

When Formal and Informal Education Meet: Intervention in Illegal Immigrant's Daycare

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Abstract

Recently, many illegal refugees mainly from Africa have settled in Israel. The immigrants have community lives that are 'concealed' from the authorities. During the day their young children are sent to "pirate" daycares handled by babysitters from their community, most of them without any formal education. This case study describes, through a Teacher Educator perspective, the decision, dilemmas and manner of intervention within one "Pirate" daycare. These dilemmas include deciding and negotiating priorities (sanitary and educational), walking the fine line between suggesting and forcing an intervention(s). This study emphasizes the problems when cultures meet, and when compassion and professionalism come together.

Introduction

In the past few years the state of Israel has become a sanctuary for African refugees (Sabar, 2008). These refugees live on the outskirts of society, keeping their family and social life concealed (Ehrenreich & Hochschild, 2002). Very little is known about the education of their children, who during their preschool years attend illegal "pirate" daycare facilities (Amir-Kasif, 2013; Dresler, 2007). As integration of immigrant children in the society depends on education, language skills and the bridging of cultural gaps (Agbenyega & Peers, 2010), the current ethnographic case study describes the process of providing formal professional guidance in such a daycare within the refugee community.

The purpose of this study was to understand the operation of these "underground" daycare facilities and the suitable ways of assisting in proper integration of children from different cultures and socio-economical status. The study followed Dana's (teacher educator) experiences, doubts, and interventions within Ann's¹ daycare. This is needed, as the integration of immigrant children into the society is dependent on education, language skills and the bridging of cultural gaps (Agbenyega & Peers, 2010).

Background

Work immigrants and refugees

Foreign work immigrants from Asia, Central America and Africa began arriving in Israel during the mid-1990s, most of them residing in the southern part of Tel Aviv, also known as south Tel Aviv. Adjustment difficulties and crises are a common part of the immigration process. Refugees and work immigrants have it even harder. On one hand they develop hopes that this transition from the hardships, persecution, torture and violence they experienced in their native country, will improve the situation for them and their families (Amnesty-International, 2000; Burnett & Peel, 2001; Eisenman, Keller, & Kim, 2000). On the other hand they encounter a reality which is more difficult than they expected, and they need a longer adjustment time than expected. They quickly come to understand that the promise of a better life that they and their children face is rooted in a social and cultural environment different from the one they are accustomed to, and that the opportunity for economic advancement and a superior education for their children is minute. For illegal immigrants, arriving from a traumatic environment, even more time is needed to process the traumatic events from the past and to establish a level of security and trust in the host country (Atweir, Gifford, & McDonald-Wilmsen, 2009).

¹ all names in this paper have been changed to protect the anonymity of the subjects

In the host country many of them are faced with barriers such as discrimination, racism, lack of official authority designated to deal with them and the inability to use the local language (Dumper, 2002; Gubbay, 1999), which make their integration harder (Clayton, 2005).

Women immigrants and refugees

Female work immigrants become part of the global economy, which enables women and men to provide for their nuclear and extended family. Literature shows that there are characteristics unique to female work immigrants. Since this paper describes "Ann" from Ghana, who resides in Israel without a visa or work permit, we will expand on the subject, in order to better understand her patterns of action and behavior. The difficulties of female refugees and work immigrants are amplified compared to those of males (Clayton, 2005). They suffer from low self-esteem which at times leads to undervaluing their qualifications, abilities and experience, a situation which likely derives from their belonging to a traditional patriarchal society in their homeland, in which they are regarded as inferior, experiencing low esteem, exclusion and insignificance (Sabar, 2008). African women like Ann, belong to a man all their life: a father, brother or husband. Leaving their families and immigrating to another country to an independent life requires a change in the patterns of behavior. The act of immigration, however, does not remove the cultural and gender limitations. This explains why female immigrants in Israel and elsewhere change their perceptions and behavior very slowly if at all (Sabar, 2008). In many cases they lack experience and do not master the local language, which increases their hardships. Moreover, lack of proper education in their country of origin and the lack of sufficient guidance in the hosting country also damage their self-esteem (Clayton, 2005). Quite often they leave behind husbands, children and parents for whom they have to provide. Leaving their families, as well as the pressure factors described above, create a schism between their traditional way of thinking and the new world in which they find themselves (Kaplan, 1998; Manderson, Kelaheer, Markovic, & McManus, 1998), and as Kaplan claims may even cause depression, as we will describe in Ann's case.

