

Paulo Freire at the Institute results from a Seminar with Paulo Freire at the Institute of Education in October 1993. The Seminar was built around a central topic: the educational theory of Paulo Freire.

Paulo Freire at the Institute contains the reflections of Freire on progressive education, as well as discussions of the topics raised by academics and the audience. This volume was thought of as an opportunity to make widely available Freire's talks, which are based around issues he has discussed in recent publications in Portuguese.

"He was a returning hero to many in the packed lecture theatre. Described by Peter Mortimore, the Institute's director, as a worldwide legend in his own life time, the Brazilian author – best known for *Pedagogy of the Oppressed* – was talking about the qualities a progressive teacher needs. His reputation is built upon his work on adult literacy, which he saw as the greatest weapon for change for the disenfranchised in the slums of Brazil and elsewhere." *Frances Rafferty, The Times Educational Supplement*, 29 October 1993, p.6

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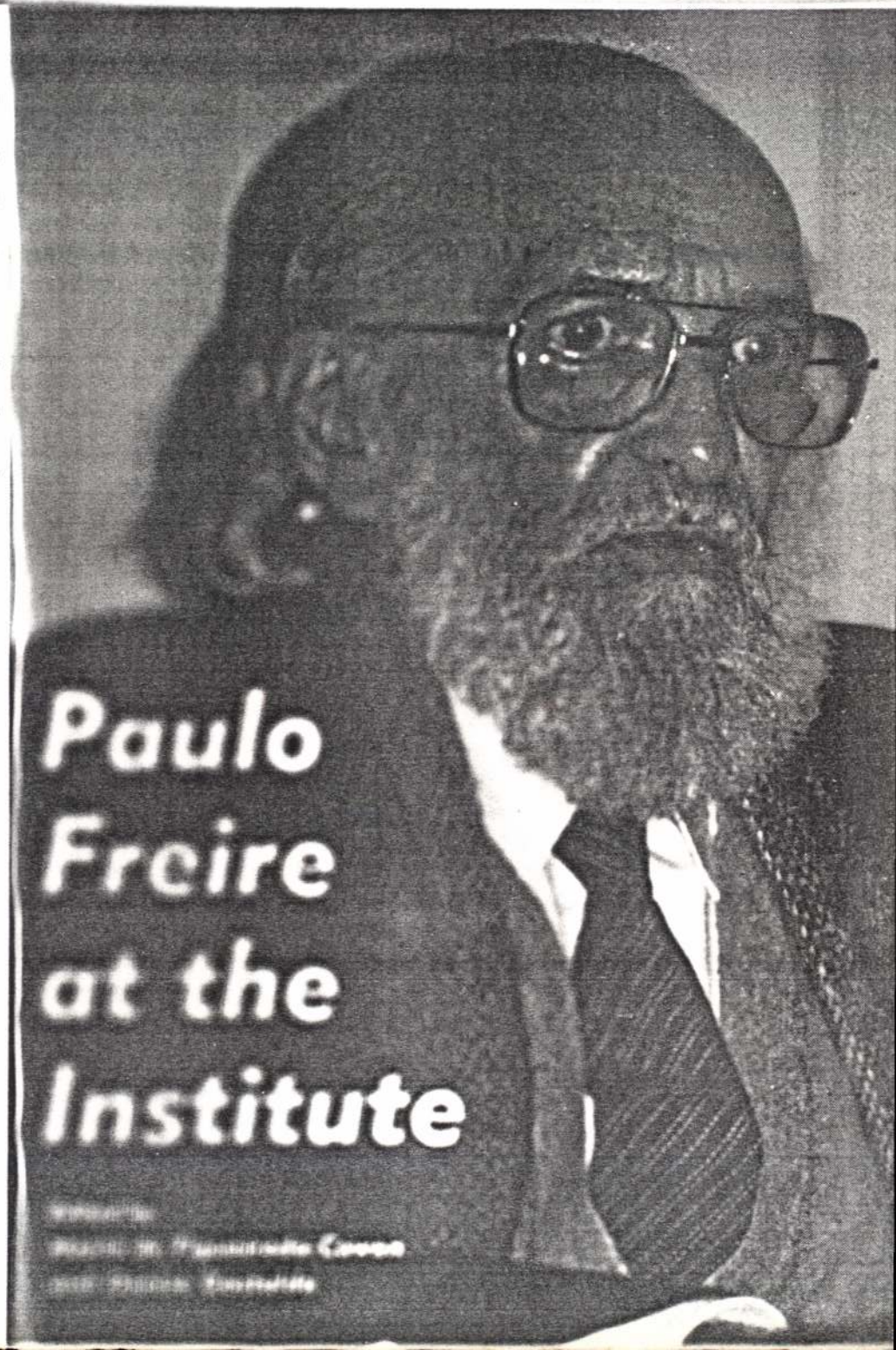


