

Conceptual Article

Relevance of Paulo Freire's Educational Philosophy in Indian Educational System

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Abstract

The study investigates the utilization of Information and Communication Technologies (ICT) by B.Ed. trainees in teacher education programs. A structured questionnaire was administered to a sample of B.Ed. trainees to assess their frequency, purpose, and proficiency in using various ICT tools such as computers, the internet, multimedia, and educational software. Data were analyzed using descriptive and inferential statistics to identify patterns in ICT usage and differences based on gender, academic performance, and teaching specialization. Findings reveal that while most trainees have access to ICT resources and demonstrate basic proficiency, their usage for instructional planning and innovative teaching methods is limited. The study highlights the need for integrating ICT training more effectively into teacher education programs to enhance digital competency and improve teaching-learning outcomes

Keywords: *ICT Utilization, B.Ed. Trainees, Teacher Education, Educational Technology, Digital Competency, Computer-Assisted Learning, Internet Usage, Instructional Technology.*

1. Introduction

Thomas Merton in his book *Faith and Violence* has made the following statement: "When a system can, without resort to overt force, compel people to live in conditions of abjection, helplessness, wretchedness that keep them on level of beasts rather than men, it is plainly violence. To make them live on a subhuman level, to constrain them in such a way that they have no hope of escaping their conditions, is an unjust exercise of force.

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Those who in some way or other concur in that oppression and perhaps profit by it are exercising violence even though they may be preaching pacifism.

And their supposed peaceful laws, which maintain this spurious kind of order, are in fact instruments of violence." Amidst several revolutionaries in socio-politico-economic scenario, it is Paulo Freire, an influential revolutionary educationist stands in the field of education echoing education as "Practice of Freedom." This article reflects on Paulo Freire's Educational Philosophy, his process of Conscientization, his Pedagogical method and its relevance to Indian Educational context.

2. Paulo Freire's Educational Philosophy

Freire argued that educators should reject a "banking" model of education in which the teacher "owns" knowledge and "deposits" it in students. Instead, he promoted a "problem-posing" method in which teachers and students learn together through dialogue. Problem-posing education depends, then, on a dialogical theory of praxis and knowledge and a revised relationship between teacher and student.

2.1. Dialogue, Praxis, and Knowledge

Freire defined dialogue as "the encounter between humans mediated by the world in order to name the world." At its broadest, the concept of dialogue represents, for the Catholic Marxist Freire, the dialectical process of moving from thesis to antithesis to synthesis. At times, Freire uses the term interchangeably with another key term, "praxis," or "reflection and action upon the world to transform it." Freire also presented dialogue as a pedagogical process, in which teachers and students actively pursue learning through discussion and debate of sociopolitical realities, processes that entail a particular theory of knowledge. For Freire all learning is relational and knowledge is produced in interaction.

2.2. Problem-Posing Education and the Teacher-Student Relationship

Problem-posing education relies on a transformed and transformational, respectful relationship between teacher and student. According to Freire, "through dialogue, the teacher-of-the-students and the students-of-the-teacher cease to exist and a new term emerge: teacher-student with student-teachers. The teacher is no longer merely the one who teaches, but one

who is taught in dialogue with the students, who in their turn while being taught also teach." Problem-posing education, according to Freire scholar Moacir Gadotti, is "a horizontal relationship fed by love, humility, hope, faith, and confidence."

2.3. Ontological Vocation

For Freire, man's ontological vocation is to be a subject who acts upon and transforms the world and in so doing, move towards ever new possibilities of fuller and richer life individually and collectively. But Freire saw human society as divided into two groups, the oppressors and oppressed, a class society where the masses are treated as 'objects', 'things' to be managed, directed and manipulated by the oppressors. This oppressive situation denies the masses of their right to self-affirmation as responsible persons. It interferes with man's ontological and historical vocation to be more fully human. The result is an all-pervasive dehumanization. Dehumanization marks not only those whose humanity has been stolen but also of those who have stolen it. Hence, the task of humanization becomes a major challenge. And in the struggle for humanization, Freire warns, the oppressed must not become in turn oppressors but rather, restorers of the humanity of both.

3. Conscientização

The literal meaning of the word conscientization is 'to make aware' or 'awakening of consciousnesses or 'critical consciousnesses. But for Freire, Conscientization is a political-educational process which enables the masses to overcome 'false consciousness', to realize their real situation in society and to take part in changing society in the capacity of subjects. According to Freire, the more a person conscientizes himself, the more he unveils reality and get at the phenomenonic essence of the object he stands in front of to analyse it.

