

REVOLUTIONIZING PEDAGOGY

MARXISM AND EDUCATION

This series assumes the ongoing relevance of Marx's contributions to critical social analysis and aims to encourage continuation of the development of the legacy of Marxist traditions in and for education. The remit for the substantive focus of scholarship and analysis appearing in the series extends from the global to the local in relation to dynamics of capitalism and encompasses historical and contemporary developments in political economy of education as well as forms of critique and resistances to capitalist social relations. The series announces a new beginning and proceeds in a spirit of openness and dialogue within and between Marxism and education, and between Marxism and its various critics. The essential feature of the work of the series is that Marxism and Marxist frameworks are to be taken seriously, not as formulaic knowledge and unassailable methodology but critically as inspirational resources for renewal of research and understanding, and as support for action in and upon structures and processes of education and their relations to society. The series is dedicated to the realization of positive human potentialities as education and, thus, with Marx, to our education as educators.

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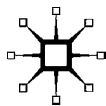
Revolutionizing Pedagogy: Education for Social Justice within and beyond Global Neoliberalism

Edited by Sheila Macrine, Peter McLaren, and Dave Hill

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REVOLUTIONIZING PEDAGOGY

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*This book is dedicated to Nicholas, Nathalia, and Leena, also
Gavin, Catherine, and John Andrew*

*Also, in memory and remembrance of our colleague and comrade Joe
L. Kincheloe December 14, 1950–December 19, 2008.*

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Contents

Foreword ix
by Martha Montero-Sieburth

Acknowledgments xvii

Introduction 1
Sheila Macrine, Peter McLaren, and Dave Hill

Part I Frameworks for Organizing Pedagogy

1 A Wolf in Sheep's Clothing or a Sheep in Wolf's
Clothing: Resistance to Educational Reform in Chile 17
Jill Pinkney Pastrana

2 Education Rights, Education Policies, and
Inequality in South Africa 41
Salim Vally, Enver Motala, and Brian Ramadiro

3 Taking on the Corporatization of Public Education:
What Teacher Education Can Do 65
Pepi Leistyna

4 Revolutionary Critical Pedagogy: The Struggle
against the Oppression of Neoliberalism—A
Conversation with Peter McLaren 87
Sebastjan Leban and Peter McLaren

Part II Strategies for Practicing the Pedagogy of Critique

5 Class, Capital, and Education in this Neoliberal and
Neoconservative Period 119
Dave Hill

6	Defending Dialectics: Rethinking the Neo-Marxist Turn in Critical Education Theory <i>Wayne Au</i>	145
7	Hijacking Public Schooling: The Epicenter of Neo-Radical Centrism <i>João M. Paraskeva</i>	167
8	Critical Teaching as the Counter-Hegemony to Neoliberalism <i>John Smyth</i>	187
9	Empowering Education: Freire, Cynicism, and a Pedagogy of Action <i>Richard Van Heertum</i>	211
10	Teachers Matter . . . Don't They? Placing Teachers and Their Work in the Global Knowledge Economy <i>Susan L. Robertson</i>	235
	Afterword: After Neoliberalism? Which Way Capitalism? <i>David Hursh</i>	257
	<i>List of Contributors</i>	261
	<i>Index</i>	265

Foreword

Martha Montero-Sieburth

In the midst of the current economic worldwide crisis, global neoliberalism¹ is at the center of the storm. At no other time have the effects of neoliberalism in terms of its intent in global market liberalism, deregulation, and free-trade policies been more poignantly felt. The economic failure of Wall Street and the banking system has brought home the fragility of the credit and mortgage lending systems not only in the United States and Europe, but throughout the industrialized countries of the world.² Loss of remittances and work opportunities has already begun having a ripple effect in receiving countries throughout Latin America.

