THE USE OF MULTIMEDIA CASES TO DEVELOP TEACHER LEADERSHIP SKILLS:

A TEACHER TRAINING PROGRAM COMBINING MULTIMEDIA AND THE CASE

METHOD FOR RIO DE JANEIRO'S PUBLIC EDUCATION SYSTEM

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Abstract

Society expects students to become the self-learning, able, and motivated leaders of the 21st Century. But it often neglects teachers the opportunities and tools to develop their own leadership skills. Applying principles from executive education to teacher training, this project proposes the use of multimedia and the Case Method to promote teacher leadership skills in Rio de Janeiro's municipal public education system. Discussions on teacher leadership, the Case Method application in teacher training, and the expertise of Rio de Janeiro's public municipal multimedia company (MultiRio) support the conceptual framework of a multimedia teacher training program on teacher leadership skills, to be pilot-tested by MultiRio with teachers from Public Schools in Rio de Janeiro. The project includes the theoretical-methodological discussions, a proposed conceptual framework, and a proposed course structure with a description of its multimedia platform and component elements.

KEY-WORDS:

Teacher leadership; teacher training; Case Method; multimedia; public education; Rio de Janeiro; MultiRio

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Knowing the right thing to do is the central problem of school improvement. Holding schools accountable for their performance depends on having people in schools with the knowledge, skill, and judgement to make the improvements that will increase student performance.

Richard Elmore[1]

If, on the other hand, one is to adopt a method which fosters dialogue and reciprocity, one must first be ideologically committed to equality, to the abolition of privilege, and to non-elitists forms of leadership

Paulo Freire[2]

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[1]   Elmore, R. (2003). Knowing the right thing to do: School improvement and performance-based accountability. Washington, DC: NGA Center for Best Practices

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1.   Introduction

Considered a primary mechanism to increase human capital, education is a crucial factor for progress and development. Research by UNESCO shows a clear link between learning and economic growth. A well-educated workforce leads to state prosperity, productivity gains, increased competitiveness, greater innovation and welfare. A greater number of skilled, educated and productive citizens can increase the economic output for the private sector, but it also improves governance in the public sector.

That is why public education is often considered one of the most important inputs for a nation's social and economic outcome, especially because it contributes to growth not only by building up human capital, but also by instilling common norms that increase peace, stability and social cohesion.

However, disparities in education based on gender, race or socioeconomic status can pose a serious threat to sustained economic growth. And when educational disparities add up to other forms of inequality, societies can become violent, conflicted and unstable. Fortunately, well-targeted education expenditure can be effective for fighting inequality and poverty alleviation, turning schools and education systems into active promoters of development. (Byrd, 2012; Gradstein, 2000; Jung and Thorbecke, 2006; Unesco, 2005).

Improving efficiency and equity in education depends heavily on having competent, high quality teaching, as teachers are the most significant and costly resource in education and teacher quality is the most important variable influencing student achievement. (OECD, 2009)

The demands on schools and teachers are becoming more and more complex. Society needs schools and teachers who are capable of dealing with different languages, backgrounds, culture and gender issues, promoting tolerance, inclusion and social cohesion, applying new technologies and innovative approaches to teaching and student assessment, and that are effective and efficient in terms of government spending.

That is why concepts like leadership, innovation, motivation and engagement, once restricted to the realms of business and management contexts are now becoming key-concepts in education.

1.1 Project Objective:

Applying principles from executive education to teacher training, this project examines the possibilities of using multimedia cases and the Case Method in teacher training, to foster the development of teacher leadership skills by public schools' teachers, working in the city of Rio de Janeiro, Brazil.

