

# **The Relevance of Paulo Freire's Contributions to Education and Development in Present Day Africa**

**By Juma E. Nyirenda**

## **Abstract**

Paulo Freire is a Brazilian educator and philosopher who is best known for his literacy method based on conscientization and dialogue. He has been called "the greatest living educator, a master and a teacher" (Taylor, 1993, p. 1). This article identifies and examines Freire's educational ideas which offer most important contribution to understanding educational practices and discusses their relevance to education and development in contemporary Africa in terms of the extent to which they are still of value. These ideas include Freire's theory of conscientization and dialogue, liberating education, a criticism of banking education, and a criticism of the concept of extension as cultural invasion. The examination of these ideas shows that, given the existing realities in African societies today, particularly in the rural areas, Freire's ideas now appear more relevant to education and development in Africa than ever before.

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# **La Coherence des Contributions de Paulo Freire a l' Education et'au Développement en Afrique Contemporaine**

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## **Résumé**

Paulo Freire est éducateur et philosophe brésilien, qui est bien connu dans le domaine de la littérature, basée sur la sensibilisation et le dialogue. On l'a baptisé "l'éducateur contemporain le plus grand; maître et professeur" (Taylor, 1993, p. 1). Cet exposé cerne, pour mieux analyser, les idées de ce monsieur sur l'éducation. Cela permet de voir l'importance de sa contribution et de comprendre les pratiques éducationnelles, ainsi que leur cohérence au développement en Afrique contemporaine. Ces idées comprennent la théorie de Freire sur la sensibilisation et le dialogue, l'universalisation de l'éducation, une critique de l'éducation bancaire et du concept de l'expansion comme une agression culturelle. L'analyse critique de ces idées montre qu'étant donné les réalités de la société africaine contemporaine, notamment dans les régions rurales, les conseils de Freire nunc sont encore plus cohérents, en ce qui concerne l'éducation et le développement approprié en Afrique.

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## Introduction

Paulo Reglus Neves Freire was born on September 19th, 1921 in Recife in Brazil. He grew up in a Christian family as a Catholic under difficult conditions. He is best known for his work in and influence on literacy campaigns and programmes first in Brazil, then in Chile and later in other countries including Guinea Bissau, Nicaragua and Tanzania (Allman, 1994; Gadotti, 1994).

Freire was one of the founders of the Cultural Extension Service of the University of Recife. And he was its first director. At that time, Freire was also the Coordinator of the Adult Education Project of the Movement of Popular Culture in Recife. Freire's experiences in this project led to the maturing of his early educational ideas. He was concerned about the large numbers of illiterate people. He considered them obstacles to the development of Brazil and the creation of a democratic mentality (Freire, 1974; Bee, 1990). Freire (1974) stated that, "in 1964, approximately four million school-age children lacked schools; there were sixteen million illiterates of fourteen years and older" (p. 41). Therefore, Freire sought to provide these illiterate people with an alternative education which would take place outside a traditional school (Bee, 1990). And through the Adult Education Project of the Movement of Popular Culture Freire and his colleagues set up:

... a new institution of popular culture, a "culture circle", since among us, a school was a traditionally passive concept. Instead of a teacher, we had a coordinator; instead of lectures, dialogue; instead of pupils, group participants; instead of alienating syllabi, compact programs that were "broken down" and codified into learning units (Freire 1974, p. 42).

These culture circles were established in the villages and slums of Recife and were deliberately designed to be different from traditional schools. As mentioned in the above quotation, culture circles had coordinators in place of teachers, learning was done through an exchange of ideas between the coordinator and group participants and dialogue replaced the traditional

lecture in which information and skills were handed down to the learner. Culture circles encouraged active participation and the content to be studied was related to the interests and reality of the group participants. These culture circles attempted to clarify situations through critical discussion or debate and to seek action as a result of that clarification. The topics for discussion were offered by the groups themselves. They included topics such as nationalism, profit remittances abroad, the political revolution in Brazil, illiteracy, the vote for the illiterates, and democracy. The topics were schematised or codified and presented to the groups with visual aids like pictures or slides and then followed by critical discussion. Freire reports that they were amazed by the success of this form of participatory teaching. Consequently, Freire was convinced that learning to read for adults should be a process in which content and materials had to have a bearing on their daily reality; and that a study of their concrete social reality should lead to critical awareness of the possibilities for action and change (Freire, 1972 and 1974; Freire and Shor, 1987; Bee, 1990)

Freire used the experience in the culture circles to develop a method of teaching literacy to adults based on his theory of conscientization. He conducted experiments under the auspices of the Service of Culture Extension of the University of Recife. The first experiments with the method began in 1962 involving 300 rural farm workers who were taught how to read and write in forty-five days. In 1964, 20,000 culture circles were planned to be set up. However, the military coup in that year interrupted Freire's work. He was jailed for seventy days and later went into exile in Chile (Sanders, 1968).

