

Pedagogy And Politics In The Work Of Paulo Freire

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The Brazilian educator, Paulo Freire, has exerted a considerable influence on the field of adult education not only in Latin America but worldwide. The reaction to his adult educational theory has been varied. It has often been considered as "reformist" (eg. La Belle, 1986) and "populist" (Youngman, 1986). Other writers have, on the contrary, underscored the radical nature of Freire's pedagogy (eg. Torres, 1982) and the process of "conscientization" with which it is closely identified, a process regarded by Connolly (1981) as being "essentially geared to the radical transformation of social reality". (p.71)

This paper provides a critical exposition of Freire's adult educational theory, outlining its basic tenets and examining the extent to which it can be successful in contributing to a general process of social transformation.¹ The paper emphasizes the radical nature of Freire's alternative pedagogical theory.

1. Ideological Domination Through Education

In his earlier writings (cf. *Pedagogy of the Oppressed*), Freire dwells at length on the nature of oppression and the manner in which it is brought about. Such writings betray a number of influences, notably Hegelian dialectics and Phenomenology (Torres, 1982: 77), besides "catholicism, marxism, existentialism and a general humanism" (Lind, Johnston, 1986: 58). Drawing from the insights provided by a number of writers, notably Gramsci (1971), one may argue that oppression can be brought about through ideological domination and coercion. The latter is most pronounced in many of the Latin American countries which provide the context for Freire's writings, countries where resort to the State's physical control mechanism is quite frequent. Freire's writings, however, deal, for the most part, with education and most notably adult education. It is therefore with the ideological means of control and domination that they are mainly concerned.

One may argue that such means constitute a form of what Pierre Bourdieu would call "symbolic violence". This serves to mystify reality for the oppressed in such a way that they would

be prevented from gaining, in Freire's own words, "consciousness of themselves as persons or as members of an oppressed class" (Freire, 1970: 30). This process of "symbolic violence", it can be argued, serves its purpose in imbuing them with a sense of "false consciousness" which manifests itself in various ways, most notably in the tendency among the oppressed to internalize the image of their oppressors:

"Their ideal is to be men; but for them, to be men is to be oppressors. This is their model of humanity"

(Freire, 1970: 30)

The "oppressor consciousness", therefore, makes its presence felt inside the oppressed. Henry Giroux (1981) has indicated several forms of behaviour among the underprivileged which reflect such a presence. One of these is sexism, a common form of "violence" perpetrated by members of male subcultures in relation to women who "share their experience" (p.14). To this, one may add racism and ageism.

The process of domination and oppression is facilitated by other related means, most notably by a series of social practices that are "prescriptive" in nature: "One of the basic elements of the relationship between oppressor and oppressed is prescription" (Freire, 1970: 31). Such social conditioning prevents human beings from questioning what would otherwise be considered as problematic assumptions about social reality. In much of the Third World context which influenced Freire's thinking, people are "conditioned into accepting the interpretation of the world provided by the dominant culture" (Jarvis, 1985: 112).

Such conditioning discourages initiative and creativity. Under these conditions, even freedom becomes a fearful thing for the oppressed. Any activity which entails creativity, that which enables human beings to explore and enjoy such freedom, involves risk-taking (Freire, Macedo, 1987: 57) and therefore presents itself to them as a fearful journey into the unknown.

Traditional pedagogical methods, characterized by a "top-to-bottom" communicative approach, a case of "strong framing" (Bernstein, 1971), constitute a very

important example of a kind of social practice which is prescriptive in nature. These methods, through which the teacher is the only dispenser of knowledge while the learners are its passive recipients (Goulet, 1973: 11), serve their purpose in encouraging submissiveness. They stifle creativity and critical thinking, and therefore facilitate the reproduction of unequal social relations among human beings.

Freire (1970) refers to the foregoing as “the “banking” concept of education” (p.58). In a much cited passage from his most celebrated work, Freire (1970) states:

“Education ... becomes an act of depositing, in which the students are the depositories and the teacher is the depositor. Instead of communicating, the teacher issues communiques and makes deposits which the students patiently receive, memorize and repeat”(p.58).

