

## EDUCATIONAL RECONSTRUCTION: A STUDY OF PAULO FREIRE'S THOUGHT

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### ABSTRACT

The purpose of this research is to find out and understand to teaching staff that today's education is not relevant to educational goals, so Paulo Freire wants to reconstruct this education. This research is qualitative, using library research data collection methods. Data source: Because this article is a study of the work of a figure, the data used is more library data, so the author collects literature, including books and articles related to the figure to be discussed. In analyzing data, researchers try to find meaning by trying to reveal the implied and explicit meanings. The result of this article is the reconstruction of education carried out by Paulo Freire because education is currently shifting towards the bank system. Today's teaching system is known as a passive learning model, namely, the teacher explains, the students listen, the teacher dictates, the students take notes, the teacher asks, the students answer, and so on. Therefore, Paulo Freire wanted education must provide liberation, learning must be carried out using methods of dialogue, facing problems, raising awareness, and liberating education.

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## 1. INTRODUCTION

Education is essentially a component of human life that cannot be separated (Biesta, 2020; Reimer, 2022). Humans learn from what happens around them from birth (from the cradle), and this continues until elderly people die when they continue to carry out preconditions in viewing the difficulties they face, and this is the learning process. The classic perspective on education is that education is an institution that can carry out three goals at once: first, preparing the young generation to take on certain responsibilities in society in the future. Second, transferring or shifting information according to the expected function, and third, transferring values to maintain the sanctity and unity of society as a prerequisite for the survival of society and civilization (Yamin, 2009).

In subsequent advances, the definition of education was expanded as a response to the needs of society, or the "market." Therefore, education has a secondary goal, namely protecting the order and values of society while acting as a catalyst for renewal. This

process then creates challenges for education, especially when there is a link between educational interests on the one hand and community needs on the other (Danin, 2003).

In Islamic education, education refers to the preservation and development of nature and human potential or resources to develop a complete human being (*insan kamil*). In this sense, education is not the transmission of knowledge but rather helps students develop their potential. Education is a process of humanly liberating students according to their potential or nature (Snaza, 2013; Nurnaesih & Komariah, 2023). If a student is forced to accept his teacher's wishes, his mind is restrained, or he follows orders under pressure, this shows that he is not yet completely free as a human being. An educational approach like this will only produce inflexible individuals with limited views (Topatimasang et al., 2010).

The value of education is sometimes overlooked by society's expectations. This means that preserving culture takes priority over efforts to predict the future well and accurately (Baker, 2014; Bantock, 2023). As a result, various complaints against the education system have surfaced. This criticism began with his observation of educational stagnation, which gave rise to many currents in education.

Paulo Freire, one of the founders of critical education, voiced fundamental criticism in the 1970s. According to Friere, one of the harshest criticisms of education in Brazil at that time and perhaps today in many countries, one of which is Indonesia, is that education is undergoing a process of "dehumanization." This is stated because education has experienced a setback due to the degradation of the human values it contains (Yaqin, 2015).

The problem is that educational practice seems to be more of a means of distributing doctrine or an instrument of ruling class hegemony. Students are always coached and educated to be obedient. Education is no longer a process of building a more critical human mindset but rather an instrument of tyranny (Droubi et al., 2023; Dominici, 2023). If the educational environment completely rejects the presence of students as human beings who are capable of thinking and being alert, then children will not be able to progress.

## 2. METHOD

The type of research used in this research is qualitative research; therefore, the data collection method was carried out using the library research data collection method (Nawawi & Martini, 1996). So, the author obtained data by searching relevant literature sources. Of course, the material for study is from published, written sources. At this stage, the author collects data about the concept of education according to Paulo Freire and other data needed by researchers.

Data source: Because this article is a study of the work of a figure, the data used is more library data. Data collection methods are the methods used to obtain the truth that occurs or exists in the research subject or data source. The data collection method used is documentation. Documentation is a method for obtaining the required data, namely in the form of sources from several works of literature that are closely related to the

theme being discussed ([Arikunto, 2010](#)). The data collection method was carried out using documentation because this type of research is library research. Data sources, both primary and secondary, are collected as documents. These documents were read and understood to find the data needed to answer the problems in this research.

