

# Preparing for Dialogue, Teaching for Emancipation: Paulo Freire on Teacher Preparation and the Role of the Critical Educator in the Emancipatory Project of Education

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**Abstract:** This paper seeks to provide a discussion of how Paulo Freire portrayed the critical pedagogue engaged in the liberatory project of education and the place of teacher preparation in the realization of the emancipatory endeavor of liberatory education. I begin with a discussion of Chapter Two of the *Pedagogy of the Oppressed* where Freire presented his critique of “banking education” and laid the groundwork for his proposed “problem-posing education”, which serves as the foundation of the Freirean conception of *dialogue*. The paper proceeds with Freire’s *Pedagogy of Freedom* where the Brazilian thinker was most explicit in his idea of the role of the critical educator primarily highlighting certain principles directly related to the framing of the emancipatory role of the critical educator with the teacher as a co-producer of knowledge through dialogue and the recognition of the learner’s *unfinishedness*. I continue with an exposition of

how Freire articulated the importance of teacher preparation in shaping the critical educator. Ultimately, this paper provides an overview of Freire's idea of a critical teacher and the importance of engaging in her formation and preparation through an exploration of his most important writings that directly frames the responsibility of a teacher in service to the emancipative spirit of Freirean liberatory education.

**Keywords:** Freire, critical pedagogy, teacher education, philosophy of education

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## EMANCIPATION IN SCHOOLS

To define emancipation in the context of education, I turn to Charles Bingham and Gert Biesta's definition of the concept of emancipation rooted in ancient Roman law that involves the releasing of a wife or a son from the legal authority of the father. Biesta states that "Emancipation literally means to give away ownership ... it means to relinquish one's authority over someone."<sup>1</sup> This would imply that in every emancipatory act, there is an "object" of emancipation that is freed with the severance from the authority of another figure.<sup>2</sup> This statement denotes that emancipation is generally associated with the concept of autonomy and independence from the tutelage and directive of another. Invoking the Kantian commandment of the Enlightenment and writings on education, Biesta linked the process of man to become a "rational autonomous being" with the process of education.<sup>3</sup> What can be surmised in this statement is the recognition of the process that is apparent in every educative act—the development of one's capacity to think. And through this, a manifestation of how emancipation has taken form in the practice of education—an emancipatory process through the development of knowledge and the capability of the student to think for herself. Emancipation as understood in schools is a process of recognizing an individual's capacity to be autonomous by acknowledging and developing her capacity to reason.

The development of one's capacity to reason has always been the credo of educational institutions. One only needs to look at how the mission statement, core values and even mottos are framed by schools highlighting

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<sup>1</sup> Charles Bingham and Gert Biesta, *Jacques Rancière: Education, Truth, Emancipation* (New York: Continuum, 2010), 27.

<sup>2</sup> Biesta continues his tracing of the historical development of emancipation as he related its evolving nature and disposition with the turn of the times. The 17<sup>th</sup> century saw emancipation in relation with religious tolerance. In the 18<sup>th</sup> century, it is associated with slavery and its abolition. At the onset of the 19<sup>th</sup> century, the fight for women's rights became the face of emancipation. See *Ibid.*

<sup>3</sup> *Ibid.*, 28.

the development of the students' intellectual capacities and promoting the notion of independence among learners. Yet, it is noticeable that what is apparent in schools is not just the development of autonomy as explicitly stated in the flowery and aspiratory words of mission statements, what is given more emphasis in schooling is the development of obedience and an outright focus on maintaining the status quo.<sup>4</sup> For Giroux, schools have become "factories for the working class" tasked with reproducing the existing class structure.<sup>5</sup>

The claim that schools have often become institutions that seek to perpetuate ideologies of subjection is reinforced by Noah de Lissovoy as he states, "Oppression in education does not merely function to preserve privilege; education as it in fact exists oppresses students because its central sense and purpose is domination and subjection."<sup>6</sup> This form of schooling that is laden with hierarchies, imbalances in power, and an instrument of domination is the primary object of criticism of critical pedagogy and its framework of liberatory education. To provide a theoretical underpinning on the understanding of emancipation in the practice of education, I turn to critical pedagogy and its intellectual forefather, Paulo Freire.

## **EMANCIPATION IN FREIREAN LIBERATORY EDUCATION**

To understand Paulo Freire's notion of emancipation requires an unraveling of his definition of oppression. Freire, as an intellectual, did not write of oppression as a mere observer of the oppressed as he both witnessed and experienced how the political and economic structure of his native Brazil perpetuated the systemic oppression that flourishes in mass

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<sup>4</sup> Philip W. Jackson, *Life in Classrooms* (New York: Teacher College Press, 1990), 32.

<sup>5</sup> Henry Giroux, *Theory and Resistance in Education: Towards a Pedagogy for the Opposition* (Westport, CT: Bergin and Garvey, 2001), 57.

<sup>6</sup> Noah De Lissovoy, "Rethinking Education and Emancipation: Being, Teaching, and Power," in *Harvard Education Review*, 80:2 (2010), 205.

illiteracy and mythologization of reality.<sup>7</sup> It is in the Brazilian Northeast that Freire had a firsthand experience on how widespread illiteracy has become an instrument in perpetuating a “culture of silence.” These initial forays and his experiences in promoting an adult education that is based on local and participative learning paved the way for a succinct discussion of oppression and its ideological underpinnings in education which is encapsulated in the work that is commonly considered as his greatest contribution and that which is most celebrated, *Pedagogy of the Oppressed*.

