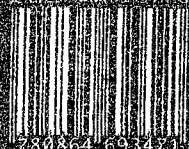


Paulo Freire, the influential Brazilian educationist, died on 2 May 1997. Best known as the author of *Pedagogy of the Oppressed*, Freire's name has found a place in many fields of academic inquiry. References to Freirean theory and practice appear not only in the educational literature, but also in books and articles by literacy scholars, theologians, psychoanalysts, counsellors, social workers, political activists, literary critics and linguists. Freire's ideas have been applied by those working in schools, universities, adult education programmes, prisons, hospitals, peace organisations and unions.

This book is based on a symposium organised at the University of Auckland shortly after Freire's death. The contributors to this volume bring theological, indigenous, feminist and postmodern perspectives, among others, to bear on a range of pedagogical and political issues in Freire's work. A number of chapters assess the significance of Freire's thought for historical and contemporary struggles by Maori, church leaders and educationists in Aotearoa-New Zealand. Differences between Freirean and neoliberal approaches to social policy reform are considered. The contributors identify both strengths and weaknesses in Freire's work. While attentive to the complexities of Freirean theory, this book avoids excessive jargon and is aimed not just at specialists, but all who share an interest in questions of oppression, liberation and pedagogy in this country.

ISBN 0 86409 341 6



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PAULO FREIRE, POLITICS AND PEDAGOGY

REFLECTIONS FROM
AOTEAROA - NEW ZEALAND

Edited by Peter Roberts

©1999 edited by Peter Roberts
©1999 Dunmore Press Limited

First Published in 1999
by
Dunmore Press Limited
P.O. Box 5115
Palmerston North
New Zealand

Australian Supplier:
Federation Press
P.O. Box 45
Annandale 2038 NSW
Australia
Ph: (02) 9552-2200
Fax: (02) 9552-1681

ISBN 0 86469 347 8

Text: Times New Roman 11/13
Printer: The Dunmore Printing Company Ltd
Palmerston North
Cover design: Murray Lock. Photo provided by
Paulo Freire Institute

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Preface

In the days, weeks and months following Paulo Freire's death in May 1997, scholars around the world paid tribute to his work. At the University of Auckland a symposium was organised to give expression to a range of voices on the theory and practice of Freirean education in Aotearoa—New Zealand and elsewhere. Nine speakers each addressed Freirean themes from different points of view: indigenous, feminist, postmodern and theological perspectives, among others, were brought to bear on Freire's ideas. The symposium attracted interest from academics, students and teachers in a variety of departments at the University of Auckland, and also included participants from the Auckland College of Education and Massey University at Albany.

This book brings together essay versions of all but one of the presentations given by speakers at the symposium. George Armstrong's account of Freire's brief but memorable visit to New Zealand in 1974 was a welcome addition to the collection. Part of the Introduction is based on my comments at the start of the symposium. The material for Chapter 7 was not included in the original presentation, but has been written to complement the papers from other contributors. At the symposium each person spoke for approximately ten minutes on their

selected theme, allowing 30–40 minutes for questions, comments and dialogue. The aim in publishing the presentations in book form has been to capture something of the informal atmosphere of the occasion, while at the same time providing concise critical readings of Freire's work.

When the contract for the book was being negotiated, the publisher expressed a preference for a small, modestly-priced volume that might have appeal not just to 'Freire specialists' but also a wide range of other potential readers. Toward this end, most of the contributors have kept their essays within a moderate word limit and all have taken special care in the presentation of key concepts and ideas. It is recognised that this is only a partial selection of voices from Aotearoa–New Zealand on Freirean themes, and that in a larger volume a different picture of Freire might have emerged.

Peter Roberts
June, 1999

Acknowledgements

I would like to thank the contributors and Sharmian Firth at Dunmore Press for supporting the publication of this book. I am grateful to Colin Linkshear for stimulating my initial interest in Freire and for offering subsequent words of encouragement and good advice. Thanks are also due to students at the University of Auckland and the University of Waikato who have participated in courses addressing Freire's work for many thoughtful comments, questions and ideas over the years. The cover photograph of Freire has been reproduced with the kind permission of the Paulo Freire Institute (São Paulo, Brazil). Finally, acknowledgement should be made of Paulo Freire himself, for the pedagogical example he provided and the critical reflection he invited.

Introduction

Remembering Freire in Aotearoa–New Zealand

Peter Roberts

Paulo Freire, one of the most influential educationists of the twentieth century, died on 2 May 1997 in São Paulo, Brazil. He was 75 years old. As news of his death spread around the international academic community, many of the thousands of scholars and practitioners who had been touched in one way or another by his work paused to reflect on the impact he had on their professional and personal lives. Freire's influence extended far beyond the educational domain. His ideas have been interpreted and applied by not only teachers at all levels of the education system but also psychologists, counsellors, social workers, health professionals, theologians, development theorists, political activists, literacy specialists and women's studies scholars. Freire's pedagogy was built upon a philosophy incorporating insights from several intellectual traditions: liberalism, Marxism, existentialism, phenomenology, radical Catholicism and (in his later work) aspects of postmodernism. His publications spanned three decades, and his practical work in the field of education occupied much of his adult life.

Freire grew up in Recife, Brazil. While he enjoyed the comforts of a middle-class background, his family, like many others, suffered considerable hardship during the years of the Great Depression. After

completing his schooling, Freire attended the University of Recife. His initial interest in law gave way to a passion for teaching and the urge to investigate some of the deepest philosophical questions and most pressing social problems of his time. His pedagogical theory emerged, in part, through his experiences in the Division of Public Relations, Education and Culture with the Social Service of Industry (SESI) in Pernambuco during the 1940s and 1950s. Freire often spoke of how much he learned about the art of good teaching from his first wife, Elza. Building on earlier efforts (and learning from previous mistakes) in working with peasants and the urban poor in the 1950s and early 1960s, Freire went on to coordinate major literacy initiatives for adults in the northeast of Brazil and was eventually appointed director of a comprehensive national literacy crusade.

In a distinctive approach to adult literacy education that was later to gain international attention, Freire attempted to integrate the reading of words with an increasingly sophisticated reading of the world. Grounding literacy learning squarely on the experiences of participants in his programmes, Freire and his co-workers developed a series of 'generative' words for different areas and coupled this with a set of pictorial representations based (in part) on scenes from everyday Brazilian life¹. The acquisition of print skills was preceded by a thorough discussion of various ontological themes and a re-examination of hitherto unquestioned assumptions about self and society. Freire found that with this system adults could develop a basic competency with reading and writing in as little as 40 hours, while simultaneously extending their abilities to think critically about the social world. It was this dual achievement – the attainment of not only (erroneously labelled) 'technical' skills, but also a new form of political awareness – which was ultimately to force Freire into exile.

When the military government swept to power in Brazil in 1964, Freire was labelled a subversive and placed under house arrest. More than 15 years would pass before he returned to Brazil (under a somewhat more moderate political regime) in 1980. The intervening years in exile – dominated by periods in Chile in the late 1960s and Geneva for most of the 1970s – were pivotal in bringing Freire's work to the attention of scholars in the First World. Freire conducted numerous seminars and lectures across the globe in the 1970s and 1980s. He supported the

Brazilian Workers' Party in the 1980s and assumed leadership of the Municipal Bureau of Education in São Paulo in 1989. Freire resigned from his position as Secretary of Education for the municipality of São Paulo 1999 and spent his last years in reflection, teaching and writing.

