

Critical Pedagogy for The Future in Indian Education: A Qualitative Study with Reference to Paulo Freire's Theory

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Abstract

The prevalent education system and practice seems to encompass autocracy masked with democracy which prevails in the present-day educational organizations. With globalization, liberal democratic principles are prerequisite to cater to the needs of every individual; but, pseudo-democracy climate prevails in the autocratic system today. As a result, oppression and dominance continue at every levels of education. Thus, we require education for democracy which can contribute to a more democratic individual and society.

A crucial problem is that there is an imbalance at all levels of inter-personal relationships in education which is undesirable. In other words, democratic education that fosters critical thinking needs to be promoted to overcome the power imbalance existing at all levels of inter-personal relations in education. This paper discusses the relevance of critical pedagogy which is the need of the hour advanced pedagogy for the future to promote a culture of critical thinking amongst students for social transformation and democracy in Indian education. In turn it also emphasizes relevance and practicability of Freirean pedagogy to Indian classrooms relating to Paulo Freire's model and methodology.

Introduction

Every country develops its system of education in view of its specific, cultural, economic, geographical, political and social scenario. Evidently it does not consider global requirements. In some countries, the disadvantaged are kept 'submerged' by the economic, social and political domination of a few, who use the system of education to maintain the 'culture of silence' i.e. illiteracy and ignorance, while in others the advance of technology has adversely affected many people. Today, homes and educational institutions from nurseries to universities are greatly affected by cultural invasion that inhibits the creativity of the individual by curbing their expression. Usually, the false conception of education in extending 'knowledge' to passive students, surround them with a "barricade" which inhibits creativity. The children increasingly view parent and teacher authoritarianism as inimical to their own freedom. Generally the environment of the home is prolonged in the school as well.

Paulo Freire, the Brazilian educationist, has left a significant mark on thinking about progressive practice. Throughout his life and in his work as an organic intellectual and a philosopher, Freire fought fiercely against social oppression and injustices. His *Pedagogy of the Oppressed* is currently one of the most quoted educational texts (especially in Latin America, Africa and Asia). Freire was able to draw upon and weave together, a number of strands of thinking about educational practice and liberation. He devised and tested an education system and a philosophy of education whose educational thrust centres on the human potential for creativity and freedom in the midst of politico-economic and culturally oppressive structures. Educational practice need not be seen as 'extension' but as 'communication' where extension is negative in nature and communication positive in nature so that it can create consciousness about the right kind of education, by way of avoiding authoritarian teacher-pupil models, based on actual experience of students and on continual shared investigation, each individual can develop a new awareness of self and begin to look critically at the world through dialogical relationships with others. The teachers can examine issues which students see as significant to their community and then initiating action to influence these events. In view of that, Paulo Freire's concepts and ideas are closely connected to attributes as a teacher and with today's education on execution into own students, classroom and

teaching styles.

To this end, the purpose of paper is to present relevance of critical pedagogy in future in Indian education with special reference to Freire's model and methodology and its critical appraisals in the present-day context.

Literature Review

Druliner (1992) conducted research to devise a liberating Christian education that incorporates the theological principles of Gustavo Gutierrez and the educational methodology of Paulo Freire. Guthrie (2003) conducted research to find out the apparent flaws in critical pedagogy which can actually encourage the critical consciousness that is the goal of the enterprise signifying Paulo Freire's theory of critical consciousness. Haley (2004) conducted research to examine the creation, implementation, and effectiveness of the guide-book, *Moving Forward: A Learner-centred and Participatory Approach to Teaching Community Adult ESL* in response to the need for lesson-plans and activities that help teachers focus on learner needs, applying Freire's praxiological method of teaching. Mireya Garcia-Durian Huet (2004) conducted research to examine oppression and the reactions to it signifying the Freirean non-oppressive pedagogical methodology. Van Winkle (2004) chose to study Paulo Freire as a tool in proving why education is a human right because throughout his work he demonstrated the need for people to be literate in order for them to be considered "truly human". Daniels (2005) conducted research to determine how and why adult women make meaning of credible, still photographs without the accompaniment of text where they schematized and demonstrated Paulo Freire's theory of critical consciousness. Lee (2005) conducted research to discuss Paulo Freire's Dialogical Pedagogy and the possibility of its transformation into Taiwan's education environment. Wee (2006) conducted research to explore in detail the reasons for the low levels of successes of the ABET (Adult Basic Education and Training) and how the centre can be viewed from a Freirean perspective. It is based on the simple but fundamental Freirean technique of "problem posing" and there is therefore the antithesis of "Banking" Education, which seeks solutions or gives answers. Andrade (2007) conducted research to explore the possibilities in reinventing Freirean critical pedagogy in the context of Indian formal education, and to examine the tensions and limitations that emerge and that would need to be

