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**EDUCATION FOR AUTHENTIC DEMOCRACY:  
CAPITALISM, OPPRESSION, AND FREIRE'S  
CRITICAL PEDAGOGY FOR LIBERATION**

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## **Abstract**

Within the parameters of western ideology the concept of democracy is frequently upheld as a corner stone to which our moral, social, political and educational practices are anchored. The term has become a powerful instrument of persuasion in the public forums as the innate goodness of democracy has become more unquestionably ingrained in the historical imaginations of its citizens. As the logic surrounding the value placed on democracy is entwined with the virtues of freedom and self-determination for all, this is hardly surprising. What remains often unexplored in these public forums, however, is whether this logic is in fact justified. To situate the investigation into the current political arena is to acknowledge the dichotomy by which the philosophies of democracy and capitalism are publicly claimed to exist side by side. Such an acknowledgement forcefully yields one to the questions of to what extent our current ideologies of democracy, and the perpetuation of this dogma through our education system, can successfully result in producing an authentic democratic society within capitalist constructs.

This thesis has been written in an attempt to expose the contradiction present between our current political claims of democracy and our capitalist directed practices of education through the critical philosophy of Paulo Freire. Freire has firmly established himself as a respected democratic educator, however, my intention has not been to reduce his educational pedagogy by adapting it to attempt to improve the current system of schooling, as I argue is frequently found within educational literature, but rather to differentiate his democratic philosophy of education as the practice of freedom from the capitalist concept of education as a tool of domination and domestication.

I argue that the logic of transnational capitalism, which dictates the policies and practices of our education system, is detrimental to the development of the peoples' critical thinking facilities and thus negates their individual and collective empowerment. Such a system of banking education actively denies people the right to participate in history as subjects and inhibits the possibility of an authentic democracy. In this way the capitalist education system is in fact a system of oppression. Through Freire's critical pedagogy I argue that the transference of

knowledge through an authoritarian system does not constitute as education but is instead a training ground for workers set up in the interests of capitalist employers. Social class divisions are maintained and enforced by means of a paternalistic apparatus of hierarchy.

In supporting Freire's philosophy, and acknowledging the entirely political nature of education, I argue that an education system that would support an authentic democracy would have to practice authentic democracy. Through the concepts of 'problematization', dialogue, critical transitivity and praxis I have attempted to refute the fatalistic assumptions that such an education system is unconceivable or unexplainable. Indeed, I argue that if our goal is to live in a democracy then such concepts are unavoidable.

The historical case study from the history of the New Zealand education system is included to illustrate the theory in practice. Here I argue that the intentions, practices and policies of the legislators were anti-democratic and anti-educational in that they constructed a compulsory system that is detrimental to the development of critical thought, self determination and dialogical knowing that is necessary to allow each member of society to be part of the governing system. By examining the consequences and legacy of this system it is possible to expose its influences in the larger educational realm in society. It is not my intention to simply present New Zealand education as an isolated case which requires examination but rather as a prominent example of how Freire's philosophy applies to traditional education in the west.

This thesis is therefore aimed at re-defining the concepts of democracy and education through critically examining the socio-economic conditions necessary for effective and equal participation in democratic forums. By critiquing the current system via the vehicle of Freire's philosophy, a prominent democratic educator, the divide between democracy as an illusion and as a reality becomes clearer.

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# **Introduction**

## **My Journey to Freirean Pedagogy**

### **1. Introduction**

When I was growing up I was immersed into a formal system of compulsory schooling from the age of five to seventeen. I have several distinctive memories from this period of my life that shaped the beginnings of my personal theories of human ontology and human education. It took me several years to be able to view my schooling objectively. Every ‘achievement’ I gained within the school institution effectively had little to do with my own educational development. I felt and observed the effects of power within the school – which I believe were unfairly allocated – and I tried to make sense of how I could possibly conform to a system that I felt contradicted my very being. There was never a time within this period that I possessed the vocabulary or the capacity to effectively alter my situation.

The term ‘education’ is one I became wary of. Whenever you begin a conversation about “education”, in my experience, the conversation almost immediately turns to that of formal schooling. Society has been thoroughly ‘schooled’ and thoroughly. In approximately 150 years of organised formal schooling in New Zealand, the majority of people have little imagination for other educational possibilities. This tendency combined with the capitalist mantra of competition for private ownership, and the paternalistic use of schooling credentialing by employers for social selection, has resulted in a situation where democratic education is largely rhetorical.

Whilst in university I was fortunate enough to work with several teachers who believed and practiced education for liberation rather than the submissive banking system I had previously been immersed in. Although the tertiary sector is not without its flaws it was here that I gained experiences of education where the answers were not always pre-subscribed and where critical questioning was rewarded rather than frowned upon. It was also at this time that I finally gained the words I needed to articulate the injustice I feel is present in so many aspects of the banking system of ‘education’. Paulo Freire’s theory in particular held strong

appeal. He outlined conclusively the problems within the current system of formal 'education'. His concept of banking transmission is progressive in that it incorporates the problem of oppression as a foundational flaw in the traditional system. Further, Freire's critical pedagogy comprehensively proposes an alternative democratic educational theory which has liberation of the oppressed as its foremost objective.

When I took the role of a teacher, at an alternative education centre, the practical and fundamental importance of Freire's work became apparent. My role was to teach twenty youths ranging from 13 to 16 years who had been excluded from three neighbouring high schools. Legally these children had to attend formal schooling until the age of sixteen but the mainstream schools considered them, to be blunt, "un-teachable", and hence they were sent to "wait out their time". Part of what I learnt from these young people is that Freire's concept of education works in a practical sense as well as a theoretical. His term "teacher-learner, learner-teacher" is not an abstract philosophical concept but one that is practically viable and greatly beneficial to the educational experience.

The detrimental effects for individuals of the banking system of 'education' deems 'failures' was all too apparent when I was first introduced to these young people. For two years we worked together largely unsupervised from school authorities and unrestrained by a prescribed curriculum. We began to develop dialogue, and eventually began to engage in critical thinking. The intellectual progress that these individuals made was far beyond anything the school authorities could ever have envisaged. I owe a large ideological debt to every one of these special individuals.

A particular realisation came out of this experience regarding the concept of democracy. Increasingly, I came to understand the importance of democratic practices and philosophy as being the foundation for an authentic education. Democracy, for these youth, was an empty intellectual term, meaningless and incomprehensible. As we worked together to develop critical consciousness they began to understand what a democratic forum would look like and frequently pointed out the anti-democratic practices in the society around them. Freire's theory made a pivotal point when he advocated that education must be democratic

in its politics. This is a major contradiction present in our current societal claims and formal institutions practices and one that this thesis examines in greater details.

Given this background, I have written this study with two firm objectives in mind. The first is to reaffirm that our current schooling system holds clear contradictions for the progression of a democratic education that promotes critical thought and praxis. I use the term “reaffirm” because what I am arguing is not a new concept. The fact that numerous renowned academics from all stations have exposed this concept many times over must be recognised in any educational enquiry. The second objective is to reassert that we do have a direction in the quest to find an educational solution to the problem posed by compulsory schooling. In this regard Freire has proposed a critical pedagogy that provides a theoretical base for the implementation of practical solutions. He has proposed a way for education to have a structure without being a limiting and dominating force of people’s critical capacity. Instead his theory aims at developing this capacity to allow people to become active participants of their own creation and an authentic democracy.

## **2. Mapping a critical structure of study**

The task that remains is to map a critical structure around which this study is formulated. My intention in Chapter 1 is to begin with making a case for Freire’s concept of democracy. The western world already currently claims to be democratic in its politics but I argue here that the reality is that many of its practices are decidedly anti-democratic, and that this is particularly observable in its institutions. By highlighting the contradictions between societies current politics of capitalism, and those required to establish authentic democratic forums, my intention is to expose the contention between the western world’s claims and actuality of its practices. The purpose of this chapter is to clarify the concept of democracy and democratic education.

In Chapter 2 the issue of focus is of exposing the capitalist mantra as the phenomenon that maintains and reinforces oppression in the world. Through observing the capitalist practices of individual competition, private ownership,

mass production, and the unequal division of socio-economic resources I argue that the roots of oppression can be clearly traced to back to capitalism. Emphasis is made on the particular oppressive conducts of capitalist institutions and the unequal outcomes these create on a global scale. Freire was adamant in his opposition towards capitalism and its detrimental effects on the oppressed. I employ his critical theory, along with that of other renown academics, such as Karl Marx, in order to strengthen my argument regarding the anti-democratic and anti-humanist nature of capitalist politics.

Chapter 3 is dedicated to an enquiry into the traditional formal schooling institution, which Freire named the “banking system”. I argue that the philosophy, politics and practices of the banking system are anti-democratic in nature and are observably detrimental to the ability of individuals to be active participants in democratic forums. A critical investigation into the traditional curriculum and the schools use of behavioural modification techniques is undertaken with Freire’s theory as the foundation for critique. In particular, formal assessment processes are exposed for their anti-educational consequences. The reproductive social hegemony that the school perpetuates is discussed in terms of the barriers it presents for the oppressed and their autonomy over their own reality. The phenomenon of oppressors as educators is examined with particular consideration given to what this entails for oppressed individuals. Finally, this chapter begins to look at ways to address the problems of the traditional system in preparation for a thorough enquiry in Chapter 5.

The historical case study of the ‘New Zealand scene’ in Chapter 4 intends to further illuminate the impact the banking system has on a society. By enquiring into the historicity of a nation’s school policies and practices we can begin to gain clarity both of the development of early educational ideology and the legacy that subsequently followed in this country. It is through a detailed historical recount that Freire’s concepts can be brought into meaningful relativity. This chapter will also to highlight that the educational flaws of the banking system are not contemporary occurrences. Even before the establishment of formal schooling in New Zealand several academics, politicians and educationalists have had the foresight to comprehend that a system so heavily focused on formal assessment

and examination is largely detrimental to the educational development of youth. This chapter also attempts to outline how the public demand for credentialing developed through a complex society of individuals who brought the historical memory of an ascription based homeland to their new country.

My fifth and final chapter is dedicated to utilising Freire's critical pedagogy to construct an alternative concept of education than that of our current formal schooling (banking) system. With the previous chapters having focused on exposing and examining the 'problem' in depth and my intention in Chapter 5 is to give direction towards an educational 'solution'. In this chapter I argue theoretical and practical ways that a democratic education can be achieved through using Freire's pedagogy as a foundation of practice. Through the development of an individual's historicity, dialogue, and the use of praxis a critical consciousness can be achieved. I also look at what this specifically entails for the democratic teacher and the obstacles that they will encounter to achieving a liberating educational environment. This chapter is written with the intention of exploring practical solutions to the current domesticating system in order to take action to change our current reality. The situation presents a difficult task but not an impossible one. Through the work of Freire I argue that the steps we must take to create an authentic democratic education can be clearly shown.

# Chapter 1

## A Freirean Case for Democracy

### 1.1 Introduction

The concept of a democratic society has been regarded as more than just a philosophical ideology in human history. The Western world has frequently claimed that it has embraced democracy as a political system, process, and way of life embodying freedom as an inherent good. Democracy is regarded as a system of value seen to enhance the lives of individual human beings and of the more general aspirations for human societies as a whole. Hence, when politicians and the media use the term, it resonates within individuals as being a political ideology that respects their rights to equality, freedom of speech, and participation in the election of a representative government.

Whilst the Western world has vigorously declared its constituent nations to be democratic, a profession of democracy does not necessarily entail that a society is democratic in its practices. Democracy needs to be viewed in relation to the contradictions of the capitalist system within which it attempts to function.<sup>1</sup> In other words, democracy must be *lived* in order to be authentic. In this regard, the presence of an electoral system is by no means indicative of democratic living. Democracy requires the presence of forums where all peoples voices can be heard and, ultimately, ‘govern’ their own reality. This obligation extends to all manner of institutions within a society. A more sophisticated theory of authentic democracy and authentic democratic practices within a society needs to be embraced to recognise these problems.

The work of Paulo Freire provides that sophistication. In so far as it is a view of democracy and democratic living that offers both a direction and a challenge to the current political and social system, Freire’s concept of democracy is best thought of as a verb than a noun; that is, a concept to be lived. Highlighting the benefits of this concept and the opportunities it would offer for an alternative perspective on life and living is therefore the purpose of this chapter. The missed

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<sup>1</sup> G. McLennan, *Marxism, Pluralism and Beyond: classic debates and new departures*.

opportunity that the constraints of capitalism produce for democratic practice will also be highlighted.

## 1.2 The socio-political context of Freire

Freire's life began in 1921 in the northeast of Brazil. The region where he was born is one of the poorest regions in the world.<sup>2</sup> He came from a middle class catholic family but experienced poverty and hunger first-hand when the depression of 1929 hit his family home.<sup>3</sup> In 1931, soon after the family moved to Jatatao, his father died. Because of the hardship that Freire had experienced during this period, he fell two years behind in his school work. His progress was so uneven during this time that some of his teachers even thought that he was mentally retarded.<sup>4</sup>

During this time, the poverty and inequality that surrounded him did not go unnoticed. In 1959, for example, half of the land in Freire's country was owned by three percent of the population.<sup>5</sup> So it was in this way Freire experienced first hand the practical and theoretical implications of social class at an early age. It was more than likely that this reality too led him to study law at the university level. Despite never practising as a lawyer, and instead opting to work with catholic groups who pursued a theology for liberation with the poor and dehumanized in mind, this background would have been an invaluable asset to his struggle nonetheless.<sup>6</sup>

By 1959, Freire had completed a doctorate on adult education, and secured employment at a university, where he was given an opportunity to develop the adult literacy programmes that for which he would become so well known. He worked as a teacher and advocate among the people of the slums, eventually focusing on adult literacy among the poor of Recife.<sup>7</sup> He continued this work until 1964 when, after a military coup in Brazil, his work was declared subversive and

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<sup>2</sup> J. L. Elias (Ed.), *Paulo Freire: A pedagogue of liberation*, p.1.

<sup>3</sup> Ibid.

<sup>4</sup> Ibid, p.2.

<sup>5</sup> Ibid, p.1.

<sup>6</sup> P. Roberts, 2000, *Education, literacy, and humanization: Exploring the work of Paulo Freire*.

<sup>7</sup> J. L. Elias (Ed.), *Paulo Freire: A pedagogue of liberation*, p.3.

he was forced into exile. He lived the next twenty years in various Third and First World countries, including the United States of America.<sup>8</sup> On his time in exile Freire commented:

I began to understand the nature of limits on education when I experienced the shock of the coup d'état. After the coup, I was really born again with a new consciousness of politics, education, and transformation. You can see this in my first book, *Education for Critical Consciousness*...I don't make reference there to the politics of education. But, I was able to learn after that about history. All these things taught me how we needed a political practice in society that would be a permanent process for freedom, which would include an education that liberates.<sup>9</sup>

In 1970, the release of *Pedagogy of the Oppressed* saw Freire solidify his international fame as an academic. What his critical pedagogy signalled was for academics to see education as a liberating force rather than a domesticating one. In this respect, the ideas in *Pedagogy of the Oppressed* have since been applied on every continent— in projects ranging from grass roots basic literacy programmes to national educational policies.<sup>10</sup> It is notable also that although Freire's earlier work centred around the plight of Third World countries and Third World peoples, his pedagogy had a huge impact on First World nations such as the United States of America. As one American academic has remarked, "Not since John Dewey have the thoughts of a philosopher of education impacted upon such a broad sphere of public life in the U.S."<sup>11</sup>

During the 1980s, Freire was able to return to Brazil. He continued to work there but travelled often to give seminars and write books. He collaborated with several acknowledged critical theorists, such as Donald Macedo and Ira Shor. Such collaboration enabled him to reflect critically on his own ideas through dialogue.<sup>12</sup> Reflecting on the inspirations within his life in various biographies, (i.e. Peter Roberts(2000) *Education, literacy and humanization: Exploring the work of Paulo Freire*, Moacir Gadotti & John Milton (1994) *Reading Paulo Freire: His life and work*, and Peter McLaren & Peter Leonard (1992) *Paulo Freire: A critical encounter*), progressive Catholicism, Marxism, and his work in

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<sup>8</sup> P. Roberts, 2000, *Education, literacy, and humanization: Exploring the work of Paulo Freire*.

<sup>9</sup> Op cit. p.9.

<sup>10</sup>R.D. Glass, "On Paulo Freire's philosophy of praxis and the foundations of liberation education," p.15.

<sup>11</sup>Ibid.

<sup>12</sup> P. Roberts, 2000, *Education, literacy, and humanization: Exploring the work of Paulo Freire*.

Third World countries are highlighted as the major sources of his ideas. These influences are clearly seen throughout his work, particularly evident in the type of language he employs.

Although Freire's death in May 1997 ended his direct personal contribution to public educational and philosophical dialogue, the legacy of his critical pedagogy remains alive and continues to be developed through many of the academic survivors that have followed him such as Paula Allman, Moacir Gadotti, Henry Giroux, Peter Leonard, Peter McLaren & Peter Roberts. It is recognisable that several of these academics have taken Freire's own advice, not merely stopping with his ideas but critiquing them in relation to contemporary issues and practices. As many have argued, a pedagogy of the oppressed is as needed today as it was when Freire first articulated it. With global economic forces pressing public education toward ever more narrow and conservative agendas—thus reinscribing and somehow justifying poverty and dehumanization through their association with specific (il)literateacies and failure on standardized tests—Freire's pedagogy is as critical now as it was in his own time to uncover the myths that deceive.<sup>13</sup>

### **1.3 The political nature of education**

One of the most persistent myths is in fact that education is neutral to political endeavour. So that although some may perceive education and democracy to constitute two separate realms, Freire argues that in fact the whole activity of education is political in nature.<sup>14</sup> To Freire, all education has a political direction. It is not an experience that is outside the political realm— although it often seems to be a separate and isolated system. Education is politics because it is one place where individuals and society are constructed.

Because human beings and their society are developed in one direction or another through education, the learning process cannot avoid being political.<sup>15</sup> Politics is life. It is not the sole business of governments. It is about defining the forms of life citizens wish to pursue within their society. Signalling an interest in

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<sup>13</sup> P. Shannon, 1998, *Reading poverty*.

<sup>14</sup> I. Shor, *Paulo Freire: A critical Encounter*, p.27.

<sup>15</sup> *Ibid*, p.28.

alternative forms of life therefore, a major ideological tension is recognised as being the ability of people to retain a concept of the political beyond their contemporary consumer identity.<sup>16</sup>

This view of education requires a significant shift in our assessment of the meaning and purpose of the educational policy we wish to employ. If education is in fact political in nature, then what politics is it precisely that we wish to be practicing? Indeed, if our claims of a democratic political system are valid ones, then authentic democratic values need to be the root from which all policies—particularly those of education—stem. Democratic principles would then have to follow from such values. As Dewey observed, a society is democratic in so far as it “makes provisions for participation in its good for all its members on equal terms and...secures flexible readjustment of its institutions through interaction of the different forms of associated life.”<sup>17</sup>

Hence, for Freire a democratic education could never be conceived without a profound commitment to our humanity. This is a humanity not merely based on some psychological notion of ‘positive self esteem’, but rather a deeply reflective interpretation of the dialectical relationships between our cultural existence as individuals and our political and economic existence as social beings.<sup>18</sup> Democracy and democratic education is therefore not a mere charity. It is instead a recognition of humanity and the unique nature of its values. As Gramsci so aptly put it, democracy as a total and integral part of society is what is desired, not the partial democracy which commonly and vulgarly describes the world’s most advanced countries today.<sup>19</sup>

Recognition of the intimacy between education and politics leads to a different set of questions than the ones often asked by educators. For example, is the current political situation we are experiencing one that nurtures the growth of democracy for all people through the philosophies and practices of institutions in our society? Or, perhaps, is it nurturing something else? Are our institutions of education

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<sup>16</sup> P. McLaren, *A pedagogy of possibility. Reflecting upon Paulo Freire’s politics of education*, p.49.

<sup>17</sup> R.A. Breault, “Dewey, Freire and a pedagogy of the oppressor,” p.99.

<sup>18</sup> A. Darder, *Teaching as an act of love- In memory of Paulo Freire*, p.2.

<sup>19</sup> B. Gulli, “Praxis and the danger: The insurgent of ontology of Antonio Gramsci.”

democratic in nature? It needs to be clear as to what politics is guiding the educational experience in which learners are immersed.

If the education system is a means by which narratives are deposited in students, and these narratives contain a profound capitalist bias, then the possibility of people being able to critically examine the capitalist ideology must be considered to be severely hindered. For Freire, an authentic democracy can only be achieved through a liberating education, not a dominating or domesticating one. The more that people participate in the process of their own education, the more that people will participate in the process of defining the kind of production in which they wish to engage. By reflecting on such questions additionally, the more people will participate in the development of themselves. The more people become themselves, the better the democracy.<sup>20</sup> In Freire's concept of production, the power is given back to the people who produce the products rather than an employer who owns the company in which these products are produced.

As is becoming apparent, a central theme of Freire's concept of education is that of freedom. He reminds us that "freedom is not an ideal located outside of (wo)man; nor is it an idea which becomes myth. It is rather the indispensable condition for the quest of humanization".<sup>21</sup> Freire's concept of freedom is completely entwined within his democratic principles. This type of freedom contrasts sharply with many of the capitalist ideals inherent within its philosophies and practices. Because the capitalist society has been ascendant within our society and throughout our education, it may seem difficult to imagine questioning its politics. But this is precisely what Freire's work does. While the theoretical grounding and implications of Freire's (educational) practices are profound, at the foundation of such work is the conviction that a critical, multicultural democracy should be the driving force of the struggle for freedom.<sup>22</sup>

To understand Freire's pedagogy one must firmly grasp the concept of democracy and freedom being threaded throughout his entire educational philosophies. What Freire puts forward is an education that revolves around a struggle for human

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<sup>20</sup> M. Horton & P. Freire, *We make the road by walking – Conversations on education and social change*, p.145.

<sup>21</sup> P. Freire & I. Shor, *A pedagogy for liberation – Dialogues on transforming education*, p.113.

<sup>22</sup> P. Leistyna, *Presence of mind in the process of learning and knowing: A Dialogue with Paulo Freire*. p.17.

freedom by means of a democratic political stage. Inherent to this politic is a form of citizenship that could not be obtained by choice. Such citizenship required that we fight to obtain it; a fight that required commitment, political clarity, coherence and decision.<sup>23</sup> This fight or struggle is one that Freire believes is central to the humanization of all people and that conscientization, a sense of history, praxis, and dialogue are central to such a struggle.<sup>24</sup>

For Freire, education must engage in both a struggle for meaning and a struggle over power relations. Freire recognised that the oppressed participate in their own oppression by internalising the meanings that are mediated to them in formal and informal education.<sup>25</sup> If education is to be democratic in its philosophies and practices then it must be liberating in its philosophies and practices also. Education as the practice of freedom—as opposed to education as the practice of domination—denies that man is abstract, isolated, independent, and unattached to the world. It also denies that the world exists as a reality apart from men.<sup>26</sup>

#### **1.4 The unfinished nature of humans**

An important foundation to the understanding of Freire's concepts is in grasping the idea of the unfinished nature of humans. We can recognize that much of our reality, including much of what we (presently) are, is the consequence of human action in the past.<sup>27</sup> By acknowledging the past as contributing to the present, one can begin to comprehend how the present in turn contributes to the future. Human beings are constantly creating their reality through their action and reflection. In contrast to animals, whom Freire describes as creatures who have contact with things in the world but do not relate to the world, humans are beings of relations in a world of relations.<sup>28</sup>

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<sup>23</sup> A. Darder, *Teaching as an act of love - In memory of Paulo Freire*, p.9.

<sup>24</sup> P. Leistyna, *Presence of mind in the process of learning and knowing: A Dialogue with Paulo Freire*. p.17.

<sup>25</sup> P. Roberts, *Paulo Freire, politics and pedagogy*, p.55.

<sup>26</sup> P. Freire, *Pedagogy of the oppressed*, p.54.

<sup>27</sup> P.L McLaren & C.C Lankshear, "Being' and 'time' in Freire's philosophy,"p.177.

<sup>28</sup> *Ibid*, p.176.

Human beings consciously make the world and all within it objects of their investigation, contemplation, action and comment. In doing so, they communicate with others, transform the natural world, build relationships of various kinds with their fellows and create, modify, and (sometimes) destroy institutions.<sup>29</sup> They do not merely repeat history over and over, but they change, develop, grow, and differ with the decisions that they make in the world everyday. Humans are historical beings, but it is a history that is still being created rather than one that is finished and printed in a textbook. Indeed, as Freire points out, in contrast to other animals who are unfinished, but not historical, men know themselves to be unfinished; they are aware of their incompleteness.<sup>30</sup> It is up to humans to rediscover their humanness and the humanness of others, and recognize that, unlike animals, that must adapt to the conditions given to them. We human selves can act upon and change the world around us.<sup>31</sup>

Reality is neither stagnant nor fixed but rather is both reflective and reflexive of human action. The material world influences humans, and humans likewise influence it. As Roberts explains:

Rejecting both mechanical objectivism and solipsistic idealism, Freire emphasizes the interaction between inner and outer dimensions of reality. We change the objective world through consciously directed activity, but our ideas are also shaped by material phenomena, processes and activities.<sup>32</sup>

Human beings also create through the names and narratives that they give to material phenomena, processes, and activities in the world. They do this also through the corresponding value that they attach to them. And in this respect, a very real and present power is revealed in this statement in so far as those who name the world also control it. Likewise, those who realise that they can re-name it are able to take back that control. Terms such as ‘right’ or ‘normal’ are simply indicative of this power to name the world.

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<sup>29</sup> Ibid.

<sup>30</sup> P. Freire, *Pedagogy of the Oppressed*, p.57.

<sup>31</sup> P. Freire, *Pedagogy of freedom*.

P. Roberts, *Education, literacy and humanization*.

D. Hill, “More free or less constrained? Freire and Foucault on freedom and the problem of human submissiveness.”

<sup>32</sup> P. Roberts, *Education, literacy, and humanization: Exploring the work of Paulo Freire*, pp.145-146.

The historical nature of humans means that much of who we are has been created from the legacy of the past. Such personal history is always embedded in social forms of the past which are part of our collective cultural present—whether good or bad.<sup>33</sup> In this sense, the present is very much true to its wording as almost being a pre-‘sent’ reality.

In contrast to this image of unchanging truths that transcend time and space, Freire argues that ideas must be understood contextually as historically and culturally informed discourses. As such, they are subject to the forces of material and symbolic production.<sup>34</sup> This entails that our personal identities stem from much bigger collective historical ideas, such as what it means to be a woman, or a lawyer, or to have blonde hair or to teach. Peter Roberts’ work contains an excellent discussion about this in which he points out that “Freire does not deny that individual human beings are unique—that they understand and respond to the world and to others in distinct ways—but argues that it is only through inter-subjectivity that individual existence makes sense”.<sup>35</sup>

Whilst the present may be pre-sent, the future is not. Being historical beings does not entail that history is finished. The underlying theory of historical materialism present in Freire’s work consists of precisely the opposite view. As Joseph Ferraro writes:

Historical materialism, by virtue of its emphasis on human productive practices and historical specificity, holds out the prospect of perceiving the present as history. Human beings can know the world, despite its complexity, because they have made it... A materialist conception of history unite ontology, epistemology and history around a single premise of struggle.<sup>36</sup>

Within this idea of struggle is contained the key to understanding this theory: that destiny is something one has to fight to determine—not a script that is merely waiting to be enacted or re-enacted out.

The history of human beings is unfinished and therefore always becoming into a new reality. Likewise, this same unfinished state also applies to human ideas,

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<sup>33</sup> P. McLaren & P. Leonard, *Paulo Freire. A critical encounter*, p.55.

<sup>34</sup> P. Roberts, “Knowledge, dialogue and humanization: Exploring Freire’s philosophy,” p.174.

<sup>35</sup> *Ibid*, p.177.

<sup>36</sup> P. McLaren, *Che Guevara, Paulo Freire, and the pedagogy of revolution*, p.194.

knowledge, and culture. Knowledge is therefore always historical; always becoming. Knowledge is changed to the extent that reality moves and changes also.<sup>37</sup> Freire, in the tradition of Marx, believed that we both make and are made by history, and thus, knowledge cannot be divorced from historical continuity.<sup>38</sup> Knowledge is not ideas outside the realm of people but ideas that are created by people themselves. Or as Marx and Engels explained this same concept in 1976; “the production of ideas, of conceptions, of consciousness is at first directly interwoven with the material activity and the material intercourse of men”.<sup>39</sup>

This is the essence of Freire’s human ontology. It is by knowing that the future is not determined that human beings become more fully human. It is by knowing that intervention into reality is the means of displaying or expressing that humanity that human beings realise their own humanness and also comprehend the humanness of others. This is the contrast between humans and animals; the latter being creatures that must adapt to the conditions given to them by the world. In contrast, humans create the world around them. They act upon the world to change it.<sup>40</sup> Freire goes so far as to argue that this is the purpose and right of every person; that reflection and action on the world is what defines humanity as humanity.

Paradoxically, it is in its incompleteness that Freire’s concept of knowledge derives its dialectical strength.<sup>41</sup> If human beings are historical beings—and therefore constantly changing—then it stands to reason that, for knowledge to have any authenticity, it would need to change also. This is change not just at the level of the individual but at the level of the collective additionally. Here Freire’s concept of dialogical knowledge becomes apparent, as knowledge reflects not just the changing individual but the changing society in the changing world. Dialogical knowing always renders problematic an individual or group’s existential predicament in relation to a larger socio-political context.<sup>42</sup> Knowledge is unfinished because our relations with the world and with each other are

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<sup>37</sup> Op cit., p.171.

<sup>38</sup> A. Darder, *Teaching as an act of love- In memory of Paulo Freire*.

<sup>39</sup> P. Roberts, “Knowledge, dialogue and humanization: Exploring Freire’s philosophy,” p.171.

<sup>40</sup> P. Freire, *Pedagogy of freedom: Ethics, democracy and civic courage*.

P. Roberts, *Education, literacy and humanization: Exploring the work of Paulo Freire*.

<sup>41</sup> P. McLaren & P. Leonard, *Paulo Freire. A critical encounter*, p.59.

<sup>42</sup> Ibid, p.53.

unfinished. What can be seen is that we come to know through our interaction with an ever-changing world.<sup>43</sup>

It is within this notion of “unfinishedness” that Freire outlines a great opportunity for all human beings. It is an opportunity of agency where they can be responsible for their own becoming, and create the reality that they choose—even if it is different to their current historical location on the planet. He outlined this opportunity explicitly in his work *Pedagogy of Freedom* by stating;

If I am a pure product of genetic, cultural or class determination, I have no responsibility for my action in the world and, therefore, it is not possible for me to speak of ethics. Of course this assumption of responsibility does not mean that we are not conditioned genetically, culturally and socially. It means that we know ourselves to be *conditioned* but not *determined*.<sup>44</sup>

Freire would describe this opportunity as one that provides the possibility of becoming more fully human. As noted above, Freire saw the whole purpose of human beings to become more fully human and he thought that the possibility of doing so depended upon them becoming conscious of their own incompleteness—of the unfinished nature of reality, of the various constraints to their recognizing this—and, upon recognizing this, to enter the active process of making reality and their own human selves.<sup>45</sup> His concept of praxis hinges on this idea that knowledge is unfinished. By critically reflecting on their world, and then taking action accordingly, human beings could consciously create their reality. For him, it was essential for human beings first recognize that they were unfinished; that they were only capable of “learning”, in a qualitatively broader sense, if they were capable of this recognition.<sup>46</sup> Freire saw this as an opportunity that every human being was born with a natural right to pursue.

It is in the prevention of accessing this opportunity to become fully human that the root of oppression lies. Freire saw that every human being had the right to create their own reality as historical beings. He urged educators to recognize this right; that it was when the majority is denied this right to participate in history as

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<sup>43</sup> P. Roberts, “Knowledge, dialogue and humanization: Exploring Freire’s philosophy.”

<sup>44</sup> P. Freire, *Pedagogy of freedom: Ethics, democracy and civic courage*, p.26.

<sup>45</sup> P.L McLaren & C.C Lankshear, “‘Being’ and ‘time’ in Freire’s philosophy,” p.179.

<sup>46</sup> Ibid.

subjects that they become dominated and alienated.<sup>47</sup> Correspondingly, he argued that when the majority is denied their right to participate in history, society as a whole is disadvantaged through the loss of their voice. In saying this, Freire recognised that diversity in society, and the resulting social tensions this created, was integral to an authentic democracy. What was needed was a critical dialogue of praxis between groups and individuals in order to reap the benefits for all.

## **1.5 The politics of the Capitalist ‘education’ system**

Close observation of our education system reveals that it is clearly capitalist by nature. Indeed it could be argued that the education system works to justify economic inequality and to produce a labour force whose capacities, credentials, and consciousness are dictated in substantial measures by the requirements of profitable employment in the capitalist economy.<sup>48</sup>

Freire outlined this capitalist system of education as the “banking” system. Within the banking concept of education, it can be seen that an analysis of the teacher-student relationship at any level—inside or outside the school—reveals its fundamental narrative character.<sup>49</sup> This character limits peoples’ ability to critically create their own reality by binding them to that of another’s. Banking education neither promotes nor permits the critical consciousness required for the oppressed to become participants in the creation of human history. The teachings are void of contextual meaning that would allow them to be applied to the world in which they live. The traditional curriculum, disconnected from life, centred on words emptied of the reality they are meant to represent and lacking in concrete activity, could never develop a critical consciousness.<sup>50</sup>

Banking education teaches the narratives and cultural stories about a society as truth. It does not encourage exploration of the facts and fictions of a society but rather prescribes to students the knowledge it wishes them to retain. For Freire, curriculum is controlled from above as a means to impose the dominant culture on

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<sup>47</sup> A. Darder, *Teaching as an act of love- In memory of Paulo Freire*, p.9.

<sup>48</sup> M. Sarup, *Marxism and education*, p.169.

<sup>49</sup> *Ibid*, p.57.

<sup>50</sup> P. Freire, *Education for critical consciousness*, p.37.

each new generation of students. Knowledge is not neutral. Rather it is the expression of historical movements where some groups exercise dominant powers over others.<sup>51</sup>

‘Truth’ stems from the dominant power relations that make it.

If one was to observe the gnosiological cycle of knowledge, they would find that there are only two moments in the cycle—and that these two moments are dialectically related. The first of these moments is the *production* of new knowledge. The other moment is one in which the produced knowledge is *known* or *perceived*.<sup>52</sup> As Freire and Shor explain;

...what happens generally is that we dichotomise these two moments; we make them separate. Knowledge is produced in one place far from the students, who are asked only to memorize what the teacher says. Consequently we reduce the act of *knowing* the existing knowledge into a mere transference of the existing knowledge and the teacher becomes just the specialist in transferring knowledge.<sup>53</sup>

It becomes clear that knowledge alone, especially that transmitted by the school in the banking concept of education, does not transform life. Only the conversion of knowledge into action can transform life. This concretely defines the meaning of practice; the dialectic movement between the conversion of transformative action into knowledge and the conversion of knowledge into transformative action.<sup>54</sup> The banking concept of education thus begins to be seen as having a specific direction in its aims and practices, and can therefore be measured for comparison against that of an authentic democratic educational direction.

An observation of the current world politics does seem to support this statement. It also appears that it is often difficult for people to envision a society which harbours a philosophy different to that of capitalism. In the United States, for example, the logic of capitalism has been etched into the historical imagination of its subjects.<sup>55</sup>

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<sup>51</sup> I. Shor, “Education is politics: Paulo Freire’s critical pedagogy,” p.28.