Pedagogy of the Oppressed (Freire, 1972a) is without doubt Freire's most famous book. This classic text has been reprinted numerous times in English, Spanish and Portuguese over the years, and has become a key reference point for many groups seeking to investigate the relationship between oppression, liberation and education. While *Pedagogy of the Oppressed* was the first of Freire's books to find a large Western audience, it was not his first published work. *Education: The Practice of Freedom* (Freire, 1976; also published under the title *Education for Critical Consciousness*) was written before *Pedagogy of the Oppressed*, but only found wide circulation in the Western world some years after its initial publication. The two books are quite different in style and focus. *Education: The Practice of Freedom* bears a stronger stamp of liberal ideas, while *Pedagogy of the Oppressed* gives evidence of a clear shift (further) to the left in Freire's thinking. In subsequent works, Freire extended and modified some of the pedagogical arguments introduced in these two early books (and another text, *Cultural Action for Freedom*: Freire, 1972b), while nonetheless retaining a number of key philosophical principles across the entire corpus of his published writings.

Pedagogy in Process: The Letters to Guinea-Bissau (Freire, 1978) recalled Freire's experiences in a major programme of adult education during the mid-1970s, while *The Politics of Education* – published in 1985 – brought together a number of essays from the previous 15 years. The late 1980s witnessed the beginning of the most productive phase in Freire's publishing career. His co-authored book, *A Pedagogy for Liberation* (Freire and Shor, 1987), was constructed in a dialogical form with North American educationalist Ira Shor and addressed a wide range of issues relating to the application of Freirean principles in First World contexts. *Literacy: Reading the Word and the World* (Freire and Macedo, 1987) challenged conventional views of reading and writing and provided theoretical substance for some of Freire's earlier claims about the politics of literacy. The 'talking book' format continued with several other publications, notably *Learning to Question*

(Freire and Faundez, 1989) and *We Make the Road by Walking: Conversations on Education and Social Change* (Horton and Freire, 1990). A text specifically devoted to the nature and role of universities, *Paulo Freire on Higher Education* (produced from a series of dialogues between Freire and a group of Mexican academics: Escobar, Fernandez, and Guevara-Niebla, with Freire, 1994), also emerged during this period. In the last few years of his life, Freire published a series of reflective works. One book – *A Pedagogy of the City* (Freire, 1993) – provided an account of his role as Secretary of Education in São Paulo during the late 1980s and early 1990s. Another – *Pedagogy of Hope* (Freire, 1994) – examined responses to *Pedagogy of the Oppressed*. In *Letters to Cristina* (Freire, 1996) Freire looked back at important events and ideas over the whole course of his life and work. A volume of critical essays on Freire, with his response to them, appeared under the title of *Mentoring the Mentor* (Freire with Fraser, Macedo, McKinnon and Stokes, 1997) in the first half of 1997. A number of other texts – *Pedagogy of the Heart* (Freire, 1997), *Teachers as Cultural Workers: Letters to Those Who Dare Teach* (Freire, 1998a), *Politics and Education* (Freire, 1998b), *Pedagogy of Freedom: Ethics, Democracy and Civic Courage* (Freire, 1998c), and the collaborative *Critical Education in the New Information Age* (Castells, Flecha, Freire, Giroux, Macedo and Willis, 1999) – have been published posthumously.

In both his early endeavours and the programmes with which he was later involved as a coordinator or consultant, Freire identified an important relationship between education and the struggle to overcome poverty, hunger and oppression. As he refined his pedagogical ideas, it became clear that Freire supported neither authoritarian nor laissez-faire approaches to education. From a Freirean point of view, programmes of education, while avoiding the manipulative and oppressive features of 'banking' systems, should nonetheless have structure, direction, a strong sense of purpose and rigour. Freirean education begins – but does not end – with personal and collective experience and concentrates on posing problems, asking questions, and the development of an investigative, curious, critical disposition in the learning process. Education, for Freire, is one part of a wider political praxis in which participants continuously reflect (through dialogue with each other) and act to transform the world.

While Freire's ideas have been enthusiastically embraced by hundreds of people in both the Third World and the First World, it is important to avoid romanticising either the man or his work. Important weaknesses, contradictions and omissions have been identified (some by Freire himself, some by his critics) over the years. The sexist language in Freire's earlier books came under fire. Although this problem was rectified in later works, a number of silences on issues of gender remain (as Boler's chapter points out). His approach to adult literacy education has been seen by some as 'too political', by others as politically naïve. The concept of 'conscientisation' has been attacked by Peter Berger (1974). Freire's theory of oppression has been found wanting in its emphasis on class at the expense of gender and ethnicity. The universalist assumptions in Freire's philosophy have been criticised by a number of feminists, postmodernists and poststructuralists (see, for example, Ellsworth, 1989; Weiler, 1994). Some commentators have attempted to 'turn the tables' on Freire, arguing that his pedagogy, against Freire's intentions, is culturally invasive (Bowers, 1983) and anti-dialogical (Walker, 1980).

As a number of tributes after his death indicated, whatever one thinks of Freire, he cannot be ignored. Freire encouraged readers to critically engage his ideas, and in his later books he reinforced the importance of finding spaces within educational institutions for vigorous but productive debate. Concepts such as tolerance, diversity and difference found (what was for Freire) a comfortable place alongside the older ideals of unity, collective struggle and solidarity among oppressed groups. Freire always stressed the close relationship between his educational activities and his theoretical work. His attempt at integrating critical, dialogical reflection with committed political action, while not without its problems, seems likely to continue to provide an inspirational example for many educators as we face the new pedagogical challenges in the twenty-first century.

The Purpose and Structure of this Book

Hundreds of books and articles about Freire's work have been published. There has never, however, been a text exclusively devoted to Freire published in New Zealand. Reference has often been made to Freirean

ideas in university courses in New Zealand, but to date there has been no book concentrating on Freire and education in this country to which students taking such courses could be referred. Colin Lankshear, an academic at the University of Auckland from the mid-1970s to the early 1990s, has published a co-edited volume on Freire (*Politics of Liberation: Paths from Freire*, London, Routledge, 1994, with Peter McLaren) and the stamp of Freirean ideas is clearly evident in some of Lankshear's earlier writings (e.g. *Literacy, Schooling and Revolution*, London, Falmer Press, 1987, with Moira Lawler). Lankshear's books have been highly regarded internationally, and his influence in promoting critical Freirean scholarship through his teaching at Auckland also deserves special mention. The editor of this book and several contributors worked with Lankshear as a student or colleague, and some have continued to develop collaborative projects with him after his departure from Auckland. This book, while surveying a number of international developments, also addresses Freire's significance in the New Zealand context. In this sense, it builds upon work already undertaken by Lankshear and others but also aims to fill a lacuna in the existing literatures on both Freire and New Zealand education.