1.2 Document structure

This project begins with a review of literature on teacher leadership concepts, models and frameworks, and on the use of the Case Method in teacher training. Then, conceptual reflections on media education and the use of multimedia materials in teacher training are illustrated by the case of MultiRio[3], a public multimedia company with over 20 years of expertise working with

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3   MultiRio (Municipal Multimedia Company) is a public company created by the Municipal Department of Education of Rio de Janeiro, in 1993, and its mission is to develop educational multimedia products for teachers and students in the more than 1,400 public schools in the city.

teachers and students in Rio de Janeiro municipal public school system. This discussion supports the proposal of a conceptual framework and structural design for a teacher training program, to be pilot-tested in Rio de Janeiro's municipal public school system. The proposed framework includes theoretical and methodological notes and a proposed course structure and a description of the component elements of the multimedia platform that will support the program.

2. Teacher Leadership and Education

In every city, in every district, in every school, there are teachers who look beyond the limits of their own classrooms; teachers who recognize schools as complex systems of interactions, who experience a kind of professional restlessness (that some call the "leadership itch"). Be it in a formal or informal roles, these teachers usually find a way to exercise some form of leadership.

The most common form of teacher leader is related to formal roles, such as principals, head of departments, program managers, district technicians or union officials. But this form of leadership depends on administrative, curricular or political elements. The kind of teacher leadership that most authors are interested in differs from these forms of institutional leadership in education because it refers to those teachers who, while still teaching, have the drive and the desire to "do more". In many ways, they believe that the administrative form of leadership is not enough; thus the need for a new form of teacher leadership, which can originate from any voluntary, informal, and spontaneous initiative to enhances student learning.

Teacher leadership can be spontaneously exercised by any teacher as a response to a need or an opportunity. No one appoints a teacher leader to their role. Teacher leadership is something that emerges organically. And, although administrators have an important role in supporting this kind of leadership, the initiative usually comes from the teachers themselves.

Nevertheless, the construct of teacher leadership is still not conceptually (or operationally) well defined. Few authors venture into what could be considered a definition of teacher leadership. Still, since the education reform efforts of the 1980's, the concept of teacher leadership is gaining momentum. And gradually, teachers are assuming more diverse leadership roles in the instructional or organizational levels on schools and school systems.

Today, more than ever, a number of factors underline the importance of teacher leadership in schools. It is almost consensus that, in order to educate students for success in this ever changing world, the educational systems and the teaching profession must transform drastically. According to this new vision, teachers should abandon their previous, secure status as receptacles and transmitters of knowledge, and must become facilitators of learning, empowering students to learn and perform.

And the concept of teacher leadership resonates with contemporary visions of a new paradigm in the teaching profession, of a radical shift in the culture of schools. In fact, if we want students to become the self-learned, self-motivated and able leaders of tomorrow, we need to support teachers in developing their own leadership skills. Or, in other words, "teachers need to experience and model what we want students to be able to do". (TLC, 2011)

In this new and challenging environment, teachers need to exert another form of action, assuming the role of advisors, coordinators, establishing goals and objectives, proposing challenges and projects, offering guidance and support, promoting debates and exchange of ideas, fostering collaboration and collective efforts in order to build knowledge. Instead of the former passive, narrative discourse, teacher must adopt and promote active dialogue. Students are no longer passive receptacles, but "co-creators" of knowledge. This is no small step (actually, it's more like a "giant leap") for many 21st Century education systems that, in many ways, seem to be still living in the 19th century.

2.1 Defining Teacher Leadership

Although it is not new, the concept of teacher leadership builds upon the idea that the world needs "new organizational structures and roles in schools in order to successfully meet the needs of 21st Century learners". As new challenges and demands are put before schools and educational

systems, teacher leadership is becoming more and more essential for serving the needs of students, schools and the teaching profession. (TLC, 2010)

The term teacher leadership refers to a set of skills demonstrated by teachers who continue to teach students but also have an influence that extends beyond their own classrooms. In some ways, it is a process by which teachers can influence their colleagues, principals and other members of the school community, improving teaching practices to increase student achievement.