Paulo Freire at the Institute

Edited by Maria de Figueiredo-Cowen and Denise Gastaldo

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Foreword by Peter Mortimore
 Edited by Maria de Figueiredo-Cowen
 and Denise Gastaldo



Qualitative
1995

Paulo Freire
at the Institute

Edited by
orig: Maria de Figueiredo-Cowen
and Denise Gastaldo



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Foreword
Sir Peter Newsam

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When Paulo Freire visited the Institute in October 1993, he turned a lecture to some 800 people into an intensely personal conversation. It was as if a few of us were drinking coffee together, and listening and talking seriously. That gift of immediacy with an audience is a rare one. It is a particular example of the Freirian idea of becoming what we want to become. In this case, one of this century's great educators sharing that greatness with us as great teacher.

Paulo Freire does not educate us by reflecting on our experience. He reflects on his own experience. The nature of that experience and the reading, writing and reflection which illuminate it, give him his peculiar power to illuminate our own experience as educators, and our own lives as people.

"Will no one rid me of this turbulent priest?" an English king once said of an Archbishop who opposed him. Paulo Freire was treated as a dangerous priest in an earlier part of his life and barely survived that experience. The paradox is that Paulo Freire, though capable of anger and irreverent wit as the anecdotes in his lecture show, is personally the least turbulent of men. His thought is coherent, his manner quiet, the articulation of his philosophy sophisticated and elegant. With humility and determination he follows his argument wherever it leads. He reflects on the sources of oppression and on the possibilities for men and women to take control of their lives. His messages are radical; but his power to influence comes through and out of the word – through new ways of thinking and feeling.

It is with pleasure that I invite the reader to investigate Paulo Freire's new ideas in the following lectures, essays and discussions presented at the Institute of Education, and to take from Paulo Freire whatever the reader's previous experience permits. And perhaps a little more.

*Sir Peter Newsam
Director, Institute of Education
Autumn 1993*

paper. At a given moment the organizer, a beautiful woman, very specialized in controlling time, brought me a gift. Puzzled, I asked: 'Is it time for me to stop?' And she said: 'Yes'. Then I replied: 'Of course, I will obey. I will stop because first of all you have the power. But before I stop I have something to say to all of you, and to you, Madam: Yes, I will stop, but I cannot understand why you paid two first class tickets for me and my wife to come from Brazil, so far away from here. You are also paying me a very high fee, and you do not allow me to finish my speech. Nevertheless, as you are paying me, I will stop.'

Nita is just reminding me that the end of my lecture in Sweden was very appropriate because I was speaking about the bureaucratization of the mind. And I added: 'One of the things we should fight against above all in this so-called First World is how we become servants of time which we think we command. How can you put together first class tickets, a high fee and not permit me to finish the speech? How is it possible? You did not understand anything I told you here. Nothing at all. I should be in Brazil, in my house writing.'

Literacy in Brazil: The Contribution of Paulo Freire¹

Ana Maria de Araújo Freire

Paulo Freire has written:

The meeting did not take place in a formal hall but in the shade of an enormous and very ancient tree. The people demonstrated their hospitality by receiving the delegation in the inviting shade of that tree, in intimate relation with their own natural world.

My impression was that the shaded area beneath that tree was a kind of political-cultural center – a place for informal conversation – where they made their work plans together. I also thought how such a place, taking advantage of the shade, might be used for programs of nonformal education.

As I went toward the tree, admiring its thick foliage, I remembered that it had been in the shade of just such trees that Amílcar Cabral met with armed militants during the struggle to evaluate their action against the colonialist armies. At such times, military and tactical analyses never failed to be accompanied by political discussions and debates about culture. Through this means the permanent leadership squadrons were formed. . .

