



## Review of the book “education as a practice of freedom” by Paulo Freire

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Submitted on: 11/10/2021

Approved on: 11/15/2021

v. 1, no. 12 p. 01-05, Dec. 2021

DOI: 10.51473/rcmos.v1i12.203

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*Education as a Practice of Freedom* was written in 1967, during Paulo Freire's exile in Chile. The period portrayed emphasizes that Brazilian society was in transition at that time and it seems that it has not yet managed to make the crossing, due to the short period in which the country is experiencing an incipient and immature democracy. The book has 157 pages that are divided into four chapters and an appendix that demonstrates in great detail the entire literacy method developed by Freire.

Freire shows the search for a mass education that is the search for freedom, devoid of the alienation that the elites intend. He questions what type of education should be aimed for: alienating education for the man-object or liberating education for the man-subject. Since the man-subject would imply the society-subject, aware of his actions, always guided by self-reflection and reflection on time and space.

His work is based on the presentation of his method of literacy for young people and adults in a very detailed way, highlighting his enormous philosophical capacity and his political action based on his educational practice. This work, which appears divided into four chapters, was written during his period in exile in Chile, at the same time that he participated in the development of several projects based on his method.

In the first chapter, The Brazilian Society in Transition, there is a very important theme which is that of assistance that makes man passive, since it does not allow him to participate in the process of his own recovery and does not allow for the awareness that is so necessary for the emergence of the massification process. This paternalistic attitude goes back to the remnants of the slave society that always treated men

simple as animals, as possession. Here it is worth noting that the term man refers to men and women. This legacy was and, in a way, still is welcomed by the politicians who competed for power in the 1960s.

Faced with this oppressive force, it would be impossible for man to feel in the world, integrated into the environment in which he lives, reflecting on his existence; in short, it would not be the protagonist of its History and Culture. It would just be a lot of maneuvering for those who were merely concerned with power.

In chapter 2, called Closed Society and Democratic Inexperience, Freire presents his arguments about the closed society and Brazil's democratic inexperience. As the country is the result of large estates, where the master ruled and owned everything, including people; slaves had no voice. Showing, once again, that the project for this *Terra Brasilis* is exploitation that seeks material wealth only.

There was not, and still does not seem to be, a serious project to create a free, active and thinking nation. Citizens were not called to participate in debates to solve common problems and, therefore, had to remain in the doldrums, waiting for decisions to be made without their analysis.

The arrival of the Court to Rio de Janeiro in 1808 led to a process of Europeanization in Brazil. It was a time when the bourgeoisie, on the rise, began to take space from the big landowners. However, there was no concern for the people. It was a change of direction, with them led. And in this fight for survival, a society was created in which its members are ready to gain an advantage, even if it has to harm the collective.

However, around the time the book was written, there was an increasing evolution of the urbanization process, in which people left rural areas in search of better living conditions in large cities that were beginning to industrialize. From some mobilizations, there are also records of some experiences of popular participation, which demonstrate that the country tended to get out of the alienated situation in which it was.

Because there is no project to build a nation, according to Paulo Freire, educators have a preponderant role in the fight against massification (the desire of the dominant class that intends to maintain the *status quo*). In this sense, chapter three, Education *versus* Massification analyzes traditional education and the practices that were applied at school. Freire, humanist that he was, always thinking about the liberation of man, suggests that

elite should be aware of their responsibility towards the country and promote an education capable of freeing Brazilians from this state of lethargy, through an education that faces problems with the aim of finding objective solutions, an education that is based on dialogue and in science; in order to make the transition from naive transitivity to critical transitivity. In this way, it would be possible for people to be promoted to active participation in the different spheres in which they live, that is, at school, in unions, in the neighborhood, in associations, among many others.

It must be agreed that education must stop being “verbose”, outside the underlying reality of individuals. It must be transformative in that it will overcome illiteracy, which is currently more characterized by functional illiteracy, and elevate democracy to a more effective and participatory level.

Educators, according to the author, must treat subjects with due depth, ceasing to be superficial in their analyses; and this requires the capacity for critical analysis and love to develop in students a taste for research, inquiry, criticism and science.