In such a situation, the teacher is the only “subject” of the learning process while the learner is merely an “object”, a person who is totally under somebody else’s control. Everything is prescribed for the learner. The teacher is, here, engaging in what Freire would call “a pedagogy of answers” (Freire, in Bruss, Macedo, 1985: 9).² As a result, the “good educatee” is, in Freire’s own words, one “who repeats, who refuses to think critically, who adapts to models, who finds it nice to be a rhinoceros” (Freire, 1972a: 179), the reference here being made to Eugene Ionesco’s celebrated play, *Rhinoceros*.

“Banking Education” serves to “domesticate” rather than “liberate” human beings (ibid.). Deference to authority, an uncritical consumption of information and knowledge and an immersion in what Freire calls the “culture of silence” are normally the outcome of such a process. The prescriptive mode of pedagogy, a much favoured one, even in Maltese educational establishments, destroys any sense of relationship that the educatee may have with the material to be learnt. It constitutes a process of cultural alienation, in that the educatee is estranged from the content to be learnt. It also facilitates a process of “cultural invasion” in as much as the educatee becomes uncritically receptive to ideas imposed from above (ideas related to the dominant culture) and from without (ideas disseminated as part of a process of ‘cultural imperialism’). The educatee would therefore be presented with a sense of reality that bears no relationship with his or her own culture.

“Banking Education” is a non-reflective mode of learning (Jarvis, 1987: 90) which fosters

undemocratic social relations and therefore supports prevailing structures of power and processes of domination. It is part of a hidden political process which helps preserve the status quo. Freire underlines the political nature of all educational activity, maintaining that education cannot be neutral: “It is ... impossible to deny, except intentionally or by innocence, the political aspect of education” (Freire, 1976a: 70). Educators therefore have to make what amounts to a *political* choice: “Educators must ask themselves for whom and on whose behalf they are working” (Freire, 1985: 180). They can either indulge in “Banking Education”, and therefore help “domesticate” human beings, or they can become transformative agents, educating for “liberation”.³ The form which “Education for Liberation” takes in Freire’s adult educational theory and practice, in the pre-social transformation, or “pre-figurative” (Allman, 1988), stage, is “Cultural Action for Freedom”.⁴ It is to a discussion of this alternative pedagogical practice that the paper now turns.

2. The Alternative: Cultural Action For Freedom

In Freire’s writings, non-formal adult education constitutes the main site of social practice wherein education for transformation and liberation takes place. The reasons for this are obvious. Though he “talks”, in his “dialogical” book with Ira Shor, of the possibilities for a transformative education which exist in a First World context (Shor, Freire, 1987), Freire draws a lot, in most of his writings, on his own experiences as an adult educator and advisor to organisers of adult literacy programmes in developing countries.⁵ His ideas are often the product of experiences in Latin America and Africa where, in certain regions, only a very small percentage of the relevant age group receives a formal education. This, together with the fact that it is difficult to carry out counter-hegemonic schooling under conditions of extreme repression, conditions which obtain in a number of Latin American countries, has rendered non-formal education the area in which “Cultural Action for Freedom” takes place.

“Cultural Action” constitutes the vehicle whereby the oppressed gain awareness of the social and economic contradictions that place them in a subaltern position. “Cultural action is developed in opposition to the elite that controls the power.” (Freire, in Torres, 1982: 83). Freire therefore underlines the counter-hegemonic nature of this adult educational process. It is a

process which reflects his faith in the potential of human agency to transform social structures.

His is a pedagogical theory couched in the "language of possibility" (Giroux, 1985: xiv), a theory with strong voluntaristic overtones. Because he accords great importance to the transformative potential of human agency, a "critically conscious agency" (Allman, 1988: 95), Freire repudiates the overly deterministic and mechanistic theories of reproduction associated with vulgar Marxism. He maintains that these theories convey a sense of "liberating fatalism ... a liberation given over to history ... It will come no matter what." (Freire, 1985: 179).