addressed in such an attempt. Flood (2007) conducted research to find the ideas and educational theory of Paulo Freire to explore the notions of identity and musical agency within the Educational and Cultural Association Didá in the city of Salvador da Bahia, Brazil. Chem (2008) conducted a study to analyze the verbal interactions between teachers and low achieving students in class in junior high school applying Paulo Freire's dialogic pedagogy. Linda (2008) conducted research to find out whether the work of Brazilian educator Paulo Freire provided a framework for a better understanding of school bullying in the United States. Mehta (2009) conducted research to find out the relevance and significance of the contribution of Paulo Freire to the philosophy of Education and its critical reflections and evaluations in the present Indian context. Felderman (2010) conducted research to find out the literacies produced in a second grade classroom, through podcasting, from critical literary perspective. Subramaniam (2011) conducted research to examine how critical pedagogy can facilitate Latino students facing challenges in the schools of America. Diaz (2012) conducted research to explore radical democracy in the thought and work of Paulo Freire and Luis Villoro. Kershaw (2012) conducted a study to examine the utilization of critical pedagogy in criminal justice higher education. Mazier (2014) conducted research to explore the possibilities for enacting critical pedagogies within a neoliberal climate of educational restricting in higher education.

The preceding literature indicates that researches on Freirean philosophy are conducted extensively in different countries of the world; however, very few researches are conducted in India. Therefore, there arises an urgent need to conduct more researches on Freire in India, so that the relevance and significance of Freirean philosophy is known to prospective teachers and Freire's model of critical pedagogy is adopted and implemented in the current educational practice in India thereby promoting critical education effectively for bringing a social change in formal Indian education system. The present study concerns itself with Freirean critical pedagogy and Indian culture of pedagogy, despite having originated in a very different context from that of Indian classrooms today, how Freirean critical pedagogy can offer a useful contribution to address the crisis in Indian education which yet needs to perpetuate critical literacy.

The present study attempts to ascertain whether Freirean thoughts on pedagogy can be put into practice in the educational system of India. The research is an attempt to find the influence of Freirean philosophy and pedagogy on the student-teachers and to what extent it promotes critical, reflective and creative thinking among them contributing towards critical and liberating education in the present Indian context. This qualitative study focuses on the student-teachers making sense of Freirean philosophy of education and do they implement his philosophy during the teaching-learning process and subsequently to help students to be active questioners and critical thinkers and act towards a more inclusive society initiating critical education for democracy and social transformation.

The scope and success of the possible entry points of Freire in teacher education and schooling and the relevance and practicability of Freirean philosophy and pedagogy depends primarily on the teachers themselves and secondarily on the educational system, educational organization, family, society or the students after all.

Statement of the Problem: Educational Thoughts of Paulo Freire and its Relevance to Student-teachers in Contemporary Indian

Education

Broad Research Questions

The study was conducted with broad research questions as follows:

1. What are the lived experiences of student-teachers regarding oppression in Indian society?
2. What are the lived experiences of student-teachers regarding system of education in India?
3. What is the perceived meaning and essence of Paulo Freire's theory of 'Pedagogy of the Oppressed' in the present day context?

Methodology of the Study

Chosen to see how student-teachers of B.Ed. colleges, make sense of Freirean pedagogy and philosophy of education and how it promotes critical, creative and reflective thinking amongst them and influences them towards critical and liberating education, actually based on their lived experiences regarding oppression in Indian society and system of education in India and above all their perceived meaning and essence of Freire's theory of 'pedagogy of the oppressed' in the present day context, The researcher followed the qualitative research design.

The research study used the phenomenology methodology and empirical, transcendental or psychological phenomenology (Moustakas, 1994), wherein, the researcher discussed Freire's philosophy and pedagogy and shared experiences along with the participants, reducing the experiences to a central meaning of the "essence" of the experience. The researcher accomplished this task primarily through opinions and experiences of 15 student-teachers of one college of education, of diverse socio-economic and educational backgrounds, during the intervention programme of 24 hours, conducted for 6 hours on 4 week-ends, followed by focus group interviews for 6 hours at the same college with same number of participants, besides 15 student-teacher participants of another college of education in Mumbai. The researcher developed and inter-related categories (constant comparison) of information, collecting unstructured interview data, analyzing the data by reducing the information to significant quotes and combining into themes, developing textural description of the experiences of participants and structural description of their experiences and finally writing a combination of the textural and structural descriptions conveying an overall essence of the experience of the relevance of Freirean critical pedagogy to the student-teachers. The researcher chose and used Moustakas's (1994) approach as it has systematic steps in the data analysis procedure and guidelines for assembling the textual and structural descriptions.

Participants of the Study

In the present research, the research participants were 15 B. Ed. student-teachers of government-aided colleges of education of the University of Mumbai in intervention programme of 24 hours and focus group interviews as means for data collection. Twelve of the participants were girls and three were boys from diverse socio-economic and educational backgrounds. The research setting was the natural settings of the B. Ed. colleges' classrooms itself wherein the participants interacted and took part actively in intervention programme and focus group interviews. In focus group discussion, the researcher introduced topics for discussion, asked questions and helped the group to participate in a lively and natural discussion. The researcher followed crucial points in facilitating focus group discussion such as ensuring even

participation, careful wording of the key questions, maintaining a neutral attitude and appearance and summarizing the session to reflect the views evenly and fairly. The participants were free to agree or disagree with each other to provide an insight into how they think about the issue, about the range of opinions and ideas and the inconsistency and variation that exists in terms of beliefs and their experiences and practices.

