

## Learning Innovation in The Merdeka Curriculum: A Critical Pedagogical Review in Primary Schools

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### Abstract.

This study explores learning innovations within the Curriculum Merdeka at State Elementary School 268 Panyileukan, Bandung City, from a critical pedagogical perspective. It aims to understand the innovative practices implemented by teachers and the extent to which values of critical reflection and social awareness are embedded in the learning process. The research employed in-depth interviews, participatory observation, and document analysis conducted from July to October 2025. The findings indicate that Curriculum Merdeka has successfully promoted project-based, differentiated, and contextual learning approaches that enhance students' creativity and motivation. However, critical pedagogical aspects—such as deep reflection on the learning process and the development of students' critical awareness of social issues—remain underdeveloped. Teachers tend to emphasize evaluation based on final learning products without fully integrating critical thinking throughout the process. Other challenges include limited teacher understanding of the curriculum, insufficient infrastructure support, and the need for ongoing professional development. This study recommends strengthening teacher capacity through training in critical pedagogy, designing projects that connect learning to real-world social issues, and enhancing infrastructural support. This research makes an important contribution to the development of curriculum and teaching practices that are not only technically innovative but also liberating and empowering for students as active learners in real social contexts.

**Keywords:** Curriculum Merdeka, Learning Innovation, Critical Pedagogy, Differentiation

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## INTRODUCTION

Primary education is a crucial stage in shaping students' character, mindset, and foundational competencies (Jannah, 2023). During this stage, learners undergo rapid development, both cognitively, affectively, and psychometrically (Khasanah, 2022). Therefore, the education system at the elementary school level must be capable of providing learning experiences that not only focus on mastering content but also encourage active student participation in the learning process (Navitri et al., 2025). In the context of globalization, technological disruption, and rapid social changes, primary education in Indonesia faces the challenge of continuously innovating to produce a generation that is adaptive, creative, and capable of critical thinking (Afendi & Khojir, 2024).

As part of the effort to address these challenges, the Indonesian government, through the Ministry of Education, Culture, Research, and Technology, launched the Merdeka Curriculum as a form of curriculum transformation that is more flexible, contextual, and student-centered

(Ibrahim et al., 2025). The Merdeka Curriculum emphasizes the importance of differentiated learning, strengthening character through the Pancasila Student Profile project, and providing autonomy for educational units and teachers to design lesson plans according to the needs of students and local characteristics (Efendi et al., 2023). In this approach, learning innovation becomes a key element that determines the success of the curriculum's implementation. Teachers are expected not only to be transmitters of knowledge but also facilitators who can create an active, participatory, and meaningful learning environment (Puspita et al., 2024).

However, the implementation of the Merdeka Curriculum in various educational units has not fully reflected the expected pedagogical changes (Wahyulia, 2023). This indicates that many educators still face difficulties in maximizing the application of the fundamental principles of the curriculum. For example, findings from Rosa et al. (2024) suggest that this innovation has increased student participation, critical thinking skills, and their readiness to face the challenges of the 21st century. However, some main barriers identified include the need for continuous support for teachers, limited access to technology, and the need for curriculum adjustments to ensure the optimal implementation of innovations. On the other hand, Fairuzy et al. (2024) stated that the "Merdeka Learning" policy has a positive impact on students' motivation for independent learning, although it still faces challenges such as teachers' limited understanding of the policy's concept and inadequate infrastructure support.

From various research findings, it can be seen that the Merdeka Curriculum indeed holds positive potential for improving the quality of learning by increasing student involvement, developing critical thinking skills, and fostering independent learning. However, its implementation still faces significant challenges, such as teachers' suboptimal understanding of curriculum principles, limited access to technology, a lack of continuous training, and inadequate infrastructure support. This condition shows a gap between the ideal concept of the Merdeka Curriculum and the practices occurring in schools. Therefore, a more in-depth approach is needed to examine learning innovation practices, not only from a technical perspective but also in a reflective and ideological manner. A critical pedagogical approach becomes important in this context as it can assess how well learning facilitates critical awareness, active participation, and the liberation of students as subjects in the educational process.

The critical pedagogical approach, as developed by Freire (2008), emphasizes the importance of building a dialogical relationship between teachers and students, encouraging learners not just to receive information but also to question, interpret, and relate it to their own life experiences. In the context of the Merdeka Curriculum, which provides room for teachers and

students to explore content contextually, this approach is highly relevant because it strengthens the meaningfulness and participation dimensions of the learning process. However, the integration of the Merdeka Curriculum and critical pedagogy has not been widely discussed in the context of elementary education, let alone through in-depth empirical studies in elementary schools in Indonesia.

