

DIALOGICAL COMMUNICATION STRATEGY ANALYSIS IN IMPROVING TEACHERS' CRITICAL AWARENESS WITH PAULO FREIRE'S APPROACH

(Case Study of Strada Daan Mogot Vocational School, Tangerang City)

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Abstract

This study aims to explore the role of dialogic communication in increasing teachers' critical awareness through Paulo Freire's critical pedagogy approach. The background of this study is based on the reality of traditional education that still applies the banking education model, where teachers are the only source of knowledge and students are only passive recipients. This model closes the space for dialogue, reflection, and critical thinking. In contrast, Freire's approach emphasizes the importance of equal dialogue between teachers and students as a path to liberation and critical awareness. This study uses a qualitative method with a sociocultural approach and a constructivist paradigm. Data were collected through structured interviews with three teachers from vocational high schools who have different backgrounds, experiences, and involvement in reflective communities. The results of the study indicate that dialogic communication is understood as a process of open exchange of ideas. However, its implementation is still limited by structural obstacles such as time, a dense curriculum, and the hierarchical culture of schools. Teachers who are active in dialogic forums tend to have a higher critical awareness of educational issues. This study confirms that dialogic communication not only increases student participation but is also an effective strategy for forming reflective and transformative teachers. Systemic support is needed so that dialogic communication can develop sustainably in the educational environment.

Keywords: *dialogic communication, critical consciousness, Paulo Freire, liberating education*

INTRODUCTION

Becoming a teacher is not an easy task because many requirements must be met. There are still many people who do not understand the steps to becoming a good teacher and being a role model for students. The teaching profession has a great and noble responsibility because it is not only tasked with teaching but also acts as an educator, motivator, and role model for students. In addition, teachers must also face various challenges in carrying out their duties. This is in line with the understanding of teachers according to (Nikmatulaili et al., 2023), who state that teachers have an essential role in supporting the development of students, both in skills, knowledge, and moral values that will be provisions for their success in the future. One of the problems in the world of traditional education is the continued application of the banking education approach. Paulo Freire introduced this term in his work *Pedagogy of the Oppressed* (1970) (Freire, 2020), which describes an image of education in which teachers act as knowledge providers while students are considered empty vessels that only receive information. In this approach, the learning process is passive and authoritarian and does not encourage active student involvement. As a result, students are given less space to think critically and participate actively in learning. The characteristic of the banking education approach is the view that teachers are the only source of knowledge. At the same time, students only act as recipients without the opportunity to question or explore more deeply. In addition, this method does not encourage students to think critically or engage in discussions. In the learning process, students are positioned as passive objects, where interactions take place in one direction; the teacher delivers the material, while students only receive it without active involvement.

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From the explanation above, education functions not only as a medium for transferring knowledge but also as a dialogical process that stimulates students to achieve critical awareness and act in an effort to free themselves from various forms of oppression. In his book *Pedagogy of the Oppressed* (1970), Paulo Freire not only rejects the banking education model but also emphasizes the principles of education as a practice of liberation, which places students as active subjects in the learning process. As agents of change, teachers have an essential role in encouraging transformation through dialogue that involves shared awareness. Education should not only focus on conveying information but also become a forum for building shared awareness and promoting change. At this point, education acquires its true meaning: not just teaching but also liberating.

Paulo Freire, as an influential thinker, has produced several important works that discuss education in relation to political, economic, and social aspects. In his works, Freire explicitly reveals the realities of life for the poor and marginalized, who are often trapped in an education system designed to maintain the status quo. According to Freire, educational practices in an oppressive system are deliberately designed to reinforce social inequality so that the benefits and advantages generated from education are not distributed evenly. This condition widens the gap between dominant groups and oppressed groups. Education, which should be a tool for liberation, is instead used as a means to maintain social, economic, and political domination by a handful of elites (Herlambang, 2021). Freire emphasized that education must be oriented toward critical awareness and social transformation. With a liberating educational approach, individuals can understand the conditions of oppression they experience and take active steps to change them. This study focuses on the methods, strategies, and approaches in the process of knowledge transfer, according to Paulo Freire, which include three main aspects: humanistic education, liberating education, and dialectical education. Freire criticized the traditional education system, which he called the banking concept of education. In this system, students are treated as investment objects and potential sources of deposits, while teachers act as depositors who fill students with knowledge without providing space for critical thinking. This model reflects a hierarchical educational structure, where students are considered empty vessels that only receive knowledge without the opportunity to participate in the learning process actively.