This was not the false hope of one who hopes for the sake of hoping and lives on the basis of vain hope. Hope is true and well founded only when it grows out of the unity between action that transforms the world and critical reflection regarding the meaning of that action. . .

Referring to the violence of the colonialists, one of them bowed low and bowed again, curving his body, living the word with which he described the terrible treatment received. He walked from one side to the other within the circle of shade in which he stood, using the movements of his body to express some aspect of the story he told. None of them spoke ecstatically, disassociating his body from

the words he spoke. None spoke only to be heard. In Africa the word is also to be seen, part of the necessary gesture. No one in Africa, with the exception of the de-Africanized intellectuals, denies his roots, or reveals fear or shame in using his body to express his meaning.

And while we saw and heard them speaking, with the force of their metaphors and the easy movements of their bodies, we thought of the innumerable possibilities that were opened for a liberating education by these wellsprings of African culture.

They spoke also of the present moment, of their desire to participate in the struggle for national reconstruction. They spoke, at the same time, of the difficulties that they confronted.

The oldest among them, the one who spoke last in the shade of that enormous tree, spoke to all of us in the language of hope.²

I come from far away to talk to you about the contribution of Paulo Freire to literacy in Brazil and I have started my (not so long) talk with words on Africa that are not mine but Freire's, the Brazilian educationist. From these fragments of the introduction of **Pedagogy in Process – the Letters To Guinea-Bissau**, it is possible to understand partially how Paulo Freire feels, thinks, acts and understands the words and the world; education, knowledge and society.

In Paulo Freire's language and poetic style, the dialectical thinking, the scientific rigour, the political commitment, the sensibility for others, and the effort to re-invent a more just, serious, and democratic world are very much present. In this re-invented world there is a space for the utopian dream and a time for hope. In this way Paulo Freire's political-pedagogical-epistemological thinking is integrated.

The quotation from Paulo Freire can act as the 'generative words' of my talk on the contribution of Paulo Freire to education in Brazil and in the world, and not only to literacy.

From this quotation which condenses a large part of Freire's relation to the world, I would say that Freire is the pedagogue of the obvious, of hope, and of daring; he is the pedagogue of the verb and of the noun; even more, he is the pedagogue of thought and of emotion which made him known as the pedagogue of the oppressed and, hopefully, of the oppressors³. Above all, he is the political-pedagogue, *par excellence*.

Therefore, the Freire quotation permits us to meet *the sensitive man* who, from his Northeastern origins, values the shade of the big century-old tree which gives him the pleasure of the fresh breeze and a place to think. We also meet *the man who, intensely concerned with epistemological questions*, never forgets,

in the name of scientific knowledge, the question of informal conversation, the expressiveness of 'speaking bodies', the discourse of the 'great man' who possesses the hopeful wisdom of those (traditionally oral) societies; *the political man* who denounces the colonial exploitation which mistreats and violates, who points out, without fear or shame, those cultural sources as the content of a liberating education i. e. the education that makes it possible for men and women to become actors in their history, and from their education to build their truly democratic society; *the pedagogical man* who, from the struggles for a daily life of peace and justice, holds seminars assessing the unity between the transformative action *on* and *of* the world and the critical thinking of hope and of the natural world along with the world of production. The dialectical and utopian themes are clear, and all this is presented with humility and respect.

Paulo Freire has become the political-pedagogue or the pedagogist-politician of the oppressed, of all those who wish to re-invent, from the furnace of colonialism, a just and non-eternally dependent society; of all those so-called minorities (women, blacks, homosexuals, migrants etc.) who need and are willing to participate actively and not marginally, precisely because they have been excluded from the actions of their country and their community; of all those who, suffering from class discrimination, hunger, lack of housing and schools, are unable to name the world because society, closed in its privileges, does not permit them to have; to be; to wish; to know. We wish those people, no matter how they are named – excluded, oppressed or proscribed – to have, to be, to wish, to be able to and to know, and therefore to name the world⁴. To name the world by writing and reading the written word, to name the world by writing and reading in the same world where they live, against the condition of simply *being in* the world rather than *being with* the world, not allowing the patronizing social system to be a weight for them; only through an authentic integration of the "how" and the "through" would they be able to act upon themselves and upon history to re-invent their society.