Techniques of Data Collection and Research Instruments

An interactive intervention programme of 24 hours on Freire’s educational philosophy, in-depth focus group interviews, videos, documentary evidence and observations were used as data collection techniques whereas constant comparison method was used for data analysis. The researcher used research instruments like intervention programme plans, focus group interview protocol, observation notes, transcription analysis reports and video photography.

Results

In the present study, the themes emerging from the analysis about how participants experienced the relevance of Freirean philosophy and pedagogy in contemporary Indian education were “Causes of oppression in Indian education”, “Effects of oppression in Indian education”, “Remedies to oppression in Indian education” and “Relevance of critical pedagogy in future” which are illustrated as follows.

Following table demonstrates categories from which the following themes emerged.

Categories	Themes
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Acceptance of unfair situations Factors leading to power imbalance Oppressive aspects of education Existing casteism Untouchability in schools Inefficacy of NPE Corporal punishment Gender inequality amongst teachers 	Causes of Oppression in Indian Education
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Unfair incidents Passive classroom Creativity suppressed After-effects of punishment Autocratic classroom setting Autocratic teacher Gender stereotyping in textbooks Controversy on freedom of religion Favouring passive education Weaknesses of Paulo Freire fitting in Indian education Limitations of critical pedagogy in Indian culture of pedagogy Challenges of bringing Freire to teacher education 	Effects of Oppression in Indian Education

<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Purpose of education Resolving oppressive aspects of education Overcoming child exploitations Coping with reservation quota Boycotting casteism Developing critical self-improvement Fostering independent thinking Growing with independent thinking Manifestation of independent thinking Exposure to independent thinking Remedies to passive classroom setting Being democratic teacher Teacher’s pivotal role (to bring change in the classroom) Questioning ‘why?’ Expressing self Critical reflection on action Practicing freedom Creating democratic classroom Tackling freedom of religion Developing critical thinking Favouring active education Efficacy of problem posing method Promoting inquiry-based learning Dealing with corporal punishment leading to suicide 	Remedies to Oppression in Indian Education
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Scope of Paulo Freire fitting in Indian education Possible entry points of Freirean pedagogy Reflection on Freirean pedagogy 	Relevance of Critical Pedagogy in Future

Following themes with participants’ statements are illustrated.

Theme 1: Causes of Oppression in Indian Education Evidence in Participants’ Statements:

- “...I think it is easy to preach than to practice...I have major concern about raising voice...it’s like asking for more trouble...and worse no one by your side...Here the ones holding power are misusing their powers and are getting more powerful...while others remain powerless...and are getting more harassed and exploited...naturally you feel - what I can do alone to change the situation anyway?!!...”
- “... We need mutual understanding and proper communication to overcome any dire situation...conversely there is a social and communication barrier between us...”
- “...I fear in reality theory is impracticable, for example, cleanliness law ought to be strict...awareness campaigns should be carried out frequently - but to no avail!”
- “...I believe because of lack of awareness of our constitutional rights and duties in society...societal people do not realize the fact that it is the rights of all children, irrespective of caste, to be treated equally...to get good quality, well-nourished food...so, government first need to take measures to generate awareness among society about an individual’s constitutional rights and duties and its correct usage...”

- "...Since *dalit* people in rural areas are mostly illiterate, they are unable to determine what's right for them... whether their child should be sent to school or not... as a result the powerful authorized person decides not to send them to school... thereby exploiting their rights to study... violating human rights... exhibiting inhuman behaviour..."
- "...Indian education system has definitely not succeeded well enough in achieving NPE goals mainly as it is exam-oriented and *not* student-oriented and the focus is more and more on rote-learning and *not* on understanding of student..."
- "...During practice teaching lesson, we observed that female school teachers would call a male teacher whenever there was indiscipline in the class and he would come and simply start hitting them... the students were terrorized by his presence itself..."