Most of the contributors to this book engage Freire's work in relation to a specific theme. Several of the authors – George Armstrong, Graham Smith, Kuni Jenkins and Betsan Martin, and Brian Findsen – assess Freire's influence in personal and professional contexts. Their chapters have a strong autobiographical flavour. Others give Freire's work a critical re-reading in the light of contemporary theoretical developments in feminism (Megan Boler) and postmodernism (Michael Peters). Stephen Stoer and Roger Dale examine the ways in which Freirean ideas have been interpreted and applied by divergent political groups (for distinctive purposes, and with different consequences), while my own chapter compares Freire's philosophical and educational position with neoliberal approaches to university reform in New Zealand.

George Armstrong opens the collection with an account of Freire's brief visit to New Zealand in 1974. Organised by the Church and Society Commission of the National Council of Churches, Freire's seminar raised challenging questions about colonialism, race relations and oppression in New Zealand. Writing from the standpoint of one who was there, Armstrong recalls that Freire surprised many who attended

the seminar with his refusal to play the role of 'guru', his preference for listening rather than talking, and his reluctance to offer 'solutions' to New Zealand's structural problems. At a time when many hitherto unexamined assumptions about society were being problematised by both secular and religious groups, some of the most uncomfortable questions – those 'closest to home' – could still not be confronted. Freire insisted that participants at the seminar face up to the legacy of colonialism and expressed support for the struggles of the indigenous people of Aotearoa–New Zealand. Armstrong argues that while a number of Māori leaders were keenly aware of the issues raised by Freire's visit, many Pakeha were not yet ready to address them adequately. As Armstrong points out, it is perhaps rather easier to understand Freire's stance 25 years later. With the heady days of the early 1970s and the years of Muldoonism behind us, the rise of neoliberal ideas and practices has brought alternatives of the kind promoted by Freire into sharper focus.

Graham Smith gives evidence of just how close the kinship between Freire and many Māori educators has been. Smith maintains that Freire's appeal for indigenous peoples lies in the emphasis he places on social transformation and liberation and the link he makes between theory and practice. He argues that Freire is often 'discovered' by Māori following their active involvement in struggles for self-determination. Pivotal books such as *Pedagogy of the Oppressed* then provide theoretical support for what people have already been doing. Smith is critical of those who adopt an instrumentalist view of humanisation, regarding it as a linear progression from 'conscientisation' to 'resistance' to 'transformative praxis'. In place of this, Smith favours a circular and dynamic model where, as can be seen from the example of Kaupapa Māori educational interventions, entry into the process of struggle can be at any point in the cycle. Thus it is not necessary to become conscientised first by reading Freire's books, and then to resist, and thus transform; rather, Freirean ideas can be practised first and subsequently relearned through critical engagement with key books and discussion with others involved in similar struggles.

The contribution from Kuni Jenkins and Betsan Martin has a connection with both of the chapters preceeding it. Jenkins and Martin identify the theological roots of Freire's thought and consider his work

against the background of wider debates over biculturalism, tino rangatiratanga and the Treaty of Waitangi in Aotearoa–New Zealand. Their chapter traverses a broad territory, addressing both historical and contemporary themes. While warning against the dangers of overestimating Freire's influence, Jenkins and Martin argue that Freire was an inspirational figure for many Māori concerned to link the church with social justice, anti-racism initiatives and the struggle for Māori sovereignty in Aotearoa–New Zealand. The Freirean metaphor of a tidal wave provides the basis for a discussion of collective power. Jenkins and Martin identify a series of movements, programmes and centres developed in a wave of energy for social change following Freire's brief visit to Aotearoa–New Zealand in 1974. Māori leaders such as Hone Kaa, influenced by liberation theology and Freire's work in particular, promoted a number of new church initiatives in the late 1970s and early 1980s. These included Kaa's new order of service, which was to attract controversy in some quarters and strong support in others. Jenkins and Martin analyse Freire's views on the church and compare his ideas with those of Luce Irigaray, the French philosopher of sexual difference. In their conclusion, they ask what progress has been made by the Church in Aotearoa–New Zealand in addressing Māori concerns, and make brief comments on the recent 'Hikoi of Hope' organised by the Anglican Church in response to lack of government progress on the policy issues of poverty, health, housing and education.

In Chapter 4 Megan Boler acknowledges Freire's influence on radical and feminist pedagogies, but draws attention to three key absences relating to questions of gender. First, Freire's theory of power is constructed in universalist terms and ignores the specificities of gender oppression. This is indicated, in part, by the ambiguous treatment of emotion in Freire's writings. Second, Freire has been 'heroised' as a cultural figure. This, according to Boler, 'marks the dominant masculine paradigm of creating heroes which erases the grassroots dimension of radical social change'. These two problems contribute to a third difficulty, namely the neglect of the history of feminist pedagogies and consciousness-raising initiatives which have, Boler argues, been as powerful and important as Freire's work in their transformative impact.

In the fifth chapter Brian Findsen assesses Freire's significance for the theory and practice of adult and community education. He aligns

Freire with those who see shortcomings in liberal models of adult learning and development. Freire's work can be seen as falling within the radical, emancipatory, independent tradition, where the importance of education beyond state-controlled formal institutions is recognised. In Freirean education, as in other radical approaches, adults are viewed as radical change agents. After a brief account of his personal journey with Freire, Findsen highlights some of the pivotal ways in which Freire's work has influenced adult education as a field of study. Freire provided a theoretical foundation for the practice of radical adult education, and his insistence that reflection be synthesised with action has been readily accepted by many in the field. Similarly, critical dialogue has become an integral part of many pedagogical projects with adults. Freire's approach to literacy education has exerted considerable influence on Western programmes of reading and writing for adults, and the value of 'problem-posing education' over 'banking education' has been widely accepted. Finally, radical adult educators share Freire's view of education as a politically contestable terrain, where the wider context for pedagogical work is often one of conflict and oppression. Findsen concludes with an examination of the adult learning project in Edinburgh, discussed by Gerri and Colin Kirkwood, as an example of Freirean theory in practice.

Stephen Stoer and Roger Dale consider the extent to which apparently divergent interpretations of Freirean ideas overlap. They observe that the very notion that Freire's work can be applied or adapted in different ways suggests a fundamental coherence among the varying interpretations around a 'common core' of principles and practices. The post-revolutionary period in Portugal from 1974 to 1976 provides a fascinating illustration of this point. Stoer and Dale concentrate on three features of the Portuguese example in developing their argument. First, the 1974–1976 period in Portugal was unique in making Freirean ideas the 'norm' rather than the 'alternative'. The revolution allowed radical movements to flourish, relatively free from the usual political constraints. Second, given such an environment of openness, the possibility of multiple interpretations of Freirean ideas increased. As Stoer and Dale put it, 'the word was being written, as it were, not merely interpreted, let alone applied or adapted'. Third, the proclivity to sloganising Freire's work became evident during this period. After sketching some of the key elements of the Portuguese revolution, Stoer and Dale identify and

discuss two quite different approaches to radical educational reform in post-revolutionary Portugal: *alfabetizacao* initiatives on the one hand and *poder popular* programmes on the other, both of which claimed a Freirean heritage. The final section of their chapter examines how these two interpretations were applied in practice and reflects on what these examples might tell us about Freire's work.