Freire sketched these things in his first publication – **Education, the Practice for Freedom** – the pedagogue of criticism of Brazilian colonialism and of its consequences, men and women submerged in a society of anti-dialogue, of authoritarianism, of silence, and hierarchy of submission and awareness of (unwelcome) oppression.

Freire's critical – and incipient political – consciousness emerged from the century-old presence of Brazilian illiteracy exposed atrociously in the streets. His closeness to the illiterate population in Recife, during the 40s and 50s, when he worked in the Educational Division of SESI (Social Service for Industry), led him to think seriously about a solution for one of the biggest Brazilian problems: widespread illiteracy.

The search for a solution to this problem was based on an understanding of the dialectical dichotomy, the subjectivity-objectivity of being in the world, later one of the most remarkable features of Freirian pedagogy. Freire started from a concrete fact, the history of his life in a given period of difficult times in Brazil – the period of the American Economic Depression. After the fall in the New York Stock Exchange, monopolistic capitalism re-structured itself, with perverse consequences for the Third World.

The child Paulo, confined to the small town of Jaboatão, 18 km from Recife, faced pain, suffering and anxiety. He also learned, mysteriously, that he needed to find pleasure for life, love as a principle, and intellectual growth as a necessity.

Freire was framed by daily financial and material difficulties. Nevertheless he had the opportunity to go to one of the best schools in Recife – the Colégio Oswaldo Cruz whose owner was my father, Aluizio Pessoa de Araújo. Struggling through, and working hard, Freire became initiated into scientific knowledge, with special attention devoted to the Portuguese language.

Later, as a teacher in SESI, working with adults, Freire built up his teaching around his difficulties in life and his previous theoretical knowledge about education. From this praxis with the urban, rural and coastal workers, Freire invented a new theory of knowledge – and there is no neutral theory of knowledge – re-creating a new road for those who wished to write.

It was then that he started asking questions: what for, for whom, against whom, how, until when, on behalf of whom, on behalf of what? It was a moment of clarification of the contradictions of the Brazilian economic and political system. He then understood the meaning and the strength of the ideologies he was familiar with.

It was then that Freire understood with clarity that to teach adults how to write and to memorise mechanically the articulation of letters, syllables and words would not give to them the chance to name, speak and decide. They would become permanently, as they have been in Brazil, an object without voice, and passive listeners of norms and orders from 'superiors'.

For Freire, literacy had to have a wider meaning. It had to give men, women and children the opportunity to become actors and not only objects of their history, of their life, of becoming literate in the real act of knowledge which is teaching-learning.

That is why I can say that Freire is the pedagogue of the obvious, of hope and of daring, of objectivity and of subjectivity, of the noun, of the verb, and of the preposition. And of the oppressed because, starting from the reality historically characterised by oppression, Freire created the necessary conditions to overcome it with his liberating pedagogy.

Freire, as a political-pedagogue, was then able to invent a 'method' which, teaching how to write and to read through words and sentences, would make people politically aware.

The way Freire chose to make Brazilians literate was then, as he himself calls it, an educative tactic, in order to reach the necessary and intended strategy, i.e., the political awareness of the Brazilian people. The concept of his 'method' is revolutionary, but it is a revolution in which the tactics and the strategy deny the military and guerrilla meanings. It is revolutionary because it is able to withdraw from a condition of submission and passivity those who did not know the written words. That is where Freire's revolution is, one which never claimed to invert the pole, oppressed-oppressor; on the contrary, what Freire had in mind was to re-invent a society without exploitation and without the verticality of authority.

The birth of this 'method' – I have been raising this thesis as a result of my analysis of Freire's thinking in the History of Brazilian Education – took place, I am sure, when, as the Pernambuco Rapporteur of the Second National Conference of Adult Education, Freire presented new proposals to one of the themes put forward by the then Minister of Education Clovis Salgado who had called for the Conference: "Adult Education and the marginalised population: shanty-towns, huts, slums and communities of foreigners" (Theme 3).

This Conference took place from 6 to 16 July 1958, when President Juscelino Kubitschek, fully in power, wanted to solve the problems of poverty and lack of education within the frame of the populist ideology. However the ideas, the discourse and the practice of Paulo Freire already indicated the road to an authentic popular pedagogy.

Such concerns within the political society met those of part of the civilian society in the fifties. There was an appropriate ambiance for mobilisation, for thinking and the will for social and political changes.

