

Ibn Khaldun's Rationalist Assessment of Paulo Freire's Libertarian Resolution of Teacher-Student Contradiction

Asad Shahzad ¹ Syed Aamir Alam Rizvi ² Anam Qamar ²

¹ Assistant Professor, Center for Policy and Area Studies, Institute of Business Management, Karachi, Sindh, Pakistan.

✉ asad.shahzad@iobm.edu.pk

² Researcher, Institute of Business Management, Karachi, Sindh, Pakistan.

✉ syedaamiralamrizvi@gmail.com

³ Assistant Professor, Department of Business Administration, Jinnah University for Women, Karachi, Pakistan.

✉ anam.qamar@ymail.com

This article may be cited as Shahzad, A., Rizvi, S. A. A., & Qamar, A. (2025). Ibn Khaldun's Rationalist Assessment of Paulo Freire's Libertarian Resolution of Teacher-Student Contradiction. *ProScholar Insights*, 4(4), 112-122.

<https://doi.org/10.55737/psi.2025d-44132>

Abstract: This article explores the teacher-student relationship, focusing on three major conceptual frameworks: the teacher-student relationship in the 'banking' concept of education, Freire's libertarian pedagogy, and Ibn Khaldun's method of progressive cultivation of scientific habit. It aims to clarify the relationship, analyze its correlation with student learning, and understand its connection to a larger social structure. The study employs the sociology of education methodology and comparative research design to address diverse educational issues, focusing on broader social inequalities. It aims to identify key issues in multiple frameworks, focusing on the teacher-student relationship and its wider social implications. The finding of the study reveals that teacher-student relationship is not primarily oppressive and can be improved through a rationalist approach. Critical consciousness in Freire and Ibn Khaldun's frameworks is crucial for 'humanization'. However, Freire's radical liberty overlooks the importance of learning from authoritative teachers. Viewing students as student-teachers may overlook the significance of personal contact with authoritative teachers and scholars for scholarly excellence.

Keywords: Education, Ibn Khaldun, Libertarian, Paulo Freire, Pedagogy, Oppression, Teacher-Student Relationship



Corresponding Author:

Syed Aamir Alam Rizvi

Researcher, Institute of Business Management, Karachi, Sindh, Pakistan

✉ syedaamiralamrizvi@gmail.com

Introduction

1. Freire's Libertarian Critique of Banking Conception of Education

Paulo Freire is a renowned libertarian educationist. It is commonly argued that some of his ideas are "most relevant to address the challenges of the twenty-first century" (Schugurensky, 2014, p. 173). Freire offers a scathing critique of what he calls the 'banking conception of education' characterized by being anti-dialogic and having subject-object contradiction of teacher-student relationship. In his magnum opus, *Pedagogy of the Oppressed*, he mainly draws on Marxism, existentialism, and phenomenology. *Pedagogy of the Oppressed* "has been cited more than 72,000 times—the most in the world in the education discipline" (Geier, 2024, p. 1315). Freire contends that the 'banking' conception of education views teachers as a depositor of knowledge and students are treated as passive receptacles. According to the banking concept of education 'bank-clerk teachers' make deposits of knowledge that passive students just memorize and finally cash that deposited knowledge in the form of grades. The 'banking' approach does not allow the critical consciousness to grow because it domesticates and subjugates students so that they fit into the system of alienation and capitalist exploitation which does not allow them to question their situation. Freire contends that deposits of knowledge and critical consciousness of the students are inversely related. The larger the deposits in students' accounts, the weaker their critical consciousness (Freire, 2005). The 'banking' approach engages students in such problems as whether Roger gave green grass to the rabbit or Roger gave green grass to the goat (Freire, 2005).

The politics of such education is veiled from the eyes of the oppressed, and the so-called 'humanism' of the 'banking' approach "masks the effort to turn women and men into automatons" (Freire, 2005, p. 74).

Teachers who, knowingly or unknowingly (well-intentioned bank clerk teachers), are instruments of the structure of oppression through the 'banking' approach, serve the structure by assuming the role of depositors, domesticators, and prescribers. Thus, Freire views the common teacher-student relationship dialectically and finds it authoritarian in the sense that the teacher is the oppressor whereas the students are the oppressed. By seeking to integrate the oppressed into the structure of oppression the 'banking' approach helps to maintain the social structure that enables the oppressor to treat the oppressed as 'being-for-others'. Freire contends that it is not the integration of the oppressed in the structure of oppression that would lead to their liberation but rather the transforming of the structure would enable the oppressed to become 'beings-for-themselves'. In the overall social order, Freire contends that teachers are sub-oppressors who partially but very significantly serve the structure of oppression. Under the 'banking' conception of education students are worse than the Hegelian slave in that the Hegelian slave is aware that his master is dependent on him whereas the students "never discover that they educate the teacher" (Freire, 2005, p. 72). In Marxist terms it may be said that students have false consciousness, and they need to develop class consciousness. Freire sees "the process of removing the teacher as a figure of authority as one of the important steps toward challenging all figures of authority and authoritarianism" (Spoto & Bay, 2015). It is in this sense that Freire sees his resolution of the master-slave contradiction as a significant sub-project of transforming the structure of oppression.

