Chapter 2

THEORETICAL OVERVIEW

2.1 Introduction

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2.1 Introduction

Any research study requires a strong theoretical basis and so it is essential to make an in-depth inquiry and understanding of the theoretical background on which the study is conducted. It is on the basis of this theoretical background that the researcher proceeds with the study. The present study is based on the theoretical overview of constructivism and critical pedagogy. The conceptual ideas of constructivist approach and critical pedagogy, how these approaches when combined together can be put into practice and how to assess effectiveness are the major focuses in this study.

2.2 Constructivism

2.2.1 Meaning of Constructivism

Constructivism is basically a theory based on observation and scientific study about how people learn (Brooks and Brooks, 1993). It says that people construct their own understanding and knowledge of the world, through experiencing things and reflecting on those experiences. The learners are active creators of their own knowledge. To do this, they must ask questions, explore and assess what they know.

The constructivists believe that;

1. Knowledge is constructed, not transmitted.
2. Knowledge construction results from activity, so knowledge is embedded in activity.

3. Knowledge is anchored in and by the context in which the learning activity occurs.

4. Meaning is in the mind of the knower.

5. There are multiple perspectives on the world.

6. Meaning making is prompted by a problem, question, confusion, disagreement, or dissonance (a need or desire to know) and so involves personal ownership of that problem.

7. Knowledge building requires articulation, expression, or representation of what is learned (meaning that is constructed)

8. Meaning may also be shared with others, so meaning making can also result from conversation.

9. So meaning making and thinking are distributed throughout our tools, culture and community

10. Not all meaning is created equally.

2.2.2 Constructivist Learning

According to Maslowe and Page (1998), learning in constructivist terms is

1. Both the process and the result of questioning, interpreting and analysing information.

2. Using this information and thinking process to develop, build and alter the meaning and understanding of concepts and ideas.

3. Integrating current experiences with past experiences and what is already known about a given subject.
To learn, a student has to be mentally and often physically active. A student learns when she/he discovers her/his own answers, solutions, concepts and relationships and creates her/his own interpretations.

2.2.3 **Historical Background of Constructivism**

The concept of constructivism has its roots in classical antiquity, going back to Socrates’ dialogues with his followers, in which he directed questions that led students to realise for themselves the weaknesses in their thinking. The Socratic dialogue is still an important tool in the way constructivist educators assess their students’ learning and plan new learning experiences.

The constructivist views knowledge as a subjective understanding of the person. In the early 18th century, an Italian philosopher Vico defined knowledge as ‘a cognitive structure of a person so that to know something is to know how to create’ (Glaserfield, 1989). The concept of Vico’s view was not readily accepted by contemporary western philosophers until the German philosopher Kant (1781) tried to transform the western epistemological tradition of the late 18th century. Kant believed that it is not possible to find from such evidences out of a few cases the nature and limits of human knowledge as long as one continues to think of the mind and its objects as separate entities. He held, instead, that the mind is actively involved in the objects it experiences. That is, it organises experience into definite patterns. Therefore, it is sure that all things capable of being experienced are arranged in these patterns, even though they may not yet have been experienced. Kant seems to attempt to coordinate two disparate views of knowledge, the view that a logical analysis of action and objects leads to the growth of knowledge and the view that one’s individual experience generates new
knowledge. Kant went on to argue that both views have their own merit such that analysis, by definition occurs after the facts, and individual experience occurs before or during the event. Both are a function of one’s own idiosyncratic mental filtering system. These views affect how one makes sense of new information.

Piaget and Dewey developed theories of childhood development and education, what is now called Progressive Education. Progressive Education led to the evolution of constructivism. Piaget believed that humans learn through the construction of one logical structure after another. He arrived at the conclusion that the logic of children and their modes of thinking are initially entirely different from those of adults. The implications of this theory and how he applied them have shaped the foundation for constructivist education. The pragmatic philosopher Dewey called for education to be grounded in real experience. He wrote, “If you have doubts about how learning happens, engage in sustained inquiry: study, ponder, consider alternative possibilities and arrive at your belief grounded in evidence.” Inquiry is a key part of constructivist learning. Dewey (1916) defined education as a process to restructure the individual experience by reflective thinking through expanding one’s present experience. Individual experience is the core of knowledge, not knowledge offered by others. Thus, continuous development of the child must be stimulated through his interaction to his environment to create meaningful knowledge.

Kuhn (1962) warns against scientific misconceptions and claims a scientific paradigm shift. His paradigm shift in science is similar to the adaptive process offered by Piaget, one of the most influential epistemological constructivists.
Among the educators, philosophers, psychologists, and sociologists who have added new perspectives to constructivist learning theory and practice are Vygotsky and Bruner. Vygotsky introduced the social aspect of learning into constructivism. He defined the “zone of proximal learning,” according to which students solve problems beyond their actual developmental level (but within their level of potential development) under adult guidance or in collaboration with more capable peers. Bruner initiated curriculum change based on the notion that learning is an active, social process in which students construct new ideas or concepts based on their current knowledge.

Papert’s groundbreaking work in using computers to teach children has led to the widespread use of computer and information technology in constructivist environments. Modern educators who have studied, written about and practised the constructivist approach to education include Bransford, Glaserfield, Duckworth, Forman, Schank, Grennon, and Brooks and Brooks.

2.2.4 Theoretical Basis of Constructivist Learning

It is essential to take a look at the following personalities whose research and theories form the basis of constructivist learning.

2.2.4.1 Jean Piaget

Piaget is a cognitive theorist whose research and theories have had a profound influence on psychology and education. Piaget’s system is cognitive in that its primary concern is mental representation. Piaget, (1976) states that the growth of knowledge is the result of individual constructions made by the learner’s
understanding. Piaget contends that the current state of knowledge is temporal, it changes as time passes just as knowledge in the past has changed. It is not a static existence, it is a process. It is a process of continual construction and reorganisation. Piaget viewed constructivism as a way of explaining how people know about their world. He collected an extensive body of research of children’s behaviour and witnessed children’s behaviour which were then used to create well supported influences about the function of the mind. According to him, children construct knowledge through their actions in the world. Learning, Piaget believes, takes place through the processes of assimilation (to assimilate is to respond in terms of previous learning), accommodation (to accommodate to change behaviour in response to environmental demands) and adaptation (the interplay of assimilation and accommodation). There is a balance between assimilation and accommodation which is called equilibration. He uses the term equilibration to signify the processes or tendencies that lead to a balance. Maturation, active experience, equilibration and social interactions are the forces that shape learning (Piaget 1961). The sophistication of children’s representation of the world is a function of their stage of development. That stage is defined by the thought structures they then possess. Piaget believed that development of a cognitive structure progresses through a series of stages such as

1. Sensori Motor (birth to 2 years)
2. Pre-Operational (2 to 7 years)
   i. Pre-conceptual (2 to 4 years)
   ii. Intuitive (4 to 7 years)
Piaget’s stage theory of development reflects the ideology of individualism. Piaget’s constructivism implicitly supports a contextualist approach to knowledge development.

The educational implications of Piagetian approach are

1. Providing activity

   Interaction with real objects is crucial to the growth of knowledge and to the development of understanding and abilities that underline thinking.

2. Providing optimal difficulty

   Material presented to learners should not be so difficult that it cannot be understood (assimilated) nor so easy that it leads to no new learning (no accommodation).

3. Importance of the teachers knowing the child’s developmental level

   Knowing how the child thinks, and understanding both the limitations and the potential of child thought are important.