These progressive components of the civilian society – urban and rural workers, students, university teachers, intellectuals and the catholic clergy – were no longer willing to accept the *status quo* but wanted to break with the archaic, authoritarian, discriminatory and elitist traditions which had dominated Brazil for centuries.

Many were those among the politicians who thought and tried to search for solutions towards development. Some elements of the civilian society resented poverty, social injustice and the widespread illiteracy among the Brazilian people. Freire was one of them and soon became the pedagogue of this resentment.

In the Second Conference of Adult Education, Freire then proposed, in his particular language, within his innovative and progressive philosophy of

education, that adult education in the marginal areas be based on the consciousness of the reality lived daily by those to be literated, rejecting the simple process of literacy (later he used to say: simple bla bla blas).

In the Conference Report, Freire proposed that the adult literacy process no longer takes place *upon* (vertically) or *for* (in a patronizing way) men, but *with* men, *with* learners, and *with* reality. Only that way would it be possible to educate for democracy. It is worthwhile to notice that in the fifties and even after the publication, in the seventies, in the USA, of **Pedagogy of the Oppressed**, Freire did not mention women; the word 'men' was understood in its wider sense i.e. human beings.

Freire proposed an adult education that would stimulate collaboration, decision, participation, and social and political responsibility.

Freire took the category of knowledge, which is acquired existentially, through the living knowledge of his problems and those of the local community, knowledge which is not acquired intellectually or notionally. By so doing, Freire made explicit his respect for popular knowledge, for common sense.

As Rapporteur of the Pernambuco Commission of Theme 3, Freire anticipated some aspects of his understanding of the world which became deeper twelve years later in **Pedagogy of the Oppressed**, after several experiences in Brazil and abroad, including his condition of political exile. The issue of the oppressed was with him since he was a child in Jaboatão, when he felt it through the homes and streets of Brazil.

The Report talked about social education, about pupils knowing themselves and their social problems, and was not only concerned about acquiring academic and technical abilities. It stimulated people to participate in the immersion process of public life. Freire emphasised that it was the learners' duty to plan the content of their studies. He also stimulated pedagogical work in the slums and pointed out that women overcome their condition of destitution by changing the nature of their domestic practices.

Such a philosophy of education contained already a clear perception of the discriminatory routine of our mainly patriarchal and elitist society. Freire presented solutions to overcome these conditions, ahead of time, within a broader and more progressive conception: education as a political act. All that was very new in Brazil which used to exclude through social reproduction those who are socially disadvantaged⁵.

I am sure that in that Second Conference Paulo Freire created in the history of Brazilian education a new concept of adult education. He has contributed, since then, to a real critical understanding of illiteracy, and of the act of educating. He was also very perceptive about the political nature of education.

The political nature of education, even before its pedagogical, technical

and didactic specificity, has been Freire's main concern, not only in his theoretical thinking but also in his educative praxis.

Since then, Freire has been shaping himself according to his experience as the pedagogue of the oppressed – even before writing his book **Pedagogy of the Oppressed** – because he based it on popular knowledge and language, on people's dreams, respecting their reality and their daily lives. Above all, he extended these thoughts into a proposal to overcome this world of submission, of silence and poverty, and to move towards a world of possibilities.

Freire 'invites' the adults who are learning how to read and write to consider themselves as men or women living and producing in a particular society. He removes the illiterates from the apathy and conformity which constantly make them regard themselves as individuals who have been 'sacked from life'. Freire challenges them to understand that they are also taking part in the process of creating culture. He teaches them the anthropological concept of culture.

Freire based his 'method' on a simple and obvious principle: when a man transforms clay into brick in order to build his house, he is at the same time producing culture, aware that he knows what he is doing. He also should be able to use words to build sentences, to use syllables to build words. He is therefore capable of acquiring reading and writing skills, because men and women are capable of expressing their spoken language in a written code.

The fact of belonging to a less privileged social class has to be seen not as a divine wish or fate but as part of the economic-political-ideological context of the society in which they live. They will be unveiling the true reasons for oppression.

When these men and women notice that they have active roles in the process of creating their own culture, they will have almost or totally overcome the first stage to perceiving the importance, the need, and the possibility of acquiring reading and writing skills. They will be learning how to read and write, from a political point of view.