Freire presented his literacy method in a more detailed form in his 1967 book entitled *Education as a Practice of Freedom*. The uses of the method can be found in his book entitled *Conscientization*. The basis of Freire's method is that education is seen as a part of the process of the revolutionary transformation of society. The method is linked to a total change in society.

The context of Freire's ideas are the conditions or circum-



stances of the Northeast of Brazil at the beginning of the 1960s where half of the population lived in the "culture of silence". They were illiterate and "apathetic, down-trodden, and fatalistic in their attitudes" (Bee, 1990, p. 40). Freire hoped that his literacy method would make the illiterate people lose their fatalistic, apathetic and naive view of their reality as given and immutable. Freire wanted to replace this view with critical awareness so that illiterate people could accept their role as subjects in it. A critical perception of reality would make illiterate people know what needs changing. Hence it was important to raise a critical consciousness of the illiterate people.

It can be seen, therefore, that one of the important contributions of Freire to education and development is his theory of conscientization. However, there are other ideas of Freire which offer equally important contributions to education and development. This paper attempts to identify such ideas and discuss their relevance to education and development in contemporary Africa in terms of the extent to which they are still of value.

### **Literacy and Conscientization**

Freire's literacy method is founded on the notions of *conscientization* and *dialogue*. It involves teaching adults how to read and write in relation to the awakening of their consciousness about their social reality. Discussing Freire's texts, Taylor (1993) explains that, "Conscientization is a process of developing consciousness, but consciousness that is understood to have the power to transform reality" (p. 52). And Sanders (1968), writing on the Freire literacy method, defines conscientization as:

an 'awakening of consciousness', a change of mentality involving an accurate, realistic awareness of one's locus in nature and society; the capacity to analyze critically its causes and consequences, comparing it with other situations and possibilities; and *action* of a logical sort aimed at transformation. Psychologically it entails an awareness of one's dignity (p. 12).

And Sanders (1968) goes on to say that:

Even though the stimulus to conscientization derives from interpersonal dialogue in which one discovers the meaning of humanity from encounters with other humans, an almost inevitable consequence is political participation and the formation of interest groups such as community organizations and labour unions (p. 12 ).

Conscientization, therefore, leads to people organizing themselves to take action so as to change their social realities. The concept of conscientization has attracted those who believe in humanistic implications for the participation of the masses and in the necessity of a rapid restructuring of society. It rests on value assumptions of equality of all people, their right to knowledge and culture, and their right to criticise their situation and act upon it. It also implies having a faith in the capacity of all people, including the illiterate, to engage in critical dialogue. Dialogue is the means of achieving conscientization. Conscientization requires that an individual change his or her attitudes, perception or beliefs. In other words, individuals must not accept that social reality cannot be questioned and changed (Taylor, 1993).

Freire believed that once a person perceived and understood a challenge and recognised the possibilities of a response, that person will act and the nature of his or her action will correspond to the nature of his or her understanding. Hence, critical understanding of situations leads to critical action (Freire, 1970, 1972 and 1974). Freire's literacy method offered the illiterate people the means by which they could replace their *passive* perception of their reality by that which was *critical* so that they could do something about those situations. Freire felt that before teaching the illiterate adult to read, he or she should be helped to overcome his or her passive understanding and develop an increasing critical understanding of his or her reality. Freire (1970, and 1974) proposed that such conscientization could be achieved through an active dialogical and critical pedagogy,



changing the learning content so that it comes from the learner's experiences or concrete social realities, and the use of problem codification. He argued that to acquire literacy was more than just being mechanically competent in reading and writing skills but also to be competent in these skills in terms of consciousness. Hence, the educator's role is to enter into dialogue with the illiterate about concrete situations and give him or her the means with which he or she can teach himself or herself to read and write. This kind of teaching is not imposed from the top but takes place in a shared investigation or in a problem-raising situation between educator and educatee. The emphasis is on the critical analysis and the creativity of the educatee in order to discourage passive behaviour of the educatee or learners. As Gadotti (1994) has put it, Freire's literacy method is founded on the dialogical and dialectical relationship between the educator and the educatee who in this relationship should learn together.

