

# A FREIREAN RE-IMAGINING OF THE TRANSFORMATIONAL MODEL OF HUMAN RIGHTS EDUCATION

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## Rezumat

În cadrul Educației pentru Drepturile Omului, cel mai frecvent, sunt utilizate trei tipologii de diseminare a informației despre drepturile omului. Modelul transformațional este bazat, în sens larg, pe filosofia pedagogică a lui Paulo Freire (Tibbitts, 2005), iar după cum au arătat studiile de caz, el accentuează autoreflexia, autonomia și transformarea situațiilor opresive (Lohrenscheit, 2006); totodată, în practică, modelul se abate de la pedagogia lui Freire în mod fundamental, ceea ce face modelul mai puțin eficient la depășirea oprimării, rădăcină a multor situații de violare a drepturilor omului. Totuși, prin reimaginarea Modelului Transformațional, prin evaluarea critică a studiilor de caz, utilizând modelul Freirean, se poate formula o tipologie mai eficientă care vine din partea celor asupriți și pledează pentru desființarea oprimării ca formă a violării drepturilor omului.

**Cuvinte-cheie:** învățare transformativă, educație pentru drepturile omului, Freire, Model Transformațional, educație

## Introduction

Over the course of the past 20 years, human rights education has slowly emerged as an important component to the human rights movement as well as to the fulfillment of human rights treaty obligations. As a new field within education, educators have struggled to establish models to disseminate human rights and encourage the transformation of individuals and communities. As programs have been developed, researchers such as Felisa Tibbitts have worked to analyze the typologies that have emerged. One such typology is the Transformative Model (TM), which is most often used in programs involving groups that have endured human rights violations. This typology is focused on enabling communities to recognize the violations that have occurred and begin to formulate solutions to emerge from their oppression.

Several of the concepts fundamental to the TM can be attributed to Paulo Freire, a Brazilian educator well-known for his commitment to changing the way in which the oppressed are educated. Within his writings, in particular the *Pedagogy of the Oppressed* and the *Pedagogy of Freedom*, the concepts of the TM are more clearly articulated and defined, and they are accompanied by other concepts that are equally as important to establishing a transformative program according to Freire. Yet, the TM omits these additional key elements, and thus, is limited as to the extent it remains transformative in the Freirean sense. This paper intends to demonstrate the variance of the TM to Freire's transformational pedagogy as well as establish a set of criteria by which a program using the TM typology can be assessed to show how closely aligned it is with Freire's pedagogy. Finally, three case studies of human rights educational programs are analyzed using the criteria, and suggestions are provided that allow for a Freirean re-imagining of human rights education.

## Human Rights Education Mandate

The need for human rights education (HRE) is anchored in the Universal Declaration of Human Rights (UDHR), which was established in 1948 following the atrocities of World War II. The Preamble states that, "every individual and every organ of society ... shall strive by teaching and education to promote respect for these rights and freedoms". Additionally, Article 30 of the UDHR emphasizes that one of the goals of education is to strengthen respect for human rights as well as freedom.

Over the past 60 years, many other treaties and conventions including the International Covenant on Economic, Social, and Cultural Rights, the International Covenant on Civil and Political Rights, the International Convention on the Elimination of All Forms of Racial Discrimination, and the Convention on the Rights of the Child have addressed the need for human rights education. In 1993, the World Conference on Human Rights in Vienna once again affirmed the importance of human rights education, training and public information, declaring it "essential for the promotion and achievement of stable and harmonious relations among communities and for fostering mutual understanding, tolerance and peace". Shortly thereafter, in 1995, the United Nations Decade of Human Rights emerged from a plan of action containing five objectives: "the assessment of needs and formulation of strategies; building and strengthening human rights education programmes; developing educational material; strengthening the mass media; and the global dissemination of the Universal Declaration of Human Rights" [1, p. 2].

During the 10-year span, States made many achievements toward these objectives including international implementation of human rights education within school systems and higher education [2, p. 6] as well as training amongst justice officials (p. 7). The High Commissioner of Human Rights also acknowledged several shortcomings within the decade, one of which was the need to develop appropriate methodologies for human rights education [2, p. 8]. Upon the completion of the UN Decade for Human Rights Education, the General Assembly issued a resolution creating the World Programme for Human Rights Education, a structured four-phase program in which particular groups of people are the focus of human rights education: phase one (2005-2009) focused on educating children in primary and secondary schools; phase two (2010- 2014) focused on students in higher education institutions as well as teachers, trainers and government officials; phase three (2015- 2019) focused on media professionals and journalists. The fourth phase (2020-2024) once again focuses on youth, emphasizing " education and training in equality, human rights and non-discrimination, and inclusion and respect for diversity with the aim of building inclusive and peaceful societies" [3]. Through these UN initiatives and the actions of governmental bodies, nongovernmental organizations, and academics [4, p.108], human rights education has gained prominence within many educational contexts as well as amongst civil servants, government officials, and law enforcement agencies.