<sup>52</sup> P. Freire & I. Shor, *A pedagogy for liberation – Dialogues on transforming education*.

<sup>53</sup> Ibid, p.8.

<sup>54</sup> P. McLaren, *Che Guevara, Paulo Freire, and the pedagogy of revolution*, p++.

<sup>55</sup> Ibid, p.19.

Yet if education is to follow the capitalist ideology of economic production, then it must follow that it must necessarily inherit the capitalist consequences. If education is then thought of as merely a sub-sector of the capitalist economy, then it is to be expected that a capitalist class system of hegemony will emerge from it benefiting the few at the expense of the masses. Perhaps this may be a difficult concept for some banking educators who promote that the current ideology of education gives a chance for each individual to succeed in our economic set up. Gramsci addresses this dilemma by stating that;

The multiplication of types of vocational school thus tends to perpetuate traditional social differences; but since, within these differences, it tends to encourage internal diversification, it gives the impression of being democratic in tendency. The labourer can become a skilled worker, for instance... But democracy, by definition, cannot mean merely that an unskilled worker can become skilled. It must mean that every 'citizen' can 'govern' and that society places him, even if only abstractly, in a general condition to achieve this.<sup>56</sup>

A typical response to the banking education problem is often one that involves the idea of progress and technological advancement. Yet if one is to understand clearly what Gramsci and Marx proposed, then a reassessment of what is indeed progress and advancement for human beings is needed. Freire continually addressed this subject, challenging people's reliance on technological modernization to lead people to a critical consciousness. He pointed out that highly technical societies were often the most 'domesticated' ones with people holding a mistaken illusion of choice.<sup>57</sup>

Mass schooling can be viewed historically as the result of mass economic production. Indeed, it seems that education has been captured increasingly by this concern. As Freire points out, in our highly technical world, mass production as an organization of human labour is possibly the most potent instrument of (wo)mans' massification.<sup>58</sup> When you take this idea and apply it in an educational setting, it is also one of the most potent instruments for assimilating people to the dominant ideology.

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<sup>56</sup> B. Gulli, *Praxis and the Danger: The insurgent ontology of Antonio Gramsci*.

<sup>57</sup> P. Freire, *Education for critical consciousness*, p.34.

<sup>58</sup> *Ibid*, p.34.

Instead of challenging the organizational structures of the dominant society that perpetuates the advantaged positions, practices, and privileges of the superclass, a traditional form of pedagogy tends to undermine the democratic process. Education of this type ends up advancing a philosophy that propagates hegemonic class rule and re-establishes the role of the capitalist class.<sup>59</sup> Such perceptions lead people to internalise the dominant ideology, and therefore to ignore the other possibilities available as an alternative social ideology. As Freire has argued, authentic democracy by contrast relies on people being able to acknowledge and include diversity.

Although it should be cautioned that the concept of education extends far beyond that of traditional schooling, schools provide an interesting political example when considering the idea of banking education. 'Education is politics' suggests that the entire school experience has political qualities and consequences. In schools and colleges governed from the top down by administrations, new generations of people develop. Schools construct people year by year, developing the way they think about the world and act within it.<sup>60</sup> The new generation's perspectives and practices regarding democracy are developed in this manner. It often transpires that when these young people enter into society at large, they bring with them the only conception of democracy that they know. What they advocate from this model is that those with the "right" answers or the greatest wealth deserve the greatest voice in government.<sup>61</sup> In other words, their reasoning bears the hallmarks of capitalist thinking.

This proposes a significant problem when trying to construct an authentic democracy in a society that promotes capitalist ideology through banking education. Until one recognizes that integrating the diverse perspectives of citizens *strengthens* a democracy, there will be little commitment to cultural diversity.<sup>62</sup> And with such a philosophy how can an authentic democracy of inclusion prevail? If the traditional curriculum is biased in its culture, then it is unlikely that it will support action from other cultures. Yet shouldn't this be the

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<sup>59</sup> P. McLaren, *Che Guevara, Paulo Freire, and the pedagogy of revolution*, p.35.

<sup>60</sup> "I. Shor, Education is politics: Paulo Freire's critical pedagogy," p.28.

<sup>61</sup> R. A. Breault, "Dewey, Freire and a pedagogy for the oppressor," p.4.

<sup>62</sup> *Ibid*, p.5.

action which a democratic education would support and indeed initiate? Cultural action is a kind of action that intends to expose the mythification of reality. As Freire states, “ We have to make—and help others make—problematic the myth power of the slogans which domesticate us.”<sup>63</sup>

This in turn links back to the Freirean concept of knowledge. To Freire, knowledge is always becoming. That is, if the act of knowing has historicity, then today’s knowledge is not necessarily the same tomorrow. Knowledge is changed to the extent that reality also moves and changes.<sup>64</sup> Any curriculum needs to be mindful of this; to change *with* knowledge rather than transfer or prescribe past knowledge. It would have to treat knowledge in a manner that strengthens democratic principles rather than perpetuates the dominant principle. Cultural knowledge is an immense part of this task. Since democracy relies on trust in the ability and inclusion of diverse groups, the curriculum must also counteract the dichotomous ways of thinking that sabotage attempts at integrating the society.<sup>65</sup>

## **1.6 Revealing an opportunity for democracy through education**

Freire addresses these concerns through his Marxist perspective, which is foundational throughout his pedagogy. The central theoretical and political tenet of Marxism is that the political forms of a society are governed and constrained by the mode of economic production and the class structure which emerges from it.<sup>66</sup> Thus democracy would need to be incorporated into the entire system of a society in order to constitute an authentic philosophy.

Far from democracy being equated with a system of representative government—where representatives of a government body are separate from the daily concerns of human life—democracy is instead seen to embody a social consciousness that extends to the totality of citizens under its banner. For Marxists in particular, democracy cannot be restricted to the formal equality of electoral competition—this being the most common meaning of democracy in capitalist societies. Rather,

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<sup>63</sup> P. Freire, “A few notions about the word ‘concientization’,” p.226.

<sup>64</sup> P. Roberts, “Knowledge, dialogue & humanization: Exploring Freire’s philosophy,” p.171

<sup>65</sup> R. A Breault, “Dewey, Freire and a pedagogy for the oppressor,” p.4.

<sup>66</sup> G. McLennan, *Marxism, pluralism and beyond: classic debates and new departures*, p.8.

it is about the substantive socio-economic *conditions* of effective and equal participation in democratic forums.<sup>67</sup>

Freire clearly saw capitalism as the major obstacle in the quest to create an authentic democracy that would serve all its citizens. He never relinquished the belief that the capitalist mode of production poses deep structural impediments to humanisation.<sup>68</sup> Freire challenges us to examine the claims that our society is both democratic and capitalist when the values each of these systems hold are so opposing in nature. Only when the people in general, and the working class in particular, are free from exploitation and free to pursue a creative and self-directed life can genuine democracy prevail.<sup>69</sup>

At the 2005 Conference called *Democracy: Promoting Foundations*, sociologist Walden Bello delivered a speech in which he described the last 25 years as a “missed opportunity”. He stated that during this period:

A democratic renaissance in the south was derailed by elite capture of democratic processes and external pressure to adopt contractionary economic programs often connected with debt repayments, which were precisely the wrong prescription from the point of view of democratic consolidation. Thus, in many countries, democracy is seen widely as simply a mechanism for elite competition and as an obstacle to progressive economic transformation.<sup>70</sup>

What Bello’s speech highlights is that the Western world so often appears to value materialism and monetary wealth rather than democracy and indeed, concern for human beings. If this is to change, Bello argued, then there must be recognition of how capitalism is affecting the ethics that govern the world today, and the influence it has on all people— economically, socially and emotionally. Once this recognition takes place, it will become possible for people to consider ways in which to move towards an authentic democracy with the aid of democratic education.

Although Freire’s views on capitalism are unmistakably negative, it must be clear that to take a Freirian perspective— hence, a foundationally Marxist one on

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<sup>67</sup> Ibid.

<sup>68</sup> P. Roberts, “Pedagogy, Neo-liberalism and Post modernity: Reflections on Freire’s later work,” p.461.

<sup>69</sup> Op cit.

<sup>70</sup> P.K Brubake, *Globalization at what price?* p.44.

education—does not imply taking a fanatical stance towards capitalism. For Marxists, although capitalism creates some important preconditions for democratic society, such as universal suffrage and the socialization of productive resources and technology, capitalism is in essence an exploitative system, producing systematic inequalities in wealth, power and status in society.<sup>71</sup> Hence a capitalist regime is largely anti-democratic.

Given this position, the question needs to be asked as to the sort of democracy that can be created within capitalist's existing preconditions. Lenin's observation is perhaps apt here: "Democracy for an insignificant minority, democracy for the rich—that is the democracy of capitalist society."<sup>72</sup>

If human beings are to change the current system, they must challenge the legitimacy of the capitalist narratives that are being transmitted from one generation to the next. The gross inequalities that capitalism creates must be exposed as contradictory to democratic principles—just as the myth that two systems can co-exist in harmony must also be exposed. People need to be able to critically examine political systems so that they are aware of how their societies are affecting their own lives and the lives of others on the globe. Democratic education rather than capitalist education is a logical beginning for this task.

What Freire advocates as *authentic* democratic education is in fact communication and dialogue and critical transitivity for all peoples. Critical transitivity is characteristic of authentically democratic regimes and corresponds to highly permeable, interrogative, restless, and dialogical forms of life.<sup>73</sup> Education in this sense is the antithesis of the traditional curriculum and its problem-solving ideology. In contrast, Freirean education concerns itself with problematizing human issues of human concern by a problem-posing strategy. In problem-posing education, (wo)men develop their power to perceive critically the way they exist *in* and *with* the world in which they find themselves; they come to see the world not as a static reality, but as a reality in progress; in transformation.<sup>74</sup> They begin to participate as a subject in a democratic reality rather than being shaped as an object.

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<sup>71</sup> McLennan & Gregor, *Marxism, pluralism and beyond: Classic debates and new departures*, p.8.

<sup>72</sup> I. Shor, *Paulo Freire a critical encounter*, p.106.

<sup>73</sup> P. Freire, *Education for critical consciousness*, p.19.

<sup>74</sup> P. Freire, *Pedagogy of the Oppressed*, p.56.

What Freire describes as democratic education is not the traditional task of transmitting or depositing knowledge, nor is it simply extending students' knowledge. Education, in a Freireian sense, is communication and dialogue. It is not the transference of knowledge, but the encounter of subjects in dialogue in search of the significance of the object of knowing and thinking.<sup>75</sup> A Freireian pedagogy of liberation is totalising without being dominating in that it always attends dialectically to the specific or local "act of knowing" as a political process that takes place in the larger conflictual arena of capitalist relations of exploitation.<sup>76</sup> The picture being painted here is one where democratic education may happen *in spite of* rather than *because of* the capitalist regime.

The oppressed must reconsider their powerlessness within Freire's concept of education as they critically reveal the reality of the oppressors. Whereas the banking method of education directly or indirectly reinforces (wo)men's fatalistic perception of their situation, the problem-posing method presents this very situation to them *as a problem*. As the situation becomes the object of their cognition, the naïve or magical perception which produced their fatalism gives way to perception which is able to perceive reality, and thus be critically objective about that reality.<sup>77</sup>

Problem-posing education is not to be reduced to a version of student-directed learning that lacks social critique. It must involve a dialogue that embraces and creates social change. In Freire's pedagogy, dialogue is not just the encounter of two subjects who look for the meaning of things—but an encounter which takes place in praxis—in action and reflection—in political engagement, in the pledge for social transformation.<sup>78</sup> It is within Freire's notion of praxis that an understanding of what is meant by critical consciousness can be more profoundly conceived. He writes that people "will be truly critical if they live in the plenitude of praxis; that is, if their action encompasses a critical reflection which increasingly organizes their thinking and thus leads them to move from a purely

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<sup>75</sup> P. Freire, *Education for critical consciousness*, p.140.

<sup>76</sup> P. McLaren, A pedagogy of possibility. Reflecting upon Paulo Freire's politics of education, p.52.

<sup>77</sup> Ibid, p.58.

<sup>78</sup> M. Gadotti, *Pedagogy of Praxis – A Dialectical Philosophy of Education*, p.24.

naïve knowledge of reality to a higher level, one which enables them to perceive the *causes* of reality.”<sup>79</sup>

The authoritarian nature of banking education cannot survive within true dialogue. Here, the teacher must abandon a traditional role of the ‘gate-keeper’ of knowledge and be prepared to consider new narratives that challenge their own. In this sense, education is thus concerned with the liberation of people and their opinions; not the domination of them. The students become co-investigators in the dialogue, rather than followers awaiting the ‘truth’ from the teacher. In all of Freire’s teachings, the concept of truth becomes linked to one’s placement in the reigning narratives *about truth itself*.<sup>80</sup>

Democratic education requires cooperation not competition. It requires a loyalty to humanity rather than to the power of the state or the materialistic rewards that the state is offering. Although such ideals may seem idealistic, it is nonetheless the aim of this thesis to examine our current system and to employ Freire’s critical pedagogy to highlight the possibilities afforded to us by this expanded democratic theory.

Perhaps it is rather ironic that Freire recognized that the oppressed often fear the responsibility that the freedom he proposed would bring. Yet in Freire’s eyes, fear and revolutionary dreams were unquestionably linked. The more people are willing to struggle for these dreams, the more apt they are to know intimately the experience of fear. This then opens up the possibility of learning how to control and educate that fear; how to transform that fear into courage. Moreover, by this recognition, people would come to recognize that fear as a signal of their engagement in critical opposition and transformative work to bring to life their revolutionary dreams.<sup>81</sup> Fear could be used as a tool by the oppressed in their struggle for liberation, rather than as a tool by the oppressors to maintain their domestication.

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<sup>79</sup> J. L. Elias, *Paulo Freire: Pedagogue of Liberation*, p.70.

<sup>80</sup> P. McLaren, *A pedagogy of possibility: Reflecting upon Paulo Freire’s politics of education*, p.50.

<sup>81</sup> . A. Darder, *Teaching as an act of love. In memory of Paulo Freire*, p.4.

Freire's pedagogy is therefore concerned with hope; hope for the oppressed to liberate themselves; hope for all humans to liberate themselves. On this subject he writes, "Hope is a natural, possible and necessary impetus in the context of our un-finished ness. Without it, instead of history, we would have pure determinism."<sup>82</sup> His hope for the oppressed is that through the means of an authentic democracy— that is, a democratic education that centres on problem-posing rather than problem-solving—they may well be able to liberate themselves from the reality of *the oppression of capitalist relationships*— and in so doing, move towards becoming more fully human and gaining an authentic existence in our society.

## 1.7 Conclusion

As I have outlined in this chapter, the claims that democracy makes are overshadowed by the inequalities mandated and prescribed through the capitalist regime of the state. Capitalism prevents the socio-economic conditions occurring that would allow effective and equal participation for all in democratic forums. Capitalism produces a situation of 'haves' and 'have nots' which are contradictory to the values and practices that democracy entails. The concept of democracy in our contemporary times is therefore a reduction of authentic democratic practices; the theme of this study.

Banking education is a system that Freire has named as embodying the capitalist ideology and failing to serve human beings in their quest for liberation and democracy. In order for a democratic education to flourish that would encourage critical thought, reflection, and action to address the un-democratic situations of exploitation that are currently taking place in the world, new narratives about acceptable treatment of other human beings and economic and social fairness need to be unveiled.

To be concerned about an education that empowers the oppressed in order to determine their own reality is therefore to be concerned with their participation in humanity as a whole. It is the intention of this study to outline clearly the ways in

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<sup>82</sup> Op cit., p.15.

which this can be realised through an authentic democratic education. In this respect, my aim is likewise to highlight precisely the ways in which capitalism and its accompanying notion of banking education is presently undermining this possibility.

It is clear that Freire's pedagogy is both an invitation and a challenge to humanity. And although he has given us reasonably clear guidelines for the creation of a democratic form of education, what must be noted is that there is no single or 'right' recipe to copy. It takes a critical understanding of his pedagogy and praxis—that is, action and reflection—to develop our own models in response to our ever-changing reality. It will also involve struggle on our part; struggle for the realisation of our democratic dreams. Unless authentic democracy involves individual participation—the responsibility of every individual to write their own humanity—nothing new will result. It is these themes to which I now turn in the next chapter.

## Chapter 2

### Capitalism and Oppression

#### 2.1 Introduction

The devastating effect that oppression has on the lives of people is a subject that is naturally of extreme importance to anyone genuinely concerned with the welfare of other human beings. Oppression is something that is so evident within our world that even the most hardened would have difficulty not to notice its presence. Yet although oppression is not hard to locate, it is perhaps a subject that is difficult to understand in its complexity. Capitalism had led to such a powerful and dynamic state of economic hegemony that it is easy to be overwhelmed when trying to unravel its nature and more especially, in trying to overcome its grasp. This again highlights the necessity to use a strong critical pedagogy as a foundational tool when examining the causes of oppression and the action that can be taken against them.

As I noted in Chapter 1, few educational thinkers have been as influential as Paulo Freire.<sup>1</sup> Freire has provided a framework to examine oppression so that it can be understood in a meaningful way. Through understanding that human beings make and remake their world, it is possible to look at oppression not as a fixed and stagnant ‘given’ but rather as a situation that has been caused by people—and thus needs to be addressed by people. By naming the ways in which the socio-economic conditions are created to cause oppression, one can begin to hope to dismantle them. Freire’s *Pedagogy of the Oppressed*—first published in 1970—opened up this potential. Even though Freire’s influence from Marx is clearly evident, Paulo’s theory adds new strength through his obvious humanist and educational commitments.

This chapter aims at exploring the notions of oppressed and the oppressor in the world today. Its focus is to expose the structure of capitalist society as the root of oppression in the world. By first examining Freire’s critical pedagogy to develop

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<sup>1</sup> P. Allman, “Paulo Freire’s education approach: A struggle for meaning.”  
H. Giroux, “Foreword.”

P. Roberts, *Education, literacy and humanization: exploring the work of Paulo Freire*.

a strong definition of oppression, my intention is to expose the workings of capitalism; how it creates and sustains oppression. I intend to show that the defining measure for oppression is found in an inquiry into dehumanisation. My intention here is to also outline how this is upheld through capitalist ideology. Although Freire has clearly identified capitalism as the catalyst for oppression today, it seems that this link is sometimes forgotten when academics start to unravel the nature of oppression. Capitalism, being the current political state of our time, is not only the *catalyst* but also *the conditioner and the reinforcer of oppression*. If we are to uphold democratic values and ideals of freedom, then we must wager what this entails in a capitalist society.

By exploring the roles of oppressed and oppressors in this chapter, I intend to expose a more complex examination regarding these definitions in relation to our current society and its capitalist constructs. It is seductively simple to use definitions without understanding the multifaceted characteristics that tie people both to their roles. Through a deeper understanding of how oppressed and oppressor are played out in society, one can begin to understand how these roles—and this relationship—affect the quest to develop a ‘more fully human’ humanity.

The final section of this chapter will include an examination of the way in which oppression is perpetuated throughout societies. My argument here is that it is not sufficient to merely identify and define ‘oppressed’ and ‘oppressor’ in order to unravel the nature of oppression. What is vital is to source how oppression is maintained and transmitted. The conclusion of this chapter will therefore begin to focus on the need to examine institutions as enforcers of oppression. In particular, we need to understand how the education system colludes with capitalism in preparation for a deeper philosophical inquiry into the practice of banking education in the following chapter.

## **2.2 Human ontology and oppression**

In order to understand the nature of oppression, one must comprehend the Freire’s perspective on the nature of human ontology. According to Freire, human beings

exist in relation to others and other things. Without relationships with others, a human would lack any meaning in their identity, or any comprehension of self. As Freire explains, human beings exist *in* and *with* the world.<sup>2</sup> Human reality is created by the names, narratives, and cultural stories people hold about themselves in relation to others. Although the dialectical relations of (wo)men with the world exist independently of how these relations are perceived—or whether or not they are perceived at all—it is also true that the form of action (wo)men adopt is to a large extent a function of how they perceive themselves in the world.<sup>3</sup> Accompanying these relations is the necessary acknowledgement that we all inherit beliefs, values—and thus ideologies—that need to be critically understood and thereafter transformed.<sup>4</sup>

A great power to manipulate reality is hence exposed through the naming of the world. In order to access this power, humans must be able to critically perceive that reality is not fixed or static, but is instead transformational. If (wo)men are unable to perceive critically the themes of their time, and thus to intervene actively in reality, they are carried along in the wake of change.<sup>5</sup> Thus the reality they will experience will be of another's choosing and control. Nothing less than a domination of their own freedom and a domestication of their abilities to transform their own reality are at stake. This situation of domination is profoundly anti-democratic in the totality of its experience. And, in so far as behaviour is a function of experience, if our experience is anti-democratic, then so will be our behaviour.<sup>6</sup>

If people are dominated by another's reality, then they are limited to another's guidelines, images, symbols, and narratives. They exist in a political, social, and mental world not of their creation—and seemingly out of their control. Having been ruled out of the creation of their own reality, they cannot conceive a world whereby they could manifest that control. To Freire, this *is* oppression. When Freire spoke of the ruling class, or the oppressors, he was referring to the

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<sup>2</sup> P. Freire, *Pedagogy of the Oppressed*.

<sup>3</sup> Ibid.

<sup>4</sup> P. Leistyna, "Presence of mind in the process of learning and knowing: A Dialogue with Paulo Freire."

<sup>5</sup> P. Freire, *Education for critical consciousness*, p.7.

<sup>6</sup> D. Rubinstein & C. Stoneman, *Education for democracy*, p.40.

historical class distinctions and class conflict within the capitalist society.<sup>7</sup> Although this may seem to be a purely economic distinction, Freire urged people not to lose sight of the manner in which other forms of discrimination are hidden within the class system; such as racism and sexism.<sup>8</sup> As this distinction becomes more unravelled, it allows room to suggest that it is possible for more complex definitions of the ‘oppressed’ and ‘oppressor’ in different social spheres. This distinction will be explored more in the subsequent chapter.

Undeniably, however, it is the politics and practices of capitalist society that Freire denounced as the cause of the oppressed–oppressor divide. Rather than viewing capitalist advancements as a vehicle to aid humans’ progress he instead viewed this as a limiting state. He commented that we could not rely on the mere process of technological modernization to lead us from a naïve to a critical consciousness. Indeed, as he points out, an analysis of highly technological societies usually reveals the “domestication” of man’s critical faculties by a situation in which he is massified and has only the illusion of choice.<sup>9</sup>

Such a situation of oppressed and oppressors occurs when the oppressed internalise the narratives of the oppressors and the role they are assigned by them. Much like the master and the slave, the oppressed exist in the oppressors’ reality as lacking presence or power. The oppressors create a reality in which they place themselves as being the “master”. Mastery has been identified in a Nietzschean genealogical interpretation as dominating power which works by distancing of the ‘other’ and naming them as weaker or less-than the master. The master is thereby portrayed as strong or good.<sup>10</sup>

The power of these narratives in society is undeniable. The names and narratives of the oppressors become so ingrained within the oppressed that they often lose the ability to conceive regaining control of their reality. They have internalised the opinion that the oppressors hold of them. So often do they hear that they are good for nothing, know nothing, or are incapable of learning anything—that they are sick, lazy, and unproductive—that in the end, they become convinced of their own

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<sup>7</sup> A. Darder, *Teaching as an act of love: In memory of Paulo Freire*, p.5.

<sup>8</sup> Ibid, p.5.

<sup>9</sup> P. Freire, *Education for critical consciousness*, p.34.

<sup>10</sup> P. Roberts, *Paulo Freire, politics & pedagogy :Reflections from Aotearoa New Zealand*, p.57.

unfitness.<sup>11</sup> They begin to accept that the oppressors are more equipped to dictate to their reality than they are themselves, and are fearful of the responsibility it entails. The oppressed suffer from this duality which has established itself in their inner most being. They discover that without freedom, they cannot exist authentically. Yet although they desire authentic existence, they fear it. They are at one and the same time themselves and the oppressor whose consciousness they have internalised.<sup>12</sup>

The oppressed see the world as a fixed reality and their existence one that is prescribed and predetermined. But human history is neither static nor finished. History is not a set of disjointed events but rather a continuous story. Freire outlines that it is because humans are historical beings—which allows them to be aware of their own incompleteness—that they are unfinished.<sup>13</sup> As he clarifies, in contrast to animals who are unfinished but not historical, men know themselves to be unfinished; they are aware of their incompleteness. It is in this incompleteness and this awareness that the very roots of education as an exclusively human manifestation lie.<sup>14</sup>

In the tradition of Marx, Freire believed that we both make and are made by history and thus, knowledge could not be divorced from social continuity. As such, educators had to recognize that “it was when the majorities are denied their right to participate in history as subjects that they become dominated and alienated”.<sup>15</sup> This denial is situated in the level of consciousness that the education of the oppressed encourages or allows. Such a level of consciousness, according to Freire, requires that people place themselves in history; the assumption being that we are never independent of the social and historical forces that surround us.<sup>16</sup>

Not to participate in history is not to participate in the consciousness of the time. It is not to be critical of the social and political norms functioning in the reality of

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<sup>11</sup> P Freire, *Pedagogy of the Oppressed*, p.49.

<sup>12</sup> Ibid, p.32.

<sup>13</sup> Ibid.

<sup>14</sup> Ibid, p.57.

<sup>15</sup> A. Darder, *Teaching as an act of love: In memory of Paulo Freire*, p.9.

<sup>16</sup> P. Leistyana, Presence of mind in the process of learning and knowing: A Dialogue with Paulo Freire, p.17.

the oppressed. The problem of critical consciousness cannot be posed in abstraction from the significant historical contexts in which knowledge is produced, engaged, and appropriated.<sup>17</sup> To divorce oneself from a critical consciousness of one's historical time is to remove one's voice from the current political agenda. This spells the renunciation of citizens of their citizenship and a loss of political voice correspondingly. Thus, without the majority participating in the historical transformation of reality, an authentic democracy cannot transpire.

The oppressed have been led, whether willingly or not, into a naïve consciousness that prevents their participation in the creation and recreation of reality, and consequently, of their participation in an authentic democracy. The tool, which has played a major role in this outcome, has ironically been called “education”. In opposition to the democratic education which Freire promotes, an education that has been aimed at creating systematic division between humans has been promoted. To achieve this end, the oppressors use the banking concept of education in conjunction with a paternalistic social action apparatus.<sup>18</sup>

### **2.3 Critics of Freire's ontology**

Before continuing discussing “oppression” based on Freire's critical pedagogy, it is necessary to address some of the critics of his theory. Freire has been frowned upon by some critics for his supposedly Western view of human ontology, particularly when it came to Third World countries. Bowers, a prominent critic of Freire's, thought that using historical materialism to understand one's world—and then to try and transform it through praxis—was a Western notion that he called “culturally invasive”.<sup>19</sup> However, if one is to examine Freire's work closely, a major theme of his pedagogy is that it is *the oppressed* who need to free themselves rather than have someone else do it for them. Therefore it is the oppressed who would decide how to transform or change their own world through critical reflection of that same world. If there were to be an invasion of their

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<sup>17</sup> P. McLaren, “A pedagogy of possibility: Reflecting upon Paulo Freire's politics of education,” p.50.

<sup>18</sup> P. Freire, *Pedagogy of the Oppressed*, p.60.

<sup>19</sup> C.A Bowers, “Linguistic roots of cultural invasion in Paulo Freire's pedagogy.”

culture from this process, then it would be one that came from within; from its own people and within its own culture.

What is additionally worthy of mention is that Bowers implies that change in a culture is something that is not a good thing. In doing so, he is asserting a rather fatalistic perspective on human beings. Because of the nature of human life, it is not possible for a person *in any culture to not change*, given that people are constantly changing as they interact with an ever-changing world. What Bowers perhaps does not grasp is that Freire did not think the Western view was “better” than that of other cultures. Quite the contrary; he was an avid critic of the Western world. What he *did* proclaim however was that all individuals need to reflect and remake their own world in order to be fully human and to be in charge of changing it for themselves for the better. Culture should never become an excuse for condoning oppression. Freire was most certainly not prepared for the oppressed to sacrifice their ontological vocation to be fully human for the sake of community coherence.<sup>20</sup>

For all cultures, the ability to situate themselves in their historicity, to critically reflect on their situation in their own manner, and then to take action to create their own realities can be nothing if not empowering. Comments such as this from Peter Roberts in 1999, show an example of this understanding of the humanization that is the right of all peoples;

If Maori were to seriously consider a move towards liberation and decolonisation—the common themes in Freire’s struggle for the oppressed groups throughout the world—then they would need to develop a critical perception of their true position.<sup>21</sup>

Other critics such as Coben (1998) and Berger (1974) have criticized Freire from a similar sort of perspective claiming that he presented a hierarchical view of knowledge and knowing. Roberts’ defence of Freire here is apt (2000). As he argues, Western academics, particularly social theorists, have minimized his theory and ‘domesticated’ it by translating Freire’s model into a universal one. The result has been that Freire’s work has been misinterpreted. It has been turned

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<sup>20</sup> P. Roberts, “Introduction: Remembering Freire in Aotearoa New Zealand.”

<sup>21</sup> Ibid, p.49

into the kind of model that actually marginalized people rather than liberated them.

Moving on to another criticism, several authors have brought it to our attention that Freire's explanation of the categories of oppressed and oppressors fail to capture the entirety of these concepts. Freire has addressed the ways in which oppression on the bases of ethnicity, class, and sexual orientation are intermingled—though perhaps, on the basis of this criticism, not in satisfactory depth. As a number of North American critics have pointed out, Freire failed to fully engage the issue of white male privilege.<sup>22</sup> To those who understood Freire and the point of these categories, what is clear that these critics did not fully understand how all oppression prevents people from becoming “human”. As such, concern for humanization leads at once to the recognition of dehumanisation, not only as an ontological possibility but also as an historical reality.<sup>23</sup>

It should be noted here that when discussing the notion of oppression, there is always a possibility of misrepresentation if Freire's broader philosophy lies outside writers' experience. This is why dialogue between people with different perspectives is so important when trying to overcome oppression and live democratically. Freire recognized that there was no way of representing the consciousness of the oppressed that escapes the founding assumptions of the culture and society in which the teacher or culture worker is implicated also.<sup>24</sup> Although this does not demean the conversation, it is certainly a consideration to take into account when one is writing about the nature of oppression in the world.

With this in mind, if one were to rethink Bowers criticisms, then the denial of the majority's participation in history would be one that brings to mind the term ‘cultural invasion’. This invasion is historically evident for many oppressed people all over the world—through the governing systems and institutions that impose one particular group's reality to the day-to-day relations of indifference promoted by capitalism.

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<sup>22</sup> P. McLaren, “A pedagogy of possibility: Reflecting upon Paulo Freire's politics of education,” p.52.

<sup>23</sup> P Freire, *Pedagogy of the oppressed*, p.27.

<sup>24</sup> Op cit, p.50.

## 2.4 Dehumanisation as a definition of oppression

It is the purpose of human beings, according to Freire, to become more fully human. Once people begin to have a concern for humanization, this then leads to the recognition of dehumanization, and thus an ability to examine oppression.<sup>25</sup> The ontological vocation of human beings is to reflect upon the world they live in and to take action to make it and re-make it. It is through this means that humans become the makers of their own reality. Freire would contend that this applies to all human beings rather than just some—or even most of them. In the same way that humanization is applicable to all human beings, so too is dehumanization.

While critics have argued that Freire has theorised oppression as a universal truth—and therefore failed to appreciate the different historical locations of oppression by so doing—<sup>26</sup> it could be instead argued that by trying to narrow down the definition of oppression to specific situations, such critics may in turn have failed to appreciate the different historical locations of dehumanization and the universal truth of human beings' becoming. While naming these situations could be said to be empowering in its exposure, defining oppression by them could be said equally to be limiting. The argument that we cannot know sexism and racism without some broader theory of oppression is one that is valid.<sup>27</sup>

When Freire spoke of the ruling class or the oppressors, he was referring to historical class distinctions and class conflict within the structure of capitalist society.<sup>28</sup> This definition is not particularly clear when it comes to many examples of oppression such as racism and sexism. Freire himself addressed these concerns in *Pedagogy of the Heart*, by reminding us not to “lose sight of the manner in which the class factor is hidden within both sexual and racial discrimination”.<sup>29</sup> Here, Freire extends a challenge to re-clarify the boundaries that define the classes in society. Within this statement is also a plea to look at oppression as a multi-

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<sup>25</sup> P Freire, *Pedagogy of the oppressed*.

<sup>26</sup> P. Roberts, “Pedagogy, neo-liberalism and post modernity: Reflections on Freire’s later work,” p.456.

<sup>27</sup> Ibid.

<sup>28</sup> A. Darder, *Teaching as an act of love: In memory of Paulo Freire*, p.5.

<sup>29</sup> P. Freire, *Pedagogy of the heart*, p.5.

layered and complex occurrence— rather than simplifying it in order to label it. He commented further on this matter by stating that;

I have always challenged the essentialism reflected in the claims of a unitary experience of class and gender... [O]ppression must always be understood in its multiple and contradictory instances, just as liberation must be grounded in the particularity of suffering and struggle in concrete, historical experience.<sup>30</sup>

By defining oppression as dehumanisation—the prevention of people or peoples exercising their right to become more fully human—then all different instances and circumstances where oppression takes place can be included. The complexity of relations and power between individuals and people in the world would render it impossible to state every situation where oppression occurs, and indeed more so because the world and relations are constantly changing. The experiences of oppression are also specific to the people or persons that experience them. In addition, what one experiences is not necessarily the same for those alike.

Freire's work was originally concerned with the idea of Third World oppression. As Peter Roberts pointed out in 2006, "From any account of Freire's life, it is clear that his prime commitment in education and politics was always to the Third World".<sup>31</sup> Despite the truth behind this claim, defining oppression as simply a Third World phenomena does not necessarily generate a complete understanding of what oppression means for human beings. By the same token, neither does it do justice to the extent or causes of suffering in these nations. When perceived in this manner, oppression becomes only one aspect of a complex, larger issue. Additionally worrying is that it sets the problem up as something that happens 'over there' and to 'them'.

Oppression is not only a dilemma that concerns and affects 'the other'. Likewise, it is not a dilemma experienced only by those in the Third World. What needs to be recognized is a means to begin a deeper exploration of oppression that is not the sole property of Third World dictatorships. In the same way, oppression must not be seen to have ended with the passage of Civil Rights legislation.<sup>32</sup> Freire himself realised that by defining oppression as a Third World problem, he was

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<sup>30</sup> P. Freire, "Foreword", p.x.

<sup>31</sup> P. Roberts, *Education, literacy, and humanization: Exploring the work of Paulo Freire*, p.6.

<sup>32</sup> R.A. Breault, "Dewey, Freire, and a pedagogy for the oppressor," p.2.

limiting understanding about the complex nature of oppression. In his later works, he stopped using the terms First World and Third World in relation to specific geographical locations in the world. Instead, he began to promote the ideology that all First World countries contained a Third World of oppressed and disenfranchised citizens.<sup>33</sup>

In recent years a number of postmodern and feminist critics (e.g., Weiler, 1991) have argued that Freire's use of the terms 'oppressors' and 'oppressed' is too abstract and universalist.<sup>34</sup> As I argue here, however, it is in his universal use of the concept that the term retains its truth. The problem of oppression for Freire must be seen in the context of the problem of dehumanisation.<sup>35</sup> That is, it must be seen against the problem of preventing people from becoming human.

## 2.5 Capitalism and oppression

There is a distinctly common thread throughout all of the examples of dehumanisation, which results from an abuse of power and privilege. Within the realm of capitalism, the examples of oppression through abuse of power and privilege can be found in every aspect of society; from individual domestic relationships, to employment relations, to the global market. Capitalism—combined with its paternalistic social apparatus—actually relies on the occurrence of oppression for its continual existence.

