

## **Educational Neocolonialism and the World Bank: A Rancièorean Reading**

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### **Abstract**

In this article, I employ Jacques Rancière's conception of an explicative order to explore how the World Bank contributes to the global project of educational neocolonialism. I argue that the Bank operates as a Master Explicator who taps into students' "inability" to learn by themselves. It explicates concepts such as "development" and "educational reform" as if the so-called Third World is unable to identify and solve its own problems. I also discuss how the Bank's self-described role as a knowledge bank is based on biased notions of research knowledge and evidence-based practice. In the name of objectivity, the Bank promotes particular kinds of knowledge, which steer educational policies and reforms towards neoliberal capitalism. I conclude the article with some implications that Rancière's conception of emancipation and equality may provide for imagining alternative futures.

**Keywords:** Education, neocolonialism, World Bank, Rancière, explicative order

### **Introduction**

As a form of domination, neocolonialism came into existence during the periods of political "decolonization" after the World War II. As most colonies were inadequately prepared for independence and self-governance, the colonial powers offered "help" to the newly independent countries. Most of these countries accepted the offer because they hoped to be able to participate in the global economy and move towards "progress" and "development." In this sense, newly independent countries remained dependent on the former colonial powers. Since the same relationship of domination continued, "a new national flag or anthem in many respects did little to change the status for most of the population or the real relations of power between the former colony and the former colonizer" (Warf, 2006, p. 330). In his 1965 book *Neocolonialism: The Last Stage of Imperialism*, Kwame Nkrumah, the first

president of independent Ghana, succinctly described this shift in forms of domination. He argued that “although countries like Ghana had achieved technical independence, the ex-colonial powers and the newly emerging superpowers such as the United States continued to play a decisive role through international monetary bodies” (cited in Ashcroft, Griffiths, & Tiffin, 2000, pp. 162-163).

Since its coinage in 1965, the term neocolonialism has been used to refer to the domination of not only the former colonies, but also the new superpowers such as the USA and the international monetary organizations such as the World Bank and the International Monetary Fund. In a broad sense, neocolonialism is sometimes used “to signify the inability of the so-called Third World economies to develop an independent economic and political identity under the pressures of globalization” (Ashcroft et al., 2000, p. 163). Although the concept of neocolonialism most commonly refers to the unequal economic relations, its other uses include cultural domination, military intervention and political interference by the former colonial powers and/or the new superpowers, often with the help of local elites in the former colonies. When it comes to education, neocolonialism works in both obvious and subtle ways. The use of textbooks from a former colonizer in the schools of a newly independent country can be an example of obvious educational neocolonialism. However, it can be subtle when, for example, it “includes the use of foreign technical advisors on matters of policy and the continuation of foreign administrative models and curricular patterns for schools” (Altbach, 1995, p. 453). In both ways, educational neocolonialism severely limits the capacities of a country to set its own educational policies and priorities.

In many parts of the world, educational neocolonialism takes place as the education system established in the colonial time continues to persist. It should be noted that most colonial powers adopted elitist educational policies in their colonies. For example, in India, the British rulers established a downward filtration system in which a small number of Indian elites would receive British style education and then would be responsible to educate and “enlighten” the masses. Such a policy reflected a system of power, domination and forcible Christianization.

For example, Thomas Macaulay—a Law Member of the British Governor-General's Council who served on the Supreme Council of India between 1834 and 1838—envisioned that the Indian education would “form a class who may be interpreters between us [colonizers] and the millions whom we govern; a class of persons, Indian in blood and colour, but English in taste, in opinions, in morals, and in intellect” (Macaulay, 1995, p. 430). In this manner, most colonial education systems focused on the needs of the metropolitan powers and aimed at developing an administrative cadre instead of preparing individuals for social advancement. These systems of education emphasized “the skills necessary for secondary positions in the bureaucracy;” as a result, “few scientists, agricultural experts, or qualified teachers were available when independence came” (Altbach, 1995, p. 453). Consequently, most newly independent countries retained the colonial patterns of schooling, and only a few slightly modified their curricula. Not only these new countries had limited capacities to revitalize their education systems, but their elite groups, who received Western education during the colonial period and many of whom were not familiar enough with their own indigenous language and culture, were also inclined to continue with the colonial education systems. Thus, the colonial education that ignored the needs and cultural traditions of the local societies remained in the colonies even after the formal decolonization.

I argue that today’s neocolonial powers adopt similar strategies of domination and dictate the education policies in the so-called developing countries<sup>i</sup> in various ways such as providing loan money and technical assistance for educational reforms. For example, the former colonizers send large number of teachers and teacher trainers to developing countries. They also provide scholarships for students and teachers from the developing countries, who come to West and learn about Western traditions of curriculum and pedagogy. After returning to their home countries, most of them continue to use these Western pedagogies and maintain strong ties to the countries/institutions that provide scholarships for them. Similarly, international monetary organizations such as the World Bank give loan money to the developing countries for educational development. Through this loan money, they promote Western-style education, which is “expected to produce an educated élite with Western

values and entrepreneurial attitudes... [who] would then lead their states on the path to modernity” (Tabulawa, 2003, p. 14). Scholars also argue that by prescribing Western pedagogies and curriculum reforms, these aid agencies “facilitate the penetration of [neoliberal] capitalist ideology in periphery states” (Tabulawa, 2003, p. 10). Unlike the colonial rulers, the aid agencies exert domination not by direct force, but by active persuasion. They skillfully explain why the developing countries should accept loan money and develop their education systems according to the lender’s prescriptions.