Theme 2: Effects of Oppression in Indian Education

Evidence in Participants' Statements:

- "...Teacher is looking very angrily at students in the class... Instead of giving a break to students, he does not seem to like it, that a student is saying that he had enough and seeks a recess... He does not like to be criticized or questioned either... Perhaps the education he is providing is not student-centred... He is simply busy teaching continually... He seems too busy in lecturing to worry about students interest..."
- "...The student has written the word 'Freedom' in a different way, so, the teacher has to appreciate the child and not scold him; also, the teacher need to tell the student politely a better correct way to write it down... Teacher is looking angrily at the student and is insisting that he writes exactly the way it is written on the blackboard; instead she needs to motivate the child and not de-motivate him by cancelling off his written word... The teacher tries to teach the word 'Freedom' to the student; but, she has not given freedom to the child; in fact his freedom is curbed..."
- "...The child is depressed... He has not got opportunity to express himself and his opinion... He is punished and he is feeling lonely and sad... He feels he is not good in studies... He maybe a slow learner... He could have failed in some subject... To sum up, all negative emotions of the child are displayed..."
- "...I believe the child will become a subject of humiliation and mockery in front of the classmates after punishment as soon as the teacher leaves the classroom... as a result he could become more aggressive towards everyone, even his siblings... he could go in depression and remain isolated in society... he might suffer from inferiority complex... he would avoid going to school and stay aloof from studies and classmates..."
- "...During practice teaching lesson, a teacher insisted that we teach the units from Navneet Publication Guide only... simply because he used to teach from that guide himself..."
- "...There is no respect for teachers by the parents, so, what can we expect from children? It's sad to see parents hardly turn up for the meeting and those who do, leave in the middle of the session – that is so humiliating and rude for the teacher..."
- "...We do not know who will become the destiny of the nation, so, everyone; irrespective of gender should be physically and mentally healthy and strong..."
- "...A Marathi girl was not allowed to seek admission in a convent school by her parents because they believed that she would follow Catholic tradition instead of Hindu tradition..."

she would learn to light candles instead of *diyas* at home... On one hand, we are saying we are moving ahead towards the 21st century and on other hand, we are following such old orthodox traditions... what is amazing is no one in the family was illiterate, so, it's so sad that even educated people behave this way..."

- "...My class teacher used to solve a sum from the textbook itself and then asked us to solve the rest ourselves... we used to copy the sum blindly as she never discussed core steps... once after solving the sum on black board she even took a catnap..."
- "...Activity-based learning is not there in every school... in some schools, there is hardly any scope for classroom activities and projects because of time and space constraints, therefore the aspect of activity-based learning will *not* fit in our system..."
- "...Our education system is not allowing or providing students freedom to speak... in that case, we will not have any famous scientists and thinkers in India..."
- "...A student committee should look into learning problems of students relating to overall curriculum... they should consult authorized teachers related to committee framing the curriculum who in turn talks with an expert committee member of NCF..."
- "...The traditional mindset has to be changed at childhood stage itself that the teacher knows everything and student knows nothing and students are required to gain knowledge from teachers only... usually students are more confident and conscious in urban areas about their rights, however, that cannot be generalized..."

Theme 3: Remedies to Oppression in Indian Education

Evidence in Participants' Statements:

- "...I think education overall develops power of thinking... decision-making capacity... national integration... 'we' feeling... thus, education can build humanity..."
- "...It's vital that student-centred education is promoted... allow the child to question... express his views... every teacher should contribute greatly... social awareness need to be generated... strict action for execution of law be taken..."
- "...I've worked with CRY, Vidya group and other NGOs... I do not understand why government should take an initiative and not an individual... Why should law be there for everything when an individual should be aware about his duties towards society and nation *from within*-- from his soul, from his conscience, from his morale itself? I suggest we create human and mass awareness campaigns..."
- "...I feel admission should be based on talent only... there should be a non-discriminatory rule for each and every student... reservation quota should be for *genuinely* disadvantaged students in rural areas only... because they cannot get high quality education in rural municipal schools... so, there should be a reservation quota in urban private schools for such poor and disadvantaged children in rural areas..."
- "...I think it's a shame that even educated people do caste discrimination in village, say, *Sarpanch*, Police, Headmaster, Teachers and others as well... so, education should not be related to text book itself... 21st century education should be connected to the feelings... based on human bonding... such that people learn to respect each other's culture, values, sentiments and so on, irrespective of caste and religion..."

