

# The Hope of Critical Pedagogy in the New Dark Ages of Neoliberal Globalization and Imperialism

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## **Abstract**

*This article describes how Globalization of Neoliberalism in education through International Financial Institutions like OECD and World Bank is imperialist in nature. It examines how imperialism has affected education in the heart of the empire through the organized business sector, Edubusiness, privatization and militarization. This model of Neoliberal education has been exported and imposed on a global scale leading to a degradation of critical thinking and human values. The New Dark Ages are in the mirror of the markets. This article suggests that the hope of Critical Pedagogy is resistance to the dehumanization in progress. It concludes that Critical educators are fighting a war for the future of humanity.*

**Keywords:** *Neoliberalism, Globalization, Imperialism, Critical Pedagogy, Hope.*

## **Introducing the necessity of hope for change**

There is no change without dream, as there is no dream without hope  
-Paulo Freire

In *Pedagogy of Hope*, Paulo Freire (1994) states that we cannot even begin to imagine what education should be about, unless we start with hope. As Viegle

(2019) also suggests, it is indeed difficult to fathom why we would educate the new generations if we would live in a world in which we have the guarantee that things will never change for the better; education seems to imply the possibility that our way of living, as individuals and collectively, can transform.’

The importance of hope, the belief that our present situation can be improved, cannot be underestimated. As Włodarczyk et al. (2017) outline ‘the most important features of hope are positive expectations about the possibility of achieving certain objectives in the future and positive feelings of outcome anticipation, regardless of the negativity of the present situation. Therefore, hope implies goal setting, planning and actual mobilization.’ Similarly, Snyder (1994; 18) proposes that ‘hope is more than distancing oneself from and delimiting the impact of failures; hope is the essential process of linking oneself to potential success.’

As Freire suggests, in the introductory quote above, hope is essential for change. Dinerstein and Willaert (2018) observe:

Hope is not just the ability to fantasize, but a tool for taking alternative realities seriously so that they might actually become possible. With hope, we can make concrete preparations for alternative ways of organizing our societies – alternatives that are already awaiting in the present, but which are simply not thought possible yet. We cannot abandon hope, because our capacity to dream and aspire collectively is our only way to make a truly better world. But hope is something we must learn.

In *The Principle of Hope*, German philosopher Ernst Bloch (1995) argues that the world is unfinished, unclosed. That, if the world were closed, comprised of fixed facts, then nothing could be changed to correspond with human wishes

and desires. However, the world is open and incomplete, as it is comprised of ongoing processes; dynamic relationships in which ‘the Become’ has not triumphed, but in which being and becoming are ongoing processes, which humanity has influence over – agency. Thus ‘the Real’ concerns temporal processes, in which humanity mediates between the present, the unfinished past and thus vitally, possible futures. As Bloch (ibid.) put it; ‘processus cum figures, figurae in processu’ - the process is made by those who are made by the process. As such, he re-affirms the notion of utopia, viewing it as concerning hope, the possibilities of engaging in always unfinished, incomplete, unfulfilled, processes (Dinerstein & Deneulin, 2012).

Hannah Arendt (1954) describes education as essentially an intergenerational transaction, during which the world is passed on to the next generation, but in such a way that they can truly begin anew with the world . As Bloch (supra) has argued, the moment of youth is always also a moment of radical political potential. To be young, for Bloch, is to have one foot out of the present. It involves being open to both other pasts and other futures - an idea with rich pedagogic possibilities (Mitchell & MacFarlane, 2019).

Despite this radical potential of youth, it is nonetheless rather bold to assume that education can begin to build society anew. Although education influences all aspects of society, it is, in its turn, also shaped by these different aspects of society and as such, its transformative abilities are restricted by these external influences on, and interventions in, it (Nikolakaki, 2011). What education is, without doubt, is a laboratory for practical philosophy to envision and work towards future possible societies. Visions of potential future societies can be materialized in and through education. If such better futures are to come into existence, hopes for them need to be materialized through educational processes.

Under capitalism however, in education, visions for the future are dominated by the ruling class and their ‘missionaries’, as Chomsky (1999) refers to them. Thus illustrates the nature of education, as an arena of class struggle, in which the visions and institutions of the elite and its functionaries in the middle management class, battle with critically conscious teachers and students fighting for hope and the better worlds they believe are possible.

In her essay, *The Crisis in Education*, Arendt (1954) writes, that the educational crisis, whatever its origins or causes, ‘tears away façades and obliterates prejudices’ - and that this ‘disappearance of prejudices’ implies that ‘we have lost the answers on which we ordinarily rely without even realizing that they were originally answers to questions’. In a crisis, a question finally appears as a question. Given this, such moments require responsiveness to the situation, that involve a willingness to consider fundamental problems anew. In this way, a crisis invites us to ‘explore and inquire into whatever has been laid bare of the essence of the matter’(ibid.). A crisis does not only reveal a gap between a problem we are forced to confront and our present capacity to resolve it, but is also, more affirmatively, an opportunity for critical thought and positive change (Norberg, 2011). Over the last fifty years, the deepening crisis of the education system, in a similar manner to related crises of other social institutions, has neoliberalism as its root cause. This has served to foreground fundamental questions about the education system: who and what is education for?; who has ownership of the education system - and for what ends?

