Transformative Researchers and Educators for Democracy
Dartmouth Dialogues
João M. Paraskeva and Thad LaVallee (Eds.)
University of Massachusetts Dartmouth, USA

The 2012 Critical Transformative Educational Leadership and Policy Annual Conference hosted by the University of Massachusetts Dartmouth met head-on with issues of neoliberalism, educational democracy, cultural politics, public education, and seeing teachers and administrators as critical transformational leaders. This book is a collection of the highlights of that conference that addresses these arenas of debate, from the presentations of Deborah Meier, Ken Saltman, Clyde Barrow, and Joao Rosa, among others, to the works of emerging academics and intellectuals in the field of education. The book to serve as an antidote to such ill-informed thinking before it becomes a part of the cultural commonsense, much the way the manufactured realities of high stakes testing, standardization, and police-guarded schools have become normative.

"It is urgent to learn to accurately read reality in a world in which language and discourse are being resignified to confuse people and turn reality into a board game, a world which large corporations and global financial powers play the role of the old mythological gods, creators of dogmas and flamboyant realities that they want us to submit and worship. This volume is an outcome of an important political critical transformative pedagogical project that challenges the lethal consequences of the impact of neoliberal policies in education. We need to welcome Paraskeva and LaVallee’s contribution since it offers a crucial tool to help us articulate accurately a critical diagnosis as well as solutions for a more just and democratic public education that cultivates humanity.” – Jurjo Torres Santomé, University of Corunha, Spain

“This new collection Transformative Researchers and Educators for Democracy: Dartmouth Dialogues is one of the most impressive outcomes of a critical transformative program at the University of Massachusetts Dartmouth. João M. Paraskeva and Thad LaVallee provide their readers with a careful selection of chapters that explore the idea of critical and transformative leadership for a democratic conception of education, focusing on a range of related themes in understanding the dimensions of cultural and organizational change. A crucial volume focusing on aspects of the critique of neoliberal globalization in education and a needed book that insightfully combines critique and robust analysis with a utopian and positive agenda for critical transformation.” – Michael A. Peters, University of Waikato (NZ) and University of Illinois (Urbana-Champaign, USA)

“This edited volume is the result of an amazing critical transformative program in educational leadership and policy studies chaired by João M. Paraskeva. Paraskeva and LaVallee produced an important contribution to a timely topic that provides clear evidences that the free market model of education it is not a hope for good public education. This book is not only important to US educators but it is really crucial for educators all over the world. What is analyzed in this book is taking place in Europe, Asia, Latin America, Africa and the Middle East.” – Alvaro Moreira Hypolito, University Federal de Pelotas, Brasil


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Dartmouth Dialogues

Edited by

João M. Paraskeva and Thad LaVallee
University of Massachusetts Dartmouth, USA
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JOÃO M. PARASKEVA

INTRODUCTION

Let’s Begin from the Beginning

Like any other book, this one has a history. This edited volume is the result of a conference organized by the doctoral students of the Educational Leadership and Policy Studies program at UMass Dartmouth. It is also the result of the hard work done by students, faculty, and the community of a small program in a small public university in Massachusetts – struggling, like so many others, with a million dollar deficit rationale – that took advantage of a very small space to promote a critical transformative leadership, community-academic terrain that prepares leaders – not managers – to better address the local sagas faced by the ‘localized rest’ (Bauman, 1998) in cities, such as New Bedford, Fall River, Taunton, Brockton, that are fuelled by neoliberal policies. Despite all the odds, this program, the students, faculty and the community, is a crystal example about the hope and possibility (Giroux, 2000) to develop critical spaces and work despite and within the mantra of the crisis that smashes public institutions. De Certeau (1995) was not wrong, when he claimed that the system is not perfect, that the system has cracks, and that one promotes change by working in the cracks of the system. So far, we have been able to prove that. We cannot afford to give up on the potential power of public higher education. Throughout history, so many people, communities, and organizations put their own lives in the line for the common good for us just to give up. Public education is an inalienable people’s right, not a privilege.

Needless to say that to understand the cracks (DeCerteau, 1995) (i.e. the space) is not enough to advance an alternative avenue sensible to the community needs. None of the gains would be possible if we (students, faculty, community, and local legislators) did not work collectively, in many spaces, and if the students would not have been exposed to the work of (and in many cases interactions with) intellectuals, such as Noam Chomsky, Slavoj Žižek, David Harvey, Antony Giddens, Zygmunt Bauman, Nancy Fraser, Judith Butler, Cornell West, Paulo Freire, Stanley Aronowitz, Ulrich Beck, Henry Giroux, Antonia Darder, Michael Apple, Peter McLaren, Angela Valenzuela, Angela Davies, Donald Macedo, John Dewey, Amartya Sen, Edward Said, Chantal Mouffe, Ernesto Laclau, Peter Sloterdjik, Martin Bernal, Jack Goody, Andre Frank, Boaventura de Sousa Santos, Giovanni Arrighi, Giorgio Agamben, Michel Foucault, Gilles DeLeuze, Pierre Bourdieu, Antonio Gramsci, Lois Wacquant, Erik Wright, Walter Mignolo, Eduardo Galeano, Paget Henry, Amilcar Cabral, Gayatri
Spivak, Frantz Fanon, Martha Nussbaum, Steve Biko, Thomas Sankhara, Kwame Nkrumah, Samir Kassir, Tarik Ali, Bell Hooks, and many others. Such critical transformative intellectual métier allowed the students to understand how another knowledge and another world is really possible (Sousa Santos, 2005; 2007) and that this implies concomitantly to challenge the Western hegemonic epistemological platform that produces all other epistemological perspectives as “nonexistent” (Sousa Santos, 2014). To be a critical transformative educational leader, to rely on Sousa Santos (1999) argument, is to be fully cognizant of the very challenges of building a just critical platform in a world in which one has so much to criticize.

What the readers have in their hands reflects the huge amount of work done by a collective that, despite all the odds – so common in too many places – always show the political clarity to understand the importance of public education and of a public university, which is the only one in the South Coast of Massachusetts. Programs like this overtly manifest that the crisis – so much fabricated – not only is quite insufficient to block an alternative approach in our public institutions, – not only power blocs are not absolute and unconditional but they are also dynamic and dispositional – but also the solution to address such ‘fabricated’ crisis does not rest in the dangerous veins of “venture capitalism” and the fallacy of philanthropism so well examined in the most recent works of Giroux (2011) Ball (2012) and Saltman (2010).

Despite the fiscal crisis and the constant pressure to address it by shrinking the role of a public institution, collectively we understood that the best way to challenge the crisis is actually to not compromise the vision and mission of public institutions just with the dictatorship of the numbers, especially when such institutions are situated within social complex realities, such as the ones we have in New Bedford and Fall River, communities that rightly look at UMass Dartmouth as their university, an university with an answer. In communities as such, numbers have real faces of pain and oppression and are smashed by a different dictatorship: poverty, inequality, teen pregnancy, crime, drugs, a lost generation. Our program is perfectly tuned with the community needs; it is a community program occupied by the community. As our proposal clearly states, the proposed doctoral program in Educational Leadership and Policy Studies has been designed to prepare future practitioners and scholars who will work as professors, researchers, administrators, or executives in leadership roles in a variety of institutional settings. These may include schools, universities, federal and state departments of education, national and state professional organizations, and non-governmental agencies. Graduates of this program will be committed to transforming students and institutions alike in pursuit of a more ethical, just and fair society and to improving educational achievement in environments that are dynamic, interactive, culturally diverse, and democratic. In so doing, they will become stewards of the discipline, develop a deep respect for the public trust and support an attitude of caring for all people, especially for students at every level and from various walks of life. Consistent with our
mission as a regional research university, the doctoral program aims to prepare individuals capable of leading systemic transformations that promote learning and improve educational attainment in schools. To accomplish the above the proposed program is driven by a set of beliefs, namely that human growth and development are transformative lifelong pursuits; that schools are political and cultural artifacts of local and global contexts; that diversity strengthens organizations; that while transformative leadership implies individual and team work that stimulates differences, it is also driven by moral and ethical imperatives; and that one can only have an impact globally if one is capable of making a difference locally.

This history needs to be told, especially in a moment where public institutions, such as schools, are under a massive attack, not only to promote draconian cuts to reduce the debt but also to collectively engage in a journey to address the new market needs. More to the point public schools have been called to lead the new financialization of neoliberal capital[ism] (Aronowitz, 2013; Bellamy Foster, 2008). The faces and impact of such policies, as Ball (2012), Robertson & Keeling (2009), and others documented, is quite dispositional, yet lethal. In some places, this malaise assumed a kind of tea party flavor “fictitious rationality” crises (see Barrow, 2010, p. 320), an ideological hysteria in such a way that the so-called overbearing cuts stroke any hypothesis to really engage in building capacity to address the new market flavors.

One cannot understand the current revolution in public schools – and the consequent destruction of its public mission – without a clear perception of the current neoliberal global crises and concomitant policies to address such crises; a global minotaur (Varoufakis, 2011) that have driven public schools to a quasi-moribund state (Paraskeva, 2009) – despite the fact that the empirical evidence shows no connection between education and the last great recession (Giroux, 2011). The neoliberal answers to the current fabricated global crisis – what I have been calling neoradical centrist challenges (Paraskeva, 2007, 2011) – “put even Lenin’s post 1927 exploits to shame” (Varoufakis, 2011, p. 2).

NEOLIBERAL GLOBALISMS

Neoliberalism is the official landscape of the new Education PLC (see Ball, 2007), or to be more precise, a debtscape daily paced by the complex empirical and conceptual accounts of the participation of business models in public sector in education around the world (see Appandurai, 2001; Ball, 2007; Ball, 2012). Public institutions, such as schools and hospitals, not only have been connected to this crisis, but also blamed by what Bellamy Foster (2013) insightfully calls an epochal crisis. That is a “sheer enormity of the historical challenge confronting humanity in our time that the worst economic crisis since the Great Depression, sometimes called the Second Great Depression is overshadowed by the larger threat of planetary catastrophe, raising the question of the long-term survival of innumerable species—including our own”
He (2013) argues that, currently, capitalist societies face a paradox of developing “an understanding of the interconnections between the deepening impasse of the capitalist economy and the rapidly accelerating ecological threat—itself a by-product of capitalist development” (p. 1). Since such a statement is undisputable, a question needs to be asked, how come a crisis of such planetary havoc wasn’t noticed ahead of time? And, how come in a moment that society, in some cases, dares to challenge the natural course of nature, why was such crisis not anticipated? Queen Elizabeth II, in a tour to the pristine London School of Economics in 2008, perplexedly flagged the issue: “If these things were so large, how come everyone missed them?” (see Helleiner, 2011, p. 68). Maybe they didn’t. Eric Helleiner’s (2011) approach took a different take though. Helleiner (2011) argues that such questions “crystalized a widespread view that the economics profession largely failed to predict the massive event and had much to learn from its failure” (pp. 68–69). Scholars in the field of International Political Economy, Helleiner (2011; see also Cohen, 2009) argued, “had a ‘dismal’ record in anticipating the crisis [and showed a blunt] myopia comparable to the failure of international relations scholars to predict the collapse of the Soviet Union two decades earlier” (p. 68).

As I highlighted before, I want to channel the argument in a different direction. While there are elements of good sense in Helleiner’s (2011) and many others’ well-framed critique, one should not forget that well within the mildest of the economic climax a significant number of public intellectuals – both within and beyond the U.S. – were raising their voices against the dangers of a society totally manipulated by the politics of an almighty deregulated market (Nader, 2000; Berliner & Biddle, 1995; Stiglitz, 2000; Stiglitz, Sen & Fitoussi 2010).

The neoliberal hegemonic power bloc knew exactly what they were doing and despite multiple crises, continue doing it. Naomi Klein’s work helps a great deal here. In her *The Shock Doctrine: The Rise of Disaster Capitalism*, Klein (2007) unmasks the (current) social havoc as the major enzyme of the neoliberal framework. The idea of shock is at the base of the current turmoil, as Klein (2007) unmasks accurately. Drawing her interpretation on the complex issues surrounding the war in Iraq, Klein (2007) problematizes why the idea of shock was so appealing for those who wanted to remake Iraq to maintain Western global hegemonic dominance. By returning to the source of the metaphor of shock therapy or therapies, Klein (2007) unveils how such a mechanism is used in psychiatric contexts and in torture. By digging in some specific declassified CIA interrogation manuals that were first published in 1963 and then in 1980’s, she (2007) examines how it was crucial for the CIA to put prisoners in a state of (permanent) shock. Klein (2007) argues that when one is in a state of shock, s/he is not able to protect his/her own interests; that is, the individual becomes like a child. In fact, Klein (2007) explains how such manuals are really obsessed with the idea of regression. Klein (2007) argues that such strategy was imported and applied on a mass scale. The exploitation of shock and crisis has been consciously used by radical free marketeers. This very idea, Klein (2007)
argues, is quite clear in Milton Friedman, who claimed that only crisis will produce real change. His vision of a radically privatized world could not be in place without a crisis. The War on Terror, coined by George W. Bush, launched a new economy with endless parameters. Bush’s war on terror was the most sophisticated and profitable business model ever, that is, a new endless market financed with unlimited funds. Unlike traditional wars, this war was a permanent new part of the economy that will slowly form a privatized security state (Klein, 2007).