According to Freire, education that takes place in this model is outdated because teachers too dominate it. Students have little opportunity to think independently or express their opinions. As a result, education becomes negative, where teachers only act as transmitters of information that must be received, memorized, and repeated by students without understanding its meaning in depth (Robikhah, 2018). Paulo Freire emphasized the concept of humanization or liberation in education, which aims to lift the oppressed from the shackles of an oppressive education system (Fadli, 2020). In liberation pedagogy, Freire not only critiques the existing education system but also offers solutions to the decisions and cynicism that often arise in oppressed societies. However, his thoughts have also been criticized by radical left groups (Abdullah, 2017). According to Freire, education should be dynamic, contextual, and non-discriminatory. Education should be a tool of liberation for both the oppressed and the oppressors (Kamil & Ratnasari, 2023). He emphasized that education for the oppressed must be created together with them, not just given to them. This education must be part of the struggle to restore humanity that the oppressive system has taken away. Therefore, education must be a tool for the struggle against oppression in the ever-evolving social reality.

Freire emphasized the importance of praxis, which is the combination of reflection and action in education. Critical consciousness is an important factor in the liberation movement because, without consciousness, there will be no real change (Kamil & Ratnasari, 2023). Paulo Freire places dialogue as a key element in education. Ontologically, humans are dialogical beings, so dialogue is a fundamental existential need (Lestari et al., 2023). In the context of education, dialogue is not just a means of communication but also part of a dialectical learning process. The dialectical approach in education enables change and internalization of values such as honesty, justice, humanity, solidarity, professionalism, nobility, discipline, and sincerity. Dialectical education not only emphasizes the delivery of knowledge but also plays a role in shaping the character of students. With dialogue in education, teachers and students can interact more critically and reflectively, creating a participatory and humanistic learning environment. Education in this model is not only about providing information but also building critical awareness that allows students to understand social reality and act for better change. Based on the description above, it is assumed that dialogic communication in the world of education is essential for a teacher to be able to communicate with students. Because the success of students is one of the roles of teachers. The implementation of education based on awareness is seen as impossible and faces significant problems. However, this change can occur if it is carried out at the lowest level. Namely, teachers in schools can apply this critical awareness.

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Then, education in Indonesia will be able to transform for the better and as a means of true liberation, even though the changes are small at the teacher level in schools. Similar previous studies serve as a reference for researchers to conduct research. Mulyatno and Wahyu (2022) research entitled "Dialogical Communication of Teachers and Parents in Accompanying Distance Learning during the Covid-19 Pandemic" aims to capture the dialogical communication of teachers and parents of students at the Mangunan Experimental Junior High School (SMPE) in assisting children during the Covid-19 pandemic. Furthermore, Rian's (2022) research entitled The Role of Dialogical Communication of Teachers and Learning Partners in Learning at the Mangunan Experimental Elementary School. This study aims to provide an overview of the importance of implementing dialogical communication in the collaborative learning process. The novelty of this research lies in the new perspective to fill the gap of previous research. The researcher focuses on the critical awareness of teachers, which will be explored through questions that will be submitted in the interview session. This research contributes to the field of education, especially teacher awareness in carrying out their duties as educators so that it is even better. The purpose of this research is to identify and understand how dialogic communication can increase the critical awareness of teachers in the learning process, based on the liberation education approach developed by Paulo Freire.

