

cR

Centro
de Referência
Paulo Freire

**Este documento faz parte do acervo
do Centro de Referência Paulo Freire**

acervo.paulofreire.org



InstitutoPauloFreire



Instituto Paulo Freire

Rua Cerro Corá, 550 - Cj. 22 - 2ª and

05061-100 - São Paulo - SP - Brasil

Tel.: (011) 3021-5536 Fax.: (011) 3021-5589

E-mail: ipf@paulofreire.org Home Page: www.paulofreire.org

CROSSING BORDERS

FREIREAN METHOD AND EXPERIENCES

Moacir Gadotti^(*)

Paulo Freire's ideas go beyond borders of disciplines, cultures, sciences, beyond Latin America. At the same time that his reflections were deepened by the theme that he followed throughout his entire life – education as practice for freedom – his approaches extended to others fields of knowledge, creating roots in different areas of the world – from the “mocambos” slums of Recife, Brazil, to the “burakunins” communities from Japan. This strengthened theories and educational practices, as well as helping to stimulate reflections not only from educators, but from doctors, therapists, social scientists, philosophers, anthropologists, and others professionals too. His thought is considered an interdisciplinary model.

We can not see Freire as just an academic or adult educator, or reduce his work to a pedagogical technique or method. We can see Freire's work in the context of a “profound and radical nature of its theory and practice as an anti-colonial and postcolonial discourse” (Henry Giroux, “Paulo Freire and the politics of Postcolonialism”, in Peter McLaren & Peter Leonard, editors, *Paulo Freire: a Critical Encounter*, Routledge, 1993, p. 177).

Freire assumed the risk in **crossing borders**, in order to read the world more completely and to facilitate new positions without sacrificing his initial commitments and principles.

Borders are always surrounding us. Intellectuals and educators who occupy very narrow borders do not realize that borders also have the capacity to capture them. Thus, we need to consider the importance of Freire's work in global terms. It would be naive to consider his pedagogy just for the “Third World”.

Freire's first experiences with adult education occurred in the 50s in Northeastern Brazil; in Chile during the 60s with the helping of the reconstruction of new educational systems, and in different African countries, during the 70s. Coming

(*) **Moacir Gadotti**, is a professor at the University of São Paulo and General Director of the Paulo Freire Institute, in São Paulo (Brazil). He has written several books, including *Reading Paulo Freire: His Life and Work* (Albany: State University of New York Press, 1994), translated to Japanese, Spanish, Italian, and Portuguese; *Pedagogy of Praxis: a Dialectical Philosophy of Education*, with a preface by Paulo Freire (Albany: State University of New York Press, 1996), translated to Spanish and Portuguese; *History of Pedagogical Ideas*, translated to Spanish; and *Paulo Freire: a biobibliography* (São Paulo: Instituto Paulo Freire and Cortez Editora, 1996), translated to Spanish (Mexico City: Siglo XXI, 1999), which has not been translated into English yet. With over 780 pages, it is the most complete work available on Paulo Freire.

back to Brazil after 16 years of exile, he became involved during the 80s, in the democratic construction of the public and popular school in South America. The last great practical experience of his ideas happened during the 90s in São Paulo (Brazil), as Secretary of Education. He promoted the critical formation of teachers and adult education, promoting the reconstruction of curriculum and interdisciplinary project.

Why was he recognized internationally?

In these times of bureaucratic, formal and strict education, he would consider the needs and problems of the community and the socio-ethno-cultural differences, differences of gender and different contexts. He tried to empower the most humble, the common people to make their own decisions, in order to be autonomous people. His pedagogic method empowered the conscious and active participation.

1. Presenting Paulo Freire

Paulo Freire was born in 1921 in Recife, in the northeast Brazil, one of Brazil's poorest regions. He died of heart failure in São Paulo, Brazil in May 2, 1997. He was soon forced to experience that reality directly, working firstly in the Industrial Social Service (SESI) and after in the Cultural Extension Service of the University of Recife.

Paulo Freire developed the process of "conscientization" as authentic education. His process identified literacy with political awareness, enabling the oppressed to acquire both skill and power. His thought on the *Philosophy of education* was first expressed in 1958 in his doctoral dissertation at the University of Recife, and later in his work as Professor of the *History and Philosophy of Education* in the same university, as well as in his early experiments with the teaching of illiterates.