*Pedagogy of the Oppressed* stands as a testament of the transitioning element of Freire’s thoughts. For Schugurensky, it is in this monumental work that we can observe his transition from a liberal to a more radical approach grounded in social and educational realities.<sup>8</sup> The first chapter of Freire’s work shows a product of interconnected disciplines ranging from philosophy, sociology and psychology in an effort to provide a framework of oppression that is rooted in dehumanization. Freire provided a definition of dehumanization stating that it is a “distortion of the vocation of becoming fully human.”<sup>9</sup> His discussion in the first pages of *Pedagogy of the Oppressed* offers an exploration of the relationship between the oppressed and the oppressors drawing from Hegel’s dialectic between the master and the slave.<sup>10</sup> The Freirean concept of dehumanization is characterized by an affliction that does not only concern the oppressed but the oppressor as well as the latter engages in acts that distort the vocation of becoming fully human; the oppressor is dehumanized because of his engagement and active participation in the act of dehumanization.

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<sup>7</sup> Brazil is classified as one of the traditionalist countries in South America during Freire’s time. A state that is “characterized by elitism, authoritarianism, discrimination, paternalism, and exploitation.” Daniel Schugurensky, *Paulo Freire* (New York: Continuum, New York, 2011), 18.

<sup>8</sup> *Ibid.*, 69.

<sup>9</sup> Paulo Freire, *Pedagogy of the Oppressed*, (London: Continuum, 2003), 44.

<sup>10</sup> Schugurensky, *Paulo Freire*, 70.

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Freire states that it would be impossible for the oppressors to lead the struggle for liberation from dehumanization so it falls upon the oppressed to engage in the formulation of a pedagogy that is not for the oppressed but something that is forged alongside them.<sup>11</sup> It is therefore necessary for the oppressed to not just be passive receptors of a pedagogy that seeks to liberate her as to exclude the oppressed in the process of her own liberation is what turns pedagogy and the supposedly humanizing act of education into an instrument of domination and dehumanization.

As articulated by Freire in an effort to give utmost importance to the engagement of the oppressed, “Attempting to liberate the oppressed without their reflective participation in the act of liberation is to treat them as objects which must be saved from a burning building.”<sup>12</sup> This engagement in praxis is imperative as Freire states that “Freedom is acquired by conquest, not by gift.” And this conquest that Freire constantly mentions is an education that enables the oppressed to articulate and practice new ways of taking part in their humanization; an education that genuinely liberates.<sup>13</sup>

But before a pedagogy of the oppressed can be conceptualized, the oppressed must first overcome an inherent “fear of freedom” that leads them to emulate the oppressors and adapt a misconstrued view of a pathway towards liberation. This tendency is most apparent at the initial stage of the struggle of the oppressed that for Freire, the oppressed has framed the oppressor as the “model of humanity” and in the process, strives to emulate him and risk the danger of becoming sub-oppressors.<sup>14</sup> This prescriptive notion based on the oppressor as a model of manhood is deeply ingrained in the consciousness of the oppressed. What can be surmised in

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<sup>11</sup> Freire, *Pedagogy of the Oppressed*, 47-48.

<sup>12</sup> *Ibid.*, 65.

<sup>13</sup> *Ibid.*, 47.

<sup>14</sup> *Ibid.*, 45.

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this framing of Freire's understanding of oppression is that oppression is not just physical; it also possesses a psychological dimension.<sup>15</sup>

By understanding how Freire associated oppression with dehumanization, we are provided with a picture of how he framed the blueprint of emancipation through liberatory education.<sup>16</sup> An education that is liberatory in a sense that it seeks the involvement and reflective participation of the oppressed. An education which is non-neutral and prioritizes the development of critical agency. An education that is eminently political and an indelible part of the project of freedom.<sup>17</sup> Freire envisioned schools as a place for nurturing a truly working democracy.<sup>18</sup> This is an important step as Freire sees the democratization of schools as a part of a broader program to democratize society as it can be a tool for social and cultural emancipation.<sup>19</sup> A tool that can ultimately drive the process of rebirth, for the oppressed to take on a new form of existence that is far from the spitting image of the oppressor who was once their ideal.

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<sup>15</sup> The influence of the philosopher and psychologist Erich Fromm is very apparent in the first chapter of Freire's work as well as in the Freirean notion of *decodification* which is a form of communal psychotherapy. So influential is the work of Fromm that the process of overcoming Freire's notion of oppression must be in-line with psychological principles that ultimately translates into a collective form of social psychotherapy.

<sup>16</sup> It would be difficult to imagine a utopic vision from a Freirean viewpoint as it is the thematic concept of Freire to include themes on process, unfinishedness, and continuous historical struggle. In *Pedagogy of Hope*, Freire made mention of the idea of utopia and how it is hinged on *humanization* and hope. That for Freire, "Utopia, however, would not be possible if it lacked the taste for freedom that permeates the vocation to humanization. Or if it lacked hope, without which we do not struggle." Paulo Freire, *Pedagogy of Hope: Reliving Pedagogy of the Oppressed* (New York: Bloomsbury Publishing, 1992), 89.

