Exploring the Concepts of Liberation and Human Flourishing in Paulo Freire's Philosophy of Education: Implications for Education in Cameroon

By
Ransheeh Justin Jaff[a], Valentine B. Ngalim[b], & Mbih Jerome Tosam[c]
[a]Faculty of Education, The University of Bamenda
[b]Higher Teacher Training College (HTTC) Bambili, The University of Bamenda
[c]Faculty of Arts, The University of Bamenda

Abstract

Education in its very essence serves as an instrument for human transformation and liberation. This paper explores Paulo Freire's understanding of education as a tool for human emancipation. Freire argues that human liberation is integral because it frees the individual socially, economically, psychologically, culturally, physically, intellectually and spiritually. In this paper, we argue that it is in the idea of liberation that Freire's concept of human flourishing takes its roots and finds meaning. We examine Freire's concept of education as a tool for human emancipation and flourishing and show its implications on the educational systems in Cameroon. After Cameroon's independence and reunification in 1960 and 1961 respectively, the educational systems "inherited" from the French and British colonial administrations were maintained in the two parts of the country which they administered. These systems of education are still heavily invested in their colonial origins and not fully grounded in indigenous values, beliefs, epistemologies and knowledge systems. In this paper, we argue that the continuous presence of colonial values hinders genuine freedom and human flourishing in the Freirean sense. The paper argues for the need to decolonise Cameroon's educational system from French and British epistemic influences to ensure authentic freedom and human flourishing.

Keywords: Paolo Freire, education, liberation, human flourishing, the Educational System in Cameroon, decolonization

Introduction

Paulo Freire, a Brazilian educator and philosopher, is widely recognized for his influential work on liberation pedagogy and its role in fostering human flourishing in education (Shih, 2018). Freire's ideas challenge traditional educational practices that perpetuate oppressive systems and

advocate for a transformative approach that empowers individuals to critically engage with their social reality (Freire, 1970; 1984, Shih, 2018; Chalaune, 2021). In his seminal book, *Pedagogy of the Oppressed*, Freire presents a revolutionary framework that emphasizes the importance of dialogue, conscientization, and praxis in liberating individuals from oppressive structures and enabling them to become active agents in their education (Freire, 1970). Dialogue, according to Freire, is not merely a means of transmitting information, but a process of mutual learning and understanding between educators and students. Through dialogue, individuals engage in critical reflection on their social reality, uncovering the underlying power structures that perpetuate oppression. This process of conscientization enables individuals to develop a critical awareness, allowing them to recognise their agency and challenge oppressive systems. Freire emphasizes the importance of praxis – the integration of theory and practice – in the educational process (Freire, 1984). He believes that true liberation can only be achieved through action informed by critical reflection. By engaging in praxis, individuals actively transform their social reality, working towards a more just and equitable society. Freire believes that education should not be limited to the acquisition of knowledge, but should empower individuals to become active participants in shaping their own lives and communities (Freire, 1970).

Freire's liberation pedagogy has had a profound impact on educational theory and practice worldwide. In this paper, we examine Freire's concept of education as a tool for liberation and human flourishing and its relevance to the educational system in Cameroon. After Cameroon's independence and reunification in 1960 and 1961, the educational systems "inherited" from the erstwhile colonialists were carried along unmodified, which have continued to have an overwhelming influence in Cameroon to the detriment of indigenous realities, such as local languages, knowledge systems, histories, and values (Kishani, 2021). By

placing liberation at the core of education, Freire envisions a world where individuals are not only knowledgeable but also critically conscious of their social reality, actively working towards their wellbeing and the improvement of society as a whole (Freire, 1970). In this paper, we consider the relevance of his idea of liberation and human flourishing in the educational system in Cameroon, bedevilled by its extended dependence on colonial values and epistemologies.

This paper is divided into four sections. In the first section, we engage in conceptual clarification in which we explicate the key terms in the paper, in general, and from a Freirean perspective. Section two situates the idea of liberation and human flourishing in education. In section three, we examine Freire's philosophy of education and its implications on liberation and human flourishing. And, finally, in section four, we discuss the implications of Freire's contentions for the educational systems in Cameroon.