After the crisis hits, the kind of change will depend on the ideas that are lying around. This is what the University of Chicago Economics Department was producing all over these years. When the next crisis hit, ideas that had been lying around were ready for that crisis. The issue here is not to engage in conspiracy theory. This is not it at all. However, some crises have been deliberate shocks and were then exploited. Chile was a case in point. The cue in Chile was an attack that pushed the nation into a state of shock. It is the first class case of economic shock therapy. Iraq was another example of economic shock therapy. The most important thing is not about planning the original shock but rather being in an acute state of intellectual disaster preparedness so that when the crisis hits, you’re the ones ready with the ideas that are lying around. Katrina is a crystal example of such doctrine. After the havoc, the Heritage Foundation Act immediately presented the 32 free market solutions, namely, roll back labor standards and introduce school vouchers instead of public school funding. Klein’s (2007) argument is a clear example of how neoliberalism was never a peaceful process, as some claimed.

Such new economy, fuelled by the security paranoia, will force a myriad of ideological state apparatuses, such as the schools, to a submissive relationship with the military matrix framing the relative autonomy of each apparatus. The latest *U.S. Education Reform and National Security* (2012), chaired by Joel Klein and Condoleezza Rice, is a clear example of such submissive interplay. By claiming in its findings that “public school systems (not excluding higher education) are detached and divorced from the transformative and innovative desires of the markets as well as ill prepared to collaborate, compete, act locally or globally” (p. 4). Such a report laudably argues that the so-called failure of public schools constitutes a severe threat to national security. This threat due to the fact that public educational system is not helping the economic growth, but also is preparing and training individuals capable of working in social positions determined by a state in permanent war, such as intelligence agencies and armed services. Public education is not just condemned to be privatized; it is now explicitly at the mercy of the military and para-military interests.

As Klein (2011) argues, contemporary social sagas show vividly how neoliberals, being in a state of permanent preparedness, immediately unleash a set of mechanisms to commonsensically promote disorientation within the civil society framed by complex collective shocks – or global aporias (Varoufakis, 2011) – such as wars and the imminence of wars, terrorists attacks and the imminence of such, and even natural disasters, to immediately control and prescribe a shock therapy in a society
psychologically devastated and totally unprepared, at least immediately, to (counter) act appropriately. Modernity, Nelson Maldonado-Torres (2008) argues, is based on a paradigm of war.

Such shock therapy fits rather well within the new state metamorphoses, a managerial state (Clarke & Newman, 1997) that hegemonically saturates the very (ir)rational managerial structure that runs public institutions. Klein’s shock doctrine is not something ethereal and transcendental. It circulates in the open veins of drained public institutions such as schools.

Clyde Barrow (2010) unmasks the current crisis based on what he coined “fictitious rationality” (p. 320). Heavily influenced by Offe and Habermas, Barrow (2010) argues that public institutions such as schools are graphic examples of a clear inability of a balance between “formal and substantive rationality” (p. 320). That is, the inability to both rational(ity) forms creates an abyssal line between means and ends. Such abyssal line is precisely propelled by the very natura of the capitalist system, a system that can only exist within its own contradictory excesses. The clash or abyssal vacuum between means and ends paves the way for a convenient way of decision making based on what Barrow (2010) calls fictitious rationality “a derivative of formal rationality focused focuses exclusively on administrative means such as rules, procedures, and efficiency calculations” (p. 320).

Public institutions, such as schools, have been framed within a formal and substantive rationality totally divorced from social or organizational ends. Such divorce, or as I would call abyssal line, is not innocent; it is endemic of a capitalist system in which public institutions as state ideological apparatuses are profoundly implicated both on the reasons and solutions for the crisis (Barrow, 2010). In a way, the sustainability of the capitalist system relies precisely in its capacity to produce and legitimize commonsensically such an abyssal line that paves the way for a non-rationality or, as Barrow (2010) claims, a fictitious one. Fictitious rationality is an “ideological illusion of individuals who observe the academic labor process, but are not directly part of that process” (Barrow, 2010, p. 321). And, naturally, an ideological illusion mood can only drive to an ideological illusion decision making that shows that the only way (not even the best way) to address the crisis is “to monitor, regulate and reduce the costs of intellectual production [that] requires an even larger, and more coercive administrative apparatuses” (Barrow, 2010, p. 321). Odd as it might be, the main goal is the intensification of the crisis.

To use the framework of the leading German contemporary philosopher, Peter Sloterdjik (1988), we are actually before the cynicism of ideology. And, since this is an undisputable claim, neoliberals knew (and know) exactly what they are doing but still keep doing it. As Sloterdjik (1988) would put it, we are actually before a clearly fabricated crisis, a rationale of shock (that it is not a shocking rationale since it has been domesticated and naturalized) that paves the way not just to say the unsayable (and concomitantly unsaying the sayable) but, in so doing, to unfold what might be called the cultural politics of disaster. In public schools, this is clearly the case. Public institutions, such as schools, are a crystal clear example of such
rationality crisis, unleashed by current neoliberal innovations, as well as a tool to foster ‘social crisis’ in the best Friedman way possible as the only way to produce real change, regardless how inhumane are the local consequences of such policies (Bauman, 1998). Such manufactured crisis (see Berliner & Biddle, 1995) faced by public institutions is a catalytic to help converge the non-monolithic hegemonic bloc in a common educational agenda of change – or better say innovation. As Doug Henwood and Liza Featherstone (2013) claim, although the hegemonic bloc is divided on some issues – how quickly to attack Iran, how much to cut Social Security and Medicare, whether homosexuals should be tolerated or treated as the spawn of Satan – they are united on one thing: the need to “reform” the public school system. However, “‘Reform’ means more tests, more market mechanisms, and fewer teachers’ unions” (Henwood & Featherstone, 2013).

No one has more effectively unmasked the ideological backbone of neoliberal globalization than David Harvey (2005):

[Neoliberal globalization] is particularly assiduous in seeking privatization of assets. The absence of clear property rights ... is seen as one of the greatest of all institutional barriers to economic development and the improvement of human welfare. Enclosure and the assignment of private property rights is considered the best to protect against the so-called ‘tragedy of the commons’... Sectors formerly run or regulated by the state must be turned over to the private sphere and be deregulated. Competition – between individuals, between firms, between territorial entities – is held to be a primary virtue ... Privatization and deregulation, combined with competition, it is claimed, eliminate bureaucratic red tape, increase efficiency and productivity, improve quality, and reduce costs both directly to the consumer through cheaper commodities and services and indirectly through reduction of the tax burden. (p. 65)

Harvey’s accurate description allows one to question the success of neoliberalism. In the words of Samir Amin (2008), the real question “is not whether the neoliberal project is or is not absurd. It is absurd and not viable. But it exists” (p. 32). The real question is why “it has asserted itself with such a force. The success of a group of retrograde conceptions was possible only because the systems that managed the world’s societies in the preceding historical states exhausted their own potential” (p. 32). In fact, the decline of the welfare state, the fall of the Berlin Wall, and the rise of a ferocious national populism coupled with religious fundamentalist impulses (Paraskeva & Torres Santomé, 2012) have created the conditions for “a total submission of society to the unilateral demands of capitalism [that] has become, through the force of its own logic of accumulation, a crony capitalism” (Amin, 2008, pp. 32). In “liberating individual entrepreneurial freedoms and skills within an institutional framework characterized by strong private property rights, free markets, and free trade,” market fundamentalists’ creed forced the state to create and preserve an institutional framework appropriate to such practices (Harvey, 2005, p. 2).
As I claim elsewhere (Paraskeva, 2007, 2012), the dichotomy of the weak state versus the strong state, which has been exposed by too many critical approaches as one of the leitmotifs of the neoliberal hegemonic bloc, misrepresents – as Giroux (2011) would put it – the central tenet of neoliberalism. In fact, it is the state that is paving the way for the market (Paraskeva, 2007, 2012) in such a way that the neoliberal state makes no mistakes in overtly walking out on all its responsibilities, suspending its powers – what Agamben (2005) calls a state of exception – if and when it is necessary to allow the totalitarian desires of the market to flourish. Thus, “if markets do not exist (in areas such as land, water, education, health care, social security, and environmental pollution), then they must be created, by state action if necessary” (Harvey, 2005, p. 2). Public education is one of the social apparatuses that have been suffering the rapacious consequences of such capitalisme de connivence, as Samir Amin (2008, p. 50) would put it. Public education was and is still a real obstacle to fanatical marketers.

In an exegesis that challenges “the metaphysics of normality and controlling principles for observation” (Vleben, 1898, p. 72) paced by the tautological nexus of facts and theory, Giroux (2011) quite sentient of the ‘fascist relation between language and the subject’ (Barthes, 1969, p. x), unreservedly confronts the rather commonsensical politics of misobservation and misrepresentation regarding the devastating effects of neoliberal policies in society in general and public education in particular.

Both the manufactured crises in public education as well as the belligerent strategies to address such crisis need to be seen within the Western capitalist epistemology of blindness. Giroux (2011) claims the need to go beyond “the absurdities and viability” of the voracious neoradical centrist project, not only to confront the assault on public education, teachers and students, but also to announce that the manufactured crisis of education “is part of a broader crisis of democracy itself” (p. 32). Barrow (2010) insightfully challenges us to frame liberal democracy in two structural chronic issues: on one hand a “chronic-structural deficit [that is an intentional] structural gap develop[ed] between the expenditures necessary to maintain both capital accumulation and popular legitimacy” (p. 319).

In this context, the neoliberal hegemonic bloc needs to be seen as a global minotaur (see Varoufakis, 2011) whose tentacles not only slaughter any attempt that challenges the despotic wishes of the market, such as real democracy and the common good, but simultaneously paves the way for a veritable reformist orgy that puts into practice a set of educational reforms such as charter/voucher projects, disestablishing programs, departments, schools, and centers in public universities, the philanthropic fever now flooding public education as well as the small school agenda that is conquering cities like New Bedford in Massachusetts (see Rosa & Paraskeva, 2012), which is a venomous attack on equality, freedom, and social justice. By spitting in the face of democracy, social justice, equality and solidarity, neoliberals show the utmost contempt for the most elementary notions of human dignity, thereby tattering the common good. Despite the fact that “deficits [were] not
the result of failed schools” (Giroux, 2011, p. 33), democracy and public education are not only real hurdles to the neoliberal project, they are even placed in the dock, denied access to a lawyer, and sentenced without parole for the unprecedented current financial crisis.

This global manufactured crisis with a local face (or local faces) represents the emptiness of participatory democracy as an endless social treasure, while simultaneously creating ‘natural’ conditions for a deranged attack on public teachers, public education, and everything that is public by definition. Such attacks open the door for a set of social and educational reforms coined by the market, as if these marketeers, who are now philanthropically rising to the top via education, had nothing to do with the financial disarray the global community is currently facing. The systematic reduction of state support to public educational institutions and consequent appeal to puzzling policies based on self-sustainability, self-sufficiency, autonomy, emulates “the language of the bankers who were responsible for the economic crisis of 2008 and the suffering and destruction that followed” (Giroux, 2011, p. 24).

Such casino-type reforms (Giroux, 2011; Saltman, 2012a; 2012b) needed to be seen as producers of subtractive pedagogical forms (Valenzuela, 1999) and educational reforms that charter disaster and humiliation. These reforms showed an “ethically sterile discourse [that has] ... now taken on a more militant tone by flooding the media and other commercial spheres with a politics of humiliation” (Giroux, 2011, p. 24). Faculty (overwhelmingly non-tenured) are taken to the pillory, tried ruthlessly and relentlessly in the public arena, and in the media charged with their so-called irresponsibility, incompetence, and lack of accountability. They are expected to adhere to a new ‘religion’ that marketeers want people to accept as an inviolable and unquestioned act of faith that produces a messianic language that fosters competition, individualism, and greed. Giroux (2010) explains:

What has become increasingly clear is that [teachers] are the new scapegoats for the market-driven juggernaut that is sucking the blood out of democracy in the United States… Public schools and teachers are now the object of a sustained and aggressive attack against all things public in which they are put in the same disparaged league as advocates of health care reform. (p. 24)

The success of neoliberal education policies forces the reconfiguration of the very meaning of democracy and the public good, which concomitantly implies the annihilation of public education. Public education is not suddenly a new potentially profitable field feverishly beloved by what Giroux (2011) refers to as “billionaire reformers” (p. 4) and other lackeys of the market. It is not just an opportunity to recapitalize capital and dispose of capital flows that have been clogged by the stress of financializing capital (see Bellamy Foster, 2010; Paraskeva, 2011b). While this is utterly crucial, as Giroux (2011) and Quantz (2011) demonstrate, the attack on public education also aims to disestablish any form of intellectual freedom, any vestige of critical inquiry, any possibility of an education that engages in reading the word and
the world relationally (see Freire & Macedo, 1987) and beyond the hegemony of the English language (Macedo, 2000). We need a pedagogical framework that challenges economic, cultural, religious and political illiteracy and see beyond knowledge that has been produced beyond a particular Western epistemological terrain (Paraskeva, 2011). In fact, as Quantz (2011) argues, “the greatest irony in schooling today is that the most dangerous revolutionary act that any teacher and student can engage in is education itself” (p. 145).

