

of pedagogy

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Pedagogy
You
School
master

Science
of
Teaching

Educate!
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that there was rarely any connection between schooling/teaching and resistance (except when the negative effects of schooling were resisted). Rather, the stories seem to indicate that young people needed and created a diversity of experiences — doing and learning in a variety of contexts, with a myriad of people — to pursue their questions, unveil their confusions, and find clarity about the dangers and fallacies of the dominant economic-political-educational system.

This calls to mind the much larger question of whether questioning, meaning-making, creating, dreaming, etc., can ever really be taught. Does pedagogy, critical or otherwise, make these processes possible? Can you teach anyone to ask questions, or make meaning, or interpret their experiences? Or are these natural human instincts, all part of what we call human learning and human doing, part of the great mystery of the human mind and heart?

I would like to replace pedagogy, the art of teaching, with the age-old arts of sharing and learning together. In sharing, you offer your ideas, your beliefs, your talents, your experiences, to others. Typically, this is done freely, with little expectation of reward or punishment for doing so. You may share orally or visually, using expressive forms like film, paintings, writing or theater. The key to sharing, though, is the vulnerability and humility involved. As the sharer, you have to be open to any response, mainly because there is no guarantee of what the other person (the 'share-ee') will feel about what you are sharing. They are free to listen to you, appreciate you, discuss with you, reject you, opt out of the experience, etc. Of course, as the sharer, you will likely be lively, kind, interesting, friendly — which those rare teachers in schools also can be. But the difference is, in sharing, both people get to make the choice of how to engage with each other; it is a mutually decided-upon interaction (which is untrue in schools).

Moreover, sharing builds upon our natural human instincts for questioning, meaning-making, interpreting, wondering, in community, together. As a sharer or as a share-ee, you are actively learning and contributing in all regards. You can nurture spaces and relationships where these instinctive actions can happen openly and dynamically, or you can (re)produce spaces and relationships in which they are suppressed or controlled. You can create environments, through your being and doing, which can make it easier (or more difficult) for people to express their curiosity, to explore their questions, to make mistakes, to take risks, etc. But ultimately, the tasks of doing, of learning and understanding, are up to the share-ee, just as they have been upon the sharer.

To figure out the difference between teaching and sharing, you would have to ask:

* Have you both entered into the relationship with your own consent and interest?

* Does one person have the power to reward or punish the behaviour of the other person in the course of the interactions?

* Does one person have the power to rank or evaluate the other?

* Does one person have more control in

determining the course of activities?

* If so, does the other person have the option to leave?

* Am I open to any questions? Am I asking questions too?

* Am I ready, hoping and willing to be surprised by what comes out of our interactions?

* Am I hoping to learn something from the other person as well?

Personally, it has taken me some time to understand this difference between critical pedagogy and sharing. I used to expect people to believe me, to agree with me, as I 'taught' them about the destructiveness and dehumanization of this model of education and development. I saw my role with children and youth as 'facilitating' their understanding of this 'truth'. But as I reflected on my experiences, I have realized that 'teaching' (i.e., informing or guiding) cannot be the path by which self- and systemic-change will happen. If I know this from my own experience, why would I expect it not to be true for others as well?

Deep learning, the kind that leads one to self-change and systemic action, begins from within and seeks out spaces and relationships in which to manifest. But pedagogy, of any kind, necessarily begins from the outside. And when it operates within a deficit-oriented culture of schooling (of which the mass media is a part), it ensures that power over learning remains out of young peoples' hands. Yet, it is this power — of asking questions and interpreting and making meaning and making choices — that is needed for facing the crises before us and for generating creative new possibilities for living together.

I have found that sharing opens up different kinds of opportunities for self-understanding and co-creation. By nurturing spaces and relationships, through which we can share our different frames for viewing the world, we can better see the blocks in our perceptions — the boxes of rationality, neglect or disregard we have created. We stop trying to be 'right' or 'the best' and instead try to listen and understand. We then are able to share in different peoples' realities, their multiple worlds and multiple truths. This helps to create lively communities of learning, in which we find friendship and support for deepening and heightening our thoughts and actions.

I have been trying this process with children, young people and adults over the last several months, often with quite in-depth learning and growing for me and the others involved. Indeed, sharing as a mind-frame and process has proven itself much more palpable to me than critical pedagogy, because I have not had to sacrifice the means for the ends. Being a sharer has made me vulnerable, which has kept me honest. It ensures that I help to nurture an open space in which learning — not pedagogy — is central. ■

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the very institutions it is critiquing. For example, it is ironic to launch a critique of the thoughts/actions of scientists (or presidents or movie stars), while still expecting students to defer to the teacher's thoughts and actions.

A second response to critical pedagogy is whether a critical perspective towards the dominant system can even be taught. Over the last several months, Shikshantar has been collecting young peoples' stories of resistance and unlearning, the stories of how they came to challenge the dominant model of progress and its many manifestations: technology, nationalism, particular gender relations, religious constructs, etc.

What has become clear to us, from writing our stories and reading others' stories, is