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Transformative Empowerment Evaluation and Freirean Pedagogy: Alignment With an Emancipatory Tradition

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Abstract

Empowerment evaluation and Freirean pedagogy share a common emancipatory tradition. These approaches help people learn to confront the status quo, by questioning assumptions and prescribed roles, unpacking myths, rejecting dehumanization, and no longer blindly accepting the "truth" about how things are or can be. They help people think critically about the world around them. © 2017 Wiley Periodicals, Inc., and the American Evaluation Association.

Empowerment evaluation and Freirean pedagogy are both forms of transformative education. They create environments conducive to people empowering themselves. They rely on cycles of reflection and action to contribute to transformation. They both attack the "culture of silence" (acquiescence to a pervasive system of beliefs that undermine and devalue entire groups of people). Empowerment evaluation and Freirean pedagogy share a common belief that:

> Every person, however . . . submerged in the "culture of silence," can look critically at his or her world through a process of dialogue with others, and can gradually come to perceive his personal and social reality, think about it, and take action in regard to it. (Shaull, 1974, p. 13)

This stands in juxtaposition to educational approaches that are designed to reproduce the status quo. As Shaull (1974) explains:

> There is no such thing as a neutral educational process. Education either functions as an instrument which is used to facilitate integration of the younger generation into the logic of the present system and bring about conformity or it becomes the practice of freedom, the means by which men and women deal critically and creatively with reality and discover how to participate in the transformation of their world. (p. 15)

Empowerment evaluation and Freirean pedagogy are both dedicated to the concepts of community and collaboration, as well as self-determination, social justice, and sustainability. Empowerment evaluation and Freirean pedagogy are aligned in principle and practice. I was influenced by Freirean pedagogy before developing empowerment evaluation, while breathing life into the approach, and continue to be influenced by his work into the present.

The Niche of Empowerment Evaluation

Empowerment evaluation is a stakeholder-involvement approach to evaluation. It differs from other similar stakeholder-involvement approaches in the following manner: collaborative evaluators are in charge of the evaluation; participatory evaluators jointly share control of the evaluation; and empowerment evaluators view program staff members, program participants, and community members as in control of the evaluation (Fetterman, Rodriguez-Campos, Wandersman, & Goldfarb O'Sullivan, 2014).

Empowerment evaluation is the use of evaluation concepts, techniques, and findings to foster improvement and self-determination (Fetterman, 1994). It is an approach that "aims to increase the likelihood that programs will achieve results by increasing the capacity of program stakeholders to plan, implement, and evaluate their own programs" (Wandersman et al., 2005, p. 28). It is mainstreamed as part of the planning and management of the program/organization. In essence, empowerment evaluation is a tool to help people produce desired outcomes and reach their goals.

Two Streams

Empowerment evaluation in practice is typically applied along two streams. The first is practical and the second transformative. Practical empowerment evaluation is similar to formative evaluation. It is designed to enhance program performance and productivity. It is still controlled by program staff, participants, and community members. However, the focus is on practical problem solving, as well as programmatic improvements and outcomes.

Transformative empowerment evaluation (Fetterman, 2015) highlights the psychological, social, and political power of liberation. People learn how to take greater control of their own lives and the resources around them. The focus in transformative empowerment evaluation is on liberation from pre-determined, conventional roles and organizational structures or "ways of doing things." In addition, empowerment is a more explicit and apparent goal. Freirean pedagogy is most closely aligned with transformative empowerment evaluation in that it is committed to helping people confront the culture of silence about the status quo, raise consciousness about their role in the world (as compared with "false consciousness"[1]), and improve the human condition.

Theories

Reviewing the theories guiding empowerment evaluation practice will also help illuminate the integral relationship between Freirean pedagogy and empowerment evaluation: empowerment theory, self-determination theory, evaluation capacity building, process use, and theories of use and action.

Empowerment Theory

This theory is about gaining control, obtaining resources, and understanding one's social environment. Empowerment theory focuses on the positive rather than the negative. For example, the language of empowerment focuses on wellness as compared with illness, competence compared with deficits, and strength compared with weakness (Perkins & Zimmerman, 1995). Moreover, empowerment theory highlights capabilities, instead of risk factors, environmental influences as contrasted with views that blame the victim (Fetterman, 1981). A formal definition of empowerment is:

> an intentional ongoing process centered in the local community, involving mutual respect, critical reflection, caring, and group participation through which people lacking in equal share of valued resources gain greater access to and control over those resources. (Cornell Empowerment Group, 1989, p. 1)

This definition is in accord with a Freirean tradition in that people are required to take an active role in their own transformation and take action to gain greater control over their lives. Empowerment theory is divided into processes and outcomes. According to Zimmerman (2000):

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[1] The culture of silence is designed to indoctrinate and condition people to think of themselves as useless, without value, and incapable of making a meaningful contribution to society.

