

PAULO FREIRE'S PERCEPTION OF DIALOGUE BASED EDUCATION

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ABSTRACT

Dialogue based educational approach, which was put forward by Paulo Freire (1921 – 1997), one of the most significant thinkers of radical education approach, was designed in such a way to enable teachers and students to carry out research together. Freire proposes this educational approach as an alternative to the traditional educational model which he calls as banking education. Therefore, the criticism of the banking model of education by Freire is provided in the first place in the study.

The central concept in the educational model put forward by Freire is dialogue. Dialogue also constitutes the main concept of this study. Therefore, the study comprehensively focuses on the concept of dialogue, which is one of the techniques to be used in problem posing education according to Freire. As Freire emphasizes, dialogue is not only an educational technique, but also a style of confrontation that is peculiar to humans and must be used by all humans. Considering this fact, the concept of dialogue was examined in both dimensions in this study.

Key Words: Freire, critical pedagogy, problem posing education, dialogue.

INTRODUCTION

Paulo Freire, one of the leading representatives of critical pedagogy, is well-known for his libertarian ideas in this field. A great part of his ideas is concentrated on the criticism of the traditional educational methods within a broad framework. Establishing a strong relation between education and politics, Freire proposes a new model of education. He criticizes the traditional educational method, which he calls banking education, by drawing a perspective of society in line with his experience in Latin America. According to him, those privileged people who make the social relations imperative and dominant are from the class of oppressors. The other members of the society constitute the oppressed. Furthermore, this imperative process is facilitated by many instruments. One of these instruments is the ordinary education, which is named as banking education by Freire (Mayo, 2011).

Banking Education System

Banking education, the most important theme of Freire's critical pedagogy, means a process in which the knowledge is directly transferred to students, the teacher is the sole distributor of knowledge, and the student is the passive receiver of this knowledge. Under these conditions, the learner is the object of the learning process, but not the subject. In this process, the knowledge is consumed without any criticism, and the learners experience a cultural alienation and become defenseless against cultural imperialism (Mayo, 2011).

According to Freire, those being educated through banking education are ignored at the first step and converted into empty containers to be filled by the educators. The reason why Freire calls this educational model as banking education is that it regards depositing in the students as one of the most important purposes (Milan, 2008). Freire explains this as follows:

"The students are the depositories and the teacher is the depositor. Instead of communicating, the teacher issues communiques and makes deposits which the students patiently receive, memorize, and repeat. This is

the "banking" concept of education, in which the scope of action allowed to the students extends only as far as receiving, filing, and storing the deposits." (Freire, 2011: 51).

Freire named banking education as 'educação bancária' in Portuguese, his mother tongue. The term *bancária* has such meaning as bank or bank-related (Tagliavia, 2008). According to Freire (2004), banking education has been shaped by the views of the proponents of this model towards the humans. This model ignores the fact that the human is a historical being.

In banking education, the educators know and those being educated do not. The educator speaks and those being educated listen amenably. Thus the educator deposits the knowledge mechanically into the memory bank of the student (McLaren, 2006; Tagliavia, 2008). In this respect, it is not surprising that the banking education considers the humans as beings to be influenced. As the students get busier with storing the material loaded on them, their critical conscious that would help them intervene in the world will be more passive (Freire, 2000).

Joel Spring (2010), a professor of pedagogy from the United States, believes that the banking education is not libertarian and that it causes the oppressed to become obedient and alienated. This model of education ignores life and makes it more difficult to be conscious of oneself, rather than verifying the life of the learner and providing him/her with the tools of developing a perception of life. The purpose of the education provided through this method is not to understand oneself, but to change the individual according to alien purposes. In this model determined by the oppressors, the oppressed are instructed how to exist. Such a model naturally tends to sustain the existing social structure. It is apparent that the content and ethical orders of this model reflect the ideology of the ruling class, i.e. oppressors.

According to Freire (2011), the banking education is designed to serve the purpose of the oppressors and it causes dehumanization. This model is covertly based on the assumption that there is a polarity between the human and the world. According to this assumption, the human just exists on the world, but is not together with the world or others. This assumption rejects that the human is a conscious being, and it accepts that human has conscious. If education is based on this assumption, it causes alienation rather than humanization. Freire (1991) alleges that both the humanization and dehumanization of the human are possible as the human is not an incomplete being. The humanization process of the persons is hindered through such instruments as unfairness, exploitation and pressure.