Freire proposes to replace the 'banking' conception of education with what he calls 'pedagogy of the oppressed' (or dialogical education) which seeks to dissolve "vertical patterns characteristic of banking education" (Freire, 2005, p. 80). The teacher must adopt "the role of student among students to undermine the power of oppression and serve the cause of liberation" (Freire, 2005, p. 75). At the core of the difference between 'banking' conception of education and Freire's proposed dialogical and problem-posing Education lies in differing teacher-student relationships. Freire draws on the works of Martin Buber to formulate his view of dialogue. He adapted "Buber's concept of dialogue into something political (Guilherme & Morgan, 2018). Freire's 'pedagogy of the oppressed' demands that education "must begin with the solution of the teacher-student contradiction...so that both are simultaneously teachers and students" (Freire, 2005, p. 72). Freire contends that an educational system or educator can't be neutral; they are either domesticators or liberators. The apolitical nature of education links it with the SDGs either positively or negatively. Either Eco pedagogical education prompts a generation nationally and globally in the direction of sustainability or the politics of education is directed to "unsustainable environmental violence" (Misiaszek, 2022).

Freire aspires to redesign the teacher-student relationship in the contemporary educational system as a libertarian. /quasi-anarchist Spirit. In an oft-quoted passage, Freire contends that "the more radical the person is, the more fully he or she enters into reality, so that knowing it better, he or she can better transform it" (Freire, 2005, p. 39). Freire's radically libertarian pedagogy is sometimes identified as "libertarian in the tradition of the anarchists" (McLaren & Leonard, 1993, p. 16). Freire's proposed dialogic approach has two distinct characteristics; it is "a humanist and libertarian pedagogy" (Freire, 2005, p. 54). To Freire, the very essence of dialogical education is the practice of freedom (Freire, 2005). As dialogue is not possible between master and slave or oppressor and oppressed, liberty is a precondition for dialogue to take place. The practice of liberty Freire contends would lead to invention and reinvention of knowledge.

Freire proposes what he views as a 'humanistic pedagogy' that he identifies as a dialogic problem-posing or problematizing method of education. A primary purpose of education, to Freire, is the development of conscientização/conscientization or critical consciousness. Leading to the 'humanization' of teacher and student. 'Conscientization' is a dialectically-oriented term that implies the development of consciousness of socio-economic and political contradictions in the society and striving to remove the oppressive elements of reality (Freire, 2005). Freirean pedagogy is expected to make students realize that they and their oppressors are both dehumanization. Thus, 'Conscientization' seeks to identify contradictions and to take action to resolve them to reshape reality in the direction of 'humanization'. By 'humanization' Freire means "a process by which each person becomes capable of transforming the world" (Spring, 1977, p. 62). The dialogic liberation of the student, Freire contends, is aimed at



achieving 'humanization' Of both teacher and students. The oppressors are not only agents of dehumanization but are themselves dehumanized because "no one can be authentically human while he prevents others from being so" (Freire, 2005, p. 85). The oppressors are dehumanized by denying the oppressed to question them. The 'banking' method habituates the students to remain quiet in the presence of a perceived authority. The 'banking' method is deliberately established because "no oppressive order could permit the oppressed to begin to question" (Freire, 2005, p. 86).

2. Libertarian Humanization as Freire's Proposed Resolution of Teacher-Student Contradiction

Freire's dialectical view of reality ultimately seeks the resolution of the oppressor-oppressed contradiction by the 'humanization' of both. Freire contends that the development of critical consciousness through humanistic education would enable both the oppressor and the oppressed to identify their dehumanization. Dehumanization, to Freire, is primarily characterized by mental subservience, fatalism, and alienation. 'Humanization' will bring an end to alienation and will lead to the psychological emancipation of the oppressed. He proposes the praxis (borrowed from Marx) as a remedy to the duality between theory and practice. In Freirean pedagogy, praxis combines work and word and fuses action with reflection. "Human beings are not built in silence, but in word, in work, in action-reflection" (Freire, 2005, p. 88). The culture of silence, to Freire, is a strong indication of the influence of the structure of oppression.

Freire contends that dialogue is of the essence of human phenomenon and the word is the essence of dialogue. The word is not mere utterance; it comprises the composite of reflection and action. To Freire, an action devoid of reflection and a word not directed to change the world are both unauthentic. 'Banking' method, Freire contends, does not bridge the gap between action and reflection; it does not target to fuse word and action. That is, the words of the 'bank clerk teachers' are not directed to change the world in the direction of 'humanization'. Human beings, to Freire, are primarily *namers* and agents of change in that work, and word action and reflection are the building materials of human beings. Thus, 'humanization' implies the ability of a person to name the world, and to change the world. The act of naming is not a one-time project because the world reappears and demands new naming.

Freire couples his conception of dialogue and that of naming the world with the libertarian notion of freedom. The purpose of Freire's "dialogical-libertarian action...is to make it possible for the oppressed, by perceiving their adhesion, to opt to transform an unjust reality" (Freire, 2005, p. 172). Freire does not altogether renounce authority in favor of freedom. Though more inclined to license, he is critical of both authoritarianism and license. For example, in his *Pedagogy of Freedom* Freire compares an authoritarian teacher with a teacher who imposes no limitations on liberty at all (i.e., an anarchist teacher). He specifies that the methods of both the former and the latter are flawed in that the former "suffocates the natural curiosity and freedom of the student", whereas the latter is "equally disrespectful of an essential characteristic of our humanness, namely, our radical (and assumed) unfinishedness" (Freire, 2001, p. 59). Both teachers and students are unfinished.

Freire remarks, in his matrix of libertarian-humanist pedagogy, that "no one teaches another, nor is anyone self-taught. People teach each other" (Freire, 2005, p. 80). In Freire's radically libertarian model of education everyone is a teacher and a student which implies that no one in particular is a teacher. Freire contrasts the 'banking' concept with the problem-posing method of education and remarks that the former, on the one hand, dichotomizes the teacher's act of learning and his/her act of teaching; on the other, in denying reflection, it dichotomizes cognition and memory of the students. Freire contends that the problem-posing method does away with the dichotomy of the teacher-student relationship in that the students are no longer docile and passive listeners but rather critical and active interlocutors investigating a subject in dialogue with the teacher. "The problem-posing educator constantly reforms his reflections in the reflection of the students" (Freire, 2005, p. 80).

