

The “Shock Doctrine” in HIGHER Education: The Neoliberal ‘Fix’ and Alternative Visions

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Neoliberalism

- David Harvey (2005): Neoliberalism is “a theory of political economic practices that proposes that human well-being can best be advanced by liberating individual entrepreneurial freedoms and skills within an institutional framework characterized by strong private property rights, free markets, and free trade.” (profit=bottom line)
- Un-interrogated assumptions about ‘reality’ at height of imperialism- last 30 years-globalization
- Giroux (2008): Neoliberalism works at all levels of everyday life and the cultural forms of class, race, gender, youth and ethnicity

Major tenets of neoliberalism

- Liberating "free" enterprise from government regulations (ex: EPA, BP, charter schools, merit pay, media restrictions eliminated);
- Cutting public expenditures in favor of private investments in public social services (ex: tests, prisons charters, healthcare, welfare, military,);
- Eliminating concepts like the "public good" or "community", rather "individual good" (ex: public housing, Katrina, welfare,);
- Deregulation, privatization...(ex: EPA, charters)

Shock Doctrine (example) from Naomi Klein (2007)

Real, contrived or natural catastrophes:

We are in danger! We are threatened by 'terrorists' and immigrants jealous of our way of life, and, due to our failing public schools, we are losing in the competition for global political and economic leadership (supremacy). Moreover, from the Black President to the visible people of color in the media, an emphasis on affirmative action and diversity is no longer needed in the field of education.

We must take action to address the threats of terrorism and the economic challenges to our ways of life. We can protect our social system, and our economic and political hegemony through, for example, enacting specific educational policies and practices (e.g. high stakes testing in the field of education; Arizona anti-immigration SB 1070 & the elimination of ethnic studies programs; Texas curriculum massacre: standardizing/homogenizing the curriculum; merit pay, private schools with public funding, etc).

Overview of Responses to the 'Shock Doctrine'

(Roberta Ahlquist, San Jose State University)

- Reproduction theories= reproduce the social classes through schooling. Over the last 30 years there has been an increasing, undemocratic takeover of public schools by the corporate and business elite; students are dispossessed, especially, of access to equitable schooling for students on the 'downside of power' poor children of color, poor white students, new immigrants from working class backgrounds; (see Emery & Ohanian's *Why is Corporate American Bashing our Public Schools*);
- Undemocratic takeover of public schooling to privatize and corporatize it, by the corporate class, since 1989 the *Business Roundtable*, (300 CEOs of biggest US corporations) business interests want to make schools serve market interests : have more control over teachers, curricular content, rewards and punishments through standardized assessments, so schools serve the corporate economy, not social justice, democracy, ethnical concerns the civic good;
- Dispossession of new immigrant children: those on the 'downside' of power: poor kids, poor kids of color, new immigrants who speak Spanish or another language as their mother tongue;
- Limiting access to further schooling for some, and decreasing educational attainment;
- (NCLB; RTTT; Middlesex, UK, PISA Scores; Erosion of tenure, AA, academic freedom
- This is a global, hegemonic power grab for control of all aspects of schooling; (curriculum, academic freedom, accountability, etc.) at ALL levels.

Some of the Purposes of our Research

1. To understand the ‘shock doctrine’, and the subtle ways in which people with wealth and/or power use “technologies of power” (hegemony) to manufacture the consent of the people for laws, policies, and practices that benefit a neo-liberal agenda;
2. To understand that through these technologies of power, many people come to see these laws, policies, and practices as normal, natural, and common sense, and as fair and equitable responses to the crises;
3. To understand that race, class, and gender are technologies of power that constitute, manage, and reproduce white, middle/upper class, male privilege;
4. To recognize that public schools, as an arm of the current oligarchy/plutocracy, are central to the effective functioning of hegemony. If equity and/or equality are the goals of teachers, students, parents and community members, they need to be able to recognize, *and re-cognize*, how technologies of power/hegemony function, and develop strategies to interrupt this process and harness education to meet their own socio-economic political and cultural needs.
5. And to take informed action with others.....

Identifying the Neo-Liberal Fix: Applying the *Technologies of Power Model*¹ to Schooling

