



Paulo Freire: Democratic Frame Work in Socio- Educational Philosophy in Teacher Education for Developing Countries

KEYWORDS

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ABSTRACT Paulo Freire (1921 - 1997), the most influential thinker of education in the late twentieth century, particularly with informal educators with his emphasis on dialogue, his concern for the oppressed, and educational programs for adult education and literacy. According to Freire people are in two strata; the oppressor and the oppressed. The socio-educational frame works in present world are planned and executed by oppressors, but actually these have to be done by the oppressed. Banking in education is a metaphor used by him to comment on existing education that suggests students are considered empty bank accounts that should remain open to deposits made by the teacher. The knowledge is not a static entity and education is not a function of conveying 'facts'. Problems of poor society can be overcome by progressive education and practices, based on dialogue, dialogical cultural action and praxis. The process of education should be for 'conscientization' and critical thinking and reflection. Entire education should be democratic in all sects. Conquest, divide and rule, manipulation and cultural invasion are the four techniques or frame works by oppressors to oppress the people. The alternative frame works of the oppressed are co-operation, unity for liberation, organization and cultural synthesis. These alternative frame works must be the unswerving design of socio-educational philosophy of third world democracies, which can be achieved by true education only. Paulo Regulus Neves Friere, popularly known as Paulo Freire (1921 - 1997), the Brazilian philosopher and educationist, has left a significant mark on thinking about progressive practice in social life in developing countries, in acquisition of knowledge, learning and in education. Perhaps the most influential thinker of education in the late twentieth century; Paulo Freire has been particularly popular with informal educators with his emphasis on dialogue and his concern for the oppressed, and educational programs for adult education and literacy. He is a true educationist and philosopher of the contemporary era. His innovative ideas and theories created and are creating sound discussions in the education scenario of democratic states of third world. He strongly believed that the societies of the third world countries can reach on their own destiny by efforts and true education, which is progressive education for 'conscientization'. Paulo Freire had a faith that "The future isn't something hidden in a corner. The future is something we build in the present"

Paulo Freire's Educational Theory

Freire's educational theory is the extension of his philosophical ideas. He is in the opinion that the problems of poor society can be overcome by progressive education and practices.

People are in two echelons or strata. One is the oppressor and another is the oppressed. Major problem of the present education system is that oppressor is the developer of the agenda of educational process and programme. It is the education to govern, not education to live. Actually education is to be developed and practiced from the oppressed side. The system has to be changed. Regarding this Freire developed educational ideology based on his concept of human nature, knowledge, values, opportunities, dialogues and democracy.

Theory of Human Nature

Human being is a separate identity, differ from other species. The ability of humans to plan and shape the world for their future needs is what separates man from animals. But these 'planning and shaping' is done by the oppressors, though all of the human beings have these abilities. The oppressed majority must be taught to imagine a better way so that they can shape their future and thereby become more human. There is difference in the concept of human nature between the elite and others. The elite (oppressors) naturally believe that they are better and anything else is naturally inferior.

'Growing to human' is something more than growing to the trees or the animals. Growing to human is a process in which he can intervene or get involved. The point of decision of human growth is not found in other species. Men are not only nature, nor are only culture, education and thinking, men are beyond all these predetermined concepts.

Man has a strong tendency to affirm that what is different from him is inferior. Friere says that, "we start from the belief that our way of being is not only good but better than that of others who are different from us. This is intolerance." The dominant class believes it has the power to distinguish itself from the dominated class. This group first, rejects the differences between them, second, does not pretend to be equal to those who are different; third, it does not intend that those who are different shall be equal. What it wants is to maintain the differences and keep its distance and to recognize and emphasize in practice the inferiority of those who are dominated.

Theory of Delude Education - Banking concept of Education

Freire's most well known work is Pedagogy of the Oppressed (1974). Throughout this book (and in subsequent books also) he argues for system of education that emphasizes educating as an act of culture and freedom and democracy. Freire talks about the misleading notion of looking at the education system like a bank, a large depository where students come to withdraw the knowledge they need for life.

Freire is best-known for his opinions on what he called the 'banking' in education. Banking in education is a metaphor used by him to comment on existing education that suggests students are considered empty bank accounts that should remain open to deposits made by the teacher. According to him, in this approach the student is viewed as an empty account to be filled by the teacher or the educator making 'deposits' in the learner. This concept is a strong support of the transmission of mere 'facts' as the goal of education.

Freire rejects this approach, claiming it results in the 'dehu-

manization' of both the students and the teachers. The banking approach stimulates oppressive attitudes and practices in society.

In banking system of education the teacher talks about reality or fact as if it were motionless, static, compartmentalized, and predictable. Or else s/he explains a topic completely strange to the existing experience of the students. Teacher's task is to 'fill' the students with the contents of his narration. In it, teachers make deposits of information which students are to receive, memorize, and repeat.