The methodology he developed was widely used in literacy campaigns and was considered such a threat to the old order that Freire was jailed immediately after the military coup-d'état in 1964. Released seventy days later and encouraged to leave the country, Freire went to Chile, where he spent five years working with UNESCO and the Chilean Institute for Agrarian Reform in programs of adult education.

He then acted as a professor at Harvard University's School of Education, in the United States, and worked in close association with a number of groups engaged in new educational experiments in rural and urban areas. Then, during 10 years, he was Special Consultant to the Office of Education of the World Council of Churches in Geneva, working as an educational counselor of Third World governments, specially in Africa.

In 1980, he returned to Brazil, after 16 years of exile, to "re-learn" his country, working as professor at the State University of Campinas and at the Catholic University of São Paulo. In 1989, he became Secretary of Education in São Paulo, the largest city in Brazil. During his mandate he made a great effort to implement literacy movements, to review the curriculum, and to increase the salaries of educators.

Paulo Freire was a man with a great sense of humor nevertheless, at times a man disgusted with all types of injustice. He was father of five children, from his first wife, Elza. After her death he married his ex-student, Ana Maria.

Paulo Freire is the author of the best-selling *Pedagogy of the Oppressed* as well as *Education: the Practice of Freedom*; *Education for Critical Consciousness*; *Pedagogy in Process*; *Pedagogy of the City* and *Pedagogy of hope*. His work has been the subject of hundreds of Ph. D. dissertations during the past decades. He received dozens of *Honoris Causa* doctorates from universities all over the world and numerous prizes, including UNESCO's Peace Prize in 1986. On April 10, 1997, was launched his last book, entitled *Pedagogy of Autonomy*.

I lived and worked closely with Paulo Freire during 23 years. A few days before his death, we were discussing various projects to be developed by the Instituto Paulo Freire (IPF) (Paulo Freire Institute), which was, for him, a space for discussion and for inquiry into new educational perspectives. He had been intending to offer various courses. He died at the height of his intellectual production, with one unfinished book and many projects under way.

I will try to say something about his legacy, focusing principally on his recent political-pedagogical praxis within the Brazilian educational context.

2. Originality of "Paulo Freire Method"

We can certainly say that the thought and ideas of Paulo Freire are an existential and historical product. He forged his ideas in struggle, in praxis – understood as "action with reflection", a definition which he developed. Brazilian and Latin American societies in the 1960s could be considered a grand laboratory in which the "Paulo Freire Method" was solidified. The intense political mobilization that characterized this era played a fundamentally important role in the consolidation of Paulo Freire's ideas, whose **origins** can be found in the 1950s. The time that Paulo Freire lived in Chile was crucial in explaining the consolidation of his work, initiated in Brazil. In Chile, he found a political, social, and educational space that was very dynamic, rich, and defiant, and that enabled him to re-study and re-examine his method in a different context, evaluating its practice and systematizing it theoretically.

Paulo Freire conceive the literacy as an **emancipatory** and **socio-cognitive process**. Adult literacy is a complex process of liberation. He called attention to illiteracy as a consequence of poverty and exploitation. Literacy process is not only cognitive. It is also social and "ideological". That is, the literacy process need to attack also the causes of inequalities in society.

The method of the formation of a critical conscience passes through **three distinct stages**. They can be described as follows:

1. **Investigation stage** - This is the stage of the discovery of the universe of vocabulary in which the words and generative themes are found which are related to the daily life of the alphabetization students and of the social group to which they belong. These generative words are selected according to their syllabic length, their phonetic value and principally for their social meaning for the group. The discovery of this vocabulary universe can be made through informal meetings with the dwellers of the place in which the scheme will take place - living with them, sharing their worries and getting a feeling for elements of their culture.

2. **Thematization stage** - In this second stage, the themes resulting from the initial awareness stage will be codified and decodified. They will be contextualized and substituted, at first sight magically, by a critical and social vision. In this way, new generative themes are discovered which are related to those which were initially found. It is in this stage that the cards for the breakdown of the phonetic groups are made. These will be of help for reading and writing.

3. **Problematicization stage** - We can now return from the abstract to the concrete. The limits and possibilities of the existential situations found in the first stage are found. Concrete action which will overcome limiting political, cultural, social and economic situations, that is, obstacles to hominization, the process of becoming men becomes necessary. Being able to read and write becomes an instrument of struggle, social and political activity. The final objective of the method is conscientization. The oppressive reality is experienced as a process which can be overcome. Education for

liberation should result in a transformative praxis, a collectively organized act of educating with emphasis on the subject.

