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Tracing the Philosophical and Theoretical Origins of Openness in Education

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Abstract. This research paper undertook the task of exploring and analysing the concept of openness in education through the lens of Philosophy of Education, Sociology of Education, the Frankfurt School, and Critical Pedagogy. A literature review was conducted, exploiting both recent and earlier peer-reviewed and topic-related papers on openness. In addition, original texts and books by the theorists of the above-mentioned schools, fields and movements were studied and utilised, also conducting additional analyses of them. Openness in education emerged as a term in the 20th century with the establishment of the Open University and has

no clear definition. While commonly categorised as philosophy, culture, and policy, the supporting research for these labels is not entirely concrete. Nevertheless, an examination of these fields reveals a strong connection to the concept of openness, both in theory and in practical implementation. More specifically, the major findings showed that openness as a philosophy can be based on the ideas of Liberalism, as a culture can be related to Bourdieu's habitus and Habermas' lifeworld, while as a policy and practice it can be related to Pedagogy of Liberation. Overall, openness appears to be connected to and a logical progression of the aforementioned theories, suggesting that it could effectively tackle educational obstacles in the modern era. Establishing the theoretical and philosophical background of openness in education can lay the foundation for its definition and practical adoption by educational systems.

Keywords: Openness in education, philosophy of education, sociology of education, Frankfurt School, critical pedagogy.

Introduction

The purpose of this paper was to interpret openness in education by relating it to the Philosophy of Education, the Sociology of Education, the Frankfurt School and Critical Pedagogy. In order to achieve this aim, a literature review was conducted, which included the study of original texts by theorists in the above fields and schools, as well as relevant secondary analyses. Furthermore, papers and books related to openness in education were examined and exploited. Each section delved into both open and closed aspects to offer a complete understanding of the subject being examined. Therefore, the paper was structured as follows: in the first section, openness was related to the Philosophy of Education from Plato's time to the present day. In the second section, the relationship of openness with the Sociology of Education was presented, while in the third section, openness was approached through the ideas of the Frankfurt School. Finally, in the fourth section, openness was related to Critical Pedagogy, while in the fifth section, the discussion and conclusions were presented related to what has been mentioned and further research was proposed.

Openness in education emerged as a term in 1969 with the establishment of the Open University and until today, it has been constantly evolving and reshaping. However, openness in education is a complex volatile phenomenon that interacts with, determines and is determined by politics, economics and society, resulting in the impossibility of defining it and, by extension, the impossibility of implementing it at a practical level (Baker, 2017; Lionarakis, 2008). All attempts to define it revolve around the creation of a list of characteristics that should be present or excluded from an open educational environment (Tunnel, 2010). The common denominator of the interpretative efforts is the attribution of openness as a philosophy, culture and policy that can potentially be adopted by an educational system and democratise it or, more precisely, it is a dialogue between philosophy and politics in the field of education.

Upon delving into the academic literature, numerous facets of openness in education across diverse disciplines such as philosophy, sociology, and critical pedagogy are revealed. Strikingly, the concept of openness is conspicuously absent from these texts, including those

produced contemporaneously with the establishment of the Open British University as well as more recent publications in the 21st century. The expressed ideas and theories, however, create the theoretical and pedagogical framework of an open and non-open/closed educational environment. Therefore, exploring the relationship between openness and the aforementioned disciplines and fields can validate it as a philosophy, link theory to practice and lay the foundations for its application at a practical level.

These labels of openness as philosophy, culture and policy are not supported by research (Baker, 2017). The inability to define and delineate openness and the lack of theoretical background brings barriers to its adoption at a practical level. The lack of research in this area frequently causes institutions, practitioners, decision-makers, and stakeholders to view openness as either a perfect solution or a cure-all, ultimately resulting in unsuccessful or superficial implementation efforts. A further consequence of this is the functioning of openness as a tool in the hands of politicians to serve their particular interests (Tait, 2008; 2018). In response to this problem, this paper attempted to contribute to filling the gap and add to the existing literature by laying or creating the theoretical foundations of openness and linking theory to practice, with the ultimate aim of strengthening the adoption and implementation of openness at a practical level.

