

CRITICAL PEDAGOGY AND THE EDUCATIONAL CHALLENGE

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Module Structure

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| Critical Pedagogy | Introduction, Paulo Freire, Banking Model of Education, Culture of Silence, Ivan Illich, Deschooling Society, Henry Giroux, Paul Goodman, Compulsory Miseducation, Concluding Remarks |
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Description of the Module

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| Items | Description of the Module |
| Subject Name | Sociology |
| Paper Name | Education and Society |
| Module Name/Titles | Critical Pedagogy and the Educational Challenge |
| Module ID | 11 |
| Pre Requisites | There has to be a dialogic relation between the teacher and the taught; it is necessary to perceive of education also as a discourse of freedom. |
| Objectives | This module seeks to elucidate an important perspective in the context of education that radically questions the basic assumptions of the modern educational system. |
| Key words | Pedagogy, oppressed, praxis. Deschooling, |

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Introduction

Critical pedagogy is a teaching approach inspired by Marxist critical theory and other radical philosophies, which attempt to help students question and challenge posited "domination," and to undermine the beliefs and practices that are alleged to dominate. ([https://en.wikiversity.org/wiki/Introduction to Critical Pedagogy](https://en.wikiversity.org/wiki/Introduction_to_Critical_Pedagogy))

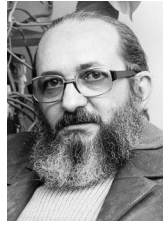
Critical pedagogy includes relationships between teaching and learning. Its proponents claim that it is a continuous process of what they call "unlearning", "learning", and "relearning", "reflection", "evaluation", and the impact that these actions have on students. Critical pedagogy is a philosophy of education and social movement that combines education with critical theory. First described by Paulo Freire, it has since been developed by Henry Giroux and others as a praxis-oriented "educational movement, guided by passion and principle, to help students develop consciousness of freedom, recognise authoritarian tendencies, and connect knowledge to power and the ability to take constructive action." Among its leading figures are Michael Apple, Bell Hooks, Joe L. Kincheloe, Peter McLaren, Henry Giroux, and Patti Lather.

Critical Pedagogy draws from critical theory, which is concerned with the idea of a just society in which people have political, economic, and cultural control of their lives. Thinkers of critical theory believe that these goals are satisfied only through emancipating oppressed people which empowers them and enables them to transform their life conditions. It is actually the starting point for critical pedagogy. The major concern of critical pedagogy is with criticizing the schooling in capitalist societies. As Gor (2005) puts it, the major goals of critical pedagogy are awareness raising and rejection of violation and discrimination against people (as quoted in Mohammad Aliakbari & Elham Faraji Ilam 2011)

The following section highlights the contributions of Paulo Reglus Neves Freire, Ivan Illich, Henry Giroux and Paul Goodman among many stalwarts who have contributed towards conceptualizing, understanding, and applying Critical Pedagogy resulting in emergence of generations which are more conscious and participating citizens of the society and nation.

Paulo Reglus Neves Freire

Critical pedagogy was greatly influenced by the works of Paulo Reglus Neves Freire, the most celebrated critical educator. Freire was a Brazilian educator and philosopher who was a leading advocate of critical pedagogy. He is best known for his influential work, *Pedagogy of the Oppressed*, which is considered one of the foundational texts of the critical pedagogy movement.



Paulo Freire (1921-1997)

Freire endorses students' ability to think critically about their educational situation; this way of thinking allows them to "recognize connections between their individual problems and experiences and the social contexts in which they are embedded" (Freire, Paulo. 2005)

Paulo Freire contributed a philosophy of education that came not only from the more classical approaches stemming from Plato, but also from modern Marxist and anti-colonialist thinkers. In many ways his *Pedagogy of the Oppressed* (1970) may be best read as an extension of, or reply to, Frantz Fanon's *The Wretched of the Earth* (1961), which emphasised the need to provide native populations with an education which was simultaneously new and modern (rather than traditional) and anti-colonial (not simply an extension of the culture of the colonizer).

