

A critical review of pedagogy of the oppressed by paulo freire

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Abstract

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

Introduction

The pedagogy of the oppressed by Paulo Freire brings together the political, educational and philosophical theory. The author explores the aspect of oppression and the foundation of liberation. Paulo Freire holds the notion that in order for persons to experience liberation, there is a need for the development of critical consciousness and thinking process in the person. Freire asserts that this is only possible through a pedagogy that creates a bond between the teacher and the learner, encouraging the learner to participate in dialogue and the practice of humanization via thought and its corresponding action (Freire 2004). The intention of this document is to provide a critical review of Freire's work by considering his assertions on humanization and dehumanization, and oppression in the context of education and sham generosity.

Freire recognizes the importance of humanization to the human kind and believes that the concern for humanization culminates in acknowledgment of dehumanization as an "ontological possibility as well as a historical truth" (Freire 2004, p. 43). He asserts that if an individual perceives the degree of

dehumanization, he may question the viability of humanization. Freire views humanization and dehumanization as potentials for an individual, as an uncompleted being with knowledge of their incompleteness. Freire believes that injustice, oppression, exploitation, as well as the violence of the oppressors have thwarted humanization (Freire 2004, p. 44). Humanization is exemplified by the craving of the oppressed for justice, independence and lost humanity.

The author asserts that dehumanization is an indication of those deprived of their humanity and also those who have deprived of humanity from others. He asserts that dehumanization is responsible for the distortion of the vocation of humanization. He believes that distortion is a historical occurrence, but not a vocation. The author opposes the idea of admitting dehumanization as a historic vocation, since the idea would lead to cynicism. He further asserts that the struggles for humanization, for liberation of labor, for elimination of discrimination would make no sense. Freire asserts that distortion of humanization may cause the oppressed to retaliate to the oppressors in an effort to recover their humanity. He believes this action by the oppressed changes them into “oppressors of the oppressors” a situation that makes their effort worthless (Freire 2004, p. 45). The author states that the oppressed has a responsibility of ensuring the liberation of both themselves and the oppressors since the oppressors have no power to unshackle themselves and the individuals they oppress. He believes that the oppressed has sufficient power to transform the oppressors into beings that recognizes humanization.

The author considers true generosity as that which employs the fight whose purpose is to distort the vices responsible for the nourishing of sham generosity. He believes that the realization of true generosity and humanity should commence from the oppressed because they understand the importance of a liberated society better than the oppressors (Jackson, 2007). In order to realize liberation, the oppressed must be dedicated to the task, demonstrating love, which is in opposition to the lack of love that exists in the hearts of the oppressors. Freire asserts that the “fear of freedom” experienced by the oppressed may lead them to adopt the behavior of the oppressor, or subject them to the position of the oppressed. He, therefore, advocates for the examination of the “fear of freedom” (Freire 2004, p. 46). The author believes that in order to attain freedom, one must be responsible and steadfast in pursuance of freedom. He believes that people can overcome oppression by being conscious of its origin, and developing situations that value humanity.

When looking at the teacher and student relationship, Freire criticizes traditional pedagogy because he opposes the aspect of memorization, which he believes turns learners into “containers” to be filled by the teacher (Freire 2004, p. 72). He asserts that the practice converts education into a practice of deposition in which the teacher is the depositor, and the learner is the receptor. The author terms this concept as “banking” because it only allows the reception, filling and storage of deposits to “containers”. According to Freire, the “concept of banking” assumes that learners are devoid of knowledge and, therefore, the teacher or educator should bestow

this knowledge to them. The author believes that education should follow a better concept in which the teacher-student relationship transforms into a situation where all become students and teachers at the same time.

