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## Analysis and Review of Critical Theory in the Curriculum

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### Abstract

One of the most important basic human issues is the education, which has always been considered by many thinkers. The issue of education has gone a long way from the past to the present; so that in the contemporary world, it has entered new realms with the emergence of new schools such as pragmatism and postmodernism. One of the most important of these arenas is the emergence of critical thinking in the field of education. Critical education is a theory in the field of education that emphasizes the development of critical thinking and knowledge of students, and the curriculum elements are designed in such a way that critical knowledge of political, cultural, economic and social developed in it. Thinkers such as Paulo Freire, Henry Giroux, Michael Apple, Jurgen-Habermas and Peter McLaren, who plotted and made their point of view. The present research sought to determine the main elements of the curriculum of critical education based on the views of theorists on this field. Identifying the philosophical and social foundations and determining the main elements of the curriculum, such as the role of school, teacher, student, and evaluation, finding teaching methods and curriculum content in critical education, emphasizing the notion of prominent scholars of this field were among the goals of this research. First, the critical theory of the Frankfurt School and then the foundations and elements of the curriculum in postmodernism and critical education were examined and then the views and ideas of the major theorists of this field were analyzed. The findings of this research made it clear that prominent scholars of this field followed humanists in their philosophical and psychological foundations and to achieve their educational goals, which were critical awareness, propose a problem and in this case, dialogue played an essential role.

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## 1. Introduction

Each society needs to provide proper education in accordance with the patterns and needs of the life of its generation in order to manage its own life. If society can develop education tailored to its cultural, social, political and economic advancements, it will undoubtedly archive the pinnacle of progress in all fields. A look at the philosophical and educational perspectives of philosophers and sociologists suggests that each of them, based on their point of view, as well as the culture and politics of the society in which they lived, had theories in the field of education. Explaining these views and ideas will provide valuable guidance for educators will be able to rely on these guidelines transform their education infrastructure into society. In that change, transformation and innovation should be in the educational policies of any educational system; however this does not involve any kind of change and they are important changes that can make society progress and provide education as an essential element of life to meet the needs of that community. Postmodernism is one of the most important branches of contemporary thought which with the advent of thinkers such as Richard Rorty, McCarthy, Giroux and Lyotard has been able to enter a new arena with the idea of modern thought, especially in education, in which emphasized on the evolution of change, innovation and creativity more than acceptance and induction. Therefore, the main issue of the research is that, what are the characteristics of an effective curriculum from the perspective of critical theorists of education. This research seeks to answer the following question: What are the characteristics of an effective curriculum from the point of view of critical theorists?

## 2. Methodology

The method used in this research is descriptive-analytic, conceptual or philosophical analysis. This research method has been performed with clarifying and improving the set of concepts or conceptual structures, in which they can be used to interpret the experience, express the intentions, structure the issues and conduct research. The research community is a text-based society composed of scientific content, as well as research and written articles related to critical education theorists. In this research, purposeful sampling has been used, because the purpose of the research is to examine the samples in depth. The tool used to collect data in this study is taking notes. Characteristics of Critical Theory: The meaning and concept of critical theory :Critical theory is a theory by which the thinker and the researcher examine a set of issues that constitute the theoretical framework of the critique in the social system or discover its contradictions, seeking a kind of social system without this contradiction. This theory addresses the discovery of contradictions with the aim of eliminating defects and creating evolution (Shabani Varaki, 2004).

The Characteristics of critical theory: Theorists of critical theory look at school, curriculum and education as factors and activities that go beyond purely academic disciplines and have important political, economic, social, and educational implications (Gottak, 2005). Critical theorists seek to find the following questions: Who should control the schools? Who should determine the ethical, social, and economic goals of education? Who should set the curriculum? In response to critical questions, critical theorists say a large number of structures in the current societies are under the influence of powerful community groups. And these institutions exploit their power to control weaker groups (Göttek, 2005).