Here is an example of the **Study of the Reality** throughout the “generative theme” (Paulo Freire Method), focusing on the theme “humans and the planet”, applied to the curriculum of the primary education.

**Generative Theme: Human Beings and the Planet
Will They Survive?**

| | <i>Study of the Reality (includes students activities)</i> | <i>Organization of Knowledge (identifies core content, concepts, and issues)</i> | <i>Application of Knowledge (projects and assignments)</i> |
|--------------------|---|--|---|
| Art Education | <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Visual arts: collages, painting, modeling • Musical activities | Week of modern art activities/Folk music as a means of questioning reality | <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Visual arts/Music/Poetry/Dramatizations |
| History | <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Questionnaires • Interviews • Debates | Industry/Class struggle/Living standards/pollution/Discrimination/Human rights | Essays/Group projects |
| Language Arts | <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Posters, billboards, ads • Newspapers | Lectures/Writing projects linguistic analysis/analysis of advertising campaigns and consumption patterns | Group projects |
| Sciences | <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Debates • Interviews • Group discussions | Environment/Recycling/Pollution/Basic sanitation Conservation/Human body and Reproduction/Physical and mental health/nutrition | Group projects/Writing projects addressing a community issue |
| Math | <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Questionnaires • Debates | Cost of living/Basic computation/Monetary systems/Percentages-Fractions | Graphing cost of living, inflation, and income data |
| Geography | <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Interviews • Debates • Reports • Maps | Social groups/Social classes/unemployment/Violence/Social and physical space/Migration and population explosion | Drawing maps/Group projects about urbanization/ of neighborhood |
| Physical Education | <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Questionnaires • Interviews/debates | Body awareness/Leisure time | Demonstration of good health habits |

Source: Maria del Pilar O'Cádiz, Pia Linquist Wong, Carlos Alberto Torres, *Education and Democracy: Paulo Freire, Social Movements and Educational Reform in São Paulo*. Westview, 1998, pp. 201-202.

Teachers interviewed parents and students, catalogued neighborhood amenities and services, visited centers, and collected archival information about their school. In collecting data they considered the general level of education among neighborhood families and organized and applied this knowledge in the school activities.

What caught the attention of educators and politicians of that era was the fact that the Paulo Freire method “accelerated” the literacy process for adults. Paulo Freire was not using the same methods with adults that were used with children. It is true, others had already thought of this same idea. Still, he was the first to systematize and experiment with a method that was created entirely for adult education.

Current constructivist theories also support the significance of lived experience and students’ prior knowledge. Thus, it is necessary to know and systematize this experience and knowledge. Nevertheless, **Freirean constructivism** goes beyond research and beyond thematic learning. Freirean constructivism demonstrated that not only can all people learn, but also that all people know something and that each is the subject responsible for the construction of this knowledge and for the redefinition of

what he learned. A child, a young person, and an adult learn only when they have a **life project** where the knowledge is meaningful and significant for them. But it is the subject who learns through his or her own transformative action in the human world. It is the subject who constructs the proper categories of thought, organizes his or her world, and transforms it.

The work of Paulo Freire is interdisciplinary and can be seen as research and science or as education. And, these two **dimensions** imply a third: Paulo Freire did not separate either from politics. Paulo Freire should also be considered a political figure. This is the most important dimension of his work. He did not think about reality as a sociologist would, attempting the merely understand it as an impartial observer. He sought elements in the sciences that, by providing a more scientific understanding of reality, would allow for intervention in that reality in the most efficacious form. He viewed education, therefore, as a political act, as an act of knowing, and as a creative act. All of his thought has a direct relation with reality. This is his mark in history. He did not concern himself with bureaucratic schemes – whether they were schemes about political power or schemes about academic power. He was committed to a reality to be transformed, above all else.

Paulo Freire proposed a **new conception of the pedagogic relationship**. He did not view education as the mere transmission of content from teacher to student. On the contrary, he viewed it as the establishment of a dialogue. This means that while teaching, the teacher also learns. Traditional pedagogy affirms this ideal, but Paulo Freire placed the educator in a position to learn from the learner, in the same way that the learner learns from the educator. Thus, no one could be considered definitively educated or complete. Each person, in his or her own way, together with others, could learn and discover new dimensions and possibilities from the realities of life. Education becomes a process of collective and continuous formation.

