

Rethinking Paulo Freire's Dialogic Pedagogy and Its Implications for Teachers' Teaching

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Abstract

Paulo Freire was a Brazilian educator, and was seen as a theorist of critical pedagogy. Freire's works have a particular significance for contemporary education in different countries. This paper aims to rethink Freire's dialogic pedagogy, and further illuminate its implications for teachers' teaching. In order to do so, firstly, we explain the importance of Freire's dialogic pedagogy. Secondly, we explore the theory & practice of dialogue. Thirdly, this study explains that the dialogue between teachers and students is a way of promoting critical consciousness. Finally, we explore dialogic pedagogy, and illuminate its implications for teachers' teaching. By reading and analyzing related studies, the implications can be summarized as follows: (1) practicing love-based teaching, (2) developing humility-based teaching, (3) nourishing hope-centered teaching, (4) enriching humor-based teaching, (5) developing silence-based teaching, (6) teachers should promote students' critical thinking ability in their teaching, and (7) teachers deeply believe that their students will achieve a better vocation.

Keywords: critical consciousness, dialogic pedagogy, Paulo Freire

1. Introduction

Paulo Freire (September 19, 1921- May 2, 1997) once wrote, "For me education is simultaneously an act of knowing, a political act, and an artistic event. I no longer speak about a political dimension of education. I no longer speak about a knowing dimension of education. As well, I don't speak about education through art. On the contrary, I say education is politics, art, and knowing" (Lewis, 2012). Whether we view education as politics, knowing, or art, education-in-itself is a cultural activity, in which the individual body-mind, including knowledge, feeling and will, develops intellectually, morally and physically. In the most fundamental sense, schools exist to transmit the values of society. To do this, teachers must cultivate certain attitudes and values for students to adapt to changing society (Blase, 1986). Teachers often complete the above objective through pedagogical praxis. Furthermore, it is quite certain that no other period in human history has had so much talk on the need for dialogue (Kazepides, 2012). With regard to dialogue, Paulo Freire's viewpoint is unique. Freirean pedagogy is built on a platform constituted by a dynamic dialectical approach toward the world, a praxical view of knowledge and human beings, and a deep commitment to the liberation of the oppressed. Dialogic pedagogy represents a specific approach to understanding human beings and the social world, from which general principles for teaching and learning can be generated. For Freire, pedagogy can be humanizing only when it is critical, dialogical, and praxical. Moreover, dialogic pedagogy is an actual praxis of democracy (Tang, 2012). Finally, this study not only reviews the major features of Freire's dialogic pedagogy, but also illuminates some implications for teachers' teaching.

2. Research Method

Through philosophical literature analysis and theoretical interpretation, this study aims to explore Freire's dialogic pedagogy, and illuminate its implications for teachers' teaching. In order to study rigorously, increase the value of research, and avoid subjective and speculative over-concentration, the following techniques are used interactively in the research process: (1) Interpretation; (2) Argumentation.

3. The Importance of Dialogic Pedagogy

Freire was a Brazilian educator (Shaul, 2000). He is one of the most important critical educators of the twentieth century. Not only is he considered one of the founders of critical pedagogy, but he also played a crucial role in

developing a highly successful literacy campaign in Brazil before the onslaught of the junta in 1964. Once the military took over the government, Freire was imprisoned for a short time for his efforts. He was eventually released and went into exile, primarily in Chile and later in Geneva, Switzerland for a number of years (Giroux, 2010).

In fact, Freire was perhaps the most significant educator in the world during the 20th century. Freire is seen as a new kind of intellectual, and was described as “organic” in the words of Gramsci. In August 1986, the *New York Times* published an article which stressed the importance of Freire in the organization of various educational systems (Gadotti, 1994, pp. xxii-xxiii).