This violent attack on public education and public institutions, that should be responsible to prepare well-informed and critical citizens has been taking place over the last four decades, has fostered a school system that produces uncritical citizens and an apathetic citizenry that has contributed greatly to the current global aporia described by Varoufakis (2011). In fact, one of the most lethal dimensions of this aporia is that schooling is profoundly engaged in promoting and endorsing a particular colonality of thought and being (Maldonado-Torres, 2003, 2008; Grosfoguel, 1999, 2004).

NON-NAÏVE NAÏVETÉ: THIN INTELLECTUALISM AND THE CULT OF POLITICAL ILLITERACY

One of the reasons that neoliberalism has been so powerful and triumphant over the last five decades is its ability to win the battle over commonsense. It is precisely at the commonsense level that economic, cultural, and ideological battles have been fought and have shown the capacity of neoliberalism to keep reinventing itself (Apple, 2000; Giroux, 2004, 2011). As Giroux (2011) argues, “The cultural apparatuses have been largely hijacked by the forces of neoliberalism” (p. 3). One major battle that neoliberals have been winning, although not without severe resistance, is the attack on intellectualism. This construction of the desensitized intellectual as nonexistent and the cult of particular forms of literacy produce realities beyond a specific western white-male supremacist platform (cf. Sousa Santos, 2009; Paraskeva, 2011). If any one social field has been deeply engaged in such quarrels, it is education. Unlike early in the last century, when public institutions supported and promoted intellectualism, and intellectuals “engaged in ongoing public conversations about political and cultural issues that were of great social importance [were] able to comment critically and broadly on a number of issues [and] exemplified a mode of writing and political literacy that refused the instinctive knee-jerk reflex of privileging plain-speak over complexity” (Giroux, 2011, p.104), our current era devalues intellectualism:

Twitter-like clarity has replaced accessibility and has grown more pernicious as it aligns itself with an array of new corporate and military institutions, a dumbed-down cultural apparatus, school systems that miseducate, and a growing network of films, talk radio, and television shows in which language and thought are emptied of content. In an age when the acceleration of time is perfectly suited to the eradication of thoughtfulness as the last barrier to
immersion in thrill-seeking entertainment, pop clarity and its notion of frictionless, spontaneous truth now governs the conditions for all modes of intelligibility. (Giroux, 2011, p. 104)

Anti-intellectualism needs to be understood as non-naïve naivety, a notion in which the media plays a key role. Today’s anti-intellectualism as a new form of intellectualism has been championed by ‘fast thinkers’ such as Bill Kristol, Glenn Beck, Bill O’Reilly, Dinesh D’Souza, Chester Finn, Charles Murray, and others. These thinkers are the people who now write and speak for a broader audience and spew an unprecedented “public phobia” while attacking the “semi-welfare state and any viable notion of social protection. In doing so, they actively work to pathologize all things public such as schools, health care, public transportation, and other important social services” (Giroux, 2011, p. 109). While on the one hand “they rail against big government playing an important role in providing social protections and improving citizens’ lives,” on the other they “have no trouble supporting an expansion of government power in regulating morality, investing in a permanent war economy, supporting the coercive powers of the state, expanding the surveillance state, and advocating government power to free corporations of any form of regulation” (Giroux, 2011, p. 109).

This anti-intellectualism goes hand in hand with the current hegemonic view that forces public schools to comply with the corporate model of education. A good example of this, as Giroux explains, “is seen in the decision by the former commissioner David Steiner to name the utterly unqualified Cathleen P. Black, the former chairwoman of Hearst Magazines, as the chancellor of New York City’s public schools” (Giroux, 2011, p. 89). Under the business model, education “is all about preparing people for jobs and setting up policies that remove critical thinking as a serious condition for independent action and engaged citizenship. It represents the triumph of stripped-down visions of management over leadership” (Giroux, 2011, p. 95). In fact, heralds of the neoliberal ideology, such as Bill Gates, Jack Welsh, David Steiner and others, do not accept that “teachers might actually be educated as critical intellectuals – thoroughly versed in theory and subject matter and not simply methods – and might engage in the dangerous practice of teaching students how to think, hold power and authority accountable, take risks, and willingly embrace their role as producers of knowledge and not merely transmitters of information” (Giroux, 2011, p. 95).

Challenging this anti-intellectualism, Giroux (2011) encourages public teachers and critical educators and pedagogues “to assume the role of critical public intellectuals, [repudiating] the popular assumption that clarity is the ultimate litmus test to gauge whether a writer has successfully engaged a general educated audience [and taking] matters of accessibility seriously in order to combine theoretical rigor with their efforts to communicate forcefully and intelligibly to a larger public about the most pressing matters of the day” (p. 100). The quasi-religious “cult of clarity becomes an ideological smokescreen that conceals how the notions of common
sense and simplicity are mere excuses for rejecting complex ideas and the careful use of language as a marker of the educated mind” (Giroux, 2011, p. 100; see also Quantz, 2011).

Anti-intellectualism partners with the poisonous culture of a new form of literacy that reinforces a eugenic view of reading the word and the world (see Freire & Macedo, 1987). Giroux (2011) argues that we are actually experiencing “new forms of political illiteracy” (p. 32) in which both the media and schooling have criminal records. As Giroux (2011) claims, the dominant media apparatuses run by “ideological extremists and religious fundamentalists” (p. 9) have the temerity to claim that they “offer a balanced commentary on the state of education when in fact it is an unabashed advertisement for various versions of corporate educational reform” (p. 19). The mainstream media have the audacity to portray the reality of public institutions, and public education in particular, in a way that creates the conditions within the common sense to “say the un-sayable” (Paraskeva, 2007), as evidenced in the “endless numbers of newspaper editorials, television series, media advertisements, Youtube clips, and every other imaginable element of the new and old media” (Giroux, 2011, p. 19) that massacre society’s common sense on a daily basis with images and words that put public teachers, unions, and minorities in the dock of the current financial mess. Underneath such attacks lies an agenda to promote “an anti-public ideology with its denigration of public education and other institutions of the welfare state” (Giroux, 2011, p. 19), an attack on any form of critical pedagogy and critical transformative thinking or non-white minorities through “the harsh anti-immigrant laws passed in states like Arizona and Florida” (Giroux, 2011, pp. 14) that set the tone for impressive forms of cultural illiteracy. One would argue that such policies of misrepresentation and misobservation are not ingenuous, and that what we have in fact is the promotion and sedimentation of new forms of political literacy that desensitize citizens who are produced and reproduced by the dominant media and public schools. It is precisely this ‘neo-literacy’ that promotes sociopolitical lethargy, an ideological coded framework or aporia (Varoufakis, 2011) that underpins a colonial determinant that is determined by colonial beings (see Maldonado-Torres, 2003, 2008; Grosfoguel, 1999, 2004).

What is shocking is how neoliberals ‘lie the lie to tell the truth,’ as Slavoj Žižek (2001) would put it. The same media, the same media players, the very same powers that now furiously blame public education, tenured public teachers, and teachers’ unions for the current deficit and financial mess in progress all were unable to congratulate and praise public education, tenured public teachers, and teachers’ unions when the United States showed a comfy surplus of $69 billion. In fact, the new anti-intellectualism fosters the conditions for a particular discourse of education reform that “generates, as discourses do, subject positions, social relations and opportunities within policy” (Ball, 2007, p. 2). As Ball (2007) argues, “new kinds of actors, social interactions and institutions are produced [and] specifically the meaning, force and effect of these discourses are framed by an over-bearing economic and political context of international competitiveness” (p. 2).
Given the current state of public education in the U.S. and in many other nations around the world (see Paraskeva, 2012) – in which, as a component of the ideological and economic state apparatuses, the university, especially public universities, is implicated in the state’s on-going fiscal crisis, and is both a cause of the crisis and a solution to the crisis (Barrow, 2010), – it will not be too much to ask for a kind of carnival that, once and for all, will unmask the state of intellectual anemia that permeates public schools blocking radical transformation. Such carnival would not aim to romanticize the past. Actually, too many analyses of schools fall on such romanticism as if public institutions of the past were not one of the locomotives of social segregation, inequality and injustice. In Bakhtinian terms, carnival is more than a pale denotative means of parody. The carnival is the way to break down barriers and segregated social ties, to destroy wicked relations of power, to break with social inequalities, to embarrass the dominant groups, to blow up the hierarchies, to renew interpersonality yarns (see Bakhtin, 1984). Carnival, in Bakhtian terms, is always a breath of fresh air in the dense morass that rots the status quo. Looking for the amorphous form in which public schools are today, it is undeniable that carnival delivers a hope for change, challenging the power relations that are established (see Bakhtin, 1984). Carnival is the best challenge to the managerial delirium that dominates public schools where everything is reduced to an administrative equation; that is, administrators convert everything into an administrative problem to be addressed by administrators since solution is supposedly purely administrative. But, why a carnival?

Such carnival will force all of us to assume consciously that to address such fabricated crisis implies that one begins from the beginning (see Žižek, 2009). That is, the Leninian conclusive question raised by Ginsberg (2011) – i.e. what needs to be done – deserves another answer, a Leninian answer, so well explained by Žižek (2009). We really need to start all over again. Žižek takes a path tracing the way. He deserves to be highlighted.

According to Žižek (2009), “when the Bolsheviks, after winning the Civil War against all odds, had to retreat into the New Economic Policy of allowing a much wider scope to the market economy and private property,” Vladimir Ilyich Lenin “uses the analogy of a climber who must backtrack from his first attempt to reach a new mountain peak to describe what retreat means in a revolutionary process, and how it can be done without opportunistically betraying the cause” (Žižek, 2009, p. 43). According to Lenin, the climber,

is forced to turn back, descend, seek another path, longer, perhaps, but one that will enable him to reach the summit. The descent from the height that no one before him has reached proves, perhaps, to be more dangerous and difficult for our imaginary traveler than the ascent—it is easier to slip; it is not so easy to choose a foothold; there is not that exhilaration that one feels in going upwards,
straight to the goal, etc. One has to tie a rope round oneself, spend hours with an alpenstock to cut footholds or a projection to which the rope could be tied firmly; one has to move at a snail’s pace, and move downwards, descend, away from the goal; and one does not know where this extremely dangerous and painful descent will end, or whether there is a fairly safe detour by which one can ascend more boldly, more quickly and more directly to the summit. (apud Žižek, 2009, p. 43)

According to Lenin’s ‘to begin from the beginning,’ Žižek, (2009) adds that one has the clear sense that Lenin “is not talking about merely slowing down and fortifying what has already been achieved, but about descending back to the starting point: one should begin from the beginning, not from the place that one succeeded in reaching in the previous effort” (p. 44). Moreover, according to Žižek, (2009) “this is Lenin at his Beckettian best, foreshadowing the line from Worstward Ho: ‘Try again. Fail again. Fail better’” (p. 44).

Who will deny the resemblance between Lenin’s Beckettianism and the state of public institutions, such as schools, caused by a crony capitalism that failed miserably in its political project and persists in using public higher educational institutions in the financialization of capital (see Bellamy Foster, 2008). Such ‘begin from the beginning’ mentality calls for “a counter-hegemonic globalization of the university as a public good” (Sousa Santos, 2008). Such counter-hegemonic globalization of the university will challenge the reactive defensive approach that permeates universities today, particularly in their responses, to the financial crisis. ‘Begin from the beginning’ implies to “face the new with the new, to fight for a definition of crisis, to fight for a definition of University, to reconquer legitimacy’ (Sousa Santos, 2008). The new beginning will challenge neoliberal globalization, devastating an attack on the idea of national project, conceived as a major obstacle to the expansion of global capitalism.

WORKING WITHIN THE CRACKS OF THE SYSTEM – FINAL NOTES

We witness a unique moment in the history of capitalism in the U.S. The dominant federal policies and practices of overspending and little concern with the deficit – to a point of shutting down the government – clash dramatically with the narrative and maladroit practices of addressing the deficit issues that are happening in specific public higher educational institutions. The U.S. is a nation in two speeds. One in which the foci of its narrative is to transform the deficit, which is an enzyme that would lead the nation out of the current ‘fabricated crises’, and another one that frantically transforms numbers in an act of faith with a firm cult that public education needs to eliminate the deficit, even if that means more pain to oppressed communities. Under the guise of “public,” these privatized reforms of the public institutions are a kind of self-emulation that is destroying the real mission of public institutions. The strategy is actually not new within the capitalist framework. Antonio Salazar, the
sanguinary Portuguese dictator that committed genocide for almost 50 years, used the same strategy. While Minister of Finance, he addressed the nation’s economic collapse claiming: “I will save the nation. Not the people.” The financialization of capital was always at stake (Bellamy Foster, 2012; Giroux, 2013).