In their unrestrained eagerness to “possess”, the oppressors develop the conviction that it is possible for them to transform everything into objects of their purchasing power. Such ideology reflects their materialistic concept of existence. Money becomes the measure of all things and profits the most desired outcome. For the capitalist oppressors, what is worthwhile is “to have”—and to be the class of the haves—and that applies, even if the oppressed have less or nothing.<sup>36</sup>

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<sup>33</sup> P. Roberts, *Education, literacy, and humanization: Exploring the work of Paulo Freire*.

<sup>34</sup> P. Roberts, “Pedagogy, neo-liberalism and post modernity: Reflections on Freire's later work,” p.456.

<sup>35</sup> J.L. Elias (Ed), *Paulo Freire: Pedagogue of Liberation*, p.27.

<sup>36</sup> P. Freire, *Pedagogy of the Oppressed*.

Their actions alone signal the lack of worth the oppressors assign to the oppressed. The problem is that they do more than this. They vocalize their opinion. This results in self-depreciation—which is another characteristic of the oppressed. Through the internalisation of the opinion the oppressors hold of them, the oppressed hear that they are good for nothing, know nothing, and are incapable of learning anything. They begin to believe that they are sick, lazy, and unproductive—so much so in fact that in the end, they are convinced of their own unfitness.<sup>37</sup> The damage to the oppressed is far greater than simply lowering their self-esteem. The damage is that it rules the oppressed out from the process of becoming, which damages their very being.

For the oppressors, however, it is always the oppressed (whom they obviously never call ‘the oppressed’ but—depending on whether they are fellow countrymen or not— ‘those people’ or ‘the blind and envious masses’, or ‘savages’, or ‘natives’, or ‘subversives’) who *deserve* their disaffection. They deserve it because they are ‘violent’, ‘barbaric’, ‘wicked’, or ‘ferocious’—and this is the way in which they duly react to the violence of the oppressors.<sup>38</sup> Such ideas serve to strengthen the characteristics of “the other” in the mind of each party. This then allows the oppressor to ignore the commonalities of human beings and to distance themselves even more strongly from these ‘other’ people.

The structure of capitalism consolidates the oppressor’s ideologies of ‘other’. In the oppressor’s eagerness to possess, they develop the conviction that it is possible for them to turn everything into objects of their purchasing power, which lends to their strictly materialistic concept of existence. Everything is measured by money and every goal is related to profit. What is worthwhile for the oppressors is to always have more – even at the cost of the oppressed having less or nothing. For the oppressors, to be is to have and to be the class of the ‘haves’.<sup>39</sup> As I mentioned before, this results in the attitudes that accompany this situation become ingrained in and passed down through the history of nations.

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<sup>37</sup> Ibid, p.49.

<sup>38</sup> Ibid.

<sup>39</sup> Ibid.

## 2.6 Neo-liberalism and capitalism

Freire identified the doctrine of neo-liberalism as producing the particularly oppressive form of capitalism that we experience within the world today. He pointed to the links between neo-liberal capitalism and globalisation, and the resulting devastating human suffering that is found in both First and Third World communities. In Freire's view, only the corporate, multinational elite benefited from the ethics of the marketplace. In *Pedagogy of Freedom; Ethics, Democracy, and Civic Courage* he stated; "The capitalist system reaches, in its globalising neo-liberal crusade, the maximum efficiency of its intrinsically evil nature".<sup>40</sup>

The central value of neo-liberalism is competition, which is best expressed through the "free market". The market shapes major social and political policy. According to this ideology, a minimal state is preferred. Private enterprise is encouraged and "free enterprise" is free by virtue of traders being able to trade unregulated in a free market. In this scenario, competition is welcomed and the activity of unions, seen as forces to regulate wages and conditions, are discouraged. Citizens are preferred to be seen as "consumers" with less emphasis being put on co-operative and planned social and political decision-making.<sup>41</sup> The values of neo-liberalism are clearly the scramble for power and money but the startling reality is that the welfare of the majority unable to compete liberally in the marketplace is compromised correspondingly.

The World Bank acknowledges in its *World Development Report, 2006* that; "Global markets are far from equitable, and the rules governing their functions have a disproportionate negative effect on developing countries". Developing countries, the report notes, have a weaker voice in the "complex negotiating process" in which rules are made.<sup>42</sup> The system is designed so that the playing field is evidently in favour of the globally-able traders. Although competition is the central value of neo-liberalism, it is not a competition in which all peoples have an equal starting point. Fairness is not a factor in this game.

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<sup>40</sup> P. Freire, *Pedagogy of freedom: Ethics, democracy and civic courage*, p.114.

<sup>41</sup> P.K. Brubake, *Globalization at what price?* p.33.

<sup>42</sup> Ibid, p.39.

Capitalism harbours assumptions that function to keep the oppressed in their dominated state. More and more, the use of science and technology are utilised to maintain global advantage. The result is the maintenance of the oppressive order through manipulation and repression.<sup>43</sup> A neo-liberal regime not only condones the seizure of wealth and power to the hands of the few but it also promotes a form of pseudo-neutral, techno-scientism, where technology and technical skill become separated from ethical considerations.<sup>44</sup>

Given this scenario, while the advances of technology have given the impression that advances have been made in all areas of human life—and that human beings use this as proof to tell themselves that they have ‘come a long way’—Freire would question the truth of this conclusion. He argues that we cannot rely on the mere process of technological modernization to lead us from a naïve to a critical consciousness. Indeed, an analysis of highly technological societies usually reveals the ‘domestication’ of man’s critical faculties by a situation in which he is massified and has only experiences the illusion of choice.<sup>45</sup> To develop extensively in one area, yet ignore areas that humans claim to hold as foundational values—such as freedom, equality, justice and democracy— is to promote a tainted illusion of progress.

It would be equally mistaken to believe that the oppression that is often associated with the industrial revolution has now been erased with the coming of the technical age. In our highly technical world, mass production as an organization of human labour is possibly one of the most potent instruments of man’s massification. The structure of capitalism clearly lays out the rules for private ownership which does not mean that every human privately owns but rather than the oppressors own privately while the oppressed work for those that own. Economist Susan George asserts that;

The top 20 percent of the income scale are likely to gain from neo-liberalism and the higher you are up the ladder, the more you gain. The bottom 80 percent, however, all lose and the lower they are to begin with, the more they lose proportionately.<sup>46</sup>

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<sup>43</sup> P. Freire, *Pedagogy of the Oppressed*, p.46.

<sup>44</sup> P. Freire, *Pedagogy of freedom: Ethics, democracy and civic courage*.

<sup>45</sup> P. Freire, *Education for critical consciousness*, p.34.

<sup>46</sup> P.K. Brubake, *Globalization at what price*, p.40.

What can be seen in the world today is a massive divide between the ‘haves’ and the ‘have nots’ which is being perpetuated and strengthened continually through the capitalist neo-liberal values those in power project. An examination of consumption patterns indicates what this means in terms of purchasing power. The richest percent worldwide consume 16 times as much—and use 17 times the energy—as the poorest 20 percent. Altogether, the top one-fifth of the population accounts for 86 percent of all private consumption expenditures.<sup>47</sup> Capitalism does not encourage equality in the distribution of resources throughout the world. Through the ethos of the corporation, the neo-liberal philosophy has justified the unequal distribution of wealth, both nationally and globally. The corporation has been aided by legal laws in Western countries to defy moral laws regarding basic human rights on a global level.

Democracy and capitalism were always at odds with each other in Freire’s mind. Capitalism meant domination for humans—not freedom. It meant separation of individuals, not communion between them. An education that was liberating would mean that individuals would move beyond the capitalist view of winners and losers and of “natural competition”. To achieve this goal, the oppressed must confront reality critically, simultaneously objectifying and acting upon that reality.<sup>48</sup> That does not mean merely upskilling the manual worker or training him for participation. It means making each member of society a part of the governing system.<sup>49</sup>

Freire critiqued neo-liberalism for the marketisation and technocratic view of education it promoted and the competitive ethos it encouraged which resulted in its failure to foster authentic democracy.<sup>50</sup> He described the kind of ‘education’ that happened within capitalist neo-liberalism as “the bureaucratising of the mind”. This description he in turn described as “the mind’s abdication of its own essential self”.<sup>51</sup> He also criticized the top-down, pseudo-scientific approach to education and spoke of its harmful power;

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<sup>47</sup> Ibid.

<sup>48</sup> P. Freire, *Pedagogy of the oppressed*, p.37.

<sup>49</sup> M. Gadotti, *Pedagogy of praxis –A dialectical philosophy of Education*, p.55.

<sup>50</sup> P. Roberts, “Pedagogy, neo-liberalism and postmodernity: Reflections on Freire’s later work.”

<sup>51</sup> P. Freire, *Pedagogy of freedom: Ethics, democracy and civic courage*, p.102.

We are speaking of that invisible power of alienating domestication, which attains a degree of extraordinary efficiency in what I have been calling the bureaucratising of the mind.<sup>52</sup>

This top-down, pseudo-scientific approach to education has only intensified since this statement of Freire's. Its ideology has been submitted to throughout teaching institutions at every level. Teacher education—both in service and pre-service—has no time for genuine critical appraisal of the ethical nature of education.<sup>53</sup> Indeed, the depositing of knowledge as facts in an over-crowded curriculum seems to be accepted in education. The latter is now seen predominantly as a business, and one that is quite content to be run without ethics or virtue.

## 2.7 Fatalism and freedom

Freire was also highly critical of the fatalism and pessimism of neo-liberalism. He pointed out scathingly that the human suffering of unemployment, hunger, and poverty that results from international capitalism and globalization was portrayed as being the 'natural order of things' and beyond human control. This portrayal stands in direct conflict with Freire's theory of ontological vocations for human beings, which asserts that it is up to human beings to make and remake their world through praxis. Instead, this portrayal renders human beings as hopeless and helpless to change their situation. It thus leaves the oppressed forever condemned to their suffering.

It is this fatalistic view that can also make it difficult to engage some people in the humanist cause because they may have the prevailing attitude that either the oppressed have "done it to themselves"—and are somehow 'deserving' of their situation of oppression—or that "there is not enough to go around", which means that the oppressed are an unfortunate necessity. Perhaps most commonly heard is the view that "that's just the way things are". No one, by this prognosis, can do anything to alter the situation so there is no point complaining about it.

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<sup>52</sup> Ibid, p.111.

<sup>53</sup> D. Hill & G. Lee, *Beyond accommodation: Philosophy and history in the service of educational recovery*.

By the oppressed internalizing these narratives, they likewise internalise the image the oppressors hold of their identities of ‘self’ and ‘other’. So deeply entrenched is this reality that the oppressed become afraid of any alternative reality. Having internalized the image of the oppressor and adopted his guidelines, they begin to fear their freedom. This is because freedom would require them to reject this image and replace it with a view of self as autonomous and responsible. Freedom is, (hence), acquired by conquest, not gift.<sup>54</sup> It is also an impossible gift to bequeath to another, given that it is the oppressed themselves who must participate in the struggle for their own freedom.

It is within this struggle for freedom that the nature of oppression truly begins to reveal itself. Oppression is a *state of being*—not simply an action. That is to say that racism, sexism, and class prejudice cannot sum up the definition of oppression alone because it is by means of the oppressed internalizing another’s reality that they are kept in slavery to the guidelines of this reality. It is this internalization that gives them the illusion of taking away their control over their being—which thus, in turn, dehumanizes them. This does not mean that the nature of oppression is a less serious problem. On the contrary, it means that the problem is one that is located deep within the psyche of oppressed people. As such, a dichotomy takes place whereby the oppressed actually participate in keeping themselves in a state of oppression.

## **2.8 The duality of the oppressed**

Freire often talked about the duality that the oppressed suffer from and described it as something that established itself in their inner-most being.<sup>55</sup> So ingrained is the reality of the oppressor in the oppressed mind that although they recognize on some level that they are not existing in accordance to their true nature, they cannot imagine rejecting the reality they have always known. Therefore the oppressor’s reality becomes both their *fear* and their *security*. This is clearly a *false* safety where they stay in a reality that they know and are familiar with, rather than taking control of their own reality and stepping into the unknown.

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<sup>54</sup> P. Freire, *Pedagogy of the oppressed*, p.31.

<sup>55</sup> Ibid.

As Freire explains, the oppressed suffer from this duality which is etched into their inner-most being. Without freedom however, they discover subsequently that they cannot exist authentically. Yet although they desire authentic existence, they fear it. They are at one and the same time themselves and the oppressor whose consciousness they have internalised.<sup>56</sup> In order for the oppressed to confront this duality, it requires a great deal of courage, so deeply internalized is this image. As an outcome, overthrowing it becomes both a confusing and frightening experience—a struggle for their very right to become human. Freedom, in the Freirean sense of the term, therefore means unmasking the social and cultural mechanisms of power as a basis for engagement in emancipatory action.<sup>57</sup>

The oppressed must begin to see the situation for what it is; as the reality of the oppressors that they have internalized—but not a fixed and stagnant reality that they cannot transform. They must learn to distance themselves from this reality to objectively observe it as an historical moment that may contribute greatly to their past, but which does not control their future. Freire believed that experience which is accepted uncritically would merely allow the oppressors to continue their domination.<sup>58</sup> The dominant ideology ‘lives’ inside us and also controls society outside. If this domination inside and outside was complete, definitive, we could never think of social transformation. But transformation is possible because consciousness is not a mirror of reality; not a mere reflection, but it is *reflexive* and *reflective* of reality.<sup>59</sup> Hence, the situation of the oppressed is not set in stone and is within their power to change. Oppression need not be a life-long sentence but instead a state that a struggle can be undertaken in order to overturn this reality.

Freire often pointed out how the perception that oppression was a fixed state was a major barrier to triumphing in the battle of oppression. Capitalism and neo-liberalism help to strengthen this barrier by ‘normalising’ and ‘naturalising’ the idea of the haves and have-nots. He acknowledges that many have succumbed to fatalism, pessimism, and the programme of “neo-liberalism”, the doctrine

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<sup>56</sup> Ibid, p.32.

<sup>57</sup> T. Da Silva & P. McLaren, “Knowledge under siege: The Brazilian debate.”

<sup>58</sup> Ibid.

<sup>59</sup> P. Freire & I. Shor, *A pedagogy for liberation – Dialogues on transforming education*, p.13.

according to which we have no choice but to adopt both our hopes and our abilities to the new global market.<sup>60</sup> Fatalism and oppression go hand in hand in this sense as both are a limiting situation that determines human beings and condemns them to a predestined future. They eliminate the possibility of choice, responsibility, and hope from the human condition, and ultimately rule out the possibility of ‘becoming’. It needs to be clear that the absence of hope is not the ‘normal’ way to be human. It is a distortion.<sup>61</sup>

A realisation therefore needs to be clearly formed in the minds of the people that the idea of peoples’ worth being mediated by their consumer potential is not natural and certainly not just. The ideology that it is normal or natural to continue the inequalities associated with the ‘haves’ and ‘have nots’ is similarly absurd. The dominance of the market as the model for all economic and social activity constitutes a dictatorship, driven by the relentless drive for greater profits—‘the unfettered greed of the power minority who control the world today’. For Freire, the workings of the market have no regard for the ‘ethical code that is common to us all’.<sup>62</sup>

## 2.9 Refining the definitions

Although the ideology of the ‘haves’ and ‘have nots’ gives a valid starting point in order to begin defining oppressed and oppressor, it is still vague and open to misinterpretation. It also fails to take in the complexities associated with the process of becoming in its simplicity. Hence further inquiry is needed regarding these terms. If we are to clearly define the titles of ‘oppressed’ and ‘oppressor’, it needs to be done by means of defining the action of dehumanization and the roles people play in this process. In this respect, I would argue that simply identifying white, male privilege would not be an adequate explanation for oppression. Gross generalizations may be helpful in highlighting particular groups of people that are being marginalized and oppressed—and also in giving a historical recount of

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<sup>60</sup> P. Freire, *Pedagogy of freedom: Ethics, democracy and civic courage*, p.7.

<sup>61</sup> *Ibid*, p.69.

<sup>62</sup> P. Roberts, “Pedagogy, neo-liberalism and post modernity: Reflections on Freire’s later work,” p.462.

oppression— but they are not completely helpful in defining characteristics of oppressed and oppressor as they are enacted.

A major point in this regard would be Freire's statement that "any situation in which some men prevent others from engaging in the process of inquiry is one of violence".<sup>63</sup> From this statement, a much broader, yet more accurate, vision of an 'oppressor' emerges. What certainly needs to be considered is the situation in a historical materialist manner so as to understand where dehumanization is occurring even if it may at first look like something else. Freire tells us that;

Any situation in which "A" objectively exploits "B" or hinders his or her pursuit of self-affirmation as a responsible person is oppression. Such a situation in itself constitutes violence, even when sweetened with false generosity, because it interferes with the individual's ontological and historical vocation to be more fully human.<sup>64</sup>

There are several ways to consider the 'oppressor' in this limelight and perhaps one that springs to mind is an image of bullying oppressors who simply do not wish to share any decision-making with the oppressed. Arguably, although there is some truth to this—especially if one was to truly unravel jingoism and examine global politics as they stand—but if we were to unpack this statement further, the question remains: why do the oppressors act in this manner? By way of response, it could be said that the 'haves' harbour an oppressor trait where the ideal is to always have more—even at the cost of others. So, a system of capitalist politics creates a worldview that supports and reinforces this hegemonic drama.

## **2.10 The oppressors and trust**

A further response might well be—thinking on a more complex level—that the oppressors act in this way towards the oppressed because they have no *trust* in the oppressed to take part in inquiry. This analysis perhaps betrays an even more definitive characteristic of the oppressor than that of selfishness or greed. They (the oppressors) talk about people, but they do not trust them; and trusting the

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<sup>63</sup> P. Freire, *Pedagogy of the oppressed*, p.73.

<sup>64</sup> *Ibid*, p.37.

people is the indispensable precondition for revolutionary change.<sup>65</sup> In fact, Freire would argue that trust would be a definitive characteristic in defining actions of oppression. He reminds us that; “A real humanist can be identified more by his trust in the people, which engages him in their struggle, than by a thousand actions in their favour without that trust.”<sup>66</sup>

It is this lack of trust that contributes to the mistakes educators make regarding false generosity. *The oppressed must free themselves.* The oppressors cannot free them. The action needs to come from the oppressed, so that they can enter into the process of becoming fully human. Simply informing the oppressed about their situation is not enough on its own to win them their freedom. Marx demonstrated the necessity that philosophy as a radical reflection, with a rigorous and methodological structure, doesn't serve social transformation *a priori*. This reflection needs practice, involvement, and concrete engagement.<sup>67</sup>

Freire was particularly mindful of this situation and it is perhaps this aspect of his work that his most noted critics fail to comprehend when they criticize his pedagogy for its apparent hierarchal structure. Freire understood that as the oppressed take more control of their own history, they assimilate more rapidly into society, but on their own terms.<sup>68</sup> It is this point that distinguishes Freire's pedagogy as one of *liberation*. In his own words, Freire clarifies this by saying it is;

[A] pedagogy which must be forged *with*, not *for*, the oppressed. This pedagogy makes oppression and its causes objects of reflection by the oppressed and from that reflection will come their necessary engagement in their struggle for liberation. And in the struggle this pedagogy will be made and remade.<sup>69</sup>

Freire understood the false generosity that accompanied the belief of the ruling class; that it was their duty to educate—or even ‘save’—the oppressed from what they saw as their ignorance and immorality. Yet he would ask them to re-examine this belief with regard to the notions of freedom and liberation. Perhaps a certain realistic humbleness could be added to that mix when one is considering who best

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<sup>65</sup> Ibid, p.46.

<sup>66</sup> Ibid, p.47.

<sup>67</sup> M. Gadotti, *Pedagogy of praxis –A dialectical philosophy of education*, p.83.

<sup>68</sup> P. McLaren, “A pedagogy of possibility: Reflecting upon Paulo Freire's politics of education,” p.50.

<sup>69</sup> P. Freire, *Pedagogy of the oppressed*, p.30.

knows how to tell others to live their lives. What is really called for here is recognition of others as *human beings* rather than selfish or competitive animals.

## 2.11 Freire and love

Throughout Freire's work, the theme of love is evident and it has a particular importance when discussing oppression. The type of love that Freire speaks of is not the romantic version that often graces Western stories but rather a love for humanity that holds within it recognition of what it means to be human and to share the human condition with all other humans. In this manner, the type of love that Freire refers to is one that is not merely an emotion but one that is put into practice throughout the serious aspects of peoples' lives. For Freire, love always stipulates a political project since a love for human kind that remains disconnected from politics does a profound disservice to its object.<sup>70</sup>

Oppression leaves no room for the love for humankind that Freire upholds. Any love that is shown in oppression is not authentic as it fails to acknowledge the object of that love as a human being. Oppression is dehumanizing by its very nature. Hence, this sort of love would be false in that it would be a love only for the self as a human being and not a genuine love for the other. It would be narcissistic in its nature. Whereas authentic love opens the self up to the other, narcissistic love culminates in a self-dissolving spiral by refusing the other who stands at the door of self-understanding. Only when the other is encountered behind the door can the self find its authentic eyes, ears, and voice in the act of dialogic, reciprocal understanding.<sup>71</sup>

It seems fairly obvious that to oppress someone is not to love him or her, yet within our society, examples of people who oppress others—yet claim to love—are commonplace. Here lies a complexity in defining love. Domination reveals the pathology of love: sadism in the dominator and masochism in the dominated. Because love is an act of courage, not of fear, love is commitment to others.<sup>72</sup> In

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<sup>70</sup>P. McLaren, "A pedagogy of possibility: Reflecting upon Paulo Freire's politics of education," p.53.

<sup>71</sup> Ibid, p.57.

<sup>72</sup> Ibid, p.53.

the same way that the master and the slave are both ensnared in a detrimental relationship, so are the oppressed and the oppressor. Neither of them can find authentic existence without the presence of authentic love.

## **2.12 Pedagogy of the oppressor**

What is sometimes neglected in discussions regarding the oppressed and oppressors is that the oppressors themselves suffer from the situation they perpetuate. As the oppressors dehumanize others, and violate their rights, they themselves also become dehumanized. And as the oppressed, fighting to be human, take away the oppressors power to dominate and suppress, they restore to the oppressors the humanity they had lost in the exercise of oppression.<sup>73</sup> The master is also the slave in this scenario in that the task of being the master enslaves him to that role. Further, he has failed to acknowledge the essence of humanity by denying the other to become human, thereby limiting his own ability to recognize this in himself.

It is difficult to entirely believe that an oppressor who surrounds themselves with the luxury and the freedom that extreme wealth can buy, will be convinced that his life would be better off if he gave up this wealth to support the oppressed in their struggle for liberation. Yet “No man is an island”, to quote a cliché and all humans are on this journey together towards becoming more fully human. Currently, the world has such unhappiness and suffering that no one who has a respect for human beings could sit well with this state. Wealth gained at the cost and suffering of another is a disputable ‘gain’ for humans. “The freedom of commerce,’ says Freire, “cannot be ethically higher than the freedom to be human.”<sup>74</sup>

Of course, the above depiction of the oppressor is generalized so that the question might be asked; Can it therefore be possible to be both oppressed and oppressor? The example of a white woman from the Western world can be brought to bear on our discussion here. Everyone knows that the pay rate of a woman is still not

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<sup>73</sup> P. Freire, *Pedagogy of the oppressed*.

<sup>74</sup> P. Freire, *Pedagogy of freedom: Ethics, democracy and civic courage*, p.116.

equal to that of her male counter-part. We know also that while the situation has improved, there is still a strong tendency to privilege white individuals in her society. So, while she is a victim of white male dominance, she is also privileged at the same time because of her colour. So how does this narrative relate to Freire's work?

Once the woman in the above example examines the historicity of the roles that make up her identity she can, with critical reflection understand that she is unfinished as a human being and act to alter these roles in the future. The narrative relates because of Freire's idea that we are conditioned but not determined. It is up to the particular individual to determine her future, even as she acknowledges her past. As a woman that acknowledges the historicity of female oppression she must also recognize that the future doesn't need to be a repeat of the past. She must engage in the struggle for her own liberation—and for that of all women. This is a complex idea to understand. It is not meant to dismiss or marginalize the very real situation of the woman's oppression but rather to dismiss the pessimistic and fatalistic notion that that is how things must stay. The crucial idea is that humans create their humanity—they become human in the process of intervening in reality in order to change it; in making and remaking the world. In this process of making and remaking the world, humans make and remake themselves; their human being.<sup>75</sup>

How is it possible to define oppressed and oppressor in current situations that involve much more complex politics than that of master and slave? If we remember that all oppression can be reduced to the act of dehumanization, then it does become possible to identify these roles. When people are ruled out of the process of their own becoming, they are oppressed in that they are not allowed to become human. In the case of democracy, this concept must be applied if the democracy is to be authentic and not merely some type of pseudo version.

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<sup>75</sup> P.L. McLaren & C.C. Lankshear, "'Being' and 'time' in Freire's philosophy, p.178.

## 2.13 Institutions as transmitters of oppression

What is perhaps most helpful in combating dehumanization is to define methods and practices by which oppression is perpetuated and transmitted through our society and the world. Arguably, it is only when the means by which people are domesticated and dehumanized are exposed that action can be taken to reverse this effect. Freire was only too well aware that domestication today is not accomplished through the physical violence of the old regimes but rather by the oppressed and oppressors being submersed in the capitalist neo-liberal ideology that keep them accepting and identifying with the situation of ‘haves’ and ‘have nots’. Knowing this situation exists, we might well ask why people do not liberate themselves from this ideology?

The answer can again be found in the capitalist system. Specific institutions have emerged within this system to ensure the perpetuation of the capitalist order. These systems often create structures in order to control people without exerting force.<sup>76</sup> Of all of these institutions, the welfare state, the medical fraternity, and the media are the most effective in maintaining, and indeed encouraging, the elements of oppression seen in the world today. So too is the education system. It is in this system that the themes of neo-liberal capitalism are most prominently protected and endorsed.

The education system is indeed a capitalist system in that it is concerned with production, competition, and private ownership. It is dictated by business interests and driven by demands of the economy. Arblaster opens this inquiry by highlighting these points when he states;

It is itself, therefore, a critical concept by which we can measure, and oppose, the increasing subordination of the educational system to the demands of industry and business and the economy, and the domination and restriction of many fields of study by the complacent and narrow ideology of western capitalism.<sup>77</sup>

Arblaster is far from alone in his opinions and many academics have mirrored his views for several decades. The education system has been pinpointed specifically

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<sup>76</sup> J.E. Rosenbaum, *Making inequality – The hidden curriculum of high school tracking*, p.4.

<sup>77</sup> A. Arblaster, “Education and ideology,” p.55.

as not only a system that has done nothing to prevent oppression ,or minimize it, but is instead one that has maintained and perpetuated it. As Madan Sarup pointed out in 1978;

The education system works to justify economic inequalities and to produce a labour force whose capacities, credentials and consciousness are dictated in substantial measure by the requirements of profitable employment in the capitalist economy.<sup>78</sup>

For the oppressed, this means that the very vehicle that one would naturally assume would aid them in their plight is instead one that will only allow them to remain in their disadvantage. An education system that is dedicated to maintaining an unjust order is not one that will solve— or even address—the situation of the ‘haves’ and ‘have nots’. Nor is it one that will examine dehumanization within the world. It will instead deposit the values of a capitalist economy into students’ heads. The result is that the oppressed remain oppressed, and the oppressors learn how to be more effective oppressors.

The banking or transmission theory of school knowledge and practice, known as ‘education’, continues to dominate. As Freire explains;

Education thus becomes an act of depositing, in which the students are the depositories and the teacher is the depositor... This is the banking concept of education in which the scope of action allowed to the students extends only as far as receiving, filing and storing the deposits.<sup>79</sup>

Because of the nature of banking education, it can be concluded that the interests of the oppressed—as individuals or as groups—are not on its agenda to serve. The situation of oppression in the world is one that is of benefit—if not necessity—to the structure of capitalism, so it stands to reason that an education system set up under its banner would have little interest in upsetting this order. The oppressed will find no freedom through its ranks, even as it proclaims so. As Sarup elaborates;

Schooling is the essential mechanism of the *integrative* function which allocates individuals to economic positions. It produces a stratified labour force for the capitalist enterprise. The main role of education is the production of an adequate labour force in a hierarchically controlled and class-stratified

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<sup>78</sup> M. Sarup, *Marxism and education*, p.169.

<sup>79</sup> P. Freire, *Pedagogy of the oppressed*, p.55.

production system. Schools therefore, remain hostile to the individual need for personal development; neither are they vehicles for the equalization of economic status or opportunity.<sup>80</sup>

Banking education is a major weapon of the oppressors in the capitalist regime because of its ability to infect its citizens at such a young age—and to consequently to become the ‘voice inside them’. There is no need for physical force here as the power of banking education is so strong within the minds of the oppressed. Freire recognized this power when he noted;

The capability of banking education to minimize or annual the students creative powers and to stimulate their credulity serves the interests of the oppressors, who care neither to have their world revealed nor to see it transformed.<sup>81</sup>

Banking education only serves to reinforce the titles of oppressed and oppressor through its methods of competition and stratification. It does this under a formal banner of ‘legitimization’, which makes its decisions feel both frightening and final for the oppressed—and anyone else wishing to oppose those decisions. As Freire puts it;

To achieve this end, the oppressors use the banking concept of education in conjunction with a paternalistic social action apparatus, within which the oppressed receive the euphemistic title of ‘welfare recipient’.<sup>82</sup>

Banking education thus becomes the subject of investigation as a major barrier for the oppressed to overcome their oppression, and for an authentic democracy to prevail. The next chapter will examine this system in detail to understand how it perpetuates and maintains the capitalist doctrines that inhibits the world’s quest for humanization and democracy.

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<sup>80</sup> M. Sarup, *Marxism and Education*, p.167.

<sup>81</sup> Op cit, p.60.

<sup>82</sup> Ibid.

## 2.14 Conclusion

Oppression is a very real problem for the person of the modern world and one that is of concern for any humanist, or indeed, any person who cares for the welfare of others. It is not a problem that only belongs to the Third World and needs awareness and action worldwide if it is to be fully overcome. Paulo Freire's work provides us with a paradigm by which we can better understand the complexities of oppression in order to overcome it and end the suffering of oppressed peoples everywhere.

Oppression can be defined as *dehumanization*; that is, to inhibit a person's ability to become more fully human. Although examples of oppression can be found in specific locations—such as racism and sexism—oppression as a whole needs to be defined as dehumanization in order to capture its experience for human beings. It is through the unfinished nature of humans that oppression can be understood in depth. It is also through this discourse that the opportunity for human beings to overcome oppression can be comprehended.

It appears that it is this aspect of Freire's work that his critics often misinterpreted, as I have indicated. They accuse him of harbouring a Western bias and of prescribing what other cultures should do in order to free themselves from oppression. While Freire does not condone any form of oppression or dehumanization, even if it is part of one's culture, he is clearly of the opinion that the oppressed need to confront reality and act on their conclusions *themselves*. Only the oppressed can free themselves. Anything else would be false generosity and display a lack of trust in the people who must be left to free themselves.

Neo-liberal capitalism is the major catalyst for oppression in the world today. Its ethos of globalization, competition, and private ownership only serve the interests of the oppressors by keeping the imbalance between the 'haves' and 'have nots'. Its technocratic, pseudo-scientific authority only serves to distort these ethics further and has no regard to any code of ethics for human beings. Freire has squarely placed responsibility on the neo-liberal capitalism doctrine as the cause of hunger, poverty, unemployment, and suffering for much of the world.

He also denounced the fatalistic attitude that the capitalist system produced as the 'natural order' of the world. He called instead for people to understand that they were conditioned, but not determined, and therefore to see capitalism as part of an historical process that could be changed. He reminded us of the importance of love, as a political project; a love for humankind and its importance when dealing with oppression.

I also touched on the issue of institutions as transmitters and maintainers of oppression at the conclusion of this chapter. In particular, the issue of the education system and its institutions as a vehicle by which oppressors can maintain the capitalist order of inequality has been raised. In the next chapter, I will explore this subject more deeply. In particular, I will examine Freire's critical pedagogy more critically to unpack the complexities that institutionalised capitalism entails for the oppressed and educators alike.

## **Chapter 3**

### **Banking ‘Education’**

#### **3.1 Introduction**

This chapter is dedicated to exploring the concept of banking education that Freire popularised to expose how the traditional curriculum has encouraged and maintained the situation of oppressed and oppressors in the world. As Freire has highlighted, the retention of this binary is one of the most significant ways in which authentic democracy remains a “potential” rather than a possibility. In this regard, an examination of the politics, curriculum, and methods that characterize this system will be the focus of study. According to Michel Foucault – whom it could be argued provides a micro-analysis of how power operates within this oppressor/oppressed binary – space, time and capacity were the primary classificatory forms of power operating in an institutional medium. These three sets of dividing practices will be appealed to in explaining Freire’s objections to a traditional – which does not exclude contemporary– model.

A discussion focusing on addressing the problems that have been raised within this analysis (of the banking system) will conclude the chapter. Considerations about the difficulties educators face when trying to transform the current system will also be canvassed. As I argue here, by exposing the many facets that need to be seriously addressed in this banking system of ‘education’, a broader sense of the complexity of change in education will need to be considered if we are ever to equip our citizenry with the conceptual tools necessary for investigating truly democratic deliberation.

#### **3.2 Defining banking ‘education’**

The method that Freire described as “banking education” is characterized by a style of teaching where by students are expected to receive, memorize, file and

store information that is deposited to them from the teacher<sup>1</sup>. The students predominantly absorb the information as “true” or “correct” without questioning its authenticity or interacting with the knowledge in such a way as to understand how the concept or content actually became “knowledge” in the first place. Knowledge in this sense is conveyed as a static and unmoving body that is to be transmitted from teacher to student. There is no attempt to make knowledge appear fluid and unsettled and as such there is a loss of sense that people make knowledge and that it can be changed. This method results in the students’ role of being mere passive recipients rather than an active participant in the act of learning.<sup>2</sup> The knowledge that is transmitted is not expected to be changed or challenged during this process. There is no inquiry into knowing the world or discovering the connection between knowledge and human validation of some information or understandings as knowledge and some mere opinion. Instead the knowledge that the student should memorize is already selected and the facts of the curriculum are established, apparently beyond debate.

The way in which institutions of education are validated simply by virtue of the way in which anything labelled “educational” is ipso facto of value illustrates this point. The need to rename the education system becomes strikingly apparent when one attempts philosophical discussions on the nature of education. What Freire has achieved by renaming this system as a banking system is to allow for a communication of the belief that there are significant differences between the traditional dominant method and an education that would fulfil the promises that are being fulfilled by the existing system.

To Freire, banking education is essentially a system of reproductive ideology. The system is set up to initiate students into the social protocols that dominant our existing society. The main task of the dominant curriculum is to transfer these values through particular narratives that endorse these selected values. As Freire pointed out, a careful analysis of the teacher student relationship at any level, reveals its fundamentally narrative character<sup>3</sup>. In the banking scenario, the teacher determines which narratives will be enacted in the classroom validated by the expectations (guidelines) expressed in the school curriculum. The student has no

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<sup>1</sup> P. Freire. *Pedagogy of the Oppressed*.

<sup>2</sup> Ibid.

<sup>3</sup> Ibid, p.57

say on either the narrative they are expected to receive or on the ethical implications that result from receiving of them.