As is the case with a number of radical humanists, Freire derives much of his inspiration from the early writings of Karl Marx, notably such pieces as the *Third Thesis on Feuerbach* and the passage, "Concerning the production of consciousness" (cf. *The German Ideology*). In these writings, the dialectical nature of the relationship between human agency and structure is underlined: "Circumstances make men [sic] just as much as men [sic] make circumstances" (Marx, in Tucker, 1978: 165).

The basic tenet of Freire's pedagogical theory is that human beings have the potential to reflect upon their world of action, which provides the circumstances in which they live, in order to transform it and, in so doing, create new circumstances. His is a pedagogical theory which centres around the concept of "Praxis" that entails transformative action and reflection:

"But men's [sic] activity consists of action and reflection: it is praxis, it is transformation of the world".

(Freire, 1970: 119)

In Freire's view, any separation of the two key elements in the process of praxis (ie. action and reflection) is either mindless activism or empty theorizing, the latter being what Jarvis (1987) would call "armchair reflectivity" (p.90). The two elements ought, in Freire's view, to be inextricably intertwined. Freire's much celebrated "Method" seeks to combine the two, having "praxis" at its core. It involves a process in which elements relating to the social reality of the adult learners are objectified in such a way that they can be viewed by them in a better, somewhat detached manner. The process in question is that of "conscientizacao" (conscientisation), the term which was originally used by Catholic radicals in the sixties (Zachariah, 1986: 28) and which, according to Freire, was rendered popular by Bishop Helder Camara (ibid: 36). Owing to lack

of space, the entire learning process involved cannot be described in detail. For the sake of brevity, however, this paper reproduces Dennis Goulet's succinct description of the process from his excellent introduction to one of Freire's early publications in the English Language:

-participant observation of educators 'tuning in' to the vocabular universe of the people;

- their arduous search for generative words at two levels: syllabic richness and a high charge of experiential involvement;

- a first codification of these words into visual images which stimulate people 'submerged' in the culture of silence to 'emerge' as conscious makers of their own 'culture'.

- the decodification by a 'culture circle' under the self-effacing stimulus of a coordinator who is no 'teacher' in the conventional sense, but who has become an educator-educatee - in dialogue with educatee - educators too often treated by formal educators as passive recipients of knowledge;

- a creative new codification, this one explicitly critical and aimed at action, wherein those who were formerly illiterate now begin to reject their role as mere 'objects' in nature and social history and undertake to become 'subjects' of their own destiny"

(Goulet, 1973: 11).

It is through the processes of codification and decodification that the people's reality, their "world of action", is objectified. This enables them to reflect better upon it with a view to transforming it. Praxis apart, the method adopted by Freire has other interesting features which are worthy of every consideration. Echoing Mannheim (1936), Freire acknowledges that knowledge is existentially determined. He therefore appears to be suggesting that any meaningful process of adult education should seek to affirm the relationship between knowledge and the learner's material existence.⁶ In contrast to the prescriptive model of "Banking Education", this is a process of knowledge sharing characterized by a "bottom - up", as opposed to "top-to-bottom", approach. The learners are helped to reflect on their own experience to arrive at new levels of awareness. The entire process is initiated by the Circle coordinator. All the circle members, however, help each other throughout the process. For Freire's method entails a "group pedagogy", another aspect of his work which recalls Mannheim (1936), an important source of

influence on Freire (Torres, 1982: 77). The "knowledge" attained could be regarded as "a cooperative effort of group life, in which everyone unfolds his [sic] knowledge within the framework of a common fate, a common activity, and the overcoming of common difficulties (in which however each has a different share)" (Mannheim, 1936: 29).

The foregoing suggests a mode of communication characterized by dialogue: "A cultural circle is a live and creative dialogue .." (Freire, 1971: 61). It is a process which serves to establish democratic social relations - the most important feature of what Jarvis (1985) calls an "Education of Equals" (p.49): "Through dialogue, the teacher of the students and the students-of-the teacher cease to exist and a new term emerges: teacher-student with students-teachers. The teacher is no longer the one who teaches, but one who is himself [sic] taught in dialogue with the students, who in turn while being taught also teach" (Freire, 1970: 67). Educators and educatees become "learners" acting as "cognitive subjects" in a constant attempt to discover "knowledge through one another and through the objects they try to know" (Freire, 1976b: 225).

