



Paulo Freire's Notion of Philosophy of Education

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Abstract:

Paulo Freire (1921-1997) was a Brazilian revolutionary educator and philosopher who was a pioneer of problem posing education system. He believed that education is a path of achieving "critical consciousness", which would enable people to create changes in their lives. His theory 'Conscientizacao' or critical consciousness or the process of conscientization allows people to question the nature of their historical and social situations. For Freire "education is a practice of freedom and education should be an activity of freedom". For him this 'Conscientizacao' is a struggle against dehumanization; a act of love against the lovelessness. Freire proposed that teachers and students must carry a dialogical relation in classroom which should always be a 'horizontal relation'. Freire criticized the traditional educational system and compared it as a banking method, which is a pre-determined process. The teacher-centered classrooms continue to discourage the students, so they feel a kind of suppression. There works an anxiety, a loss of confidence, and fearfulness in between the students which forms an anti-dialogical atmosphere in the classroom. The students are encouraged to memorize information word-to-word from the books or the information which are given by the teachers. And all these information they have to memorize only for getting good marks in exams. So, in this situation students are not encouraged to become a free thinking participant in the creation of knowledge rather they are treated as container which is filled up by the teachers. Against this banking method Freire proposed a dialogical problem posing education system in which both the teachers and students can develop their critical consciousness. Freire also said that, this can only be reached by a "revolutionary praxis".

Keywords: Problem posing education, banking method, critical consciousness, Conscientizacao, revolutionary praxis, dialogical, antialogical.

Introduction: Paulo Freire was born in a middle class family in Recife, on 1921. He had to experience hunger and poverty in 1930s, because of the economic crisis of United States, which at that time affected Brazil so much. His philosophy of education is rooted in his lived experience. So, he was aware of the relation between poverty and the ability of learning. According to him, thought and study alone did not produce any critical thinking; it is rooted in concrete situations¹. Freire's lived experience motivated him to quest for the critical pedagogy, by which the people can emerges from a dehumanized situation and move towards the way of humanization. Freire's reflection on education system is a form of

politics. For him schooling is never neutral, instead it always serves some interest and impedes others. In the traditional teaching process the learners are treated as a thoughtless machine. There are some pre-specified curriculum that is always provided by one way communication and the learner only memorize it to vomit in exams, through this process the learner does not understand the real problem of his life and of the society. There is no activity of freedom respectively between teachers and students, which leads to a one way domination. To transform this dominating education system Freire wanted to implement the problem posing education system as a powerful weapon. His philosophy of education originated from the thoughts of Hegel's work, Immanuel Kant's critical philosophy, Karl Marx's and Fredrik Engels philosophical ideas etc². Many people believe that Freire's critical pedagogy has been influenced by Frankfurt School, which has launched a new approach in contemporary educational issues³, but it's doesn't mean that Freire's critical pedagogy totally inherent this concept. As Kincheloe stated, "Emerging from Paulo Freire's work in poverty stricken northeastern Brazil in the 1960s, critical pedagogy amalgamated liberation theological ethics and the critical theory of the Frankfurt School in Germany with the progressive impulses in education..."⁴. In his book "Pedagogy of the Oppressed", Freire criticized the traditional education method as a banking system which creates obstacles to learners' creative thinking. Banking system of education never allows people to think critically about their situation. In his point of view, the banking system of education is one of the most important tools for sustaining the culture of silence or 'communiques'. Only through education and awareness people can liberate themselves from such kind of dominating situation. Therefore, He encourages the teachers to be liberal, humanist, revolutionary educator who gives the student freedom of thinking, freedom to have dialogue, and inspire them to participate in the revolutionary praxis⁵. In this paper, I will try to analyze Paulo Freire's notion of anti dialogical banking method of education and, how we can come out from that with the help of a dialogical problem posing educational method.

