

# Pedagogy, Ideology and Power Politics

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## **Abstract**

*“Teaching is not only a job of work. A teacher is charged with waking students to the nature of reality, providing rigorous introduction to a certain discipline, and creating an awareness of their responsibility as citizens trained in the art of critical thinking. Of course most young people in the history of the world, even the brightest among them, have not been nurtured in this way. Education is expensive, and – unfortunately – this expense has been largely supported by states that want certain things taught and many things avoided. But education is never as much about the past as about the future. Indeed Paolo Freire, a theorist of education, once reminded us ‘that to think of history as possibility is to recognise education as possibility. It is to recognise that if education cannot do everything, it can achieve some things.’”*

(Jay Parini, *The Art of Teaching*, p. ix)

Critical pedagogy is fundamentally concerned with understanding the relationship between power and knowledge. The dominant curriculum separates knowledge from the issue of power and treats it in an unabashedly technical manner; knowledge is seen in overwhelmingly instrumental terms as something to be mastered. That knowledge is always an ideological construct linked to particular interests and social relations generally receives minimal consideration in education programmes. The work of the French philosopher Michel Foucault is crucial in understanding the socially constructed nature of truth and its inscription in knowledge/power relations. Foucault’s concept of “power/knowledge” extends the notion of power beyond its conventional use by philosophers

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