Both learners and educators are *subjects* sealed together in a "joint act of knowing and re-knowing the object of study" (Shor, Freire, 1987: 100). As Ira Shor maintains, anything which the educator already knows is relearned through interaction with the educatees (ibid:100). Freire's early writings stress the horizontal nature of the social relations of education which characterize the Cultural Circle. One must not, however, be so naive as to assume that adult learners, conditioned by years of exposure to the idea of "Banking Education" and, according to Freire, fearful of freedom itself, would be disposed to partake of a dialogical, democratic education. Such conditioning could lead them to resist attempts at a dialogical education and bring pressure to bear on the facilitator concerned to adopt traditional, "tried and tested" methods of teaching (cf. Baldacchino, 1990: 53, 54; Armove, 1986: 24, 25). The present writer's recent experience as coordinator of the Malta Adult Literacy Programme suggests that this can easily be the case. The pressures faced by the adult learning facilitator who persists with encouraging democratic social relations of education are indeed great.

Freire's later works suggest a slight shift in his position regarding the nature of these social relations of education. In these works, Freire

plays down what several critics (eg. Torres, 1982: 84) took to be the "anti-directivist" nature of his pedagogy. His proposed process may be regarded as an "Education of Equals" but only to a certain extent. The educator, or adult learning facilitator, is also a learner but this is not to say, however, that she or he is at par with the educatee:

"At the moment the teacher begins the dialogue, he or she knows a great deal, first in terms of knowledge and second in terms of the horizon that he or she wants to get to. The starting point is what the teacher knows about the object and where the teacher wants to go with it" (Shor, Freire, 1987: 103).

The pedagogy is therefore "directive" in that it is directed towards a particular goal, an unmistakably political one. The radical educator/facilitator has the political goal of facilitating, by virtue of what is essentially a "process pedagogy", a change in social relations, rendering them more democratic. The foregoing citation can be taken as an indication that Freire acknowledges a certain "superiority" on the educator's part. This is rarely explicit in his earlier writings, for which he had been criticized. Youngman (1986), for instance, states, in a work published a year before Freire's "conversational" books with Shor and Macedo, that the Brazilian educationist is "ambivalent about saying outright that educators can have a theoretical understanding superior to that of the learners and which is, in fact, the indispensable condition of the development of critical consciousness" (p.179).

That "superiority" is now acknowledged. The educator, however, can only realise his/her political goal by ensuring that the authority derived from his/her competence does, at no stage, degenerate into authoritarianism: "... the democratic teacher never, never transforms authority into authoritarianism". (Shor, Freire, 1987: 91). It ought to be remarked, once again, that years of social conditioning can lead the adult learners to create the sort of learning climate which prevents the facilitator from establishing her/his authority without being authoritarian.

Avoidance of authoritarian teaching methods would, however, be essential for the Cultural Circle to succeed in serving as a microcosm of the kind of "utopian" society which Freire has in mind. This would be a society characterized by dialogue and participation at all levels, in which an ongoing process of "denunciation and annunciation" (Freire, 1972b: 39, 40) takes place.

These are just some considerations concerning Freire's process of cultural action for freedom. The questions this paper attempts to address at this stage are: To what extent can this process of adult education truly serve as a means of liberation? Can this form of non-formal education bring about social and political transformation? It is quite natural to assume that, in countries governed by repressive regimes, counter-hegemonic activities would be considered anathema and would often be ruthlessly and violently stamped out. Freire knows this only too well. His activities in the north east of Brazil were carried out under "populist" governments and also benefitted from state funding (Kozol, 1985: 95). They were, however, brought to an abrupt end in 1964 when the Military staged a coup which overthrew the government of Joao Goulart. Freire was first imprisoned and then sent into exile. The subversive nature of Freire inspired "popular education" is also underlined by the fact that, in Nicaragua, centres where such activities took place were often the target of Contra attacks (cf. Amove, 1986: 54; Camoy, Torres, 1987: 31).

