

MIGRATING FROM NAIVE CONSCIOUSNESS TO CRITICAL CONSCIOUSNESS IN TEACHING/LEARNING: BUILDING A BETTER NIGERIAN SOCIETY VIA FREIREAN CRITICAL PEDAGOGY

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Abstract

This paper examined the possibility of evolving a better Nigerian society which involve citizens who could migrate from being robotic and docile, to active participation in the building of the nation. This is basically a shift from naive consciousness to critical consciousness. The paper adopted traditional methods of research in philosophy, viz; philosophical analysis, to examine the critical pedagogical methods which could help migrate from naïve consciousness to critical consciousness; and philosophical speculation which aided in forecasting the development which would happen to Nigerian school system and Nigerian society given the migration. The study adopted Freire's critical pedagogy as a conceptual framework. The two researchers argued that most Nigerian citizens are docile because of the system of education used to nurture them. This system of education, enacted through conventional pedagogy which instills passivity and naivety in the learner, has invariably made the Nigerian become helpless as he accepts the domination, subjugation and oppression taking place by the political bourgeois in the society. The researchers however posited that the introduction of Freire's critical pedagogy into Nigerian education system and the consequent infusion of critical consciousness in pedagogues and learners, would make the education system become critical, impactful, productive and in fact, responsive to individual and societal needs. The study showcased questioning technique; problematization; as well as modelling critical thinking skills as possible methods which could evolve critical consciousness in Nigerian teachers and learners, who in turn would create a paradigm shift in the Nigerian society. The paper concluded by recommending that if Nigeria is really to witness a meaningful development, then teaching and learning must migrate from conventional pedagogy to critical pedagogy, that is, from naïve consciousness to critical consciousness, so as to produce agents who are critical enough to confront political arrangements which had hitherto constituted cogs in the wheel of progress for the nation.

Keywords: *Critical consciousness, naïve consciousness, critical pedagogy, teaching and Nigeria.*

INTRODUCTION

The historical progression of Nigerian society is somewhat similar to that of Brazilians under British slavery, which grew progressively from one form of tradition of silence and mental slavery to another (Akinsanya & Ojotule, 2022). From the inherited socio-cultural tradition of silence of forebears, one could figure out this trajectory via intellectual muteness of conventional pedagogy and domination of colonialists to today's seemingly enthroned culture of impunity by the 'untouchable' in the political class. It is disturbing to note that this culture of silence appears fearfully fated in recent days, with tacit endorsement by the populace. Reflecting on how the powerful in the society have used the culture of impunity against the powerless, Osamor (2021) decries that unperturbed by people's precarious misery, the elected political elites (like the 1960s and 1970s' Capitalist of Freire's days) have benumbed the populace in their vanguard of criminal impunity and glaring perils of maladministration which apparently spells doom for the fortunes and future of Nigeria. Yet it appears sometimes that no one can afford to dare speak, as the masses complain beneath their breath in whisper and signs. Perhaps, no one wants to suffer again the lots of those who tried hitherto and had their heads served on Herod's platter. Such predicament as described above is the plight of a common man in Nigerian society which doubtlessly mirrors the impacts of political and ruling class. Comparably, one would say that Nigerian society today is apparently bedeviled with the same lot which inevitably informed Freirean critical pedagogy.

Tracing the root causes of the *status quo*, scholars have repeatedly pointed accusing fingers at the Nigerian educational system, among others. Of course, being the societal power-house that is charged with the responsibility of equipping and turning-out skilled man-powers for the society, educational system is indispensable and as such can hardly be exonerated in this quagmire. Freire (1970) had submitted in this regard that unjust systems are sustained by educational systems. Undoubtedly, herein underlies the obvious perceived need to infuse critical consciousness among Nigerian pedagogues. It is strongly believed and hoped among scholars and in accordance with Freire's, that adoption of critical pedagogy in Nigerian educational system and the consequent infusion of critical consciousness in pedagogues and students, would make education system become critical and creative, more impactful, productive, and in fact, responsive to individual and societal needs in Nigeria. It is with this understanding that this paper considers the possible ways to evolving critical consciousness in Nigerian teachers and learners, who in turn would make Nigerian society a better home for citizenry.

STATEMENT OF PROBLEM

Sequel to today's world of technological acceleration, knowledge explosion and artificial intelligence, a new mode of thinking and attitude, imbued by critical consciousness is inevitably required by the world in general, and Nigerian society in particular (Akinsanya, 2022b). This need appears even more urgent and mandatory given the needless insurgency, banditry, fanaticism, fundamentalism, bigotry, corruption and other social menaces which have occupied the centre stage in the present day Nigeria. Most of these challenges, if not all, are as a result of the system of education put in place by the authorities, exemplified in conventional pedagogy which resultantly precipitate naïve consciousness. It takes critical consciousness, aroused by critical pedagogy, to confront headlong the aforementioned issues (Akinsanya & Ojotule, 2022). A critically minded child, for instance, would challenge the captain sending him/her on a suicide-bomb mission with some fundamental questions, unlike the naïve-minded bigot. This study, therefore, argues for adoption of critical pedagogy in Nigerian education system with the view to evolving critical consciousness among teachers and learners, for the consequential betterment

and development of Nigeria.