Within this method comes the assumption that the knowledge that is passed down for the student to deposit is in fact valid. The knowledge is treated as a determined fact with its authority presupposed by curriculum authors who also give credence to its historical longevity by doing so. The teacher thus talks about reality as if it were motionless, static, compartmentalised and predictable<sup>4</sup>. Knowledge is not treated as something that is negotiated by human beings. Rather, it is represented as a solid, unchanging, body of values by its designation as “facts”. It sets up a “pretence” that facts lie beyond the realm of human determination; that human knowledge changes over time and therefore has “historicity”. In this same manner students are presented reality as simply facts that need to be transferred from the teacher to the students’ heads.

As Freire argues numerous in his works (*Pedagogy of the oppressed*(1970), *Education for critical consciousness*(1973),*Pedagogy of hope - reliving pedagogy of the oppressed*(1994) and *Pedagogy of Freedom – Ethics, democracy and civic courage*(1998)) banking education operates as a sorting mechanism in society. On the basis of how good a student can play the banking game, students are stratified within the school and then beyond. Their economic prospects and social standing follow directly from their level of achievement in the system, so that in spite of commonsense discourses that schools are sites that engender a “meritocracy,” they are sites that in fact collaborate with economic divisions of labour to allocate people to different levels of power and monetary rewards. A capitalist ideology underpins its structure, policies and practices.

Banking education is not dedicated to the development of students’ critical consciousness. Rather, it is a system highly efficient in producing obedient, submissive, and uncritical citizens. In a school system dedicated to banking pedagogy, students internalise values and habits, which actually sabotage their critical thought. The result is the development of alienated and anti-intellectual adults after years in mass education and mass culture, where they are treated as

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<sup>4</sup> Ibid

objects filled with official ideas and supervised by authorities.<sup>5</sup> Not only is this outcome detrimental on an individual level but is likewise corruptive to any establishment of an authentic democracy as democracy requires critical consciousness and active participation from all the citizens of a society, not only select members.

Throughout his life, Freire was deeply critical of the concept and practice of banking education. He strongly believed that educators were lacking in understanding when they assumed that education was the task of the transmission or systematic extension of knowledge.<sup>6</sup> Instead, he believed that education was the creation of knowledge in which the teacher and student are co-investigators. Both the teacher and the student bring a different personal history of knowledge to the object of knowing, and seek to understand and create the world through dialogue and praxis. Through such an approach to knowledge an acknowledgement is made that yesterdays knowledge conditions, but does not determine, what can be known today.

### **3.3 The politics of banking ‘education’**

Freire has always been avid in his convictions that education is not separate from politics or political agenda. He asserted that the whole nature of education was political in nature, and what was relevant was the form and direction that the politics were operating in. Education always takes a particular direction by encouraging selected beliefs and practices and discouraging others. As such the process could therefore not be neutral or apolitical. As Freire elaborates:

Politics also resides in the discourse of the classroom, in the way teachers and students talk to each other, in the questions and statements from teachers about the themes being studied, in the freedom students feel when questioning the curriculum, in the silences typically surrounding unorthodox questions and issues in traditional classrooms.<sup>7</sup>

The political direction that the traditional banking system has embraced is evident in its promotion of submissive and obedient behaviour and its discouragement of

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<sup>5</sup>I. Shor, “Education is politics – Paulo Freires critical pedagogy,” p.29

<sup>6</sup>P. Freire, *Education for critical consciousness*, p.140

<sup>7</sup>Op cit., p.27

independent inquiry and cooperation. It is also apparent through the encouragement of formal competition between pupils for the promises of social status and economic position. The manner in which school authorities and teachers treat students and the rights that are accorded to them is a further indication of the political system that is operating through traditional schools. There is also politics found in the imposition of standardised tests, in grading and tracking policies, in the physical conditions of classrooms and buildings, all of which send messages to students about their worth and place in society.<sup>8</sup>

From the onset of mass schooling politics has primarily been seen to be relevant in the form of government involvement. Government took sole control of the mass 'education' system from its beginnings and refused to relinquish that control as the system grew up. Governments have often taken the stance that it was their 'duty' to provide every child with compulsory education. Private funding was discouraged. This was seen to compromise the government control, and equality of opportunity: it was believed that it was the duty of the government to provide everyone with 'ability' whatever their economic position, with advanced education and that the government had the resources to do this.<sup>9</sup>

If one is to consider government as a multi-faceted body of power, what soon becomes evident is the role that corporations and business organizations play in assisting governments to secure this power through financing. In the capitalist economy big business has both the power and corresponding wealth to offer irresistible forms of support to government parties. Industry and business have had a major investment in the banking system of education because it has always provided them with an easy way to categorically sort and select employees. The system is designed to cater to employers' needs and is renowned as a vehicle by which people can establish themselves within its ranks.

As 'education' has become even more driven by business and individual competition the idea that it was the duty for government to provide education for every child remained but was increasingly overshadowed by a prevailing belief that it was a user-pays commodity that was aligned to the needs of the progressive capitalist. The dominant paradigm was no longer that of education as a common public service but became an education *market*, steered from the

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<sup>8</sup> Ibid.

<sup>9</sup> S. Marginson, *Markets in education*, p.4.

background by government in which students and parents were consumers, teachers and academics were producers, and educational administrators became managers and entrepreneurs.<sup>10</sup>

The resulting outcome is that the politics that have guided and shaped the current banking system of education have been determinedly capitalist. The values of competition, individual gain, privatisation and materialism are strongly intertwined with those taught in the 'education' system. The system embodies a formal process of 'ordering' individuals' that is evident to both the students inside the process and the larger society outside. Consequently, the politics that the students in mass are indoctrinated into are those of capitalistic social hegemony. Although democracy may be a word that students hear whilst their intellect is developing it will be, at best, an empty concept as traditional schooling does not encompass concrete experiences of democratic practices. The authorities of schools, the teachers included, do not afford students democratic rights in the classroom. Our behaviour is a function of our experience. If our experience is anti-democratic then so will be our behaviour.<sup>11</sup>

Democracy relies on the multitude of voices being recognized and heard. It can not be present in an institution that has, at its aim, the imposing of one dominant culture over all others. Democracy needs people who will (and can) represent their differing points of view. The development of critical capacity and the ability to reflect upon differences will allow the production of new knowledge, ideas, and solutions in democratic forums. The banking system of education does not encourage the development of critical consciousness needed for students to be able to inquire, reflect or consider alternatives and therefore democratic practices fail to transpire. A school setting, where choice is minimised and where the student is subservient to subject matter, is contrary to democratic living and thinking. The same is true where memorisation takes precedence over thinking or where the need for a quick, correct answer is more important than the exploration of alternative perspectives."<sup>12</sup>

The danger of an 'education' system where its politics are primarily anti-democratic is that those who are 'educated' become the next generation of citizens

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<sup>10</sup> Ibid, p.5.

<sup>11</sup> D. Rubinstein & C. Stoneman (Eds.) *Education for democracy*, p.40.

<sup>12</sup> R.A. Breault, "Dewey, Freire and a pedagogy for the oppressor," p.5.

who will create society in continuation of the politics and social divisions that are familiar to them (as they have not developed the ability to critique its structure). The oppressed will continue to exist in a powerless state while the future leaders, decision makers and educators will unquestionably perpetuate the capitalist mantra and its anti-democratic values. When these young people (dominant class) enter the larger society they bring with them the only conception of democracy they know – those with the most “right” answers or the most wealth deserve the greatest voice in the government.<sup>13</sup>

Most students have heard of the concept of democracy in regards to government political systems but I would argue that they have never actually experienced – or more importantly – participated in an authentic democratic society. They are informed that they live in a democracy yet are aware that this concept does not extend to them as students and will in reality only be applicable to those that ‘succeed’ in achieving positions of high rank in society. The result is that students are being led to dichotomous thinking and sent the message that democracy is something to practice only after they leave school.<sup>14</sup>

### **3.4 The traditional curriculum**

The curriculum is often a central topic of educational discussion and policy. In general this discussion revolves around how the topics and facts should be included in the curriculum for students to memorize and later be assessed on. The theme of such inquiry is typically dedicated to reviewing the content rather than rethinking its structure within formal schooling. Although content of the curriculum has in some areas broadened and altered over time the actual structure has remained remarkably the same. Knowledge is still thought to be something that is transmitted to students’ and so any examination of the curriculum is usually limited to deciding which knowledge should be transmitted. Anthony Arblaster noted in 1970:

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<sup>13</sup> Ibid, p.4.

<sup>14</sup> Ibid.

It is striking how little of the abundant public discussion of education in the past decade has been concerned with the context of education, with *what* should be studied rather than how, where, when and by whom.<sup>15</sup>

It should be remembered that the traditional curriculum was developed at a particular period of time, during the industrial revolution, which meant that there was a desire for specific skills required from the population for the means of production. It meant that some characteristics from the masses were encouraged through the schooling system and others discouraged. As a result, the traditional concept of 'education' was developed in an environment where industrialisation had enticed people to think in terms of separating knowledge and skills into useful, stage- by-stage sections. This resulted in an attitude that the amount of creativity children be allowed to develop should be strictly limited.<sup>16</sup>

The curriculum was a vehicle whereby those in power could instil the narratives they wished to transmit to a captive young audience. By deciding what, when and by whom the curriculum was taught, authorities controlled from a young age what students were exposed to in the 'educational' experience. To ensure obedience, methods of instruction were often harsh and formal. Narratives that were passed down through the schooling process perpetuated the socio-economic class structure present in society and thus the schooling system was one of reproductive ideology. Due to the class strata it therefore seemed logical to discourage children from questioning the foundations of the society they found themselves in and its corresponding value system.<sup>17</sup>

The curriculum has traditionally been very much a top down model. Its prescribed content is developed and administered by government educational authorities, which in turn is then delivered as 'official' content to youth by local school authorities. From the beginning, this process represented the deliberate imposing of one culture onto every child. For Freire, curriculum is controlled from above as a means to impose the dominant culture on each new generation of students. Knowledge, he explains, is not neutral. Rather, it is the expression of historical moments where some groups exercise dominant power over others.<sup>18</sup>

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<sup>15</sup> A. Arlblaster, "Education and ideology," p.49.

<sup>16</sup> W. Williams, "The proper concerns of education," p.161.

<sup>17</sup> Ibid.

<sup>18</sup> I. Shor, "Education is politics – Paulo Freires critical pedagogy," p.28.

The curriculum was never intended to encourage independent or critical thought. The notion of allowing the masses independent thought was presumably wrought with danger for those in power and the higher levels of education were certainly not intended to be accessible to all when the curriculum was established. Rather than the curriculum providing a teaching content that would assist in developing inquisitive, intellectual adolescents, it was instead seen as a means of curbing students' inquiry to a narrow field deemed appropriate by authorities. Whilst the establishment of schooling was far from agreed on by all, education of the masses was seen as a means of overcoming subversive thought and preventing revolution in society.<sup>19</sup>

The content of the curriculum came in the form of selected facts that were divided up into sections. These facts were then transmitted or deposited from the teacher to the students, who were expected to memorise and regurgitate them in rote fashion at a later date. There were usually too many restrictions on teaching time, and sometimes little desire, to relate these facts to concrete examples in students' lives in order to make them meaningful for individuals. Students often faced negative consequences if they dared to question the validity of the facts that they were expected to retain. There was no room for critical encounters in the traditional system as this would have only hindered the 'depositing' process. As Freire contends:

Our traditional curriculum, disconnected from life, centred on words emptied of the reality they are meant to represent, lacking in concrete activity, could never develop a critical consciousness.<sup>20</sup>

The curriculum of our contemporary time largely follows the traditional model in its prescribed knowledge decided by educational authorities. The transmitting of knowledge has been generally accepted as authentic education by the public. Minimal effort has been aimed at developing students' critical capacity rather than simply expanding their memorization skills. Through the traditional schooling curriculum, we have, in essence, been teaching students what to think instead of how to think. Children have been taught to remember facts and fictions. These are

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<sup>19</sup> J. Marshall, *Why go to school?* p.13.

<sup>20</sup> P. Freire, *Education for critical consciousness*, p.37.

the fictions each society has set up about itself – rather than giving individuals the ability to discover and create their own truths.<sup>21</sup>

### **3.5 Behaviour modification**

As with any institution, the school has many different aspects that make up its totality, all of which contribute to the impact it has on the people within it. These aspects include the physical structure of the institution, its routines or rituals, the policies, practices and attitudes of the relevant authorities and the overall philosophy the institution holds. Hence, in the case of the school, the actual content of the curriculum is only part of the schooling experience. The way in which the curriculum was (and is) used, as a tool to shape the behaviour of the child, makes it a much more formidable subject to contemplate. The role of the teacher is to become an expert in the shaping of students' behaviour by following the instructions laid out for them by school authorities.

This behaviour modification comes from the experience the children have of the school as an institution that actively rewards behaviour it wishes to encourage and punishes behaviour it deems unsavoury. This is done through the attributed granting or removal of students' privileges, praise and rebuke, and through the assigning of grades. The traits and attitudes that the schools reward are docility, passivity, and obedience.<sup>22</sup> Students soon observe that these traits are deemed preferable from the attitude and disciplinary measures projected by teachers and school authorities. From the onset, the traditional schooling system was treated as a means of acquiring power over the pupil, not as a means of nourishing their own growth.<sup>23</sup>

Teachers are also restricted in the amount of creativity they can afford in the traditional banking system of education due to loss of autonomy in the 'educational' process. Teachers often find themselves in the line of criticism in educational debates yet it should be remembered that they have very little freedom to move from the prescribed curriculum and the accompanying assessment it

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<sup>21</sup> N.D. Walsch, *An uncommon dialogue*, p.112.

<sup>22</sup> J.T. Gatto, *Dumbing us down – The hidden curriculum of compulsory schooling*, p.7.

<sup>23</sup> D. Rubinstein & C. Stoneman (Eds.) *Education for Democracy*.

entails. An overcrowded curriculum and pressure to meet credentialing assessment deadlines means that content must be dealt with quickly and methodically, leaving little room for exploration. Hence, the school environment is similarly stifling for many teachers. As such, it is not only the student that has become a mere object in this process; the teacher too, has been reduced to the status of the simple worker with little control over the curriculum and their activities.<sup>24</sup>

What has resulted, due to the pressure exerted on teachers from educational and school authorities, is that the possibility of critical education is discarded in favour of subservience and conditioning. Conditioning eliminates options in two ways: it produces young people who are equipped only for the course of life they are expected to pursue; and it inculcates the belief that the alternatives are misguided, perverse or evil.<sup>25</sup> There is evidence of a major presumption held by ‘educational’ authorities responsible for this method of instruction. This is the belief that the way of life, behaviour, and thinking that they are conditioning students to accept is the most beneficial way for all individuals. Because students’ critical capacities are not permitted to develop through education, they do not have the ability to critically consider (or imagine) alternative ways of living to make objective choices. By conditioning students, we are essentially submitting them to a reality and way of living of another’s choosing. As Freire observed of the traditional banking system, “the students must be permitted no autonomy lest the evil spirits that lurk in everyday life regain lost ground.”<sup>26</sup>

As the history of schooling has progressed, behaviourist techniques have continued to be a popular method of controlling children. While the use of physical punishment was an obvious aspect of shaping behaviour, however, emotional and intellectual conditioning is perhaps even more effective at achieving the task of behaviour modification. Several notable academics, such as Michel Foucault, have dismissed the notion that the conditioning of individuals in institutions has been erased with the removal of physical punishment. As Foucault contends;

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<sup>24</sup> Op cit., p.166.

<sup>25</sup> D.L. Norton, *Imagination, understanding and the virtue of liberality*, p.21.

<sup>26</sup>P. Freire, *Pedagogy of freedom –Ethics, democracy & civic courage*, p.5.

...in the course of the seventeenth and eighteenth centuries the disciplines became great formulas of domination. They were different from slavery because they were not based on a relation of appropriation of bodies; indeed, the elegance of the discipline lay in the fact that it could dispense with this costly and violent relation by obtaining effects of utility at least as great.<sup>27</sup>

Although physical punishment was eventually condemned in the schooling system, the control exerted from behaviourist techniques to condition students' behaviour are still extremely potent. It is poignant to note that a system that is based on ideological indoctrination is not an improvement over one based on physical coercion.<sup>28</sup>

Traditional banking system behaviourist techniques always include the use of both rewards and punishment and consequently the cultivated hope for rewards and fear of punishments in students. It can be argued that it is a manipulation of children's emotions which allows this technique to be extremely successful. While in the system, students are also numbered and kept track of so escape is not permissible. Fear is thus accepted as a motivator for students 'educational success' and as an effective method for shaping their behaviours. This is certainly an extrinsic method of motivation but is it an ethical one? When society accepts the notion that the child is all-the-better for being disciplined with fear, then schools can only be repressive and the repression will inevitably affect the whole nature of the child.<sup>29</sup>

When combined with the powerful force of fear as a motivator, conditioning through behaviourist techniques results in the loss of student autonomy. In Freire's critical theory, he proposes that this produces individuals with a naïve concept of the world. In naïve thinking, the present is merely the extension of the past, bearing the shape or imprint of the past and not differentiated from the past. The past and present become one determined state that forms a limitless 'today' that students are seemingly powerless to alter.<sup>30</sup> And thus, just as the present reality is undifferentiated from the reality of the past, so too, their tomorrow will be an undifferentiated extension of the present. There is then little hope for the students to alter their reality of tomorrow in their mind so they submit to the

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<sup>27</sup> M. Foucault, *Discipline and punish: The birth of the prison*, p.137.

<sup>28</sup> A. Reath, B. Herman & C. Korsgaard (Eds.) *Reclaiming the history of ethics – Essays for John Rawls*, p.17.

<sup>29</sup> A. S. Neill, *The problem teacher*, p.18.

<sup>30</sup> P.L. McLaren & C.L. Lankshear, "'Being' and 'time' in Freire's philosophy."

preordained reality. Submerged in time the naïve thinker is reduced to passive adjustment.<sup>31</sup>

One major implication of this ‘passive adjustment’ process is for students is to curtail their critical thinking processes or in other words to be indoctrinated. The doctrines are deposited in the students through the banking system which neither encourages nor allows critical exploration of the information. It is highly plausible to argue that the conditioning of students in this manner is applicable to the term indoctrination. To indoctrinate is to “still critical reflection” or “to stimulate being doctrinaire”. To be specific, to indoctrinate a person is not only to try and suppress their intellectual virtues; it is also aimed at impeding the development of their rational emotions.<sup>32</sup>

The term indoctrination, it can be surmised, is closely linked with that of the absence of freedom. To suppress someone’s critical disposition means that you are depriving them of at least some forms of freedom. Because their critical capacities will be undeveloped, they will not always have the freedom to be able to choose between critically assessed alternatives. They are denied the right to develop into critical persons who can completely and freely participate in a democratic institution or state.<sup>33</sup> They become passive recipients of reality rather than active creators of their own reality. As such their democratic ability is severely impaired. In this way they will not have the freedom to prefer one (moral or political) alternative to another. They will often be prisoners of rigid conventions (like sex roles) and at the same time be unable to discover the valuable aspects of tradition.<sup>34</sup>

Through encouraging obedient and submissive behaviour, and retention of narratives without critical reflection, the schooling system is actively stilling the critical consciousness of students and encouraging them to deny rational emotions such as curiosity. Whilst this method of schooling may have certain benefits for the capitalist employers labour production this is surely not justifiable when weighing it against the particularly detrimental harm to the individual student’s

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<sup>31</sup> P.L. McLaren & C.L. Lankshear, “‘Being’ and ‘time’ in Freire’s philosophy.”

<sup>32</sup> B. Spiecker & R. Straughan, *Freedom & indoctrination in education: International perspectives*, p.18

<sup>33</sup> Ibid.

<sup>34</sup> Ibid, p.27.

autonomy. As Deb Hill contends: “The harm is therefore measured against each personal ability for self-determination.”<sup>35</sup>

The seriousness of this situation has not been lost on many academics and often the banking system of education provokes passionate reactions against this lack of autonomy afforded to students. As Harvey Siegel argued:

...To be so shackled, and to have her options and future limited, is to narrow her life in a way which is unacceptable as it is out of her control. The child is cut off from all but a narrow band of possibilities. Her freedom and her dignity are short-circuited, her autonomy denied, her control over her own life and her ability to contribute to community life truncated, her mental life impoverished. This is a more apt description of child abuse than of acceptable education.<sup>36</sup>

Any practice that seeks to diminish critical consciousness cannot be promoted as in the well-being of the individual. Nevertheless there has been little public criticism of the methods behaviourist techniques employ. This has been a characteristic feature in fact of the traditional curriculum. As McKenzie asserted in 1975:

Behaviourist techniques of instruction and evaluation with their implied imperative ‘that which cannot be measured does not exist’ can be seen historically to provide a fascinating lure for any public system of schooling concerned with accountability in terms of measured results.<sup>37</sup>

These techniques, with their scientific methodologies, also provided an official and impressive means of data collection. What behaviourists’ often overlook is that things exist that are important to the educational development of an individual which cannot be measured through these techniques. For example, the measurement of an individual’s development of empathy is beyond their scope. Through its behaviourist approach, the traditional banking system sends an unrealistic message that emotions are largely irrelevant in educational development. This tendency towards dualism in American society, for example, can be seen clearly in its schools. Dichotomous thinking has led to the belief that one cannot develop both intellect and emotion without slighting one.<sup>38</sup>

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<sup>35</sup> D. Hill, “What do we teach? Teaching philosophy of education,” p.3.

<sup>36</sup> Op cit., p.37.

<sup>37</sup> J.D.S. McKenzie, “The changing concepts of equality in New Zealand education,” p.106.

<sup>38</sup> R.A Breault, “Dewey, Freire, and a pedagogy for the oppressor,” p.3.

Emotions are an important part of any human being's existence and are an integral part of one's educational development. Feelings of passion, sadness, anger, frustration, and injustice are just some examples of emotions that inspire and arise from the educational process. Educators and other members of the helping professions are also recognizing with increasing frequency that personality improvement and classroom performance correlate more significantly with elements of empathy than with any other specific methodological approach.<sup>39</sup>

The banking system has demonstrated an extraordinary fetish in its need to measure and sort students and to record and file its 'results'. Accountability has taken precedence over the motivation of education that serves the learner and consequently over the well-being of the learner. Democratic practices are not upheld within the banking system of education and students experience several indignations in teachers and authorities quest to retain power over them. The developments of their critical abilities are stunted in favour of passive, subservient traits. Behaviourist methods of schooling sought officiation of the system and to safeguard its authorities. But, as Freire perceptively observed; "in the last analysis, it is men themselves who are filed away through the lack of creativity, transformation and knowledge in this (at best) misguided system. For apart from inquiry, apart from the praxis, men cannot be truly human."<sup>40</sup>

### **3.6 Assessment and education**

Assessment tools, such as formal examinations, have always been a major part of the formal school experience. Standardized tests became an important stratification tool for 'educators', employers, and the public. Assessment quickly began to be thought to measure more than just how much information the student retained, it became an indicator of their very worth. The trend of assessment never withered and died in education but instead grew stronger as time progressed. Contemporary institutions of education are a testimony to this phenomenon. How this information was (or is) of any real benefit to the student's education remains somewhat unclear. Teachers spend an enormous amount of time and energy on

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<sup>39</sup> J. Morgan & P. Welton, *See what I mean: An introduction to visual communication*, p.15.

<sup>40</sup> P. Freire, *Pedagogy of the oppressed*, p.58.

assessment but very little information is obtained which helps teachers actually teach. Students are given marks or grades with the aim of placing them in an order of merit rather than of aiding their personal educational development. Assessment has its purpose in judging and then ranking students to continue the hegemonic patterns in society, and very little has to do with the well-being of the learner.

Students are told that they need to attain good results in order to demonstrate that they have ‘achieved’ an education, the clearest reason given that it was of importance to employers regarding job selection. Schooling in this sense has been reduced to a convenient means by which employers can select employees from a multitude of applicants. There is little motivation for students to venture into formal schooling for their own personal development because the external reason of successful employment with its accompanying status in society and monetary rewards is more highly valued. As Freire concluded in 1987:

The dominant curriculum treats motivation as outside the action of study. Tests, discipline, punishments, rewards, the promise of future jobs, are considered motivating devices, alienated from the act of learning now.<sup>41</sup>

Students may internalize assessment results believing that they are a reflection of their own self worth. If students do not ‘succeed’ in formal assessment, it is not the system that is seen as lacking but the student who is commonly deemed to have ‘failed’. Formal assessment, therefore, frequently takes on the illusion of measuring the value of the whole person from their ability to memorize the selected narratives the banking system demands. Inaccurate or inflexible assessment of a student does not affect merely the teacher’s impression of the student. They may also affect what the student actually becomes.<sup>42</sup> The significance of this applies to a great deal more than just their initial employment prospects:

Intellectuals who memorize everything, reading for hours on end, slaves to the text, fearful of taking a risk, speaking as if they were reciting from memory, fail to make any concrete connections between what is happening in the world, the country, or the local community.<sup>43</sup>

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<sup>41</sup> P. Freire & I. Shor, *A pedagogue of liberation – Dialogues on transforming education*, p.5.

<sup>42</sup> D. Rowntree, *Assessing students: How shall we know them?* p.31.

<sup>43</sup> P. Freire, *Pedagogy of freedom –ethics, democracy & civic courage*, p.34.

Perhaps there are means by which assessment can be used appropriately in education that are in the interest and benefit of the learner. Knowing the stage that a learner is at in their development is most certainly not necessarily harmful in itself. The learner themselves could be conducting the assessment in order to enhance their learning experience. If assessment is to have a place in education, it must be in order to aid the educational development of the learner, not to hinder it. What can be said is that a teacher's use of assessment will be largely influenced by the expectations of the educational system within which they are teaching. That is to say, the teacher's attitudes to assessment will largely depend on their ideology regarding what teaching, learning, knowledge, and education are all about.<sup>44</sup>

If assessment is seen as a means by which to differentiate and allocate students into a social hierarchy, then assessment cannot be in the interest of all individuals. Assessment in this manner becomes a tool that is useful for the authorities in power, employers and, to some extent the administration of the school, but it does not serve the student. Thus the way in which we currently use examinations and other assessment techniques suggests that we attach much greater importance to this goal of social selection than to the quality of our teaching.<sup>45</sup>

The detrimental effects of a curriculum with its main focus pertaining to credentialing and formal of assessment cannot be amended simply by good teaching qualities. Many teachers recognize the limitations of such a system on their ability to educate students, even if they have the most forthright intentions. As a teacher, John Taylor Gatto, reflects on the way schools enforced his cultivation of emotional and intellectual dependence of students through the means of assessment:

By stars and red checks, smiles and frowns, prizes, honours and disgraces, I teach kids to surrender their will to the predestined chain of command. Rights may be granted or withheld by any authority without appeal, because rights do not exist inside a school.<sup>46</sup>

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<sup>44</sup> Ibid.

<sup>45</sup> D. McIntyre, "Assessment and teaching," p.170.

<sup>46</sup> J.T. Gatto, *Dumbing us down – The hidden curriculum of compulsory schooling*, p.7.

Some may argue that assessment still has a valid purpose in obtaining better job prospects for students, although they would have to concede that this only applies to those students who achieve good results. It is debateable that these results are even an effective indicator for employers as to the suitability of a future employee. Perhaps they may be useful in a job that requires a great deal of memorization and hardly any independent initiative or creativity. Yet now world wide market trends and international recessions have made the credential of schooling problematic, it is no wonder students feel estrangement and disengagement from schooling processes.<sup>47</sup> Students also find that the ‘bar’ of satisfactory credentialing is continually being raised, which has been a continuing trend from the beginning of the formal schooling system.

### **3.7 Hierarchal stratification of the masses**

It is clear that the traditional curriculum did not have its motivation in creating an authentic democracy whereby all of its citizens could participate. As Freire elaborates:

The domination in schools includes a traditional curriculum which interferes with the democratic and critical development of students. After years in passive classrooms students do not see themselves as people who can transform knowledge and society.<sup>48</sup>

If education had once been valued as something that was an instrument of liberation for individuals, then the onset of formal compulsory schooling worked to change this definition. This system was concerned with shaping students’ behaviour for productive labour not for critical autonomy. As McNeil points out, ‘education’ had taken on a new persona:

The idea that education could free a person to shape his or her own destiny was turned on its head as industrialists around the turn of the century looked to schools to supply them with labour for their expanding factories. Their desire to control schooling went beyond wanting to socialize students into a particular set of values. These industrialists of the late nineteenth and early twentieth century wanted schools to help control the labour supply.<sup>49</sup>

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<sup>47</sup> L. McNeil, *Contradictions of control: School structures and school knowledge*, p.9.

<sup>48</sup> I. Shor, “Education is politics,” p.28.

<sup>49</sup> Op cit. p.4.

The industrial revolution had a profound influence on the whole formation of the formal schooling system. It set the structure up in a specific way which served the industrialists' demands and this model was to remain the structure formal education would follow as a priori. The influence of industry and business was definitive in the shaping of the banking system because it placed them as the major stakeholders in its outcomes. The whole idea of assembling masses of students (raw materials) to be processed by teachers (workers) in a centrally located school (factory), was a stroke of industrial genius. The whole administrative hierarchy of education as it grew up, followed the model of industrial bureaucracy.<sup>50</sup>

However, schooling was not only aimed at supplying labourers for factories. A socio-economic stratification of employment, and hence class, was being established through its ranks. 'Education' for the masses meant that authorities had the ability to order, sort and select from the population those individuals that they desired and award them social mobility accordingly. It meant the end of the classical education of the gentleman, a drive to make science and technology "respectable", and a move towards universal schooling not only to meet the increased demands of capitalist consumption, but also to tap a potential pool of technical and managerial ability.<sup>51</sup>

Through the means of formal assessment, the school claimed to offer social mobility to those who were willing to 'work for it'. It promised an education system that preposed to give every child the equal chance at competing for the prize of social elevation. Formal schooling in this sense has both been seen as a critical mechanism in the perpetuation of patterns of *social* division, yet at the same time it has been valued as a means of gaining individual mobility.<sup>52</sup> The ideal of equality of opportunity however, was, at best, rhetorical. Capitalist values of competition and private ownership encompassed the need to have a hierarchal distribution of power and monetary rewards in society and schooling was the means by which to reinforce this. The authorities were interested in a schooling system that would enforce the capitalist values in society into different levels

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<sup>50</sup> A. Toffler, *Future shock*, p.362.

<sup>51</sup> J. Marshall, *Why go to school?* p. 13.

<sup>52</sup> P. J Dwyer, B. Wilson & J. Wyn, *Social division, economy & schooling*, p.3.

within the occupational structure; in this way the social relations of education replicate the hierarchical divisions of labour.<sup>53</sup>

The current system continues to repeat this legacy of hierarchical division for the work place by allocating people to different strata's in society. That is to say, different levels of 'education' fed workers because the driving consideration for education was that of economic efficiency.<sup>54</sup> The purpose of schooling was to integrate the population to the capitalist mode of life. A massive work force was being harnessed and trained for the capitalist economy which set up the oppressors as the main profiteers.

Schooling is the essential mechanism of the *integrative* function which allocates individuals to economic positions. It produces a stratified labour force for the capitalist enterprise. The main role of education is the production of an adequate labour force in a hierarchally controlled and class-stratified production system. Schools therefore remain hostile to the individual need for personal development; nor are they vehicles for the equalization of economic status or opportunity.<sup>55</sup> Individual development and personal growth is not in the interest of capitalist employers, as it does not serve to correlate with increasing their profit margins.

Although schooling stratified society, parental attitudes often reflected the myth that it provided an equal opportunity of social mobility for all. The schooling system that had been created, in part to assist the factories of the industrial revolution to have a skilled and subservient labour force, was now being seen as the vehicle that could be used to avoid the 'factory worker's fate'. But what happened in reality was that the schooling system simply continued sorting students into their allocated positions that would benefit the capitalist economy. That is to say, different levels of 'education' fed workers into different levels within the occupational structure. In this way, the social relations of education replicated the hierarchal divisions of labour.<sup>56</sup>

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<sup>53</sup>M. Sarup, *Marxism and education*, p.169.

<sup>54</sup>Op cit.

<sup>55</sup>Ibid, p.167.

<sup>56</sup>Ibid, p.178.

The contemporary attitudes of parents have only served to enforce this idea more fiercely. In almost every instance it seems that the overwhelming concern of parents is primarily that schooling should ensure their children are able to acquire an adequate livelihood. Sometimes this is simply referred to as a 'good job' (certainly not factory work) which is understood in terms of a particular environment and a certain level of pay.<sup>57</sup> It stands to reason that parents were, in all probability, wishing for their offspring to have a better life than they themselves had led, and their quest for credentialing reflects this intention. This desire has amplified as time has progressed.

However, the ideology that the schooling system would dramatically alter the hegemonic structure of society, created by those authorities in power, was one that was naïve at best. The school system perpetuated the reproduction of socio-economic positions in society rather than revolutionized it. A major implicit aim of the 'educational' system is social selection, since the eventual position of a person in the social class hierarchy is to a large extent determined by the way in which they are classified within this system.<sup>58</sup> Thus the idea that it would be a means of social mobility was but a hopeful dream for most who participated in its ranks. Although it did serve to alleviate some the strict class structures of the society of the 'gentleman' one can conclude that 'equal opportunity' for all was a fictitious claim by those in power. As Freire explains:

We know that it's not education which shapes society, but on the contrary, it is society which shapes education according to the interests of those who have power. If this is true, we cannot expect education to be the lever for the transformation of those who have power and are in power. It would be tremendously naïve to ask the ruling class in power to put into practice the kind of education which can work against it. If education was left alone to develop without political supervision, it would create no end of problems for those in power. But, the dominant authorities do not leave it alone. They supervise it.<sup>59</sup>

The stratification mechanism of schooling served to enhance existing class distinctions as it reflected only the dominant class values and those of whom these values were unfamiliar suffered a great disadvantage. As has been shown frequently, a middle class child with adverse home circumstances generally gets by at school much better than the working class child with the same handi-cap,

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<sup>57</sup> P. J Dwyer, B. Wilson & J. Wyn, *Social division, economy & schooling*, p.7.

<sup>58</sup> D. McIntyre, "Assessment and teaching," p.166.

<sup>59</sup> P. Freire & I. Shor., *A pedagogy for liberation – Dialogues on transforming education*, p.36.

since the first one tends to get the support from the environment denied to the other.<sup>60</sup> Even in later years, with the proposals that reforms would alter these inequality this stratification still takes place. It has been clearly shown in many countries that the claim to offer ‘equal educational opportunity for all children’ is a myth.<sup>61</sup>

### **3.8 Oppressors as ‘educators’**

Through Freire’s critical pedagogy it can be recognised that the schooling system holds many elements of oppression in both its philosophies and practices. To understand the motives behind the authorities that set up this system of formal schooling is a complex task. This difficulty emphasizes the importance of examining this subject in a historical manner. There appears to have been, in some quarters, a genuineness in the belief held by the ruling class that they knew what was ‘best’ for the masses and so were equipped to direct their ‘education’. Whilst this ‘false generosity’ may have stemmed from their own indoctrination, it must be noted that the system those in power set up was self-serving of their interests above all others.

These authorities did not wish their position in society to change and had no desire to equip the population with the critical intelligence which would allow this occurrence. In this way they led an existence that necessitated they remain separate from the rest of society and, to a large degree, fearful of it. In this light, Freire would have us consider the nature of the oppressor who is also trapped by his or her own actions of oppression, which lead to a fearful and mistrusting existence. As he writes, “The oppressor cannot be utopian and cannot create hope. What is the future of the oppressor but the preservation of his oppressing present?”<sup>62</sup>

This statement highlights the possible naivety in asking the elite ruling class to set up an education system that would assist the masses in gaining critical consciousness. It is plausible that a system set up by oppressors would work to

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<sup>60</sup> N. Tucker, “The underprivileged child in the underprivileged area,” p.71.