In analyzing data, researchers try to find meaning in the sense of trying to reveal the implied and explicit meanings and relate them to things that are theoretically logical. The steps taken are to carry out analysis only up to the description level. First, analyze and present the data systematically so that it is easier to understand. All the research results must be discussed. There is absolute unity between language and thought. A new understanding is said to be good if it is discussed ([Saifuddin, 2001](#)). Content Analysis To sharpen the analysis, the author also uses the content analysis method. Content analysis is used through the process of reviewing the data studied. It is hoped that this content analysis will have a theoretical contribution.

Second, content analysis is a tool for analyzing texts that are straightforward and contain explicit meaning. Third, the interpretation method is the method used to make interpretations, but not subjective interpretations that must rely on objective evidence. This element of interpretation is the basis for the hermeneutic method. This interpretation contains various relationships, which are units of methodical elements. These elements show and guarantee that interpretation is not merely arbitrary or depends on the tastes of the individual making the interpretation, but rather relies on objective evidence.

### 3. RESULTS AND DISCUSSION

#### 3.1 Biography of Paulo Freire

Paulo Freire was born on September 19, 1921, in Recife, a coastal city in northeastern Brazil. His father, Joaquim Temistockles Freire, was a military policeman who was not very pious; therefore, he rarely attended church. Meanwhile, his mother, Edeltrus Neves Freire, adhered to the Catholic religion ([Munawar, 2001](#)). His mother is from Pernambuco. Freire's family was middle-class, but he grew up in poverty as his family experienced financial failure due to the economic crisis that began in the United States in 1929 and spread to Brazil. Freire found himself among the "rags of the earth" as a result of his circumstances.

This condition has a huge impact on life and its problems, so Freire is very aware of what hunger means for elementary school students. Freire's family moved to Jabotao in 1931 when his father died. According to Prof. Richard Shaull, Freire was determined to dedicate his life to "fighting hunger, so that no other child would suffer the suffering he experienced" at this time ([Collins, 1999](#)). At the age of 15 (two years below his age group), Paulo Freire finished school with average results, barely enough to meet the criteria for high school.

However, when his family's conditions improved slightly, he was able to finish school and enroll at the University of Recife. Paulo Freire attended university and studied linguistic philosophy and psychology before enrolling in law school. He also worked part-time as a Portuguese instructor at a high school, and like many teenagers,

he began to question the disconnect between the teachings he heard at church and the realities of everyday life. Freire married Elza Maia Costa Oliveira from Recife in 1944, an elementary school teacher (who later became a school administrator), and they had two sons and three daughters. Freire stated that it was then that his interest in educational ideas grew, and he began reading literature on education, philosophy, and the sociology of education rather than legal texts (Dhakiri, 2002).

In 1959, he received a PhD in educational history and philosophy. It was then that he first expressed his views on the philosophy of education in his dissertation at the University of Recife and later in his work as professor of history and philosophy of education at the University of Recife, as well as in his various experiments in teaching the illiterate in the same city.

Towards the end of the 1960s, Freire's work exposed him to a new culture that substantially changed his ideas. In 1970, he left Latin America for the United States at the request of Harvard University, where he worked as a visiting professor at the Center for the Study of Education, Development, and Social Change.

In the early 1970s, Freire worked as a consultant and then as a special advisor at the Education Office of the World Council of Churches in Geneva. Freire traveled the world, giving lectures and implementing educational initiatives in developing countries in Asia and Africa, such as Tanzania and Guinea-Bissau. He also serves on the executive committee of the Institute for Cultural Action (IDAC) in Geneva. The institute carried out various investigations and experiments based on Paulo Freire's concepts (Freire, 2018). Paulo Freire remained in exile from the country of his birth until mid-1979. Paulo Freire died with a legacy of dedication, compassion, and hope for oppressed people around the world. Paulo Freire's ideas have provided solutions from a creative mind and sensitive conscience to the great suffering of enslaved people around him (Freire, 2018).