3. A Khaldunian Assessment of Freire's Libertarian Method of Education

Significance of Ibn Khaldun's thoughts:

Ibn Khaldun is a 14th-century Muslim historian, philosopher, and sociologist. Various Western theorists and scholars acknowledge Ibn Khaldun as the founder of the science of sociology (Abdellah & Haridy, 2017). Ibn Khaldun's Prolegomena (The Muqaddimah) provides "a philosophy of history which is undoubtedly the greatest work of its kind



that has ever yet been created by any mind in any time or place" (Toynbee, 1948, p. 322). It is commonly contended that Ibn Khaldun is a predecessor of Marx's dialectic, Machiavelli's virtù, Montesquieu's views on the environment, Weber's typology of leadership, Darwin's theory of evolution, and Durkheim's concept of organic and mechanical solidarity (Hughes-Warrington, 2015). Marx, Durkheim, and Weber identified the loss of freedom and enslavement in modern society as alienation, anomie, and confinement to the iron cage of rationality respectively (Alatas, 2017). Centuries before Marx, Weber, and Durkheim identified the contradictions of modernity we find Ibn Khaldun "thematizing the absence of freedom and enslavement as well," which shows, "the modern relevance of his thought" (Alatas, 2017). Ibn Khaldun is influenced by Muslim historical tradition, but more dominantly he is positioned in the Greek and Greco-Roman rationalist tradition which connects him with Aristotle, al-Mas'udi, al-Farabi, Avicenna, and Averroes on the one hand, and "European philosophical historians and sociologists of the 18th, 19th, and 20th centuries," on the other (Dale, 2006). However, Ibn Khaldun's views on pedagogy and methods of teaching and learning are relatively overlooked. The following section consists of two parts. The first part offers Ibn Khaldun's proposed method of instruction whereas the second one provides a Khaldunian critique of Freire's proposed pedagogy.

4. Ibn Khaldun's Proposed Method of Instruction

Ibn Khaldun formulated a rationalist conceptualization of the aim and method of education. To Ibn Khaldun, teaching is one of the crafts while the learning of any craft (*sanā'i*) requires teaching. That is, learning of all crafts depends on the craft of teaching. For Ibn Khaldun, knowing and doing together constitute craft. In addition to teaching, some other crafts include calligraphy, agriculture, architecture, medicine, singing, and music. What connects all these crafts is the cultivation of a habit as the convergence of action and thought. "Teaching is considered categorically as one of the crafts. Craft is identical to the habit (*Malaka*), while habit provides the skill using which knowledge and science are practiced" (Ahmad, 2003, p. 26). The cultivation of habit is preceded by preparedness and receptivity of the student. Preparedness for and receptivity to scientific knowledge "grows gradually and little by little when he (the student) faces the problems of the discipline...and advances from an approximate understanding of them to a complete, higher knowledge" (Khaldun, 2015, p. 608). Ibn Khaldun proposed the method of progressive cultivation of scientific habit. Abdellah & Haridy, (2017) suitably identified Ibn Khaldun's method as 'scaffolding'. The neglect of scaffolding, on the part of the teacher, makes the student get the "impression that scholarship is difficult and he becomes loath to occupy himself with it. He completely dodges and avoids it" (Khaldun, 2015, p. 608). Ibn Khaldun's proposed method of scaffolding (or progressive cultivation of scientific habit) aims to promote the habit of thinking leading to questioning and analyzing. A student, to Ibn Khaldun, is prepared to learn all useful disciplines if he succeeds in attaining the scholarly habit in one discipline. Otherwise, he or she becomes mentally lazy and gives up thinking. Pedagogies that renounce the principle of the progressive development of scientific habit suppress students' curiosity and ruin their desire to become scholars. Such pedagogies may be understood as forms of oppression.

To Ibn Khaldun, learning by doing is superior to learning by knowing. He discerningly notes that the habit that is developed as a result of direct personal observation is stronger and more perfect than the one established by the means of assimilating information. It implies that to enable the learner to have mastery over a discipline it is imperative to link theory with practice where possible. The craft of teaching is concerned with the development of scholarly habits in the student by gradually exposing him/her to information about a discipline and letting him/her understand a phenomenon by direct observation. Ibn Khaldun contends that some "students spend most of their lives attending scholarly sessions. Still, one finds them silent...they are concerned with memorizing" (Khaldun, 2015, p. 504-5). Remaining silent and Memorizing does not help them develop scientific habits. Ibn Khaldun observes that such students "think that scientific habit is identical with memorized knowledge. But that is not so" (Khaldun, 2015, p. 504). Scientific habit is far more related to the ability to think, critically investigate, and practice. Mere understanding is possessed even by someone who is well-versed in a single particular problem in a particular discipline. *Understanding* may equally be found "in the beginner, in the common man who has no scientific knowledge whatever, and in the accomplished scholar" (Khaldun, 2015, p. 504). In critiquing mere memorization and understanding Ibn Khaldun renounces a core element of the 'banking' approach. Scientific habit is not commonly found and belongs to the person who has gradually attained excellence in scientific disciplines (Khaldun, 2015)). In other words, "habit is the exclusive property of a certain category of people, i.e., the class of scholar and person who are well-versed in a certain scientific



discipline" (Ahmad, 2003, p. 26). Critical investigation, to Ibn Khaldun, is a necessary component of scholarly habit. In the absence of critical investigation, falsehoods, based on prejudices and partisanship, are accepted and transmitted (Khaldun, 2015).

