UNIT 7: CRITICAL PEDAGOGY

UNIT STRUCTURE

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7.1 LEARNING OBJECTIVES

After going through this unit you will be able to,

- Understand the meaning of critical pedagogy
- Know Paulo freire's contribution towards critical pedagogy

7.2 INTRODUCTION

Critical pedagogy is the portrayal and study of oppression in education. Critical means not taking things for granted, opening up complexity, challenging reductionism, dogmatism and dichotomies, it means being self reflective and through these process, making opaque structures of power relations manifest.

Critical pedagogy is based on two propositions- first, oppression exists, but the forms of oppression may differ like, social, economic, ideals etc. Second, the transformation of oppressed is possible, the oppressed can liberate themselve by knowing the causes of oppression. Paulo Freire argued that, to be human, we need to be self determined. What we do, how we think, it should not be controlled by others. Freire was concerned about oppression in general, but oppression of the deprived within the framework of educational system in particular. The traditional lecture model, just pumps information. Students participate passively without any interaction and they are trained to accept what is said in the form of teaching. Without any

interaction, it is just deposit information and make the students uncritical,It is a one way approach which becomes undemocratic learning. Democracy is about raising voice, about equal participation, but the modern education never encourages such characters of democracy. Democracy is considered to be the best form of governance, but the very soul of it; our learning and our education has been pushed to turn into undemocratic.

To transform reality of oppression, critical reflection and action is needed, which is called praxis. It's a dialectical process. This is a form of learning through questioning. Both teacher and students will question and their question is contextualized with their social problems. Without questioning individual can't become human being, for questioning equips us with the ability to interact with each other and then only we can act and get emancipated.

Paulo Freire was the champion and pioneer who extended the notion of education by introducing the concept of Critical Pedagogy. He was influenced by Hegel, KarlMarx, Antonio Gramsci, Ivan Illich etc.



CHECK YOUR PROGRESS

Q.1 Fill in the blanks

a. Critical pedagogy is the portrayal and study of oppression in …….....……..

b. Paulo Freire was influenced by ….....etc.

c. Praxis is a form of learning through…….....……...

7.3 PAULO FREIRE : THE PROPONENT OF CRITICAL PEDAGOGY

Paulo Riglus Neves Freire was born in 1921 in Recife, northeast Brazil. His father was a military officer and died during the Great economic depression of 1930's. Freire was just a young child at that time. The economic depression and his father's death in 1934 made him realize,

hunger and poverty.He dropped out from school to help his family financially. His solidarity with the poor increased, since he himself became part of the reality of poverty. He had a deep understanding on the effects of socio economic condition on education and the relationship between social class and knowledge. His all such childhood experiences, helped him to form his ideas on education. Nevertheless, the family's economic situation improved to some extent and he was able to complete his schooling. He studied law, and then taught Portuguese language in a secondary school in Brazil.He completed his doctorate on issues pertaining to the education system of Brazil. He taught history and philosophy of education at the University of Recife. He associated with the popular education movement in Brazil, which dealt with immense illiteracy.But his efforts were put to an end for 70 days, because of dislodgement by the military since he was imprisoned on April 1, 1964. He served as a visiting professor at the Harvard University. He held a post of special consultant in education for nine years in the World Council of Churches. In 1979 he returned to Brazil and joined the Workers Party in Sao polo and headed its adult literacy project for 6 years from 1980-86. In 1988, he was appointed as Sao Paulo's secretary of education

Freire ventured into teaching the illiterate peasants of Brazil. He viewed education as a source of emancipation. Traditional teaching styles treat the poor as passive, silent recipients of knowledge and keep them powerless. He suggested that through co-operation, dialogue and critical thinking, every human can develop a sense of self and fulfill their rights to be heard. His radical idea helps people to identify and challenge the source of their oppression. He promoted liberation through a cooperative teacher student education model. Freire says one has to be curious being. Almost 45 years he contributed towards critical understanding of education. Thinking of education also led him to thinking of literacy which is fundamental part of education as a whole. He also had expertise in the field of adult literacy. He proposed a critical way of thinking, a critical way of teaching or knowing to the teachers to work differently with the students.