The Philosophy of Education & Openness

Conservatism and Conventional Education

Any reference to and attempt to interpret openness presupposes a corresponding reference to and interpretation of closedness (Edwards, 2015). Openness and closedness are often treated as a binary, when in fact they are a continuum in education with gradations related to the particular social context, time period, and educational conditions (Bayne et al., 2015; Oliver, 2015).

Closedness has characterised most educational systems from antiquity to the present day and is identified with the political ideology of conservatism, as well as educational practices in their most rigid and authoritarian form. According to conservatism, the mind trumps the body and thus, only academic subjects should be an integral part of the curricula and, in fact, without flexibility and distinctive variations (Curren, 1998; Dupuis & Gordon, 2010). The school is the sole provider of education, while other agents, such as the family, have a subsidiary role. The school must:

- support strict discipline, obedience and adherence to order,
- promote the acquisition of knowledge and the authority of teachers
- implement teacher-centred teaching practices
- respect regulations, without deviation or differentiation (Dupuis & Gordon, 2010).

These beliefs have been influenced by the ideals laid out in Plato's writings, particularly his ideas on the importance of education for shaping the ideal society. Throughout history, advocates of conservatism have maintained that education should be reserved for the

intellectual elite, as they are the ones best suited to uphold and preserve traditional values and societal norms. This elitist view of education has endured through various time periods and continues to be a fundamental belief in contemporary conservative thought (Dupuis & Gordon, 2010). Plato, although he lived in Athens during the period of the democratic constitution, supported aristocracy and believed that equality was unattainable. He took for granted the separation of classes in society based on intellectual ability and hence, in education (Curren, 1998; Dupuis & Gordon, 2010). Of course, only the intellectually superior class, the so-called philosopher-kings, would be fit to rule the whole (Curren, 1998; Dupuis & Gordon, 2010).

A key idea of Plato's educational philosophy, which established and formed the core of conservatism, is to limit the purpose of education to teaching academic subjects and strengthening exclusively the intellectual skills of the ruling class, which can only be achieved through rigidity, discipline and violence (Curren, 1998; Dupuis & Gordon, 2010). Yet, the enduring power of the ideology of conservatism is remarkable. Despite changes at the social, economic, and political levels, liberalism was not challenged until the 17th century (Dupuis & Gordon, 2010).

Liberalism and Democracy in Education

As already mentioned, openness emerged in the 21st century with the creation of the British Open University (Peter & Deimann, 2013) and is often referred to as philosophy and political ideology, characterisations that are not well documented due to the lack of a clear definition of openness (Baker, 2017; Lionarakis, 2008). Nevertheless, by studying the literature, its relationship with the ideology of liberalism, which emerged in the 17th and 18th centuries and overturned what had previously been the case, albeit at a theoretical level and to a limited practical extent (Dupuis & Gordon, 2010), becomes apparent.

Even periods of hard conservatism, such as the era of Plato, Christianity and the Renaissance, had elements of liberalism (Dupuis & Gordon, 2010). In this context, Plato believed that the state had a responsibility to provide education that nurtured the talents of its citizens, regardless of whether they were academic or not. Conversely, during the Renaissance, there was a focus on enhancing the individual freedom of students (Dupuis & Gordon, 2010). The need for substantive equality arose in the era of industrialisation. Workers in heavy industry were excluded from any form of education, perpetuating the lack of opportunities and poor economic situation (Dupuis & Gordon, 2010; Peter & Deimann, 2013).