Critical theorists, according to their intellectual origins, can be divided into three main groups. Some of them emphasize the importance of an overt curriculum in the reproduction of consciousness, such as Paulo Freire and Ivan Illich. Another group, with an emphasis on hidden curriculum, adopts a vision of what is called "matching theory" or "reproduction theory", such as Samuel Bowles and Herbert Gintis. The third group on postmodern thoughts has turned to a vision of "resistance theories," such as Henry Giroux and Michael Apple.

Education from the perspective of revolutionary theorists: Paulo Freire: Paulo Freire is a prominent mentor who lived in a very difficult and extremely difficult Brazilian society at a time of poverty and exploitation. He believes that it is necessary to increase the consciousness of individuals towards the problems surrounding them and turn them from passive beings to active and thoughtful people. Educational goals: Freire believes that, the goal of education is to raise the level of critical awareness of students, so they can think freely and criticize anything they see in their social and cultural environment.

The role of the school: The school is the best place to implement critical education and critical accountability can be combined with basic education in schools (McLaren, 1989). In traditional societies, schools play an effective role in achieving the main goals of the social class ruling, and emphasizes that the school is not neutral. The claim of school impartiality is a common ideology that hides the political function of school. Schools are places where the opportunity to understand and practice the rights and responsibilities of an active and critical citizen in various forms of social learning for students is provided, in this way, the human capabilities of solidarity and unity in them are developed (Fathi Vajargah, 2007).

Teaching -Learning (Teaching Method): According to Freire, education is not knowledge transfer or content. Everyone who teaches learns while teaching, and everyone who learns, teaches when learning (Freire, 2001). According to Freire, the practice of teaching in schools is the practice of saving information that the teacher is the saver and the students are warehouses and teacher is the one who will better fill these reservoirs, and students are good persons who will allow those fill up them (Freire, 1972).

Teacher and student role: Freire with a detailed analysis of teacher and student in traditional or classroom teaching, believes that such a connection have more "narrative" content. This kind of relationship requires two elements: a teacher and a student whose duty is to be patient (Fathi Vajargah, 2007). In traditional education, which Freire calls banking education, the teacher's practice is divided into two stages: In the first stage, the teacher, while preparing the lessons in study or in the lab, prepares for presentation in the classroom, acquaints with the object being identified; in the second stage, he describes the object or subject for the students. The teacher presents the material for his students' study, and when his students describe their considerations, he re-examines his previous observations and opinions (Freire, 1972).

Assessment: Self-assessment plays a pivotal role in critical education of Freire, which is a humanist education, and students are expected to assess progress towards goals through learning (Miller, 2000, quoted by Kirschenbaum). In Freire's teaching method, students can learn to evaluate their learning and reflect on the actions they have taken in a group. In this way, the evaluation of the sciences strengthens the educational goals including individual and social changes, so that students become agents in their world (Volrštejn 1987).

Education from the perspective of reproduction theories: According to the viewpoints of the theorists in this group, the problems existing in the educational system of a society are due to the class conflict structure of that society. The educational system continues to perpetuate and reproduce this structure.

Theorists believe that the educational system and the school are a layer of social "superstructure" that forms the basis of society's economy. In their view, schools with preparing students to enter the economic system of society, try to connect and adapt the structure of the school to the structure of production in society. Reproduction theories are divided into two categories: "Social Reproduction Theory" and "Cultural Reproduction Theory." The Social Reproduction Theory is rooted in the thinking of Samuel Bowles and Herbert Gintis. A major part of their work was to prove that the educational system is an essential element in the reproduction of the division of labor, which ultimately expresses the supremacy and superiority of the capitalist class. The link between the three institutions of the family, work and school provides a framework for their theory. They consider educational inequality as part of the fabric of

the capitalist society and believe that the hierarchical structure of values, norms and skills that exist in the field of work is the same hierarchy and relationships in the classroom.