<sup>61</sup> M. Duane, “ Education in Britain today,” p.59.

<sup>62</sup>P. Freire, “A few notions about the word “conscientization,”” p.24.

maintain the current order and ensure that those schooled through this system would not challenge the existing power relations. The banking system of 'education' was an ideal vehicle for this purpose. As Freire contends:

Uncritical citizens who deny their own intellects and blame themselves for their own failures are the easiest to control, so it is understandable for the mass education system,(invented decade by decade by authorities), to under-develop most students<sup>63</sup>

The idea of the education being re-invented by authorities' decade after decade is in keeping with Freire's concept that knowledge is created and re-created by humans rather than a static and unchanging entity. Formal schooling has been re-created by each successive generation's authorities to continually re-invent its stratification processes. In Antonio Gramsci's work, hegemony is described as control of the public agenda as well as control of the means of production. Gramsci's conception is highly mobile. Leading ideas, whole systems of power, are continually in flux and control must re-invent itself to survive. <sup>64</sup>

To understand the complexity of these ideas as they are played out in the capitalist economy one has to be able to connect with how deeply entrenched they are throughout society as a whole, not only the institution of schooling. By immersing the mass population in the reality of the dominant culture a society has been created where the majority of its members are reliant on others for direction and instruction. Individual's lose responsibilities for the choosing of their own reality and relinquish control over many aspects of their lives. They lack the autonomy for their own self-determination. As Gatto asserted, in practice, "good people wait for an expert to tell them what to do. It is hardly an exaggeration to say that our entire economy depends on this lesson being learned. Think of what might fall apart if children weren't taught to be dependent."<sup>65</sup>

If education were to encourage critical thought, then the oppressors would be faced with a very real concern of losing their minority power. They would have to concede that such a change would not only affect the education system, but the power structure of society as a whole. This may seem a disastrous consequence to those that have only known the life of the power elite in which case it must then be concluded that they have no understanding - or at least no interest in the

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<sup>63</sup> I. Shor, "Education is politics," p.29.

<sup>64</sup> S. Marginson, *Markets in education*, p.25.

<sup>65</sup> J.T. Gatto, *Dumbing us down – The hidden curriculum of compulsory schooling*, p.9.

development of - an authentic democracy or democratic education. In either case, the argument for a liberating education system would not be diminished by the oppressors' reluctance to comply. As Wyn Williams stated in 1970:

It is no longer adequate to insist upon an education that emphasizes the specialist training of a small elite, with a secondary training in literacy and numeracy for the mass of the population. In our opinion this is an attitude that is rooted in fear: fear of the changing environment; fear of the trend towards a more democratic society; fear that there may no longer be a guaranteed place for the academic elite.<sup>66</sup>

The current schooling system holds much the same qualities of sorting, stratification and rewarding obedience and submissive thought as it did when it was established. There have been some changes made, such as the removal of physical punishment, but the system has largely continued to remain an institution of coercive instruction. Its objective is still to serve as a selection process for employers in the capitalist economy. It persists as being a fundamentally narrative process whereby the teacher transmits the selected knowledge of the dominant culture to students. In short...the 'education' system basically is a method of disciplining children in the interest of producing a subordinate population. Of course, the *forms* of school discipline, the position of the teacher, and the conceptions of childhood have all changed, but the above objective has remained.<sup>67</sup> For generations, oppressors have asked schools to help create a society in which they can feel comfortable. Now it is time for the schools to help the oppressors build a society in which all citizens can be comfortable.<sup>68</sup>

### **3.9 Addressing the problems in the traditional system**

Approaches to address the problems with the traditional schooling system have often failed to consider rethinking the politics and philosophy of the school and have instead tended to focus on re-structuring its current practices. The question of whether education should have its purpose in serving business and capitalist employers seems to be one that is largely overlooked in the public debate. The autonomy of students has been replaced with the autonomy of the capitalist market yet many do not seem to see this as being an ethical concern for human

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<sup>66</sup> W. Williams, *The proper concerns of education*, p.165.

<sup>67</sup> M. Sarup, *Marxism and education*, p.166.

<sup>68</sup> R.A Breault, *Dewey, Freire, and a pedagogy for the oppressor*, p.6.

beings. Children who do not 'achieve' in the school are regarded as simply failures by the system and, unfortunately, often by their own selves. This attitude is changing in some quarters as educators can no longer ignore the number of students that this title of 'failure' is applied to. However, in the face of the crisis of legitimacy of schooling practices, there is an observable tendency for policy makers to try to bring events under 'control'. What they have failed to appreciate is the historical context which demonstrates the inadequacy of control models to solve what is wrong with schools.<sup>69</sup>

Those that do voice the need for a change that is not merely reorganising the current practices often risk public ridicule. Freire found this out first hand and reflected that "even in ostensibly democratic societies, those who would bring dialogue and critical practices into classrooms risk marginalisation."<sup>70</sup> This phenomenon can make discussions into educational inquiry with authorities a somewhat daunting task. The idea of appealing to the ruling elite to install an education system that would undoubtable alter the existing order of society may indeed be a naïve venture yet there is merit in the argument that a democratic education could hold substantial gain for business development in society. Techniques of behaviour modification and formal assessment that are designed to create submissive and obedient students often fail to foster desirable business traits such as initiative, creativity, critical reasoning, independence and responsibility in people. David Mckenzie (1983) worded this point eloquently when he stated:

Perhaps a key may be in aiming for a greater awareness in business communities regarding the potential benefits of independent thought, creativity, comprehension and initiative and the ways in which examinations can work to the detriment of their development. In the longer term it can only be hoped that employers will develop more appropriate kinds of job selection procedures than their past reliance on formal school qualifications suggests.<sup>71</sup>

An education system that fosters critical thinking, inquiry and ultimately, praxis, is not an enemy to the development of business in a society. The difference would be that students emerging from such an education would not be satisfied with passively adjusting to the current business structure, including its preordained hierarchy. Presently, however, it takes a great measure of courage for students to

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<sup>69</sup> L. McNeil, *Contradictions of control –school structure & Social knowledge*, p.9.

<sup>70</sup> P. Freire, *Pedagogy of freedom –Ethics, democracy & civic courage*, p.15.

<sup>71</sup> J.D.S McKenzie, "Politics and the school curriculum," p.32.

question the 'education' systems' prescriptions. As education has been suppressed and instead replaced by training, students quickly learn that critical consciousness is dangerous to the end of techno-scientific formation because it may jeopardize their chance for a job let alone a career.<sup>72</sup>

The issue resides around what people, and educators in particular, believe the purpose of education to be. If they see education as a means by which individuals are shaped into submissive persons, to fit into the established system in an obedient and unchallenging manner, then their perception on an education that promotes critical consciousness will be grim to say the least. Education with a Freirian perspective would argue instead that recreating the current system by critical reflection and action is the right of every human being and indeed necessary to becoming fully human. Education should thus not be aimed at creating a passive awareness of 'dead facts' but instead be an activity directed towards that which our effects are to create.<sup>73</sup>

The oppressed will not serve their plight by adhering to a system that has its motives in adopting them to the existing hierarchal regime. What is needed is an education centred on empowering them to firstly, historically inquire and critically reflect upon the current state of the world in which they live and secondly, to initiate action to create their own reality from their conclusions. However, this presents the initial challenge of overcoming the legacy learning that has been 'schooled' into them for several generations. Freire points out that:

In traditional classrooms, students develop authority dependence; they rehearse their futures as passive citizens and workers by learning that education means listening to teachers tell them what to do and what things mean... if a liberating teacher asks students to co-develop the class with her or him, the student often doubts that this is 'real' education.<sup>74</sup>

Education is not about being a passive recipient of other peoples' ideas. Society's perceptions of education have become so narrow that in many peoples' mind, education simply equates to schooling with no wider concept of the term. This is particularly concerning because it means that there is a benign acceptance of the current banking system, which in turn, is producing students who are unable to critique it. For Freire, education must engage in both a struggle for meaning and a

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<sup>72</sup> P. Freire, *Pedagogy of freedom – Ethics, democracy & civic courage*, p.15.

<sup>73</sup> D. Rubinstein & C. Stoneman (Eds.) *Education for democracy*, p.28.

<sup>74</sup> I. Shor, "Education is politics," p.29.

struggle over power relations. He recognised that the oppressed participate in their own oppression by internalising the meanings mediated to them in formal and informal education.<sup>75</sup>

Freire was well aware of the dilemma of trying to change education through the existing system. He understood that such an endeavour would encounter resistance from several quarters, not least the oppressors that controlled mass education. He realised that the oppressed themselves would be fearful and sceptical of a critical education that treated them as active participants rather than passive recipients and he tacitly admitted a huge frustration in trying to undertake school reform within a system that, in a large measure, is deprived and in turn deprives students of the most elementary tools of education.<sup>76</sup>

There is merit in this concern when one considers the motives behind the current education systems' establishment. There would have to be a complete transformation in the ideology of the role and purpose education holds for human beings. It is not surprising that there is scepticism in accepting the idea that the authorities in power would welcome such a change. Another consideration is whether such a transformation would even be possible if it were to be attempted through the current system. Gatto was staunch in his opinion of this matter when he stated; "It is time that we squarely face the fact that institutional school teaching is destructive to children...The method is deeply and profoundly anti-educational. No tinkering will fix it."<sup>77</sup>

In theory, there are some obvious steps that would lead towards such a transformation but these would need to begin with changing the overall philosophy and politic of the school which will be discussed in depth in my final chapter. This may well be easier said than done as state control may render reform on this road to be a futile task. Whether the school is salvageable or instead education must take a new route altogether is not totally clear. However, the change itself that is needed is becoming strikingly clear. For example, we can begin at once in all schools to replace the ethic of competition and acquisition by one of co-operation and community.<sup>78</sup>

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<sup>75</sup> P. Roberts, *Paulo Freire, politics & pedagogy: Reflections from Aotearoa –New Zealand*, p.55.

<sup>76</sup> P. Freire, *Pedagogy of freedom: Ethics, democracy & civic courage*, p.11.

<sup>77</sup> J.T. Gatto, *Dumbing us down – The hidden curriculum of compulsory schooling*, p.19.

<sup>78</sup> A. Rowe, "Human beings, class and education," p.38.

### 3.10 Conclusion

The traditional system of schooling treats students as passive recipients of the narratives decided upon by authorities is what Freire has named the banking system of “education”. Freire proclaimed that it is a system that will never be able to foster critical consciousness in students.<sup>79</sup> The politics of the school, which is state controlled and funded, are decidedly capitalist rather than democratic. Competition among students is highly valued over cooperation. Democracy is not evident in the structure, philosophy, or administration of the school, and, as such, it is stifled in the classroom. Students learn that not all opinions are valued and that only some voices are deemed worthy of being heard. They observe that the dominant culture is the ‘correct’ one, and that if they wish to succeed in society they must adapt to it.

The banking system uses behaviourist techniques of rewards and punishment, combined with rigorous formal assessment, to shape students into submissive and obedient individuals who quickly learn that it is dangerous to question ‘experts’. Students are conditioned to not seek or consider alternatives to the dominant cultures narratives, which results in the diminishing of their autonomy. Rote learning techniques do not allow time for meaningful reflection of the knowledge they receive in the classroom. Inquiry is discouraged as the knowledge that is deemed valuable is already selected for students by authorities and different conclusions do not correlate to passing grades.

Schools are sorting mechanisms that reproduce economic social divisions in society. This stratification then is transferred to the wider society, through allocation into different positions within the hierarchy of capitalist labour production and the subsequent power and monetary rewards. Students are submitted to the processes of bureaucracy through being numbered, recorded, and eventually sorted. They learn that critical thought that challenges this hegemonic system could be dangerous to their future job prospects.

The very structure of the banking system is anti-educational and therefore any attempts to reform it presents numerous obstacles for those willing to undertake

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<sup>79</sup> P. Freire, *Education for critical consciousness*.

this task. The authorities that control the system are unlikely to wish to change the allocation of power in society that would eventuate from an education devoted to developing critical consciousness. What can certainly be argued is that waiting for these authorities to initiate the change needed to transcend the current system into an education for liberation has historically not been successful.

In the next chapter an historical case study of New Zealand will be examined in order to demonstrate how the policies and practices of the banking system can be practically observed in the legacy of schooling within this country. The intention here is to highlight the effect of the banking system on a society and the manner in which it is perpetuated through official state policy.

## **Chapter 4**

### **Historical Case Study: The New Zealand Scene**

#### **4.1 Introduction**

The purpose of this chapter is to use a historical case study to illustrate, in a more concrete manner, the implications that government-controlled national schooling has had for the society of people on whom it is imposed. By examining the development of policies and practices regarding New Zealand's compulsory schooling history the reader will be provided with a structure by which to examine the Freirean concept of banking education through the examples it provides. It is my belief that these examples are prevalent not only in New Zealand's past but also in the present through the legacy that implementation of this system has had.

New Zealand has been chosen as the setting in which to conduct such an illustration for several reasons. First, it is my place of birth which gives the added advantage of first-hand familiarity with the education system in question and with the places and policies around which the literature that will be reviewed centres. Second, New Zealand has been--in its political, cultural, and educational development--influenced by several other major western countries. The most notable influences have come from England, Scotland and America, and to this end New Zealand education can be seen to have traceable shadows from these societies evident in its policies and practices. As such it is plausible to conclude that an investigation into New Zealand education will not be so abstract as to provide an incomparable example to that of other western education systems. Third, a study of key aspects of New Zealand history provides several instances where educationists have time and again pointed out the flaws of the 'banking system' within this country, even if they do not use this Freirean term to describe it.

This chapter will demonstrate conclusively that the arguments levelled against banking education are not nearly as radical or modern as they may seem to be at first glance, and that progressive educationists in New Zealand have been pointing out the failings of the system since its inception, particularly in regards to assessment practices. It is not the intention of this work to propose that the criticisms it makes of traditional education are startling discoveries. To the

contrary I wish to highlight the fact that many educationalists have been pointing out these concerns for centuries, yet they have been ignored largely by authorities.

The four major areas that this chapter will address are, firstly, to set the scene regarding the ideology and philosophy of early New Zealand society before then moving to discuss in detail the introduction of the 1877 Education Act and the implications this statute had for New Zealand education. The effects of curriculum content will be examined with regard to both pupils and the wider community. A significant portion of this chapter is dedicated to considering the nature of assessment and changes to it over many years in New Zealand schools. Finally, I will bring the threads together for the reader by using some philosophy from the Freirean pedagogy to highlight how the practices of the banking education model have not been a progressive choice for the people of Aotearoa/New Zealand.

## **4.2 Early New Zealand**

To comprehend the beliefs and actions of people residing in New Zealand in the early nineteenth century it must be remembered that the first settlers brought with them many foundational beliefs and ways of living. One must not divorce these beliefs and actions from the learning that these people acquired, predominantly in Britain. The ‘homeland’ may have been a place that they chose to leave, but it was still the land that held the culture they had been emersed in, probably from birth. The colonists were not about to let all their memories die simply because they were on new soil. As one writer has stated:

...especially is he [the colonist] concerned to give his children an education that shall link them to the life he has known. Cultural continuity is to the colonist of even greater importance than practical adaptation.<sup>1</sup>

Consequently it is predictable that the great majority of the social, educational and political values upheld in Britain made the journey across the sea with the colonists. It was even thought essential, during the 1840s to around the 1860s, that teachers be procured from England to assist in establishing a similar system in New Zealand.<sup>2</sup> This was hardly surprising given the absence of any teacher

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<sup>1</sup>A .Campbell, *Educating New Zealand*, p.11.

<sup>2</sup> J.D.S. McKenzie, “The changing concept of equality in education,” p.23.

training colleges in New Zealand until 1876, when the Dunedin Training College was established.

Although many early settlers claimed that they desired to leave behind the rigid social class system, to achieve this desire completely would have necessitated the removal of any indoctrination that had been reinforced in them since birth. Statements such as that from a group in Cheddar in England depict a more realistic view of education that was held by many of the early settlers: “To teach the children of the poor to read the Scriptures was to engage in a useful, if not essential, form of charity; to give them ideas above their station in life was to fly in the face of Providence.”<sup>3</sup>

The view that there was a ‘natural order’ or hierarchy of human beings was very prevalent and ran, perhaps, far deeper than even their misunderstandings of Darwin’s work did. It was considered the duty of these settlers to quell the evil tendencies that dwell in the uneducated people so that a ‘civilized’ society could be obtained. Thus schooling had an especially important role in shaping the ideas of a given population. Thirty years earlier it was thought to be “better, wiser and safer to neutralize in their inactive and embryonic state the evil agencies which, suffered to grow and gather, continually threaten to convulse and eventually disorganize society – than vainly attempt to stifle them when mature and ready for explosion.”<sup>4</sup>

This model of schooling thus had another practical use that began to flourish in the minds of the populace or, more significantly, in the minds of the provincial leaders and prominent people in New Zealand. Schools could be used as a means to prepare the bulk of the population for work. As a result they were not intended to encourage “children whose vocation is that of honest labour” to spend time on an academic education that was the preserve of the ‘upper’ classes.<sup>5</sup> Elementary level ‘education’ thus tended to be thought of, in effect, as an insurance against civil disorder and as a means of providing a supply of docile and reasonably efficient labour.<sup>6</sup>

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<sup>3</sup>B.Fraser (Ed.), *The New Zealand book of events*, p.39.

<sup>4</sup> A. Campbell, *Educating New Zealand*, p.9.

<sup>5</sup> G. Lee, H. Lee, “The 1877 Education Act: Lessons from the past,” p.5.

<sup>6</sup> UNESCO, *Compulsory education in New Zealand*, p.10

In hindsight it seems obvious that those people in power would lean towards wishing to develop a state-controlled national system of instruction whereby the masses could be instructed in a manner that was deemed necessary and precautionary so as to prevent the development of thought that was not conducive to the agenda of state authorities. To whose advantage this system was to work ultimately is a question this thesis will address. At this stage, however, it can be stated that there was a prevailing belief of 'duty' as has been mentioned above, and a confidence by those in positions of power that they had substantially more knowledge of what the population needed in terms of educational requirements than did the population themselves. The ideology that they were 'better' was retained from English society.

### **4.3 The 1877 Education Act**

The New Zealand Education Act of 1877 has been credited by historians typically with having established a national system of free, secular, and compulsory primary education. Although this was a piece of legislation that was definitive in shaping the educational direction of New Zealand, in our contemporary society it receives very little attention. The philosophies and intentions that advocates of the 1877 Act endorsed are at odds with contemporary beliefs regarding their historical contribution. A national system of schooling that is funded and controlled by the state has become, for many citizens of New Zealand, not only a 'normal' practice of New Zealand life but also a 'natural' one. So deeply ingrained has this system become in the present culture that many people do not seem to be able to consider any alternatives seriously. In fact, if there is ever a cry for change it is usually a request for the same system to be practiced even more vigorously rather than propose an alternative system for consideration.

From their installation in positions of influence the powers that be, namely New Zealand politicians, have always taken upon themselves the task of selecting which knowledge is valued and which is not. The assessment of the individual's retention, or lack of retention, of this selected knowledge has been firmly established as an important and valued role for accredited persons in a society--one that determines the worth of students and of the institution they derive from.

*Instruction* is now defined commonly as *education* because the instruction is coming supposedly from an expert. Few if any people could dispute that expert opinion is highly regarded in our current society. The exercise of authority and discipline were seen as essential ways of working with children, and it was presumed that respect could not be obtained without stand-over tactics (many parents may still mourn the loss of their ally, the cane, from about 1989 in New Zealand schools).

It would be interesting to hear what replies contemporary New Zealanders would give to some of their forebears' critiques of the narrow and illiberal prospects associated with such an education system. In England, in 1847, the working-class district of Burnley gained some notoriety in history when its citizens proclaimed that the only education available for their social class was designed deliberately so that "it may be engrafted into the minds of your children, that they will always be passive slaves and obedient to the powers that be".<sup>7</sup> What the people of Burnley recognised in the absence of state intervention in the primary school domain – evident only from the passage of Forster's 1870 Elementary Education Act – was that the promise of education was not unconditional. Essentially, education based on a mass schooling model, represented a form of social control by which the masses could be controlled, and shaped.

This is neither a new revelation nor is it one that was particularly hidden in the statements made by supporters of the 1877 Act. The curriculum specified in this *legislation* was viewed unambiguously by politicians as a form of control.<sup>8</sup> What is perhaps not examined so commonly is the fear held by those initiating this type of social control. The fear that those youth under their control may gain enough knowledge to question the authenticity of that control and eventually overturn it was very real in some quarters. It was, in short, a fear of the power of education. Perhaps more specifically, it was a fear of the consequences of granting education to the masses. Consequently, the system that was installed in 1877 in New Zealand was a system of "unquestionable instruction", not of education. As I shall argue, an equivalent remains in our contemporary state system of primary and secondary education.

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<sup>7</sup> G. Lee & H. Lee, *op. cit.*, p.5.

<sup>8</sup> D. McKenzie, "A national system of education," p.1252.

Prior to the passing of the 1877 Act, education had been the responsibility of the provincial councils under the 1852 Constitution Act. The different Christian religious sects provided schooling as they saw fit. The resulting inequalities in the schooling provided by the provinces resulted in growing support for the view that the denominational systems had proved wasteful of public money and helped to further entrench sectarian bitterness.<sup>9</sup> A climate for change was evident, and was heightened in one sense by the establishment of the University of New Zealand in 1871 because it was presumed that the country would then be able to produce “experts” of its own. The effect of humanitarian labour laws in England that excluded children from mines and factories meant that children in rapidly expanding industrial areas were being exposed to a “type of education calculated to produce a nation of pickpockets”<sup>10</sup> owing to their resulting lack of supervision. There was a general consensus among politicians in the New Zealand House of Representatives in 1877 that some structure and discipline must be put into place.

The 1877 Act succeeded in establishing a nationwide, state funded and controlled primary schooling system, one that stipulated how schools were to be set up, staffed, inspected and administrated, and what was to be taught, and not taught, within them.<sup>11</sup> Although the New Zealand Parliament in effect passed the Act, the main responsibility for the preceding 1877 Bill rested chiefly with Charles Bowen<sup>12</sup>, the Minister of Justice in the Grey Ministry. Bowen had strong ideas when it came to the benefits he believed his system would bring to New Zealand children. He stated:

The key to knowledge...(for) every child in the community (would) prevent the population of any district (from) falling into the absolute brutishness into which an uneducated people have a tendency to descend.<sup>13</sup>

This statement encompasses a major aspect of Bowen’s thinking regarding the role that elementary schooling should fulfil in society. Education was seen as the best means by which to ‘civilise’ the masses, and Bowen was by no means alone in promoting this interpretation.

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<sup>9</sup> Ibid, p.1253.

<sup>10</sup> Ibid, p.1252.

<sup>11</sup> J.D.S McKenzie, “The changing concept of equality in education,”p.22.

<sup>12</sup> *Education*, Vol.26, p.1.

<sup>13</sup> A Campbell, *Educating New Zealand*, p.2.

The Act stipulated that every child between the age of seven and thirteen was to attend a primary school compulsorily; although this was subject to each school committee “voting in” the compulsory attendance clause in the early stages. The Act also provided that all children between the ages of five and fifteen were entitled to receive free education at a state primary school.<sup>14</sup> This schooling was to be ‘entirely secular’; thereby it was not attached to any particular religious denomination. Bowen also declared that the control of primary schools should not be centralized.<sup>15</sup> He created a three-tiered system that embraced local control (with a school committee for each primary school), twelve regional district authorities (education boards that replaced the provincial education boards), and a Department of Education (based in Wellington). The latter organization was charged with the primary task of financing the various boards and framing a national syllabus of education.<sup>16</sup>

On the surface the facts appear to present a scenario wherein Bowen was fully deserving of praise for his efforts in establishing a system of free schooling that shared power and control between the different bodies. Before the reader arrives at such a conclusion it is necessary, however, to first examine the underpinning philosophy that shaped this Act. The ideologies of its advocates and of society at large and the actual nature of the power distribution that Bowen strongly proclaimed need to be examined carefully.

The impression may be gained that the 1877 Act allowed for educational control to be shared always between each local authority and the regional authorities, the latter in particular acting in an objective or ‘detached’ manner. In actuality, the lineage of power was a fairly straight top-down model of government control. Although the appointment of teachers was left in the hands of local school committee members, no teacher could be appointed to a primary school unless his or her qualifications were deemed acceptable to the respective education board.<sup>17</sup> These regional or district authorities were funded directly from the government Department of Education, and were therefore required to enforce government ideology through legislation.

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<sup>14</sup> A. Domett, “The Education Ordinance, 1847, and the New Munster Response,” p.2.

<sup>15</sup> “1877 Education Act”

<sup>16</sup> Op.cit., p.9.

<sup>17</sup> A. Domett, “The Education Ordinance, 1847, and the New Munster Response,” p.5.

The Grey Government also had other instruments at its disposal that would effectively bend the primary schools to its political will. First, it was in charge of specifying the curriculum (under the 1877 Act) and therefore had direct control over what knowledge would be compulsory to acquire in any New Zealand primary school. Second, this control could also be used to make certain kinds of knowledge inaccessible, inappropriate, and invaluable—such as accounts of history that were not compatible with the government’s view, for example, the ill-treatment of indigenous peoples at the time. Third, the introduction of Standards examinations in 1880 signalled a move toward measuring institutional, teacher, and pupil ‘efficiency’ in terms of passes in external examinations drafted by primary school inspectors in each district operating under the authority of an education board – their immediate employer. Accordingly, the potential to define, audit, and regulate ‘knowledge’ was substantial.<sup>18</sup> A more subtle, but definitely powerful, method of control that was soon to be in government hands was made available directly through the establishment of teacher training colleges.

The government had an even more effective protection policy designed to ensure that its designated political authority would be upheld. Bowen had essentially produced a reproductive ideology because he knew that the school leavers of one generation would become the parents, members of the regional boards and school committees and, in some instances, of the government controlling the next generation of youth. Teachers effectively got a triple dose as the schooling system developed: first as students, then through their training and, finally, as staff under control of the authorities. Perhaps one of the more compelling pieces of evidence that supports this suggestion that Bowen’s system was much more inclined to government control than the distribution of power he proclaimed essential is to be found in a statement made by Bowen himself in 1877. When introducing the Education Bill he declared that “... a due control should be held by the power that gives the money – in fact, this house.”<sup>19</sup> What constitutes ‘due’ control is up for debate, but the link between control and the financing of schools was forged unambiguously with the introduction of this education legislation.

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<sup>18</sup> A Campbell, *Educating New Zealand*, p.9.

<sup>19</sup> J.D.S McKenzie, “The changing concept of equality in education,” p.32.

#### **4.4 The underpinning philosophy that shaped the formation of the 1877 Act**

In 1877 the ideology was much the same as it was in the English homeland the settlers had left behind. Bowen's idea of the 'brutishness' that uneducated people supposedly had, and displayed, was an example to demonstrate that the "natural order" ideal still prevailed. One writer, David McKenzie, has pointed out that Bowen's clear distinction between primary and secondary schooling signified the link between curricula and class structure which New Zealand settlers had brought with them from Britain.<sup>20</sup> The realm of higher education was never thought as being appropriate for the majority of the populace. Education, as proposed by Bowen, was never intended to be precisely the same in orientation and content for everyone. He and other politicians had not expected that compulsory schooling would transform the minds of the working class to being anything other than efficient workers, for people were often told that this was what a nineteenth century pioneering country "needed". There was no desire to create *employers* – only law abiding, employer aiding *employees*. Primary teachers were advised by education authorities that it was a waste of time and effort for both themselves and their pupils for children to enter academic courses when they lacked the ability to prosper with, or *did not* have a "bias towards," that course of study.<sup>21</sup>

Teaching methods continued to follow the rote-learning methods of instruction. This was further reinforced at the first national secondary school headmasters' conference held in Nelson in 1888, where the decision was taken to make the University of New Zealand's entrance examination, with its classics curriculum, a well-regarded secondary school leaving examination.<sup>22</sup> Hence the arrival, and promotion, of the Form 5 "Matriculation" examination which remained in place until 1943. It was widely recognised by teaching staff that the pressures of assessment often hindered their ability to teach to every student's interests, needs, and aspirations. There was evidence of teachers bribing the less able primary students to stay away from school on examination day or of students being condemned to never rising above the primer classes due to their fear of an

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<sup>20</sup> Ibid, p.22.

<sup>21</sup> Ibid.

<sup>22</sup> Department of Education, *Vocational guidance*, p.5.

inspector conducting an examination.<sup>23</sup> Teachers were keen to get the highest examination pass rates so they held some students back in a given standard class. The curriculum itself was often irrelevant to the daily challenges students faced in life and, when combined with a teaching style that allowed little or no time for personal reflection, often resulted in learning becoming a ‘cramming’ process. Therefore, regardless of how broad a teacher’s idea of ‘education’ might be, he or she had, at one time or another, to violate almost every principle or law of child-nature and child-development in order to get as many students through the standards examinations in primary schools as possible.<sup>24</sup>

The underpinning philosophy was to prescribe and provide a course of study that would ensure the obedience and manageability of the growing population. Individual competition was not part of the initial philosophy but was asserted in the form of hegemonic ranking of students owing to teachers’ fear that poor students would reflect badly on their teaching ability. The initial idea that the policymakers of the late 1800s thought they were bestowing a gift of ‘civilization’ on the masses is fairly clear, but individual advancement for all youth is a notion that has grown—rather than being derived from—the philosophy behind the 1877 Act. It is also evident that policymakers such as Bowen seemed to believe generally that they were doing charitable work by bestowing their ideas of betterment upon the whole youth population.

#### **4.5 Curriculum content in New Zealand schools**

Curriculum content seems to have been recognised early by politicians as necessary in legitimising a type of schooling that was driven towards installing certain desired characteristics into New Zealand’s young people. The actual content of the curriculum features far less in historical discussion than does the means by which to assess students’ retention of it. Philosophical and educational debate has often assumed a highly differentiated form when it comes to examining issues of the curriculum. One stance is to try to reinforce a curriculum structure by adjusting the content within it (i.e., by looking at *syllabuses*) while another is to look at the very structure of the curriculum itself. As with many

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<sup>23</sup> F. Milner, *Presidential Address to S.S.A*, p.7.

<sup>24</sup> D. McKenzie, “A national system of education,”p.22

issues where “science” is separated into from different areas of learning, a merging of disciplines would be beneficial in order to address this topic.

It has to be recognised that many New Zealand educationists in the past have maintained that the curriculum is not about the transmission of the ideal package of knowledge for young people, although admittedly these admissions *appear* to have died away in recent times. In 1893 William Hodgson, a Nelson school inspector, remarked that curriculum content was not a guarantee of a good life when he reported: “No apprehension need be felt that the scraps of geography, grammar and history that he [the student] may have picked up should be a serious obstacle to his success in life”<sup>25</sup>.

This attitude reflects a viewpoint that is in contrast to curriculum content offering real educational value. Hodgson seemed to be suggesting that success in life was, or can be, largely independent of school success. This earlier viewpoint was that the primary school curriculum was irrelevant if not somewhat detrimental to students’ achievements in life. The question must therefore be posed as to what was intended with the establishment of such a system—what it was designed to install in its pupils—if the content of facts it so proudly proclaimed as constituting essential knowledge was viewed cynically in some quarters by primary school inspectors and by other parties. Once again attention is drawn to the early settlers’ ideology of trying to create an ordered society with clear hegemonic undertones through assessing and ranking the youth population.

As was to be expected, the first groups to experience the weight of government-imposed curricula as a form of evaluation and constraint were the teachers and children in the primary schools after 1877. The conditions of early schooling in New Zealand were formal and constricting, by any historian’s account. If we consider this in an empathetic manner then it is hardly surprising that there was some public and pupil resistance to its introduction—especially in relation to its highly prescriptive nature. As such, criticisms of the unrealistic nature of the syllabus prescriptions and the role of inspectors as petty tyrants were soon heard because some educators realised the adverse effect that this use of curriculum

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<sup>25</sup> W.L. Renwick, “National education system 1877 –1977,” p.5

control was having upon the quality of teaching and learning in the nation's classrooms.<sup>26</sup>

The primary school curriculum was viewed with some cynicism by several early educationists so, not surprisingly, political and public debate began to turn towards the content of the curriculum; specifically, its aim to produce 'appropriate' knowledge for students. It could be argued that the initial establishment of compulsory schooling was undertaken in order to impose a system of control on the masses, rather than assuring that a high quality education elementary education would be available to all boys and girls. The idea that people should have a right to access education was one that has developed within New Zealand but it was not one that had dominated discourse about schooling at that time. Consequently a system of schooling had grown up with a part of its foundation cemented in a desire to control a population. Educationists often struggled to find compelling reasons for arguing that primary schooling had discernible *educational* benefits for the individual.

These earlier debates highlighted one important aspect that has characterised New Zealand education to the present day. The curriculum was a government-controlled and prescribed entity, therefore from the inception of a national system of public education in New Zealand governments saw a curriculum as an ideal means of controlling and evaluating the schools, defining the limits of work to be undertaken in certain kinds of institutions, and excluding contentious subject matter from them.<sup>27</sup> It is particularly with this top-down method of curriculum specification and delivery that learning became reduced to certain tasks and responses that students were meant to absorb submissively and deliver upon request (e.g., for the standards examinations).

In the early 1900s debates around education began to revolve mostly around secondary schools in New Zealand, in particular with George Hogben's influence from 1899-1915. As Inspector-General of Schools Hogben commented in 1907, for instance, that "The whole of our secondary education could be far more useful to the state if it were more natural, more practical and less abstract than it is at present."<sup>28</sup> Hogben's views were not well received because they often posed a

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<sup>26</sup> J.D.S McKenzie, "Politics and school curricula," p.24

<sup>27</sup> Ibid, p.23.

<sup>28</sup> W.L. Renwick "National education system 1877-1977," p.5

direct challenge to the control of the secondary school curriculum exercised by the University of New Zealand.<sup>29</sup> He believed that the time had come to ask how secondary school curricula should be designed to meet the requirements of New Zealand – not an English society– and insisted that teachers and critics should recognize the mistake of following “too closely the methods of older countries bequeathed to us by our fathers.”<sup>30</sup>

Hogben argued in favour of curriculum differentiation: a principle which decreed that the declared vocational aspirations of pupils and their intended length of stay at a high school were to determine the particular course of instruction taken.<sup>31</sup> This attitude reflected Hogben’s desire to see more manual and technical instruction delivered in secondary schools, and echoed his awareness of the agricultural nature of the New Zealand economy. Hence the mantra of relevance was viewed with suspicion in some quarters. Accordingly Hogben sought to push secondary school curricula towards more overt practical purposes and outcomes for most pupils. However this stance was not well received by the public, even within rural communities. It seemed that New Zealand parents were anxious for their children not to be treated on different grounds academically, for fear of re-establishing a class differentiated society along English lines. “Sameness” was thus seen as the key to ensuring equality in schooling for all youth. Hogben, to this end, had begun to conceive of a general education curriculum in which English, history, mathematics, science and physical training had core status in every high school course.<sup>32</sup>

From the mid 1920s the Department of Education’s focus was directed more sharply toward the issue of specifying a general education curriculum for high schools. This was an unexpected turn of events. Public primary schooling in New Zealand was not conceived of as a preparation for the kind of education already being received by the upper classes.<sup>33</sup> It seemed that despite some criticisms directed toward the current system, working-class parents were keen to grab hold of the ladder of ‘opportunity’ (hierarchy) set up by the oppressors. The school had become an institution that issued standards of worth (i.e., certificates and

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<sup>29</sup> J.D.S McKenzie, “Politics and school curricula”

<sup>30</sup> *Ibid*, p.26.