Before proceeding to the main discussion, I shall clarify that I do not wish to take an essentialist position and claim that all aid agencies always establish a neocolonial relationship with the loan-recipient countries. Nor do I intend to argue that oppressive structures of hegemonic power operate monolithically. Quite the contrary, I believe that power operates in a complex web of relationships and interests. For example, local NGOs, think tanks, political leaders or persons responsible for handling the loan/aid money can be as corrupt and oppressive as their neo/colonial masters. Therefore, I agree with the colonial discourse theorists such as Said (1979) and Bhabha (1994) who argue that binary categories are fundamentally flawed because they constantly diffuse and intersect within the complex networks of domination. Simply put, my argument is that loan money for educational development in the developing countries can be seen as one of many forms of domination that constitute a complex network of neocolonialism under the guise of globalization. In this article, I employ Jacques Rancière’s (1987/1991) conception of an explicative order to shed light on how the World Bank’s policies and financing of education contribute to and sustain the global project of educational neocolonialism.

### **What is an Explicative Order?<sup>ii</sup>**

In *The Ignorant Schoolmaster*, Jacques Rancière (1987/1991) recounts the history and method of a French schoolteacher, Joseph Jacotot, who discovered an unconventional teaching method in the 1820s. Jacotot found himself teaching Flemish students whose language he did not know and who did not know his. Jacotot’s unusual method of teaching led him to believe that all people were equally intelligent, that no

knowledge was necessary to teach, and that no explication was necessary to learn. He proclaimed that people could learn on their own without someone else explaining things to them<sup>iii</sup>. In *The Ignorant Schoolmaster*, Rancière describes and analyzes Jacotot's method and its implications for such issues as pedagogy, equality, emancipation, democracy and so on.

Among the concepts that Rancière discusses, the most relevant to this article is the notion of an explicative order. Jacotot's method of teaching challenges the necessity of explication, which is taken for granted in any system of pedagogy. He asks: why can't children understand the materials contained in a book? Why do they need a master to explain the book's reasonings to them? Can't a father<sup>iv</sup> give a book to his child to understand the book by himself/herself? Building on Jacotot's method and its premises, Rancière argues that the father cannot be certain if his child has understood the book's contents because he lacks the art of the explicator. Rancière calls this the *art of distance*. The master explicator's secret is his ability "to recognize the distance between the taught material and the person being instructed, the distance also between learning and understanding. The explicator sets up and abolishes this distance—deploys it and reabsorbs it in the fullness of his speech" (p. 5). Thus, the master's power of explication enables him to decide whether or not a child has understood the reasonings of a book. The master is different from the father in the sense that the former knows the art of explaining the gap between the learner and the learning, between the knower and the knowledge.

In order for this gap to sustain, the master creates and maintains an explicative order, in which "an oral explication is usually necessary to explicate the written explication" (p. 5). This leads to a paradoxical hierarchy that privileges speech over writing. This gives rise to another paradox, i.e., "the *words* the child learns best, those whose meaning he best fathoms, those he best makes his own through his own usage, are those he learns without a master explicator" (p. 5). Rancière argues that what all human children learn best is their mother tongue, which no master can explain. They learn this language through their own intelligence and through instructors who do not explain the language to

them. These instructors are the adults who speak to and around the children. Although children successfully complete the most difficult apprenticeship—learning their mother tongue—without the help of the master explicator, they are not given the freedom to understand the materials presented in the book because the traditional pedagogy is based on the premise that “understanding is what the child cannot do without the explanations of a master” (p. 6). This pedagogy maintains that the child can read the book, but cannot understand its contents without the master’s explications because only the master—not the father—can proclaim that the child has understood the book.

In this order, explications take place in a strange circumstance. As Rancière argues, “since the era of progress began, these explications have not ceased being perfected in order better to explicate, to make more comprehensible, the better to learn to learn—without any discernible corresponding perfection of the said comprehension” (p. 6). As a result, any complaint about the ineffectiveness of an explicative system necessitates reworking of the explications so that they can be made more effective and easier to understand for those who cannot understand by themselves. This conception of explication has been taken for granted in most systems of pedagogy and politics, but Jacotot’s method of teaching overturns this explicative order. It shows that the very idea of incapacity creates the fiction of an explicative order. For this, Rancière argues that “to explain something to someone is first of all to show him he cannot understand it by himself” (p. 6). Therefore, explication works as a myth of pedagogy. This myth divides intelligence into two: an inferior intelligence and a superior intelligence. In this pedagogical myth, the master explicator’s trick consists of what Rancière calls double inaugural gesture. First, the master “decrees the absolute beginning: it is only now that the act of learning will begin” (p. 6). Second, the master throws “a veil of ignorance over everything that is to be learned, [and then] appoints himself to the task of lifting it” (pp. 6-7). Jacotot believes that this pedagogical myth divides the world into knowing minds and ignorant ones, splits intelligence into inferior and superior, and thus follows the principle of enforced stultification (*abrutir*). Building on Jacotot’s beliefs, Rancière argues that stultification is the opposite of emancipation, and that emancipation is possible only when

the explicative order is abolished. Grounding my discussion in this argument, I explore how the World Bank creates an explicative order, which reinforces stultification as a form of educational neocolonialism. It should be noted that in recent years a few education scholars have taken up Rancière's radical philosophy of emancipation and equality. For example, Biesta (2011a; 2011b) has applied Rancière's thought to democratic citizenship education, Quinn (2011) to pedagogy, and Lewis (2012) to aesthetics of education. However, to the best of my knowledge, no one has engaged Rancière's philosophy to discuss the World Bank's role in the global educational scene. This article is the first attempt to do so.

### **The World Bank(ing) Method of Education<sup>v</sup>**

The World Bank was founded in 1944 with a mission to work “as facilitator of post-war reconstruction and development” (World Bank, 2013a, para. 1). However, its goals and activities have changed drastically since its establishment. There have been three important changes in the Bank's history. First, the Bank started its journey as a single institution, but it has now expanded into a group of five development institutions, consisting of the International Bank for Reconstruction and Development, the International Development Association, the International Finance Corporation, the Multilateral Investment Guarantee Agency, and the International Centre for Settlement of Investment Disputes. Second, in its formative years, the Bank “had a homogeneous staff of engineers and financial analysts, based solely in Washington, D.C., [but today it has] a multidisciplinary and diverse staff that includes economists, public policy experts, sector experts and social scientists—and now more than a third of [its] staff is based in country offices” (World Bank, 2013a, para. 2). Finally, in the past the Bank's primary activities revolved around reconstruction, but the overarching goal of its present activities is “poverty reduction through an inclusive and sustainable globalization” (World Bank, 2013a, para. 3).