The economic safeguards that were created from the 1970s onward in capitalistic societies through neoliberalism with the promise of de-emphasizing government intervention in the domestic economy while focusing on implementing free market methods, freeing business operations, establishing property rights, and inducing privatization have seriously been compromised. The assumption that the unrestricted flow of capital would lead to the production of the greatest social, political, and economic good in any given society is now seriously being questioned.³

Adopted by the World Trade Organization, the World Bank, and the International Monetary Fund and the Inter-American Development Bank, some critics say the philosophy of neoliberalism has been imposed top-down to gain the “competitive advantage” favored by the opening of markets through government institutions and corporations.⁴ This has led to accusations from some critics that instead of development being fostered through these organizations and institutions, the setting up of economic power and domination of developed to nondeveloped countries has been promoted (Martinez and Garcia, 1996).

Those supporting neoliberalism consider the flow of capital as necessary for developing market efficiency, producing higher economic

growth, and obtaining better returns on capital and investments—all processes that would eventually lead to development. Presumed was the idea that with such flows of capital resulting in efficiency, greater global stability would ensue, and more democratic forms of government and decision-making would develop. Yet from the current situation the world is in, even under the best of circumstances, the former outcomes have not realistically been achieved by many countries, and consequently the latter has not prevailed.

In this first decade of the twenty-first century, we have experienced instead extremely unstable global situations, with terrorism since September 11, 2001, becoming even more widespread. Train bombs exploded in Madrid on March 11, 2004, and in London in 2005. In September 2008, The ETA Basque separatist movement resumed bombings after having signed a peace ceasefire in 2006. The wars in Iraq and the incursions of Taliban fighters in Afghanistan have dramatically weakened the U.S. economy, and the continued saga between Israelis and Palestinians in the Middle East has diminished the possibility of sustaining bilateral peace agreements. Violence has become an accepted way of life and global destabilization is becoming more and more “normalized.”

Concurrently, we are experiencing changes in our habitats, with global warming affecting not only humans but flora and fauna as well. Attempts at developing more democratic forms of government and decision-making processes, even in countries such as Bolivia and Venezuela that have initiated bottom up socialistic governments, have met with resistance and become mired in political haranguing, with platforms of ill-directed decision-making and subversion supplanting democratic tendencies.

In such a milieu, the economic bubble of prosperity that would lead to a liberalizing democracy has burst wide open, and in its aftermath, residual fear and hesitation to act are replacing hope. While pension and retirement funds are being reduced, the fate of future schooling and the pedagogies and humanistic values that support education and social justice are in a state of suspended animation. Without doubt, they will be used as hostages in the economic decisions that are to come and will be placed under close scrutiny as the budgets for educational benefits, including those promised by No Child Left Behind, will be reduced by the diminishing returns of the dollar and other currencies. Even with the election of President Obama, discussions of budget allocations for education continue to be the fodder of speculation on websites and blogs as reductions are expected.

Fear has overtaken our trust and belief in human nature and in the ensuing months the gains made by educational programs and projects created to “equalize” the playing field between affluent and poor school districts and between professionally competent teachers who are “highly qualified” and those who are not, as well as curriculum programs such as special education and Title I reading programs, will run the risk of being reduced, cut, or eliminated.

The processes being produced with the expansion of globalization will have further repercussions, and, as Nina Glick Schiller and Peggy Levitt (2006) point out, will affect cities as contexts, homeland politics, and the flows of capital, media, objects, and ideas as part of such globality. Gleaned from this current crisis is the obvious cause and effect that markets have on human lives, but more significantly, the fragility and susceptibility that education has in relation to the whims of the free market and the influences of a neoliberal ideology. Having been introduced since its inception into many of the schooling programs and practices worldwide, neoliberalism and the influences of globalization have become the mainstay of many schooling outcomes. Carlos Torres (2002) points out that “education within the nation-state . . . [has] been shaped by the demands . . . to prepare labor for participation in the economy and to prepare citizens to participate in the polity” (p. 363). He sees the purpose of schooling to be one of making labor highly skilled and competitive and education to be focused on problem-solving issues. Moreover, education has, in his opinion, become directed toward a marketplace rather than toward human rights ideology, and in such a process the democratic notions of citizenship that include tolerance, conviviality, and respect for human rights become secondary (Torres, 2002).