Refugee's and work immigrant's children

Work immigrants sometimes arrive with their children in the host country, or will start a family after their arrival. In Israel they cannot become citizens due to the laws of the country (Ekstein, 2010; Spiro, 2010). In the last few years many foreign workers were deported or removed from Israel, and in many cases their wives and children were left behind. This reality forces them, at times, to work double shifts to make a living for their families. Since they work twelve to sixteen hours a day they have to leave their children in makeshift kindergartens, called "babysitter", run by women such as Ann, the subject of this research, who work in these pirate kindergartens, with no professional training. They work with a large number of small children, who fit the classification of endangered children, "suffering from severe mental and physical neglect". Babysitter services are significantly cheaper than official day care or city kindergartens. They operate twelve hours or more each day, so that the parents can make a living, and house children from age zero to four, joined at noon by children aged four to seven who were accepted into the Israeli education system.

Children who spent time in the Babysitter arrangement find it hard to integrate into the Israeli education system since they were educated in a system lacking a structured daily routine or in other words "chaotic order" (Amir-Kasif, 2013). The "pirate kindergartens", as described in MESILA report are usually found in buildings unsuitable for habitat and especially not as kindergartens, according to the standards acceptable in Israel. They are mostly housed in old industrial buildings or in very small apartments, without sufficient sanitation, endangering the children.

This study will focus on the work patterns and actions of Dana, the first Teacher-Educator in a pirate kindergarten. We will describe the processes, the difficulties and the way she etches her work in one kindergarten, "Ann's kindergarten".

Dana was hired by the MESILA organization, a Tel Aviv municipal organization that was established in response to the increase in the numbers of work immigrants in south Tel Aviv at the end of 1990's, in order to help and care for the refugees' basic needs.

In 2002 an expedited deportation of work immigrants residing in Israel without work permits was carried out (mostly men, among them Ann's husband). As a result MESILA focused their action on assisting women and children, which included monitoring efforts to improve the state of the "babysitters".

After various efforts professional teacher-educators were employed for assisting in implementing safe working procedures and to improve the quality of the pirate kindergarten teacher's professional work. Dana started to work within this framework and her first kindergarten was "Ann's kindergarten".

Methods

The present study is an ethnographic phenomenological qualitative study focused on Dana's experiences and interventions in "Ann's kindergarten". The phenomenological study's hypothesis is that the knowledge is buried/cached in the significance the participants give to their actions. Learning takes place via the descriptions of their experience (What) and the manner in which the process evolved (How) (Creswell, 2007) as well as the significance attributed by the participants. In the present case the focus is on Dana in view of the motives and actions, processes, intentions and insights she experienced through the process.

Study population: The study focused on the interaction of two women:

Dana, age 55, a teacher-educator, familiar with the educational trends in the Israeli educational system was a teacher, school principal, professional supervisor and faculty in college of education. Dana, chosen by MESILAAan organization focused on the improvement of the foreign illegal immigrant's welfare, is the first teacher educator in an underground daycare.

Ann, a female migrant worker from Ghana, age 50, is residing illegally in Israel. She came with her husband and left her four children behind. In 2002 her husband was caught by the authorities and sent back to Ghana. Ann, who has no formal education, established the daycare in her place of residence to avoid exposure and to reduce risk of apprehension by the authorities. Through this she hoped to make a living for herself and her family in Ghana.

Tools, gathering and analysis of data: The basis of the study was triangulation of various information sources as a means to uphold the study's quality (Denzin, 1978; Patton, 1999). Source merging included an in depth interview, diary and field notes. The process included an audit trail of the experiences from a firsthand source. Data was collected for approximately fourteen months from May 2008 through October 2009. These sources were the basis for the development of discrete categories of content in an attempt to represent the chain of events its significance. Analyses included a number of steps which were constructed and depended on each other: The first, "preparing the ground", studied the data from the various sources in depth (Agar, 1980). The second, open coding of the data by each participant separately, with the goal of creating initial categories representing subjects which arise from the data (Corbin & Strauss, 1990). In this process, the main perceptions and significant experiences were identified. The third stage included selective coding which incorporated a deeper understanding of the process and the ties between the different categories.

Ethical issues and study limitations: As mentioned, the kindergarten was acting secretly and the teacher and most of the children's parents reside illegally in Israel. However, they were interested in receiving the services provided by the intervening educator. Thus, special attention was given to guarantee on one hand that the kindergarten teacher's consent was given with proper understanding and willingness. As a part of this process, an emphasis was given on the right to withdraw from the study at any time. In addition, in light of the sensitivity we took particular action to maintain the privacy and secrecy of the kindergarten.

Further, the absence of Ann's authentic voice limits our findings. In spite of our plans to interview Ann after Dana finished her intervention, due to the circumstances described below, Ann went back to Ghana before completing the research.