<sup>17</sup> Henry A. Giroux, "Rethinking Education as The Practice of Freedom: Paulo Freire and the promise of critical pedagogy," in *Policy Futures in Education*, 8:6 (2010), 716.

<sup>18</sup> For Franz Giuseppe Cortez, the vision of democracy that Freire is invoking is not that of liberal democracy but something that resembles social democracy.

<sup>19</sup> Schugurensky, *Paulo Freire*, 28.

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## TO INDOCTRINATE OR TO LIBERATE: THE TEACHER AS AN INSTRUMENT OF OPPRESSION OR LIBERATION

It is interesting to note that Pedagogy of the Oppressed was once tagged as a “violent book.”<sup>20</sup> Such claim validates the book as a piece of literature which echoes a revolutionary tone challenging established structures in societies and in particular, the system and conduct of education. The second chapter of this “violent book” offers criticisms directed against a form of (mis)education that has been discreetly promoting the interest of the oppressors seeking to maintain their dominant position in society. It is an education that is defined by passive transference of information treated as an “act of depositing”, disabling any opportunity for communication and annulling the creative power of the students who are considered as mere depositories.<sup>21</sup> Paulo Freire referred to this form of education as banking education.

Banking education which is metaphorically defined through the act of “depositing” knowledge to the students with the teacher acting as the depositor, is devoid of communication and even less so, the possibility of facilitating dialogue. The removal of the student’s capacity of inquiry by the teacher is what ultimately characterizes banking education as the teacher who acts as a depositor is completely alien to the existential experience of the students who, for the banking educator, are just passive recipients of knowledge.<sup>22</sup> For Biesta and Bingham, students are not given the opportunity to think in the banking model. Therefore, hindering their ability to think for themselves as the teacher does it for them. And as the student’s thinking is borrowed from the teacher, the students can no longer be themselves as their very being is borrowed from the latter.<sup>23</sup>

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<sup>20</sup> *Ibid.*, 26.

<sup>21</sup> Freire, *Pedagogy of the Oppressed*, 72-73.

<sup>22</sup> *Ibid.*, 71.

<sup>23</sup> Bingham and Biesta, *Jacques Rancière*, 65.



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The effectiveness of banking education is nigh unquestionable. The reason why it has successfully preserved the oppressive conditions of education is because it often yields results deemed effective from the perspective of standardized testing hinged on rote memorization and mechanical narration.<sup>24</sup> Freire did not mince words when he expressed that education is suffering from a “narration sickness.”<sup>25</sup> This is manifested on how the teacher-student relationship is framed in banking education with the student being treated as a vessel to be filled; an object devoid of historicity and experience.

The metaphorical notion of the empty vessel has been used time and time again by scholars through the ages that it is almost as old as the traditional notion of a “good” teacher—a teacher who is often framed as a master lecturer, adept at grandstanding and in possession of an almost unassailable degree of knowledge regarding his practice or specialization. The empty vessel that is the student, the depositor that is the teacher, both situated in a cauldron that is the school, yield a form of education grounded on oppression and the persevering desire to maintain it.

The problem is that it is hard to deny the effectiveness of banking education as a tool for domination, for it is often dressed as an act of “humanitarianism” by the oppressors who mostly benefit in preserving the oppressive structure. This deception is exemplified by Freire as he states, “The oppressors, use the banking concept of education in conjunction with a paternalistic social action apparatus within which the oppressed receive the euphemistic title of “welfare recipients.”<sup>26</sup>

What is apparent in banking education is the effort to reform the consciousness of the oppressed, instilling them with the notion that they are people who needs to be transformed so that they can fit in the general configuration of a “good society.” That when the oppressed dare to speak or express themselves, the elite brands it as a manifestation of sickness and

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<sup>24</sup> Schugurensky, *Paulo Freire*, 71.

<sup>25</sup> Freire, *Pedagogy of the Oppressed*, 71.

<sup>26</sup> *Ibid.*, 74.

that they require treatment, this “ailment” for Freire, is the desire to speak up and participate.<sup>27</sup> The oppressor through banking education shapes the consciousness of the oppressed so that they see themselves as marginals who have chosen to live outside of society.

The concept of banking education for Freire regarded the oppressed as “the pathology of the healthy society, which must therefore adjust these “incompetent and lazy” folk to its own patterns by changing their mentality.”<sup>28</sup> This instills a false sense of consciousness that pins the blame on the oppressed for their suffering which is necessary on the part of the oppressor to maintain the system of domination and establish the relevance of the banking concept of education. That in order for the oppressed to fit in the “good society”, they must be educated in a particular way. The implanting of an inner sense of indebtedness in the consciousness of the oppressed further strengthens a system that is defined by domination that is perpetuated by the oppressor; the “welfare provider” who is seen as the ideal of the oppressed.

Here is where the nefarious ingenuity of banking education lies, it wears a humanitarian mask acting as an agent of transformation and a part and parcel in the development of men and women while actually hindering their capacity to become fully human. With its objective of changing the consciousness of the oppressed rather than alter the situation that they are in, banking education engages in turning the oppressed into automatons which for Freire, is the negation of their ontological vocation to be fully human.<sup>29</sup> Rather than provide an education that seeks to transform, what can be seen in this arrangement is an education that domesticates. A domestication that favors the banking educator as the act itself leads to a degree of validation. The existence of the teacher who acts as a depositor of

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<sup>27</sup> Paulo Freire, *Education for Critical Consciousness* (London: Sheed and Ward, Ltd., 1974), 14.

