Trauma-informed Philosophy and Healing-centered Practices

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Abstract: This article focuses on the important role of trauma-informed philosophy within the educational system and society at large, with particular emphasis on their critical role in the development of learners' mental health and personal integrity. In the context of COVID-19, educators need to focus not only on academic performance, but also on building safe and restorative justice environments for students who have experienced adverse childhood experiences. Teachers can utilize home visits, observation, and funds of knowledge to gain a deeper understanding of learners' cultural experiences and engage families, social organizations, and other institutions in multiple interventions, including, but not limited to, the promotion of healing-centered practices and the ongoing reform of social institutions for justice.

Keywords: trauma-informed philosophy, healing-centered strategies, funds of knowledge

1. Introduction

More and more schools can now gradually consummate their teaching system to guarantee students have a higher chance of achieving satisfactory academic results, but what is often overlooked is that an integrated personality is not only dependent on their academic performances, but also on mental health development. Trauma-informed philosophy is one such tool that can be used to understand a student's past experiences. In the context of the pandemic that brought about so much pain, it should not only be promoted in the field of education, but also be known and mastered by every one of us to care for people around us with compassion.

2. The Implementation of Trauma-informed Philosophy at School

In a school, the implementation of trauma-informed philosophy implies that everyone in this environment — including the principal, administrators, and teachers — should listen with respect and patience to understand the trauma each student has gone through. The most basic requirement for a school to carry out trauma-informed philosophy is to call on all faculty members to act as a community to inspire compassion for their students [1]. By considering problems from the perspective of the students on the basis of empathy, a welcoming and cooperative holistic ethos can be created throughout the school, thereby enabling traumatized students to develop a sense of psychological security and belonging that lead to a more relaxed interpersonal coordination and appropriate self-awareness [2]. By recognizing different kinds of trauma carried by students, faculty should abandon traditional punitive practices and instead adopt an approach of restorative justice — helping students find out the real cause of misconducts and further envision these misbehaviors as opportunities to train themselves to be more resilient and stronger, so that students can bravely handle challenges in their future lives.

3. The Exploration of Funds of Knowledge for ACE Children

As explained by Dr. Niki, adverse childhood experience (ACE) is not only caused by domestic violence, but also by various socializations in society, such as implicit discrimination among peers happening in the classroom, which will further aggravate the trauma of some minoritized groups [3]. When children cannot receive the care and support deserved from their families, teachers will likely become the last refuge for children to rely on and play a key role in trauma-informed care [4]. In formal classrooms, whether teachers' emotions are inclusive and stable directly determines whether students can breed a sense of settlement, which corresponds with what Eccles & Roeser [4] claimed that the emotional support from teachers is crucial for students to generate a sense of engagement and intrinsic motivation. Teachers need to be clear that trauma can have a devastating effect on the brain, so it is impossible for students to balance study and life when they are suffering from ACEs. In a trauma-informed teaching, the first step a teacher should take is to learn about the student as a whole, which is what Moll [5] refers to as the funds of knowledge accumulated through community culture, or what Nasir et al.[6], refers to as the repertoires of practices formed by real-life experiences in the context of society. It is these mixed gains and wounds that give each student a particular identity, in that each element of which determines how they experience the world and how others respond to them [7]. Therefore, teachers should not only learn to respect the privileges and marginalization brought

by those identities, but also let students recognize and accept the integrity of themselves constructed by these experiences. In order to achieve this goal, teachers can visit households to understand the words and actions of the families and communities where these children live, as well as the socio-cultural categories reflected in their shared meanings and morality [8]. In this process, teachers become observers and learners: they transform the funds of knowledge of students into the reality integrated with their personal experiences, and listen to the trauma of students with a flexible mindset, so as to reflect on their teaching practices and adjust them appropriately to a healing-centered engagement in line with the accumulated cultural identity of students.

4. The Significance of Trauma-informed Philosophy and Healing-centered Strategies

In 2020, we experienced the serious infectious disease COVID-19, which has already become a social and global trauma. According to investigation, the panic and anxiety caused by daily news on TV, as well as the grief brought by the possible illness or death of family members or close friends, all led to varying degrees of trauma in adults and children [9]. This kind of trauma imposes a more significant and lasting effect on children. When similar traumatic events occur later in life, they will completely lose the ability to cope with such emergencies. In this particular context, trauma-informed philosophy and healing becomes even more urgent. As mentioned above, teachers play an integral part in trauma-informed practices, but in the face of COVID-19, a pain that is common to all human beings, teachers, parents, schools, societal organizations, and communities need to unite together and engage in diversified grassroots movements to mobilize everyone. According to research, if the child's caregiver can keep calm all the time, then the child can regard the parents as a factor of protection. On the contrary, if the parents themselves are distressed, it will bring more negative effects to their children [10]. Therefore, on the one hand, schools can provide children with daily necessities and health services to let them heal from the level of social interaction; on the other hand, schools can plan a variety of stress-relief and child development workshops to serve parents, so that children can also thrive in their home environment. In addition, we need to establish social organizations to conduct community-based movements. An example would be Positive & Adverse Childhood Experiences Connection (PACEs), an organization that has clearly defined mission, Equity & Inclusion Statement and core values [11]. Such large organizations' meaning lies in that they can penetrate communities at all levels, offer guidelines and tracking tools to help them develop a set of culturally sensitive healing strategies. Such relatively macro-level measures can further explore the influence of a person's cultural community on his/her experienced trauma, in an attempt to address adverse experiences at its source and implement trauma-informed and healing techniques in a long-run continuum.

5. Conclusion

In summary, trauma-informed philosophy should be in the minds of educators, social activists, and even ordinary people, since it can help us gain insights into each other's growth experiences, and further guide us to help those in need in a sincere and compassionate way. When healing-centered strategies can be implemented, those who once had adverse childhood experiences can potentially become people who can continue to help others, and eventually collectively change the unequal structure embedded in the educational and social institutions.

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