Freire's work was to humanize man, humanize through conscious action and transformation of the world. To act upon his/her oppressed situation one needs to develop critical consciousness. The struggle for humanization is possible only because of dehumanization. It is the result of an unjust order that escalates violence in the oppressors and they dehumanize the oppressed. So today or tomorrow, the oppressed shall struggle against those who have made them so. Men can intervene in reality in order to change it. If man is unable to change the reality he adjusts himself. This adaptation is the characteristics of animals, so adjustment leads to dehumanization of man. If a man knows what he wants, thinks and feels, he will be able to act. If he is not able to think, he confirms to the anonymous authority and adopts a self which is not known to him. The more he does so, the more he is forced to confirm to such authority. He is talking about in the context of Brazilian society. In the transitional phase, education becomes a highly important task. But learning can be successful if one learns and is able to apply what he/ she learns. This ability reinvents learning. On the other hand, who are unable to apply his learning and reinvent it, he cannot learn in reality. Conscientização, a Portuguese word which means one needs to be conscious of what is going on in his/her surroundings. He advocated to raise consciousness. If you are conscious, you are going to think about it, reflect on it and once your reflect you will also act upon it. Unless we act, reality does not change. Action is fundamental, because it is the process of changing the reality. In this context, learning is very crucial, because it uncovers the social reality. Learning enables one to tell what exactly is happening and how to work for it. How one can be the instrument of change, this process, where there is critical awareness of social reality, and by acting upon it, constitutes Conscientização.

Critical pedagogy is the pedagogy of people, engaged in the fight for their own liberation. The oppressed must struggle themselves to achieve liberation. It can't be developed by the oppressors. If it is developed by them, it will also become an instrument of dehumanization. Humanization is equally important for the oppressed and the oppressor. The oppressor is

also the manifestation of dehumanization. The oppressed must perceive the reality of their oppression but mere perception is not enough to change their situation but it should act as a motivating force towards transformation of the existing reality. They must act for their liberation. In the same way, the oppressor will be liberated only when they stop perceiving the oppressed as an abstract category.

His notion of freedom has always been dynamic. Freire has been even more attentive to the special oppression masked by the forms of democratic freedom or civil liberty. But, through education these obstacles of life could be overcome.

7.4 THE BANKING MODEL OF LEARNING

Freire used banking concept of learning. The problem of education system is that it started working like a bank. The teachers deposit information (the way bank deposits and withdraw money) into the minds of children, they are filled with information. Banking concept is like pouring water into the empty vessels. The banking concept of education, he considered as an instrument of oppression. The teacher interprets the reality as motionless, stagnant, compartmentalized and conventional. Accordingly the teacher teaches something which is completely alien to the reality of students. Here, the motive of educator is just to fill the students with content which are detached from their reality. In such a context, students memorize, repeat the content without understanding. Teacher plays the role of narrator and students memorize it mechanically. So, the students become containers to be filled by the teacher.Education thus becomes an act of depositing. Teacher is the depositor and students are the depositories. This is the banking concept of education (Freire, 2017).In this system culture of silence is also practiced in classroom. If there is complete silence it is understoodas disciplined class. But in such a situation learner or children become passive, un interactive. But Freire says,the thought of reality does not take place in silence or isolation, but in the space where communication happens. Education is suffering from narration sickness. Education and literacy could be a tool for emancipation, where students bring their own knowledge and experiences for the same.

He talked about the concept of domination, how in traditional education , instead of setting a man free, it enslaves and treats them as objects and through manipulation never allow them to act as subjects and to become human. To be human, one has to engage in relationships with others and with the world. One needs to engage in dialogue and interaction. If the person who is oppressed is not participating in the act of his/her emancipation, it is not an act of liberation. Liberation should come from the people who need to be liberated. They need to be active participants in this process of liberation.

Freire also talked about student teacher relationship. According to him it is a relationship of oppressor-oppressed. He said about entering into dialogue. It helps in liberating both the oppressed and the oppressor. There should be a relationship of equality between the teacher and the taught. It has to be a relationship of equals where one does not think he/she is more powerful, or controls the other. They should know that engaging in dialogue leads to transformation of knowledge and causes new knowledge to come in existence. With these, we can transform the world into a better one. Knowledge creation cannot take place where there is no equality and space for dialogue. Education is the practice of liberty. It creates an equal platform for educators and educants. It frees them from monologue and silence for both partners begins to learn. One forgets the stigma of illiteracy, poverty or technological ignorance and gets to know the self as a being of worth.