In contemporary Africa, illiteracy rates are very high in many countries, especially in the rural areas. For example, the estimated adult literacy rates for Sub-Saharan Africa for the years 1995 and 2000 are 56.8 per cent and 62 per cent respectively (UNESCO, 1994). Illiterate people tend to be apathetic and accept their reality or condition as God-given and believe that they cannot do anything to change it. This is reflected, for example, in their behaviour during political elections. Some countries which have recently changed to multi-party politics have complained about the low turn out at elections by illiterate rural people. Zambia is one such example (Nyirenda, 1995). There are several factors that continue to contribute to high illiteracy rates in many countries of Africa. They include high population growth rates, limited capacity of the formal school systems to capture all the school-age population, lack of political commitment to the cause of literacy, lack of or inadequate allocation of human, material and financial resources, inadequate training of teachers, and lack of support mechanisms such as rural libraries and community learning centres (UNESCO, 1994). Associated with the issue of illiteracy is poverty which is

widespread among rural people and urban workers in many countries of Africa. Rural and urban poverty is exacerbated by the economic recession and the effects of World Bank/IMF Structural Adjustment Programmes which have been prescribed for economic growth in many African countries. The effects of the World Bank/IMF prescription for economic growth in Africa have caused greater poverty among the urban workers and rural dwellers alike. They are the most hit of the populations.

These conditions or circumstances provide a context today in which Freire's conscientization literacy could be applied in order to raise the critical awareness of the rural illiterate people and urban workers so that they can understand why they and their countries are poor and how they can act in order to change the situation for themselves. The Freire literacy method seems to have the capacity to attract the participation of many illiterate people in literacy classes since the content of literacy learning will be related to their present social realities and therefore meaningful. To this extent it can be argued that the literacy method founded on the notions of conscientization and dialogue is relevant to present day Africa. However, for the method to work in these contexts there would be need to train teams of coordinators (or educators) who should have a new attitude on how dialogue and critical study for conscientization should be elements of the educational process. Such coordinators would need to achieve a sufficient change from their existing paternalistic attitudes to the spirit of the method founded on conscientization and dialogue. At present, these elements of dialogue and conscientization appear to be absent in our upbringing and education in many countries of Africa. The curriculum and methods of teaching determined by the elite still dominate our education systems. Further, the governments in power would need to accept the method and not regard it as subversive.



## **Education and Social Change**

Freire's literacy method whose key concepts are conscientization and dialogue has contributed to our understanding of the processes of education and social change. Freire's analysis of education and social change centres on his contention that education cannot be neutral. It can either be domesticating or liberating. His analysis includes a criticism of the banking education (1970).

### *Liberating Education*

Freire (1970), has argued that educative processes are never neutral. They can either be an instrument of domination or liberation. Educative processes domesticate people where there exists a dominant culture of silence. In this culture people are taught to accept what is handed down to them by the ruling elite without questioning. Hence, their understanding of their social reality is limited to what they are taught and told to accept and believe. Freire (1970) points out that:

In a culture of silence the masses are 'mute', that is, they are prohibited from creatively taking part in the transformation of their society and therefore prohibited from being. Even if they can occasionally read and write because they were 'taught' in humanitarian - but not humanist - literacy campaigns, they are nevertheless alienated from the power responsible for their silence (p. 30).

Domesticating education denies people the power to think for themselves and become architects of their own destinies. It does not provide them with a critical perception of their own social reality which would enable them to know what needs changing and actually take action to change.

While education that liberates, shatters the silence and makes people become aware of their condition and their democratic rights to participate in social change or transformation, Sanders (1968) quotes Freire's argument that "If man is a being

transforming the world, the educational task is different ... If we look on him as a person, our educational task will be more and more liberating" (p. 4). People are educated with a deliberate aim and intention of raising their awareness and liberating them from their naive acceptance of life and its dehumanizing effects on them. Freire's thesis is that social change should come from the masses and not isolated individuals. The political nature of Freire's education benefits those who are struggling to have a voice of their own because they live in cultures or sectors of cultures which are totally silenced. Freire contends that people can be taught to read and write as well as presented with a world view that is unclear and mystifying or a world view which is clear and enables them to understand their life situation more clearly. This latter view is attained not only by what is taught, but why and how it is taught. For instance, what do we mean when we say that a person is educated? Or what do we mean when we say that an illiterate person has become literate? On examining the assumptions behind the descriptions that "a person is educated" or "a person has become literate", it becomes clear that there is an underlying ideology and practice which is in fact undeniably political, even when, for example, the process of acquiring literacy is made nothing more than the mastery of technical skills such as reading simple messages or filling a form. Therefore, we can say that the written word can subdue, deceive, and lull or it can arouse, enlighten, stimulate and awaken, depending on the ideology and practice employed (Bee, 1990). In other words, education can domesticate or liberate people.