<sup>28</sup> Freire, *Pedagogy of the Oppressed*, 74.

<sup>29</sup> *Ibid.*, 74.

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knowledge is validated by the supposed ignorance of the student by being her necessary opposite.<sup>30</sup>

A teacher is in danger of unwittingly becoming an instrument of oppression as she continues to play the role of a depositor of knowledge in the banking education framework. This tendency takes root not in the actual practice of teaching but during the formative educative experience of the teacher. For Fulgencio, Sedilla and David, conceptions of teacher education students are often shaped by their experiences in elementary and secondary education and these experiences shaped the belief that teachers need to ascertain that students are given knowledge to pass various assessments. For this, rote and surface learning are given emphasis to ensure that knowledge is retained.<sup>31</sup> This tendency may also be accentuated in some teacher education programs considering the indifference shown by policy makers in professional education on democratic and liberatory themes in education.

A teacher who adheres to the banking model of education risks the danger of thinking that she educates to liberate when the truth is quite the opposite. The teacher, the depositor of knowledge who shares her expertise to the receptors that are the students, reinforces that which makes education an exercise of domination by indoctrinating them to adapt to the world of oppression.<sup>32</sup> The true humanist for Freire cannot lean on banking education as an instrument in the quest for liberation yet the prevalence of its methods is recognizable in practice even among teachers who hold liberatory aspirations. This is highlighted by Freire's cautionary passage where he stated, "Unfortunately, those who espouse the cause of liberation are themselves surrounded and influenced by the climate which generates the banking concept, and often do not perceive its significance and

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<sup>30</sup> *Ibid.*, 72.

<sup>31</sup> Aurora Fulgencio, Betinna Sedilla, and Adonis David, "Exploring Filipino Teacher Education Students' Conceptions of Teaching and Learning," in *Educational Measurement Evaluation Review*, 5 (2014), 100.

<sup>32</sup> Freire, *Pedagogy of the Oppressed*, 78.

dehumanizing power ... they utilize this same instrument of alienation in what they consider an effort to liberate.”<sup>33</sup> What must be remembered especially in the instrumentalization of education as a liberatory force is that authentic liberation is a process of humanization—that liberation is praxis.<sup>34</sup>

For education to become truly liberatory, it must not be limited to mere transferal of information nor should it be treated as separate from its subject and her own experiences. For education to become a practice of freedom, it must continuously establish the connection between human beings and their understanding of the word and its relations to the world. What is needed is a pedagogical method that recognizes man’s historicity and unfinishedness. This, for Freire, is the liberatory alternative for the domesticating capacity of banking education; Freire refers to it as *problem-posing* education.

Problem-posing education as a pedagogical method, operates under the notion of recognition of not just the student but the teacher as well. The banking method which totalizes the student is countered by the recognition of the unfinished character and capacity to transform of problem-posing education. Freire described problem-posing method as an education that “affirms men and women as beings in the process of becoming—as unfinished, uncompleted beings in and with a likewise unfinished reality.”<sup>35</sup> Compared to banking education wherein the students are considered as mere receptacles detached and separated from reality and their own history, problem-posing education recognizes that there exists a human-world relationship and it must be the point of departure of every pedagogy. This act of recognition authenticates the student as she is treated

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<sup>33</sup> *Ibid.*, 79.

<sup>34</sup> *Ibid.*, 79.

<sup>35</sup> *Ibid.*, 85.

as a historical being with the capacity to influence the dynamic present and refuse a pre-determined future.<sup>36</sup>

The translation of this humanistic approach in pedagogy is the opportunity that problem-posing education provides to the student which is the capability to engage in inquiry. The capacity of problem-posing education to facilitate inquiry is the very foundation of its principles and the main claim of its existence for it is not possible for the oppressors to use it as a tool. Inquiry is founded in the capacity to ask questions and as Freire puts it, “No oppressive order could permit the oppressed to begin to question: Why?”<sup>37</sup> It is through inquiry that the mythological reality that the banking method maintains is shattered as inquiry in problem-posing develops students into critical thinkers.<sup>38</sup> Freire mentioned this transformative quality of problem-posing education as he states:

In problem-posing education, people develop their power to perceive critically the way they exist in the world *with which* and *in which* they find themselves; they come to see the world not as a static reality, but as a reality in process, in transformation.<sup>39</sup>

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<sup>36</sup> It is not hard to imagine the power of these statements in the context of Paulo Freire who developed his method in service of farmers and other marginalized sectors in his native Brazil. For the longest time, the oppressed have been fatalistic in their view of reality that they continuously accept their place in the oppressive structure that dominates them. This idea is easily recognizable in the framing of Freire’s “stages of consciousness” in his original work *Education as the Practice of Freedom*.

<sup>37</sup> Freire, *Pedagogy of the Oppressed*, 86.