2.2 Teacher Leadership Skills Framework

The concept of teacher leadership is undergoing intense scrutiny. Several books on the subject have been published, in addition to countless articles. An increasing number of institutions of higher education are offering degree programs in teacher leadership. A growing number of education systems around the world include teacher leader stances in their professional structures.

But many questions arise: Does one have to be a great teacher in order to be a teacher leader? Is every teacher a teacher leader? Can every teacher be a teacher leader? What kinds of knowledge and skills must a teacher learn or develop in order to serve effectively as a teacher leader? How should teacher leaders be selected? How to best support teachers in leadership roles?

A well-designed teacher leadership skills framework can be used to guide the preparation of experienced teachers to assume a wide variety of leadership roles as resource providers, instructional specialists, curriculum specialists, classroom supporters, learning facilitators, mentors, school team leaders, and data coaches.

The proposed framework is inspired by 3 different sources in 2 different initiatives. But other models could be included, since there are similar frameworks being used in leadership education, leadership development and teacher education. However, as a work in progress, this initial framework serves as a preliminary mapping of the territory, which must then be explored

and populated, as the project develops, and this model receives inputs from MultiRio, external contributing specialists, Rio de Janeiro municipal department of education officials and from the staff at Paulo Freire municipal public teacher training school. Each one of these stakeholders is expected to contribute to the final curriculum of the program, in order to devise a collectively engineered project that meets the needs and expectations of the most interested parties: the municipal public school teachers of Rio de Janeiro.

The first influence is the "Teacher Leader Model Standards" proposed by the Teacher Leadership Exploratory Consortium, a multi-organizational initiative made up of a variety of education stakeholders, including union representatives, teachers, school administrators, policy organizations, and leaders in higher education. These standards were created in 2011 to codify, promote, and foster teacher leadership, helping schools to meet the needs of 21st-century learners.

Rather than a comprehensive checklist for aspiring teacher leaders, the Standards describe seven areas in which teachers can exert their leadership.

- *Domain I: Fostering a Collaborative Culture to Support Educator Development and Student Learning*
- *Domain II: Accessing and Using Research to Improve Practice and Student Learning*
- *Domain III: Promoting Professional Learning for Continuous Improvement*
- *Domain IV: Facilitating Improvements in Instruction and Student Learning*
- *Domain V: Promoting the Use of Assessments and Data for School and District Improvement*
- *Domain VI: Improving Outreach and Collaboration with Families and Community*
- *Domain VII: Advocating for Student Learning and the Profession*

Each domain develops into a list of functions that an expert teacher leader in that domain might perform and that are not described herein[4].

Another important source for this project comes from the P21 – Partnership for 21st Century Learning. P21 is a nonprofit USA based organization that advocates for knowledge and skills for success in a globally and digitally interconnected world[5]. The P21 Framework is divided into 4 dimensions:

1. *Content Knowledge and 21st century themes: that propose a different organization for disciplines and transversal subjects*
2. *Learning and Innovation Skills: which is developed into the 4C's framework (as explained below)*
3. *Information, Media and Technology Skills: media literacy and ICT readiness*
4. *Life and Career Skills: which comprehend what is often referred to as "non-cognitive skills" or "education for values", but also "emotional intelligence skills"*

From the P21 framework, one important development must be highlighted, because it is being constantly referred to in the education field. This is a development of the "Learning and Innovation Skills" dimension, which is treated as a framework on its own, known as the 4C's of 21st century learning. This model is composed by four skills, attitudes, practices that must be encouraged and nurtured in the 21st century: Critical Thinking, Collaboration, Communication and Creativity. As the diagram illustrates, they are interconnected and interact with each other, allowing interesting exercises and reflections

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4   The complete Standards are available at: http://www.teacherleaderstandards.org/standards_overview

