

# PAULO FREIRE'S CRITICAL PEDAGOGY IN EDUCATIONAL TRANSFORMATION



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## ABSTRACT

Through critical analysis, the purpose of this article is to reflect critically on some of the key aspects of Paulo Freire's critical pedagogy and its contribution to educational transformation. This study is based on critical interpretation and the concept of some key terms in particular. First, this article gives a glimpse into the background of critical thinking, the theoretical basis of Freire's critical pedagogy, and his life experience. Similarly, Freire's critical thinking on the banking education system, which hinders the development of learner's creative thinking, is discussed. These include the role of oppression and dehumanization of the traditional and banking system of education, dialogue and conscientization, libations and problem-posing education, praxis as the reflection in the situations, the role of political and cultural factors in educational change. Second, based on Freire's critical pedagogy, there is a critical interpretation of the current school system's educational process, Practicing Freedom based Teaching Strategies, curriculum planning, and possible transformation into teacher and learner roles. Therefore, to prepare a citizen inspired by freedom and humanization, it is necessary for learners to have critical pedagogical method that can move forward by establishing a connection between themselves and their environment. This requires collaborative and interactive based policies and teaching. It is hoped that such a study will provide some impetus for the transformation of the existing state of education, and will benefit the qualitative development of education.

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## 1. INTRODUCTION

The present education system is based on consensus, non-critical and preservation of pre-established beliefs. Educational transformation requires a radical change in pedagogy. An equally relevant issue is these days when individualism is emphasized in the expansion of injustice with larger- sectors of society. There is need for a



solidarity-based pedagogy, where underprivileged social groups at large given adequate attention. Again, when we get information from various sources, critical thinking is needed to make the right decision about what the reality of such information is, who is benefiting from this information, and what issues that information is concerned with. In these contexts, critical pedagogy will be a powerful tool for educational change.

It is a teaching method intended to help in challenging and actively struggling against any kind of social oppression and related customs and beliefs. Critical pedagogy is both theory and practice that helps learners develop critical consciousness. It is concerned with transforming relations of power which might be oppressive and which leads to the oppression of humans. It attempts to humanize and empower learners [Kincheloe \(2005\)](#). According to this thinking, education is inherently political, and any kinds of pedagogy have to be privy to this reality. An educational and social vision of equity and equality must be the idea of any sort of education. Freedom from oppression and human struggling has to be a crucial dimension in schooling.

From the review of Marxism, the Frankfurt School was the first in Europe to introduce critical pedagogy. In the 1970s, Freire criticized the existing education system which was based on formality and narrative in nature and introduced the concept of critical pedagogy as an alternative [Mahmoudi et al. \(2014\)](#). Freire's concept of critical pedagogy led to a radical change in the education system. Emphasis was placed on empowering the marginalized communities and the oppressed learners from narrative education. Therefore, education should be able to liberate the individual from any form of exploitation. Learning should start from the problem of the learner and not from the solution. Is the education system of a country like Nepal guided by critical thinking? Various studies and experiences say that only students who do not recognize themselves and their surroundings were produced by educational institutions. Is liberation possible? How is it possible to improve the current education system, especially in the classroom? This article is designed to find solutions to such problems.

The purpose of this article is to analyze some aspects of Freire's critical pedagogy and their transformation of the existing education system.

## **2. METHOD**

This study is based on critical interpretation. It describes some of the key aspects of Paulo Freire's world-famous book, *The Pedagogy of the Oppressed*. In addition, some other related sources are also considered as the basis. This article is specifically based on the concept of some key terms in particular. Attempts have been made to draw conclusions based on some of Freire's important messages.

## 2.1 CRITICAL PEDAGOGY OF FREIRE

Freire has done a remarkable job in the development of critical pedagogy. Paulo Freire, a world-renowned educationist, was born (1921-1997) into an ordinary Brazilian family. His childhood was spent in poverty. He worked with poor workers and gained experience in what and why poverty is. Freire became a grammar teacher while still in high school. Even then his intuition pushed him toward a dialogic education in which he strived to understand learners' expectations [Bentley \(1999\)](#). These experiences led him to believe that ignorance, illiteracy and a culture of silence are the result of the prevailing economic conditions, social and political trends in society, which influenced his views on education. In this context, he presented a theoretical and practical outline of critical pedagogy.