TECHNOLOGIES OF POWER (cf. Foucault)	EXAMPLE
Surveillance – Monitoring, regulating function	Students have no privacy, even in the bathrooms; School building structures facilitate surveillance, dress codes, codes of conduct strictly enforced
Normalization – Through standards, & homogenous, scripted, Anglocentric curriculum	Establishes power relations; Acceptable school pedagogy and practice established through comparison with the “normal”
Exclusion – often occurs with normalization	Tracking; Reading groups; “Sheltered” & English-only classrooms of “ELLs” and Special Ed students; Some identities, practices and ways of constructing knowledge
Classification – Sorting function	Language Arts, Science etc. AP, Honors, Special Needs students. “Race,” class, gender—via. Dumbed-down test scores, grades
Distribution – Controlling the agenda	Reading groups; Grade level groups, segregated schools and classrooms
Individualization – A form of exclusion	Competition, ‘me’ versus ‘we’, I, rather than viewing the historical, systemic nature of inequalities and inequities
Totalization – Consumes student agenda & governs and regulates groups	Students commit to various competitive, ego-invested groups like year groups, teachers, fraternities, teams, debating groups, ethnic groups
Regulation -	Refers to group rules, regulations and sometimes reference to knowledge; related to sanctions, rewards and punishment (NCLB)

Drawing on historical seeds of fear to manipulate public responses to current concocted crises

(Virginia Lea, University of Wisconsin Stout)

Tales of Two High Schools

(one in California, one in England)

Context: “Socio-economic, immigration, and educational crises” that are being currently promoted

Study: Documented in what ways techniques of power/hegemony were “fixing”/impacting the following, in the interests of the neo-liberal agenda:

- Curriculum and teaching practices;
- School structures; and
- The role of language (discourse—race, gender, class, and cultural hegemony) in managing and reproducing educational inequities and inequalities

Whose schools are these, anyway? American dream or nightmare: Countering corporatization, standardization, privatization, & PACT in higher education in California
(Roberta Ahlquist, SJSU)

- ***“Deliverology”*** and the role it is playing globally in higher education;
- Charter Schools and Merit Pay: The brief infatuation with charter schools among Latino/ and African American families; Budget cuts: California and Prop 13—American dream, or American nightmare;
- White-stream, scripted, mono-cultural curriculum, with surveillance to guarantee teachers conform to the standards, and a neoliberal educational agenda

Against the Shock Doctrine Framing of Bias Incidents on Campus

(Glyn Hughes, University of Richmond)

1. Bias incident protocols in context
 - neoliberalism and higher ed
 - diversity struggles on campus
2. Neoliberal fixes for bias incidents
 - the symptom as disease
 - individualizing the problem
 - repressing the neoliberal context
 - narrating the university as hero
3. Re-framing the “crisis”: some tactical thoughts

Problem-Posing

IN PROFESSIONAL INTEREST GROUPS

(Diversity Officers, Administrators, Faculty, Student Life, etc.)

- In what ways is the 'Shock Doctrine' playing out on your campuses?
- Brainstorm some of the strategies you might use to reclaim equity and social justice?
- Pick one example and two strategies to share back with the larger group

What's a social justice teacher to do?

- Realize that this is going to be a long, difficult struggle and we shouldn't get too deeply into 'outcomes';
- ***Use the technologies of power as a model to better identify the neoliberal fix on your campus. Build alliances to become stronger. For example, share your observations on our Wikisite, as we develop collaborative efforts towards change. (We will be sharing the site.)***
- Work in 'local pockets' and develop alternatives. Recognize that small steps by many dedicated people can provide us with some creative change, especially if they are connected and collaborative.
- Have patience; Focus on process. Starting in your own location, get to know your students, parents, co-workers, staff, union liaisons, sympathetic administrators, and engage them in an exchange of ideas over the current crisis. Discuss their stories and their concerns, write op-ed. pieces, stories for local papers, discuss these issues at PTA, school board meetings.
- Educate people about the crisis and how to promote equity, step-by-step. Make contact with and building alliances with others who share a social justice vision: union activists, progressive groups, blogs, websites, organizations who are working towards similar goals.

What's a social justice teacher to do?

Help build further analyses of the problems and viable solutions:

- *Engage in Participatory Action Research (PAR) with students, parents and communities: Problem-posing; Linking “Reading the Word” with “Reading the World”; Name the problem: poverty, racism: Give voice to ethnically and economically diverse voices/generating critical themes that require research; Engage in collaboration with unions and allies: as a result of research, develop strategies to resolve the problems & develop more critical consciousness among parents, teachers, administrators, friends;*
- Take risks to begin the dialogue around the educational and job crisis; Write your school's, collect students' stories that educate for equity and social justice, for action on the backlash and demand more funding for education so we can educate today's students for tomorrow's economy;
- Educate parents, students, community members about the problems with standardized testing; teach for critical thinking ;
- Join the thousands of students, faculty, parents, and concerned citizens fighting to save public education in California and elsewhere!
- Have faith in the work that allies are doing;
- Sharing our resources, cooperate, collaborate—for the long term.....

References

- Note: 1. See Lea, V. (Book Forthcoming). Grand Theft Consciousness Narratives that Unmask Hegemony, and Ideas for Creating Greater Equity in Education; & (Article Forthcoming). A Tale of Two High Schools: How neo-liberal technologies of power shape policy, practice and resistance in a Californian and an English high school.
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