The author indicates that oppressor's aim is to change the perception of the oppressed and not the condition that leads to their oppression. He argues that the "Banking concept" of education perpetuates oppression through the application of patterns and instruments which converts the oppressed into "welfare recipients" (Freire 2004, p. 74). In order to overcome the handcuffs of this concept, the teacher and the learner should employ a partnership approach which promotes critical thinking for both the educator and the learner. Through this approach, students will change into persons able to perform different tasks instead of memorizing words that exist (Holst, 2006). He believes that this practice causes some persons to possess naive consciousness, which despite their knowledge of possession fails to change it; they perceive the situation as normal. Critical thinking would help students subject themselves to reality and thus fight for their unrestraint. Although Friere advocates for the awareness of reality, he argues that those who succeed in liberating themselves ends up becoming what they were against.

Friere advocates for dialogical education, which he perceives as a practice of deliverance. This concept entails a mutual exchange capable of changing situations (Bowers, 2005). The dialogical concept encourages students to criticize various daily situations and find solutions for them. Through problematization of situations, it is possible to create knowledge in the

reality that environs the individual (Schugurensky, 2011). It is possible to overcome limiting situations passed on by the oppressors. Freire assertions imply that if; there is a need to perform a study of a generative topic, it is imperative to perform a study of the thoughts of the people in need of liberation. This is for the purpose of avoiding de-contextualization of their work. While liberating persons, the idea is to make the teaching an element of their reality.

The author argues that in order to accomplish liberalization of man and defeat oppression, it is important to avoid the use of common ideas (Bowers, 2005). He proposes that one should create own ideas and convey them via praxis and communication. To perform a good study of a generative topic entails the person's action of visiting the region where the action occurred. This is for the purpose of bringing into the light thinking of the oppressed. Also, the application of thinking to the learning procedure through concentration on group communication among contestants is vital. This is because; through communication or interaction the participants are able to attain consciousness of reality, in addition expressing this reality fully.

Freire perceives formal schooling and also the educational system related to it as undesired. This is because he believes that it retards human growth as well as initiative. That is why Freire proposes opposing education methods, one being the practice of liberty, and the other domination. According to Freire, education should raise political consciousness. The purpose of Freire's educational methodology is to subvert the oppressive regimes. The methodology proposed by the author considers development as non material

and, therefore, perceives an individual as the chief contributor of nation development. Freire's notions of education appear rather selective. They do not attempt to articulate the vast richness of their opinions on issues regarding the collective personality of man's humanity (Pitts 1972, p. 116).

Freire's work does not contain a succinct analysis of gender and a clear description of the role the teacher in the proposed models. The issue of the authority of the educator is partially discussed although he perceives the teacher as an element of oppression. He appears to present a pedagogy of the oppressed, whose main aim is to perform the criticism of colonialism while, on the other hand, viewing the world via the incomplete and meticulous lens of patriarchy. Freire's work does not acknowledge the issue of gender, class and race of teachers and learners. He also fails to consider their structural locations (Sue, 2007). The author seems to have forgotten that structural inequalities are critical, especially when articulating the idea that transformation is possible via individual thought and action. I believe the author should have reflected on the issue of structural inequality, race and class in order to present a clear description of the possible change via the utopian concept of actions and dreams (Sue, 2007).

Freire's proposition that opposes the "banking concept" of education is imperative because it presents unique and different teaching and learning approaches. The concept proposed by Freire employs the "problem posing" tactic useful in different settings (M. Guajardo & F. Guajardo 2008). The methodology can be useful to isolated communities for the purpose of initiating both personal and community transformation. This is because when

faced with problems, they will respond to the challenges and transform themselves, based on the conception that through the individual though it is possible to realize change (M. Guajardo & F. Guajardo 2008). The pedagogy of oppression presents the reader with facts that can become useful in shaping researchers into creators of knowledge. Freire's work has become an inspiration to learners as well as teachers who have been able to realize the in justices perpetuated by the " banking approach" of formal education. In addition, different settings including sociological, institutional and economical have benefited from Freire's notion of education (M. Guajardo & F. Guajardo 2008).

Conclusion

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 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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