We have witnessed its effects in different countries and contexts, with my own country of origin, Mexico, becoming the personification of neoliberal policies and practices.⁵ In some instances, issues of social justice have been sidestepped and ignored, as was the case in Chile, one of the most representative neoliberal success stories. In others they have been progressively infused with the idea that “what works” is what counts and that “best practices” are to be emulated worldwide, as in the case of the United States with the North American Free Trade Agreement and Britain. In other instances, issues of social justice have been commodified or, even worse, made redundant, as has been the case in Mexico. The introduction and development of the “maquiladoras,” or export assembly plants, as part of the inroads of globalization has in effect changed the nature of Mexican family structures, the immigration flow of many Mexicans, and education.

Reverberations of Paulo Freire's teachings seem appropriate at this juncture, both in terms of his message, but also in terms of the healing power brought by his message.⁶ In fact, as Peter McLaren (1999) has commented, Freire's critical pedagogy of possibilities serves to offer practical alternatives to the (neo)conservative and (neo)liberal discourses and practices. Of Freire's philosophy, several strands seem pertinent to the contextualization of this foreword: his use of language, notion of education, criticism, and historicity.

As we focus on the outcomes of education into the future, Freire's *Pedagogy of the Oppressed* (1974) early on depicted the influence of neoliberalism in education. The very issue of language containing structures of power from the landowner to the peasant is not that far fetched from our current discourses about corporate giants in relation to earners and taxpayers. Freire links education to human nature and moral order, making education an essential part of human life. In rereading Freire, Glass (2001) comments: "Language, culture, history and community are dependent on education, on freedom and the capacity to create forms ('ways') of life" (p. 17). Thus it is this triumvirate that is raised by Freire in his identifying voice and criticism. In a 1985 edited videotape Freire stated: "We should challenge the students concerning the right they have to have voice, the duty they have to be critical in having voice, and getting criticism by experiencing the voice. We cannot get the criticism without speaking." It is these three levels of understanding that remind us of what has been lost in our being seduced by a neoliberal stance that in fact has not contributed entirely to the "good" of the society, but to fulfilling the benefits of only a few. Such levels of understanding include: (1) the right to have voice, (2) the duty to be critical in having voice, and (3) becoming critical in experiencing voice. These are the basic tenets of a truly democratic society, yet through appropriation of a marketplace ideology that makes labor highly competitive, focus on problem-solving and not problematizing, and infusion of neutrality into the current national standards for curriculum, teacher professionalization, certification programs, and educational reform, these rights and duties become "silenced."

Equally important may be that education as a dialogical process so aptly described by Paulo Freire (1974) in this context may become less of the life of biology that he considered became life as biography, that is, life as history. In our enculturation process into social practices by groups and institutions defined around certain values and interests, the possibility of creating dialogical processes can only be engendered when we question the very groups and institutions by which we are

socialized and can change the way that we interpret such a reality (Gee, 1988). Schools have a major charge in facilitating the way that biology can become history, but in the current state, the history that most likely will unfold and can be told will be that of the permanence of social inequalities and social injustices.

Counteracting what might be a pessimistic view is the publication of *Revolutionizing Pedagogy: Educating for Social Justice within and beyond Global Neoliberalism*. Not only is its timing propitious, but its messages most needed. Distributed throughout its twelve chapters are not only the frameworks that help the reader understand how critical pedagogies are being organized in different continents and in different contexts, and through different structural mechanisms like the testing industry, but also the strategies and practices that are possible for creating transformative change in education. This dual approach that fuels and unifies movements to grasp, and in that grasping begins to break and supersedes the ties of global neoliberalism helps us recover our meaning of critical pedagogy from the different discourses and positions presented.

Beginning with case studies from Chile to South Africa to the confrontation of corporate America in public education, these serve as frameworks to organize the prevalent discourses existent in schooling today. The included strategies for practicing critical pedagogy hone in on asking what education can do in Britain, United States, India, and the rest of the capitalist world. The work then explores positions that rethink Marx and Engels, examines schools that have been kidnapped, explicates strategies needed in teacher education and the understanding of knowledge-based economies, and posits striking lessons and ways of thinking about education.