In *Pedagogy of the Oppressed* (1970), Freire, reprising the oppressor/oppressed distinction, differentiates between the positions in an unjust society: the oppressor and the oppressed. Freire champions that education should allow the oppressed to regain their sense of humanity, in turn overcoming their condition. Nevertheless, he acknowledges that for this to occur, the oppressed individuals must play a role in their liberation. As he states: "No pedagogy which is truly liberating can remain distant from the oppressed by treating them as unfortunates and by presenting for their emulation models from among the oppressors. The oppressed must be their own example in the struggle for their redemption (Freire, 1970, p. 54). Likewise, the oppressors must be willing to rethink their way of life and to examine their own role in the oppression if true liberation is to occur: "those who authentically commit themselves to the people must re-examine themselves constantly" (Freire, 1970, p. 60).

Freire believed education to be a political act that could not be divorced from pedagogy. Freire defined this as a main tenet of critical pedagogy. Teachers and students must be made aware of the "politics" that surround education. The way students are taught and what they are taught serves a political agenda. Teachers, themselves, have political notions they bring into the classroom (Kincheloe, 2008).

Freire believed that "education makes sense because women and men learn that through learning they can make and remake themselves, because women and men are able to take responsibility for themselves as beings capable of knowing of knowing that they know and knowing that they don't" (Freire, 2005, p. 15).

Critical consciousness/conscientization, is a popular education and social concept developed by Paulo Freire, grounded in post-Marxist critical theory. Critical consciousness focuses on achieving an in-depth understanding of the world, allowing for the perception and exposure

of social and political contradictions. Critical consciousness also includes taking action against the oppressive elements in one's life that are illuminated by that understanding.

Banking Model of Education

In terms of pedagogy, Freire is best known for his attack on what he called the "banking" concept of education, in which the student was viewed as an empty account to be filled by the teacher. He notes that "it transforms students into receiving objects. The banking model of education attempts to control thinking and action of students, thus leading men and women to adjust to the world, and inhibiting their creative power" (Freire, 1970, p. 77). Even before Freire put forward his idea of critical pedagogy scholars like Rousseau and John Dewey had articulated concerns about passive learning mechanisms. John Dewey was for example strongly critical of the transmission of mere facts as the goal of education. Dewey often described education as a mechanism for social change, explaining that "education is a regulation of the process of coming to share in the social consciousness; and that the adjustment of individual activity on the basis of this social consciousness is the only sure method of social reconstruction" (1897, p. 16). Freire's work, however, updated the concept and placed it in context with current theories and practices of education, laying the foundation for what is now called critical pedagogy.

Culture of Silence

According to Freire, the system of dominant social relations creates a 'culture of silence' that instills a negative, silenced and suppressed self-image into the oppressed. The learner must develop a critical consciousness in order to recognize that this culture of silence is created to oppress. A culture of silence can also cause the "dominated individuals [to] lose the means by which to critically respond to the culture that is forced on them by a dominant culture." Social domination of race and class are interlaced into the conventional education system, through which the "culture of silence" eliminates the "paths of thought that lead to a language of critique (https://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Paulo_Freire)

Freire's praxis required implementation of a range of educational practices and processes with the goal of creating not only a better learning environment, but also a better world. Freire himself maintained that this was not merely an educational technique but a way of living in our educative practice.

Critical democratic theory sees education or learning as an on-going, two-way, dialectic process that is built around the experiences of the student and allows for critical thinking and action to help students *grow*. In a truly democratic school, students are given the opportunity to have their voices heard and to build on their previous experiences and interests to plan for their continuing growth (Dewey, 1938). Traditional hierarchies must be broken down and teachers must also be learners (particularly learning from their students) and being critically

reflective about their practice to bring about *conscientization* (Freire, 1998, p. 55). Teachers become facilitators to help students as they: share experiences and learn from each other; undertake critical inquiry and create their own plans of action. The importance of dialogue (between students, teachers, administration, parents and community) must be stressed. Tension between opposing conditions (subject and object, the individual and world, the word and the world) is seen as impetus for growth. As Freire states "the subjectivity and objectivity thus join in a dialectical unity producing knowledge in solidarity with action, and vice versa." (Freire, 1975, p.22).