Based on his close study of the methods of instruction prevailing in his times, Ibn Khaldun offered a critical analysis of those methods and distinguished effective from ineffective methods. It is interesting to note that the keen observations he made about the methods of instruction are found not to be obsolete but relevant concerning the modern educational system. Ibn Khaldun's proposed method is linked with his idea of human nature. Ibn Khaldun contends that human beings originally belonged to the genus of animals and they are distinguished from animals not essentially by their type but by their ability to think. "Before a man has discernment, he does not know whatever, and is counted one of the animals" (Khaldun, 2015, p. 503). All scientific and scholarly accomplishments of humankind are the "result of sensual perception and the ability to think" (Khaldun, 2015, p. 503). The ability to think coupled with sense-perception and proper education gradually matures into the scientific habit. The degree of perfection of humanity depends on the degree of perfection of the ability to think.

The ability to think, Khaldun, (2015) argues, works at several degrees. He mentions three such degrees, namely, the discerning intellect (*al-'aql al-tamyīzī*), the experimental intellect (*al-'aql al-tajrībī*), and the speculative intellect (*al-'aql al-tazārī*). The discerning intellect is the ability to think that is concerned with making sense of the causal chain in the outside world. That is, it seeks to discover orderliness concerning the chain of cause and effect in the world of objects. Mostly, it works through perception (*idrāk*). On the one hand, perception is the consciousness of the perceiver, on the other, it is related to the use of the five senses. The experimental intellect is the ability to think that enquires about the principles underlying human behavior and deals with the ways human beings are socially organized. This type of intellect consists of appreciation (*tasdīqāt*) which is gradually developed through experience. It seeks evidence and proof. The speculative intellect is the ability to think that is concerned with providing knowledge or hypothetical knowledge about something beyond sense perception. It is devoid of practical activity. It consists of both perception (*idrāk*) and appreciation (*tasdīqāt*). Man's attainment of perfection or complete 'humanization' means becoming "pure intellect and perceptive soul (*nafs mudrika*). This is the meaning of human reality" (Khaldun, 2015, p. 496). Thus, Ibn Khaldun seems to conceptualize a fuller account of 'humanization' in that it requires the development of three forms of intellect whereas Freire's humanization is linked with the growth of critical consciousness.

Various sciences are the results of these three degrees of ability to think. A primary purpose of education, to Ibn Khaldun, is to gradually expose the students to the sciences so that their thinking is nurtured they develop scholarly habits, and contribute to the sciences and wellbeing of society. "To obtain the perceptions (*idrākāt*), man has recourse to those who preceded him or those who had more knowledge than him" (Ahmad, 2003, p. 23). Moreover, Ibn Khaldun contends that the development of sciences is possible in a specific cultural setup.

Ibn Khaldun contends that neither the primitive cultures of the countryside and desert nor the under-developed cultures of the small town are suitable enough for the growth and development of sciences. Sciences are developed only in sedentary urban cultures because the services of the learned are socially demanded in such cultures and because of the possibility of leisure, the continuation of a civilized tradition, "and the appreciation and encouragement of the rulers of their profession as expressed in their generosity in establishing schools and founding endowments to maintain them" (Mahdi, 2016, p. 222). This line of reasoning entails that the ethos of dialogue is likely to be promoted and nurtured in the sedentary urban cultures. It implies that the teacher-student relationship also varies from culture to culture. The relationship that prevails, for example, in urban culture is not possible in a countryside culture and vice versa.

Ibn Khaldun contends that the pursuit of knowledge is commonly accompanied by the training to rely on laws and be dominated by them. Students are subjected to such domination "from the very beginning of their education and instruction in the crafts, sciences, and religious matters, and are thereby deprived of much of their fortitude" (Khaldun, 2015, p. 170). Submissiveness to law is an inherent element of the sedentary urban lifestyle. Urban people have to suffer governmental laws and discipline both as children and adults. It seems significant to note that Ibn Khaldun does not develop a correlation between submissiveness to law and inability to produce knowledge but rather



lays stress on a correlation between submissiveness to law and diminution of fortitude. Freirean approach, in consonance with Marxism, tends to denounce submissiveness to the law as a part of the system of oppression. It appears that the practice of radical liberty does not have the potential to lead to Freire's aspired co-production of knowledge.

In volume III of his *Prolegomena* (The Muqaddimah), Ibn Khaldun analyzes the methods of instruction that fail to allow the students to attain full mastery of a discipline. He critically scrutinized major prevailing methods of instruction and identified their weaknesses in terms of their inability to allow the student to attain scholarly habits. He investigated Maghrabi (North African) and Spanish methods of instruction and pointed out their deficiencies. In addition, he proposed his view of an effective method. Interestingly, the method that Khaldun, (2015) specifically criticizes is characterized by anarchist attributes of randomness, lack of organization, and lack of focus. It was random and disorganized in that it did not expose students to ideas by the cognitive makeup and capacity of the students; it lacked focus because it did not identify its target. These specifications seem to have some similarity with the method of instruction proposed by Freire in that Freire's method lays too much stress on the practice of radical liberty. For example, Bertrand Russell contends that the school of thought that overemphasizes liberty is "too individualistic, and unduly indifferent to the importance of knowledge" (Russell, 2004, p. 142).