The existence of educational equality was a necessary condition for achieving social equality. Theoretical and educational reformers of this era, such as Jean Jacques Rousseau, John Locke and John Comenius, reacted to elitism and class segregation, both in society and in schools (Dupuis & Gordon, 2010). At the same time, the development of disciplines such as psychology, sociology and anthropology began to provide answers to questions of an educational nature. Now, Platonic and Christian views of reason and faith as proofs of superiority are being challenged and experience and science are being used (Dupuis & Gordon, 2010). In this new context, education takes on a holistic character and schools are called upon to cultivate the full range of skills, not just the academic ones, as the Conservatives argued (Dupuis & Gordon, 2010). More specifically, it was emphasised:

- the new role of teachers as guides/leaders rather than authorities
- student-centred learning
- experiential and experimental learning
- the use of play in education
- enhancing interactions
- giving children a certain freedom of choice
- the continuous assessment of pupils at all stages of the educational process, not only after the end of teaching.

The ideas of liberalism in its most complete form were expressed by John Dewey. Dewey (2008) considered that the basic purpose of education is to enhance the participation of all students in social life. Plato argued that each person has a specific purpose and place in society, which should serve the harmony and interest of the whole (Dewey, 2008; Dupuis & Gordon, 2010; Garrison et al., 2012). In reality, the individual was subordinated to the larger whole. In contrast, Dewey advocates for uniqueness and believes that education should embrace these diverse characteristics so that there is pluralism and equality in both school and society (Dewey, 2008). Therefore, each individual is not beneath the collective but rather a vital and valued component of it, contributing just as much with their unique experiences and expertise. Indeed, it is worth noting that Dewey (2008) was one of the first theorists to talk about the recognition, importance and contribution of informal learning, i.e. learning that arises outside the formal educational context and is based on personal experiences, in the pre-Open University era, where these ideas were (and to a large extent still remain) uncharted waters (Garrison et al., 2012).

Of course, pluralism and equity are not easy to maintain. To begin with, segregation based on gender, origin and social classes must be abolished (Dewey, 2008). This can happen through constant communication and interactions. It is necessary for people to think and act in relation to others, to contribute to the group in their own unique way, without their behaviour being subject to imposed social norms (Dewey, 2008). In a nurturing educational setting, children have the opportunity to foster habits and hone skills that will enable them to become engaged members of society. Dewey outlined key principles for promoting openness in education, which can be distilled into the following points (Dewey, 2008; Garrison et al., 2012):

- student autonomy
- interactions and communication
- recognition of informal learning
- acceptance of diversity
- promotion of lifelong learning
- accessibility

- linking school to society

These conditions are still a requirement in education today. In the 21st century we are no longer talking about the philosophy of liberalism so much as the philosophy of post-modernism. Theoretically, and based on the ideas of Dewey and other liberals, teachers should now act as fellow travellers, guiding students to create new knowledge through active engagement with the educational material (Dupuis & Gordon, 2010). Of course, the distance between theory and practice remains wide. These ideas are only partially implemented, mainly, by open higher education institutions (Tait, 2008; 2018).

The Sociology of Education and school culture

Habitus as a Culture of Closedness in Education

Two of the most important representatives of the Sociology of Education, Pierre Bourdieu and Basil Bernstein, have dealt thoroughly with the culture that dominates conventional school and university education. Based on Bourdieu's (2020; 2021) theory, education is itself a separate field, an autonomous environment, with a specific and consolidated culture. This culture is consolidated and crystallised, imposing certain standards of behaviour and a normality that excludes anything and anyone different (Bourdieu & Whitehouse, 1974; Bernstein, 1996; Nash, 1990). The culture we are discussing possibly corresponds to Bourdieu's habitus. Habitus according to Bourdieu and Passeron (1990) and Bourdieu (2020) is the commonly accepted principles, beliefs and behaviours that are consistently repeated and characterize a field (such as education), but are also prerequisites for entering that field (Naidoo, 2004; Nash, 1990). In any case, the existing habitus is taken for granted, expected and normal and everyone is asked to adapt to it automatically and unconsciously, just as it happens in the school environment.