Regardless of the context in which human rights education is being implemented, there are two main goals for learners: learning *about* human rights and/or learning *for* human rights [5, p.176]. When students learn *about* human rights, the emphasis is on the international declarations, treaties, and conventions that have been established to protect their rights. Learning *for* human rights moves the students toward empowerment and becoming an active participant in securing rights for themselves and others [5, p.177]. Additional common goals include changes to one's attitude or emotions [6, p. 483].

Despite the commonality of goals amongst HRE programs, there is no clear consensus as to how HRE should be defined; thus, the definitions of HRE provided by those responsible for creating HRE programs vary [4, p.107]. Yet, the content for learners within a human rights program generally focuses on the following three areas: understanding the content of human rights documents, especially the rights and duties contained within; identifying human rights violations; and engaging in behaviors that help prevent and eliminate further abuses and violations [4, p.178].

According to Tibbetts, five models are used to evaluate the successfulness of these HRE programs. *Goal-oriented evaluations* focus on participants' progress learning about human rights and the successfulness of various educational innovations in helping them to do so. *Decision-oriented evaluations* focus on participants' ability to make good choices when confronted with a human rights-infused situation. *Transactional evaluations* focus on the values and processes of the program. Goal-free evaluations focus on understanding the impact of HRE outside of the program's objectives. Finally, *adversary evaluations* result in competing analyses of a program's successfulness based upon interpretations of the program's values [7, p. 4].

Over the past 60 years, human rights education has progressed as a field in part due to many treaties and conventions but also due to the establishment of programs designed to put knowledge of human rights into the hands of community members who could further disseminate this knowledge. HRE is not clearly defined, but strides have been made to clarify common goals, content areas, and means of evaluation within HRE programs. Thus, HRE is not without its complexities but continues to spread through the efforts of NGOs and governments across the world.

### **Human Rights Typologies**

Many models for HRE have emerged since the World Conference on Human Rights in Vienna, each one specifying a different approach to achieving particular outcomes and goals. Bajaj explains that common distinguishing factors between the models often include content and participants' level of engagement in their learning [6, p.485]. However, in examining the construction of programs for human rights education, three main typologies have emerged [8, p.163], and a brief overview of each follows.

#### **Values and Awareness Model**

The first typology is the Values and Awareness Model, which takes a philosophical-historical approach to learning. The programs are generally implemented in schools or programs established for the general public with the purpose of conveying information about human rights and with the hope that learners will incorporate human rights values into their value schema. Engagement is the pedagogical strategy of choice; for, the greater the number of people engaged with and in support of human rights, the greater the chances are that the increase in public support will impact government choices towards the protection and enforcement of human rights [8, p.163]. This model is not overly concerned with the concept of empowerment nor does it explicitly avoid the purposeful transfer of knowledge without critical consciousness of human rights [8, p.164].

#### **Accountability Model**

The second typology is the Accountability Model, which takes a legal/political approach to learning [8, p.165]. Most often, professionals who are already involved in human rights issues such as lawyers and advocates as well as doctors and journalists are the recipients of HRE via this model. Through trainings and workshops, these groups of people are instructed on the topics of human rights law, leadership, and how to develop alliances [8, p.165]. The expectation is that those engaged in this model of HRE will take their knowledge and directly apply it to the work they are already involved in. This model is not particularly concerned with changing the learner, but instead, with ensuring that the learner understands well the laws and means of ensuring government accountability that are available [8, p.166].

## **Transformational Model**

The Transformational Model is the final typology within HRE and the focus of this paper. This model utilizes a psychological-sociological approach to learning mainly with vulnerable populations and victims of human rights abuses [8, p. 166] although the model has gained some popularity within school systems. The focus of this model is, as its name suggests, transformation of both individuals as well as communities through empowerment. A combination of critical thinking, self-reflection and community discussions are the primary pedagogical choices as personal experiences with human rights violations position the learner “to recognize and protect their own rights and those of their primary reference group” [8, p.167], resulting in the anticipated transformation. More than the other models, the transformational model encourages a greater level of engagement with human rights and the fight for justice [9, p.486].

### **Linking the Transformational Model and Paulo Freire**

Paulo Freire’s work and pedagogical theories have long been strongly linked to human rights education [4] [10]. Concepts, often brought to their fullness by Freire such as participation, empowerment [11], dialogic learning, emancipatory learning, and critical pedagogy are found extensively throughout HRE literature. In many HRE programs, where the goal is learning for human rights, a particularly strong emphasis has been placed upon the concepts of empowerment and transformation [8] [12]. These programs are generally most closely aligned with the TM, as such concepts are foundational to its goals [13] more so than the goals of the Values and Awareness Model or the Accountability Model.