<sup>31</sup> G. Lee, “Origins of the common core curriculum,” p.103.

<sup>32</sup> *Ibid*, p.104.

<sup>33</sup> J.Caughley, “The development of the curriculum,” p.21.

qualifications) that many members of the public saw as signs of vocational and social respect. Parents and critics who loudly condemned the restrictive secondary school curriculum were often the very people who upheld the school as an institution that endorsed social mobility for their sons and/or daughters by the acquisition of competitive formal qualifications<sup>34</sup> from the early twentieth century. The notion of external, independent worth being validated by examination passes and qualifications and by “expert” control, had been internalised by the New Zealand public from the late 1870s, with the primary school standards.

However there is perhaps an irony here that Hogben had begun to highlight—one that the New Zealand public failed to recognize—in that the system to which they looked to provide the desired social mobility was in fact still identical to the system that many of them had left behind in Britain. In 1935 Douglas G. Ball, another inspector of schools, commented of New Zealand institutions that “They were still English schools, with an English curriculum and with English teachers, teaching the ways they had been taught.”<sup>35</sup> Criticisms were on the decline from the public regarding the way in which the secondary schooling system was being conducted in New Zealand. Public criticism was not completely stifled, but as long as the ‘domesticating’ function of the school (a function signified by the imposition of common syllabus prescriptions upon all schools) was kept to the fore, then there was little room for local initiative and experiment in educational programmes.<sup>36</sup>

Meanwhile, in political circles there were several calls for a common core curriculum to be introduced for all types of post-primary schools. This view was expressed by Josiah A. Hanan, Minister of Education in the National Ministry (1915-1919), who was prepared to be much more inventionist than were any of his predecessors.<sup>37</sup> Hanan took the approach that education was necessary for adolescents to enter more fully into the life and work of a community, and was particularly concerned with citizenship education. The provision of a general education curriculum, he concluded, allowed “equal opportunities for all [youth]”

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<sup>34</sup> A. Campbell, *Educating New Zealand*, p.21.

<sup>35</sup> W.L. Renwick “National education system 1877-1977,” p.9.

<sup>36</sup> D. McKenzie, “The changing concept of equality in education,” p.97.

<sup>37</sup> G. Lee, “Origins of the common core curriculum,” p.105.

within a democracy.<sup>38</sup> The ideology that education was essential to democracy is a trend that is evident in earlier New Zealand policy making, one that is notable for several reasons not least because it ceases to become apparent from around the 1980s in New Zealand education debates.

To the existing common core curriculum established under free place regulations Hanan added history and civics and domestic subjects in 1917, with effect from 1918, because they were seen to have an especially important role in citizenship preparation in post-war high school curricula.<sup>39</sup> Citizenship training was highlighted throughout this period of New Zealand history, having been strengthened by the adverse effect that a world war had had on the nation. This situation raises an interesting point of debate because civics or citizenship training as part of a school state curriculum contains within it several aspects of interest to philosophy of education especially. History and civics both contain elements necessary to assist the development of historicity and dialogue, and as such have the potential to provide for an expansion of the educational content of schooling. The different authorities of the time who instigated these curriculum changes therefore displayed some insight into the necessary components for authentic education but Hanan was concerned with civics *instruction* and *training* which left little possibility for dialogue to occur. It is much easier to understand where their mindset was born from when one ponders the emotions and priorities that they must have experienced, with New Zealanders having been involved in the harrowing conflict of the First World War (1914-1918).

What these educationists failed to develop, or what successive governments failed to achieve, was the critical aspect of education within which these subjects (i.e., History and Civics) can be useful for individuals to gain a critical consciousness. Because the curriculum was state controlled and therefore the knowledge it contained was also determined by the state, little room *was left* for critical exploration by teachers with History and Civics in the classroom. Admittedly there was, and is, far more leeway for such exploration than with some traditional subjects in the curriculum but undeniably the system was still one where knowledge was transmitted by a teacher to the pupil, whose sole role was to receive and recite it. Although the intent behind these subjects may well have

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<sup>38</sup> Ibid.

<sup>39</sup> Ibid.

been to foster students' learning, the result has not been educational for each and every student.

The free place regulations, Peter Fraser asserted in the 1930s, already embodied subjects "recognized by any educationist as the essential core of any essential core of any secondary curriculum."<sup>40</sup> The first Labour Government emphasized the importance of having a truly democratic form of education at any level. Fraser had argued that post-primary schools in particular would be expected to "cater for the whole population" for the first time in their history.<sup>41</sup> This perspective was heightened through the threat of war in the late 1930s, with the result that "democratic" principles gained priority. The notion of having Civics as a key subject, as recommended in 1936 by Frank Milner, was firmly supported by Rex Mason (Minister of Education 1940-1947) in the next Labour Government.

Mason soon concluded that in order for social stability and democratic values to be preserved during the Second World War Milner's 1936 curriculum should be extended to all high schools. The school leaving age also needed to be raised, he believed, to enable more pupils to be drawn into high schools in order for them to receive this citizenship training.<sup>42</sup> This was raised from 14 to 15 years in 1944. Clarence Beeby, who became Director of Education in 1940, supported Mason in these educational ideas. Beeby was Mason's key advisor. What Mason did was to follow precisely what Beeby had suggested. An appreciation of the merits of a democratic society was available, these educators suggested, through studying English, mathematics, social studies, general science, music, art, crafts, and physical education. The Thomas Committee, set up in 1942 by Beeby at Mason's request, agreed, as did the English New Education Fellowship (NEF) Ottaway Committee in 1942.<sup>43</sup>

The Thomas Committee saw its main task as being to design a curriculum to educate all adolescents for their forthcoming roles as "workers, neighbours, homemakers and citizens."<sup>44</sup> A comprehensive common core -vocational (elective) studies curriculum balance was deemed ideal for this purpose. Effective citizenship would be assured, the Thomas Committee concluded, once school

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<sup>40</sup> Ibid. p.109.

<sup>41</sup> Ibid.

<sup>42</sup> Ibid, p.110.

<sup>43</sup> Ibid, p.111.

<sup>44</sup> Ibid.

teachers paid more attention to pupils individually and collectively.<sup>45</sup> This ideology—that it was the role of post-primary school teachers to develop citizens—saw the realm of schooling expand dramatically. Suddenly it was not just about schooling a nation to prevent rebellion or dissent, but also about developing each individual to contribute to and help form a society.

When the Thomas Committee introduced social studies as a post-World War 2 new compulsory curriculum subject at the post-primary school level, it was intended to provide the focal point of citizenship education for democracy. Moreover it was to be the vehicle for innovative teaching methods emphasizing active student participation.<sup>46</sup> The Committee's report can be viewed as one of New Zealand's most notable attempts to re-assess the direction the post-primary schooling system and curriculum had taken and to try to turn it towards fostering greater democracy in society and in the classroom. Thus the Thomas Committee argued that in introducing social studies into high schools the subject's aims were two fold: First, it was to "assist in the development of individuals who [were] able to take their parts as effective citizens of a democracy", and second, it was to "deepen pupils' [understanding of human affairs]" and to open up wide fields for personal exploration.<sup>47</sup> Both of these aims suggest a much deeper level of understanding regarding the nature of education than had been initiated in New Zealand schools previously, but they were still designed to foster an uncritical adherence by the pupil to whatever was to count as "democratic".

The Thomas Committee's ideology of a compulsory common core of general education subjects was to remain a feature of New Zealand high schools from 1946. Curriculum reports since at least 1936 have also concluded that comprehensive provision of a common core curriculum designed to help adolescents prepare for their various roles as citizens was a matter of some urgency.<sup>48</sup> But the intentions of the Thomas committee have not been realised fully. The successful introduction of the broad common core curriculum was dependent ultimately upon having a sympathetic and informed teaching profession. Some high school teachers were unaware of the philosophy supporting

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<sup>45</sup> Ibid.

<sup>46</sup> Y. Nozaki, R. Openshaw, & A. Luke, *Struggles over difference: Curriculum, texts and pedagogy in the Asia pacific*, p.26.

<sup>47</sup> New Zealand Department of Education, *The post-primary school curriculum: Report of the Committee appointed by the Minister of Education in November, 1942*, p.27.

<sup>48</sup> G. Lee, "Origins of the common core curriculum."

the new general education curriculum because they often had difficulty obtaining copies of the Thomas Report. This was a consequence of its wartime release,<sup>49</sup> with teachers in the armed forces overseas during WW2.

Although Mason, Beeby, and the post-primary inspectorate appreciated in the mid-1940s that the “schools will take some time to adapt themselves fully to the changed conditions,” in 1948 Arnold Campbell, the Assistant Director of Education, was still recommending “a breathing space during which the schools can quietly put into effect the reforms.”<sup>50</sup> The philosophy of an extensive general education curriculum, the Thomas Committee asserted, was never incorporated into New Zealand post-primary schools as was intended because it encountered a major obstacle to any attempt to create a schooling system that promoted democracy. This obstacle was the continuing use of assessment instruments in New Zealand schools, notably national examinations.

In 1962 the Currie Commission upheld the notion of a common core post-primary curriculum, with specialisation to be delayed as late as possible for all pupils. The Thomas Report was again seen to provide the proper model for all high schools. The Currie Commission stated that the report’s philosophy “meets the wishes of the people of New Zealand” and reflected “the dominant democratic ideals of the New Zealand community.”<sup>51</sup> Effectively the Thomas Committee ideology was still dominant. However, what was not being considered as a serious issue was the question of how students could obtain a general education in a system within which people were increasingly obsessed with credentialing students at a young age. Moreover, no policies were put in place by the Department of education in the 1950s and 1960s to further develop the idea and practice of a democratic classroom. Democracy was a concept which the schools proclaimed they created yet it was also one that they failed to practice.

The pressure for market driven schooling increased in New Zealand markedly, with The Treasury (1987) presenting the re-elected Lange Labour Government with a briefing document on education. This publication took issue with the prevailing ideology of social equity; The Treasury (1987) proposed replacing it with a new ideology of individual choice (a market-orientated approach). They

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<sup>49</sup> Ibid, p.113.

<sup>50</sup> Ibid.

<sup>51</sup> Ibid, p.114.

presented unflattering statistics regarding the failure rates of students, particularly Maori learners, and concluded that the government should get out of the business of schooling<sup>52</sup> or at least reduce its presence. This was a direct blow to the philosophy of the Thomas Committee because it meant that schools should compete with each other for income and promote themselves not on the ground of providing a high quality general education but on their ability to credential their students and to prepare them for entering a capitalist global economy.

Although the direction of New Zealand schooling was changing, the curriculum rhetoric was recognisable from the past. The 1991 draft national curriculum upheld the sentiment that schools have a duty to train their students for full citizenship, just as the Thomas Report had recommended. It stated that “students will understand the relationship between the rights and responsibilities as citizens in a democratic society.”<sup>53</sup> The responsibilities that the 1991 draft curriculum outlined as being ‘progressive’ were that students should now be encouraged to “develop an awareness of the present and future roles of work in their lives.” Once more this assertion reflected the Thomas Committee’s reasoning that New Zealanders needed to be better prepared for their various civic roles and responsibilities, and that paid work was to feature prominently in these regards.<sup>54</sup> As Gregory Lee pointed out in his analysis of the 1991 publication:

The political desire to employ a national curriculum to restore New Zealand’s economic wellbeing has therefore not marked the 1991 curriculum apart from the Thomas curriculum.<sup>55</sup>

Whether or not the 1991 curriculum has assisted students to be better citizens in a democratic society remains debatable. The curriculum has been delivered consistently as a body of knowledge that students must commit to memory. No curriculum in New Zealand’s history has had an aim of investigating concerns the contemporary world faces without having answers that are conceived already. The idea that critical thinking be implemented as a basis to a curriculum has not featured as a reality in New Zealand’s history. Some more recent Ministry of Education curriculum documents—in 1993 and in 2007—contain some mention of critical thinking, but these appear to be more ‘brain storming exercises’ that do not contribute to any significant movement away from set class work.

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<sup>52</sup> P. Adams. et al. , *Education and Society in New Zealand*, p.123.

<sup>53</sup> Op.cit. ,p.115.

<sup>54</sup> G. Lee, “Origins of the common core curriculum.”

<sup>55</sup> Ibid, p.115

The Thomas Report may have begun to lay some foundations for expanding the curriculum but it seems that this is where the idea stopped, generally. Rather than implement the Committee's idea of a three-year general education curriculum from which students could branch out, specialisation in subjects by pupils began much earlier than was anticipated by the Committee and earlier than was deemed beneficial to students' personal development. The common core subjects therefore continued to be taught in a rote learning style from the late 1940s, with the result that pupils' interest was often lost along with their perception of the content's relevance. Instead of fostering a condition or a climate of critical inquiry, where students were (and are) inspired to explore new information beyond class work, the curriculum becomes the *end* of discovery rather than the *means* to it. A major reason for critical thinking not having gained much of a profile in the New Zealand curriculum is to be found in the continual public demand for students to be assessed, and comprehensively. New Zealand education administrators have not conceived of a way to assess students for ideas and interests that transcend a set marking schedule.

#### **4.6 Assessment in New Zealand schools**

For some 130 years New Zealand schooling has been shaped by two dominant ideologies relating to philosophies of schooling and to the manner in which assessment in schools is conducted. The first of these ideologies—that of social equity—had its origins in the 1877 Education Act and remained dominant until 1988 when the Tomorrow's Schools policy was released. The second ideology, which became dominant from 1988 onwards, was that of individual choice, a notion that was markedly different in its ideals regarding the respective roles of the individual and the state in schooling contexts.<sup>56</sup> Both these ideologies have been evident in particular eras in New Zealand's schooling history.

With the formal introduction of schooling into New Zealand there came a desire for 'betterment' of the population with a strong undercurrent that there should be a fairness in education that had not been achieved in England. Whilst the Minister

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<sup>56</sup>P. Adams et al., *Education and Society in New Zealand*, p.119.

of Justice, Charles Bowen, was endeavouring to pass legislation to enable primary school children to be schooled nationwide, and was deliberately equating school provision with a reduction in criminal activity, there was also a belief in some quarters that “education” ought to be a concept that was more expansive than what nineteenth century school teachers could offer. From the time that the first ‘standards’ regulations were promulgated in 1878 there were critics who harboured the suspicion that the emphasis to be placed on measurable results was at odds with the educative experiences they believed school teachers should offer.<sup>57</sup>

The advent of compulsory primary schooling in New Zealand was one that seemed to appease a number of demands and expectations in society, yet the manner in which it was carried out was most likely an artefact from England. Even by that early date (1877-1878) some authorities were able to perceive that, “by applying to the whole colony a rigid and precise series of tests, the task of comparison will...be rendered easy so far as *instruction* goes, as distinguished from *education*.”<sup>58</sup> This insight has proven to be one that has seldom been to the fore in the course of New Zealand’s schooling history, rather than one that has gained ascendancy.

Government-imposed curricula linked to assessment instruments and constraints was not free from criticism when it was introduced into New Zealand. Teachers, through the New Zealand Educational Institute (NZEI) created in 1883, were convinced that “education...would only come to be regarded as a process rather than a result when the existing curriculum constraints over individual teachers and schools were radically eased.”<sup>59</sup> This comment demonstrates a high level of insight into the components needed for *education* to occur in the classroom.

From 1888 the universities were the main driving force behind assessment mechanisms in the senior forms of New Zealand schools and had assumed the authority to ‘set the bar’ because the Matriculation Examination of the University of New Zealand (the entrance examination) was the highest qualification. With it in place schools assumed a role as institutions for preparing entrants to

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<sup>57</sup> D. McKenzie, “The changing concept of equality in education,” p.94.

<sup>58</sup> Ibid.

<sup>59</sup> Ibid, p.24.

universities.<sup>60</sup> Thus the hegemony of academic knowledge was firmly established in New Zealand. The official desire to inspect institutions and to measure the individual's absorption of this knowledge became a chief concern for those persons working in education fields due to the demands and expectations of those authorities above them in the institutional hierarchy.

Yet not all officials were bowing to the requirements placed on the schooling system from beyond. On assuming office as Secretary of Education and Inspector General of Schools in 1899 George Hogben was able to declare, with supporting evidence, that slavery to formal examination tests was still one of the greatest obstacles to national progress in the education system.<sup>61</sup> But Hogben's ideas about curricular and other kinds of reform were not greeted positively in all quarters because the secondary schools' power was reinforced by the University of New Zealand and hence made both institutions formidable opponents in education debate both locally and nationally, regardless of the fact that Hogben had pointed out in 1901 that only one in twenty pupils leaving secondary schools made the transition to enrol at a New Zealand university.<sup>62</sup>

The primary schools were also suffering from stringent assessment strategies and expectations at the beginning of the twentieth century. Arnold Campbell commented on the primary syllabus for New Zealand schools in 1904 as follows:

The schools remained, generally speaking, formal institutions dominated by a drive for measurable results. The reasons were many. For all its great virtues the syllabus itself continued to reflect the Victorian pre-occupation with intellectual analysis to the neglect of emotional and aesthetic values... In addition it demanded much more knowledge and professional skill than the majority of teachers possessed.<sup>63</sup>

The pressure was soon placed firmly on secondary schools to measure and credential adolescents. Through the influence of The University of New Zealand, its affiliated colleges, and prescribed examinations secondary school teachers delivered the instruction necessary for competitive examinations, the results of which could determine the social and economic status of successful candidates in

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<sup>60</sup> G. Lee, "Origins of the common core curriculum," p.24

<sup>61</sup> D. McKenzie, "The changing concept of equality in education."

<sup>62</sup> J.D.S McKenzie, "Politics and school curricula."

<sup>63</sup> W.L Renwick "National education system 1877-1977", p.7. Campbell, 1941, p.96.

New Zealand society at least. Some sectors of the public took these prescriptions from universities as ‘truths’ which was demonstrated clearly when the ‘upward drift’ in the primary school population also resulted in an increasing demand for access to free secondary schooling. Consequently, in 1902 the Seddon Liberal Government responded by introducing (from 1903) free secondary schooling for those children who had succeeded in passing the Standard 6 examination, the qualification that was now renamed the ‘Proficiency Certificate’.<sup>64</sup>

The very name of this Certificate was an indication of the attitude toward assessment and credentialing in the early twentieth century. From the 1880s the public had begun to regard the primary schooling system as the ideal vehicle by which to determine and provide evidence of individuals’ worth in society, and this was followed by a demand for access to higher levels of schooling for credentialing purposes. Because of this phenomenon the stage was set for primary schools being relieved somewhat (but not totally) of the intense focus on assessment, and since the secondary schools were assuming a larger role here. It was this reality that encouraged Hogben to exercise his authority to reform the curriculum of the primary schools radically.<sup>65</sup>

Hogben’s wish was to see formal, rigid, assessment in primary schools assume less importance, so that the focus could be directed to improving the quality of teaching and learning in these schools. Teachers gained more control over the subject matter and delivery of their teaching because they did not have to adhere to the demands and restrictions of formal examinations in Standards One to Five. Standard Six was still examined externally until 1937 but the process of curricular and assessment change had begun within the primary school sector. The benefits of these reforms were widespread, and are still clearly observable today in comparison with secondary schools.

There was mounting evidence that assessment in the nation’s schools could be detrimental to both students and teachers. Education was still valued as a process that was beneficial in itself by many educators and it was yet to be defined as an instrument for credentialing individuals primarily for entering the workforce.

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<sup>64</sup> Op.cit., p.26.

<sup>65</sup> Ibid.

Already by this stage (the early twentieth century) however, the New Zealand public seemed to have ‘brought into’ and thus endorsed external assessment as a means by which to differentiate between people and to rank them in a society. Yet it also appears that a minority of educationists could envision the direction in which assessment-orientated schooling was heading. Some of these commentators had the foresight to try to voice their concerns publicly in this matter. In 1930, for example, the Atmore Committee heard from the Rector of St. Bede’s College who felt compelled to state:

I would like to say this: that the public here seems to be examination mad. There is no greater nuisance to any schoolteacher than to have excellent parents come to you and tell you that you must get their child to pass the Matriculation examination. It is such a pitiful thing – the parents do not seem to want anything else”.<sup>66</sup>

The report that the Committee submitted in 1930 to the Minister of Education reflected this message (and others) in their overall philosophy, and provided a further example that a minority of educationists had the foresight to argue that “education” would not benefit from the stringent assessment methods applied to schools. Such a report, should it be released in the present-day (twenty-first century) schooling system, may seem radical for its content and conclusions, because external assessment has become so ingrained in modern-day formal schooling that these previous concerns from educationists appear to have disappeared largely from our collective historical memory.

In 1937 the Proficiency Certificate Examination, which students had to pass in order to gain entry into a secondary school, was eliminated by the Labour Government, a move which meant that every child in New Zealand was then able to attend a secondary or another post-primary school without any restriction. From this date the primary schools could no longer be described accurately as preparatory institutions for an academically select group.<sup>67</sup> The mixed blessing of this situation was that although the Government was displaying a greater commitment to equality of educational opportunity for all New Zealand primary school pupils, these students would still experience restraints in their education in the post-primary schooling domain.

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<sup>66</sup> D. McKenzie, “The changing concept of equality in education,” p.102.

<sup>67</sup> J.D.S McKenzie, “Politics and school curricula”, p.28.

Not surprisingly, then, secondary schools became institutions whose staff were dedicated to sorting, ranking and then validating young individuals in society. For teachers in this sector the demands placed on them became especially onerous, as David McKenzie has perceptively observed:

The full weight of attempting to improve teaching and learning in the face of constraints determined by prescriptions for external competitive examinations has been placed upon the secondary schools.<sup>68</sup>

It can be argued, therefore, that attempts to improve teaching and learning may be at odds with external examination requirements, and it is possible that those persons who emphasized the acquisition of school-based qualifications may have paid little attention to this reality.

As mentioned previously the Thomas Committee (1942-1943) suggested directions for the future development and reorientation of post-primary education. It recommended that teachers should ensure “as far as possible, that all post-primary pupils, irrespective of their varying abilities, and their varying occupational ambitions, receive a generous and well balanced education.”<sup>69</sup> The Thomas Committee, while making suggestions for revising the School Certificate Examination, focused in particular on the quality of education that was to be provided for all pupils. The Committee argued that “the post-primary schools, no longer selective, must now cater for pupils of widely different abilities and interests.”<sup>70</sup> There was a recognition that the present structure of stringent assessment and examination for post-primary schools did a great disservice to the personal development of students who did not succeed in obtaining school qualifications. Therefore the outcomes for individual students were distinctly unequal.

The Thomas Committee knew that its main task was to create a curriculum that would educate all post-primary school pupils in their various roles as workers, neighbours, homemakers, and citizens. A common core vocational studies curriculum was seen as ideal for achieving this purpose. Effective citizenship

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<sup>68</sup> Ibid, p.26.

<sup>69</sup> D. McKenzie, “A national system of education,”p.103-104.

<sup>70</sup> J.D.S McKenzie, “Politics and school curricula”, p.28.

would be assured, the Thomas Committee concluded, once teachers and school authorities paid more attention to pupils individually and collectively.<sup>71</sup> Here lay an appreciation of the reality that high schools had not been catering for the needs and interests of all pupils and also a recognition that assessment in the schools only served some but not all students. The ideology of revising the School Certificate Examination was to provide a qualification for those pupils who would not be sitting the Form 6 University Entrance Examination because their interests, abilities, and vocational aspirations lay elsewhere. Thus the modified examination would cater for a different group of students, those who would not proceed to a New Zealand university upon leaving school.

The Committee was well aware that the Form 5 Matriculation Examination, in combination with an increasing public demand for school qualifications and credentials, had had a detrimental effect on the quality and scope of education provided by post-primary school teachers. It therefore recommended the introduction of a modified Department of Education examination, School Certificate, with a wider range of options than the 1934 version, and the requirement of an aggregate pass in four subjects, one of which had to be English.<sup>72</sup> The Committee hoped that the common core curriculum requirements, the wide range of options and the revision of School Certificate subject matter would curb the desire for teachers, pupils, and the public to direct teaching and learning activities toward narrow preparation for examinations, as had occurred so often in the past.<sup>73</sup>

Another occurrence was also taking place in New Zealand schools, one whose effects have not been discussed as widely as those for assessment have been. I am referring here to the practice of streaming in secondary schools. Streaming originated in English schools, where it had developed as a 'system' throughout the state primary and post primary schools in the 1920s and 1930s. Its origins can be traced to the beginning of the nineteenth century but it was the reorganization of elementary schools that made this practically a universal method of internal school organization.<sup>74</sup> The practice of streaming children according to their

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<sup>71</sup> G. Lee, "Origins of the common core curriculum," p24

<sup>72</sup> D. McKenzie, "The changing concept of equality in education", p.104.

<sup>73</sup> J.D.S McKenzie, "Politics and school curricula",

<sup>74</sup> B. Simon, "Streaming and unstreaming in the secondary schools," p.146.

(perceived) ability may seem justified because it enabled teachers to teach appropriate material to the level of a particular group but, in actuality, streaming merely reproduces (and has reproduced) hegemonic class distinctions.

An understanding of some of the problems that result from streaming children can be gleaned from examining the rationale behind its implementation. The rigid method of grouping pupils was based on the theory that intellectual potential was determined largely by heredity, that it was fixed and unchanging, and that it could be assessed accurately at an early age.<sup>75</sup> Streaming involved an allocation into an academic or other station and it served to reproduce a social class structure in schools from the wider society. Educationists now know that one's environment largely determines the intellectual abilities children have and that streaming has been shown by research to involve a self-verifying hypothesis.<sup>76</sup> The question must be posed, then, why streaming—even in our contemporary era—has not been phased out of New Zealand schools completely.

In 1944 the Matriculation Examination was abolished and in its place a new University Entrance Examination was installed, which was to be sat in the sixth form year.<sup>77</sup> When the School Certificate Examination was revised, and put in place from 1946, it soon became apparent that its reintroduction had not curbed the public demand for national examination results in the way in which the Thomas Committee had hoped would happen. School teachers, knowing full well the value of securing a reputation based upon good percentage pass rates, did not dissuade their better pupils from sitting the examination which soon came to be sat commonly after three, rather than four, years of post-primary school attendance.<sup>78</sup> Not only did school teachers not come to regard School Certificate in the manner in which the Thomas Committee had recommended but also employers and parents had continued to demand “Matric” (and, later, University Entrance) and they came to regard School certificate as an inferior qualification.<sup>79</sup>

The School Certificate Examination did little in its original objective of catering for pupils who were likely to be unsuccessful in the University Entrance

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<sup>75</sup> Ibid, p.146.

<sup>76</sup> Ibid, p.148.

<sup>77</sup> D. McKenzie, “The changing concept of equality in education”.

<sup>78</sup> Ibid, p.104.

<sup>79</sup> W.L Renwick “ National education system 1877-1977,”p.7.

Examination. The former examination, instead, continued to exert a stranglehold on the post-primary school curricula and it still produced unequal outcomes for students as it had done (gradually) from 1934. This was because the scaling procedures used for the qualification—procedures designed allegedly to ensure fair rules of contest—ensured that a fixed proportion of candidates would fail no matter how much progress they had made individually in their school studies.<sup>80</sup> School Certificate (from 1946 -1967, with the aggregate mark system) can be considered to be a mechanism for social engineering because pupils had to perform better than did at least half of all those sitting the same subjects in order to achieve a pass. This distinctive means of ranking students made success unattainable for more than half the student population participating by scaling the grades nationally so that essentially 50% would fail regardless of how well they performed in the examination. The School Certificate Examination remained a formal, national, externally assessed examination which continued to differentiate between (and assign students to) academic and other positions throughout its existence until 2002 in the New Zealand schooling system, when it was replaced by the National Certificate of Educational Achievement (NCEA).

Problems with the School Certificate Examination were brought firmly into the educational limelight again in 1962 with the Currie Commission's wide-ranging and comprehensive report on education. The Commissioners were unable to ignore the ongoing difficulties the examination created for the large number of pupils who did not achieve a pass, and who therefore achieved little by way of formal recognition from their school experience. The report stated:

...it cannot close its eyes to the fact that for a substantial proportion of the school population, who cannot obtain the present School Certificate, the secondary school as yet offers neither a goal attainable by honest effort nor the type of course and tuition needed to help pupils to attain such a goal, if one could be devised<sup>81</sup>

However the Currie Commission did not make any radical recommendations in their report about this examination, despite recognition of the adverse effects external examinations were having on the schooling experience of a large number of New Zealand adolescents. Although the Commission had sympathy with

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<sup>80</sup> J.D.S McKenzie, "Politics and School curricula."

<sup>81</sup> Op.cit., p.9.

arguments that external examinations distorted the educational work of the schools, it believed that most difficulties could be overcome by an appeal to the “individual conscience” of the teachers.<sup>82</sup> What the Currie Commission did *not* consider though was how precisely the individual conscience of teachers could be accommodated in a system where national curriculum prescriptions and a demand for external assessment still controlled the daily life of the classroom. The Currie Commission’s report offered nothing new to problems relating to assessment in New Zealand schools. It could be suggested that the Commissioners assigned responsibility back to the teachers who had little control over the prescriptions placed upon them from external bodies.

In 1974 the Lawrence Committee produced a report that, once again, revealed concern about the significant grip that external assessment had gained over New Zealand schools. The Committee was fully committed to the belief that the main purpose of assessment in schools was to aid rather than to dominate teaching and learning. To this end they recommended in 1974 “that over the next 5 years external examinations be phased out and replaced by a system of internal assessment within schools.”<sup>83</sup> This was yet another government review that highlighted the damage associated with external assessment for New Zealand students.

The 1991 draft national curriculum reinforced a trend that has been apparent since the establishment of schooling in New Zealand, namely that the results pupils obtain in school are the chief means that employers use to select people for different jobs. In itself this practice appears entirely reasonable if not natural to the public who have grown up in a society whose members valued individual upward social mobility rather than being bounded by the geographical confines of their ancestral lands. But, as the idea of “individual choice” has come to exercise an increasingly stronger grip on society, manifested in privatisation, capitalism and neo-liberalism, schools become nothing other than agencies for satisfying employers’ interests. An individual’s choice may be associated with a high personal cost. The United States of America can be seen as a leading influence in the direction that New Zealand schools are taking in this area. As the political

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<sup>82</sup> D. McKenzie, “The changing concept of equality in education,” p.105.

<sup>83</sup> *Ibid*, p.105.

scientist Michael Parenti has put it: “‘Individualism’ is not to be mistaken for freedom to choose moral, political and cultural alternatives of one’s own making. Each person is expected to operate ‘individually’ but in more or less similar ways and similar directions... ‘Individualism’ in the United States refers to *privatisation* and the absence of communal forums of production, consumption and recreation.”<sup>84</sup>

What the ideology of individual choice promotes primarily is competition between individuals. Assessment is the key marker of this competition, and its practical manifestations (e.g., examination results and certificates) provide an easy and convenient way for employers to judge the ‘worth’ of potential employees. Nevertheless there is very little evidence in the history of New Zealand schools to show that external assessment has been beneficial universally to students’ learning or that it accurately reflects or attests to their worth. In fact there is evidence to indicate that it is often a hindrance to the learning process. Thus the way in which we have used examinations and other assessment techniques suggests that we attach (and have attached) much greater importance to the goal of social and personal differentiation than to the quality of teaching.<sup>85</sup> It also suggests that the 1991 draft national curriculum statement regarding students’ learning about the balance between their rights and responsibilities as democratic citizens leans heavily towards *responsibilities*, and provides little education about their possible *rights*. Democratic citizens are persons who have the ability to use their critical capacity to assess and to change their society. They are not citizens whose main capacity is their ability to adapt to and slot into any current regime uncritically. The present regime of individual competition does little to give hope to developing a condition of extreme importance to democracy, which is the ability to co-operate.

Until 1991 the Universities Entrance Board ran both the external Bursary Examination, which was sat by pupils in the seventh form year, and also the Sixth Form Certificate, while the Ministry of Education ran the fifth form School Certificate Examination (from 1988). After 1991 both were managed instead by

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<sup>84</sup> A. Kohn, *No contest- The case against competition*, p.129.

<sup>85</sup> D. McIntyre, “Assessment and teaching,” p.1.70.

the New Zealand Qualifications Authority.<sup>86</sup> This was a significant move away from the old ideal of ‘equity’ in New Zealand, towards ‘individual choice’. Bursary, Sixth Form Certificate, and the School Certificate Examination were all norm-based qualifications that were not designed to allow all students to achieve a pass. The result has been that a not insignificant number of adolescents have been labelled as failures during a period of their lives where it is widely believed that the search for personal identity is especially challenging (i.e., adolescence). What hopes were there for the development of *education* in schools and for finding more beneficial uses for assessment?

In a planned change from 2002 to 2004, a new certificate, NCEA, at Levels 1-3 inclusive, replaced the previous secondary school qualifications.<sup>87</sup> The NCEA introduced a standards- or criteria- based assessment regime where students achieve credits for individual units as opposed to the norm-based assessments of the past. It has three levels, to be studied in each of the three final years of secondary school, and is administered through internal and sometimes external assessments. A total of 80 credits are needed to pass each level, with Level one having a requirement of eight credits that demonstrate literacy and eight that demonstrate a candidate’s numeracy. The other two levels have no literacy or numeracy requirements.<sup>88</sup>

The introduction of NCEA met with controversy from high school teachers, educationists, and the media.<sup>89</sup> From 2002 there were many problems in the consistency in marking, variability of results, and with some schools’ refusal to accept the new system. Because NCEA is divided into modules or units students have a choice of which ones they wish to gain credits in, and they can miss out units or modules altogether. ‘Knowledge’ is broken down into these units, and there is little or nothing to link the learning together. Each bit of knowledge is taught and assessed in separate slices, with the main aim focused firmly on the achievement of credits at the end of a course of study. While it may be argued that this system works satisfactorily in some cases with the more ‘technical’ subjects (such as woodwork or metalwork) one can see some obvious weaknesses for

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<sup>86</sup> [Wikipedia.org/wiki/National Certificate of Educational Achievement](http://Wikipedia.org/wiki/National_Certificate_of_Educational_Achievement)

<sup>87</sup> Ibid, p.1.

<sup>88</sup> <http://www.nzqa.govt.nz>

<sup>89</sup> Ibid.

subjects such as history, literature, composition, and geography, to name a few fields of study. Even the breaking down of subjects such as mathematics and science can not give credit to the educational benefits derived by students from their studies when this system does not encourage pupils to gather the knowledge into anything meaningful.

The attempt to redefine assessment in New Zealand not altered the situation that schools are institutions whose authorities are not encouraged to have or to promote a holistic view of learning. It is arguably better than the system it replaced, in that it is not mandating directly that a set proportion of students fail each year, and it includes much more internal assessment than was evident with the old system. Yet, educationally, it is another form of reduction. The official desire to assess and give credits to students has meant that the promotion of a general education curriculum or programme that leads to specialization later is less likely in a system with no holistic philosophy of learning. Perhaps now more than ever in New Zealand schools, assessment is the end rather than part of an educational journey.