Students are, therefore, introduced to the school habitus by transferring their personal cultural capital, i.e. their personal stock, which relates to their social and economic background, their use of language, their manners and preferences, etc. (Bourdieu, 1986; Bourdieu & Whitehouse, 1974; Harker, 1990). However, in order to integrate and thrive socially, they must adapt and navigate their position in the established social structure, which is rooted in a system of power and hierarchy dictated by the upper echelons of society (Donnelly, 2018; Olakulehin & Singh, 2013). As such, the school itself marginalises and excludes deviant students, considering them to have a language and/or cultural deficit (Bernstein, 1975; Bourdieu & Passeron, 1990). Thus, students from the lower classes are asked to either assimilate into the dominant habitus or to accept their inferior position as normal.

Ultimately, students are socially trapped and excluded from integration and academic success (Bernstein, 1996; Bourdieu & Whitehouse, 1974; Nash, 1990). Habitus is maintained through repeated pedagogical choices by teachers, which involve – according to Bourdieu and Passeron (1990) – the use of violence and the imposition of power in a symbolic way, i.e. indirect, unconscious and thus, unperceived. Consequently, school ends up being a closed institution, a mirror of society, which does not accept diversity and reinforces homogeneity and conservatism, accurately reflecting and reinforcing differences between social classes (Bourdieu & Passeron, 1990; Harker, 1990; Naidoo, 2004).

Habitus as a Culture of Openness in Education

According to Bernstein (2000), the school, as an institution, must ensure certain rights for students. Students should have the right to:

- individual strengthening of their self-confidence in order to act and take initiative
- social, cultural, intellectual and personal inclusion
- participate in the exercise of power and in the functioning of the hierarchy.

Overall, all students should feel that they have a place and value in school, and that their voice is heard, which is the epitome of democracy (Bernstein, 2000). Clearly, as already mentioned, this is not the case in education.

Bernstein, in order to highlight the current situation and the changes that need to be implemented, developed his theory of classification and framing (Bernstein, 1996; Morais, 2002), which may correspond to practices of closedness and openness. This theory suggests that strict classification and framing, or closedness, limits the learning opportunities for all students. On the other hand, it emphasizes that successful learning comes from flexible classification and framing, or openness, which gives students the freedom to control when, where, and how quickly they learn (Bernstein, 1975, 1996; Morais, 2002). Furthermore, Bernstein (1961) considers that the curriculum and its design are of particular importance. A curriculum should be adaptable, have clear objectives and take into account all factors related to the target group of students, such as age, maturity, interests and socio-cultural background (Bernstein, 1960, 1961; Donnelly, 2016).

Overall, the two important theorists of the Sociology of Education, Bourdieu and Bernstein, in approaching the character of education, set out - perhaps without realising it at the time - the criteria for the existence of openness, which can be summarised as follows:

- providing unrestricted and equal access to education for all individuals without any barriers or bias,
- equal sharing of knowledge and educational resources,
- recognition of social and cultural differences in the creation of educational programmes,
- flexibility and adaptability in curricula,
- recognition of informal learning,
- granting students control of space, time and pace of learning,
- adoption of student-centred learning.

These criteria are often vague and unmeasurable (Bernstein, 1975). Nevertheless, almost five decades later, they remain relevant and certainly have been enriched. In his analysis of the school environment from a sociological standpoint, Bernstein highlights the importance of the

content of information, the manner in which it is conveyed, and its practical implications for children (Morais, 2002). Several years later, Lionarakis (2006), similarly raises the issue of shifting the focus from the transmission of information to its use by students to acquire knowledge. In fact, students should be able to choose and act/perform in authentic environments and not just memorize. Bernstein (1975) and Bourdieu and Passeron (1990) referred to this perspective on education, which is based on the aforementioned openness criteria, as Invisible Pedagogy, which is essentially student-centred pedagogy, and possibly, corresponds to openness practices. On the other hand, the opposite practices described earlier constitute, according to Bernstein (1975), Visible Pedagogy, which is identical to teacher-centred pedagogy and relies on the practices of closedness.

The Frankfurt School and Openness

Education in Compliance with the Economy and Politics

The Institute of Social Research or, as it is commonly known, the Frankfurt School was mainly concerned with the dynamics and influence of politics, markets and the economy on education. Several important theorists of the Frankfurt School, such as Max Horkheimer, Theodor Adorno, Herbert Marcuse, Erich Fromm and Jürgen Habermas, developed Critical Theory, which deals with the connections between political, social and economic factors and the reinforcement of oppression and inequality, as well as with possible ways of emancipation and social reform (Deakin Crick & Joldersma, 2006).