According to Freire, banking education is one of the instruments that hinder the humanization process of the person to the greatest extent. This model makes the individual an object on which work is performed, and the learner is regarded as a tool for the teaching to achieve its purpose. Therefore, the target achieved by the banking education is the creation of a conscious that is alien to the learner (Spring; 2010). However, Freire suggests that the main purpose of education is to develop the social awareness and critical thinking skills of people. Within this framework, Freire considers education as a process of assistance to raising one's awareness. Believing that this purpose can be achieved through problem posing education, Freire considers it as an alternative to the banking model education (Ayhan, 1995).

Problem Posing Education

Freire (2011) suggests that the defenders of liberation should reject banking model of education and replace it with the problem posing education because this type of educational work corresponds to the core of the conscious and puts communication into practice. Therefore, problem posing model of education is a libertarian educational work.

Considering this aim of the problem posing education, more importance is attributed to what Freire means by liberty. According to Freire (2004; 2011), liberty is the thinking and acting of the people in order to transform the world on which they live. Actual liberation can be also considered as humanization.

Stressing that the general aim of the problem posing education is liberation, Freire also sets specific aims for the implementation of this model. According to him, problem posing education aims to strengthen the student's skills of thinking critically or contemplating on the object of knowledge and reasons for his/her existence. When this aim is achieved, the student will start acquiring knowledge through a feeling of epistemological curiosity. It is not possible to acquire systematic knowledge without curiosity. In this respect, curiosity is an instrument of acquiring knowledge (Vittoria, 2010). Freire summarizes the process of acquiring knowledge as follows:

"Knowledge emerges only through invention and re-invention, through the restless, impatient, continuing, hopeful inquiry human beings pursue in the world, with the world, and with each other." (Freire, 2011: 51).

According to Freire; for the implementation of the problem posing education, it is necessary to abandon the thoughts that educators hold absolute knowledge. In this model, the educator should be ready for a dialogue-based relation and thus for listening. Furthermore, the educator should not accept the educators as the subject of the knowledge (Vittoria, 2010).

The banking education considers the knowledge as a gift given by those considering themselves as the knower to those considered by them as knowing nothing while the knowledge in problem posing education is a real perception that is not only taught by the educators but also taught to the educators together with the students. Therefore, the problem posing education considers the teacher not as a person that transfers knowledge, but as a person that perceives together with the students. In this process, the students carry out critical research together with the teacher rather than being amenable listeners (Freire, 2011).

The teacher does not interrupt the action of the student in problem posing education. The teacher also gets into the process of perceiving together with the student. Therefore, he/she does not consider the objects of perception as his/her own private property. In this way, people develop their strength of critically comprehending their ways of existing in the world in which they have found themselves and in the world of themselves (Yıldırım, 2011).

With the problem posing education, people start perceiving the world not as a stable reality but as a reality in the process of transformation. Thus, people think of the world and themselves, and they do not separate the act of thinking from action. The problem posing model defines people as beings that are in the process of being completed. Unlike other living beings, the humans are aware of the fact that they are not complete and competent. This incompleteness and awareness makes it compulsory for the education to be a continuous activity as a way of expression that is unique to the human. The people undergoing such education create an actual form of thinking and acting (Freire, 2011).

The central concept in Freire's epistemology is praxis, which means conscious action. The act of knowing includes a dialectical movement from action to idea and from thinking on action to a new action (Ayhan, 1995). However, according to Freire, the educator must act in such a way to enable action and thinking to be in interaction with each other as thinking and action constitute a simultaneous unity in the praxis concept. These two items are so connected to each other that even if one of them is sacrificed only partially, the other would be damaged (Freire, 2011). It is apparent that Freire's educational theory is an initiative to concretize the epistemology that is based on praxis. Freire proposes dialog in this model of education, in which the teacher and the learner jointly undertake the act of knowing.

