

Research Article

A Tryst with Alternative Pedagogies: Ivan Illich and Paulo Freire

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ABSTRACT

Apart from the dissemination of skills and knowledge, education is also meant to be a tool of social and political empowerment, freedom, inclusiveness and enrichment of each individual's existence in society. However, proponents of alternative educational approaches have pointed to the 'self-defeating' nature of traditional schooling systems wherein students have limited influence over educational choices and are required to follow set rules and meet certain predetermined standards. Furthermore, they aver that educational systems aid the reproduction of inequality in society. This article engages with the unique and forceful pedagogical models proposed by Ivan Illich and Paulo Freire, which constitute two important strands in critical pedagogy. It coaxes us to take a fresh look at the restrictive nature of institutionalised education.

Keywords: Critical pedagogy, Deschooling, Ivan Illich, Libertarian education, Paulo Freire

INTRODUCTION

Education is the most fundamental of all social institutions. It lays the edifice for an individual's personality and trains the individual to be a functioning member of society. A large part of the process of socialisation in society takes place through the educational system. It is often pointed out, however, that schools and the systems of education are also systems of oppression and bondage. Students are required to obey commands; they have no say over the curriculum and, as a result, get little personal joy from their studies. Social control and conformity are also exercised through the educational system. Schools are, in fact, closely connected to the entire structure of stratification in society.

Education provides the economy with a labour force with the requisite skills, personalities and attitudes. According to Bowles and Gintis (1976), for instance, schools are used to create a workforce that is subservient, obedient and disciplined. This is regarded as a hidden function of education because, overtly, the education system is seen as a vehicle for social transformation and mobility. The school serves as a vehicle for reproducing existing social inequalities. The curriculum that is taught is also a powerful tool for social change as well as social control. Michael Apple (1979) emphasises education's selective nature, in which it, like all other institutions of society, serves to exclude certain groups while favouring others. Education maintains and disseminates what is thought to be 'legitimate knowledge', the knowledge that 'everyone should have'. The knowledge of a specific class is given cultural legitimacy by schools. Politically, economically and culturally dominant groups use their influence to transform their knowledge into 'knowledge for all'. Schools, according to Apple, are entwined in a nexus of political, economic and cultural institutions that are all fundamentally unequal and serve as a site for enacting that inequality (Apple, 1979; Weis, 2006).

Dissatisfied, therefore, with the systems of schooling in the present format, several theorists have proposed alternative models of education. Ivan Illich and Paulo Freire are two such theorists/activists who have proposed alternative paradigms for education that make it the truly emancipating experience that it ought to be. With the success of Illich's *Deschooling Society* (1971) and Freire's *Pedagogy of the Oppressed* which was first published in 1970, the two became stalwarts of critical pedagogy and prominent spokespersons for an entire generation of young scholars (Kahn and Kellner, 2007). This article takes an overview of the educational ideas of Ivan Illich and Paulo Freire.

IVAN ILLICH AND THE IDEA OF DESCHOOLING

Ivan Illich rose to prominence in the 1970s when his book *Deschooling Society*, which contains a radical critical discourse on education as practised in 'modern' economies, was published. The work essentially states that the 'top-down management' of schools renders students powerless. According to Illich, top-down management is a syndrome that is characteristic of the modern, technological economy and all of its institutions, and in the context of education, it prevents individuals from truly learning. He, along with Everett Reimer (1971), believed that the school had become the 'universal church' of a technological society, incorporating and transmitting its ideology, shaping human minds to accept this ideology, and conferring social status in proportion to such acceptance.

Illich upholds that education ought to be a liberating experience. Education should be able to develop an individual to explore one's potential and use initiative and judgement

to develop one's faculties and talents to the fullest. Alternatively, education, at its most basic, is concerned with the acquisition of specific skills such as a language or a craft. In either case, schools as they currently exist and function, according to Illich, are ill-equipped to achieve these goals. As a result, the current format of school education is inherently self-defeating (Illich, 1971).