Findings

The story line as it is reflected in this chapter focuses on three key themes: first is the process Dana went through. Second are Ann's actions and responses and the third is focused on the interaction between the two.

Dana- I felt like a pioneer

Dana had learned from the media of perilous situation of the illegal immigrants in Israel.

She therefore answered MESILA's appeal when looking for teacher-educators to improve the "piratekindergarten". Dana, the first educator chosen for this task, recalls:

MESILA wanted a woman who will not be deterred by difficulty, a professional, empathic, who could lead an educational processes related to the teacher's daily tasks, along with her empowerment as a capable professional, containment, empathy, teaching of content etc. Along with these, the educator will not hesitate to relay basic information such as: hygiene and sanitation habits, preparation of meals, safety and more. I felt like I was making a breakthrough, an emissary, I felt a responsibility and commitment, I could not allow myself to fail due to the harsh reality and my need to aid them.

Dana perceives herself as appropriate for the role of educator and was proud to be chosen as the first salaried educator in an underground kindergarten. She views her job as a mission and is determined to succeed.

At MESILA, during the effort to prepare her for the job it was explained to her that it was a "difficult place". But she was unable to imagine what she would find in the first kindergarten she was exposed to, Ann's kindergarten. She embarked on a "journey" confident in her knowledge and experience. Her educational concept was based on western models acceptable in Israel in toddler educational systems, among which were the children's safety and security from physical and mental hazards, assuring proper development and especially the construction of educational enrichment programs appropriate to their age (Golden, 2006; Golden & Mayseless, 2008; Rozenthal, 2004). Reality struck soon enough and Dana was faced with mixed emotions of sadness, pain, compassion and confusion.

Ann's KINDERGARTEN- "I felt compassion and sadness seeing the neglect of the place".

Dana recalled her first meeting with Ann

...At the end of the instruction day [...] when I got home I went directly to the shower, throw all my clothes to the laundry and cried. I cried for Ann's misfortune, for the children, because of the terrible conditions, the filth, the hordes of roaches, the potent smell of urine that clung to me and would not go away. I felt confused, a strong need for action. But where to begin?

At first, I was not able to include my family and close ones in the intensity of the experience, to tell them how harsh the conditions are. I was afraid that this will cause hardships at home. My husband was not enthusiastic of my working there and my daughters thought it was terrible, but I could not give up. I stayed because I believed that I could make their lives easier and improve their basic habitation and work conditions.

The kindergarten was situated in an old industrial building. On the ground floor in a dark corridor was the office of a snake exterminator, next to it a night club. The stairs to the top floors were shabby with a broken down railing. On the first floor there were two rooms; one was used as a church and the second as a kindergarten. On the third floor there were two kindergartens, one belonging to the church and next to it Ann's kindergarten.

According to Dana:

Ann received me with a wide smile, she radiated warmth and pleasantness, I was enamored by her. She worked alone in a large hall inhabited by five babies and about thirty rowdy children aged one and a half to four years. The place reeked. The most frightening thing for me were the exposed electric wires and the toilets down the hall which were unfit for the children's use and shared with another kindergarten, the church and everyone else in the building. It was unclear as to who was responsible for their upkeep a large sink in the toilet room was used as a shower. In the kindergarten there were a baking oven, a gas range and two gas tanks. The children arrive at 6 AM and according to Ann stay until 9 PM. A partition in the hall created a room in which Ann lived.

According to Dana standards, the place did not look like a kindergarten. There were a few plastic tables and chairs and very few toys. I felt compassion and sadness seeing the neglect of the place

The clash with the reality in which Ann operated shook Dana up and undermined her confidence. She had a sense of being an emissary with a strong motivation to improve the kindergarten. But she felt confused that perhaps her professional knowledge was irrelevant to the time and situation. Thirdly, she felt lonely, she was afraid of her family's reaction to her activity, when she herself was having difficulty overcoming her feelings of fear, pain and even disgust from the physical conditions of the place.

Dana understood that in order to succeed and win Ann's cooperation she needed to gain her confidence.

In order to convince Ann to build a trusting relationship Dana shared her plans with Ann, and defined the educational intervention as a mutual process, calling it "joining hands". She explained to Ann that:

there could be days which will be more interesting in which we will take part in activities with the children, and more difficult days in which I will challenge her with assignments such as running a learning meeting with the children. Gradually I built a warm and friendly relationship with Ann. She told me of her life and children in Ghana. These conversations helped me create ties between her past and the present reality. Based on this knowledge I could implement education processes. Ann usually agreed to everything I said, we joined hands and embarked on a common dream.

