Power, Pedagogy and Praxis
CRITICAL ISSUES IN THE FUTURE OF LEARNING
AND TEACHING

This series represents a forum for important issues that do and will affect how
learning and teaching are thought about and practised. All educational venues and
situations are undergoing change because of information and communications
technology, globalization and paradigmatic shifts in determining what knowledge
is valued. Our scope includes matters in primary, secondary and tertiary education
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approach helps attend to important current and future issues related to learners,
teachers and the variety of cultures and venues in which educational efforts occur.
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perspective illustrating similarities and differences in situations, problems,
solutions and outcomes.

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Power, Pedagogy and Praxis

Social Justice in the Globalized Classroom

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Shannon Moore and Richard Mitchell
INTRODUCTION

Power, Pedagogy and Praxis – Towards Common Ground

Whether one sees the current wave of globalization as a new ideology obscuring trends that have always accompanied modernity’s colonialist, capitalist expansions, or whether one sees something qualitatively novel, the dilemma for contemporary social scientists is the same – to make sense of what they observe (Weber 2002). This approach sets the tone for a text drawing upon both theory and empiricism with scholars from diverse critical and pedagogical discourses at various stages of their careers, and sadly, one of our number deceased since the work was undertaken in mid-2006 (see Tomaševski 2006b). The themes guiding us were various expressions of institutional, social, legal, political, and personal power, pedagogy and praxis, and clearly, each rests lightly upon highly contested terrain while tethering readers to the shifting ground of an emergent, new discourse (see Appadurai 1996; Apple, Kenway and Singh 2005; Bloch, Kennedy, Lightfoot and Weyenberg 2006; Burbules and Torres 2000; Crossley 2000; Malott 2008; Spring 2006; Stromquist 2000 for additional analyses). Throughout this chapter, our aim is to foster a critical dialogue about what social justice might mean in the context of the many pedagogical perspectives of the whole anthology. Although it is fair to say an exhaustive analysis is beyond the scope of this project, the text presumes to be global in content with individual scholars from Canada, the US, UK, and Europe predominant.

Similar to Foucault’s attempt to historicize his ontological inquiries (1977), we too attempt to define some of the contours of this emergent discourse, not of the body/mind, but something nonetheless of the subjective experiences of teaching/learning for hundreds of millions of humans without essentializing (see also Besley and Peters 2008: 58; Osler and Vincent 2002). Kincheloe (2008) acknowledges that for critical pedagogues at this historical juncture, decisions must be taken about whether or not to continue to allow many people in North America, especially in non-white sub-cultures like Indigenous, African American, Latino/a, and Asian, not to mention around the world…

…to look at what we do as basically a North American appropriation of a South American thing. In many ways the state of critical pedagogy right now in North America constitutes a few North Americans appropriating a Freirean pedagogy and taking it into a U.S. or Canadian context….they see critical pedagogy as primarily a North American white thing, and often times a white male thing (in Malott 2008: 158).
With these insights in mind, Kincheloe further asserts that critical educators should work to convince various ‘sub-cultures’ that there is something to be gained by joining in common ethical and political purpose to create conditions that lead towards greater social justice, seeing critical pedagogues as allies in this project (see Giroux; McLaren and Jaramillo; Linds and Goulet; Wotherspoon this volume). At the same time, critical pedagogues must recall that their own traditions, history and theorizing have frequently drawn from diverse, non-white, often Indigenous and other cultural contexts. Theorizing in this way doesn’t necessarily mean leading anything new, but as Kincheloe points out, most often involves humbly listening and standing alongside oppressed groups in solidarity.

