

# Educational Philosophy Of Paulo Freire: A Study

**Dharitri Boruah**

*Research Scholar (PhD)*

## **Abstract**

Paulo Freire, the great educator was born in Recife, Brazil on September 19, 1921. His family was middle class and in his early years he experienced a good standard of living and had many opportunities. Paulo Freire is considered by many educators and curriculum developers to be one of the most important educational thinkers of all time. His ideas and “critical pedagogy” are taught in most universities across the world. This paper provides a short overview of Freire's theories and considers how his ideas may be introduced into the educational field of society. Objective of the study is to know about the Freire’s Ideas on Education. India also have followed this type educational schemes like Education for all, No child left behind, Universal Education, Education for Girl child etc. to promote Education as a birth right to all human being.

**Key Words:** Paulo Freire, Education, ideas, philosophy

**1.1 Introduction:** Paulo Freire was born in Recife, Brazil on September 19, 1921. His family was middle class and in his early years he experienced a good standard of living and had many opportunities. However, this changed in 1929 when there was a worldwide economic depression. It was during this time that he first started to experience poverty and even hunger. His biographer Donald Macedo writes that this period had a deep effect on his life and that these experiences would:

This had a profound influence on his life as he came to know the gnawing pangs of hunger and fell behind in school because of the listlessness it produced; it also led him to make a vow at age eleven, to dedicate his life to the struggle against hunger, so that other children would not have to know the agony he was then experiencing (Freire 2000, pp. 30).

According to Macedo, Freire came to realize “that their [poor

people] ignorance and lethargy were the direct product of the whole situation of economic, social, and political domination—and of the paternalism—of which they were victims”(Freire, 2000, pp. 30). Freire began to believe that the poverty and misery that poor people experienced in their everyday lives was because of the education system. “It became clear to him that the whole educational system was one of the major instruments for the maintenance of this culture of silence,” writes Macedo (Freire, 2000, pp. 30).. As a result of these experiences, Freire decided to focus much of his attention on the field of education. However, it would be several years before he became a major force in educational reform.

According to Aronowitz, Freire did not think that education was only for teaching students how to get jobs or careers, but instead a way to learn to live in the world and live a “self-managed life” (Giroux, 2010). Giroux says that Freire rejected these types of ideas. He writes that Freire was against the idea that education should only meet the demands of the economy or “market” and that it should be more about challenging students with critical thinking, teaching freedom, and social responsibility. Moreover, both Giroux and Aronowitz further

state that Freire believed that education should also be about teaching students to create a “socially just world.”

Today, Paulo Freire is considered by many educators and curriculum developers to be one of the most important educational thinkers of all time. His ideas and “critical pedagogy” are taught in most universities across the world. For example, the text books for several college classes including Curriculum Theory and Curriculum: From Theory to Practice both devote several pages to his ideas. In Curriculum: from Theory to Practice, author Wesley Null calls Freire “a formidable figure within what has become known as “critical pedagogy” or “critical theory (Null, 2011, pg. 94-95).” Education critic Herbert Kohl says that Freire is “perhaps the most significant educator in the world during the last half century” (Freire, 2000, pp. 16). Another critic of the American education system is Alfie Kohn. In his book called *The Schools Our Children Deserve* he writes about the banking concept and talks about Paulo Freire. Kohn says that throughout history many educators have critiqued the system. He quotes John Dewey who called this type of system a “static, cold storage ideal of knowledge.” Kohn calls the present

system a “jug and mug” model. He explains that this means that information or knowledge is “poured from the big container into the little ones.” (Kohn, 1999, pp. 62)

There is another thing in Kohn’s book about the ideas of Taylorism and John Dewey at the beginning of the 20<sup>th</sup> century. According to Kohn, the No child Left Behind or the testing model is very similar to the things they did in America during the birth of the state controlled educational system. Kohn says that they did not work then and that they will not work nowadays. In his book he quotes from a saying of John Dewey about this problem in education:

What avail is it to win prescribed amounts of information about geography and history, to win ability to read and write, if in the process the individual loses his own soul: loses his appreciation of things worthwhile, of the values to which these things are relative: if he loses desire to apply what he has learned and, above all, loses the ability to extract meaning from his future experiences as they occur ( Kohn, 1999).