Freire's ideas on the non neutrality of education can be illustrated further by comparing functional literacy to Freire's literacy. Functional literacy means possession or acquisition of literacy skills which are adequate for carrying out those actions or activities required of a person by society. This means the acquisition of literacy skills which make a person a more efficient and productive citizen and worker according to the prevailing government's requirements and expectations. For example, a



person can be considered functionally literate if that person can fill forms, read agricultural magazines, names of different types of fertilisers and so forth. The purpose behind all this is an economic one. The notion of functionality of literacy advanced by UNESCO was "to combine literacy and numeracy with a programme of education in basic vocational skills directly linked to the occupational needs of participants" (UNESCO and UNDP, 1976, p. 120)

The following features of functional literacy as defined above can be identified: (a) it is aimed at specific target groups of illiterates working within a specific economic activity; (b) the human capital theory of education which considers education as an economic investment is the guiding ideology behind functional literacy; (c) and the meaning of functionality is very limited to improved vocational skills or in general to work-oriented contents of literacy programmes. As can be seen, the ideology and practice of functional literacy is an economic one. In other words, functional literacy donates skills and knowledge to the learners to make them more efficient and productive. It is created by experts and aimed at selected target groups engaged in some economic activity or vocation. Educational content and methods are those considered by experts as desirable and suitable for the learners. Further it offers learners no chance to make decisions on, for example, learning content. Instead, it encourages passivity and acceptance of what is handed down to them. In short, functional literacy leads to further oppression of the people. It creates the culture of silence in which the masses have no voice and therefore are denied the chance to participate in changing their social reality.

Freire's literacy circumvents these weaknesses or pitfalls of functional literacy. Freire's literacy involves the masses or peasants in the mastery of literacy skills and not just a few selected groups of learners. The learners are taught to read and write in a meaningful and critical way in order to increase their ability to take charge of their own development. Freire's literacy enables the learners to intervene in their social reality. Therefore,

Freire's literacy gives back to the people a sense of self and their own worth. It is a process of education that enhances a sense of personal and cultural identity.

Freire's ideas on education discussed above contribute to an understanding of the processes of education and social change and therefore they still have worth and relevance to contemporary Africa. Liberating education can affirm a freedom and capacity of people to decide their own destinies. It is a critical and active process through which the culture of silence is overcome and shattered. This kind of education is more relevant to Africa today than ever before. Today in many African societies, it is not uncommon to find the masses being oppressed by the ruling elite. The existing education systems are designed by the elite and attempt to adjust people to given societies. People are treated as objects into which superior beings, that is the elite, pour knowledge. If the value and full potential of the people and their democratic and other human rights are recognised, Africa today requires education systems in which people are not treated as objects but subjects who are capable of working to change their social reality.

However, the validity and relevance of Freire's ideas on education founded on conscientization and dialogue assume a strong belief and faith in the need for equality and social justice. This implies acceptance of liberating education as a viable means for achieving freedom and change. And that liberating education frees people from the bondage of the culture of silence. It can be stated that Freire's education is concerned with the development of a just society. And just societies are far from being achieved in Africa of today where we have economically and socially ordered patterns of dominance and subordination which are constituted and reproduced through the existing educational practices of the elite. African states have tended, intentionally or unintentionally, to perpetuate these unequal arrangements of power through educational practices. Hence, a critical dialogic education which is liberating and challenges and disrupts these entrenched structures of domination and leads to



structural social change is relevant to present day Africa. Development of both individuals and society should involve the creation of just social structures through the process of liberating education.