Today, the Bank is involved in many activities ranging from providing microcredit to working for AIDS prevention to improving health care in the developing countries. In recent years, the Bank has focused heavily on education. It is now

one of the largest external education financiers for developing countries, managing a portfolio of \$9 billion, with operations in 71 countries as of January 2013. The World Bank supports education through an average of \$2.6 billion a year in new financing for the poorest countries as well as for middle-income countries. The World Bank helps countries achieve their education goals through finance and knowledge services in the forms of analytic work, policy advice, and technical assistance. This support includes working with countries to help identify the role and contribution of education to their overall development strategies and poverty reduction. (World Bank, 2013b, para. 3)

The Bank views investment in education as an effective strategy for poverty reduction. Taking a human capital approach to its work, the Bank is interested in education's impacts on individuals, societies and the economies in which they live. With regard to the economics of education, it addresses six topic areas: economic analysis of education interventions, finance and expenditures in education, public-private partnerships in the education sector, school-based management, impact evaluation, and quality of education. By addressing these issues, the Bank tries to establish a link between education and economic growth.

Building on world-system theory, I argue that the Bank's policies and work on educational development bring Western values and priorities into the developing countries. World-system theorists contend that the world is integrated, but there are international divisions of labor and unequal economic relations among the countries (Braudel, 1973; Wallerstein, 1974; Clayton, 1998). According to the proponents of this theory, the world economy has followed the capitalist system since the sixteenth century. It is impossible to separately understand the economies of individual nation-states or societies and their "stages" of development because each state/society is a part of and affected by the world economic system (Ashcroft et al., 2000). In this system, the core zone is the United States, the European Union and Japan, which dominates the periphery zone consisting of the countries that depend on low-skill, labor-intensive production and extraction of raw materials. This system uses education, among others, as a principal mechanism to promote ideologies of the dominant countries. As Spring (2009) points out, "the goal of the core is to legitimize its power by inculcating its



values into periphery nations through national school systems that teach capitalist modes of thought and analysis” (p. 13). As I discuss below, the World Bank plays significant roles in promoting and legitimizing the ideologies of neoliberal capitalism through its education policies in the developing countries.

The Bank uses knowledge as a key mechanism to legitimize the capitalist ideologies. According to Hans Weiler, a German political scientist, the relationship between knowledge and power in the globalized world involves “a hierarchy of knowledge where one form of knowledge is privileged over another” (cited in Spring, 2009, p. 13). However, privilege is used not only to oppress, but also as a form of “emancipation” where powerful groups use their own knowledge to “empower” the oppressed, to “improve” schools, and to “modernize” developing countries. In this sense, the World Bank’s intervention on education in the periphery zone and its use of Western knowledge to improve the Third World’s education can be seen as an example of what Altbach (1995) describes as educational neocolonialism. In its efforts to “develop” the education systems, the Bank creates a discourse of incapacity, an incapacity of the developing countries to improve their education systems. This discourse stultifies those-to-be-developed because “the dynamics of emancipation [must] involve an affirmation of capacity” (Rancière, 2007a, p. 565). Rancière’s thought invites us to engage with the possibilities of reconceptualizing the idea of development or emancipation in ways which do not presume (and thus reinforce) the status of educationally, politically, and economically marginalized groups or nations. Borrowing from Rancière (1987/1991), I argue that the processes of *empowering* the oppressed, or developing the underdeveloped, remind them of their marginalized positions, point to their inability to improve their situations and, thus, insult their intelligence. The very notion of empowering *the other* denies “the equality of intelligence [which] is the common bond of humankind, the necessary and sufficient condition for a society of men to exist” (Rancière, 1987/1991, p. 73). In the pages that follow, I discuss how the Bank denies the equality of intelligence and creates an explicative order to legitimize its neoliberal capitalist ideologies and to establish a neocolonial relationship with the loan-recipient countries.

## **Promoting Neoliberal Ideology**

One of the ideologies that drive the World Bank's education projects is neoliberalism, which is "a theory of political economic practices that proposes that human well-being can best be advanced by liberating individual entrepreneurial freedoms and skills within an institutional framework characterized by strong private property rights, free markets, and free trades" (Harvey, 2005, p. 2). According to this theory, the main role of the state is to create and maintain an institutional framework favorable for such entrepreneurial practices. The proponents of neoliberalism argue that "the market introduces competition as the structuring mechanism through which resources and status are allocated efficiently and fairly," and thus it is "the most efficient way of sorting out which competing individuals get what" (Olssen, Codd, & O'Neill, 2004, pp. 137-138). In short, neoliberalism views society as a gigantic marketplace and every transaction as entrepreneurial—carried out for personal gain. Neoliberal economic principles are currently dominating educational policies in many parts of the world. One example is the much-discussed No Child Left Behind Act (2002) in the United States, which holds states accountable for "measurable" educational outcomes. Due to this policy, educators have been forced to focus more on measurable outcomes such as test scores than on actual learning of students (Cochran-Smith & Lytle, 2006). Multilateral organizations such as the World Bank convince the developing countries to adopt similar neoliberal principles for their educational reforms. As the largest financier of education, the Bank often forcefully carries out education reform initiatives and uses its own model of development shaped by the neoliberal principles.