C. Education from the perspective of resistance theories: The theory of resistance in education is due to criticisms of reproductive theories. Some scholars describe the lack of empirical evidence as a major source of ambiguity in reproductive theory. Others, ignore the ability of teachers and students to resist against school as the main conceptual and political weaknesses of the theory of reproduction, but at the same time, reproduces certain forms of resistance in them also cannot be ignored (Apple, quoted by Marzouki, 2000). The departure of this theory, which is currently led by people like Henry Giroud and Michael Apple, is the concept of "contradiction" and "resistance." With rejecting both conservative and radical views, they see the curriculum as a complex discourse that not only serves the interests of the dominant class but also has the prospect of the possibility of emancipation. This theory, with a critical look at the previous views, believes that even if social and cultural reproduction also occurs in the educational system, this is not easy and simple, and students resist the demands and pressures of the school. The school is a relatively independent institution that not only provides for the possibility of adverse behavior, it is also a source of contradiction; the teacher should engage in "critical thinking" and "critical literacy" by creating a critical relationship. . In critical theory, the two components of "critique" and "correction" are considered. The main goal of these theorists is to correct it based on their critique, school and curriculum system. So that, schools become democratic spaces. Critical theorists try to redefine the role of the teacher, the nature of teaching and its goals (Adib Manesh and Javaheri Daneshmand, 2010).

Critical theorists consider the curriculum from two aspects: first, an explicit curriculum of well-known subjects and skills, and another hidden curriculum that forms in the secrecy values, attitudes and behaviors. In critical theory, the hidden curriculum is considered more and more. The hidden curriculum includes messages that teachers, school structures, books, and other school supplies transfer to the child (Ellen, 2008). Critical theorists emphasize the study of history and various cultures, and they are of the opinion that students during the curriculum must be familiar with the factors that have led to the strength or weakness of some of the cultures (Göttek, 2006).

The purpose and basic principles of education from the perspective of Giroux: According to Giroux, the goal of education is helping individuals acquire the knowledge they need to succeed as a citizen. Critical education is based on the assumption that every rational justification contains a special situation. Each situation is considered as a specific conceptual organization, which allows for the development of various questions (Aghazadeh and Dabirinezhad, 2001). Giroux believes that "education should not only be the creator of knowledge, but should also be the creator of political activists. Critical education Instead of rejecting the language of politics, should link public education to the needs of a critical democracy (Dehbashi et al., 2007).

Critical Education Objectives from Giroud perspective: The development of a critical citizen instead of a merely desirable citizen. Attention to the social issues of all groups from any ethnic group. To help eliminate the political domination of marginal political groups and consider their rights and freedoms. Eliminating racial segregation and defending the rights of the oppressed. Creating an equitable and ethical democratic society. Modifying and refining curriculum content in order to transform the content, purpose and method; Defining new roles for teachers and helping them to transform society; Transforming their passive role and accepting them to active role. The principle of critique and criticism According to this principle, in the course of educational interactions, the teacher and student should look at the analytical and critical view of what are being read or learned. In terms of evaluation, the instructor should not only focus on student savings in assessing their learning (Salehi, 2016).

The principle of discourses: In critical education, dialogue is a way through which students in the classroom interact with each other using language, symbol, and image. An effective educational dialogue

can provide social dialogue with creating a common space and two-way communication between learners with each other and learners with teachers (Marjani, 2006).

Principle of anti-authoritarianism and domination: In this principle, it has been paid attention to the rights of all people. Therefore, not only the teacher does not have the right to authorize and dominate over the class and the opinions of the students, but also, curriculum planners and even a particular group of students have no right to authorize and dominate the other. This principle focuses on organizing classroom space, changing the position of the teacher; so that, students do not feel superiority and supremacy of him or her to the class. The classroom is a place where social interactions, critique, research, problem design, and the experience of different learning styles can be provided (Ahmad Abadi Arani, 2017).

The principle of relativity of knowledge: Given that, the transfer of knowledge is nothing but an accumulation of the student's minds from old knowledge; educators should avoid the transfer of mere epistemology. Some critical theorists such as Freire (1970) hardly criticize the role of traditional teaching teachers as transmitters of knowledge and of students as passive information receptors. Hayman (2001), Freire sees the result of this educational approach students who, like empty ships; their tank is accumulated, but will never be able to move and transfer these goods. Trained students will not be able to transfer knowledge and critical thinking to traditional knowledge through traditional methods.