Paulo Freire (1970) analyzed society through a combination of religious liberalism and Marxist thought. He called it Critical conscientization. The conscious person thus analyzes the world around him and acts collectively on the basis of what he has achieved after the analysis. The combined form of such work he called praxis. Through his book "Pedagogy of the Oppressed", Freire criticized education as a banking system that stifles learners' creative potential. In this book, he made it clear how people have never learned to think critically about their situation. In his point of view, the banking (conventional) education system is one of the most important instruments for maintaining the culture of silence. He tried to prove such a fact that it is only possible to liberate people from the culture of silence and obscurity of ignorance through education and awareness. Therefore, He advised teachers to be liberal, humanitarian, and respect the freedom of the learner, and to teach participatory. He initiated the empowerment process based on the policy of utilizing the creative potential of the learners. At the same time, in his view, education should make the learner optimistic and increase correlation. But the critical approach must be strengthened.

Freire attempts to transform oppressed people and prevent them from being objects of education into subjects of their self-governance and emancipation [Aliakbari and Faraji \(2011\)](#). With this in mind, learners have to act in a manner that enables them to transform their societies, that's excellent performed through emancipatory education. Through problematic education and questioning of problematic issues in the lives of learners, learners learn to think critically and develop critical awareness that helps them improve their lives and take responsibility for them, measures necessary to construct a greater just and equitable society. Thus, it is often said that critical pedagogy challenges all sorts of domination, oppression and subordination in order to liberate the oppressed [Aliakbari and Faraji \(2011\)](#). As Kessing-Styles (2003) has mentioned, critical pedagogy is an academic reaction to inequalities and oppressive relations of power that exist in schooling system [Keesing-Styjes \(2003\)](#). Thus, the fundamental aim of education is to achieve a critical awareness which enables individuals to prepare the ground for their progress.

## 2.2 CRITIQUE BANKING SYSTEM OF EDUCATION

Paulo Freire (1970) opposes the banking (traditional) concept of education and emphasizes problematic education. Because banking education begins with an illusion about human as objects, it cannot encourage development. According to him, banking education suffers from narrative illness. So the remarkable feature of this narrative education is the richness of the sound of the words, no longer their changing power (p.53). Banking education creates a situation of oppression in society and acts as a means of oppression. In this system learners are handled like a blank slate and information is accumulated by the instructor.

The focal point of Freire critical pedagogy on critical thinking is predicated on the objective realities within the person's life Burbules and Berk (1999) . In contrast to different strategies, the posed-problem method has been presented by Freire requires exchange of thoughts and beliefs through dialogue in which both instructors and learners have critical cooperation in research. Freire states that education must begin with resolving the paradox of the instructor-learners, including the poles of contradiction that both the instructor and the learner belong together. He accepts that cognizance is the indication of progress and advancement. Such a progress and advancement is the main output of good critical instruction plan.

Indeed, following narrative-based method defective teaching-learning process in the educational system and also hamper from social progress and critical thinking among learners:

- The teacher teaches and the learners are taught.
- The teacher knows everything and the learners do not know anything.
- The teacher thinks and the learners are memories contents.
- The teacher speaks and the learners listen modestly.
- The teacher makes rule of discipline and the learners follow them.
- The teacher chooses and imposes his choice, and the learners command them.
- The teacher acts and the learners imitation his/her action.
- The teacher selects the contents alone, and the learners adapt to it.
- The teacher confuses the authority of knowledge with his/ her professional authority, which he/she determine as opposed to the freedom of the learners.
- The teacher is the main subject of the learning process, while the learners are mere objects Freire (1970) .