Critical pedagogy, as outlined by Freire (1998) must include critical and creative thinking, not just skills. The critical aspect must examine not only political issues, but also issues of social justice and equity. In a culture of democracy, the dialectic nature of both critique and possibility go hand in hand. Critical democratic pedagogy offers the opportunity for teachers and students to ask the tough questions about their lived experiences and the contradictions that they encounter.

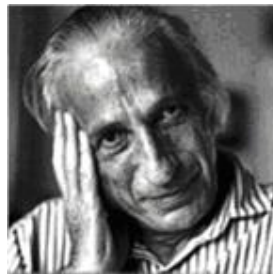
Freire's approach to learning - participatory, non-hierarchical, drawing on the learner's experience, empowering, exposing of injustice, aiming at social and political transformation thus became internationally known.

Ivan Illich

"School is the advertising agency which makes you believe that you need the society as it is."

Ivan Illich

Ivan Illich, another Critical Pedagogue known for his contributions to critical pedagogy with his work *Deschooling Society*.



Ivan Illich (1926-2002)

Ivan Illich was an Austrian philosopher, Roman Catholic priest, and "maverick social critic" of the institutions of contemporary Western culture and their effects on the provenance and practice of education, medicine, work, energy use, transportation, and economic development. (https://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Ivan_Illich)

Deschooling Society (1971) is a critical discourse on education as practised in modern economies. It is a book that brought Ivan Illich to public attention. Full of detail on programs and concerns, the book gives examples of the ineffectual nature of institutionalised education. Illich posited self-directed education, supported by intentional social relations in fluid informal arrangements.

Universal education through schooling is not feasible. It would be no more feasible if it were attempted by means of alternative institutions built on the style of present schools. Neither new attitudes of teachers toward their pupils nor the proliferation of educational hardware or software (in classroom or bedroom), nor finally the attempt to expand the pedagogue's responsibility until it engulfs his pupils' lifetimes will deliver universal education. The current search for new educational *funnels* must be reversed into the search for their institutional inverse: educational *webs* which heighten the opportunity for each one to transform each moment of his living into one of learning, sharing, and caring. We hope to contribute concepts needed by those who conduct such counterfoil research on education ó and also to those who seek alternatives to other established service industries.

The last sentence makes it clear what the title suggests. The institutionalisation of education only institutionalises society and conversely ideas for de-institutionalising education may be a starting point for the establishment of a de-institutionalised society. Illich argued that the use of technology to create decentralized webs could support the goal of creating a good educational system

A good educational system should serve three purposes. First, it should provide all who want to learn access to available resources at any time in their lives. Second, empower all who want to share what they know to find those who want to learn it from them. Third, and, finally, It must provide all who want to raise an issue to the public with an opportunity to make their challenge known.

Developing this idea Illich proposes four **Learning Networks**:

1. **Reference Service to Educational Objects** - An open directory of educational resources and their availability to learners.
2. **Skills Exchange** - A database of people willing to list their skills and the basis on which they would be prepared to share or swap them with others.
3. **Peer-Matching** - A network helping people to communicate their learning activities and aims in order to find similar learners who may wish to collaborate.
4. **Directory of Professional Educators** - A list of professionals, paraprofessionals and free-lancers detailing their qualifications, services and the terms on which these are made available.