How much Ann wanted or was able to become integrated in the program remained to be seen.

Intervention-"You will be a kindergarten teacher and this will be a kindergarten"

Gradually Dana located the malfunctions in the kindergarten; especially evident were the sanitation conditions, lack of work and educational routines. The urgency to give basic tools to insure the children's safety and welfare pushed the educational activities aside. Nevertheless, Dana, dedicated to western views strived to lead Ann to a kindergarten modeled after western standards. Dana brought up few examples:

I explained to Ann to show the children how to blow their noses and clean the mucus spread across their faces; wash their hands after using the toilet and before meals. [...]

Under the sink stood a big bucket, one day I saw one of the children using this bucket to relieve himself, at that moment I understood where the appalling smell came from. I asked "why are they using the bucket? Ann answered, "They are small and I am afraid that if they go out to use the toilet they will fall down the stairs". Under my instructions Ann taught the children to go out to the hall and use the toilet. [...]

Ann forced the children to eat. When a child refused she pushed the food forcefully into his mouth. I felt as if she was gorging them. If a child threw the food angrily to the floor she made him eat it off the floor. This made me angry.

Another problem was the fact that the food was not nourishing. I downloaded some recommendations for menus from the internet and explained that this is the menu that the government requires the children to eat. As soon as I mentioned the government, it seemed important to her and this is how we improved the quality of the nutrition.

Dana tried to decide in which order to address the topics and what means to use in order to educate Ann. At times she acts as a guide and advisor and in certain cases she acts out the duties herself to convince Ann. She does not hesitate to use additional tools for persuasion, which may be interpreted as mandatory, such as the mention of government in the nutritional processes she strives for.

Rifts: interactions between Dana and Ann – the children are placed like things in the kindergarten.

Ann accepted the demands focused on improving the hygiene conditions of the kindergarten and tried to apply them. Dana however did not allow time for implementing, and hurried to instruct Ann with more complex processes, for example an orderly procedure of separation of the children from their parents. This action escalated the tension between the two.

In the morning, the parents came in quickly, sat the children down in a chair, put the babies in the crib and ran to their workplaces. In most cases the children cried and there was no one to attend to them. Ann did not understand the importance of the separation process being structured. She claimed that "a child that cries is a spoiled child". The task I faced was to make Ann understand the importance of this process, and her meaningful role in receiving them in the morning. I shared the difficulty I had with seeing the children placed down like objects in the kindergarten. I repeated it a few times and offered her to take the children from their parents, hug them and say "good morning". She however continued her habit of ignoring their arrival. Ann said: "it's a waste of time and they become more spoiled". One morning without saying a thing, I went to Fred, who cried every morning and said "good morning" with a big smile, "say good bye to Mommy and give her a kiss" I gave him my hand and said, "come see what we have at our work table today". I wished the mother a nice day and played with him. I am not sure who was more shocked, the child, his mother or Ann. The child did not cry, he played and continued his day as usual.

At noontime when the children rested I asked Ann "what do you think of what happened this morning? How do you feel about the fact that Fred did not cry when his mother left?" she answered, "Tomorrow he will cry again, he always cries." I asked her: "could you try to do what I did tomorrow with Fred and with another child? If every day you greet another child that way what do you think will happen?" Ann was silent. I understood that even after the demonstration this seemed futile to her.

I left her with the task and a week later when I got there I saw that nothing changed. The children were greeted with indifference. At noontime I described our meeting in the morning to Ann, I arrived and she greeted me nicely, I greeted her personally, ask how she was, took interest in her and her family. I asked her, "How do you feel when we meet?" She said "it's nice but we are adults". The gap between how she and I perceive her job was evident again.

The gap in professional perception between the two is evident. Ann interprets the children's tears in the morning as a spoiled child's reaction; therefore, any attention will only reinforce the tears and spoiled behavior. In order to influence Ann, Dana tries to compare her meeting with Ann in the morning to the arrival of the children and the separation from the parents. Ann does not see the similarities. The way Dana treats her seems natural to her, as a form of adult communication. To overcome Ann's resistance Dana switches from instruction and explanation to demonstration, but Ann stays her course, the struggle continues.

As usual I decided not to give up. In the kindergarten where I am the instructor children will not be laid down as if they were objects. We must make a significant change. I suggested that each of us will greet a child parting from his parent, on the day I came to the kindergarten, so that it did not add to her work load. I explained to her why it was important to greet a child parting from his parents. Ann was not convinced. I pressured her to move forward in the process. In the beginning it was evident that she was acting under duress, but gradually she noticed the joy her attention gave the children and their parents as well as getting praise from me. When new children arrived at the kindergarten she already know how to receive them, the parents also learned not to leave a child in the playpen or in a highchair but to hand him over to Ann.