<sup>38</sup> As Cortez puts it, critical thinking has no univocal term associated to it. The term “critical thinking” in this context is understood from the notion of critical pedagogy and its relation with the critical theory tradition which involves “a deeper understanding of the socio-political and economic arrangements that hegemonize and homogenize the lives of the students. Franz Giuseppe F. Cortez, “Critical Rethinking of Critical Thinking: A Contribution of Critical Pedagogy in Facing the Challenges of K+12,” in *Kritike*, 10:1 (June 2016), 322.

<sup>39</sup> Freire, *Pedagogy of the Oppressed*, 86.

The indispensability of the process of inquiry in conscientization is highlighted in the vehicle on which the process of inquiry is facilitated—through dialogue. This term might sound familiar for the educator yet much care must be taken in trying to unveil the meaning of dialogue from a Freirean perspective as it is easily misconstrued because it is often used loosely especially in pedagogy.

Dialogue is not an unfamiliar word in education that most of the time it is tagged as a practice which resembles a form of facilitation. This is a case of reducing dialogue into a superficial practice as its transposition to mere facilitation reduces it to an act of opening spaces for conversation mainly with the intent of talking and sharing but not listening nor being sensitive to the context of the participants.<sup>40</sup> It is a far cry from how Freire conceived the term in the context of his pedagogy as dialogue does not just open spaces for conversation, it also entails recognizing subjects and their own historical spaces.

In the introduction written by Stanley Aronowitz for *Pedagogy of Freedom*, he states the importance of understanding the true essence of dialogue and its relation to education that for him, “education takes place when there are two learners who occupy somewhat different spaces in an ongoing dialogue. But both participants bring knowledge to the relationship ...to explore what each knows and what they can teach each other.”<sup>41</sup> Dialogue then goes beyond mere facilitation but a venture towards a joint pedagogical encounter rooted in the recognition of people as subjects not separated from their own history engaging in the process of producing knowledge and meaning-making.

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<sup>40</sup> Stanley Aronowitz, “Introduction,” in *Pedagogy of Freedom: Ethics, Democracy and Civil Courage*. See Paulo Freire, *Pedagogy of Freedom. Ethics, Democracy and Civil Courage* (Maryland: Rowman & Littlefield, 1998), 8.

<sup>41</sup> *Ibid.*, 8.

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## THE DIALOGICAL CLASSROOM AS A FRAMEWORK FOR A PEDAGOGY FOR FREEDOM

Paulo Freire's *Pedagogy of Freedom* stands as less of a manual and more of a code or framework for the professional practice of critical teachers. *Pedagogy of Freedom: Ethics, Democracy and Civil Courage* which was published in 1998, is considered as Freire's response to the call of the times as education becomes more embroidered in the flourishing of neoliberalist ideologies. What can be observed from reading *Pedagogy of Freedom* is a more experienced Freire sharing his insights polished by his experiences as a former Secretary of education in Sao Paolo, Brazil. For Schugurensky, the book offered Freire an opportunity to clarify formerly obscure concepts in his other works, most importantly among these are his ideas on the ideological dimensions of education and his views on modernism.<sup>42</sup>

Freire offered a sort of a "manual" for teachers in his other works most notably in his essay *Education as a Practice of Freedom* and the famous second chapter of *Pedagogy of the Oppressed*. Yet, it is in *Pedagogy of Freedom* that Freire is most explicit as he discussed what a critical teacher should be; an educator who sees education as "a specifically human act of intervening in the world."<sup>43</sup>

It is in *Pedagogy of Freedom* where Freire offered a succinct discussion of the critical role of the educator in the conduct of dialogue within the pedagogical setting. Most importantly on what dialogue truly seeks to facilitate as a progressive educational praxis. For Freire, the need for dialogue stems from the importance of making the students and teachers assume their epistemological curiosity.<sup>44</sup>

For Freire, people from all walks of life are naturally curious, as a farmer who have experienced injustice shares the same sense of curiosity with scientists and philosophers in their respective inquiry. Although they

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<sup>42</sup> Schugurensky, *Paulo Freire*, 89.

<sup>43</sup> Aronowitz, "Introduction," in *Pedagogy of Freedom*, 6.

<sup>44</sup> Freire, *Pedagogy of Freedom*, 80.

may share the same sense of curiosity, there is still a difference between the curious farmer and the inquisitive philosopher, as Freire believes that the simple folk has not overcome ingenious “unarmed” curiosity and is yet to become “epistemologically” curious.<sup>45</sup> It would need an intervention in the form of education for indigenous curiosity to develop to epistemological curiosity as it does not happen automatically.<sup>46</sup> It falls upon the praxis of critical education to take it as one of its essential tasks to transform this “unarmed” sense of curiosity into something critical and transformative.<sup>47</sup> Freire defined curiosity as “what makes me question, know, act, ask again, recognize.”<sup>48</sup> This sense of curiosity stands as the beginning of the process of historical and social construction and reconstruction through the development of epistemological curiosity which Freire describes as “critical, bold and adventurous.”<sup>49</sup> The fostering of this curiosity which is often suppressed in the monological nature of banking education is what dialogue should always look to maintain. This is imperative, as stated by Cortez, because dialogue operates under the notion that both teacher and students are considered as knowing objects reflecting on a knowable object which is the world.<sup>50</sup> This desire to know urges the students to become more critical of their perception of their own context and open the exploration of various possibilities for emancipation. Therefore, what dialogue seeks to maintain begins is the fostering of epistemological

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<sup>45</sup> *Ibid.*, 37.