In the banking system of education, the more learners work to accumulate the deposits entrusted to them, the less they produce significant sensations that will arise out of their arbitrariness as transformers of that situation. The more they fully accept the passive role imposed on them. The more they adjust to the world in general and amassed, the divisive outlook will be on reality. According to Freire, individuals who knowingly or mistakenly use a banking approach fail to experience that deposits themselves are logical anomalies about reality. Accordingly, Freire (ibid,) refers to the metaphor of the traditional way to deal with education as the banking model of education since it resembles saving cash in a bank. This model reflects

the structure of an oppressive society wherein the oppressed and the oppressors are divided. It advocates the determination of reality. So it is a vehicle for proceeding with the political mistreatment and neutralizing freedom.

### **3. I MPLICATIONS FOR EDUCATIONAL TRANSFORMATION**

#### **3.1 EDUCATIONAL PROCESS**

Freire (1970), states that educational process is not neutral. Education either works as a tool to motivate the reconciliation of generations into the logic of the existing system, or it becomes the practice of freedom, the means by which people are critical of reality and how to take an interest in the change of their reality can. Freire adds that this doesn't depend either on the content of the education offered or on the goodwill of the educator. The educational process itself is decisive here.

Freire therefore suggests that the nature of liberation education based on dialogue. He differentiates banking education from dialogue-based and problem-based education. Instructors are the pillars of knowledge; they know it all and the learners don't know anything. Instructors gather information in learners and never ask those questions they know. Learners in this model are receivers of information. They receive, memorize and repeat. They are not asked to relate this knowledge to the current problems and injustice in society in order to improve society. He gets a passive role in this process.

The question raised by Freire on the education system and teaching process in the '60s is equally important in countries like Nepal today. In the teaching process, the learner is treated like a thoughtless machine. Some information specified by the curriculum is provided through one-way communication. The learner memorizes limited information, writes in the exam, and is declared to know him. But the learner has not been able to understand the real problem of his life. In other words, a person has become literate but has not become educated. In order to change this situation, the educational process has to start from the learner's experiences, and real-life problems. For this, the critical method based on collaboration with the active participation of the learners and role of facilitator of the educator in the learning process may be the basic condition. Therefore, in the educational process, the teacher must accept the freedom of the learner, and make dialogue strategy the medium of instruction.

#### **3.2 PRACTICING FREEDOM BASED TEACHING STRATEGIES**

A person by nature wants freedom. One can determine one's own direction and position. In Freire's view, education is a practice of freedom, and education should be an activity of freedom [Freire \(1970\)](#) . Therefore, the teacher should understand the method of how to maintain the opportunity of freedom to the learner in the educational process. Through this method, teachers and learners participate in the learning process in many ways, and meaningful learning occurs. It can empower both teachers and learners. Thus the teacher should use the method based on asking ques-

tions during teaching. Ask questions about problems in the learner's living situations, and allow them to think critically. With this, the learners can create new value of life for themselves. Such a state of teaching actually gives the learner an opportunity to make self-choices and self-decision making.

### **3.3 CHANGE IN CURRICULUM PLANNING PROCESS**

The curriculum should be based on a combination of the learner's different learning experiences and learning meanings. Similarly, the curriculum should also address social issues. The aim of education is to develop in the learner proper knowledge, skills, attitude as well as human values, self-reliance, self-awareness and self-realization in the field related to various aspects of life. Therefore, when planning the curriculum, teachers or curriculum developers should think deeply about how students will achieve the expected goals of education.

The curriculum planning is based on the idea that there is no single method that can work for all people. Therefore, the curriculum is designed using the experiences of the learners and the realities of their lives [Degener \(2001\)](#). In Freire's view, curriculum planning is a completely learners-oriented process that starts with the learner's expectations and desires. He accepts that curriculum development is a continuous process that can be achieved through the mutual participation of educators and learners. Although the role of intellectuals in curriculum planning is also important. They should participate in the process of development and transformation of the curriculum through critical dialogue and reflection on work issues and division of labor.