Inspired by neoliberalism, the Bank views knowledge as the most important factor in economic development. Therefore, it argues for producing, reproducing, commercializing, and using knowledge for sustainable development and improved living standards (World Bank, 2002). However, I argue that the Bank's claims about knowledge-centric development are based on its own definition of development and human capital slogans. As Jones (1997) states, "in painting a picture of the preconditions for successful educational development, the bank is in effect depicting its view of the ideal economy" (p. 127). It is not difficult to

see the Bank's educational aid "as an economic investment designed to produce better workers to serve multinational corporations" (Spring, 2009, p. 14). The capitalist world system not only requires similar products for a global free market, but it also wants schools to prepare workers with similar knowledge and skills. In this sense, the policies and discourses imposed on (or borrowed by) the developing countries in the name of globalization and development "steer national educational policies into the same neoliberal direction" (Rizvi, 2007, p. 257), which advocates accountability, competition and privatization. As Menashy (2007) points out, the World Bank promotes a market-oriented view of education, and its "policies of privatization, user charges, student loans, decreased role of government via decentralization, and focus on economic growth as the aim of education, all demonstrate adherence to this [neoliberal] ideology" (p. 51).

By imposing its own model of development on the loan-recipient countries, the World Bank promotes "particular economic and political agendas that benefit wealthy and rich nations at the expense of the world's poor" (Spring, 2009, p. 13). These agendas are deeply grounded in capitalism, i.e.

the sanctification of private (or, corporate) profit based on the extraction of surplus labour (unpaid labor-time) as surplus value from the labor-power of workers. It is a creed and practice of...class exploitation, exploitation by the capitalist class of those who provide the profits through their labor, the national and international working class. (Hill, 2003, p. 3)

This sanctification of private profit is now rampant in many Western countries such as the UK and the USA. When it comes to the developing countries, the principles of capitalism are increasingly manifested in the social, economic and educational policies. Various international organizations that are controlled by the capitalist West are spreading reforms that are conducive to the sanctification of market and private profit. For example, Kabir (2010) discusses how the World Bank supported the formulation of a 20-year Strategic Plan for Higher Education (SPHE) in Bangladesh. Kabir's (2010) critical analysis of the SPHE shows that the Bank's policies and recommendations "connect

education with market-driven economic forces” and redefine the role of the state “through withdrawing government grants in the higher education sector” (p. 619). Thus, by implementing privatization of education and other neoliberal policies such as excessive accountability and fierce competition, the Bank envisions a capitalist world where profits and economic gains are the ultimate goal of all human endeavors.

One of the outcomes of such capitalist policies in Bangladesh—like many other countries—has been a mushrooming of private universities. These universities are driven, to a large extent, by the principles of marketisation and corporatization of education. Although some argue that these universities are playing instrumental roles in preparing a large number of young people for the expanding economy of the country, the way these institutions are operating has far-reaching social and political implications. For example, in a recent study, I examined the degree programs offered by public and private universities in Bangladesh (Anwaruddin, 2013). A comparative analysis showed that the private universities offered much more programs in the disciplines of business, science and technology than in arts, humanities and social sciences. The rationale is simple enough: because the private universities do not receive any financial support from the government, they offer programs that can be sold at high prices. However, this exclusive focus on business and science education ignores the roles that arts, humanities and social sciences can play in nurturing students’ imagination, empathy and creativity that are necessary for a healthy democracy. If universities continue to discard disciplines that are not “profitable,” Martha Nussbaum (2010) warns that nations all over the world will produce “generations of useful machines, rather than complete citizens who can think for themselves, criticize tradition, and understand the significance of another person’s sufferings and achievements” (p. 2). Regarding education’s narrow focus on profit-making, she reminds us that “most of us would not choose to live in a prosperous nation that had ceased to be democratic” (pp. 10-11). Thus, privatization and marketization of education not only commodify knowledge, but also devalue education’s role as a public good.

Nevertheless, it should be noted that the World Bank's neoliberal capitalist principles are failing to bring about promised outcomes in many parts of the world. Reporting on the situations in Mexico, Delgado-Ramos and Saxe-Fernandez (2009) argue that "the consequences of all these [neoliberal] trends and policies being implemented are deep-seated because the public university is being estranged from national public interests, losing its critical capacity and that of generating the type of knowledge and technology required by the societies and economies of the Global south" (p. 49). In Pakistan, for example, private sector involvement in education has noticeably increased in recent decades. Ironically however, the promise of efficiency and quality is far from the reality. Privatization has resulted in opportunities for corruption in Pakistan like many other parts of the world. Some of the largest chains of private schools are owned by the politically powerful individuals and their families (Mukhtar, 2009). The current patterns of privatization seem to follow a one-size-fits-all American model, which overlooks differences in sociocultural contexts where education takes place. The Bank makes an unwarranted assumption that the state's role is always negative when it comes to educational affairs. It sees the market as the only means to improve education in the same way it increases capital in a consumerist society. It contends that the market is the best "means of social coordination whereby the supply and demand for a good or service are balanced through the price mechanism" (Brown, 2011, p. 11). The Bank explicates the importance of connecting economics to education when it focuses on creating knowledge economy. Its approaches to developing human capital are based on the premise that "knowledge-driven growth requires education systems that impart higher-level skills to a greater share of the workforce. These systems must foster lifelong learning, particularly among existing workers who have not completed secondary or entered tertiary education" (World Bank, 2013c, para. 3). In this way, the Bank emphasizes creating a skilled workforce that will be helpful for neoliberal and capitalist corporations. However, we need to keep in mind that education "is not a commodity to be bought and sold. One can buy *the means* to an education, but not the hard graft of autonomous learning itself" (Hill, 2009, p. xii).