Dana forces Ann to go in her way, in correspondence with the approach "Do and obey" (exodus 24, 7), see what I have done and follow my lead. Dana keeps pushing to promote changes, the tension between the two women intensifies and so does Dana's criticism of Ann.

Concerning the educational task Ann found it difficult to follow my professional guidance. She perceived her role as a babysitter to feed, change diapers and make sure the children rested. Even though I included her in the details of each activity, as soon as the activity was about to begin she found "urgent" tasks to attend to. I carried out the activities on my own and slowly drew her in [...]. There were cases where I had to tell her decisively "if you don't join in I am leaving".

Ann implemented the instructions concerning the improvement of the children's hygiene and basic needs. However, she avoided carrying out the instructions regarding the development of educational activities. Dana did not stop for a moment and contemplated what obstructions prevented Ann from implementing her demands? What was the right pace for her? What could be the implications for Ann? She continued to apply pressure and even threatened to stop the process of guidance. This threat could cause the kindergarten to be closed down and jeopardize Ann's livelihood.

Dana deployed an additional strategy to achieve her goals, unannounced visits, in order to test the implementation of the program. She also promised Ann that if she advances with the program she will get a donation from MESILA for the development of the kindergarten, a promise which came true after six months.

I used to conduct unannounced visits at the kindergarten [...]. I explained that a kindergarten participating in the program and advancing in the process receives a donation. In light of the advancement, about seven months later we received \$6,500 from MESILA towards purchasing equipment. I consulted with Ann as to what equipment we would purchase, what colors we would like. I demonstrated where we would place the furniture. I purchased quality equipment and Ann learned to use it. She learned to collect objects and toys and to put them in place. This was pleasantly carried out with the children. It was a wonderful step.

Now the dark colors of the kindergarten stood out. We chose bright colors, and volunteers painted the kindergarten, I asked my husband to illustrate the walls. Ann was deeply moved by the gesture. Seven months passed and the kindergarten looked clean, pretty and cozy.

Ann was delighted by the success and Dana who was at first apprehensive about her family's reaction now included them and even recruited her husband to illustrate the kindergarten walls. Another change accompanied Dana's personal coaching style. At first Dana explained and advised, when she was unable to achieve her goals she turned to demonstration as if replacing Ann at her role of Educator.

She even did not hesitate to resort to threats. With time, the interaction evolved toward shared decision process. However, Dana's expectations and demands increased. She carried out two more "Dramatic" moves, parents-teacher meeting and a helper for Ann.

We planned the parents meeting to include them in what was going on in the kindergarten and to recruit them to help Ann carry out the new arrangements, (such as: morning arrival time, end of the day, meals etc'). Ann told the parents about changes in the schedule, hygiene practices, she proudly presented the new kindergarten. A MESILA social worker joined the meeting, our presence improved Ann's prestige. The social worker and I, with Ann's consent made an offer to the parents that for an extra fee she would cook fresh food for the children every day. This gathering was not a recognized action in the community's kindergartens.

As Ann progressed my expectations of her grew. I pressed her to add a staff member. After a long search we agreed on Mody, a man from Ghana, who was literate and had experience working with children [...]. The agreement between Ann and Mody included room and board in the kindergarten. To maintain Ann's position I suggested that I will instruct her and she in turn would instruct Mody but she refused.

Ann could not implement some of Dana's escalating demands. For example, the demand for fixed hours for drop off and pick up was one the parents could not uphold. They worked long hours (nursing, restaurants, etc') (also see Amir-Kasif, 2013). Another difficulty was the demand for hired help, which meant that Ann had to share her income. As a result, tensions grew. Dana's insistence caused Ann to agree and choose Mody as her helper.

In the beginning I did not want to harass Mody with a lot of instructions, considering the fact that he was an African man and I a white woman meant I had to preserve his dignity. So I watched him and his work. Mody walked around like a teacher in Africa, with a stick under his arm, which I perceived as violence. Most of the day he read the two to four year old children stories from the New Testament, and taught them arithmetic with large numbers. He pointed at the exercise with his stick, read out loud and the children were required to repeat after him. In the same manner he taught them English. The contrast between the way Mody functioned and the place Ann reached was prominent. She learned to listen and relate to them, that it was important to keep them active, to provide them with colors, sheets, materials to work with, to sing with them. Mody's manner of operation angered me. The children were unable to understand what was expected of them. I feared for Ann's position because he was a man and a teacher and the parents regarded him as a central figure. I taught Mody the content I taught Ann earlier, how to organize the schedule, to divide the day into activities and to adjust them to age. Ann insisted Mody learn from me. Gradually he understood that I would not harm his position as teacher. Mody was a relatively easy trainee, was ready to change his work patterns and the process moved forward.