The magnitude of a large number of works, Ibn Khaldun remarks, in various sciences and their set of terminologies is a major obstacle on the path of a learner. Ibn Khaldun contends that the method of showering the student with a multitude of complex ideas in an abridged form without adequate elucidation does not succeed in making the student understand the concepts and their correlation. For a student, the presentation of summarized ideas with the help of brief handbooks cannot lead to the results acquired by detailed critical discussions. Such a method of instruction crowded with ideas makes understanding needlessly difficult. This method "confuses the beginner by presenting the final results of a discipline to him before he is prepared for them. This is a bad method of instruction" (Khaldun, 2015, p. 606). One major pedagogical problem with abridgments is that they are not suitable enough for the cultivation of habit because abridgments contain few repetitions which leads to inferior scholarly habit. The use of excessive multimedia slides with a bombardment of bulleted items seems to be among the relevant cases.

Ibn Khaldun proposes an organized method of progressive cultivation of scholarly habit (or three hierarchical stages of instruction) in the students for a given discipline. Freire's method mainly focuses on dialogue and the practice of radical liberty. In contrast, the three-tier hierarchical method seeks to expose views gradually from simple to complex. Thus, habit is fortified and excellence is achieved little by little. In the first stage, the teacher presents the student with a summary analysis of the principal problems of a given discipline which initiates the cultivation of the scholarly habit. During this stage, the teacher observes the intellectual potential of each student and his preparedness for understanding. "In the process, the student acquires the habit of the science he studies. However, that habit will be an approximate and weak one" (Khaldun, 2015, p. 607). In the second stage, the teacher offers full commentaries and explanations as well as diverse points of view and differences of opinion which leads to further reinforcement of the scientific habit. At this stage, the student is exposed to "the existing differences of opinion and the form these differences take all the way through to the end of the discipline" (Khaldun, 2015, p. 607). In the third stage, no secret of the discipline is veiled from the sight of the student. Thus, the student acquires a superior scholarly habit for a given discipline. Ibn Khaldun proposes this method of instruction as the most effective one because it provides a threefold qualitatively progressive repetition leading to the cultivation of a strong scientific habit. Keeping the diversity of cognitive assets of students in mind, Ibn Khaldun remarks that "some students can get through it with less than that, depending on their natural dispositions and qualifications" (Khaldun, 2015, p. 607) As the character of the foundation determines the condition of an edifice, the habit developed in the childhood proves to be the foundation of all habits developed in later stages of life.

5. Assessing Freire's Libertarian Education with Khaldunian Pedagogic Lens of Progressive Cultivation of Scientific Habit

Ibn Khaldun would agree with Freire on a basic pedagogical view that authoritarian anti-dialogue violates the nature of human beings in that it obstructs the process of 'humanization'. However, both have different and perhaps



irreconcilable views on the cause of anti-dialogue and its correction. Moreover, both agree that 'humanization' is a goal of education but have different views on the nature of 'humanization'. Besides, the practice of liberty, to Ibn Khaldun, does not constitute the essence of education. However, the practice of liberty for open discussion is necessary for the provision of a conducive environment to express oneself and to learn to accomplish complete 'humanization'. Contrary to Freire's proposed resolution of his perceived teacher-student contradiction, the role of the teacher, to Ibn Khaldun, is highly significant in that the "skill the student acquires in a craft, and the habit he attains, correspond to the quality of instruction and the habit of the teacher" (Khaldun, 2015, p. 346). Thus, the quality of learning and the progressive development of scientific habits significantly depend on the quality of teaching and the degree of the scholarly habit of the teacher. Ibn Khaldun acknowledges that teaching may take the form of oppression. Thus, he warns that immoderately harsh treatment of the student not only suppresses the student's curiosity and thwarts the cultivation of scientific habit but also proves to be disastrous for both the student and society at large. In his denunciation of oppression, he does not become reactive; thus, he does not see radical liberty as a remedy to oppression.

Ibn Khaldun analyzed the practice of giving severe punishment to students and warned about its profound, complex, and lasting psychological consequences. In continuation with the rationalist tradition, Ibn Khaldun strives to conceptualize a balanced pedagogical approach. On the one hand, he strongly disapproves of the severe punishment of students; on the other, he does not endorse the idea of promoting radical liberty between teachers and students advocated by contemporary libertarian theorists such as Freire. It is interesting to note that Ibn Khaldun identifies students, servants, and slaves as vulnerable in terms of being subjected to severe punishment. He argues that students, servants, and slaves "who are brought up with injustice and force are overcome by it" (Khaldun, 2015, p. 618). Ibn Khaldun contends that being subjected to mistreatment, insult, and punishment leads to the building of a character in students that has the attributes of trickery, deceit, loss of vigor and energy, laziness, and insincerity. The students subjected to unjust treatment "lose the quality that goes with social and political organization and makes people human...Thus, they fall short of their potentialities and do not reach the limit of their humanity" (Khaldun, 2015, p. 619). Thus, both Ibn Khaldun and Freire agree that oppression has a dehumanizing effect. Oppression, to Ibn Khaldun, leads to bad consequences both at the individual and collective levels. For example, if a whole community such as a minority group is subjected to unjust and tyrannical treatment it becomes collectively deceitful, sneaky, and insincere. Given the pernicious consequences of harsh punishment Ibn Khaldun advises that "a teacher must not be too severe toward his pupil, nor a father toward his son, in educating them" (Khaldun, 2015, p. 619). Both Freire and Ibn Khaldun analogize students with slaves but the latter does not see radical liberty as a solution to this problem. Nor does he find it a universal problem. Contrary to Freire's radically libertarian pedagogy, Ibn Khaldun does not entirely rule out a degree of harshness in particular cases on the part of the teacher to cultivate the scholarly habit in the student.

