

Examining your classroom beliefs

Introduction

In this teacher development activity, participants will have the chance to get to know the ideas and beliefs of Paulo Freire. They will be able to compare his beliefs and opinions with some more traditional opinions about the classroom. They will have the opportunity to discuss together their own beliefs and assess how well Freire's beliefs match with their own.



This activity draws on materials and ideas presented by Chris Sowton in his presentation 'What Paulo Freire can teach us about the ELT classroom.'

Webinar time reference: 05:56 – 13:12

Time: 40 – 60 minutes

Aim: To introduce participants to some of the ideas of Paulo Freire.

Preparation:

- Make copies of the '8 Statements about education' and 'Quotes from Paulo Freire' from the materials section.

Procedure

- Ask the participants what they know about Paulo Freire. Ask them to share their knowledge in small groups of 3 – 5.
- Get them to share whatever they know as a class.
- Give the participants the 8 Statements about education. Tell them they are observations about attitudes to education in the 1960s. Ask them to discuss in groups which ones they believe are still true today.

- Get some feedback and then ask them to discuss which are true in their own classroom and what they do to move their teaching style away from this traditional view.
- Next, ask the participants to look at the 8 quotes from Paulo Freire.
- Ask them to read and decide which of these quotes are in conflict with the original statements about education.
- Put the participants into groups to discuss.
- Finally, ask participants to discuss which of the Paulo Freire quotes they agree with and how they can attempt to make these a reality in their teaching.
- Get some feedback and get participants to share their ideas.

8 Statements about Education

To what extent do you agree with these statements?

1. Passive acceptance is a more desirable response to ideas than active criticism.
2. Discovering knowledge is beyond the power of students.
3. Recall is the highest form of intellectual achievement.
4. The collection of facts is the goal of education.
5. The voice of authority is to be trusted and valued more than independent judgement.
6. Students' own ideas and those of their classmates are inconsequential.
7. Feelings are irrelevant in education.
8. There should always be a single, unambiguous right answer to any question.

Quotes from Paulo Freire

1. "Liberating education consists in acts of cognition, not transferals of information"
2. "Leaders who do not act dialogically, but insist on imposing their decisions, do not organise the people - they manipulate them. They do not liberate, nor are they liberated: they oppress."
3. "Language is never neutral."
4. "The teacher is of course an artist, but being an artist does not mean that he or she can make the profile, can shape the students. What the educator does in teaching is to make it possible for the students to become themselves."
5. "It's in making decisions that we learn to decide."
6. "To study is not to consume ideas, but to create and re-create them."
7. "People educate each other through the mediation of the world"
8. "I cannot be a teacher without exposing who I am."

Additional resources

ELT and social justice: opportunities in a time of chaos

- In this plenary recording, JJ Wilson looks at the arguments for including social justice issues in ELT classrooms. He summarises the literature, referencing major theorists such as John Dewey, Paulo Freire, and Bell Hooks. He also examines relevant ideas and movements: critical pedagogy and conscientização; participatory teaching learning; problem-posing and dialogic methods; 'poor man's pedagogy'; service learning; and 'the banking method' versus education as the practice of freedom.

<https://www.teachingenglish.org.uk/article/plenary-session-jj-wilson>

Managing your teaching staff – how to keep a staff motivated, challenged, and developing professionally

- In this session, Fiona Dunlop explores ways of identifying what motivates the teachers you manage and how to encourage them to take ownership of their CPD in a way that will benefit not only the teacher but the organisation too. The session covers areas such as developmental observation techniques and focussed action research for teachers.

<https://www.teachingenglish.org.uk/article/graphic-organisers>

Understanding emotional and social intelligence among English language teachers

- This paper explores the role of emotional and social competences as key components of effective classroom practice. The study has two phases. In phase one, a survey was conducted to establish the emotional and social intelligence of English language teachers from across the globe, as well as the role of mediating variables. In the second phase, case studies were employed to examine the beliefs and practices of selected highly emotionally and socially intelligent teachers. Discussing the findings, we reflect on the implications for language teaching, language teacher education and further research in this area.

<https://www.teachingenglish.org.uk/article/understanding-emotional-and-social-intelligence-among-english-language-teachers>