It is a way of transmission of knowledge from the knowledgeable to the know nothings; Transmission from subject to object. Freire says, "The more students work at storing the deposits entrusted to them, the less they develop the critical consciousness which would result from their intervention in the world as transformers of that world".

Banking education, which emphasizes the teacher's role as the active one and student's role as passive and the teacher-student relationship as an anti-dialogical approach, is worthless and anti democratic. It serves the oppressor by denying the learner an active role in the learning. It does not engage students in critical thinking-which is compulsory in a democratic society- instead, it requires the students to be passive and to adapt thereby serving the purposes of oppression. It inhibits creativity, it resists dialogue and it is laid-back in nature.

As banking education is a way of dehumanization, Freire advocates for a more authentic education, which aims 'Conscientization'. According to him, this 'authentic' approach to education must allow people to be aware of their incompleteness and strive to be more fully human. The attempt to use education as a means of consciously shaping the person and the society is called conscientization. Libertarian, progressive education needs to "begin with the solution of the teacher-student contradiction, by reconciling the poles of the contradiction so that both are simultaneously teachers and students". True education is that which is progressive, democratic and denies the banking method.

Progressive educators help students to reach conscientization. Conscientization meaning breaking through prevailing mythologies to reach new levels of awareness, in particular, awareness of oppression, of being an object in a world where only subjects have power. The process of conscientization involves identifying contradictions in experience through dialogue and becoming a subject with other oppressed subjects-that is, becoming part of the process of changing the world.

Instead of banking methods, progressive educators employ problem-posing methods. Problem-posing education does not and cannot serve the interests of the oppressor. "In problem-posing education, people develop their power to perceive critically the way they exist in the world with which and in which they find themselves; they come to see the world not as a static reality, but as a reality in process, in transformation". Teachers-students and students-teachers are continually reflecting on themselves and the world, establishing 'an authentic form of thought and action'.

In this method learner reaches 'Conscientization', a process by which the learner advances towards critical consciousness. Through the "Culture of Silence", people lose their cultural, political and social stability and identity. Culture of Silence is a process by that dominated individuals lose the means by which to critically respond to the culture that is forced on them by a dominant culture. Some human beings are submerged in the culture of silence. Some are ignorant in different social matters. Every human being, no matter how 'ignorant' he or she may be, is capable of looking critically at the world in a dialogical encounter with others. It is not a

traditional way of teaching and learning.

The method of education must be able to exterminate the culture of silence.

Theory of Transmission of Knowledge

According to Freire teaching is a political process. It must be a democratic process. The teacher must learn about the student so that knowledge can be constructed in ways that are meaningful to the student. The teachers must become learners and teaching and learning become knowing and 're-knowing'.

Teachers need to know what happens in the world of the children with whom they work. They need to know the universe of their dreams, the language with which they skillfully defend themselves from the aggressiveness of their world, what they know independently of the school, and how they know it. This knowledge of teachers will help them to do effective teaching enriched with democratic process.

The school of a developing society should be democratic. Atmosphere and total method of interaction between students and teachers must be democratic in all sense. Freire says, "School that we need is not one in which only the teacher teaches, in which only the student learns, and in which the principal is the all powerful commander". Teachers must have humility, coupled with love and respect for their students. Humility helps teacher to understand a truth: no one knows all; no one is ignorant of everything. All know something; all are ignorant of something.

Democratic teachers increasingly prepare themselves to be heard by learners. By listening to students and learning to talk with students, democratic teachers teach the students to listen to them as well.

Education should raise the awareness of the students so that they become subjects, rather than objects, of the teaching learning process. This is done by teaching students to think democratically. This is done by teaching students to continually question and make meaning from (critically view) everything they learn. Such learning alone contributes for effective social living of common peoples of developing societies.

Knowledge is a social construct. Knowing is a social process. However individual dimension of knowledge and knowing cannot be forgotten or even devalued. The process of knowing has individual dimensions, which involves the whole conscious self, feelings, emotions, memory, affects, a curious mind and so on. The process of knowing focused on the object equally involves other thinking subjects. All are capable of knowing and curious. Freire discusses two types of knowledge, a) unconscious, sometimes practical knowledge and b) critical, reflective or theory knowledge. Beliefs are shaped into knowledge by discussion and critical reflection. These discussion and critical reflection are necessary for the well being of developing societies. These activities will guard the society from social disintegration.

Dichotomy is a major problem in the transmission of knowledge in democratic classroom. The term dichotomy means division or segregation in to two. Seeker of knowledge must never segregate cognition and emotion. People do not separate out between commonsense knowledge and other. All knowledge man gets is knowledge, not separate knowledge.