Educational methods: Giraud believes that "the critical method can provide the ground for the emergence of ideas and creativity. In fact, discourse is like a double coin, which is, on the other hand, considered to be the method of border education (Dinarwand, Imani, 2008). Giroud's educational practices such as discourse, reading and critical writing include methods that led to critical thought. After discussing and reading, students have interpreted and criticized them and are looking for new ideas by reviewing the subject (Salehi, 2016).

**Table 1.** education goals, principles and methods of Giraud

<b>Main components</b>	<b>Main Indicators</b>
purpose of education	Nurturing a Critical Citizen, Elimination of Racial Discrimination
Principles of Education	Critique and criticize, central discourse, anti-authority and domination, the relativity of knowledge
Educational methods	Discourse, Critical Thinking

Teacher and student roles from Giroud's perspective: One of the most interesting points in Giroud's theory of education is the role of a teacher in the educational system. If teachers talk about what they teach, how they do it, and the higher goals they are trying to address, these will be like instruments which activates their essential and critical role in defending human nature and shape the conditions in which they work (Giroux, 1999).

A. Characteristics of Teacher: Criticist evolution: "Girou divides teachers into two groups of critical climate change and" adaptation of the atmosphere. "The first group will endure many roles and pressures, while the second group will receive promotion and rewards, and the task of these cultural actors is to take on social critique "(Dinarwand, 2008).

Respect the opinions and beliefs of all students: teachers are able to criticize the opposite view and to allow students to defend their ideas without any prejudice. Critical theorists are seeking to reform the school based on their critique, so that schools become democratic in order to open up the perspective of the younger generation to true moral, economic, and ethical responsibilities (Gottak, 2008).

The ability to grow and be creative in the reconstruction of yourself and others: The critic's teacher has the power, due to his positive attitude and insight, to reconstruct it in accordance with his professional development and help students to use creativity to transform themselves, (Berka and Stoke Barry, 1992).



Awareness of the day issues: Among other features of the teacher, up-to-date information and being aware of the youth issues in schools. A teacher who does not have enough knowledge about these issues will not succeed in educating a critic citizen (Salehi, 2016).

Content: In terms of Giroud, knowledge related to curriculum should not be regarded as a sacred text, but as a part of an endless employment, to a variety of narratives and traditions that can be re-read and in different political conditions of re-formulated, expanded (Giroux, 2004). Education is a textual study process that can use the three modes of reading, interpreting, and criticizing, and give students the opportunity to translate, summarize and extend narratives of the text and provide more readings of phenomena (Dehbashi et al., 2007).

Giro believes that teaching should be seen as part of a larger curriculum design for building themes and political forms of schools as a democratic public space. Teachers should create the power to examine the text by allowing students to read texts out of the same shape. Giroux seems to promote the idea that "teaching" is a kind of skill and "teacher" is a professional intellectual; that is, it is necessary to link his career or skill with thought and opinion. Teachers, in fact, have to deconstruct the cultural system in which they live and teach (Bagheri, 1375).

B) Student characteristics: Ability and dare to ask question: The most important features of students based on Giroud's vision are the courage and dare to ask questions in all fields of education. Such students are not passive and question ambiguous questions when confronted with new learning situations (Salehi, 2016). Active participation in social affairs: Among other characteristics of students, they are sensitive to the political and social issues of the society in which they live. The school is a small sample of society. Students with different identities should interact as cultural cross-borderers and practice the openness and respect to the different cultures in the school environment "(beautiful words and Mohammadi, 2015).

Efforts to improve school reforms: Students should play an important role in school reforms. Students can ask questions such as: Does the curriculum overcome their needs? In community education, school conferences will solve problems and review their issues. According to Giroud's critical point of view, one of the characteristics of students is to pay attention to educational reforms and efforts to strengthen these reforms in all educational issues (Salehi, 2016) 4. Having the spirit of rational critique: having critical morale is not a new issue among philosophers and thinkers, but emphasizing the necessity. The training of a critical spirit can be seen in the views of philosophers such as Socrates, Plato, and the Confucianists. It can be said that the root of critical education lies in critical thinking (Marjani, 2006).