Dialogue

Freire regards dialog as the basic item in the knowledge structure. So, the classrooms designed in accordance with this model of education will become the meeting places where information is researched (Ayhan, 1995). Within this framework, it is apparent that Freire does not consider dialog as a simple education technique leading to the attainment of certain results. He considers dialog mainly as complementary to the human nature. We need others to know ourselves and we can affirm our identity only through other people, i.e. through dialog (Tolomelli, 2012). Freire (2000) suggests that the human has a social and historical existence

unlike other living beings. Besides, the human has the capacity to know himself/herself. In other words, the human beings are conscious of their incompleteness unlike other living beings. Thanks to this feature, they can educate themselves by encountering others.

Dialog, which means encounter of people with each other, is also experienced through world to name the world. Thus, dialog is not possible between those who want to name the world and those who do not. As dialog is an existential reality, it should be applied to the pedagogy, too (Freire, 2011). Freire (2000) does not consider dialog only as a need of the human nature. Dialog is also a sign of the democratic stance of the educator. Therefore, a democratic educator is a dialogist by nature.

According to Freire, who takes dialog as an element of pedagogical communication, education means sharing. Therefore, education must be based on dialog, through which relational opportunities are created. In such education, where authority-based reasons are not valid, no one teaches another person (Yıldırım, 2011). Therefore, educator learns from the student and the student learns from the educator in the process of dialog. So, the roles of the educator and the learner interchange. Thus, in the process of dialog, educators help the development of a process in which the educators and the learners can learn together (Mayo, 2011). Freire believes that dialog has a number of preconditions. And one of these preconditions is love (Ayhan, 2000).

Dialog requires a deep love of the world and the humans. Dialog is an act of naming the world, and it can be realized only by being blended with love. Therefore, love is the basis of dialog and also the dialog itself. Thus, one who does not love the world, the life and the people cannot enter into dialog. Another precondition for dialog is modesty (Freire, 2011).

According to Freire, dialog in education is accompanied by modesty. In other words, dialog cannot be used without modesty. Therefore, dialog is an element that directly influences the establishment of a relation between the educator and the learner based on equality (Tagliavia, 2008). Freire explains this as follows:

“On the other hand, dialogue cannot exist without humility. The naming of the world, through which people constantly re-create that world, cannot be an act of arrogance. Dialogue, as the encounter of those addressed to the common task of learning and acting, is broken if the parties (or one of them) lack humility. How can I dialogue if I always project ignorance onto others and never perceive my own?” (Freire, 2011).

Dialog also requires a strong faith, too. This is the human beings’ faith in their strength to do and to create. Every human has this faith by nature. However, those who are exposed to a concrete alienation cannot use this strength (Freire, 2011).

Another precondition for dialog is hope. Hope arises from the continuous search of humans due to their incompleteness. On the other side, hopelessness is a form of ignoring the world and escaping. However, hope does not mean crossing the arms and wait passively. The human can have hopes only if he/she struggles (Freire, 2011).

Lastly, dialog requires courage. The parties of dialog should encourage thinking critically, in other words thinking without fearing the dangers of the action. The determinant for a critical thinker is the continuous transformation of the reality in favor of the continuous humanization of the humans. Such a dialog can create critical thinking (Freire, 2011).

DISCUSSION AND CONCLUSION

The basis of the educational method proposed by Freire is constituted by the element of dialogue. In this respect, dialogue is a technique used in Freire’s method. There are a number of preconditions for dialogue, which is also one of the most important elements of human nature. When the preconditions are closely examined, it can be seen that each of them corresponds to a characteristic of the human that is unique to the human. This demonstrates that the technique of dialogue is not only used in the process of education.

Dialogue, which is possible through the satisfaction of preconditions, also helps the strengthening of the characteristics that are peculiar to the human. The preconditions of dialogue include love, humility, faith, hope and courage. According to Freire, these are also the human characteristics that are peculiar to the human. Estranging of people from these qualifications indicates their alienation. However, the alienation of the human does not mean that the characteristics peculiar to his/her nature have been eliminated. These can only be deactivated. If Freire thought that the alienated people lost these qualifications, he would not attempt to educate these people as each of these is a precondition. Dialogue, which is the most important component of the problem posing education in this context, is also a style of encounter that can be experienced by all people including those that have been alienated. Therefore, hope, a precondition for dialogue, also constitutes the point of origin of its pedagogy. Within this framework, Freire was quite hopeful that every human could be educated.

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