2.2.4.2 Lev Vygotsky

   Social constructivism largely emerged out of the work of Vygotsky and his colleagues who emphasised what was at the time a radical and controversial idea: that learning was primarily a sociocultural process. Social constructivists contradict the view that individual children construct knowledge through their actions in the world and they claim that understanding is social in origin. Meaningful learning occurs only when individuals are engaged in social activities.
Individual consciousness is built from the outside through relations with others. From this perspective, higher mental thinking develops through interpersonal communication mediated by shared psychological (language, sign systems and gestures) and physical tools. Vygotsky (1978) outlined how thought and language are independent and develop separately, but with similar processes. He also offers pointers for instructional technologists. Vygotsky analysed a number of studies to help his theories of thought and language. He took the strengths of these studies to form his theories, and then tested his theories in his own studies. His theories in which he wrote about the development of thought and speech were influenced by Piaget. Throughout his book he makes statements about instruction, that have been compiled to convert how an instructional technologist can benefit from Vygotsky’s analysis and studies. He writes that a child develops thought and speech separately before two years of age and then she/he merges and joins these functions at two years to initiate a new form. Thought becomes verbal and speech becomes rational. Speech serves the intellect as thoughts are spoken. Social environment is important to a child’s development because it can accelerate or de-accelerate development. According to him, learning is the acquisition of many specialised abilities for thinking and occurs through social interactions. Partners work together and construct the solution to a problem.

For Vygotsky, the rigorous study of social context was a key dimension of his psychology. According to him without an understanding of the relationship between social context and cognitive behaviour, psychologists were bound to make profound mistakes in studying mental processes. It was in this context that his well known concept of Zone of Proximal Development (ZPD) emerged. ZPD
represents a social context in which learning takes place. This social context shapes the range of potential each student has for learning. The ZPD is relevant to instructional technologists and since instruction should precede development, the requisite functions are immature when instruction begins. The discrepancy between children’s actual mental age and the level they reach in solving problems with assistance is the ZPD. There is no single ZPD for individuals because the Zone varies with culture, society and experience. Vygotsky claimed that the larger the Zone, the better the students would learn in school. The notion of ZPD assures us that a certain percentage of academic difficulties have little to do with innate cognitive ability. Instead, one’s cultural exposure becomes profoundly important. This perspective introduces a proactive role to the teacher for scaffolding the children as and when needed. Scaffolding is the support given by or collaborating with more experienced people.

In the most elementary dimensions of Vygotsky’s work critical teachers learn that educators must understand the social, cultural, political, ideological and economic forces that affect cognitive development. Appreciating this complex process, individuals can begin to see the ways their consciousness have been constructed and their relationship to schooling produced. Language and dialogue between the teacher and learners play a pivotal role in the learning process. Thus, understanding this dimension of Vygotsky’s work, critical teachers can encourage students to see themselves and they become themselves from the perspective of other people.
2.2.5 Theoretical Assumptions of Constructivist Learning

There are three fundamental differences between constructivist learning and other learnings. The first is that learning is an active constructive process unlike the process of knowledge acquisition. Second, teaching is supporting the learner’s constructive processing of understanding rather than delivering the information to the learner. And finally, teaching is a learning-teaching concept rather than a teaching-learning concept. It means putting the learners first and teaching second so that the learner is at the centre of learning. Constructivists like Jonassen (1990) and others enlist the following theoretical assumptions. (Kim, 1993)

1. Knowledge is constructed out of sensual and perspective experiences of the learner in which learning internalised through the learner’s constructive process is natural.

2. Knowledge is the personal understanding of the outside world through personal experience rather than the experience of others.

3. This internally represented knowledge becomes the basis of other structures of knowledge and a new cognitive structure of the person.

4. Learning is an active process of developing meaning, based on individual/personal experiences. In other words learning is a developing process of the learner’s understanding of the real world.

5. It comes from the premise that personal understanding result in various perspectives. The perspectives constructed within the individual cognitive conceptual structure attempt to share all the various possible perspectives.

6. Learning creates knowledge in the context of a situational reality. Knowledge is the understanding of meaning through situational contexts, not objective reality.
2.2.6 Constructivist Learning Approach

The learning approach that incorporates the following features is called constructivist learning approach.

1. More experiential, inductive, hands-on learning.
2. More emphasis on higher-order learning.
3. More responsibility transferred to students for their work.
4. More enacting and modelling of the principles of democracy in school.
5. More cooperative and collaborative activity, developing the classroom as an interdependent community.
6. Role of the teacher as a facilitator, guide, researcher and co-learner.
7. Students should be active participants.
8. Dynamic interaction among task, teacher and learners.
9. More importance to the background and culture of the learner.
10. Increasing responsibility for learning on the part of learners.
11. Increasing potential of learners sustains the motivation in them.
12. The importance of context is central to the learning itself.
13. Dynamic assessment is emphasised.

Assessment of student-learning is interwoven with the teaching-learning process. It takes place through the teachers’ observation of the students at work and the students’ portfolios. The process is as importance as the product.
In the constructivist learning environment, the learner is expected to be proactive and to have effective communication skills. In addition the learner is supposed to be equipped with higher order thinking skills such as critical and reflective thinking as well as being capable of transferring all these skills to real life situations. Constructivist learning is a decision making process which is shaped by the skills, drives, beliefs, attitudes, and experiences of the student. The students construct knowledge through exploring, interpreting, and interacting with the environment. Thus, they learn the content or the process concurrently. The features of constructivist classroom includes the following.

- constructivist classroom is student-centred
- constructivism uses a process approach
- constructivist teaching includes negotiation
- the teacher in the constructivist classroom is a researcher
- students and teachers are interactive
- organisation and management of a constructivist classroom are democratic
- power and control in these classrooms are shared

The difference in school environment between traditional classrooms and constructivist classrooms is given in the table 2.1.
The activity based classrooms at higher secondary level is similar to the traditional classrooms.

### 2.2.7 Principles of Constructivist Learning

The basic principle of constructivist learning theory is that learners actively interpret knowledge, information, and the world around them and that cognition
serves an adaptive function. This adaption involves an individual’s making personal sense of the information by mediation and negotiation in a social setting. It can be summarised as follows.

1. Posing emerging problems of relevance to students
2. Structuring learning around primary concepts: the quest for essence
3. Seeking and valuing the students’ points of view
4. Adapting the curriculum to address the students’ suppositions
5. Assessing students’ learning in the context of teaching (Brooks and Brooks, 1993)

2.2.8 Ideas Put Forward by Constructivism

1. Discovery learning

Teachers must create an atmosphere that enables the learner to discover ideas and facts. Rather than leaving the student to discover for himself, providing opportunities that prompts the learner to discovery is important. Providing direct explanations and asking the student to imitate models is not what is expected from the teacher. Helping the student to develop a model on his own is more important.

2. Learning through debate

Debates, Bruner believed, lead to learning. Here debate does not mean an argument. It is a sharing of ideas. New ideas can be developed by asking for explanations, contributing ideas, internalising ideas and analysing ideas in a debate. It is an active method where all students in the class can participate.
3. Learning through Problem solving

Learning takes place only when the student sees in a particular learning situation a problem that needs a solution. In the event of an imbalance in knowledge there is a natural tendency to carry out some activity to correct it. The student needs to be confident that he will be able to find a solution. So problems were framed in accordance with the abilities and the cognitive level of the learner, and its practicability.

