

# Education, Empowerment, and Social Change: Toward a Critical Pedagogy

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# Presentation Format

**Part I: Changes and Challenges**

**Part II: Critical Theory and Critical Pedagogy**

**Part III: Final Thoughts: Bringing it all Together**

# The Professor and the Classroom



<https://s3.amazonaws.com/hobsons-ccinfo-prod/admit/uploads/2010/03/professor-287x300.jpg>

# The Classroom Then



[https://chronicle-vitae-production.s3.amazonaws.com/uploads/user\\_article/photo/654/full\\_080122014-classroom.gif](https://chronicle-vitae-production.s3.amazonaws.com/uploads/user_article/photo/654/full_080122014-classroom.gif)

# The Classroom Now



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# Faculty and The Classroom Now



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# Change and Challenges: Voices from the Campus

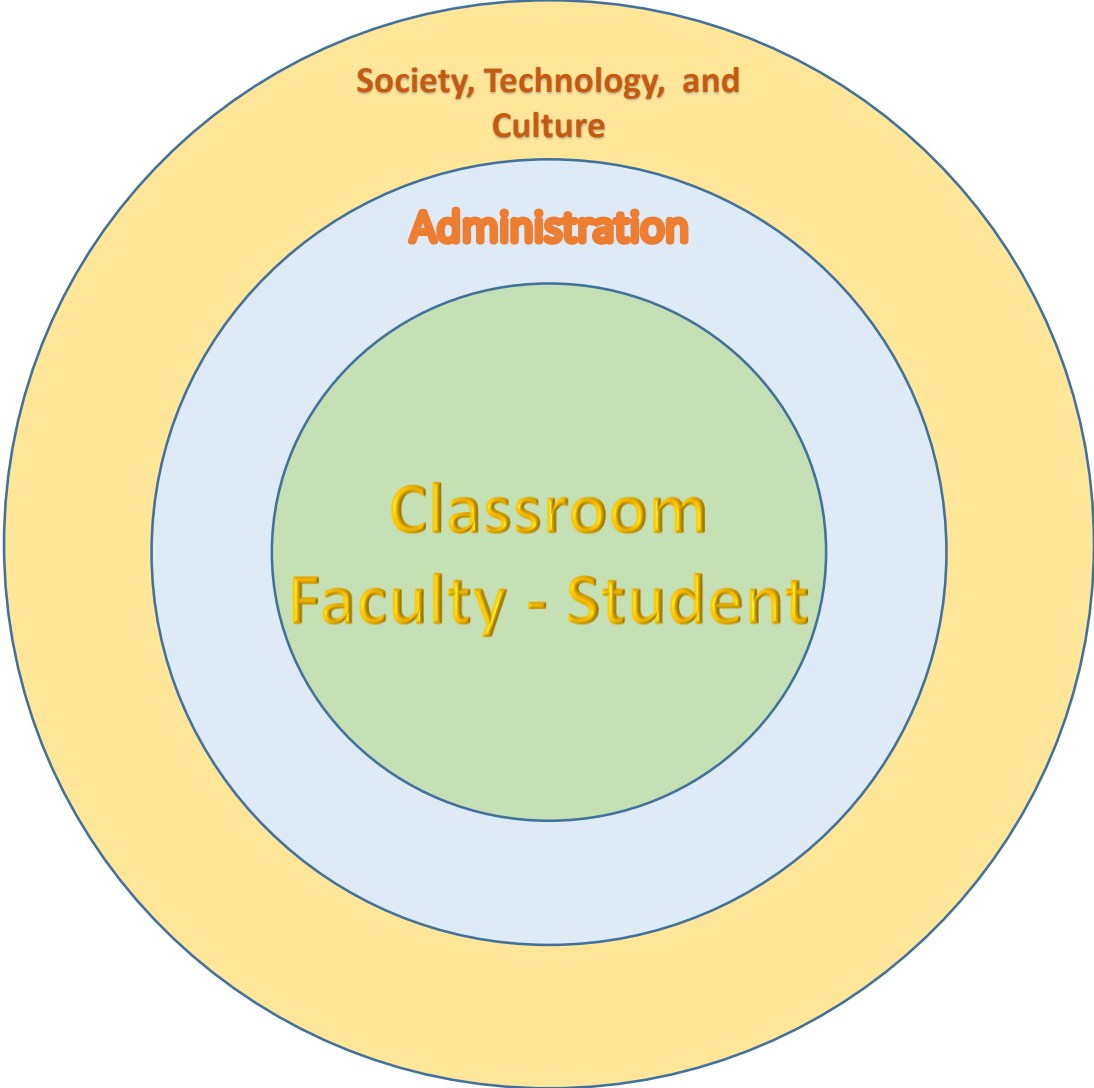
1. College education resembles the fast food industry
2. Students are not prepared for college-level work
3. Students don't read and write
4. Students feel entitled and think they deserve the grade just for attendance.
5. The administration is growing in size and power
6. Faculty are not respected
7. Funding for liberal arts education is under attack
8. Lack of empathy – Nobody cares
9. Alienation on campus
10. And...