5   P21 official website: http://www.p21.org/index.php

(e.g.: What should be called the intersection between critical thinking and communication?).
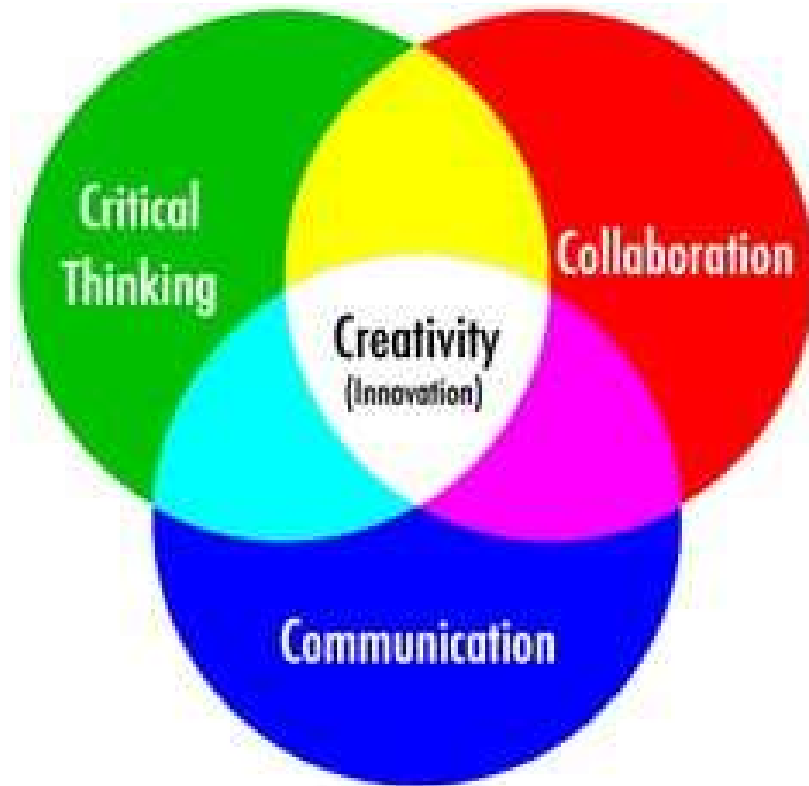
3. The Case Method

The Case Method was introduced at Harvard Law School in the 1870's. Under the guidance of Dean Christopher Columbus Langdell, the law faculty decided to emphasize the analysis and discussion of individual cases by students, as a way of preparing them for their professional life. Spreading to other law schools, the case-based methodology was rapidly adopted by other fields of study, such as business or medicine. (Merseth, 1993, 1996).

The School of Journalism at Columbia University defines the Case Method of instruction as "an interactive, discussion-based approach to learning"[6]. Differing from lectures, seminars, problem sets and other modes of teaching, a typical case is a narrative piece that tells a compelling story, stopping mid-action, at a problematic stance, asking students to put themselves into the shoes of a decision maker facing a tough call. It usually involves a situation where there is no right or wrong answer.

Widely adopted in many fields of instruction and professional training, the Case Method uses cases as either a part of or the central focus of the course curriculum. It is by definition a student-centric teaching methodology, based on inductive reasoning, with a learning approach that follows the line from the specific to the generic, going from practice to theory. It completely inverts the usual theory-centered method of instruction, in which students are presented with a general theoretical exposition, onto which they have to exert their deductive reasoning, in order to apply the theory into real-life practical situations. In a typical application of the Case Method, students read the case carefully in preparation for a faculty-guided, small group or whole classroom discussion, focused on real-life experiences in their professional field.

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6   https://casestudies.ccnmtl.columbia.edu/page/about/

This should not be confused with "case-studies". The Case Method is a pedagogic strategy, and not a research method. In this sense, cases are descriptive research documents based on real-life situations or events. A case should present a balanced, multidimensional account of the context, the participants, and the reality of the situation. Its main objective is to promote discussion and it must include sufficient detail and information to elicit an active analysis and interpretation by readers. (Menezes, 2009)

As a general rule, a case must have three essential elements: It is real, it relies on careful research and study, and it provides data for consideration and discussion. Taking responsibility for the case-prompted decisions helps students to develop leadership, management, and critical thinking skills. Students also practice their ability to negotiate, to listen, to persuade, and to speak in public.