Illich proposes that people who naturally use certain skills in their daily lives should be engaged to impart those, as they would be the best people to teach those skills. He gives the example of Spanish-speaking teenagers in New York, many of whom would have been mere high school dropouts, who were engaged to teach Spanish to school teachers, social workers and ministers. They were trained to use a teaching manual designed for use by linguists with university degrees and their training was completed in just 1 week. Within 6 months of being in the field, they had successfully completed their task of teaching Spanish to non-Spanish-speaking people. However, in practice, we function within a system where such natural skills are not recognised or utilised. More often than not, such natively skilled people lack the official authorisation to impart their skills in the context of a formal system. Only those with standardised credentials, those who have been officially trained, possess certain qualifications, and are certified to teach, are permitted to teach in the educational system. This is true for all types of skill training (Illich, 1971).

Furthermore, real learning should entail students' participation in all aspects of the learning process. According to Illich, most learning should actually require no teaching. In the current educational system, students have little say in the decision-making with regard to their own education. Their involvement is limited to compliance with rules and regulations and attaining specified standards. According to Illich, therefore, schools are repressive institutions that stifle creative expression, instil conformity and crush students into not only accepting the interests of the powerful but also regarding these to be just. This, to Illich, is the 'hidden curriculum' operating in schools. Students have little control over what they learn and how they learn it. The teaching regime is an authoritarian one in which the student must learn to comply and conform in order to be considered successful. The best student is not always the most learned or skilled or the most exceptionally brilliant. The best student is the one who excels within the system. Those who excel at conforming are promoted to the next level and are appropriately rewarded. Schools reinforce a world view that equates 'teaching with learning, grade advancement with education, (and) a diploma with competence' (1971, p. 4). Because the school is the agency that grants the credentials that are valid in the labour market, it wields enormous coercive power to exact conformity. Graduating from such schools, students as citizens continue to use the same yardsticks in all aspects of their lives, perpetuating inequality and the imbalance of power within the system. As a result, Illich is harshly

critical of the educational system, viewing it as the root of the problem with modern industrial society. He avers that schools as the primary agency of socialisation have become the first and most critical stage in the development of 'mindless, conforming and easily manipulated' citizens. Students are taught to conform, and that conformity is rewarded; individuality and hence originality are not given their due place.

According to Illich, these lessons (at school) prepare the individual for his role as a mindless consumer, for whom passive consumption of industrial society's goods and services becomes an end in itself. Responding to advertisements and the directives of those in power, people expend their resources, including time, money and energy, to obtain these much-flaunted objects of desire, the products of industry. It must be noted that when Illich talks of commodities, he means both goods and services, including the services of professionals such as doctors, lawyers and even social workers. Indeed, Illich is sceptical of all of these. People are educated through the educational system to believe that they will require the services of these professionals at some point in their lives. They are taught to show deference and respect for professional authority and to become devoted consumers of the services of doctors, social workers, lawyers and other professionals. Through the educational system's indoctrination, they are trained to accept that those in authority know what is best for them and can make decisions about their well-being better than they can. People become reliant on the directives of the state and its auxiliary, the bureaucracy, as well as various professional bodies. Illich believes that in order to address the issue of an over-institutionalised society, the foundation must be dismantled, de-institutionalising education for a de-institutionalised society.

Illich contends that modern industrial society, in its current form, is unfit to build the foundation for true happiness and fulfilment in life. He observes that despite the vast availability of commodities off the market and the purchasing power to obtain them, people are dissatisfied. Illich bemoans the fact that despite the constant deployment of trained professionals with ever more comprehensive programmes to address social ills, misery, dissatisfaction and social problems continue to rise alarmingly. The consumer-driven society has only one ready-made solution for everything that ails it: consume more and more goods and services.

Expressing disappointment at this restrictive nature of institutionalised education, Illich makes a case for self-directed education, supported by voluntary social groups and carried out through informal arrangements. His solution is misleadingly simple yet a radical one. The answer, for Illich, lies in the abolition of schools and the educational system as it exists. As the school is the foundational institution, de-schooling is the first logical step towards reform. 'Deschooling is, therefore, at the root of any movement for human liberation' (1971, p. 34). To replace the traditional school, Illich proposes the

use of ‘talent exchanges’ and ‘learning webs’. In the first, an instructor passes on a skill that he possesses, to others who are interested in learning it. A Spanish speaker, for example, can teach Spanish to people who need to learn it. ‘Skill-teaching is a matter of repeating drills over and over’, says Illich (1971, p. 65). Illich recognises that learning a skill isn’t always a happy process, and that it is ‘all the more gloomy for those students who need it the most’ (Illich, 1971). Illich also recognises the necessity for some type of certification or credit system, but is unable to propose a long-term solution. Illich’s other mechanism is a more comprehensive method of creating learning webs. This is Illich’s preferred educational method. Learning webs establish a network of teaching and learning among like-minded individuals who will pursue ‘creative and exploratory’ learning on their own initiative. Illich explains how these webs can be formed:

- Through ‘reference services to educational objects’, which facilitate access to items or processes used in formal learning. Some of these items can be set aside for this purpose and stored in libraries, rental agencies, laboratories and showrooms such as museums and theatres; others can be used on a daily basis in factories, airports or on farms, but made available to students as apprentices or during off-hours.
- Skill Exchanges allow people to list their skills, the conditions under which they are willing to serve as models for others who want to learn these skills, and their contact information.
- Peer-Matching, a communication network that allows people to describe the learning activity in which they want to participate in the hopes of finding a partner for the activity.
- Reference Services to Educators-at-Large, who can be listed in a directory that includes the addresses and self-descriptions of professionals, paraprofessionals and freelancers, as well as the terms of access to their services. Such educators could be chosen through polling or consulting with their former students.

Illich concludes that ‘deschooling’ will destroy ‘the reproductive organs of a consumer society’ and result in the establishment of a social order in which an individual can be truly liberated and fulfilled.

PAULO FREIRE: LIBERTARIAN EDUCATION

Paulo Freire has proposed a pedagogical paradigm based on a new relationship between the teacher, the student and society. Observing the state of educational practices as a teacher, Paulo Freire started the development of a new paradigm of education—one that would be sensitive to the needs of students. He later became deeply involved in

adult education and worker training. Freire's pedagogy was initially concerned with literacy, and he was motivated by the desire to assist individuals in overcoming their sense of powerlessness by empowering them to act on their own behalf. Freire criticises the traditional educational system for 'domesticating' people and advocates for a liberating education instead. According to Freire, education for domestication, tames and conditions people to accept their given conditions in life. Libertarian education, on the other hand, instils confidence and a sense of control over one's own destiny. According to Gur-Ze'ev (1998), Freire views education as political practice in the control of language and consciousness as a condition for the subjection of individuals and groups by the rulers. To him, education is an aspect of the relation between critique and domination. He refuses the ruling group's claim that schools distribute knowledge in an objective and neutral manner.

In its investigation of the relationship between the teacher and the taught, the *Pedagogy of the Oppressed* includes a deep Marxist class analysis. It is dedicated to the 'oppressed' and is based on Freire's own experiences while teaching Brazilian adults to read and write. Freire opposes the traditional educational paradigm, which he views as taming people, and instead advocates for 'liberating' education. According to Freire, education for domestication forces people to accept their fate. People who receive a libertarian education, on the other hand, gain self-confidence and control over their lives. Freire has advocated for an educational system that promotes learning as a culturally and politically liberating act. Freire advocates for a dialogue between teachers and students in which both parties learn, question, reflect and participate in the meaning-making process. In true Marxist tradition, Freire believes that in order to transcend oppression, the oppressed must first become fully aware of their situation. Furthermore, people must understand that oppression is not a natural or unavoidable state, but rather an injustice that can be overcome through struggle. Because they are oblivious to the nature of their situation, the oppressed tend to adopt the oppressors' ideals, adopting their prescriptions and, in some cases, participating in the process of propagating the oppressive system. They must work hard to recognise and acknowledge their situation while also imagining a world free of oppression. In this case, the concept of praxis as a liberating process comes into play. According to Freire, the oppressed are encouraged to liberate themselves through praxis, or informed, concerted, revolutionary action. Those who are oppressed owe it to themselves to work to end their enslavement. The oppressed must liberate themselves as well as their oppressors. 'This, then, is the grand humanistic and historical duty of the oppressed: to liberate themselves as well as their oppressors', Freire says, invoking Marx and Engels' ideas of dialectics. 'Only the oppressed people's power will be strong enough to liberate them both' (Freire, 2005, p. 44). 'When praxis takes the form of action, it provides a way for oppressed people to channel their latent creativity into liberation work' (Freire, 2005).