Conscientization is a historical commitment. It is a critical insertion in history. This implies that men and women take the role of agents, makers and remakers of the world. In this process, the first step is to discover oneself as oppressed. In discovering oneself as oppressed, one should also know that liberation is, knowing that something can be done and in trying to transform the oppressing situation in which one is. Conscientization thus implies a critical insertion in the praxis and the process of historical change. It is a social process, taking place among men as they unite in common reflection and action upon this world.

3.1. The Process of Conscientization

The Freirean Approach conceives education as a process of 'conscientization' and seeks practices consonant with this aim. The 'how' of conscientization implies a basic starting point: the distinction between education as an instrument of domination i.e. Banking Approach to education and education as an instrument of liberation, i.e. Problem-posing Approach to education. The Banking type of education is designed to prevent critical thinking and perpetuate the status quo. Here the educator is the guardian of a secret. He teaches and the students are taught. The teachers is the one who knows, thinks, talks, disciplines, chooses the content, acts and so on. Only he is the subject in the learning process. It is the 'digestive or nutritive' concept of education.

'Problem-posing education' on the other hand, is an act of knowing together, where the teacher and the learners enter into a dialogue through which they investigate the problems together. The basic assumptions are that 'no one can teach anyone else' no one can learn alone' and that 'people learn together, acting in and on their world'. The mode of learning is dialogue, in which love, humility, hope and faith prevail. This approach abolishes authoritarianism in the classroom, ends irrelevance and arid intellectualization and encourages critical thinking about society.

3.2. Paulo Freire's Pedagogy

Freire views education as the practice of freedom. In its true perspectives, it humanizes people through their conscious action to "transform the world." The importance of education lies in its ability to put people into a "critical confrontation" with their own problems and allow them to be responsible for any resultant change. Thus education must begin with the level at which the people perceive their reality so that their own existential situation can be posed as the problem. Neutral education cannot and does not exist. Education either conditions and domesticates or deconditions and liberates. The hierarchical teacher-student relationship, a relationship of authority and control, effectively limits the student's ability to act as a subject in the learning process. They are relegated to the status of an object where decisions regarding their welfare are largely determined by others and it is this loss of one's control over one's reality that establishes a dehumanizing and oppressive situation. Freire terms this situation the "banking-concept" of education in which teacher student roles are rigidly defined. It is assumed

a priori that the teacher "knows" and that the students have yet to learn. Through constant narration, education becomes an act of depositing the knowledge of the instructor into the student. As such, banking education minimizes the student's creative power, it alienates by imposing a different reality and it oppresses by refusing to address itself to the student's world. Conversely, education as liberation, "implies the problematization of one's situation in its concrete objective reality so that being aware of it, one can also act critically on it." Education needs to be of a problem-posing nature where the power relationship between the instructors and the students becomes equalized i.e. "teacher-students" and "student-teachers," and through open communication (dialogue) they can both critically analyze their own realities and establish their own praxis. In essence, problem-posing education occurs within the context of the individual's existential situation, presenting the individuals with their own experiences as the problem.

This liberating education can be an effective means of illuminating oppression and its causes. Dialogue is the facilitator of problem-posing education and is a prerequisite for individuals engaged in "naming" the world. Dialogue cannot be verbalism, nor can it be simply an exchange of ideas or a polemic argument. Dialogue must be based on life, humility, faith in humankind, and must be an act of critical thinking between individuals. Dialogue must also be extensive. Therefore, it is crucial that dialogue take place in an atmosphere of trust so that the danger of misinterpretation is minimized.

4. Relevance of Paulo Friere's Educational Philosophy to the Indian Education Context

4.1. Indian Pedagogy of Education

To make our Indian Educational System operative, pedagogy of a new society has to be generated. It should form men and women for others in a post-modern world where so many forces are at work which are antithetical to that of pedagogy of sharing. For this purpose, all educational agencies should exhibit a preferential option for the poor and assist the students to understand the reasons underlying the insecurities of 'the poor' and to seek more constructive ways to deal with them.

The social dimension of education should be affirmed in our education in order to facilitate the birth of the new society. The younger generation has to be imbued with a strong

commitment to humanizing values of such a Society. Our education should conscientize the students to change radically the unjust status quo with the awareness of the necessary struggles. Only then does education become contextual and, therefore, relevant. They should be linked with the life- situations. The educational institutions should be the centres of development for the neighbourhood with people's involvement in planning and management of education. The essential function of educational institution is to render intellectual and social service to the community where they are situated rather than limiting themselves intramurally.

The consciousness-raising content requires a stress on our pedagogy of education. Particularly institutions of higher education should generate processes of critical awareness both at social and ecological levels. They should be transformed as centres for forming new synthesis and counter-value systems. The research that is carried out in the universities and parallel Institutes of higher learning must render them as revolutionary think-tanks and dynamic harbingers of change. They should develop the students critical thinking so that they can discern the forces which liberate and those which enslave.