Conceptual Clarification

Liberation

The concept of liberation has been explored and discussed extensively throughout history by scholars, philosophers, activists, and thinkers from various disciplines (Alcoff and Mendietta, 2000). Liberation is generally considered the act of setting someone free from imprisonment, oppression or slavery. In the context of Paulo Freire's work, liberation refers to the process of overcoming oppression and achieving freedom. According to Freire, liberation is not simply about gaining political or economic freedom, but also about achieving a sense of personal agency and critical consciousness (Freire, 1970). He argues that traditional education often perpetuates oppressive-power dynamics by treating students as passive recipients of knowledge. Instead, Freire advocates for an educational approach that encourages dialogue, critical thinking, and active participation of learners. One of the key concepts in Freire's theory

of liberation is conscientization, which refers to the process of developing critical awareness of one's social reality. Conscientization involves recognizing and analyzing the social, economic, and political forces that contribute to oppression. According to Freire (1972):

> Conscientization ... implies, then, that when I realize that I am oppressed, I also know I can liberate myself if I transform the concrete situation where I find myself oppressed. Obviously, I can't transform it in my head: that would be to fall into the philosophical error of thinking that awareness "creates" reality, I would be decreeing that I am free, by my mind. And yet, the structures would continue to be the same as ever-so that I wouldn't be free. No, conscientization ... implies a critical insertion into a process, it implies a historical commitment to make changes. (1972).

Reflecting on the contentions of Freire, Aliakbari and Faraji (2011) have stated that:

> With this in mind, learners have to act in a manner that enables them to transform their societies, that is excellently performed through emancipatory education. Through problematic education and questioning of problematic issues in the lives of learners, learners learn to think critically and develop critical awareness that helps them improve their lives and take responsibility for them, measures necessary to construct a greater, just and equitable society. Thus, it is often said that critical pedagogy challenges all sorts of domination, oppression and subordination in order to liberate the oppressed

It is undeniable, then, that through conscientization, individuals can become conscious agents of change and work towards transforming their own lives and society as a whole. Freire emphasizes the importance of dialogue in the process of liberation (Freire, 1998). He holds that true dialogue involves mutual respect, openness, and a willingness to learn from others. In contrast, Freire criticizes what he calls anti-dialogical practices, such as paternalism or authoritarianism, which hinders genuine communication and perpetuates oppressive relationships

(Freire, 1970). To add to this understanding is the concept of praxis, which refers to the integration of theory and practice. According to Freire, true liberation cannot be achieved through abstract theorizing alone; it requires concrete action informed by critical reflection. Praxis involves engaging in transformative actions that challenge oppressive structures while continuously reflecting on and learning from these actions. It could therefore be argued that liberation is a concept that encompasses various meanings and interpretations across different contexts, including political, social, psychological, and philosophical dimensions. It refers to the state of being free from oppression, constraints, or limitations, and the pursuit of personal or collective freedom. Commenting on this, Singh (2021) maintains that Freire's analysis of society is based on a combination of religious liberalism and Marxist thought. It is on this idea that, to Freire, as Singh (2021) further opines, a conscious person analyses the world around him/her and acts collectively based on what s/he has achieved after the analysis. This is the basis of liberation, and Freire in *Pedagogy of the Oppressed,* attempts to transform oppressed people and prevent them from being objects of education into subjects of their self-governance and emancipation (Aliakbari and Faraji, 2011).