But Paulo Freire can be read in another light yet, that of his **passion for liberation**. This would be a liberating reading. As many of his interpreters confirm, the central thesis of his work is *liberty-liberation*. Liberation is the central point of his educational conception, beginning with his very first work. Liberation is the endpoint of education. The purpose of education would be to liberate oneself from an oppressive and unjust reality. Education aims for liberation, the radical transformation of reality, in an effort to improve it, make it more human, and ensure that men and women are recognized as subjects of their own history rather than as objects.

Liberation, as an objective of education, situates itself on the horizon of a **utopic vision of society**. Education or formation should permit a critical reading of the world. The world that surrounds us is a world still in formation and this requires the denunciation of oppressive and unjust realities and, consequently, a transformative critical sense in the declaration (“anúncio”) of another reality. This declaration is necessary as a moment for the new reality which is still in the making. This new reality is the utopia of today’s educator.

One can cite numerous instances that demonstrate the strict coherence between Freire’s theory and practice. We will look only at his work as a public administrator (1989-1991), at the helm of the Municipal Secretariat of Education for São Paulo (Brazil).

3. Paulo Freire experiences as Secretary of Education in São Paulo

For those who knew Paulo Freire well, his administrative skills were not a surprise. His secret, however, was knowing how to govern democratically. During the

almost two and a half years as head of the Secretariat of Education, he succeeded in creating a team of five or six assistants who were able to work with considerable autonomy and who could substitute for him in any type of emergency. There was one weekly meeting in which the general policy initiatives of the Secretariat were discussed. If it was necessary, new directions were explored. Paulo Freire defended vehemently his opinions, but knew how **to work as part of a team** – just the opposite of the spontaneity of which he has been accused. He had authority but he exercised it in a democratic manner. He dealt with conflict situations with great patience. He was accustomed to saying that the work of educational change requires historical patience because education is a long-term process.

What were the most important **structural changes** introduced in the municipal schools under Paulo Freire's leadership?

Freire himself responded to this question in his book about his experience as Secretary (*Pedagogy of the City* – New York: Continuum, 1993 – pp. 79-80): "The most important structural changes introduced in the schools relate to expanded school autonomy". The School Councils and Student Associations were reestablished. Thus, continued Paulo Freire, "the biggest advance for school autonomy came in granting the site authority over its own pedagogical projects, which received support from the administration, and accelerated the overall school transformation".

To illustrate this process of change, I would like to present **three examples**: the program of continuous professional development, the program of literacy for youth and adults, and the practice of interdisciplinarity.

3.1 – The program of continuous professional development of educators

From the beginning of his administration, Paulo Freire insisted that he was profoundly challenged by the question of professional development for teachers. His professional development program was oriented by the following **principles** (ib., p. 80):

First: Educators are the subjects of their practice, which they create and recreate by reflecting on day-to-day events and work.

Second: An educator's professional development should be continuous and systematic, because practice is made and remade.

Third: Pedagogic practice requires an understanding of the very origins of knowledge, that is, how the process of understanding unfolds.

Fourth: A program for the professional development of educator is a prerequisite for the process of curricular reorientation in schools.

With this program Paulo Freire wanted to prepare teachers with a new pedagogical attitude and approach, particularly given the authoritarian pedagogical tradition in Brazil. It was not possible to hope that in a few years this tradition would be overcome. Therefore, Paulo Freire was willing to put a number of issues on the line: his well-known pedagogic patience, political decisions, technical competence, affection, and, above all, the exercise of democracy.

The result was a success. The formation of teachers went beyond expectations and transcended what might have been learned in a formal course about the theoretical tenets of democracy. Teacher formation occurred through practice and real participation. Such democratic practice was much more valuable and significant than a course or lecture on democracy.

All the actions developed by Paulo Freire's team, related to the democratization, to the new quality of teaching, to the new policies of education for youth and adults, to the continuous professional development of teachers, show the possibility of a better public school quality. What proves this is the **reduction of school rates of failure**. The

approval rates decreased significantly from 1988 to 1991, falling down from 22,58% to 12,3% respectively.