As I have mentioned before, despite such ferocious attacks on public education and public higher educational institutions, we fortunately have some good examples of individuals and institutions trying to challenge such arithmetic functionalism (Wacquant, 2009). A little biographical information is crucial here. When I joined UMass Dartmouth in 2009, I was given the responsibility of building both the new Department of Educational Leadership and the new Doctoral Program in Educational Leadership and Policy Studies. My experience in working in several universities in different nations and my close interactions with scholars, such as Richard Quantz, Donaldo Macedo, and Jurjo Torres Santomé, helped me greatly in moving forward with the plan. As the architect of the program, founder of the department, chair and program director, the program started in the summer of 2011 with the following courses: ELP 554 – Transformative Educational Leadership, and ELP 552 – Organizational Behavior and Change in Educational Settings. Ricardo Rosa and Mark Paige joined the Department in the Fall 2010. Together we wrote the draft of the mission and guiding principles that was debated and approved unanimously by the Department, and we created countless courses. In addition, we conceptualized and organized colloquia – bringing world renowned intellectuals to the program, such as Gary Anderson, Antonia Darder, Kenneth Zeichner, David Hursh, Kenneth Saltman, Gustavo Fishman, Deborah Meier, Noam Chomsky, John Willinsky, David Berliner, Donaldo Macedo, Stanley Aronowitz, Lois Weiner, Angela Valenzuela, Richard Quantz, Henry Giroux, Lilia Bartolome, Pauline Lipman, Wayne Au, Bernadette Baker, Jurjo Torres Santomé and Ana Sanches Bello from Spain, Alvaro Moreira Hypolito and Ines Barbosa de Oliveira from Brazil, Vanessa Oliveira de Andreotti from Finland, and Victor Borges from Cape Verde. In addition, we have been working closely with local communities and schools. Ricardo Rosa has been organizing and coordinating with some students and community leaders several community forums in New Bedford, Fall River, and Brockton, addressing critical issues in public education, such as eco-justice, high-stakes testing, “dropouts”/forced outs, school-to-prison pipeline, etc. The work of our program is vital to critical transformative leadership that cannot be isolated to research and books but a critical transformative leadership that takes research and engages with the community in working to critically transform our community toward social justice. The Department believes in scholarly research that is always intimately connected to and reflective of the needs of the surrounding communities. This means not only hosting community dialogues, but developing relationships with the community and youth, which is a key component of our Department’s mission. In addition, I was involved with an elementary school in New Bedford, coaching basketball for the kids and work in curriculum integration matters. Currently, I have been working on several community projects, within the local Lusophone community, namely establishing a
Portuguese official school, organizing and fighting for Lusophone representation at key positions on the state, engaging with community leaders and local Lusophone-American legislators to defend the Lusophone languages and cultures. Given the rich Lusophone history in the South Coast, this is a necessary struggle to ensure this cultural knowledge and legacy survives. Furthermore, the Department and program gained a great deal of strength with the support of community leaders and activists, such as Jose Soler, the Director for the Center of Labor Studies. He has been a tremendous comrade and supporter of our program and our activities. In this complex political project, we cannot forget the support of our local legislators as well. The support of senators Marc Pacheco and Michael Rodrigues as well as State Representatives Tony Cabral and David Vieira has been crucial to our program. The recent election of senator Vinny de Macedo speaks volumes about the power of our community, that for the first time elected 3 senators.

Currently, the program has a total of 48 students within four cohorts of students, (cohort 1, Counterhegemonics; cohort 2, Synoptics; cohort 3, Critical Transformative Leaders; and cohort 4, Public Intellectuals). We are recruiting the fifth cohort, and we have plans on adding an Higher Education component, in Critical University Studies. In 2015, we will have the first group of students (cohort 1, Counterhegemonics) with a doctoral degree in Educational Leadership and Policy Studies through UMass Dartmouth. Kenneth Saltman joined us from De Paul University. We see this as a consequence of the overt commitment that we have towards a critical and transformative educational leadership and policy.

Our mission and guiding principles are critical and transformative and DEL unanimously adopted both the Mission and the Guiding Principles on March 2012:

Consistent with the University of Massachusetts Dartmouth’s mission as a public regional research university, the Department of Education Leadership (hereafter DEL) was founded in the Fall of 2011. DEL’s major political scope is to assume a leading role both nationally and internationally in preparing a new generation of education leaders and policy analysts, highly prepared in educational leadership and policy studies who could exercise critical transformative leadership committed to social and cognitive justice. We believe that education should be a place that cultivates humanity; a place that fosters the “ability to imagine the experiences of another”; a locus that emphasizes the ability to think critically, the ability to transcend local loyalties and to approach world problems; a place that fosters creativity and the formation of a holistic citizen. We believe that education and educational institutions should be driven by leaders and not by managers. Given the current global crises with a profound devastating impact in our region, we maintain that the flourishing of a democratic society relies on a democratic educational system capable of a critical balance between the need to sustain a strong economy and the preparation of a more holistic citizen.
We claim educational leadership and policy studies as contested political terrains profoundly coded with ethical, moral and spiritual dimensions. DEL offers a critical transformative doctoral program in Education Leadership and Policy Studies designed to produce future practitioners and scholars who will work as professors, researchers, administrators, or executives in leadership roles in a variety of institutional settings. Graduates of this program will be committed to transforming students, institutions and their contexts in pursuit of a more ethical, just and fair society and to improving educational achievement in environments, that are dynamic, interactive, culturally diverse, and democratic. The doctoral program aims to prepare individuals capable of understanding global contemporary dynamics as well as leading systemic transformations that promote learning and improve educational attainment in schools. Our program prepares future education leaders quite sentient of the need for advocacy leadership. We claim that there is no authentic education with a lack of basic social needs for the massive majority of society. In so doing – and aligned with the more recent and insightful research in the field – our program calls for a collaborative and critical transformative leadership, one that encourages an open transformative leadership practice quite capable of creating the caring and authentic culture as well as empowering teachers, students, parents and the community in critical transformative leadership. To accomplish the above the proposed program is driven by a set of beliefs, namely that human growth and development are transformative lifelong pursuits; that schools are political and cultural artifacts of local and global contexts; that diversity strengthens organizations; that while transformative leadership implies individual and team work that stimulates differences, it is also driven by moral and ethical imperatives; and that one can only have an impact globally if one is capable of making a difference locally. DEL is oriented by a set of principles regarding critical transformative Educational Leadership and Policy Studies. Such principles are the vivid result of an ample and heated participatory debate among faculty, administrators, superintendents, principals, teachers, parents, social activists and community in general. Both the department and the doctoral program were built with them and not for them to which we express here our sincere gratitude.

**Principle 1**
Education is a political act.
Accordingly, the education policies produced at all levels of government (local, state, federal, and international) reflect the political struggles and power dynamics inherent in our society. DEL explores these varying dynamics and influences and develops future school leaders and scholars in the field of public education who are actively aware and engaged with these complex and layered interactions.
Principle 2
Education leadership and policy understands and claims education as a public good.
Of vital importance to our society and the collective good is the nature and quality of the education we provide our children. Moreover, a recognition that education envisions leadership and policies that ensure that every child receives an equal educational opportunity to maximize their potential. In this way, education as a public good is promoted.

Principle 3
Educational leadership and policy places the educational system within the dynamics of ideological production.
As such, it recognizes that there policies and curriculum decisions and choices that reflect certain ideological leanings that, when reproduced, can perpetuate inequalities in the education system. These ideological leanings are not always obvious. These ideologies reflect existing power imbalances. Therefore, recognition of these ideological underpinnings – and the reasons for their perpetuation – are crucial understandings in developing educational leadership and policy.

Principle 4
Educational leadership and policy acknowledge power and privilege and argues for a new conception of power.
Certain interests and ideologies can carry a disproportionate amount of power in education systems and society in general. An understanding of the above-mentioned principles necessitates a shift in power to rectify imbalances that manifest in the education system and greater society. Accordingly, educational leadership and policy must reflect this need and attempt to re-calibrate the power balances.

Principle 5
Educational leadership and policy recognizes education and schools as critical transformative agencies.
Despite the power imbalances inherent in educational systems, it is understood that these agencies may be changed from within and by those who have heretofore been disadvantaged by the existing mechanisms and struggles. Moreover, in recognizing this, it is understood that schools and education are part of a set of agencies and constructs that, together, require reformation to mitigate against existing power imbalances.

Principle 6
Educational leadership and policy is an intellectual and moral craft that articulates individual and collective purposes.
We understand educational leadership and policy as moral undertaking grounded on critical intellectual trajectories that seek a critique and transformation of dominant structures. We emphasize the need to articulate individual and collective aims to attain purposes related with equity and excellence.
**Principle 7**
Educational leadership and policy is a commitment to democratize democracy. We perceived educational leadership and policy as committed to a praxis of democracy as an unfinished process, a reality that is not solely to be theorized in relation to ordinary political structures, but that must be extended to civil society and culture.

**Principle 8**
Educational leadership and policy understands that the struggle for social justice is a struggle for cognitive justice. De-centering dominant paradigms requires the perpetual inclusion of epistemological diversity. This would signify the inclusion indigenous knowledge(s), counter-histories, and methodologies. Educational leadership and policy seeks an understanding of leadership that is not bounded to individualism but rather through an analytical lens that centralizes power politics, interactions, and the context through which these dynamics operate.

**Principle 9**
Educational leadership and policy understands that global challenges needed to be won locally
Educational leadership and policy understands the importance of transformation of the local context while not abstracting the intricate relationships between the local and global.

**Principle 10**
Educational leadership and policy fosters indigenous knowledge’s, counter-histories, and methodologies. Educational leadership and policy fosters not only a critique of existing institutions and social, political, and economic arrangements; it also opens up an analytical lens towards alternative possibilities.

**Principle 11**
Educational leadership and policy is community ‘engagé’.
Educational leadership and policy is committed to the engagement of leadership and policy studies within and beyond the boundaries or organizational settings. It fosters transformative partnerships with community and society by and large.

**Principle 12**
Educational leadership and policy understands schools as spaces that cultivate humanity. Therefore, to this end, it promotes efforts to develop critical thinking, an understanding that schools are part of a complex web of institutions in a global society, and appreciation of different perspectives beyond one’s own.

In accordance with our mission and guiding principles, the department includes the voices, not just of faculty, but also students. The students established the Graduate Students Association of Educational Leadership and Policy Studies (ELP-GSA) at UMass Dartmouth, and a student representative participates in the departmental
meetings. Right in the first semester of the program, together with the students and faculty, we started working on what would be the first critical transformative leaders annual meeting here at UMass Dartmouth. Together with the students and faculty, we were able to organize a successful conference with Deborah Meier and Kenneth Saltman as keynote speakers on November 16 and 17, 2012. The pieces that structured this volume reflect updated versions of papers presented at the conference. Both the papers and the chapters went through a peer review process. As I am writing this preface, the students have already organized the second conference “Voices and Silences of Social and Cognitive Justice.” that was held on November 15 and 16, 2013, as well as the third conference “How Public is Public Education” that was held in November 14 and 15, 2014. While in the former we had the Secretary of Education of Massachusetts, Matthew Malone and Donaldo Macedo, University of Massachusetts Boston as keynote speakers, in the latter we had Pauline Lipman, Wayne Au, and Barbra Madeloni as keynote speakers. Although a collective project, each year a specific cohort is responsible for organizing the conference.

As any political project, the second one showed already a different positive tone. The students decided to create Transformative Researchers and Educators for Democracy (TRED); TRED’s mission explicitly claims its engagement with the community and schools to work for social justice and democracy through transformative action and dialogue. TRED seeks to provide a public space for educational researchers and practitioners to engage in critical and transformative dialogues through forums, presentation sessions, panel discussions, and informal gatherings, which place the discussion of educational leadership and policy within the dynamics of ideological production, that reflect existing power imbalances that perpetuate inequalities within society. With the formation of TRED, the critical transformative leaders’ annual meeting became the annual TRED conference.

Needless to say, that none of this was done alone. A lot of individuals – internally and externally – contribute for the success of program. Without a doubt, we coin the success of the program also to many individuals such as Jean MacCormack, Tony Garro, Donaldo Macedo, Richard Quantz, Gustavo Fischman, Mike Peters and Mike Dantley. A word of profound gratitude to my colleagues and friends João Rosa, and Clyde Barrow for their support and solidarity. João was instrumental in the success of the program since its embryonic phase. Our countless conversations and discussions over the way on how we should frame the program politically was crucial. João and Clyde left to Bridgewater State University and the University of Texas Pan American respectively. Their support and comradeship will always be remembered.

I am not romanticizing any space and time here. As a colleague of mine at the Universidade Agostinho, Luanda, keeps remind me ‘one should romance with the argument not with reality’, this is not a perfect space. We are all fully aware of the cracks in existence in our program. For example, we are fighting to have more minority students in our program, we are fighting to have more fellowships that can help minorities to join the program, we want the program to be more and more
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critical transformative, fully engaged in social and cognitive justice (Sousa Santos, 2014). As Samora Machel would put it, being critical is being in a state of perpetual alert. This is the most important battle in space that it was very hard to edify, yet not impossible, and we are quite proud to be in a public institution. As educators working within a critical post-al path, examples such as the one I raised, reinforces in all of us a real utopia (see, Galeano, 2013; Paraskeva, 2009) of the power not just of public education as a pale narrative, but of public institutions as real critical engines of social critical transformation. In this regard, we have learned how transformative leaders need to know how to work within the cracks of the system.