## **Loan Money and Enforcement of Policies**

In this section, I discuss how the World Bank uses its loan money to enforce capitalist educational policies and to create an explicative order in which the loan-recipient countries may be compared to what Rancière would call *learners* who are yet-to-be developed by the Master Explicator. To frame my discussion, I ask this question: How does the Bank lend money? The Bank lends money to client countries on certain conditions that are stated in the loan contract. This is generally referred to as conditionality, which “means that the country must fulfill a certain number of requirements to get the loan, such as reforming teacher statutes, reducing budget deficits, charging full costs of utilities, preserving the environment, or whatever is fashionable at the time” (Castro, 2002, p. 392). In the early 1980s, the Bank introduced structural adjustment programme (SAP) as a major condition for countries to obtain loan money. Grounded in the neoliberal ideology, SAPs were designed to re-structure an economy, for example, by eliminating government’s controls and by promoting competition in a free market. Many criticized the SAP for its intervention on the recipient countries’ economy. Others questioned the moral right of the Bank to impose such policies. Critics also blamed the Bank for serving the interest of the large corporations and Western countries through the SAPs. In order to respond to such criticisms, the Bank supplemented the economy-focused SAPs with a social dimension, i.e., poverty alleviation. In 1999, the Bank along with the International Monetary Fund (IMF) introduced Poverty Reduction Strategy Paper (PRSP). Countries were asked to prepare a PRSP every three to five years and it was a precondition for loan/aid money and debt relief. In these two types of conditionality, the Bank focused on economic and social dimensions respectively.

At the turn of the new millennium, the Bank introduced political reforms such as good governance as a condition. It emphasized good governance as a means of economic and social reforms. It envisioned its own ideal type of political regime and how the regime would formulate and implement social and economic policies. The Bank stated that

this initiative will take as a starting point the five dimensions of good governance that was developed in the World Bank’s

Corruption study for Europe and Central Asia and contained in the Bank's most recent update of its public sector strategy: public sector management, competitive private sector, structure of government, civil society participation and voice, and political accountability. (World Bank, 2013d, para. 5)

In addition to these three forms of conditionality—SAP, PRSP, and good governance—the Bank has added a fourth type of conditionality, which is based on knowledge management. Steiner-Khamshi (2012) calls this “programmatically conditionality,” which emerged as the Bank “re-invented itself in the education sector and presented itself as a knowledge producer and knowledge manager” (p. 4). As a knowledge bank, it now determines what “works” in terms of educational development. In addition to the three types of conditionality mentioned above, the loan recipient countries are now required “to subscribe to a particular reform package (‘best practices’) that was piloted in a few countries, analyzed in impact evaluations, and then disseminated to other recipient governments” (Steiner-Khamshi, 2012, p. 4). Due to its self-acclaimed ability to generate trustworthy knowledge about educational development, the Bank sees itself as a *super think tank*. However, I would argue that what helps the Bank to impose its market-driven education policies on the loan-recipient countries is not the trustworthiness of its knowledge, but the power of money. In order to receive money and technical assistance, the recipient countries cannot but accept the conditionalities attached to the loan money.

## **Politics of Knowledge**

The power of money enables the Bank to play a politics of knowledge to create and maintain an explicative order for educational development in the loan-recipient countries. Although the Bank claims to be a producer and manager of valuable knowledge, I argue that it takes a positivist approach to knowledge creation and produces a particular kind of knowledge that legitimizes its policies driven by the neoliberal capitalist agenda. Its research, which suffers from methodological biases, often provides coercive recommendations. As Klees (2012) argues:

The World Bank prides itself on being evidence- and research-based, but it is not. Its premises and conclusions are based on

ideology, not evidence. The World Bank selects and interprets the research that fits with its ideology. In this sense, it resembles right wing ideological think tank institutions like the Cato Institute or the Heritage Foundation in the U. S. However, it differs in two important ways. First, everyone realizes Cato and Heritage are partisan. The World Bank, on the other hand, makes a pretense of objectivity and inclusiveness. Second, Cato and Heritage are private institutions with limited influence. The World Bank is a public institution, financed by taxes, which gives grants, loans, and advice around the world, yielding a vast global influence. (p. 49)

Thus, the Bank's claim for generating "objective" knowledge and emphasis on evidence-based policies and decisions suffer from bias and self-interest.

Many scholars point to the World Bank's narrow approach to research. For example, Samoff (2012) discusses three issues that shed light on how the Bank generates knowledge. First, the Bank pays very little attention to what happens inside the classroom. National examinations and international assessments are often used to measure students' learning. Moreover, the Bank maintains methodological orthodoxy in its research activities and looks for particular kind of evidence. It not only ignores "alternative notions of evidence, of knowledge, and of the research process," but also rejects them "as non-scientific" (Samoff, 2012, p. 145). Second, the Bank's approaches to research avoid the confrontation of alternative perspectives, which may generate critical knowledge about educational development. For example, if the Bank's policies and practices are truly evidence-based, what do we know about its failed projects or the projects that did not yield promised outcomes? The massive database and hundreds of technical reports that the Bank produces each year tell us very little about its failures or alternative perspectives. Thus, the Bank's self-referential approach to research and evidence is extremely uncritical. As Samoff (2012) points out:

Rather than using available research to develop a strategy that accommodates the contingent and the unexpected and that incorporates a strong thread of critical self-reflection and the need to adapt and adjust, we find unqualified assertions about the correct objectives and means. (p. 149)



Finally, the World Bank's research in many instances becomes consulting. In most developing countries, funds for research are very little or non-existent. Educational researchers, therefore, look for commissions or contracts from various overseas organizations. Funding agencies such as the World Bank take advantage of this situation and fund educational researchers, but they often "specify the issues to be studied and the approaches deemed appropriate" (Samoff, 2012, p. 150). While private funding and commissioned projects make more research possible, they undermine the value of research as a scholarly activity and produce a particular kind of knowledge that serves the interest of the funders.