One of the mistakes we, the third world people, often make is to dichotomize reading and writing as two separate processes for knowing or learning. Even from children's earliest steps in the practice of reading and writing, they are to conceive of these processes as detached from the general process of knowing. This dichotomy between reading and writing follows us forever, as students and as teachers and as social beings. The dichotomy between pupils and teachers as sepa-

rate learning and teaching units is to be discarded. Like that, the dichotomy between governors (the Government) and people as separate governing and to be governed units is to be discouraged. This is necessary for the development of the self esteem and confidence of peoples of developing states.

Theory of Opportunity

Freire's entire education and philosophical career is based on his desire to provide greater opportunity for the poor and oppressed people of the world, particularly in Brazil. The oppressed majorities should avail opportunities for education and development.

Freire challenges the conventional assumption that there is equal opportunity in a democratic society. He affirms that education is a political process. Schools become tools that are used by parents, business and the community to impose their values and beliefs. While no intentional harm is intended, this process often results in the oppression of less privileged persons.

There will raise struggles in societies because of unequal distribution of opportunities. There may not be life or human existence without struggle and conflict! Conflict shares in our conscience. All disagreements can be reached on compromise. Priority and preference should be provided in accordance with the character of conflict or struggle.

Disagreement is normal and something to expect always. Disagreement can be an impulsion to reflection and a source of growth. When opinions and disagreements are suppressed in the name of control and authority it creates adverse effects. They have to be treated democratically.

Concept of Dialogic, Dialogical Cultural Action and Praxis

Freire viewed the essence of education (if it is a democratic political process) as the practice of freedom and dialogue. He argues that words involve a radical interaction between reflection and action and true words are transformational. These words are the frame of dialogue.

Dialogue has unique capacity to ensure freedom, enjoy liberalism in education, develop critical thinking and reflective interaction in learning and protect cultural synthesis. Dialogue requires mutual respect and cooperation to not only develop understanding, but also to change the world.

"Dialogue cannot exist unless the dialoguers engage in critical thinking. Without dialogue there is no communication, and without communication, there can be no true education", Freire says. Dialogue is a give and take of ideas, a sharing. Teacher cannot dialogue and attempt to impose his own ideas on learner. Teacher and learner can dialogue about their ideas and others- mutual give and take.

Authentic education, according to Freire, will involve dialogue between the teacher and the student, mediated by the broader world context. He warns that the limits imposed upon both the oppressor and the oppressed dehumanize everyone involved, thereby removing the ability for dialogue to occur, inevitably barring the possibility of transformation. He proposes 'dialogic' as an instrument to free the oppressed, through the use of cooperation, unity and organization and cultural synthesis. Dialogue is the way to overcome problems in society to liberate human beings.

There is no individual without limitations. All are incomplete. Understanding of these limitations and incompleteness is essential for dialogue with others. Then it will become against

the interests of oppressors. Dialogue should not become a teacher centered process. It should be democratic. Teacher should keep respect towards students. It is a form of cultural exchange. Dialogue is not from the teacher to student, but mutual. Problem with the 'teacher to pupil' form of dialogue is that, the teacher may think himself as the leader to empower students. Educators take the stand that they are empowering students through their attempt. Empowerment does not come from the educator to the learner. There should have critical reflection through dialogue. This dialogical cultural action leads to praxis and it is the step to critical consciousness through critical reflection and action.

Freire's model of 'dialogic' must be rooted within social praxis, informed reflection and political action. Dialogic and social praxis are working together to break down oppression. They together also try to degenerate the structures and mechanisms of oppression. According to him freedom will be the result of 'praxis' when a balance between theory and practice is achieved.

The praxis here is the informed action. Actually Praxis is the step to critical consciousness through critical reflection and action. Learner has to move from 'object' to 'subject'. For this, learner is needed to be involved in dialogical action with the teacher. Dialogic action has two basic dimensions, reflection and action (Action + Reflection = word (dialogue) = work = praxis).

Techniques of Oppression

Freire identified four techniques set in motion to oppress the people as the part of the oppressors' frame work; they are a) conquest, b) divide and rule c) manipulation and d) cultural invasion

The alternative frame work of the oppressed is based up on dialogical cultural action. Here, dialogue is the base of critical thinking and reflection. The oppressed people can make techniques as the part of alternative frame work. This alternative frame work can be enriched only by the true education based practicing problem posed learning and aiming conscientization. The education for the development in this way must be rooted on dialogic, dialogical cultural action and praxis. Then only education attains the plank of an effective tool of democratic political process.

The alternative frame works of the oppressed those are to be achieved by education are a) co-operation against conquest, b) unity for liberation against divide and rule, c) organization against manipulation, and d) cultural synthesis against cultural invasion. Cooperation, unity for liberation, organization and cultural synthesis must be the unswerving design of socio-educational philosophy of third world democracies.

Paulo Freire started his educational journey with the first step on adult education. Normally the poor are the sector of society who needs deviated education and literacy programmes. Freire developed his concept based on this interest. Hence, we can read his strong stand for adult education and informal education from his views. All of his educational ideas are strong supports to the educational philosophy of a developing democracy like India.

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