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The University of Massachusetts – Dartmouth started down a new and exciting road in June of 2011. On a hot summer night, Dr. Joao Paraskeva, the director of the newly formed Educational Leadership and Policy doctoral studies, sat down with nine students for what would be the first class of the program’s first cohort. It was clear within the first few minutes of that initial meeting that the cohort was in for an intensively critical four years that would not only transform each cohort member individually, but also transform the group as a whole in such a way so as to produce agents and activists for transformation within the education system(s).

While mystifying at first, the cohort soon came to not only understand, but engage in and fight for the twelve principles on which the program is pillared:

- Education is a political act
- Education Leadership and Policy understands and claims education as a public good
- Educational Leadership and Policy places the educational system within the dynamics of ideological production
- Educational Leadership and Policy acknowledge power and privilege and argues for a new conception of power
- Educational Leadership and Policy recognizes education and schools as critical transformative agencies
- Educational Leadership and Policy is an intellectual and moral craft that articulates individual and collective purposes
- Educational Leadership and Policy is a commitment to democratize democracy
- Educational Leadership and Policy understands that the struggle for social justice is a struggle for cognitive justice
- Educational Leadership and Policy understands that global challenges needed to be won locally
- Educational Leadership and Policy fosters indigenous knowledge, counter-histories, and methodologies
- Educational Leadership and Policy is community engagement
- Educational Leadership and Policy understands schools as spaces that cultivate humanity

It was with these principles in mind that, in the summer of 2012, the first conceptualizations of expanding the cohort’s classroom discussions into a larger forum for a greater number of voices bore forth the notion of hosting a student-led educational conference.
Once the idea of a conference was tabled, Dr. Paraskeva played a crucial role in establishing the framework for the event, but he made it clear at the onset that this conference would be produced and run by the cohort, not the faculty. In setting a precedent for the initial conference that would aim to become an annual event hosted by subsequent cohorts of the Educational Leadership and Policy program, the pressure was immense to ensure every logistical, ideological, and theoretical detail was correct – insofar as was democratically decided. Many nights the cohort burned the midnight oil mulling over seemingly trivialities, from the wording on the “Call for Papers” to which foods would be served by the caterers, as well as debating major issues such as what physical space should host the conference to who should be invited to be the keynote speaker(s). As with most democratic practices, it was a messy endeavor, but all voices were heard and opinions respected as the cohort began firming up on one detail after another.

The “Call for Papers” was sent out to most New England Universities that had graduate education programs. Being a new conference, at first the papers trickled in. However, as the deadline for the proposals drew nearer, the cohort was flooded with many excellent papers covering a wide range of topics and political perspectives. The task then, for the cohort, was not only to accept the best papers for the conference, but to also choose papers that would create a panopticon of viewpoints over a wide breadth of issues that touched upon the conference’s theme and strands.

While half of the cohort worked on the tough paper selection process, the other half were busy engaged in creating discussion panels and roundtables. These sessions were made up of superintendents, administrators, teachers, politicians, policy makers, and academics. And one panel, most importantly, was comprised of a group whose voice is often not admitted into spaces where critical dialogues concerning matters of education are held – public school students.

Finally, on November 16th and 17th of 2012, the Educational Leadership and Policy doctorate program at the University of Massachusetts-Dartmouth hosted its inaugural conference, “Critical Transformative Leadership and Policy.” Adhering to the mission, values, and focus that are at the core of the Ph.D program’s work, there were four strands on which the conference focused:

1. Education as a democratic ideal
2. Cultural politics and curriculum
3. Teachers as transformational leaders
4. Leadership, management, and policy

Academics, educational professionals, and students, among others, from across the Northeast US attended the conference and presented papers, sat on panels, or participated in roundtable discussions. This book is a compilation of the paper presentations from the conference, including a discussion from keynote speaker Deborah Meier and a chapter from Kenneth Saltman who delivered the opening address on day two of the conference.

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The chapters that follow reflect the diversity of voices, views, and theories exhibited at the conference from those who are striving to transform education today. While these writings may be subject to dissenting opinions, increased complexity, or alternative conclusions, the selection of works in this volume represent the ideal of democratic participation that conferences like this strive to achieve, where the presentations are not an end-point unto themselves, but rather serve as the genesis for greater debates and discussions that can act as transformative agents.

Why transformative? It was the aim of this first conference to encourage critical educators to move beyond the chic of the current “reform” movement(s) or the simple notion of change. In an era where our capitalist system has been radically transformed over the past forty-five years, education must be held as the apparatus that can slow or halt the current “proletarianization” (Harvey, 2003) of society. Where the main focus of schooling was once placed on giving students the tools to be productive employees who could enjoy the comforts of both capitalism and democracy, which, prior to 1968 were seen as a necessary tandem to preserve the “American way” (Reich, 2007), capitalism in the modern era is no longer undergird by US workers in factories or US employees engaged in other modes of production, but rather it is fueled by the financialization of (fictitious) capital and the exploitation of surplus labor in countries of the Economic South. As a result, the US (and global) economic situation for a majority of citizens (lately identified as the “99%”) likewise has been radically transformed — or, rather, has radically regressed to the dire straits of decades preceding World War II. Of course, society also has been negatively transformed. Though there have been great strides in moving towards social equality (though still far short of that ideal), massive economic inequity is now the plague that chokes many families. Mass unemployment and underemployment are now normative. Retail or service sector jobs that are part-time and without benefits are now more the rule than the exception. The need for money to pay for life’s essentials has forced many citizens to participate in what is often the only area where employment is readily available — the underground economy. This has resulted in a dramatic increase in prison rates.

All of this greatly affects children, from the kindergartener who must live with the reality that her father is in jail to the senior who is faced with the question of whether a college education will be a financially wise investment. It is with this in mind that those in public education must not talk of “reform”, especially as that term has been hijacked by those who wish to “reform” education in such a manner as to secure the current financial and social status quo by manufacturing “commonsense” through a rigid set of high-stakes standardized tests, Common Core curriculum, and de-professionalized (teacher-free) pedagogies. Rather, educators must seek to critically transform the relationships that occur in the classroom and throughout the system as a whole.

At a recent open house for parents of kindergarten students in the town of Sharon, Massachusetts (ranked by Money Magazine and CNN in 2013 as being the best small town in the US in which to live, and consistently rated as being one of the top
100 schools districts in the country), the school’s principal spoke at length about the district’s curriculum, designed, in part, to make these little five and six year olds “globally competitive.” Never mind the fact that the focus of the discussion was on children who still need help brushing their teeth and getting dressed in the morning, but the question needs to be asked, what is meant by “competition”? What are these children competing for? Against who? For jobs? What jobs? And, moreover, why is there this need for competition?

This is the modern sensibility of schooling. Though the commonsense of schools as a means primarily to train students for the workforce has been ingrained since the beginning of formalized education, and to some degree that bared some relevance, apart from becoming human capital or the creators of intellectual property that will end up being owned by a corporation, for what purpose does education still hold future employment as its primary objective when jobs – to say nothing of good, meaningful jobs – are few and far between? And, as far as “college preparedness” being an objective of schools, again, to what end when an undergraduate degree will only slightly increase a person’s chance of obtaining meaningful employment and/or slightly increase his or her pay rate, but at the cost of putting oneself in massive debt that will likely negate any financial benefit a university diploma can offer. Such is the dilemma in a time of mass joblessness and academic inflation where jobs that once required a high school degree are now only accepting applicants who have a masters degree or higher.

Employment opportunities also are subject to the economic laws of supply and demand, where increased unemployment among those with graduate degrees and Ph.Ds who are flooding job openings with their resumes make the prospects of attaining a career seem virtually impossible for those with only a high school or undergraduate degree. These individuals are then forced to seek advanced higher education, which in turn causes the two-fold effect of putting citizens deeper into personal debt and further exasperating the problems of academic inflation, which then threatens to create a deeper proletarianization of all citizens, despite their academic degrees.

And, so it is now the onus of all those involved in education to move beyond “reform” and work to transform. To some, this means developing critical curricula and pedagogies that create civically-minded citizens. To others, it means bringing revolutionary ideologies into the classroom that push against capitalism’s modernity. Still to others it means tinkering with education in order to create social transformation.

In spite of all the different ideologies, theories, and views that are presented in this book, educators must find strength in their differences to unite, not divide, in the common goal of transforming education to be a means of transforming society in such a way as to resist and reverse the contemporary capital trends that are infecting – and often to deadly degrees – the common good. Schools must not continue to reproduce the conditions for the production of an inequitable society. The current
trajectory of capitalism and its effects upon families and communities cannot be sustained, and thus education must develop new sensibilities to prepare students for the radically new world that awaits, be it for better or worse.

Thad LaVallee
Dartmouth, MA
10 October 2013

NOTE

1 Stanley Aronowitz (2013) makes the distinction between “work” and “jobs” – where there exist lots of work, jobs are much more scarce, where jobs are defined as employment opportunities that offer a living wage, benefits, vacation time, pension plans, upward corporate mobility, and, in general, what can be defined as a lifelong career.

REFERENCES

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1. WHAT IS A FACT? AND WHO CAN WE / SHOULD WE TRUST?

The number one “habit of mind” that we based our work at Mission Hill, Central Park East schools on: “how do we know what we know and how credible is it?” With all the education talk about “evidence-based” and “data driven” reform you’d think we’d stop for a moment and ask ourselves how much school evidence/data we can truly count on? Or even scarier – how do we know anything beyond our first-hand knowledge?

I just finished reading a blog by Diane Ravitch about Geoffrey Canada’s work in Harlem which, in turn, is based on a blog by Gary Rubenstein. Rubenstein gives facts and figures to (1) prove Canada’s proclaimed graduation rates aren’t honest, (2) show that Canada’s success depends heavily on the incredible fiscal resources he has access to, (3) remind us that Canada built his rep without acknowledging that he kicked out two entire classes because they didn’t get good test scores, and (4) that he denies all the above.

But in a field in which I know a lot I no longer believe anyone’s data; thus exposing Canada hardly matters! Not even my own “facts”! Sometimes I don’t convince even me! I know too much about my own temptation to pick and choose evidence that confirms my beliefs to assume that my allies – and enemies – aren’t similarly influenced. At any one moment the temptation to lie, fudge or obscure negative data can be either trivial or critical. The higher the stakes that rely on the data the greater the temptation – like e.g. bonuses, reputation, livelihood, jail – to look for the best and hide the worst. The GAO claims that 33 states cheat, but I believe it relies on an old-fashioned rule – no explicit prepping for a specific test.

So I wonder, is my nostalgia for a time when I “believed” most “facts” just that – false memory? Or even worse, stupidity on my part? I suspect some of it was stupid and some naiveté. After all, I long ago noticed that the NY Times never got a story quite right if it was one I happened to know a lot about – where I was there, for example. But I still kept/keep, sort of, believing all the information they offer on what I don’t know much about.

I remember an anarchist friend of mine disputing my claim that people were living longer today than they had a hundred years earlier. When asked why I believed it, I mentioned as one example, census data. He lashed into me about my naiveté in believing government-sponsored data. I felt sorry for him because how can one cope

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J. M. Paraskeva & T. LaVallee (Eds.), Transformative Researchers and Educators for Democracy, 1–5. © 2015 Sense Publishers. All rights reserved.
with a world where you cannot know who and what is “a fact.” It surely makes even flawed democracy a utopian dream.

I’m in his boat now, and it feels awful.

Close to home, for example, I know how easy it is to fudge graduation data, dropout data, class-size data, attendance data, GPA averages, test scores, and on and on. I’ve even dabbled in a few of these myself. It’s hard to get caught – unless someone is really after you or you’ve let too many people in on the secret.

Therefore should we stop collecting the stuff? Maybe. At least I feel comfortable saying we (1) shouldn’t be collecting new stuff with high stakes attached, and (2) should remain very skeptical – especially if, on the basis of one’s personal knowledge, the data seems miraculous or peculiar.

I used to carefully scan the ranked test score reports in the *NY Times*. (It began in the 1960s). Schools were ranked in order of scores, and the story indicated both this year’s scores and last year’s. What I soon noticed were occasional great leaps or declines – which seemed unlikely if we were actually comparing oranges to oranges. Either something happened – such as the school having suddenly become the site of the District’s gifted program, or a new principal was no longer inflating scores as his/her predecessor did. (She/he may not have even known they were inflated.) I checked some and it confirmed my suspicions. Others I had no way to confirm or deny. Similarly, years ago I witnessed an enormous rise in attendance in our high schools following a new chancellor’s demand that we focus on attendance (“they can’t learn if they’re not there.”) Until I realized we had simultaneously, and not secretly, changed the class period when attendance was officially taken – from first to third, I believe.