Human Flourishing

Human flourishing is a concept that has been explored by educationists, philosophers, psychologists, sociologists, and other scholars throughout history. Nevertheless, the term human flourishing is not easily definable. Although Paulo Freire does not directly use the term human flourishing, from our reading, he understands human flourishing as human transformation, which is based on an education for freedom (Freire, 1970). It could be said, then, that human flourishing is an elusive concept cutting across several disciplines. From the Latin *flor* meaning flower, we shall use the term to refer to ideas of happiness, fulfillment, growth, prosperity, positive development and wellness. Educational philosophers like Paulo Freire argue that children should flourish in life and that

flourishing or human transformation should be the ultimate aim of education. To flourish means to have actualized your potential, to do the best in life you can, through educating oneself for liberation (Freire, 1970). De Soria (2023) contends that in theories of human flourishing, there is often a notion of development implied. Hence, to flourish is a process, an activity and a praxis which, as Freire has described, is attained through emancipatory pedagogy.

Education and the Educational Systems in Cameroon

Education etymologically comes from three Latin words: *educare, educere, and educatum. Educare* "to raise, or bring up or nourish", or to "train or mold." This implies that a child is to be raised or nourished with certain cultural values and ideals (Chazan, 2022, p.14). *Educere*: "to lead out or to draw out." Hence, the role of the education is to bring out or mold the best of what is already in the learner, or the one being trained or molded(Chazan, 2022, p.14). *Educatum* assumes the act of teaching or training. It throws light on the principles and practices of teaching. It means providing training facilities to those in the process for their integral formation and development. From another perspective, education is the process of facilitating learning, or the acquisition of knowledge, skills, values, beliefs and habits to meet the standards in the society. Education can also be defined as all the skills, attitudes and knowledge gained in the course of life (Ngalim and Shang, 2022). Tambo defines education as the total of a person's learning experiences during their lifetime (Tambo, 2003). Educational learning must make the learner a better person in some way. Tambo uses the term broadly to include all the circumstances and actions leading to a child's intellectual, social, moral and physical development (2003). In this sense, education can take place outside school, and not everything that is learned in school is necessarily included. Kurugu and Kamere (2013) have opined that one can receive an education outside school, and one can miss an education in school. Education can happen at home, in school and in the

community, and some have insisted that most of it happens outside school. According to Freire (1970), education refers to that which helps people develop their power to perceive critically the way they exist in the world with which and in which they find themselves.

Cameroon's educational system is complex, just like Cameroon's history itself. This is because, from the Berlin West African Conference of 1884, the partition of Africa gave Cameroon to Germany. Then, after the defeat of the Germans during the First World War, Cameroon was further partitioned between Britain and France, who governed Cameroon from 1919 to the 1960 and 1961 when Cameroon gained independence (1960) and reunification (1961). The presence of the Germans initially in Cameroon and later on the British and the French influenced various domains of life in the country, including education. For instance, when the Germans administered Cameroon, German was the language of instruction in Cameroon schools (Buma, 2023). With the departure of the Germans, English became the language of instruction in the part of Cameroon administered by Britain, and French in the part of Cameroon administered by France. After Cameroon's independence, the "inherited" educational systems were carried along, as Cameroon established two sub-systems that had and still have their foundations on foreign realities.

Education for Liberation and Human Flourishing

The concept of education and human flourishing has attracted a lot of discussion from scholars. Nevertheless, few scholars have approached this in-depth like Freire, as seen in the next section of the paper. For instance, Sanga in *Education as a Tool for Liberation: Seeking Nyerere's Understanding*, explores the concept of education as a tool for liberation using the perspectives of Nyerere. This was intended to unveil various elements of education as a liberating tool and to provide a more realistic view of education as a liberating instrument that should be used to address various contemporary issues. To Nyerere, education is a tool for liberating both an individual and society (1975). Accordingly, this tool

should liberate an individual socially, economically, culturally, physically, intellectually and spiritually. Reasoning from this, Sanga (2017) opines that education ought to add value to learners through effective transformation that leads to the growth of society and the development of a nation (Sanga, 2017). Sanga focuses on the perspectives of Nyerere from the point of view of liberation and development. Nyerere also underscores the idea of education for self-reliance (1967). He points out that education has to enhance a person's physical and mental freedom, to improving their control over themselves, their own lives and the environment in which they live, giving them a certain sense of autonomy over their lives. The ideas imparted by education, or released in the mind through education, should therefore be liberating; skills acquired through education should be liberating skills. It has to liberate both the mind and the body of an individual. It has to make the person more of a human being because s/he is aware of his/her potential as a human being and is in a positive, life–enhancing relationship with him/herself, his/her neighbour and his/her environment (Nyerere, 1975).