OBJECTIVES

The objectives of this paper are specifically to:

1. critically examine the pedagogical approach adopted for teaching and learning in Nigerian education system
2. argue for a replacement of the present pedagogy
3. to establish the potency of Freirean critical pedagogy as a better approach for the system of education in Nigeria
4. identify practicable ways of training citizens who are critically minded, and consequently save the Nigerian society from degeneration

Significance of the Study

This research shall:

1. Help Nigerian society develop at the pace it should go, in comparison with other nations which are rapidly developing.
2. Reduce to barest minimum, the unrest, social, religious, economic, educational and political upheavals confronting the Nigerian society in the present times.
3. Make Nigerian learners and teachers become critical and creative agents, given their migration from naïve consciousness to critical consciousness.

METHODOLOGY

This work is qualitative research, which does not employ the mode of quantitative study by drawing hypotheses, questionnaires and testing with statistical tools. The paper rather adopted traditional methods of research in philosophy, which is purely rational and argumentative, viz; critical analysis and philosophical speculation. Critical analysis was used to examine the critical pedagogical methods which could help migrate from naïve consciousness to critical consciousness; speculation helped to forecast the kind of development which would happen to Nigerian school system and Nigerian society given the said migration.

Critical Consciousness and Naïve Consciousness: A Conceptualization

Etymologically, critical consciousness is a derivative of a Portuguese term *conscientização* which was adopted by Paulo Freire. Although there was the possibility of Freire deriving the word from Frantz Fanon's concept of conscience in his book: *Black skin, White Mask*. Fanon (1952) uniquely applied the term to racial consciousness and consciousness of the colonized which make the oppressed within colonial context seek to rebel and overthrow their oppressors. Working mostly to achieve improvement in literacy in a postcolonial setting in Brazil while appreciating the topic of communist perspective, Freire considered critical consciousness in a similar light, though less openly revolutionary than Fanon and more interesting in reform (Ford, 2017). Critical consciousness was orchestrated by Freire as an approach to help rural Brazilian peasants learn to read the written word and read the world. Freire believed that developing literacy should be intertwined with learning to critically "read" dehumanizing social conditions, because marginalization and oppression have a way of conditioning oppressed or marginalized people to believe that their voices and perspectives are irrelevant and powerless. Having taught them how to read the world critically, Freire observed that oppressed peoples' thinking about and

understanding of their social conditions developed, as their views of themselves in relation to society also developed. That is, as their thinking about social structures became more nuanced and complex, oppressed people became less constrained by their social conditions and, in turn, developed the agency and capacity to change these conditions, resolve developmental challenges, and determine their own lives. This transitive cycle of developing reflection and action is a central element of critical consciousness theory, for it entails learning to perceive social, political, and economic contradictions, and to take action against the oppressive elements of reality (Diemer et al., 2016).

For Rodriguez-Mojica, Muñoz-Muñoz and Briceño (2020), critical consciousness is the intellectual capacity to think holistically, recognize, and analyze institutionalized constructs for effectiveness and inequalities, and the commitment to take action to improve the system through critical reflection and dialogue which promote social transformation. This definition implies that critical consciousness is an outcome of reflection which engenders action for a better outcome. Contextually, critical consciousness in education system is being self-conscious, critical, and analytical of teachers' beliefs, pedagogical approaches, and behaviours, while developing a deeper knowledge and consciousness of what to teach, how to teach, and to whom. In this light, being critically conscious could mean the ability and disposition to identify and apply knowledge in addition to critical thinking skills to examine learners' situations, develop a deeper understanding of reality and its relevance to the learner's needs as well as generating ideas and implementing solutions to the problems. Bring this understanding to bear in human society, critical consciousness, somewhat entails one's ability and disposition to invest one's intellectual capital in a rigorous educational process of learning which focuses on achieving an in-depth understanding of the world which in turn allows for the exposure of social and political contradictions.

Rousseau, Dewey and Descartes had also opined that education itself is founded on critical thinking and critical consciousness (Shih, 2018). Being the architect of independent and objective thinking, critical mindedness is the bedrock of creativity, from where imagination, speculation, innovation, discovery and others emanate. Through critical consciousness, the "Culture of Silence", in which dominated individuals lose the means and the voice to critically respond to any imposed culture of oppression, injustice, systemic subjugation, inter alia, by a dominant culture, is critically interrogated, demythologized and crumbled at once. It shapes and refines both teachers' and students' perception of and attitudes to life. In Freire's words, learners should think critically about the things they read, see, and hear, and they will identify inequality or injustice (Freire, 1970). By extension, a learner with critical consciousness can frame questions around issues and look for possible answers because they have language which asks: Is this fair? Was that just? Was there equality? Freire believed that by preventing active inquiry in classrooms, you deny learners the opportunities for growing up into mature, autonomous people who critically reflect on their world to make it a better place.