The contrasts between Freirean and neoliberal politics, introduced at the end of Armstrong's chapter, find further elaboration in Chapter 7. In the last few years before his death, Freire made a number of critical comments about 'neoliberal pragmatists'. He regarded the market reforms taking place across the globe in the latter part of the twentieth century as inherently unjust and argued for a more democratic and equitable system of social and economic organisation. The implications of neoliberal thought for education were of particular concern for Freire. Chapter 7 concentrates on the application of neoliberal ideas at the university level in New Zealand, contrasting the marketised system of education enacted in this country (and the philosophical assumptions underpinning it) with the alternative approach developed by Freire in both his theoretical and practical work.

Michael Peters concludes the collection with his chapter on Freire and postmodernism. Following brief comments on how he positions himself in relation to Freire, Peters considers two approaches to his topic. From one starting point, we might mount a postmodern critique of Freire; from another, we can investigate 'postmodern tendencies' in his work while nonetheless acknowledging the modernist foundations upon which Freirean theory and practice rest. In exploring the first possibility, Peters draws on Lyotard and Deleuze to identify strong traces of the Hegelian dialectic in Freire's thought. There is, Peters argues, an oppositional logic to a number of important theoretical categories in Freire's work – including the central binary between 'the oppressor' and 'the oppressed'. Peters claims further that underlying Freire's concept of humanisation is a unitary notion of the subject. At the same time, several points of compatibility between Freire's work and postmodern theorising can be noted. These include Freire's 'emphasis on textuality, on the text and text analogues for understanding the world; his emphasis upon subjectivity, experience and culture; and, to some extent, his understanding of oppression and the exercise of power'.

Peters notes that Freire started to acknowledge postmodern insights in his later writings, and also refers to the work of Freirean scholars who have reinterpreted his ideas in the light of postmodern currents in education and social theory. In Peters' view, Freire is a complex thinker who, while primarily located in modernist intellectual traditions, retained openness to new forms of critique as part of his ongoing commitment to participatory democracy and social justice.

Note

¹ In linking the content of a literacy programme to everyday knowledge and experience, Freire's work has some important connections with Sylvia Ashton-Warner's innovative system for teaching reading to Māori children in the 1950s.

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1

After 25 Years: Paulo Freire in New Zealand, 1974

George A.W. Armstrong

At the centre of Paulo Freire's teaching method is the teacher posing the students' particular life-situation as a problem to be reflected upon. This is in contrast to the 'banking system' of education where the teacher transmits to the learner the teacher's own analysis of and solutions to the problem facing the learner. The life-situation-as-problem is posed by the teacher as a 'limit situation' that is evocative and disturbing. Paulo Freire's 1974 visit to New Zealand in itself established its own kind of 'limit situation' for us here. His manner among us posed for us our own perplexing problem situation that has deserved reflection and analysis ever since.

For the Pakeha participants in the Freire seminar held in Auckland in May 1974, the problem situation was not unlike that which Freire often had to pose to frustrated white Western academic audiences in North America. Paulo came, as a member of the staff of the World Council of Churches in Geneva, at the invitation of the Church and Society Commission of the National Council of Churches, assisted by the New Zealand Government's Department of Education. Both secular and religious educationists of this period were engaging closely with society, using the new tools of the social sciences to analyse and democratise

Paulo Freire: Lessons in Transformative Praxis

Graham Hingangaroa Smith

In this brief commentary, I want to reflect on Freire's contribution to the articulation of some of my own ideas and thinking with respect to more effectively analysing, engaging and transforming a range of Māori (the indigenous people of New Zealand) educational and schooling crises. While it has been necessary to narrowly select particular aspects of his work and contributions as the focus of this writing, I would nevertheless fully acknowledge the breadth and scope of his total life's work and therefore his impact on indigenous peoples in a more general sense.

From the point of view of indigenous peoples, Paulo Freire is to be regarded as one of the most (if not *the* most) important liberation thinkers of the twentieth century. His work has been profoundly influential within Māori communities here in New Zealand since the 1970s. His popularity with many Māori derives from an empathy between his ideas as articulated in *Pedagogy of the Oppressed* (1972) and the lived realities of indigenous peoples' day-to-day struggles. Māori struggle is contained within multiple tensions arising out of the contested relations which are summarised in the following generalised dichotomies: the coloniser and the colonised, the cultural oppressor and the culturally

oppressed, the economic exploiter and the economically exploited, the politically dominant and the politically subordinated. It is to these types of tensions that Freire's clear and easy-to-understand words speak so pointedly and accurately. Freire's value to Māori has been his ability to provide the intellectual space and structures to illuminate the critical issues confronting Māori as a colonised people in their own land and to also provide ideas and strategies by which change might be attained. Beyond the Māori situation, his words, more than those of any other writer, have been able to 'connect' emotionally with the multiple oppression(s) and exploitation(s) endured by indigenous populations generally as the outcome of colonisation. Thus perhaps his greatest contribution has been that his words have moved beyond mere critique and simplistic description of 'what is wrong' to laying out theoretical and practical ideas for 'what to do'. In this sense, Freire's wide appeal among indigenous peoples is, I believe, derived from the real sense of hope and optimism offered by his liberation and transformation strategies.

It is not the intention here to canonise or to reify Freire (the person) or, for that matter, his ideas. In prioritising his work in 'real' rather than 'theoretical' terms, many Māori find that he is not only able to articulate clearly the reality that Māori live, but his words reveal a deep identification with their struggle. Freire's words thus provide comfort to Māori in that their struggles are understood by others, and furthermore that the nuances and complexities of their day-to-day difficulties are understood in the international arena.

A key understanding here with respect to the relationship between Māori resistance and Freire's ideas, is that Māori did *not* go out and buy Freire's book and *then* apply his ideas as some kind of recipe for liberation and emancipation. On the contrary, most Māori (and this was certainly my own experience) came to Freire after they were well involved in resistance and struggle. The point is that for many Māori, Freire's writings provided support, direction, validity and confirmation of what they were already doing. Thus, Freire's manifesto, *Pedagogy of the Oppressed*, provided a theoretical reinforcement for and an intellectualisation of the struggles which for the most part were already happening on the ground. Within this particular insight, there are some important points to be made with respect to engaging in transforming action, or as Freire has articulated, transformative praxis.

The point I wish to take up and elaborate in this writing is a small but significant one relating to transformative praxis on the way to 'humanisation'. The intention here is to build on and to expand Freire's emancipatory concern which he embeds within the notion of transformative praxis in Chapters 3 and 4 of the *Pedagogy of the Oppressed*. Thus critical insights from Māori indigenous experience provide both clarification and expansion of Freire's thinking here.

In New Zealand since the 1980s Māori have been engaged in a number of educational and schooling interventions which first attempted to revitalise Māori language, knowledge and culture, and second, overcome a number of learning crises among Māori which correlate with high and disproportionate levels of educational and schooling underachievement. To cut a long story short, Māori communities developed a series of immersion Māori schooling initiatives at the pre-school (Te Kohanga Reo), the primary school (Kura Kaupapa Māori), the secondary school (Te Kura Tuarua) and the tertiary level (Wananga) in an attempt to respond to the twin concerns outlined above. These resistance initiatives grew out of many years of struggle as increased numbers of Māori withdrew from the mainstream, state schooling options. The initiatives were heavily politicised and often became embroiled in charges from disaffected Pakeha as being 'separatist' and 'cultural retrenchment' movements and so on. A major development at this time was that Māori communities formed a substantial critique of (became conscientised in relation to) the continued failure of the existing system, despite ostensibly well intended policy reform over the years to change these negative outcomes for Māori. Furthermore, Māori parents became conscientised to some of the structural impediments to their education aspirations; that is, they penetrated the hegemonies which held 'dominant/Pakeha/State' education and schooling in place, and therefore understood more clearly some of the structural barriers and constraints which underpinned the system's inability and reluctance to deliver on their aspirations.