In the beginning of the process and as a basis for working with Ann, Dana stressed the importance of gaining her trust; the same was true for Mody. She chose however to conceal her status and authority, according to her to maintain his dignity in line with his cultural patterns. The difference in her attitude towards the two is interesting. Dana saw Mody as a significant work force, and attributes a large part of the process' success to him. The enthusiasm was short lived, a few months later Mody passed away suddenly in his sleep and the process reverted:

One morning I was notified that Mody passed away. Ann was very sad but immersed in her work with the children. Mody's death marked the beginning of difficult times since there is a common belief in the community that when someone dies in the house it is a sign of bad luck. As a result, many parents took their children out of the kindergarten. Gradually the children returned and Ann looked for a staff member to work with her. The ones she chose did not seem right for the job to me and tensions rose again.

Disaster Continues

Events and developments continue to deteriorate at Ann's kindergarten

Ten months after I began working with Ann, I was watching the news on TV and saw that an eight year old girl was run over and killed in south Tel Aviv. I realized that the girl belonged to Ann's kindergarten. In the morning the girl attended a special education institution and in the afternoon and during vacations she was integrated at Ann's kindergarten. I also recognized Ann, who was laying on the road, yelling and screaming. The next day I came to the kindergarten. Ann was arrested and it was very quiet. One of the children whispered to me: "you know, the police took madam and the girls she was run over by a car". Another girl silenced him saying: "you were told not to speak about it". This is how the conversation ended. I felt uncomfortable with the silencing. I let the children draw and hoped this would alleviate the trauma. I gave Ann's substitute working directions.

On the way home the thought hit me that maybe I was to blame for everything that happened. My demand to remove the bucket of urine from the kindergarten and for the children to use the toilet down the hall was the cause for it all. If I did not insist, if at least I made sure that the kindergarten door was locked and the children could not go out by themselves maybe the girl would not have been killed. I worried about Ann. Would she be released? Would she be deported? I worried for the children. MESILA demanded that I stop the instruction. What was to be? The uncertainty was devastating. After a week I decided on my own that I would go back. Ann was under house arrest and was locked in her room, she was forbidden to contact anyone including the children who were being watched by another caretaker. The children were knocking on the locked door of Ann's room, calling to her, crying, they were asking for her. I calmed them down, instructed the caretaker how to keep them occupied. Parents were taking their children out of the kindergarten again, only ten remained. In the community people believed that a voodoo spell was cast upon Ann.

Dana's confidence in her mode of action with Ann is shaken for the first time. Did she demand more than Ann was able to implement and as a result contribute to the disaster unintentionally? She feels that she cannot leave Ann alone given the circumstances and the demands at MESILA to end her activity at Ann's immediately. She understands that Ann will run the kindergarten with or without guidance. Therefore, driven by a sense of responsibility and possibly scruples, she continues the instruction in hope that it will stabilize the situation and even bring progress to the kindergarten. At this stage Dana was less demanding and set goals she believed Ann could put into practice. Things however went differently than expected

I felt compassion towards Ann, I was more forgiving, I tried to help her get the routine back to the kindergarten, and our bond was strengthened. At the time Ann suffered from depression and was treated with anti depressants which caused her fatigue and lack of motivation. She was concerned about her financial future and was disappointed with the number of children who remained in the kindergarten. A short time after, a child aged about 4.5 went out to the toilet unattended, climbed through the window and fell from the third floor. It was decided at MESILA that Ann had to close the kindergarten because she was irresponsible. This decision was made without consulting me and was very difficult for me. Over the phone Ann said to me: MESILA told me to close the kindergarten, "I have no food in the house, I am closing the door and waiting to die". She was desperate; I spoke to her over the phone daily, and supported her. A small group of parents told her they were willing to wait until she opened up a new kindergarten.

The incident involving the fall out the window was another malfunction resulting from Dana's demand that the children use the toilet down the hall. Ann who worked alone did not insist on the door being locked and could not watch the children going out to use the toilet. Her emotional and financial state deteriorated, she became depressed, a phenomenon well recognized in refugee women (Kaplan, 1998; Manderson et al., 1998).

Hope

The existential need is stronger than any warrant. Despite MESILA's lack of support, children leaving the kindergarten, her instable mental state and lack of statutory status in the state of Israel, Ann reopened the kindergarten. Dana portrays:

From the depths of her depression Ann knew she had to make a living. After two weeks she decided to reopen the kindergarten.

