

Review Essay: Neoliberalism, education and strategies of resistance

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Hill, D. (ed) (2009) *Contesting Neoliberal Education: Public Resistance and Collective Advance*, New York/Abingdon: Routledge, 276 pp.

Ross, E.W. and Gibson, R. (eds) (2007) *Neoliberalism and Education Reform*, Cresskill, N.J. : Hampton Press, 312 pp.

Background

The value of education for exploitative relations under industrial capitalism has been understood for some time. The need for state intervention in education to further the interests of capitalism has been recognised since the nineteenth century. As Jones and Novak (2000) observe, state education in Britain was established to subvert the radical threat posed by working-class self-education provided in miners' schools, night classes, Chartist schools and so forth. Its main purpose was to prepare the workforce of the future and inculcate young people with the 'right' social attitudes. Whilst schooling and higher education around the mid twentieth century did offer sites for greater critical understanding to be nurtured (in Britain under the influence of Keynesian welfarism during the immediate post-war period), since the 1980s education in Britain, the US and developing nations is increasingly being shaped by neoliberal ideology. It is the effects of this latter development with which both these edited texts are primarily concerned. More specifically, *Neoliberalism and Education Reform* sets out to achieve two principal aims: first, to offer a critical assessment of state education systems under neoliberal welfare regimes; and second, to present counter concepts about educational issues based on a Marxian understanding. As such, it aims to provide a 'tool bag' with which to, firstly, scrutinise neoliberal perspectives on education (and, by doing so, expose their inherent flaws and contradictions); and secondly, to consider alternative 'democratic' education practices capable of generating a more 'just' society. Meanwhile, *Contesting Neoliberal Education: Public Resistance and Collective Advance* (one of four books in a Routledge series of studies in Education and Neoliberalism edited by the prolific Marxist scholar and activist Dave Hill) is a more ambitious project – one that seeks to chart the possibilities for arriving at a postcapitalist society. In doing this, the book describes a number of practical campaigns and strategies of resistance to neoliberal organising in education.

Neoliberalism and Education Reform

The focus of analysis in the first three chapters of *Neoliberalism and Education Reform* is education policy under neoliberalism in the US and England. Whilst proponents of markets in education systems argue that they are inherently more efficient and equitable than

bureaucratic arrangements (by being more responsive to needs and desires), David Hursh shows, in Chapter 1, how the increasing marketisation of education in the US and England since the 1980s has resulted in the exacerbation of inequalities between and within schools. Furthermore, in allowing the interests of business to increasingly pervade all areas of education - through managerial control systems, programme specifications, benchmark statements, curricula design, the production of course materials, school take-overs, and so forth - education's social purpose - for generating a critically aware, empathetic citizenry, freely engaged in democratic participation - has been eroded. Hursh goes on to ask: 'How is it then that changes that benefit corporations but may harm the larger social welfare ... are being implemented?' (p.26). Hursh suggests three reasons: increasing individualisation and a breakdown in social solidarity; the ability of the state to socially construct a 'crisis' of 'failing standards' within the education system (and subsequently retain legitimacy by appearing to take action to address these failing standards); and state interventions in education in the interest of powerful corporations (presented in the language of fairness and equity). These arguments are largely supported by Pauline Lipman in her assessment of the US' 2002 No Child Left Behind (NCLB) Act in Chapter 2.

Lipman analyses the discourse used within the Act to define the US education problem and its solution. This argued that state schools were particularly failing African-American pupils and that this therefore required tough measures in the interest of greater equality, accountability and choice. These measures contained more standardised test-driven teaching and stringent sanctions for failure that included allowing students to transfer schools, supplementing existing teaching resources, replacing teachers, and restructuring schools (including privatisations)¹. In practice, Lipman identifies a highly racialised hidden agenda with NCLB that includes the intensified surveillance, control and policing of schools which are (coincidentally) mainly populated by African-American and Latino students (leading to their increasing criminalisation). According to Lipman, in the context of neoliberal globalisation and its consequences for the restructuring of local economies and changes to the role of the state, African Americans and some Latinos have become 'a surplus population to be regulated, policed and expelled from the city' (p.40). Neoliberal education reforms must therefore be understood not only in terms of their utility for industry (through the production of a docile, flexible workforce) but also for the white supremacist culture (protecting it from contamination by 'alien sub-cultures').

