# Critical (Anti-Western) Pedagogy Primer

Critical pedagogy is an educational approach originally developed by Brazilian Marxist educator Paulo Freire. This style of education contrasts sharply with our conventional understanding of education (refer to the infographic at the end of this paper). Instead of focusing on imparting essential subject knowledge and preparing students for their future, critical pedagogy encourages students to adopt a pessimistic view of society and to challenge the values, norms, and culture that shape it. Critical pedagogy is rooted in Critical Theory, emphasises themes of power and oppression, and divides people by social categories such as class, race, and gender. The primary aim of this educational framework is to fundamentally alter society by encouraging students to participate in activism.

For more details on critical pedagogy, see the following resources:

- Logan Lancing - ItsNotInSchools.com
- The New Discourses website has a wealth of information on critical pedagogy, as well as their YouTube series' on Paulo Freire, the Marxification of education and How Education Turned Critical
- The Natural Women's Council - Ireland's Woke Education , The Manipulative Agenda Behind Irish Education , Education for Social Justice , UNESCO Indoctrination Comes to Ireland - Corrupting the Primary Curriculum with Critical Marxism

## Critical educational approaches are not evidence-based:

Evidence-based education relies on methods and practices that produce measurable and replicable outcomes for students. In contrast, the success in critical pedagogy is evaluated through subjective assessments (e.g., indicators of how students or teachers "feel" about their teaching/learning experience) rather than through standardised metrics such as proficiency rates or test scores. This makes it difficult to assess whether these methods are effective in helping students reach important educational outcomes. There is little empirical data supporting the use of critical approaches in the classroom.

## Critical Pedagogy is Ideological Grooming:

The aim of this form of education is to develop students "critical consciousness," which involves shaping their worldview, beliefs, and values. Students are expected to embrace a Marxist / Critical Social Justice viewpoint through this process. They are expected to adopt certain predetermined positions on important and complex social and political issues. For example, certain groups must be viewed as inherently oppressed and disadvantaged (e.g., gender queer individuals, racial or ethnic minorities, migrants), while other groups are characterised as inherently privileged and oppressive (e.g., heterosexual men and women, Irish or white Western populations).

## Critical educational approaches are openly and repeatedly referred to in the new curriculum:

There is clear indication that the new curriculum is based on radical educational frameworks. References to critical pedagogy and associated teaching approaches can be found within subject specifications and background materials for Aistear, the Primary Curriculum Framework and subject areas (Social and Environmental Education, Wellbeing), Junior Cycle Wellbeing and CSPE, and Senior Cycle subject areas (English, Climate Action

and Sustainable Development, Geography, History). The shift towards critical approaches is also reflected in NCCA documents such as their 2022-2025 Strategic Plan and guidelines for schools, including the Guidelines on Intercultural Education.

## Critical Pedagogy specifically aims to radicalise students into political activism:

Advocates of this teaching style believe education *must* be political and that teachers cannot remain politically neutral. Critical education is a deliberate effort to foster social change and promote a far-left political agenda by grooming the youth into adopting specific ideological beliefs and engaging in activism.

Most parents do not send their children to school to learn to become activists. Parents were never openly informed by the NCCA that the new curriculum fundamentally changes the traditional goals and purposes of their children's education.

## Critical Pedagogy is being used to promote anti-Western sentiment:

Critical Race Theory for example totally ignores the systemic racism that exists in countries such as India, China and many African and Middle-Eastern countries. The Critical lens points in one direction only, to the West.

The goal of Critical Theory is revolutionary, i.e. it doesn't with to improve the current society, it's goal is to tear it down and start again. This anti-Western sentiment is fostered by Marxist and Islamist activists, and Critical Pedagogy is used to radicalize Western children and youth into feeling their heritage, their religion, their morality and their nation state are inherently oppressive, and need to be "transformed". Replace the word "Critical" with "Anti-Western" and that will give you a clear indication of what it is all about.

## Spotting Critical Educational Approaches:

There are many different terms that are used to refer to "Critical" methods and approaches to education. To help parents identify these, below is a list of terms to look out for. These are all approaches or methods which derive from, or were greatly influenced by, critical pedagogy and/or critical theory. Some of these may sound nice at first glance, but keep in mind that the main aim of these approaches is not to educate your children, but rather, to radicalise them into far-left political activism.