By adopting these approaches to research, the Bank promotes a particular kind of knowledge. In other words, it propagates "western representations of modernization" that are "based on an economic instrumental rationality" (Peters, 2011, p. 94). It also produces knowledge that has functional imperatives in the market-driven world economy. By doing so, the Bank takes a narrow approach to the knowledge agenda. As Mehta (2001) explains, there are a number of assumptions behind this agenda:

First, knowledge is considered a public good that can be transferred from those who know to those who do not. Second, there usually exists one kind of knowledge (usually conceived in absolute terms) that exists more-or-less in a vacuum, ready to be tapped and accessed by the poor. Third, once this knowledge is accessed, the 'isolation' of the poor will be broken and they can be full-fledged members of the global community. (p. 190)

Taking this problem-solution approach, the Bank uses its own knowledge to fix educational problems in the developing world. Furthermore, it makes certain that the knowledge-based solution packages that it provides for the developing countries are compatible with the Western ideologies and that they are accepted as legitimate solution. In this sense, it is possible to describe the Bank's prescriptive solution package as intellectual imperialism, in which the imperialists use education as a tool to legitimize their own knowledge and epistemology.

## Concepts of Quality, Assessment & Outcomes

In this section, I argue that the Bank uses concepts such as quality, assessment and outcomes to legitimize its educational policies and activities. These concepts also create a center-periphery binary, and the developing countries are judged against the standards set in the developed countries. The following quotation illustrates the Bank's conceptualization of learning achievement and outcomes:

The crucial factor is learning achievement. Improving learning outcomes, along with the expansion of schooling, will improve labor productivity, reflected in workers' earnings, and will contribute to higher and sustainable rates of national income growth. The crucial next step is to establish what policies and programs can improve learning outcomes. There are important efforts underway in a number of countries to document through rigorous impact assessments the causal links between reforms and learning outcomes. (World Bank, 2013e, para. 1)

This short passage reflects how the Bank envisions a global education system that will increase labor productivity. In the name of learning achievement, what the Bank actually measures are students' skills that are useful in the capitalist market.

Additionally, when the Bank uses international student assessments such as PISA and TIMMS to "reveal wide knowledge gaps between most developing countries and members of the Organization for Economic Co-operation and Development (OECD)" (World Bank, 2011, p. 3), it actually takes a binary approach to knowledge and accepts Western knowledge as the point of reference to which the non-Western students should look up. In many technical reports, the Bank refers to the achievement gap between the developing countries and the members of the OECD. For example, in the *Education Strategy 2020*, the Bank makes frequent references to educational quality, but it does not spell out what quality actually means. It apparently focuses on students' performance on international benchmark tests such as PISA, TIMMS, and PIRLS. However, there are serious problems in how quality is conceptualized in terms of these standardized tests. Although the Bank always connects education to economic growth, it does not provide

sensible explanations of “the relationship between the kinds of skills that tests measure and their impact on economic development” (Soudien, 2012, p. 103). Moreover, there are concerns about the design and construction of the standardized tests. The test developers assume a converging world culture of education as if education has the same function for all students across the globe.

This converging test culture disrespects students’ sociocultural backgrounds and their educational preferences and priorities. It encourages students to face an irrational and fierce competition, which actually works as a sorting mechanism. Furthermore, the Bank does not specify what value the test scores add to educational quality. For these reasons, the Bank’s conceptions of educational quality, assessment and outcomes remain narrow and exclusionary. Borrowing from Rancière’s (1987/1991), I argue that the primary purpose of the Bank’s discourse on quality is to create distance between the developed and the under-developed. This discourse appears to be based on the argument that some have to be losers in order for others to be winners. Like the Master Explicator, the Bank sets up distance between the successful and unsuccessful, and then prescribes methods of abolishing this distance. Thus, it identifies and sustains inequality, which is the prime goal of any explicative order.

### **Influence on Other Aid Agencies and NGOs**

The World Bank conducts impact analyses of its interventions and provides recommendations for educational development. Every year it collects vast amount of data and produces large number of technical reports. As a self-described super think tank (Steiner-Khamshi, 2012), the Bank exerts tremendous influence not only on the loan-recipient countries, but also on other funding agencies and local NGOs. Although various agencies set up their own policies and priorities, many of them seem to follow the footsteps of the World Bank. The Bank explains how other agencies should invest their money and resources in the education sectors of the developing countries. As Samoff and Carrol (2004) observe, the Bank

sets the pace and largely controls the form for education sector work. Not infrequently it oversees the provision and use of other agencies' funds. Its energetic development of CDF, PRSP, and related holistic strategies effectively make the World Bank the primary point of reference for how to organize and manage development assistance. (p. 47)

Thus, the Bank uses its power to influence other aid agencies and tries to make sure that all of them follow a similar pattern of educational development. Moreover, the Bank periodically creates new organizations to maintain and strengthen its influence on other organizations. Creation of the Association for the Development of Education in Africa is a clear example of such strategy (for details, see Samoff & Carrol, 2004).

Many aid agencies and donor countries have unfortunately joined the bandwagon of the World Bank. For example, Brock-Utne (2007) discusses how “the traditional and much-praised independence of thinking evident in Norwegian bilateral aid has been subsumed by uncritical adoption of World Bank policy stances, usually imposed uniformly irrespective of local conditions and preferences” (p. 433). Citing examples from several African countries, this author demonstrates that the Norwegian aid to education has been heavily influenced by the language, policies, and assumptions of the World Bank’s thinking about educational development. Furthermore, local NGOs play huge roles as a conduit between the Bank and those at the grassroots. While most educators do not have direct contact with the World Bank, many NGOs, as a middle stratum, channel the Bank’s ideologies down into the day-to-day school activities. These NGOs often describe themselves as “think tanks” in order to deny their political roles. For example, various think tanks in post-communist Bulgaria played decisive political roles under the guise of technical expertise. They “served as mediators of political technologies of [American-style] democratization” (Anguelova-Lavergne, 2012, p. 77). Thus, local think tanks often transfer and popularize recipes of Western social, economic, and educational development. As a result, capitalist discourses of educational development are being perpetuated to grassroots levels (for an example of how this is done through a World Bank-financed literacy program in Senegal, see Nordtveit, 2010). Building on Rancière (1987/1991), I argue that the

World Bank, along with its allies such as local NGOs and think tanks, creates an explicative order in which the developing countries are expected to learn the educational know-how from their donors. Thus, the Bank assumes superiority of intelligence by not only attaching strings of conditions to loan-money, but also influencing the policies and activities of other aid agencies and local NGOs and think tanks.