4. Collaborative learning

This is a form of learning which shares the learning responsibility among the members of a group which works towards a common goal. The common goal can be achieved only when all the members perform their duties satisfactorily. The outcome of learning can be shared by all the members of the group. The teacher who facilitates learning need to clarify the responsibilities of each member. This can be done only through discussions with the members of the group. The situation where one person acts on behalf of the group can be avoided in this type of learning. Collaborative learning method can be followed only by a teacher who is prepared to share knowledge and authority with the students.

5. Co-operative learning

This is a mode of learning where the learners help each other to learn. Those who have better knowledge and experience help other students. It must be ensured that the help involves not a mere copying of the work of the other students. It is a need based interaction providing support for learning at all stages. All the members of the group will be ready to answer the questions on the common task
and the group’s achievement will be evaluated on the basis of the performances of the members of the group.

6. Zone of Proximal Development (ZPD)

According Vygotsky, there is a level of achievement that can be reached by all learners on their own, and another higher level which can be achieved through help from teachers or peers. While any learning activity can be successfully completed by many learners, with the help of the knowledge of elders, all can reach a higher level. Those who complete the activity only in parts can complete it with the help of the teacher. If appropriate help is received, all learners proceed to better performance. The area between the level achieved by own efforts and that which can be achieved with the help of others is called the Zone of Proximal Development by Vygotsky.

7. Scaffolding

Many learners are unable to complete learning activities if help is not received in time. The student needs help from the teacher in many learning activities. Here, help does not mean taking over and completing the work for the student, but making the student complete it himself. The teacher may provide hints, examples, evidences, or ask questions to direct the thought to specific path. In some situations the student may be asked to examine how others have approached the problem. What is important in providing this scaffolding is to bear in mind that the student must gradually be equipped to take up and complete the task. The concept of scaffolding highlights the important role of the teacher in a learner centred education.
8. Learning, an active mental process

Learning being a cognitive process, the teacher needs to know cognitive processes to facilitate the creation of learning opportunities. Learning can be made effective by providing learning experiences involving mental processes like

- Retrieving/recollecting/retelling information
- Readily making connections to new information based on past experiences and formulating initial ideas/concepts.
- Detecting similarities and differences.
- Classifying/categorising/organising information appropriately.
- Translating/transferring knowledge or understanding and applying them in a new situations.
- Establishing cause-effect relationships.
- Making connection/relating prior knowledge to new information/applying reasoning and drawing inferences.
- Communicating knowledge/understanding through different media.
- Imagining/fantasising/designing/predicting based on received information.
- Judging/appraising/evaluating the merits or demerits of an idea/developing own solutions to a problem.

9. Internal motivation

Constructivism emphasises on internal motivation over external motivation. Teachers must make all efforts to see that students have internal motivation. Only a student who is internally motivated can involve himself completely in learning
and take up responsibility for all activities in learning. The teacher may frequently evaluate how far he has been able to motivate the students and develop adequate strategies.

### 2.2.9 Role of Constructivist Teachers

1. Constructivist teachers invite students’ questions and ideas.
2. Constructivist teachers accept and encourage ideas invented by students.
3. Constructivist teachers encourage students’ leadership, cooperation, information seeking and the presentation of ideas.
4. Constructivist teachers modify their instructional strategies in the process of teaching based upon the students’ thoughts, experience and/or interest.
5. Constructivist teachers use printed materials and the service of experts to get more information.
6. Constructivist teachers encourage free discussions.
7. Constructivist teachers encourage and invite students’ predictions and causes and effects in relation to particular cases and events.
8. Constructivist teachers help students to test their own ideas.
9. Constructivist teachers invite students’ ideas before the student is presented with ideas and instructional materials.
10. Constructivist teachers encourage students to challenge the concepts and ideas of others.
11. Constructivist teachers use co-operative teaching strategies through student interactions and sharing ideas and learning tasks.
12. Constructivist teachers encourage students to respect and use other people’s ideas through reflection and analysis.

13. Constructive teachers welcome the restructuring of their ideas through reflecting on new evidences and experience. (Yager, 1991)

### 2.2.10 The Instructional Strategies of Constructivist Teaching

According to Piaget, other individuals play an important role in one’s cognitive development. By means of group work, an individual encounter cognitive conflict and through negotiations, he develops more complex cognitive structures. Similarly, Vygotsky claimed that higher mental thinking skills develop as a result of social interactions. He proposed that construction of knowledge occurs by working with other students. Vygotsky described two sources of knowledge. One comes from interaction with the environment (everyday knowledge) and the other from formal instruction that take place in the classrooms. Everyday knowledge is affected by peer interactions, language and experience. Learners use both everyday knowledge and school knowledge to construct meaning. Peers can assist each other to learn new concepts more effectively than adults because they have a similar developmental level.

Researchers developed a lot of teaching strategies based on constructivist approach such as Driver’s Constructivist Teaching Sequence (Driver and Oldham, 1986), Learning Cycle Approach (Stepans, Dyche and Beiswenger 1988), Conceptual Change Model (Posner et al.,1982) and Bridging Analogies Approach (Brown and Clement, 1989). Yager (1991) proposed a constructivist teaching strategy as:
1. **Invitation:** Asking questions, considering responding to questions, noting unexpected phenomena, identifying situations where the student perceptions vary.

2. **Exploration:** Brainstorming possible alternatives, looking for information, experimenting with material, discussing solutions with others, engaging in debate and analysing data.

3. **Proposing explanations and solutions:** Constructing and explaining a model, reviewing and critiquing solutions, integrating a solution with existing knowledge and experiences.

4. **Taking action:** Making decisions, applying knowledge and skills, sharing information, and asking new questions.

According to the model for constructivist teaching sequence developed by Driver and Oldham (1986), there are five phases: Orientation, elicitation, restructuring, application and review. The Orientation phase introduces students to the subject they are to learn. The Elicitation phase helps students make their ideas explicit and thus become aware of their thinking. Group discussions, designing posters or writings are useful activities for this purpose. In the Restructuring phase, the ideas of students are clarified and exchanged through discussions and students are thus able to develop scientific knowledge. Students are given opportunity to test their ideas and are experienced with cognitive conflict. They engage in problem solving. In the Application phase, students use their ideas developed in the previous phase in new situations. In the final phase, the Review phase, students view how their thinking has changed from the beginning of the study to the end. This phase helps students construct metacognitive strategies.
Posner et al. (1982) define conceptual change in terms of assimilation and accommodation. If a student uses existing concepts to deal with a new phenomenon, it is called assimilation. When a student’s current concepts are inadequate to allow him to grasp a new phenomenon, he has replace or reorganise his central concepts. This is called accommodation. There are four conditions of accommodation.

1. There must be dissatisfaction with the existing conceptions. The individual must first encounter difficulties with an existing conception to consider a new one seriously. The major source of dissatisfaction is anomaly. An anomaly exists when one is unable to assimilate something. Anomalies create cognitive conflict that prepares the student’s conceptual ecology for an accommodation. The more the students consider the anomaly to be serious, the more dissatisfied will they be with current concepts and the more likely will they be to accommodate new ones.

2. A new conception must be intelligible. Finding a theory that is intelligible requires more than just knowing what the words and symbols mean. Intelligibility also requires constructing or identifying a coherent representation of a passage or theory. This representation may function passively; in paragraph/comprehension tasks. Representation may also function actively as a plan for directing one’s attention and conducting purposeful searching. When the student can psychologically construct a meaningful representation of a theory it becomes a tool of thought. Only an intelligible theory can give rise to a new conception in a conceptual change.

3. A new conception must be plausible. A new conception must have the capacity to solve the problems generated by its predecessors. Otherwise it will not appear a plausible choice. In addition, the new conception must be consistent
with other theories or knowledge and with one’s current metaphysical beliefs
and epistemological commitments. Therefore it is important to find out
the students’ epistemological commitments in order to understand what
students find plausible or more generally, their processes of conceptual
change.