Understanding the disciplinary purpose of education is taken up by Kevin D. Vinson and E. Wayne Ross in Chapter 3. For them, disciplinary power over schooling occurs through the convergence of *surveillance* (where the many are visible to the few - e.g. through school inspections) and *spectacle* (where the few are visible to the many - e.g. through media-reported standardised test scores). This new disciplinarity in education reflects the belief amongst neoliberal theorists that such mechanisms are essential for the health of schools - 'making it *possible* and among some people (even) *desirable* to see and be seen continuously and simultaneously' (p.69 - emphasis in original). As Vinson and Ross argue, much of this is illusory. 'Both media and public, via test scores, create understandings grounded not in what actually occurs in schools and classrooms - nor on what teachers and students actually do - but on how this all is *represented*' (p.71 - emphasis in original). There is a growing realisation, for instance, that year-on-year increases in exam results or test-score standards is the result of intensive preparation on passing exams or tests (to the detriment of substantive learning) and the increasing number of students excluded from such assessments². In truth, more children are being left behind in the US - particularly African-American and Latino children - whilst teachers and students are increasingly alienated, in the Marxist sense, from the learning process. There is also evidence to suggest 'that the pressure and anxiety associated with high-stakes testing is unhealthy for children, literally making them sick' (p.76)³.

In Chapter 4, Gilbert G. Gonzalez addresses the issue of 'race' in US education policy further in his historical analysis of American imperialism and the education of Mexican immigrants. Gonzalez traces the origins of US imperialism - that is, a deliberate policy of expansionism - to the late nineteenth and early twentieth centuries. By 1900, US capital investment dominated the Mexican economy with profound consequences for Mexican society - including the emergence of an industrialised urban working class amongst the indigenous population (spatially and socially segregated from the comfortable American minority). US capitalist enterprise encouraged migration within Mexico and across the border into the southern states. Alongside the economic domination of Mexico emerged a discourse of imperialism that socially constructed 'the Mexican' as inferior - as having 'a child-like mental ability [A]s lazy, lascivious, prone to violence, inveterate thieves, immoral, unambitious, fatalistic' (p.94). This racialised discourse served to conceptualise the 'Mexican problem' and the solution - legitimising measures aimed at 'civilising' this 'alien culture'. Within the US, Mexican immigrants were seen as a potential threat to the wellbeing of Americans and therefore policy measures sought to isolate and contain them. This included segregated schools. Moreover, with the rise of scientific racism and the idea that there is a relationship between phenotype and intellectual ability, Mexican children were judged to be genetically and culturally defective, and mentally inferior. As a consequence, Mexican children were channelled into an industrial education system with limited academic training - to be culturally cleansed ('Americanised') and prepared as cheap, exploitable labour for the capitalist system. Whilst movements for democratic schooling have existed for some time within the Mexican community, particularly since the 1960s, this struggle is a profoundly challenging one - being, as Gonzalez states, ultimately 'a struggle against imperialism' (p.104).

In Chapters 5 and 6, Dave Hill and Glenn Rikowski respectively contextualise neoliberal education regimes in a global context. Hill shows how educational change in Britain and the US is being shaped by the World Trade Organisation (WTO) and other 'global clubs for the mega-capitalists' (p.110) - aided by ideologically compliant governments and, it should be added, opportunist educational administrators and academics - in the interest of powerful multinational and transnational corporations. He describes how education has become increasingly subordinated to the requirements of capital (the 'business agenda') in terms of (a) making sure schools produce 'compliant, ideologically indoctrinated, pro-capitalist, effective workers' (p.120) and (b) making sure that opportunities exist for businesses to make profits from education. A corollary of this development has been widening inequalities and the erosion of democratic accountability within not only schooling but also society. Hill goes on to expose inherent flaws in neoliberal thought on the role of the market in education. Indeed, he speaks of the market 'perverting education' (p.123) because the needs of the two are incompatible. 'On the one hand, capital requires educated and flexible workers, but on the other hand, it cannot countenance that workers should be thinking *fundamental critique* for themselves' (p.125 - emphasis in original). As Hill argues, capitalist markets and education hold opposing goals and motivations. He argues that education is not about satisfying market demand in order to make a profit. It is about satisfying the needs of those motivated to learn - allowing them possibilities to explore different understandings and ways of being regardless of profit considerations. In considering *what is to be done* to resist the neoliberal agenda in education, Hill calls on critical educators to agitate not only within the classroom but also 'within other sites of cultural reproduction' (p.131) - connecting with 'different economic and social sectors, linking different strategies' (p.134). In respect of where this agitation might lead, Hill concludes that 'Marxism ... remains the most viable option in the pursuit of economic justice and social change' (p.137).

Rikowski's chapter looks in greater detail at the way the WTO's General Agreement on Trade in Services (GATS) is fostering the operationalisation of the business takeover of schools in England. The seeds of the GATS were sown in 1943 during World War II when the US and British governments began talks aimed at establishing a post-war international trading system, free from the protectionism of the inter-war years. In October 1947, 23 countries signed up to the first General Agreement on Tariffs and Trade (GATT) – reducing tariffs on about a fifth of world trade. The signatories also agreed to the establishment of an International Trade Organisation (ITO) to complement the World Bank and the International Monetary Fund (IMF) in establishing trade rules. However, the ITO was never ratified – largely because it held the potential to protect workers' rights and the needs of developing economies (contrary to the interests of powerful corporations). The GATT survived, however, and continued through to 1995 when its functions were taken over by the WTO. The WTO extended the remit of the GATT to include several further agreements including the GATS.