Preliminary observations at State Elementary School 268 Panyileukan, Bandung City, show a gap between the ideal concept of the Merdeka Curriculum and the actual learning practices in the classroom. Although the school has administratively adopted the Merdeka Curriculum, in practice, learning is still dominated by lecture methods, exercises, and repetitive written tasks. Teachers tend to adopt innovative approaches only through the use of digital media or variations in task formats, without truly reflecting on the pedagogical values behind these strategies. In this case, a critical pedagogical approach can serve as an analytical tool to examine how “innovative” learning really empowers students and enables them to become active subjects in the educational process.

Another issue that arises is the limited understanding of teachers regarding the deeper meaning of the principle of "Merdeka Learning." Many teachers still understand the freedom in the Merdeka Curriculum purely in procedural and administrative terms, without realizing that such freedom requires intellectual and ethical responsibility to continually reflect on teaching practices. Teachers need support and capacity-building not only in technical aspects of teaching but also in pedagogical awareness and philosophical understanding of the meaning of education itself.

The novelty of this study lies in its approach, which attempts to bridge the gap between the ideas of learning innovation in the Merdeka Curriculum and the critical pedagogical framework, which has not been widely studied together, especially in the context of elementary education in Indonesia. This research will not only describe the innovative learning practices but also analyze them critically using qualitative and reflective approaches. By conducting a case study at State Elementary School 268 Panyileukan, Bandung City, this study will provide an empirical overview of how the ideas of the Merdeka Curriculum are interpreted and implemented by teachers, as well as how a critical pedagogical approach can be used to assess and develop these practices.

The urgency of this research is even higher given that elementary school is the starting point for the formation of character and thinking patterns of children. Failure to build liberating learning at this level can have long-term effects on students' intellectual and moral

development in the future. In an era where information is easily accessible and changes occur rapidly, students must be equipped not only with factual knowledge but also with critical thinking skills, reflective attitudes, and social sensitivity. The Merdeka Curriculum provides a great opportunity to realize this, but such opportunities will not be fully maximized without deep and reflective understanding from educational implementers, particularly teachers.

By analyzing the learning innovations implemented at State Elementary School 268 Panyileukan, Bandung City, through the lens of critical pedagogy, this research is expected to contribute both theoretically and practically to curriculum development, teacher training, and the development of relevant learning models in line with the spirit of the times. This research is also expected to inspire a new discourse in Indonesian education, where educational transformation is not only about technology or new methods but also about changes in paradigm, values, and power relations in the classroom.

Overall, this study aims to uncover the extent to which learning innovations in the Merdeka Curriculum truly reflect the spirit of liberation, participation, and meaningfulness promoted by critical pedagogy. By delving deeply into the experiences of teachers and students at State Elementary School 268 Panyileukan, Bandung City, this research is expected to enrich the academic field and provide concrete input for educational policymakers at both local and national levels. In the face of increasingly complex demands of the times, education that liberates, empowers, and humanizes is a need that cannot be postponed. This research represents a small step toward bringing Indonesian elementary education closer to this ideal.

## **METHODOLOGY**

This research uses a qualitative approach with a case study design, aimed at exploring in depth the practice of learning innovation within the Merdeka Curriculum and reviewing it through a critical pedagogical lens at State Elementary School 268 Panyileukan, Bandung City. The qualitative approach was chosen because it allows the researcher to understand the meanings, values, and subjective experiences of teachers and students within the context of everyday learning. As Creswell (2016) states, a qualitative approach "allows researchers to explore phenomena deeply and holistically within natural settings, with a focus on the meanings given by participants." A case study strategy is used because this research focuses on one specific educational unit, State Elementary School 268 Panyileukan, Bandung City, as a locus that allows for an in-depth exploration of the interaction between curriculum policies, teaching strategies, and student responses. Yin (2019) mentions that case studies are highly

appropriate for answering "how" and "why" questions about phenomena in real contexts, especially when the boundaries between the phenomena and its context are unclear.

The subjects of this research include classroom teachers, the school principal, and students from grades IV, selected purposively based on relevant criteria such as their experience in implementing the Merdeka Curriculum and active involvement in the learning process. Purposive sampling was chosen because qualitative research requires informants who truly understand the issues being researched and can provide in-depth information (Sugiyono, 2019).