## Commonly Used Terms Associated with Critical Methods of Education

- Transformative learning; Education for transformation
- Democratic education; Human rights and citizenship education
- Problem-posing activities/education
- Critical inquiry; critically-engaged approach
- Critical thinking (when you scratch the surface you can often discover it's not the form of critical thinking you're familiar with. You'll see references to power dynamics or power relations, source of oppression etc.)
- Social Justice education; Education for Social Justice (ESJ)
- Decolonial pedagogy; Decolonise the curriculum
- Multicultural/Intercultural education

- Inclusive education; DEI
- Global Citizenship; Development education
- Education for sustainable development
- Anti-racism approaches; anti-bias approaches
- Culturally responsive/sustaining/relevant pedagogy/teaching
- Critical Literacy; Queer Literacy
- Queer pedagogy / Queering education
- Dialogical education/learning; Dialogue + Reflection & Action
- Education for liberation; Liberatory education
- Equitable learning
- Critical constructivism
- Co-construction of knowledge
- Centering the voices of minorities
- Interrogate, problematise, deconstruct
- Queering the curriculum

## Case Study – Critical Pedagogy in Action

For this case study we will use the book "**Teaching for Social Justice and Sustainable Development Across the Primary Curriculum"** as an example. This book was edited by Dr Anne Marie Kavanagh, Prof Fionnuala Waldron and Dr Benjamin Mallon with contributions from a further 19 DCU academics. The book was launched in 2021 by the then Minister of Education, Norma Foley, and President Michael D Higgins.

**Table of Contents**

Chapter 1: Teaching for Social Justice and Sustainable Development Across the Primary Curriculum: An Introduction
Section 1: Critical Enquiry: A Pedagogy for Social Justice and Sustainability
Chapter 2: Critical Historical Enquiry for a Socially Just and Sustainable World
Chapter 3: Geography Education for Social and Environmental Justice
Chapter 4: Education About, Through and For the Environment: A Scientific Inquiry Approach
Chapter 5: Critical Thinking, Critical Pedagogy and Climate Change Education
Section 2: Creative and Relational Approaches to Social Justice & Sustainability Education
Chapter 6: Integrating Visual Arts with Education for Social Justice and Sustainability
Chapter 7: Connecting Social Justice Education with the Teaching of Music
Chapter 8: Drama, Social Justice Education and Education for Sustainable Development: Theory in Action
Section 3: Challenging Dominant Frameworks through Critical Discourse
Chapter 9: Global Citizenship Education: Interconnection, Social Justice and Sustainability
Chapter 10: Embedding Social Justice and Sustainability Perspectives in Language Teaching
Chapter 11: Critical Literacy: Challenging Dominant Discourses
Chapter 12: Meaningful Mathematics: Applying Mathematical Thinking to Issues of Justice and Sustainability
Chapter 13: Beginning Conversations about Difference, Race, Ethnicity and Racism through Ethical Education
Section 4: Social Education in Real Contexts
Chapter 14: A Whole School Approach to Social Justice Education
Chapter 15: Transforming Pedagogy for a Socially Just and Sustainable World

If you followed our guidance from earlier, it should be pretty clear that this book is both promoting a Critical Pedagogical approach to the teaching of every subject, and is also integrating elements of social justice, climate change, and sustainability into every subject – a technique known as the "whole school approach".

The book can be accessed online for free at:
https://ebrary.net/174167/education/teaching_for_social_justice_and_sustainable_development_across_the_primary_curriculumacting_for_a_b

The first two paragraphs of Chapter 1 set the tone for what is to follow:
*"While the mobilisation of youth-led movements is not a new phenomenon, we are currently experiencing a resurgence in young people agitating for social change…."*

*"The motivations for these protest movements are grounded in social or environmental injustices, highlighting the importance of exploring social and environmental justice issues in contemporary classrooms."*

*"…children and young people are not powerless witnesses. Rather, they are active agents of social change, capable of exercising agency and envisioning more socially and environmentally just futures."*

*"Grounded in theories of social justice education (SJE) and education for sustainable development (ESD) and acknowledging the transformative power of human agency, this book provides guidance for teachers and student teachers on how to enable children to connect with, and engage critically and meaningfully with, the key social and environmental issues of our time."*

Page 2:
*"The idea that education provides a neutral or disinterested space in which children develop skills, gain knowledge and learn to be creative, productive members of society is challenged by theorists that highlight the extent to which schooling acts to reproduce existing unequal relations"*
This statement would echo the sentiments of Critical Educator Paulo Freire that education is always political. And of course it is, if you live in a Totalitarian state that wishes to indoctrinate it's children and youth. This is setting the scene for politicising the curriculum with woke left activism.