Whilst the WTO is expected to operate on a system of consensus, as Rikowski observes, 'in practice this process is driven by the "Quad" – the United States, the EU, Japan, and Canada' (p.149). In turn, representatives of the Quad 'are lobbied heavily by transnational corporations. ... Thus, the WTO provides an "enforceable global commercial code" based on close relations with transnational capital, making it "one of the main mechanisms of corporate globalization"' (p.149). The key principle underpinning the activities of the WTO is the removal of all barriers to free trade. Its ideological conviction is that trade liberalisation leads to greater competition, market efficiency and enhanced wellbeing. The GATS aims to free up around 160 service sectors to international trade. Although it is unclear whether public services come under the GATS, the EU is committed to it for primary and secondary education. Section 5 of the EU Schedule of Commitment indicates that 'the GATS refers to "privately funded education services"' (p.154) – however, as Rikowski points out, what is defined as 'privately funded education services' is ambiguous. For example, the injection of private finance in school building programmes (through the Private Finance Initiative), the ability of school governing bodies to set up as trading companies under the 2002 Education Act, the promotion of 'partnerships' between private and state schools, and encouragement for the business sponsorship of specialist schools and academies all opens up schools to the GATS. Effectively, only education systems funded entirely by the state and with no commercial involvement are excluded from the GATS. As Rikowski warns, 'One day, a company in Detroit or Vancouver that focuses primarily on the bottom-line could control a local secondary school in England. Now, that would certainly stretch the notion of a "community school" and the concept of democratic accountability' (p.157).

In Chapter 7, Patrick Shannon uses the case study of teaching elementary reading to illustrate the way that the actions of both teachers and their students are being regulated – particularly through defining 'learning to read' in terms of the ability to score well in tests, and the imposition of 'scientifically-based' core reading texts and scripted lessons (monopolised by three large publishing houses). Compelling teachers and students to 'follow the script' ensures their compliance in a project designed to meet the needs of the capitalist system – i.e. the production of culturally, socially and economically valuable commodities (literate workers). 'Many remark that these changes have turned students away from using reading and writing to engage actively in civic life, reducing the quality and quantity of public democratic discourse' (p.162). Moreover, 'The human essence of reading, teaching, and learning are lost from view' (p.172). Shannon considers possibilities for generating forms of schooling that 'encourage and foster the realization of differentiated human capacities' (p.173) – something that will require 'a dialectical effort to change the minds and social conditions of teachers, administrators and taxpayers. This is what Marx meant by praxis, the bond between thinking and doing in which ideas and ideals can only be

vindicated and validated by some kind of activity' (p.173). This will require exposing contradictions inherent in capitalist systems, and strategies of resistance built on alliances between teachers and other issue-based movements at both the local level (e.g. addressing the need for liveable incomes, health care and affordable decent housing) and the global (e.g. on opposing the GATS). Here, Shannon's 'projects of possibility' reflect those outlined earlier by Hill in Chapter 5.

The theme of resistance continues in Chapter 8 with Rich Gibson's assessment of the utility of Paulo Freire's critical pedagogy for mobilising social change⁴. Gibson argues that by focusing on the role of critical consciousness, Freire's approach offers important lessons for radical social movements – aiding them in finding out the answers to such questions as 'where do we want to go?' and 'how do we hope to get there?'. In adopting such an approach, Gibson stresses that a social praxis rooted in dialectical materialism is the only reliable means of locating 'truth' (p.192) and exposing hidden meaning. In arguing his case, Gibson is critical of postmodernist strains of Freireanism (such as discourse analyses) because, he claims, they fail to acknowledge the centrality of class struggle.

In Chapter 9, John F. Welsh argues the case for higher education research based on critical perspectives and a dialectical methodology. As Welsh argues, at present 'the body of knowledge about higher education, taken as a whole, fails to meaningfully inform the higher education community, much less the society it serves, about the instructional, curricular, financial, and organizational dynamics of the higher learning' (pp.217-18). This is because higher education research has become too technocratic and insular, dominated by positivistic methodologies largely serving the interests of managerial elites. '[P]recious little research is either critical of higher education or employs research methodologies that open new vistas into how this major societal institution can become more responsive to human interests' (p.218). Welsh sets out a methodological framework for researching higher education in a way that allows false assumptions inherent in neoliberal ideology to be exposed. The basis of his framework is shaped by the ideas of Hegel, Marx, Lukacs, Gramsci and Marcuse.