Data collection was carried out using three main techniques: in-depth interviews, participatory observation, and documentation studies. Semi-structured interviews provide flexibility to explore the informants' views while maintaining relevance to the topic being studied. Moleong (2017) states that qualitative interviews provide space for dialogue between the researcher and the informant, so that the hidden meanings behind statements can be explored more deeply. Observation was conducted directly on the learning process, interactions between teachers and students, and the implementation of the project, noting both verbal and non-verbal behaviors observed in the classroom. Documentation studies involved analyzing the Lesson Plan (modul ajar), teaching modules, and project reports used in the learning innovations. To ensure data validity, source and method triangulation were applied by comparing results from various data collection techniques to obtain consistency of information (Moleong, 2017). Data analysis was performed using the interactive model of Miles & Huberman (2014), which consists of data reduction, data presentation, and conclusion drawing. The analytical framework in this study uses Paulo Freire's critical pedagogy perspective, which emphasizes the importance of dialogue, reflection, and liberation in the educational process. With this approach, the study not only describes the technical practices of learning innovation but also examines the extent to which these processes carry ideological content and contribute to the transformation of students' awareness.

## **RESULTS AND DISCUSSION**

### **RESULT**

This research was conducted at State Elementary School 268 Panyileukan, Bandung City, from July to October 2025. The main focus of the study was to explore in-depth the practice of learning innovation within the Merdeka Curriculum and examine to what extent critical pedagogical values are realized in its implementation. The research employed three main data collection techniques: in-depth interviews, participatory observation, and documentation

studies. The findings are presented in three main sections: interview findings, observation findings, and documentation findings, which are then analyzed thematically.

Interviews were conducted with five key informants: two class teachers (grade IV), the school principal, and two students. Additionally, supplementary interviews were conducted with the curriculum coordinator and parents for additional data. The majority of teachers stated that the implementation of the Merdeka Curriculum provides greater space for teaching creativity, although it also demands higher pedagogical and managerial skills from teachers.

The subjects for this case study were selected using purposive sampling to ensure rich, context-specific data. Participants included two Grade IV classroom teachers, the school principal, and two Grade IV students. Teachers were selected based on two key criteria: 1) minimum one year of experience in implementing the Merdeka Curriculum, and 2) evidence of using differentiated and project-based approaches in their planning. Students were selected based on their active involvement in the learning process and their ability to articulate their learning experiences. This selection ensured informants had a deep understanding of the research issue. Data analysis followed the interactive model by Miles & Huberman (2014) (data reduction, display, and conclusion drawing). Data reduction involved open coding to identify descriptive themes from interviews and observations (e.g., project enthusiasm, control issues). This was followed by axial coding, grouping themes into major critical pedagogical categories (dialogue, reflection, power relations, and social consciousness), which served as the study's analytical framework. Source and method triangulation were applied to ensure data validity.

The grade IV teachers shared that the differentiated learning approach presents a unique challenge. She must adjust materials, media, and teaching methods according to the needs of each student.

"In one class, I could have a student who learns very quickly, and others who still struggle with reading. This makes me have to create three versions of assignments, and it's very tiring." (Interview, April 2025)

On the other hand, the grade IV teachers noticed a renewed enthusiasm among students when they engaged in projects based on Deep Learning. They shared the experience of students working on an environmental project, where they observed plastic waste around the school and created a small digital campaign about recycling.

"The kids were very excited. They made posters, reflection notes, and even presented in front of the class. This was much more meaningful than the lecture method." (Interview, October 2025)

The school principal emphasized that innovation is not just about new methods but should also involve a change in the teachers' mindset.

"For us, innovation is not just about using digital media or creating projects. It's also about how teachers can foster curiosity, critical thinking, and students' courage to voice their opinions." (Interview, October 2025)

From the students, it was found that they preferred interactive and collaborative-based learning methods. Grade IV's student mentioned feeling more motivated to learn when given the opportunity to work in groups and explore their own ideas.

"When we made a cultural project, my friends and I looked for regional cultures, learned Sundanese song, and made project from recycled things. It was fun, Ma'am. Learning became enjoyable." (Interview, October 2025)

Meanwhile, another grade IV's student provided a perspective that emphasized the importance of active student involvement in the learning process. They stated feeling more confident when given the opportunity to express his opinion in front of the class and work in a team during a thematic project. He shared his experience in a project, which is created simple products from recycled materials and presented it in the classroom.