Drop-out figures? They are hard to count and aren’t simply the difference between the number of 8th graders vs. 10th, or 9th vs. 12th (although big discrepancies in either requires some explaining). After all, kids leave one school for another – some of which can be verified, some not. After all, families move to other cities, states, and countries. Also some can be accounted for by hold-overs unless one looks into the 5 and 6 year graduating rate. We’d need a team of detectives per school to follow-up and even then it’s problematic how much they could discover. Except for rare drop-in visits to count a random sample of classes, we are pretending schools are telling the truth. Maybe there are more honest principals out there than one might think. But even the few who are more careless, let’s say, are rarely “accused.” Both the cost and the morale impact of being continually inspected for the truth would be beyond immense. (Store-keepers, bankers, you name it, have reached the same conclusion and have invented annoying ways to keep “us” honest, but not themselves).

I could go on and on. Every time we institute a new policy to catch wrong-doers, most of us act just like our students, we put our minds to new ways to get around the new rules. The last fiscal crisis being a good example. It’s easier than improving the school (economy) in ways that will show up on high stakes rank-order lists.

A wonderful friend of mine (and of many other school people) ran a high school that took all the kids others wanted to get rid of. He never said “no” if there was
a space. And the kids he took were grateful because he really cared about them. But after many years, some reporter decided to expose him by noting the school’s relatively low attendance rate and relatively high drop-out data. He was, the story suggested, a phony who had been getting away with this for years. My friend soon retired and afterwards died under sad circumstances. Of course, were it not for him other feeder schools would have had worse data. And, I wonder, would he have served his students better had he been willing to fudge the data?

The world is a worse place when we feel that maybe we “should” lie in order to “do good.”

So where do I go with this? I’ve reached a few possibly useful conclusions to start with. To lessen the reasons to lie, the stakes must not be too high; and to increase the reasons to tell the truth, the consequences must be helpful (Campbell’s Law). Then we need to make it easier for the truth to be naturally exposed – where lying would require too much collaboration from too many people to last long. (That’s what I usually count on – truth will win out over time – when I hear outrageous conspiracy theories.) That’s one reason I like small schools. Assuming that people generally trust data that supports what they otherwise know first-hand, school size helps check lying too much. If I say 100% graduated, hopefully some kids, teachers, and parents simply know better because they know better; they remember. And on and on. There was a story in the media some years ago about a speech in which the valedictorian started off by asking the graduates to look round and think about their freshman classmates – those who were no longer with them, who hadn’t made it.

But, we have to rely on some “facts” – just to get out of bed each morning. But how much further from our own self-knowledge can we rely on “the evidence”? In short, not far. Restoring confidence in “the facts” while retaining sufficient skepticism is a tough balancing act. It’s what, ideally, schools, the media, the courts (and friends) are there for. I’ve come to believe that the first order of the day for any reformer is: figure this puzzle out. The answers must, I fear, finally rest in human judgment; but judgment can be trained, improved upon and what better place for doing this than schools.

Yes, smallness is one partial answer. Openness is another. Not getting so tangled up in our fear of intruders that we lock everything up would help (and then we get hacked, etc.). Lots of opportunities for families and schools to share information – more and more family conferences to clarify the self-serving lies that even the best kids occasionally tell. Especially if the kids are at such meetings too so they can check on misleading claims adults sometimes indulge in. It also means tackling the “isms” – above all racism. It’s this – and all the small disrespectful acts that go with it, that cannot help but undermine trust.

We discovered (from others, including good private schools) the value of visiting teams of respected colleagues and experts who come and spend time on a regular basis – as we did at CPESS and on some level also at Mission Hill. Let them look over our records, our curriculum, our assessment tools and interview a sample of parents, teachers, and students. Sit in classes. Then at the end, after reading their
reports, we enjoy an open free-for-all, followed often by a written faculty “response.” These were NOT for high-stakes purposes, but ways of checking for useful and helpful feedback. It helps also if the school culture rests on frequent teacher-to-teacher visits, drop-ins, etc.

How to shift the balance? How much of it must be mandated from above? How far “above”? Who should have access to what? What protections are needed from harmful or premature disclosures – or should there be none? “What we say here, stays here” may at times be critical for healthy discussion – if so, how do we provide for that too? We need to leave room for discussing those “white lies” that even the strictest truth-teller might – or might not – occasionally indulge in. And we need to help young people sort these out too, without undue fear. The value of making such “habits of mind” explicit and user-friendly takes time and effort.

How might we try some of these ideas out on an experimental level? It is probably the narrative that goes with them that will or will not help persuade others to follow – not the statistical part. The primary tool of a democracy is persuasion. The facts are part of trying to persuade. Generally, we stick with what we have been believing until someone we trust a lot on a personal basis presents an eye-witness report that forces us to consider the possibility that “I’m wrong.” We have to respect how hard it to persuade people they’re wrong. For as Thomas Kuhn said – in discussing the search for scientific proof – sticking with one’s current viewpoint is not a bad idea. If we have no commitment to our ideas we will never know whether they are right or wrong. We need accommodate new “truths” to old ones for as long as we can. But also it shouldn’t be too uncomfortable to switch “sides” – eventually one should be able to drop practices or beliefs that even you have begun to be skeptical about and try out a few that you used to shun. It’s easier if you are also able to revert! Watching good teachers caused me to reconsider some of my pedagogical certainties: like the value of choral reading (and not just of music). Even about lining-up routines; although I’ve also questioned why we need to line-up so often!

It was even exciting when I came back from visiting a city (Minneapolis) that never lined kids up, to ask colleagues why we needed them.

I’m also, as I finish this, thinking about how the other four “habits of mind” serve as a partial check on the first. Number 2 usually is something like this: how else might it appear, look to others? The third asks about perceived patterns, the fourth asks “what if” and the last asks, “who cares and does it matter?” There are probably dozens of other habits of mind that we use as we delve deeper and deeper into the usually unending search for knowledge. But then the dilemma is: habits depend on frequent use in many different settings.

The crisis, so-called, in American education is a symptom of a “crisis of trust” which in turn poses a “crisis for democracy” writ large – as an idea itself. If we are not to give up, we need schools, families and communities that start to carefully rebuild trust within their own four walls, and base it on losing the fear that we might, on occasion, be wrong. No institution I know, alas, presently values being wrong less
than our K-12 schools. We might as well start there. Maybe if we do we can reverse the trends of the past few decades or distrust at all levels of society.

NOTE

1 The conference’s keynote address, delivered Dr. Meier, was largely an unscripted dialogue consisting of her reminiscences, experiences, theories, and how all those combine to shape her educational activism today. At her request and with her written permission, this is a republication of an article appearing on her website that captures the general tone, feel, and substance of the keynote address she presented.
2. DEMOCRATIC EDUCATION AGAINST CORPORATE SCHOOL REFORM

The New Market Bureaucracy in U.S. Public Schooling

INTRODUCTION

Corporate school reform or neoliberal educational restructuring aggressively expands privatization, standardized testing, and the standardization of knowledge, curriculum, and pedagogy. As it does so, it casts educational problems not through the democratic language of civic engagement, public interest, and shared and contested human values and interests, but rather through business terminology, metaphors, and ideology. Thus, corporate school reform positions its reforms in what are in fact ideological terms that its proponents present as apolitical, neutral, and of universal value. Students and parents become consumers of private educational services rather than public citizens. Public school administrators are imagined as private sector managers, CEOs, and entrepreneurs rather than public servants dedicated to the public interest. Teachers become delivery agents of discreet bits of knowledge treated as commodities rather than as public intellectuals responsible for fostering in students the knowledge, skills, and dispositions necessary to link knowledge to broader public issues and social struggles. Tragically and dangerously, corporate school reform eviscerates the development of democratic forms of public schooling that can teach, encourage, and animate, public thought, critical citizenship, critical consciousness, and engaged public participation. These public aspects of public schooling are of dire importance as public culture in the United States becomes increasingly marked by irrationalism in numerous domains. As corporate models of reform intensify at the expense of a vibrant political culture irrationalism takes over.

The broader culture of irrationalism represents a changing relationship between the public and knowledge. The democratic ideal of a citizen armed with knowledge to act in the public arena is increasingly imperiled as the quality of information throughout the public sphere and the capacity of citizens to evaluate information are both in crisis. Corporate media consolidation has resulted in the near death of investigative journalism while the majority of news content is now public relations and nearly all (95%) online news is taken from what remains of traditional newspapers. Citizens are inundated with a vast barrage of information and “edutainment” while most have little sense of how to access or evaluate the quality of information as television punditry, unvetted websites and blogs, advertising and
public relations comprise the vast majority of news content, and the vast majority of news punditry is from the political right. At a time in which the credible and the outlandish appear indistinguishable to many, and editorial processes are rendered archaic, citizens do not have the tools with which to interpret and make sense of the world they experience. Irrationalism has come to fill the vacuum of political and public discourse in the form of conspiracy theory, hearsay and anecdote, propaganda, political elections purchased for billions of dollars and waged with thirty second advertisements, marketing fantasies, “infotainment,” 9/11 conspiracy plots, birther secrets, medical conspiracy against vaccinations, secret chemicals in our drinking water causing the obesity epidemic, God’s plot against homosexuals, etc. have taken on greater prominence as social and historical explanations, research and science are treated as equivalent to rumor, speculation, and opinion unsupported by evidence and argumentation.

In this context, the continued upward redistribution of wealth and inequality in income and the decline of upward mobility and life chances, the violence of poverty, corporate capture of the public sphere, and political exclusion become explained through emotionally potent simplifications which have been readily provided by a corporate media culture organized around the principle of selling audiences to advertisers.

This crisis of legitimation for quality information is matched by a crisis of critical interpretive tools. The rise of irrationalism represents a public and a popular educational crisis. As public education has an important role to play in providing citizens with the intellectual tools of rational discourse, deliberation, and engagement, public education is being radically remade by corporate school reform in ways that hinder critical thought, the evaluation of knowledge, and the relationship between claims to truth and the social forces informing their production. Interested knowledge in the form of public relations is presented as disinterested news in mass media while in concert in public education ever more public relations and advertising invades the classroom in the form of school commercialism, sponsored educational materials, and “lessons” in consumption. As political and material interests seep into every last corner of public culture outside the classroom, inside the classroom the culture (or cult) of standardized testing and standardized curriculum insists that there are no politics to the curriculum or to pedagogy. Corporate school reform expands irrationalism under the guise of a hyper-rationalism in which that which is deemed worthy of knowing is only that which can be numerically quantified. The crucial point is that at a time when it is imperative for citizens to understand the cultural politics and political economic forces animating representations and undergirding claims to truth, classroom pedagogy and curriculum are being overtaken by corporate school reform that posits false claims to neutrality and that denies the politics of knowledge, teaching and learning. It is not just standardized testing implicated in the dangerous denial of politics but the broader phenomenon of what I call “the new market positivism” at work in reducing all questions of knowledge, teaching and learning to that which is numerically quantifiable and measurable. Recourse
to numbers in the new educational context takes on the guise of science while in fact it furthers irrationalism as knowledge is decontextualized and understanding is misrepresented as a collection of a “world of facts”, as if these facts do not require interpretive frameworks and underlying theoretical assumptions.6

In the context of a rising irrationalism, mysticism, and public culture dominated by image and fleeting opinion, numbers promise the allure of certainty, the suggestion of scientific solidity. The institutionalization of high stakes standardized tests offers the promise and the sheen of solidity and certainty in a world rendered abstract through the principle of capitalist exchange applied everywhere.7 Under the sway of neoliberal ideology, the suggestion that there is no alternative to the market has produced what Mark Fisher calls “market Stalinism”, in which the appearance of market efficiency trumps real efficiency.8 Such market Stalinism represents a world in which all that is solid melts into public relations – a world in which, as David Simon’s television series “The Wire” accurately captured, the game of “juoking the stats” (creating foremost an appearance of ever improving numerical measures of efficiency) comes to supersede reason or rationale grounded in public interest for the policies and practices of teachers and administrators, police officers, politicians, business people, and public workers. As the numbers game seeks to produce ever better numbers, the pursuit of numbers above all else results in multiple perversions of institutional values and purpose foreclosing the potential for democratic social relations. This is happening in public education under the guise of promoting “market based efficiencies” by cutting through “public sector bureaucratic red tape”.

THE NEOLIBERAL PROMISE OF DEBUREAUCRATIZING PUBLIC EDUCATION

One of the most important foundational metaphors for public school privatization and neoliberal educational restructuring (or corporate school reform) that has been promoted since the early 90’s involves claims of the “natural efficiencies of markets”9 and cutting through bureaucratic red tape. This argument against the alleged bureaucratic inefficiency of the public sector and for the alleged managerial efficiency of the private sector was launched by Chubb and Moe’s Politics, Markets, and America’s Schools in 1990.9 Corporate school reformers have justified numerous forms of privatization, including chartering, contracting, and vouchers, on the basis of cutting through the bureaucratic inefficiencies of the public sector. The promise of debureaucratization has been part of a string of market metaphors.

Since the publication of Chubb and Moe’s neoliberal educational bible, the debureaucratizing force of privatization has been promoted relentlessly in educational policy, despite a lack of evidence for it. Yet, corporate school reforms, rather than decreasing bureaucracy and increasing efficiencies in public schooling, have in fact vastly expanded bureaucracy and created economic and operational inefficiencies.10 That is, corporate school reform has produced a privatized bureaucratic infrastructure that has yet to be identified as such. Moreover, the question of expanding or shrinking bureaucracy to a great extent conceals the ways that corporate school reforms achieve
the redistribution of control and governance over policy and practice, curriculum and administration as well as the redistribution of control over educational resources by creating a new two-tiered system that is privatized at the bottom and undermining the public and critical possibilities of public schools.