These critical penetrations of prevailing hegemony gave impetus to the alternative schooling and education resistance initiatives taken up by Māori. Freire's notion that 'the oppressed must also free themselves and that the oppressor alone cannot free the oppressed' has meaning here. Some of the fundamental intervention elements which are

embedded across all of these Māori resistance initiatives have been analysed and discussed in more detail elsewhere by the author (see Smith, 1997). A selection of key elements, which are shared across these alternative Māori schooling sites and which are often referred to as Kaupapa Māori (Māori philosophy, world-view and cultural principles), are summarised here:

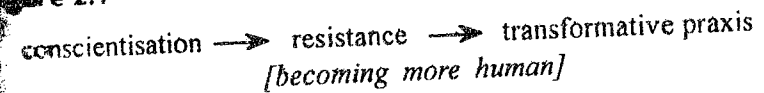
1. *self-determination* (the ability to have increased control and autonomy over the meaningful education decisions which impact on one's life)
2. *cultural aspirations* (the emotional need for Māori language, knowledge and culture as a basis for one's cultural identity)
3. *culturally preferred pedagogy* (learning and teaching which is couched in and positively reinforces the values, behaviours, customs and cultural capital of the Māori home)
4. *mediation of socio-economic impediments* (the mediation of the socio-economic impediments which impact in disproportionate levels on Māori)
5. *extended family social structures and practice* (the employment of Māori collective cultural practices built around extended family structures and responsibilities)
6. *a collective vision* (a shared vision supported by all of the participants and that provides direction and impetus for the struggle).

However, the point of this chapter is not so much to dwell on describing these new formations of Māori resistance in the 1980s and 1990s as such, but more to look under the surface in order to reveal some important understandings from this context about the nature of transformative praxis itself, such as the Kaupapa Māori transforming elements described above.

Kaupapa Māori strategies attempt to engage with and mediate multiple levels and shapes of exploitation and oppression in new ways. Kaupapa Māori as 'theory' and 'praxis' represents the evolving of a more sophisticated approach to Māori 'freeing' themselves from multiple oppressions and exploitation(s). Kaupapa Māori as an intervention strategy, and in the Western theoretical sense, critiques and reconstitutes

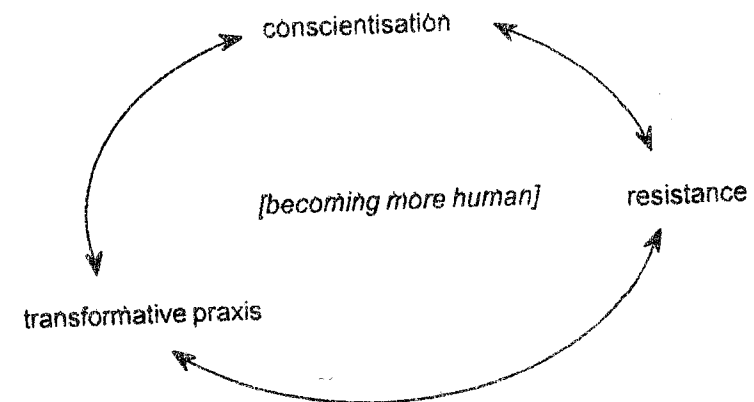
relations of conscientisation, resistance and transformative praxis in current configurations. In particular, this work rejects the notion that any of these concepts stand 'individually'; nor are they interpreted in this analysis as being a lineal progression from conscientisation, to resistance, to transformative praxis. For example:

Figure 2.1



In rejecting the instrumental, linear position represented in Figure 2.1, a new conceptual representation is posited. This is a framework in which all of these components are considered important; all can be held simultaneously; all stand in dialectical relation to one another. In this sense (from the indigenous world-view), these elements might best be represented as a cycle. For example:

Figure 2.2



A further point is that individuals do not 'enter' the transforming cycle; they are always in it. Often participation in transforming praxis is unconscious. They do not necessarily (in reflecting on Māori experience within Kaupapa Māori interventions) have to start with or at the point of

'conscientisation'. In other words, individuals often unwittingly and unintentionally participate in transformative praxis (e.g. taking their children to Te Kohanga Reo pre-school because this is the only facility in the community; or attending hui – gatherings to learn traditional songs in order to support traditional rituals) because these issues are political issues. This apparent political activity may very often lead into political conscientisation; that is, this seemingly 'innocent' participation in language and cultural revitalisation very quickly opens up the potential for the conscious participation in resistance.

This is a significant critique of much of the writing on these concepts, particularly some of the writings on critical pedagogy which tend to imply and portray a linear, instrumental progression from 'conscientisation' to 'resistance' and then to 'transformative praxis'. Māori experience tends to suggest that these elements may occur in any order and indeed may all occur simultaneously. This latter model is important too because it provides an inclusive structure; it suggests that everyone is in 'the struggle' to some extent. This contrasts with the linear, instrumental model which pressures a prerequisite condition before movement to the next stage. This tends to produce hierarchies of 'knowing' within the resistance initiative and contrary outcomes which privilege elite groups within a struggle. This in turn has the potential to create division rather than cohesion within a struggle. It is important to note as well that the arrows in the cyclic model go in both directions which reinforces the idea of simultaneous engagement with more than one element. This allows for Freire's claim that praxis is important because the struggle (and indeed transformative praxis) is constantly being made and remade within contestation.

Thus the point I wish to conclude on is that I believe that there has been some misreading and misinterpretation with respect to Freire's notion of praxis. Often, particularly within some of the critical pedagogy literature, there is an implicit rationality which is linear, uni-directional, instrumental and hierarchical. This 'technicist rationality' seemingly aligns closely with a mono-cultural Western type of world view. In my view, Freire's notion of transformative praxis deserves deeper consideration, and I believe that Māori experience can offer valuable insights in this process.

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7

Freire, Neoliberalism and the University

Peter Roberts

In a number of his later works Freire comments at length on educational processes in university settings. Indeed, one of his books (Escobar *et al.*, 1994) is devoted entirely to issues in higher education. In *A Pedagogy for Liberation* (Freire and Shor, 1987), Freire addresses questions about what, how and why students ought to read in universities, and in several other texts (e.g. Freire and Faundez, 1989; Horton and Freire, 1990; Freire, 1994; 1998a) his analyses of teaching clearly have particular relevance for those working in institutions of higher education. This chapter compares Freire's ideas on the nature and purpose of the university with those promoted by market liberals. Responding to dominant trends in political and educational reform across the globe, Freire was highly critical of what he called the 'neoliberal pragmatists' in Brazil and other countries. The chapter concentrates on philosophical differences between Freire and neoliberal reformists in New Zealand.