Illich claims that it is patently false to claim that most learning is the result of teaching. On the contrary the teacher in a modern school is in fact acting in three roles; as a custodian of societies' rituals, as a therapist and as a preacher. He proposes that instead of a learning society, a system must be created in which skill training is widely available and divested of the ritualistic elements of schooling, and where citizens freely associate to develop a critical

education, perhaps guided by 'masters'. Illich sees in modern schools a false myth of salvation. He points to the fact that how much ever money is poured into public schooling it always requires more and the outputs do not increase. It is like chasing the myth of unlimited progress. He sees educational credentials as an element in this; one gets credentials to enter on the next level but credentials don't measure competence, so much as attendance at a school. He also analyses the multiple and total roles of the teacher in this enclosed institution. The teacher has three roles; custodian, therapist and preacher. School has much more to it than learning. It has many roles; creche, socialisation, keeping young people out of the workforce, training in the acceptance of the values of consumerism and obedience and so on.

Illich's practical vision for learning in a de-schooled society is built around what he calls 'learning webs'. Illich envisages 3 types of learning exchange; between a skills teacher and a student, between people themselves engaging in critical discourse, and between a 'master' (a master practitioner) and a student. Illich also considers the de-institutionalisation of resources. He proposes that resources already available in society be made available for learning. Whether he is talking about skills exchanges or educational resources Illich envisages non hierarchical networks. The professionals in Illich's vision are the facilitators of these exchanges not the distributors of approved knowledge packages in the school system. He envisages two types of professional educators; those who operate the resource centres and facilitate skills exchanges and those who guide others in how to use these systems and networks.

In conclusion Illich points out that the school is not the only modern institution whose main purpose is to shape people's view of reality. Other factors contribute to this, factors related to social origins and family surroundings, the media and informal socialization networks. These, amongst others, are key elements in moulding behaviour and values. But he considers that it is the school that is most deeply and systematically enslaving. It alone is entrusted with the task of forming critical judgement, a task that, paradoxically, it tries to carry out by ensuring that learning, whether about oneself, about others or about nature, follows a predetermined pattern. Illich defends these opinions in his polemical and provocative style, affirming that, in his judgement, school impinges so intimately upon us that no one can hope to be freed from it by any external means (Marcelo Gajardo)

Henry Giroux

Another advocate of critical pedagogy is Henry Giroux. Henry Giroux (born September 18, 1943) is an American and Canadian scholar and cultural critic.



Henry Giroux (1943 -)

One of the founding theorists of critical pedagogy in the United States, he is best known for his pioneering work in public pedagogy, cultural studies, youth studies, higher education,

media studies, and critical theory. In 2002 *Routledge* named Giroux as one of the top fifty educational thinkers of the modern period.

Giroux has been an important contributor to a variety of academic fields, including critical pedagogy. His work draws from a number of theoretical traditions extending from Marx to Paulo Freire to Zygmunt Bauman. He is also an advocate of radical democracy, vigorously opposing the anti-democratic tendencies of neoliberalism, militarism, imperialism, religious fundamentalism, and the ongoing attacks against the social state, the social wage, youth, the poor, and public and higher education. Giroux's most recent work focuses on public pedagogy, a term he coined to describe the nature of the spectacle and the new media, and the political and educational force of global culture. He is also a regular columnist for *Truthout* and writes for a variety of academic journals and public venues.

The most important theme in critical pedagogy according to Giroux is the belief that education systems are political. To Giroux (1997), it is essential to make everyday experience problematic and critical by revealing its hidden political assumptions. He maintains that, this critical understanding by empowering students to develop the courage to participate in their self formation has a liberatory purpose. He also asserts that higher education should engage in political education by teaching students to take risk, challenge those with power, honor critical traditions, and be reflective about how authority is used in the classroom (p. 265). Needless to say that, the political view helps learners' growth in society. "Lacking a political project, the role of the university intellectual is reduced to a technician engaged in formalistic rituals unconcerned with disturbing and urgent problems that confront larger society" (Giroux, 1997, p. 265).

Paul Goodman

Another major proponent of the critical pedagogy is Paul Goodman who has critiqued the stereotypical systems of education. Goodman was an American novelist, playwright, poet and psychotherapist, although now best known as a social critic, anarchist philosopher, and public intellectual.