### **3.2 The Reconstruction of Education According to Paulo Freire**

Education is an important activity that prepares young people for their future lives (Klapper & Fayolle, 2023; Suoranta, 2023). Even though the symptoms of this educational process have existed since the beginning of humanity, the execution techniques remain quite basic. However, it is a phenomenon that the educational process has existed for a long time because the simplicity of the educational process in ancient times gave the impression that people did not recognize that what they were doing was an educational process.

The education process is a challenge that affects every tribe and nation. As a result, it will be influenced by various facilities, cultures, circumstances, and conditions of the country or ethnic group. Thus, we will see differences in the implementation of such education, but we will also see the same goal of maturing children in the sense that they will be able to stand independently amid a wider society. Especially in rich countries, the implementation of the education process will be very different from that in developing countries (Citriadin, 2019).

Current education, especially in Indonesia, is far from good. Schools only function as entities that impose restrictions on students. Freedom of expression was eliminated,

and the culture of criticism was destroyed. Even though teaching at school is nothing but a tiring activity, schools do not always give students enough space to breathe amidst a series of tiring school activities.

This fact is inseparable and can be felt in the large number of subjects that take place in educational regulations. The National Education Standards Agency recognizes that the educational curriculum in primary and secondary schools in Indonesia is the toughest in the world. Students in Indonesia are required to receive more than a thousand hours of lessons each year, which applies to elementary, middle, and high school. Looking at lessons in Asia-Pacific countries (excluding rich and developed countries), the average is 900–500 hours per year ([Al-Hamdi, 2017](#)).

Another fact from the educational atmosphere is similar to prison: students' freedom is limited, and teachers often act like prison guards when criticized, denying students if they make suggestions and shouting if students make mistakes ([Postman, 2020](#)). Thus, assuming that teaching activities in schools that occur as above constitute a kind of restriction on children's creativity and freedom, they hinder the development of their competencies. It can be seen that schools do not provide sufficient free space for students to be creative. Even knowledge often results in restrictions that hinder student creativity.

This is what Paulo Freire saw: that education is currently shifting towards the banking system. The interaction between students and teachers at all stages of education is synonymous with the character of storytelling. Students are more like vessels into which water (knowledge) will be poured by their teachers. Education like this becomes a saving activity. Students as "piggy banks" and teachers as "savers".

The criticism above is a problem for learners who have never taught students. In other words, the passive learning paradigm is as follows: the teacher explains, students listen, the teacher dictates, students take notes, the teacher asks, and students answer ([Aziz, 2022](#)). In fact, students are expected to memorize traditional texts rather than develop creative thinking. So, in the long run, rational scientific disciplines will become undeveloped in the Islamic world, affecting Islamic thought as a whole and being hampered by a lack of challenge and incentives or encouragement. The impact of this teaching paradigm is students' anxiety and confusion towards the teacher.

Therefore, the concept of banking system education has been used by educators in the teaching and learning process, and more specifically, Banking-style education has resulted in a freezing of mind and a lack of critical awareness in students. This is because the strategy commonly used in this educational concept is a narrative approach, which directs students to mechanically remember the information from the lesson being narrated.

In the banking-style education concept, the space available for student involvement is limited to receiving, recording, noting, and digressing. As a result, education is negative, with teachers providing material that students must understand, remember, and then memorize in front of the teacher. Simply put, Paulo Freire listed the antagonists of banking-style education.

Because the teacher is in the middle of everything in the explanation above, it is logical for students to identify themselves as teachers, as ideal human prototypes who must be imitated, admired, and integrated in all aspects. Thus, under the concept of bank-style education, knowledge is a gift given to individuals who are considered to not know at all. The teacher introduces himself to his students as someone on the other side of each other considers them complete fools, and then confirms his existence.

Paulo Freire's goal with this type of education system was to reform the existing education system, showing that education must be carried out in a dialogical manner. This dialogue process is one of the approaches included in his comprehensive educational agenda, which he calls a process of awareness (conscientization). He believes that consciousness is an exclusively human process (Freire, 2018). This can be described as follows:

### **1. Dialogue/problem-facing method**

According to Freire, the method of dialogue is the practice of human freedom, not exploitation or dehumanization. The dialogue method must be seen as an integral part of human history. It is part of the process of historical progress toward becoming human. As a result of the dialogue method, it can be said that humans become communicative and critical (Shore, 2001).