Banking Concept of Education: Freire's notion of critical pedagogy begins with the refutation of "banking system of education". Freire calls this formal education system as banking system of education, in which the teachers act as a depositor of the knowledge into the void brain of the students; as if the students minds are like *tabula-rasa*, which needs to be filled up with information. In this process teachers are considered as a knowledgeable individuals and the students as mere ignorant. Basically, it is an act of monologue where the teacher is the only speaker, so, there is no intercommunication between teachers and students. Freire criticized his own former practice as banking method, remarking that "it was as if my word, my theme, my reading of the world, in themselves, were to be there compass"⁶. In the banking method teachers are considered themselves as a narrating subject and students as a listening object. This process immortalizes the culture of silence. In the classroom teacher talks about the reality as if it is fixed, benumbed, static, predictable, as a result students detached from the reality. To show their hierarchy, the teachers use hard words; the sonority of words, which don't have any transforming power. This process, alienates the students from understanding their lived experience, which produces self-depreciation among the students. Banking system makes the students into a container; here, who can fill this container with more knowledge is considered as best teacher and who can take more knowledge from the teachers and permit themselves to be filled, they are

considered as best student. In this context Freire stated that “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, 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”. There exists a dichotomy between the teachers and students in the banking system of education, the teachers present themselves as they are necessarily opposite to their students and consider the students as idiots; full of ignorance. “The students, alienated like the slave in the Hegelian dialectic, accept their ignorance as justifying the teachers existence—but, unlike the slave, they never discover that they educate the teacher”⁷. As a result, the student starts to feel that he is ignorant and only the teacher has knowledge and that the student is the recipient of what the teacher has in him. This kind of relation Freire compared with the relation of oppressor and oppressed, invader and invaded. So, internalizing the teacher’s opinion means internalizing the oppressor’s opinion, thus the oppressor has begun to be housed within the oppressed. The oppressed begin to feel that, to be is to be like the oppressor, to be under the oppressor, to depend on the oppressor. Neither the teacher can think for his students, nor can he impose his thought on them. In banking method of education (which provides the interests of oppression), the students started depending emotionally on those oppressive teachers which leads the students to necrophilic behavior. Because banking system turns the student into a receiving object, try to control their action as well as create a barrier to think critically or creatively, so it produces “necrophily”. “Necrophilous person loves all that does not grow, all that is mechanical. The necrophilous person is driven by the desire to transform the organic into inorganic, to approach life mechanically, as if all living persons were things... Memory, rather than experience; having rather than being, is what counts. The necrophilous person can relate to an object - a flower or a person - only if he possesses it... He loves control, and in the act of controlling he kills life”, says Fromm⁸. Freire mentioned some characteristics of education system which have been practices in banking method:

- a) The teacher teaches and the learners are taught;
- b) The teacher knows everything and the learners do not know anything, they are ignorant;
- c) The teacher thinks and the students have to remember those contents;
- d) The teacher speaks and learners listen meekly;
- e) The teacher disciplines and the students are disciplined;
- f) The teacher chooses and imposes their 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, the syllabus, and the students (who were not consulted) adapt to it;
- i) The teacher confuses the authority of knowledge with his/her professional authority, which s/he places to oppose the freedom of the learners;
- j) The teacher is the subject of the learning process, while the students are mere objects⁹.