The University and the Market

Over the last two decades, the model of the market has dominated policy reform agendas around the world. Beginning, perhaps, with the election of Margaret Thatcher as Prime Minister of Britain in 1979 (but

foreshadowed by earlier events), the present epoch has witnessed a sharp turn away from Keynesian economic theory, the ideal of full employment, and the provision of universal welfare entitlements. Economic and social systems in both the North and the South have been subject to significant and long-lasting programmes of structural adjustment along market lines. The theoretical roots for the changes can be located in Hayekian individualism and the public choice theory of Buchanan and Tullock. In New Zealand the reform process has been especially rapid and dramatic. Elected to power in 1984 after nearly nine years in the political wilderness during the interventionist Muldoon years, the Labour Party set about implementing a radical agenda of corporatisation and deregulation. In an apparent abandonment of its socialist roots, the Labour administration, spearheaded by Finance Minister Roger Douglas, sold off state assets, reduced tariffs and subsidies, and introduced a range of 'user pays' policies in social services. The emphasis was on 'less government' and 'more private enterprise'. The aim ostensibly was to reduce the role of the state in peoples' lives and to encourage the individual independence and initiative necessary to lift New Zealand from a culture of 'welfare dependency' to economic prosperity. Key agencies such as the State Services Commission and particularly the Treasury gained new power under Labour and exerted considerable influence over Cabinet decisions. Under the guise of promoting greater autonomy, accountability and social equity in the public sector, policies of devolution and corporatisation in health, education and housing were implemented. Systems of management and organisation lifted from the business world were seen as the answer to past inefficiencies and applied to almost all public sector institutions¹.

This process of neoliberal reform was deepened and extended by the National government when it was elected with a record majority in 1990. Soon after coming to power, National slashed payments to beneficiaries and intensified the privatisation process in health and education. Hospitals become 'Crown Health Enterprises', patients were designated 'clients', and students were renamed 'consumers'. Unemployment and underemployment increased dramatically in the early 1990s, while wages and working conditions declined. The Employment Contracts Act granted extraordinary power to employers and systematically undermined the role of trade unions. Corporate

success was held up by then Prime Minister Jim Bolger as the yardstick for other forms of achievement, and talk was rife about the need to create an 'enterprise culture' in New Zealand. There was an emphasis on 'contestability' in the provision of public services and an expressed preference (even if this did not always emerge in practice) for 'leaner' bureaucracies. From the relative securities of the past, New Zealanders came to see short-term, performance-based contracts as the norm. Work previously undertaken by state agencies was increasingly 'contracted out' to the private sector, and a new class of roving entrepreneurs – with readily transferable skills – emerged. 'The market' became the model on which all human activities were supposed to be based, and political ideals grounded in principles of collective communitarian care were routinely dismissed as 'backward' and 'unworkable' in the contemporary age.

Educational institutions have endured a series of crises under neoliberalism. At the tertiary level a process of incremental privatisation has been at work for almost a decade. Determined to give the universities a good 'shakeup' (Butterworth and Tarling, 1994), first Labour and then National introduced a series of reforms purportedly aimed at enhancing student choice through increased competition. As 'consumers' in an educational 'marketplace' students were encouraged to 'shop around' among competing 'providers' of tertiary education, seeking the best value for their educational dollars. Vouchers, often promoted under euphemisms such as 'entitlements' or 'funding that follows the student', were favoured by many members of the National Cabinet and given explicit endorsement by former Minister of Education Lockwood Smith near the end of his tenure in that position. In the early 1990s, student numbers ballooned in tandem with rising unemployment, while government funding for universities decreased substantially in real terms. Staff were expected to do more with less, and no relief from overcrowded lecture rooms was in sight as support for new buildings and other forms of capital development diminished. Institutions became locked into the language of 'performance indicators' and 'strategic planning'. There was a strong push by government officials to make universities more 'accountable' to the 'needs' (almost never discussed or defined) of students, employers and taxpayers. Much has also been made of the need for skills and training relevant to economic competition

on the international stage. Other areas of study have been construed as 'irrelevant' to the economic imperatives of the current age and pushed into the background².

The recently released white paper on tertiary education (Ministry of Education, 1998) consolidates moves towards full privatisation already made and signals the direction ahead. Replete with references to serving the 'needs' of multiple groups and with talk about the importance of a high-quality tertiary system for economic competitiveness and national wellbeing, the white paper confirms the government's commitment to a voucher system, contestability in research funding, and a further blurring of boundaries between universities and other institutions. Remarkably, for a government that has made so much of the need for restraint in a cash-strapped social policy environment, taxpayer funds will be available to support overseas private training enterprises wanting to establish themselves in New Zealand. Perhaps most importantly of all, there will be significant changes in the composition of university councils and wide-ranging new powers for the Minister of Education. The size of tertiary institution councils will be reduced, and representation from academic staff on governing bodies will be minimised. The Minister will have the power to appoint the initial councils of tertiary institutions, to recommend their dissolution, and – in some circumstances – to add or remove members. Spokespersons for private training establishments have welcomed the new proposals, seeing clear benefits for their sector in the years ahead, while the Association of University Staff, the New Zealand Vice-Chancellors' Committee, the New Zealand University Students' Association, and all but one of the major political parties other than National have expressed serious reservations. Overall, less money (in real terms) will be available for public institutions, and there will be greater constraints on what becomes permissible and possible – for both teachers and researchers – under the new system.

The Freirean Alternative

The philosophical assumptions underpinning Freirean and neoliberal approaches to higher education are fundamentally antagonistic. At an ontological level, neoliberals conceive of humans as self-interested, self-contained, rational, perpetually-choosing individuals. Freire, by contrast,

sees humans as *social* beings, shaped by their relations with others and the world, with a variety of interests and commitments. For Freire, the ideal of the unencumbered self is an illusion. Moreover, while people may strive to serve their own ends, their very conception of what is in their 'best interests' will, from a Freirean point of view, always be conditioned by the experiences to which they have been subject. Freire identifies multiple ways in which people can and do work collaboratively with others, seeking to uphold or pursue values, principles or goals in support of communal rather than individual ends. Like neoliberals, Freire believes humans are rational beings, but he does not see this as a 'self-contained' or 'pure' form of rationality. Humans, as conscious beings, have the capacity to reflect, to think, to imagine and wonder, to pose problems and address them. Freire stresses, however, that the form these abilities take is not pre-defined or universal; rather, humans *learn* how to think (and to consider what it means to be rational) in distinctive social contexts, each governed by different norms, values, customs, practices and structures with a bearing on the 'nature' of rational processes.