4. A new concept must be fruitful. It must have potential to open up new areas
of inquiry. It must lead to new insight and discoveries. Students map their
new conceptions on to the world, i.e., they attempt to interpret experience
with it.

2.2.11 Benefits of Constructivism

1 Children learn more, and enjoy learning more when they are actively involved.

2 Education works best when it concentrates on thinking and understanding,
rather than on rote memorisation. Constructivism concentrates on learning
how to think and understand.

3 Constructivist learning is transferable. In constructivist classrooms, students
create organising principles which they can take with them to other learning
settings.

4 Constructivism gives students ownership of what they learn, since learning
is based on students’ questions and explorations. Often the students have a
hand in designing the assessments as well. Constructivist assessment engages
the students’ initiatives and personal investments in their journals, research
reports, physical models, and artistic representations. Engaging the creative
instincts develops the students’ abilities to express knowledge through a
variety of ways. The students are also more likely to retain and transfer the
new knowledge to real life.
By grounding learning activities in an authentic, real-world context, constructivism stimulates and engages students. Students in constructivist classrooms learn to question things and to apply their natural curiosity to the world.

Constructivism promotes social and communication skills by creating a classroom environment that emphasises collaboration and exchange of ideas. Students learn how to articulate their ideas clearly as well as to collaborate tasks effectively by sharing in group projects. They exchange ideas, and learn to ‘negotiate’ with others and to evaluate their contribution in a socially acceptable manner. This is essential to success in the real world, since one is always exposed to a variety of experiences in which one has to cooperate and navigate among the ideas of others.

2.2.12 Criticisms of Constructivism

One of the criticisms of constructivism, lies in its tendency towards epistemological relativism including individual and social community relativism. This seems to be the major challenge that constructivists face. The quasi-religious or ideological aspect is identified as the weak point of constructivism. Constructivists, of whatever ilk, consensually hold that knowledge is not mechanically acquired, but actively constructed within the constraints and offerings of the learning environment. This is commonly regarded as a paradigm shift in educational psychology. It may be noted that with this shift, human subjectivity, which was excluded by behaviourist and information-processing accounts, has returned to the discussion. But what is of great interest is the relation expressed by popular constructivist accounts between the objective and subjective aspects, between the world and mind. Cognitive or radical constructivists consequently emphasise the learner centred and discovery-oriented learning
processes. In the process, social environment and social interaction work merely as stimulus for individual cognitive conflict.

The social or realist constructivist tradition is often said to derive from the work of Vygotsky which emphasises social environment in learning as the central theme. Learning is thus considered to be a largely situation-specific and context-bound activity (Eggen and Kauchak, 1999; McInerney and McInerney, 2002; Woolfolk, 2001). The negative side of constructivism in becoming an exclusive religion of human epistemology does not lie solely within its claim of becoming a paradigm; many constructivists harbour important socio-political and educational concerns (Phillips, 1995).

2.3 Critical Pedagogy

2.3.1 Meaning of Critical Pedagogy

“Pedagogy is a deliberate attempt to influence how and what knowledge and identities are produced within and among particular sets of social relations.” (Girox and Symon, 1989). In any learning context, there is an expectation that some kind of exchange will occur so the practice of pedagogy relates to the production of knowledge. Therefore, in examining pedagogy, questions must be asked about the goals of education and the practices in classrooms or other learning contexts. If knowledge is to be produced, the pedagogue must systematically reflect on the role of a teacher in relation to the learner and must also examine such critical aspects as the social milieu that influences and is subsequently influenced by the learning experience. Pedagogy is to good interactive teaching and learning in the classroom as critical pedagogy is to good interactive teaching and learning in the
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classroom and in the real world. Critical pedagogy looks for ‘why’ that leads to action. Critical means to see deeply what is below the surface-think, critique or analyse.

Critical Pedagogy is a teaching approach which attempts to help students question and challenge the beliefs and practices that dominate. It is a theory and practice of helping students achieve critical consciousness. Critical Pedagogy signals how questions of audience, voice, power and evaluation actively work to construct particular relations between teachers and students, institutions and society and classrooms and communities. Pedagogy in the critical sense illuminates the relationship among knowledge, authority and power (Giroux, 1994).

According to Friere, Critical Pedagogy is a dialogic exchange between teachers and students, where both learn, both question, both reflect and both participate in meaning making. It is a process that leads to the development of critical consciousness. Cultural circles should be formed, which means a non-hierarchical collaborative relationship between teachers and learners has to be built for the purpose of fostering an atmosphere in which the learners’ voices and experiences are valued. The approach to this pedagogy begins with the practice of the teacher mingling with the community, asking questions to the people, and gathering a list of words used in their daily lives that have immediacy and personal meaning for them. Context based generative themes were used for constructing knowledge.

Freire’s theory of pedagogy has been influential in re-conceptualising thinking about the teachers’ role and relationship with the learner. From this
standpoint, the learning process should be dialectical and embedded in two interrelated contexts. The first is the ‘authentic dialogue’ between the teachers and the learners, second is the social reality in which people exist. The role of teachers is to create pedagogical spaces by using their personal passion, domain knowledge and expertise, and to pose problems in order to help learners analyse their own experiences and thus arrive at a critical understanding of the reality.

### 2.3.2 Historical background of Critical Pedagogy

As a philosophy of education, critical pedagogy has deep historical roots. The foundations of critical pedagogy can be traced along a general timeline that begins with Marx (Gibson, 1986). After Marxism, came the philosophy of the Frankfurt School and the precursor to critical pedagogy, Critical Social Theory (Gibson, 1986). Prominent educational philosophers such as Counts and Dewey began calling for social and educational reform, similar to those of Marx and the Frankfurt School (Marcus & Tar, 1984). Later, these theories spanned to influence modern educational philosophers such as the late Freire and current prominent academic McLaren (McLaren, 2003). This section will provide a brief history of critical pedagogy and its origin within critical social theory and a discussion of its contemporary form.

Marxism is a political/economic view of society based on the writings of the 19th century German philosopher Marx (Gibson, 1986). According to this philosophy, a critique of society is essential to achieve the ultimate goal of a revolution, culminating in an egalitarian society and economy based on socialism (Marcus & Tar, 1984). Marx’s writings have been read and used by numerous
individuals all around the world to critique and call for reform of society (Marcus & Tar, 1984). Marxism was the foundational philosophy of the Frankfurt school (Gibson, 1986). The Frankfurt School was founded in 1923 at the University of Frankfurt by sociologists who “drew upon challenged, revised, and added to Marx’s theory” to develop critical social theory (Gibson, 1986).

Critical social theory was developed by three scholars, Horkheimer, Adorno, and Marcuse (Gibson, 1986). Critical social theory attempts to critique society and knowledge in a holistic and complete way that facilitates fundamental change in all parts of society (Gibson, 1986). Horkheimer suggested using critical social theory to analyse the relationship between the individual and society, to more deeply understand Marxist writings through society, and to explain the relationships linking consciousness, culture, and society (Gibson, 1986). Adorno’s two primary perspectives on critical social theory were negative dialectics and the authoritarian personality. He suggested that negative dialectics are the constant interplay and interactions between individuals and society (Gibson, 1986; Marcus & Tar, 1984).