What a study of selected historical aspects of assessment in New Zealand schools shows is that there have been many incidents of top-down government intervention that have reinforced this situation and that the call for more stringent assessment has been heard frequently from the New Zealand public. In 1878 a system (with six primary school standards) was put into place, one that gradually developed a stranglehold over public opinion through capitalising on their desire for individual upward social mobility. New Zealand's recorded history of schools and schooling is littered with government reports and statements outlining the damage associated with the way school teachers were expected to use assessment tools and external examination. The public desire to credential youth seems, if anything, to have become stronger over the last half century. As J.D.S McKenzie wisely observed:

..it is idle to pretend as some critics give the appearance of doing, that the schools can dodge the issue of rating the performance of their pupils in ways that will be accepted as valid upon a national basis. There is nothing in the history of New Zealand's educational development that would suggest that this

consistently held expectation is going to disappear because its requirements are not now to the liking of some schools, teachers, and educational radicals.<sup>90</sup>

What we are faced with is the need to develop meaningful and ‘relevant’ ways to assess students’ work that have, at their centre, the aim of giving them the knowledge and tools to develop their learning, not just during their time in the institution of the school but also during their lifetime as democratic citizens. Employers’ needs must come second in these considerations, if not even further down the list. The economy will not suffer from having critical inquiring citizens, although admittedly some businesses might if, for example, certain inequalities some corporations practice became a popular topic for critical inquiry. If assessment is to be part of a democratic system of education then it should be used as a tool to promote critical capacities, not to dull them. Assessment should not have as its sole priority the ranking or ordering of students, but should reflect their stage of personal development. This development has to include their ability to work, reflect on and create new knowledge with other people rather than just having pupils compete for grades or obtain credits if an authentic democracy is desired.

#### **4.7 A Freirean perspective on historical aspects of New Zealand schooling**

The banking concept of knowledge, which Freire identified, is seen clearly in New Zealand’s school system in that the teacher has been unanimously the transmitter of knowledge to the pupil whose role has been historically, and currently, to receive it. Remembering that the roots of Freire’s work are from Karl Marx it is appropriate to remind the reader at this point that the “knowledge” the teacher is transmitting is (and has been) knowledge that is decided and deemed appropriate by the state. This situation describes a system where education is suppressed in preference to instruction and training in certain ideologies.

In most if not all historical snapshots of New Zealand society teachers have retained the position of authority in the classroom. It seems that the majority of teachers in this country’s history have not embraced the role of co-investigators of

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<sup>90</sup> J.D.S McKenzie, “Politics and School curricula,”p.33.

knowledge with their pupils in the classroom. There is little or no evidence of a teacher as learner, a learner as teacher relationship in the policy of New Zealand schools. Whilst there is some evidence of educationists wishing to promote more democratic teaching methods in the classroom, particularly after the Second World War, the structure of the official curriculum and the accompanying assessment practices has largely militated against advancements of this idea.

Memorization of material has been to the fore historically in the New Zealand schooling system, largely because of the preoccupation with external examinations in the late nineteenth century and well beyond. Rote “learning” was a favoured approach from the beginning of formal schooling. It would seem logical that if members of a given society believed that certain people were “naturally” more intellectually and socially able than were others, then those ‘more able’ people may feel inclined to exert a degree of social control over the masses. What is *not* logical is for those people who believed they were *naturally* more able to have to put in place safeguards or precautions that ensure the masses never “catch up” (unless, of course, they were sceptical about just how natural those differences actually were). It should be noted that there was a general concern among the upper classes in the late nineteenth century that any government ‘reforms’ should not have the effect of bringing the state primary schools into competition with secondary schools. This was at least one reason for the annoyance expressed in some quarters about the creation of primary school Standard 7 classes (from the mid-to-late 1880s) and about their adverse effect on local high school enrolments.

Among those authorities who were consulted there was a clear-cut consensus. It was felt that the curriculum of the secondary schools and the universities should remain the preserve of the elite or the scholastically able – or, to put the argument in Charles Bowen’s terms, “certain kinds of knowledge should not be accessible to persons whose vocation in life was to be that of honest labour.”<sup>91</sup> There is a clear recognition here that “knowledge” is associated with power, and that the way to prevent the masses from achieving this power was to deny them access to “certain kinds of valuable knowledge”. Some authorities in the late nineteenth century were well aware that the system of schooling established was one

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<sup>91</sup> NZDP, vol.24, p.36

involving instruction, as distinguished from education.<sup>92</sup> This distinction raises some significant questions about the types of knowledge that “should not be accessible to” the working class. Accordingly to certain commentators, this knowledge was to be granted only to a select few who would “rule” over the masses, so to speak.

The picture that is painted of the political agenda during the late 1800s and early 1900s is one where the government had harnessed “education” not only as a means of controlling the masses but also of securing their own place comfortably at the top of the hierarchy through their control of what counted as worthwhile knowledge. This fear, of allowing the lower classes to have enhanced access to “valuable” knowledge, demonstrates that there were inherent problems with the popular notions that there was a ‘natural order’ to human society and that academic study at a post-primary level constituted a waste of time for the working classes. Other methods would have to be utilized therefore to convince them of their lower station in life.

Historical evidence needs to be considered when thinking about future education practices because our school system’s ideologies have a definite legacy. The ideals that formed them may not be fully or partly compatible with the ones we wish to accord value to today. If those values are truly those of a democratic society and of democratic education then we cannot ignore the need to develop critical thinking and co-operation in our young people. This will require a conviction that knowledge is not static and concrete, but that it will be possible for teachers and other persons to produce new knowledge rather than just provide information for memory—specifically, examination—purposes.

Young people need tools to be able to think and act critically. If schools could become centres where youth received a general education and then learnt to put these tools into practice by cooperating with others to critique existing knowledge, then to produce new knowledge, schooling would have the potential to be more rewarding and *enjoyable*, and would involve more stimulating experiences than would the acquisition of an ‘A’ grade by pupils. It is not just the young people who stand to gain greatly from re-examining the system but indeed society as a whole, and societies to come. Perhaps never before in the history of humans has

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<sup>92</sup> Ibid,

there been so pressing a need for cooperative behaviour to be fostered actively.<sup>93</sup> Without cooperation the future of relationships between different communities and nations and, indeed, the preservation of this planet, may well be placed in jeopardy.

## 4.8 Conclusion

In conclusion, the Education Act of 1877 was a definitive event in the shaping of primary schooling as we know it. Although Bowen can be praised for his contribution to the New Zealand schooling system he can also be criticized (to some degree) for his philosophies of education in general. The system that has grown up from 1877 has been strongly shaped from its foundation and from the rigid structures it installed by an ideology of conformity, hierarchy, and of differentiation between youth in a common, state-provided, schooling system. .

The system that Bowen introduced was one involving reproductive uniformity. In many respects it was (and is) a system that often does not equate with the true meaning of education in either its principles or practice, although Bowen used the term “education” to describe it as such. Education should not be used as an alternate word for habit formation. Instead, it must take into account the fact of personal development that all teaching should follow and not attempt to alter.<sup>94</sup> The 1877 Education Act introduced a method of training and instruction for the general mass of the youth population, albeit only at the primary or elementary level. The effect of government stipulations concerning which knowledge should and should not be taught in schools has had the effect of giving successive governments the power to place a definite value on certain types of knowledge as opposed to other kinds. The “expert” opinion associated with these stipulations remains a feature of New Zealand schooling. Politicians and educationists have come to regard a school curriculum – especially a compulsory one—as being the ideal vehicle to transmit their worldviews to a captive youth audience.<sup>95</sup>

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<sup>93</sup> A. Kohn, *No contest- The case against competition*, p.24.

<sup>94</sup> *Ibid*, p.23

<sup>95</sup> H. Altrichter & J. Elliot, *Images of education change*, p.7.

Therein lies a key component in the legacy of the 1877 Act. By initiating a system of compulsory schooling for children in New Zealand the government was able to actively disseminate certain values and attitudes to people at a malleable and largely uncritical stage in their lives. Just as the early settlers in New Zealand could not divorce themselves entirely from the values and beliefs associated with their upbringing in the “home land”, future generations who experienced the state compulsory education system could not separate themselves fully from the lessons they had learnt about which kinds of knowledge to value based on their particular conception of education. What has occurred since is ironic in that from the late nineteenth century the New Zealand public saw mass primary schooling as a means for individual rather than collective advancement, thereby creating a form of hegemony that was somewhat different from the one their ancestors left behind, primarily on the ground of social class background. In order to do so they were (and remain) willing to compete against each other for grades and for vocations, whilst the “unsuccessful” are those who get left behind and who are (and were) deemed school failures. There was little if any serious questioning of the system that was meant to be serving all youth educationally.

For several generations the systems of assessment have served to measure a student’s worth in society and, as time progressed, to indicate the perceived status of his or her school. Universities came to exercise the greatest power in the education sector, with their authority being exercised through the universities’ right to control advanced school examination prescriptions and through their preparation of the majority of secondary school teachers in arts and science degree courses.<sup>96</sup> Assessment practices must be examined in order to ascertain who actually benefits from them, and who is disadvantaged. Unfortunately the external examination system has remained largely unchanged apart from the recent move towards the NCEA model and toward embracing the ideology of individual choice, which has brought another agenda into schools. If the way we use assessment and examinations is not benefiting students and not contributing to the democracy that we proclaim we want then something needs to change urgently.

The legacy of the 1877 Education Act remains incomplete, although in some respects it is undiminished in the current New Zealand schooling system. The basic framework remained in place until October 1989, when the *Tomorrow’s*

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<sup>96</sup> D. McKenzie, “The changing concept of equality in education,” p.21

*Schools'* policies were introduced.<sup>97</sup> The changes this policy brought about were more in line with a reshuffling of Bowen's ideology than with a wholesale dismissal of it, however. The control of schooling is still exercised ultimately by central government. Issues of social control and a fear of critical education being available to all people continue to be apparent in our system, even though they have undergone changes in form. Despite rapid changes in our political, social, cultural and economic environment not everything has changed as a consequence. Older as well as more modern ways of organizing social life now exist side-by-side, interacting with and interrupting one another.<sup>98</sup>

The recognition by the public of the philosophies that have underpinned schooling in New Zealand, and their critical engagement with them, has been extremely slow. Nonetheless it must be understood that in order to make philosophies such as Bowen's transparent, one must first recognise that in education domains there is an inevitable time lag of at least a generation in understanding its consequences. Even at the end of that time failure is not easily recognised, for that generation has to recognise in itself the failure.<sup>99</sup> By identifying Freire's theory concerning the banking method of education and its application to New Zealand schools a theoretical point to begin to consider alternatives will become available. In the last chapter I will outline some of these alternatives, based on Freire's pedagogy, with the primary aim of exploring democratic education and attempting to suggest ways in which New Zealand educators and the populace can move towards a more authentic democracy.

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<sup>97</sup> G. Lee & H. Lee, "The 1877 Education Act: Lessons from the past," p.4.

<sup>98</sup> H. Altrichter & J. Elliot, *Images of educational change*, p.7.

<sup>99</sup> B. Spiecker & R. Straughan, *Freedom and indoctrination in education*, p.75.

## Chapter 5

### A Pedagogue for Democracy

#### 5.1 Introduction

A pedagogue for democracy is not a new proposition for education but has instead been an integral part of Freire's critical pedagogy for liberation, freedom, hope, and transformation via critical consciousness. Education, in the Freirean sense, is concerned with communication and dialogue through praxis, between people, and across cultures. To gain an education that is democratic is not an isolating endeavour but rather a practice concerned with the *connections* between people and of knowledge in regards to their placement with and in the world. It is centred on the creation of knowledge, not its transmission, and with the opportunity this presents to us to transform reality as agents of our own human becoming.

Whilst a Freirean pedagogy for democracy will always be written with the liberation of the oppressed peoples of the world foremost in mind, this chapter asserts that authentic democracy is inclusive of all peoples. Pedagogy for democracy is not solely for one particular group of people but rather the aim is the *critical* participation of *all* in democratic forums. Capitalist neo-liberalism has produced a situation of inequality and oppression within the world that has resulted in the need for the oppressed to engage in a struggle to acquire freedom and democratic participation. The oppressors are themselves also constrained by their oppressing role in the capitalist mantra and are devoid of the tools necessary to participate in an authentic democracy when it eventuates. As a result both parties are the victims of the fetishisation of capital.

The democracy that Freire advocates necessitates its participants move from a naïve to a critical consciousness in order to understand the relationship between reflection, action, and the world. The Freirean concept of education promotes a democratic forum where the tools of critical consciousness can be developed and put into practice through creation and re-creation. A Freirean pedagogy for democracy is an opportunity of democratic possibility in contrast to the traditional banking theory which has always maintained democracy as an enigma students must attempt to find once their formal education is completed. Democracy has no

place in the traditional system and hence the message is that an authentic democracy has no place in the majority of forums in society as a whole and, particularly, no relevance to our way of living.

In this chapter a pedagogue for democracy will be explored that takes education to be a democratic process from its starting point. It will examine the process of developing a critical consciousness as the motive for education, and how this translates for teachers and students, beginning with their historicity. Dialogue will be explored as the basis for all learning with the concept of praxis, action – reflection, the primary objective of all participants. The benefits of critical consciousness as the overall educational intent will be outlined with the quest of humanization of all addressed as central to the pedagogy. The democratic teacher will be considered, in regard to what precisely it entails for a person educating from this position, with a particular recognition of the profound differences this stance requires in comparison to the traditional authoritarian method of transmitting knowledge.

Finally, this chapter will look at the possibilities and limitations of education for democracy and how it can transcend into other forums in society. It will discuss the difficulties of implementing an authentic democratic education in a neo-liberal capitalist society with its own agendas. The resistance and obstacles to the implementation and preservation of a pedagogue for democracy will be discussed with the aim of finding possibilities for transformation and hope for those who have already joined the “struggle” for liberation.

## **5.2 A place to begin: Historical locations**

Every learner brings to the situation of education a particular historical location. That is to say they bring to the situation of education their particular identity that has been constructed through history and culture. Humans are historical beings who always have an ideological debt in the creation of their identity to the past.<sup>1</sup> This sets the precedent that there will be a diverse range of differing histories in the democratic classroom including the location of the teacher as well. But it is

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<sup>1</sup>P, McLaren & P, Leonard. (Eds). *P. Freire: A critical encounter*

the crucial ontological characteristic of “being human” that Freire persistently identified in so far as humans produce history and culture, even as history and culture produces them, and as such an education for democracy must “ take the people’s historicity as their starting point”.<sup>2</sup>

Without learners having a conception of the way in which they are both made and make history, they lack the ability to grasp the connections between themselves and others and the world. This ability is essential if learners are to develop an important foundational characteristic of a critical consciousness; that of authentic reflection. Authentic reflection always takes the learners relationship with other people and the world as its basis. It does not consider abstract persons or the world without people<sup>3</sup> but instead the connections and relations of people in and with the world. By acknowledging their own historicity, learners discover that their ideologies are not privately owned but are instead connected to the world around them. Helping individuals to understand the connectedness of their own ideas and those in the larger society is also necessary to combat dualistic thinking.<sup>4</sup>

What this requires is that learners reflect upon their perspectives of the world and those of others in the world through understanding the actions in the past that have formed these perspectives. Education that is committed to taking people’s historicity as its starting point denies that humans are abstract, isolated, independent, and unattached to the world; it also denies that the world exists as a reality apart from people.<sup>5</sup> By comprehending how their personal history is embedded in larger social forms, learners begin to discover their inherent link to the collective. The experiences and ideas that individuals have formed are related to and with the world and with other people in it.

The task of realising one’s own historicity is not a trivial matter for learners to contend with. Often the process requires conceptualising aspects of history that contain many actions of oppression or dehumanisation that are incorporated in the ideological debt of the individual’s identity. Alternatively the individual may find

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<sup>2</sup> P. Freire. *Pedagogy of Freedom: ethics, democracy and civic courage*, p.65

<sup>3</sup> P. Freire, *Pedagogy of the oppressed*

<sup>4</sup> R.A, Breault, “Dewey, Freire, and a pedagogy for the oppressor.”

<sup>5</sup> P, Freire, *Pedagogy of the oppressed*, p.54

examples of a lineage of oppressors in their collective identities; history that is unsettling to acknowledge. Perhaps this contributes to the reluctance sometimes found in some learners to delve deeply into history to uncover truths and untruths that may contradict the individual learners current views of the world and others. Yet Freire understood that as the oppressed take more control of their own history, they assimilate more rapidly into society, but on their own terms.<sup>6</sup> In an interview with Pepi Leistyna, Freire acknowledged some of the difficulties learners face when addressing their historicity by stating:

While it is true that people need to use their historical location as the place to begin to reflect upon the object of knowledge and to create meaning, the problem is that they often neglect to question their own self or others...However, even within the limits of my position, and under historical and cultural influences, my job as a learner is to connect it to the rest of the world. In other words, I need to be able to make linkages with other historical events so as to gain a greater comprehension of reality.<sup>7</sup>

It is this willingness to discover the truths of the past and to become aware of how these truths are constructed and change over history that needs to be cultivated with the learner. The world begins to open up for their intellectual imagination when the connections between past and present become revealed to them. What is vitally important is that in reflecting on the historical past a realisation is reached that being conscious of their historical location provides them with the tools to see history as an opportunity and not as determined. The praxis that defines human existence is marked by this historicity, this dialectical interplay between the ways in which history and culture make people even while people are making that very history and culture.<sup>8</sup>

Recognition that the learner is an historical being is recognition that they are also incomplete in their history. People thus know that they are unfinished and are aware of their incompleteness.<sup>9</sup> As they conceptualise that their reality, including much of what they, (presently) are, is the corollary of human action in the past<sup>10</sup> they are awakened to the connections between human actions and reality and that the actions of the present will create the future. The future is not determined by

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<sup>6</sup> P. McLaren. "A pedagogy of possibility: Reflecting upon Paulo Freire's politics of education," p.50.

<sup>7</sup> P. Leistyna. *Presence of Mind: Education and the Politics of Deception*, p.3

<sup>8</sup> R.D, Glass. "On Paulo Freire's Philosophy of Praxis and the Foundations of Liberation Education," p.16

<sup>9</sup> P. Freire, *Pedagogy of the oppressed*.

<sup>10</sup> P.L McLaren, P.L Lankshear & C. Collin. " 'Being' and 'Time' in Freire's philosophy."

the past but will be created by human action with, and in, the world just as the past was also. When students see their own actions will create their future realities, they become agents of their own human 'being'.

An invitation is thus extended to the learner to critically reflect on the past and decide which aspects of it serve them in the reality they choose. This does not entail that they must do away with tradition or religion or culture but rather that they reflect on the different aspects of these things through historicity in relation to the reality they wish to live in. Freire has often been criticized as having a western view of this reflection concerning culture yet it is the people themselves who would make the decisions regarding their culture after reflection. It can be said that no culture on earth is complete in its becoming and therefore not needing reflection from the people who are immersed in it. Freire clarified this concept by saying:

First of all, I think that all cultures have their own identity, a reason for being, and they should undoubtedly struggle to preserve it. This does not mean that cultures don't carry within themselves weak dimensions...So, I think that cultures should struggle to reinforce what is already valid and to promote what needs to be validated – especially that which has yet to be recognized – and, obviously, understand and eradicate what is negative.<sup>11</sup>

The purpose for the learner becoming aware of their historical location and reflecting on the ideologies of the past that contributed to shaping this is not for them to dismiss the past and adopt a uniform view of the world. It is the diversity of ideologies and historical locations that are an inherent part of a Freirean education and of what makes life interesting and exciting on earth. Furthermore, it is our different experiences, with interpretations of, and social relations within the world that provide the substance for interactivity between two or more people<sup>12</sup> which is a crucial practice in Freire's pedagogy. As Freire has contended:

I cannot understand human beings as simply *living*. I can understand them only as historically, culturally and socially *existing*...I can understand them only as beings who are makers of their "way", in the making of which they lay themselves open to or commit themselves to the "way" that they make and that therefore remakes them as well.<sup>13</sup>

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<sup>11</sup> P. Leistyna. *Presence of Mind: Education and the politics of deception*, p.4

<sup>12</sup> P. Roberts. "Pedagogy, Neo-liberalism and Post modernity: Reflections on Freire's later work," p.460

<sup>13</sup> P. Freire. *Pedagogy of hope: Reliving Pedagogy of the oppressed*, p.97.

Every learner who comes to the object of knowledge brings with them a different historical location and a different ideological perspective to contribute to the educational setting. In the traditional banking system students would not see the benefits that their different historical locations bring to the classroom because there is only one set of prescribed answers that are validated within this setting. Banking theory and practice, as immobilizing and fixating forces, fails to acknowledge people as historical beings: in contrast problem – posing theory and practice takes people’s historicity as their starting point.<sup>14</sup> In the Freirean concept of education, knowledge is created and not prescribed so the knowledge and ideologies that students bring to the object of knowledge become important commodities. No one can know everything, just as no one can be ignorant of everything.<sup>15</sup>

Knowledge thus takes a very different form in a Freirean pedagogy. It is not a process of absorption or memorization but rather a process of construction and creation. People learn by actively constructing knowledge, weighing new information against their previous understanding, thinking about and working through discrepancies,(on their own and with others), and coming to a new understanding.<sup>16</sup> The objective is to create something new, not to transmit knowledge from the past. It is not only the students who bring their particular historical locations to the learning process but, of course, the teacher as well. In the endeavour to create new knowledge, the teacher and the students come to the learning situation as possessors of past knowledge, albeit of different sorts.<sup>17</sup> An important moment in the learning process is when the student critically evaluates what she knows and not only simply for the purposes of overcoming these knowledge’s.<sup>18</sup>

Each participant in the act of education begins with her historical location in the world and her associated ideologies as the starting point to the process of creation of knowledge through dialogue. These assorted locations are recognised as being part of a wider society that the participants share. Peter McLaren makes a valid

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<sup>14</sup> P. Freire. *Pedagogy of the oppressed*, p.71.

<sup>15</sup> P. Roberts. “ Knowledge, Dialogue and Humanization: Exploring Freire’s philosophy,” p.172.

<sup>16</sup> A Kohl. *Punished by Rewards*, p.219

<sup>17</sup> P. Freire. *Pedagogy of Freedom: Ethics, Democracy and Civic courage*.

<sup>18</sup> *Ibid*, p.9.

point with regards to Freirean education and the historical locations of people in the current era:

...(consequently) a Freirean pedagogy of liberation is totalising without being dominating in that it always attends dialectically to the specific or local “acts of knowing” as a political process that takes place in the larger conflictual arena of capitalist relations of exploitation, an arena where large groups of people palpably and undeniably suffer needless privations and pain due to alienation and poverty.<sup>19</sup>

Through the learners’ recognition that they are historical beings, and by the evaluation of their current historical location to gain an understanding of the capitalist influences in its creation, they may begin to critically assess if the many aspects of the capitalist system are applicable to the reality they wish to create. Freire thinks that if we fail to grasp how the capacity for historical, cultural, and linguistic praxis makes us different from the rest of the organic and inorganic world, we will fail to be able to transform society toward a vision of justice and democracy.<sup>20</sup> This possibility is precisely one that learners need to be introduced to when approaching the subject of democracy.

In *Pedagogy of hope* (1994), Freire spoke about his concept of history and his vision of an authentic democracy being intertwined. Rather than accepting the current capitalist conditions in the world he reminds people to keep the hope for a new reality alive as an ontological potential. He states:

The understanding of history as *opportunity* and not determinism, the conception of history operative in this book, would be unintelligible without the *dream*, just as the *deterministic* conception feels uncomfortable, in its incompatibility with this understanding and therefore denies it.<sup>21</sup>

In contrast to the traditional banking theory of education, which stills learners’ imaginations by submitting them to the rigours of prescribed knowledge, a Freirean pedagogy would encourage - indeed necessitate - imagination as a tool to conceptualise the reality of the future as one that will differ from the present. It would require the ability to imagine *other* realities than the one that currently

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<sup>19</sup> P. McLaren. “A pedagogy of possibility: Reflecting upon Paulo Freire’s politics of education,” p.52.

<sup>20</sup> R.D Glass. “On Paulo Freire’s philosophy of praxis and the foundations of liberation education,” p.17.

<sup>21</sup> P. Freire. *Pedagogy of hope: Reliving pedagogy of the oppressed*, p.91.

exists including other distributions of power, wealth and cultural meanings and other ways of relating to one another.

### 5.3 Dialogical education

A Freirean pedagogy of education condemns the situation where the teacher is the transmitter of knowledge prescribed as rigid and determined facts and the students the passive recipients. For Freire, education is communication and dialogue. It is not the transference of dialogue, but the encounter of subjects in dialogue in search of the significance of the object of knowing and thinking.<sup>22</sup> The different historical locations of the teacher and the learners are highlighted again as they both bring different contributions to the act of dialogue. Freire further defines this process by asserting that:

Education takes place when there are two learners who occupy somewhat different spaces in an ongoing dialogue. But both participants bring knowledge to the relationship, and one of the objects of the pedagogic process is to explore what each other knows and what they can teach each other. A second object is to foster reflection on the self as actor in the world in consequence of knowing.<sup>23</sup>

Knowledge in this sense cannot be prepared earlier by the teacher to be later subscribed to by the student, as the outcome of the learning is not known before the participants enter into the process. The teacher cannot know all that the student will bring to the situation and how that will move the knowledge forward through dialogue just as the student does not already know what knowledge the teacher has regarding the object to be known. In other words, the object to be known is put on the table *between* the two subjects of knowing. They meet around it and through it for mutual inquiry.<sup>24</sup> The object of knowing could be a physical object in the world, a text, an event, a theory, concept or an idea. The range of objects of knowing is only limited by what the students and teacher introduce through dialogue. It is in the learners' differences that the dialogue gains its

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<sup>22</sup> P. Freire. *Pedagogy of the oppressed*, p.140.

<sup>23</sup> P. Freire. *Pedagogy of Freedom: Ethics, democracy and civic courage*, p.8.

<sup>24</sup> P. Freire & I. Shor. *A pedagogy for Liberation –Dialogues on transforming education*, p.99.

strength yet it is in their mutual inquiry that this is also true. Dialogue depends on difference as well as a particular kind of sameness for its very existence.<sup>25</sup>

When Freire spoke of dialogue and education he was referring to a way to approach an object of knowledge. Dialogue, he said, “is not simply another word for a mere conversation among people about everyday matters”.<sup>26</sup> Rather it should be viewed from an epistemological perspective in which it requires “approaching and examining a certain knowable object”.<sup>27</sup> Neither the learners nor the object of knowing is abstract from the world and so a dialogue becomes a possibly regarding the relations between the learners and the object of knowing, and the object of knowing and the world. Instead of the learners trying to work out the prescribed answers that the teacher held as the correct solution, they pose problems regarding the object of knowing in relation to themselves and the world.

This marks a profound difference to the Freirean pedagogy to the traditional banking theory. The student’s task is not to solve the problems that the teacher administers and internalise what they are told to be the valid answers, but rather they are to engage in the process of inquiry to bring new ideas to the dialogue in the search of knowing. Consequently the educational process is one that is evidently very different to observe. As Ira Shor contends:

In Freirean critical classrooms, teachers reject the method which makes students passive. They do not lecture students into sleepy silence. They do not prepare students for a life of political alienation in society. Rather, Freirean educators pose critical problems to students, treat them as complicated, substantial human beings, and encourage curiosity and activism about knowledge and the world.<sup>28</sup>

In the traditional approach to education, which centres on solving pre-determined problems, students are asked to contemplate knowledge as isolated and unrelated information from the world. In contrast, problem posing information takes the students relation to the world as its starting point. In problem-posing education, men develop their power to perceive the way they exist in the world *with which* and *in which* they find themselves; they come to see the world not as a static

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<sup>25</sup>P. Roberts. “Pedagogy, Neo-liberalism and Post modernity: Reflections on Freire’s later work,”p.460.

<sup>26</sup> P. Leistyna. *Presence of Mind: Education and the Politics of Deception*, p.1.

<sup>27</sup> Ibid.

<sup>28</sup> I.Shor. “Education is Politics – Paulo Freire’s critical pedagogy,” p.25.

reality, but as a reality in process, in transformation.<sup>29</sup> Hence the object of knowing has meaning in relation to their individual historical location, the location of others, and to the world as it currently exists.

Dialogue is not concerned with the limits of pre-ordained knowledge. As such, it requires a presence of imagination and courage that has not before been regarded as a valuable characteristic in traditional banking theory. Dialogue would be seriously limited if it stipulated that ideas outside the current knowledge must be excluded in the communication. So dialogue presupposes curiosity; it doesn't exist without epistemological curiosity, without the desire to understand the world around us.<sup>30</sup> Dialogue cannot be present in absence of the world, just as there would be no dialogue about the world without human presence.

A preservation of the established order would not be conducive to a Freirean pedagogy. Yet with the traditional banking system, this aim can frequently be seen as being uppermost in the minds of those in power. Freirean critical education invites students to question the system they live in, and the knowledge being offered them; to discuss what kind of future they want, including their right to elect authority and to remake the school and society they find.<sup>31</sup> This requires that teachers of Freirean pedagogy relinquish an element of control and authority that has been a historical foundation in traditional schooling in order to become co-investigators in the creation of new knowledge.

Dialogue is thus a process whereby change is a positive aspect; whereby the change is produced from a critically projected forward advancement on the previous thinking that existed. To teach is not to *transfer knowledge* but to create the possibilities for the production or construction of knowledge.<sup>32</sup> The possibility of new knowledge correlates to an inevitable awakening for the teacher that this knowledge will not only be an extension of the knowledge that the student holds about the object of knowing, but also an extension of the knowledge that the teacher holds about the same object both participants are inquiring about. As Freire outlines:

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<sup>29</sup> P. Freire. *Pedagogy of the oppressed*, p. 56.

<sup>30</sup> P. Leistyna. *Presence of Mind: Education and the Politics of Deception*, p.1.

<sup>31</sup> I. Shor. "Education is Politics – Paulo Freire's critical pedagogy," p.28.

<sup>32</sup> P. Freire. *Pedagogy of Freedom: Ethics, Democracy and Civic courage*, p.30.

Liberatory education is fundamentally a situation where the teacher and the students *both* have to be learners, *both* have to be cognitive subjects, in spite of being different. This for me is the first test of liberating education, for teachers and students both to be critical agents in the act of knowing.<sup>33</sup>

Dialogue is an epistemological concept and must be understood as a progressive educational tool in the quest for freedom and democracy. To trivialize the process of dialogue is to ultimately undermine the whole concept of a critical pedagogy concerned with liberation. The point is not to have students reveal their specific historical locations and ideologies in order to then accordingly direct their thinking back to the ‘correct’ perspective. Dialogue must be prepared to enrich current knowledge, and not just simply enforce it. This means that the exchange of different experiences is not in and of itself a dialogue because in this instance the speakers never move beyond descriptive conversation. In other words, this discursive practice is bereft of theorizing; that is, making sense of one’s history in relation to an object of knowledge.<sup>34</sup> It is this latter activity that truly signifies dialogue.

In a classroom faithful to the aim of constructing knowledge, students are encouraged and allowed time to explore phenomena or different ideas, conjecture, share hypotheses with other participants in the inquiry, and revise their original thinking.<sup>35</sup> Such a situation of education obviously denotes that there would be expansive changes in the systems set up from the current practices. Time is a major factor. The rush to memorize selected facts in order to regurgitate them for accreditation would be severely hindered in a critical pedagogy. Students would need to be afforded time to critically approach the object of knowing and relate it to the world. What would result would be an education based on students adhering knowledge to competent connections with reality and then applying those connections to create new ones. Memorization, in this classroom, would be but one of a set of skills not the measure of a successful student. Such a classroom differs sharply from one in which the teacher lectures exclusively, explains the “right way” to solve a problem without allowing students to make some sense of

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<sup>33</sup> P. Freire & I. Shor. *A pedagogy for Liberation –Dialogues on transforming Education* ,p.42.

<sup>34</sup>P. Leistyna. *Presence of Mind: Education and the politics of deception*,p.1.

<sup>35</sup> A. Kohl. *Punished by rewards*.

their own, or denies the importance of students' own experience or prior knowledge.<sup>36</sup>

For the first time, the student's prior knowledge is not only acknowledged but highly valued in the process of education. Dialogue is strengthened through the contribution from different perspectives and critical ideologies not hindered as in the tradition system is. Freire has always advocated dialogue among diverse groups and across differences.<sup>37</sup> Dialogue does not support ethnocentrism in that its objective is progressing knowledge through the critical participation of all involved in the inquiry towards the object of knowing. Education should, in Freire's view, be concerned with delineating, debating, and (as far as possible), addressing differences – not with allowing them to prevent any productive discussion from occurring.<sup>38</sup> Because dialogue is not concerned with transmitting the dominant culture and instead creating a culture of inquiry for new knowledge, all cultures have truths to offer. This undertaking of inclusion of all cultural voices is long over due and should be treated with the sensitivity it requires. Freire embodied this cause by cautioning:

...we should embrace an intercultural dialogue moved also by affect, and not only our rationality. We should use our sensitivity in this task in order to become almost like artists, to understand and respect the cultures. We should possess the political quality of tolerance.<sup>39</sup>

The learning that this statement implies holds vast implications for the Freirean educator. Through students understanding of their historical locations in relation to the world, and through dialogue with others the possibility of tolerance becomes a reality. Students need to be aware of how the capitalist regime has affected people and their place in relation to the world today. By gaining a comprehension of these dichotomies, students will gain depth to their comprehension of dialogue with others. Most multicultural education approaches fail to address injustice and the challenges of transforming inequitable power relations.<sup>40</sup>

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<sup>36</sup> Ibid, p.217.

<sup>37</sup> P. Roberts. "Pedagogy, neo-liberalism and post modernity: Reflections on Freire's later work."

<sup>38</sup> Ibid., p.459.

<sup>39</sup> P. Leistyna. *Presence of Mind: Education and the politics of deception*, p.4

<sup>40</sup> C. McCarthy. *Race and curriculum*.

& S. Nieto. *Afirming diversity: The sociopolitical context of multicultural education*.

In order to enter into dialogue both the teachers and the students must have a respect and care for other people in the world. Dialogue is recognition that people are not isolated or abstract from others in the world but instead share an ontological vocation with all humans. If it is to be humanizing, dialogical communication must involve a “love” of the world and of other human beings. This in turn demands a certain sense of humanity.<sup>41</sup> It involves the desire for all people to participate in their ontological vocation to become more fully human and to actively create their reality in the world. As can be seen, for Paulo Freire, education is part of the process of humanization.<sup>42</sup>

## 5.4 Praxis

The quest for freedom, humanization and democracy cannot be derived from an education dedicated to reflective dialogue alone. The critical educator’s role is to assist students to move from reflecting on themselves and the world to taking action to transform the world. Education does not stop with dialogue. The teacher is obliged to engage in “exposition and explanation” of those economic and social conditions that bear on the educational process and to expose students to many sacred texts without which education degenerates into opinion.<sup>43</sup> Education thus takes on a critical capacity where learners come to see the world as a reality in progress and into textual dialogues as well as verbal ones to expand their awareness of its constructs.

Problem-posing becomes a characteristic of critical education that serves not only to generate reflections about the world through dialogue but also to initiate action for transformational change following those reflections. Freire said that “to “problematize” in this sense is to associate an entire populace to the task of codifying total reality into symbols which can generate critical consciousness and empower them to alter their relations with nature and social forces”.<sup>44</sup> Dialogue then must contain reflections but such reflections must, however, be always considered in relation to our *actions* for it to constitute authentic knowledge. In

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<sup>41</sup> P. Roberts. “ Knowledge, dialogue and humanization: Exploring Freire’s philosophy,” p.177.

<sup>42</sup> M. Gadotti. *Reading Paulo Freire*.

<sup>43</sup> P. Freire. *Pedagogy of freedom: Ethics, democracy and civic courage*, p.12.