### **Neoliberal globalization and imperialism in the new Dark Ages**

Much has been written on neoliberalism and this has brought with it an accompanying danger of ‘bringing owls to Athena’ - a Greek saying, cautioning against banal repetition. Elsewhere, I have argued, both that neoliberalism is class warfare involving economic, political and cultural aspects and for the

urgent need for resistance to the intensifying neoliberalization of societies (Nikolakaki, 2020). In this section of the paper, I will illustrate how neoliberalism is connected to imperialism, as central drivers of a global, neo-fascist assault, designed to control human and natural resources, including education.

Neoliberalism has been globalised and ‘globalization’ has become a key narrative since the 90s, following the fall of the USSR. It is presented as inescapable - Margaret Thatcher’s ‘there is no alternative’ - a conclusion that resonates with Fukuyama’s (1992) claims as to ‘the end of history’. Undoubtedly, imperialism has changed in the century since the First World War, when Lenin developed his critique of international capitalism, however, an understanding of it both historically and in its present forms remains a useful tool for analyzing neoliberal globalization.

Imperialism as Lenin described it, is the highest level of capitalism. As Lenin wrote: we must give a definition of imperialism that will include the following five of its basic features:

- (1) the concentration of production and capital has developed to such a high stage that it has created monopolies which play a decisive role in economic life;
- (2) the merging of bank capital with industrial capital, and the creation, on the basis of this “finance capital”, of a financial oligarchy;
- (3) the export of capital as distinguished from the export of commodities acquires exceptional importance;
- (4) the formation of international monopolist capitalist associations which share the world among themselves, and
- (5) the territorial division of the whole world among the biggest capitalist powers is completed. Imperialism is capitalism at that stage of development at which the dominance of monopolies and finance capital is established; in which the export of capital has acquired pronounced importance; in which the division of the world among the international trusts has

begun, in which the division of all territories of the globe among the biggest capitalist powers has been completed. (1914)

Globalization is imperialism within Neoliberal capitalism. As Samir Amin (2019) describes: Contemporary capitalism is a capitalism of generalized monopolies... This system of generalized monopolies is the result of a new stage in the centralization of capital in the countries of the triad that developed in the 1980s and '90s. Simultaneously, these generalized monopolies dominate the world economy. *Globalization* is the name that they themselves have given to the imperatives through which they exercise their control over the productive systems of world capitalism's peripheries (the entire world beyond the partners of the triad). This is nothing other than a new stage of imperialism.

Globalization, broadly defined, is not limited to a set of economic paradigms and related structural reforms. Rather, what we are dealing with is a wider imperial project, broadly serving powerful, overlapping, global interests:

- Wall Street and the Global Banking Apparatus;
- The Military Industrial Complex;
- Big Oil;
- The Biotech conglomerates.;
- Big Pharma;
- The Global Narcotics Economy and Organized Crime;
- The Media Conglomerates and the Information and Communication Technology Giants. (Chossudovsky, 2019).

This militarized agenda is geared towards supporting and endorsing these and other powerful interest groups. There is, inevitably, given the nature of global capitalism and different state interests, competition and contradictory pressures

within and between these sectors and interest groups, including mounting conflict between global conglomerates, each of which have their respective lobby groups (Chossudovsky, 2019).

United States imperialism, what Tariq Ali (2003) calls 'the mother of all fundamentalisms', has shifted from its previous Keynesian position of pseudo-liberalism, to fully embrace a fanatical, contemporary neo-liberalism (McLaren, 2005). The man that many view as the grandfather of neo-liberalism, Friedrich Von Hayek, someone whose work influenced both Margaret Thatcher and Ronald Reagan, favored military actions to defend US interests abroad. On the domestic front he favoured 'the invisible hand of the market' - in reality a manipulated market, contrary to claims as to 'the free market'. For Hayek, no state intervention against the interests of capital was to be tolerated. Yet, the state was vital, as to the imperial roles of the military, in the sphere of international relations.

Through global institutions that control finances around the world, debt and austerity measures are imposed towards the creation of a de facto world government. As Porfilio and Carr explain:

'To implement pro-capitalist policies and corporatist logics that strengthen their interests, corporate leaders have utilized communication technologies, military forces, and international associations, which have coalesced to form a *de facto* world government with the World Bank, the International Monetary Fund, and the World Trade Organization forming the center-piece (Chomsky, 199; Giroux, 2004; Klein, 2007; Porfilio & Malott, 2008). This "any means necessary approach" to propagate policies, practices and knowledge designed to control labor power and extract the world of its resources has exponentially intensified suffering and pain inflicted on large swaths of the world's population, while concomitantly concentrating the ruling elite's wealth and power.' (2010)

These International Financial Institutions constitute the tools for global integration of countries' economies to the USA empire. "As a result, globalization transforms the marketplace into the universal mechanism for economic regulations and accentuates and complicates international and internal inequalities" (Vilas, C and C. Pérez, 2002). Through financialization it has been able to control the world economy, as John Bellamy Foster (2019) claims (and is worth long quoting):

'The late 1970s and '80s saw the growth of neoliberal globalization, which sought with considerable success to subordinate states, particularly in the global South, to the rules of a world market where, by definition, the financial center rules. Late imperialism can thus also be seen as the period in which economic stagnation, financialization, and the planetary ecological crisis all emerged as widening, irreversible fissures, inseparable from the system of monopoly-capitalist accumulation itself and finding its ideological justification in neoliberalism.'... 'In this more integrated imperialist system, five hundred corporations account for nearly 40 percent of world revenue while most other firms in the world economy are entangled in the webs of these giant firms and exist as mere subcontractors. Production and circulation are now organized in the form of global commodity chains, serving to highlight the different roles of center and periphery within these commodity chains. This is in line with the global labor arbitrage, which serves to promote the intensified exploitation/expropriation of labor in the global South, leading to the capture of much of this extra value by the North. The heightened imperialist controls of global finance and communications are inherent parts of this process without which the globalization of production would not be possible.'"(2019).

