

# Research Briefs: Critical Pedagogical Praxis: Risk and Hopeful Struggle

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## Research Briefs

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### **Critical Pedagogical Praxis: Risk and Hopeful Struggle**

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### **Chapter Summary**

This chapter critically and autobiographically discusses the ways in which I started practicing critical pedagogy before encountering the work of Freire or any other critical pedagogy literature. Critical pedagogy is a process of dialogue by which learners engage in deeper and more critical understanding of what they are learning and how it affects others, their actions, the community, etc. My beginnings with critical pedagogy were generated through my experiences teaching in Upstate New York and my innate dissatisfaction with the banking method that prevailed at Romulus Central School and other educational institutions during my teaching career. Banking education, as defined by Freire (1971), indicates that traditionally teachers make deposits of information into

students like making a deposit at a bank with the expectation that students will return the deposit as information for a test question. When I did come to read *Pedagogy of the Oppressed* (1971), it "was like being in a completely dark room and someone turning on a bright light." The consequences that my students and I faced as we read the word and the world, lead me to emphasize that critical pedagogy necessarily entails risk. The risk of visibility and consequently vulnerability for both teacher and student. Risk is involved because such pedagogy questions the taken-for granted in mainstream education and in the larger society as well. I also read student evaluative comments in order to grapple with student enthusiasm and resistance to critical pedagogy. Since no pedagogy is inherently liberating, enthusiasm and resistance are discussed. Finally, there is an emphasis in this chapter on hope for the possibilities that critical pedagogy can provide in education, teaching and our society in the present and in the future.

## **Practical Application**

In today's education system which relies on standardized, high stakes testing and the simple banking of information, there are alternatives. One such alternative is critical pedagogy which replaces the depositing of information with dialogue, the exchange of ideas and learning in classrooms. All become learners. This autobiographical account discusses teaching experiences in using critical pedagogy in a variety of classrooms from rural high schools to Native American reservation schools to undergraduate and graduate university classrooms. It does not discuss methodology, but the ways in which critical pedagogy can help to develop students who become not simply consumer citizens but critical citizens willing to ask questions and participate in the socio-political issues of our time.

## **Citation**

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