It is interesting to see how all of these critics discuss the ideas of Paulo Freire. They all see that the

present system is very much like the “Banking” system and that it has many negative effects on the students.

**1.2 Need and Significance of the study:** Paulo Freire was one of the most influential and controversial educational theorists of the 20<sup>th</sup> century. His ideas have been widely adopted around the world and have deeply impacted pedagogical practice since the 1970's. This paper provides a short overview of Freire's theories and considers how his ideas may be introduced into the educational field of society.

**1.3 Statement of the Problem:** Statement of the problem has been entitled as “Educational Philosophy of Paulo Freire: A Study”

**1.4 Objective of the Study:** Objective of the study is to know about the Freire’s Ideas on Education.

**2.0 Method of the study:** In this study the investigator used descriptive technique and secondary sources of data like journals, books, etc to fulfil the present study.

**3.0 Result and discussion of the study:**

**Objective 1: To study about the Freire's Ideas on Education**

According to one of college text books entitled Curriculum: From Theory to Practice Paulo Freire is most widely known for his radical education ideas called "critical pedagogy" or "critical theory." The education critic and reformer Henry Giroux describes critical pedagogy as an "educational movement, guided by passion and principle, to help students develop consciousness of freedom, recognize authoritarian tendencies, and connect knowledge to power and the ability to take constructive action" (Giroux, 2010). One of the most important ideas of Freire's is the Banking concept of education. This idea has been discussed and written about by many scholars. It is also discussed in many text books. Freire writes about this idea in Pedagogy of Oppressed. He says:

In the banking concept of education, knowledge is a gift bestowed by those who consider themselves knowledgeable upon those whom they consider to know nothing. Projecting an absolute ignorance onto others, a characteristic of the ideology of oppression, negates education and knowledge of processes of inquiry. The teacher presents

himself to his students as their necessary opposites; by considering their ignorance absolute, he justifies his own existence. (Freire, 2000, pp.72).

Furthermore, Freire created a list of questions that he says show how schools and classrooms can be evaluated. If a school or classroom can be defined by the following categories then they represent the Banking concept of education.

- (a) The teacher teaches and the students are taught;
- (b) The teacher knows everything and the students know nothing;
- (c) The teacher thinks and the students are thought about;
- (d) The teacher talks and the students listen-meekly;
- (e) The teacher disciplines and the students are disciplined;
- (f) The teacher chooses and enforces his choice, and the students comply;
- (g) The teacher acts and the students have the illusion of acting through the action of the teacher;
- (h) The teacher chooses the program content, and the students (who were not consulted) adapt to it;

(i) The teacher confuses the authority of knowledge with his own professional authority, which he sets in opposition to the freedom of the students;

(j) The teacher is the Subject of the learning process, while the pupils are mere objects.

Many educational critics such as Kohn, Giroux, Aronowitz, Macedo, and others believe that most conventional education is based on the Banking method. In our system, most of the students memorize the teacher's lectures and their notes. Another main idea of Freire is called "praxis". Freire says that praxis is "the action of men and women upon their world in order to transform it" (Freire, 2000, pp. 79). This part of Freire's idea and theory is that students need to learn by doing things and "engaging, applying, exercising, realizing, or practicing ideas." In other words, the students should be challenged to ask questions and solve problems on their own or in groups. One way to do this kind of teaching is described in a report by the Center for Adult English Language Acquisition. Karwan kakabra Kakamad, Nicholas Rion said that:

The term "problem posing" is often misunderstood, perhaps because of the negative connotations given the word

"problem" and the frequent reference to problem-solving skills in education. In the Freirean approach, cultural themes in the form of open ended problems are incorporated into materials such as pictures, comics, short stories, songs, and video dramas that are then used to generate discussion. The teacher asks a series of open-ended questions about these materials that encourage students to elaborate on what they see in them (Caela, 1993, pp. 2-4).