Marcuse (1991), argues that society is heavily influenced by the economic and political system. Capitalism and the culture of consumerism intrude into all sectors and determine the methods by which society meets the needs of its citizens (Marcuse, 1991). Of course, education is not left unaffected. One-dimensional thinking finds practical application in the field of education, so that the school adapts to the economy and politics (Marcuse, 1991). The social and economic context limits educational innovation and imposes norms of behaviour on teachers and students (Habermas, 1991; Terry, 1997). The school thus ends up being a sterile environment for the maintenance and reproduction of the already existing culture (Terry, 1997).

According to Habermas (1991), society is a patchwork of the system (i.e. the economy and politics) and the lifeworld. He defines lifeworld as the culture of everyday life and the context in which people interact with each other (Fleming, 2020; Habermas, 1991; Regmi, 2017). In the field of education, lifeworld potentially refers to school culture and the relationships that develop in the school environment. The influence of external systemic forces, such as the economy and politics, has colonised and tainted this culture, leading to the reification of its values and beliefs. This has resulted in the culture being frequently oppressed and dominated by market power (Fleming, 2020; Habermas, 1991; Regmi, 2017).

Consequently, a lifeworld in education that is in perfect alignment with economic and political interests reinforces exclusions and differences between social classes, fostering a culture of closedness. Education ultimately becomes a tool of political power, capitalism and, by extension, consumerism.

Citizenship Education

According to Habermas (1991), in order to free education from the influence of political and economic forces, continuous dialogue and equal interaction between citizens should be established (Okshevsky, 2016). In his Discourse Theory, he explains that these interactions should have the following characteristics (Okshevsky, 2016):

- Equal rights to participation, disclosure and inclusion. All discourses should be public and everyone should be able to contribute.
- Equal rights to argumentation and expression of personal opinion. Everyone should have the opportunity to raise an issue under discussion, to judge or challenge.
- Exclusion of prejudice and deception. Dialogue should be characterised by honesty, authenticity, objectivity and empathy.
- Freedom of communication, without coercion. Dialogue should be based on reason and be free of any kind of imposition.

By applying the Theory of Discourse in education, we can empower students to engage in civil society and foster a more democratic lifeworld within educational settings. These skills are essential for preparing students for active participation in society later on (Okshevsky, 2016; Regmi, 2017).

Habermas in turn sets some conditions and practices for democratizing and decolonizing education so that it can fulfill its purpose and become Education for Citizenship (Deakin Crick & Joldersma, 2006; Englund, 2010; Moran & Murphy, 2011):

- student-centred teaching,
- student-centred learning,
- interdisciplinarity and intersubjectivity,
- open communication and equal dialogue,
- presentation of the world from many different perspectives,
- involvement of students in decision-making.

The creation of a democratic school is essential for the existence of democracy in university education and, of course, in society. This bottom-up change requires liberation from capitalism and the culture of consumerism it imposes (Fleming, 2020; Torres & Morrow, 1998). Therefore, it probably requires the transformation of the aforementioned lifeworld of closedness into a lifeworld of openness through the application of Habermas' Discourse Theory practices.

Critical Pedagogy and Openness

Pedagogy of the Oppressed

Critical Pedagogy is an evolution of the critical theory of the Frankfurt School. The representatives of Critical Pedagogy, such as Paulo Freire and Henry Giroux, are concerned with the influence of, above all, politics on education. Freire (1993) believed that the lower social classes can be liberated if a cooperative model between teachers and students is applied to the educational process. In fact, he called education, in its present state, Pedagogy of the Oppressed. In this context, members of the working class are seen as ungrateful and idle and, at the same time, they accept their position, not perceiving it as oppression (Freire, 1993). Hence, the distinction between the oppressed and the free individuals indicates the distinction between their societal standings.