3.2 – *The literacy program for youth and adults*

In addition to the intense program of teacher formation, Paulo Freire initiated a literacy movement in partnership with social movements, through the expansion of night courses and supplementary education.

This project, MOVA-SP (Movement for Alfabetization – Literacy Movement), begun in January 1990, had significant repercussions in São Paulo and in other States because the proposal included the strengthening of popular and social movements. It was one of those rare examples of **partnership between Civil Society and the State**. It was evident that in these circumstances the relationship was not always harmonious. It was often fraught with tensions. But this is a necessary condition for equitable interaction between the State and popular movements (Grassroots Groups, GRGs).

MOVA-SP did not impose a singular methodological orientation or, as some are accustomed to calling it, the “Paulo Freire Method”. Instead, it attempted to maintain pluralism, though antiscientific, philosophically authoritarian, and racist pedagogies were not tolerated. Although one methodology was not imposed, certain political-pedagogic principles from Paulo Freire’s educational theory were embedded in the movement’s approach, including: a liberating conception of education; the idea that education plays a role in the construction of a new historical project; the use of a theory of knowledge that bases the construction of knowledge; and, the understanding of literacy not solely as a logical and intellectual process but also as one which is profoundly affective and social.

In order to make a literacy movement into a collective effort, experience must be the main source of knowledge. Otherwise, it will be reduced to mere intellectual knowledge which doesn’t lead to critical awareness and to strengthening popular power, that is, creating and developing popular organizations.

What is being developed must not be confused with literacy campaigns. Failures experienced in many literacy campaigns in Latin America and especially in Brazil, made us avoid even the word “campaign”. We want to stress the character of continuity and permanence of the movement we want to construct.

The importance of the GRGs (Grassroots Groups), social and popular movements, in the provision of literacy programs in developing countries is recognize for many reasons. They are agencies with a strong potential of impact at the community. Popular movements (GRGs) conduct many activities involving adult literacy in Brazil.

Types of GRGs Participating in MOVA and Evolution in Terms of Classes, Students, and GRGs

| Type of Association | Number | Percentage |
|--|--------|------------|
| Community or Neighborhood Associations | 30 | 40 |
| Educational/Cultural Groups | 13 | 14 |
| Women’s Groups, Mother’s Clubs, Women Volunteer Groups | 12 | 16 |
| Religious Groups | 11 | 15 |
| Worker’s Groups | 6 | 8 |
| Human Rights Groups | 2 | 3 |
| Sports Associations | 1 | 1 |
| Total | 74 | 100 |

Evolution of MOVA in Terms of Classes, Students, and GRGs

| Time | Classes | Students | Grassroots Groups |
|---------------|---------|----------|-------------------|
| February 1991 | 451 | 9,513 | 39 |
| May 1991 | 557 | 11,853 | 45 |
| December 1991 | 868 | 17,766 | 68 |
| May 1992 | 920 | 20,114 | 69 |
| June 1992 | - | 21,000 | - |

Source: Nelly P. Stromquist, *Literacy for citizenship: Gender and Grassroots Dynamics in Brazil*, Albany, SUNY Press, 1997, pp. 173, 214.

As the above table shows, the success of the MOVA Program demanded a growing enlargement in terms of classes and Grassroots Groups. In three years we attend about 80,000 illiterates.

3.3 – The practice of constructing an interdisciplinarity curriculum

The extensiveness of Paulo Freire's work and his numerous passages through various areas of knowledge and practice bring us to another central theme of his theory-practice: interdisciplinarity.

In 1987 and 1988, Paulo Freire developed the concept of interdisciplinarity in dialogues with educators and scientists from various fields in the University of Campinas (São Paulo). The concept of interdisciplinarity involves from the analysis of concrete practice and of lived experience of the "reflection groups". The following year, as Secretary of Education, he started an important movement for the changes in the curriculum. This would be called the "Projeto de Interdisciplinaridade" (the Project for Interdisciplinarity). Interdisciplinarity is not merely a **pedagogic method** or an **attitude** on the part of the teacher. It is demanded by the very nature of the pedagogic act.