<sup>46</sup> *Ibid.*, 38.

<sup>47</sup> This does not mean that the critical educator is looking down nor discounting the relevance and potential of ingenious curiosity as it remains the starting point of critical scientific knowledge. As Freire clarifies that “the more my own practice as a teacher increases in methodological rigor, the more respect I must have for the ingenious knowledge of the student.” *Ibid.*, 62.

<sup>48</sup> *Ibid.*, 80.

<sup>49</sup> *Ibid.*, 38.

<sup>50</sup> Franz Guiseppe F. Cortez, “The Philippine Engagement with Paulo Freire,” in *Kritike*, 7:2 (December 2013), 52.



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curiosity which allows them to “obtain a complete grasp of the object of knowledge.”<sup>51</sup>

With the fostering of epistemological curiosity comes the recentring of the educational pendulum from the epistemological authority of the teacher to the process of dialogue itself. This would require the teacher to create conditions for critical learning characterized by learners who are engaged in their continuous transformation in becoming authentic subjects with a shared responsibility with the teacher in “constructing and reconstructing” what is being taught.<sup>52</sup>

The importance that Freire bestowed to dialogue puts the teacher in a critical position in the process of liberation through education. The teacher is being required by dialogue to not just be an external figure but also an agent in the production of the conditions allowing critical learning to flourish.<sup>53</sup> Interestingly, Freire mentioned that such condition should not mirror a laissez-faire setting as a dialogical classroom should still maintain form and structure.<sup>54</sup> Freire maintains that dialogue implies responsibility, directiveness and discipline for it to achieve the goals of transformation.<sup>55</sup> This notion of directiveness and influencing the dialogical classroom setting does not necessarily imply that the teacher must adhere to the tenets of authoritarianism. Freire paints the idea that the liberatory teacher must still employ directiveness but not of the students, but of the *process*.<sup>56</sup>

Ira Shor, a contemporary of Freire, proposed the idea of *dialogue teaching* as a model in teacher education in his work, *Freire for the Classroom: A Sourcebook for Liberatory Teaching*. Stemming from the

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<sup>51</sup> *Ibid.*, 32.

<sup>52</sup> *Ibid.*, 31.

<sup>53</sup> *Ibid.*, 33.

<sup>54</sup> Franz Giuseppe F. Cortez, *The Main Elements of Paulo Freire’s Liberating Pedagogy* (unpublished paper).

<sup>55</sup> Paulo Freire and Ira Shor, *A Pedagogy for Liberation: Dialogues in Transforming Education* (London: Macmillan Education Ltd., 1987), 102.

<sup>56</sup> *Ibid.*, 46.

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idea of dialogue teaching is the development of critical literacy and situated pedagogy that will enable teachers to *problematize* all subjects of study and situate their teaching to accommodate the students' cultures.<sup>57</sup> For Shor, "Practice in leading dialogic inquiries in class will require making the teacher-education curriculum dialogic."<sup>58</sup>

Currently, the question if the teacher education curriculum is dialogical in a Freirean sense is still yet to be answered. But upon consideration of what has been discussed in this paper regarding the state of critical pedagogy and the concept of emancipation in the teacher education curriculum, as well as how dialogue is often superficially understood and practiced in the field of education, it can be assumed that the potential of genuine dialogue, its space in teacher preparation, and what it can offer in making teaching more critical is yet to make a monumental step towards realization in the professional training of teachers.

### **THE MAKING OF THE CRITICAL PEDAGOGUE: PAULO FREIRE ON TEACHER PREPARATION**

Facilitating genuine dialogue in the Freirean sense does not come naturally to an educator whose training and preparation is still dominated by positivist notion of learning that focuses on result-driven pedagogy and often stripped of its political and personal facets. It has gone unnoticed in teacher preparation that Giroux, stated that teacher preparation programs have failed to provide spaces for critical discourse for student teachers; that teacher education has "rarely occupied a critical space, public or political, within contemporary culture."<sup>59</sup> The issues on teacher

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<sup>57</sup> Ira Shor, *Freire for the Classroom: A Sourcebook for Liberatory Teaching* (Portsmouth: Boynton/Cook Publishers, 1987), 24-25.

<sup>58</sup> *Ibid.*, 23.

<sup>59</sup> Henry Giroux, *Teachers as Intellectuals: Toward a Critical Pedagogy of Learning* (New York: Bergin and Garvey Publishers Inc., 1988), 160.

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preparation is a recurring concern in critical pedagogy that various scholars have focused their lens of critique on how future teachers are formed and educated. Even today, the discussion on how teachers should be trained and prepared for the rigors of actual teaching is still in the arena of arguments as specialists and curriculum developers stake for position in the crowded curriculum.

The way that teachers are prepared and how such formation is translated in actual teaching practice fascinated Freire that for him, there exists a sense of contingency when it comes to discussing qualities that must be identified in teacher preparation yet are formed in actual teaching practice, as Freire mentions, “It ought to be an integral part of our teacher preparation to discuss the qualities that are indispensable for our teaching practice even though we know that the qualities are created by that practice itself.”<sup>60</sup> Even Freire recognized the fractures in teacher education that for him, teacher preparation must not be limited to mere technical preparation and should be rooted in “the ethical formation both of selves and history.”<sup>61</sup> This aligns with how Freire portrayed the critical educator who is tasked to facilitate critical spaces for her students; that a teacher must go beyond mere transmission of knowledge because doing so will only reinforce the banking model of education which treats the students as mere receptors of knowledge.