On the basis of efficient delivery of educational services, “deregulation” of public controls has been enacted. Yet, these so-called deregulatory reforms have introduced a vast new regulatory architecture. For example, charter schooling was supposed to free schools and administrators from the bureaucratic constraints of districts to allow for greater accountability (typically this means increased standardized test scores) and decreased costs. Not only have studies of charters found lower standardized test based performance than comparative traditional district schools, but the EMOs that manage charters have higher costs allocated to administration.\textsuperscript{11} Also, the charter movement (and “choice” more generally) bankrolled disproportionately by the Gates foundation has introduced entirely new layers of bureaucracy into the school system, such as public relations schemes to market schools to parents, entire new organizations at the local, state, and national level to grease the entry of charters into districts and “research” centers churning out dubious advocacy, reports, and “studies” to push the various aspects of the privatization agenda.\textsuperscript{12} Take for example Chicago which has at the local level the Renaissance Schools Fund with its $100 million budget to lobby and promote charters, at the state level the Illinois Charter School Association, at the national level the National Charter School Association, the Alliance for School Choice, the Charter School Growth Fund and New School Venture Fund, the venture philanthropies such as Gates, Broad, and Walton to name a few. This is to say nothing of the vast new in-school bureaucratic impositions on teachers and administrators who have been transformed into paper pushing “edupreneurs” encouraged to be constantly hustling for private money to maintain basic operations. The crucial insight to be gleaned from this is that in the name of efficiency, bureaucracy has not been eliminated or necessarily even reduced, but rather it has resulted in a shift in governance and control of school operations and policy formation subjecting teachers and administrators to an entirely new array of market oriented bureaucracy. The new market bureaucracy, though largely not for profit, plays a central support role for rapidly expanding private sector markets in the form of for profit educational management companies, contracting, consulting, publishing and technology companies that are raking in billions of dollars through chartering, vouchers, turnarounds, database tracking. In terms of teaching, one utterly obvious cost of this shift is that teachers spend their time doing an overwhelming amount of paperwork, dealing with so-called accountability measures rather than preparing for lessons or developing as intellectuals. Less obvious are the ways that teaching becomes deskilled and degraded as curriculum is not to be developed but rather delivered. Teaching becomes robotic, less about intellectual development and more about adhering to prescribed methodological approaches. More significantly such prescriptive methodologies fostered by the new market bureaucracy also disallow a focus on the specific educational context and student experience,
rendering critical pedagogical approaches impossible. Critical pedagogies ideally begin with student experience and educative contexts to foster interpretation of how broader social forces produce these contexts and experiences and they do this as the basis for social intervention. While critical pedagogies aim to expand understanding of the production of both knowledge and subjective experience, prescriptive methodologies aim to decontextualize knowledge and reduce comprehension of experience to the individual. Even less obvious are the ways that such deskilling becomes the means for installing conservative ideologies at odds with public and critical forms of schooling.

THE NEW MARKET BUREAUCRACY IN PUBLIC SCHOOLING

The new market bureaucracy in public schooling can be divided into at least three categories for conceptual clarity. First, the new market bureaucracy involves the shift to what I’m calling the “new market positivism” – that is, numerically quantifiable performance outcomes and the bureaucratic apparatuses put in place to control teachers, administrators, and students and to transform curriculum and pedagogy. Second, the new market bureaucracy involves linking the new market positivism to the institutionalization and the funding of entirely new strata of bureaucratic organizations dedicated to furthering the corporate agendas of privatization, deregulation, and standardization, charter support organizations, venture philanthropies, district support organizations and lobbying infrastructure. Third, the new market bureaucracy imports into public schooling business expenses and rationales that have financial and social costs such as public relations and advertising required of both public and privatized schools and real estate deals with chartering organizations, funding for market style competitions for private funds or public funds to implement corporate reforms such as Race to the Top, the Broad Prize, the Milken Prize, etc. This third form of the new market bureaucracy involves the use of billions of dollars in private foundation money, especially from the large venture philanthropists Gates, Broad, and Walton to influence and steer public policy. This foundation wealth, which is only possible through tax incentives, effectively redistributes control over public policy to private super rich individuals. Thus, the public pays to give away control over public institutions.

THE NEW MARKET POSITIVISM IN THE DOMINANT EDUCATIONAL REFORMS

Positivism is at the center of dominant educational reforms that are modeled on corporate culture and a private-sector vision of management, growth, and quality. Standardized testing is at the center of all the following: No Child Left Behind and its blueprint for reauthorization, Race to the Top; the push for value-added assessment; the creation of database tracking projects to longitudinally measure teacher performance on students’ standardized tests; the linkage of teacher evaluation and pay to such standardized test-based measures; the imposition of “urban portfolio
districts' legislative moves to stifle the power of teachers unions; the unbridled entry of corporate managers into school reform by-passing professional educators and educational scholarship; and the use of corporate media to frame educational problems and solutions. Standardized testing has also been at the center of the push for charter school expansion and the expansion of for-profit management companies running schools.

These dominant reforms share a common logic with regard to standardized testing. Test scores that are low in relation to the norm are used to justify policies such as regressive funding formulas (NCLB), imperatives for corporate reforms like "turnarounds" (NCLB and Race to the Top), school closures (NCLB and Race to the Top), and school privatizations. Corporate reformers use the alleged objectivity of the standardized tests to champion corporate reforms that lack scholarly or empirical justification. This alleged objectivity dooms the public schools under scrutiny, but the reforms put forward by the corporate reformers are not held to the same standards. For example, charter schools, No Child Left Behind, and for-profit management of schools can be fairly described as “failed” corporate educational reforms that do not increase standardized test scores, and no evidence for the success of turnarounds and portfolio districts exists. Indeed, the proponents of portfolio districts – which model districts on a stock portfolio and the superintendent as a stock investor – contend that it is impossible to measure the success of such models in terms of the same standardized testing that they use to justify implementation.

As the corporate reforms have failed to succeed on the proponents’ grounds (higher test scores), proponents have responded with two strategies. The first is willful ignorance. Policy elites such as the Secretary of Education, the venture philanthropists, charter school associations, and right-wing think tanks have continued, for example, to wrongly assert the success of charters and for-profit management companies and to insist on the need to continue NCLB (albeit slightly tweaked). The other strategy has been to change the rules of the game. This has been most evident with the failure of the charter movement to prove itself in terms of the test score improvements that justified its corporate backers. With a lack of test-based evidence, a number of policy makers have come out suggesting other measures to determine charters a success. Eugenicist, Harvard professor, and co-author of the *Bell Curve*, Charles Murray, wrote explicitly about the need to change the measure in a *New York Times* op-ed. Charters, it seems, were justified for implementation based on the low test scores of public schools, but the same criteria should not be used to justify their continuation. Likewise, Paul Hill, who leads the pro-privatization Center for Reinventing Public Education at the University of Washington, explained in his reports on creating portfolio districts that the measure of the success of charters and other privatizations should be the implementation of these reforms rather than the rise in test scores. The Bill and Melinda Gates Foundation has been the single largest funder of charter school expansion for schools, districts, and numerous charter “support” organizations at the local, state, and national levels. Since succeeding in getting the dubious charter movement made,
DEMOCRATIC EDUCATION AGAINST CORPORATE SCHOOL REFORM

a central element of the federal education agenda in Race to the Top and NCLB, the Gates Foundation’s reauthorization efforts have never admitted that evidence does not back its billions in spending. Instead, it continues to pour money into charters and other reforms more closely tied to standardized testing. For example, the foundation is pushing to expand value-added assessment and to link it to teacher pay, and to link value-added assessment to video surveillance. These reforms aim to deduce a methodology for teaching practice that will raise test scores and that can be forced on numerous teachers.

The New Market Positivism can also be found in the market based rearticulation of the language of schooling for social justice. While Secretary of Education Arne Duncan regularly describes education as the most important social justice and civil rights issue today, he then asserts that the imperatives for test based measures of educational quality and privatizations are the solution to the historical injustices he registers. Duncan is not alone. The Gates and Broad Foundations explain their push for test-based reforms, especially database tracking of student tests scores, as intended to “close the achievement gap.” Duncan, Gates, Broad and other proponents of the new market positivism share a number of related assumptions about knowledge, the self, and the society. Knowledge in this view is to be efficiently delivered and does not need to be comprehended in relation to its conditions of production or interpretation. In other words, the subjective positions of the claimant of truths do not need to be investigated, nor do the objective conditions which give rise to particular interpretations need to be comprehended. The self in this static view of knowledge ought to accumulate ever more knowledge towards the end of “measurable achievement” and instrumental action linked to economic utility. Within this view, social justice is not to be achieved by collective action and aspirations for reconceptualizing and impacting the social world. Instead, social justice for the new market positivists becomes an individualized pursuit in which disciplined consumption of pre-ordained knowledge creates the possibilities for inclusion into a social order presumed to be fundamentally just. This of course has little to do with social justice in the sense of transforming the economy either by ameliorating the devastating effects and dire inequalities of wealth and income of capitalism through social democratic welfare state controls. Nor does it have to do with more fundamentally transforming the political governance of capitalism through democratizing relations of production and consumption. As well, this conception of social justice has no sense of transforming the culture to value dissent, disagreement, difference, and dialogue which are the lifeblood of democratic social relations. Instead, this version of social justice imposes a singular value of individual economic inclusion in a corporate economy that by its nature is exclusionary.

The ubiquitous concepts of “student achievement”, the “achievement gap” and the call across the political spectrum to “close the achievement gap” all presume that achievement is measured by standardized testing. “Student achievement” naturalizes, neutralizes, and universalizes class and culturally specific knowledge establishing norms, comparing, and ranking in relation to the norm, all the while disavowing
the politics of knowledge informing the selection and framing of knowledge on the tests. The denial of the politics of knowledge is then further deepened by the concept of the “achievement gap” which suggests that the test outcomes indicate how racial and ethnic groups fare in relation to the norm. In the spirit and legacy of cultural imperialism and colonialism, racial and ethnic cultural differences are ignored and denied in the making of the standardized tests but then differences are invoked to demand that the ordained knowledge be consumed and displayed on the tests. In this view cultural differences and struggles over their meaning are not at the center of teaching and learning an object of analysis that could form the basis for emancipatory pedagogies that comprehend claims to truth in relation to the social positioning of individuals and groups. Instead, cultural differences in the new market positivism are only to be registered as something to be overcome as all students are required to take in the dogma.

THE NEW MARKET POSITIVISM

Though the criticism of positivism in Fordist public schooling came and largely went at the end of the Fordist era and the transition to post-Fordism, the culture of positivism (what I am calling here “the new market positivism”) has been at the center of the new forms of market based educational restructuring in the last twenty years. The new market positivism is typified by the reinvigorated expansion of longstanding positivist approaches to schooling: standardized testing, standardization of curriculum, the demand for policy grounded exclusively in allegedly scientific empirically-based pedagogical reforms that (unlike science) lack elaborated framing assumptions or adequate theorization, the drumbeat against educational theory and in favor of a practicalism that insists that “facts” speak for themselves and that untheorized experience is the arbiter of truth. The new market positivism signals the use of these longstanding approaches towards the expansion of multiple forms of educational privatization.

In part, what is new and different now is the use of positivism in coordination with corporate/corporeal control: 1) the use of positivism to justify various forms of public school privatization – a shift in the ownership and control of public schools, but also a shift in the culture of schools, their curricula and pedagogies; 2) repression in schools such as militarized and prisonized schooling, efficiency models for poor students and schools that aim at total control of the body and that justify expulsion through the failure of the student to be totally controlled – this is the flip side of the singular promise of economic freedom and choice and self realization through consumption and work. These forms of control are typified by the use of drugs in schools for educational competition.

For richer students, the corporeal/corporate controls take the form largely of pharma-control medicating students into attention (add/adhd upper drugs such as Ritalin and Adderall) which is coordinated with educational competition and economic competition. Pharma control also is used to medicate students out of
depression/panic/anxiety (various anti-depression anti-anxiety downer drugs such as Prozac, Paxil, Zoloft, Xanax, etc.). The logic of charter schools is shared by these control approaches: loosen up controls (de-democratize, privatize, de-unionize), but then demand test-based accountability defined through testing (positivism). The New Market Positivism evinces a new relationship between freedom and unfreedom. The student is promised the chance to be disciplined into being an entrepreneurial subject, to compete educationally in order to compete economically. Pharma-control drugs when not given medically are being used illicitly by students for the very same ends: in order to compete educationally to compete economically.