In the last chapter, there is a reflection on the relationship between Education and Awareness, as the subtitle itself demonstrates. The writer refutes ready-made formulas and believes that there must be respectful interaction between educator and student for a healthy exchange of knowledge between them. It also details the work carried out in the Culture Circles, where the Professor gained a new concept: he was the Coordinator of the debates; instead of classes, there was dialogue; the student was a group participant; and points were replaced by compact programming, reduced and codified into learning units. The debates were scheduled according to the group’s suggestion. Furthermore, the Angicos experience is shown in which 300 adults became literate in 45 days. The method used by Paulo Freire is shown in detail and shows that literacy goes beyond the simple memorization of terms disconnected from reality, but requires conscious appropriation of the technique in a curious, creative, creative and recreating attitude. It is possible to see that Paulo Freire thought of a liberating education, based on love and dialogue, however, unfortunately, after the 1964 Military Coup, the project was interrupted and did not receive due recognition during the dictatorship.

The appendix brings images produced by the painter Vicente de Abreu (since Francisco Brenand's originals were taken) that were associated with 10 situations that

they enable the understanding of the concept of culture and demonstrate how this knowledge is constructed. They also present the 17 generating words that constituted the CVof the Culture Circles of the State of Rio and Guanabara, based on the word favela.

It is truly one of the author's most philosophical texts and reflects on man's place in the world and how education is capable of freeing him so that he can act consciously. The topic discussed is still very current. It is enough to analyze the behavior of the elite who, distanced from social problems, want to maintain alienation in order to maintain their privileges. Always distorting reality, positioning itself as the protector of society, when in fact it wants massification to continue. To do this, they demonize those who try to defend dignity and freedom. Certainly, Brazilian society has not yet freed itself from the oppressive constraints that harm it so much. Currently, we see the cutting of funds that would be allocated to education, the dissemination of *fake news*, glorification of ignorance and violence on the part of politicians and groups of malicious businesspeople who really show no concern for Brazilian citizens.

The book brings a very incisive reflection: "It is necessary to exist and not just live." In a way, it goes beyond the limits of the educational scope and goes into the spiritual field, emphasizing that religion must reconnect human beings to their Creator, instead of being another tool to alienate them. It must always show that man is capable of transcending time and recreating and modifying the environment in which he lives. It is capable of reflecting on its condition in spacetime, unlike animals.

Unfortunately, man has been educated to be accommodated and not to integrate, being part of the whole and as he loses his ability to choose, he just accepts what is imposed, complacent because he does not have freedom and loses his creative capacity. As oppression is overwhelming, it reduces man to an animal incapable of integration, but only capable of adjusting and accommodating himself to what is imposed on him. Therefore, it is urgent to use intellectual faculties to the detriment of instinctive and emotional ones for the integration of man capable of understanding changes and actively participating in them.

Freire saw a "closed society" that seems to have not yet managed to transform into an "open society". This same society seems to have not yet managed to have such clarification, because whenever a thinker appears, who reflects on his

acts critically and seeks the rise of society, is treated as a radical in the pejorative sense of the word, or as a communist. Despite always using the words education, freedom, culture, autonomy in his texts; Paulo Freire has been criticized by the current government as being a harmful factor for Brazilian education.

It really is a work that encourages education professionals to move from the field of teachers to that of educators (or coordinators, as the author suggests in his Literacy Method). Teachers need to change the focus from the teaching paradigm to the learning paradigm, which means not focusing educational action on the teacher, but understanding that learning is a continuous process that goes beyond a single path and must consider knowledge and experiences of students. Education must also be based on respect for the paths that arise in the course of experience between people.

A teacher, in this sense, is the one who holds knowledge and, from top to bottom, only communicates to his students, imposing limits and conditions on them. On the other hand, the educator dialogues, questions and allows himself to be questioned through his own way of behaving. The educator is always learning and should never be satisfied with the level achieved. Once people, society, methods and relationships change, he cannot remain stagnant, considering himself holder of all the truth and, Paulo Freire, with all his knowledge and humility, brings to light that education must be based on love, dialogue, respect for different experiences and constant reflections on the educational act.

## References

FREIRE, Paulo. **Education as a practice of Freedom**. 49th ed. São Paulo: Peace and Land. 2021.