The foregoing may lead one to argue that there are limits to the effectiveness of Freire's pedagogy as an instrument of political change. There have been situations, however, where Freire-inspired pedagogy made an effective contribution to social and political transformation. Amove (1986) states that Freire exerted considerable influence on the sort of counter-hegemonic pedagogical activities carried out in Nicaragua in the late sixties and seventies (p.8). Jesuits from the University of Central America (U.C.A.), many of whom belonged to the "Liberation Wing" of the Church, were involved in popular education activities that preceded the Somoza overthrow in 1979 (Amove, 1986: 8). Such "Cultural Action for Freedom" may have appeared less of an outlawed activity since it was carried out under the Church's "umbrella". It would be relevant to remark, however, that, in this case, Freirean pedagogy was not carried out in isolation but in relation to a strong social movement, one which sought to draw together three strands, "Sandino's popular national revolt, Marxist class analysis and Christian Liberation Theology" (Amove, 1986: 9).

The inference that one may draw from the Nicaraguan example is that adult education, or simply education, on its own, does not lead to social transformation. It can prove to be effective in this regard only when it is related to some social and political movement capable of effecting a

rupture in the social and political structures. Freire himself warns us that one should not "expect" from education what it cannot do, namely "transform society by itself" (Shor, Freire, 1987: 37). It is not an independent variable. If left on its own, the adult education process proposed by Freire would only involve "intellectual praxis". This is a kind of "praxis" which would be capable of transforming the learners' consciousness. It would not, however, be conducive to their engagement in the social action necessary for them to transform their situation of oppression (La Belle, 1986: 181). If linked with social action, however, the educational process would involve "revolutionary praxis". This is akin to what Marx refers to, in the *Third Thesis on Feuerbach*, as "revolutionising practice" (Marx, in Tucker, 1978: 144). It is the kind of "praxis" which not merely changes the people's consciousness but, being carried out in relation to a strong social movement, as was the case with the consciousness-raising activities in Nicaragua, contributes to social and political action (La Belle, 1986: 181).

It is for this reason that Freire advocates that educators "expose themselves to the greater dynamism, the greater mobility" found "inside social movements" (Shor, Freire, 1987: 39). This certainly applies to "cultural action" within the Latin American context. In this context, Freirean pedagogy is closely related to Liberation Theology, "a critical reflection on praxis" (Boff. L, Boff. C, 1986: 69), which provides the basis for a strong social movement governed by Christian-Marxist principles. It also applies to the kind of critical education, to which Freire's writings provide a lot of the theoretical underpinning, which is being advocated by a number of writers (cf. Giroux, 1990) in a predominantly First World context. For Freire, it is in the "intimacy" of social movements that a radical, critical education, geared towards social transformation, has to develop (Shor, Freire, 1987: 88; Freire, Macedo, 1987: 61).

It can still be argued, however, that, irrespective of whether it does or does not take place within a social movement, cultural action does not *directly* lead to political action intended to bring about political change. In the cases of Guinea Bissau, the context for Freire's *Pedagogy in Process*, and Nicaragua, military action on the part of a guerrilla movement brought about the desired change. One feels, however, that the people need to be prepared beforehand in order to accept and partake fully of the cultural change which would be expected to take place following

the country's political transformation. Freire's proposed "Cultural Action for Freedom" may prove to be effective in this regard. It can help create the right cultural climate for such a process of transformation.

It has often been argued that Freire's process of transformative adult education would stand a much better chance of succeeding in a post-revolutionary or post-independence context, especially if the political climate is a most congenial one. The process would in such cases, be one of "Cultural Revolution" which "occurs in complete harmony with the revolutionary regime ..." (Torres, 1982: 88). The validity or otherwise of this assumption will be examined in the course of the next section.