Ibn Khaldun identified one of the best methods of education in a letter written by Ar-Rashīd, the Commander of the Faithful, to a teacher he had appointed to instruct his son. Ar-Rashīd advised the teacher to "take firm hold of him and make him obey you...Give him insight into the proper occasions for speech and how to begin a speech" (Khaldun, 2015, p. 620). First, it may be concluded from this advice that educating a student demands a suitable degree of obedience. Second, for Ibn Khaldun, the ability to dialogue and speak is not only highly significant but also needs cultivation. The identification of proper occasions of speech and the contextually appropriate and judicious ways a speech is initiated need some cultivation and training. Rather than leaving students on their own in an anarchist-libertarian way, Ibn Khaldun argues that vexing students by being harsh kills their minds whereas being too lenient makes them like leisure and become used to it. Russell seems to have made a partially similar point when he remarked that those "who are subject to authority become either submissive or rebellious, and each attitude has its drawbacks" (Russell, 2004, p.143). Ibn Khaldun's advice implies that teachers must take care that students neither become submissive nor rebellious. In addition, Ibn Khaldun argues that the drawbacks of leniency must be overcome as well because too much leniency and radical liberty do not promote the development of scientific habits. Ibn Khaldun conceptualizes a more balanced pedagogical approach.



Freire's libertarian pedagogy does not seem to specify a particular method for attaining scholarly excellence. This way of instruction does not appear to be able to remove ambiguities and obscurities in understating the problems of a discipline. This method is likely to lead to the persistence of confusion for the students. The random method "has a corrupting influence upon the process of instruction and is detrimental to the attainment of scholarship" (Khaldun, 2015, p. 606) in that it rejects the process of progressive cultivation of scholarly habit. Table 1 attempts to offer a comparison of the prospective libertarian method of instruction and Ibn Khaldun's method of scaffolding. As Freire's method does not seem to have conceptualized specifications about the method of instruction Table 1 treats Freire's libertarian specifications speculatively.

Table 1

A Comparison of Ibn Khaldun's Progressive Method of Instruction with the Libertarian Pedagogy

Aim, Procedures, and Techniques	Libertarian Method of Instruction	Method of Instruction with Three Progressive Stages
Historical Roots	Marxism, Existentialism	Greek philosophy, Greco-Roman Thought, Muslim philosophy
Target of Teaching	Co-creation of knowledge in a discipline by teacher and student through practice of radical liberty; cultivation of critical consciousness	Full mastery over a discipline through progressive cultivation of scientific habit (i.e., instructional method of scaffolding)
Teacher-Student Relationship	Resolving perceived teacher-student contradiction by practice of radical liberty; dialogue between teacher-students and student-teachers	A moderate degree of obedience required; in specific cases, moderately harsh treatment of the student allowed for cultivating scientific habit
Speed of Teaching	Not well-defined; may be fast-paced; bombarding the student with complicated ideas in the beginning seems to be acceptable	Slow-paced; exposing the students to new and complicated ideas little by little
Order of exposing students to intellectual problems of a discipline	Not well-defined; seems to be a random approach	Gradualism (or scaffolding); from easy to difficult; Stage 1: summary analyses of major problems Stage 2: full explanations with differences of opinion; repetition of ideas Stage 3: all complicated secrets of the discipline exposed; repetition of ideas
Continuity of Learning	Continuous learning without long intervals is encouraged	Continuous learning without long intervals is strongly encouraged
Number of disciplines	Multiple disciplines may be addressed together	Usually, one or few disciplines at a time

Learning, to Ibn Khaldun, is not possible without an adequate degree of obedience. The demand of obedience implies that Ibn Khaldun rejects equality between teacher and student because the teacher is a cultivator, and student, so to speak, a recipient of scholarly habit. Freire's proposed resolution of teacher-student contradiction disregards the asymmetry of scholarly habit between the teacher and student. Moreover, Freire ignores the problems of student behavior and teacher well-being concerning student learning. Student misbehavior and discipline problems have consistently been identified as key sources of teacher stress and burnout (Spilt et al., 2011). There is some empirical evidence that exhibits that teacher wellbeing positively affects teaching practice and student learning (Turner & Thielking, 2019).

Further quoting Ar-Rashīd's guidance Ibn Khaldun remarks that the appointed teacher was advised to "forbid him (Ar-Rashīd's son) to laugh, save at times when it is proper" (Khaldun, 2015, p. 620). Smiling and laughing are highly



significant parts of a conversation and one needs some instruction and discipline of emotions to be mindful of diverse occasions suitable and unsuitable for laughing. Advising his son's teacher, Ar-Rashīd further directs the teacher to correct his son as gently and kindly as possible but if "he does not want it that way, you must then use severity and harshness" (Khaldun, 2015, p. 620). Freire's line of reasoning would lead to the conclusion that the appointed teacher was oppressed by Ar-Rashīd and Ar-Rashīd's son was oppressed by the appointed teacher. In contrast, Ibn Khaldun prefers kindness over harshness but is convinced of the efficacy of a mild degree of severity and harshness as a goal-oriented pedagogical tool. Dialogue is productive in the sense of cultivation of habit if a suitable degree of obedience exists in the teacher-student relationship. Freire's pedagogy of dialogue is partially fruitful but does not allow the dialogue to critique the 'pedagogy of the oppressed'. Freire would not agree that an educator needs always to be critical and should encourage criticism even if it is against his or her utopia. Thus, one major problem with Freirean pedagogy is that it is incapable of being critical of itself (Gur-Ze'ev, 2005). Freire's libertarian pedagogy is likely to lead to the weakening of critical thinking and the strengthening of active propaganda (Gur-Ze'ev, 2005). This observation seems to carry some truth that the application of Freire's pedagogy implies theft of education in that the students who embrace Freire's pedagogy are transformed into learners who learn nothing except two things: first, they view the world from no other perspective than the 'standpoint of the oppressed'; secondly, they learn to condemn the 'dehumanizing conditions' of that world and nurture a desire to change the perceived conditions (Lindsay, 2022). However, Freire's identification of the promotion of dialogue between teacher and student is an essential element of a fruitful relationship between teacher and student.