Naïve consciousness, on the other hand, is the direct opposite of everything mentioned about critical consciousness. Simply defined, it is consciousness that is naïve. A learner's mind becomes naïve when he assumes that the interpretation of the world, as given by the teacher or elders in the community, is sacrosanct, and it is not laced with some clandestine ideological sentiments which may be far away from objectivity and fairness. Such learner with naïve consciousness is tutored through conventional pedagogy, never to challenge or raise tough questions in the classroom, but to swallow whatever is given hook line and sinker. Eventually, when such learners mature to take the position of the teacher in the classroom, they work consciously or unconsciously, to preserve and perpetuate the culture of 'silence' or 'wilful acceptance'. Critical consciousness, however,

raises the teachers' intellectual ingenuity to improvise in the class for both meaningful and impactful teaching-learning encounter. Little wonder Assante and Cuza (2020) had posited that today's teachers must engage learners in a self-reflective process that leads to a sense of personal and social responsibility and empowerment. Critical consciousness helps learners to engage effectively in career development processes; and ability to equip learners with problem-solving skills required to achieve and succeed in today's challenging world is arguably one of the defining characteristics of a professional pedagogue.

Critical Consciousness, Critical Pedagogy and Education in Nigeria

It was pointed out earlier that critical consciousness is primarily critical awakening of human consciousness to systemic oppression and dehumanizing practices adopted by the powerful in the society in order to impoverish the powerless mentally and perpetually render them intellectually caged, as well as socio-politically subjugated, subservience and parasitic, by hijacking and controlling their thinking via conventional pedagogy. This was what led Freire (1970) to devise a pedagogic method, capable of imbuing teachers and students with metacognitive capacity for critical consciousness. The imperativeness of his option for critical pedagogy is premised on the comparative advantages of critical pedagogy over conventional pedagogy. While the former, in his opinion, strives constantly for emergence of critical consciousness, the latter anesthetizes and inhibits creative power in its submersion of human critical consciousness.

Dewey who coined a similar term - *reflective thinking* and identified it with the goal of education, had suggested curricular revision as a means of evolving critical mindedness among educators (Dewey, 1910, cited in David, 2018). Without prejudice to Deweyan tradition and later scholars, Freire (1983) opted for pedagogical approach instead of curriculum content. Interestingly, a few authors, aside Freire, have equally highlighted the need for intentional efforts to go beyond the curriculum and to implement changes in teacher's pedagogic method in human quest for critical thinking skills (Kuhn, 1999; Paul, 2005). While both means are indispensably instrumental for evolvement of critical consciousness as Ennis (1993) noted, Freire arguably posits that critical consciousness is better infused via pedagogical strategies than curriculum content (Giroux, 2003). Expressing his preference for critical teaching method, Freire argued:

Infusion of critical consciousness involves a process of learning not necessarily dependent on a specific or determined curriculum, per se, but a pedagogical methodology capable of imbuing educators with the capacity to create conditions for problematization (Freire, 1983:19).

Succumbing to Freirean position, Snyder and Snyder (2008) opined that critical thinking could actually be fostered in teaching-learning episode by focusing instruction on the process of learning through the use of pedagogical techniques which provide students with an intellectual challenge than relying on lecture and rote memorization of content. Inferably, a teacher must learn and be acquainted with pedagogical art and procedure of thinking critically before he/she can apply the skill to content scenarios. Rather than an automatic or a natural occurrence, critical consciousness should be understood as a human phenomenon that arises through an organic process of human engagement in dialogic critical pedagogy. Development of critical consciousness is therefore a complex engagement process of reflection and action that involves changes in knowledge and perspectives as well as behaviours. This paper shall quickly consider some pedagogic methods which could be used to migrate every learner and educator from naïve consciousness to critical consciousness.