In Chapter 10, Les Levidow continues with the theme of the purpose of higher education for capitalism. He describes the way higher education under neoliberalism has become increasingly directed at meeting the needs of labour markets (accumulation) and reinforcing dominant ideologies (legitimation and social control). A key tool increasingly used to support this agenda is information and communication technology (ICT) - a process Marcuse believed alienated humans by subordinating them to 'technical efficiency and necessity' (cited p.241). At the same time, however, Levidow acknowledges possibilities for students and tutors to create spaces for generating 'critical citizenship [and] even ... overt challenges to capitalist agendas' (p.238). He describes how such confrontations emerged in African universities in the 1980s when academics and students joined forces to challenge the structural adjustment programmes (SAPs) imposed by the IMF and World Bank. Levidow concludes by arguing that more 'imaginative efforts will be needed to counter the neoliberal agenda' (p.252). In particular, he identifies a need to link resistances across constituencies and localities. '[W]e need an international network for several purposes: (a) to link all targets of the neoliberal attack worldwide, (b) to circulate analyses of anti-marketisation struggles, (c) to enhance solidarity efforts, and (d) to turn ourselves into collective subjects of resistance and learning for different futures' (p.252). Levidow also sees the potential for exploiting ICT as a key tool in facilitating this network and 'enhancing critical debate among students and with teachers' (p.252).

The book concludes with Peter McLaren's chapter on critical pedagogy and class struggle in the context of neoliberal globalisation. McLaren's analysis of critical pedagogy shares some of the concerns expressed by Gibson in Chapter 8. In particular, he is critical of

postmodernist strains of critical pedagogy for seemingly having 'collapsed into an ethical licentiousness and a complacent relativism that has displaced the struggle against capitalist exploitation with its emphasis on the multiplicity of interpersonal forms of oppression' (p.267). McLaren's concern is that critical pedagogy has abandoned class analysis in favour of a postmodernist interest in a politics of difference – 'a position that effectively substitutes truth for singular, subjective judgement and silences historical materialism as the unfolding of class struggle' (p.268). His point is that debates over educational reforms need to be 'seen through the palimpsest of Marxist critique' (p.268) – a critique best able 'to challenge the rule of capital and the social relations of production at the basis of the capitalist state' (p.268). Critical pedagogies neglectful of such analyses will be 'doomed to remain trapped in domesticated currents and vulgarized formations' (p.276). Moreover, organising resistance in the context of neoliberal global capitalism requires 'a philosophy of organization that sufficiently addresses the dilemma and the challenge of the global proletariat' (p.282). This echoes Levidow's call for the development of global anticapitalist alliances.

Contesting Neoliberal Education: Public Resistance and Collective Advance

Contesting Neoliberal Education describes a number of resistance campaigns against neoliberal organising in education. These include trade union and global resistance movements against the GATS; campaigns for teacher education reform built on a radical Left/Green agenda; the adoption of pedagogical practices that foster collaboration; campaigns in Britain against budget cuts, local state opt outs, standardised assessments, education action zones and private sector involvement in schooling; anti-racism and free speech movements in the US; the use of 'guerrilla pedagogy' to give 'voice' and 'agency' to the oppressed, and to expose the harmful effects of US imperialism; radical education reforms in Brazil; teacher campaigns in Latin America in pursuance of both better working conditions and more socially just social policies; Chávez's revolutionary reforms in Venezuela; and examples from the history of socialist pedagogy (including the Soviet Union, Cuba, Mexico, Nicaragua and Venezuela).

The book opens with a foreword from Peter McLaren and, curiously, an introduction by Gustavo Fischman (rather than the editor, Dave Hill). McLaren describes the 'assault on Keynesian-inspired state intervention and trade union power' (p.ix) that accompanied the ascendancy of neoliberalism under Thatcher and Reagan. The political right will have us believe that, over the last thirty years, there has been a qualitative shift in the nature of the global economic order. Neoliberal global capitalism is presented as 'natural' - the only realistic means of attaining social wellbeing and prosperity for all. In contrast, the socialist paradigm is presented as obsolete. The nation state can no longer be expected to protect the wellbeing of its citizens, and individuals and families must now rely on the market and civil society for their welfare and security. *Contesting Neoliberal Education* seeks to challenge the assumptions behind these claims and 'offer strategies against neoliberalism's "forced normality"' (p.xv). In his introductory chapter, Fischman describes some of the detrimental effects of neoliberal organising which highlight the urgency for strategies of resistance – in particular, the disproportionate gains accrued by the world's elite (the income share of the richest 20 percent compared to the poorest increased from 30:1 to 61:1 in the last 30 years – with 3.3 billion of the world's population living on less than \$750 per year) and the increasing unease felt by more and more people caused by a sense of losing control over the social, political and economic forces shaping their lives.