Neoliberal globalization, imperialism, militarism, austerity measures as weapons of class war are wreaking the planet and human lives bringing immiseration and poverty all along the big portions of the world. What we observe today, with respect to imperialism in the 21<sup>st</sup> century, is a combination



of wars and the globalization of neoliberal 'austerity' measures through internationalized debt creation, designed to drain national economies. 'War and globalization go hand in hand. Militarization supports the imposition of macro-economic restructuring on targeted countries. It imposes military spending in support of the war economy at the expense of the civilian economy. It leads to economic destabilization and the demise of national institutions. Military interventions are coupled with concurrent acts of economic sabotage and financial manipulation. The ultimate objective is conquest of both human and natural resources as well as political institutions. Acts of war support a process of outright economic conquest. Debt conditionalities are imposed by foreign creditors. In turn, large sectors of the World population are impoverished through the concurrent imposition of deadly macro-economic reforms.' (Chossudovsky, 2019)

John Bellamy Foster (2019) concludes that, '[i]mperialism today is more aggressive and boundless in its objectives than ever. In the present period of declining U.S. hegemony, as well as economic and ecological decline, the dollar-oil-Pentagon regime, backed by the entire triad of the United States/Canada, Europe, and Japan, is exerting all of its military and financial power to gain geopolitical and geoeconomic advantages. The goal is to subordinate still further those countries at the bottom of the world hierarchy, while putting obstacles in the way of emerging economies, and overthrowing all states that violate the rules of the dominant order.' The rise of BRICS as an economic bloc, especially alongside China and Russia's challenging US imperialism, is potentially a game changer that could transform this narrative.

Many analysts predict that the end of US empire is approaching. As Chris Hedges (2018) says: 'The American empire is coming to an end. The U.S. economy is being drained by wars in the Middle East and vast military

expansion around the globe. It is burdened by growing deficits, along with the devastating effects of deindustrialization and global trade agreements. Our democracy has been captured and destroyed by corporations that steadily demand more tax cuts, more deregulation and impunity from prosecution for massive acts of financial fraud, all the while looting trillions from the U.S. treasury in the form of bailouts.'

The discourse for globalization has been put under question as sum. Both the rise of China and Russia as superpowers, and the never ending crisis of overproduction itself have lead to the questioning of its feasibility. As Stavros Mavroudeas explains:

'It was argued that 'globalization' would lead to the spread of global democracy. As Held & McGrew (1998: 242) typically argue "through a process of progressive, incremental change geo-political forces will come to be socialized into democratic agencies and practices". Moreover, it was argued that in 'globalization' the 'make business not war' motto would predominate as global entrepreneurship abhors nationalism and militarist conflicts. In fact, this is a renovated version of classical Liberalism's belief that was utterly disproved by the 1<sup>st</sup> WW. Unsurprisingly, both these political claims are also highly disputable. During the 'globalization' era there was actually a proliferation of nation-states (not only because of the disintegration of the Eastern bloc's states) which were seldom accompanied by bloody military conflicts. Furthermore, international agencies never ceased to be dominated by national interests and their workings remained field of power struggles rather than of democratic practices. On the basis of the aforementioned arguments, 'globalizationist' theory made two bold empirical claims. First, that 'globalization' is totally new phenomenon. And, second, that it is irreversible. Both claims are equally unfounded.' (2019).

If this is to happen, it won't be the first time in history a global empire has fallen. For thousands of years, empires have risen and fallen, as, over time, they

became inefficient and struggled to sustain their power. Before empires fall there is always a degradation of their power. Many scholars have compared the contemporary situation, with respect to the US, to the fall of Rome (Cullen Murphy, 2008). Stavrianos (1976) observes, that a striking difference between the present and the age of Rome is the presence of technology: 'The Roman empire was hobbled by technological stagnation, but the problem facing the world today is the exact opposite, how to make rational and humane use of a powerful and proliferating technology' (ibid., p. 165). Yet, at the same time, 'there is a remarkable similarity between these necrophilic historical epochs: a) economic imperialism, b) ecological degradation, c) bureaucratic ossification, and d) a flight from reason' (ibid). The Dark Ages, the historical epoch subsequent to the decline of the Roman Empire, were characterized by brutality. It was a time of constant warfare, rule by despotic chiefs and minor kings, migrations of whole nations of people over many hundreds or thousands of miles, the complete eradication of whole cities of people, a time plagued by violence, lust, greed and barbarism. Our 'new dark age' is, in similar fashion, characterized by domination by brutal ruling elites (–the identities of whom are mostly unknown to the majority of people), hegemonic ideologies, fundamentalisms, a growing denial of both human rights and democratic working conditions (including with respect to salaries and benefits), a conservative often reactionary culture, ignorance and 'miseducation' - and all of these conditions unfold under the guise of a determinism (a kind of superstition that was frequently dominant in the Dark Ages) that, in its turn, leads to feelings of helplessness, alienation, and surrender. It is worth mentioning that any ideology that opposes current neoliberal 'sophistication' is demonized – there should be no opposition, no alternative, no hope, just “massification”, pacification, and surrender (Nikolakaki, 2011).

