# Effects of Paulo Freire Theory to Media Information Literacy

パウロ・フレイレの理論のメディア情報リテラシーへの影響

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**Abstract**

The present paper brings a brief introduction to one the most recognized Brazilian educators. Paulo Freire devoted his life to education with research and the teaching practice itself. Starting from a humanist view, he developed his own literacy method, searching for liberation of the oppressed masses. Being his most significant contribution the need for attention about the student background. And, this paper also aims to explore Freire's contributions to education and direct it to Media Information Literacy (MIL), from a point of view of social movement.

概要

本報告では，先ずブラジルで最も知られた教育者について簡単に紹介している。パウロ・フレイレは，その人生で教育と，研究，実践に没頭した。ヒューマニズムの見地に始まり，独自のリテラシー育成法を開発し，異なる見方を持つ自由を追い求めた。彼の最も重要な成果は，生徒の成育歴について注意を払う必要があることを示したことだ。そして，本報告では社会階層移行の観点から，フレイレの教育やメディア情報リテラシー(MIL)に及ぼした貢献について調査することを狙った。

## 1. Biography and Social Context

Paulo Freire (1921-1997) was born in Brazil and until now is known as the most prestigious Brazilian educator. In 2012 he was declared patron of Brazilian education.

His pedagogical ideas originated from his observation of the students culture - particularly the use of language - and the elitist role of the school. From his experiences in life he stated that the hunger affected his ability to learn, and that influenced his decision to dedicate his life to improving the lives of the poor.

In 1946 he became the Director of the Department of Education and Culture of the Social Service in the state of Pernambuco, in the northeast region of Brazil.

In 1964 Brazil suffered the military coup and Paulo Freire, at that time leading the former president literacy program, was arrested accused of communism. After 70 days in prison he was exiled from Brazil for 16 years. During his exile, he wrote one of his most known books called "Pedagogy of the Oppressed" in 1968. He was invited to lecture at Harvard University and after one year in Cambridge, Massachusetts, he moved to Geneva, Switzerland to work as a special education advisor to the World Council of Churches. He also worked as an adviser in former Portuguese colonies in Africa for an educational reform.

With the end of his exile, when back to Brazil, Freire joined the Worker's Party and later on he became Secretary of Education for the state of São Paulo.

For reference purposes, it is necessary to address the Brazilian reality in terms of social disparity. In Brazil poverty was, and still is, a major problem concerning all regions of the country. Paulo Freire developed his theory based in all these social and economic differences in an effort to shorten the gap within the society. Thus, all his work cited here should be observed from a viewpoint of a society where there are people that control most

of the country's riches, and many others have no opinion in several aspects that permeate their lives whatsoever.

## 2. Contributions to education

Paulo Freire's most known work is the Pedagogy of the Oppressed where he debates about how the socially oppressed individuals need to understand the world around them to start a change of their own reality. He defended the idea that the objective of the school was to teach the student how to "read the world" (Freire, 1997) so that they could change it. Freire expressed the students needed to develop an awareness of their situation in order to be able to understand their role and work towards their liberation.

Freire frequently criticized the traditional method of education, which he often referred as "banking model of education" (Freire, 2007), or the model of education in which the student was viewed as a blank account to be filled by the teacher. In this concept of education the cultural background of the student is ignored, focusing only on what is had to be important by the dominant culture. In other words, knowledge is seen as a donation from those that judge themselves as owners of this knowledge. The traditional school was recognized by him as an alienating space where "the student's curiosity, investigative spirit and creativity are killed". He often said that while the conservative school intended to accommodate students to the existing world, the education he defended intended to unsettle them.

Still on the banking model of education, Freire points to the fact that most of the knowledge often showed in the classroom has no meaning in the lives of students and no critical skills are developed from these practices. From this information, we can identify one of the main points in his whole work, when he indicates that it is needed to take account of the background and from that base the development of the classroom practices

should be designed. Without the critical knowledge the individual is not able to change the environment around itself and thus, it becomes impossible to surpass the oppressor-oppressed contradiction. For the dominant it is not important that the masses think, because this would mean not to control them anymore. From his own words "to dominate, the dominator has no other option but deny them the real praxis to the masses, denying them the right to have their saying, to think right."

The Freiriean approach can be clearly observed from a quotation from his speech during the 1986 UNESCO Prize for peace education, which he won:

> *"[...], the education that I am fighting for, that I am struggling for, is a rigorous, responsible, essentially democratic or progressive form of education which, in order to encourage students to learn, challenges and critically assesses them".*
>
> *(Cited from UNESCO, 1988)*

Freire also points that dialogue is an important part of education and with this in mind, at the same time the teacher teaches he/she can also learn. Even illiterate people have culture and when the educator is able to connect the students culture, dialogue for new knowledge to be acquired is established (Zitkosky, 2005). In his own words "reading the world precedes reading the word" (Freire, 2007), for it is from the reading of the world that every student build new knowledge about reading, writing, calculations, etc.