Such characteristics of an education system are equal to an education of domination, which steals the student's creative power by which student could change the world. The banking method of education implies a non-progressive world of dictatorship and there the oppressors have the power in their hands. Constantly adapting the teacher's word ceases the path of freedom and critical thinking of the students. Freire said, "for the more the oppressed can be led to adapt to that situation, the more easily they can be dominated"¹⁰. Here, the dominated students are reduced to the status of thing and they are not considered as actors in intercommunication. The teachers behave like a conqueror, aim at conquering the student through a paternalistic behavior. "Every act of conquest implies a conqueror and someone or something which is conquered. The conqueror imposes his objectives on the vanquished, and makes of them his possession. He imposes his own contours on the vanquished, who internalize this shape and become ambiguous beings "housing" another. From the first, the act of conquest, which reduces persons to the status of things, is necrophilic"¹¹. This necrophilic atmosphere transforms the way of communication into communiqué, dialogue into monologue. The dominating teacher hardly gives an opportunity to ask some question to the student. The teacher acts like an invader, who owns the knowledge and the student note down every word of the teacher and memorize the contents narrated by the teacher (here the students act like invaded person). The students are afraid of expressing their words because there is an inherent feeling among students that they are inferior, and the teachers are superior. "Those who are invaded consider themselves inferior, they must necessarily recognize the superiority of the invaders. The values of the latter thereby become the pattern for the former. The more invasion is accentuated and those invaded are alienated from the spirit of their own culture and from themselves, the more the latter want to be like the invaders: to walk like them, dress like them, talk like them"¹². Banking method does not have the power of leading people to the way of liberation, rather it has the power of 'de-humanization'. Liberation is a kind of praxis which is the combination of action and reflection of the people. Praxis has the power of transformation of the world. Those who truly committed to the liberatory praxis, neither they accept any kind of mechanistic concept of consciousness as a void container to be filled, nor they use this banking method of oppression in the name of liberation. As most of the teachers are surrounded by an oppressive culture, they are so much misguided. Even some well-intentional teachers also do not perceive that they are acting like a 'bank clerk'; they don't realize that they are pushing the students in the direction of de-humanization. Knowingly or unknowingly their use of banking approach creates contradiction about reality. Memorizing and mimicking teacher's word, the verbalistic lessons, selecting some book pages by the teachers for reading; these all methods create distance between the teachers and the pupils. "The bank-clerk educator does not realize that there is no true security in his hypertrophied role, that one must seek to live with others in solidarity"¹³. Banking system of education makes the students as a passive entity, like student's mind is an empty vessel which is open for the deposit of knowledge. This method of education is similar to what Sartre calls the "digestive" or "nutritive" concept of education, in which knowledge is "fed" by the educator to the pupils to "fill them out". Freire suggests "Education must begin with the solution of the teacher-student contradiction, by reconciling the poles of the contradiction so that both are simultaneously teachers and students"¹⁴. The banking method of education resembles

with an oppressive society which advocate the resistant of reality. But through existential experience, when people understand that this system not only dominative, but also a hindrance to be a fully human, they started struggling to get out of this banking system for their liberation. Those people, who truly struggling for their liberation, must refuse the banking system, and identify themselves as a conscious being; a person who have critical consciousness.

Problem Posing Education System: Freire proposed the problem posing education as an alternative to banking method of education, which help the people to achieve their freedom. In this method the teacher and student build their relation with mutual love and respect. Here, the teacher motivates the student to think critically. According to Freire, "Problem-posing education, responding to the essence of consciousness—intentionality—rejects communiqués and embodies communication"¹⁵. So, here the teachers do not act like a depositor of knowledge, rather they also become the student among students. The dialogue works an important role to achieve critical consciousness in the problem posing education system. In the way of liberation, who are unable to having a dialogue with people, is surely self-deceived. But, dialogue cannot occur between those who don't let anyone else to speak and those whose right to speak has been taken away from them. Dialogue cannot exist without love, humility, faith, hope and critical thinking. Problem-posing education introduces a dialogical process to stand against the hierarchical nature of banking method, in which both teachers and students act as subjects. Through dialogue, the concepts of 'teacher-of-the-students' and the 'students-of-the-teacher' disappeared, and new concepts emerges: teacher-student with students-teachers. The teacher is no longer merely that bank clerk who deposit their knowledge into students' void brain, but one who is himself educated in dialogue with the students, who in turn while being educated also educate. Thus the content of education evolved through the dialogue between the teacher-students and the students-teachers. The student is also no longer a docile listener, they become a critical co-investigator in dialogue with their educator. As Freire stated "The problem-posing method does not dichotomize the activity of the teacher-student: she is not "cognitive" at one point and "narrative" at another. She is always "cognitive," whether preparing a project or engaging in dialogue with the students. He does not regard cognizable objects as his private property, but as the object of reflection by himself and the students. In this way, the problem-posing educator constantly re-forms his reflections in the reflection of the students."¹⁶ In the struggle for their liberation, both teachers and students not only unveil the reality critically, but their task is to recreating knowledge in order to transform the world. Through action and reflection the re-creators of knowledge attain the reality, which leads them to the way of true liberation; "human activity consists of action and reflection: it is praxis; it is transformation of the world. And as praxis, it requires theory to illuminate it. Human activity is theory and practice; it is reflection and action"¹⁷. If any person genuinely committed to the liberatory praxis, then their action and reflection cannot occur without the action and reflection of others. So, liberatory education doesn't promote "A" for "B", but rather it does promote "A" with "B".

