



## Praxis in the Digital Age: What Would Paulo Freire Think of Digital Learning?

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### Abstract

*The increased use of digital learning, in its hybrid or distance learning forms, is often considered as challenging, and even damaging, by adult educators and university lecturers committed to critical pedagogy that considers democratic dialogue and social presence as essential to the learning process. Their greatest inspiration is often Paulo Freire who developed his philosophy of education in the pre-digital era. Freire, however, did urge educators to use technology in their projects. He did this both through his writings and as Secretary of Education of São Paulo, Brazil. When using technology, Freire insisted, educators must nonetheless be critically aware of its political implications. The use of technology in education is not a politically neutral process and can work in favour or against the domestication of learners. Online projects like MOOCs who use 'banking' approaches of expert-centred knowledge delivery are not conducive to liberatory practices. This paper will therefore first look at Freire's philosophy, including his conceptualization of praxis, that is 'reflection and action directed at the structures to be transformed', and its relevance to networked digital learning. The author will then attempt to construct a critical pedagogy of e-learning by mediating between Freire's concepts and a modern theoretical framework that was developed in the context of web-based learning, namely the Community of Inquiry (CoI) model.*

*Keywords: Paulo Freire, critical pedagogy, online learning, technology, praxis.*