As previously stated, the Transformational Model, according to Tibbetts aims to empower, heal and transform both individuals and communities that it assumes have encountered or experienced violations of human rights [8, p.162]. For Freire, transformation of an oppressed community comes about through dialogue and the development of a critical consciousness that recognizes oppression and produces an empowered community. Other critical theorists including Adorno, Horkheimer, Marcuse and Habermas have also surmised that the oppressed can only experience freedom from their oppression if they are empowered to transform their current situation on their own. However, it is Freire who establishes the link between personal transformation and societal transformation through critical reflection and conscientization [13, p.3].

Furthermore, the TM takes from Freire the concepts of problem posing, community participation, and dialogue. One of the foremost roles of the educator, according to Freire, is to engage learners in problem-posing rather than simply transferring information (otherwise known as using a banking form of education). Problem-posing involves the examination of reality as a social-historical construction in which oppressive conditions can be changed [14, p.69,73]. Learners are asked to consider the conditions producing oppression and pose those problems to the community. Community participation is necessary for the liberation of individuals for “no one liberates himself by his own efforts alone” [14, p.53]. Dialogue between both community members and educators allow for solutions to emerge. Reflective dialogical participation of the community is what allows for the revelation of liberatory solutions to oppression [14, p.52].

### **Deviation of the Transformational Model from Freire’s Pedagogy**

Unfortunately, despite the clear linkages between Freire’s transformational pedagogy and the Transformational Model, it is also clear that the model lacks clear resonance with other key concepts of Freire’s pedagogy. Three major concepts emerge when reading Freire’s *Pedagogy of*

*the Oppressed* and *Pedagogy of Freedom*, and each concept contains fundamental elements that are not found within the TM. These elements, when taken together, provide criteria for establishing the extent to which a human rights program remains transformative in the Freirean sense. Case studies of transformational human rights programs measured against the criteria reveal that these programs are often misaligned with Freire's pedagogy, and thus, are not truly Freirean. Recommendations as to how these programs can be more closely aligned also clearly emerge through careful analysis of the criteria.

### **Freire's Transformational Pedagogy**

A reading of Freire's *Pedagogy of the Oppressed* and *Pedagogy of Freedom* reveals three fundamental concepts for educators wishing to put Freire's pedagogical framework into practice: (1) educators must have a clear understanding of their role as well as the role of education for the oppressed; (2) the conscientization of learners is imperative if transformative learning is to occur; and (3) educators must very conscientiously include oppressors. From these concepts, I have developed criteria for establishing the extent to which a HRE program aligns with Freire's transformational pedagogy. This form of evaluation differs significantly from the current models of evaluation previously mentioned due to its conceptual specificity but can provide HRE practitioners with clear guidelines as they develop future programs.

### **The Role of Education and the Educator**

**Criterion # 1: *Education must be understood to be a political. It is gnostic and directive; thus, it is political.***

**Criterion # 2: *Problem-solving education rather than banking education must be used.***

**Criterion # 3: *Educators need to be willing to take the role of learners and understand they cannot free students from oppression.***

A fundamental tenet for Freire is an understanding that education is political and never neutral [15, p.67]. It is political because it has a gnostic character that involves the giving of achievement directives [15, p.67,100]. These directives are normally intended to reproduce the dominant ideology, but for Freire, the directives ought to require the interrogation of these ideologies and question their reproduction [15, p.91]. Real interrogation involves students acting as both teacher and learner; it requires students to think critically rather than mindlessly accept and consume the ideas of the teacher or the curriculum. Interrogation requires the absence of banking education.

For Freire, education can either liberate the oppressed or help to maintain the status quo by reproducing dominant ideology. Maintenance of the status quo is linked to the way in which educators engage learners. Freire speaks of a student-teacher contradiction that must be overcome [14, p.72] because educators use a banking form of education in which learners are seen as receptacles that need to be filled with the knowledge that educators have [14, p.72]. No thought is given to the knowledge that learners already hold; instead, they are seen as ignorant and unknowing [14, p.72]. Freire argues for a new engagement between learner and educator in which both are seen as learners and as teachers. In this way, both develop a more critical consciousness that rejects the maintenance of the status quo that seeks to preserve the interests of the oppressors [14, p.73]. Freire states, "To resolve the teacher-student contradiction, to exchange the role of depositor...for the role of student...would be to undermine the power of oppression and serve the cause of liberation" [14, p.75]. Educators, like oppressors, can neither liberate or free others from their oppression nor can they think for their students or insist they believe as they do [14, p.77]. An educator, to be effective, must instead engage students in

critical reflection and problem posing, for the banking model will never lead to transformation or liberation [14, p.79].