*"More recently, radical educational philosophies of social transformation, such as those associated with the work of Paulo Freire, have revolutionised how we think about the nature of education and its role in challenging inequality."*

***"This publication is premised on the view that education is inherently political and that choosing not to engage with these issues is still a choice; it is not neutrality."***
*(emphasis added).*

Here the authors are telling us the approach that will be taken, and that they would like to see implemented in the text books and class room practices.

The next section *"**Systemic, institutional and individual oppression**"* brings in identity politics and discussions of inequality and oppression.

Later in the section, ***"What is social justice education (SJE)?",*** we have:

*"Social literacy is concerned with the relational, content mastery, critical analysis and personal reflection aspects of SJE (Hackman, 2005). It involves children and young people learning how to recognise, analyse and resist institutionalised forms of oppression, the "isms" (e.g. racism, classism, sexism, heterosexism, ableism) both in their own lives and in their classmates' and communities' lives"*

This is education for Marxist activism, seeing everything through the Critical Marxist Lens of oppressor and oppressed, and with predetermined Critical Social Justice and Climate Change/Sustainable Development viewpoints, that will be imposed on young learners. This is not education for learning, scholarship and the development rational critical thinking.

The new Aistear and Primary School curriculum are the last links in the chain of Irish Education to adopt this new "transformative" approach to Irish education. It will take time for teachers to be suitably "trained" to deliver this type of content but the process has started, and we can see the impact of the above approach in Junior Cycle text books such as "Louder than Words" (English) and "Make a Difference" (CSPE).

The detrimental effects of political radicalisation to the individual and society are many, as is the opportunity cost, so it is reprehensible on the part of the academic institutions such as the National Curriculum body (NCCA), the Dept. of Education, and the Irish Government to be foisting this on Ireland's children based on input from the United Nations, UNESCO, NGOs and radical academics.

Two comparison tables follow which should help the reader understand:

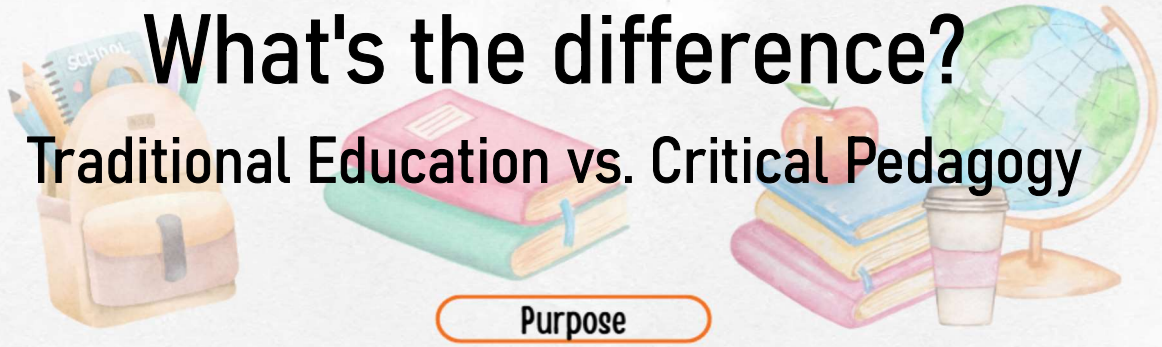
1. The difference between traditional education and "critical" education based on Critical Pedagogy.

2. The difference between Traditional / Liberal Social Justice and Critical Social Justice.

A detailed comparison of Catholic Social Teaching versus Critical Social Justice is available here: https://www.naturalwomenscouncil.ie/resources

# What's the difference?

## Traditional Education vs. Critical Pedagogy



### Purpose

To impart core knowledge to students, helping them develop key skills, and shape their character. Fosters a shared national, cultural, or religious identity in students.

To get students to question and dismantle current societal norms, structures, and values. To help students develop "critical consciousness" and promote "social justice."

### Methods

Teachers deliver information through lectures and instruction. Memorisation and factual recall are important to build a strong knowledge base. Typically uses standardised textbooks and curricula.

Student-directed and relies on the "co-construction" of knowledge. Emphasis placed on questioning/analysing certain social issues through a Marxist analytical lens.