Usually, students read the case before coming to class, taking notes and preparing to answer general or specific questions about it. The instructor starts each class with problem-posing questions or comments about the case, to prompt students into responding, igniting the discussion. Some students may be randomly asked to contribute their opinions, which works as an incentive for students to actually study the case, for they might be invited to comment.

It is important to reemphasize that cases do not present a right or wrong answer. They must act as catalysts for group discussions on feasible alternatives that could generate better results, according to the context and the data provided in the case. Case-based instruction fosters active learning, transforming student into active parts in the learning process, while instructors act as advisors or facilitators.

In a case-based learning environment, each student is also an instructor, because the Case Method fosters a change in the student attitude towards pro-activity, taking advantage of each

student's theoretical and empirical experience. Students are urged to research new data, contribute with different perspectives, including inputs and data from other sources and fields of knowledge.

The Case Method is different from most traditional ways of teaching because students do not receive facts and theories in a passive manner, but actually practice their leadership skills in group projects, collaborating to solve the challenges proposed by the case. A case-based instruction environment allows students to develop their abilities to analyze, summarize, conciliate different points of view, define and prioritize goals and, after that, try to persuade and inspire others towards their proposed solutions. (Izuka, 2008)

Usually, any case-method application comprises the following distinct moments:

- *The instructor selects the case and gets ready to discuss it*
- *Students receive the case and read it before class, preparing their questions*
- *Students work in small groups, discussing their ideas*
- *The instructor asks questions about the case, facilitating the discussion*
- *Relevant issues and solutions are discussed*
- *The instructor closes the case, with conclusions from to the students' arguments*

3.1 Case Method in teacher training

While Case Method teaching has long been associated with business and medical schools, in the past few years there has been increased interest in teaching with cases in secondary schools, colleges, and professional schools. In teacher education contexts, a few programs have experimented with the use of cases in the 1920s and 1930s. However, it was not until the late 1980s, when Shulman urged teacher educators to use cases for effective teacher education, that Case Methods gained enormous traction in the field. Shulman envisioned the Case Method as a strategy to overcome some of the most serious deficiencies in teacher education. Because of their narrative, contextual, local and situated nature, a case has the power to integrate that which is usually kept apart in teacher education programs. (Wasserman, 1994; Merseth, 1996).

According to Merseth (1996), cases and Case Methods offer promising possibilities for teacher education programs to explore new methods, content and pedagogies in teacher training. After a comprehensive review of the literature on the subject, Levin (1995) discussed some of the benefits of using the Case Method in teacher education. In her view, the Case Method is useful for promoting critical reflection, better understanding of theory, and for producing teachers who will be problem solvers and critical thinkers. In this sense, cases can be used as a pedagogical tool for both preservice teacher education and on-the-job professional development.

For Merseth and Lacey (1993), well-written cases and effective case-based instruction can offer realistic representations of complex problem-solving situations, inspiring discussions and research in teacher education programs, which are consistent with (and representative of) the practical dilemmas faced by novice or experienced teachers. Real-life cases also have the capacity to represent the practice of teaching in multiple ways, magnifying the complexity of specific teaching situations, reinforcing the understanding of the teaching profession as a complex, multidimensional and compelling field of work.

Relevant literature identifies at least four aspects of cases that influence how teachers think. These aspects include the ability of cases to develop problem-solving and decision-making skills, the ability of cases to increase awareness of multiple perspectives and of other educational settings, the ability of cases to enhance beliefs about personal authority and efficacy, and the ability of cases to develop habits of reflection.