## **Imperialism in education**

As Henry Giroux says: 'One of the challenges facing the current generation of educators, students and others is the need to address the question of what is the role and mission of education in a time of tyranny. What should it attempt to accomplish in a society at a historical moment when society is slipping over into an abyss of fascism? Central to such a challenge is the question of what education should accomplish in a democracy' (Giroux and Karlin, 2018:10). ' As Dave Hill (2006:10) describes Education also plays the ideological function of normalizing death by starvation amidst a sea of plenty, or normalizing immiseration and glorifying extreme wealth and exploitation of labour power, of pretending 'we are all in this together'.

Imperialism, as a prime goal of foreign policy, can only be achieved by a country that has already internalized imperialism, and education has long been a central site for doing so and for the manufacture of consent among the public for the acceptance of imperialism. Public schools in the United States have increasingly come to resemble both the military and prison systems, with the hiring of military generals as school administrators and heavy investment in security apparatus - metal detectors, high-tech dog-tag IDs, chain-link fences, and real-time Internet-based or hidden mobile surveillance cameras - plus, insistence on regimented school uniforms, the hiring of security consultants, surprise searches of students, and the presence of police on campuses (Saltman, 2007).

'Neoliberalism is an imposing transformation of society oriented toward a multiplication of enterprise that has made us humans into homo economicus, economic (hu)man, in a form new to the world. The economic (hu)man is not one of exchange from, an earlier time, but (hu)man the consumer, (hu)“man at enterprise in production”. Neoliberalism in its subjugation of society to

competition is not a market society, but an enterprise society' (Huckaby, 2019, p.5). New modes of subjectivity and citizenship are forged through a social insistence on prioritizing one's survival, solely through individual 'choice', leading to, an 'instrumentalism of existence' (Habermas, 1986, p. 31). As a result, in order to make a living, people are brought together primarily in competition, rather than in cooperation. The prevailing dictates of neoliberal global capitalism are consume, compete, and win at any cost, even if this involves killing. All the major communication institutions of modern society - including the media and education - facilitate the ongoing replacement of democratic values, by market and military values (Nikolakaki, 2011). Such marketwise and militarized education in the United States needs to be understood in relation to the enforcement of global corporate imperatives, as they expand markets through the real and symbolic violence of war (Saltman, 2007).

Organisations such as the OECD, UNESCO, the World Bank systematically produce international statistics that bring together a range of indicators relating to the piloting of reforms, thus making it possible '*to identify changes in quality and results; draw attention to aspects that must be improved; evaluate the impact of the effort of the system; develop initiatives in relation to other countries or political organisations; catalyse new ideas*'. (Neves, 2008: 75) There is no proof that these indicators actually work for the quality of education but they reassure that Neoliberalism is sustained and promoted. Prior to the 90s education was a responsibility of the state. Under Neoliberalism, International Financial Institutions define how education on a global scale operates. This cultural imperialism has had reactionary results. It has taken the authority of education away from the teachers and the community to those funding the International Financial Institutions, mainly Wall Street and the City of London. Peter Gowan (2009:10) says: "This may seem to imply a formidably centralized

financial power operating at the heart of these markets. Indeed: the New Wall Street System was dominated by just five investment banks, holding over \$4 trillion of assets, and able to call upon or move literally trillions more dollars from the institutions behind them, such as the commercial banks, the money-market funds, pension funds, and so on.”

In stark contrast and opposition to such conceptions and roles for education, Paulo Freire (1994) contends, that the fundamental importance of education lies with the 'act of cognition not only of the content, but of the *why* of economic, social, political, ideological, and historical facts...under which we find ourselves placed' (ibid., p101). Freire views human beings as both subjects and objects of history. In other words, though the forces of history shape our past and present, we can change the course of history, and in the process of doing so make history. 'The future does not make us, we make ourselves in the struggle to make it' (Freire, 2004, p.34). We can break the chains of history that have been passed down to us from previous generations and make our own history. Central to doing so, is an appreciation of Freire's claim that, while human beings are conditioned by history, they are not determined by it, for history concerns possibility - the possibility that things may be different and that we can make them so.

If a central objective of education is to construct, for every given society, the desired citizen for its envisioned future, then, by analyzing the nature of neoliberal educational reforms and pedagogy, one can ascertain what kind of future society is being envisioned. At a basic level the global, neoliberal assault on education, involves a shift from a focus on teaching, to a focus on testing (Phelps, 2016). As Henry Giroux (2012) points out: 'The most serious attack is being waged by advocates of neoliberalism, whose reform efforts focus narrowly on high-stakes testing, traditional texts and memorization drills. At the

heart of this approach is an aggressive attempt to disinvest in public schools, replace them with charter schools, and remove state and federal governments completely from public education in order to allow education to be organized and administered by market-driven forces'.

