



INTERROGATING PEDAGOGICAL STRATEGIES

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Abstract

The paper proposes to analyze educational strategies of education employed in Latin America and Russia and does a comparative study with the pedagogical strategies used in India. It suggests innovative methods of schooling can prove to be effective tools in bringing major transformations. The paper proposes that the subjective consciousness of students must be taken into account against the objective truths of the text books. The education system must not advocate conforming of students into the present ideological apparatus but rather should promote freedom from it towards humanization, because material gain must not be seen as the ultimate ambition of a student's life. The educational institutions must advocate critical intent among students for the natural process of growth to take place. In the end paper examines various cons of the idea of completely abolishing the system of school education.

Key Words: *Ideology, deschooling, humanization, dehumanization, oppressor, and oppressed.*



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It is essential to say that for their part the ideological state apparatus functions massively and predominantly by ideology, but they also function secondarily by repression, even if ultimately, but only ultimately, this is very attuned and concealed, even symbolic. (there is no such thing as purely ideological apparatus) thus, schools and churches use suitable methods of punishment, expulsion and selection, etc to 'discipline not only their shepherds but also their flocks' (Althusser 1971: 303).

Althusser proposes that every individual endowed with 'consciousness' must operate according to the ideas he accepts as true and if one does not do so, he terms it as 'that is wicked' (Althusser 1971: 320). He states that every idea exists in action, action in *practices* and practices in *rituals*. These rituals have a material basis, so the subject begins to be governed by these ritual practices. The subject is free, ethical, and has an idea, but once the ritual practices begins to govern the subject, it is in danger of transforming into an object. According to Eric Fromm, the authoritarian force takes the position of a subject and begins to dominate the subject turned object. The school and its educational methods can be analyzed according to Eric Fromm's distinction between authoritarian ethics and humanistic ethics. This paper proposes to analyze the pedagogical strategies used in the schooling systems of Latin America and Russia vis-à-vis that of India (metropolitan centers) in particular and the scope of subversion that may lie in theories of alternative education.

According to Ivan Illich school education (with reference to the dominant Soviet model) is the most repressive channel to subjugate children and there is a need for radical transformation which is possible through 'deschooling' (Illich 1971: 10). (The concept of 'deschooling' will be explained shortly in the paper.). 'Deschooling' means rejecting the obligatory form of schooling which follows a preset curriculum, with 'deschooling' Illich suggests an open curriculum system where the focus shall be on learning skills from living experience. While in the Latin American context, pedagogical strategies were aimed at doing away with the banking concept of education to rouse the consciousnesses of people and methods and objectives of teaching radically altered the received institutions of thought about teaching to teach the oppressed sections of the people in the following terms:

'The teacher talks about reality as if it were motionless, static, compartmentalized, and predictable... topics completely alien to the existential experience of students. His task is to "fill" the students with the contents of his narration'. (Freire, 1993: 52).

Eric Fromm on the other hand suggests that in realizing humanitarian ethics one needs to trust man's reason and his capability of subjective truth; man is to be respected for his potential to attain individuality in the competitive world:

'The great tradition of humanistic ethical thought has laid foundations for value systems based on man's autonomy and reason' (Fromm 2006: 3).

In schools, the teacher-student relationship works on a different level all together as teachers do not encourages students' creativity; in fact, all subversive ideas are systematically demolished by the dominant mode of thinking created by the system. It works in direct opposition to any development of individuality, and focuses on mechanical aspects of education where all students are directed to retain the concepts delivered by teachers and if there are questions that are provoked they are largely 'one-dimensional' in nature. In such a situation, students are mostly considered to be ignorant, indifferent or indolent and are therefore made to internalize the passive attitude and belief in their sluggishness whether mental or physical. Students are taught to gain material success as that becomes the parameter on which society evaluates man's accomplishments in life. Whereas Fromm warns against the materialism (attachment to commodities rather than human relationships) that has slithered man's life and has estranged him from his own self and man is unable to apply his energies to prolific good.

