

The Theft of Education

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Much of the theory and practice of education (pedagogy) employed today in North American schools is derived directly, with certain contextual updates and modifications, from the work of a Brazilian Marxist radical by the name of Paulo Freire. While Freire isn't exactly a household name in the United States, he is a household name and figure of educational legend in all North American colleges of education. So is his approach, which is called "Critical Pedagogy" or "Critical Education Theory." In colleges of education throughout North America, in fact, Freire is revered, and his work is considered virtually sacrosanct. It has accordingly been incredibly influential. Because of his incredible sway in North American colleges of education, Paulo Freire is recognized as the third most-cited scholarly author in all of the humanities and social sciences by authoritative metrics. It exaggerates none at all to state that Paulo Freire is at the theoretical center of everything happening in colleges of education today, and from there our nations' schools. A succinct way to phrase the consequences of his influence on education is that our kids go to Paulo Freire's schools.

What this means is nothing short of the theft of education. Something that looks like education remains, but it is no longer education. It is political brainwashing to see the world "on the side of the oppressed." So central to his views is this transformation of education that Freire's magnum opus bears the description of it in the title: it is the Pedagogy of the Oppressed, in which educators and learners together are instructed to "die and be resurrected" on the side of the oppressed and into a "faith" in "permanent struggle." Students are transformed into learners who learn virtually nothing except two things: (1) how to view the world from the "standpoint of the oppressed," and (2) to denounce the "dehumanizing conditions" of the world, as seen from that perspective, in a way that simultaneously announces the potential for something "better" (read: more Socialist, equitable, and Socially Just).

The mechanism for this theft of education was straightforward and generational: capture and transform the colleges of education; mold a generation of teachers; program every generation of students thereafter. Colleges of education were captured almost entirely to the Freirean approach by no later than 1995, and the intervening quarter century has seen enough turnover of the teachers to have fundamentally remade our schools and thus education itself. Kids still go to school, but school isn't school anymore. The teachers have been replaced with activists, and education has been turned into "conscientization," the process of seeing the world from the so-called standpoint of the oppressed.

(The Marxification of Education: Paulo Freire's Critical Marxism and the Theft of Education by James Lindsay, Orlando, Florida: New Discourses, Kindle, 2022, Page 15 of 210)