In Chapter 2, Mike Waghorne addresses the World Trade Organisation's (WTO's) General Agreement on Trade in Services (GATS) from the perspective of the Public Services

International (PSI), the global trade union federation for public sector trade unions. The PSI are particularly concerned with the '*potential dangers*' (p.9 – emphasis added) of the GATS – these being primarily its threat to public services remaining in public hands. Whilst the GATS would appear to allow governments the right to retain control over public services, this 'right' remains vague. It does not cover services 'in the exercise of governmental authority' unless these are delivered 'on a commercial basis' or 'in competition with another service provider' (p.18). What this all means remains unclear. For instance, do university fees constitute a commercial transaction? And are universities in competition with each other? In the case of developing nations, because of the close policy relationship between the WTO, the World Bank and the International Monetary Fund (IMF) – and because the World Bank and IMF dictate to developing countries on how to run their public services (under pressure from the 'Quad' of influential actors Rikowski alludes to in *Neoliberalism and Education Reform* - the United States, the EU, Japan and Canada) – these countries can be made to liberalise their services under the GATS in the interest of multinational enterprises. Failure to do so could result in sanctions such as the loss of loans, aid or investment.

In Chapter 3, Dave Hill and Simon Boxley explain how teacher education in England and Wales has been de-theorised since the 1980s – resulting in the loss of equality issues in curriculum content and educational objectives. They argue that this change 'is a symptom of the project of capital, which requires the suppression of oppositional, critical and autonomous thought' (p.30). To counter this development, Hill and Boxley define four overarching radical left principles for a re-theorised egalitarian education covering: (a) vastly increased equality of outcomes; (b) comprehensive provision; (c) democratic community control of education; and (d) use of the local and national state to achieve a socially just (egalitarian), anti-discriminatory society. They propose mobilising support for this agenda on the back of the growing movement for environmental and ecological justice – a '*critical ecopedagogy*' based on a further twenty radical left/Green-left principles for education covering *inter alia* the need for: vastly increased state funding; a more humanised school system; cooperation between schools rather than competition; increased local democratic control; a rich and varied curriculum that includes the fostering of critical awareness and social cooperation; creative assessment practices; and teachers and administrators acting as role models of integrity and care. Hill and Boxley suggest that these principles should form the basis of a core curriculum in teacher education – a curriculum that assumes an '*explicit emancipatory, critical and transformatory role of teacher educators, education, and schooling in the interests of social and environmental justice and egalitarianism*' (p.50). Whilst acknowledging the existing constraints preventing teachers and the education system working in such a way, Hill and Boxley believe 'Spaces do exist for counter-hegemonic struggle – sometimes (as now) narrower, sometimes (as in the 1960s and 1970s) broader. ... [W]e maintain that whatever space does exist should be exploited' (p.50)⁵. Moreover, strategies of resistance within the education field need to engage with '*other arenas of progressive struggle*' (p.50) if they are to have any chance of succeeding.

In Chapter 4, Terry Wrigley describes the key historical role education has played for sustaining capitalism – summed up succinctly by Hannah Moore in the early nineteenth century when she justified the importance of Sunday Schools for training up 'the lower classes in habits of industry and piety ... Beautiful is the order of society when each, according to his place, pays willing honour to his superiors' (p.61). In contemporary times – with global capitalism in crisis due to the collapse of financial markets, rising debt and poverty, the disintegration of the planet's ecosystem and the permanent 'war on terror' - this validation remains as crucial as ever for capitalism's survival in order to 'close down the discursive spaces where ... an active critical understanding could be developed' (p.62). The

utility of neoliberal education reforms for masking the connection between global crises and capitalism needs to be understood, exposed and challenged. 'Voice and agency' (p.68) in the education system has been systematically suppressed by the disciplining of educational institutions (through external audits and inspections), centralised control of the curriculum (programme specifications and benchmark statements), and centrally prescribed methods of teaching and learning. Wrigley offers alternative suggestions for developing a pedagogy that encourages 'learner initiative and collaboration' (p.75) around issues of common concern (in contrast to the competitive individualism fostered in mainstream schooling).

Chapter 5 is written by Bernard Regan, a radical activist who describes various campaigns against the detrimental effects of neoliberal education reforms in Britain from the 1980s onwards – e.g. the Socialist Teachers Alliance (STA) against cuts in education budgets; the National Union of Teachers (NUT) against proposals for schools opting out of local education authority (LEA) control; the parents/teaching union alliance against Standardised Assessment Tasks (SATs) in Scotland; the Anti-SATs Alliance of teachers, parents, governors and other activists in England; the STA campaign against Education Action Zones (EAZs); NUT action against academies and the interference of private sponsors in schooling (leading to the establishment of the Anti-Academies Alliance); and a coalition of teaching unions, parents, governors and students against the private finance initiative (PFI) and public-private partnerships (PPPs) in education. Whilst this chapter is a little diffuse, it does highlight how collective resistance remains a distinct possibility. This latter point is reflected in the next chapter, Chapter 6, by Rich Gibson, Greg Queen, E. Wayne Ross and Kevin Vinson, which charts the origins and development of the Rouge Forum in the US (a movement for progressive change in both the education system and society) and its theory and practices.