There is also sufficient literature on the nature and understanding of human flourishing. To J. House (2020), the idea of human flourishing can be understood with the "circular flow model of human flourishing," a concept which he adopted from the Aristotelian idea of flourishing, that is, the life of virtue and contemplation. Going beyond Aristotle, House (2020) emphasises that human flourishing begins with becoming the best specimen of one's species that one can be. To the above contention on flourishing, Soria (2023) discusses the idea of character formation, arguing that character education and, in particular, the promotion of virtues, are necessary to stimulate human flourishing. Good character is the head and the heart of human potential. It is on this premise that Soria (2023) recommends that seeking a good life necessitates recognising and implementing the life of virtue, and central among the

virtues he recommends is the virtue of justice. Mountbatten-O'Malley (2021) observes the nuances in the understanding of flourishing and the fact that there is an infinite understanding of what it means to flourish and thus attempts as it principal objective to strike a balance between the clarity needed to make sense of the term human flourishing through connective analysis. The concept of human flourishing is used synonymously with other related concepts such as health, welfare, well-being, and happiness. Based on this understanding, it was observed that we cannot speak about flourishing murderers, flourishing thieves, etc, for the reason that the criteria for flourishing suggests that which is good for the individual as well as for his/her community. It would be inappropriate then and an illegitimate transfer of concepts if one person found it made them happy to self-harm or to kill others. This is not human flourishing to Mountbatten-O'Malley (2021). Roos (2011, p. 22) on his part intimates that the process of achieving self-realisation is undergirded by the satisfaction of seven existential needs that are rooted in the paradoxical human conflict between instincts and consciousness. These existential needs are the following: "the need for a frame of orientation, the need for devotion, the need for unity, the need for rootedness, the need for stimulation, the need for effectiveness and the need for self-love."

Freire's Philosophy of Education and its impact on Liberation and Human Flourishing

Freire believes that education can be circumscribed into two perspectives. On the one hand is the role he ascribes to education as pedagogy of the oppressed (Freire and Macedo, 1987). On the other hand, he sees education properly engaged in as pedagogy of liberation. The former, to Freire, sees one in education as a *tabula rasa*, and involves the naming of the world by the educator for those in education (Freire and Macedo, 1987). This form of education is described by Freire as "the banking system of education" (Freire, 1970). In this model, the "teacher"

makes "deposits" into the supposedly "empty" heads of the "learners", or replaces "knowledge with a poor "currency value" with "higher value" knowledge (Freire, 1972). The presumption in this system is that a student comes to learn without any experience of his/her own and needs to be given this experience by the school or the system. Commenting on this banking model of education, Ward (2007) intimates that this deficit model of education prevails throughout the world as the universal norm, as the standard and accepted basis for the creation and "transfer" of knowledge from one generation to the next. Reflecting further on this, Ward (2007) holds that there is a curious paradox at work within the banking model. He writes:

> If we take education to be about the emancipation of future generations, if we expect them, through education, to "do better than we did," or to free themselves from social and economic servitude, we also ensure, by the very model of education to which we subject them, that they will be compelled to adapt to our model of education, and to the set of social relationships which shaped us and which it represents, and against which we otherwise seem to be at odds. The normative system of education, in other words, works counter to its own espoused aims of emancipation and democracy (Ward, 2007).

In line with this, Freire opines that such a system of education sustains a certain superiority and domination of the educator over the one in education, of those who decide over the ones decided on, of the government over the governed. Freire highlights:

> To impose on them one's own understanding in the name of their liberation is to accept authoritarian solutions as ways to freedom. But to assume the naiveté of those becoming educated demands from educators a most necessary humility to assume also their ability to criticise, thus overcoming our naiveté as well. (Freire and Macedo, 1987, p. 41).

