

**Remedies To Oppression In Indian Educatio:
A Qualitative Study With Special Reference To Paulo Freire's Theory**

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Abstract:

There is a need to bring changes in the formal education system in India which is currently suppressing critical education and thereby perpetuating inequality and oppression. Educational inequalities largely reflect wider societal patterns of oppression, occurring particularly along lines of caste, class and gender. Even when they do enrol in schools, the poor and marginalized fail to receive an education that is equitable in terms of its quality. A crucial problem is that education quality decreases down the social and economic pyramid, and those on the lower end, are forced to rely on poor quality government schools, are unable to compete with their peers from privileged classes. In other words, educational institutions reinforce existing social inequalities. This paper discusses the remedies to oppression in Indian education for eradication of inequality in Indian education and suggests practical suggestions relating to Paulo Freire's model and methodology. In turn it also emphasises Freirean critical education for social transformation that equips people to understand the gap between the way the world is and the way the world should be, the reasons for this gap and the means to act to overcome this gap.

Introduction:

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

Educational practice need not be seen as 'extension' but as 'communication' where extension is negative in nature and communication positive in nature so that it can create consciousness about the right kind of education, by way of avoiding authoritarian teacher-pupil models, based on actual experience of students and on continual shared investigation, each individual can develop a new awareness of self and begin to look critically at the world through dialogical relationships with others. The teachers can examine issues which students see as significant to their community and then initiating action to influence these events. In view of that, Paulo Freire's concepts and ideas are closely connected to attributes as a teacher and with today's education on execution into own students, classroom and teaching styles.

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

Literature Review

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

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

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

The present study attempts to ascertain whether Freirean thoughts on pedagogy can be put into practice in the educational system of India. The research is an attempt to find the influence of Freirean philosophy and pedagogy on the student-teachers and to what extent it promotes critical, reflective and creative thinking among them contributing towards critical and liberating education in the present

Indian context. This qualitative study focuses on the student-teachers making sense of Freirean philosophy of education and do they implement his philosophy during the teaching-learning process and subsequently to help students to be active questioners and critical thinkers and act towards a more inclusive society initiating critical education for democracy and social transformation.

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

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

Broad Research Question

The study was conducted with broad research questions as follows:

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

Methodology of the Study

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

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

and structural description of their experiences and finally writing a combination of the textural and structural descriptions conveying an overall essence of the experience of the relevance of Freirean critical pedagogy to the student-teachers. The researcher chose and used Moustakas's (1994) approach as it has systematic steps in the data analysis procedure and guidelines for assembling the textual and structural descriptions.

Participants of the Study

In the present research, the research participants were 15 B. Ed. student-teachers of government-aided colleges of education of the University of Mumbai in intervention programme of 24 hours and focus group interviews as means for data collection. Twelve of the participants were girls and three were boys from diverse socio-economic and educational backgrounds. The research setting was the natural settings of the B. Ed. colleges' classrooms itself wherein the participants interacted and took part actively in intervention programme and focus group interviews. In focus group discussion, the researcher introduced topics for discussion, asked questions and helped the group to participate in a lively and natural discussion. The researcher followed crucial points in facilitating focus group discussion such as ensuring even participation, careful wording of the key questions, maintaining a neutral attitude and appearance and summarizing the session to reflect the views evenly and fairly. The participants were free to agree or disagree with each other to provide an insight into how they think about the issue, about the range of opinions and ideas and the inconsistency and variation that exists in terms of beliefs and their experiences and practices.

Techniques of Data Collection and Research Instruments

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

Results

In the present study, the theme emerging from the analysis about how participants experienced the relevance of Freirean philosophy and pedagogy in contemporary Indian education was "Remedies to oppression in Indian education" which is illustrated as follows.

Following table demonstrates categories from which the following theme emerged.

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

Following theme of remedies to oppression in Indian education with participants' statements is illustrated.

Theme: Remedies to Oppression in Indian Education

Evidence in Participants' Statements:

“...I think education overall develops power of thinking...decision-making capacity...national integration... 'we' feeling...thus, education can build humanity...”

“...It's vital that student-centred education is promoted...allow the child to question...express his views...every teacher should contribute greatly...social awareness need to be generated...strict action for execution of law be taken...”

“...I've worked with CRY, Vidya group and other NGO's...I do not understand why government should take an initiative and not an individual...Why should law be there for everything when an individual should be aware about his duties towards society and nation *from within*-- from his soul, from his conscience, from his morale itself? I suggest we create human and mass awareness campaigns...”

“...I feel admission should be based on talent only...there should be a non-discriminatory rule for each and every student...reservation quota should be for *genuinely* disadvantaged students in rural areas only...because they cannot get high quality education in rural municipal schools...so, there should be a reservation quota in urban private schools for such poor and disadvantaged children in rural areas...”

“...I think it's a shame that even educated people do caste discrimination in village, say, *Sarpanch*, Police, Headmaster, Teachers and others as well...so, education should not be related to text book itself...21st century education should be connected to the feelings...based on human bonding...such that people learn to respect each other's culture, values, sentiments and so on, irrespective of caste and religion...”

“...I honestly feel when I analyze myself critically, I find my spirits sky high...my conscience clear...I remember a recent incident where my conscience hurt me very much...During my practice teaching lesson in a school, I got good remarks from the lesson observer...yet, I was disappointed from within...because perhaps only I knew the fact that I had missed out certain very important points during the lesson...!”

“...Every child is special...no child is weaker or stronger...criticism, in a positive sense, draws out the weak points of the child and there is a scope for improvement for any child when one finds out what the problem is...so, with positive criticism and reinforcement, teachers and school authorities must focus on areas of improvement for all children...such that the child starts thinking...reflecting on his thoughts...”

