



himaya , in collaboration with **Moms & To Be** , aims to break the silence on children abuse which is still considered a taboo. This section is to help you recognize different forms of abuse and stop them from happening to ensure the safety and welfare of a child.

ADVOCATING FOR ACTIVE EDUCATION



Have you ever wondered how the current school system came to be shaped the way it is? What is the history behind the current educational system and is it best designed to suit our natural and social needs?

Schools are historically a recent development, and our culture has significantly evolved from the hunter-gatherer culture to what it is now. For thousand of years, play and exploration were essential tools for children to become adults. To survive in such times it was imperative to gather information regarding the environment around you, and learn skills to craft weapons and hunt, and within this hunter-gatherer culture, it was hard to distinguish between work and play time.

When agriculture thrived in society, status differences became more apparent. Those who had land had a higher status than those who did not, which brings us to the medieval societies where lands were owned by Kings and lords while the rest of the people were merely servants that helped sustain these lands. Play and exploration were now obstacles for children to become good workers and were therefore suppressed, children were taught obedience and submission to authority instead, a trait that can still be found in schools till this day. With the rise of industrial societies, new

qualifications needed to be established; students had to learn how to read and write, punctuality, how to follow directions and how to accomplish basic and boring tasks for long hours. The governments saw schools as a place where children could be made into obedient citizens and soldiers. School became a duty to children as work is for adults.

It is in the 19th and 20th centuries that schools started to resemble those of today. School programs became diversified and school days became longer, on one hand because of the great advances in knowledge and on the other, it was a productive way to keep children supervised while the parents were working.

Power relations were essential to maintain control and order. In schools the power fell into the hands of the teachers and principals, and power was often imposed physically to maintain the children's obedience. Disciplinary methods did become less violent but the structure of what a school is and how it should shape young minds remained the same.

In 1970, Paolo Freire, who went on to win the UNESCO Prize for Peace Education, published his first book "Pedagogy of the oppressed".



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He criticized the educational system that would not give children a choice on what they are being taught. Critical thinking and creativity were two things the educational system had no intention of developing, and they would rather force their own ideas into a child's mind, through their teaching methods. A child's potential for productivity and happiness was being oppressed.

Paolo Freire wanted to replace this traditional form of education with a form of education that would encourage children to find solutions to problems. The objective of problem-posing education is to get students to think for themselves, discover, acquire and develop knowledge by being actively engaged. The student-teacher relationship would change into a partnership rather than a power relation. Through dialogue and active research, the child would reach conclusions to solve problems. The student and the teacher would learn from one another and in the process teach the rest of the class as well.

Freire's point of view lead to changes in education theory and methods. One of these changes is to include playtime as an educational tool, and it has been shown through studies that this change is a success. The problem remains that to be able to establish such an approach, the educational system must go through a complete change, even for the design of classrooms, which makes it a very expensive project. In the adult world, play education and active engagement methods showed a lot of success, and the staff's skills are developed faster.

Freire's work also empowers children by teaching life skills such as decision making, problem solving, creative thinking, critical thinking, effective communication, interpersonal relationship skills, self-awareness, empathy and coping with emotions and stress, which are considered life skills by the World Health Organization. Many employers believe that communication is the most required

skill for qualifying for a job. Acquiring these skills would make us more competent workers and happier people. Some also encourage including skills that are essential for adults such as cooking, cleaning and managing finances. While those skills are usually learnt at home, children today are spending more time learning at school than at home, with school's long hours and the parents' working hours. Also, people today are reliant on caretakers and nannies, which also does not expose the child to enough tasks for him to learn such skills. Some countries such as Japan give children the responsibility of cleaning their own school. Life skills programs have had great success in the NGO world. Children who were victim of abuse or war are being taught life skills programs since their family life and daily routine are not stable. It is clear to see though that most of today's youngsters would benefit from such skills.

Why these changes haven't been established yet

is still a critical question. Children are naturally inclined to play and explore, and therefore learn. Why are we oppressing their curiosity and love of learning? One answer could be economical since education programs are not well funded. Another could be that schools are still a tool to create working citizens who all think the same with no chance of challenging the way the system works. A critical thinking and active young generation has always been what shakes the status quo. We all have a duty to demand more from our schools and government, in the interest of our children and in the hope of a better tomorrow.



Michel Maragel
Clinical Psychologist
www.himaya.org