METHOD

This study uses a qualitative research method based on (Creswell & Creswell, 2017). In qualitative research, assumptions and an interpretive framework are needed that can influence the study of a problem. Thus, this research can be associated with problems that occur in individuals, groups, or social environments. The tradition in this study uses socio-cultural traditions. This tradition focuses more on the interaction between individuals compared to the personal characteristics of each. In this tradition, there is a space where cultural values, meanings, roles, and rules develop through the process of interaction (Littlejohn, 2009, p. 65). Although each sorts the information they receive personally, the primary focus of this tradition is to understand the patterns, rules, and ways that develop among humans, which ultimately form reality as a group. In this study, the researcher adopted a constructivist paradigm. The constructivist paradigm is an approach that is contrary to the view that prioritizes observation and objectivity in finding reality or knowledge. The constructivist paradigm in social science emerged as a critique of the positivist paradigm. In the constructivist view, the social reality that a person observes cannot be generalized to all individuals, as positivists do. Rooted in Weber's thinking, this paradigm argues that human behavior is fundamentally different from natural phenomena because humans act as agents who shape their social reality, both through giving meaning and understanding behavior in their groups. In constructivist studies, researchers are placed on an equal footing with the research subjects and seek to understand and build understanding according to the perspective of the subjects being studied. In this study, the researcher applied a structured interview technique to explore data more broadly and obtain more in-depth information from the informants. The number of people to be interviewed was three teachers, with the criteria for respondents who would become informants based on gender, age, teaching experience, and qualifications and competencies. The data analysis technique for this study was data analysis reviewed using Miles and Huberman data, which included data reduction, data presentation, and conclusions (Denzin, 2018)

RESULTS AND DISCUSSION

This research involved three teachers from the vocational secondary education level as informants, with the following details.

Table 1. Informant Profile

Code Name	Age	Length of Teaching	Subject
Teacher A	42	18 years	PPKn
Teacher B	35	10 years	Bahasa Indonesia
Teacher C	29	5 years	Accounting

Humanistic Education

The researcher conducted interviews with three teachers about humanistic education. Humanistic education is a pedagogical approach that places students as active subjects in the learning process, with the aim of developing individual potential as a whole based on human values, such as empathy, freedom, and responsibility. The three informants were selected based on their involvement in reflection activities, learning communities, and openness to critical educational approaches. The findings of this study are based on the teachers' understanding of humanistic education. (a) The three teachers have a fairly uniform view of the meaning of education and critical awareness, that

education is not only about values and curriculum but also about an effort to form students' character and social awareness. Teacher A stated: "Education is not just memorization. I want children to think and care." Teacher B added: "Sometimes I invite students to discuss social issues, such as poverty or the environment. I want them to be critical." This finding is in line with Freire's approach that education should foster critical awareness. (b) teacher-student relations in dialogic communication, teachers realize the importance of building two-way communication, although it is acknowledged that it is not yet optimal. Teacher C said: "I like to have dialogues, but sometimes students are still afraid or passive." Teacher A added that the system that is still "top-down" makes students feel like they have no room to talk. This shows that there is still a tendency towards "bank-style" education, as Freire criticized. The challenges of implementing humanistic education were expressed: administrative pressure and curriculum burden, as well as a school culture that does not support freedom of thought. Lack of specific training on humanistic pedagogy. However, teachers have personal initiatives to create a space for dialogue, for example, through open discussions, reflection at the end of lessons, and emotional approaches to students.

Education Liberates

Liberating education, according to Paulo Freire, is an educational process that aims to humanize humans through liberation from oppression and social injustice. This education is not just a transfer of knowledge but a dialogical process that raises critical awareness of conscientization so that individuals, especially the oppressed, are able to understand their social reality critically and dare to act to change it. Findings from teachers about (a) understanding of liberating education, teacher A stated: "In my opinion, liberating education is when students can think for themselves, not just receive from the teacher." Teacher B said: "Liberating education is what makes students dare to ask questions and criticize, even towards the teacher. But sometimes that is considered impolite." Teacher C added: "In mathematics, it's difficult, but I try to give them questions related to everyday life so they can think more broadly." The three teachers have an understanding that is in line with Paulo Freire's idea: education that empowers students to think critically and not just accept passively. (b) Dialogical communication practices Teacher A explained that he often opens the class with a light discussion. "I invite them to chat first, for example, about the news or what they experienced this morning. From there, sometimes interesting discussions emerge." Teacher B has started implementing group discussions and weekly reflections. "I invite them to discuss social cases, for example, about economic inequality or bullying.