She looked for a different location and by doing so hoped to lift the curse she attributed to the building. She rented a small apartment and dragged the equipment from the old building to the new location during the night.

Ann notified MESILA officials she opened a new kindergarten. Her step was regarded by them as a brave one and I got back to educating her. She looked after the equipment, kept up the kindergarten, kept a daily routine, and the children's hygiene. She executed what she learned, the children were active and there was a calm and pleasant atmosphere, a feeling of rejuvenation.

Ann, true to her beliefs and culture, does not attribute the voodoo curse to herself but rather to the building in which the calamities took place. She therefore chose an alternative site to open the kindergarten in and to remove the curse. Contacting MESILA turned out to be the smart move, Dana returned to instructing her, which in turn strengthened her standing within the community and the parents brought their children back to her kindergarten.

The dream is Shattered

Ann performed well in the kindergarten, until one day the landlord threw Ann, the children and the equipment out the building and replaced the lock claiming that Ann did not pay rent. Ann went back to Ghana and our relationship was discontinued. This ending caused me pain, disappointment and frustration. Three times Ann managed to lift herself up from blows so harsh that I felt they were hitting me as well. I continued to support and stand by her. I thought that we could always keep going but this time I lost her. I went to work in a different kindergarten but lost energy, I became suspicious and saw things in a less romantic way, I was more critical. I understood that it did not depend only on a meeting between two women, instruction meetings, not only on what I wanted to teach and how much Ann wanted to be guided. It was about these kindergartens operating in an unpredictable environment, this left me scarred.

Discussion

The current study focuses on the experience of Dana, a teacher educator from MESILA, to improve the working patterns and sanitation conditions in a "pirate" kindergarten, serving immigrant children from Ghana. The kindergarten was run by Ann, residing in Israel without a work permit or visa. The gap between the desire to bestow western values and standards acceptable in Israeli kindergartens, and the difficult state of the kindergarten operating as a "babysitter", exposed the dilemmas and challenges of trying to confer local educational patterns to a culturally diverse population. These dilemmas are apparent in the partial success and the complications this process underwent.

Dana worked with Ann for approximately 18 months. During this time the knowledge she accumulated on Ann's culture and the magnitude of changes required of her and refugee and immigrant African women was minute. She was also not aware of the reality the absorbing environment "forced" upon the refugee women. These women shifted from a passive and periphery role in their society, to a reality where they have to take the initiative, show independence and make autonomous decisions (Sabar, 2008), a demand which is unfamiliar and difficult for them.

In western society change and transformation are characteristic of the era; some may even argue that change is a simple and reasonable means of problem solving, improving ideas and ways of action, a man's or society's way of life (Watzlawick, Weakland, & Fisch, 1974). Change, however, demands a multi-disciplinary transformation of thought patterns as well as the individual's way of conducting himself; this requires education. The agent of change must examine the ability of the individual, or the group to adjust to the change and to pay attention to the fact. Focus on educational systems as a target for change, to create a set of values, norms and skills in line with their educational and social needs is also needed (Fullan, 2001; Karnieli, 2000). However, action aiming at change in a population which differs culturally, nationally and religiously, one that was not educated in modern society, living in hiding, on the outskirts, hunted and making a scant living is necessarily complex. This current work demonstrates that even if the preliminary results were encouraging, like improved hygiene, nutrition, acquiring equipment, adjusting the structure to the kindergarten, an active schedule, the final outcome is not certain.

Two examples underscore the cultural differences between Ann and Dana. First, Ann attitude toward the children arriving in the morning. In Ann's traditional society childhood is considered as a necessary period between birth to adulthood and rather than a critical time for growth and development in which the child educational needs should be taken care of (Caldwell, 2005).

Thus, behavior that differs from adult behavior is perceived characteristic to "spoiled child". In Ann's perspective such behavior might delay child's readiness to adulthood duties. These conception discrepancies created tension between Ann and Dana.

Second, Dana preferred male teacher to join the kindergarten while concomitantly disapproved Ann's request for female assistance. While Dana promoted hiring Mody, African male with formal teaching experience, in order to improve the kindergarten children education, Ann perceived it as an act mitigating her managerial status and as if reminding her of the traditional woman's role in her home culture (compare: (Tanye, 2008). Thus, she preferred working with the babies and letting Mody teach the grownup children. This resulted in a further reduction in Ann's status among the parents.