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- "...I honestly feel when I analyze myself critically, I find my spirits sky high...my conscience clear...I remember a recent incident where my conscience hurt me very much... During my practice teaching lesson in a school, I got good remarks from the lesson observer...yet, I was disappointed from within...because perhaps only I knew the fact that I had missed out certain very important points during the lesson...!"
- "...Every child is special...no child is weaker or stronger... criticism, in a positive sense, draws out the weak points of the child and there is a scope for improvement for any child when one finds out what the problem is...so, with positive criticism and reinforcement, teachers and school authorities must focus on areas of improvement for all children...such that the child starts thinking...reflecting on his thoughts..."
- "...I think desirable teacher's efforts positively will help boost student's self-confidence...kill the fear of inhibition...develop leadership qualities... as a result each and every child will get a fair chance to express his thoughts freely...come up with creative ideas...take rational and accurate decisions...learn to self-analyze with discipline...stay active in the class..."
- "...It gives me a feeling of satisfaction to me whenever I encourage independent thinking amongst children...for example, during my practice teaching lesson, a curious child asked me, "Why rice changes its form after it is cooked?", "Why bubbles are circle in shape?" and so on...I was quite pleased to see that he was a free thinker and an active questioner...I believe every child does independent thinking but it's important that they be given ample opportunities to think freely and express themselves better..."
- "...Normally all great scholars are great independent thinkers too...so one should take inspiration from philosophy of life of famous educators and think independently to be independently strong and self-confident...we do not depend on other's ideas and decisions...we be the change we want to see...we believe in ourselves...we revise our thoughts, examine our activities and then put our ideas into action..."
- "...I think whether its KG or PG courses, activities should always be conducted in the classroom...Innovative thinking can be promoted at any age...for example, one teacher conducted seminar in a different way by giving breaks, feedbacks and all..."
- "...Teacher did not get angry when I disturbed him with my irrelevant story; in fact, he still maintained discipline and correlated my story to the matter being taught..."
- "...Teacher puts personal efforts for the improvement of children...He makes the class more active, adopts new teaching methods for better understanding...slowly but surely students respond positively...I realize that it takes time and perseverance to get good results when we work on something new and try to bring about a change..."
- "...I believe parents, teachers and society, especially a teacher is bound to answer all questions posed by children whose mind is like blank slate with lots of questions. Even a student has the right to raise his voice if his question is not answered properly. It's essential to give freedom to children to ask questions confidently to teachers on the content knowledge and general knowledge which she poses..."
- "...Teacher should take examples and ideas from students to add to knowledge to the content...for example, if a science teacher is teaching dissolution and gives an illustration of water and salt, she could motivate children to give more examples..."
- "...There should be theory and practice both otherwise it is meaningless...for example, when a teacher is teaching about non-violence in History, other than theory, she should show pictures and video clips of Mahatma Gandhi's non-violence movement and then compare advantages of non-violence and disadvantages of violence. She can discuss about national integration, loss of national property, wealth and lives during war, patriotism with examples of freedom fighters, Gandhiji's aspiration of self-dependence, humanity values and so on with practical experiences relating to life and not just bookish knowledge. Teacher can demonstrate and give first-hand experience to students, motivate them to think critically and share examples relating to daily life experiences and knowledge with students, so that student is inspired to ponder over any issue or subject and present ideas critically..."
- "...As a tutor, I believe in giving freedom to students to communicate freely with me...I remember once I responded to a student's query at midnight on the phone..."
- "...I believe classroom should be democratic because this is the age where usually students are more curious about new things they come across in daily life, so, teacher should not turn down their questions because that may create confusion and their doubts may remain in their minds. I suggest the solution is teacher should organize debates and group discussions to inspire students to think and criticize critically, for example, students can be asked to criticize a particular poem or prose and allowed to ask, disagree or criticize with freedom in a sensible manner..."
- "...I believe, in schools, there should not be a column for religion...What takes an individual ahead in life is humanism and not religion...We should not come across stereotype religion barrier...We should not follow a society where fanatically any religion is followed; instead we should follow humanism and believe in humanity..."
- "...We realize that freedom of expression should be given to students so that they can share their ideas freely...teacher has to accept and respect student thinking..."
- "...Our Math class teacher never spoon fed us...She asked us to try out different methods before helping us out...First she allowed us to think over the problem she put forward and then asked suggested solutions from students...She also used various mathematical instruments as teaching aids to make understanding easier..."
- "...In problem-posing method, the teacher takes a problem, describes it and the students think critically over it...every student has different views based on prior knowledge and experience that is acknowledged and utilized to clear the concepts well..."
- "...In Std. V, a Science teacher used the inquiry-based learning method to teach 'salt'; she used the driving question, 'why do we eat salt with food?' A series of questions followed about salt and its production, usage and availability and students shared their knowledge freely. Finally teacher explained the process and the concept was clear about salt..."
- "...One cannot hook up education system in cases of corporal punishment or molestation; instead, take apt action against the individual responsible once it comes to their knowledge, or

else, the student and school reputation both are at stake...”

Theme 4: Relevance of Critical Pedagogy in Future

Evidence in Participants' Statements:

- “...I think students need to be moulded and parents oriented right from primary class so that they accept and follow a variety of modern teaching-learning activities and methods...”
- “...Quality employment means employee experienced in practical level and in theoretical studies as Freire proposed study with experiences and experiments...In schools, there are co-curricular activities which simply need to be added with the studies...for example, in Municipal schools, they have co-curricular activities like singing, physical training, debate and so on which ought to be related with studies...”
- “...Students need to be moulded and parents oriented right from primary class so that they accept and follow a variety of teaching-learning activities and methods...”
- “...In every school, teaching-learning activities are done at lower or higher level...”
- “...Teacher's role should be inter-changeable with students where both learn from each other...teacher can inspire and appreciate students for sharing new ideas...”
- “...It depends upon the teacher's mentality...if the teacher wants to honestly mould the child, then she can take apt steps to do so, but, if she is not interested in doing it, she will not be able to take apt steps to mould the personality of the child...”
- “...If we need to produce more geniuses in the field of education, we ought to apply Freirean pedagogy in our education, so that, we can bring reformation in education. Even scientist Einstein faced failure initially but grew as an independent thinker...!”
- “...I've already started applying Freirean methodology when I teach my tuition students and hope to do so in my future school job too...I told my students to ask questions freely and I also learn from them when we share knowledge and views...”
- “...I remember teaching a Std. I student who enjoyed adding knowledge to what was taught in the class, so, basically, it's up to teachers how they share knowledge with students giving freedom of expression to them to be liberal, prolific thinkers...”
- “...The parent's role is major because a child stays more at home than in school, hence, parents have to take an initiative to let the child discover the world around them...experiential learning can be preferably learnt best from society itself...parents and society have to teach children and then teacher's job is to teach the vital skills...”