Table 2. Main Components of Girou Education

Components of Girou Education	Functions
Education	Producing political subjects and the greatest protector of the past cultural system
Teacher	Transformational intellectuals and facilitators of knowledge creation
School	The place of democratic education and the cultivation of critical citizens
Content	Focus on a variety of narratives and traditions (attention to narratives)
Teaching	Curriculum related to the construction of topics and the political form of schools

The purpose and basic principles of education from the perspective of Habermas: The ultimate goal of education according to Habermas is liberation. He knows the real task of education facilitate the emergence of students' communicational rationality and the movement towards liberation. Education is looking for a way to accept cultural multiplicity. According to Habermas, instead of forcing people into a predetermined unit structure, education should teach the learners that if they have a consensus and unity, it should be achieved by agreement, not as a common form in current systems, because in a system, relations are formed on the basis of power, money and coercion.

The principle of justice and social equality: Justice is the most fundamental social value and in some way a factor in the survival of society which should be manifested in all aspects of society and move along it.

Huber Mas believes in justice and freedom as the goal of moral education at the social level. Habermas's attention to the world of life, conversational ethics, communicative action and communicative rationality expresses his specific interest in intellectual thinking and the growth of the rational-moral responsibility of individuals, which can be achieved in the light of unconstrained discussions and debates and lead to prosperity of people. The principle of freedom in expressing opinions: Students have the freedom to accept or reject them after criticizing issues with convincing reasons. Presence in the school and institution environment is a good opportunity for individuals to practice freedom and accept they are free creatures. Educational environments can contribute to the growth of student freedom with providing conditions for expressing free and critical opinions. Students should have active presence in learning new issues and evaluate, criticize and review educational issues during the learning process. Principle of growth and development of critical thinking: In the process of educating learners, teacher should strive to provide opportunities for freedom of action. The learner should not be like an aimless person that listens to everything due to pressure and force. Education of people should be in the direction of survival and continuity of the world, and this requires that students participate actively in classroom, school, and community in the terms of critical thinking and critique. The principle of strengthening and having an intercultural perspective: According to Habermas, social education should be on the side where learners can easily accept individual differences and have an intercultural look. One of the necessities of communicative action is that the trainee should be trained in such a way that could be able to abandon his or her calculations for succession and put collective agreement instead of it (Zibakalam et al., 2014).

The principle of selectivity: From the point of view of Habermas, the legitimacy and validity of the norms is based on the fact that the participants can know themselves the creator of norms that they should follow. This should not be done unilaterally. That's why Habermas knows legitimacy an argumentative dialogue. It is noted that the conditions for the success of language communication between humans are not just the exchange of information and the solution of problems, but the linguistic connection is being pursued in order to reach agreement on the validity of rules and norms in the field of speech and deed.

Educational methods: 1. The method of governing communication rationality in educational relationships. Communication rationality is the free form of communication and interaction between teacher and student. Communication rationality reduces repression in the classroom and increases individual flexibility and reflection, and in general, reduces wisdom oriented toward classroom decision-making and increases communication rationality (Macrany, 2016).

2. The method of strengthening and developing critical thinking and attention to social issues: Students should be prepared in advance to participate in the Habermas conversation, and be familiar with the rules of the correct argument. Since the possibility of emancipation lies in language, language enhancement is essential for the correct expression of reasoning and expression of interest. Learners should be able to express their interests comfortably and freely, and in this regard, they should have equal rights and freedoms (Lesanaf, 1999).

3. The method of developing the social skills necessary for dialogue and the right choice: Communication requires a receptive skill that is necessary to pay attention to the proper understanding of social information that exists in situations. Teachers should not allow students to be considered as neutral observers. Students should be involved in the rules of the law and the teacher will participate as a student in a discussion. It is necessary to create a series of social skills to create an environment with an understanding. Most of these skills include skills of helping, adherence to rules and regulations (Kasumi & Baran, 2011).

