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Examining Student Engagement for Alienated Youths in Schools:

Insights using Freire's *Pedagogy of the Oppressed*.

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What factors, situations and contexts lead to successful and active engagement in today's classrooms? While some classrooms have made progressive gains in attracting and maintaining students' attention, other classrooms have alienated and disengaged students. McInerney (2009) describes student alienation being manifested by many factors including, but not limited to, passive resistance, withdrawal from school activities and, not attending school.

It appears that there is a dialectic that defines the ideology that exists in school. At one end are those who subscribe to a deficit ideology. This belief places the fault of student disengagement on individual students' choices and actions. Whereas, those who subscribe to structural ideology fault a system of school policies and practices. This is reminiscent of what Freire (2018) describes with the banking model of education.

Freire's work is grounded on the notion of humanization. "According to Freire, to be fully human is to be a subject capable of acting on changing the world" (McInerney, 2009, p. 28). In my interpretation of Freire, to dehumanize is to turn students into docile drones incapable of making their own free choices, decisions and actions related to learning. McInerney state:

If we deny subjectivity, silent student voices, show scant respect for children and their culture, suppress the creative capacities of individuals and close down spaces for inquiry, we are likely to reinforce existing patterns of alienation and disaffection amongst young people. (p. 28)

In order to combat the issue of student alienation, the researcher uses Freire's model of educational projects. As Freire say, "one must seek to live with others in solidarity. One

cannot impose oneself, not even merely co-exist with one's students" (Freire, 2018, p. 77).

Through this avenue, teachers in McNerney's research co-constructed learning activities with students which focused on students' interests. Such actions resulted in fostering high-quality and valued learning experiences.

References

- Freire, P. (2018). *Pedagogy of the oppressed*. Bloomsbury.
- McInerney, P. (2009). Towards a critical pedagogy of engagement for alienated youth: Insights from Freire and school-based research. *Critical studies in education*, 50(1), 23-35. <https://doi.org/10.1080/17508480802526637>