



EDUCATION AND CAPITALISM

STRUGGLES FOR LEARNING AND LIBERATION

Edited by Jeff Bale and Sarah Knopp

Education and Capitalism: Struggles for Learning and Liberation

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A conservative, bipartisan consensus dominates the discussion about what's wrong with our schools and how to fix them. It offers "solutions" that scapegoat teachers, vilify unions, and impose a market mentality. But in each case, students lose. This book, written by teacher-activists, speaks back to that elite consensus and offers an alternative vision of learning for liberation.

Education and Capitalism: Struggles for Learning and Liberation Details

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Dena Lake says

I am currently using this book as the basis for a reading group with NJTAG, a teacher-activist group in northern New Jersey. It's really great for analyzing specific aspects of our current public ed system alongside other readings. For example, we read Brian Jones' chapter "The Struggle for Black Education" alongside a few articles by Gloria Ladson-Billings and a piece on critical race theory by Antonia Darder. It definitely provides for a rich discussion!

Najla Gomez says

"Imagine a society in which teachers and students democratically decided what learning should look like and where learning was freed from the confines of a classroom. Imagine what true lifelong learning could look like in a world in which we were free to develop our own courses of study and unlock the creative potential of humanity."

Laura says

A must read for radicals and educators.

Patrick says

A great book. A little too American in its focus for me, but still some very useful pieces. The chapter on teacher unionism is excellent.

Dan Sharber says

all the stars!! fantastic book on many of the issues in education today. crowded in history and theory the book not only recounts the problems with much of the 'reform' schemes on offer through groups like the broad and bill and melinda gates' foundations but also lays out a clear vision for a radical model of education. a model built around social justice and liberatroy pedagogy. very timely and engaging.

Mesut Bostanc? says

this book had be getting pumped up about emancipatory education on the morning commute. I work in education and it is a constant barrage of neoliberal ideology, tearing down any higher concept of education

as a social right and a social good into some scheming "business skill", and test score. This book is a collective middle finger to all of that bad news. It is a feel-good book.

I often read about "Praxis" when reading in Marxism, and it can sometimes make very little practical sense. This book weds the concept of Praxis in giving a Marxist interpretation of education while at the same time deepening the understanding of what Praxis means. Get it? How meta is that? For example, in several chapters it shows how combining education in a traditional sense with political and emancipatory education helps turn learning into an engaging, cooperative enterprise. I love this quote:

"genuine learning triumphs in revolutionary situations that provide people with real opportunities for collective and cooperative inquiry and research; that literacy is always political; and that radical pedagogy is most successful when it actively engages people in the transformation of their own worlds- not simply in the World of ideas, but by transforming the material conditions in which reading, writing, and learning take place." THAT is praxis.

The introductory chapter on Marxism in education is a tremendous primer in reorienting your views on education away from the neo-liberal doldrums which can creep into your thinking from the routine imposition of limit-situations. Which reminds me, I have heard of Friere and the pedagogy of the oppressed before, but the chapter in this book is a fantastic introduction and explanation of his thought. I mean he was writing in the heyday of foofy Marxist metaphysical writing. The author gives a wonderful explanation of limit-situations, untested feasibilities and limit-acts. I see these three concepts play out all of the time in my daily life, in class struggle, and in the classroom.

The book also dives into the history of literacy campaigns after socialist revolutions (Cuba and USSR in particular), and gives updates on why Obama's education policy is not much more than W's third-term. This ability to link the historical, the theoretical, and the topical make this book a great addition for anyone pissed off by the slide in education Globally, and for any Marxist a little fuzzy on the practical applications of Praxis.

Bethanie says

Knopp has managed to put together a wonderfully informative read with Education and Capitalism. Although educators and teachers won't find a how-to guide on Social Justice they'll nonetheless be inspired to get behind an educational reform revolution that'll finally take down the unproductive system of Capitalism. Knopp briefly touches upon theories by explaining general Marxism. She does so with clarity and with historical evidence derived mainly from the Russian and Cuban Revolution. Throughout the book there are really great focus points on different struggles for reform such as the Freedom Schools during the Civil Rights Movement, the Madison Protests, and the Chicano American Movement. Although, it is important to note that Knopp still refrains from turning into a how-to guide for educators. The only criticism I would have of Knopp's novel is her lack of support for alternative education methods. Her main theory and point is that all teachers should work amongst and for the public school system and join unions. Knopp states that she would like to see the alternative method of education be implemented in all schools (which I completely support and would include things like no standardized curriculum and smaller class sizes) but that working for charter schools/ private schools etc is an entire step against the movement which I disagree with. I can see where Knopp is coming from with the standpoint of keeping things unified and uniform for a strong movement and perhaps I am speaking from a biased standpoint since I have been completely raised in the alternative education system but it is in that same system where I have had some of the most outrightly spoken aware, intelligent, and pro-reform teachers. It is within that system where I was educated on Social

Justice following the text swritten by Howard Zinn and many of the writings of Jared Diamond and other works by very progressive and truthful Historians. In fact it is from the teaches within that system where I have been inspired to become a Social Justice educator myself and to teach History wholly and truthfully and to make it a reality. So whilst I do support the changing and reform of the public school system, and our current economic and social structures I do not think it is fully fair to denounce alternative methods and say that since they are not a part of the public school system they must be thrown away with. Because truthfully, schools under charters do receive more freedom with the curriculum (although they still have to test and follow Common Core) my teachers were allowed to design interdisciplinary courses, hands on projects, and multiple fieldwork experiences under the Expeditionary Learning model. I think that more charter schools should be opened in high-risk areas to offer more options and that will take lots of brave teachers who are willing to step up to the challenge of recognizing the activist and potential of every student regardless of race, gender, or sexual orientations. I also fully support unions and think that charter school teachers should form a union as well; for it is not just the public school system --- it is the school system in America that needs to be completely revamped and targeting any means of change will not do anyone much good.

Algernon says

A political economy of public education in the age of No Child Left Behind could be deeply discouraging, but this volume does not just deliver the bad news, it also offers inspiring and creative possibilities that educators and parents can struggle for together, as well as descriptions of precedents such as the 'Freedom Schools' in the United States and the amazing literacy campaign in Cuba following the revolution. The chapter on Paolo Freire is excellent in itself.