One specific way in which teachers can resolve the teacher-student contradiction is to encourage dialogue. Dialogue, between learners and learners as well as learners and teachers, can open the door to problem posing, which can then lead to the altering of reality through problem solving. However, true dialogue has specific requirements that must be met in order for students to be receptive and for dialogue to be fruitful. First, love is the prerequisite to and the foundation of dialogue [14, p.89]. Second, humility is necessary, because without it, the parties will fail to acknowledge their ignorance [14, p.90]. Third, only faith in humankind will allow for the establishment of the trust needed to dialogue rather than manipulate [14, p.91]. Fourth, hope is necessary to dialogue, for without it, problem solving will not occur [14, p.91]. Finally, dialogue without critical thinking will only result in further internalization of the oppressors' ideology [14, p.92]. Educators must facilitate dialogue of this kind in order that oppressed students engage in true education [14, p.93], which allows them to recognize their domination and dehumanization and choose to liberate themselves.

The educator must also acknowledge and help learners understand that they are historical beings in the process of becoming who exist in a temporary reality that can be altered [14, p.85]. But to do that, the past has to be problematized. It has to be seen through a lens that finds fault in the behavior of the oppressors and the treatment of the oppressed. Students need to be encouraged to view the past critically and not see the future as a necessary perpetuation of today [15, p.102]. Importantly, students also need teachers to help them understand that they are not to blame for their temporary reality; that through no fault of their own have they been mired in such oppression. Both students and teachers need to be cognizant "that the role of the dominant ideology is to inculcate in the oppressed a sense of blame and culpability about their situation of oppression" [15, p.78]. Thus, the role of the teacher is significant and never neutral, and Freire writes extensively in *Pedagogy of Freedom* of key characteristics he believes teachers must embody in order to best engage with students' movement out of oppression.

Educators need to respect the inherent dignity of their students. Their autonomy and ability to make decisions by themselves and for themselves has to be respected. Students are capable of thinking for themselves and teachers need to accept their beliefs and decisions [15, p.59]. Educators also need to be willing to accept that what they know to be true isn't always, that they may have incorrect information, and that being open to skepticism is indicative of being a critical epistemologist [15, p.62]. Likewise, teachers should not be fearful of disclosing their lack of knowledge to students [15, p.65]. Acknowledging that expertise is never complete does not dispel an educator's authority. Furthermore, teachers need to maintain curiosity about what is unknown to them [15, p.79] and to make clear to students that reality is always changing and what is known is never static [15, p.66]. Other important characteristics Freire mentions include self-confidence, professional competence, and generosity [15, p.85] as well as commitment to students and ending oppression [15, p.89]. While the place of educators is not on the front lines of the fight out of oppression, their role is still significant and can do much to either maintain oppression or to encourage students in their quest to change reality.

The TM as a typology of human rights education does concern itself with some of the same central components of education that Freire discusses yet the key characteristics of educators are completely absent. Concepts such as critical thinking, self-reflection, and dialogue are stressed in the model. However, the rules of engagement with all three are unspecified and without the

clarity that Freire's pedagogy demands. Methodology, in general, has not been clearly articulated for any of the typologies and is seen as an area for improvement within the field of HRE [10, p.21]. The TM doesn't speak to the issue of banking education nor caution educators against the modeling of it. If HRE program educators do not have a clear understanding of what banking education is and alternative ways to educate, true liberation cannot take place. Efforts by educators to engage learners in self-reflection, dialogue and critical thinking are also ineffective if learners lack the understanding that their reality is temporary and able to be changed. A major role of the educator, undisclosed by the TM, is to reveal that temporality. Finally, dialogue, as previously established, is a necessary part of the educational process, and it has prerequisites as well as other requirements that must be followed during any dialogue. Educators who unaware of the prerequisites and requirements risk engaging students in dialogue that will not lead to problem solving, transformation and liberation.

### **Conscientization**

**Criterion # 4: *Learners must be engaged in self-reflection, dialogue, and praxis as a part of conscientization.***

Dehumanization is part of the process of power maintenance for the oppressors [14, p.44]. Dehumanization involves the objectification of the oppressed [14, p.57, 64] and allows for violence against them [14, p.55]. So that, rather than being subjects as the oppressor are, they are delegated to "Other", an object that is dependent upon the oppressors [14, p.57]. Through prescription, the oppressed adapt to their dependence and adopt the belief that "to be, is to be like, and to be like, is to be like the oppressor" [14, p.48]. Thus, the oppressed maintain an existential duality – they are themselves, but they are also the "oppressor whose image they have internalized" [14, p.61]. Self-depreciation is a primary component of the internalized view that they are "sick, lazy, and unproductive" [14, p.63], which exacerbates their dehumanization and dependence.