Giroux (2020) follows a similar logic. Giroux addresses the evils of the modern era, with a focus on the spread of far-right parties in the United States of America and the prevalence of Neoliberalism. In these conditions, education is commodified and its sole purpose is to produce an efficient workforce, while the role of teachers is reduced to a process tool for preparing this workforce (Giroux, 2020). Neoliberalism brings to the fore the practices of Conservatism in a more extreme form. Freire's (1993) *Pedagogy of the Oppressed* thus ends up being more relevant than ever and enriched in response to new political conditions worldwide (Giroux, 2020).

More specifically, *Pedagogy of the Oppressed* has the following characteristics (Freire, 1993; Giroux, 2020):

- deprivation of voice and maintenance of social inequalities,
- polarisation between teachers and students,
- task-centred teaching with emphasis on lecture (narration sickness) and memorisation,
- control and manipulation of thoughts and actions,
- reinforcement of passivity,
- submission to technological developments and political and economic demands.

In *Pedagogy of the oppressed*, education serves the existing political power and reproduces it in the school environment, so that citizens become a better fit for the world. Education takes on the character of a bank (banking concept of education), where students are empty vessels while teachers act as depositors (Freire, 1993). In an educational setting, teachers and students engage in an active-passive dynamic, characterized by the division of roles and power dynamics. Teachers assume an active role as they impart knowledge, exercise critical thinking, make choices, take actions, hold authority, and serve as subjects of the educational process. Conversely, students are positioned as passive recipients, lacking knowledge, dependent on others for thought processes, constrained by predetermined choices, guided by teachers' actions, lacking power, and relegated to the status of objects within the

educational framework (Freire, 1993). However, despite its teacher-centred nature, Pedagogy of the Oppressed does not give teachers substantial power. As already mentioned, both teachers and students are caught in the cogs of the political apparatus (Giroux, 2020).

The solution to this morbid educational environment, according to Freire (1993), is to transform political activity into pedagogical activity. The opposite of Pedagogy of the Oppressed is Pedagogy of Liberation, which can respond to these problems. Possibly, and in the case of Critical Pedagogy, the transition from Pedagogy of the Oppressed to Pedagogy of Liberation corresponds to a transition from the pedagogy of closedness to the pedagogy of openness.

Pedagogy of Liberation

According to Freire (1993), the oppressed remain in an inhuman and violent condition without being aware of their situation, which makes it even more difficult for them to disengage. The liberation of the oppressed in society is achievable through collaborative efforts between leadership and the marginalised community. Similarly, within the school environment, collaboration between teachers and students using a unified educational approach is essential for achieving justice and empowerment (Freire, 1993). Liberation in education will help the oppressed to re-construct their identity and reject the previous one, without remaining in bondage to the dominant class and the labels assigned to them (Freire, 1993).

Liberation Pedagogy, therefore, mandates the reconfiguration of educational structures to be autonomous and independent of the economic and political interests of the upper classes (Freire, 1993). Taking into account the ideas of Freire (1993), but also the more modern ideas of Giroux (2020), we can summarise the characteristics of Liberation Pedagogy as follows:

- equity between teachers and students
- continuous dialogue
- teachers and students teaching and learning in parallel
- teachers and students producing new knowledge together
- creativity, reflection
- application of problem-solving techniques
- linking school with real life
- creating and using teaching materials that actively involve students
- revealing to students the ways in which political and economic forces interact and influence education
- cultivating critical thinking and social responsibility
- strengthening participation in decision-making and civil society.

According to Critical Pedagogy, education should be so empowered that it can intervene in politics and create the conditions for social change, providing students with the skills, power

and knowledge to participate in this change (Giroux, 2020). In essence, Critical Pedagogy refers to a subversive education that removes exclusions and is a pillar of democracy.