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Sustaining this understanding, Freire demonstrates throughout his work *Pedagogy of the Oppressed*, how normative mainstream systems of education, through the "banking system", exhibit pedagogies of domination which operate precisely not for the liberation of those in education but rather for their subjugation. The banking system of education then flourishes on the unfounded assumption that students come to the learning experience as empty vessels into which the teacher must make deposits. Going beyond this, Freire highlights that this form of education does not only retard the liberation of students, but it is equally the carrier of violence. He asserts that:

> Every relationship of domination, of exploitation, of oppression is by definition violent, whether or not the violence is expressed by drastic means. In such a relationship, dominator and dominated alike are reduced to things - the former dehumanised by an excess of power, the latter by lack of it. And things cannot love. When the oppressed legitimately rise up against their oppressor, however, it is they who are usually labelled "violent," barbaric," "inhuman," and "cold". Among the innumerable rights claimed by the dominating consciousness is the right to define violence and to locate it. Oppressors never see themselves as violent (Freire & Macedo, 1987, pp 10 - 11).

This education that imposes and carries with it violence can be situated in colonial history. Reflecting on this, Freire holds that "in cultural invasion it is essential that those who are invaded come to see their reality with the outlook of the invaders rather than their own; for the more they mimic the invaders, the more stable the position of the latter becomes…" (Freire, 1972, p.122). In this way, the invaded are made in the image and the likeness of the invaders; they try to think like the invaders, to behave like them, to speak like them, to the detriment of their belief systems and cultures. Such an imposition on Freire is essentially a violent activity

because it denies the basic rights of the person to name and frame their reality, to create themselves by creating the world (Freire, 1972).

In contrast with the above system of education, Freire perceives true education as a tool for the emancipation of self and future generations (Freire, 1970). In this way, education as pedagogy of liberation is an alternative hegemony. In this model, students do not see themselves at the receiving end of culture; they perceive themselves as the creators of culture. Creativity, which is perceived as the starting point of education for liberation always regarded negatively in the banking system of education. To Ward (2007), it is one of the characteristics of our society that the creative person is frequently seen as a social freak, an outcast, an outsider. Creativity of one's culture and not just a mere recipient of culture is the starting point of genuine education, and this is only, as Freire has observed, attainable through a process of dialogue, with others and with oneself in the learning or creative experience. He highlights:

> In true... education, there is no particular moment in which, all alone in the library or laboratory, the educator "knows," and another moment in which s/he simply narrates, discourses on, or explains the knowledge "received." At the moment in which educators carry out their research, when as knowledgeable Subjects they stand face to face with a knowable object, they are only apparently alone. Not only do they establish a mysterious, invisible dialogue with those who carried out the same act of knowing before them, but they engage in a dialogue with themselves too. Place(d) face to face before themselves, they investigate and question themselves (Freire, 1970, p. 150).

The underlying assumption here is that the more students ask questions, the more they feel that their curiosity about the subject is not decreasing. It only diminishes if it is isolated from human beings and the world. This is why dialogue as a fundamental part of the structure of knowledge needs to be opened to other subjects in the knowing process. In this

sense, a classroom to Freire (1970, p. 150) cannot be understood in the traditional sense, "but a meeting place where knowledge is sought and not where it is transmitted."

Hence, an education for freedom as opposed to that as opposed to for domination must begin by recognizing that any process which prevents or inhibits the individual from participating in the production or creation of culture is repressive, since it places limits upon the emerging humanity of the individual. This is visible in prescriptive systems considered by Freire (1970) as a form of education in which one person's choices are prescribed by another, where knowledge itself is prescribed for the other rather than with the other. If the goal of education is the emancipation of the individual or the maximization of his or her humanity, then to instruct, prescribe or profess, as Ward (2007) has enunciated, is a counter-productive process. While this is the dominant characteristic of the banking model of education, pedagogy of liberation cannot do this by its nature, it involves dialogue between two subjects and two equals.