The origins of the Rouge Forum in the 1990s are rooted in the concerns of anti-racism and free speech activists within the National Council for the Social Studies (NCSS). The development of its campaign saw its struggle advance beyond a critique of increasing corporate interference in schooling, racism and the silencing of dissent to one highlighting the connection between these tendencies and US imperialism (including permanent warfare) and neoliberal capitalism. The Rouge Forum's theoretical critique is rooted in dialectical materialism and is dismissive of postmodernist Freirean critical pedagogy – accusing this of failing to address the material basis of inequality or giving sufficient attention to class consciousness. Its practices are both research and action oriented - seeking to present empirically-grounded arguments upon which to establish grassroots organising. A range of organising strategies are described including: speaking at meetings and conferences; radical teaching and publishing; joining community coalitions and engaging in community uprisings; building contacts with the media; and producing a website. One particular tactic deployed - described as 'guerrilla theatre' - is to target conference delegates with bingo cards containing common 'neoliberal' buzzwords. Whoever completes a card first shouts 'MEAP-SCHMEAP!' (MEAP being Michigan's state exam).

In Chapter 7, John E. Lavin offers a series of definitions for guerrilla pedagogy and its utility for challenging US imperialism. For Lavin, guerrilla pedagogy is an ethic concerned with human dignity rather than violence. It seeks to offer an alternative understanding to 'the curriculum of "lectures in obedience [and] loyalty" that the United States made the premise of its colonial domination on the island [Dominican Republic] in 1922 and 1923' (p.139). The guerrilla movement in pedagogy opposes the occupation of the Caribbean mind, military force and violent counter insurgency. 'It is an educational initiative, not a military impulse, and emerges from a vigorous interest in the structures of thought and language enunciated by [for example, such figures as] the Salvadorian poet, Roque Dalton ... who chose to dramatise the struggle of the Salvadoran poor not with guns and militia but within

the literary framework of a theatre and its stage and proscenium' (p.139). As a counterpoint to military violence, the guerrilla pedagogy of Dalton poses 'the alternative of peaceful, collective, political awareness that draws back the curtain and allows the spectacle of humanity to engage the audience' (p.140). By facilitating the sharing of imagination, guerrilla pedagogy exposes human suffering to public scrutiny. 'It is at once an aesthetic and sociological venue' (p.140). A similar approach is found in the Salvadorian Bishop Oscar Romero's style of preaching. Romero drew on metaphors to encourage his congregation to engage in critical reflection. For instance, he appealed to the pro-life rhetoric of 'a life must never be cut short' - not so much in support of the anti-abortion movement but to advocate 'for the birth and protection of labor unions. ... Without jobs, how can Salvadorans support more children?' (p.141). Moreover, Romero's main purpose was not to demand higher wages and living standards but to 'identify as fundamental the pedagogical right to dialogue' (p.141). Guerrilla pedagogy addresses the needs of the poor to voice their suffering, and to recognise their ability to organise and engage within and between social movements on various levels.

In Chapter 8, Luís Armando Gandin analyses the radical education reforms implemented by the Workers' Party-led city authorities in Porto Alegre, Brazil. These reforms – described as the Citizen School project and initiated in 1994 – were built on a re-articulation of neoliberal rhetoric on public sector reform ('decentralisation', 'collaboration', 'autonomy', etc.) expressing 'counter-hegemonic purposes' (p.162). In order to implement its reforms, the city authorities established a Constituent Assembly – a democratic, participatory forum designed on the basis of the Participatory Budgeting model. The assembly decided that the democratisation of the municipal education system would need to occur in three dimensions: (a) access to schools (including changing the school structure to better respond to individual student needs – allowing them to learn at their own pace); (b) knowledge (constructing 'a new epistemological understanding about what counts as knowledge' [p.166], 'representative of the aspirations, interests, conceptions, and cultures of the community' [167] – in this way, students come at important 'high culture' historical, social and cultural themes from their own lived realities, making it possible for them 'to simultaneously learn and ... have the chance to transform their situation of exclusion' [169]); and (c) governance (including the involvement of parents, students, teachers, staff and administrators in collective decision making). Whilst concern has been expressed about the ability of the Citizen School project to sustain itself, it does appear to have made genuine progress in respect of democratising schools – in particular, valuing critical thought and action now appears to be deep-rooted in schooling. As such, the Citizen School project provides a concrete example of a radically different style of inclusive schooling. Not only does it offer a lively curriculum that engages students in creative thinking, it also opens up possibilities for generating action in pursuit of positive, life-changing social transformations.