Cases and case discussion can also create an environment where students of teaching have an opportunity not only to see alternative conceptions of teaching but also to build their own understandings, as they interact with the case and their colleagues in meaningful and constructive

discussions. The Case Method also enables teacher-students to learn about both the practical and the theoretical aspects of teaching.

Research by Levin (1995) shows that the opportunity to read, write, and discuss a case affects the individual's thinking about the case. In her findings, discussions acted as catalysts for reflection and metacognition for very experienced teachers. While for the less experienced teachers and the student-teachers, case discussions allowed them to clarify and/or elaborate their thinking about particular issues in their future practice. In both cases, the social interaction during the discussion of a case seem to inspire changes in the way those teachers who participated in the discussion think about those issues. In practical terms: Case Method in teacher education can promote better precept and practice; problem solving and decision making and also knowledge and understanding of complex situations.

Shulman (1992) also argues that the use of Case Methods in teacher education can: increase motivation for learning, benefit practitioners who participate in the process of creating cases, provide antidotes to overgeneralizing theories, provide instructional materials for communities, link the realities of current practice with the ideals of teacher education reforms.

3.2 Multimedia cases in teacher training

In a case-based program, case documents usually comprise several pages of text, descriptive data, charts, tables and props. Also, most of the times, the case information is incomplete, or out-of-date. Most often, due to the sheer volume of information, students may feel less stimulated to read all the materials attentively and, in doing so, they might ignore important or essential information to the competent understanding and management of the issues presented. (Beraldo, 2004)

The use of multimedia can substantially improve the quality of the simulations provided by the Case Method. Technology-enhanced cases bring the reality of teaching practices into classrooms in the form of text, image, audio, and video, often within web-based learning environments. Applying other forms of media and supports to the description of a case (such as videos, podcasts, e-books, animation, interactive simulations and learning objects) can actually add new layers of information, promoting new forms of understanding and interaction with the content, amplifying the impact and effectiveness of the case description, helping to bridge the gap between the world and the classroom and bringing reality closer to the students.

According to Bencze et al (2007) studies suggest that multimedia cases have many benefits in teacher education contexts. They can effectively create links between the different perspectives and practices held by teacher educators and those held by student-teachers. Multimedia Case Methods, because of their increased flexibility, capacity and portability, are particularly attractive to teacher educators, because they can provide a 'window' through which the student-teacher can view the 'real world' of teaching and learning in schools.

Teacher educators have increasingly advocated for the use of Case Methods within teacher education programs, since this particular instructional approach enhances the learning of pre-service teachers who lack teaching experience by providing them with examples of authentic teaching practices. In particular, using cases in teacher education has received increased attention due to its effectiveness in conveying student-centered instructional strategies to students, as well as supplementing a potential lack of field experience.

However, Bencze (2007) highlights the limits to the effectiveness of multimedia Case Methods. As any form of narrative representation, multimedia cases can never fully reproduce the realities of teaching and learning. In essence, Case Methods reify – to varying degrees – reality.

Although they usually contain important contextual variables, they can misleadingly present an illusion of fully representing reality. So, in order to improve the efficacy of multimedia Case Methods, student-teachers interacting with them must experience the perspectives and practices depicted in them and, in so doing, develop their own representations (reifications) of such experiences. That is why the experience with case-methods (including multimedia cases) must never neglect the importance of peer-to-peer interaction, group discussions and collective exchange of experiences and information. Much as the case itself, reflection and discussion are vital elements of any Case Method application.

4. The Case of MultiRio

MultiRio – Rio de Janeiro Municipal Multimedia Company, was created in 1993, as a public company subordinated to the Municipal Education Department of the city of Rio de Janeiro. The company was founded on the pillars of culture, citizenship and education, developing multimedia contents based on an educational project that has the school community as its priority. MultiRio media platform includes: Cable TV and open-air TV; Internet, Web TV and Web Radio, interactive games and apps; DVDs; flash drives; print media (newspapers, magazines, booklets and books) and satellite, for use in training courses. For more than two decades, MultiRio advanced the democratization of information and knowledge and the access to education and cultural goods, tackling cultural exclusion, integrating multiple generations and different strata of society[7].