They are enthusiastic." Teacher C emphasizes open questions and answers more. "Usually, I give them time to ask questions, but not many students dare." Teachers have started to adopt two-way communication practices that give students a voice, although full implementation is not yet widespread. (c) Teachers' critical awareness of the social environment Teacher A realized that many of her students face economic challenges. "I became more sensitive; why do they often sleep in class? It turns out they help their parents at night." Teacher B admitted to being more concerned about the students' backgrounds. "I often think they come from tough environments; how can we teach them like robots without caring about the context?" Teacher C felt compelled to learn new things outside the curriculum. "Now I also take part in training so that I am not out of date and can connect with the children." Teachers' critical awareness began to grow, especially in understanding students' social realities as part of the learning process. The interview results showed that Paulo Freire's approach through dialogical communication has great potential in fostering teachers' critical awareness. The teachers involved began to demonstrate an understanding of liberating education and began to integrate dialogical communication into their teaching practices. However, implementation is still limited due to several factors: hierarchical school culture, minimal reflective and collaborative space between teachers, and lack of training based on critical pedagogical values. Referring to Freire, education must be humanistic and liberating, and this begins with teachers who are able to reflect on reality, develop empathy, and build meaningful two-way communication.

Dialectical Education

Paulo Freire's dialectical education is a revolutionary and humanistic educational approach, emphasizing critical dialogue and reflection as a means of freeing learners from passive positions to agents of social change. Through this dialectical process, education becomes a democratic public space where various perspectives meet and form critical awareness that can transformatively change the real world. (a) It was found that teachers experience dialogical communication as a process of open exchange of ideas between teachers and equals, although with different levels of understanding. Teacher A stated that I usually discuss things with students, not just teach one way. But indeed, it is not yet deep enough to relate to their social context. Teacher B is more critically aware and says that I often raise social issues and invite students to discuss them from various perspectives. Dialogical

communication makes them more active and brave in thinking. Teacher C is still in the early stages of learning how to build an equal dialogue, not patronizing. Because usually, students wait for directions. From the results of the first question, all three showed the potential for developing dialogical communication, but there are still differences in the level of understanding and implementation. This is in line with Freire's idea that critical awareness develops gradually. (b) Furthermore, if viewed from the practice of reflection and critical awareness. The three teachers have carried out the reflection process, both individually and in joint forums such as Subject Teachers' Deliberations (MGMP) or training. Teachers A and C reflected more individually, in contrast to teacher B, who was more active in the teacher community, as seen from the many activities in discussions and learning from fellow teachers. In the discussion, there was definitely mutual criticism, but in a constructive spirit (Khoirul, 2021). It really opened our eyes to the inequality in our education system. From the second question, according to Freire, critical awareness arises from reflection and action (praxis). Teachers who are involved in dialogical forums are quicker to show a critical attitude towards the educational structure. (c) The last obstacle for teachers is building dialogical communication. Some of the challenges that occur include a school culture that is still hierarchical, a lack of time due to administrative burdens, and an overly dense curriculum. Teacher C stated that sometimes he wanted to have a deeper dialogue, but 45 minutes felt like not enough. Especially if you must chase curriculum targets, this strengthens Freire's concept of the importance of dialogue and collective action to liberate and humanize the education process.

CONCLUSION

Based on the results of the study through interviews with three teachers at the vocational secondary education level, it can be concluded that several main things related to dialogic communication in increasing critical awareness of teachers through Paulo Freire's approach, namely: (a) Understanding of humanistic and liberating education. The three informants have an understanding that is quite in line with the principles of humanistic and liberating education. They realize that education is not only about mastering material but also a means to form character, empathy, and social awareness of students. This idea shows conformity with Paulo Freire's thinking that education should raise conscientization or critical awareness. (b) Dialogic Communication Practices. The teachers showed efforts to build dialogic communication, such as open discussions, two-way questions and answers, and integration of social issues in learning. However, the implementation of parallel dialogue between teachers and students still faces obstacles such as a one-way teaching culture, inequality in relations, and passive student responses. (c) Reflection and critical awareness of teachers. Teachers who are active in learning communities or discussion forums show a higher level of critical awareness, especially regarding inequality in the education system. The reflection process carried out both individually and collectively becomes the gateway for the emergence of criticism of educational structures and policies that do not support social justice. (d) Dialectical education is a transformative process; teachers begin to practice a dialectical approach in learning, although it is still in the early stages. The process of open and critical dialogue begins to be applied as a method to encourage students to think independently and contextually. The difference in levels of understanding and practice shows that critical awareness is a process that develops gradually, in accordance with Freire's theory of praxis (reflection and action). (e) implementation obstacles, the main obstacles in building dialogical communication include administrative pressure, time constraints, a dense curriculum, and a school culture that is still hierarchical. However, there is a personal initiative from teachers to create reflective and dialogical space in the teaching and learning process.

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