3. Cultural Revolution

Once the desired change has occurred, a process of consolidation of the new order, often based on a new conception of human relationships, begins to take place. Freire was involved with the non-formal education programmes carried out in a number of countries which had just experienced a major political change. These included Nicaragua (Armove, 1986), Grenada (Torres, 1986: 27), Guinea Bissau (Freire, 1978; Freire, Macedo, 1987), Tanzania (Torres, 1982) and Sao Tome and Principe (Freire, 1981).

Freirean pedagogy would be considered appropriate in a situation which calls for a change in social relations, a change intended to give the people a voice they previously did not have. This would be a change which would enable the people's culture - popular culture - to constitute the basis of their own learning. Of particular relevance here would be Melo's account (1985) of the "popular education" activities which took place in Portugal after the "silent coup" of 1974. The sort of cultural and political climate that prevailed in the country at the time was one which should have easily lent itself to the use of Freirean pedagogy, given the strong cultural and historical ties that exist between the Portuguese and Brazilian contexts. These activities were meant to lay stress on what the people possessed rather than on what they lacked. It was the sort of adult educational programme which had to instil in the people confidence in their own ability to participate fully in the life of the community. It is for this reason that an adult literacy programme was avoided at all costs during the initial stages of the post-revolutionary period.⁷ It was felt that a literacy programme would have emphasised "what the people did not possess" (Melo, 1985:

42) rather than "what they had in abundance ... popular culture, the people's own store of knowledge ... in short, their own living culture" (ibid: 42, 43).

There is an obvious connection between the foregoing ideals and the basic tenets of Freirean pedagogical theory. This notwithstanding, the national director/s (?) of the Freire-inspired government sponsored programme in Portugal was, according to Lind and Johnston (1986: 61), suspended because of the programme's "political implications of action or potential action against the government". As Bhola (1988) maintains, "Freire's approach has .. brought something of anti-statism to adult education" (p.31). In sponsoring Freire-inspired programmes, therefore, the State would be furnishing the people with a weapon that can eventually be wielded against itself. Lind and Johnston's remark concerning the Portuguese experience leads one to consider as problematic the assumption that Freirean pedagogy works best within a process of "Cultural Revolution".

Though Freire's pedagogical theory would be relevant, there would obviously be limits to the extent to which its basic ideals can be realized. The "antistatism" which, according to Bhola (1988), is associated with Freirean adult education, constitutes a greater problem in the Third World. This is the context for Freire's proposed process of Cultural Revolution, where "most adult education .. is being delivered by the state" (p.31). There is much in Freire's theory, however, which must have been of relevance to the "new" political realities faced by such countries as Nicaragua, Guinea Bissau and Tanzania where Freire was involved, albeit "peripherally" in the case of the last mentioned (Torres, 1982: 87).

Unlike Portugal, these countries chose to carry out mass literacy campaigns which served a variety of purposes. In the case of Nicaragua, it was argued that the "Cruzada" helped maintain the revolutionary momentum. It also served to legitimize the Sandinista government in the eyes of a people who had been deprived of a basic education during Somoza's rule (Armove, 1986). As Lind and Johnston (1986) maintain, "the mere promotion of literacy activities can benefit the state, and give it some legitimacy in the eyes of the people: 'the state is doing something for us' (p.33). This suggests a rather patronising attitude towards adult education which could serve to disempower people rather than empower them, rendering them "objects" instead of "subjects". Furthermore, in such countries, it was

essential to furnish adults with the skills of basic education necessary for them to participate effectively in the process of economic development. For, as was stated in Tanzania's first five year Development Plan, "the nation cannot wait until the children have become educated for development to begin" (cited in Unsicker, 1936: 231). Economic constraints may also have prevented impoverished countries like Tanzania from providing adequate schooling. Non-formal education appears to have been a cheaper alternative. A war situation as that which occurred in Nicaragua (ie. the Contra War) would render schools dangerous places to be in and non-formal education would therefore allow for greater flexibility in the use of premises.