### **Promoting a Monoculture of Educational Development**

By attaching various types of conditionality to loan money and influencing the activities of other agencies and NGOs, the World Bank promotes a monoculture of educational development. Borrowing from Santos (2004, 2008) and Bennett (2007), I argue that the Bank commits epistemicide in the name of educational reforms in the developing countries. It ignores and suppresses forms of knowledge that do not fit with its own conceptions and models of development. Santos (2004) argues that the knowledges that do not exist are also produced, but they are produced as non-existent. These “other” knowledges are often skillfully rendered invisible or swallowed up (Bennett, 2007). By ignoring alternative perspectives on educational development, the Bank commits this epistemicide. It creates and popularizes knowledges that justify its own educational agenda based on neoliberal capitalism. In this way, it fails to work for socially-just systems of education that respect all methods of knowing. Without this respect, the hegemonic forms of globalization are likely to continue and the knowledges of the subaltern are likely to be suppressed. Unfortunately, the Bank’s promotion of a monoculture of educational development is detrimental to the epistemic diversity of the world because, as Santos (2008) argues, “there is no global social justice without global cognitive justice [and] the logic of the monoculture of scientific knowledge and rigor must be confronted with the identification of other knowledges and criteria of rigor” (p. xlix). In this light, the Bank’s “what works” approach to educational knowledge and development reflects an epistemic monoculture based on Western neoliberal capitalist worldviews.

### **Seeing through the Lens of the Explicative Order**

As I have argued, the World Bank’s relationship with the loan-recipient countries may be understood through the lens of an explicative order

(Rancière, 1987/1991) that always comes with a promise that things will be better in the future. However, this promise, e.g., the World Bank's discourses on educational development and economic progress, will never be fulfilled because "progress is the pedagogical fiction built into the fiction of the society as a whole" (p. 119). The explicative order works *progressively*, i.e., it works out a certain delay in progress and repairs evil and incapability. When the order does not work effectively, the Master Explicator devises new, "better" methods. Thus, the explicative order creates fictions of progress and hope, and delay and incapability feed into these fictions. In a *pedagogicized* society, the promise for progress will never be fulfilled as "never will the student catch up with the master, nor the people with its enlightened elite; but the hope of getting there makes them advance along the good road, the one of perfected explications" (p. 120). Thus, Rancière may help us understand why and how the loan-recipient countries abide by the Bank's explication in the hope that they will soon join the bandwagon of progress and development. However, by the time they will reach their destination (e.g., as outlined in their SAPs or PRSPs), the developed world will make further advancement. In this way, the distance between the developed and the under-developed, between the master and the pupil, will always persist.

By maintaining this explicative order, the Bank establishes a neocolonial relationship with the loan-recipient countries. Many scholars of comparative and international education have discussed how the education in developing countries is dictated by foreign aid agencies and neocolonial states. For example, studying the education systems in the Pacific Islands, Thomas and Postlethwaite (1984) developed an analytical framework consisting of six dimensions. These dimensions asked questions about the school's purposes, administrative structure, personnel, student population, curriculum, and sources of finance. Among these, Dimensions V and VI are particularly important for my purpose in this article. Dealing with curriculum and instructional methodology, Dimension V asks three fundamental questions: "who determines the nature of the curriculum and teaching methods, what are the cultural sources of the curriculum and teaching methods, and whose welfare is served by the curriculum?" (p. 16). Dimension VI sheds light

on financing of education and asks two questions: “who determines how the system will be financed, and what influence do people’s ethnic or cultural origins have on their role in financing education?” (p. 17).

These two dimensions of Thomas and Postlethwaite’s (1984) analytical framework can be linked to the World Bank’s policies and lending conditions for educational development. The Bank requires that “educational priorities should be set with reference to outcomes, using economic analysis, standard setting, and measurement of achievement through learning assessments” (World Bank, 1995, p. 8). It strongly advocates privatization of education and argues that developing countries should spend more on educational development (World Bank, 2011). The Bank justifies these arguments “on the basis of human capital theory’s sunny optimism that education and training will make workers, and thereby entire economies, more productive” (Jones, 2007, p. 252). I argue that the Bank, just like the Master Explicator (Rancière, 1987/1991), provides hope and promise for the developing countries that things will be better in the future after they have implemented the Bank’s recommendations as the only legitimate solution to their problems. It sets educational goals for the developing world and creates distance between the goals and where the developing countries are at. Then, it prescribes various means of achieving those goals, explicates the means, and constantly monitors the progress towards the goals. In this explicative order, the Bank preserves full authority to measure and declare how well a loan-recipient country has done in terms of educational development. This act of explication, I argue, helps the Bank establish a relationship of domination with the loan-recipient countries that remain dependent on the Bank for their “development.” This sort of relationship creates what Rancière (1999) would call a “police order,” which denies “the equality of any speaking being with any other speaking being” (p. 30).

## **Imagining Alternative Futures**

Scholars of anti-colonial education have called for revealing and dismantling hegemonic forms of knowledge (e.g., Tikly, 2004; Dei & Kempf, 2006; Rizvi, 2007). Some delineate how the knowledge of the European and North American elite dominates social policies and

