

# **Pedagogy of the Oppressed**

## **Introduction**

The paper brings a critique of Freire's notions in regard to education, philosophy and politics. It explains how exploitation and oppression affects humanization. It also criticizes the "Banking model" of education, and recommends the dialogical approach which can transform individuals.

## **1. Background and Context**

Freire was born on September 19, 1921. He grew up in the Northeast of Brazil. Due to the world economic crisis Freire came to know hunger and poverty at a young age. His Social condition didn't allow him to have education. He lived among poor rural families and laborers; he gained a deep understanding of their lives and of the effects of socio-economic on education. Freire became a grammar teacher while still in high school. His intuition pushed him toward a dialogic education in which he strived to understand students' expectations.<sup>1</sup>

## **2. Problems of the Education System**

### **2.1. Banking Model of Education: Education as the Practice of Domination**

Pedagogy of the Oppressed is education as a practice of freedom, which contrasts with education as a practice of domination. Its goal is to adapt people to their oppressive conditions. Teacher attempts to control thinking and action of the students, who are treated as passive objects.<sup>2</sup> It removes students from their context and teaches reality as unchangeable. Freire criticizes traditional pedagogy because he opposes the aspect of memorization, which he believes turns learners into "containers" to be filled by the teacher.<sup>3</sup> It teaches students to adapt to an oppressive world, instead of teaching them how to view the world critically. Education should

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<sup>1</sup> Paulo Freire, *Education for Critical Consciousness* (New York: Continuum, 1993), 23-26.

<sup>2</sup> Shor, I., *Freire for the classroom: A sourcebook for liberatory teaching* (New Hampshire: Heinemann Educational Books, 1987), 89

<sup>3</sup> Friere, P., *Pedagogy of the Oppressed* (New York: Continuum, 1970), 59.

follow a better concept in which the teacher-student relationship transforms into a situation where all become students and teachers at the same time.<sup>4</sup>

Thus, the following points take place in the banking model of education:

- The teacher teaches and the students are taught
- The teacher knows everything and the students know nothing
- The teacher thinks and the student are thought about
- The teachers talk and the students listen meekly
- The teacher disciplines and the students are disciplined
- The teacher chooses and enforces his choice and the student comply
- The teacher acts and the students have the illusion of acting through the action of the teacher.
- The teacher chooses the program content, and the students adapt to it
- The teacher confuses the authority of knowledge with his her own professional authority, which he sets in opposition to the freedom of the students.
- The teacher is the subject and of the learning process, while the students are mere objects.

### **3. Freire's Approach of Education**

#### **3.1. Critical Pedagogy Model = Teacher equal (equality) Student**

Critical pedagogy is dialectical thought; meaning challenging given situations, asking questions and considering other possibilities that might enable positive changes to be made. Critical theory re-examines the basic assumptions that people make about the world, and especially about society and all its institutions, roles and structures.<sup>5</sup> It asks not only what is happening, but also why things are set up this way, and what the consequences of concepts, practices and experience might be. Applying critical theory to education involves re-examining basic concepts and asking questions.<sup>6</sup> Freire critical pedagogy on critical thinking is based on the objective realities in the individual's life. It requires exchange of thoughts and beliefs through dialogue in which both

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<sup>4</sup> Peter McLaren, "Paulo Freire and the Academy: a challenge from the U.S. Left." *Cultural Critique*. (Spring 1996), 151–184.

<sup>5</sup> J. Dewey, *Experience and Education* (New York: Collier Books, 1963), 92.

<sup>6</sup> J. L. Elias. *Conscientization and Deschooling: Freire's and Illich's Proposals for Reshaping Society* (Philadelphia, PA: Westminster Press, 1976), 58.

teachers and students have critical cooperation in research. As a result, they will be motivated to think critically about their life. The goal of critical pedagogy is emancipation from oppression through an awakening of the critical consciousness, a philosophy of education and social movement that has developed and applied concepts from critical theory and related traditions to the field of education and the study of culture.<sup>7</sup>

**3.2. Conscientization:** Critical awareness, (Social, political, economic, gender, race, class) that precedes action. Emphasis on student's experiences: student's background. Freire aims to cultivate Conscientization or critical awareness in the learners. It is the ability to critically perceive the causes of social, political, and economic oppression and to take action against the oppressive elements of the society.<sup>8</sup>

**3.3. Problem-Posing Education:** Teachers problematize, Students pose solutions, work together to implement change. Freire encourages students to adopt a curious, questioning, probing stance in exploring educational issues. His education demands a deep commitment to the goal of building a better social world, and necessitates active resistance against oppressive structures, ideas, and practices.<sup>9</sup>

**3.4. Dialogue:** Freire argued that Dialogicity and antialogicity served liberation and oppression respectively. Dialogicity has distinct features while antialogicity its features too. Transformational leadership must embrace Dialogicity because it represents cultural synthesis, union, collaboration and organization. On the contrary, antialogicity represents features such division, conquests, cultural invasion and manipulation.<sup>10</sup>

#### **Five stages of dialogue:**

- Participants describe what they see
- Teachers pose problems regarding codified representation
- Participants reflects upon their previous state of silence

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<sup>7</sup> Freire, Paulo, *Pedagogy of the Oppressed* (New York, NY: The Continuum International Publishing Group Inc. 2009). ISBN 978-0-8264-1276-8.

<sup>8</sup> P. Freire, *Education for Critical Consciousness* (New York: Continuum International Publishing Group, 2005), 78.

<sup>9</sup> Paulo Freire, *Pedagogy of the Oppressed* (1970, ED045793), 12.

<sup>10</sup> Ira Shor and Paulo Freire, *A Pedagogy for Liberation: Dialogues on Transforming education* (Massachusetts: Bergin and Garvey Publishers, Inc., 1987), 97-103.

- Participants go through increasing levels of critical awareness as they come to understand the ways that that political and economic circumstances shape their lives and thinking and
- The controlling influence of the oppressor is ejected from their minds<sup>11</sup>

#### **4. Freire's Philosophy:**

- Neither an idealist, nor a realist, or a mechanist
- Near to existentialists and Marxist who gives much emphasis on inequality, and injustice of the capital system in the society

#### **5. Freire's views on Education:**

- His thought of education was entirely influenced by Marxism, existentialism and his radical ideology
- Freire believed that the education system played a central role in maintaining oppression and thus it had to be reformed in order for things to change for the oppressed.
- According to Freire, “a humanizing education is the path through which men and women can become conscious about their presence in the world”<sup>12</sup>

### **Conclusion**

Critical pedagogy is to teach people to understand the political and economic forces that influence the structure of society in order to prepare them to work for social change. It used problem posing as a way to link education to lives of the students. The consequences of one's action and the causes of one's thinking are also important in critical pedagogy. Freire's view of traditional pedagogy as oppressive and the proposition of the learning concept based on “problem posing” are useful in transforming communities. His work, however, fails to discuss the significance of a teacher in his proposed concept. In addition, the author's work does not include the aspect gender, race and class and, therefore, open to criticism. The author discusses the issue of humanization and dehumanization; he asserts that oppressors thwart humanization

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<sup>12</sup> <https://newlearningonline.com/new-learning/chapter-2/supporting-material-2/paulo-freire-on-education-that-liberates> (Accessed on 14th December, 2020)

through the injustice, violence and exploitation that they perpetuate. Freire's pedagogy is worth recognizing because of its ability transform individuals into thinkers able to fight for their liberation.

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