After more than 20 years of uninterrupted production, MultiRio is the guardian of this rich and diverse archive, documenting over two decades in the evolution of the municipal public school system in Rio de Janeiro, as well as the changes in the city itself. There are literally tens of thousands of hours of video on every issue in education that was important or relevant for the city's public schools. It is a rich and powerful collection of documentaries, interviews, discussions with specialists and practitioners. But, most importantly, it is a record of the pedagogical experiences of countless teachers, students and schools. The real story of education in the city, as told by their protagonists.

For this project, this archive represents a possibility to establish reflections and dialogues across time and space, bringing to newly hired or more experienced teachers the possibility of accessing a relevant portion of the accumulated knowledge and experience of their peers and

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7   From MultiRio's official website: www.multirio.rj.gov.br

presenting the past achievements of teachers and schools as inspiration for debate, reflection and resignification of the practice and role of the public school and the public teachers in the city.

And this is arguably the greatest value this project can ever wish to create

5.   Teacher training program proposal

The goal of this project is to develop a framework of multimedia cases combining audiovisual, print and interactive materials and platforms to be tested and evaluated at the city's public teacher training school (Escola do Professor Carioca Paulo Freire), as a mean to develop leadership skills in new-coming teachers, approved on public tenders. This could be a powerful way to foster discussions and reflections on best practices addressing some of the most challenging and demanding issues of public, elementary school teaching.

This project represents an innovative approach to teacher training, bringing together multimedia technologies and interactive, discussion-based methodologies to help Rio de Janeiro's public school teachers in developing their leadership skills, something that is being increasingly demanded and dramatically in need of developing not only in Rio or Brazil, but around the world.

5.1 Conceptual Framework

The conceptual framework of this teacher training program is based on ideas by renowned education thinkers that are both familiar to the Brazilian and Rio de Janeiro educational systems (for their major contributions to the theoretical foundations of the country's and the city's curricular directives) and also because their proposals resonate with the fundaments of the Case Method and the particular view of leadership and teacher leadership espoused by this project.

Of course, this approach to education is not new. In some sense, one can find its roots in the works of John Dewey, in the early 20th Century, through his advocacy for students and teachers as partners in the democratic venture. A true democrat and humanist, Dewey actively argued in favor of an enlightened society, stemming from democratic and participative school environments.

Decades later, constructivists authors such as Jean Piaget or Lev Vygotsky proposed the social dimension of learning and the collective construction of knowledge. Their theories consider the role of the group and social interactions in the development of thinking in its cognitive, moral, and social domains. Their combined work offers evidence that social interactions among peers promote learning and development. A notion that leads us to the teachings of Paulo Freire, a world-wide celebrated Brazilian educator, and one of the founders of the critical pedagogy.

In "Pedagogy of the oppressed", Freire compares two antagonistic views on education. One, based on the idea of "transmission", considers the teacher as the sole retainer of knowledge. Applying unidirectional "narrative" processes and outdated communication models, teachers actively transmit knowledge and information to passive, receptive students. Freire calls this model "banking" education, because students accumulate knowledge as capital, in a process similar to storing coins in a "piggy bank".

The Freirean alternative to the "banking" education is education for liberation and critical consciousness. Based on problem-posing, reflection and dialogue, his educational philosophy is not directly connected to the study of leadership, although Kaak (2011) argues that the works of Paulo Freire can offer valuable lessons on leadership education and teacher leadership. In fact, Freire's ideas have the potential to produce the emergence of leaders (intentionally or as a by-product). His methods and proposals have the capacity to "awake" leaders, who become aware of urgent and pungent social issues, taking ownership of their action and questioning themselves about what could be done about such issues.

