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Critical Pedagogy in Indian Classroom

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ABSTRACT

Critical pedagogy has its origin in critical theory of the Frankfurt School and the work of Brazilian thinker Paulo Friere. The critical pedagogy is a transformative approach in Education. It is the approach based on political act like Democracy and Social Justice. The students are given freedom to put forward their opinion and interact with the teacher to understand not mere the concept of subjects but the social, political, economic and historical mechanism too and develop the ability to think critically to bring positive changes in the prevailing society. Paulo Friere for the first time brought the application of concept of critical theory in Education, It is well depicted in his work 'the Pedagogy of Oppressed'. Beside this, he also opposed the banking system of Education in which the teacher deposits or transmits the knowledge in the mind of learners and the learners neither do anything with the knowledge mere to collect and organize them. Friere emphasised on critical thinking based Education system where the oppressed also get equal chance to participate in the two way teaching learning process. Irrespective of few criticisms to critical pedagogy, it is an important instrument in our hands with which we can have the ability to transform this society.

Keywords: Critical pedagogy, critical theory, critical thinking, dialogue, transform, society etc.

INTRODUCTION

Critical Theory is a school of thought that stresses the reflective assessment and critique of society and culture by applying knowledge from the social sciences and the humanities.

As a term, Critical Theory has two meanings with different origins and histories: the first originated in sociology and the second originated in literary criticism, whereby it is

used and applied as an umbrella term that can describe a theory founded upon critique; thus, the theorist Max Horkheimer described a theory as critical insofar as it seeks "to liberate human beings from the circumstances that enslave them".

DEFINITION

Critical Theory was first defined by Max Horkheimer of the Frankfurt School of sociology in his 1937 essay *Traditional and Critical Theory*: Critical Theory is a social theory oriented toward critiquing and changing society as a whole, in contrast to traditional theory oriented only to understanding or explaining it. He described a theory as critical insofar as it seeks "to liberate human beings from the circumstances that enslave them". Critical Theory involves a normative dimension, either through criticizing society from some general theory of values, norms, or "oughts", or through criticizing it in terms of its own espoused values. *The core concepts of Critical Theory are as follows:*

1. That critical social theory should be directed at the totality of society in its historical specificity (i.e. how it came to be configured at a specific point in time), and
2. That Critical Theory should improve understanding of society by integrating all the major social sciences, including geography, economics, sociology, history, political science, anthropology, and psychology.

CRITICAL THEORY AND EDUCATION

Critical theorists have widely credited Paulo Freire for the first applications of Critical Theory towards education. They consider his best-known work, *Pedagogy of the Oppressed*, a seminal text in what is now known as the philosophy and social movement of critical pedagogy.

"The radical, committed to human liberation, does not become the prisoner of a circle of certainty' within which reality is also imprisoned. On the contrary, the more radical the person is, the more fully he or she enters into reality so that, knowing it better, he or she can better transform it. This individual is not afraid to confront, to listen, to see the world unveiled. This person is not afraid to meet the people or to enter into dialogue with them. This person does not consider himself or herself the proprietor of history or of all people, or the liberator of the oppressed; but he or she does commit himself or herself, within history, to fight at their side."

— Paulo Freire, *Pedagogy of the Oppressed*

CRITICAL PEDAGOGY

Critical pedagogy is a philosophy of education and social movement that has developed and applied concepts from critical theory and related traditions to the field of education and the study of culture. Critical pedagogist view teaching as an inherently political act, reject the neutrality of knowledge, and insist that issues of social justice and democracy itself are

not distinct from acts of teaching and learning. The goal of critical pedagogy is liberation from oppression through an awakening of the critical consciousness. When critical consciousness is achieved, it encourages individuals to bring change in their world through social critique and political action.

McLaren defines critical pedagogy as follows:

McLaren defines critical pedagogy as follows: Critical pedagogy is a way of thinking about, negotiating, and transforming the relationship among classroom teaching, the production of knowledge, the institutional structure of the school, and the social and material relations of the wider community, society, and, nation state (McLaren, 1998, p.45).

In McKernan (2013) we read: "...Critical pedagogy is a movement involving relationships of teaching and learning so that students gain a critical self-consciousness and social awareness and take appropriate action against oppressive forces. This idea is central to Freire's notion of "conscientization" or the coming to personal critical consciousness. According to Herbert Marcuse, a major figure in the Frankfurt school, that there could be no qualitative social change, no socialism, is possible without the emergence of a new rationality and sensibility in the individuals themselves: no radical social change without a radical change of the individual agents of change (Marcuse, 1972)... (McKernan, 2013, p. 425).

PAULO FREIRE AND THE ROLE OF CRITICAL PEDAGOGY

Critical pedagogy is a teaching method that aims to help in challenging and actively struggling against any form of social oppression and the related customs and beliefs. It is a form of theory and practice which serves to let pupils gain a critical awareness. Critical pedagogy is a type of pedagogy in which criticism of the established order and social criticism are essential. Critical pedagogy wants to question society in its understanding of the role that education has. From this point of view, social critique is necessary if one does not want an upbringing and education that contributes to the reproduction of inequality.

An important key concept in this is emancipation. It is emancipation, liberation from oppressive social relations, which critical pedagogy is committed to. Social critique leads to social change. With this mode of critique we want students to see clearly that phenomena like inequality are not necessary, but arose in a certain historical context that has been established and produced by man-made social processes. Upon becoming aware of this reality, a person no longer needs to feel like a manipulable object anymore.

