

Print and read. Answer the questions: <https://goo.gl/forms/QJFndZQAwRkn3Le82> Bring the book next class.

A careful analysis of the traditional teacher-student relationship reveals its fundamentally narrative character. This relationship involves a narrating Subject (the teacher) and silent, patient, listening Objects (the students). No matter what gets taught, it become lifeless and petrified through the process of being narrated. Education is suffering from narration sickness.

The teacher talks about reality as if it were motionless, static, and predictable and students are simply supposed to fit into it as it is. Or else he explains a topic in a way that is completely foreign to the experience of the students. His task is to “fill” the students with the contents of his narration — contents which are detached from reality, disconnected from the experience that gave birth to them and could give them significance. Words are emptied of their concreteness and become a hollow and alienated.

The defining characteristic of this narrative education, then, is the sound of the words, not their transforming power. “Four times four is sixteen; the capital of USA is Washington DC.” The student records, memorizes, and repeats these phrases without perceiving what four times four really means, or realizing the true significance of “capital” in the statement.

Narration (with the teacher as narrator) leads the students to memorize mechanically the narrated content. Worse yet, it turns them into “containers,” into “receptacles” to be “filled” by the teacher. The more completely she fills the receptacles, the better a teacher she is. The more meekly the receptacles permit themselves to be filled, the better students they are.

Education thus becomes an act of depositing, in which the students are the depositories and the teacher is the depositor. Instead of communicating, the teacher issues deposit slips and makes deposits which the students patiently receive, memorize, and repeat. This is the “banking” concept of education, in which the scope of action allowed to the students extends only as far as receiving, filing, and storing the deposits.

Yes, it is true that students do more than deposit; they can also become collectors or cataloguers of the things they store. But what ends up happening is that the people themselves are those who are filed away through the lack of creativity, transformation, and knowledge in this misguided system.

For apart from inquiry, apart from praxis, individuals cannot be truly human. Knowledge emerges only through invention and re-invention, through the restless, impatient, continuing, hopeful inquiry human beings pursue in the world, with the world, and with each other. In the end, a student who only learns to store information and creates nothing with it has unlearned to be human.

In the banking concept of education, knowledge is a gift granted by those who consider themselves knowledgeable upon those whom they consider to know nothing. This system only works so long as the students project ignorance and the teacher is the one that has the knowledge. However, projecting an absolute ignorance onto students gets rid of real education and knowledge (as processes of inquiry). In creating a structure where the teacher knows all and the students do not, he teacher presents himself to his students as their necessary opposite; by considering their ignorance absolute, he justifies his own existence.