Questioning Technique

Questioning has been identified as a pedagogic technique laced with the capacity to engage the human mind in a strenuous activity of thought. Consequently, from the days of Sophists and Socrates in ancient Greece till date, integrating questioning techniques into classroom discussions to stimulate learners' critical thinking and consciousness had been considered (Haynes & Bailey, 2003, Hemming, 2000). Yet the notion appears ebbing in the education system. Precisely, it is a higher type of cognitive venture that is capable of eliciting a reflective kind of critical awareness of human existential situation that is hardly resistant to action. Little wonder Van Gelder (2005) submitted that higher-order thinking and critical consciousness are inextricably correlated in cognitive development. Accordingly, questioning technique is a thought-provoking pedagogical approach which is characteristically based on dialogic interrogations and inquiries which potentially trigger off in learners the ability and disposition to engage oneself in self-evaluation, analysis and synthesis of one's knowledge, belief and situation. Kane (2002) had observed and lamented that teachers' training programmes continue to prepare teachers in ways that reinforce conventional pedagogy. This is a back to basic approach which is antithetical to questioning techniques. Lacking dialogical reciprocity and intellectual capacity to build neither the habit of critical inquiry nor evoking critical awakening in learners, teachers themselves being taught and trained via anti-dialogical modes of teaching are by some means sentenced to prescriptive regurgitation of knowledge. It is precisely the desire to dump this deadening and anti-dialogical pedagogy in schools that informed Freirean idea of a problem-posing pedagogy with the intent of injecting habits of dialogic questioning and reflective inquiry in teachers. Admittedly, some content, such as vocabulary definitions and perhaps, physical sciences do require memorization, however, questioning techniques are adopted to unleash learners' capacity to analyze, synthesize, and evaluate information so as to make reasoned decisions. Brown and Kelley (1986) for example, pointed out that learners' critical thinking is best supported when instructors use critical questioning techniques to engage them actively in the learning process. According to them, such questioning techniques include but are not limited to the following:

- What do you think about this or that?
- What is your knowledge based upon?
- What does it imply and presuppose?
- What connects to it, or leads from it?
- How do you view it?
- Can it be viewed differently?

Obviously questions as above and the likes raise teacher's critical consciousness to evaluate the clarity and accuracy, the depth and breadth of their thinking about the relevance of curriculum content they are using and its application to solve human problems. Although some teachers may be naturally inquisitive, training is inevitably required to become systematically analytical, fair, and open-minded in their pursuit of knowledge. Indeed, the benefits of this pedagogic approach are multidimensional. Aside imbuing teachers with capacity and confidence for critical consciousness (Lundquist, 1999), questioning technique is apparently non-domain specific (Astleitner, 2002; MacKnight 2000). In whichever learning process it is adopted, its fundamental tenets, namely active critical dialogue and reflection, are pivotal to emergence of critical consciousness.

Problematization Method

The key purposes of critical consciousness are liberation and humanization. However, the actual awakening to the imperative need to act critically for liberation and humanization emerges through critical dialogue when learners' concrete oppressive and objective reality is problematized. By problematization, it is meant as a deliberate effort to objectivise and present critically identified, perhaps, dehumanizing and unjust systemic practices, to the consciousness of the victims. This tactical way of presenting the human world as a problem for human beings is meant to read the world critically and take operation as a whole, that is, their action and that of others on it (Freire, 1983). This is one of the Freirean designed pathways to critical consciousness of students and citizenry where teachers are required to adopt and be actively involved as creators of knowledge and participants in making a better world. As a teaching tactic, it thus implies a process of learning not necessarily dependent on a specific or determined curriculum, per se, but far more concerned with empowering educators with the habitual capacity to create pedagogical conditions for problematization. In Freire's pedagogical understanding, this approach enables educators to learn to exercise their reason in ways that lead to the construction of integral knowledge, which opens the door to further questioning and greater curiosity of why the world is as it is and how it might be different. Problematization is purposed among others, to enable educator (also learners) to find genuine opportunities for voice and democratic participation, in which they can think through more deeply the consequences of their individual and collective attitudes, interventions, behaviours, decisions, and, most importantly, the relationship of these to the official standards of knowledge imposed by conventional schools and its uncritical ideology. This pedagogical quality imbues teachers with ability and willingness to critically question, deconstruct, and recreate knowledge without repercussions or reprisals, in ways that enhance their sense of ethical responsibility to self and service the humanity through imparting knowledge on the students.

Freire (1983) contends that problematization is far from being an intellectual diversion from school curriculum content nor is it an escape from action but a way of disguising the fact that what is real has been denied. Put in proper perspective and accordingly understood, this critical consciousness awakening pedagogical approach is not only inseparable from human act of learning but also from concrete situations. This inseparability from concrete situations or material conditions is key to understanding, why socio-political and religious critical consciousness deepens teachers' interaction with one another and their environment within school setting in the dynamism of critical dialogue. More specifically, by critically engaging with officials, co-teachers and learners and commonsensical knowledge teachers while considering the impact on others, teachers come to question: In favour of what? In favour of whom? (Freire, 1995). Discerning the social and material consequences to transcend limit situations, teachers come to know the essence of themselves as full subjects of history, rather than objects to be manipulated, prescribed, exploited, or dominated. Noteworthy here are two important features related to problematization that must remain at the forefront. First is the dialectical nature of the teacher-student relationship, which must be upheld in the dialogical process of problematization. On this, Freire wrote:

Problematization is so much a dialectical process that it would be impossible for anyone to begin it without becoming involved in it. No one can present something to someone else as a problem and at the same time remain a mere spectator of the process...In the process of problematization, any step made by a subject to penetrate the problem-situation continually opens up new roads for subjects to comprehend the object being analyzed, the humbler they are in this process, the more they will learn (Freire, 1983:153).