According to Freire, the pedagogy of the oppressed has two distinct stages as humanist and libertarian pedagogy. In the first stage, the oppressed expose the world of oppression and commit to its transformation through praxis. In the next stage, this pedagogy ceases to belong only to the oppressed, when the oppression has already been transformed and becomes a pedagogy of all people in the process of permanent liberation.

Freire has advocated an educational system that emphasises learning as an act of culture and freedom. Literacy, according to Freire, is to do with more than just being literate, being able to read and write; it is also about being able to think for oneself. Literacy includes political literacy as well. It enables a person to recognise the hidden valuations at work in any social context and to develop the courage to unite with others in order to overcome oppressive situations. To combat any oppressive state of affairs, Freire advocates for 'Conscientisation'. Conscientisation is the process by which a learner gains a critical awareness of his current state of being and the dissonance between what things are and how they should be. Freire advocates for a shift away from what he refers to as the culture of silence, a way of life in which dominated individuals are so overwhelmed by their dominators that they lose the ability to critically respond to the culture imposed on them by the dominant culture. The development of this critical consciousness (Portuguese *conscientização*) is central to Freire's pedagogy (Gadotti, 1994). The development of critical consciousness enables people to question the nature of their historical and social circumstances in order to participate in the creation of a democratic society. Freire advocates for a dialogic exchange between teachers and students. Teachers in traditional schooling patterns engage in a monologue that is inflicted on the students. The teacher–taught relationship is fundamentally asymmetric and one-sided, with the teacher doling out knowledge to the student, who is to be appropriately grateful for this beneficence. Freire challenges this paradigm and proposes a mutual give-and-take relationship between the teacher and the taught. In practice, this pedagogy begins with the teacher mingling with the community, asking questions and learning about their daily lives. The teacher can also help by compiling a list of words that students frequently use in their daily lives. These frequently used words are emblematic of the major preoccupations that shape those people's lives. Through an understanding of these conceptions, the teacher can begin to appreciate people's social realities and reformulate classroom interaction through a set of ideas to which the students can actually relate. In other words, according to Freire, the teacher should create a list of 'generative' words and themes that can spark discussion in classrooms or cultural circles (Gadotti, 1994, p. 20). By making words relevant to people's lives, a process of conscientisation can begin, allowing the social construction of reality to emerge. People externalise their worldviews, their ways of thinking about and confronting the world. Generative themes emerge as a result of this. Generative themes are not characteristics

found in human individuals per se, but are derived from the human–world relationship. The more actively people investigate their themes, the more they open themselves up to critical awareness of their reality. Themes exist in people and their interactions with the world. Themes have far more meaning than any object or thing. It is critical that the emotions elicited by these themes are ultimately human aspirations, feelings and goals. This interest in generative themes serves as a springboard for further investigation, leading to the search for a shared reality, shared self-awareness and shared educational practices. The investigation of these themes is thus not a psychoanalytic exercise; rather, it is a means of developing a foundation for an educational programme that seeks to examine relationships between students and educators. As a starting point, this investigation should look into connections between themes, focusing on areas of conflict and placing them in historical context. Both education and theme investigation must include communication and the shared experience of reality. Education and thematic investigation intersect at various points in the on-going quest for the ideal educational practice. Freire provides a methodical examination of the relationship between oppressed people and their oppressors. Being oppressed, according to Freire, is a dehumanising experience. Overall, Freire is concerned with the liberation of all oppressed peoples, as well as the transformation of all humans—oppressed and oppressors alike into self-actualised, creative, empowered beings. Because of their ignorance about the nature of their situation, the oppressed tend to adopt the oppressors’ values, accepting their prescriptions and frequently participating in the process of transmitting the oppressive order. They must strive to recognise and acknowledge their situation, as well as creatively imagine a world free of oppression. It is in this context that the concept of praxis as a liberating process comes into play. Freire exhorts oppressed people to liberate themselves through praxis. Those who are oppressed owe it to themselves to work hard to overcome their oppression. The oppressed must free themselves as well as their oppressors. When praxis manifests as action, it becomes a means for oppressed people to apply their latent creativity to the labour of liberation. This oppression must be overcome through a collaborative effort between the oppressor and the oppressed in which both the oppressed and the oppressors must be liberated. As a Marxist theorist, Freire defines the relationship between oppressors and oppressed as a dialectic exemplifying a dynamic contradiction between two states of being that can and must be resolved through a disruptive struggle towards synthesis. According to Freire, freedom results from praxis-informed action—when a balance between theory and practice is achieved.