Real educational praxis must be linked to its social context and to the complexity of its environment. A theory cannot be a vehicle that secludes praxis, but rather an instrument of critical analysis that is embedded in our own praxis. From my point of view, one of the deepest teachings of Freire’s pedagogy is the dialectic between theory and practice, which involves the true dialogue between students and teachers (Freire & Vittoria, 2007). Humanization is the core perspective of Freire’s educational thought. In fact, the main aim of his educational philosophy is humanization. He was looking for a kind of education with two characteristics. First, a pedagogy that enables both students and teachers to develop a critically conscious understanding of their relationship with the world. Second, and intertwined with the first, pedagogy that enables students and teachers to become subjects consciously aware of their context and their condition as a human being. For Freire, changing the world into a humanized one is feasible only through true dialogue (Nouri & Sajjadi, 2014).

4. Theory & Practice in Dialogue

Theory without practice would be mere abstract thinking, just as practice without theory would be reduced to naive action (Freire & Vittoria, 2007). Theory is often conceived of as an abstract idea or phenomenon. Practice involves an action component that goes beyond the abstraction of theory (Breunig, 2005). The tensions between educational theories and practices—what critical pedagogue Freire termed “praxis”—can either buoy a classroom to great heights, or sink it entirely. Teachers must constantly balance their teaching philosophies against their practical, in-class constraints. Occasionally, the aims of one teacher’s practice may conflict with the aims of the same teacher’s theory. Similarly, the same teacher may find herself pressured to teach a certain way based on her personal philosophy, while also feeling pressured to teach a certain way based on more practical concerns (Hamilton, 2018).

An unauthentic word, one which is unable to transform reality, results when dichotomy is imposed upon its constitutive elements. When a word is deprived of its dimension of action, reflection automatically suffers as well; and the word is changed into idle chatter, into verbalism, into an alienated and alienating “blah.” It becomes an empty word, one which cannot denounce the world, for denunciation is impossible without a commitment to transform, and there is no transformation without action. On the other hand, if action is emphasized exclusively, to the detriment of reflection, the word is converted into activism. The latter—action for action’s sake—negates the true praxis and makes dialogue impossible. Either dichotomy, by creating unauthentic forms of existence, creates also unauthentic forms of thought, which reinforce the original dichotomy (Freire, 2000). Hence, dialogue contains reflection and action. Dialogue is not only theoretical activity but also practice activity.

5. Dialogue between Teachers and Students is the Way of Promoting Their Critical Consciousness

Education, which is a very valuable and meaningful activity, should cultivate the critical consciousness of students, and represent students’ subjectivity. Critical consciousness is at the heart of Freire’s unique view of education. Freire paid much attention to develop a critical consciousness, and thought about how to promote people’s critical consciousness to liberate themselves. Freire stressed that the cultivation of critical consciousness happens through dialogue between teachers and students in the teaching setting. In particular, the dialogue between teachers and students can enlighten their subjectivity. Hence, Freire is mainly concerned with the educational means of freeing people from the bondage of the culture of silence (Taylor, 1993), and the dialogue between teachers and students is the way of promoting their critical consciousness. For this reason, this paper aims to explore Freire’s dialogic pedagogy, and illuminate its implications for teachers’ teaching.

6. The Exploration of Freire’s Dialogic Pedagogy

6.1 The Background of Dialogic Pedagogy

Freire was born in Recife, North-east Brazil, on 19 September 1921. He was one of several children in an established middle-class family (Taylor, 1993). The social conditions where Freire lived in Brazil did not allow the poor to have an education. The government then was highly autocratic (Macedo, 2000). Freire speaks gently

and lovingly of his father, Joaquim Themistocles Freire, and of his mother, Edeltrudes Neves Freire. It was they, he says, who by example and love taught him to prize dialogue and to respect the choices of others (Collins, 1977). Consequently, Freire's thinking about dialogue was developed under the influence of his life experiences.

6.2 The Premise of Dialogue

6.2.1 Each Person has the Right to Speak

Dialogue is the encounter between men, mediated by the world in order to name the world. Hence, dialogue cannot occur between those who want to name the world and those who do not wish this naming (Freire, 2000). In other words, each person has the right to the speak and the right to name the world in dialogue.