> Empowerment processes are ones in which attempts to gain control, obtain needed resources, and critically understand one's social environment are fundamental. The process is empowering if it helps people develop skills so they can become independent problem solvers and decision makers ... Empowerment outcomes refer to operationalization of empowerment so we can study the consequences of citizen attempts to gain greater control in their community or the effects of interventions designed to empower participants. (p. 3)

Empowerment theory helps operationalize both empowerment evaluation and Freirean pedagogy by separating out processes from outcomes. Empowerment evaluation and Freirean pedagogy provide people with conceptual skills required to critically understand their social environment and become independent problem solvers.

Self-Determination

This is one of the foundational concepts underlying empowerment theory. Self-determination is defined as the ability to chart one's own course in life. It consists of numerous interconnected capabilities, such as the ability to identify and express needs; establish goals or expectations and a plan of action to achieve them; identify resources; make rational choices from various alternative courses of action; take appropriate steps to pursue objectives; evaluate short- and long-term results, including reassessing plans and expectations and taking necessary detours; and persist in the pursuit of those goals. A breakdown at any juncture of this network of capabilities—as well as various environmental factors—can reduce a person's likelihood of being self-determined.[2]

These are instrumental microsteps required for people to accomplish their objectives, build confidence, design new challenging goals, and ultimately take charge of their own lives. Freire recognized the need for people to take action grounded in reality to transform their lives. These steps are a blueprint for action on a microlevel.

Process Use

This represents much of the rationale or logic underlying empowerment evaluation in practice, because it cultivates ownership by placing the approach in community and staff members' hands. The more that people are engaged in conducting their own evaluations, the more likely they are to believe in them, because the evaluation findings are theirs. In addition, a byproduct of this experience is that they learn to think evaluatively. This makes them more likely to make decisions and take actions based on their

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[2] See also Bandura (1982) for more details on issues related to self-efficacy and self-determination.

evaluation data. This way of thinking is at the heart of process use[3] (see Patton, 1997, 2005).

In an empowerment evaluation, thinking evaluatively is a product of guided immersion. This occurs when people conduct their own evaluation, assisted by an empowerment evaluator. Teaching people to think evaluatively is like teaching them to fish. It can last a lifetime and is what evaluative sustainability is all about—internalizing evaluation.

Empowerment evaluation models a Freirean liberating pedagogy in part because it recognizes the importance of people remaining in control of their own lives, instead of outside experts. As Freire (1974) warned: "the fact that investigators may in the first stage of the investigation approximately apprehend the complex of contradictions does not authorize them to begin to structure the program content of educational action. This perception of reality is still their own not that of the people" (p. 106).

Empowerment evaluation assumes people learn and internalize that learning from doing. Freire (1974) observed that it is only when people "become involved in the organized struggle for their liberation that they begin to believe in themselves" (p. 52). Moreover, people learn, become more fully conscious, and are liberated by conducting their own evaluations. Freire captured this self-reflective phenomenon when he explained that people's oppression itself needs to be the basis for reflection, which leads to the type and level of engagement required for liberation.

> This pedagogy makes oppression and its causes objects of reflection by the oppressed, and from that reflection will come their necessary engagement in the struggle for their liberation. And in the struggle this pedagogy will be made and remade. (p. 33)

A more fundamental concern is raised about people engaged in evaluating themselves—bias. For example, Scriven (1997), Stufflebeam (1995), and others have argued about the contaminating or biased nature of self-assessment.[4] However, Freire (1974) points out the flaw in that thinking:

> Some may think it inadvisable to include the people as investigators in the search for their own meaningful thematics: that their intrusive influence will "adulterate" the findings and thereby sacrifice the objectivity of the investigation. This view mistakenly presupposes that themes exist, in their original objective purity, outside men (and women)—as if these were things. Actually, themes exist in men (and women) in their relations with the world, with

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[3] There is a substantial literature concerning the use of evaluation. However, most of it is devoted to lessons learned after the evaluation. The discussion of process use in this context focuses on use during an evaluation (see also Patton, 1997, 1998, 2005).
[4] See Fetterman (2001) and Fetterman and Wandersman (2005) for a more detailed response to this critique.