Conclusion

The themes emerged in data analysis answers the broad research questions, signifying the possible entry of critical pedagogy in Indian education.

Research Question 1: What are the lived experiences of student-teachers regarding oppression in Indian society?

Answer:

Unfortunately the social reality in India continues to be one of widespread deprivation and inequality – one that is difficult for

a child or someone who has underprivileged socio-economic background. The outright violation of human rights within a dynamic and emerging economic giant makes one wonder why there has not been a revolutionary drive for social change to challenge and overturn these inequalities and what allows these inhuman conditions to persist.

In the present research, the participants' opinions regarding oppression in Indian society reflected on submissive behaviour of Indians, lack of social awareness and inhuman approach towards oppressive factors such as casteism, untouchability, child exploitation, corruption and power imbalance leading to social inequality.

According to the participants, their lived experiences emphasise the oppression they faced in society and apparently the felt need for social change. One participant grieved about lack of humanity, “*I was shocked to see a road accident one day where no one came forward to help the victim. I took the victim to the nearby hospital. I think we lack humanity. Though we fall in the category of humanism, there is no human bonding at all.*” Another participant felt powerless and helpless, “*I went for a job interview and I was let down because of partiality at interview. I realized that people holding maximum powers were literally misusing the powers by calling candidates for a job interview which was already assigned to a resourceful person. I felt like a tool simply wasting my time, money and energy.*” In other case, the participant experienced traditional mindset of student's parents, “*I take private tuitions. I tried to follow new method of teaching however I was very discouraged when the parents told me not to do so. I tried to convince them but they were firm on following traditional methods only since they believed I could not change the system alone and securing good marks was their only motto.*” Another participant succumbed to fear and pressure, “*I generally do not raise my voice out of fear and accept wrong beliefs succumbing to pressure. For instance, we've an orthodox religious practice of animal sacrifice to God; I objected initially but I realized I cannot stop this evil custom!*” One participant felt the need to change our belief to bring social change alone, “*Sometimes I raise my voice in critical conditions but usually I ignore raising my voice; that's because I am assertive that an individual alone cannot change anything unless a group of people assemble and take an initiative together. For instance, a young commuter was littering in the train. I requested her not to litter but in vain; but, when a group of people warned her, it worked out immediately!*” A participant remarked on religious discrepancy in society, “*Admission was denied in a minority school because of the Muslim religion of the child or maybe his family background was not up to the mark. I think schools prefer students from sound socio-economic background so that they can pay high fees and that is definitely undesirable!*” Another participant showed concern over indifferent attitude of educated people, “*I was in a school for my practice teaching lesson where I came across a very young canteen boy working as a helper. I asked him why he is working at this age and he refrained from talking. I confronted the manager but he gave poor response. Finally I spoke to the teacher who said that it is none of their business and they do not care. Hence, I blame the uncaring attitude of educated people!*” Further, the society was depicted as caste discriminating, bias toward higher class and very corrupt by a participant, “*I'll give example of news of police not lodging FIR of a missing girl belonging to SC parents in some rural areas in U.P. Later she was found killed in the woods!*” Most of the participants felt society with passivity, “*It's a de-motivating society which does*

not appreciate other's sincere efforts to change the society. Parents keep a selfish attitude only about their own work rather than giving importance to parent-teacher association meetings.”; “It's a busy society where people are not interested in educational system at all and there is a lot of negligence towards education by both parents and teachers.” In a sensitive case on freedom of religion, some participants found conservative behaviour of educated people themselves, *“A Marathi girl was not allowed to seek admission in a convent school by her parents because they believed that she would follow Catholic tradition instead of Hindu tradition and she would learn to light candles instead of diyas at home! On one hand, we are saying we are moving ahead towards the 21st century and on other hand, we are following such old orthodox traditions. What is amazing is no one in the family was illiterate, so, it's so sad that even educated people behave this way!”*; and somewhere else, *“At a reputed college in South Mumbai, I was shocked, when my sister was asked to bring baptism certificate to secure admission in their Christian minority college!”* In a similar case one participant found the need to generate human awareness, *“We need to think about humanity in society and not religion. I raised my voice against my parents when they exhibited religion inequality with my Muslim friends.”* One participant on corporal punishment found parents themselves culprits, *“Sometimes parents' involvement is responsible for corporal punishment as they only ask teachers to hit their children when needed. Often even principal hits children.”*

To conclude, the illustrations of lived experiences of the participants regarding oppression in society manifests passivity in society and hence the need to generate human awareness to face societal problems and bring equality with social change.