What is crucially different between the old positivism and the New Market Positivism is the ways that the old positivism neutralized, naturalized, and universalized social and cultural reproduction under the guise of the public good, the public interest, but also individual values of humanist education. During the Fordist “hidden curriculum” era, the economic role of schooling as a sorting and sifting mechanism for the capitalist economy was largely denied. As Bourdieu and Passeron pointed out, mechanisms such as testing simultaneously stratify based on class while concealing how merit and talent stand in for the unequal distribution of life chances. The new market positivism still neutralizes, naturalizes, and universalizes the reproduction of the class order through schooling. But the new market positivism also openly naturalizes and universalizes a particular economic basis for all educational relationships (schooling for work, schooling for economic competition) while justifying a shift in governance and control over educational institutions to private parties. Testing, database projects designed to boil down the allegedly most efficient knowledge delivery systems and reward and punish teachers and students – these are not only at the center of pedagogical, curricular, and administrative reform, but unlike during the era of the hidden curriculum, they are openly justified through the allegedly universal benefits of capitalism. The new market positivism subjects all to standardization and normalization of knowledge, denying the class and cultural interests, the political struggle behind the organization and framing of claims to truth. The trend rejects critical and democratic pedagogies that make power, politics, history, and ethics central to teaching and learning and that accord with the values of democratic community. The new market positivism links its denial and concealment of the politics of knowledge to its open and aggressive application of capitalist ideology to every aspect of public schooling. The positivism of the hidden curriculum era concealed the politics of knowledge to conceal the capitalist ideology structuring public education. Put bluntly, the reproduction of the stratified workforce, the unequal distribution of life chances and so on were made to appear natural, neutral, and unquestionable in the era of the hidden curriculum, undermining the capacity of public schools to function as critical public spheres. The new market positivism still conceals the politics of knowledge, but it does so while redefining individual and collective opportunity strictly through open reference to a supreme value on capitalism. The intensified testing, control of time, and standardization regimens of the new market positivism further threaten
the possibilities for teachers to teach against the grain (as Roger Simon describes it) and to engage in critical pedagogical practices. The New Market Positivism effects a kind of deep privatization in the sense that it renders public schools places that are less open to struggle for public values, identifications, and interpretations, thereby reducing the social space of non-commercial values, ideas, and ideologies.

INSTITUTIONALIZING THE NEW MARKET POSITIVISM IN THE NEW PRIVATIZED BUREAUCRACY

Jeff Edmondson, president of the Strive Together – National Cradle to Career Network that “partners” with public schools to do turnarounds is, according to writer David Bornstein, leading a national effort for establishing “data war rooms” in schools for “data driven instruction”, “data driven administration”, etc. As Edmundson explains in the *New York Times*, “The key to making a partnership work is setting a common vision and finding a common language. You can’t let people get focused on ideological or political issues. You need a common language to bring people together and that language is the data.”

Edmundson concisely and powerfully describes the denial of politics behind the new market positivism. On the one hand there is a universal assumption that the aim of such reform is to increase student test scores towards “global economic competition”, that is, capitalist inclusion. On the other hand, there is a denial that such an agenda for education is of course profoundly political. Take a particularly glaring class example. Those who own industry and seek to maximize profit by minimizing labor costs do not share a common set of interests, for example, with those workers who will be forced to sell their time and labor power to the owners in a position to exploit it. The politics of labor is perhaps more concretely understood by the fact that Strive Together is affiliated with the organization Stand for Kids that advocates limiting public teachers’ collective bargaining rights in Cincinnati Public Schools and is linked to Michelle Rhee’s New Teacher Project (and National Council on Teacher Quality NCTQ) that aims for privatization, union busting, pay for test scores, the end of teacher job security, less educated and less experienced teachers, etc. Data can be creatively manipulated or utterly ignored when in the service of this ideological agenda pushed by Rhee and The New Teacher Project, NCTQ, Hanushek, Finn, Peterson and the usual cast of corporate school reformers affiliated with Hoover, Fordham, AEI, Heritage, and the other rightist think tanks.

Data as “the common language” provides a way actively to deny the sometimes incommensurably different values, histories, and interests of different groups.

As Mark Fisher details in his book *Capitalist Realism: Is There No Alternative?*, the new market bureaucracy that has overtaken public schooling installs an audit culture in which it is not performance of teachers and students that is compared but rather “comparison between the audited representation of that performance and output.” (2008, pp. 42–43).
As numerical test output targets become the end of schooling in the new market bureaucracy, as Fisher puts it, “…if students are less skilled and knowledgeable than their predecessors, this is due not to a decline in the quality of examinations per se, but to the fact that all of the teaching is geared towards passing the exams. Narrowly focused ‘exam drill’ replaces a wider engagement with subjects” (2008, pp. 43–44). As Fisher observes, more effort ends up expended on generating and representing the “outputs”, which in education take the form of manipulated test data, than on improving the quality and depth of instruction – that is, the process of teaching itself.

CONCLUSION

Theodor Adorno’s concept of what drives the allure of positivism is the promise of the concrete in the world of abstraction/alienation produced by a social world characterized by market exchange in which everything is turned into equivalences.23 What we have now is a new, ever-more control and output oriented educational system in which numbers allegedly dictate. Yet we have policy implementation that is utterly at odds with both empirical evidence for reforms (charters and EMOs) within the positivist assumptions, and we have the public purposes of schooling being elided by these control and output oriented bureaucratic reforms along with an explicit justification of all policy on the basis of individual participation in capitalism – a system represented as the only game in town, not just economically, but politically and culturally as well. The triumph then, as Fisher points out, is an ascendency of schooling as public relations in which everyone knows the lie but plays along anyway. As charters and EMOs show worse to par test scores with traditional public schools in comparisons, those at the center of the audit culture (such as the venture philanthropists like the Gates and Broad Foundations) change the audit criteria from standardized test scores to graduation and college enrollment rates.24 What is crucial to the public assenting to such policies is the ongoinly produced pedagogies that educate subjects ideologically and that also fosters a culture of cynicism about intervening to challenge audit culture and the new market positivism.

We need to rethink the accusations of bureaucratic “red tape” that has been a core part of the corporate reform agenda. What most teachers and administrators experience in schools is a new market bureaucracy that has been installed and expanded under the guise of market efficiencies. Fisher offers a succinct and powerful antidote to the new market bureaucracy. He calls for demanding fulfillment of the promises for de-bureaucratization instilled through neoliberalism. In other words, for Fisher we should take the neoliberal imperative for cutting bureaucratic red tape seriously but direct this imperative towards market driven audit culture. In education this means aiming to dismantle the market bureaucracy and its frenzied pursuit of ever more numerical representations of educational progress.

While the logic of empiricism has overtaken educational debates, demanding that everything be justified with an evidentiary basis, in reality the reforms are being implemented principally through the justification of market ideologies and
metaphors that most often run contrary to the evidence of proponents. Whether it is charter schools, for-profit management companies, vouchers, so-called portfolio districts, NCLB, or competitions like Race to the Top, implementation is based not on evidence but on market advocacy. The new market positivism is characterized by a triumph of irrationalism under the guise of rationality; a new bureaucracy under the guise of efficiency; audit culture and unaccountability at the top masquerading as accountability; extension of repressive bodily and hierarchical institutional controls defended through reference to freedom and opportunity; anti-intellectualism and destruction of the conditions for creativity pushed on the basis of the need to produce creatively minded workers and entrepreneurs; and a denial of intellectual process, curiosity, debate, and dialogue justified on the basis of intellectual excellence. There is a kind of emptiness at the core of the new market positivism in that it is less about making decisions based on the imperative for empirical evidence and conceptual justification and more about using evidence when convenient for the ends of amassing elite control. In education, corporate bureaucracy is being installed and expanded, yet as Wall Street is discovering, corporate bureaucracy may have seen its best days. The editor of the Wall Street Journal, Alan Murray, in August 2010 argued that “corporate bureaucracy is becoming obsolete.” Wall Street subjects teachers and students, administrators and citizens to the sloughed-off detritus of corporate culture. Meanwhile, business prescriptions for education are exactly what business is discarding for business.

What the teachers unions, education scholars, teachers, and everyone concerned about strengthening public education has to grasp is that as long as the framing of educational quality remains trapped within the current frame of allegedly neutral and allegedly objective quantifiable “student achievement,” public education stands to be dismantled. The kind of schooling pushed by the privatization advocates and centrally aided by the new market positivism aims to transform the historical dual system of public schooling into another dual system of public schooling. In the historical dual system, elite public schools in rich, predominantly white communities prepare managers, leaders, and professionals for the top of the economy and the state while the underfunded public schools in poor, working class, and predominantly non-white communities prepares the docile, disciplined workforce for the bad jobs at the bottom of the economy and for exclusion from the economy altogether. Despite the ceaseless neoliberal and liberal rhetoric of crisis and failure, the public schools, as Freire, Bourdieu, Ollman and others recognize, do exactly what they are supposed to do: they produce the stratified workforce while sanctifying inequality as a matter of individual merit or talent. The neoliberal privatization reforms maintain the dual system, leaving in place the elite public schools but targeting poor schools and predominantly students of color to turn them into short term profit opportunities in numerous ways: contracting, testing, and tutoring schemes, but also for profit management, charters, as well as all the ancillary profits that can be generated through privatization, like the public funds that will pour into marketing charter schools to prospective “customers” through advertising and PR, the lucrative real
estate deals through charters, etc. At present, the lower end of the dual system provides a deferred investment in low pay, low skill disciplined workers and fodder for the for profit prison industry and the military. Privatization targets the low end of the dual system and pillages the public sector for short term profits benefitting mostly the ruling class and professional class (poverty pimping) while doing nothing to transform the dual system of public education into a single system as good as its best parts throughout. For investors in privatization, the benefits are double: money can be made in the short run by draining public tax revenue while the future exploitable workforce can still be produced for the long-run. And, as the investors are benefitting twice, they can feel good that they are giving poor students “every opportunity” to benefit themselves. The goal should not be to see how we can all help to subsidize the rich getting richer by replicating a more lucrative system of dual education – the rich part still public and the poor part privatized. The goal must be ending the dual education system and recommitting to a truly public education which requires equalizing funding, racially and ethnically desegregating schools, and fostering critical intellectual curriculum and pedagogy. But the new market positivism is at the core of creating the new privatized dual education system by making standardized testing, database tracking, and standardization of curriculum and pedagogy the measure of good teaching and learning. Instead, the alternative to these positivist approaches to teaching and learning are democratic approaches to education such as critical pedagogy. Educational progress must be measured not by tests but by social progress: the eradication of poverty and corporate rule, the revaluation of intellect and public values, the reduction of inequality and the egalitarian redistribution of economic, political, and cultural power.

NOTES

1 This chapter has been adapted and revised from Kenneth J. Saltman The Failure of Corporate School Reform “Chapter Three: White Collar, Red Tape: The New Market Bureaucracy in Corporate School Reform” Boulder: Paradigm Publishers 2011, pp. 54–79. The larger original article includes sections that discuss the new market positivism in relation to a rising culture of irrationalism and an expanded discussion of the historical educational theorizing of educational positivism under the fordist economy.


4 On the radical expansion of news content being comprised of public relations, see Nichols and McChesney. This book challenges the suggestion that the decline of journalism has to do with the loss of classified revenues due to the internet. Instead it makes the compelling case that good journalism has been decimated by corporate media consolidation. The authors contend that the vast majority of online news content is repeated from traditional newspaper reporting. This fact is confirmed by The Pew Research Center’s Project for Excellence in Journalism study “How News Happens” January 11, 2010 available at: http://www.journalism.org/analysis_report/how_news_happens. Together these facts suggest that the profit motive applied to news is having an utterly devastating effect on the ability of citizens to get information necessary for self-governance. The implications are enormous for public education at a time in which corporate school reform injects the profit motive into public education.
See the work of Alex Molnar, Deron Boyles, and Trevor Norris for excellent studies of contemporary school commercialism.


Empirical study has yet to be done that accounts for and aggregates all of the new market bureaucracy spending on advertising, public relations, venture philanthropy expenditures, Astroturf lobbying to expand privatization, and contracting.


I detail this as the “circuit of privatization” in The Gift of Education.

I detail as this part of privatization in The Gift of Education.


This way of thinking about difference as needing to be registered in order to overcome such difference can be found exemplified in the speaking and writing of Vickie Phillips head of the Bill and Melinda Gates Foundation and books such as Abigail Thernstrom and Stephen Thernstrom, *No Excuses: Closing the Racial Gap in Learning* New York: Simon & Shuster 2003. Racial, ethnic, linguistic, and cultural difference is positioned in this discourse of the “achievement gap” as an obstacle and sometimes as a pathology that needs to be overcome. The way to overcome difference is to enforce the learning of prescribed knowledge which is alleged to be of universal value. This is diametrically opposed to critical pedagogy in which difference needs to be engaged for how individuals and groups are positioned materially and symbolically in subordinate or superordinate ways and how such social positioning informs the claims to truth made by different parties. Such critical interrogations of difference form the basis for reconstructing individual and group experience and ideally form the basis for collective action towards equality.


Both Gates and Broad foundations have massively funded various forms of privatization, especially chartering, but also database tracking projects to measure student test scores, and teacher performance relative to scores. When the charters were not showing promise on raising test scores Gates shifted the criteria to focus on graduation rates and college enrollment rates. Similarly for the Center for Reinventing Public Education’s Paul Hill the standardized test scores should be used to justify closing traditional public schools but not for evaluating the contractors who take their place.