Second, Freire (1998) firmly believed that to the degree that the historical past is not “problematized” so as to be critically understood, tomorrow becomes simply the perpetuation of today. To counter this outcome, it requires a process of problematization that is integrated within a critical praxis of dialogue. As such, he believed deeply that through democratic forms of horizontal engagement, where I-thou relationships of historical subjects reside, love, humility, trust, and criticality can prevail. In this process of knowing, critical pedagogues learn how to enact reflection and action in a permanent alliance, through the communal process of dialogue.

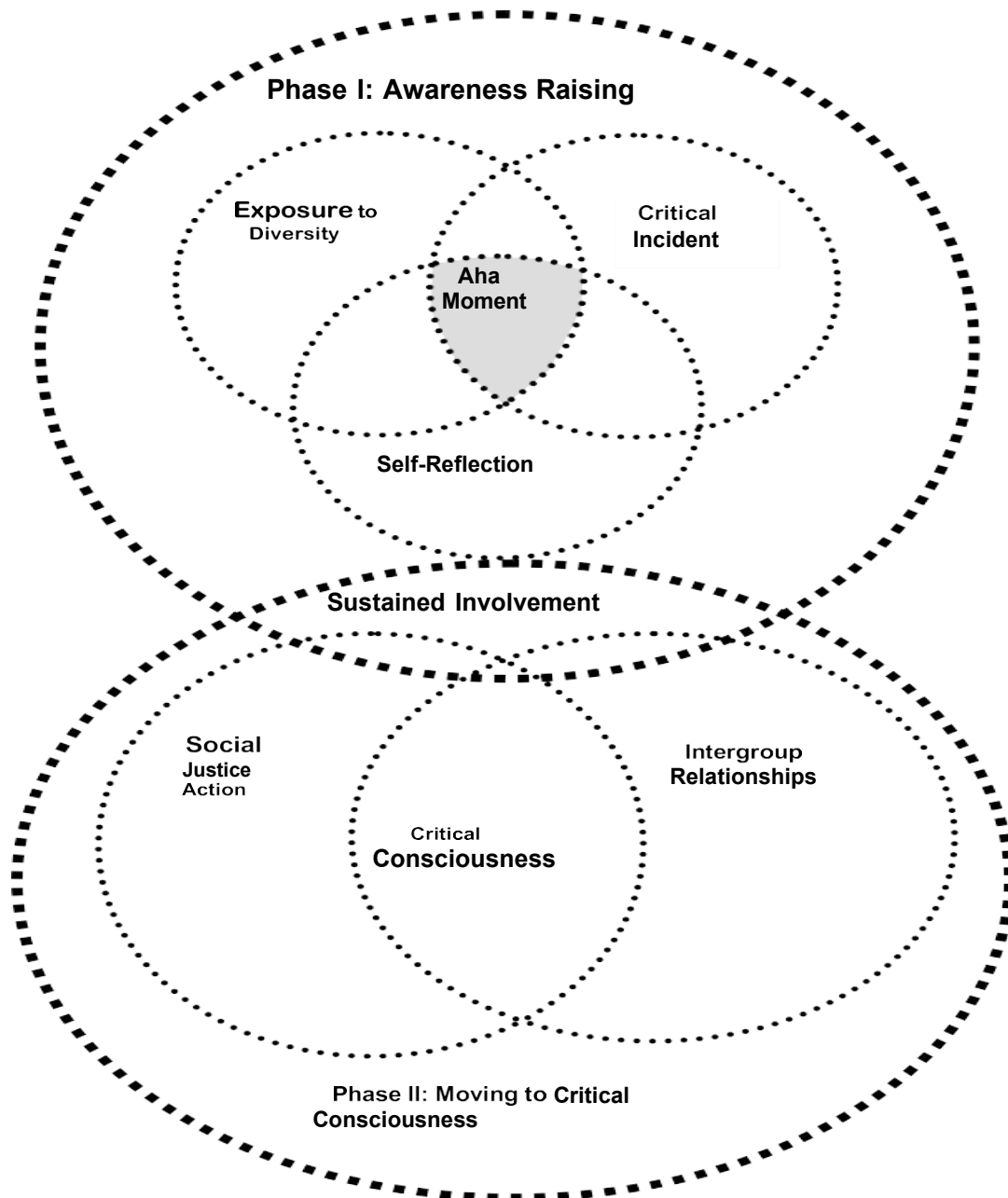
Modelling Critical Thinking Skills

Modelling can be demonstrated in a discussion setting by asking a question and “walking through” the process of critical thinking. The presumption herein is that critical thinking and consciousness are mostly learned skills as teachers may neither be born with the ability to think critically nor did their prior learning experiences require them to think likewise. Under modelling critical thinking skills, Broadbear (2003) proposes four elements on which critical thinking activities should be based, namely ill-structured problems, criteria for assessing thinking, learners’ assessment of thinking, and improvement of thinking.