In India, there are not many teachers that practice this type of teaching. Consequently, many students are not comfortable to ask questions of the teacher or make statements about the lessons. Many students are afraid to talk in class and do not wish to be called on in case they might make a mistake

Sometimes, Freire calls this type of work "dialogue". These ideas are very philosophical and can be very difficult to understand at first. For example, Freire writes about dialogue in *Pedagogy of the Oppressed*. He says:

Dialogue is the encounter between men, mediated by the world, in order to name the

world. Hence, dialogue cannot occur between those who want to name the world and those who wish this naming--- between those who deny others the right to speak their word and those whose right to speak has been denied them (Freire, 2000, pp. 88).

Simply put, this is saying that students need to be able to speak and not be afraid to say what they think. The student needs to have the right to talk about their ideas and the world they live in. They do not have to except the world of the teacher and what they say as the best thing or the truth. (Karwan kakabra Kakamad, Nicholas Rion)

One of the last ideas we will talk about is the idea of the “culture of silence.” We understand this to mean that people or students do not speak because they believe it will not make a difference. The people are silent because they do not think they have any power to change things or make things better.

With Freire’s ideas teachers should encourage students to have these types of dialogues and talks in the classroom. We think that these are some of the main ideas about reforming education. Moreover, they are a different way to think about how students learn and how to conduct education in a better

way. Finally, we believe that many of these ideas should be used to help prepare students to study in western countries universities and also to be better prepared for the globalizing world. It is recognized by many scholars and citizens that India is changing very rapidly and it will need many new ideas to help make these changes. Indian education system have to upgrade in some phases of teaching style according to Freire’s ideas of education.

### **Conclusion:**

As we have seen in this paper, Paulo Freire was, and is, an important figure in the area of educational reform. For some reformers like Kohn, Freire is the most important educational thinker of the last fifty years. However, for many people such as the Board of Education in the state of Arizona where his Pedagogy of the Oppressed was banned from high school classrooms, his ideas are far too radical and political. Nevertheless, there are few educators in the world who are not familiar with his fundamental theory of “banking” in education. As a result of this, his ideas continue to have an effect on education. Furthermore, for some educators like Kohn and Macedo his ideas offer many solutions to the present No-Child-Left-Behind type systems that focus so much attention

on testing and maintaining allusive and arbitrary standards. India also have followed this type educational schemes like Education for all, No child left behind, Universal Education, Education for Girl child etc. to promote Education as a birth right to all human being.

## References

1. Chavez, C. (n.d). Education as a force to transform the world: The work of Paolo Freire. Retrieved from <http://tx.cpusa.org/school/classics/freire.htm>
2. Elias, J. L. (1993). Paulo Freire: Pedagogue of Liberation. Krieger Publishing Co., PO Box 9542, Melbourne, FL 32902-9542.
3. Freire, P. (2000). Pedagogy of the oppressed . (30 ed.). New York : Continuum.
4. Freire, P. (1995). EPZ Pedagogy of Hope: Reliving Pedagogy of the Oppressed. New York: Continuum.
5. Giroux, H. (2010). Lessons from Paulo Freire. The Chronicle of Higher Education.
6. Giroux, H. A. (2010). Rethinking Education as the Practice of Freedom: Paulo Freire and the promise of Palou Freire Educational Philosophy and Possibility of using it in Kurdistan Region Of Iraqi Education critical pedagogy. Policy Futures in Education, 8(6), 715-721.
7. Kakamad, K.K & Rion, N. (2019).
8. Kohn, A. (1999). The schools our children deserve: moving beyond traditional classrooms and" tougher standards". Boston New York: Houghton Mifflin Company.