Dialogue is an essential factor to build critical individuals. And in this view, another term greatly seem in Freire work, Pedagogy of the Oppressed, is the Humanization (Freire, 2007). So, for Freire human life has meaning only from the relentless pursuit of liberation from everything that dehumanizes us and forbid us from being more humane, worthy and free in our being existentially situated.

As a remarkable part, he complements that education is a political act and that it is not neutral. With this in mind, the educator must show his point of view and what he/she

believes in, however, without showing it as the only and real truth. From the several alternatives explained by the educator, the student shall choose what he/she believes to fit better in his reality.

## 3. The Paulo Freire Method

Freire became mostly known in Brazil for his work with adult education. Although many people may refer to his work as a "method", Paulo Freire himself did not want his work to be recognized as a method, rather than a way of thinking. His literacy method became known in 1962 when he alphabetized 300 sugar cane workers in only 45 days without using a textbook (Revista, 2012). He often criticized the use of textbooks for alphabetization because these kinds of books usually brought made up sentences, with no meaning whatsoever to the daily life of the students.

Before the military coup in Brazil, he was in charge of the government literacy program, which recognized by the then current president the method's efficiency and permitted the distribution all over the country. With the military coup, his progressive ideas were taken as communism and thereafter were prohibited in Brazil.

There are three main stages in Freire's method of education: the first being the moment when the teacher get acquainted with what students already know, not only to advance in the classroom discussions, but also to bring to the classroom what has meaning in the students' lives, understanding the most significant words and themes of the lives of the students, inside their vocabulary and community. The second one is social analysis of the words and themes, which allows the student to create the path from common sense to a critical view of the reality. Lastly, is the moment that the educator challenges the student to go beyond the simple, non-critical view of the world, and this also creates a conscious attitude.

## 4. Paulo Freire and Media Literacy

The actual society is surrounded by new means of spreading information such as internet, televisions, digital newspaper accessible by mobile phones, etc. This network of information is now an undeniable part of the modern world and is becoming a natural part of what the world sees as a daily characteristic. Inside this storm of information, people are adopting this new information society as their own reality and thus, those that find themselves outside this trend, are starting to be labeled as "digitally excluded" (Buzzato, 2006).

The "digitally excluded" or also "disconnected" emerge from within this ease of publishing, accessing and interacting with this new network of information. The speed on what knowledge can be shared now is faster than it can be "consumed". When Paulo Freire pointed that those that have no access to education were oppressed and thus, excluded from the dominant society, media education was somewhat new. However, now we must attempt to the fact that media education is an important part of the actual society, and those who are found excluded from this concept are becoming the new socially excluded.

We must also attempt to the fact that even in poor regions now, the access to media has been increasing over the last years, and having access to television, and even computers was made easier. Plus, children and adolescents have been expending more and more time consuming entertainment media, such as television, videogames, internet, music, etc (Hobbs, 2007) . However, this exposure happens in a passive way, coming from an environment where these adolescents cannot always choose what they watch. The Grünwald Declaration on Media Education, presented on 1982 UNESCO's International Symposium on Media Education, had already stated the fact that "in some countries, for

example, children already spend more time watching television than they do attending school." (UNESCO, 1982).

With the previously cited we can relate media education with Paulo Freire's work within two aspects: the first one being using media education as a tool to move from the excluded status, to the digitally included position, as though relating with the education for liberation concept of Freire's research; and second, the fact that what it comes to media education, the educator must still attempt to the students' background, since today's children are born inside this information world, thus bringing with them a whole spectrum of previously acquired knowledge.

Freire's critical pedagogy, which initially related to a different scope and time of the society he participated in, is still related to this more technologically developed society, in which individuals find themselves surrounded by information. To avoid a new type of exclusion, the critical concept of pedagogy must be integrated in media education towards the development of more critical and active users of the new technologies. Freire advocated an approach that started with consciousnesses raising, enabling the poor and the oppressed to explore and analyze the sources of their oppression. In today's standards, exploring and analyzing the oppression of the poor also lays in media education, since it evolves a great part of the modern society.

Also, since there is this wide exposure to information through television, internet, etc., we must also attempt to the creation and maintenance of many values and identities inside our society. In this matter, Hobbs (2007) brings an important notice about how media education might help dealing with these changes:

> *Because children and teenagers have differential access to informational inputs including parents, extended family members, education, and other resources, they differ in the level of reliance on television, Internet and mass media presentations for their understanding of their personal identity and the social world. Media literacy*

> *helps children and young people recognize how values are presented in the mass media and how to evaluate the differences in quality, relevance, and usefulness among the ever-expanding array of entertainment and information choices.*

As Hobbs states above, mass media brings an array of information that involves the development of values and identities of children and young people. However, if this information is not well pondered and critically observed, the mass information might just contribute to the alienation of the less instructed population.