"I used to be shy to speak, but now I'm braver. When we made crafts from used bottles, my friends and I made piggy banks and had to explain them to other classmates. It felt proud, Ma'am." (Interview, October 2025)

These statements indicate that, in general, the Merdeka Curriculum provides more active and contextual learning experiences for students. However, not all teachers have been able to integrate reflective and critical approaches into their teaching practices.

Observations were conducted four times per class for grades IV. In practice, teachers have applied project-based learning, group discussions, as well as differentiated tasks and materials. In class 4A, for example, the researcher noted how the teacher divided students into three groups based on learning styles and literacy levels. Each group was given different reading materials and then asked to create summaries in the form of posters or mind maps.

Although the lesson structure took into account student diversity, it was still evident that the teacher played a dominant role. The teacher frequently provided one-way instructions, and

students were not entirely free to develop their ideas. The teacher seemed cautious in directing the learning process to ensure it did not "go off track," which indicated a concern over maintaining class control.

In class 4B, the project was carried out with an interdisciplinary approach. Students were asked to research local culture, such as traditional foods, clothes, and ceremonies in their community. They conducted interviews with parents, collected photos, and created a digital portfolio. However, in the final discussion, the researcher noted that the teacher did not guide students to reflect on the underlying values of local wisdom in their everyday lives.

Documentation analysis was conducted on lesson plans (modul ajar), teaching modules, student project results, and curriculum implementation reports. The analyzed lesson plans showed the teacher's efforts to integrate differentiation principles and project-based learning. Teachers included learning indicators related to 21st-century skills, such as critical thinking, collaboration, and communication.

The teaching modules used by the teachers were generally open and flexible. For example, in the Indonesian language subject, students were asked to write short stories based on personal experiences, which were then uploaded to the class blog. The module also included open-ended questions such as "Why is it important to respect differences?" or "What are the consequences if the school environment is dirty?" However, there was a lack of guidance or instructions for teachers to guide students in critically reflecting on broader social issues.

Student portfolios showed high creativity, including written works, drawings, videos, and other visual projects. However, the teacher's notes in the portfolios were still descriptive and evaluative of the final outcomes, without deep reflection on the learning process. In several project implementation reports, inconsistencies were found between the plans and the actual implementation, especially in terms of the duration of activities, student involvement, and documentation of the process.

Overall, the research findings indicate that State Elementary School 268 Panyileukan, Bandung City has implemented the Merdeka Curriculum with an innovative spirit, particularly in aspects of project-based learning, contextual learning, and differentiation strategies. Teachers have made efforts to develop more participatory and enjoyable learning for students. Students also responded positively to the learning that is no longer monotonous and one-way.

The Merdeka Curriculum at State Elementary School 268 Panyileukan, Bandung City has opened space for learning innovation, but it has not been fully accompanied by a deep understanding and practice of critical pedagogy. This presents both a challenge and a great

opportunity for educational reform at the elementary school level, especially in producing a generation of learners who are not only academically intelligent but also socially and humanistically aware.

## **DISCUSSION**

This study reveals that the implementation of the Merdeka Curriculum at State Elementary School 268 Panyileukan, Bandung City, has triggered various innovations in the learning process. These innovations are reflected in the implementation of project-based learning, the application of differentiated learning strategies, and the integration of local wisdom values into student learning activities. These findings align with the principle of "merdeka Learning" (freedom to learn), which emphasizes the freedom of both teachers and students to design and develop learning processes that are relevant to their conditions and needs.

From the perspective of critical pedagogy, as articulated by Freire (1978), education should be an instrument of liberation, not oppression. Freire rejected the "banking model" of education, where students are positioned as empty vessels to be filled with knowledge. Instead, he advocated for a dialogic and reflective approach, where students and teachers are both active subjects in the learning process. In the context of State Elementary School 268 Panyileukan, Bandung City, although efforts have been made to actively involve students in the learning process, the reflective and dialogic nature of critical education has not yet been fully realized.

According to Kurniasari et al. (2023), this finding is consistent with the implementation of the Merdeka Curriculum at the elementary school level. Their study shows that some teachers have started applying innovative approaches such as project-based learning and differentiated instruction. However, the dimension of critical reflection on social realities and the empowerment of students has not yet fully developed. Teachers' focus generally remains on the end result or output of the learning projects, while the development of critical thinking skills has received less attention. This condition indicates that, although progress has been made in methodical approaches, a comprehensive paradigm shift in education has not yet been fully realized.