**Table 3.** Objectives of Educational Principles and Methods from the Viewpoint of Habermas

Main components	Functions
Educational goal	-Facilitate the emergence of students' communication rationality towards salvation - Axial independence - Emphasis on freedom
Principles of Education	- Principle of Justice and Social Equality - principle of freedom in expressing opinions and ideas - Principle of Growth and Critical Thinking - principle of enhancing the intercultural look - principle of selection - The mode of communicating rationality
Educational methods	- method of strengthening critical thinking and attention to social issues - method of developing social skills necessary for dialogue and the right choice

The main components of Habermas's theory of education: 1. Education: In educational settings, freedom and liberty are exercised, ability to criticize, and the ability to defend their rights and beliefs. In the educational environment, freedom and liberation, the ability to criticize and defend the rights and beliefs be practiced. Educational environments help student's freedom with providing conditions in which students have the opportunity to comment and make appropriate criticisms and suggestions in different ways. It is necessary for students to criticize and challenge the new methods in an active way (Mohammadi, 2014).

School: The educational environment and school should be accompanied with an agreement and interaction between mentality, respect and mutual trust. Based on the ethics of Habermas' discussion, assume that "no law is imposed, unless all the people involved in the discussion accept it in the same way. With this in mind, the provision of rules and regulations by bureaucrats or administrators and teachers is prohibited, and all current school regulations should be designed through a dialogue process similar to the ideal state of expression, and after the approval, understanding and agreement of the learners will be executed (Nowruzi, 2009).

Teaching and classroom space: According to Habermas, the classroom should be a set of questions and answers. As the teacher asks the students, they should allow the students to ask either of them or each other. Students talk to each other and respond to or accept the opposing views by pointing out the reason and the rationale.

Teacher: Among other duties of the teacher is the choice of proper topics for discussion. Whenever the discussion reaches places that only lead to energy waste and students are mentally unprepared to participate in the discussion, the teacher should indirectly focus on the topic that are more important to the discussion. The teacher selects among students the issues to choose from which the vast majority of students consider it to be their issue (Mohammadi, 2014).

Student: The learner should be trained in a way, or that kind of ability is developed in him or her that can eliminate self-deterministic computing for achieving success and replace collective consensus and compromise with self-confidence.

**Table 4.** Main Components of Habermas Education

Educational components	Characteristics and functions
Education	Liberation developing freedom behaviors Axial independence
Teacher	Facilitating the creation of knowledge Helping students to better understand the argument and make it correct Factor for informing the liberation



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School	Democratic space without violence School as the public sphere and the world of living An arguable space for an agreement between minds
Teaching	Class is an ideal condition of expression Teaching is based on communication space Focus on a variety of narratives and traditions in teaching
Student	Communication agent Free agent and actor Reviver of Life world

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What are the characteristics of a good curriculum from the point of view of critical theorists of education? Efforts to achieve real school reforms that empower teachers to exercise power over education. To engage in critical dialogue with students on economic, political and cultural issues. Considering the cultural diversity of students

Critical theorists have pointed out the role of the teacher: To teachers, the power of decision-making beyond the teaching and learning process has been given. Teachers will have common research to re-conceptualization of curriculum and teaching. Teachers should study the cultural differences of their community. Teachers should have a critical dialogue with their students about the fundamental and social realities. Teachers have the responsibility to effectively address schools' issues and problems, such as illiteracy, and so on.

### 3. Discussion

The educational theory based on critical theory, with the link between educational systems and social structure, seeks to challenge the dependencies in the system of domination through critical education. Education and educational institutions are transformative factors of social and political affiliation. Positive Features of critical view of education is mixing of knowledge and action that can create new knowledge. Awareness of disadvantaged and oppressed and knowing important their needs in curricula are from other critical positive points of view. The first attempt of critical theorists is to direct the educational system to the interests of those who have not previously had a place in education, especially in capitalist societies. Critical theorists link education to the real life of students, which ultimately leads to the participation of learners in learning and more education's usefulness.

According to the findings of the research, in the critical education and the answers to the research questions, a general philosophical theory of education could be found. A person was a humanist thinker who paid special attention to mankind, his desires and needs, and believed that man should be active, not passive, so that he could interfere in his personal and social life and made his own destiny the way he wanted it. They considered the school as a completely political place where students prepared themselves to face the political and social problems they confronted in the future. Students, in accordance with their needs and interests, determined the content of the curriculum with the help of the teacher and according to the specific characteristics of each region, and evaluated the process of development and satisfaction from the educational process.

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