reference to concrete facts . . . There is, therefore, a relation between the given objective fact, the perception men (and women) have of this fact, and the generative themes. (p. 97–98)

No pedagogy is truly liberating if it continues to treat people as "unfortunates" and offers models from those in power. People "must be their own example in the struggle" (p. 39). This is how conscientização[5] (or conscientization—"the process by which human beings participate critically in a transforming act"; Freire, 1985, p. 106) is achieved and people become free "to create and construct, to wonder, and to venture" (p. 55). (See also Fetterman & Wandersman, 2007, for a response to the role of bias.)

Capacity Building

Capacity building has been a driving force in empowerment evaluation since its inception (Fetterman, 1994; Fetterman, Kaftarian, & Wandersman, 1996). The evaluation capacity literature has coincided with and intersected with the empowerment evaluation. (For more information about evaluation capacity building, see Duffy & Wandersman, 2007; Taylor-Ritzler et al., 2013.)

Labin, Duffy, Meyers, Wandersman, and Lesesne (2013) conducted a research synthesis on the topic and define evaluation capacity building (ECB) as "an intentional process to increase individual motivation, knowledge, and skills, and to enhance a group or organization's ability to conduct or use evaluation" (p. 2). The assumption is that ECB strategies will improve individual attitudes, knowledge, and skills as evidenced by behavioral changes. In addition, ECB strategies will facilitate sustainable organizational learning.

Freire also believed in the capacity of ordinary citizens (literate or illiterate) to analyze their own reality, to "'re-consider' through the 'considerations' of others, their own previous 'consideration.'" The purpose of "individuals analyzing their own reality is to become aware of their prior, distorted perceptions, and thereby to have a new perception of that reality" (p. 114). Empowerment evaluation and Freirean practice use many of the same mechanisms or procedures to build a reflective, sustainable evaluative capacity and culture—placing the work in the hands of the people themselves (with guidance).

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[5] Conscientização is a Brazilian word. It is the process by which people develop a critical consciousness about society and their role as a group in the world. It is generally discussed in terms of consciousness in the practice of liberation. However, the separation between consciousness and the world is artificial. It is a dialectical relationship between the two that makes conscientização possible. Separating them results in "illusions of idealism or mechanistic errors" (p. 106).

A Theory of Action

Finally, the alignment of *theories of use and action* explains how empowerment evaluation helps people produce desired results. The theory of use is usually the espoused operating theory about how a program or organization works. It is a useful tool, generally based on program personnel views. The theory of action is often compared with the theory of use. Theory of use is the actual program reality, the observable behavior of stakeholders (see Argyris & Schon, 1978). People engaged in empowerment evaluations create a theory of action at one stage and test it against the existing theory of use during a later stage. Similarly, they create a new theory of action as they plan for the future. Because empowerment evaluation is an ongoing and iterative process, stakeholders test their theories of action against theories in use to determine whether their strategies are being implemented as recommended or designed. The theories go hand in hand in empowerment evaluation.

Freire recommended dialogue and discussion, followed by action, and then reflection on practice again. In essence, he is suggesting a comparison of precisely these theories. (This approach is discussed in additional detail under cycles of reflection and action.) The juxtaposition of theories of use and action are the mechanisms by which people build their capacity to learn, and as Freire suggested, to adapt to the world, intervene, re-create, and transform it.

Principles

The theoretical foundations of empowerment evaluation lead to specific principles required to inform quality practice. Empowerment evaluation principles provide a sense of direction and purposefulness throughout an evaluation. Empowerment evaluation is guided by 10 specific principles (Fetterman & Wandersman, 2005, pp. 1–2, 27–41, 42–72). They include:

1. Improvement—empowerment evaluation is designed to help people improve program performance; it is designed to help people build on their successes and re-evaluate areas meriting attention
2. Community ownership—empowerment evaluation values and facilitates community control; use and sustainability are dependent on a sense of ownership
3. Inclusion—empowerment evaluation invites involvement, participation, and diversity; contributions come from all levels and walks of life
4. Democratic participation—participation and decision making should be open and fair
5. Social justice—evaluation can and should be used to address social inequities in society

6. Community knowledge—empowerment evaluation respects and values community knowledge
7. Evidence-based strategies—empowerment evaluation respects and uses the knowledge base of scholars (in conjunction with community knowledge)
8. Capacity building—empowerment evaluation is designed to enhance stakeholders' ability to conduct evaluation and to improve program planning and implementation
9. Organizational learning—data should be used to evaluate new practices, inform decision making, and implement program practices; empowerment evaluation is used to help organizations learn from their experience (building on successes, learning from mistakes, and making midcourse corrections)
10. Accountability—empowerment evaluation is focused on outcomes and accountability; empowerment evaluations functions within the context of existing policies, standards, and measures of accountability; did the program or initiative accomplish its objectives?