### **Freire's Criticism of Banking Education**

In his work, *Pedagogy of the Oppressed* (1970), Freire criticises the banking conception of education which he labels bourgeois. In this conception of education, the educator knows and the learners don't know; the educator thinks and the learners are "thought"; the educator speaks and the learners listen quietly; the educator makes and prescribes his choice and the learners follow his prescription; the educator chooses the content of education and learners' ideas on educational content are never heard and they have to get used to it; the educator gives himself the authority of his function which has the authority of knowledge and this is antagonistic to the freedom of the learners, who have to adapt to the determinations of the educator; and the educator is the subject of the process while the learners are mere objects. Thus education becomes an act of depositing like in banks. Knowledge becomes a donation from those who know to those who don't know anything. Hence banking education aims at maintaining the division between those who know and those who don't know, between the oppressors and the oppressed. It denies the learner and educator the possibility of dialogue. Banking education fails to stimulate intellectual discipline. Instead it kills curiosity, creativity and any investigative spirit in the learners and encourages the passive behaviour of the learners.

Freire sees banking education as the pedagogy of the oppressor or colonizer and his conception of education as the pedagogy of the oppressed. He contends that in the bourgeois pedagogy of the oppressor, the awareness of the oppressed is immersed in the world of the oppressor. In there exists a duality in the mind of the oppressed whereby on one hand the oppressed adheres to

the oppressor's conscience (his values, his ideology, his interests) and is afraid of being free; and on the other hand, the wish and need to free himself are also present. So in the minds of the oppressed, there is an internal struggle which requires a liberating education to achieve freedom.

The importance, value or worth, and relevance of Freire's criticism of banking education to contemporary Africa is that it shows the linkage between knowledge and power in educational practice and how this linkage impacts on notions of liberation and self-determination. Freire's own conception of education provides genuine help and inspiration to the oppressed masses of the continent and can contribute to the formation of coercive social structures to fight for change. Hence, it can be argued that to that extent Freire's educational ideas have relevance in the context of present day Africa whose societies are changing rapidly towards democratic practices. These societies are currently still commanded by elites, be they military or bourgeois politicians, and the ordinary citizens have become mere objects or things without being aware of it. The key concept is that of conscientization which consists of a liberating process on the part of the dominated conscience to get rid of the influence exercised by the dominating consciousness. The role of education should be seen from the viewpoint of the masses in the construction of a democratic society or an open society. Such a society cannot be constructed by elites in Africa since they are incapable of providing the bases for political and social reforms. This society can only be the result of the struggle of the masses who are the only ones who can make such change.

### **Extension and Communication**

In his book *Education for Critical Consciousness*, Freire (1974) critically analyses the term extension, the relationship between the concepts of extension and cultural invasion, and how extension agents or technicians and peasants can communicate in the process of developing a new agrarian society.



## Extension

Freire begins by analyzing the term "extension" semantically. He points out that words have a basic meaning and a contextual meaning. It is the context in which the word is used which determines its potential or virtual meaning. The term extension implies the action of extending something. Therefore, professionally the action of an agronomist working in rural extension is that of an extension agent who extends something to peasants. His or her role is to extend knowledge and his or her technical capacities. Freire criticises this concept of "extension" because it contradicts the search of people becoming more fully human in the world where they exist. He argues that the act of extension means that those carrying it out go to another part of the world to normalise it according to their way of viewing reality. In other words, they go there to make it resemble their own world. The term extension connotes an action of handing over, giving, mechanical transfer or depositing of content chosen by the extension agent. Thus extension transforms people into objects or things and negates their existence as human beings who can transform the world.

Freire thus argues that the concept of extension does not correspond to an educational undertaking that is liberating. Therefore, since the duty or task of extension agents is to educate and be educated, their work should not be called extension. This concept of extension negates their work. Nor is the task of the extension agent to persuade the rural masses to accept his or her propaganda. Propaganda is always used to domesticate regardless of the context. The extension agent is the subject and the object by whom the act of persuasion is exercised on the peasants or masses. However, if the peasants have a choice for liberating education, they cannot be persuaded or forced to submit to the extension agent's propaganda. So extension agents must refuse to domesticate people.

## **Cultural Invasion**

Freire has criticised extension as cultural invasion. That is, what is brought or deposited to the peasants reflects the extension agent's vision of the world. The extension agent who is the invader seeks to penetrate another cultural situation and impose his/her system of values on its members. The invader reduces the people in the situation he/she invades to mere objects of his action. Freire has vividly described the relationship of the invader and the invaded as follows:

.. the relationships between the invader and the invaded are situated at opposite poles. They are relationships of authority. The invader acts, the invaded are under the illusion that they are acting through the action of the other; the invader has his say, the invaded, who are forbidden this, listen to what the invader says. The invader thinks, at most about the invaded, never with them; the latter have their thinking done for them by the former. The invader dictates; the invaded patiently accept what is dictated (p. 113).