Similarly, while both Freireans and neoliberals speak with approval about 'freedom', the forms of free human activity favoured differ substantially between the two groups. Justifications of market liberalism support a form of negative freedom, where the liberty of the individual is seen to depend upon minimal constraints from the state (and other external influences). Freire, on the other hand, ties the concept of freedom to a theory of liberation (see Roberts, 1998). It is *freedom to* live a more fully human life and *freedom from* the forms of oppression which prevent this with which Freire is concerned. For neoliberals the market is the preferred allocative mechanism, on both efficiency and moral grounds. For Freire, 'market forces' ought not to be left unchecked; instead, they must be tempered by a prior commitment to values other than free enterprise. Freire devoted most of his adult life to the dream of building a better social world and saw the gross inequalities resulting from neoliberal policies as abhorrent and dehumanising. The existence of widespread poverty on the one hand and extraordinary wealth on the other in marketised and supposedly 'civilised' societies represents a distortion of the human vocation, a breakdown in communicative relationships and a waste of educational opportunities. Freire supports a

redistribution of wealth and resources, both within and between nations, where inequities exist. Market liberals place a premium on maximising opportunities for people to 'make a profit' in (supposedly) 'free' competition with other self-interested individuals. The idea, from a neoliberal point of view, is to create a 'level playing field' where individuals will prosper or perish according to their own abilities and efforts. On this view, inequalities in outcomes are of no concern, provided the rules of the game have been, and remain, the same for all players. Freire believes market playing fields are *never* level, and rejects the notion that people should be forced to play one game – i.e. participate in the market economy as utility-maximising individuals – as a precondition for their survival and betterment. He suggests that 'every country on the planet is becoming more and more suffocated by the ethics of the market' (Freire, 1998b: 24–25). This, he says, is the 'scourge' of neoliberalism: 'its cynical fatalism and its inflexible negation of the right to dream differently, to dream of utopia' (p. 22).

Market liberalism, as it has developed in New Zealand at least, has combined technocratic and managerialist assumptions about learning. This has been exemplified in the reforms implemented under the New Zealand Qualifications Authority, where a push for maximising student choice and flexibility (and for minimising 'provider capture' in the control and regulation of qualifications) has been combined with a drive for standardisation, portability, and the establishment of unambiguous relationships between the different parts ('building blocks') in the system. Supporters of such an approach aim to uphold the goal of efficiency, but have difficulties in doing so. This is, in part, because the commitment to choice and flexibility lends itself to a proliferation of qualifications (or elements, formerly known as 'unit standards', in a qualifications framework), requiring a cumbersome bureaucratic structure to deal with the sheer number and variety of assessable components in the system. From a Freirean point of view, the goal of establishing transparency should be applauded, but the division of qualifications and bodies of knowledge into numerous discrete units is neither desirable nor possible. Such an approach ignores the dynamism in learning, the interconnectedness of different subject areas and forms of understanding, and the importance of seeing knowledge as necessarily incomplete and always evolving (Roberts, 1996).

The commodification of education under market liberalism stands in marked contrast to Freire's account of educational processes. Where neoliberals see education as a product and/or service to be traded (sold, purchased, consumed, out-sourced, etc.) in a competitive marketplace, Freire speaks of a complex process of interaction between two or more human beings, mediated by an object of study, with an ever-shifting set of constraints upon, and possibilities for, worthwhile learning. For neoliberals, teaching and learning take place (or ought to take place) in a contractual environment, where transactions occur between self-interested parties bound to legally-enforceable agreement. Such a model leaves little scope for a meaningful discussion of *pedagogy*, such a key term for Freire. From its initial appearance in his classic work *Pedagogy of the Oppressed* (Freire, 1972) to two of the last books he wrote before his death in 1997 – *Pedagogy of the Heart* (Freire, 1997a) and *Pedagogy of Freedom* (Freire, 1998b) – the term 'pedagogy' has held a fascination for Freire. Its frequent appearance in the titles of his books is indicative of the centrality of the concept to his educational theory. Often confined to narrow discourses on 'teaching methods' and applied more to educational processes with children than adults, pedagogy in Freirean theory takes on a different face.

Broadly speaking, 'pedagogy' can be defined as the theory and practice of teaching and learning, and for Freire such a definition implies a necessary consideration of ethical and political questions. Teaching and learning, Freire never tired of telling us, are always non-neutral, political processes. Among the myriad senses in which this might be so, mention might be made of the values, beliefs and experiences teachers and students bring to any pedagogical situation; the social and economic policies developed by politicians (and frequently enshrined in law) to which all participants in educational institutions and many informal learning programmes become subject; global patterns of trade, exchange and resource distribution which set limits upon what becomes possible in national education systems; the epistemological and cultural presuppositions teachers bring to bear on matters of evaluation and assessment; the relationships and forms of interaction established between teachers and students; the architecture, layout and organisation of buildings and other physical structures for educational purposes; and, of course, the processes of selection involved in all decisions about

curriculum content. Neoliberals, by contrast, posit a 'depoliticised' view of education, seeing the market as the neutral arbiter in student and 'provider' decision-making processes. As Freire observes:

The neoliberal point of view reinforces a pseudoneutrality of the educational practice, reducing it to the transfer of informational content to the learners, who are not required to apprehend it in order to learn it. Such 'neutrality' serves as the foundation for reducing the education of a plumber to training in the techniques and procedures involved in wrench mastering.

(Freire, 1997a: 46–47)

Technicist approaches to education and other domains of social policy are, of course, nothing new, and have been sharply criticised by theorists in a range of disciplines for decades. The work of the Frankfurt School, and particularly Habermas and Marcuse, has been influential in shaping several lines of critique. Henry Giroux's (1983) analysis of technocratic rationality in the curriculum provides one example. Freire always insisted that teaching, properly understood, is never merely about techniques or methods. The same is true of teacher education. In his later works Freire identified some of the limitations of teacher training programmes based on narrow conceptions of preparation via technical competence. In *Mentoring the Mentor*, for example, he claims:

One result of the new pragmatism of neoliberalism is more concern with the scientific and technical training of teachers while denying a more comprehensive preparation because such a preparation always requires a critical understanding of one's role in the world. Thus the pragmatist's proposals always provoke a rupture and a disarticulation from the world in which the specialisation or area of study is located. Information and knowledge are thus separated from the social and ethical context in which this information or knowledge appears.

(Freire, 1997b: 314)

The emphasis on skills in documents such as the *New Zealand Curriculum Framework* (Ministry of Education, 1993) and the wider

push for training programmes tied directly to employer, student and government 'needs' ignores the ethical dimension Freire sees as essential in all forms of education. Freire argues that neoliberalism 'works aggressively to provoke a rupture between oneself and one's world' while simultaneously advocating an artificial, exaggerated connection between the self and the market. In other words, 'the focus of education in the neoliberal world really becomes how to become a proficient consumer, how to become a proficient dispenser of knowledge, without asking any ethical questions' (Freire, 1997b: 314–315).

The reduction of educational processes to a series of transactions between 'providers' and 'consumers' provides an interesting new, more literal variation on the 'banking' system described in memorable detail by Freire (1972) in Chapter 2 of *Pedagogy of the Oppressed*. For neoliberals, 'knowledge' is possessed by one party (teachers, reconceived as 'sellers' in 'provider' institutions and organisations) and received by students who purchase it as self-interested consumers. In this sense, students are seen as opening 'educational accounts' into which deposits by teachers may be made. The deposits represent a return on the initial commitment of funds (tuition costs), to be 'cashed in' at a later date as the student realises a gain in personal income from the instruction purchased and the qualifications received. From an epistemological standpoint the process exhibits a strong 'banking' character: knowledge creation through critical dialogical interaction between students and teachers is replaced by a relationship based on the exchange of money for information.