Paulo Freir's early life was lived among the poor and the oppressed and it is they who taught him what he describes as 'culture of silence of the dispossessed' (Shaull 1993: 12). He recognized that the forces operational in dominating the poor were a combination of the economic, social and political. These forces intertwined with the strategy of submerging them in a condition of total oppression, as the environment was not conducive for the development of critical awareness. He attributed the educational system to be the main repository of these dominating forces which aided them in maintaining the 'culture of silence'. He believed that man's endeavor must be oriented to achieve a nature of being and then to act as a subject in order to transform the world. This movement helps in attaining new possibilities and develops man's life both at the level of the individual and that of the collective. An individual's growth is reflected in his capability to perceive his personal and social reality with a critical perspective. Paulo Freire demonstrated that this critical ability is to be developed in a teacher-student relationship. In his endeavor to develop the notion of a teacher's responsibility he completely negates the present system of education as it is prevalent in Latin America specifically in his own country Brazil.

Paulo Freire explains two possible purpose of the education system. To begin with, he states there is no such thing as a neutral educational process. The first point that he raises to provoke thought is - education functions as a system that aims toward the integration of students into its conformity apparatus in which the logic of the present system operates. The second purpose with

which Freire aligns himself is ‘the practice of freedom’; here students are made conscious of the critical perspective which enables them to transform the world. Freire links up the system of alternative education with humanization and the traditional teaching-learning process as one that leads to increasing dehumanization. Humanization is man’s prerogative but there is a constant negation of humanization in the education system as school education is used to oppress students. Students can revert back to humanization by opposing this oppression. In this phenomena of oppressor and oppressed, the oppressor himself is enslaved and with negative application of power can never liberate either himself or his victim. It is the power of the oppressed which has the capacity to liberate both the oppressed and the oppressor. This liberation can come to the oppressed if only they recognize the need for autonomy and struggle for it. Freire presents certain flaws in this situation when the oppressed in their labor to become liberated ends up becoming oppressors or ‘sub-oppressors’. Their conditioning has been shaped by existential modes where they come to identify with the ideal wo/man as oppressors. So the identification is with the oppressors and there is a lack of consciousness in which they do not acknowledge themselves as oppressed. The consciousness of being from the oppressed category is termed by Freire as a prerequisite for liberation. He illustrates this with an example that if peasants want agrarian reform it is with the rationale to acquire land and become landowners. So the problem lies at two levels and liberation cannot be achieved until these problems are solved. First, an oppressor submerges the consciousness of human beings and impedes their way to development. Secondly, because of the first mentioned problem there exists a degree of duality in oppressed classes which makes them divided beings. Here Eric Fromm’s analysis of modern man’s predicament is appropriate as he believes that modern man is reverting back to a primitive stage in the foregoing of his reason. Such duality in man’s nature makes him susceptible to the moral confusion which can prove dangerous for society at large as it might find a vent in violent ways.

Freire indicts the existing educational institution as the force determining man’s perception of things in this world. The prevalent functioning of education system is described by him as the ‘banking system of education’ (Freire 1993: 53) when the teacher makes the deposits which the students passively and meekly memorize and repeat. This process reflects the lack of critical faculty as it has no (or perhaps little) scope for transformation of the world. Teachers become the depositors and students the deposits. Teachers come to believe in the absolute ignorance of

students and this facilitates their existence as oppressors. As explained, prior to this, like agrarian farmers, students too come to identify themselves as ignorant and never question the logic of the teacher and the content of what is taught. The concept opposed to the banking system of education is libertarian education (doctrine of free will). Here the focus is on generating knowledge through reconciliation of the student-teacher relationship. In this system, there is ample scope for developing the critical consciousness and thus the scope for transformation of the world. This is in contrast with the banking system of education which demolishes any possible attempt to transform the world. This demolition of critical consciousness is perfectly suitable to the interests of oppressors as it permits the functioning of the social order according to their dictates and no one inquires. The purpose of the oppressed is to 'integrate' and 'incorporate' the inept and indolent in its system. But the purpose should be allowed a structure where an individual is allowed to explore his critical faculties and put them to practice by questioning as that is the key to transformation. But the oppressors cannot allow this transformation to take place as it does not support their interest. Friere terms the potential to transform on perceiving the social, economic and political contradictions as 'conscientizacao'. Paulo Freire is aware that the banking approach has invented a new device to mask its elements of oppression in 'humanism'. **Oppressors generate false generosity.**

As students grow up to be adults, through their existential experience they become conscious of the disparity between their knowledge and its application in the real world. They realize the deposits their teachers have made in them are in stark contradiction to the world they encounter. Therefore in the banking approach to education, a person merely exists in the world not with it or with other inhabitants, whereas there has to be a constant interaction between man and world as both are interdependent. Educators' role as suggested by Paulo Freire should be to regulate the 'way' the 'world' enters into the student. The individual who comes from the banking concept of education is appropriated to suit the interest of the oppressors and fits in the world the oppressor has created. This approach thus precludes thinking and turns students into passive recipients of education. Freire focuses on the authentic thinking to be attained through communication where teachers and students simultaneously participate and generate productive knowledge and not the repetitive one. Banking approach to education produces 'necrophily', a state, when a person adopts mechanical methods to accomplish tasks instead of applying critical thinking. At some point in life, students realize that the efforts to act responsibly are not yielding

results and this leads to suffering. This inability to act in a way propels them towards critical thinking and removes them from the state of ineptness.