Empowerment evaluation principles help evaluators and community members make decisions that are in alignment with the larger purpose or goals associated with capacity building and self-determination. The principle of inclusion, for example, reminds evaluators and community leaders to include rather than exclude members of the community, even though fiscal, logistic, and personality factors might suggest otherwise. The capacity-building principle reminds the evaluator to provide community members with the opportunity to collect their own data, even though it might initially be faster and easier for the evaluator to collect the same information. The accountability principle guides community members to hold one another accountable. It also situates the evaluation within the context of external requirements and credible results or outcomes (see Fetterman, 2005, p. 2).

These principles are in alignment with Freirean pedagogy. For example, the principles of community ownership, inclusion, and democratic decision making highlight the significance of community involvement and control. Community members are expected to authentically participate in, if not control, evaluation-related decision making, concerning issues that directly affect their lives. Empowerment evaluation and Freirean pedagogy are in agreement that the presence of people struggling "for their liberation will be what it should be: not pseudo-participation, but committed involvement" (p. 69). In addition, empowerment evaluation's commitment to social justice shares the same Freirean assumptions about the world, specifically, that there are inequities throughout the world and there is a pressing need to address them in a timely manner—through action. Accountability, for both empowerment evaluation and Freirean discourse, is paramount. It must be preceded by dialogue and understanding, but it is one of the best

tests of effectiveness. Accountability, in this case, refers to both individual responsibility to the group and the group's responsibility to larger societal forces, including producing outcomes.

Concepts

Empowerment evaluation concepts provide a more instrumental view of how to implement the approach. Key concepts include cycles of reflection and action, communities of learners, and reflective practitioners (see Fetterman, Deitz, & Gesundheit, 2010).[6]

Cycles of Reflection and Action

This involves ongoing phases of analysis, decision making, and implementation (based on evaluation findings). It is a cyclical process. Programs are dynamic, not static, and require continual feedback as they change and evolve. Freire described the same process in the context of transformation (p. 36) and liberation, explaining "reflection—true reflection—leads to action. On the other hand, when the situation calls for action, that action will constitute an authentic praxis only if its consequences become the object of critical reflection" (p. 52–53).

Cycles of reflection and action are ongoing processes designed to contribute to long-term, sustainable forms of social change and transformation. It is this cyclical testing of ideas and strategies in practice (and revision based on feedback) in the real world that knowledge is gained. As Freire explains: "Knowledge emerges only through invention and re-invention, through the restless, impatient, continuing, hopeful inquiry human beings pursue in the world, with the world, and with each other" (p. 58).

Community of Learners

Empowerment evaluation is driven by a group process. It creates a community of learners. Members of the group learn from each other, serving as their own peer review group, critical friend, resource, and norming mechanism. Individual members of the group hold each other accountable concerning progress toward stated goals.

Freire was also committed to group learning and believed that real change could not be accomplished by the individual alone, but needed to be understood and accomplished through the group (pp. 34, 52, 88, 100). As Freire (1974) explained:

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[6] These concepts are influenced by traditional organizational development and transformation theorists including Argyris and Schon (1978) and Senge (1994), as well as evaluators associated with organizational learning (Preskill & Torres, 1999).

> I can not think for others or without others, nor can others think for me. Even if the people's thinking is superstitious or naive, it is only as they rethink their assumptions in action that they can change. Producing and acting upon their own ideas—not consuming those of others. (p. 100)

Reflective Practitioners

Finally, empowerment evaluations and Freirean pedagogy help create reflective practitioners. Reflective practitioners use data to inform their decisions and actions concerning their own daily activities. This produces a self-aware and self-actualized individual who has the capacity to apply this world-view to all aspects of their life. As individuals develop and enhance their own capacity, they improve the quality of the group's exchange, deliberation, and action plans.