Hobbs (2007) also contributes to the aspect of creating a public sphere with participative citizens when she says that:

> *The creation of a public sphere greatly depends upon an engaged citizenry, whose members are interested, willing and able to access information, evaluate it, and make decisions in a collaborative fashion in order to participate in civic and cultural life.*

This aspect of media education can be enhanced by Freire's theory, where he claims for the critical individual that can make changes in his/her social environment, by having the possibility of choosing what suits better his/her way of thinking. The active citizen is part of media education and the Grünwald Declaration in 1982 (UNESCO, 1982) had already stated this need for awareness among the participants of this new world of information. Critical and active spectators can relate what has been seen and be able to analyze the information, avoiding only being a passive receptor.

As a second link between Freire's theory and media information literacy, we have the still present need to take into account the students' background when developing the practices for this modality of education. As for understanding that today's children are born inside this technological world, it is important to understand what the student has previously experienced and learned. Acknowledging what critical pedagogy indicates, that

students are active participants in the construction of knowledge, Hobbs (2007) brings again another contribution to this aspect:

> *In media literacy, educators use students' preexisting interests in mass media, technology and popular culture to ask questions about the message content, form, audience, purpose and cultural impact or importance. New information, issues and ideas are introduced and students are encouraged to ask questions, gather information, share ideas, and reflect upon their own experience and new knowledge.*

In Freire's adult education "method" he already pointed out that it is important, to explain to the student why he/she should learn what was being discussed in the classroom. In today's reality, where we see information everywhere, children and young people must also be included in this understanding, since the everyday life provides information in high volume and speed. When the school negates the reality of the student, he/she loses the interest turning the learning meaningless.

We must also observe the fact that this digital culture is increasingly fragmented, and the gap between teachers and students understanding and use of these technologies is evident. By engaging this aspect, the quality between the teacher-student relationship can be improved, when the teacher acknowledges this wide background of digital culture that each student brings with himself/herself.

## 5. Final remarks

Paulo Freire theory contributed to the education not only in Brazil, but in several countries around the world. His travel around the world during his exile allowed him to develop his ideas beyond his own reality, giving contribution to different aspects of the education field.

As previously stated, he writes for a context where the social disparity is evident and needed to be addressed. Although this reality must be taken account while reading his work, one must also notice that the concept of critical pedagogy can and should be taken for any kind of society that wants individuals to develop a critical thinking, aiming for a liberating, humanist, democratic and solidary organization, production and reproduction of life in society.

Although his work was developed in a distinct era, the philosophical approach of his research can be related to what we now see as social disparity and digital excluded. And from that, utilize his studies to address the needs in media education.

## 5. References

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## 6. Appendix

### 生い立ちと社会状況

- 1921年ブラジル北東地方ペルナンブーコ州生まれ
- 1929年 世界規模の経済危機
- 大学:法律専門
- 学生の観察
- 貧しい人の生活の向上
- 教育局での業務



### 生い立ちと社会状況

- 1964年 軍事クーデター
- 共産主義者と非難された
- 16年間の国外追放
  - 1968年 被抑圧者の教育学
  - アメリカとヨーロッパで講義
  - ポルトガル植民地で顧問
- 帰国
  - 労働組合
  - サンパウロ市教育長
- 1997年(75歳)亡くなった.

### 生い立ちと社会状況

- 格差社会
- 貧しさ



### 教育への貢献

- 被抑圧者:自分の現実を変化させるため,周りの世界を理解する
  - 意識化
- 学校教育の目的:「世界を読む」
  - 解放するために現状を分からなければならない
- 銀行型教育
  - 教育における一般的な形態
  - 生徒の背景を無視している
  - 「生徒が金庫で教師が預金者」
- 「生徒の好奇心,探究心と創造性が殺される.」
- 保守的な学校の目的とフレイレの目的.

### 教育への貢献

- 学校で学ぶ知識は日常生活では意味がない
  - 批判的な技能が発達しない
- 批判的な知識がない場合に被抑圧者・抑圧者の矛盾を解決できない
- 教師と生徒の間の対話を必要とする
- 読み書きのできない人の文化
  - 教えると同時に生徒から学ぶ
- 「言葉を読む前,世界を読む」
- 人間化(Humanization)
  - 「解放のあくなき追求」
- 教育:政治的な行為で中立行為ではない

### パウロ・フレイレの方法

- 成人教育
- 1962年, 45日間でテキストなしで, 300人サトウキビ労働者に読み書きを教えた
- 軍事クーデター前には全国で知られた
- フレイレの考え方が共産主義と見られ,禁じられた
- 方法の3つのステップ
  - 生徒が持っている知識を知る
  - 社会的な分析:常識から批判的な意見へ
  - 世界の単純視,非批判的な視点を超えるため,教師が挑戦を提案する

パウロ・フレイレとメディアリテラシー

- 技術的な社会；
- 情報発信ややりとりが容易になった；
  - デジタル除外；
- 情報過多；
- メディアリテラシーとパウロ・フレイレの関係：
  - 社会階級の変化；
    - 情報テクノロジーの批判的な利用；
  - 生徒の背景を知ること；
- 注意：メディアからの価値観