Cameroon's Experience vis-à-vis Freire's Education and Human Flourishing

The ideas of Freire on education for liberation and human flourishing are relevant for Cameroon's educational systems, which are still heavily influenced by French and British colonial legacies, thereby sustaining a culture of domination and violence in the Freirean sense. As Ward (2007) has noted, schools play an important role in perpetuating the present system of social inequality and exploitation and in their capacity as agents of dominant cultural values, they paradoxically become centres of cultural invasion. The contentions of Freire on education for liberation and human flourishing suggest that Cameroon's educational system tilts more towards the banking model of education. Within this context, this paper has identified three areas that have continued to hinder the educational system in Cameroon from liberating and enhancing human

flourishing. These are continuous colonial influence, political influence and certificate-centeredness.

Decolonisation of Cameroon's educational system

According to Freire (1970), the educational process is not neutral. This implies that it either works as a tool to motivate the reconciliation of generations into the logic of the existing system, or it becomes the practice of freedom. For this to be realized, Freire thinks that this must take into consideration the content and the educational process. Reflecting further on this, Freire opines that the nature of liberation education is established on dialogue. In this regard, he distinguishes the banking system of education from dialogue-based and problem–based education. With the former, teachers are the pillars of knowledge, whereas the learners know nothing, teachers think, and the learners are only thought of (Freire, 1970). Commenting on this, Chalaune (2021) emphasises that in the banking system of education, the more learners work to accumulate the deposits entrusted to them, the less they produce significant sensations that will arise out of their arbitrariness as transformers of that situation. The more they fully accept the passive role imposed on them. With the banking system, learners receive, memorize and reproduce. The learners are not asked to relate the knowledge to the current problems and injustice in society to improve society (Chalaune, 2021).

This issue of the banking model of education considered by Freire is relevant in Africa and particularly in the Cameroonian educational context, where the content and process of education are still largely colonial. Higgs has appositely captured this when he maintains that:

> The marginalisation of African values in African education has resulted in the general Westernisation of education theory and practice in Africa, and educational research has not escaped this process. Dominant research epistemologies have developed methods of initiating and assessing research in Africa

> where researchers fail to acknowledge the cultural preferences and practices of African people. Instead, research epistemologies and methods are located within the cultural preferences and practices of the Western world. Such practices have perpetuated an ideology of cultural superiority that precludes the development of power-sharing processes and the legitimisation of diverse cultural epistemologies and cosmologies (Higgs, 2011, p. 1).

The continuous reliance on colonial pedagogy in Africa manifests a certain and unjustified superiority of Western culture over African culture, which can be likened to Freire's banking system of education, where the teacher appears superior to his/her students. Bame castigates this path by arguing that "no people entirely dislodged from their ancestral roots have ever made real collective progress with integral development. That the era of outsiders deciding and supplying what Africans need has not yielded hoped-for outcomes" (Bame, 2011). Bame's perspective reflects the reality of present-day Cameroon. It has become clear, he further emphasizes, that education in Cameroon has been largely unproductive as it should be because it enlightens by distancing and estranging Cameroonians from their life circumstances (Bame, 2011). We believe that for the type of education dispensed in Cameroon to promote liberation and human flourishing in the Freirean sense, it must first and foremost be decolonized and rooted in Cameroonian realities. Balogun, in his work *Building an authentic African philosophy of education based on the African concept of personhood,* believes that any authentic education must be committed to the situated or lived reality of a human community. Once this is not the case, those in the process can only be literate but not educated. Following on these premises, Cameroonians should be educated based on their cultural values, and this will help to defeat the low self-esteem in students, particularly when it concerns their indigenous cultural values. Ndjependa (2023, p. 23) observes that "when Cameroonians will have an education based on their