Humanists should not resort to banking educational methods for liberation; instead the focus should be on humanizing through developing the consciousness of men and women. Whereas in the banking concept of education there is no focus on generation of concepts; rather what the teacher teaches becomes exclusively his/her own property and students memorize it without any critical reflection. The opposite of this stunted method is the problem-posing method where the key to generate knowledge lies in the dialogue/s between teacher/s and student/s. In this method, students identify problematic concepts and offer their considerations which the teacher/s reconsider/s and adopts in his/her method of teaching and thus, there is a development of mutual knowledge.

Ivan Illich's analysis of education is not viable as his ideas are far too radical to come to realization. He begins with providing statistics which show the misuse of funds as allocated to schools to educate the poor. There is com modification of education which has given rise to technocrats. He looks at the education system as it has come to develop according to the logic of the market. He sees schools as aligned with the market and generates consumers in students to consume the products of the market. This rampant com modification has completely overpowered the schooling system and students have become the recipients of the market. In the process, the goal of humanitarian ethics is completely lost and parents who send their children (whether poor or rich) for advancement or learning remain an unrealized goal. Illich thereby proposes 'de-schooling' and says focus should be on universal education which can be achieved through one's living experience and not through following the rigid pattern of a curriculum. According to Paulo Freire, if one becomes dehumanized through the education in school, then they can revert back to the process of re-humanization within the education system itself by transforming the methods of inculcating knowledge and teaching-learning processes. On the other hand, Ellich suggest doing away with schools altogether and emphasizes on the living experience of students. He recommends that two unskilled people with some key of the subject should be left together to develop their knowledge and this is supposed to help in developing 'critical intent'. It is supposed to give rise to critical enquiry and open new avenues to be explored. But this method is too farfetched to be realistic as it has various pitfalls as enumerated below:

- First, there is an ambiguity in giving total control to two unskilled people, it seems to be a primitive idea that lacks a structure altogether and is thereby an educational utopia not realizable under the present circumstances;
- Secondly, there is a huge possibility of misguidance because the practical aspect of the subject can be learned from living experience but the theoretical knowledge needs to be learned from a trained professional conscious of his/her role of the social objective of teaching which is not providing the skills of the three Rs (reading, writing, arithmetic) alone but building a different world;
- The knowledge gained from a trained professional (which could be a farmer, an electrician, a mathematician, a poet) enables a student to apply it in practice and thus gains far better results as the teacher as initiator is engaged in thinking and practicing the subject s/he intends to teach. Here it is pertinent to notice that Paulo Freire suggests absolute negation of the banking approach to education but that cannot be as at several points students require assistance from teachers for facts they alone are equipped with. He offers an inverse model school where students learn due to self motivation and there is no need to employ teachers. Paulo Freire suggests teacher-student relationship should be treated at an equal level and the difference should be realized only at the level of skill; Illich on the other hand is very critical of teachers and says this category must be abolished if students are to attain autonomy. At the primary level, when a child joins school s/he is largely unaware of ethics, consciousness, or even good or bad as it is the responsibility of teachers to develop consciousness so that children can decide for themselves. But the teacher should not become the substitute God and by extension the State but should enable the child by helping him/her develop his/her critical intent to decide the difference between right and wrong and be conscious of the fact that the student too may have something to return to the teaching-learning process.

In the books printed under the National Council of Educational Research and Training one notices in the *Preface* the several promises it makes and seeks to fulfill. It guarantees ‘integration of indigenous knowledge’, relating the curriculum to ‘the immediate environment of the pupils’, ‘desired problem solving and learning skills’(Singal 2005: 8). The promise the *Preface* maintains is as farfetched as Illich’s radical proposal as competitive learning environment mirrors the battle of the market and what is crushed in the process is the natural flowering of a child’s (and even, youth if one considers the realm of higher education too) mind.

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