Discussion and Conclusions

This paper aimed to examine and connect the concept of openness in education with various educational philosophies and theories, namely the Philosophy of Education, the Sociology of Education, the Frankfurt School, and Critical Pedagogy. The term "openness in education" is a relatively new concept that is explored through a literature review in this paper (Peter & Deimann, 2013) and is often identified as philosophy and policy. However, these characterisations are not substantiated and to date, no clear definition has been found due to openness' fluid nature (Baker, 2017; Tunnel, 2010). Therefore, the question arises whether it is applicable, while most attempts to approach it are superficial and rely on specific lists of characteristics and possible practical applications (Tunnel, 2010).

The difficulty in interpreting openness may be related to the fact that it only emerged as a term in the 20th century with the establishment of the Open University (Baker, 2017). However, upon closer examination of the literature, one will observe that the origins of openness can be traced back to the philosophical teachings of Plato and Aristotle, and have continued to evolve through Critical Pedagogy and Postmodernism in the 21st century. It seems, therefore, that openness dates back to antiquity, but at the same time it is an outgrowth of all these changes and demands that mark the globalised societies of the 21st century.

Moreover, openness is in dialogue with the aforementioned fields, as well as these fields are in dialogue with each other. For example, by studying the Sociology of Education and the Frankfurt School, we can identify many common elements in their conceptions of the educational process. This may be due to the common time and historical periods and events that occurred and influenced society, politics and education. In the periods before the 20th century, there is no mention of openness, as open universities had not yet been established. Until then, it seems that the terms of equality and democracy were used. However, even the fields that touch the 21st century, such as Critical Pedagogy and the philosophical movement of Postmodernism, which are contemporary and/or posterior to the establishment of the Open University, continue to make no reference to openness.

Some have argued for a return to traditional methods, while others have proposed radical changes in the structure and goals of education. Despite the diversity of opinions, one thing is clear: the need for continuous evaluation and improvement in the field of education is essential for the betterment of society. This way, and without doing so intentionally, they approached both closedness and openness hermeneutically and philosophically. The philosophical basis of closedness seems to be the philosophy of Conservatism, which started with Plato and is still valid today (Curren, 1998; Dupuis & Gordon, 2010). It is even revived in its most extreme form with the spread of Neoliberalism (Giroux, 2020). Closedness, which seems to dominate conventional education, takes various forms with slight variations and diverse names, depending on the theories in question. For example, Bernstein (1975) referred to the pedagogy of closedness as Visible Pedagogy, while Freire (1993) named it Pedagogy of the Oppressed. In all cases, periods and fields, however, the culture of closedness has some features in common,

most importantly teacher-centred teaching, social exclusion, the restriction of students' freedom and autonomy and the subordination of education to external forces of politics and economics (Bernstein, 1975; Bourdieu, 1986; Bourdieu & Whitehouse, 1974; Dupuis & Gordon, 2010; Fleming, 2020; Freire, 1993; Giroux, 2020; Habermas, 1991; Marcuse, 1991).

Openness is not simply the absence of closedness, but rather a spectrum that includes varying levels of receptivity, transparency, and flexibility. It can manifest in different ways, such as being open-minded, willing to listen and consider new ideas, and being transparent and honest in communication. On the other hand, closedness can represent rigidity, resistance to change, and limited perspective. Understanding the nuances of openness and closedness can help individuals and organizations navigate complexity, foster inclusivity, and cultivate a culture of continuous learning and adaptation (Bayne et al., 2015; Oliver, 2015). In other words, a closed educational environment may have parts of openness and an open educational environment may have parts of closedness. Openness, in turn, seems to have its philosophical foundations in the Liberalism movement. Liberalism changed the landscape of education and brought significant reforms, albeit at a theoretical level (Dupuis & Gordon, 2010). John Dewey set out criteria and conditions for a more democratic education, which are still a concern of open institutions today, such as the recognition of informal learning and the promotion of lifelong learning, which demonstrates the relationship between openness and the philosophy of Liberalism (Dewey, 2008; Garrison et al., 2012).