The participants of the 'circles of culture' answer the questions formulated by the group coordinator, in a dialogue about the topic to be learned, the representation of reality, and the written words to be decoded. They are learning how to read and write, politically as much as linguistically, in an inseparable and dialectical process.

Such a dialogue allows for a re-evaluation of reality which can result in getting the individual who is learning how to read and write involved with the political practices that can lead to the transformation of society and, consequently, to its re-invention.

What? Why? How? What for? Whom for? Against what? Against whom?

In favour of what? In favour of whom? These questions, I repeat, stimulate these learners to reflect about the essence of things that surround them, their importance, their reason, their purpose, how they are made, and so on. Through a pedagogy of questioning, Freire ensures that answers would result from the consciousness of learners.

The activities involved in teaching how to read and write require the study of what Freire calls the 'minimum vocabulary universe' amongst the learners. The words that will be part of the programme will be chosen from this universe. These words (approximately seventeen), which are called 'generative words', should be phonemically rich, and should be presented in an ascending order of phonetic difficulty. In addition, these words should be selected from the context of the learners' daily lives, they should be used by the local community and should be known by those who live and work there. These words should have a pragmatic value for the men and women who are learning how to read and write⁶.

When these learners are able to articulate syllables to form words and sentences, then they know how to read and write. The process has to be appropriately developed.

The effectiveness and validity of the 'method' resides, then, in the fact that it is based on the learners' reality, on what they already know, on the pragmatic value of the things and facts of their daily lives, and on their living conditions. Freire surpasses common sense and becomes the pedagogue of the obvious, of the people, and of hope.

The 'method' abides by methodological and linguistic norms, but it goes beyond them. It challenges the men and the women who are learning how to read and write to seize the written code and its political meaning, providing a widespread notion not only of language, but also of the world, as a true political-linguistic pedagogue must do.

The 'method' denies the merely alienated and alienating repetition of words and syllables, it allows the learners 'to read the world' as well as 'to read the word'. As a matter of fact, according to Freire, these are inseparable readings. Readings in accord with the needs of the people.

In brief, this work of Paulo Freire is more than a 'method' of teaching how to read and write. It consists of a wide and deep understanding of education, whose main concern is the political nature of education and of the world.

This pedagogy of challenge, of curiosity, and of the obvious is made for those who were not allowed to read and write either the word and the world.

Since the *Pedagogy of the Oppressed*, the work that made Paulo Freire renowned as a world figure, Freire's thoughts became more and more political.

However, Freire, coherently and correctly, never abandoned his pedagogical thinking.

With his dialogic action theory, Freire proposed the liberation 'weapons' of collaboration, union, organisation, and cultural synthesis as elements antagonistic to the anti-dialogue, which it would oppose. This anti-dialogue has characterised Brazil since the sixteenth century, when it was conquered by the Portuguese, until today.

According to dialogic action theory, people collaborate with one another in order to transform the world, revealing, by cultural action, why and how the oppressed are bonded to the reality. This bondage leads to a false self-awareness and a false knowledge of their reality which is hidden by the ideology. That is why it is so important to reverse this process. As far as organisation is concerned, the necessary instruments would be leadership, no matter what kind, discipline, order, objectives, tasks to be carried out and results to be reported. One cannot be totally relaxed; there is need for authentic authority. It is important to encourage a cultural synthesis against the invasion that annihilates the oppressed with its ideological and valuational milestones.

Hence, Freirean thought became increasingly influenced by an authentic dialogicity which creates, recreates, educates, and humanises through the pedagogy of dialogue. It is a pedagogy that dares and takes risks, unveils, raises curiosity for knowledge, and tolerates. It asks and answers, transforms ingenuity into criticism, establishes rules from common sense, gives responsibilities and authority. This pedagogy aims at clarity and at being part of a political dream. It denies the extremes of spontaneity and authoritarianism, and makes the learning process a surprising one, stimulating creativity and an unpretentious capability as well as coherence between what is said and what is done. In addition, it stimulates trust in oneself and in others. In sum, this pedagogy, which is based on daily life experience, pursues theory to shed light on to the practice that grants freedom.