The dialogue model ensures that the learning process in class is not monotonous; the teacher does not only dictate and explain; students must also be active, communicative, and critical. Students are not only exposed to information, but they also have to respond more actively to problems so that, throughout the learning process, teachers and students can solve problems.

Problem-facing education is a rejection of banking-style education. Applying problem-facing education methods requires solutions to problems experienced by teachers and students, which can only be achieved through dialogue and communication methods between teachers and students. In the learning process, teachers and students are subjects, and the subject matter is the object; therefore, teachers and students must solve the problem of the subject matter object.

Problem-facing teaching is an effort to overcome the gap in teacher communication with students through the dialogue method. Therefore, the implementation of problem-solving teaching implies the existence of problem-solving in the learning process between teachers and students. The essence of problem-facing teaching is to dynamically involve students in the learning process through dialogical relationships so that teachers are no longer the ones who teach but carry out learning through dialogue. In this case, students become subjects who learn, act, and think while also speaking to express the results of their actions and thoughts (Freire, 2018). So they both learn from each other, humanizing each other. Thus, in this process, the teacher submits learning material to be considered by the students and the teacher's considerations, then tests again after meeting the students' considerations, and vice versa.

Therefore, the problem-facing teaching model is a teaching paradigm that must be developed by teachers at both the elementary school level and the tertiary level.



This is because this problem-facing teaching model can encourage and provide instruction to students throughout the teaching process, thereby achieving the goal of humanizing education and education as a liberating activity. Instead of a bank-style teaching model that silences creativity, paralyzes the mind, and fails to educate students, it's time to abandon it because such a model will only produce students who are uncritical and easy to despair when faced with problems.

## **2. The concept of human liberation education**

According to Paulo Freire, being human requires us to be connected and the rest of the world. Being human involves seeing the world objectively, independently, and understandably. The openness and separation of humans from the world characterize humans as very different from animals, which not only exist in the world but also exist together with the world. When faced with very diverse environmental problems or even obstacles, human reactions are not limited to just one pattern. In response to all this, humans must organize themselves, choose the optimal answer, test it again, act, and act and change their actions (Freire et al., 2001).

In reality, humans share a special characteristic with other creatures, namely the ability to form relationships with each other and other worlds. This shows that humans can choose their own lives. When humans face a challenge, they can produce various answers, so Paulo Freire believes that the idea of liberation must always be owned by humans themselves.

According to Paul Freire, liberation education is a process where a person discovers the most important thing in his life, namely becoming free from everything that limits his humanity and leading to a life full of freedom (Azzet, 2011). Freire argued that liberating education must function as a humanist and libertarian education (Azzet, 2011). For this reason, education must be a path to human freedom, because humanization is the ultimate goal of humanity.

For Paulo Freire, to achieve liberation in education, a teacher must not limit students' rights to express their opinions. Freire thinks that dialogue is important in the teaching process because it allows them to respect each other, learn from each other, and avoid pressure from authorities (Freire et al., 2001). In this dialogue, each person not only maintains their own identity but also understands each other together. Human rights are also respected in dialogue, rather than ignored for one side to win.

Therefore, the aim of education must be to provide freedom to express opinions and increase human critical awareness, because critical thinking is a response to change. Critical thinking does not differentiate between ideas and the reality of action but can face problems and is always ready to face risks that occur.

## **4. CONCLUSION**

The reconstruction of education was carried out by Paulo Freire because education is currently shifting towards the banking system. The interaction between students and teachers at all stages of education is synonymous with the character of storytelling. Today's teaching system is known, in other words, as a passive learning model, namely that the teacher

explains, the students listen, the teacher dictates, the students take notes, the teacher asks, the students answer, and so on. Therefore, what Paulo Freire wanted was that education must provide liberation; learning must be carried out using methods of dialogue, facing problems, raising awareness, and liberating education.

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