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Paulo Freire



Paulo Freire will speak to the ASCD General Session about Education of the Poor and Under-Served on Monday, March 18 from 9-10:30 am.

After the Brazilian coup d'etat of 1964, Freire left the country and lived and worked in Chile in the Institute for Training in Agrarian Reform, an organ of the Christian Democratic government with responsibility for educational extension within the agrarian reform. There Freire had the opportunity of experiencing his methodology in a new intellectual, political, ideological and sociological environment; working with the most progressive sectors of the Christian Democratic Party Youth (some of them afterwards incorporated into new parties inside the Unidad Popular coalition) and finding himself in contact with highly stimulating Marxist thought and powerful working class organizations. This was at the dawn of triumph of Unidad Popular in Chile which was the first successful electoral experience of transition to socialism in the region, which started in 1970 and ended in 1973 with the coup d'etat that brought Pinochet to power.

In 1970 Freire left the region after accepting an invitation from the World Council of Churches in Geneva to work as principal consultant for its Department of Education. Meanwhile, the popularity of Freire's method and his problem-posing philosophy of education grew and embraced progressive educators in Latin America, being experienced almost everywhere, on a small scale or incorporated into national experiences of adult education, such as in Uruguay, Argentina, Mexico, Chile, Peru, and Ecuador.

Up to this point, almost without exception each progressive experience in pedagogy advocates to some extent the main Freirean themes and assumptions, and the word *concientizacao* (conscientization or "critical consciousness") acquired the strength of a political-cultural program for the socialist groups. Its popularity as a new educational perspective grew everywhere. Indeed, Freire had to explicitly warn against the fetishist use of this emblematic word as a front for conservative programs whose educational principles were closer to "banking education" than to 'problem-posing education' or "cultural action for freedom."

Freire's thought can now be clearly perceived as an expression of socialist pedagogy, and the Freirean analysis has been, over time, worked into the historical-materialist framework, redefining to some extent its old existentialist-phenomenologist themes without, however, ever adopting an orthodox stance.

This brief introduction leads us in the next section to point out the characterization of the process of education, cultural action, and critical consciousness in Freire's work and consider its contribution to radical social change.

After living in exile for fifteen years, since returning to Brazil in 1980, Freire attempted to "re-learn Brazil", thus, traveling incessantly throughout the country, lecturing, engaging in dialogues with students and teachers, and publishing.

He has worked for the last twelve years as a Professor in the Faculty of Education of the Catholic University of Sao Paulo.

(This information about Paulo Freire is the publicity material distributed by his agency, Speakers Worldwide, Inc.; telephone 202/686-3221.)