What must be instilled in future educators is the capacity to recognize that men and women are unfinished beings in the world. As Freire states, “simply “to teach” is not possible in the context of human historical unfinishedness.”<sup>62</sup> The problem is that this vital capacity to recognized the unfinishedness of men and women, especially in the face of fatalistic ideology, is often overlooked in teacher preparation as it is stripped of its critical attitude in favor of the traditional notion that educators must remain neutral; a residue of the traditional and

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<sup>60</sup> Freire, *Pedagogy of Freedom*, 108.

<sup>61</sup> *Ibid.*, 23.

<sup>62</sup> *Ibid.*, 31.

conservative understanding of the schools as mere institutions that reflect the accepted values of their time. Freire time and time again, exclaims that education is never neutral, and so should teacher preparation be if it hopes to claim its critical attitude.

Early on in their preparation to become full-pledged educators, a student teacher must be instilled with the capacity to identify social and political manifestations of oppression and emancipation in the conduct of education. A teacher is also a politician who should be mindful of what politics she practices in the classroom.<sup>63</sup> And in following the contingency between the qualities which are defined by the practice itself, future educators, in order to be critical, must know where they stand. As Freire puts it, “I cannot be a teacher if I do not perceive with ever greater clarity that my practice demands of me a definition about where I stand ... I cannot be a teacher and be in favor of everyone and everything.”<sup>64</sup> Contrarywise, teacher preparation remains generally neutral with its avoidance of a social and political critical stance as if the education of future teachers stands in a vacuum.

To remedy this, Freire opines that teacher preparation should be ethically grounded.<sup>65</sup> Educational practice is ethical in nature as it calls for the unhinged development of an individual to become fully human. Freire is suggesting that teacher preparation should make certain that it bridges the gap between professional development and ethical formation.<sup>66</sup> This ultimately leads us to what Freire conceives as the ethical formation of teachers which can be assumed as revolving around the concept of openness to dialogue that will facilitate the development of epistemic curiosity, recognition of the unfinishedness of men and women, and adapting a critical attitude. As Freire states: “There is no true teaching preparation possible separated from a critical attitude that spurs ingenuous

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<sup>63</sup> Freire and Shor, *A Pedagogy for Liberation*, 46.

<sup>64</sup> Freire, *Pedagogy of Freedom*, 93.

<sup>65</sup> *Ibid.*, 24.

<sup>66</sup> *Ibid.*

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curiosity to become epistemological curiosity, together with a recognition of the value of emotions, sensibility, affectivity, and intuition.”<sup>67</sup>

By examining how Paulo Freire described the responsibilities and the tenets that guide the critical pedagogue in the process of liberatory education, it is now possible to infer the critical teacher’s emancipatory role in education: an educator who engages in the problem-posing model through the facilitation of genuine dialogue that ultimately seeks to harness the potential of ingenuous curiosity and transform it to critical epistemological curiosity. And this can be instilled in the formative years of the future educator through teacher preparation.

What can be surmised in Freire’s commentaries on teacher preparation is the inherent importance bestowed on the education of teachers in order to make the profession itself more critical. And as one end of the teacher-student spectrum begins to take a critical stance, the message of critical pedagogy in transforming education into a practice of freedom takes a step closer to reality. As critical pedagogues from Freire to the various cultural and education critics that are his successors continue to be critical on teacher preparation, the critique is pushed down to the roots even before the budding takes place. That a critical pedagogue is not just tempered in the fires of actual practice, but molded in the furnace of teacher preparation.

Freire’s framing of the critical teacher remains a model for contemporary scholars as a form of critique of both teacher preparation and the reduced role of teachers in the schools as a casualty of its continuous adherence to neoliberal policies and its alignment with its enterprise ethics. This is apparent on how Giroux calls for the need of developing a critical language to address the issues on education such as the corporatization of schools turning them as factories of production for the working class.<sup>68</sup> While Ira Shor calls for a consideration of what he refers as “Freirean pedagogy” that means to replace mechanical learning

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<sup>67</sup> *Ibid.*, 48.

<sup>68</sup> Henry Giroux, *On Critical Pedagogy* (New York: Continuum, 2011), 78.

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with an educative process that is participatory, critical, multicultural, student-centered, experiential, research-minded and interdisciplinary.”<sup>69</sup> The American thinker and educator bell hooks’ engaged pedagogy is laden with traces of Freire’s ideas and concepts which are retrofitted to respond critically on issues on gender and race in education with a critical, multicultural and feminist approach in developing critical consciousness.