Contemporary education has no space for critical thinking or imagination that could lead to the development and instigation of alternatives to our everyday neoliberal fascisms, since the role it has been assigned is to ensure the reproduction of the inequalities that exist within society. The pedagogy inscribed within neoliberal schooling is one of fear and intimidation, designed to teach students to learn how to follow orders in a militarized school system. As Saltman (2007) suggests: 'In speaking of militarized public schooling in the United States, it is not enough to identify the extent to which certain schools (particularly urban, non-white schools) increasingly resemble prisons or serve as prime recruitment grounds for the military. Instead, militarized public schooling needs to be understood in terms of the enforcement of globalization through implementation of all the policies and reforms that are guided by neoliberal ideals.'

Through the discourse of neoliberalism, students are positioned as 'machines' of productivity, whose goal it is (or at least should be) to be career ready, within a global system of competition, between students, schools, regions and nation states. An idea of educational success itself then becomes economically rooted, individualized and future-oriented, which translates into an acute focus on academic achievement, that is itself "extraordinarily narrowly conceived [in policy and school practice]... as exclusively reflected by credentials from performance in examinations" (Stanger, 2018). This quantification of educational quality, which began with the focus on human capital theory in the

1960s during the Cold War, has been utilized as an argument for the ruling class to take over the administration of education.

*The business sector*

Under neoliberalism, control over education has gradually been removed from teachers and placed in the hands of the corporate business sector. Although corporate involvement in public schooling can be traced back to the introduction of public schooling, this deep corporatization of public schools began in earnest in the early eighties, reflecting the demands of a rising neoliberal ideology. Today, this means that '[p]rivatization takes the form of for-profit management of schools, “performance contracting,” for-profit charter schools, school vouchers, school commercialism, for-profit online education, online homeschooling, test publishing and textbook industries, electronic and computer based software curriculum, for-profit remediation, educational contracting for food, transportation, and financial services, to name but a partial list. These for-profit initiatives include the steady rise of school commercialism such as advertisements in textbooks, in class television news programs that show mostly commercials such as Channel One, soft drink vending contracts dominated by Coca Cola and Pepsi, sponsored educational materials that teach math with branded candy and sportswear, lessons in science and the environment by oil companies, and other attempts to hold youth as a captive audience for advertisers. The modeling of public schooling on business runs from classroom pedagogy that replicates corporate culture to the contracting out of management of districts to the corporatization of the curriculum to the “partnerships” that schools form with the business “community” that aim to market to kids' (Saltman, 2010, p.18).

First, the *organized business sector* consists of business federations such as the Business Roundtable, U.S. Chamber of Commerce, Confederation of British



Industry, and Business Europe. It also includes quasi-governmental agencies that operate, in effect, as arms of business and lead corporate school reform on a global scale; key among these are the Organization for Economic Cooperation and Development (OECD) and the World Bank. A second sector, *edubusiness*, encompasses large companies and investors with a direct financial stake in corporate reform; among these are publishing and testing companies, technology firms, and real estate and banking interests that feed off charter school expansion. A third group, the *philanthropic sector*, consists primarily of foundations, led in the United States by the “big three” organizations of Bill Gates, the real estate and insurance magnate Eli Broad, and the Walton family, owners of Walmart' (Ryan, 2017). Privatization of education, step by step, school by school, is the neoliberal agenda. In summary, the main objective of this coordinated attack on education is to control global education, in order to make profits, while also creating docile citizens and workers for capitalism, doing so by taking power away from teachers and parents and putting it in the hands of the transnational ruling class (Nikolakaki, 2019). This takeover of education is imperialist in nature and through transnational institutions, that function to neoliberalize education on a global scale, it utilizes education systems to colonize states, in an attempt to create a globalized neoliberal world.

As Lois Weiner (2012) points out, this attack is connected to capitalism's changing modes of production and as such, aims to create a workforce that, according to the World Bank, will not require more than an 8th grade/year of education for jobs that can be easily moved from one city, state, or country to another. For those doing so, it is obvious that, '[m]oney educating workers beyond the level most will need wastes scarce public funding; and minimally educated workers require minimally educated teachers, whose performance can be monitored through use of standardized testing' (ibid.).

*Data collection*

We have moved from testing to the teaching, to teaching to the test. Testing now dominates education. Standardized testing, as practiced in the United States, was originally created by one of the leading intellectual drivers of the eugenics movement (Singer, 2019). Standardized testing also serves to provide banks of student data for the purposes of 'data capitalism'. 'Student data is stored in databases designed to follow students from pre-Kindergarten up through their entry into the workforce' (Dougherty, 2015). The data stored in such longitudinal data systems can then be shared with the federal government and other agencies. 'Most student data is gathered at school via multiple routes; either through children's online usage or information provided by parents, teachers or other school staff. A student's education record generally includes demographic information, including race, ethnicity, and income level; discipline records, grades and test scores (Hill, 2014), disabilities and Individual Education Plans (IEPs), mental health and medical history, counseling records and much more' (Strauss, 2019). One of the biggest players in the field is Knewton. This company owns five orders of magnitude more data than Google about students. Data collected by schools is also offered for sale. Very few school districts explicitly restrict the sale or marketing of student information in their contracts with service providers (Bidwell, 2014). This data will follow the student for life (Hunt, 2016), in other words this data will continue to exist and potentially be used throughout the student's lifetime. Bloom, a data-driven software venture sponsored in 2013 by the Bill & Melinda Gates Foundation and News Corp's Rupert Murdoch, was focused on 'personalizing' school for each individual student, through data mining. It was closed down after a public outcry over its practice of keeping student data in Amazon's cloud services (Branstetter, 2015). According to The Economist (2017), the world's most valuable resource is no longer oil, but data.