Adorno also differentiated between perceived and non-observed interactions, with a focus on the latter (Gibson, 1986; Marcus & Tar, 1984). Authoritarian personality refers to an examination of the individual in society, with a primary focus on the psychology of the individual and subsequent social interactions (Gibson, 1986; Marcus & Tar, 1984). Marcuse was the most famous of these three sociological philosophers (Gibson, 1986). He suggested that individuals achieve personal emancipation through self-gratification (Gibson, 1986). Marcuse determined that gratification creates “better individuals, better personal relationships, and a better society” (as cited in Gibson, 1986). The second of
Marcuse’s ideas was a critical theory of society (Gibson, 1986). This idea suggested that technological advances and capitalism lead to submission to material wealth and not to personal freedom because the individual becomes one-dimensional and gives up on social justice (Gibson, 1986; Marcus & Tar, 1984).

Critical social theory seeks to examine the nature of society and how the individual fits into that schema (Gibson, 1986). The application of this theory is achieved through a social critique of society and an acknowledgement of the injustices that saturate it, which is akin to critical pedagogy (Gibson, 1986). The Frankfurt School’s focus was on society and not education but prominent educational philosophers, such as Counts and Dewey, helped to apply the ideas of the Frankfurt school and critical social theory in education (Gibson, 1986; Spring, 2004).

Counts’ ideas were similar to Critical Social Theory of the Frankfurt School, although Counts applied his theories of reform and reconstruction specifically to education (Counts, 1978; Spring, 2004). Counts (1978) addressed the inequities that exist in society and subsequently in education. He suggested that humans are not born free and that it would be bad if this were true because it would make them void of any culture. Counts argued that culture is the primary conduit through which individuals learn and are given purpose, most especially in education. He was also critical of the idea that education is a sanctified place that is free from political or economic influence. Rather, he suggested that education was a reflection of society and, therefore, would inevitably be influenced by it.
Counts was very critical of capitalism, much like the philosophers of the Frankfurt School, and suggested that its economic framework led to the wasteful, inefficient, cruel, and inhuman treatment of people (Spring, 2004). He further suggested that schools reflected the ills of social inequality and that their goal should be to reshape society to allow collectivism to prosper. He argued that social change should begin within the schools (Counts, 1978; Spring, 2004).

Dewey was another educational reformist of the United States of America in the early 20th century. Dewey’s educational philosophies were child-centered and progressive minded with the implied goal of creating a reformed and more democratic society through schools (Spring, 2004). Dewey’s progressive educational ideas focused on a child-centered philosophy that emphasized the individual and not the intentions of the school (Spring, 2004). Dewey saw the school as a means to remedy the social problems of society by providing social services (Spring, 2004). He suggested that schools were the ultimate avenues to achieve social change because they were the most basic level to reach people and effect social change within the confines of the democratic system in the United States (Spring 2004).

Counts (1978) had major criticisms of child-centred progressives like Dewey. He suggested that “their naive belief in education free of social content was in fact a subtle but effective assent to the status quo because it ignored the reality that all education by necessity has a social dimension”. Counts further argued that child-centered progressives did not reform education and/or society but rather subverted change (Counts, 1978). He argued that “to ignore this fact was to serve the interests of existing social elites” and that “child-centered
progressives were not social progressives but [rather] unwilling social conservatives who masked their social views with child-centred language”.

Freire and McLaren are two prominent names in critical pedagogy in the present. Freire’s philosophy is akin to that of the Frankfurt School, Counts, and Dewey (Freire, 1970; McLaren, 2003; Gibson, 1986). McLaren’s writings on critical pedagogy and education are also amalgams of all of the previously mentioned schools of thought (McLaren, 2003).

Social studies has long been thought to serve the purpose of instilling in students a common set of beliefs and personal philosophies. It seeks to promote personal and independent development of the individual, much like the proposed teachings of the Frankfurt School, Counts, and Dewey (Case & Clark, 1997). Its purpose, according to some, is also to facilitate social reformation (Case & Clark, 1997; McLaren, 2003). Case and Clark (1997) suggest that citizenship education may well serve to help initiate social reformation because students are taught to be critical of information. Case and Clark (1997), however, also note a difference between social action per se and reformist social action because the first implies limited action in which students discuss relevant social issues and methods of reconstruction but do not take action beyond classroom dialogue. Reformist social action suggests action meant to achieve social change, much like Freire. Understanding this difference is important to achieving reform because social action per se instills a false sense of achievement that does not lead to actual reform, whereas reformist social action, similar to Freire’s social reconstruction, does (Case & Clark, 1997; Freire, 1970).
2.3.3 Theoretical Basis of Critical Pedagogy

The philosophical principles of critical pedagogy are drawn from several conceptual categories including cultural politics, political economy, the historicity of knowledge, dialectical theory, ideology and critique, hegemony, resistance and counter hegemony praxis as well as dialogue/conscientization (Freire, 1970; Baltodano and Torres, 2003).

Several notable 20th century educators and activists including Dewey, Horton, Kozor, Apple, Dubois, King, Freire and Boal influenced and in some cases contributed to the body of research and literature of critical pedagogy. The Frankfurt school of critical theory including Horkheimer, Adorno, Marcuse, Habermas, Benjamin, Fromom, Lowenthal and others developed a unified approach to cultural criticism and seminar contributions to the work of critical pedagogy. Several more scholars contributed to the emergence of critical pedagogy including Aronowitz, Girox, Apple, Hooks, Macedo, McLaren, Shor, Kincheloe, Britzman, Lather, Sternbeig, Cruz, Darder, Wexler, Lerstyna, Bartoleome, Gunberg, Quintero, Sofo, Carlson, Berry, Mayo, Martin, Malott, Marepreyn among many others.

The following critical pedagogues whose research and theories forms the basis of critical pedagogy have to be studied in detail.

2.3.3.1 Joe Kincheloe

According to Kincheloe (2008), the central tenet of critical pedagogy maintains that the classroom, curricular, school structures and teachers are not neutral sites waiting to be shaped by educational professionals. While such
professionals do possess agency, this prerogative is not completely free and independent of decisions made previously by people operating with different values and shaped by the ideologies and cultural assumptions of their historical contexts. These contexts are shaped in the same ways language and knowledge are constructed, as historical power makes particular practices seem natural—as if they could have been constructed in no other way.

Kincheloe lists the basic concerns of critical pedagogy.

1. All education is inherently political and all pedagogy must be aware of this condition.

2. A social and educational vision of justice and equality should ground all education. Issues of race, class, gender, sexuality, religion, and physical ability are all important domains of oppression and critical anti-hegemonic action.

3. The alleviation of oppression and human suffering is a key dimension of educational purpose.

4. Schools must not hurt students. Good teachers do not blame students for their failures or strip students of the knowledge they bring to the classroom.

5. All positions including critical pedagogy itself must be problematised and questioned that is critical pedagogy is enacted through the use of generative themes to read the word and the world and the process of problem posing.

6. The professionalism of teachers must be respected and part of the role of any educator involves becoming a scholar and a researcher.

7. All teachers need to engage with students in constant dialogue with that questions existing knowledge and problematises the traditional power relations that have served to marginalise specific groups and individuals.
8. Education must promote both emancipatory change and the cultivation of the intellect. These goals should never be in conflict, they should be synergistic.

9. The politics of knowledge and issues of epistemology are central to understanding the way power operates in educational institutions to perpetuate privilege and subjugate the marginalised – “validated scientific knowledge”

2.3.3.2 Paulo Freire

Freire was a Brazilian educator whose revolutionary pedagogical theory influenced educational and social movements throughout the world and whose philosophical writings influenced academic disciplines that include sociology, anthropology, applied linguistics, pedagogy and cultural studies. His famous work has exercised considerable influence among progressive educators in the event, especially in the context of emerging tradition of critical pedagogy, bilingual education and multicultural education.

