Pedagogy Of The Oppressed Essay, Research Paper

Pedagogy of the Oppressed

Like slaves, students are forced to do as their oppressor or teacher demands. The concepts of student and teacher oppression are introduced on the first day that education begins. Students are given a set of “class rules” for each class, and everyone except the teacher must follow them. Teachers have total control and the students must give in to their demands. Paulo Freire’s “Pedagogy of the Oppressed” deals with the concept of oppression in the educational system (banking system) that is widely used, and suggests problem-posing as an alternative system. There is and absolute need for students to “Tear down the Wall” (Pink Floyd) of conformity in education and express their individuality because they are seen as empty minds, are then classified by grades, and become mental slaves.

The banking system of education that creates an environment in which the teacher knows all and the student knows nothing has flaws. First of all, students are oppressed by teachers because as Freire indicates “students are considered empty depositories that must be filled by the depositors” (Freire 53), and he refers to this as the “Banking system”. The banking system is used by teachers to fill the minds of the students with facts that they do not always fully comprehend, so there really is no thought process and learning. Secondly, the banking system holds the student down because he is told what to learn, and he is not allowed to work to his full potential and explore for himself. Furthermore, being told what to learn creates a necessity for the student to rely on authority. This then causes the student to reject responsibility and that is the ideal situation for an oppressor.

Another tool of educational oppression is the use of grades. This method of measuring knowledge is inaccurate and does not work. It only measures how much of a given subject is memorized, how much work is completed, and how many memorized facts can be regurgitated. The fact that a student memorized certain facts does not mean that he has learned. Grades consume the students and they are more focused on what grade they earn then on what they learn. Perhaps the most confusing aspect of grades is that although a student may fail to earn “passing grades” at a certain level, he is allowed to go on to the next educational level. Several times a student will learn more than the teacher expects and the grade will remain just an “A”. Reflecting grades on personal improvement is a more efficient method of grading, although it would require more communication between student and teacher. This effective method is the problem-posing technique in which there is a topic of discussion and everyone does research and has input.

What the educational system basically comes down to is mental slavery. The usage of ringing bells gives students the image of slaves. They uncontrollably move to the bells without thinking about it. Teachers have a form of control that resembles a dictatorship. Teachers make the rules and they usually do not apply them upon themselves. Beginning with the early years of school students do school work at the teacher’s request without asking why, what for, or what good comes from doing what they are told. Even if a student did ask such questions a likely answer would be “Just do it.”, because they really do not have a choice in the class room. Only the teacher decides what will be banked upon the students, to what extent, and for how long. “Students are seen as ignorant in the eyes of the teachers, and that justifies their existence.” (Freire 53) because they are the ones who must fill the empty minds.

The students are all seen as the same. There is hardly any form of individuality among students because of the banking system. Instead of telling the students what is to be memorized, the teachers should apply problem-posing techniques to get the students learning for themselves. In that style of education the teacher could also learn from the students and everyone receives different input on a given subject, rather than just having one person’s facts. This would allow each student to break the mold and become individual thinkers who express their knowledge in different ways.

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