The Bill & Melinda Gates foundation is a key supporter of Common Core and the focus on standardized testing. Microsoft's co-founder, Bill Gates, is open about how he believes AI can contribute to 'personalized learning' through his development of technology (Newton, 2016). Building AI needs massive data foundations (Marous, 2017). Bill Gates also thinks the replacement of workers by AI will be positive for people, claiming that it will provide them with more 'free' time (Archer, 2018). Given that this is but one example, among many, of the elite few continuing to own the means of production, it serves to underline how workers will increasingly be left to depend on whatever meagre options out with the world of mainstream work exist, for their and their families' survival (Nikolakaki, 2019). Underlying such issues is a pervasive culture of militarism, through which students and citizens are encouraged to identify with militarized solutions to social problems. Saltman's (2007) description of this militarism in education is 'education as enforcement', in which the objective is the enforcement of global neoliberal imperatives through a range of educational means.

### *Militarization in education*

Given that, as discussed above, neoliberal globalization is a form of imperialism, this involves raising children to be citizens for a more authoritarian form of state. As Gibson & Ross (2009) suggest, the education agenda is a war agenda. 'That agenda can be summarized by: 1. The regimentation of curricula (phonics, abstract math, the eradication of history and academic freedom); 2. Racist and anti-working class high stakes examination; 3. The deepening militarization of schooling (JROTC, ROTC, CIA, NSA, ICE, HS, etc. all over campuses).' Student debt is a tool for military recruiting.' A significant part of the recruiting push has been showing that the Army serves as a pathway to America's middle class, with several service leaders noting that their children used GI Bill benefits and ROTC scholarships.'...'One of the national crises right

now is student loans, so \$31,000 is [about] the average. You can get out [of the Army] after four years, 100 percent paid for state college anywhere in the United States. In 2019, the recruiters exceeded their goals due to student debt' (Rempfer, 2019).

This militarization of education has been a central aspect of the ongoing war against democracy in the USA. The DOD established Troops to Teachers (TTT) in 1994. Today it is funded by the U.S. Department of Education but run by the DOD through Defense Activity for Non-Traditional Education Support (DANTES), in Pensacola, Florida. Saltman and Gabbard (2011), in the introduction to their edited book, *Education as Enforcement - The Militarization and Corporatization of Schools*, put this TTT program into perspective, referring to it as part of military education, where this is understood as explicit efforts to expand and legitimate military training in public schooling. "These types of programs are exemplified by; JROTC (Junior Reserve Officer Training Corps) programs, the Troops to Teachers program that places retired soldiers in schools, the trend of hiring military generals as school superintendents or CEOs, the uniform movement, the Lockheed Martin corporation's public school in Georgia, and the army's development of the biggest online education program in the world as a recruiting inducement" (Elder, 2017).

According to the Army's School Recruiting Program Handbook, 'The objective of the Army's school recruiting program is to assist recruiters with programs and services so they can effectively penetrate the school market. The goal is school ownership that can only lead to a greater number of Army enlistments.' It is alarming to witness the rapid proliferation of programs that contribute to the militarization of American youth (Elder, 2017).

It is necessary to consider, alongside these measures; the police forces being installed in schools for 'protection' that serve to remove the responsibilities for pedagogy and the discipline of students from teachers, the school to prison pipeline, and the arming of teachers supposedly to protect students from mass shootings. Together, these measures serve to create a culture of fear in, around and about schools and schooling. New data from ACLU (2019) shows that 'millions of students are in schools with law enforcement but no support staff: 1.7 million students are in schools with police but no counselors; 3 million students are in schools with police but no nurses; 6 million students are in schools with police but no school psychologists; 10 million students are in schools with police but no social workers; 14 million students are in schools with police but no counselor, nurse, psychologist, or social worker'.

According to the Centers for Disease Control, the suicide rate among children ages 10 to 17 increased by 70 percent between 2006 and 2016. The recent wave of school shootings reminds us that unaddressed needs of children can result in tragic crisis. "The data suggests 1 in 5 youth will develop mental health difficulties eventually warranting a diagnosis, and 1 in 10 youth will be impacted by their mental health needs enough to require additional supports from schools. These mental health concerns can have serious impacts on students as they progress through school, and it contributes to nearly half of these youths eventually dropping out..... On the other hand, no data indicates that police in schools improve either the students' mental health, their educational outcomes, or their safety - indeed, in many cases they are causing harm. When in schools, police do what they are trained to do - detain, handcuff, and arrest. This leads to greater student alienation and a more oppressive school climate" (ACLU, 2019).

These are not coincidences. As Sheila Macrine (2016:17) suggests: 'The conceptualization of the pedagogies of neoliberalism, as tools for description and critique, are concerned with the ways in which specific knowledge structures are produced, reproduced and disseminated through hegemonic networks that underlie and promote neoliberal discourses and practices'. In neoliberal education, across the world, new modes of subjectivity and citizenship are being forged, through a social mandate to provide for one's survival solely through individual 'choice'. As a result, children are being taught in ways that bring them together in competition, rather than in cooperation, focused on making a living - with such education taking place within a climate of fear and loss of hope for any humane future (Nikolakaki, 2019).

