

Paolo Freire and Grundtvig.

Possible *similarities*:

1. Common *enemies*: Bourgeois “modernity”, dualism, Cartesianism, mechanical philosophy, certain conceptions of “objective” science, forms of essentialism and static thinking, reductionism, deterministic philosophy, atomism, sorts of Empiricism, Positivism, individualism, Kantianism (Freire: “colonial” ideology, Grundtvig: “Roman spirit”).
2. Politics and *purpose* of education: Education (learning) should develop man, gradually change his social identity (actions, roles in community, political thinking, feelings, attitudes, self image, conception of the community) so that he can fight “inhuman” values and “oppressors” and support “human” values and social systems. Educating should make the students “stronger” and “better” also in a moral sense. Educating is a political action. You either support the “oppressors” or the “oppressed”. For the time being, this world is also necessarily a matter of fighting the enemy. In this way loving always implies hating. You cannot be “neutral” or “objective” as an educator or as a human being. Every sort of education (and learning and knowledge) is necessarily “partial” and should be “partial”. Educating is trying to change the world.
3. Theory of *learning*: Learning = being active = doing = relating in a specific way = acting in a community = acquiring a new identity, new roles, functions, and “virtues” or skills. Learning is much more than receiving “information”. A student is not a passive object. Man is a fundamentally *acting* and *active* being – always an “agent” doing things and taking part in communal activities. “Instruction” is only a small part of “learning”. True learning is not the same as passive assimilation or internalization. All members of a community are in various degrees active knowledge producers. Learning is not something isolated or separate but basically an aspect of acting, living and participating in a true community (like a child maturing within the community of the family and expanding and improving in its activities, Vygotski: from partial or limited or peripheral participation to full participation, greater knowledgeability means wider and more differentiated participation). Fundamentally, all the different activities of a true community are one big school. When the community member moves from new-comer to old-timer (becomes more knowing) he advances in the degree of access to resources and participation in the activities (practice) of the community. The “curriculum” of a learning community of practice cannot be specified abstractly, theoretically or in beforehand. This curriculum evolves with the development of the community or school and nobody knows how far this development can go. “Knowledge” reveals itself in action. To know something is to do it. If you do something you prove that you have knowledge. Knowledge is something “empirical” that can be seen by others. Knowledge is not really “internal” (only in the mind) but a way of acting and a way of relating to other members of my community (and to those outside our community, outside the limit). Our knowledge and truth will always be denied and attacked by our opponents. There is no such thing as “neutral” or “objective” (incontextual) knowledge. Among other things we use our knowledge to fight our opponents - and they do the same thing with us. Learning is “trial and error” and trying to learn is experimenting. If it works it’s probably true and what actually works and what is true time will show. True knowledge always has a clear use value and consequently everybody is motivated to try to find true knowledge.

True learning does not need any tests of the students or learners. The value of true knowledge proves itself in real life. You learn to “cope” with the real world. Grundtvig and Freire underline the importance of real experience in the real world. Learning is basically problem-solving. The concept of practice. Philosophical Pragmatism (Peirce, Dewey, Whitehead, Mead, Hegel, Marx, Nietzsche). Both Freire and Grundtvig had a much wider and a very different conception of what is “learning” or “education” – than usual in Western education or learning theory.

4. Theory of “**knowledge**”: Knowledge is not a thing or package which can be moved from the head of the educator to the heads of the learners. The educator and the students are participants who do different actions in a community (like master and apprentices) but nobody is a passive receiver. Both educator and educated are transformed in a collective learning process. Knowledge is produced collectively by a community and this knowledge production is one of the main functions of a community. The community produces, reproduces and transforms itself in this process of learning (development, growth). Every participant learns and contributes in different ways. If you become a more knowing practitioner you contribute more to your community and attain a greater responsibility. Growing “knowledge” is and implies growing “morality, goodness, harmony, and spirituality” (Kincheloe) individually and collectively. Knowledge is embedded, embodied, contextual, situated, and distributed in the community. It is not just a thing inside the head of an individual. Knowledge is a quality (property) of a community and manifests a certain degree of the evolution or maturity of this community. Knowledge is collective and growing knowledge strengthens the community (makes it a more coherent organism). The so-called “self” is a structure of knowledge evolving in a process as an integral part of a community. Your knowledge is also my knowledge - if we are members of the same community. Knowing is a way of being and being is always a being in a community. Knowledge cannot be owned (as a thing or private property) but is a way of relating and acting in a definite social context. Being a “knowing” person is to know what is “appropriate” or “effective” or “reasonable” in these specific social circumstances. “Knowing that” is basically “knowing how”. Knowledge is never abstract or “eternal” or universal but always concrete, definite, defined by and dependant on values, time and place, and therefore contextual. The meaning of “reason” is not universal or objective or “value free”. The “reason” (or science) of the “oppressors” is quite different from our “reason” (or science). Compare different theories in cognitive science of “knowledge” (developing new “schemata”). (Compare Freire: learning to play football - or learning how to manage everyday life after a heart attack or accident).
5. Theory of “**community**”: The so-called individual is an illusion. I am defined by my community. Outside my community I am not “myself”. All participants of a community have the same spirit and they agree about direction, values, goal and purpose. We cannot have any real dialogue with people outside the frontiers of our community (e. g. the “oppressors”) if they attack our values. The production of knowing individuals and the production, reproduction, growth, and transformation of their community are two aspects of the same thing. The community or practice is a sort of supra-person. A community has its own history, trajectory and biography. Systems theory. Cp. The principle of “the whole is more than the sum of the parts” and theories of “emergence”.
6. **Christianity**: Both are convinced Christian thinkers and both want to formulate a distinct political attitude with a basis in their personal Christian faith.

Differences:

1. Grundtvig probably pays much more attention to learning as a process of *master* (exemplar, ideal) and apprentice or disciple or student (the idea of being loyal, following and imitating). The “son” should grow up to become like his “father”. A theory of a centripetal movement (new-comers, old-timers, mastery, excellence).
2. Grundtvig probably pays much more attention to the concept of *community* and the common spirit of the organism and the participants as limbs of the whole body.