In the case of State Elementary School 268 Panyileukan, Bandung City, the projects developed by students have indeed encouraged creativity and collaboration, such as creating mini-exhibitions on local culture or initiating school cleanliness campaigns. However, these projects have not been directed toward building students' critical awareness of broader social issues. According to Giroux (2011), emancipatory education must connect classroom learning

with real-world social, political, and economic conditions. This means that learning innovations should not only involve technical creativity but also ideological and social awareness.

The gap between innovative approaches and critical substance is also evident in the use of differentiated learning. Teachers at State Elementary School 268 Panyileukan, Bandung City have attempted to design learning activities that suit the abilities and interests of students. However, in practice, this differentiated approach has not been accompanied by strengthening students' awareness of their identity, values, and roles within their social environment. Hooks (2014) emphasizes that transformative education should go beyond technical approaches toward creating spaces for dialogue that allow students to express their experiences and identities.

According to Zulaiha et al. (2023), teachers at several schools that have adopted the Merdeka Curriculum often face difficulties in comprehensively understanding and applying the curriculum. Although various innovations have been implemented, such as the use of diverse learning methods and creative media, there remains a limited deep understanding of the curriculum's philosophy and objectives. As a result, teachers often struggle to integrate learning with critical values and student empowerment. The focus of learning tends to be directed more toward technical aspects and outcomes rather than the development of reflective awareness and critical thinking skills. This issue is exacerbated by weak conceptual understanding and a lack of adequate pedagogical training for teachers.

Furthermore, the projects at State Elementary School 268 Panyileukan, Bandung City have not yet fully optimized students' reflection and critical values. Some projects are still ceremonial and are aimed at fulfilling administrative requirements. According to Rogers' (1969) humanistic education theory, meaningful learning must be based on authentic experiences and deep self-understanding. In the context of critical pedagogy, this means that projects should provide students with the opportunity to understand the realities around them, voice their opinions, and take roles in social change.

According to Wally et al. (2024), the success of implementing the Merdeka Curriculum, which emphasizes flexibility, is highly dependent on teachers' readiness, particularly in designing contextual and reflective learning. Although most teachers have a good understanding of the curriculum's basic structure and concepts, some still need further development. A lack of strong pedagogical understanding often becomes a barrier for teachers in developing truly transformative learning approaches. This is also experienced by teachers at State Elementary School 268 Panyileukan, Bandung City, where the training they attended focused more on

administrative technicalities rather than the philosophical reflection of the curriculum. As a result, the innovative approaches implemented by teachers have not yet led to the paradigm shift expected by the spirit of critical pedagogy.

From the assessment perspective, teachers at State Elementary School 268 Panyileukan, Bandung City tend to use a summative approach. Although the Merdeka Curriculum encourages the use of formative and narrative assessments, many teachers still focus on the final results or products of students' tasks, rather than on the learning process itself. According to Stiggins (2005), effective formative assessment should serve as a learning tool, not just a measuring tool. In a critical pedagogy approach, assessment should help students understand their strengths and weaknesses and provide space for them to reflect on their learning experience as part of their self-development.

On the other hand, it is important to note that the learning innovations carried out by teachers at State Elementary School 268 Panyileukan, Bandung City still have a positive impact in terms of increasing student motivation, strengthening teamwork, and building self-confidence. These aspects are an important foundation for the future development of critical pedagogy practices. According to Mezirow (1991), transformative learning begins with disorienting experiences that trigger critical reflection, which gradually leads individuals to a deeper understanding. Teachers at State Elementary School 268 Panyileukan, Bandung City have opened up spaces for diverse learning experiences, and now it remains to strengthen the stages of critical reflection and social contextualization.

Thus, this discussion shows that learning innovations in the Merdeka Curriculum have great potential to become a path toward more emancipatory education. However, to achieve this, there needs to be a stronger integration of critical pedagogical approaches with everyday learning practices. Teachers must be facilitated to understand that innovation is not just about variation in methods, but about a paradigm shift that positions students as active, reflective, and transformative subjects. This can be achieved through strengthening critical pedagogical training, creating reflective teacher learning communities, and restructuring the assessment and reporting system to support meaningful learning.