Part of overcoming their dependence and duality is the necessary act of the oppressed recognizing their dependence as well as seeing their situation as limiting but not unchangeable [14, p.49]. Conscientization is the process by which one becomes critically conscious of reality through self-reflection as well as by taking action. For Freire, conscientization is a human necessity [15, p.55] that he calls for not because it is a remedy to oppression but because it allows the oppressed to understand the ways in which their oppression is manifested and their reason for existence [15, p.55]. Conscientization is a necessary step to envisioning a new reality where the oppressed are not dehumanized and are free from dependence on their oppressors.

Conscientization emerges in part through praxis, or the process of acting, reflecting and acting, and also through self-reflection and dialogue [15, p.52]. In the educational context, self-reflection and dialogue need to be prompted and encouraged by teachers. Speaking and listening along with disciplined silence amongst teachers and students provides for truly dialogical communication [15, p.105]. As students begin to consider how they have been dehumanized and manipulated into dependence, the anticipated response is the denunciation of their dehumanization and the development of a new reality. A likely next step among students is praxis, which may take the form of rebellion by the oppressed. This process is necessary for it is only the oppressed that can take actions that will lead to their humanization and their freedom [15, p.65]. The process is also necessary to free their oppressors. For the oppressors, who by dominating and dehumanizing, have fallen into the trap of believing that "to be" is "to have" [15, p.58] have also dehumanized themselves [15, p.56]. However, the humanity of the oppressors

can also be restored, but this can only happen when and if the oppressed fight for their humanity and in turn take away the power of the oppressors. It is only the oppressed that have the ability to free themselves as well as those who have oppressed them [15, p.56].

Conscientization, while not referred to as such in the Transformational Model, is present. The model emphasizes critical self-reflection, dialogue, and action resulting in transformation of individuals and communities. Yet, the interconnection between the three is unclear as is the role of the educator. Additionally, while the Transformational Model recognizes the presence of oppressor and oppressed, the relationship is not clearly defined, and the process of dehumanization and its connection to dependence is not articulated. This is problematic in that transformation, according to Freire, can only come about when the oppressed recognize their dependence and engage in problem solving to overcome the dehumanization that causes the dependence. Additionally, the Transformational Model addresses transformation as an act by and for the oppressed individual and community; it fails to emphasize the need for the transformation of the oppressor, and it does not acknowledge the power of the oppressed to humanize the oppressor.

#### **Involvement of oppressors**

**Criterion # 5: *If oppressors are involved with the human rights program, their engagement needs to be limited to acting with the oppressed and not for the oppressed***

**Criterion # 6: *There must be a clear understanding on the part of both educators and students that only the oppressed can liberate themselves from oppression.***

As mentioned above, any attempt to overcome oppression must be led by the oppressed. The oppressor cannot free the oppressed nor can they free themselves ([15, p.56] for “only power that springs from the weakness of the oppressed will be sufficiently strong to free both” [15, p.44]. Importantly, overcoming oppression should not entail oppressing those who had engaged in oppression [15, p.44]. Yet, this is a major difficulty, for the oppressed have only had the model of the oppressor to look to – their model of humanity can only be found in the oppressors [15, p.45]. Therefore, liberation and the humanization of both oppressed and oppressor are painful processes [15, p.49]. Even so, there are those from the oppressor class that may wish to play a role in liberation. Solidarity with the oppressed means that the oppressor does not fight *for* but fights *with* the oppressed to transform reality, which is, in actuality, an act of love [15, p.50]. Those who wish to support those who have been oppressed cannot take it upon themselves to speak for or in place of the oppressed. They can only speak and think with the oppressed [15, p.67]. They must extend acts of love with true generosity that demonstrates liberation is needed for all. Those desiring to overcome their oppressor nature must be careful that they extend true generous and not falsely charitable acts to the oppressed, for false charity only maintains oppressors’ power [15, p.45].

The TM does not speak to Freire’s concern over the involvement of anyone but the oppressed in acts of transformation. It does not explicitly elucidate his tenet that only the oppressed can liberate themselves. It does not clarify the roles available to oppressors who wish to be involved in HRE programs. When oppressors do attempt to become involved in the liberation of the oppressed, false generosity is often an issue. Consciously or subconsciously, oppressors often believe that the oppressed remain in their subordinate position because they are incompetent, lazy, and ungrateful, in spite of the generosity of the oppressors [15, p.59]. Thus, the TM does not appropriately consider the impact that allowing an oppressor to participate in an HRE program can have on the program’s effectiveness to achieve its goal of transformation



[15, p.60]. Another problem stems from the allowance of oppressors to exert power over how transformation ought to be executed [15, p.60]. Because of the long-term role maintenance in which the oppressed defer to the 'expertise' of the oppressors, it is feasible and likely that when the oppressors engage in an HRE program, their attempts to help in liberation only result in the reintegration of old oppressive roles [15, p.61].