Most of the countries mentioned in this section attempted to create a "new society" characterized by popular participation, an alternative to the one characterized by domination and exploitation which existed during the colonial or dictatorship period. Freire's adult education programmes projected a set of ideals that was in keeping with the kind of "new society" the revolutionary leaders of these countries claimed to promote.⁸ It is also necessary to point out that the attainment of independence or the carrying out of a successful revolution does not change popular attitudes. Neither does it necessarily alter situations, characterized by a process of ideological domination, overnight. In this respect, Freire (1985) quotes Cape Verde's President, Aristides Pereira, as having said: "We made our liberation and we drove out the colonizers. Now we need to decolonize the minds" (p.187). Freire is one of the leading figures from the Third World to formulate an educational theory relevant to a process of decolonization. Nyerere (1979), who formulated a theory of "Education for Self-Reliance", and Gandhi, who is well known for his proposed "Nai Talim" (Bhola, 1988: 31), are two other such figures. Freire's pedagogy, with its emphasis on critical consciousness, personal and collective empowerment, democratic social relations and an educative process rooted in the positive aspects of popular culture, seems to provide the elements necessary for a programme of education intended to "decolonize" the minds. For Freire (1972: b), conscientization remains *de rigueur* even following the political change. Apart from constituting a force against bureaucrats, who could "deaden the revolutionary vision", it serves as "the instrument for ejecting the cultural myths that remain in the people despite the new reality" (p.78).

A very important feature of a "decolonizing" education would be the re-assertion of native languages. In the case of the former Portuguese colonies, where a variety of native languages are spoken by the different tribes, which necessitates the use of a lingua franca, Freire advocates the use of such means of expression as Creole. He points out that the failure of Guinea Bissau's literacy campaign was caused by the fact that only Portuguese was used (Freire, Macedo, 1987: 114). In a letter to the then Minister of Education, Mario Cabral, Freire maintained that excessive use of the colonizer's language, the language of the elite, would render the educational system a vehicle for the reproduction of an "elite dominant class" (ibid: 111). It would be relevant to enquire, at this stage, as to what languages were used by Freire in the literacy circles of North-eastern Brazil. Were indigenous languages used? A process of learning which involves the use of a language other than that which is directly related to the learner's material existence would hardly be characterized by "praxis". The language used would not be one of the native culture's "most immediate, authentic and concrete expressions" (Freire, 1985: 184).

In his writings concerning the process of "Cultural Revolution" in Guinea Bissau, Freire specifies the area of practical activity on which the adult learner is to reflect as part of a process of education through praxis. It is the area of productive labour. The use which Freire makes of the concept of praxis, in this context (eg. Freire, 1978), represents an important development in his adult educational theory. In his early work, it is used in a manner reminiscent of Marx's early writings and this reflects the belief, which Freire must have had at the time, in the spiritual and cultural bases of revolution. The area on which the adult learner is to reflect is his/her cultural surroundings. In *Pedagogy in Process*, however, it is used in a way that recalls *Capital* Vol.1 (Youngman, 1986: 163). In Letter 11 to Guinea Bissau, Freire underlines the need to relate education to production, a view that somehow recalls his literacy work carried out in relation to the Agrarian Reform in Christian Democrat-ruled Chile (cf. Freire, 1972b: 43). Freire (1978) states:

"... the new man and the new woman toward which this society aspires cannot be created except by participation in productive labour that serves the common good. It is this labour that is the source of knowledge about the new creation, through which it unfolds and to which it refers" (p.105).

The need for an absolute fusion between education and production is further emphasized when, echoing Gramsci, Freire (ibid.) advocates the creation of a "new type" of intellectual. He or she should be an organic intellectual who is, however, "forged in the unity between practice and theory, manual and intellectual work" (p.104).

Freire's theory of adult education through praxis, as developed in his 1978 publication, is reminiscent of a number of well known theories of education and production that have emerged from the Third World. Two of these are the ones propounded by Mao, who sought to destroy the long standing Confucian dichotomy between intellectual and manual work (cf. Chu, 1980), and Nyerere, who proposed, among other things, the idea of "school-farms" (cf. Nyerere, 1979). These theories are aimed at generating a process of socio-economic development that stands in opposition to the various forms of cultural and economic dependency in existence worldwide.