In Chapter 9, Antoni Verger and Xavier Bonal return to the issue of resistance to the WTO's GATS (with particular regard to education). They argue that the inclusion of education services in the GATS will lead to the institutionalisation of neoliberal capitalism throughout all areas of schooling on a global scale and result in the commodification of what should be seen as a social right. It will also erode democratic control, standards, opportunities for equality, employment rights and cultural diversity within education systems. The main beneficiaries will be large multinational enterprises. Verger and Bonal describe the 'movement of movements' opposed to the WTO and the GATS – one involving 'ecologists, squatters, feminists, unemployed workers, agricultural workers, trade unions, international solidarity organizations, indigenous movements and so forth' (p.185). Whilst reactions to the GATS go back to the Uruguay Round of negotiations held between 1988 and 1994, it was only after the 'Battle of Seattle' in November 1999 that mobilisation against the WTO and the GATS became a regular operation. Others involved in this struggle include

universities (especially from Latin America), left-wing municipalities, and UN bodies (e.g. the UN High Commission for Human Rights and UNESCO). Resistance has taken the form of both direct action (e.g. protest marches, occupations, blocking access to Convention Centres and the disruption of meetings) and more formal politicising (e.g. offering technical expertise and empirical data to delegations on the effects of trade liberalisation, and lobbying on humanitarian issues).

In Chapter 10, Dalila Andrade Oliveira attempts the ambitious task of analysing teacher conflicts in Latin America. What comes over as a significant feature of this examination is that, in many cases, the campaigns of this group of workers are centred not merely on demands for improved working conditions and salaries (which have deteriorated since the 1990s due to neoliberal managerialist reforms) but also broader social issues relevant to the advancement of a socially just and democratic society. Whilst Latin America 'was still far from a "welfare state"' (p.206) in the period prior to the reforms, protectionist national strategies between 1940 and 1960 had led to significant economic and social progress, including improved access to schooling, social protection and public health measures. The erosion of these achievements became the concern of campaigns launched by teaching professionals and their unions in the 1990s.

In Chapter 11, Mike Cole examines Louis Althusser's distinction between the 'repressive state apparatuses' (the RSAs – the government, the army, the police, the judicial system, etc.) and the 'ideological state apparatuses' (the ISAs – the family, religion, education, trade unions, law, culture, etc.). The former uses force and coercion, placing restrictions on civil rights (e.g. trade union and political activism) and policing this in intimidating and violent ways. The latter is more subtle, operating primarily through ideological processes promoting the attitudes and values required by capitalism (e.g. a strong work ethic and deference to the *status quo*). Althusser clarifies this distinction by emphasising that every state apparatus – repressive or ideological – uses both violence *and* ideology (i.e. repression goes hand-in-hand with ideology). Schools, in particular, are important for both disciplining pupils and inculcating in them the dominant ideology. In contemporary times in England, in the case of the latter, this has included presenting the case that capitalism is inevitable and part of some 'natural' order. Althusser valued Marx's theory of the state and believed that the bourgeois capitalist state must be destroyed and replaced by the proletariat.

Cole goes on to offer a reassessment of Althusser's thesis through an exposition of the recent policy initiatives of the socialist government in Venezuela where, under President Hugo Chávez, neoliberal capitalism has not been seen as inevitable. Chávez's 'revolutionary' project has sought to replace 'the bourgeois administrative machinery of local and state governments with a network of communal councils, where the local populations meet to decide on local priorities and how to realize them' (p.230). Chávez's aim is to dismantle the old bourgeois state and replace it with 'the communal state, the socialist state ... a state that is capable of carrying through a revolution' (Chávez, cited p.230). For Cole, this requires a re-evaluation of Althusser's analysis and recognition of 'the possible existence of states [emerging] which advocate their own destruction' (p.230). Moreover, given the massive inequalities and severe environmental destruction wrought by the global capitalist system, classroom debate in England needs to allow for a 'meaningful evaluation of global neoliberal capitalism [and] ... a serious consideration of the world socialist alternative' (p.234).

The book concludes with Peter McLaren and Juha Suoranta's chapter in which they argue that, contrary to conventional belief, 'socialism and pedagogical socialist principles are not dead letters, but open pages in the book of social and economic justice yet to be written or rewritten by people struggling to build a truly egalitarian social order outside of capitalism's law of value' (p.242). These principles represent 'a vision of the future that transcends the

present but is still rooted in it, one that exists in the plane of immanence' (p.258). McLaren and Suoranta place their discussion in historical context and trace attempts at developing socialist pedagogy in the Soviet Union, Cuba, Mexico, Nicaragua and Venezuela. 'The core idea of socialist education is its emphasis on the unity of human beings, and we are referring here to unity in the positive sense of "unity in diversity" as solidarity between people, or as a common good, and the equality of human beings' (p.255). The primacy of the collective is stressed over the interests of the individual. 'Socialist education aims at facilitating human beings as capable of thinking collectively, co-operatively, and in solidarity with their fellow human beings Socialist education fosters critical and analytical skills to comprehend the world, to read the world, and to act within and upon the world in ways that build the conditions necessary for a socialist society' (p.256). It is the antithesis of education under neoliberalism.