According to the critical pedagogy, education is inherently political, and any kind of pedagogy should be aware of this fact. A social and educational vision of justice and equality should be the basis for any kind of education. The liberation from oppression and human suffering should be an important dimension in education.

Education should promote both emancipatory change as well as the cultivation of the intellect. It should be kept in mind that the current education system is a reflection of the interests of the existing system of exploitation. This dynamic must be exposed by critical

pedagogy, understood, after which action should be taken against it to bring social change, a cycle of theory, practice, evaluation and reflection.

Paulo Freire's "Pedagogy of the Oppressed"

Paulo Freire, a professor of history and philosophy of education at the University of Recife, is the grandfather and one of the major contributors to critical pedagogy. He felt a deep concern for the poor, which influenced his views on education.

He is best known for his book "Pedagogy of the Oppressed" in which he described how people have been never learned to think critically about their situation. Most people accept their situation as inevitable and as belonging to life itself. Only when they become aware of their situation and are able to assign meaning to it, a step can be made toward changing the situation.

CRITIQUE OF EDUCATIONAL BANKING

Freire criticized the traditional education method of simply depositing knowledge, or what he called the "banking concept of education", which only strengthens the established order. Instead of communicating with the students, the teacher gives deposits which the students have to patiently receive. They are not considered as able to do more than to organize and accumulate the deposits.

This "banking" concept is the reflection of the dichotomous oppressive society we live in: the teacher knows everything and the students know nothing, the teacher thinks and the students are being thought, the teacher talks and the students listen obediently. The success of this method depends on the willingness to swallow. Those who are not willing to cram themselves with deposits remain 'undeveloped'.

Freire looked for a method that is conscientizing and thus comes to the basic principle of his educational theory: Education can never be neutral, it is either an instrument of liberation or an instrument of domestication. In the preface of the *Pedagogy of the Oppressed*:

"There is no neutral education process. Education either functions as an instrument which is used to facilitate the integration of generations into the logic of the present system and bring about conformity to it, or it becomes the 'practice of freedom', the means by which men and women deal critically with reality and discover how to participate in the transformation of their world."

Freire adds that this does not depend on the content of the education provided, nor the good will of the educator, decisive here is the educational process itself. If the individual does not fight for its interests, and its cultural and social emancipation, it seems that one has lost the love for life. The pedagogy that Freire proposes is the opposite of that described above. It suggests that the individual has a love for life, teaches a cultivation of being - by being in the world, not of or under the world - a condition brought about by liberation. This necessitates a kind of education that is not alienating and mechanistic. Education that

liberates the individual must be a conscious act in which the content is understood and analyzed, with the dialogue between the students and the teacher, it should negate the unidirectional (coming from one side) relationship to replace it with bidirectionality (coming from both sides) to contribute to the education of both parties, because both have the elements to offer each other insights. The teacher is hereby turned into the pupil of his own pupils. "Nobody educates anybody else, nobody educates himself, people educate each other through their interactions of the world."

DIALOGUE IN CRITICAL PEDAGOGY

To bring the awareness process in motion there must be dialogue, because man does not create oneself in silence, but by words, actions and reflection. The use of such a dialogue is the main element in the learning process.

Dialogue can only happen by the speaking of "own words" with which the individual reflects its reality, it is the only way to get the understanding of this reality and change it. In opposition to the depository education system that maintains the system, Freire proposes the problematizing education with conscientizing (coming to consciousness) as a goal. Learning is not 'eating' of false words, it is not programming, learning, problematizing by raising questions. The subject matter is the life situation of the pupil.

CRITICAL PEDAGOGY IN THE CLASS

Educators on all levels should ask themselves if their assignment is only transferring knowledge to their pupils/students. Only training the labour force that will engage in material and service production? The answer to these questions could be a dividing line between traditional and critical pedagogy. The former may conclude that there is nothing more than knowledge transfer and skills training that are parts of an educator's assignment and role. The latter will recognize something more that belongs to its assignment (Giroux & Giroux, 2006).

Following few strategies can be adopted to implement critical pedagogy in the classroom:

- Teachers must show respect towards their students and welcome their ideas.
- Produce democratic environment in the classroom, where the students feel free to ask any question and put forward their opinion.
- Not mere transmit or deposit the knowledge in the mind of learners rather indulge in some sort of healthy discussion.
- Indulge in some kind of small researches or project work with the students based on academics, social and political consequences.
- Create a classroom where the teachers and students try to understand and learn from each other.
- In addition to the subject content the students are helped to understand the working mechanism of the society. They should be helped to get the general idea of historical,

social, political and economical mechanisms. Depending on the level of education they should be motivated to critically review these mechanisms to be able to critically reflect on them.

- Open ended questions can be given to the students so that to develop critical thinking on them.

CHALLENGES IN IMPLEMENTING CRITICAL PEDAGOGY:

- Not having clear model for implementation of this pedagogy in the class.
- Its abstract nature not much practical application ie in day to day life.
- It mainly focuses on a macro level system critic than engaging in an action at a micro level in a classroom reality.
- Teachers are not well versed with the concept itself and also not well prepared to use critical pedagogy.
- Also difficult to implement due to examination ridden education system.
- Impossible to cover the syllabus within the given time period.
- Over crowded classrooms.

CONCLUSION

Irrespective of certain criticism and challenges faced by critical pedagogy there is a lots of potential in it to make the teaching - learning active and interactive process and transform the students from being a passive listener to active participant thus make the teaching learning process more effective and fruitful. The individual is made so conscious that he or she adapt to the environment completely and make the changes as per the necessity. It is one of the important tool in the hands of educators to use in the classroom and bring the desired changes for the welfare of society.

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