context, when they will be able to value their cultures and their heroes, the dream of education for liberation and self-reliance will come true." It is in this regard that education in Cameroon can become transformative. Jana and Maja (2020, p. 30) believe that transformative education, considered by Freire (1970) as dialogue-based and problem-based education, ought to "enable structural shifts in basic assumptions, thoughts, feelings and actions, and equips learners with the knowledge, skills and attitudes to promote sustainable development." To them, transformative education has as an imperative to enable and equip learners with understanding and "anticipation of change, managing uncertainty, critical thinking, value changes, appreciation of diversity, and empathy" (Jana and Maja, 2020, p. 45). The transformation through which liberation can ensure flourishing in the Cameroonian education system can occur in various ways. To Freire (1970), this transformation takes place by way of liberation in education, promoting the development of critical consciousness in individuals and challenging oppressive systems. According to Freire (1970, p. 70), "liberation in education allows individuals to critically examine their social and political realities, empowering them to become active agents of change." By fostering critical consciousness, liberation in education can enhance human flourishing by promoting intellectual growth and empowering individuals to engage meaningfully with the world around them.

Cameroon and the Politicisation of Education

Another obstacle to education, which, as Freire (1970) has argued, ought to enhance liberation and human flourishing, is the politicisation of education in Cameroon. Painting the political picture of Cameron Monga (2000: p. 723) states:

> The ethnicization and ruralization of politics in Cameroon have led political entrepreneurs not only to redefine the geo-cultural boundaries of their ethnic labels and "villages", but also to display their cultural differences as a way of marking their cultural space,

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> distinguishing themselves from potential or actual "enemy" groups, and "recruiting" allies. Thus, depending on the circumstances, ethno-cultural space and to some extent villages themselves have been depicted either as "territories" to be defended against "invasion" by "strangers" from other parts of Cameroon, or "battle fields" in the political game of give and take with the regime.

The appointments into key functions, particularly within state-run educational establishments, most often done based on political affiliations, have made schools as well to become political "battle fields" (Monga, 2000). Painting a global picture of this situation in Cameroon, Monga (2000) has underscored that presidential appointments instantly transform new appointees into their villages' representatives and make them spokespersons for their populations. In return, she argues that those appointed are then requested to express political support for the president as payback. To her, these marks of gratitude are expressed in several different ways, notably: promises to combat the influence of opposition parties in their areas of influence, great publicity about "motions of support" sent to the president and promises to vote overwhelmingly for the president and his party's candidates in all upcoming elections (Monga, 2000). While there may be nothing wrong with playing an active role in partisan politics, when academic appointments are based on rewards from the party in power and not on merit, it undermines and impoverishes educational values.

From another dimension and intimately related to the above, the politicisation of education could hamper liberation and human flourishing in the Freirean sense. This is in the sense that when academic circles become political "battle fields" (Monga, 2000), there may be no political will to adopt an idea that could enhance liberation and flourishing if such an idea is advanced by an "enemy" (Monga, 2000). And as Chapfika (2025) holds, the place of political will in enhancing

education cannot be taken for granted, given that no significant progress can be made without the political will. Chapfika writes:

> From my twelve years of teaching experience in Africa (high school and university teaching combined), I have learnt that no education paradigm takes root without the political will. The theory and practice of education in Africa are very sensitive and responsive to political rhetoric, gesturing, and messaging. I think, with most African countries approaching their big 50th independence anniversaries, it is now overdue for African politics to shift from the 'liberation war' trajectory to an 'Africanization' paradigm. In Zimbabwean politics, for instance, the Government of Zimbabwe's machinery seems well oiled to continue 'fighting' the 'colonial settler white man', or perhaps now those perceived as his representatives (often anyone who dares to criticize government policies). The liberation war rhetoric, gesturing, and messaging shows no sign of waning to pave the way for a more progressive political outlook" (Chapfika, 2025, p.153).

The experiences of Chapfika (2025) of Zimbabwe are relevant in educational circles in Cameroon, particularly when academics criticise government policies. Most of these are often tagged as *les opposants* and are sanctioned, transferred or demoted.