We have already referred to the lack of a clear definition of openness (Baker, 2017). Too often, openness is identified with democracy and equity and their accompanying practices. For example, Bernstein (1975) referred to Invisible Pedagogy as practices that promote student autonomy, flexibility, and lack of score-based grouping, among others. The implementation of these practices can modify the habitus, i.e. the culture of an educational environment (Bourdieu, 2020, 2021; Bourdieu & Passeron, 1990). In this context, habitus can be synonymous with either closedness or openness and can change according to internal, as well as external factors, practices and circumstances.

In correspondence with Bourdieu's habitus (Bourdieu, 2020, 2021; Bourdieu & Passeron, 1990) is Habermas' (1991) lifeworld. Lifeworld is the cultural backdrop of everyday life, shaping interactions that can also influence the school environment (Fleming, 2020; Habermas, 1991). Habermas (1991) provided his own criteria for the decolonization of lifeworld, which is occupied by the forces of capitalism. For him, the most important criterion was the existence of democratic dialogue and interactions between students in order to participate in Civil Society (Fleming, 2020; Habermas, 1991). Building upon Habermas' theory and the Frankfurt School, Critical Pedagogy emerges as a transformative approach. In Critical Pedagogy, openness aligns with Liberation Pedagogy, emphasizing dialogue and active engagement within Civil Society (Freire, 1993; Giroux, 2020), as does Habermas (1991).

In summary, openness can be established as a philosophy through its connection with the ideas of Liberalism and as a culture through its connection with Bourdieu's habitus and Habermas' lifeworld. Furthermore, it can be established as a policy through its connection with Critical Pedagogy. Freire's Pedagogy of Liberation, Bernstein's Invisible Pedagogy and Habermas' Theory of Discourse are the embodiment of openness in terms of a pedagogical

framework and its practical applications. In all its various manifestations, openness is designed to promote students' independence and autonomy, nurture a sense of responsibility, and equip them for engagement in civil society by eliminating discrimination, exclusions, and obstacles. These points are extremely important, are a common denominator for all the fields under study and correspond to the way we deal with openness in modern times. Openness seems to be inherent in any field, movement and sector related to education and may well be a synthesis of all these ideas, adapted to the modern age, in order to meet the challenges of the day. Openness effects and is influenced by factors such as politics, society and the economy (Baker, 2017; Bayne et al., 2015). As we have seen, the fields under study are affected in a similar way. For example, the Philosophy of Education emphasises social factors, while the Sociology of Education, the Frankfurt School and Critical Pedagogy focus on economics and politics in parallel.

In any case, the study and approach of the philosophical and theoretical background of openness is necessary in order to define it in the process, to bridge the gap between theory and practice and to have it adopted by more educational contexts. This paper faces limitations and constraints in attempting to study openness within the context of education. The existing literature on openness is insufficient and repetitive, often focusing solely on criteria and factors that influence it or on the Open University and Distance Education, thereby restricting the ability to draw broad conclusions applicable to various educational settings. Additionally, the exploration of openness in relation to sociology, philosophy, and pedagogy is novel and presents a potential risk in terms of establishing connections and depth of analysis due to the lack of prior research in this area. To address these challenges, researchers have conducted a comprehensive review of literature on openness, philosophy, sociology, and pedagogy to inform their conclusions. While the findings may not be generalised at this stage, they offer valuable insights and serve as a foundation for future research in this field.

Suggestions for Future Research

Given the information provided, it is recommended that empirical research be carried out in both school and tertiary education environments to better understand openness, explore its different facets, and establish practical applications for theoretical concepts, while considering the social, political and financial factors affecting these educational contexts. Through the utilization of qualitative methodology and case studies, this research aims to investigate openness practices within both distance and conventional universities. By conducting observations and interviews, the study will explore the criteria and principles adopted by these institutions, particularly in light of external factors such as the financial crisis and the SARS-Cov-2 pandemic. Additionally, the research will examine how these events have potentially influenced the character of universities.

Furthermore, similar research will be conducted within the realm of school education. With the increased use of Distance Education during the pandemic, schools have been forced to implement alternative practices that may inadvertently promote aspects of openness. By examining these practices and their outcomes, this study seeks to understand how schools have adapted to the challenges posed by the pandemic and how this may impact future educational practices.

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