Paulo Freire mentioned about generative themes. Every generations look at certain ideas, values which they have challenged.When they are challenged both of them coexist, that is dialectical, there is thesis and antithesis. This co existence leads towards fulfillment of a goal. Freire also used the concept of praxis.Without praxis individuals cannot be truly human. It is a process by which theory or skill can be personified or realized. It may also refer to the act of engaging, exercising or practicing ideas is reality. Through praxis the oppressed or poor people can develop critical awareness of their real condition. Again, he used the concept of dialogue. Mere dialogue is not enough in order to gain knowledge of their social reality. Dialogue is an exchange of ideas between people. Word is the essence of dialogue

and it is a human phenomenon.Human existence can only be nourished by truth and to speak truth critical consciousness needs to be generated. Only through truth transformation of world is possible. Freire's method of education is based on dialogue. Communication and intercommunication are the basics of his methodIt. It is the Relation of 'empathy' between the two 'poles' which are engaged in a joint search. Through dialogue critical attitude is generated. Dialogue has power and meaning if it is based on love, humility, hope, trust etc. Believing in everyone's being/ existence is the main motto of dialogue.

But exchange of ideas is not enough. To change the reality they must act together upon their environment. Only by engaging in discussions or verbalism one cannot change the reality, but need to act for this. One needs to think critically, and critically reflect upon that,Then through action one will be able to change the reality.Thus, critical pedagogy us focuses on dialogic learning.

Along with dialogue, in the climate of transition anti-dialogue is also a part. Both stands is opposition to each other but are components of historical cultural formation. In anti- dialogue, relation of empathy is broken, loveless, hopeless, mistrustful conditions prevail here. It involves vertical relationship between persons.

Since it lacks love and faith, it cannot create critical attitude. Freire worked in the field of adult education for more than 15 years. Traditionally school it was a passive concept in Recife. So, he launched a new institution of popular culture, a culture circle. He initiated a new concept where instead of a teacher, a coordinator; instead of lectures, dialogue; instead of pupils, group participants; instead of alienating syllabi, compact programs that were broken down and codified into learning units and that was the way of education(Freire:2016:40). In the culture circles, through group debate situation is clarified or seeks action arising from that clarification. The topics for the debate are offered by the groups themselves. Mechanistic literacy program was rejected here and it encouraged the adults, how to read in relation to the awakening of their consciousness. Freire wanted such a

literacy program characterized with search and invention, which could contribute towards democratization of culture.

Pedagogy of the oppressed the book was written at the time of decolonization, it's nothing about nation or state formation, but on the development of individuals and human development. It argues that we have to go through the decolonization of the self. Though colonial government left, ideas remain colonized. We prefer their culture to ours.So the book counter oppression. He used the term critical literacy in his book, the way of learning helps to liberate people.

According to him the rulers are also not free, though they seem to be subjects, but they are colonial subjects. They are not able to develop critical consciousness. So they also need freedom. The illiterate, who are treated as objects by the colonial subjects, think they will not be able to change their situation. That is why they need to develop critical consciousness to achieve freedom. from that kind of thinking.

In this way Paulo Freire extends the notion of education with the introduction of critical pedagogy. According to him Knowledge building can only render novelty of thoughts when it goes through the critical passage of learning.



7.4 CHECK YOUR PROGRESS

Q2. Which issue was dealt by the popular education movement in Brazil?

Q3. In the context of which country Freire develops his ideas on education?

Q4. What is the motor of cultural emancipation according to Freire?

Q5. 'Conscientização' is a word from which language?



7.5 LET US SUM UP

- Critical pedagogy is an educational approach propounded by Paulo Freire.

- Critical means not taking things for granted, opening up complexity, challenging reductionism, dogmatism and dichotomies, it means being self reflective and through these process, making opaque structures of power relations manifest.
- The theory of critical pedagogy magnifies the role of teacher to teach the students to raise critical questions about social injustice and inequality.
- It strives for a better world.
- According to Freire, education is the primary tool for emancipation that the oppressed can utilize.
- Freire through critical pedagogy wants to raise critical consciousness, that is the ability to understand the social structure and the political situation and to empower people to question the authority and voice against unjust.
- The concept of praxis is predominant which means engagement with the people.
- The step forward from praxis is to engage in dialogue which is the exchange of ideas among people.



7.6 FURTHER READING

1. Freire, Paulo. (2016). Education for Critical Consciousness. Bloomsbury.
2. Freire, Paulo. (2017). Pedagogy of the Oppressed. Penguin.



7.7 ANSWER TO CHECK YOUR PROGRESS

Answer to Q1a. Critical pedagogy is the portrayal and study of oppression in education.

Answer to Q1b. Paulo Freire was influenced by Hegel, Karl Marx, Antonio Gramsci, Ivan Illichetc.