Both Freire and Ibn Khaldun take issue with the continuing silence of a student. To Ibn Khaldun, a student's silence is a major enemy of his/her learning. Unlike Freire, Ibn Khaldun does consider cognitive differences in students. All students are not equally motivated to express their views. "Some students spend most of their lives attending scholarly sessions. Still, one finds them silent" (Khaldun, 2015, p.505). The cause of their silence in many cases lies within themselves. Such causes, among others, may include shyness, introversion, and lack of interest in a particular subject. Dialogue and discussion, to Ibn Khaldun, play a very crucial role in the process of learning but all students do not choose to participate in a dialogue. Some students prefer listening and memorizing to discussion and dialogue. Such students falsely "think that scientific habit is identical with memorized knowledge" (Khaldun, 2015, p.505) Thus, in contrast to Freire, Ibn Khaldun does not see oppression as the universal problem in the teacher-student relationship. He impels to resolve problems of teacher-student relationship by giving individual attention to each case. Ibn Khaldun "believed that educators should adapt their teaching methods to meet the needs of each student, rather than adhering to a one-size-fits-all approach...His ideas on practicality, ethics, and personalized learning remain relevant to modern education" (Zai & Ahmad, 2021). It has been practically observed that teachers who spend some one-on-one time individually with students develop better relationships which leads to better student learning (Turner & Thielking, 2019). The major purpose of education is not the practice of radical freedom but the cultivation of scientific habits.

Ibn Khaldun distinguishes between authoritarian teachers and authoritative teachers whereas Freire identifies all teachers as intentional or unintentional oppressors. An authoritarian teacher may be understood as an oppressor who demands excessive obedience and does not sufficiently allow students to question and engage in dialogue leading to the development of scientific habit and 'humanization'. However, an authoritative teacher possesses excellence in his domain of knowledge. Authoritative teachers in most cases induce dialogue and do not demand excessive obedience. An authoritarian teacher does not allow students to enter into a dialogue with him/her who tends to insult students and inflicts them with severe punishment. Ibn Khaldun contends that interacting with an authoritative teacher is far more useful than merely reading books. Contact with scholars and teachers who are better 'humanized' immensely helps student 'humanization'. To Ibn Khaldun, it exhibited the realization of the significance of the authoritative teacher that Ar-Rashīd advised the appointed teacher to let "no hour pass in which you do not seize the opportunity to teach him something useful" (Khaldun, 2015, p. 620). Personal contact with an authoritative teacher leads to the gradual development of scientific habits more firmly rooted. "The greater the number of authoritative teachers, the more deeply rooted in the habit one acquires" (Khaldun, 2015, p. 620). Interacting with and learning from "authoritative teachers enable the students...to recognize the science itself behind the technical terminologies it uses" (Khaldun, 2015, p. 621) Such is the significance of authoritative teachers that the student traveling in quest of knowledge accomplishes "perfection through meeting authoritative teachers and having contact with scholarly



personalities" (Khaldun, 2015, p. 621). Contrary to Ibn Khaldun's view of authoritative teachers, Freire either ignores or remains reticent on the possibility, usefulness, and desirability of the existence of such teachers. The acknowledgment of an authoritative teacher does not imply the finality of knowledge on a particular problem. What it implies is the expertise of the teacher on the existing level of knowledge in a particular area. Acknowledgment of expertise and commitment to learn from an authoritative teacher and demonstrating a degree of obedience does not imply that the teacher-student relation is analogous to master and slave. Master exploits the slave whereas the authoritative teacher promotes the student's 'humanization' and nurtures his/her scientific habit. In principle, the contradiction between master and slave is resolved not by enslaving the master but by freeing the slave. Similarly, Freire's proposed resolution of his presumed teacher-student contradiction seems to be unfair in that it seeks to treat teachers including authoritative teachers as students of students. Moreover, as teaching is a craft, people who do not possess this craft may not be viewed as teachers. Craftsmanship is not a natural given, so everyone is not a teacher. Thus, on the one hand, 'teachers' who have not acquired the craft are not worthy of teaching; on the other, students in most cases do not possess this craft, therefore, contrary to Freire's identification, they are not student-teachers. Problems in the teacher-student relationship need to be addressed from case to case because oppression is not a universal problem of the teacher-student relationship.

Theoretical Contribution

This study seeks to contribute to the under-researched field of teacher-student relationship. It provides a critical investigation of Freire's perceived teacher-student relationship and assesses it from a rationalist perspective established by Ibn Khaldun. This research shows that the development of critical consciousness in students is a common denominator of both frameworks in terms of requisite of 'humanization' though it is a subset of Ibn Khaldun's framework. Moreover, in its humble capacity, this article contributes to the promotion of 4th goal in the SDGs list in that it seeks to advance quality and equitable education in society by bringing to light the social nature of the teacher-student relationship and the significance of this relationship for the advancement of sciences.

Practical Contribution

This work, in its modest capacity, attempts to offer a thin conceptual framework to teachers, educators, students, and educational institutes in terms of probing into the nature of the teacher-student relationship in the advancement of sciences. A policy recommendation is that authoritative teachers and scholars need to be acknowledged and duly incentivized for the advancement of sciences and promotion of 'humanization'. Another is that measures need to be taken to promote critical consciousness in all educational programs.