In Ann's case the agent of change acted in line with western, modern educational principles. These principals differ from Ann's traditional world that does not encourage change. In this reality, in our view one should note evaluate Ann's activity according to modern society standards, no respect initiatives and personal autonomy or rapid adaptation to modern educational criteria.

These gaps emphasize the lack of tools, skills, knowledge and above all the much needed comprehension in such a process, which will assist the kindergarten teacher in her conduct. In a situation where a gap exists between the knowledge and abilities of the teacher and the agent of change's demands, resistance may occur, associated with depression and regression in the process that might eventually lead to concession and escape (Kaplan, 1998; Manderson et al., 1998; McMichael & Ahmed, 2003; Silveira & Allebeck, 2001).

Whether this case study is representative of other "pirate" kindergarten is yet unclear. Only about twelve kindergartens received aid from Dana or her peers, in which some four hundred and fifty children were located. However, one can find similar depiction in other studies (Amir-Kasif, 2013).

Further, from an ethical-moral stand point, one may wonder whether attempting to significantly modify an educational system which is foreign to us, is justified. This case study demonstrates that worthy intentions, without proper preparation and educational perspective alien to the patterns familiar to the target population (the teacher and parents in our case) has the potential induce negative impact. While this study supports proper professional training prior to similar intervention, the exact module is yet unclear.

The reality met by work immigrants in Israel does not equal their expectations. Parents of babies and toddlers find they cannot send their children to proper Israeli education organizations. Under these circumstances they create their own educational systems that facilitate their employment options. Any intervention, as well intended as it may be, may interfere with this delicate balance between these survival needs.

Ann was illiterate that did not attend any formal educational system in Ghana but worked in agriculture and housekeeping. The move to Israel required changes in her behavior patterns, independent decision making and initiatives. Although she functioned in the new society, the cultural and gender barriers were not removed (Clayton, 2005; Sabar, 2008). She gave Dana respect as is customary in her culture, seeing her as a figure of authority (Sabar, 2008), while fearing that she would be reported to the authorities and exported back to Ghana. She made efforts to please and follow Dana instructions.

While she did not argue with Dana, her demeanor expressed opposition: a smile, silence, procrastination and evasion, corresponding to the definition of Passive-aggressive behavior (Wetzler, 1992), a behavior which serves as a defense mechanism of which the individual is usually unaware. Dana, assignment oriented, aspired to turn "Ann's kindergarten" to a model kindergarten and did not stop to examine Ann's feelings and desires, and what her reasons for opposition were. She did not take into account that in order to create a significant change she must take time to learn about Ann, her culture, views, needs, goals and capabilities in the conditions she operated in and accordingly out of cultural sensitivity to construct in common a feasible plan (Banks, 2008). Dana, as described did not take the time to thoroughly examine the clues and signs Ann transmitted. In addition she did not get instructions from her dispatchers, who were probably not aware themselves of the significance of the cultural gaps and the implications which may arise as a result.

She did in fact, feel that "something was not right", as a result of the accidents. Scruples engulfed her but without proper support, guidance and escort she found it hard to interpret the situation.

The process described in this study is paved with good intentions. Ophir (Ophir, 2005) claims that "Moral" begins where indifference to the other's suffering ends. Dana was present and was appalled by the poor conditions in which the children were kept and Ann operated. She felt guided by her conscience to lead Ann and the children to a safer and more appropriate place. In the current case Dana's morals and principles of action did not meet Ann's, they both wanted what's best for the children but the suitable way was not found. Dana's massive and demanding drive towards improvement, together with the immediate need to present achievements to her employers, were an obstacle rather than support to the intervention's success. These issues are similar to the dilemmas reported in studies in multi-cultural education interventions like those when white women, of non-Muslim dominant culture, intervened in Muslim schools (Haw, 1996; Karnieli, 2000).

These findings lead to the conclusion that Ann and Dana interaction was not "joined hands" project and failed to achieve partnership in spite of the primary intentions. This conclusion shades some doubt about the validity of the data collected by the mentors, such as Dana and her superiors. Similar debates occur when educational interventions are conducted in systems that significantly differ in their culture from the dominant culture. This is in concordance with previous outlined limitations in multi-cultural education as previously described (Troyna & Carrington, 1993).

The proceedings and success of such interventions should be measured by all parties and arise from understanding, learning and mutual acceptance of all participants. The road to achieving success is bound in dialog, negotiation free of constraint, threat and manipulation, along with a mutual search for ways tailored to the side requiring change. It is important in the process to contrast the perceptions the agents of change arrive with and the reality the subjects of change reflect, to enable replication, which will create an opening for educators to overcome conceptual entrapments and improve their work (Schön, 1992).

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