# Major Spheres of Change

1. Postmodernity - Overarching cultural and societal change, fragmentation, consumerism, alienation, militarization, etc.
2. Distance Learning: Greater focus on information and less on knowledge. Redesigning faculty. Reducing human, face-to-face interactions. Objectification of students and faculty.
3. Academic Freedom: Restriction and limitation of alternative narrative (e.g., Steven Salaita, Ben Carson, Campus Watch Forum, California Board of Regents.)
4. Student Body: Diversity in race, ethnicity, gender, class, and ability
5. Classroom Interactions: Individualized and personal attention over harmony
6. Administration and authoritarianism are on the rise



# Constrains on Faculty



# Change in Higher Education Over Time

Stage	Curricula	Purpose	Target Students	Academic Freedom	Faculty
Farming/Agriculture	Liberal Arts Focus on Religion and the classics Eurocentric paradigm	Leadership training in religion, academia and politics. Character Formation	Select Elite White male	Restricted by religion Also, exclusion of women and minorities	White male of European heritage. Mostly Christians
Early Industrialization 1850 – 1900	Liberal Arts Limited vocational programs: Law, medicine and engineering Eurocentric paradigm	Leadership training in religion, academia and politics. Professional Training	Select Elite White male White Middle Class	Respected – some degree of religious restrictions Also, exclusion of women and minorities	White male of European heritage. Mostly Christians
Industrialization and Urbanization 1900 – 1960s	Liberal Arts Vocational programs Eurocentric paradigm	Leadership training in religion, academia and politics. Professional and Vocational Training	Select Elite White male White Middle Class	Expanded First Declaration of Academic of Freedom, 1915	White male of European heritage. Mostly Christians Expansion to Jewish, Italians and White Ethnic
Junior Colleges 1920s to 60s Community Colleges 1960s to present	Vocational Training  Liberal Arts Education – Community Colleges	Vocational Training  Liberal Arts Education – Community Colleges	Minorities and Women	Respected but May be irrelevant for vocational training. Relevant for Liberal Arts	White Male White Female Few Minorities
Postmodernity 1960s – ongoing	Liberal Arts Vocational programs Eurocentric paradigm Global Paradigm Alternative Paradigm	Leadership training in religion, academia and politics. Professional and Vocational Training	Open doors to diversity: race, class. Gender and ability	Challenged	Minorities, non-White and women are included in large numbers

# Part II

## Critical Theory and Critical Pedagogy

Given the changes and challenges above, few questions arise:

1. What's the faculty to do?
2. What is the added contribution of critical theory and critical pedagogy?
3. How could critical theory and critical pedagogy advance the role of faculty?

# Paulo Freire, *Pedagogy of the Oppressed*

*“Leaders who do not act dialogically, but insist on imposing their decisions, do not organize the people--they manipulate them. They do not liberate, nor are they liberated: they oppress.” (p. 178)*

*“To achieve critical consciousness, it is necessary to be the owner of one’s labor.” (p. 183)*

*“The oppressed, having internalized the image of the oppressor and adopted his guidelines, are fearful of freedom.” (p. 47)*

# On Critical Theory

*Two basic elements to critical theory:*

- 1. Concern with human happiness*
- 2. Conviction that it can be attained through a transformation of the material conditions of existence.*

*What makes critical theory different from non-critical theories is that the latter is concerned mainly with explanations, while critical theory is explanatory, normative, practical, and self-reflexive.*

# On Critical Pedagogy

*Critical pedagogy is grounded in the core structures of critical theory. Its effectiveness lies in one's ability to think critically. It maintains that schooling is not liberating and undermines the kind of social consciousness needed to bring about change and social transformation.*

*Paulo Freire (1970) referred to critical pedagogy as liberatory action or praxis. He argued that people need to engage in a praxis that incorporates theory, action, and reflection as a means to work toward social change and justice.*

# Selected Features of Critical Pedagogy

1. Critical pedagogy is a justice oriented education
2. Critical pedagogy is an act of critique and possibility
3. Critical pedagogy is a process of dialogue between people
4. Education as a process of empowerment
5. Justice must be included in all education related activities
6. If students are to be empowered, agents of empowerment must be conscious of this act. Education becomes a mission. There is no such thing as objective education. Empowerment must begin with the individual narrative of each individual student.
7. Faculty must be transformed and empowered.
8. Education is an ongoing process of interactions

# On Critical Thinking

*“Critical thinking...the awakening of the intellect to the study of itself.”*

*Critical thinking skills refer to the ability to go beyond the conventional wisdom and to bring about alternative paradigm of reality. It aims to empower and liberate its holders from the confines of predetermined social reality.*



# Selected Scholars in Critical Pedagogy

1. Paulo Freire
2. Myles Horton
3. Stanley Aornowitz
4. Sheila L. Macrine
5. Henry A. Giroux
6. Donalddo Macedo
7. Maxine Greene