Conclusion

Freire's identification of teacher-student contradiction as a relationship of oppression, and its libertarian resolution seem to be flawed. In over-emphasizing the practice of radical liberty Freire tends to ignore the educational aim of advancement of knowledge in the context of a balanced teacher-student relationship. Ibn Khaldun also addresses the problem of oppression but he distinguishes between an authoritarian teacher and an authoritative teacher. Ibn Khaldun accentuates the significance of the latter for student humanization, and the progressive development of scholarly habit. Ibn Khaldun's rationalist assessment of Freire's proposed resolution of teacher-student contradiction reveals that Freire's libertarian method of instruction tends to be random and lacking in directing students to attain academic excellence. Both Freire and Ibn Khaldun conceptualize their versions of 'humanization' in connection with dialogue. For both, Ibn Khaldun and Freire, the development of critical consciousness is necessary for 'humanization'. However, the former views 'humanization' in terms of the development of three forms of intellect.

Contemporary education can benefit from the insights of both Freire and Ibn Khaldun. Freire's emphasis on promotion of dialogical culture and Ibn Khaldun's accentuation of the progressive cultivation of scientific habit through direct contact with authoritative teachers are significant lessons for teachers and students. However, Ibn Khaldun's rationalist method appears to be more balanced in conceptualizing the teacher-student relationship and promoting the advancement of knowledge.



References

- Abdellah, A., & Haridy, A. (2017). Medieval Muslim thinkers on foreign language pedagogy: The case of Ibn Khaldun. *Lingua*, 193, 62–71. <https://doi.org/10.1016/j.lingua.2017.05.001>
- Ahmad, Z. (2003). *The epistemology of Ibn Khaldūn*. Routledge Curzon Taylor & Francis Group. <https://doi.org/10.4324/9780203633892>
- Alatas, S. F. (2017). Luxury, state, and society: The theme of enslavement in Ibn Khaldun. *Journal of Historical Sociology*, 30(1), 67–76. <https://doi.org/10.1111/johs.12152>
- Dale, S. F. (2006). Ibn Khaldun : The Last Greek and the First Annaliste Historian Linked references are available on JSTOR for this article : IBN KHALDUN : THE LAST GREEK AND THE. *International Journal of Middle East Studies*, 38(3), 431–451. <https://doi.org/10.1017/S0020743806383055>
- Delamont, S. (2012). Handbook of Qualitative Research in Education. In *Edward Elgar Publishing*. <https://doi.org/10.2307/3121684>
- Freire, P. (2001). *Pedagogy of freedom: Ethics, democracy and civic courage*. London: Rowmanand Littlefield Publishers.
- Freire, P. (2005). *Pedagogy of the Oppressed*. The Continuum International Publishing Group Inc.
- Geier, B. A. (2024). The Palgrave handbook of educational thinkers. In *Springer Nature*. <https://doi.org/10.1007/978-3-031-25134-4>
- Guilherme, A., & Morgan, W. J. (2018). Considering the role of the teacher: Buber, Freire, and gur-zeÊev. *Educacao and Realidade*, 43(3), 783–798. <https://doi.org/10.1590/2175-623674790>
- Gur-Ze'ev, I. (2005). *Critical Theory and Critical Pedagogy Today*. University of Haifa.
- Hagenauer, G., & Volet, S. E. (2014). Teacher-student relationship at university: an important yet under-researched field. *Oxford Review of Education*, 40(3), 370–388. <https://doi.org/10.1080/03054985.2014.921613>
- Hughes-Warrington, M. (2015). Fifty key thinkers on history. In *Fifty Key Thinkers on History*. Routledge Taylor & Francis Grou. <https://doi.org/10.4324/9780203762622>
- Khaldun, I. (2015). *The Muqaddimah an Introduction to History. The classic Islamic History of the World*. Princeton University Press.
- Lindsay, J. (2022). *The Marxification of Education*. New Discourses, LLC.
- Mahdi, M. (2016). *Ibn Khaldun's Philosophy of History* (Issue 1). Routledge.
- McLaren, P., & Leonard, P. (1993). *Paulo Freire A Critical Encounter*. Routledge.
- Misiaszek, G. W. (2022). An eco pedagogical, ecolinguistical reading of the Sustainable Development Goals (SDGs): What we have learned from Paulo Freire. *Educational Philosophy and Theory*, 54(13), 2297–2311. <https://doi.org/10.1080/00131857.2021.2011208>
- Russell. (2004). *In praise of idleness*. Routledge. <https://doi.org/10.1108/13620439610124684>
- Schugurensky, D. (2014). *Paulo Freire*. Bloomsbury Academic.
- Spilt, J. L., Koomen, H. M. Y., & Thijs, J. T. (2011). Teacher Wellbeing: The Importance of Teacher-Student Relationships. *Educational Psychology Review*, 23(4), 457–477. <https://doi.org/10.1007/s10648-011-9170-y>
- Spoto, S., & Bay, M. (2015). Teaching against Hierarchies : An Anarchist Approach. *Journal of Feminist Scholarship*, 7–8(7), 78–92.
- Spring, J. H. (1977). *A Primer of Libertarian Education*. Free Life Editions, Inc.
- Toynbee, A. J. (1948). *A study of History*. Oxford University Press.
- Turner, K., & Thielking, M. (2019). Teacher wellbeing, teaching practice, and student learning. *Issues in Educational Research*, 29(3), 938–960.
- Zai, A. F., & Ahmad, M. R. (2021). Ibn-Khaldun's Theory of Education and its impact on the Development of Modern Education. *International Journal of Advanced Research in Science, Communication and Technology*, 2033, 477–484. <https://doi.org/10.48175/ijarsct-2033>