Freire also critiques traditional pedagogy for following what he calls the ‘banking model’, a metaphor in which students are viewed as empty bank accounts that should remain open to deposits made by the teacher. The analogy of a child’s piggy bank is useful in illustrating the nature of common educational practices. According to Freire, in the

traditional model of education, the student is treated like a piggy bank—an inert receptacle to be filled with knowledge. He coined the phrase ‘Banking Education’, referring to an educational system in which students are passive recipients of knowledge that has been pre-selected for them to be ‘deposited’ into their minds, as if the mind were a bank for information. Freire opposes this banking approach, claiming that it leads to the dehumanisation of both students and teachers. Furthermore, he contends that the banking approach institutionalises oppressive attitudes and social practices. ‘Education becomes a depositing act, with students serving as depositories and teachers serving as depositors. This type of education is afflicted with narrative sickness’ (2005, p. 71). The banking concept of education strengthens the oppressor’s power. Oppressors regard knowledge as a gift to be bestowed upon the ignorant by those who consider themselves knowledgeable. As a result, students are socialised to accept the passive role that teachers impose on them, as well as their ascribed social statuses. Students are taught to adapt to the world as it is, as well as to the fragmented view of reality deposited by the de facto oppressor, the teacher. According to Freire, by doing so, we prevent the rise of free-thinking individuals who would strive to exceed the aspirations of those great leaders who have fought for equality and the abolition of oppression. According to Freire, the student must be treated as an aware co-participant in the process of knowledge acquisition. The learner must be regarded as a knowledge co-creator. Knowledge is gained through a dialogic relationship between the teacher and the learner. Conscientisation is the endeavour to use education to consciously shape the person and society. It is opposite of the banking approach, Freire’s philosophy of education is called problem-posing education. This introduces students to liberating education. ‘Problem-posing education’ alters the vertical hierarchical patterns typical of banking education, and the teacher and student become ‘jointly responsible for a process in which both can grow’ (2005, p. 80). This is a two-way street when it comes to education. According to Freire, this is the authentic approach to education, one that permits people to be aware of their own incompleteness and strive to be more fully human in their search for perfection. This educational concept does not separate teacher activity from student activity; rather, the educator continually reformulates his or her reflections based on the reflections of the students. They work together to develop a level of knowledge that enables ‘students to feel more challenged and compelled to react to the challenge’ (Freire, 2005, p. 81). By using the problem-posing method, the oppressed have a chance to become individuals who are willing to fight for a just world where all live in harmony, share ideals and decisions, and work together to create a united purposeful world. According to Freire, ‘violence exists in any situation in which some individuals (the oppressors) prevent others from engaging in the process of inquiry. Humans are transformed into objects when they are separated from their own decision-making processes’ (2005, p. 85). He wonders how oppressors can consider themselves human