## CRITICISMS, CHALLENGES, AND POSSIBILITIES

The emancipatory message of Freire has been echoed by various scholars in the west and is considered a major factor in shaping the educational landscape of education in the Americas with its critique of both traditional and neoliberal education.<sup>70</sup> What critical pedagogy offered is an alternative function of education that is different from its traditional objective which is to prepare the individual by supervising her intellectual development and later on, insert her in the existing social order. This alternative function stays true to the oft-forgotten mandate of education; an orientation of the individual towards the recognition of her own freedom and autonomy. As Freire tells us in *Pedagogy of Freedom*, “Autonomy is a process of becoming oneself, a process of maturing, of coming to be.”<sup>71</sup> This liberatory function made visible is an apparent claim that education itself is indelible in man’s quest for autonomy and emancipation which is a recurring theme since the time of the enlightenment. This notion that celebrates education and the educator as indelible in the emancipatory process adheres to what Biesta refers to as the “modern logic” of emancipation which is a valid criticism against the view proposing teachers as emancipators.

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<sup>69</sup> Shor, *Freire for the Classroom*, 22.

<sup>70</sup> The works of Freire are celebrated in the intellectual circles of North America leading to a development of critical pedagogy spearheaded by scholars namely Henry Giroux, Stanley Aronowitz, Ira Shor and bell hooks to name a few. Most of the aforementioned scholars trace the development of their offshoot of critical pedagogy with Freirean liberatory education.

<sup>71</sup> Freire, *Pedagogy of Freedom*, 35.

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It is the educator and philosopher Gert Biesta who framed Rancière's notion of the equality of intelligence as a critique against what he coined as the "modern logic of emancipation." For Biesta, "The key idea is that emancipation can be brought about if people gain adequate insight into the power relations that constitute their situation—which is why the notion of 'demystification' plays a central role in pedagogies."<sup>72</sup> This leads to the common understanding that if one is to be emancipated, there is a need for an emancipator who is not subjected to the mystification brought about by power relations and machinations of oppressive systems.

This provides an interesting insight as it is often understood (or misconstrued) that the oppressed is conceived as lacking in understanding of the very predicament of her own experience of oppression. These strips the oppressed of their capacity for self-emancipation as she will always be in need of a contingent being to commence the process of emancipation through "demystification."<sup>73</sup> This is the nature of the modern logic of emancipation that according to Biesta, in order for an individual to be emancipated, there is a need for an emancipator, a someone else whose consciousness is not subjected to the workings of power, someone who is "positioned outside of the influence of ideology."<sup>74</sup>

Such criticism is an important reminder for the educator to be careful in identifying herself as an emancipator for there is the consistent and ever-present danger that in the process of emancipation, the supposed emancipator, even with the immaculate and noble mission of liberation, may accidentally resort to the modern logic of emancipation and partake in the continuous dehumanization of the oppressed.

Still, there is a lot that Freire and critical pedagogy have to offer particularly in grounding teacher preparation to its liberatory impetus. It

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<sup>72</sup> Bingham and Biesta, *Jacques Rancière*, 29.

<sup>73</sup> The notion of self-emancipation is rooted in Biesta's reading of Rancière particularly in his work *The Ignorant Schoolmaster: Five Lessons in Intellectual Emancipation*, which ultimately links Rancière's notion of radical politics with his polemical interventions in pedagogy.

<sup>74</sup> *Ibid.*, 30.

all begins with the recognition of genuine dialogue; a term that is consistently used in education but in a superficial manner. Mere facilitation and classroom discussion wherein the teacher is not a facilitator that hovers outside the experiences of the learners but a co-subject who recognizes that like her, the learner is a historical being.

It would be wrong to claim that teacher education is inadequate when it comes to providing student-teachers with various theoretical groundings related to their profession. A glimpse on the three-unit subject, Foundations of Education, will show that there are indeed a variety of theories, ranging from psychology to philosophy, are being tackled in teacher education. Where the problem takes root is not on the question of quantity and appropriateness; but on the matter of clarity. A good example is the presentation of philosophical concepts in teacher education wherein discussions on philosophical ideas are sometimes saturated and retrofitted.<sup>75</sup> This translates to various issues on pedagogical practice ranging from the actual teaching-learning experience to the practice of curriculum development as attested by the lack of a clear philosophical grounding of the curriculum in the basic and secondary education level.<sup>76</sup> There are still gray areas and even untouched social and political issues that were not addressed or worse, victimized by misconception; of which, the true essence of dialogue, as taken from the perspective of critical pedagogy, is a prime example.

It is now time for Paulo Freire to occupy a place of importance in the teacher preparation curriculum. For as it stands, the name Paulo Freire and even critical pedagogy is an unfamiliar name and an unfamiliar concept in many teacher education program. In order for the teacher to

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<sup>75</sup> It must be noted that theories and concepts of various disciplines related to education are covered by the Licensure Examination for Teachers. This somewhat implies that discussions regarding these important concepts are just conducted for the sole purpose of passing the Board Examination for Teachers and need not be translated to actual practice. Unfortunately, Freire rarely appears in the content of such examination.

<sup>76</sup> Marella Ada V. Mancenido-Bolaños, "John Dewey's Democracy and Education and the Problem of Education in the Philippines," in *Kritike*, 10:2 (December 2016), 93.



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have a clear view and understanding of her role as a critical educator and partake in the emancipatory impetus of education, there is a need to be wary of a pre-packaged teacher education and the danger it carries and begin to treat it as a non-neutral space, which in turn, will turn their future classrooms into not just a space of contestation, but also a place of recognizing oppressive struggles and moments of liberation.

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