6.2.2 Dialogue Cannot Be the Act of One Person'S "Depositing" Ideas in Another

Dialogue cannot be the act of one person's "depositing" ideas in another, nor can it become a simple exchange of ideas to be "consumed" by the discussants (Freire, 2000). Moreover, dialogue cannot become the act of domination, but rather must form a challenge to domination.

6.2.3 Dialogue is not A Hostile and Polemical Argument

Dialogue is not a hostile and polemical argument between those who are committed neither to the naming of the world, nor to the search for truth, but rather to the imposition of their own truth (Freire, 2000).

6.3 Enhancing the Elements of Dialogue

Education must be democratic and dialogical. Freire emphasizes the importance of dialogue between teachers and students. The various elements of dialogue are illustrated as follows:

6.3.1 Love

To enter into dialogue presupposes equality amongst participants. Each must trust the others; there must be mutual respect and love (care and commitment) (Freire Institute, 2013). Love is an act of courage, not of fear. Love is commitment to others (Freire, 2000). Freire asserted that education is an act of love, that educators must risk acts of love, and that education should aim at establishing a world where it would be easier to love (Schoder, 2013).

6.3.2 Humility

Dialogue cannot exist without humility. The naming of the world, through which people constantly re-create that world, cannot be an act of arrogance (Freire, 2000).

6.3.3 Hope

Nor yet can dialogue exist without hope (Freire, 1994). Further speaking, from the point of view of the human condition, hope is an essential component and not an intruder (Freire, 1998). Hope is the matrix of dialogue (Freire, 1997). Hope is expressed in action (Freire & Faundez, 1992).

6.3.4 Humor

Dialogue is not to invade, not to manipulate, not to "make slogans (Freire, 1997)." However, dialogue is enriched by humor. Humor is the matrix of dialogue (Shor & Freire, 1987).

6.3.5 Silence

In dialogue, one has the right to be silent (Shor & Freire, 1987). The importance of silence in the context of communication is fundamental (Freire, 1998).

6.3.6 Critical Thinking

Dialogue creates a critical attitude (Freire, 1997). True dialogue cannot exist unless the dialoguers engage in critical thinking (Freire, 2000).

6.3.7 Faith

Dialogue is nourished by faith (Freire, 1997). Faith in the ability of others to "name the world," together with trust between participants, and a hope that dehumanization can be overcome (Roberts, 2000).

7. Implications for Teachers' Teaching

The implications are illustrated as follows:

7.1 Practicing Love-Based Teaching

Freire (1993, p. 97) pointed out:

The more you are loved and you love, the more you can love. The less you are loved and love, the less you can love.

According to Freire's illustration, teachers should practice love-based teaching, and students are loved in the climate of love. Teachers liberate students from the oppressive teaching reality that crushes them. The love will be nourished, and true dialogue will be developed between teachers and students. Only by abolishing the situation of oppression is it possible to restore the love which that situation made possible. If I do not love the world—If I do not love life—If I do not love people—I cannot enter into dialogue (Freire, 2000).

7.2 Developing Humility-Based Teaching

Interpersonal dialogue is important, and people in dialogue can recreate themselves. Dialogue itself is a process of creating and recreating (Shor & Freire, 1987). Men and women who lack humility (or have lost it) cannot come to the people, cannot be their partners in naming the world (Freire, 2000). Therefore, if teachers come to students, they can be their partners in naming the world. Dialogue is important for teachers, and they must realize humility is the matrix of dialogue (Freire, 1997). According to the above perspective, humility is very important for teachers and students in the teaching process.

7.3 Nourishing Hope-Centered Teaching

Hope is the matrix of dialogue (Freire, 1997). In dialogue, if students have no hope then they will not have any inspiration. Moreover, without hope, they will not struggle (Freire, 2000). As the encounter of women and men seeking to be more fully human lives, dialogue cannot be carried on in a climate of hopelessness (Freire, 2000). In other words, a teaching climate of hope is important for teachers. Teachers should nourish hope-centered teaching.