Freire’s revolutionary pedagogy starts from a deep love for and humility before the poor and oppressed people and a respect for their “common sense” which constitutes a knowledge no less important than the scientific knowledge of the professional. This humility makes possible a condition of reciprocal trust and communication between the educator who also learns and the student who also teaches. Thus, education becomes a “communion” between participants in a dialogue characterized by a reference, reciprocal and socially relevant exchange rather than the unilateral action of one individual agent for the benefit of the other. Freire conceived of the authentic teacher enacting a clear authority, rather
than being authoritarian. The teacher in his conception is not neutral but intervenes in the educational situation in order to help the student to overcome those aspects of his or her social constructs that are paralysing and to assist him/her to learn to think critically. In a similar fashion, Freire validated and affirmed the experiences of the oppressed without automatically legitimising or validating their content. All experiences including those of the teacher had to be interrogated in order to lay the base for ideological assumptions and presuppositions. The benchmark that Freire set for evaluating experiences grew out of a Christian marxist humanism. From this position, Freire urged both students and teachers to unlearn their race, class and gender privileges and to engage in a dialogue with those whose experiences are very different from their own. Thus he did not uncritically affirm student or teacher experiences but provided the conceptual tools with which to critically interrogate them so as to minimise their politically domesticating influences.

McLaren (2000) has called Freire the ‘inaugural philosopher of Critical Pedagogy’. Freire’s work ‘Pedagogy of the Oppressed’ articulates the distinction between ‘banking’ education and ‘problem posing’ education

1. Banking education

Freire criticised prevailing forms of education as reducing students to the status of passive objects to be acted upon by the teacher. In this traditional form of education it is the job of the teachers to deposit in the minds of students considered to be empty and in absolute ignorance, the bits of information that constitutes knowledge. Freire called this banking education. The goal of banking education is to immobilise the people within existing frameworks of power by
conditioning them to accept that meaning and historical agency are the sole property of the oppressor. Educators within the dominant culture and class tradition often characterise the oppressed as marginal, pathological and helpless.

2. Problem posing method

Against the banking model Freire proposed a dialogical problem posing method of education. In this model, the teacher and student become co-investigators of knowledge and the world. Instead of suggesting to students that their situation in society has been transcendentally framed by nature or reason as the banking model does, Freire’s problem posing education invites the oppressed to explore their reality as a “problem” to be transformed. The content of this education cannot be determined necessarily in advance, through the expertise of the educator but must instead arise from the lived experiences or reality of the students. It is not the task of the educator to provide the answer to the problems that these situation present, but to help students to achieve a form of critical thinking (or conscientisation) that will make possible an awareness of society as mutable and potentially open to transformation. Once they are able to see the world as a transformable situation rather than an unthinkable and inescapable stasis, it becomes possible for students to imagine a new and different reality.

In order to undertake this process, the oppressed must challenge their own internalisation of the oppressor. The oppressed are accustomed to thinking of themselves as ‘Less than’. They have been conditioned to view as complete and human only the dominating practices of the oppressor, so that to fully become human means to stimulate these practices. Against a “fear of freedom” that protects
them from a catalysing organisation of their being, the oppressed in dialogue engage in an existential process of dis-identifying with “the oppressor housed within”. This dis-identification allows them to begin the process of imagining a new being and a new life as subjects of their own history.

The concrete basis for Freire’s dialogical system of education is the culture circle, in which students and co-ordinator together discuss generative themes that have significance within the context of students’ lives. These themes, which are related to nature, culture, work and relationships are discovered through the co-operative research of educators and students. They express, in an open rather than propagandistic fashion, the principle contradiction that confront the students in their world. These themes are then represented in the form of codification (usually visual representation) that are taken on the basis for dialogue within the circle. As students decode these representation, they recognise them as situation in which they themselves are involved as subjects. The process of critical consciousness formation is initiated when students learn to read the codification in their situationality rather than simply experiencing them, and this makes possible the intervention by students in society. As the culture circle comes to recognise the need for print literacy, the visual codification are accompanied by words to which they correspond. Students learn to read these words in the process of reading the aspects of the world with which they are linked.

Although the system of codification has been very successful in promoting literacy among adult students, Freire always emphasised that it should not be approached mechanically but rather as a process of creation and awakening of consciousness. Awareness of the historicity of social life makes it possible for
students to imagine its recreation. Literacy is thus a self transformation producing a stance of intervention (Freire 1988). For Freire, authentic education is always a ‘practice’ of freedom rather than an alienating inculcation of skills.

Freire’s pedagogy has been influential in part because of the way it places the individual’s prior knowledge and experiences at the heart of the pedagogy. His work has become known as ‘Critical Pedagogy’. Freire himself frequently referred to it as a pedagogy of knowing.

Freire’s philosophy of education is an organic political consciousness. In his view the domination of some by others must be overcome, so that the humanisation of all can take place. Authoritarian forms of education, in serving to reinforce the oppressor’s view of the world and their material privilege in it, constitute an obstacle to the liberation of human beings. The means of this liberation is a praxis or process of action and reflection, which simultaneously names reality and acts to change it. Freire criticised views that emphasised either the objective or subjective aspect of social transformation, and insisted that revolutionary changes take place precisely through the consistency of a critical commitment in both word and deed. This dialectical unity is experienced in his formulation. “To speak a true word is to transform the world” (Freire, 1996).

2.3.3.3 Antonio Gramsci

Gramsci was a political activist of Italy. When he was in prison he wrote prison notebooks. The most famous notion emerging from the notebooks involved Gramsci’s concept of hegemony which is the central concept of critical pedagogy, in its effort to understand power. When hegemony works best, the public begin to
look at dominant ways of seeing the world as simply common sense. In his theory of hegemony, Gramsci argued that in modern industrial societies, it was also necessary to control culture. Culture is controlled not by way of coercive force but through the winning of consent. Gramsci argued against the reduction of the importance of culture and increased the need for intellectuals in modern societies. Organic intellectuals, Gramsci wrote, are individuals who resist hegemony and help bring in their fellow citizens a sense of historical consciousness of themselves and the society. The role of the critical pedagogue is in part a reflection of Gramsci’s characterisation of the organic intellectual.

2.3.3.4 Michael Apple

The inequity of American society has always been a dominating concern in the life of Apple. He has been convinced of the need to study the effects of power and inequality in education. According to him, schools cannot be separated from political and economic life. Indeed he argues that the entire process of education is political in;

- the way it is funded
- its goals and objectives
- the manner in which these goals and objectives are evaluated
- the nature of the textbooks
- who attends and who doesn’t
- who has the power to make these and other decisions.
Because of this political dimension, Apple contends that schools will always be positioned in political struggles concerning the meaning of democracy whose culture is legitimate, and who should benefit from governmental action. He studied the curricular form of knowledge and their relationship to larger political, economic, social and cultural dynamics. Apple promoted the perspectives of critical pedagogy maintaining all the way that educational theorists should never “academise the political”. Theory, he contends, should never became an academic pursuit of its own. There are positive dimensions to theorising, Apple asserts that “we absolutely need to constantly interrogate our accepted perspectives”.

2.3.3.5 Ira Shor

Shor calls for a dialogical pedagogy. He is dedicated to the preposition that the classroom is the venue for the construction of knowledge. The teachers and students have a reciprocal relationship. Traditional education represses, instead of developing skills and intellectual interests. It is the responsibility of critical teachers to research what students know, speak, experience and feel. This will create a “critical paradigm” that will respect the experiences and languages of students. Students must understand the deep meaning, root causes, social context, and personal consequences of any action, event, object, process, organisation, experience, text, subject matter, policy, mass media or discourse (1992). He resisted the standardisation and deskilling of contemporary schooling.