Ill-structured problems are questions, case studies or scenarios that do not have a definite right or wrong answers but debatable issues that require “reflective judgment.” For example, asking learners to evaluate comparable websites, such as Wal-Mart and Target, requires them to think about the content of the websites, their format, and their usability with possible logical reasoning. This criteria for assessing thinking provide teachers with a framework for thinking about their thinking. For example, why do you think Target’s navigational menus are easier to use than Wal-Mart’s? Why do you like one’s colour scheme over the other? What is your perspective based upon? Providing learners with individualized feedback based on their responses allows them to address specific criteria upon which they can assess their thinking, which is the third element. If instructors model the criteria for assessing thinking and provide a framework, teachers will eventually apply these techniques on their own. By creating a culture of inquiry where teachers can think about their thinking processes and practice logical constructs, they will become more willing to reconsider and revise their thinking.

Developing Critical Consciousness: Some Case Studies

Research has unearthed the plausible workability of infusing critical consciousness among teachers and students by adoption of Freirean critical pedagogy. For instance, a phenomenological study of the development of university educators’ critical consciousness and a quantitative study of how white male faculty and administrators engage in ally work by Landreman, Rasmussen, King and Jiang (2007) and Patton and Bondi (2015) respectively, using Freire’s work as a basic framework for infusion of critical consciousness among multicultural and intercultural educators on college and university campuses are handy examples among others. The model below best illustrates the process which began from awareness raising to emergence of critical consciousness:



Development of university educators' critical consciousness

Source: Landreman, Rasmussen, King, & Jiang (2007)

The above research team consists of four members, each coming from different sociocultural positions and social identities varying across socioeconomic class, ethnicity, gender, sexual orientation, religious identification, national origin, and teaching experiences within higher education. It was purposed to explore how educators working within higher education acquire the critical consciousness necessary to effectively prepare students to live in a diverse society. Participants in the study identified a wide range of factors and experiences that they believed influenced their development of critical consciousness. Respondents' interpretations and descriptions of their experiences which evolved critical consciousness are reflected in the two phases beneath:

Phase I: Awareness Raising: The first phase, Awareness Raising, is characterized by four themes: (a) exposure to people different from one's own cultural experience; (b) the experience of a critical incident related to these differences; (c) self-reflection on the meaning of cultural differences or an incident; and (d) an "aha moment" or new realization that resulted from reflection.

Phase II: Moving to Critical Consciousness: The second phase, which we call "Moving to Critical Consciousness", includes three themes: (a) sustained involvement in the processes involved in Phase I (exposure to diversity, critical incidents, self-reflection, and aha moments); (b) engagement in social justice action and coalition building; and (c) establishing significant intergroup relation.

In the overall analysis of participants' stories, it appeared that acquiring a critical consciousness required more than a simple exposure to differences and interaction with diverse peers. It also required the development of meaningful relationships and the establishment of coalitions across social identity. Although exposure to diversity was consistently reported as being a necessary component of participants' developmental process, it was the occurrence of one or more critical incidents, combined with reflection on the significance and importance of these events, that led to the revelations or crystallizations of meaning referred to as aha moments (that is new realization that resulted from reflection). Further exposure, critical incidents, and reflection resulted in continued meaning making. These eventually led to intentional decisions to develop intergroup relationships and build coalitions, resulting in the development of a critical consciousness whereby participants intentionally pursued-rather than passively received- additional intercultural learning experiences. This conscious sustained involvement in environments, activities, and intergroup relationships, where participants' values, beliefs, and social locations were challenged, both nurtured and facilitated the development of participants' critical consciousness.

Critical Pedagogy, Critical Consciousness and its Inevitability in Nigerian Society

Arguably, the Nigerian society, as typified by the socio-cultural milieu of our forebears, is not critically oriented or inclined from outset (Nweke & Owoh, 2020). This submission presupposes that a typical Nigerian child is born into a society that is not habitually challenging enough to 'read' the world critically and reflectively. Why? One may say that Nigerian cultural system, as it were, inhibits critical questioning. Like a poor Brazilian child in Freire's days, an average Nigerian child, having been critically disarmed, is vulnerably imbued with the capacity to condone oppression, subjugation and other dehumanizing practices. In fact, Nigerians seem to live in a society that is embarrassingly sycophantic. Given today's religious bigotry, spiced with ethnic and political loyalty, thinking objectively, independently as well as questioning ideologies would be tantamount to a rebellion. Sometimes one wonders if decades of living under military rule have engrained the oga-at-the-top mentality into Nigerian society. The seemingly top-to-bottom mentality makes it impossible sometimes for an average Nigerian to disobey even glaringly unreasonable orders from people in positions of authority. This systemic lack of critical consciousness is grabbed by the Herodian ruling class as a ploy to exploitatively perpetuate what is today called the criminal culture of impunity. Here comes the predicament of the Nigerian child.