7.4 Enriching Humor-Based Teaching

A sense of humor lets you laugh at yourself. This for me is strongly necessary for an educator drawing upon the dialogical perspective. Moreover, humor is richer and more demanding than joking. Humor helps make the learning moment "real," a quality that can reverse the artificial school experience (Shor & Freire, 1987). That is to say, teachers should enrich humor-based teaching

7.5 Developing Silence-Based Teaching

Silence makes it possible for the speaker who is really committed to the experience of communication rather than to the simple transmission of information to hear the question, the doubt, the creativity of the person who is listening. Without this, communication withers (Freire, 1998). Thus, to facilitate the communication between teachers and students, teachers should develop silence-based teaching

7.6 Teachers Should Promotes Students' Critical Thinking Ability in Their Teaching

Education is a process of communication and dialogue (Freire, 1997). Freire thought that imagination, guessing, intuition, cannot be dichotomized from critical thinking (Shor & Freire, 1987). Teachers are encouraged or required to develop their students' critical thinking. Namely, teachers should construct the ability of critical thinking of students in their teaching.

7.7 Teachers Should Deeply Believe that Their Students will Achieve a Better Vocation

Teachers require an intense faith in students, i.e., faith in their vocation to be more fully human. Dialogue further requires an intense faith in humankind, faith in their power to make and remake, to create and re-create, and faith in their vocation to be more fully human. Faith in people is an a priori requirement for dialogue (Freire, 2000). Basically, the aim of education is to cultivate students, who thereby become more fully human. However, most importantly, teachers should deeply believe that their students will achieve a better vocation, and believe that their students will achieve well-being.

8. Conclusion

Dialogue as a human phenomenon (Freire, 2000). Dialogue contains theory and practice. In *Pedagogy of the Oppressed*, Freire illuminated the importance of dialogical education. Dialogue further requires an intense faith in humanity, faith in its power to make and remake, to create and re-create, and faith in its vocation to make people more fully human (which is not the privilege of an elite, but the birth right of all people). Education-itself is founded upon itself upon love, humility, hope, humor, silence, critical thinking and faith. As such, dialogue becomes a horizontal relationship through which mutual trust between the dialoguers is the logical consequence (Nouri & Sajjadi, 2014). Further, dialogue becomes a humanizing action.

The purpose of this paper to explore and rethink Freire's dialogic pedagogy, as well as to further illuminate its implications for teachers' teaching. Firstly, we explore the importance of Freire's dialogic pedagogy. Through

true dialogue, we can change the world into a humanized one. Through true dialogic pedagogy, we can change classrooms into humanized ones.

Secondly, this paper explores the theory & practice of dialogue. Theory without practice in dialogue would be only abstract thinking, just as practice without theory in dialogue would be reduced to naive action. Thirdly, we explain how dialogue between teachers and students is the way to promote critical consciousness. Finally, this paper explores Freire's dialogic pedagogy, and illuminates its implications for teachers' teaching. The implications can be illustrated as follows:

- 1) By practicing love-based teaching, true dialogue will be developed between teachers and students.
- 2) We must develop humility-based teaching, teachers and students who lack humility (or have lost it) cannot come forward, and cannot be partners in naming the world.
- 3) We must nourish hope-centered teaching, if students have no hope then they have any inspiration, and they do not struggle.
- 4) We must enrich humor-based teaching, we must know that humor is richer and more demanding than joking. Humor helps make the learning moment "real."
- 5) We must develop silence-based teaching, because silence makes it possible for teachers and students who are really committed to the experience of communication.
- 6) Teachers should promote students' critical thinking ability in their teaching, and they are encouraged or required to develop students' critical thinking.
- 7) Teachers should deeply believe that their students will achieve a better vocation, and will become more fully human.

Finally, based on the above implications for teachers' teaching resulting from Freire's dialogic pedagogy, teachers and students, through the praxis of democratic and humanizing teaching, can raise their consciousness to critical consciousness, and thus become more fully human.

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