

# The banking concept of education

Profession, Teacher



Paulo Freire, a leader in literacy studies as well as a believer of progressive teaching, is against the education system he classifies as the "banking concept of education". Instead, he supports the idea that education should be a collaborative process in which teachers and students work together and think critically. From the text, "The Banking Concept of Education", Freire classifies the banking concept as, "an environment where teachers are the narrators and the students are the recorders" (257). Freire has also proposed a new solution in his text called the problem-posing education where the teacher and student become one, "Each teaches the other and both have the chance to think critically as well as give one's interpretation of the subject"(266). However, both systems are not perfect and therefore both have advantages and disadvantages in the education system. The banking concept of education has a large amount to criticize and I suspect especially from Freire himself. Freire describes the method of teaching where "the teachers directly fill the minds of their students with information and the student themselves accept it without any questioning as oppressive" (260). To put it differently, the teacher informs, and the student listens in return. The students are not allowed to challenge the authority and the credibility of the teacher. Therefore, students have no freedom or active participation in education and the exchange of information is one-way. As I see it, this is generally, what people call spoon-feeding. In addition, Freire explains, "Those truly committed to liberation must reject the banking concept in its entirety, adopting instead a concept of men as conscious beings, and consciousness as consciousness intent upon the world" (262). This suggests that Freire feels the banking concept leads to an unresponsive mind that

stands in the way of society's expression and freedom. This is obviously against the principle of most people in this society, which emphasizes and prides itself on freedom of expression or speech. He also adds, " In sum: banking theory and practice, as immobilizing and fixating forces fail to acknowledge men as historical beings" (265). To put it differently, he feels that the banking concept fails to recognize men as the ultimate being in this world, which is capable of unparalleled heights. With the banking concept, men's achievements are disadvantaged resulting to a backward society in the future. Thus, Freire concludes that there is no advantage to the banking concept of education and that it is never useful. There is, however, a time in which this type of teaching is necessary and useful. The act of recording, memorizing, and repeating phrases may have its advantages in certain situations. For instance, this banking method would demonstrate its necessity when teaching a foreign language. This is because, for the first few years of learning a foreign language, the only method of teaching is the memorization and repetition of vocabulary, pronunciation, and so on. Likewise, this is also true when teaching in an elementary school or to younger kids. The students need to learn the basics first before using it to think and formulate their own views and ideas. For example, when teaching basic math equations teachers ask the students to memorize  $1+1= 2$  or  $2*2= 4$  and so on. In this situation, it is appropriate to use the banking concept because there is no point denying accuracy of the equation. In other words, students need the foundation that is passed down to them by their teachers and with this foundation, they are able to think critically and be creative in their own way. Therefore, the banking concept should not be

eliminated from the education system because it plays an important role during certain stages of education for a student. As a solution to the banking concept, Freire proposed the problem-posing education method. The "problem posing" method is the opposite of the banking concept of education. Freire says, "Whereas banking education anesthetizes and inhibits creative power, problem-posing education involves a constant unveiling of reality" (263). Essentially, Freire says the banking concept prevents a person's creativity while the problem-posing education emphasizes spontaneity and prepares an individual to face reality as it is. He feels that the problem-posing method promotes an individual's creativity thereby encouraging this learning process. While the banking concept of education is only a one-way communication, the problem-posing education emphasizes a two-way communication between the teacher and the students. The teacher not only educates but is also learning at the same time from their students. In problem-posing education, teachers are open to students' ideas and therefore students' are encouraged to participate actively in class. Students also become more enthusiastic to commit themselves to the problem and solving it Freire says, "In problem-posing education, we develop their power to perceive critically the way they exist in the world" (265). This suggests that unlike the banking concept of education where students accept what they are told, in the problem-posing education, they are able to think for themselves or in other words, the concept stresses critical thinking. In short, the problem-posing education gives the student much needed freedom to voice their ideas than the banking concept of education. Although problem-posing may be a better method than the banking concept most of the time,

it is not practical in certain circumstances. For instance, picture an introductory class (an image I am very familiar with) such as Chemistry 101, Biology 101, Anthropology 201 or Psychology 100 at a state school or university. In this situation, the problem-posing method of teaching would be impossible or very costly. The reason is that classes of introductory courses generally teach basic facts of their particular field. This information and facts have been tested, recreated, and proven over time to be correct and accurate. For instance, there is no point for students to discuss and state their own version of law of gravity since it has already been proven true. Discussing every little bit of the syllabus would be a waste of time. Therefore, there is no need for the problem-posing method in this situation because for the most part, the information taught is unchangeable and it is something that a teacher cannot learn more from their students. Besides the pointless use of the problem-posing method in certain situations, the method also gives students too much freedom. It is this advantage of the problem-posing method that, well, creates other problems. Students may voice their views and ideas when they feel necessary. However, when this system emphasizes too much freedom for students, students may lose respect for their teachers. There may be cases where the students are equal in terms of knowledge on certain subjects, but as a whole, a teacher has more years of experience and thus deserves the respect. Teachers who do not feel respected by their students may not be inclined to teach and share their knowledge thereby creating an environment not favorable for learning. Learning takes place when teachers and students treat each other with respect and politeness rather than anger, mockery, or confrontation. In

addition to respect, a teacher should have some sort of authority in class, which Freire objects to. This is because, through the problem-posing method, students at some point will learn to be overconfident of themselves and thus may even be arrogant to the point they will not admit their mistakes. This stubbornness can prove to be a problem and thus disrupt a class. As a result, a disrupted class deprives other students their right and opportunity to learn from the teacher and from the rest of the class. Therefore, teachers with some authority will be able to control their students' behavior but at the same time not limit their students' ability to express their opinion. Therefore, problem-posing method should be used without the elimination of hierarchal arrangement in the classroom. Although, I disagree with Freire at some point regarding the banking concept, I do acknowledge the problem he has pointed out in his text. Freire has opened my eyes to the problem faced by the current education systems around the world. The banking concept should not be used entirely throughout an individual's education. It should only be used in certain circumstances. This is the same for the problem-posing method. However, I do admit that the advantages of the problem-posing method outweigh its disadvantages. The problem-posing method seems like the better option in most situations because it encourages critical thinking and allows a two-way street of communication between teacher and student. Thus, a teacher not only teaches but also learns at the same time from their students. In conclusion, there is not one ideal method of teaching that can solve the problems society is facing. Therefore, we must learn to incorporate both teaching methods to suite the situation we're in. , it needs versatility. Works Cited Freire, Paulo. " The Banking' Concept of Education. "

Ways of Reading: An Anthology for Writers (7th ed.) Ed. David Bartholomea and Anthony Petrosky. Boston: Bedford, 2005. 256-67.