

# Paulo Freire: Some Reflections

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## Abstract

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*Paulo Freire had contributed a philosophy of education that came not only from the classical approaches stemming from Plato but also from the modern Marxist and anti-colonialist thinkers. The article briefly summarises the biography of the Paulo, his thoughts, specially his writings on the Pedagogy of the Oppressed which he dedicated to the oppressed and to those who suffer with them and fight at their side. Freire includes a detailed Marxist class analysis in his exploration of the relationship between the coloniser and the colonised. Freire is also known for attack on what he called the banking concept of education in which the student was viewed as an empty account to be filled by the teacher.*

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Paulo Regulus Neves Freire, a Brazilian educator, a renowned contemporary educational philosopher was born in 1921 in Recife, the centre of one of the most extreme situation of poverty and under development in the Third World, he experienced the situation directly. He has made a profound impact not only in the field of education but also in the overall struggle for national development. The economic depression of the 1930s hit the Freire's middle class family and his studies got disturbed. He was so stirred up that he took a vow at the age of eleven that he would dedicate his life to the struggle against hunger so that other children would not have to face the agony he was then experiencing.

He established law school at the University of Recife in 1943. He got his Ph.D in 1959 from the University of Recife and later he worked as Professor

of History and Philosophy of Education in the same University. Freire spent five years working with UNESCO and the Children Institute for Agrarian Reform in the Programmes of Adult Education.

Freire acted as a Consultant at Harvard University's School of Education and worked in close association with a number of groups engaged in new educational experiments in rural and urban areas.

He worked as Secretary of Education at Sao Paul City Brazil and Professor at the Pontifical Catholic University of Sao Paul Puc/SP. He served as special consultant to the Office of Education of the World Council of Churches at Geneva.

Paulo Freire has published a vast collection of books which have been translated into a total of eighteen languages. More than twenty

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universities throughout the world have conferred on him the title of Doctor Honoris Causa. His most popular publication, "Pedagogy of the Oppressed" (1970) is dedicated to the wretched of this world and to those who identify with, suffer with and fight for the impoverished. He received numerous awards including honorary doctorates, the King Balduin Prize for International Development, the Prize for outstanding Christian Educators in 1985 with Elza and UNESCO 1986 prize for education for peace.

Paulo Freire was a man with great sense of humour yet at the same time a man distinguished with all types of injustice. He is father of five children by his first wife Elza. After her death he married his famous student Ana Maria. On 2 May 1997, Paulo Freire died of heart failure at the age 75.

### **Paulo Freire's educational philosophy**

Paulo Freire was a renowned educational philosopher. Due to his revolutionary philosophy he was exiled from his country. His thought represents the response of a creative mind and sensitive conscience to the extra ordinary misery of the oppressed people around him. According to him the ignorance of masses and their lethargy, are direct product of the whole situation of economic, social and political domination. The existing society, he felt, instead of encouraging and equipping them to know and respond to the concrete realities of life, has compelled them to live in a situation in which their critical awareness and response were practically impossible.

Paulo Freire's philosophy of education evolved from his own educational experiments and its main thesis of involving the totality of the child in the process of education. In his famous book *Pedagogy of the Oppressed*, he has presented a stimulating exposition of the phenomenon of oppression in our ordinary education system and a society and the manner in which this oppressing action can be reversed and defeated. He criticises what he calls "banking concept" of education which treats children and students as adaptable, manageable beings and minimises their creative power.

Paulo Freire, a distinguished Brazilian educationist, has advocated for an education which will enable the man to critically look at his world. Education, according to him is not only to help the people to learn how to read and write but also to discover how to hold history in their own hands. That is they can make history with the help of education which according to him is "Cultural Action". Education was perceived as an instrument of social change by the Paulo Freire. His experience of sharing his life with poor led to the realities, the role of education in bringing the masses into the main stream of the social and political life. He feels that previous role of education was to maintain the status quo, i.e. "culture of silence" but now education has to uplift the poor and down-trodden from the position of deprivation and subjugation to that of active participation and makers of the new society. According to him, education should generate new awareness of self and a new sense of dignity among the people so that they can

utilise their potentiality and freedom critically and creatively.

Freire advocates "Problem Posing" education which creates of dialogic relation between teachers and pupils. He points out that problem posing education is revolutionary and futuristic in character and that it affirms human beings as capable of transcending themselves and moving forward and looking ahead.

Paulo Freire takes education as a tool to change the dehumanising conditions of man and society, created by the colonial rule. A humanising education is the path through which men and women can become conscious about their presence in the world. Education is an attempt to arouse people from "culture of silence" and conscientise them to transform the dehumanising structure of society and ultimately realize their freedom.

Freire's theory of education has specially developed in the context of adult education. He developed methodology for the efficient training in literacy to the adult. By literacy education, he made the people aware of the cause of their suppression of rights and exploitation by the dominant class. Education according to Paulo Freire is a means to revolutionise the traditional society which is structured in dialectical relation of oppressors and oppressed, theoreticians and activists vocal and silent, undeveloped dependent and developed dominant, etc. Paulo Freire's revolution, as we observed, is a non-violent revolution. His emphasise is on critical reflection and study of historical situation.

### **Conscientisation**

Conscientisation is a new concept in the educational philosophy of Paulo Freire. The word Conscientisation was used during a round table meeting of Professors at Brazil Institute of Higher Studies in 1964. So Freire adopted this word in his educational philosophical terminology and since then it has become a crucial concept of Freire's educational theory. Originally this word is "Conscientizacao". Paulo Freire's book *Education The Practice of Freedom* (1973) originally published in (1967) contains a chapter on Education and Conscientizacao. He wrote on this concept in three parts, the first two parts of which appeared in the May 1970 issue of the Harward Educational Review and the third part, in his Cultural Action for Freedom. According to Paulo Freire, education is a liberating process. But it cannot liberate people from their misery unless it arouses new awareness in them. This process of arousing new awareness is called Conscientisation. In the process of liberating education, conscientisation plays a vital role. It is the instrument for ejecting the cultural myths which the people retain despite the new reality. Further, it is force countering the bureaucracy, which threatens to deaden the revolutionary vision and dominate the people in the very name of their freedom. Conscientisation is a defence against the potential mythification of the technology which the new society requires to transform its backward infrastructures.

Freire's says Conscientisation is not a magical charm for the revolutionaries but a basic dimension of their reflective

action. If men were not conscious bodies, capable of acting and perceiving, of knowing and recreating, if they were not conscious of themselves and the world, the idea of conscientisation would make no sense—but then neither would the idea of revolution. So According to Freire the aim of education is to break the culture of silence among the oppressed and conscientize them in order to make them fully human.

### **The Banking Concept of Education**

Freire has introduced the new terminology of 'banking concept' in education. He explains this by stating that narration of the teacher turns students into 'containers' into 'receptacles' to be filled. Education thus becomes an act of depositing, in which the students are the depositories and the teacher is the depositor. Instead of communicating, the teacher issues,

communiqués and makes deposits which the students patiently receive, memorise and repeat.

He talks about the fallacy of looking at the education system like a bank, a large repository where students come to withdraw the knowledge they need for life.

### **Conclusion**

After going through the above discussion on Paulo Freire's educational philosophy we can safely draw the conclusion that Freire is an example of radical philosophy of adult education, non-formal and extension programmes. He as an educator and philosopher has advocated love for the oppressors. He regards role of teacher as a facilitator, and stimulating the learning process. To him, education is the socialising process towards humanity and a most effective and non-violent means of social change.

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