Paul Goodman (1911-1972)

Compulsory Miseducation is a critique of American public schools written by Paul Goodman and published by Horizon Press in 1964. Already established as a social critic of American society and the role of its youth in his previous book *Growing Up Absurd* (1960), Goodman argues in *Compulsory Miseducation* against the necessity of schools for the socialization of youth and recommends their abolition. He suggests that formal education lasts too long, teaches the wrong social class values, and increasingly damages students over time. Goodman writes that the school reflects the misguided and insincere values of its society and thus school reformers should focus on these values before schools. He proposes a variety of alternatives to school including no school, the city or farm as school, apprenticeships, guided travel, and youth organizations. Reviewers complimented Goodman's style and noted his deliberate contrarianism, but were split on the feasibility of his proposals. Goodman's book was a precursor to the work of deschooling advocate Ivan Illich.

In *Compulsory Miseducation* Goodman also argues against the social necessity of American public schools and mandatory attendance requirements. He contends that the only "right education" is "growing up into a worthwhile world", and that adult concern over schooling is indicative of an opposite such world. Goodman thinks education should strengthen children's preexisting drive towards refining their own abilities for usefulness in society while developing community spirit. He claims that school, of which there is too much, instead encourages conformity for the good of private, corporate needs at a cost to the public. Goodman writes that America's schools reflect its misguided and insincere societal values, which need to change before schools can.

Goodman criticises the structure of academic curriculum, and connects it with "programmed instruction" and schooling that emaciates the mind proportional with time. He regards the "academic establishment" as self-aggrandizing and constituting "an invested intellectual class worse than anything since the time of Henry the Eighth." Accordingly, the scholastically inclined, knowing only lockstep, march unquestioningly into "top management and expert adviser" roles while the rest have little self-worth in their societal roles, pursuing "worthless" degrees that make their schooling appear as "a cruel hoax".

Goodman sees schools as mechanisms for adjusting youth to an automated society increasingly absent "any human values". Goodman disagrees with those who say public schools teach middle class values, as he sees schools as more petit bourgeois than bourgeois, favouring "bureaucratic, time-serving, grade-grind-practical, timid, and nouveau riche climbing" over "independence, initiative, scrupulous honesty, earnestness, utility, [and] respect for thorough scholarship". In this way, schooling is not a good use of student time, and students are right to quit and avoid the psychological and professional damage. More important is the disintegration of social class segregation. Goodman then asserts that lower- and middle-class kids would be better off without public or any schooling altogether. He proposes several alternatives to formal schooling, such as Have 'no school at all' for a few classes. Dispense with the school building for a few classes; provide teachers and use the city itself as the school, Use a pro rata part of the school money to send children to economically marginal farms for a couple of months of the year, perhaps six children from mixed backgrounds to a farmer (<http://arvindguptatoys.com/arvindgupta/goodman.pdf>) and

advocates for a variety of experimental school alternatives: "no school at all, the real city as school, farm schools, practical apprenticeships, guided travel, work camps, little theaters and local newspapers, [and] community service". Other proposals include making class non-compulsory (such that attendance will reflect student interest without "trapping" children), requiring students to wait two years before applying to the most elite colleges, eliminating grades so the burden of testing for required skills falls on companies, and letting students quit and resume freely. He proposes Danish folk school-style education for those uninterested in academics. Goodman's foremost intention was to stimulate new educational paradigms.

Concluding Remarks

The most important theme in critical pedagogy is the belief that education systems are political (Freire, 1970; Freire & Macedo, 1987; Giroux, 1997; Shannon, 1992; Shor, 1992). As McLaren (1989) asserts, the major concern of critical pedagogy is the centrality of politics and power in our understanding of how schools work. To Freire (1985), education should lead to transforming action and it is a political praxis which constantly serves to liberate human. Good teaching should aim at political transformation for the purpose of justice (Joldersma, 1999). 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. Freire (cited in Gur-Ze'ev, 1998) 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. Norton and Toohey (2004) also point out that in ESL context 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 center of curriculum. That is, all decisions regarding the sort of curriculum that should be followed, the kinds of books, language used and people hired are all political (Degener, 2001).

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