### **Summarization of Criteria for Assessing a Human Rights Program as Freire**

1. Education must be understood to be a political. It is gnostic and directive; thus, it is political.
2. Problem-solving education rather than banking education must be used.
3. Educators need to be willing to take the role of learners and understand they cannot free students from oppression.
4. Learners must be engaged in self-reflection, dialogue, and praxis as a part of conscientization.
5. If oppressors are involved with the human rights program, their engagement needs to be limited to acting with the oppressed and not for the oppressed.
6. There must be a clear understanding on the part of both educators and students that only the oppressed can liberate themselves from oppression.

### **Analysis of Case Studies**

The following case studies from the Dominican Republic, India, and Ghana exemplify HRE programs based upon, to greater and lesser extents, the Transformative Model. All of the HRE programs were developed for vulnerable communities, victims of human rights abuses, or schools. Each program's pedagogy involved critical thinking, self-reflection, and discussion amongst participants. Finally, within each HRE program, a main goal of the program was transformation at the individual and/or community level. In the case studies to follow, the goals, methods, and outcomes are outlined followed by an analysis of the HRE program's ability to meet the established criteria.

#### **Case Study 1: Dominican Republic [9]**

*Study:* Human rights education and student self-conception in the Dominican Republic.

*Goals:* Transforming students' attitudes, behaviors and knowledge regarding human rights.

*Methods:* In 2001, researchers conducted a three-month study with eighth graders from the same community in a slum area of the Dominican Republic human rights. A control and experimental group were used and pre- and post- tests measured changes. The experimental group's teacher was provided with a one-day training session and 25 lessons, which were to be covered over the course of three months. Each of the lessons took between 60 and 90 minutes to complete and the content focused on:

- 1) police brutality and extra-judicial executions
- 2) discrimination against and illegal deportations of Haitian immigrants and Dominicans of Haitian descent
- 3) low wages, poor working conditions and use of child labor in free trade zones
- 4) physical violence against women [9, p.28].

Researchers examined the findings of local and international human rights bodies working on human rights issues in the Dominican when choosing the topics and designing the curriculum, aiming to address issues of greatest concern locally.

*Outcomes:* Ultimately, the majority of the students had a greater sense of agency and felt better equipped to intervene when they saw human rights violations occurring. In other findings, researchers determined that in order to be most effective, human rights teachers needed to have comprehensive training on the “origin, specifics, and nature of human rights principles [9, p.32].” Furthermore, students need to be encouraged to develop a critical consciousness in order for empowerment to result in a liberated mind. The study pointed toward the need for dialogue between teachers and students to produce a critical consciousness.

*The extent to which the HRE program is aligned with the Freirean model:* Whether or not education was understood to be political is unknown. However, the Freirean hope would be that during the 1-day training given to teachers they would be encouraged to look at the school system as a political system that serves the interests of certain groups and not necessarily those of the children. At best, the course training would ask the teacher to reflect upon his or her role within the system. Nothing indicates that the curriculum or the teachers allowed for role reversal in the classroom with teachers taking the role of learner and students taking ownership of their knowledge and their ability to overcome their own oppression. It is also not indicated whether or not the lesson plans designed by the researchers were intended to result in problem-solving education or banking education. Given the positive outcomes, it is likely that banking education was not used, but that cannot be conclusively determined. Further, it is not known if students were encouraged to find solutions to the human rights problems most frequently encountered but the stated goals did not include the formation of solutions.

Again, the lesson plans are not outlined, thus it is unknown if students were able to self-reflect, engage in dialogue or put into practice what they learned. In this particular case it is the teachers who may or may not be a part of the oppressor group, and it is unknown if any of these teachers were. However, regardless, it would have been optimal for part of the one-day training to include training on the appropriate role of a teacher as a human rights educator. Finally, the outcomes show that the majority of students’ sense of agency increased, which may point to students understanding that they can and need to be active in their own liberation from human rights violations.

### **Case Study 2: India [16]**

*Study:* From “time pass” to transformative force: School-based human rights education in Tamil Nadu, India

*Goals:* To determine the extent to which school course content was impactful and whether the content had a transformative impact on the lives of students.