Based on this perspective, curriculum development is not an upward-down process and all those involved in education and learning process should play their role in educational planning in the best way. From this point of view, education is a means to make people aware, while the status quo of society impedes their mental progress due to political and social conditions [Shim \(2008\)](#). In this context, providing of critical consciousness is seen as the starting point of the curriculum forming process from Freire's perspective.

Freire (1985) states that it is necessary to concentrate on the rural reality so as to adjust education to the realities of the country. In fact, they have tried to focus in educational planning on the fact that any curriculum must be based on the current realities of the lower classes of society. He considers that education is a political activity aimed at analyzing social relations. Such analysis develops the political consciousness of the people. Therefore, curriculum planning should be able to bring the backward communities in the society into the mainstream of education and make them aware of their political rights.

Based on Freire's curriculum perspectives, the process of expanding and developing knowledge with simultaneous work and practical participation in economic efforts is implemented. When quantitative and qualitative educational development based on critical awareness can be effective in a broader development and expan-

sion of individual and collective life, educators associate school and educational plans with the job and economic production process. It should also be linked to political situations and cultural heritage. Freire's education focuses on the education of the oppressed. He believes that oppressed people have no critical thinking power for various reasons. Freire proposed various measures for society wherein the silent culture is dominated and the oppressed people are deprived of their rights. Knowledge of these measures is important for curriculum development.

Freire emphasizes education to help a person become self-sufficient rather than ready-made. Therefore, the curriculum should include learners' daily life experiences and techniques based on traditional skills. In addition, they need to be able to think critically and creatively, to have useful life skills while being able to lead a humane life with freedom.

### **3.4 CHANGE IN ROLE OF TEACHERS AND LEARNERS**

According to Freire approach, the educator is a problem poser to learners. He indicates that teachers should be involved in the continuous reconstruction of their own path of curiosity, opening the doors to learning habits that benefit everyone in the classroom . In fact, Learning through problem-solving and practical application allows learners to play a more active role in determining their experiences and positions within society Dewey (n.d.) . Instructors should empower their learners by creating awareness about the reproducibility of the process of unequal status in school education and offering social institutions Kincheloe and McLaren (1994) . Therefore, teachers must have the knowledge, skills, and ability to critique and transform existing inequalities in society. In this sense, they are transformative intellectuals. This transformative intellectual role is related to learning from learners, valuing their ideas, and participating in the dialogue process Giroux (1997) .

According to Freire (1998), classroom experiences with the help of instructors, should create relationships wherein learners should act as active agents in their learning and develop a critical awareness, allowing them to develop legitimacy, Help to evaluate fairness, and rights within their educational and life situations. Therefore, teachers need to be able to know the opinions of learners in the educational process, make teaching interactive, and find a way out when classroom discussions are interrupted. Teachers also have an important reflective role for creating an open and equal environment, they must engage in deeper self-reflection about their position in the classroom and the implications of their authority Degener (2001) .

As Horton and Freire (1990) suggest, teachers should have authority over their subject, but the learner should be given an open opportunity to express his or her views while interacting in classroom activities. In critical pedagogy, educators communicate with learners about society and culture so that they can critically reflect on different aspects of the culture they are studying and prepare to enter Aliakbari and Faraji (2011) . Freire (1970) further noted that educators' efforts need to be tailored to learners to engage in critical thinking and the pursuit of mutual humanization.

(p. 56). For this, the teacher should help the students to understand the reasons behind the facts. In addition, the teacher are concerned about releasing knowledge that helps learners understand how power and privilege relationships are distorted and manipulate social conditions, and help oppressed learners by identifying with them.