**Table 1. Summary of Key Interview Themes and Critical Pedagogical Gap**

Informant Group	Key Innovation Theme	Critical Pedagogical Gap/Tension	Supporting Quote (Excerpt)
Teachers	Differentiated learning increases workload but	Difficulty maintaining critical focus amidst high demands for	"This makes me have to create three versions of

Informant Group	Key Innovation Theme	Critical Pedagogical Gap/Tension	Supporting Quote (Excerpt)
	caters to diverse student pace.	procedural innovation and classroom management.	assignments, and it's very tiring."
<b>School Principal</b>	Innovation requires a mindset change beyond just digital media or methods.	The need for teachers to focus on fostering critical thinking and students' courage to voice opinions is not yet fully realized.	"It's also about how teachers can foster curiosity, critical thinking, and students' courage to voice their opinions."
<b>Students</b>	Project-based, collaborative learning is fun, engaging, and builds confidence.	Focus remains on the <i>process of making and self-expression</i> (humanistic), but not on <i>challenging social reality</i> (critical).	"I used to be shy to speak, but now I'm braver. When we made crafts from used bottles..."

## CONCLUSION

The Merdeka Curriculum at State Elementary School 268 Panyileukan, Bandung City, has shown significant learning innovations, particularly in the implementation of project-based learning, differentiated instruction, and the integration of local values that are relevant to the students' context. Teachers have made efforts to create a more participatory and enjoyable learning process, thus increasing students' enthusiasm and active involvement. However, the critical and dialogic reflection aspect of learning, which is characteristic of critical pedagogy, has not yet been fully realized. Teachers still focus more on the final outcomes of projects without developing students' critical awareness of broader social issues. Another challenge is the gap between the ideal concepts of the Merdeka Curriculum and the actual practices in the field, including limited teacher understanding, inadequate infrastructure support, and the need for ongoing training to ensure optimal pedagogical transformation. Therefore, while the Merdeka Curriculum has opened up opportunities for innovation, there is a need for deeper and stronger integration of critical pedagogical aspects to ensure that education not only produces academically intelligent students but also socially and humanistically aware individuals.

Efforts to improve the quality of Merdeka Curriculum implementation should begin with strengthening the capacity of teachers as the main actors in the learning process. This can be done through training focused on critical pedagogy, helping teachers understand and integrate reflective values and social awareness into their teaching practices. Furthermore, adequate

support in terms of facilities and technology from the school and policymakers is necessary to encourage the effectiveness of learning innovations. Additionally, the assessment and reporting system should be revised to include not only the achievement of final outcomes but also the thinking process, active participation, and critical reflection of students. Furthermore, learning projects should be designed to raise students' awareness of social, political, and economic issues in their surroundings. Finally, the formation of a reflective and collaborative teacher learning community will strengthen professional practices while supporting the sustainability of innovations in line with the spirit of the Merdeka Curriculum.

### A. The Merdeka Curriculum (MC)

This chart represents the procedural and structural innovations of the policy.

Key MC Element	Description
<b>Project-Based Learning (PBL)</b>	Curricular flexibility, authentic learning.
<b>Differentiated Instruction</b>	Valuing student diversity, the right to learn at one's own pace.
<b>Contextual Learning</b>	Connecting subject matter to students' immediate environmental reality.
<b>Profile Pelajar Pancasila (P3)</b>	Focus on collaborative dimensions and critical thinking.

### B. Critical Pedagogy (CP)

This chart represents the emancipatory, philosophical goals derived from Freire, Giroux, and Hooks.

Key CP Element (Freire, Giroux, Hooks)	Description
<b>Dialogue (Freire)</b>	Learning as <i>problem-posing</i> , rather than the <i>banking model</i> .
<b>Conscientização (Freire)</b>	Developing critical consciousness toward social, political, and economic conditions.
<b>Empowerment/Liberation (Hooks)</b>	Education as a practice of freedom; challenging hegemonic control.

Key CP Element (Freire, Giroux, Hooks)	Description
Praxis (Giroux)	The informed cycle of critical reflection and social action.

### C. The Overlap Area: Critical Synergy (The Ideal Focus)

This intersection represents the study's ideal target—the successful fusion of policy and philosophy.

Critical Synergy (The Ideal)	Description
Critical Project-Based Learning	PBL directed toward critical social analysis and action (e.g., a pollution project that leads to advocacy, not just poster-making).
Differentiated Equity	Differentiation that addresses recognition of identity and voice (Hooks), not just academic pace management.
Critical Dialogue	Teachers facilitating discussions that question underlying social assumptions and power dynamics.

### RECOMMENDATION

- Teacher Professional Development: Training must shift from administrative technicalities to 'critical pedagogy workshops' that foster reflection on teachers' power relations in the classroom and connect learning to social issues.
- Policy and Assessment Reform: Policymakers must revise assessment systems to mandate the evaluation of students' critical thinking processes, dialogue, and reflective journals, not just final products.

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