A Lift Up

Empowerment evaluation and Freire's liberating educational approach help raise consciousness and encourage people to take responsibility for their own lives. They help people engage in cycles of reflection and action in order to become more critically aware of their existence, take steps to improve their performance as members of a group, and contribute to their community's development. These approaches help lift people up, instead of pushing them down (see also Lentz et al., 2005).

Generative Themes

The process of engaging in empowerment evaluation generates priorities for inquiry that are similar to what Freire referred to as "generative themes." Without these generative themes, critical topics and issues may never be made explicit and thus never grappled with. Freire observed that these

> themes may or may not be perceived in their true significance. They may simply be felt—sometimes not even that. But the nonexistence of themes within the sub-units is absolutely impossible. The fact that individuals in a certain area do not perceive a generative theme, or perceive it in a distorted way, may only reveal a limit-situation . . . in which men (and women) are still submerged. (p. 94)

Generative themes provide the relevant substance for active engagement—the things people are most concerned about. This sets the stage for one of the most important parts of the process—authentic dialogue. Similar to Freirean pedagogy, through dialogue, existing thoughts will change and new knowledge will be created.

Dialogue

The dialogue about priorities is one of the most important parts of the empowerment evaluation process. In addition to clarifying issues, evidence is used to support viewpoints and "sacred cows" are surfaced and examined during dialogue. Moreover, the process of specifying the reason or evidence for a priority provides the group with a more efficient and focused manner of identifying what needs to be done next, during the planning for the future step of the process. Instead of generating an unwieldy list of strategies and solutions that may or may not be relevant to the issues at hand, the group can focus its energies on the specific concerns and reasons for a low priority rating that were raised in the dialogue or exchange.

The dialogue is analytical and often emotional. Empowerment evaluation has responded to critiques focused on an objectivist perspective without sufficient attention to emotion (Fetterman, 1995, 2001; Stufflebeam, 1995). Freire recognized the dialectical nature of these human features. On the one hand, Freire highlighted the value of "objectively verifiable" (p. 35) data. However, he also observed: "One cannot conceive of objectivity without subjectivity" (p. 35). The subjective and the objective are in a "constant dialectical relationship" (p. 35). Freire referred to this as "reason soaked with emotion."

Empowerment evaluation embraces this combination. People have emotions. Emotions are a powerful force shaping people's consciousness and action. According to Freire, "To deny the importance of subjectivity in the process of transforming the world and history is naïve and simplistic" (p. 35).[7] The level of emotion in an exchange is often a test of the depth of the issues confronted. However, reality must be confronted by a combination of the analytical and the emotional.

> A mere perception of reality not followed by this critical intervention (objectifying and acting upon that reality) will not lead to a transformation of objective reality—precisely because it is not a true perception. This is the case of a purely subjectivist perception by someone who forsakes objective reality and creates a false substitute. (p. 37)

Dialogue is a critical part of the pedagogy of critical consciousness or *conscientização*. People confront each other with an evaluative view of the functionality, productivity, and adaptability of their community and where it is situated in the larger society. They create meaning by sharing their view of reality with each other and coming to a consensus about the world they

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[7] "The separation of objectivity from subjectivity, the denial of the latter when analyzing reality or acting upon it, is objectivism" (Freire, p. 35). This denies the counterbalancing influence of subjectivity and emotions. This explains much about the initial debates between Fetterman (1995), who includes emotions in the human equation, and Stufflebeam (1994), who argued for an objectivist approach to evaluation.

live in and what needs to be done next to improve their lives. This is often where the "elephant" in the room emerges; the underlying problem or inequity that everyone knows about, but no one is willing to surface and discuss in daily life. The dialogue moves the group beyond needs to causes and links that to their perceived needs. Logic models and theories of change (without the jargon or terminology) become more meaningful and useful. Critical dialogue contributes to critical consciousness. Reflection based on a critical dialogue propels groups into action. According to Freire: "critical dialogue presupposes action." Planning for the future, in empowerment evaluation, is built on the critical dialogue or taking stock exchanges. It represents the coconstructed road map (or intervention) required to accomplish community goals.