Freire's political pedagogy, which above all denies authoritarianism, discrimination, and elitism that have been entrenched in Brazilian society for a long time, is based on the patience of the impatient, on humbleness, on rebelliousness, on militancy, on commitment and organisation, on debate, on fight, on conflict and dialogue, on political compromise, on justice and awareness, on human interest and dignity, on totality, on contradiction and on the concrete reality of men, women and the world. It strengthens the cry that comes from the people in order to make it a cry of indignation and hope, instead of an empty cry which neither expresses purpose nor grants power to people. Thus, Freire has become more and more radical in his position as the political pedagogue of the oppressed.

Until this moment, I have been talking, apparently, only about Freire's qualitative contribution not only to the teaching of reading and writing, but also, and more widely, to the process of educating as a whole. It is quite difficult to talk strictly about the quantitative data that came direct or indirectly from his work. The official statistical data do not show everything, because after the coup d'état of 1964 they have been ideologically manipulated. The popular education movements have not registered the data appropriately. However, the data from the Municipal Secretariat of Education of São Paulo will be extremely valuable for this analysis, when compared to those from administrations before and after Freire's. I should add that to distinguish quantity from quality is certainly not the best option from the scientific-methodological-political point of view, because quantity implies quality, and vice-versa.

I believe, though, that I have to point out Freire's different and more important practices from the sixties onwards, in Brazil. I must also say that these practices cannot be dissociated from the theory that enlightened them.

With his knowledge of education, Freire cooperated in the creation of the Cultural Extension Service (*Serviço de Extensão Cultural*) in the then University of Recife, when the education radio service was launched. He, then, systematised his literacy 'method' in the same university where he was a lecturer in History and Philosophy of Education.

Together with other intellectuals and ordinary people, he founded the Popular Culture Movement (*Movimento de Cultura Popular*) of Recife, where he first used his 'literacy method'. He helped the Literacy Campaign in the city of Natal, in the State of Rio Grande do Norte, called 'Barefoot people can also learn how to read' (*De pé no chão também se aprende a ler*). Freire led the same type of campaign in the town of Angicos, when he became known in the whole country and in outside world as the creator of the 'consciousness raising literacy method'.

When the first class of students from this small town in Rio Grande do Norte completed the course, President João Goulart attended the graduation ceremony. Freire was then invited to coordinate a national campaign which was called the National Literacy Programme. It was intended to teach 5 million illiterate adults, which would increase considerably the number of electors. The programme, officially created on the 22nd of January 1964, in order to implement the plan elaborated by the Popular Culture Commission on the 8th of July 1963, was also coordinated by Freire, and was almost immediately cancelled, when on the 13th of April 1964 the Commission was abolished by a decree from the new military government.

The sixteen years of exile were responsible for his silence and his absence from Brazil, because he and his ideas were forbidden in his country. He

wandered around the world, as he likes to put it, and became a pedagogue of the world.

When he returned to Brazil in 1980, Freire became even more radical in his classes at universities – in the Pontifical Catholic University of São Paulo (PUC/SP) or in the University of Campinas (UNICAMP), where he has lectured until 1990. He also participated in seminars at these institutions and in a number of other popular organisations, reinforcing his position that education is a theory of knowledge put into practice and that it is possible to establish that knowledge, being a historical process, results from the conscious practice of men and women, who are aware of their time and space, of their objective reality which, in turn, makes them part of the historical dialectic process that makes history.

Freire states that in education, as a result of a certain theory of knowledge put into practice, it is necessary, I repeat, to raise questions about the content – the object to be explored – about the learning 'method' and the evaluation of this practice, and, under no circumstances, to abandon the concrete reality of the learners.

Furthermore, since this content, this 'method', and this evaluation are located in a particular time and are put into practice within a certain space, they are historical. As such, they are aimed at real people who, in the process of teaching and learning, need not only to acquire knowledge, as a consequence of what they have memorised, but also to use it for their own good as well as that of their society. They can reinvent life and make history, the same history that they have always been part of.

Freire accepted his nomination as Secretary of Education of the City of São Paulo, and on the 1st of January 1989 he was inaugurated. This happened because the Workers' Party (*Partido dos Trabalhadores*), of which he is one of the founders, won the elections for the São Paulo City Council with Luiza Erundina de Souza as Mayor.

In his highly democratic administration, he proved that consensus and collegial work can lead to collective responsibility and to the re-creation of the educative process itself more efficiently and adequately.