Pedagogic action using interdisciplinarity and transdisciplinarity requires the construction of a school that is participatory and decisive in the creation of social subjects. Teachers, subjects of their own pedagogic action, are capable of elaborating programs and methods for teaching and learning, being competent to insert the school in a community. The fundamental **objective** of interdisciplinarity is to experience authentically a global reality that is inscribed in the daily experiences of the student, the teacher, and the community; in a traditional school, this is compartmentalized and fragmented. The objective of interdisciplinarity is to articulate among knowledge, wisdom, lived experience, school, community, environment, and so on in order to translate school practice into a process that is collective and mutually responsible. Interdisciplinarity is not possible without decentralization of power, or an effective practice of school autonomy.

In the table below we can see closely the processes that involve at each moment (phases) in the Interdisciplinarity Project and the required conditions and the outcomes linked with this methodological approach.

Phases in the Interdisciplinary Project

| <i>Study of the Reality</i> | <i>Organization of Knowledge</i> | <i>Application of Knowledge</i> |
|--|---|--|
| Problematicization | Selection of content areas | Implementation of the program that has been organized |
| Discussion and stories of the students, educators, and community | Reality and systematized knowledge | Evaluation and planning for the transformation of the student, educator, and community |
| Visits, Interviews | Educator's approach and attitudes Cognitive and affective requirements | Knowledge: action, appropriation and (re)construction |

| | | |
|---|--|---|
| Questionnaires, Significant situations, Thematic Design | Notions, Hypotheses, Presuppositions, Theories | Tools: natural and built environments, games, magazines, books, etc |
|---|--|---|

Source: Maria del Pilar O'Cádiz, Pia Linquist Wong, Carlos Alberto Torres, *Education and Democracy: Paulo Freire, Social Movements and Educational Reform in São Paulo*. Westview, 1998, p. 111.

In my experience of working alongside Freire for more than two decades – in particular as his Cabinet Chief in the administration of the Municipal Secretariat of Education in São Paulo and especially coordinating the Literacy Movement in São Paulo (MOVA-SP) – I learned that, given the historical conditions of centralization and authoritarianism of Brazilian institutions, it is necessary to seek the autonomy of the school at all levels.

Paulo Freire left the Municipal Secretariat of Education on May 27, 1991. After almost two and a half years, Paulo returned to his library and his academic activities, “in the manner of someone who is leaving but stays on”, as he affirmed in the epilogue of *Pedagogy of the City* (p. 143). In truth, Paulo Freire continued to have an active presence in the Secretariat, offering his immense experience which was translated into the practice of the projects developed by the Secretariat. In his farewell, he stated: “Though I will no longer be Secretary, I will continue together with all of you in another form... Continue to count on me in the development of educational policy, in the construction of a school with another ‘face’, one that is happier, more fraternal and more democratic”.

4. Paulo Freire in the context of contemporaries pedagogies

The thought of Paulo Freire can be related to that of many contemporary educators. We can find a great affinity between Paulo Freire and the revolutionary French educator, Célestin Freinet (1896-1966) in the way that both believe that the student can organize his own learning. Freinet gave enormous importance to what he called the “free text”. Like Paulo Freire, he used the so-called global method of literacy, associating the reading of the word with the reading of the world.

Paulo Freire doesn't defend the principle of nondirectivity in education as does the American psychotherapist Carl Rogers (1902-1987), but there is no doubt that there are many points in common in the pedagogies they defend, especially in what concerns freedom of individual expression. They both believe that men/women themselves can solve their problems, as long as they are motivated to do so. Similarly to Paulo Freire's method, which tries to draw the traditionally distant figure of the teacher closer, the Rogerian approach, centered on the person, brings the relationship between patient and therapist closer, instead of maintaining the distance defended by traditional psychology.

What is there in common between Paulo Freire and Ivan Illich (1926)?

In both we find a critique of the traditional school. Amidst the bureaucratization of the present-day scholastic institution, both demand that educators look to individual development a collective liberation by combating alienation at school and proposing the rediscovery of a creative autonomy. But in spite of these common points, there are some considerable differences. In the work of Ivan Illich, one can find pessimism in relation to school as he doesn't believe that the traditional school has any future. For this reason, it will be necessary to “deschooling” society. In Paulo Freire we find optimism. School can change and be changed as it plays an important role in the transformation of society.

What brings Illich and Freire together is their profound belief in the need to make a revolution in the content and in the pedagogy of the present-day school. Both

believe that this change is both pedagogical and political, and that the critique of the school is part of a wider critique of all contemporary civilization.