while attempting to prevent others from being human. Domination and dictatorship, according to Freire, should soon be eliminated through progressive steps forward taken by the people for themselves under the guidance of a revolutionary nucleus. That is the essence of praxis or ideology manifested in deliberate action. Freire explains how dialogue can be used to liberate the oppressed by utilising cooperation, unity, organisation, and cultural synthesis. This, according to Freire, contrasts with ‘antidialogics’, which employs conquest, manipulation, cultural invasion and the divide-and-rule strategy. According to Freire, dialogue is essential for revolution. When dialogue is stifled, it leads to dehumanisation and the perpetuation of the status quo. The oppressed have various relationships with both the oppressors and the revolutionaries. In order to achieve transformation, Freire believes that it is necessary to achieve communion. The oppressors are referred to as dominators by Freire because they dominate the oppressed rather than assisting them in achieving transformation because they are obligated to preserve the existing order. The oppressors maintain oppression on the oppressed through conquest, dividing, manipulation and cultural invasion. All of these, according to Freire, are anti-dialogical mechanisms. Conquest is a method of exerting control over the lives of others. Oppressive regimes divide people and prevent them from coming together. They manipulate them with myths and gain control through alliances between the dominant and dominated classes. Finally, they maintain dominance through cultural invasion, in which the leader’s beliefs are imposed on the subjects. To be liberated, the oppressed must band together, despite dominators’ opposition. ‘To dominate, the dominator has no choice but to deny true praxis to the people, deny them the right to say their own words and think their own thoughts’, Freire writes (2005, p. 126). Revolutionaries, on the other hand, use dialogue to effect change. To achieve transformation, they require cooperation, unity for liberation, organisation and cultural synthesis. According to the true pattern of Marx’s discourse, this transformation must include the following steps: People must work together with the revolutionaries in order for change to occur. They must unite in order to achieve liberation through communion. They must be well-organised and share common goals and values. Finally, they must allow cultural synthesis, which differs from cultural invasion in that it is accomplished through persuasion and for their own emancipation. ‘In order to carry out the revolution, revolutionary leaders will undoubtedly require the people’s support’ (Freire, 2005, p. 165). Dialogue also refers to the refusal to accept one’s own existence passively. It is a creative process characterised by reciprocity and mutuality. It is a human-to-human creative encounter. This also implies that it must not be used for dominance or the application of force. All humans must accept their mortality and recognise that the privileged among them have no special abilities or powers other than those conferred by their social positions. This understanding of the universality of the human situation serves as the foundation for dialogue. Thus, education should be viewed as a dialogue between people who are attempting to learn

together in their pursuit of perfection. It encourages both the teacher and the learner to learn more than they already know. True dialogue must be founded on critical thinking, and this critical thinking must evolve through the interaction of the dialogue's various participants. People communicate with one another through dialogue, and this communication is therefore absolutely necessary. Numerous political and educational policies and plans, according to Freire, have failed due to an overreliance on one-sided views and a lack of reciprocal communication. Humans live in a constantly changing and shifting world. We are aware of the world around us. People are aware of themselves as well as their surroundings. Because humans are conscious beings, there is a relationship between their own freedom of action and the constraints that limit it. These are referred to as 'limit situations' by Freire. As we can see, Freire has coined some terms and used them to express concepts that are uniquely his. One such terminological usage is the use of the term limit situation in relation to the dimensions of human praxis. Limit situations are not always hopeless or insurmountable, but rather act as shackles that must be broken. It is critical to recognise one's own potential as a human being. Only humans have the ability to generate knowledge; humans produce not only material goods, tangible objects and commodities, but also social ideas, themes and concepts. Humans begin to overcome situations that appear to limit them as they separate themselves from their own activities, carry out their own decisions and test their relationships with others and the world.

Freire has thus charted the path of transformation from an exploitative social order to an egalitarian one, through the use of a radical pedagogic paradigm. Paulo Freire gained international acclaim for his innovative practices in literacy training in Brazil. Paulo Freire has instilled the concept of praxis in the curriculum in order to make an open and clearly expressed commitment to emancipation. In this framework, students are not only informed learners, but also co-creators of knowledge. Maxine Greene, an advocate for a 'curriculum for human beings', has offered suggestions on how teachers might incorporate Freire's pedagogical principles into the classroom (Greene, 1993). Teachers must learn to listen to students' voices, according to Greene, in order to develop democratic classrooms. Teachers can learn what kids are thinking, what worries them and what has meaning for them by listening to them. When teachers learn to listen, they initiate the dialogue process. In addition, the willingness to listen and the act of listening create conditions of human empowerment; listening mitigates the marginalisation experienced by students in school, it exposes the classroom to multiple perspectives and encourages students to contribute more meaningfully to the classroom discourse.