Learners are those who actively participate in the teaching-learning process that they together with the instructor, correct the curriculum, and they share their ideas and learn to challenge assumptions that they must engage in social critique to create a public sphere where citizens can exercise power over their own lives and learning [Giroux \(1997\)](#) . Learners contribute to curriculum decisions and determine the field of study and related reading material. Critical learners are those who can accept, reject, or suspend judgment on a claim. They can also give good reasons for their thoughts and correct their own and others' processes (Moore and Parker, 1986, as cited in [Aliakbari & Faraji, 20007](#)). Freire (1970) suggested that there is a fluid relationship between instructor and learners, that is, the teacher is a learner and a learner is a teacher. Therefore, learners are not recipients of knowledge, rather they become creators [Aliakbari and Faraji \(2011\)](#) . Freire also affirms that "no one teaches the other, and no one is self-taught, People teach one another, mediated by the world" (p. 61). He suggests that learners should develop their knowledge power to critically understand how they are in the world and where they are; they see the world not as an unchangeable reality, but as a reality in the process of transformation.

Freire (1970) confirms learners as beings in the process of becoming - as unfinished beings. The unfinished character of the learners and the transformative nature of reality requires that education be a continuous activity. The learner isn't always only a listener; they are important co-investigators in dialogues with the instructor (p.65). Therefore, the learner has to face problems related to themselves in the circumstances and with the circumstances. They need to simply accept the challenges and be prepared to respond to that challenge. In their response, new challenges must be challenged followed by new understanding; and committed to it. Hence, co-operation and co-existence between learners and educators in learning seem necessary to improve our current education system.

#### **4. CONCLUSIONS**

Unlike traditional approaches, education in critical pedagogy seeks to have a transformative effect on learners. The aim of this approach is to change the attitudes of the people through which they used to look at various social problems. It seems that such an approach is given no place in the Nepalese educational system. The present education system of Nepal suffers from traditional feudal thinking. The freedom of the learner has not been recognized. The participation of ordinary parents and learners in the educational planning and decision making process has been ignored. The educational process is from top to bottom. Learning is not a matter of discovery and

rediscovery, but of memorizing preconceived facts. Therefore, critical pedagogy is very essential for the transforming of educational systems. From a theoretical and practical point of view, Freire is one of the most well-known and effective educationists in terms of critical education. He rejects traditional methods of education and introduces problem-based learning as a critical dialogue in changing educational structure and system. The learners are considered as the main core of education and have active participation in selecting educational process and subject matters.

Furthermore, for teaching, Freire recommended only dialogue, which requires critical thinking, can bring out critical thinking. He proposes to make one's life problematic to realize that one needs another situation without being oppressed and can actually achieve such a situation.

Curriculum development of Freire is a horizontal process. In which manner; teachers, pupils and even parents have to be participate in curricula development. Freire's main objective is libertarianism, so the formation of the curriculum should have correspondence with the traditional and cultural context. Based on their outlook on curriculum development, the school cannot be separated from the economy and productive institutions as well as politics. This approach can be effective for transformations in our education and curriculum planning system from preschool level to university.

Accordingly, teachers need to realize the relationship between the child's situations and the teaching strategy. The teaching strategy is related to the learner's experience, freedom and development of human qualities. Whether a person becomes a slave or a free citizen seems to depend on the education system. On the other hand, education should be a weapon of social justice and against any interference. The result of education is social transformation and the means of liberation. The educational process is the construction and reconstruction of knowledge. Therefore, the teacher should be a co-learner and not an imposer. Get learners to learn from each other and keep learning. Education cannot be meaningful without proper knowledge of social, political, economic and cultural aspects. In this context, such matters of fact need to be included in the curriculum with the participation of learners as well. Since only learners who can constructively critique various aspects can raise their voice against fatalism and injustice and inequality, it is essential to emphasize the method of reflection in the educational process. This allows learners to make and use their own decisions about themselves. Further, it is essential to improve the school's approach and teaching environment in order to increase the participation of pupils in backward classes and areas in education and increase their learning achievement.

In sum, in the present education system, the pedagogical problems raised by Freire in the 60's \70's are still there. There is a need to change the traditional thinking and methods of politicians, education policymakers and teachers in constructive ways. Freire's Pedagogy demands a learner who can analyze their situations and a teacher who can help them. This requires collaborative and interactive based policies

and teaching in addressing the existing problems of education. Similarly, there is a need for effective implementation of critical ways for academic liberation of learners. It should also be a justice-based value commitment for policy makers and practitioners /educators.

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