“...I think desirable teacher's efforts positively will help boost student's self-confidence...kill the fear of inhibition...develop leadership qualities... as a result each and every child will get a fair chance to express his thoughts freely...come up with creative ideas...take rational and accurate decisions...learn to self-analyze with discipline...stay active in the class...”

“...It gives me a feeling of satisfaction to me whenever I encourage independent thinking amongst children...for example, during my practice teaching lesson, a curious child asked me, “Why rice changes its form after it is cooked?”, “Why bubbles are circle in shape?” and so on...I was quite pleased to see that he was a free thinker and an active questioner...I believe every child does independent thinking but it's important that they be given ample opportunities to think freely and express themselves better...”

“...Normally all great scholars are great independent thinkers too...so one should take inspiration from philosophy of life of famous educators and think independently to be independently strong and self-confident...we do not depend on other's ideas and decisions...we be the change we want to see...we believe in ourselves...we revise our thoughts, examine our activities and then put our ideas into action...”

“...I think whether its KG or PG courses, activities should always be conducted in the classroom...Innovative thinking can be promoted at any age...for example, one teacher conducted seminar in a different way by giving breaks, feedbacks and all...”

“...Teacher did not get angry when I disturbed him with my irrelevant story; in fact, he still maintained discipline and correlated my story to the matter being taught...”

“...Teacher puts personal efforts for the improvement of children...He makes the class more active, adopts new teaching methods for better understanding...slowly but surely students respond positively...I realize that it takes time and perseverance to get good results when we work on something new and try to bring about a change...”

“...I believe parents, teachers and society, especially a teacher is bound to answer all questions posed by children whose mind is like blank slate with lots of questions. Even a student has the right to raise his voice if his question is not answered properly. It's essential to give freedom to children to ask questions confidently to teachers on the content knowledge and general knowledge which she poses...”

“...Teacher should take examples and ideas from students to add to knowledge to the content...for example, if a science teacher is teaching dissolution and gives an illustration of water and salt, she could motivate children to give more examples...”

“...There should be theory and practice both otherwise it is meaningless...for example, when a teacher is teaching about non-violence in History, other than theory, she should show pictures and video clips of Mahatma Gandhi's non-violence movement and then compare advantages of non-violence and disadvantages of violence. She can discuss about national integration, loss of national property, wealth and lives during war, patriotism with examples of freedom fighters, Gandhiji's aspiration of self-dependence, humanity values and so on with practical experiences relating to life and not just bookish knowledge. Teacher can demonstrate and give first-hand experience to students, motivate them to think critically and share examples relating to daily life experiences and knowledge with students, so that student is inspired to ponder over any issue or subject and present ideas critically...”

“...As a tutor, I believe in giving freedom to students to communicate freely with me...I remember once I responded to a student's query at midnight on the phone...”

“...I believe classroom should be democratic because this is the age where usually students are more curious about new things they come across in daily life, so, teacher should not turn down their questions because that may create confusion and their doubts may remain in their minds. I suggest the solution is teacher should organize debates and group discussions to inspire students to think and criticize critically, for example, students can be asked to criticize a particular poem or prose and allowed to ask, disagree or criticize with freedom in a sensible manner...”

“...I believe, In schools, there should not be a column for religion...What takes an individual ahead in life is humanism and not religion... We should not come across stereotype religion barrier... We should not follow a society where fanatically any religion is followed; instead we should follow humanism and believe in humanity...”

“...We realize that freedom of expression should be given to students so that they can share their ideas freely...teacher has to accept and respect student thinking...”

“...Our Math class teacher never spoon fed us...She asked us to try out different methods before helping us out...First she allowed us to think over the problem she put forward and then asked suggested solutions from students...She also used various mathematical instruments as teaching aids to make understanding easier...”

“...In problem-posing method, the teacher takes a problem, describes it and the students think critically over it...every student has different views based on prior knowledge and experience that is acknowledged and utilized to clear the concepts well...”

“...In Std. V, a Science teacher used the inquiry-based learning method to teach 'salt'; she used the driving question, 'why do we eat salt with food?' A series of questions followed about salt and its production, usage and availability and students shared their knowledge freely. Finally teacher explained the process and the concept was clear about salt...”

“...One cannot hook up education system in cases of corporal punishment or molestation; instead, take apt action against the individual responsible once it comes to their knowledge, or else, the student and school reputation both are at stake...”

Conclusion

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

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

Answer:

Unfortunately the social reality in India continues to be one of widespread deprivation and inequality one that is difficult for a child or someone who has underprivileged socio-economic background. The outright violation of human rights within a dynamic and emerging economic giant makes one wonder why there has not been a revolutionary drive for social change to challenge and overturn these inequalities and what allows these inhuman conditions to persist.

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

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

admission in a convent school by her parents because they believed that she would follow Catholic tradition instead of Hindu tradition and she would learn to light candles instead of diyas at home! On one hand, we are saying we are moving ahead towards the 21st century and on other hand, we are following such old orthodox traditions. What is amazing is no one in the family was illiterate, so, it's so sad that even educated people behave this way!!"; and somewhere else, "At a reputed college in South Mumbai, I was shocked, when my sister was asked to bring baptism certificate to secure admission in their Christian minority college!" In a similar case one participant found the need to generate human awareness, "We need to think about humanity in society and not religion. I raised my voice against my parents when they exhibited religion inequality with my Muslim friends." One participant on corporal punishment found parents themselves culprits, "Sometimes parents' involvement is responsible for corporal punishment as they only ask teachers to hit their children when needed. Often even principal hits children."

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

Implications of the Findings

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

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