Like John Dewey (1859-1952), the well-known American philosopher and educator, Paulo Freire insists on the knowledge of the life of the local community. But we can find a difference in their notions of culture. For Dewey, culture is simplified as it doesn't involve the social, racial, and ethnic elements while for Paulo Freire it has an anthropological connotation as the educational action always takes place in the culture of the student. What the pedagogy of Paulo Freire takes from the thought of John Dewey is the idea of "learning by doing", cooperative work, the relationship between theory and practice, the method of beginning work by talking (in the language) of the students.

We can also show the similarity between the points of view of Paulo Freire and Lev Vygotsky (1886-1935), the Russian pedagogue and Jean Piaget (1896-1980) the Swiss psychologist. Vygotsky theory of written language contains a description of the internal processes that characterize the individual changes and develops his internal discourse with age and experience. Language is enormously important in the way children become more cognitively sophisticated as it is in their increase in social affection. This is because language is the means through which children and adults systematize their perceptions.

Although Freire and Vygotsky have lived at different times and in different hemispheres, their approaches both emphasize fundamental aspects which are relative to interconnected social and educational changes. While Vygotsky focuses on the psychological dynamic, Freire concentrates on educational strategies and the analysis of language. According to Jean Piaget, the role of action is fundamental for the development of child, because the essential characteristic of the logic thought is to be operative. Piaget sustain that we only learn what we will and what is significant for us. Paulo Freire agree with this thesis of Piaget and insists: we need to develop the "curiosity" of learner in order to develop the act of knowing. When we separate the production of knowledge from the discovery of already existing knowledge, schools become easily transformed into shops for the sale of knowledge.

Paulo Freire has been influenced in different ways: his humanistic thought was inspired by the personalism of Emmanuel Mounier (1905-1950) and by the existentialism (Martin Buber), phenomenology (Georg Hegel) and Marxism (Antonio Gramsci and Jürgen Habermas). However, it can't said that Paulo Freire is just eclectic. He integrates the fundamental elements of these philosophical doctrines without repeating them in a mechanical or biased way. The association between Humanism and Marxism, between Christian and Marxist themes, enriches his texts and enables them to be read by a wide public.

Paulo Freire's pedagogy has acquired a universal meaning since the oppressed/oppressor relationship which he examined occurs throughout the world and his theories have been enriched with the most varied experiences from many countries. In addition to the countries in which Paulo Freire has directly applied his own ideas, many others have borrowed his methods and achieved positive results.

Among the original **intuitions** of the popular education paradigm, inspired by him, we can detach:

- a) Education focused on the production and not just on the transmission of knowledge;
- b) The defense for an education of freedom, first condition for a democratic life;
- c) The refusal of authoritarianism and manipulation, that create hierarchies among teachers that know (and so teach) and students that have to learn (and so study);

- d) The defense of education as a dialogic act in the rigorous discovering nevertheless full of imagination;
- e) The notion of an open science to the popular needs and, finally,
- f) A community and participate planning.

The notoriety of Paulo Freire's work, is not due only to his theory of knowledge, but to have insisted in the idea that it's possible, necessary and urgent to change things. He not only convinced many people, in so many parts of the world, through his theories and practices, but also because he would wake up on them, the capacity to dream a new reality, more human, less ugly and more just. He has been a sort of guardian of utopia. He left its legacy. And this is not only possible and good for the poor countries but also for the rich ones.

5. Roots, wings, and dreams

The challenging ideas of Paulo Freire and their worldwide repercussion cannot please everyone. In spite of his enormous capacity for dialogue and his humility, he has been criticized, especially by conservative people. Paulo Freire is not just the most widely read educator in Brazil today. He has another record: the educator with the most labels. He has been called "national-developmental", "new schoolist", "inductivist", "spontaneist", "nondirectivist", "Catholic neoanarchist", and so on.

- How did Paulo Freire react to criticism of his work and of himself?

Personal attacks were quite rare because though his ideas may have been polemical, he as a person was not. His personality was transparent. There was no room for hypocrisy. He didn't respond to personal criticism. He also didn't tussle with critiques of his work. Paulo Freire believed that good humor was a pedagogical and progressive weapon, but that polemics were not. **Humor** is constructive; **polemic** are, quite often, destructive. Consequently, he never argued with any of his critics. At the same time, he was not silent in the face of their charges.