2.3.3.6 Henry Giroux

Students responded to one of the following nine principles, according to Giroux.
1. Education must be understood as producing not only knowledge but also political subjects.

2. Ethics must be seen as the central concern of critical pedagogy.

3. Critical pedagogy needs to focus on the issue of difference in an ethically challenging and politically transformative way.

4. Critical pedagogy needs a language that allows for competing solidarities and political vocabularies that do not reduce the issues of power, justice, struggle and inequality to a single script a master narrative that suppresses the contingent historical and the everyday as a serious object of study. This suggests that curriculum knowledge is not be treated as a sacred text but to be developed as part of an ongoing engagement with a variety of narratives and tradition that can be re-read and re-formulated in politically different forms.

5. Critical Pedagogy needs to create forms of knowledge through its emphasis on breaking down disciplinary boundaries and creating new spaces where knowledge can be produced.

6. The enlightenment notion of reason needs to be reformulated within critical pedagogy. Reason implicates and is implicated on the intersection of power, knowledge and politics.

7. Critical pedagogy needs to regain a sense of alternative by combining a language of critique and possibility. Postmodern feminism, in both its critique of patriarchy and its search to construct, exemplifies new forms of identity and social relation.

8. Critical pedagogy needs to develop a theory of teachers as transformative intellectuals who occupy specifiable political and social locations. Critical pedagogy would represent itself as the active construction rather than transmission of particular ways of life.
2.3.4 Theoretical Assumptions of Critical Pedagogy

Education is a conversation where students and teachers pose and solve problems together. Therefore an authentic pedagogy was being created by teachers, participants and their learners through the redesign, of their own classroom settings over time. For that, the teachers should think about the learners in a new way - as agentive youngsters, curious, inventive meaning makers. Evidence based coherence and direction should be made for developing young learners to their full potential. A collaboration between a community of teachers, researchers and academics jointly committed to honing and improving classroom practice has to be made. It is to be emphasised that learning is not a series of unconnected steps or the planning of day-to-day exercises and activities but a joint engagement developed with learners in a shared community over time. The criteria of authentic pedagogy which is developed through a range of settings is listed below.

Pedagogy:

1. is invariably political, although it political nature is rarely taken into account explicitly
2. is explicit about values, vision and educational purposes and addresses ‘big ideas’ about learning and teaching
3. is a collaborative, iterative process between teachers, learners and other members of the community
4. evolves over time in the ebb and flow of real settings, and is constantly open to change, negotiation and revision
5. acknowledges teachers as intellectuals
6. is a complex interplay between theory and practice
requires teachers to be researchers of their own settings

seeks to bring out the best selves of the learners working with institutional barriers such as race, gender and class

acknowledges the intimate relationship between learning and identity

must be relevant to all possible contents.

These criteria open up a new language with which to consider the processes of learning and teaching, free from the sometime-dominant discourses of standards, effectiveness and performance.

2.3.5 Critical Pedagogy, Critical Theory and Critical Thinking

The notion of being critical is considered desirable in contemporary educational theory and appears not only in relation to the practices of critical theory and critical pedagogy, but also in the tradition of critical thinking. Critical pedagogy and critical thinking have some broad commonality but both define criticality not in the same manner (Burbules and Berk, 1999).

Critical thinking encourages an analysis of situations and arguments to identify fallacious or unreliable assertions or meanings. While it may well encourage discernment in relation to the social and human conditions, it does not specifically demand social action. Critical pedagogy, however, is preoccupied with social injustice and examines and promotes practices that have the potential to transform oppressive institutions or social relations, largely through educational practices. This expectation of action or social change clearly distinguishes critical pedagogy from critical thinking. Critical thinking primarily aims at the individual and largely ignores the pedagogical relations which occur between teacher and learner or
between learners. Critical pedagogy is more interested in collective action so “individual criticality is intimately linked to social criticality”.

Both critical pedagogy and critical theory are concerned with investigating institutional and societal practices with a view to resisting the impositions of dominant social norms and structures. But critical pedagogy is distinguished from critical theory in that it is primarily educational response to oppressive power relations and inequalities existing in educational institutions. It focuses on issues related to opportunity, voice and dominant discourses of education and seeks more equitable and liberating educational experiences. In short, “in the language of critical pedagogy the critical person is one who is empowered to seek justice, to seek emancipation” (Burbules and Berk 1999). McLaren (1993) suggests that critical pedagogy involves a way of thinking about negotiating and transforming the relationship among classroom teaching, the production of knowledge, the institutional structures of the school and the social and material relations of the wider community, society and nation-state.

2.3.6 Ideas put forward by Critical Pedagogy

1. Liberatory Education

Liberatory Education is an educational experience that allows for students to question power and power/knowledge relationships in society. This enables the students in identifying potential concepts that have embedded relationships of oppression, cultural colonisation or any form of social injustice: questioning scientific method: questioning historical facts: using mathematics as a tool for community investigation: questioning profit: questioning language: questioning
public health policies: investigating poverty in the immediate community and globally.

2. Class struggle in Educational Contexts

The primary mode of analysis comes from looking at how socio economics limits the power of people. Anyon (1981) has made a study of how knowledge is treated differently, based on the class of the students. The study attempts to find out how knowledge is treated in the professional/elite schools, in middle-class schools and in working class power schools.

3. Cultural Capital

It is the acquired tastes, values, languages and dialects or the educational qualification that mark a person as belonging to a privileged social and cultural class. Just as in the case of learning one’s native culture and language, cultural capital is acquired in the absence of any deliberate or explicit teaching. It is therefore unconsciously learned. It is best hidden form of hereditary transmission of capital.

4. Reading the world vs Reading the word

This involves not only reading the word but also reading the world. This means an in-depth understanding of the world. This allows the people to question the nature of the historical and social situations through reading the world. For education, Freire implies a dialogic exchange between teachers and students where both learn, both question, both reflect and both participate in meaning making.
5. Naming

Exposing and identifying those social processes that promote hegemony and social injustice. The people participate in their own domination. Hegemony is the perpetuation of social injustices. Hegemony allows for the powerful elites to retain their power while non-violently controlling the less powerful groups. Hegemony is perpetuated through social consensus, social forms and social structures including schools, church, media, political system and family.

6. Cognizable objects

Cognizable objects is an object from everyday life that is used for deconstructing social processes that create social injustice.

7. Generative themes

Topics and questions raised by students become classroom topics for investigation and exploration. Teacher listen to what students discuss with one another as well as to the questions and comments they offer during discussions class. Over time, these topics become centralised for investigation, enquiry and community based work.

8. Critical questions

Critical pedagogy is perhaps most notable in the field of educational theories as a body of literature that consistently problematises knowledge, theories and beliefs established as “truth”. Critical pedagogues like Giroix and McLaren question such truths and/or the pedagogical attempts in literature or the classroom to establish truths by asking “what are the values of public schools? who dictates
those values? How are those values reinforced? (Darder, Baltodano and Torres, 2003). Critical questioning helps students to develop as critically conscious and socially responsible citizens.