Research Question 2: What are the lived experiences of student-teachers regarding system of education in India?

Answer:

At present Indian education is serving to suppress critical literacy and thereby perpetuating inequality and oppression. In general, Indian education is largely characterized by teacher-centred classrooms, where students are generally discouraged from asking too many questions or from participating in discussion and encouraged to memorize information word-to-word from text books and to focus all their energies on preparing the examinations where they will have to regurgitate this information. Also even the opportunity to attempt to achieve one of the few spots on the education ladder is presented to only a few.

In the research, the participants' opinions regarding system of education in India reflected on passive education and our compliance and lack of awareness towards oppression in education and how students remain passive receivers, questioners and thinkers as a result contributing to the present oppressed society.

According to the participants' lived experiences, focus is on passive, autocratic and uninspiring classroom setting and the need for critical, democratic education. One participant met unfair treatment by teacher, *“I made teaching aid for an exhibition but I was severely criticized for my small handwriting and my teaching aid was rejected! I tried to explain to her that my handwriting was acceptable yet she was unduly bossy.”* Another participant elsewhere, in a similar case, *“When I was in class VII, my teacher was upset with the way I wrote letter 'F'; however, instead of teaching me properly, she hit me angrily and humiliated me in front of the class. I believe she was simply following 'my way or*

no way' attitude!” One participant found theory impractical, *“I fear in reality theory is impracticable, for example, cleanliness law ought to be strict and awareness campaigns should be carried out frequently for actual implementation- but to no avail!”* A participant felt education imparted as mechanical and superficial process, *“Initially purpose of education was to mould the child into a good human, now they make children 'inhuman' robots. Education simply prepares followers and not leaders now.”* According to a participant, good education apparently is not for lower class, *“I think education that is portrayed with the result of social discrimination is for the higher class (Brahmins) only and it fosters caste discrimination even in children; worse, education taught by teachers and parents in such areas is misleading.”* Another participant feared child's free thinking curbed with teacher dominance, *“I teach in private classes where students come from municipality and private schools both. I attempt to solve algebraic expressions in a new way and surprisingly both school students grieve that their math teachers are insisting that they do it only the way it has been taught by them in schools and none other new techniques!”* In a similar case elsewhere, *“During practice teaching lesson, a teacher insisted that we teach the units from Navneet Publication Guide only simply because he used to teach from that guide himself!”* A challenging question was raised by a participant on the usage of new teaching methods in classroom, *“In B. Ed. course, students are taught to teach in an innovative manner; yet why school teachers do not use modern methods and techniques we are learning?!”* In other case, one participant raised concern over integrity of some teachers, *“Sometimes teacher simply teaches a large content lesson as mapping, skipping the explanation part and merely discussing over some important points and then asking students to do self study, posing it as an interactive, interesting session.”* Another participant affirmed inspiring child's creativity as pre-requisite, *“My classes' student attempted an algebraic expression in a different way and although his answer was correct, he was given zero marks by his school teacher simply because teacher insisted that he has to solve the problem according to the method he had taught and none else. So, the point is teachers are not appreciating students for thinking and doing something creative. I prefer and expect teachers to inspire students to think and act innovatively as curbing student's imagination and thinking process hampers a child's natural growth.”* Conversely, another participant was all praise for a motivating teacher, *“I'll give example of a fat boy sitting at the back in the class who was teased by friends and ignored by teachers. A replacement teacher understood the capacity of the child after conducting experiments in class. Gradually, the boy's life changed and everyone became aware that he has ample knowledge about fisheries. So, the teacher's role is so vital to boost a child's confidence, motivation and spirits.”* One participant pointed out flaws in textbooks, *“I fear NCF is showing inequality of sexes in a textbook of primary class; so, naturally, children are bound to start gender inequity in the classroom itself.”* More participants appreciated teachers who favoured active education, *“Our Math teacher solved one step of the sum on the black board and motivated students to solve further steps and even cared to correct everyone's books. She would reward a pen to the child who stepped ahead confidently to solve the sum.”* Elsewhere, in similar inspiring case, *“I was very interested in sports and my class teacher used to encourage me to attend any sports event, tournament, program, and practice and so on without fail.”* On the other hand, a participant had

grievance about a passive teacher too, *"I could not understand Geography taught in the class, so, I did not fare satisfactorily in exams. Instead of guiding me well, the teacher teased me! I finally decided to do self learning. It was disappointing to be left helpless by my teacher, indeed!"* According to a participant, there is the bright and dark side of education system, *"The negative aspect of our present education system is that it is theory-based and hardly has a relation with the practical life. What we've studied is actually useful to a certain extent only when it comes to practical life, so, proper implementation of national policy on education has not taken place in our present education system. While, the positive aspect of our present education system is that government has taken an initiative for poor students by organizing educational programmes like SSA and Midday meal schemes, so, present education system may not have succeeded initially but they are succeeding now and gradually heading towards progress."* Another participant felt silence is golden but certainly that is not discipline, *"In today's view, discipline means students remaining absolutely silent in the class, that's why lesson observer comments that there was lack of class control because students were talking! When one does an activity in the class, there is bound to be chaos because of curiosity but that is overlooked and simply class silence is looked upon here."*