Certificate-oriented Education

The education system in Cameroon focuses largely on the acquisition of certificates with little or no accompanying skills, thereby creating what Achou et al. have described as "education and job mismatch crisis" (2022, p. 2), meaning education that offers knowledge which has no relevance in the job market. "The education and job mismatch" is partly due to the quest for certificates with little or no skills. Learning opportunities at all levels, notably primary, secondary (general and technical), and tertiary, as well as professional/vocational training, are imperative in ensuring the acquisition of skills and knowledge necessary for citizens' emancipation and socioeconomic and professional insertion into the

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different socio-politico-economic domains of society. Nevertheless, when there is a disconnect between the classroom and the job market, certificates become meaningless. With this approach, as Chalaune (2021) has stated, "the learner memorises limited information, writes in the exam, and is declared to know it. But the learner has not been able to understand the real problem of his/her life. In other words, a person has become literate but has not educated." The number of school graduates in Cameroon who are jobless with certificates suggests that Cameroon's model of education is the essentially the "banking model of education", which Freire (1970) discredits. Achou et al. (2022) believe that while several developing countries like Cameroon had long encouraged the general education system (which emphasizes the acquisition of knowledge) over technical education (which emphasizes the application of acquired skills in solving concrete societal problems), the gradual trend of events in a contemporary world requiring great technical know-how has unveiled the unmatched importance of technical and vocational education. In line with this, Freire (1970) advocates that learning should gear towards empowering students, and should make them critical thinkers who are conscious of their environment and the problems of their time and who use their knowledge to recreate and transform their environment. For this to be enhanced, the facilities must be made available to accommodate this kind of education. Hooks (1994) sees the transformation of the education system through which liberation in education brings about educational human flourishing in terms of empowering marginalized individuals and promoting their well-being. According to hooks, liberation in education involves creating inclusive and equitable learning environments that honour the diverse experiences and perspectives of all students. He advocates for emotional and intellectual well-being by creating spaces that validate and empower marginalised voices. Liberation in education can contribute to the holistic development and flourishing of individuals from all backgrounds (Hooks,

1994).   This contention is corroborated by Giroux (1998), who sees educational transformation in terms of promoting inclusion and equity in educational spaces. Giroux argues that "liberation in education involves challenging oppressive structures and promoting educational practices that honour the dignity and humanity of all learners" (Giroux, 1998, p. 54). By creating inclusive and equitable learning environments and promoting inclusive and equitable educational practices, liberation in education can enhance human flourishing by fostering a sense of belonging, respect, and empathy among students and educators.

Conclusion

The paper had as its primary objective to analyse Freire's concept of Education as a tool for liberation and human transformation and its relevance for the educational systems in Cameroon. We showed that the education in Cameroon is modelled after Freire's 'banking model of education', characterised by domination, a prescriptive nature and a driver of violence. This model of education, as Freire considers, does not transform the learner, who, untransformed, is incapable of impacting his/her society. To change this situation, the educational process has to start from the learner's experiences and real-life problems. For this, the critical method based on collaboration with the active participation of the learners and the role of facilitator of the educator in the learning process should be the basic approach. It is in this sense that Freire intimates dialogue between the learner and the teacher as a precondition. Therefore, in the educational process, the teacher must accept the freedom of the learner and make dialogue strategy the medium of instruction. It is true that in Cameroon, with the Competency-Based Approach, something is already being done to bring in the learners' experiences and real-life problems, but a lot still needs to be done because the impact is still insignificant. Bame et al (2011) argue that the curriculum of a country should be a reflection of the existing philosophy of education therein.   It is the total of the experiences of learners

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throughout their educational process in a country, both planned and unplanned. To buttress the point, Tambi (2016) maintains that the curriculum, being how educational institutions endeavour to realise the hopes of society, they set out to pursue the objectives and goals of the society in which they are and serve using the curriculum as the tool. Freire's Pedagogy demands a learner who can analyze their situations and a teacher who can help them to achieve this goal. As Chalaune (2021) has maintained, this requires collaborative and interactive policies and teaching in addressing the existing problems of education.

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