Planning for the Future

Many evaluations conclude at the taking-stock phase. However, taking stock is a baseline and a launching-off point for the rest of the empowerment evaluation. After rating and discussing programmatic activities, it is important to do something about the findings. It is time to plan for the future. This involves generating goals, strategies, and credible evidence (to determine if the strategies are being implemented and if they are effective). The goals are directly related to the activities selected in the taking-stock step. Planning for the future can only be conducted after the group has taken stock of their situation. In other words, their plan of action, similar to Freirean steps, comes after dialogue (taking stock). In addition, taking stock is preceded by an initial discussion about the group's purpose or mission. This provides an intellectual coherence to the endeavor and like Freire, provides an internal theory guiding practice and action. However, raising consciousness, implementing action plans, and testing hypotheses require monitoring if the initiatives are to produce desired outcomes (and remain on track and timely).

Monitoring the Strategies

Many programs, projects, and evaluations fail at this stage for lack of individual and group accountability. Individuals who spoke eloquently and/or emotionally about a certain topic during the early steps of the empowerment evaluation are asked to volunteer to lead specific task forces to respond to identified problems or concerns. They do not have to complete the task. However, they are responsible for taking the lead in a circumscribed area (a specific goal) and reporting the status of the effort periodically at ongoing management meetings. Similarly, the community members make a commitment to reviewing the status of these new strategies as a group (making midcourse corrections if the strategies are not working). Conventional and innovative evaluation tools are used to monitor the strategies. An evaluation dashboard is a particularly useful tool to monitor change or progress over

time. It consists of baselines, benchmarks or milestones, goals, and actual performance. Metrics enable community members to compare, for example, their baseline assessments with their benchmarks/milestones or expected points of progress, actual performance, and goals. This approach is aligned with Freirean pedagogy because it places the tools to monitor performance in the hands of the people in the community. It is transparent, enabling staff and community members to monitor their own performance, while allowing sponsors to determine if additional assistance is needed along the way. It is also a tool to build evaluation capacity because it teaches people how to monitor their own performance, learning in time to make adjustments in a timely fashion.

Role

Relationships play a pivotal role in the process of conducting an empowerment evaluation. The role of the critical friend[8] merits attention because it is like a fulcrum in terms of fundamental relationships. Applied improperly, it can be like a wedge inhibiting movement and change; applied correctly, this role can be used to leverage and maximize the potential of a group.

Empowerment evaluators have considerable expertise, but as critical friends or coaches, they help keep the evaluation systematic, rigorous, and on track. They are able to function in this capacity by advising, rather than directing or controlling, an evaluation. They provide a structure or set of steps to conduct an evaluation. They recommend, rather than require, specific activities and tools. They listen and rely on the group's knowledge and understanding of their local situation.

The empowerment evaluator differs from many traditional evaluators. Instead of being the "expert" and completely independent, separate, and detached from the people they work with, so as not to get "contaminated" or "biased," the empowerment evaluator works closely with and alongside program staff members and participants.

This approach is aligned with Freirean pedagogy, in which the leader works closely with the community, not as an outside expert distant from the community. In both approaches, the evaluator or facilitator refrains from assuming control, framing the discussion, dominating the dialogue, or prescribing action plans. Instead, the group takes the lead and works together as a group. Freire draws a similar picture of the role in his comparison of teachers and students[9]:

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[8] These concepts are influenced by traditional organizational development and transformation theorists including Argyris and Schon (1978) and Senge (1994), as well as evaluators associated with organizational learning (Preskill & Torres, 1999).

[9] According to Freire, the "teacher is no longer merely the one who teaches, but one who is himself taught in dialogue with the students, who in turn while being taught also teach" (p. 67).

> Teachers and students (leadership and people), co-intent on reality are both Subjects, not only in the task of unveiling that reality and thereby coming to know it critically, but in the task of re-creating that knowledge. As they attain this knowledge of reality through common reflection and action, they discover themselves as its permanent re-creators. (p. 56)

The Freirean facilitator and empowerment evaluator both serve the group or community in an attempt to help them maximize their potential and unleash their creative and productive energy for a common good. Important attributes of a critical friend include creating an environment conductive to dialogue and discussion; providing or requesting data to inform decision making; facilitating rather than leading; and being open to ideas, inclusive, and willing to learn (see Fetterman, 2009; Fetterman et al., 2010, for additional details of this role).

Conclusion

Empowerment evaluation and Freirean pedagogy are aligned in both theory and practice. The alignment is most pronounced with transformative empowerment evaluation. However, both streams of empowerment evaluation embrace essential features, including critical thinking, authentic dialogue, conscientização, and action. Empowerment evaluation and Freirean pedagogy are emancipatory, and if applied appropriately, help people free themselves from the constraints placed on them, as well as the limitations they place on themselves. Together, they can also help to transform the practice of evaluation.

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