His political decisions were born out of his own theory and out of his practice as an educationalist for the world – indeed, of the world – as well as out of the educational praxis of his technical advisers with whom he worked, who reflected the wishes and needs of the communities. Such political decisions were remarkably influential in the educational system of the municipality of São Paulo.

Thus, 'his' (and his team's) work was fruitful in the sense of 'changing the face of the school', as he usually says. He transformed the schools by bringing them back to the local communities, and by providing them with the

necessary conditions for the exercise of pedagogical activities. He reformulated the curriculum, giving to it a new orientation and adjusting it to children of the lower classes. He also encouraged staff development within a perspective of permanent training. He did not forget to include ancillary staff as educational agents, providing them with training in order to improve their performance. Security guards, cooks, cleaners, secretaries, together with principals, teachers, pupils, and their parents transformed education into a collaborative act of elaborated knowledge. Education, then, originated from the social needs felt by and for the community and to the world, having as mediators both the school, its agents, and the technical equipment.

Having left the Municipal Secretary of Education of São Paulo before his term of office ended – he carried on being a member of the Secretariat Collegiate until the end of 1992 – he left public life to be ‘given back to the world’, as the Mayor of São Paulo, Luiza Erundina, said at his farewell party, in the Municipal Theatre of São Paulo, in May 27, 1991. Since then, he has been devoting himself to his lifetime activity: writing, lecturing, and talking to people.

This is true. In the last two years Freire wrote three books. This morning we have had him here at the Institute of Education of the University of London to talk about education, and about how he sees his political-pedagogical thinking. This institution is also opening its doors to me so that I can tell you a bit about the researches I have been engaged in, regarding Paulo Freire’s influences in the history of Brazilian education. This influence has been an important part of the history of the political-pedagogical ideas of the Brazilian nation. Ideas and practices with a worldwide influence, as if to confirm one of the key ideas of the Freirean thought: nobody knows everything and nobody ignores everything. It is the Third World which, having learned from the First World, is contributing to a new understanding of a world desired by all of us, from everywhere. A new world, more egalitarian, fairer and more democratic to all men, women and children of the so called North, South, East and West.

Like one of the ‘great men’ of Africa, Paulo Freire learned with men and women of Africa, Asia and the Americas. Literate or illiterate, powerful or powerless men and women, but above all men and women with souls and the weaknesses of those who have nothing and ‘know nothing’. Above all, he has been learning from the suffering Brazilian people, who have been neglected for centuries.

Paulo Freire has become the pedagogue of de-mystification. Because of what he has relentlessly been, and has been doing for nearly all his life, with no pessimism, but actively and hopefully. Because he understood like nobody else the dialectics oppressor-oppressed, which he wishes to see overcome and which the world, in surprise and astonishment, has been admitting with humility. This

is, with no doubt, his greatest contribution not just to Brazil, but to the whole world.

Thank you very much.

NOTES

1. Translated by Terezinha Benevides Lobianco, Monica Pereira dos Santos and Maria de Figueiredo-Cowen.
2. Freire, Paulo. *Pedagogy in process – the letters to Guinea-Bissau*. London: Writers and Readers Publishing Cooperative, 1978. pp.59-62.
3. Editors’ Note. The author talks here through metaphors which are related to grammatical categories. The pedagogue of the verb is here understood as the pedagogue of action (to learn, to teach, to love, to think, to do) whilst the pedagogue of the noun is the pedagogue of the essence.

In addition the author uses the word ‘obvious’ to mean all that is intuitively understood. The pedagogue of the obvious is the pedagogue who rethinks the obvious relations in education, challenging what is taken for granted.
4. See Freire, Ana Maria A. *Analfabetismo no Brasil (1534-1930)* [Illiteracy in Brazil]. São Paulo: Cortez, 1989.
5. Editors’ Note. Ana Maria Freire uses in the Portuguese text the expression ‘proscription of bodies’ to mean the colonial ideology of exclusion dating back to the colonial acts of the Portuguese and Catholic Church in the 16th century. Proscription in Portuguese is a stronger expression than prohibition. The native Indians, the blacks and the women were excluded from participation in society during colonial times. They were considered inferior human beings.
6. See Freire, P. *Education, the practice of freedom*. London: Writers and Readers Publishing Cooperative, 1976.

Editors’ Note. This book was first published in the UK under the title: *Education for critical consciousness*. London: Sheed and Ward, 1974.