However, the teacher comes to the rescue by abandoning the conventional method of teaching, and embracing critical pedagogy as championed by Freire (1970), to restore lost voices and infuse critical consciousness in the learner. Diemer and Li (2011) expressed this belief that critical consciousness has proven to help marginalized youths to overcome structural constraints on

human agency or to serve as an “antidote” to structural oppression. Its latent mechanism and operationalization are known to dispose humans towards raising consciousness, and attempting to expose and problematize hidden biases, unexamined politico-religious and cultural assumptions or inherent contradictions in any social system and bring them to an end. Succinctly put, it empowers human habit of interrogation and inquiry. By Freirean presupposition, critical consciousness gives citizens the needed impetus to confront issues of life objectively, analyse different perspectives critically and take actions or positions based on reasoned judgment. This could set the Nigerian society on the lane of critical orientation. It was for this and other equally important reasons that Freire developed critical pedagogy as an approach to help rural Brazilian learn to read the world critically for the purpose of constructive intervention. The resultant effect of this, as supposed, is increased ability and disposition in the Nigerian child to engage either individual or collective action against any critically perceived culture of impunity, oppressive system and ideologies.

The instrumental role of teachers in building and infusing critical consciousness in the Nigerian child must be re-echoed. Without ignoring the age-long nature versus nurture contention, critical consciousness is not an innate and intuitive ability, spontaneously sprouted (Saiz & Rivas, 2010). This means that the ability to conceptualize meaningfully does not come without stimulation and requires consistent teacher’s intervention in which students are exposed to experiences relevant to their thinking (Nwosu, Ebenebe & Unachukwu, 2015). With the guide of critical pedagogues, the Nigerian child becomes creative, innovative and productive. The Nigerian child is thus able to think the unthinkable and imagine the unimaginable; and the outcome of this intellectual soaring is emergence of a society whose citizens are self-reliant, efficient and innovative.

Indeed, critical consciousness is worth expending human intellectual capital on. Unearthing more of its lifelong practical implications and relevance to the human person and society is so delightful that its lack would suggest a colossal loss to humanity. From the functionalist angle, where education is understood as a means to prepare young citizens for adulthood and roles in society, critical consciousness is greatly invaluable. Indices are beginning to show that the future of human jobs and employability quotient are contingent on critical thinking and consciousness. From information made available, the World Economic Forum (WEF) 2020 reports as related by Avis (2020) is rethinking towards looking at critical thinking as one of the indispensable elements to assess how ready a country is for the jobs of the future in 2030 and beyond. Given this reason and other developments such as the emergence of robotics and artificial intelligence wrought by technological acceleration, critical pedagogy becomes usefully handy as it puts Nigerian pedagogues on the faster lane to foster critical consciousness in Nigerian youths.

Again, the place of critical consciousness and analysis in ensuring effective democracy (the Nigerian chosen political ideology) is another compelling point to count on. According to Diemer and Blustein (2006), critical consciousness fuels one’s ability and disposition to involve individual or collective participation in democratic society. It renders citizens amenable resourceful to rational and deliberative democracy. Critical consciousness is thus a panacea to many unfounded nationalistic or ethnic dogmas and beliefs, thriving in Nigerian society which have apparently made the society gullible and seemingly superstitious.

From empirical studies, critical consciousness theory has been used in health and other areas to address issues such as health interventions to reduce HIV risk (Campbel & MacPhail, 2002), and domestic violence (Chroniste & McWhirter, 2006). Elsewhere, critical consciousness has been associated with a host of desirable individual- level outcomes among marginalized people, such as healthier sexual decision-making among South African youths of colour (Campbell & MacPhail,

2002); reduction of substance use among adult African American men and women with recent incarceration history (Windsor, 2014); mental health among urban adolescents, academic achievement and school engagement among urban African American youths and civic participation among poor and working-class youths of colour (Diemer, 2010, Diemer & Li, 2011). Hatcher (2010) noted that outcomes such as reduction of intimate partner violence, unprotected sex among young women, and improved communication between parents and their children about sex, can be theoretically linked to critical consciousness. A lot of other empirical researches have associated critical consciousness with higher self-esteem, higher political engagement, higher professional aspirations, academic engagement, and even higher academic achievement.