A Freirean-inspired leadership model is active, responsible and transformational. Based on the concept of *praxis,* which Freire defines as "reflection and action upon the world in order to transform it", his pedagogy is a call for action and responsibility, two ideas that are directly related

to leadership. And his vision of education empowers teachers and students as protagonists and partners in the construction of knowledge, for the collective transformation of society.

His philosophy of education seems pretty much in line with our technologically interconnected and economically globalized world of widely available and accessible information, where students come from the most diverse backgrounds, turning schools into a mixture and multitude of cultures, values, practices and beliefs. And his vision of (teacher) leadership is deeply connected to the concepts of autonomy, liberation, conscience and enlightened awareness about the social and political challenges of our time. Or, as Freire himself explains:

> *[W]hat I have been proposing from my political convictions, my philosophical convictions, is a profound respect for the total autonomy of the educator. What I have been proposing is a profound respect for the cultural identity of students - a cultural identity that implies respect for the language of the other, the color of the other, the gender of the other, the class of the other, the sexual orientation of the other, the intellectual capacity of the other; that implies the ability to stimulate the creativity of the other. But these things take place in a social and historical context and not in pure air. These things take place in history and I, Paulo Freire, am not the owner of history.* (apud Maclaren, 1999, p.49)

5.2 Course structure and curriculum

In student-centered models of instruction, students are expected to gradually take ownership of the learning process while teachers facilitate the process. Especially in case-based programs, instructors must prepare not only the content of the case but also the process of teaching

the case. And students are expected to assume greater responsibility for their learning. They must be active participants, not passive recipients, and they must construct their own knowledge through interaction and exchanging with their peers.

5.3 Course Methodology

The course will be structured around a customized and specifically created multimedia learning environment in which one medium actively complements and supports the other, in a truly collaborative cross-media content platform. The basic elements that constitute this platform are:

1) Video-cases: video documented accounts of real-life experiences in Rio de Janeiro's public schools, selected from MultiRio's 20+ years of multimedia assets and archives and/or especially produced and edited by MultiRio for the course. Comprising video-documentaries, interviews, news reports and comments by specialists, each video-case will present a varied and diverse panorama of the topic being addressed, in order to allow multiple interpretations and leave room for meaningful discussions and proposals.

2) hand-outs and complimentary texts: The texts will be available for download and will be provided as hand-outs during the face-to-face sessions. Their function is to add information and other insights to complement and amplify the interpretation of the video-cases. These might include graphs, charts, news articles, academic papers and other especially produced materials that can help students in addressing the challenges posed by the video-cases.

3) Web-based platform: Thought of as a "mother-ship", the web-based platform acts as both a repository for the course's materials and a channel for interaction and integration. Through the platform, students can watch the video-cases, download and read the supporting texts and materials, take part in forum discussions on each case and also interact with other students and group members as part of the activities designed for the course.

4) Group discussions and interactions: In order to encourage meaningful and constant exchange of ideas, the course will be organized around groups discussions on the video-cases. These small-group cohorts will have the main goal of letting students interact in a more focused way, fostering collaboration and interaction in a less-intimidating manner. Group discussions will take place during face-to-face sessions but also virtually, over the web-based platform, via specific forums. Students are encouraged to create other forms of group interaction, adding other channels of communication such as email, social networks, instant message apps, etc.

5) Face-to-face sessions: Organized as the culmination of each unit in the program, the face-to-face session is divided in three moments. The first one is a "welcome" moment where the instructor takes care of the course's "house-keeping", makes announcements, and establishes an open dialogue with the students about the road so far. It is also an opportunity for the whole class to watch the video-case, as a warm-up for the discussion. After watching the video-case, the class is divided into its small groups and each group discusses the case according to the questions, issues and challenges posed by the instructor and the materials. The final portion of the face-to-face session is a whole-class discussion where each group presents its insights and the instructor wraps-up the discussion with the necessary theoretical observations/clarifications.

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