The anti-dialogical banking educator organizes their own content and tries to answers their self-made question. In problem posing education, the program of content neither

considered as an imposition, nor any kind of deposited knowledge. Rather, it is considered as structured, systematized, and well-developed 'representation' of knowledge about which the people want to know more. While, banking system mythicized the reality, it is the task of problem posing education to demythologizing it. Problem posing education resists banking method's anti-dialogical approach which treats the students as 'object of assistance' and inhibits the creative power. The critical pedagogy based on the creative power of human and here, by true action and reflection people can engaged themselves in thinking critically and transforming the world creatively.

It is the fact that practicing problem posing education resolves the teacher-student contradiction. This method does not espouse any kind of dichotomy rather, the relation between teachers and students should be built on empathy, common goals and mutual understanding. Freire points out the importance of "just, serious, humble, and generous relationships" for well-functioning educational practice¹⁸. So here people can enrich their critical thinking and perceive the world in which they actually exists; the world is not consists of static, unchanged, unmovable reality (as banking concepts mythicizes these) rather the world is seen as a reality in process with constant transformation. "Whereas banking education anesthetizes and inhibits creative power, problem-posing education involves a constant unveiling of reality. The former attempts to maintain the submersion of consciousness; the latter strives for the emergence of consciousness and critical intervention in reality"¹⁹. The revolutionary, humanist teacher never acts like a depositor, prescriber or domesticator, he always try to engaged the students in critical thinking and always quest for their mutual humanization. To achieve the mutual humanization they establish a partnership with the students. When both the teacher and students will be concerned about their dehumanized status, then they will start struggle to recover their lost humanity.

Now, it is not impossible to implement problem posing education in today's educational institution. In Freire's view, as education should be a movement of freedom, therefore the educator should understand how to manage the learner in the way of liberatory educational process. In many ways the student and the teacher can participate in this pedagogy which will be critical, meaningful, and thoughtful. It has the power of humanization, which empower both teachers and students²⁰. Before entering into problem posing educational classroom the teacher should consider himself as a learner too. There will be no space for any authoritarian body. The education process should be collaborative. Thus the teacher should apply the technique which will be based on developing curiosity among students during teaching. Ask questions about any kind of problem which will be based on student's lived experiences; let them think critically. With this, the learners feel encouraged to arise some questions regarding the issues, in which they can identify any kind of injustice, inequality etc. Teacher should encourage the student to do their task independently, though the teacher can guide themselves like how many tasks they have to do in a certain time or, whether they need to work alone or with others. This type of teaching method gives the student an opportunity to make self-choices and take self-decision²¹. Having a dialogue about current topical matter with students can also make them critically aware. So, these can be those processes by which student and teacher both can become the 'fully human'.

Conclusion: “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’s notion on pedagogy is seems closer to Rabinranath Tagore’s educational philosophy. His approach of education is also humanistic. According to him education is the emancipation of man from all kinds of bondage. By his educational idea he established Visva Bharati, here music, literature, art, dance and drama are given great importance in daily life of the school. By creating this kind of atmosphere, he wanted that the process of teaching should be based on lived experience; life-centered. Tagore doesn’t want education to be merely informative, but it should be creative.

In his *Foreword to the Pedagogy of the Oppressed*, Richard Shaull states, “There is no such thing as a *neutral* educational process. Education either functions as an instrument that is used to facilitate the integration of the younger generation into the logic of the present system and bring about conformity to it, *or* it becomes “the practice of freedom”, the means by which men and women deal critically and creatively with reality and discover how to participate in the transformation of their world. The development of an educational methodology that facilitates this process will inevitably lead to tension and conflict within our society. But it could also contribute to the formation of a new man and mark the beginning of a new era..” ; So, we have to remove the traditional way of banking method and introduce problem posing education to change the oppressive structure of the education. Then, the students are considered as a main component of education and they started participate in the educational process as a subject. Also, it is necessary to improve the school's or college’s approaching nature and teaching atmosphere in order to increase the participation of students from backward or under-privileged classes and areas in education and enhance their learning outcome. When the means of education will be related with social transformation and liberation, the learners will automatically be able to take their own decisions, they will raise their voice against injustice, inequality etc. For the holistic development of the new era, it is very important to transform the education process today. Thus, the emergence of humanization will begin with the help of revolutionary praxis.

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