*Methods:* In Tamil Nadu, India, human rights education is implemented at the school level through in and out of school programs as well as through textbooks. This study examined and analyzed the observations and findings of the Institute of Human Rights Education (IHRE), which conducted research in 24 schools in Tamil Nadu. The IHRE has developed a three-year course on human rights that it has been able to offer to students in 3500 schools [16, p.3]. The IHRE’s school course involves teacher training that focuses on convincing teachers of the importance of human rights and garnering their support. Teachers have use of a textbook for their lessons, which includes stories, participatory activities and discussion questions. Student and teachers that participated in the course were observed and interviewed with some participating in focus groups.

*Outcomes:* Amongst both students and teachers, the majority found the course to be impactful in that content knowledge increased, and students, in particular, felt that the course had

transformatively influenced their lives [16, p.4]. Bajaj noted that students noticed the course had impacted them in four areas: “(1) intervening in situations of abuse; (2) reporting or threatening to report abuse; (3) spreading awareness of human rights; (4) attitudinal and behavioral shifts at home or in school that were more aligned with human rights learning” [16, p.4]. Students felt that their ability to effect change was greatly connected to the teacher’s interest in the topic and also the teacher’s support of students taking action. Conversely, it was recorded that in some schools very little transformative impact had occurred and students indicated it was due in part to a lack of interest among the teachers. Ultimately, teacher buy-in to the course greatly influenced whether students felt it was impactful or transformative.

*The extent to which the HRE program is aligned with the Freirean model:* In this case study it is unknown if teachers had an understanding of the politicized nature of the school system or if that is a part of the training that they receive. In this case it would seem that the textbook provided to teachers allowed for problem solving education by providing students with participatory activities and questions for discussion. However, the provision of these materials does not guarantee that they teachers used them. As indicated in the outcomes, it seems that some students found their HRE teachers to be uninterested in the materials and would have been less likely to take a problem-solving approach to the course. There is no indication from the study that the educators involved took on the role of learner allowing the students to demonstrate their knowledge, however, it is not improbable. Additionally, it is hoped but unknown if teachers, in their training, were encouraged to help students realize their agency in overcoming oppressive human rights violations. Students report that they felt the course had transformatively influenced their lives and they were able to name the ways in which they are now able to engage with human rights education. How this transformation came about can only be hypothesized about due to lack of information in the study. While self-reflection and dialogue could have occurred through the activities in the textbook, praxis is a complete unknown. Just as with the study in the Dominican Republic, it is possible that some of the teachers could have also been oppressors. In the case of those students who felt that teachers’ lack of interest in the course influenced their own ability to effect change, the teachers’ behavior could be understood to reflect their oppressive nature or their disbelief that the oppressed can free themselves.

### **Case Study 3: Ghana [17]**

*Study:* African Human Rights Education Micro-Projects in Ghana: An Impact Assessment Case Study.

*Goals:* To increase awareness and understanding of human rights and how human rights instruments can be used to transform and improve people’s lives.

*Methods:* In Ghana, Amnesty International and the UK Department of International Development teamed up to create the Africa Human Rights Education Project (AHRE) which was a four year endeavor to “increase awareness and understanding of human rights and how human rights instruments can be used to improve people’s lives” [17, p.6]. AHRE sought to provide locals with pertinent and pioneering HRE projects in their areas. The study, which was conducted by Amnesty, focused on two micro projects that had come out of AHRE. One of the projects focused on endorsing the rights of women and girls while the other project worked to improve the education of female children by including child rights education in a school.

*Outcomes:* Regarding the first project, two main actions were engaged in: “lobbying of traditional leaders through engagement meetings and community sensitization through community durbars and focus group discussions” [17, p.17]. These two actions resulted in

several key changes for women in Ghana. The societal attitude towards women changed, there was a decrease in domestic violence, women felt more confident and participated more often in community meetings, there was an increase in the number of children attending schools, and women gained more access to land. Amnesty found that these key changes were attributable to community ownership of the project as well as the objective attempt to improve male-female communication [17, p.20].

With regard to the second project of improving the education of girls, there were also key changes. Researchers found that the retention of girls in school had increased and that girls were remaining in school even when they had to repeat a course, which previously was a major reason why girls dropped out. Parents became more involved in their children's school performance. Children are enrolling in and attending school more often even during harvesting season. Finally, children indicated that they felt more confident and aware of their rights and human rights more generally. These changes were mostly attributed to sensitization of schools, students, teachers, and the community of the problems and challenges that children, particularly female children, face in the community, which lead them to leave school or not attend school at all.

Amnesty did note that there are areas of the projects in need of improvement. The projects were noted to be initially "top-down" because the projects were designed prior to finding partners in the community. However, positively, locals were allowed to choose the theme of their micro-project allowing for some involvement. The other area of improvement identified by Amnesty with regard to both projects also pertained to participation. The organization determined that more care needed to be taken to include all social groups of the community – specifically marginalized groups- and that more attention needed to be given to who was not participating and why they were not.