Freire goes on to say that:

invasion to be effective, and for the cultural invader to attain his objectives, the action must be supported by other complementary actions, ones which constitute different dimensions of anti-dialogue theory. Thus, any cultural invasion presupposes conquest, manipulation, and messianism on the part of the invader (p. 113).

Extension presupposes propaganda which domesticates rather than liberates. Freire argues that:

If, in accordance with the concept of extension, they transform their specialized knowledge and methods into something static and materialised and extend them mechanically to peasants - invading the peasant culture and view of the world - they deny that men and women are beings who make decisions ( p. 116 ).

Extension agents are agents of change and therefore they



should affirm their knowledge through dialogical work. In this way, they will neither invade, manipulate nor conquer. They will work with the peasants in cultural transformation.

## **Communication**

Freire argues that the role or task of extension agents as educators should be that of communication and not extension which domesticates people. Analyzing the concept of communication Freire observes thus:

... the world of human beings is a world of communication. As a conscious being ... the human being acts, thinks and speaks on and about this reality, which is the mediation between him or her and other human beings who also act, think, and speak (p. 137).

A human being who is the subject does not think alone in communication. In the act of thinking about objects, the subject thinks with the co-participation of another subject. This co-participation of the subjects in the act of thinking is communication. Hence, during communication there are no passive subjects. They are involved in dialogue which communicates. The subjects engaged in dialogue express themselves through a system of linguistic signs. Here there must be agreement on the linguistic signs used to express the object for there to be comprehension between the subjects or for communication to be possible. Comprehension and communication are inseparable and occur simultaneously. Extension agents must be aware of this observation when working with the people. For example, in dealing with a fact such as erosion, the extension agent should use a system of symbols which are intelligible to the people for them to understand his or her technical jargon. And problem-posing dialogue diminishes the difference between the sense of an expression as given by a technician and the grasping of this expression by the people in terms of its meaning for them. Thus the sense of expression comes to signify the same for both. This occurs only in communication and it never occurs in

extension in which there is no dialogue between human beings.

The concept of communication is one of making people aware. And therefore the role of the extension agent as an educator is that of communication if people are to be reached. The extension agent-educator who is not aware of the world view of the people cannot change their behaviour.

The importance and relevance of Freire's criticism of the concept of extension as cultural invasion and the proposal that extension agents should choose communication if they genuinely want to reach people by being concrete within their realities should be seen against the realities of rural masses in many countries of Africa. As it has been stated earlier, poverty among rural dwellers in Africa is widespread. The rural dwellers have become the objects of numerous rural development programmes. These programmes are imposed on them without regard to their culture and knowledge of their problems. As Freire has rightly pointed out, "the knowledge of the peasants, which is by nature experiential ... is equally conditioned. For example, their attitudes towards erosion, reforestation, seed time or harvest ... have a relation to peasant attitudes to religion, to the cult of the dead, to the illness of animals, etc ... All these aspects are contained within a cultural totality" ( p. 108 ). Hence, the success of any rural development programme intended to change the lives of rural dwellers is very much dependent on change agents' awareness of concrete realities of the rural dwellers and a recognition that rural people are capable of problematizing these realities and participating in the transformation of their world. So, change agents in Africa should be aware of the world view of the rural masses if they are to contribute to their development. What is required is not extension but communication. Thus ideas on extension and communication are relevant to rural development in Africa.

## **Conclusion**

Freire's ideas on education reveal a new way of looking at education and social change. Freire has given literacy and



## Conclusion

Freire's ideas on education reveal a new way of looking at education and social change. Freire has given literacy and education in general, the mission of awakening in people, a critical conscience which enables people not only to know what needs changing but be fully human, which is the right of every person and not for only the privileged few. It is this consciousness that creates the will or the motivation in people to struggle for social change.

This paper has identified and examined Freire's educational ideas which offer the most important contributions to education and development. These range from Freire's theory of conscientization derived and developed from his literacy method, dialogue which is a means of achieving conscientization, the non neutrality of education since it can either be liberating or be for domesticating, to criticism of banking education, the criticism of the concept of extension being incompatible with liberating education, cultural invasion, and the concept of communication as sharing meanings about realities through critical dialogue. Further, the unit has shown the extent to which, and in what contexts in contemporary Africa these ideas are of value and therefore relevant. Given the realities of African societies today, particularly in the rural areas, Freire's educational ideas seem more relevant than ever before in providing the education which can lead to personal liberation, self-determination, political mobilization and action, and radical social transformation.

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