<sup>44</sup> P. Freire. *Education for critical consciousness*, p.ix.

other words, according to Freire authentic knowledge is praxis. To know implies to act in conjunction with reflection.<sup>45</sup>

This highlights a definitive trait in Freirean critical pedagogy in comparison to critical thinking as a teachable skill. That is, the theory was part of a praxis, “reflection and action upon the world in order to transform it”.<sup>46</sup> Critical dialogue needs to encompass both reflection and action to be authentic. Thinking about and reflecting on problematic situations in the world is only half of the critical component. Students must engage with those problems in a critical manner in order to create new knowledge, in order to create transformation. Freire recognised that reflection was necessary but not sufficient only for dialogue. As Moarci Gadotti puts it:

For Paulo Freire, dialogue is not just the encounter of two subjects who look for the meaning of things- knowledge- but an encounter which takes place in praxis – in action and reflection – in political engagement, in the pledge for social transformation. A dialogue that does not lead to transformative action is pure verbalism.<sup>47</sup>

While Freire’s work often talks about the dialogue in praxis between two learners or the learner-teacher, one aspect that is not so frequently discussed is the educational possibilities between several learners. At the classroom level, curricula aimed at empowering young children and developing their capacities to resist interpersonal bias has been finding wider audiences.<sup>48</sup> With a critical pedagogy as the educational environment, these initiatives in democratic education would become possible. Each learner who enters into the critical education process has developed the strength of dialogical praxis and therefore brings new knowledge to the situation to aid in the process of transformation and change. As new information is proposed, the learners in turn reflect and act upon that knowledge, thus building and expanding on the collective knowledge formed. This is not a process of education that is done in isolation from others but rather one that is with others for mutual gain.

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<sup>45</sup> P.L McLaren, P.L Lankshear & C. Collin. “ ‘Being’ and ‘Time’ in Freire’s philosophy,”p.176.

<sup>46</sup> P. Freire *Pedagogy of the oppressed*, p.36.

<sup>47</sup> M. Gadotti. *Pedagogy of praxis – A dialectical philosophy of Education*. p.xi.

<sup>48</sup> L. Derman-Sparks. *Anti-bias curriculum: Tools for empowering young children*.

The ethos of individual competition and advancement that underpins capitalist philosophy becomes redundant in a Freirean education setting. Whilst there is a place for personal achievement, and most definitely for personal epistemological development, the overall philosophy is concerned with humanization and a system of democracy and freedom for all in the world. Individualist advancement at the cost of the dehumanisation of others as is the capitalist mantra would be a failure to recognize one's placement of being in and with other people in the world. The point is to enter into dialogue with others in order to transform the world; not to use knowledge to dominate other's reality. As was noted in Freire's philosophy of 'being' and 'time';

The very idea of a dialectic between action and reflection is meaningless unless a context of *communication among humans* is presupposed. For one thing, reflection implies standards, evaluation and critique. These things imply a public context. Humans, that is, can speak true words only in the context of human communication.<sup>49</sup>

Freirean education is about liberation for people, a liberation that is done by the people themselves. Dialogue is about inclusion of all people in their quest for humanization. Dialogue enables the oppressed to "speak a true word" and overcome their silencing.<sup>50</sup> It is concerned with unity among people to transform the world through critical reflection and action in praxis.

## 5.5 The democratic teacher

The teacher of pedagogy for liberation, freedom and democracy cannot be rigid methodologist or a didactic teacher as has been possible in traditional classrooms. Freire reacts against the "bureaucratized mind of teachers" within the banking system.<sup>51</sup> Because knowledge is created in a Freirean pedagogy not merely transmitted the teacher cannot plan the sessions' learning that will take place in total compartmental fashion nor can they take complete control of its direction. They are not powerless in the process of education yet neither are they all encompassing of the power. Instead, they are co-collaborators in the search for

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<sup>49</sup>P.L McLaren, P.L Lankshear & C. Collin. " 'Being' and 'Time' in Freire's philosophy,"p.176

<sup>50</sup> P. Freire. *Pedagogy of the oppressed*.

P. Freire. *Pedagogy of freedom: Ethics, democracy and civic courage*.

<sup>51</sup> P. Leistyna. *Presence of mind: Education and the politics of deception*.

knowledge with the learner or learners who each bring their past knowledge and experience to the situation, as does the teacher. As such, the teacher requires that the students enter into the process of education *with* them and does not provide the knowledge *for* them.

This does not mean that the teacher cannot provide tools, texts and instruments that assist in the inquiry along with their previous knowledge about the object of knowing. They do so however in the expectation that through dialogue new knowledge will be created and that the students will contribute to this creation. The educator with a democratic vision or posture cannot avoid insisting on the critical capacity, curiosity and autonomy of the learner<sup>52</sup> in his or her teaching praxis. Education in this sense means that the teacher must be prepared for his or her own knowledge to change and transform, just as the students' knowledge will change and transform. Freire writes that "whoever teaches, learns in the act of teaching, and whoever learns, teaches in the act of learning."<sup>53</sup>

Within dialectic relations the authoritarian nature of the traditional paternalistic system is removed from the equation of education. Freire writes that

...teachers who take ownership of their student's desires and dreams are using their position of authority in an authoritarian manner. Neither in the affective nor epistemological sense is this dialogical. Such a teacher is in the class but not with the class. He or she might mechanically teach a lot of biology but nothing about making meaning and democracy.<sup>54</sup>

The object of knowing becomes the learner's mediator of progress not the teacher's validation. Even in situations of teaching primarily attributed to requiring repetition and transmission towards the learner such as literacy, dialogue is possible. In this instance, Freire states that "the educators role is fundamentally to enter into dialogue with the illiterate about concrete situations, and simply to offer him the instruments with which he can teach himself to read or write."<sup>55</sup> Such education is still a process of communication between the teacher and the student rather than the teacher 'gifting' the knowledge to the student. The student must make meaning of the literacy in his or her own world, reflect on this

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<sup>52</sup> Op cit. p.33.

<sup>53</sup> Ibid. p.31.

<sup>54</sup> P. Leistyna. *Presence of mind: Education and the politics of deception*,p.6.

<sup>55</sup> P.Freire. *Education for critical consciousness*, p.45.

meaning and acting to transform reality. As Freire points out, “This teaching cannot be done from the top down, but only from the inside out, by the illiterate himself, with the collaboration of the educator.”<sup>56</sup>

This does not mean that the teacher is a passive or invalidated part of the educational process. The teacher is vitally important to the process as is the knowledge and experience, they bring with them. Since teachers are learners as well, they are not figures independent of the social process.<sup>57</sup> It is not the teacher’s role to hide this knowledge or experience, but rather to enter into dialogue with the students contributing these things to the inquiry. As Freire points out, “ I cannot be a teacher without exposing who I am: the way I relate socially and politically to the world.”<sup>58</sup> Freire does not degrade the importance of teachers throughout his work but argues for the teacher as an intellectual who, like the student, is engaged pre-eminently in producing knowledge.<sup>59</sup>

Freire’s philosophy regarding the role of the teacher has sometimes been mistaken for a call to devaluing their position. In recent times the term ‘facilitator’ has become a popular way of addressing the difficulties of authoritarian teaching stereotypes. Freire spurns the idea of the facilitator in a dialogue with Pepi leistyna. He elaborates:

There is an enormous difference between facilitating and teaching. When someone calls himself or herself a facilitator and not a teacher, deep inside what they are doing is renouncing the task of teaching, and therefore the task of dialogue...they are renouncing their duty of teaching, the task of placing the object of knowledge as a mediator between himself or herself and the students and then assuming the responsibilities as a dialogical educator – that is, an illuminator of the object, a revealer of the object.<sup>60</sup>

To teach is essentially to form. As such it is not a responsibility undertaken lightly. To devalue teaching is to reduce it to a simple technique of transmission, which denies the fundamental process of humanization and its capacity to form the human person. If we have serious regard for what it means to be human, the teaching of content cannot be separated from the moral formation of the learner.<sup>61</sup>

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<sup>56</sup> Ibid.

<sup>57</sup> P. Freire. *Pedagogy of freedom: Ethics, democracy and civic courage*, p.12.

<sup>58</sup> Ibid.,p.87..

<sup>59</sup> Ibid,p.9

<sup>60</sup> P. Leistyna. *Presence of mind: Education and the politics of deception*, p.7.

<sup>61</sup> P. Freire. *Pedagogy of freedom: Ethics, democracy and civic courage*, p.39.

As such, the process of teaching cannot be entered into authentically without a concern for humans and humanization. A teacher cannot enter into dialogue without the desire to hear the voices of others or to include all voices in the creation of new knowledge. Freire stated that, “If I do not love the world - if I do not love life- if I do not love people – I cannot enter into dialogue.”<sup>62</sup>

Teaching is therefore concerned with formation and humanization. But it is not solely the formation and humanization of the students with which the process of education is concerned. The teacher must come to the recognition that in education that is for liberation. All participants are being formed and humanized in the process and, as such, they are also included. The person in charge of education is being formed or re-formed as he or she teaches, and the person who is being taught forms him or herself in the process.<sup>63</sup> Since teachers also have historical locations and live in the context of social processes they are not independent of these as neither are their students.<sup>64</sup> Such teachers are not static or rigid beings. They are instead human beings who are following their ontological vocation to become more ‘fully human’ also.

If teachers are to consider education as a process where their own humanization is not a secret but rather an integral part of the process of education then classrooms will be distinctly altered from the way we have known them. Freirean critical pedagogy *requires* that the teacher share their ontological perspective rather than being a neutral administrator of knowledge. Traditionally teachers have been encouraged to not own the knowledge that they are promoting to the students. In other words, they [teachers] create mechanisms that give the illusions that their position in the world is not informed by ideology. Only the other has ideology. Of course, this is not possible – we are all ideological beings.<sup>65</sup>

Ideological beings have emotions and perspectives and experiences. Critical pedagogy invites the teacher not to disguise these aspects of the self behind the bureaucracy of formal education practices but instead to own them as each participant in the educational process does. Teachers are allowed to ‘feel’ in a

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<sup>62</sup> P. McLaren. “A pedagogy of possibility: Reflecting upon Paulo Freire’s politics of education,” p.20.

<sup>63</sup> Op cit.

<sup>64</sup> Ibid

<sup>65</sup> P. Leistyna. *Presence of mind: Education and the politics of deception.*, p.7

Freirean critical pedagogy. In fact, the pedagogy necessitates that teachers feel for other human beings in order to take up the challenge of transforming the world. Feeling does not exclude the realistic possibility of at times being angry or frustrated. As Freire reflects:

I feel this anger because I love. I do not need to hide this anger. But I also need to understand the anger of the students. They have this very right to be angry. Teachers working in coordination with the ideology of most formal institutions of schooling often forbid the students to expose their anger, frustration, and disappointment with the teacher and the institution itself.<sup>66</sup>

Teachers in this modern age cannot forget that they are teaching within the oppressive conditions of the capitalist regime and, as such, anger from the teacher and the student is natural at times if they are at all concerned with equality and humanization in the world. Anger is not necessarily a bad thing although the recognition of allowing feelings into the educational setting can come as a shock to some students. Students are used to being passive recipients to information and doing what the teacher instructs. If they are asked to expose who they are and what they feel about the world they are often initially perplexed. If they are then asked to elaborate on what things mean in the world they can become sceptical of the whole situation, so different is this situation to that of their previous experience with teachers. Freire points out that if a liberating teacher asks students to co-develop the class with him or her, the student often doubts that this is 'real education'.<sup>67</sup>

What it means to be a teacher of a pedagogy of liberation and democracy is to be an individual who has the courage and critical capacity to join with others in order to seek new knowledge and a new reality. There are no strict guidelines or complete teaching plans given that there are no fatalistic assumptions about the knowledge that will occur around the object of knowing. There is a clear aim of humanization and democracy for all which can be reached through the learner firstly discovering their own historicity, then through collaboration in dialogue and praxis which leads to a critical consciousness. Yet despite this pedagogy is uncompleted, and powerful in its incompleteness. Freire writes that "the progressive educator must always be moving out on his or her own, continually

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<sup>66</sup> Ibid, p.7.

<sup>67</sup> I. Shor. "Education is Politics – Paulo Freire's critical pedagogy," p.29.

reinventing me and reinventing what it means to be democratic in his or her own specific cultural and historical context.”<sup>68</sup> To teach is to take up the challenge to want to be part of the struggle to fight for humanization for all and also the self and to care about the students being taught enough to want to include them in the process. As Freire puts it, “First of all, I understand the process of teaching as an act of love”.<sup>69</sup>

## 5.6 Critical consciousness

Authentic democratic societies need citizens who are critically conscious. One major aim of a democratic education should therefore be to help students to help themselves to develop these. Critical consciousness is a collaboration of understanding one’s historicity which is then taken as a starting point to enter into a true dialogue with practical outcomes towards humanization. Critical consciousness, or conscientization, is therefore defined as “ the process in which people, not as recipients, but as knowing subjects, achieve a deepening awareness both of the reality which shapes their lives, and of their capacity to transform that reality through acting upon it.”<sup>70</sup>

Such a consciousness requires awareness of the socio-political processes in the world and of the historical relations of the self and others to these. Conscientization is the ability to analyse, problematize (pose questions), and affect the socio-political, economic and cultural realities that shape our lives.<sup>71</sup> Therefore critical consciousness is not an ontological possibility without the development of and participation in praxis. Critical consciousness is about action conducive to transforming the world through critical reflection of the current reality. Without praxis, critical consciousness is an empty term. Freire writes that people;

...will truly be critical if they live in the plenitude of the praxis, that is, if their action encompasses a critical reflection which increasingly organizes their

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<sup>68</sup> P. McLaren. “A pedagogy of possibility: Reflecting upon Paulo Freire’s politics of education,” p.52.

<sup>69</sup> P. Leistyna. *Presence of Mind: Education and the Politics of Deception*, p.7.

<sup>70</sup> J. L. Elias. *Conscientization and deschooling; Freire and Illich’s proposal for reshaping society*, p.133.

<sup>71</sup> Op cit.,p.1.

thinking and thus leads them to move from a purely naïve knowledge of reality to a higher level, one which enables them to perceive the *causes* of reality.<sup>72</sup>

Critical consciousness is not a skill to be taught in the classroom but rather a manner of thinking and a way of life as Freire suggests. To be critical with and in the world is to acknowledge the human ability to interact and change the world. One cannot be critical without recognising this as foremost in their thinking. People cannot be critical unless they understand that their actions impacts on their reality and ultimately the reality of the world. By critically reflecting on their action they can become agents of their own reality. Consientization cannot exist without or outside praxis; that being, it cannot exist outside action- reflection. The two exist in unity and express the permanently dialectical characteristics of the way people are and the way they transform the world.<sup>73</sup>

Similarly, critical consciousness cannot exist without a sense of historicity. By understanding how the actions of people in the past have lead to the current situation of reality one can then understand how their own actions will impact upon the future. Without such an understanding praxis cannot be possible and therefore the reaching of a critical consciousness is prevented. Hence consientization is a historical conscience as well. It requires that people take the role of agents, makers and re-makers of the world; it demands that people create their existence with the elements that the world offers them.<sup>74</sup> Only with historicity and praxis does the attainment of a critical consciousness become a reality.

To teach with a critical pedagogy aimed at developing students' critical consciousness is to aim to make students the agents of their own liberation. The how of consientization implies a basic starting point: the distinction between education as an instrument of domination and education as an instrument for liberation.<sup>75</sup> Critical thinking in this sense is not the process of observing the world and maintaining the social hierarchy by slotting students into the hegemonic ladder through a trial of memorization and obedience tests. Rather than methods designed to domesticate and pacify students, a critical pedagogy

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<sup>72</sup> J. L. Elias(ed). *Paulo Freire: Pedagogue for liberation*, p.70.

<sup>73</sup> P. Freire. "A few notions about the word "consientization".

<sup>74</sup> Ibid.

<sup>75</sup> Ibid,p,225.

aims to enhance students' curiosity and questioning and encourage them to be active in initiating change through praxis, both inside the classroom and society at large. Critical pedagogy is a way of thinking about, negotiating and transforming the relationship among classroom teaching, the production of knowledge, the institutional structures of the school, and of the wider community, society, and nation state.<sup>76</sup>

The reality is that an authentic critical pedagogy cannot dominate people due to its very nature. To encourage students to become agents of their own humanization, and to realise their capacities to transform their own realities, can never equate to disempowerment. Furthermore, a critical pedagogy requires that students look at structures in society- such as institutions - and pose critical problems about their historical placement in the world and the agendas such institutions hold, including the institution of education at which the student is currently learning. Such transparency is not concerned with subduing the student or domesticating their critical faculties for domination. As Freire pointed out, “problem-posing education does not and cannot serve the interests of the oppressors”.<sup>77</sup>

Through learners' emplacement in their historicity and through dialogue with critical reflection and action, the connections between every day situations and the larger forces that oppress them are revealed. It is through the identification of these “limit-situations” that the possibility of action to transform this reality can be discovered.<sup>78</sup> Instead of learners being fearful about the oppressing forces in the world conscientization means moving into a consciousness where one can comprehend they are not powerless bystanders to the formation of reality. Reality becomes a “cognoscible object” towards which the learner “takes an epistemological attitude towards searching for deeper knowledge”.<sup>79</sup> Rather than being helpless and hopeless to the limiting situations of their reality they find an opportunity in the discovery of its transformational nature. As Freire contends; we cannot transcend our existence as “un-concluded, limited, conditioned, historical beings” yet this unfinished state actually provides the “opportunity of setting

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<sup>76</sup> P. McLaren. *Che Guevara, Paulo Freire, and the pedagogy of revolution*, p.35.

<sup>77</sup> P. Freire. *Pedagogy of the oppressed*, p.59.

<sup>78</sup> P. Freire. *Pedagogy of hope: Reliving pedagogy of the oppressed*, p.91

P. Freire. *Pedagogy of freedom: Ethics, democracy, and civic courage*.

<sup>79</sup> P. Freire. “A few notions about the word “conscientization,” p.223.

ourselves free” of the situations that limit us in the world in so far as we join the struggle for transformation of the world.<sup>80</sup>

Education that is concerned with developing a critical consciousness is concerned with a human struggle for freedom. It is not a pedagogy that centres on empty facts that are presented as knowledge abstracted from the world, but instead is a pedagogy aimed at illuminating the socio-economic and political of the world and its connections to the learner and others. It is education that is concerned with democracy and living in a democratic forum where all voices are heard and all citizens have the right to participate in dialogue. At the foundation of Freire’s work is the deep conviction that a critical, multicultural democracy should be the driving force of the struggle freedom. For Freire, conscientization- a sense of history praxis and dialogue -are central to such a struggle.<sup>81</sup>

Conscientization does not imply that it is something that is a solely individual pursuit. It is not something that is strictly owned or achieved by an individual, nor can it be relevant outside the context of specific cultural and historical locations.<sup>82</sup>

People free themselves in collaboration and communion. “No one saves another, no one saves himself alone; because only in communion can we save or not save ourselves.”<sup>83</sup> Democracy is collaboration and communion and it is also strength because authentic democracy encourages critical transitivity and then allows different perspectives to be heard rather than negating one voice as more valid than another. As Freire points out, “Critical transitivity is characteristic of authentically democratic regimes and corresponds to highly preamble,(Fix) interrogative and restless dialogical forms of life.”<sup>84</sup>

Critical consciousness is a consciousness for humanization. *Humanization* is the ontological vocation of human beings.<sup>85</sup> This is the primary concern of a critical pedagogy; to struggle for people to become more fully human. And as Freire contends, “the more people become themselves, the better the democracy.”<sup>86</sup>The

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<sup>80</sup> P. Freire. *Pedagogy of hope: Reliving pedagogy of the oppressed*, p.100

<sup>81</sup> P. Leistyna. *Presence of mind: Education and the politics of deception*, p.1.

<sup>82</sup> P. Freire. *Pedagogy of hope: Reliving pedagogy of the oppressed*.

<sup>83</sup> J. L. Elias(Ed). *Paulo Freire: Pedagogue for Liberation*, p.117.

<sup>84</sup> P.Freire. *Education for critical consciousness*, p.12.

<sup>85</sup> P. Freire. *Pedagogy of hope: Reliving pedagogy of the oppressed*

<sup>86</sup> M. Horton & P. Freire. *We make the road by walking: Conversations on education and social change*,p.145.

quest for humanization and authentic democracy is implicitly linked. Both are always in a process of becoming and have a love for humanity at their core. In contrast to this love only generating a concern for the oppression, suffering and inequality in the world it instead generates action to address it. As Marx and Engels so wisely pointed out, “the philosophers have only *interpreted* the world in various ways; the point, however, is to *change* it.”<sup>87</sup>

The development of critical consciousness in order to make people agents of their own humanization would be severely hindered in a system that was dedicated to the conforming of its learners to adapt to the current reality by domesticating their critical capacities. Such an education does not encourage introspection and critique but is concerned solely with the very preservation of its survival. It has no desire to expose the mythification of reality- which comes from cultural action- and does not question culture or take it as problematic. Instead it accepts “the myths that ossify it and ossify us”.<sup>88</sup> As Freire imparts, for education to be reflective of his critical pedagogy; “we have to make – and help others to make – problematic the mythical power of the slogans which domesticate us.”<sup>89</sup> Thus, a critical pedagogy does not have the preservation of current structures as its foundation but rather the transformation of the world.

Freire recognised that education dedicated to transforming the world would come up against opposition from several fronts. In *Pedagogy of Freedom*, he cautioned that:

The critical educational project faces an uphill battle if it argues that “critical consciousness”, as opposed to critical thinking as a “skill”, should be the motive force of education and that its process as well as its outcome is a generation of intervenors in the social and political life of this planet.<sup>90</sup>

The notion that education would be dedicated to the liberation of people from the slogans and socio-economic structures that bind them perhaps perpetuates a fear in the minds of many who do not trust the people to be free. Freedom in this sense is equated with the notion of ‘chaos’ yet Freire has always advocated that freedom

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<sup>87</sup> K. Marx & F. Engels. *The Marx-Engels reader*,p.145.

<sup>88</sup> P. Freire. “ A few notions about the word “conscientization,”p.226.

<sup>89</sup> Ibid.

<sup>90</sup> P.Freire. *Pedagogy of freedom: Ethics, democracy, and civic courage*,p.17.

must be pursued constantly and responsibly.<sup>91</sup> By reducing critical consciousness to education that promotes critical thinking as a skill a lid is still maintained over the peoples' pursuit of freedom while giving the outward impression of being a democratic practice. But without praxis, without action-reflection and the foundational objective of people becoming agents of social transformation, this practice is empty as a critical pedagogy and displays a lack of trust in the people and negates their right to freedom.

Aronowitz (1993) argued that Freire's critical pedagogy was solely directed at the liberation of the oppressed and held no epistemological benefit for individual students when he stated:

The task of this revolutionary pedagogy is not to foster critical consciousness in order to improve cognitive learning, the student's self-esteem, or even to assist in his aspiration to fulfil his human "potential"...It is to the liberation of the oppressed as historical subjects within the framework of revolutionary objects that Freire's pedagogy is directed.<sup>92</sup>

While it is undeniable that Freire's pedagogy is concerned with the liberation of the oppressed, what must be understood is that it is not a pedagogy designed to alienate the oppressed from the world or others in the world nor is it a pedagogy designed to create more separatisms in the world. As Freire stated; "the important thing is to help men (and nations) help themselves, to place them in consciously critical confrontation with their problems, to make them agents of their own recuperation."<sup>93</sup> Critical consciousness does imply epistemological development in its necessity to understand the world and historical locations in order for dialogue and praxis to occur. The oppressive state of the capitalist regime has held all individuals captive through its materialistic consumer slogans and its vast inequality of economic resources. Freire's pedagogy is concerned with democracy, which implies liberation from the constricting conditions of capitalism. As Freire contends; "Freedom is not an ideal located outside of man; nor is it an idea which becomes myth. It is rather the indispensable condition for the quest of humanization".<sup>94</sup>

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<sup>91</sup> J. L. Elias(Ed). *Paulo Freire: Pedagogue for liberation*.

<sup>92</sup> S. Aronowitz. "Paulo Freire's radical democratic humanism," pp.11-12

<sup>93</sup> P.Freire. *Education for critical consciousness*, p.16.

<sup>94</sup> J. L. Elias(Ed). *Paulo Freire: Pedagogue for Liberation*,p.113.

Freedom, in short, is the indispensable condition of all humans. A pedagogy for critical consciousness must recognize this as its base. There has been a lack of this recognition in education as we know it. Freire's critical pedagogy gives a theory of education that can finally be used to 'empower' learners in the true sense of the word by making them agents of their own, and society's, transformation. As McLaren (1999) astutely observes; "Freire's critical "pedagogy of possibility" offers theoretical and practical alternatives to both neo-conservative and neo-liberal discourses and practices."<sup>95</sup> As such, it is our duty as educators to pursue these alternatives to oppression and submission in favour of practices aimed at liberation, freedom and democracy.

## 5.7 Transcending the classroom

Education is not an oasis that is unaffected by the larger society in which it is situated. The problems that are associated with implementing a democratic education for liberation within the current capitalist, neo-liberal conditions of the world are therefore daunting in capacity. The current system of banking theory with its domesticating characteristics and paternalistic philosophy is uncondusive to the vision of education concerned with the development of a critical consciousness for democracy. Freire himself admitted a huge frustration in the task of attempting school reform within a system that is, in some cases, lacking the most elementary tools of education.<sup>96</sup> This, in turn, also means that a majority of students who have been through this system will not have acquired these tools either.

Education has become a sub-sector of the capitalist market in many respects and as such has become a marketable commodity frequently more tailored to the prescriptions of big business. A pedagogue for authentic democracy and freedom from the oppression of capitalism will undoubtedly champion in the material redistribution of wealth. It is therefore predictable that there are powerful groups of people who will not wish to see the social order overturned. Freire was well

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<sup>95</sup> P. McLaren. "A pedagogy of possibility: Reflecting upon Paulo Freire's politics of education," pp.15-16.

<sup>96</sup> P.Freire. *Pedagogy of freedom: Ethics, democracy, and civic courage*.

aware that there is strong opposition from several parties to his critical pedagogy.

He illustrates that:

Not only would this program encounter opposition from the reactionaries whose agenda is, more and more, frankly to subsume schools to corporate requirements but also from liberals and progressives who cling to the neutrality of education, just as scientists insist on their incapability regarding the uses of their discoveries and inventions.<sup>97</sup>

Yet the situation of inequality and oppression as it currently stands cannot be denied by anyone with awareness outside their immediate proximity. The dominant (neo) conservative discourse blames the victims of these policies for their own suffering, suggesting that a moral poverty prefigures their social and economic predicaments.<sup>98</sup> But this ideology is clearly designed as a scapegoat for addressing the reality the oppressors produce. Meanwhile, the reformism of the (neo) liberals produces little change in either urban schools or their larger social contexts.<sup>99</sup> Regardless of this ongoing argument, the situation of oppression and suffering remains as a reality in the world and the domestication of people's critical capacities remains deemed an educational problem. The crux of the matter lies in the nexus between education and society. Freire firmly believed educational change must be accompanied by significant changes in the social and political structure in which education takes place.<sup>100</sup>

Freire frequently advocated a unity of oppressed groups in order to challenge inequality. Yet he also cautioned that "unity in this sense should never constitute a process of incorporating difference in a manner that leads to blind assimilation."<sup>101</sup> He asserted that the oppressed would have to wage a struggle not only for the redistribution of material resources but also over cultural meanings and how these translated in the global division of labour.<sup>102</sup> What must be remembered is that Freire wished to combat more separatism in the world and this was not possibly merely by reversing the roles of inequality. Although he was undeniably concerned with the liberation of the oppressed from capitalist

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<sup>97</sup> Ibid, p.17.

<sup>98</sup> W. Bennett. *Body count: Moral poverty and how to win America's war against crime and drugs.*

<sup>99</sup> J. Anyon. *Ghetto schooling: A political economy of urban educational reform.*

<sup>100</sup> P. McLaren. "A pedagogy of possibility: Reflecting upon Paulo Freire's politics of education," p.49.

<sup>101</sup> P. Leistyna. *Presence of mind: Education and the politics of deception*, p.5.

<sup>102</sup> P. McLaren. "A pedagogy of possibility: Reflecting upon Paulo Freire's politics of education."

constraints, in *Pedagogy of Freedom* Freire also clearly argues for a ‘universal human ethic’.<sup>103</sup>

This objective would necessitate a broader theory of inclusion so that *all* people might participate in the transformation of reality. Inclusion without assimilation would, put simply, require authentic democracy.

In a dialogue with Freire, Pepi Leistyna clarified Freire’s position about such a unity when speaking about a fight against social injustice by stating:

...But this would require that the broader culture that you spoke of be about democracy, which is based on participation and dissent, and not on coercion and conformity. In other words, democracy and cultural commonality are contradictions.<sup>104</sup>

For some, the potential of unity of all people under a culture of democracy might seem to be an impossibility. Unity of the different groups of oppressed itself is a task yet unachieved. Nevertheless that is what a pedagogy truly dedicated to democracy would aim for. Often throughout Freire’s work, and work of relevant scholars critiquing him, one gets the impression that appealing to the oppressors to consider the right of humanization for all and the suffering currently operative in the world would be a futile exercise in the extreme. Yet as Freire points out, “it would be impossible to dehumanise without being dehumanised – so deep are the social roots of the *calling*”.<sup>105</sup> The ‘calling’ that Freire is talking about is of course the call for humanization. By acknowledging the oppressors as also being included in the process of human becoming are and therefore capable of understanding the ‘call’, there is an opportunity for hope that an authentic democracy may eventuate. If instead the stance is taken that oppressors are only capable of dehumanisation, and this is a fixed state, then there is no hope of a universal human ethic. Breault (2003) acknowledges the reluctance to grant legitimacy to the fears of the oppressor in the process of liberation:

From an oppressor perspective, any restriction on their current way of life is a threat to their own rights. That perception cannot simply be ignored or legislated away. If we are willing to point out oppression, racism or insensitivity, we must also discuss openly the fear and resentment that perpetuates injustice – even if those views are offensive to us and to human

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<sup>103</sup> P. Freire. *Pedagogy of freedom: Ethics, democracy, and civic courage*, p.23.

<sup>104</sup> P. Leistyna. *Presence of mind: Education and the politics of deception*, p.6.

<sup>105</sup> P. Freire. *Pedagogy of hope: Reliving pedagogy of the oppressed*, p.120.

dignity...To be culturally competent is to hear and try to understand the voices of *all* concerned. Only when the oppressors reach their own conclusions that their views dehumanise others and themselves will attitudinal change begin.<sup>106</sup>

The question of whether democratic education holds the potential for helping oppressors reach these conclusions is hereby raised. Freire said that “critical education must expose the new alliance of many in the liberal intelligentsia with the dominant culture without fixing moral blame”.<sup>107</sup> Yet he also concurred that it is not education which shapes society, but society that shapes education according to the agendas of those in power.<sup>108</sup> At present the people in power are the oppressors who appear to have little desire to see reality transformed. The problem, as it becomes presented, is that Freire has tried to transfer power to the oppressed through education, which has traditionally followed the banking theory as it is framed in the context of state-financed and controlled schooling.<sup>109</sup>

As the current situation stands, a dire need is evident for this obstacle in the implementation of a critical pedagogy to become the focus of ongoing dialogue. Perhaps the tertiary sector is best placed as the site to implement more critical discussion about these barriers. Perhaps teachers willing to step away from mainstream education and promote critical consciousness will help raise awareness of the struggle. Gramsci advocated that “in order to surpass the type of education that trains the bourgeois, it is necessary to attack the ends and not the means, to train a man able to think, study, to direct and to control those who direct”.<sup>110</sup> Perhaps this is a relevant key in the revolutionary task ahead.

As Freire made clear, democracy is a system requiring leaders and leadership. He instead was in favour of leaders in the educational process and especially in the political process. He emphasized that:

...The origin of authentic leadership is politics, and there is no other place for leadership to be born than within the group that intends to lead. Leadership should not be something or someone coming from outside the group to take charge...When considering the democratic leadership and its nature, we have to understand that it has to include establishing principles and limits that have

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<sup>106</sup> R.A. Breault, “Dewey, Freire, and a pedagogy for the oppressor,”p.3.

<sup>107</sup> P.Freire. *Pedagogy of freedom: Ethics, democracy, and civic courage*, p17.

<sup>108</sup> P. Freire & I. Shor. *A pedagogy for Liberation –Dialogues on transforming education*.

<sup>109</sup> P.McLaren & P. Leonard, (eds). *Paulo Freire: A critical encounter*,p.20.

<sup>110</sup> M. Gadotti. *Pedagogy of praxis – A dialectical philosophy of education*, p.55.

to correspond to the goals to be achieved- which have to be shared by the whole group in a general policy.<sup>111</sup>

The task that is therefore before critical educators now is to find ways to implement critical pedagogy for democracy within the current constrictions of capitalism without having it reduced and de-ducted to a functional 'skill' or an empty practice without dialogue and praxis. This is by no means an easy challenge. It will require educators to expand on Freire's theory themselves and to willingly join the struggle to fight for a pedagogy of freedom for all. Although there are limits and imperfections in Freire's theory, and he acknowledged this, he nonetheless steadfastly defended the core of his theory and the practice of justice that lay at the cause of his struggle.<sup>112</sup> It is now been left in the hands of those still alive to participate in the struggle to determine if his pedagogy for liberation can become a reality.

## 5.8 Conclusion

A pedagogy for democracy aims at learners developing a critical consciousness so that they may become active participants in transforming the world. A critical consciousness is developed by the learner firstly understanding their particular historical location in the world, (their historicity), and then reflecting on the historical locations of others also. In encouraging communication across difference and diversity, a critical understanding of people's historicity through such dialogue becomes possible. By entering into dialogue, the process of education becomes one about critically reflecting on the knowledge of the past the learners bring to the situation. New knowledge is thus created about the object of knowing, rather than the process being dominated by transmitted knowledge from the teacher.

The critical teacher is *in* the class and *with* the class, in that the teacher is also a participant in the production of new knowledge. Each participant brings his or her previous knowledge and experience to the dialogue with the collective aim of

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<sup>111</sup> P. Leistyna. *Presence of Mind: Education and the Politics of Deception*, p.6.

<sup>112</sup> P. Freire & A. Fraundez. *Learning to question*.

P. Freire. *Pedagogy of hope: Reliving pedagogy of the oppressed*

creating knowledge together. The teacher must therefore be open to learning new knowledge and gaining new perspectives in the process of education, as must the students. The object of knowing is 'put between' the participants in education which they speak around and through in critical reflection. The teacher, (and possibly the students), introduce tools and instruments such as texts, objects and materials to aid the critical reflection but not to dictate it. The teacher of a pedagogue for democracy therefore must recognize their own ontological vocation of humanization as well as the learners.

This thesis has argued consistently that through critical reflection and dialogue the student becomes aware of the current state of inequality and oppression in the world today due to the socio-economic conditions of neo-liberalism and capitalism. By being introduced to the concepts of humanization and dehumanisation through this critical reflection they can begin to see the causes of these conditions in the world as the result of human action. They can then posed problems and confront the current system and the forces that are behind its causes. By speaking true words in dialogue - that is in praxis - learners become agents do more than critically reflect on the world, they initiate action to transform it.

Freire has outlined this critical pedagogy for democracy and liberation throughout the course of his life and works. The importance of the "struggle who" to free people from the state of oppression that neo-liberal capitalism has created and sustained in the world today is undeniable. The many obstacles and constrictions that will have to be overcome in order to see this transformation is equally undeniable. The hope for liberation and love for humanization are extremely compelling motivations to take up this cause. What is also needed, however, are people willing to challenge the current system and strong leaders to direct this. Education is a forum that speaks to the emerging generation and as such, critical educators have a duty to model and make accessible democratic pedagogy for freedom and liberation. Whilst this challenge will require the summing of a collective critical consciousness and also a summing of courage, the resulting re-direction and transformation of human history towards equality and liberation outweigh any materialistic value that the capitalist regime could provide.

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