### Aims

To foster intellectual growth, critical thinking, and proficiency in core subjects. To prepare students to become productive members of society and pursue higher education or careers.

To produce students that see the current social order as oppressive and to motivate them to take action to revolutionise or fundamentally transform society (toward a socialist ideal).

### Assessment

Academic performance, mastery of skills and factual knowledge, ability to follow instructions. Typically standardised assessments.

Whether students hold certain socio-political views and engage in activism. Projects and self-assessment. Opposed to standardised assessment.

### View of Knowledge

Knowledge is objective and universal. Emphasises empirical methods for testing and validating knowledge.

Knowledge is socially constructed and determined by so-called "privileged" social groups. Does not believe in objective or universal truths.

### Curriculum

Core subject knowledge (maths, reading, science, history etc). Structured and standardised. Concerned with equality of opportunity and access to education.

Focuses on themes of power, oppression, and social justice. Content is politically charged. Concerned with equality of outcomes and redistributive measures.

# TRADITIONAL VS. CRITICAL SOCIAL JUSTICE

| | Traditional / Liberal Social Justice | VS | Critical Social Justice |
|---|---|---|---|
| **Roots / Origins** | Long-standing concept of fairness in society, **focused on equal rights**, opportunities, and treatment under the law, while promoting the common good.<br>Aligns with classical liberal, Enlightenment, and religious traditions. Individual-focused and **reform-oriented.** | | Recent theoretical framework (late 20th century) based on **Marxist Critical Theory** (Frankfurt School) and **Postmodernism** (Foucault, Derrida etc.) applied to race, gender, sexuality, class and ability.<br>Treats traditional liberalism as **insufficient Or complicit in oppression.** |
| **Key Elements** | • **Equal rights and opportunities** for individuals, procedural fairness, merit, and legal equality, regardless of identity.<br>• **Distributive justice** in a broad sense—fair allocation of benefits & burdens rooted in individual responsibility, charity & reforms.<br>• **Addressing poverty**, exploitation, or discrimination through reforms (civil rights, welfare, education, or labour protections) **preserving individual agency and universal human dignity**.<br>• **Gender** is tied to **biological sex.** | | • **Society is stratified by identity groups**, inequality embedded in "structures" of power, privilege, and oppression (systemic racism, heteronormativity etc.).<br>• **Justice** requires **dismantling systems** by deconstructing norms, language, institutions, and knowledge itself.<br>• **Equity** (equal outcomes by group); "**lived experience**" and knowledge from marginalised perspectives, take precedence over objective evidence or universal reason.<br>• **Activism** aims to **transform culture**, education, policy, and discourse (intersectionality, anti-racism or DEI).<br>• **Gender is socially constructed**, performative, may change over time, and is independent of biological sex. |
| **Unit of analysis** | **Centres Individuals**<br>Individualistic, focused on Universal rights, colour-blind and merit-based treatment. | | **Centres Identity Groups**<br>Collectivist, rooted in oppressor vs. oppressed binaries based on race, gender, etc., with power dynamics as the lens. |
| **View of society and inequality** | **Sees problems as fixable** through better laws, education, or individual virtue within existing institutions (**reformist,** often optimistic about liberalism) | | **Sees inequality as inherent and systemic** in **Western**/liberal structures, requiring ongoing disruption and **social transformation** (revolutionary or deconstructive)<br>Perpetual struggle |
| **Epistemology and truth** | Focused on **reason, evidence, science, rational critical thinking** and shared objectivity. | | Prioritizes subjective **"lived experience", moral relativism**, and critiques of "dominant" knowledge as power plays. |
| **Solutions** | • **Emphasises equality of opportunity**<br>• **Charity**, legal equality<br>• **Personal agency / responsibility.** | | • **Prioritizes equity of outcomes**<br>• **Group-based remedies** (e.g., affirmative action framed as reparations, two tier policing)<br>• **Perpetual struggle** against sources of oppression<br>• **Narrative control** and **institutional overhaul.** |
| **Tone and scope** | Often tied to **religious/moral virtue or liberal humanism.**<br>Applied equally across the globe. | | Explicitly **theoretical/academic**, conflict orientated, described as **"illiberal"** for its focus on group guilt or innocence and **resistance to dissent**.<br>**Critical lens is focused on Western Society** – anti-Whiteness, anti-Eurocentrism. |