Students need to be conscientized to harsh social facts of life. Unfortunately, very often, education offers resistance to such awareness through various elite ways and means. Students should be made to experience personally the poverty, discrimination and concrete life-situations of the poor, of rag-pickers, children of working mothers, slum dwellers if a New Society has to be built up. Experiential awareness of the struggles of the poor and the oppressed will surely produce committed leaders of the prophetic Caliber. Today's anti-productive and irrelevant curricula require an urgent transformation.

4.2. Challenges to Indian Education

Any integral philosophy of education, particularly when it envisages transformation of an exploitative educational society into new society, motivated by a pro-existential concern, has to have a space for changes. They are touched upon succinctly below:

Restructuring of institutions, according to the fundamental options appropriate to the Educational Philosophy is a must in order to translate the theory of education into praxis through relevant pedagogy. Educational institutions should have student-teacher-participation in order to educate students for the service of Faith/Dharma through the promotion of justice.

Without such participation, no involvement, commitment, genuine love and concern will develop. Such participation-at-depth is the greatest challenge to educational institutions. In all decision-making and policy-making bodies, both in the administrative and academic sphere, the teachers as well as the taught should have an adequate participation. Thus students and teachers should be real partners in education. This is an essential element of education or a new society, society participation.

Autonomy of Institutions accompanied by accountability should be granted if educational institutions should be creative and innovative in the area of curricula, pedagogical paradigms and evaluation methods in a multipronged way. The management can have a pragmatic institutional planning for social awareness and justice dimension through education with the help of comprehensive and sustained efforts of motivated teachers and students. •

Educators with personal qualities, educational qualifications and professional competence are a real challenge in our times. In order to enable teachers to function efficiently proper working conditions should be made available to them. Norms of accountability should be laid to teachers, by state with incentives to good performance and disincentives for the bad performance. Educators must enjoy responsible freedom to express their views based on scientific research and also to innovate pedagogy of teaching and evaluating. They should be allowed choose their type of work and their working hours.

The vision of a New Society and commitment to struggle for it are by and large lacking in our teachers. Hence, they are just passive spectators of the present oppressive society. They fail miserably in awakening and organizing the students to put their service at the task of building a community of justice and peace. The crying need of the hour is to change this deplorable situation. Hence teachers should have an ongoing formation to enable them to understand the culture of silence among the marginalized, to respond to their contextualized needs and to conscientize the students for suitable liberative praxis. A team of socially conscious and committed teachers has to be formed in a progressive manner. For this, young men and women of outstanding abilities to teach should be encouraged to adopt an academic career.

Adult education tends to become the fastest growing segment of education. Literacy, functional skills, awareness of the socio-economic reality is an integral part of adult education. The price which the individual as well as the whole country pays for illiteracy is enormous.

Illiterates tend to maintain the status quo. Hence a multipronged attack on mass illiteracy is inevitable. The main foci of adult education should be, besides functional literacy, the upgrading of vocational skills, technology and education for citizenship. For the youth, in addition to them, physical and cultural education and participation in rural development programme should be given importance. In this context, priority should be given to Conscientization and Political Education in order to liberate themselves.

Organized action has to follow experience and reflection in order to bring about the structural change of the status quo in all its dimensions as well as sectors. No authentic educational reform in the interest of the masses can take place unless it becomes a Revolutionary movement of the poor masses themselves. It is therefore, necessary to generate and animate such movements in order to make the oppressed powerful to demand justice with suitable political collaboration. It is moreover, the fundamental right of the people to organize themselves. Political action should be programmed at grass-root levels to reclaim their rights. Joint-committees can collectively fight out corrupt and inefficiency. Only such broad-based organizational participation can ensure a definite way of working to build a New Educational Society through a appropriate philosophy and praxis of Education.

5. Conclusion

In India, education has failed in creating an egalitarian society. Firstly, the educated are not at all ready to involve themselves in the upliftment of the down-trodden. Secondly, education has not pervaded the masses and made them critically aware of their dehumanization. Thirdly, it has not instilled positive values of dignity of labour, selfless-service, total commitment in the concern of the oppressed, equality of persons and solidarity among various religious groups. There is neither training nor models in sufficient numbers to incarnate these values in day-to-day life.

The dire need of today is not status-conscious political leadership or hierarchy-cantered ecclesial leadership but a committed revolutionary leadership both in the secular and religious domain. The leadership must be able to transform the masses that are domesticated as reflexive psycho-somatic automatons into reflective pneumatic persons. "Reality cannot be changed in our consciousness. It can be changed only through revolutionary action." Hence the immediate task is to shift the centre of education from the elite to the poor and the oppressed masses.

Educational process should be geared to conscientize people for the restructuring of society. Such an education should enable the people to come out of their lethargy and confront the basic issues and make the required decisions with discernment for their own advancement as human beings.

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