The pedagogy of neoliberalism is based on fear. It involves alienation of children's minds and bodies, as well as those of teachers and the wider community. It does so through a globalization of such neoliberalized education, achieved by working through transnational institutions, whose decisions are primarily based on competition and militarism. As such, it provides the basis for a growing, new fascism, increasingly evident across the globe. If fear takes too much hold of a personality, rigidity of thought and paranoia enter. When this happens on a national level the same trend is seen. You end up with things like racism, sexism and hate. When hope is experienced in the extreme in a personality, a sense of being un-tethered to reality allows delusion to enter, and on a national level this puts a culture in danger of complacency and unpreparedness' (McFadden, 2011).

### **Hope and resistance in critical pedagogy**

One of the tasks of the progressive educator, through a serious, correct political analysis is to unveil opportunities for hope, no matter what the obstacles may be.

After all, without hope there is little we can do. For hope is an ontological need...The attempt to do without hope in the struggle to improve the world, as if that struggle could be reduced to calculated acts alone, or a purely scientific approach, is a frivolous illusion. (Freire, 1994)

What we need is the kind of critical hope which Freire (1994) describes in *Pedagogy of Hope*. This is a conception of hope which involves ‘pushing beyond simply dreaming of a better day and into consciously thinking about how to work toward that collective vision’ (Olson & Worsham, 2012, p.260). We live in truly dark times, in which we are experiencing rapidly intensifying social and ecological degradation. Given such contemporary contexts, it is easy to feel apognoisis/despair as we gaze upon the world that we currently live in. Although we are surrounded by many examples of resistance, it nonetheless seems that we are somehow failing to meet the growing and integrated, global, social, political, economic and political crises of our times. The reason for this, I believe, is that we have failed in the class war from above.

However, all the struggles in the world will not be sufficient, if we do not also possess critical or radical hope. What I’m proposing we attempt to cultivate, is not blind optimism, but what the philosopher Jonathan Lear calls ‘radical hope’. “‘What makes this hope *radical*,” Lear writes, “is that it is directed toward a future goodness that transcends the current ability to understand what it is.” Radical hope is not so much something you have but something you practice; it demands flexibility, openness, and what Lear describes as “imaginative excellence.” Radical hope is our best weapon against despair, even when despair seems justifiable; it makes the survival of the end of your world possible. Only radical hope could have imagined people like us into existence. And I believe that it will help us create a better, more loving future’ (Diaz, 2016).

As Henry Giroux (2018b) notes: 'now we are witnessing a proliferation of causes for hope: As the school year ended, thousands of courageous teachers throughout the United States led mass movements of demonstrations, walkouts and strikes. In the age of illiberal democracy and the growing fascism of the Trump administration, the unimaginable has once again become imaginable as teachers, inspired and energized by a dynamic willingness to fight for their rights and the rights of their students, are exercising bold expressions of political power.' Hope is essential for sustaining resistance. As Anna Wlodarczyk, et al. (2017) explain: 'we believe that protest participation, although initially motivated by emotions of a negative nature is, encouraged and sustained rather through its coexistence with positive emotions, such as hope.'

For decades, critical pedagogues have been utilizing critical pedagogical approaches to resist the global attack on education, attempting to both raise consciousness about issues of concern and engage in collective actions, including through rallies, protests, lawsuits, letter-writing campaigns, speaking at public meetings and on talk radio, and so forth (Niesz, 2018). Across the globe, the corporate takeover of educational governance, that is attempting to turn education into a private enterprise, is being met with dissent and massive mobilizations. The challenge that we now face is to find ways to imagine possibilities to escape the fatalistic and restrictive force on us, while accepting that 'there is [a] duty, for example, to never, under any circumstances, accept or encourage fatalist positions' (Freire, 2011). John Holloway (2014) suggests that : 'To learn hope is to see the force in the present of a world that does not yet exist but could do: the strength here and now of that which does not fit, of that which screams, however silently, "No, we do not accept, we shall create another world."' As Marx (2015) argued, in *The Communist Manifesto*, 'the motor force of history is the class struggle'.



Since the attack of neoliberalism is on the political, economic and cultural spheres of societies, our resistance likewise needs to incorporate actions across all three spheres. The first, political sphere, of resistance involves assisting each other to develop critical consciousness, or 'conscientizacao' in Paulo Freire's (2000) terms; that is, working towards shared understandings as to the recognition that neoliberalism in education is a form of class war being waged on potential futures for human societies. With respect to the second, economic sphere, the battle is to organize across multiple levels to prevent the cuts in public education funding. With regard to the third, cultural sphere, the objective is to create a culture of solidaristic resistance both in and outside the education system. As such, teachers are actors in emancipatory class struggles. Teachers are not merely fighting for better wages; this is only one front of a much wider struggle. They are fighting against the privatization of education, they are fighting for smaller classes, for more teaching and less testing, and for better working conditions and hence better teaching and learning conditions for both students and themselves. Teachers know that if the neoliberal project succeeds in education, then this will have severely negative consequences in the future, across society more broadly (Nikolakaki, 2019).