Conclusions

Marxist analysis continues to offer the most systematic approach to understanding contradictions inherent in capitalism by demonstrating the way the extraction of surplus value benefits the few over the many (thereby constituting conflicting interests). In doing so, Marxism exposes the inability of capitalism to ever optimise human happiness and prosperity: the liberalisation of markets does not lead to greater competition, efficiency and enhanced wellbeing. This recognition explains the enduring appeal of Marxist thought in social theory. At the time of writing this (autumn 2008) the economic and human cost of the wreckage wrought by 30 years of neoliberal global capitalist restructuring had reached alarming proportions. In October 2008, the estimated financial cost of the collapse of the world's financial institutions – a crash largely caused by the neoliberal-inspired deregulation of financial and housing markets – stood at \$2.8tn. £50bn has been pledged by the British government to 'underpin the system' (Elliott et al. 2008: 1) – the same system that generated the crisis. Meanwhile, echoing concerns raised by Fischman in his introduction to *Contesting Neoliberal Education*, 143 million children under five in the developing world were suffering from inadequate nutrition. In sub-Saharan Africa in 2004, 41.1 per cent were living on less than \$1 a day. In 2006, the number of children who died before their fifth birthday in the developing world was 9.7 million (Boseley and Elliott 2007). In 2005, Britain remained more unequal than most OECD countries with the richest 10 per cent earning nine times that of the poorest (Booth 2008). We would add to these concerns our disquiet about the false pretexts offered by the US and British governments for going to war in Iraq, and the efforts of energy corporations to connive with 'scientists-for-hire' in order to conceal the harmful reality of global warming (Griffin 2007). Little wonder the capitalist state quickly recognised the utility of state-controlled education for concealing the connections between such economic and humanitarian crises and their own culpability (as Wrigley in particular discussed in Chapter 4 of *Contesting Neoliberal Education*).

It is clear from the assessments set out in these books that neoliberal education systems have been a source of great social harm. In particular, the analyses presented bear witness to the profoundly harmful effects of neoliberalism on societal wellbeing – evidenced by widening inequalities; an increasingly oppressed labour force; the erosion of democracy and critical thought; the breakdown of social solidarities; the increasing surveillance and criminalisation of specific 'dangerous' sub-cultures; and the increasing alienation of teachers and students from the learning process (leading to rising health problems). At the same time, the public realm for critical dialogue has been increasingly closed off by the actions of nation states – particularly through interventions aimed at intensifying central-state control over education – compliant to the tightening grip of neoliberal global organising. The consensus view expressed in these books is that resistance to the neoliberal agenda will

require a network of alliances comprising a range of issue-based social movements and strategies, organised (as has been described) locally, nationally, regionally and globally, and aided by ICT. There is also a consensus position on the basis of this resistance – i.e. that a radical critical pedagogy rooted in Marxist analysis, applied to teaching, research and social action, is the only viable option for arriving at a more just society. Alternative ways of seeing and understanding the world, founded on postmodernist analyses, are discounted here as distractions - sidetracking the masses from the real task which is discovering how the material basis of modern life is rooted in the exploitation of labour's use value and that the only solution to this is the construction of an alternative socialist future.

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Writer's Details

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¹ Similar arguments have been used in Britain, largely with reference to disadvantaged pupils in working-class neighbourhoods, in order to legitimate similar neoliberal, managerialist reforms (e.g. standardised testing, new systems of school management, greater market competition, an enhanced role for the private sector, school takeovers, police in schools, etc.).

² In the UK, in order to satisfy the government's targets, schools now refine the subjects GCSE candidates are entered for. In recent years: 'The average number of GCSEs taken dropped below eight for the first time ... amid suggestions some schools are opting for more vocational qualifications or fewer GCSEs. ... [T]here were warnings that the trend could splinter the education system with pupils at high-performing schools coming away with qualifications which top universities and employers might value more' (Curtis 2008: 16).

³ By 2008 in the UK, doctors and psychologists were recording a "significant" increase in the numbers of children suffering from a condition dubbed "school phobia". School phobia is already estimated to affect one in every 20 children and now experts believe the trend towards bigger schools in the UK, particularly in England, an increase in childhood obesity and bullying, is making the medically recognised condition far worse. The condition – also known as "school refusal" – can, if left untreated, bring on physical symptoms such as vomiting, headaches, fatigue and panic attacks and sufferers run the risk of carrying anxiety phobias into adulthood' (McVeigh 2008: 7).

⁴ A slight non sequitur perhaps but, paradoxically, Freire died on May 2nd, 1997, the same day Blair insulted the British nation by walking into Downing Street for the first time as Prime Minister to declare that New Labour heralded a 'new dawn'.

⁵ In the field of community work, this suggestion is known as working 'in-and-against' the state – i.e. where community workers, although employed by state agencies to work on projects aimed at meeting the state's social programme, use subterfuge to work towards a different (more radical) agenda.