

DAY 1 - PAULO FREIRE: CULTURE CIRCLES

For Freire, dialogues are critical to understanding one's shared reality and acting to transform it. One way he established dialogues was to create the 'culture circle', a space where learners could share their own ways of speaking and understandings of how their world came to be as it is. Putting this understanding into words in a dialogue helps the process of imagining possible ways to act to engage that future. As part of a dialogue, individuals exercise or practice what he called "critical consciousness," by posing questions around their reality as well as ideas related to human dignity, freedom, authority, and social responsibility. Rather than adapting to imposed problem solving strategies (from outside), groups look at their lived experiences and pose problems to solve that they deem important.

Freire proposed that this process of dialogue is a *problem-posing method* of education. In this method, the teacher and student become co-investigators of knowledge and of the world, "reading the world" through a critical lens. Participants themselves name the themes and problematize issues they believe affects their lives.

A culture circle approach consists of:

- generating themes
- problem posing
- dialogue, problem solving
- possible actions at personal or community level

The group codifies (documents) the themes, problems posed and dialogue generated in some form: a case, story, photo, drawing, map, or document (text).

Learning Circles are usually facilitated by a group leader

The leader can be someone from within or outside the circle. The leader's job is to facilitate the discussion, not to determine themes, set the agenda or drive the discussion to a prejudged outcome. The dialogue becomes a "communion" between participants as a relevant exchange that benefits the entire group.

Dialogue Circles and Leadership in the Course

In our course, you will participate in four group dialogues (in the afternoon of each day). You will spend the mornings studying a case study and prepared readings, and viewing a video (or websites). Each case study represents an example of the day topic, such as "Pedagogy of Resistance (conflict)." The readings are more general to education, but I chose them to connect with the topics.

The Dialogue Circles are the most important activity of the course. It is an opportunity to experience an activity like Freire's 'problem-posing method' that moves you beyond reading the word (readings, case studies) to reading the world in posing themes and questions around your own reality of teaching and

social environments. (Where, who, what, how, why do I teach?) The readings and cases will provide you with perspectives to consider regarding your own teaching principles: similarities and differences to the case study, social environments, teaching and learning methods that consider intervention, freedom, hope, and leadership.

Themes and Problem Posing. Each group needs to decide on a theme or several themes to discuss (as dialogue) around the readings, case, social environments (related to the case), and your own teaching contexts.

Dialogue Documentation (Notes and Posts) The themes and questions should be documented, written as notes and posted on Course Blog, or email, or WhatsApp so that groups can benefit. Other important outcomes of the dialogue can be documented and shared in the same forms (assign a **note taker** for the group). Someone in the group can take a picture of notes or diagrams of the dialogue and send it to the larger group. After or during the dialogue you may want to take notes for your self as reflections for your assignment and your study for the final exam.

Leadership Each group should assign a Leader to ensure: the group comes together on time, participation of all members, respect for all ideas and comments, attention to time limits and closing the dialogue. A Second Leader should be chosen to post notes at the end of the day. Leadership roles rotate across the 4 days.