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Notes

1. I should like to thank Mr. Godfrey Baldacchino for his valuable comments on an earlier draft of this paper. This paper is an abridged and slightly altered version of Chapter 3 in Mayo (1988).
2. The relevance of this point to the Maltese situation can be seen from Jeremy Boissevain's 1968 paper, "Why do the Maltese ask so few questions?" and the most recent Maltese responses to it, published in *Education*, Vol.3, No.4, 1990, pp.16-23.
3. The relationship between politics and teaching, especially the teaching of reading, is discussed in Bee (1981) who draws on her own experience as a school teacher in England.
4. The alternative to "Banking Education" does not lie solely in the field of non-formal adult education. Several writers (eg. Giroux, Apple, Simon and Shor), who contribute to the development of a project called "Critical Pedagogy", have written extensively on the possibilities for transformation existing within schools (cf. Sultana, 1990). Some writers (eg. McLaren, 1989) openly acknowledge the potential for a critical education found in the work of Freire.
5. Freire is currently involved in the running of an adult literacy programme in Brazil. As Education Secretary in the Municipal Government of Sao Paulo, he is involved with a literacy movement (MOVA-SP) which is engaged in creating 2000 literacy "nuclei" meant to reach 60,000 people (Freire, in Viezzer, 1990: 4).
6. Freire stresses this relationship when advocating the creation of meaningful texts out of the learners' recorded conversations. He expresses his dissatisfaction with traditional primers which he regards as culturally alien and as promoting the "ideology of accommodation" (Freire, 1985: 9). He argues that ABC books do not capture the

people's "universe of language" (Freire, 1973b: 82). Creating texts out of the learners' conversations is a feature of modern adult literacy programmes.

7. The avoidance of an adult literacy programme would in no way render irrelevant the use of Freirean pedagogical ideas. For Freire, literacy learning merely serves as the vehicle for a process of political conscientization and is therefore not an end in itself. His "codification" and "decodification" method and pedagogical ideas can therefore be used in contexts where the participants are highly "literate". They have, for instance, been used in relation to issues with which particular social movements are concerned. These include Peace Education (cf. Moriarty, 1989; Bezzina, 1990) and Environmental Adult Education (cf. Finger, 1989). On the other hand, Freire's method has often been misused when applied in relation to literacy. Governments which had no intention of conscientizing the masses "co-opted" Freire (Youngman, 1986: 188, 189) by appropriating the technical aspects of his method, doing away with its political dimension. This was the case with the MOBREAL campaign in Brazil whose organisers "used" Freire's methods (Bhola, 1984: 130) despite the fact that the programme was sponsored by the Military regime which kept Freire in exile for sixteen years!
8. To what extent did these new post-revolution or post-independence governments succeed in creating a "new society"? To what extent were "dialogue" and "participation", two important Freirean ideals, a feature of these countries in the post-change period? Walker (1981) argues that there are those who would question whether the revolutionary leaders which Freire admires' can become engaged in a dialogical relationship with the masses and, therefore, whether it is possible to have a real dialogue in a post-revolutionary context. The same applies to Freire's pedagogy. To what extent was Freire's pedagogy successfully carried out in post '79 Nicaragua? His pedagogy was applied within the contexts of a mass literacy campaign and a popular basic education programme. The large scale of both programmes necessitated the involvement, as facilitators, of young students and the newly literate. One wonders how well equipped were these people to engage in Freire-inspired pedagogy. Accounts of the campaign indicate that they were not (Armove, 1986: 55; Camoy, Torres, 1987: 31; Lind, Johnston, 1986: 62). It is more likely that they engaged in "Banking Education" (Armove, 1986: 58). This was explicitly confirmed by Fr. Fernando Cardenal, the Literacy Crusade's Coordinator and the Country's former Education Minister, who stated recently that it is only now that Nicaragua is beginning to do away with "Banking Education" (ICAE, 1990: 5).

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