The readings jolt us into the discourses of the moment, helping us question the chances education has to actually democratize and educate students. Woven through several of the chapters is Freire's notion of historicity, the insertion of self in the creation of history and culture (Montero-Sieburth, 1985). Ronald David Glass (2001) states: "The praxis that defines human existence is marked by this historicity, this dialectical interplay between the way in which history and culture make people even while people are making that very history and culture" (p. 16). It is in the struggle to be free that not only the possibility for humanization takes place, but also conversely, the possibility of dehumanization.

Creating history strikes a chord as the re-democratization of Chilean education meets the Penguin Resistance of the subtle changes being demanded by teachers, students, and community members

head on. The use of community initiated research in the case of working class organizations in their ability to confront neoliberalism by identifying the delivery of social justice promises made in South Africa is another case of historicity. Confrontation of the corporatization of public education through the testing industry in the wake of No Child Left Behind heightens our awareness of the synergistic relationships that government, corporations, and the media use to control public education in the United States and leads us to question and develop strategies that inform the public about the privatization of schools, enable teacher education programs to integrate critical inquiry, allow students to learn about the historical developments around standards and assessment movements, and engage teachers not only in extensive research, but more importantly in becoming effective agents of change. Introduced are fresh ways of thinking about teachers and “the knowledge economy discourse.” Several projects are advanced that modernize school, personalize learning, “scientize” teachers’ knowledge, and focus on the “biologization and neurologization” of the learner and the commodification of schooling. In their realization, it is expected that they will develop a different education for teachers and learners and raise questions about the society and learner that is being configured.

Reading through each page compels us to face the contradictions and tensions inherent in pedagogical practices and to seek answers in the strategies that are described. Gleaned is an understanding of neoliberal and globalization influences in increasing greater homogeneity in societies through the power and operation of multinational corporations and free market ideology on the one hand, and on the other hand, as Carlos Torres (2002) indicates, greater heterogeneity and diversity, as environmental actions and democratization also increase. It is in creating this tension, as Freire (1985) has said, that the educational task cannot be understood. In this respect, *Revolutionizing Pedagogy* serves to expand our sense of pedagogy beyond our instructional practice and into the realms of knowledge production, cultural dissemination, and critique while simultaneously educating for social justice within and beyond global neoliberalism.

Notes

1. There are multiple definitions of neoliberalism showing a tension between whether it is viewed as a set of economic policies, a more commonly applied definition in Latin America, or whether it is viewed

as a philosophy, which is reflected in attitudes to the society, individual, and employment and is more commonly used in Western market democracies than in poor regions, according to Paul Treanor. (<http://web.inter.nl.net/users/Paul.Treanor/neoliberalism.html>)

2. Elizabeth Martinez and Arnolando Garcia identify the following points for neoliberalism: (1) the rule of the market, (2) cutting public expenditure for social services, (3) deregulation, (4) privatization, and (5) eliminating the concept of “the public good” or “community” and replacing it with “individual responsibility.” They cite a scholar who refers to “neoliberalism means the neo-colonization of Latin America” and refer to global neoliberalism as “the rapid globalization of the capitalist economy on a global scale.” (<http://www.corpwatch.org/article.php?id=376>)
3. <http://skeptically.org/wto/id10.html>.
4. Ibid.
5. According to Martinez and Garcia, during the first year of NAFTA, the wages in Mexico declined 40–50 percent while the cost of living rose by 80 percent. “Over 20,000 small and medium businesses have failed, and more than 1,000 state-owned enterprises have been privatized in Mexico.” (<http://www.corpwatch.org/article.php?id=376>)
6. Heinz-Peter Gerhardt (1993) points out that Freire philosophy, system, and generative themes have remained at the center of educational debates in critical pedagogy during the past three decades to the chagrin of many traditional First World academics.

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