# Critical Pedagogy on Knowledge and Power

1. Information vs. Knowledge: What constitutes knowledge?
2. Knowledge is socially constructed
3. Knowledge is subject to political manipulations and exploitation
4. Who determines what to know?
5. Who determines when to know what?
6. Who determines what to leave out?
7. Who determines the purpose of knowledge, and how to use it?
8. Knowledge and skepticism
9. Knowledge and social control
10. Epistemology – How do we know what we know? And how do we know that what we know is true?
11. Belief vs. knowledge
12. Students as creators of knowledge

# Challenges facing Critical Pedagogy

1. Individual vs. social – freedom vs. social control
2. Individual/psychological vs. structural causes
3. Liberation and justice vs. survival in the existing social order
4. What is Justice? The African American Poet, Nikki Giovanni, argues, “One cannot be un-raped!” This proposition begs the question: does justice refer to the reconstitution of the past, or forging a new path into the future?
5. Liberation and pain are two sides of the same coin

# Emerging Patterns

- Modern technology is associated with devaluation and objectification of faculty as scholars
- The information age is associated with the decline of knowledge
- Globalization is associated with lower compensation rates
- Rise of the business models is associated with the rise of consumerism and vocationally oriented education
- Ethnic diversity is associated with challenges to the dominant Eurocentric narrative
- Gender diversity is associated with feminization of higher education
- Diversity is associated with the control of academic freedom
- Gradual replacement of liberal arts education with vocational training
- Diversity in the classroom – race, ethnicity, class, and ability – is associated with incoherent standards. The classroom is no longer a harmonious orchestra
- Colleges and universities are preoccupied with teaching and training (vocational and professional training), and less with learning (cultural capital)

# Emerging Patterns, cont.

- Resentment of higher education seems to have subsided but did not disappear (At a campaign event in a Detroit suburb in 2012, Rick Santorum called President Obama a “snob” for wanting all Americans to go to college. Marco Rubio, we don’t need philosophers as much as we do welders).
- A divide in the American Culture between the gun and the pen.
- Competing Theories: Capitalism and Business Oriented theories vs. Critical Theories
- Academic Freedom is under attack (Ben Carson, Steve Salaita case, Campus Watch Groups, Christian College in Chicago to fire professor, California board of regents).
- Rise in the power of the managerial class and administration is associated with rise in bureaucracy and control of faculty
- High enrollment figures don’t necessarily point to an educated population
- The trend is to teach for a vocation, citizenship, patriotism and conformity to the nation-state. Students are less likely to acquire a cultural capital

# Emerging Patterns, cont.

- Rise of administrative power is associated with increased reliance on hierarchical structures. Hierarchy accentuates the division of labor and de-emphasizes thinking and decision making by faculty and staff
- Open the college doors to the public is associated with public control
- Transforming faculty from scholars to teachers
- Assessment movement is associated with a decline in creativity
- Computer technology and gradually replacing faculty with machines
- Distance learning is associated with objectification of students and faculty. It removes their human interaction from the education process
- Higher education now resembles the fast-food industry
- Two systems of higher education have emerged. One for the elite, the rich and the upper middle class, and the second for the rest.

# Making a Difference: Critical Socialization for Change

Socialization is a process through which people learn to accept the status quo as legitimate and fair.

From the perspective of critical pedagogy, faculty are to claim their position in academia as scholars, to empower themselves and their students to think critically and to act for change. Critical education should be endowed with alternative models to enrich their students with cultural capital that would be both inspiring and transformative.

From this perspective, higher education must take on the form of **critical socialization** that would lead to character transformation:

1. Cognitive dimension
2. Emotional dimension
3. Behavioral dimension

# On Empowerment and Justice in the Classroom

1. One way to realize faculty and their empowering and transformative leadership, is to expect students to say: Once my professor looked at me, he saw me. he saw what I am, and knew what he was looking at.
2. Study and reflect: Move from information to knowledge to reflection
3. Invoke Empathy
4. Justice must be holistic
5. College Teaching is more about nurturing and mentoring
6. Institutional commitment and personal/intellectual commitment are needed.
7. Love and justice. Justice is public love
8. Oneness and humanity may be in conflict. Solidarity is the response
9. Give students the floor and put them on the stage. Encourage and nurture imagination, exploration and creativity.
10. Accept their personal narrative and help them identify a worthy cause for their life journey



# Final Thoughts: Critical Faculty as Leaders

1. Leadership is about transformative relationships – Faculty and students working together, navigating a complex environment, overcoming obstacles, and being innovative in order to achieve their goals.
2. A key aspect of being an effective faculty leader is recognizing and fostering leadership potential in their students.
3. Leaders behave humbly, modestly and respectfully
4. Teaching is an art, a skill, a science, a performance, and knowledge.
5. Teaching is an act intended to inspire, to challenge, to inquire, to critique, to debate, to reflect, to share, to engage, to participate, to act, to empower, to imagine, to assess, to inspire, to feel, to create, and to enrich.
6. Teaching is supposed to bring teacher and student into the world of the unexpected. It is an act of seeing the invisible behind the visible, and to hear the voice of the voiceless.
7. Teaching is about passion, endurance, acceptance, tolerance, resolution, fortitude, courage, integrity, love, sharing, wisdom, empathy, light, and justice. It is about human engagement, human rights, and freedom of ideas.
8. I teach so that I can learn

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