The 21st century, as it were, has emerged as a globalized society that is characteristically highly interactive, regenerative and technologically imbued. The society undoubtedly stands in dire need of mass genius, mass creativity, mass man-power skills and lifelong learning which is possible if critical consciousness is accorded its pride and prime of place in Nigeria's education system (Akinsanya & Osiyemi, 2019). In light of the above, education has to be tailored to and infused with capacity to produce citizens who are critical, creative and inventive; citizens that are capable of doing new things and not simply repeating what previous generations have done or accepting everything they are offered. Today's learners to this effect must be taught skills that prepare them for the careers yet to be invented.

Critical Pedagogy, Critical Consciousness, Pedagogues and Nigerian Society

From the foregoing discourse, it should be clear that the major aim of critical pedagogy is to generate critical consciousness in every man. The reflective and interrogative powers of critical consciousness are indeed assets to Nigerian populace. Pushing for the realization of this ideology in every human society, Freire (1970) posited that right from school, education should engage in political education by teaching students to take risk, challenge those with power, honour critical traditions, and be reflective about how authority is used in the classroom. This notion is not peculiar to Freire; Dewey (1956) had earlier advocated that learning is a social and communal process which requires students to construct their own understanding based on personal experience; thus, any education devoid of social intervention and reconstruction is therefore nonconsequential.

Generally, one of the most disturbing and mind-wrecking issues that is plaguing and ruining education system in Nigeria today is politicization of education. Over the years, perhaps as offshoots of our societal pluralism, colonial master's chauvinism amidst previously Northern anti-western education attitude, education and its operational mechanisms had been greatly politicized and tokenized. Such terminologies as federal character principle, quota system, catchment area, educationally disadvantaged area and similar others have become ploys to cause discriminations and exclusivity of different sorts. Yet, the right of humans to education is not only independent of their group, status, nationality, religion, ethnicity, tribe and language, as it is both innate and inalienable (Human Rights of 1945). While Freire termed it oppression and dehumanization, the multiplier effects of this unwholesome situation on the development of a professedly just and egalitarian Nigeria society is demeaning. The bridging of this discriminatory gap between our national espoused ideal practice of diversity, inclusion and equity and today's glaring lack of substantial internal drive or political will to make it work as intended indispensably demand raising people's critical consciousness via critical pedagogy. According to Freire (1970), all forms of pedagogy represent a particular way of understanding a specific commitment to human society and the future. However, critical pedagogy, unlike conventional modes of teaching, particularly insists that one of the fundamental tasks of educators is to teach in an ensuring way that the future points the way to a more socially just world; a world in which the discourses of critique and

possibility in conjunction with the values of reason, freedom, and equality function to alter as part of a broader democratic project and forms the grounds upon which life is lived; and if one may add the words of Giroux (2010), this is the project that gives critical education its most valued purpose and meaning.

If critical pedagogy is adopted in Nigerian society, the consequential result is that every Nigerian would eventually become politically critical. Citizens will not just vote and be manipulated by politicians. This speculation tallies with the submission of Olajide and Meroyi (2018) who are convinced that political participation is not only about extending voting rights and protesting, but also equipping citizens with the ability to take on the responsibility to make informed, intelligent choices and decisions leading to the public good. Inevitably, the need for critical pedagogy to teach future Nigerian leaders how to critically question established beliefs and ideas in the light of present political developments becomes clear.

The position above is however not without great implications for Nigerian pedagogues. Critical pedagogues must teach to ignite in students the desire and orientation towards social transformation that is inspired by the goals of democracy, freedom, justice, equality and unity as expressed in the National Policy on Education (2013). Ideologically, critical pedagogy demands that education goes beyond achieving academic success or becoming professionals, to critical engagement and application of knowledge in public life, otherwise, education becomes neutral. If political stability is to be achieved, it requires informed, knowledgeable and wise citizens. Therefore, teachers and schools have a responsibility to nurture character and teach knowledge and skills appropriate in engaging in political life as well.

CONCLUSION

It is apt to conclude this paper by asserting that the present Nigerian society, like the Brazilian society when Freire wrote his popular book in 1970s, is in dire need of a transformation. This transformation can be done when Nigerian pedagogues shift from being conventional to becoming critically minded. Rather than teaching for memorization and recall for high grades, teachers should begin to teach for knowledge and application, transformation and criticality, and not conformity. Critical pedagogy makes students become inquisitive, productive and effective as co-generators of knowledge with teachers; and with imbued problem-solving skills, in addition to critical consciousness, citizens will be able to think independently, fairly and objectively, and thus eventually understand in clear terms, the socio-political maneuvering, domination and oppression taking place in Nigerian society. It is hoped that this understanding will go a long way in making Nigeria a better society with promises for all and sundry.

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