9. Authentic Dialogue and Critical Consciousness

Authentic Dialogue and Critical Consciousness is a popular education and social concept developed by Paulo Freire. It focuses on achieving an in-depth understanding of the world, allowing for the perception and exposure of social and political contradictions. Critical consciousness proceeds through the identification of “generative themes” which Freire identifies as iconic representations that have a powerful emotional impact on the daily lives of learners. The process of conscientization involves identifying contradictions in experience through dialogue and becoming part of the process of changing the world. Learning, according to Freire, is the act of knowing and requires the presence of two interrelated contexts. The first one is the context of authentic dialogue between learners and educators as equally knowing subjects. The second is the social reality in which people exist (Freire, 1989). To assist students in engaging in critical consciousness, the educator’s role is to empower students to reflect on their own worlds, to self assess in fact. In doing so, teachers will need to employ processes that help the students in building their ability to “become”.

10. Critical thinking

Critical thinking is the fundamental components of critical pedagogy. Legitimate critical thinking is one of the first steps in critical pedagogy. It requires intense questioning of one’s environmental controls. Critical Pedagogy allows
students to truly think critically about any number of subjects. Ahlquist (1990) suggests there are two types of critical thinking ‘weak sense’ and ‘strong sense’ critical thinking. In ‘strong sense’ critical thinking, critical pedagogy employs ‘true critical thought’ in such a manner that extensive analysis can take place. ‘Weak sense’ critical thinking refers to surface thought which does not involve substantive questioning of any potentially underlying issues. Ahlquist argues that “instead of telling students what they need to know about history, the teacher should empower students by enabling them to discover/rediscover their own cultural identities.

11. Problem posing education

Problem posing education demands dialogue and the relationship between educator and learner becomes one of critical co-investigations.

2.3.7 The Role of the Teacher as Critical Scholar/Activist in Education

There are nine tasks to be performed. The role of teachers as researchers, scholars and educators committed to social justice in answering and acting on social inequalities are as follows:

1. Describing reality critically

Describing reality critically means illuminating the ways in which educational policy and practice are connected to the relation of exploitation and domination and to struggles against such relations in the larger society.

2. Showing spaces for action

This means pointing to contradictions and to spaces of possible action. Its
aim is to critically examine current realities with a conceptual/political framework that emphasizes the spaces in which counter hegemonic actions can be or are now going on.

3. Acting as (Critical) Secretaries

This requires re-definition of research. It means that teachers act as ‘Secretaries’ to those groups of people and social movements who are now engaged in challenging existing relations of unequal power or non-reformist reforms.

4. Giving our Expertise

This involves reconstructing the form and content of “elite knowledge” so that it meets genuinely progressive social needs and acting as a “organic intellectuals”. According to Gramsci, organic intellectuals are individuals who resist hegemony, and help bring them fellow citizens a sense of historical consciousness of themselves and the society.

5. Keeping Critical Tradition Alive (Critically)

In this process, critical work has the task of keeping tradition of radical work alive. It involves keeping alive the dresses, utopian vision and non reformist reform that are so much a part of these radical tradition.

6. Developing new Skills

The above traditions should be kept alive, only then can the question “for whom are they kept alive and how & in what form are they to be made available?” be raised. This requires relearning or developing and using varied or new skills of working at many levels with multiple groups. Thus journalistic and media skills,
academic and popular skills, and the ability to speak to are crucial. Critical Media Project is an example that is specially important for defending democratic schools.

7. Building critically democratic communities in one’s daily life

Acting with the progressive social movements and the policies their work supports or in movements against the assumptions and policies they critically analyze.

8. Acting as a mentor

Acting as a committed role model and mentor for one’s students (and one’s colleagues) through concrete actions showing that it is possible to combine ethical and political commitments with work as researcher and teacher.

9. Using one’s privilege in order to open up spaces.

It is necessary to open up spaces at universities and research and development centres for those who do not now have a voice. E.g.: Women’s Studies Programmes, Activist-In-Residence programmes and Indigenous Studies Programmes. No one can be good at all of these. These are collective tasks.

2.3.8 Benefits of Critical Pedagogy

According to McLaren (2003) “school knowledge is historically and socially rooted and interest bound,” and “is never neutral but... rooted in the notion of power relations”. This key assumption underscores why critical pedagogy is beneficial in shifting from teacher-centred to more community-based education. If knowledge taught in schools is bound by a particular interest that supports
individuals in positions of power, students must be equipped with the tools necessary to understand that these institutional forces bias their education. The critical approach to education must begin with pre-service teachers because it is they who conceptualize democracy in the classroom (Marri, 2005).

A democracy is an institution in which the participants exercise direct or representative control. Therefore democratic education must be modelled in such a way that students are participants in the process rather than separated from it (McLaren, 1999).

Community-based education allows students to place the praxis of education in themselves and their community (Calderon, 2003). Freire (1970) explains the idea of praxis as the ability to create culture and history and find the “source of knowledge and creation” through reflection and action. Critical pedagogy is important in this type of learning because it encourages students to be critical of their immediate surroundings and thoughts (Calderon, 2003). Fabillar (2002) argues that students will achieve two fundamental advancements as they begin to engage themselves. Empowerment occurs in pre-service teachers by experiencing it rather than being instructed about it. These advancements are rooted in a critical pedagogical point of view. To become active, conscious, and critical of one’s environment means being democratically involved.

Culture is relevant to critical pedagogy because it is the conduit through which ideas are transferred (McLaren, 2003). Cultural awareness through critical pedagogy helps to develop critical thinking among pre-service teachers (Bassey, 1996). By taking a critical pedagogical view, pre-service teachers can gain a deeper
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insight into their own culture and personal history (Moss, 2001). One important factor of critical pedagogy is its ability to raise racial awareness. Today teachers do not often reflect the race or ethnicity of the students they teach (Spring, 2004). In a multicultural classroom teachers and students must be aware of racial and ethnic diversity (Milner, 2003). Milner (2003) emphasizes the relevance and importance of critical pedagogy in achieving racial awareness by promoting completeness.

2.3.9 Criticism of Critical Pedagogy

A major criticism of critical pedagogy is that it only offers deconstruction and no direction. “Despite its unrelenting assault on the oppressiveness of schooling critical pedagogy may be guilty of diversion, division, illusion, and confusion, which are strong influences of oppression in a democratic society” (Knight & Pearl, 2000). Some educational philosophers believe that critical pedagogy can be anti-democratic because it often times exposes problems in education but fails to offer suggestions beyond raising awareness (Knight & Pearl, 2000). Knight and Pearl (2000) suggest that because critical pedagogy does not offer suggestions for change, it leaves a vacuum that is filled by the very oppressive educational practices that critical pedagogy claims to be against. These authors go on to say that instead of facilitating change, critical pedagogy allows anti-democratic and anti-intellectual education to persist by not providing a model of reconstruction. Filax (1997) suggests critical pedagogy can be oppressive because some teachers allow it to dominate their classroom, which may cause some students to feel they have no choice but to accept critical pedagogy. She further suggests that critical pedagogy gives the impression that the only way to achieve change is through revolution, making it seem as if social change cannot be achieved otherwise.
Brown (1999) presents two main criticisms of critical pedagogy. First, critical pedagogy can instill an elitist mentality in students because its aims are to perform a critique of society, which causes students to separate themselves from society. Being separated from society may cause some students to feel as though they are disconnected or opposed to being part of it. By viewing themselves as separate; Brown (1999) suggests, students begin naturally to view the problems of society as not their own. Rather they view the problems as those of a society of which they are not part. Brown’s second criticism is that critical pedagogy may cause teachers to neglect the students’ points of view by focusing too much on critical pedagogy. This suggests that teachers who employ critical pedagogy may be so focused on the concept of critical pedagogy, that it becomes more important than its goal of social reconstruction and reform.