Yet under this neoliberal system the student is not placed in an entirely passive position; indeed, just as banks talk of tailoring their services to meet customer 'needs', so too are 'providers' of educational services expected (in a competitive environment generated by declining government support for public institutions) to adapt their offerings to cater for changing student and employer preferences. Students thus appear to have the potential to exert considerable influence over curriculum content, playing an important role in determining not just what is taught in a particular programme but also whether that programme is offered at all. In a system where 'funding follows the student', courses with low enrolments will only survive if the revenue

generated by them can be increased (e.g. by 'repackaging' for specialist niche markets); in the longer term, many are likely to disappear.

What is forgotten in such systems (where the maximisation of 'student choice' is the ostensible goal) is that good decisions in the educational domain and other complex areas of human endeavour depend on a certain level of prior experience and learning. Students do not always know what is worth studying, or how a subject might best be taught, until they engage (in a serious, critical and detailed way) a range of learning areas and encounter a variety of different teaching styles. Undertaking studies at the university level, Freire would have reminded us, is not – or *ought* not to be – akin to merely choosing items on a restaurant menu. It is, Freire would say, neither students nor teachers who should on their own make decisions about curriculum content and processes; rather, such decisions should be subject to dialogical negotiation. Students and teachers do not assume the same role in this process, but both are involved. Teachers have a responsibility to research their subject area thoroughly, to be well prepared, to provide structure and direction in learning programmes. The precise form an educational experience takes, however, is dependent upon dialogue with students. Teachers continuously 'relearn' their specialist areas – and the craft of teaching – as they work with, and reflect upon, the rich array of experiences, world-views, arguments and opinions in educational settings.

The proposals set out in the recent white paper on tertiary education in New Zealand are worrying from a Freirean perspective. Freire makes much of the university's importance in upholding the ideal of what he calls 'revolutionary tolerance' (Escobar *et al.*, 1994: 149). He is of the view that students in a university should encounter academics of varying political persuasions. The university ought to be a site where 'reactionary' and 'revolutionary' positions can exist side by side – and, indeed, in healthy, vigorous debate with each other. Intolerance arises from a lack of confidence in one's own convictions or an inability to take the views of other people seriously. For Freire the interplay of differences through purposeful dialogue is an essential element of university life³. Freire also sees creativity and critical thought as vital academic qualities. Creativity does not, however, simply appear out of nowhere: it demands certain risks and requires working conditions conducive to such risk taking. Freire makes the point in this manner:

You do not take the risk of facing fear if you do not have a minimal space of freedom; thus, without freedom, there is no academy. For instance, if you do not have the freedom to carry out your research and to assert that it is scientific, if you feel that there are ideological platoons restraining you, then, what can you risk?

(Escobar *et al.*, 1994: 143)

Freire cautions against falling into the 'naïve idealism' of believing in the possibility of a 'province of freedom' outside history and material conditions. Academic freedom ought not to serve as a kind of cocoon, shielding university staff against the non-freedoms experienced by other citizens in a society. Freedom within the university does not exist by itself, even if battles against certain forms of intolerance may be won within the academy. Each university will have its own particular problems – barriers to freedom of expression, critical thought, dialogue and creativity – to address: these will correspond with wider structural difficulties at national and international levels. There will always be limits to freedom where academic policies contradict global trends, yet it is still important to push for a wider domain of freedom within the university. Academics can bear witness to the ideal of freedom through their teaching. In this sense it is possible to extend the domain of freedom somewhat (outside the confines of the university), and convey a sense of why this ideal might matter, through the students with whom academics work (Escobar *et al.*, 1994: 144–145). The university, in Freire's view, should strive to create a space where academics can be open with students about their political leanings and students can feel comfortable disagreeing with their teachers.

At present, the responsibility of the university to act as a 'critic and conscience of society' is given legal protection in New Zealand, but the changes in research funding and systems of governance signalled in the white paper place this role under threat. In opening up the possibility of all or most of the funds for research being placed in a contestable pool, with top priority to be given to areas of strategic economic importance, the white paper discourages the further development of many fields of study (those unable to demonstrate a direct and quantifiable economic return) and impedes the promotion of alternatives to neoliberalism. Despite all the talk about encouraging choice and diversity in tertiary

education, it seems likely that in the long term greater homogeneity in political orientations, a narrowing in research and teaching concentrations, and a dampening of differences will ensue. The expression of political opinions contrary to the ideology of neoliberalism may be permitted, but genuine opportunities for such expression will be limited by the scarcity of resources for supporting alternatives. Much of the research currently undertaken by critics of neoliberalism could simply be deemed unsuitable for funding. It is impossible to know how broad-minded those responsible for administering the contestable fund will be, but it is clear that some domains of inquiry – those already compatible with neoliberal economic and social objectives – will have a head start. It is feasible that a small class of critical academics with minimal or no research funding could remain in the university, with a professional life dominated by an expanding range of teaching duties and administrative responsibilities. Ironically, such a situation makes the task of finding time for reflection, reading, investigation and writing – which many see as necessary for maintaining a robust critical posture – even more difficult. At a more sinister level, it is possible to imagine a future Minister of Education interpreting the new powers granted to him or her under the indicative legislation in the white paper as an invitation to relieve dissenting academics of their positions and even close entire institutions. The Ministry has conceded that institutional autonomy may be compromised in some cases, but argued that this must be separated from the question of academic freedom. Freire would agree that no university should be 'beyond and above the social and political system' (Escobar *et al.*, 1994: 136), but this does not, for him, mean excessive interference in academic matters by politicians or bureaucrats can be justified. Such intrusions can set up an environment of fear, mistrust and repression, as the McCarthyism of the 1950s in the United States demonstrated. The university, precisely because it is embedded within a society comprising multiple classes, cultures and ideas, must retain sufficient autonomy to allow the range of views held by diverse social groups (relatively) free expression.

Concluding Comments

While Freire never published a comprehensive critique of neoliberalism, his later books give a clear indication of where further critical work in

this area might have taken him. He saw the policies and practices of market liberalism as dehumanising, miseducative, antidialogical and undemocratic. His detailed comments on the nature and role of the university suggest he would have been deeply disturbed by developments in higher education in New Zealand over the past decade. The Freirean ideal is one based on principles of collegiality, debate and the fostering of a critical attitude in reading the word and the world. The university, Freire insists, is a place where students should encounter difference, diversity and political alternatives. For neoliberals, there is no viable alternative to the market, and all forms of human endeavour – including teaching and learning – are expected to comply with its laws. Neoliberal discourse suggests the university is simply one site among many for competitive commercial activity: self-interested students consume tertiary education courses, and the market dictates what providers will offer. Under such a system, critical thought, a commitment to rigour and investigation, a passion for a subject area, and the willingness to test ideas and findings through peer review and dialogue become relevant only if they can be 'repackaged', marketed effectively and sold as part of the contract between consumers and providers. For those who favour the Freirean ideal, there is room for some hope: neoliberal reformists have been unsuccessful, to date, in stamping out criticism of the marketisation of social life by students and staff in the nation's universities. The challenge of rebuilding a university neither wedded romantically to a past that cannot be reclaimed nor determined to sweep all tradition aside by allowing market forces to rule everything provides a pivotal task for democratic educators about to enter the twenty-first century.

Endnotes

- ¹ For a more detailed account of these changes, see Peters and Marshall, 1996.
- ² See further, Roberts, 1999.
- ³ For a more extensive examination of this area of Freire's work, see Roberts, 1996b; 1997.

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