He considered criticism in a positive light and tried to learn from it. When he responded to criticism indirectly in his books – and he did this systematically – he attempted to contextualize his work, demonstrating that he was a product of his time. In this way, we can say that his thought involved, each time conquering and surpassing specific "naïvetés" – as he himself observes in *Pedagogy of Hope*.

But there are also criticisms that come from readings and interpretations of his work that are different and at times contradictory. These are legitimate and serious interpretations. Above all, in these cases, Paulo Freire had the right to disagree and he did disagree with these readings: he did not recognize himself in many of them.

Certain **conservative critics** argued that he did not have a theory of knowledge because he had not studied the relations between the subject of knowledge and the object. He was interested in the product. This is not true: before anything else, his thought is founded in an explicit anthropological theory of knowledge. Others accuse him of authoritarianism, stating that his method suppose a transformation of reality even though such an objective may not be shared by all. As a result, it is an unscientific method (because it doesn't have universal applicability). His method would be authoritarian to the extent that he obligates everyone to participate in transformation. It is clear that this criticism ignores the fact that Paulo Freire did not accept the idea of pure theory – he thought this was an illusion – but rather argued for a critical theory rooted in a social and political philosophy. He rejected the idea of scientific neutrality – just as he distanced himself from *academicism* – and argued that the conservatives hid their ideological conservatism under the rubric of politically neutral and "pure" theory.

- What does an educator leave as a *legacy*?

In the first place, he leaves a life, a biography. And Paulo enchanted us with his tenderness, his sweetness, his charisma, his coherence, his commitment, and his seriousness. His words and actions were words and actions of struggle for a world that was "less ugly, less mean-spirited, and less inhuman", as he used to tell us. On the side of love and hope, he also left us a legacy of daily outrage about injustice, which he told us we could not "sweeten" or "sugarcoat" with our words.

In addition to the testimony of a life committed to the cause of the oppressed, he left us with an immense body of work, recorded in numerous editions of books, articles, and videos found throughout the world. Some have asked me why his pedagogy had such success. I responded that it was because his "pedagogy of dialogue" did not humiliate the student, the other person. A conservative pedagogy humiliates students while the pedagogy of Paulo **Freire gave students dignity**, putting the teacher at their side – with the task of orienting and directing the educational process – but as a being also in a mode of searching, like they were. The teacher is also a learner. This is the legacy of Freire.

Paulo Freire did not define education as simply a technique based in a theory of knowledge, but as a political, social, and anthropological roadmap of what to do. Because he based his theory and practice in anthropology, he constructed a pedagogy that was profoundly ethical. It is necessary to conscientize, but without doing violence to the consciousness of others.

In the development of his educational theory, Paulo Freire succeeded, on the one hand, in demystifying the pedagogic **dreams of the 1960s** which, at least in Latin America, viewed the school as responsible for changing everything and, on the other, in overcoming the **pessimism of the 1970s** when people thought that schooling was purely reproductive. In doing this, he went beyond naive pedagogy and negative pessimism, remaining true to the idea of utopia, dreaming dreams of the possible.

Generations of educators, anthropologists, social and political scientists, professionals in the natural and biological sciences were influenced by Freire and helped to construct a pedagogy grounded in liberation. Not only in Latin America. What he wrote is a part of the lives of an entire generation that learned to dream about a world of equality, equity and justice, that fought and continues to struggle for this world. Many will continue his work, even though he didn't leave behind "disciples". Nothing could be less Freirean than to be a disciple or a follower of ideas. He always challenged us to "reinvent" the world, to pursue truth, and not to copy ideas. Paulo Freire left us with roots, wings, and dreams. This is the best *legacy* who an educator can leave.

In the last years of his life, Paulo Freire showed, almost constantly his apprehension about the enlargement and continuance – without "continuism" – of his ideas and legacy, as well as the keeping of gathering the pedagogical critical educators.

He persisted with close friends, and even with the press, during many interviews, about the individual's contingency and social's transcendence. He seemed to feel that his body was about to die, but also near the eternal life of his ideas and dreams of freedom.

For all pedagogical critical educators involved with freirean ideas, that have been built during many years and facing many challenges, their dream was very close to succeed, in order to continue the Paulo Freire's legacy. It began more and more strong the idea of creating an organization that would congregate them. Therefore, it was born the **Paulo Freire Institute**. Paulo Freire helped its creation and legated to it the best of his intelligence and soul in the last years of his life.