CONCLUDING REMARKS: A CASE FOR CRITICAL PEDAGOGY

This article has explored the educational ideas of two of the most influential philosophers of education in the last several decades, Ivan Illich and Paulo Freire. These two

philosophies each take a distinct approach to the issues facing modern education, and in Freire's case, he established an entire discipline of critical pedagogy throughout North America. It is perceived that by utilising both Freire and Illich, it is possible to reconstruct a critical pedagogy capable of addressing today's needs and make it work to overcome social inequalities and establish critical consciousness on issues surrounding education and society. Both Ivan Illich and Paulo Freire have proposed attractive alternative educational paradigms that lead to freedom. However, opponents sometimes argue that, as appealing as such models may seem, they are not suitable for large-scale application. Furthermore, it is feared that a liberal education would fail to fulfil the function of socialisation that the school system must fulfil. According to Grundy (1987), 'Critical pedagogy goes beyond situating the learning experience within the experience of the learner; it is a process which takes the experiences of both the learner and the teacher and, through dialogue and negotiation, recognises them both as problematic.... It allows, indeed encourages, students and teachers to confront the real problems of their existence and relationships.... When students confront the real problems of their existence, they will soon also be faced with their own oppression' (Grundy, 1987, p. 105).

The central concern of critical pedagogy is the belief that education systems are also political (Freire, 1970; Freire and Macedo, 1987; Giroux, 1997; Shannon, 1992; Shor, 1992). According to McLaren (1989), the significance of politics and power in our understanding of how schools operate is the primary focus of critical pedagogy. According to Freire (1985), education should lead to transformative action and is a political praxis that continually helps to free humans. Joldersma (2001) explores how the concept of freedom in Paulo Freire's constructivist approach can be reconciled with his ethical project of a pedagogy for justice, one based on responsibility and non-indifference. Kessing-Styles (2003) also confirms that critical pedagogy is concerned with social justice and develops practices capable of transforming oppressive institutions or social relations largely through educational practices. Norton and Toohey (2004) also point out that both language learning and language teaching are political processes. Similarly, Kessing-Styles (2003) asserts that social and political analysis of life should be at the centre of the curriculum. That is, all decisions regarding the sort of curriculum that should be followed, the kinds of books used, the language used, and the people hired are ultimately political (Degener, 2001).

However, some critics point out that Illich has offered an 'empty' critique of the present educational system without any viable alternative framework for executing his ideas (Wober, 1974). Douglas Pitt declared him to be 'only superficially attractive as a critic of the contemporary order' (Pitt, 1980, p. 288). According to Routray (2012), Illich's criticism of the school system (with its specific institutional matrix) is often wrongly interpreted literally as a call to shut down schools. It is interpreted as an attempt to

deinstitutionalise society. Many of these criticisms are in fact borne out of an insufficient engagement with Illich's work (Routray, 2012). According to Zaldívar, one major conclusion that can be drawn from studying Illich's educational work is that it does little good to extend compulsory education to wide segments of the population if no one understands how much education is required to live properly. It makes little sense to encourage and invest in plans to increase the rate of primary school enrolment in underdeveloped or developing countries while the world's major economic powers continue to structure their education systems to last longer and longer and reach bizarre levels of specialisation (Zaldívar, 2015).

Freire truly energised the concept of Praxis as a dynamic, workable construct. When the oppressed reveal the world of oppression through praxis, they commit to conquering it in their pursuit of an egalitarian social order. As long as there is a struggle for more humane educational practises, deeper insights into the dynamics of power and oppression, and people's desire to construct their own realities, Freire's praxis justly shows a path to liberation, both in thought and deed.

Critical pedagogy is essentially an educational response to inequalities and oppressive power relations that exist in educational institutions which are perpetuated by the educational system and ultimately are reflected in wider society. Paulo Freire and Ivan Illich have provided two working solutions as alternatives to traditional pedagogy. In a democratic society, an educational system at all levels should be concerned with providing a liberating experience by emphasising the values of freedom and promoting independence of thought, social and political empowerment, respect for the freedom of others, acceptance of diversity of opinion, justice for all and enrichment of the life of each individual in that society. Although alternative educational paradigms are perhaps not viable for mass implementation, they offer a unique standpoint and an opportunity to rise above the confines of conventional pedagogy. Perhaps a union of some elements of innovative pedagogies with existing systems would be a sound and judicious practice to usher in an inclusive and just social order.

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