'To attempt to do without hope, which is based on the need for truth as an ethical quality of the struggle, is tantamount to denying that struggle one of its mainstays' (Freire, 1994, p.8). Giroux calls for actions of resistance beyond the classroom, taking place across the 'public sphere' – a conception similar in nature to Gramsci's notion of 'civil society'. 'Radical education of this kind would demystify intellectuals and clarify the relation between theory and practice. Theorizing about the nature of social reality would be recognized as something we all engage in and would be claimed as communal work; the truth claims of various theories would be analyzed and evaluated through dialogue by participants in such alternative public spheres' (Giroux, 1983, p.240).

Teachers' unions have been under attack because, throughout the world, they are viewed as amongst the most significant barriers to the implementation of neoliberalism's project for the privatization of education. Teachers and students, across the globe, from Mexico and Chile to Greece and Spain, and even in the USA, have witnessed and reacted to the devastating outcomes of neoliberalism in education. As a result, teachers in many countries, across five continents, are taking part in strike movements of unprecedented international proportions.

As Compton and Weiner (2008) explain, '[t]eachers unions are grappling with the increasing privatization of education services, the introduction of business "quality control" measures into education, and the requirement that education produce the kind of minimally trained and flexible workforce that corporations require to maximize their profits'. By taking the actions of resistance that they are presently engaged in, they are fighting for the soul of education and the future prosperity of society. 'Indeed, unions work as a form of social capital, providing a network of resources that enable teachers to protect themselves from overt forms of exploitation' (Robertson, 2008). However, often the bureaucratization of the unions and a range of compromises made by them have worked against the teachers' strikes, and thus teachers need to find ways to resist and move beyond such decisions. Not all unions are sufficiently supportive of the workers they claim to represent. Teachers thus occupy an invidious position. 'Pressured within audit culture and the constant surveillance of accountability regimes to participate in practices that dehumanize, silence and de-form education, teacher educators are caught between compliance and complicity or the potential and risks of resistance' (Madeloni, 2014). In making such decisions, the words of Paulo Freire (2011) are worth bearing in mind, 'the future is seen not as inexorable but as something that is constructed by people engaged together in life, in history. It's the knowledge that sees history as

possibility and not as already determined. The world is not finished. It is always in the process of becoming'.

## **Conclusions**

Although crucial, resistance alone is not enough to stop globalized neoliberalism, in education or more widely across societies. Stopping neoliberal reforms through resistance is a necessary, initial step. There is an urgent need to go beyond such resistance and to build a global revolt, across societies, to struggle against the class war being waged by the ruling class on their futures, and to create the other, alternative, societies and worlds, based on social justice, that are necessary and possible. 'Critical educators can indeed recognize that education has the potential to fuel the flames of resistance to global capitalism as well as the passion for socialist transformation' (Hill, 2006).

Peter McLaren (2003) says: 'Schools consciously and unconsciously justify oppression and the tyranny of governments. Government officials claim that schools in capitalist societies such as the United States are equal and that as long as students remain comfortably ensconced within the cultural hegemony of consumerism, and adhere to the dictates of the administration (which are meant to be in tandem with the logic of the market), the country can enhance the value of its international capital and can compete within the international market'. This provides a useful description of imperialism, as justified and driven through militarism in education. I agree with Saltman (2007) when he says: 'The movement against militarism in education must go beyond the schools and challenge the many ways that militarism as a cultural logic enforces the expansion of corporate power and decimates public power. Such a movement must include the practice of critical pedagogy and ideally, also link with other movements against oppression, such as the anti-globalization, feminist, labor,

environmental, and antiracism movements. Together, we can form the basis for imagining and implementing a just future.'

As Dinerstein and Denuline (2012) suggest: 'Hope is a fundamental human driving force. The principle of hope has a two-fold significance. On the one hand, it informs present individual and collective forms of resistance that intend to move beyond global capitalism. It presents an alternative vision to development that will not come about through state power. Alternatives to development initiatives have put at the center not only the significance of nature, the collective use of natural resources, the construction of a solidarity economy, the idea of substantive equality and radical democracy (Santos and Rodriguez Garavito, 2006), but also the idea that it is necessary to imagine another world in order to change this one (Acosta, 2010). By imagining we mean the concrete experience of anticipating a better future in the present.' Hannah Arendt (1954), proposes that 'education is the point at which we decide whether we love the world enough to assume responsibility for it'. As Freire claims: 'Man's ontological vocation is to be a Subject who acts upon and transforms his world, and in so doing moves toward ever new possibilities of fuller and richer life individually and collectively' (Shaul, 2004). 'It is our duty, in building this better world, to become fully human''.

Overall, as I have been arguing through this paper, capitalism in recent decades has been becoming more aggressive and totalitarian. Education has been suffering from imperialism and militarism along with other sections of society. In order for change to happen, one must never abandon hope. Fear and despair is the basis for an immobilized society that will passively accept the ruling class's dictums. This is something we cannot allow for the sake of humanity itself. Critical Pedagogy, even in the darkest times, is connected to hope by

definition, since it visions another world that is possible and struggles for it. For as Brecht said:

In the dark times  
Will there also be singing?  
Yes, there will also be singing  
About the dark times.

Critical pedagogy is one of the strongest powers for social change, for it builds in the minds of the future generation, the whys and the how to resist and claim back humanity. It is our duty for everyday struggle to make the future more egalitarian and prosperous by erasing exploitation of humans by humans.

'The future isn't something hidden in a corner. The future is something we build in the present.' - Paulo Freire

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