*The extent to which the HRE program is aligned with the Freirean model:* Based upon the actions of AHRE to accomplish the two micro projects, it would seem that the researchers had a clear understanding that education is political for they both sought out community leaders as well as the oppressed community members to reach with HRE. It is unclear of how the HRE training took place, but based upon the outcomes and the community nature of the micro projects it is more likely than not that AHRE used problem solving methodology rather than the banking methodology of education concerning the first micro-project. There is not enough information available to determine if the second micro-project focused on problem-solving education methodologies. Similarly, it is not certain whether the educators were willing to take on the role of learner in the process engaging the community in either of the projects.

What is clear is that learners engaged in the first micro-project in self- reflection and dialogue and praxis because durbars and group discussions took place. Again, while students were clearly impacted by the action of the second micro-project, it is not clear whether self-reflection, dialogue or praxis took place. It seems more likely that the parents of the school children underwent conscientization. With regard to oppressors being part of the process, it is possible that they were but none of the research points to who may have been or what role they may have taken upon themselves in relation to liberation. Finally, while action was taken by most of the micro project participants positively impacting their or their families' lives, it is not apparent whether the principle the oppressed leading their liberation was present.

#### **A Freirean Re-imagining of the Case Study HRE Programs**

Each of the case studies had as a goal societal transformation, which aligned the HRE program as a Transformational Model of HRE. While each of the HRE programs met some of

the criteria for establishing a Freirean model of transformation, none of them, based upon the available information, could be said to have met all the criteria. So what would a Freirean HRE program look like if it were to meet all the criteria?

HRE like all education is political and as such educators need to be careful that they not establish programs that align with anti-human rights ideologies or gloss over rights due to government, donor, or organizational pressure. Understanding the politicized nature of HRE also means that HRE ideologies need to be interrogated and their reproduction questioned. HRE programs ought to be centralized conceptually that power to overcome human rights abuses and violations comes from the oppressed. Additionally, HRE programs ought to encourage participants to envision their conceptualization of human rights as well as envision and put into practice their best solutions to the human rights issues that they face. Programs that use banking education do not take into consideration that not all human rights issues can be solved or resolved in the same way. Nor do they always take into account cultural, social, political or economic factors that may impede a participant's understanding of human rights or the ways to see them fulfilled. HRE educators also need to be willing to interact and collaborate with participants. Recognition of participants' autonomy and ability to think for themselves are vital as is educators' acceptance that their knowledge may not be infallible, especially contextually. In two of the case studies, the HRE program seemed to attempt to engage participants in conscientization. Efforts were made to employ them in self-reflection and dialogue and to apply what they had learned, discussed, and envisioned. Conscientization is a vital part of HRE for transformative learning. Without the application of self-reflection and dialogue in the form of praxis, a participant will only learn *about* human rights rather than learning *for* human rights.

A Freirean model of HRE also needs to evaluate the role of oppressors, human rights violators, and non-supporters of human rights in the program. Freire supports the inclusion of these people within educational programs but does not support their over-involvement. Oppressors and others should not act for or on behalf of the oppressed. Those not fully in support of human rights, violators, and oppressors ought to be limited to acting with the oppressed, allowing them to take the lead in their own liberation. In the context of HRE, violations and abuses are often enabled because people are ignorant or unwilling to examine their complicity in human rights abuses. Thus, it becomes inappropriate for these people to monopolize others' liberation. Ultimately, true liberation from human rights abuses can only come at the hands of those who suffer them. Human rights educators must keep in mind that they may aid in that liberation but cannot bring it about by their own actions or efforts.

### **Conclusions**

Freire's pedagogy is undoubtedly linked to the Transformational Model of HRE. A close analysis of his books *Pedagogy of the Oppressed* and *Pedagogy of Freedom*, revealed criteria that are relevant for assessing the extent to which a HRE program remains Freirean in the transformative sense. Yet, as the case studies showed, the criteria are not always fully met in HRE programs that aim at transformation. As a result, these programs cannot be considered truly Freirean.

Human rights abuses and violations oppress those who experience them. HRE programs utilizing the TM seek to transform individuals and communities by teaching *for* human rights. Their goals extend beyond teaching what human rights are to helping bring about a lived reality wherein they are experienced. However, when a HRE program fails to understand that education is always political, banking education doesn't work, teachers sometimes need to be learners,

conscientization is necessary, and liberation can only come about by the actions of the oppressed, it not only deviates from Freire's pedagogy but leaves itself open to failure of its objectives. Future HRE programs seeking to transform lives and communities may better serve participants by using the criteria established in this paper to assess their alignment with Freire's pedagogy.

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