To end with, the illustrations of lived experiences of the participants regarding system of education in India in general manifests passivity in classroom setting, among teachers and in the education system itself and hence the need to give freedom to child to think, question, act, reflect, share and criticize critically, creatively and freely in an active classroom of faith, humility, joy, love and peace.

Research Question 3: What is the perceived meaning and essence of Paulo Freire's theory of 'Pedagogy of the Oppressed' in the present day context?

Answer:

The common barriers to bring in Freirean approach in Indian education are purpose of education seen as to help children score high in exams and get jobs, what matters is the syllabus, rote-learning, narration and minimal participation.

In the research, the participants' views regarding their perceived meaning and essence of Paulo Freire's theory of 'Pedagogy of the Oppressed' in the present day context highlighted the prospects of better future in Indian education may well be shaped in critical and democratic classrooms with application of Freire to classroom methods, mainly his tools of problem-solving and critical thinking.

According to the participants' opinions, emphasis is on the scope and challenges for Freire fitting in Indian education and for possible entry of Freirean pedagogy. One participant realized activity-based learning initiated, *"The revolution has already started in India. In the present day we are following ICSE/CBSE Boards; earlier we had theory-based learning; now we've activity-based learning. The main element of change today is due to critical thinking, freedom of expression and so on in education; now we can have more employable persons in future."* Another participant suggested syllabus with high quality practical matter, *"The course started at Mulgami School has created a revolution already as it follows the ideology of Paulo Freire. Our ultimate goal is to have employable individuals for the development of society and nation, so, we've to frame syllabus where teaching-learning activities, teaching methods and high quality output matters."* A participant appreciated

efforts of schools following Freirean pedagogy already, *"I'll give an example of Mulgami, a school in Pune, Kasbad, in remotest place, which proves we can follow a democratic pattern of study of teaching-learning activities in remote areas too. Another example is of Tridha, a school in Vile Parle, which follows the philosophy of constructivism. They do not have any set textbook or syllabus; instead they follow new themes every month, respecting social happenings, thereby, students become experts in specialized fields right from childhood."* Another participant expressed concern over improvement of poor student's scholastic, *"Poor students of Municipal schools suffer most as teaching-learning activities are hardly done and not the elite students in top most schools who attend private hobby classes for co-curricular activities like music, dance, and arts and do well."* One participant pinpointed time and economics as major limitations, *"Paulo Freire is not universally accepted in India because we've major limitations like time and economics where teachers have a syllabus to complete in a specific time plus every student cannot afford fees of science or practical training courses."* Another limitation elsewhere in the similar case, *"It's not possible to take students from elite background on field trip to rural areas or make them participate in every activity. For example I've worked in a reputed international school at Bandra-Kurla Complex where teachers planned a visit to mangrove plantation at Lokhandwala, Andheri; however, elite students and parents, refused to go there and they would not eat dry snacks of school also. Such snobbish practice of the rich and elite hinders implementing Freire into the Indian classroom."* One participant was optimistic about applying Freirean methodology, *"I've already started applying Freirean methodology when I teach my tuition students and hope to do so in my future school job too. I told my students to ask questions freely and I also learn from them when we share knowledge and views."* Some teachers felt the need for teachers and parents' role to be crucial the most, *"I remember teaching a Std. I student who enjoyed adding knowledge to what was taught in the class, so, basically, it's up to teachers how they share knowledge with students giving freedom of expression to them to be liberal, prolific thinkers."* Similarly, in other case, the participant found society as a miniature school, *"The parent's role is major because a child stays more at home than in school, hence, parents have to take an initiative to let the child discover the world around them. Experiential learning can be preferably learnt best from society itself. Parents and society have to teach children and then teacher's job is to teach the vital skills."*

To summarize, the views of the participants regarding their perceived meaning and essence of Freirean pedagogy and philosophy, they remain optimistic about its possible entry points and practicability in the existing Indian education. In light of current opportunities and scope for change in the Indian education system, Freirean critical pedagogy is of relevance and significance to student-teachers in the present day Indian education and it can indeed be re-invented in the Indian context so as to contribute to social transformation in India.

Implications of the Findings

The research study is expected to generate national awareness that critical education can contribute to a more democratic society and social transformation and Indian education can gradually lead to true democracy with the need to create more democratic classrooms. It will also prepare teachers with democratic vision or posture, to teach theory and practice by critical education, insisting on the critical capacity, curiosity, and autonomy of the student.

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