actions across the world. For example, Connell (2007) discusses how the Webers and the Foucaults of the North shape the imaginaries of the social scientists and workers in the South. Pointing to the valuable knowledge produced in the global South, she stresses the importance of embracing what she calls a Southern Theory. Others propose the creation of “reverse discourses, oppositional practice, displacement of the Eurocentric premises of the discursive apparatus, [and] counter-hegemonic work” (Odora Hoppers, 2000, p. 290). As resistance to Eurocentricism, Sardar (1999) urges the non-West “to create a whole new body of knowledge, rediscover its lost and suppressed intellectual heritage, and shape a host of new disciplines” (p. 57). Supporting such initiatives to counter the hegemony of Western knowledge, Tikly (2004) adds that “there is a role for educationalists in the west in supporting such initiatives and in taking seriously the fruits of such endeavours, as well as the values and norms that are encapsulated within it” (p. 193). However, I argue that these proposals are limiting in the sense that they are likely to create reverse-hegemonic discourses. Furthermore, I find Tikly’s advice problematic because when the West supports the knowledge generated by the non-West, the former assumes scholastic superiority over the latter because it is still the West that is “able” and “willing” to acknowledge the knowledge of the non-West. From this perspective, even if the World Bank chooses to pay attention to local knowledge and culture of education in the loan-recipient countries, its *will* to pay attention will imply its position of power and privilege. From Rancière’s (1987/1991) point of view, there will not be an equality of intelligence in the suggestions mentioned above because they begin with inequality and strive for equality. Any system of pedagogy or politics that takes inequality as a starting point must end up re-discovering inequality in its endeavors for emancipation, equality or development.

Rancière’s radical philosophy of equality may enable us to approach the hegemony of knowledge, as in the case of the World Bank, from a different angle. For him, emancipation is the opposite of stultification, and stultification happens “whenever one intelligence is subordinated to another” (Rancière, 1987/1991, p. 13). Thus, emancipation is the consciousness of equality; it “is the process of verification of the equality of intelligence” (Rancière, 2007b, p. 275). If we look at the World Bank’s



policies and activities for educational development through the lens of Rancière's conception of equality, we will see how the Bank reinforces dependency and inequality in the *processes* of developing the loan-recipient countries. These processes keep those-to-be-developed "dependent upon the intervention of the emancipator, an intervention based upon a knowledge that is fundamentally inaccessible to the one to be emancipated" (Bingham & Biesta, 2010, p. 31). In this sense, the Bank divides intelligence into two: inferior and superior. Like a Master Explicator, it capitalizes on the *inferiority* of intelligence of those-to-be-emancipated in order to maintain its own *superiority* of intelligence. By fixing preconditions for educational development (Jones, 1997; 2007), the Bank sends a message to the loan-recipient countries that they cannot solve their own problems without the explanations and guidelines from the Master Explicator. Thus, the Bank puts inequality at the center of its explicative order, which stultifies the developing world because "what stultifies the common people is not the lack of instruction, but the belief in the inferiority of their intelligence" (Rancière, 1987/1991, p. 39). Building on Rancière's ideas, I argue that as long as the master claims the power to emancipate the slave, the slave will never be equal to the master. As long as the colonizer assumes the power to emancipate the colonized, the colony can at best become a *former colony*, but never equal to the *metropole*.

In summary, I have argued in this article that the World Bank uses the power of its money and knowledge to establish a neocolonial relationship with the loan-recipient countries. It creates and disseminates a particular kind of knowledge that justifies its intervention on the educational policies and priorities in the developing countries. Building primarily on Rancière (1987/1991), I have discussed how the Bank creates and maintains an explicative order, which takes inequality as a starting point. This explicative order conceptualizes educational inequality and under-development in temporal terms. As the Master Explicator, it explains how things will be better in the future if pupils understand and act on the master's explanations. This hope for equality and development always comes with a promise: "the promise that things will be different in the future, that after graduation, when one has caught up, equality will arrive. That will be the moment when the third world will

have become equal to the first world” (Bingham & Biesta, 2010, pp. 149-50). Unfortunately, this equality, emancipation, or development are not likely to come because, as I have argued, the World Bank’s intervention is based on the principle of inequality. It divides intelligence into two: a superior and an inferior intelligence. By imposing a one-size-fits-all approach to educational development, using particular kinds of knowledge, and attaching various types of conditionality to loan-money, the Bank assumes the role of the Master who knows all about educational problems and how to solve them.

What enables the Bank to carry out this act of explication is the ability to identify inequality between the developed and the under-developed countries. Because no countries are willing to lag behind, they seem to follow the Bank’s prescriptions and try hard to overcome the inequality that exists between them and the developed world. However, Rancière would argue that “as long as we project equality into the future and see it as something that has to be brought about through particular interventions and activities that aim to overcome existing inequality...we will never reach equality but will simply reproduce inequality” (cited in Biesta, 2010, p. 57). Thus, the World Bank’s interventions on educational development are based on the principle of inequality, which is the key mechanism of any explicative order (Rancière, 1987/1991). This explicative order helps the Bank utilize education as an effective means of political control within the complex network of what Altbach (1995) describes as educational neocolonialism.

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<sup>i</sup> I recognize that the use of terms such as “developing countries” and “Third World” is problematic. I am also aware of the politics of “development,” which reproduces global inequality and renders the conditions conducive to the spread of capitalism (see, e.g., Weber, 2004). For the lack of a better term, I use “developing countries” in this article (with much discomfort) to refer to the countries that receive aid/loan money from the World Bank and/or other multilateral monetary organizations.

<sup>ii</sup> This section is adapted from Anwaruddin (in press), and all quoted materials are from Rancière (1987/1991).

<sup>iii</sup> For a detailed discussion of Jacotot’s method, see Ross (1991), and Bingham and Biesta (2010).

<sup>iv</sup> I do not intend to be gender-biased when I use the word “father” and the masculine pronoun “he.” Rancière uses these words in his writing, and I follow his style as my article is premised on his philosophy.

<sup>v</sup> This heading echoes Freire (1970), who describes a banking method of education in which “the students are the depositories and the teacher is the depositor” (p. 53). By showing this binary opposition between students and teachers, Freire discusses how a banking method of education reinforces oppressive and colonial social structures. For example, “the teacher confuses the authority of knowledge with his or her own professional authority, which she or he sets in opposition to the freedom of the students” (p. 54). Thus, the banking method of education projects ignorance onto those who want to learn, and this projection of ignorance negates education as a process of critical inquiry.

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