

Paulo Reglus Neves Freire

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October 5, 2025

RECOMMENDED CITATION

mohammad looti (2025). *Paulo Reglus Neves Freire*. PSYCHOLOGICAL SCALES.
Retrieved from <https://scales.arabpsychology.com/?p=33715>

Paulo Reglus Neves Freire (1921-1997) was a Brazilian philosopher and educator who is known for his "Pedagogy of the Oppressed," one of the foundations of the critical pedagogy movement which aims to emancipate the oppressed. He is one of the 20th century's most influential philosophers on education with his goal to eliminate illiteracy among previously colonized nations. For instance, the first newspaper in Brazil was only published in 1808 when comparatively few colonials during those times could read or write.

Freire's motherland was colonized by Portugal from 1500 to 1822. Many of the indigenous Brazilians died due to harsh labor and illness. Brazil became Portugal's commercial enterprise; it was mainly for the production of sugar which competed with other European countries. Due to the lack of labor force, the Portuguese bought African slaves which led to the increase of Brazilians with African descent.

After Brazil's independence from Portugal, the citizens went through severe economic crises. In fact, Freire's father died due to the effects of the depression. In order to have something to eat, many Brazilians sold their family members and even themselves into slavery. As a young boy, Freire was forced to steal food and he stopped going to school because he had to work to help his family. He then managed to resume his education and even studied law.

Freire closely worked with parents and teachers in helping them to practice more tolerant ways in schools and homes. For him, education was a powerful medium in empowering the marginalized and in advocating social, economic, and political awareness. He also researched adult education, oppressed communities, cooperative decision-making, political responsibility, and social participation.

One of Freire's quotes is "The teacher is of course an artist, but being an artist does not mean that he or she can make the profile, can shape the students. What the educator does in teaching is to make it possible for the students to become themselves."