As Canadian-based scholars and active researchers we also observe how United Nations metanarratives such as the Millennium Development Goals (or MDGs 2000) and the Convention on the Rights of the Child (or CRC 1989) have de facto established a common pedagogical and conceptual ground towards social justice throughout the world. As editors, though, we were confronted with the challenge of advancing any one notion of social justice from a globalized perspective, but found concepts such as ‘just society’ (Clark 2006) important to define, again without essentializing through the narrowed lens of a minority worldview. While many scholars would scoff at UN narratives being emancipatory or anti-oppressive approaches, they nonetheless offer an adequate set of organizing principles to begin thinking about our themes in an age of economic, political and technological uncertainty – without utopian idealism (see particularly Giroux; McLaren and Jaramillo; Tomaševski this volume). Yearly collections of macro-statistics by UN agencies such as WHO and UNICEF, for example, show that while the total global population has doubled since 1960, one odious indicator of humanity’s progress or lack thereof as represented by the daily under-five mortality rates for children has astonishingly almost halved (UNICEF 2007). We contend that something extraordinary is occurring particularly with regard to this fourth MDG that seems to have entirely escaped the panoptic eye of international media and intellectuals alike (see also Rosling’s 2007 astute analysis). We would argue that ‘universal’ access to primary education is simply a continuation of this globalized development trend.

Assessing the largest of many oppressed ‘groups’, the United Nations Children’s Fund (UNICEF 2006) promotes gender equality as the third MDG, and when this is achieved, they argue, benefits will be felt not just amongst women and girl children but in many other spheres from poverty and hunger reduction to global health and environmental sustainability. Yet, as Katarina Tomaševski’s final international report (2006b) indicates, the often obscured globalized factors limiting access need to be exposed as ‘the lie of international support for free education’. Tomaševski was renowned as the first UN Special Rapporteur to request that her mandate be discontinued on the basis that she could not fully address this as a fundamental right, but merely as an aspiration to be realized progressively and most saliently as one that was subject to the whims of ‘available resources’. Findings from her unprecedented study put the human right to education back where it belongs using it as the yardstick to assess the role and
introduction of World Bank directors as the chief architects in the global design of education. In addition, she highlights budgetary imbalances between military and education at national levels, as well as discrimination on the basis of gender, which the richest players in the international community have repeatedly pledged to eliminate but have so far failed to do.

Indeed, while “education for all” is the second of the eight MDGs articulated by world society representatives in New York to open this decade (United Nations 2006), some laudable progress has been achieved but much is yet to be done (Mundy 2006, 2007; UNESCO 2007a, b). UNICEF’s flagship yearly report “The State of the World’s Children 2007” showed that in the long run, social justice initiatives within education and particularly those targeted towards women still hold out the best possibility that all other Millennium Goals may be reached.

As an additional outcome of these globalized ways of thinking and knowing, many observers now agree that access to primary education, at the very least, is a fundamental human rights issue (David 2002; see also O’Byrne’s 2003 analysis; and Mundy this volume). Although many also disagree, they frequently reveal a shaky historical, legal, and political grasp of this evolution (for example Lindahl 2006: 6-7, 19). Lindahl (2006) dismisses “issues of access, equality, and gender” as “moot”, and in an astounding lack of attention to detail he accuses China of not having ratified the Convention on the Rights of the Child when in truth the US and Somalia are the only nations left to commit to children’s rights within and without education (UNICEF 2006). While observing this is a “complex question to answer”, how Lindahl concludes educational concerns related to gender are moot is ill-defined, and at worst, appears discriminatory and sexist. In contrast, educational sociologist Stromquist (2000) takes a measured stance in her critical analysis of globalized educational trends particularly towards “gender [as] an area where culture, power and structures intersect at full strength”. She reviews macro- and micro-systemic perspectives within indigenous and student resistance movements, the World Bank, the World Social Forum, the World Economic Forum, and linkages between and amongst transnational corporations. She reconsiders the emerging educational entrepreneurialism in developed and developing world contexts with its “consequences of globalization on women… [and] the social construction of gender”. She declares that due to neoliberal notions the state should reduce its intervention” within educational systems since “gender policies are being weakened” (2000: 133, 143-144; also Conway 2006 and this volume; Mundy 2002, 2006, 2007 and this volume).

social justice within and without education: power, pedagogy and praxis

Many analysts are observing how this generation is the first ever with the capacity to eradicate hunger and extreme poverty while there are perhaps just as many who believe the 3.4 million ‘residents’ dwelling within Dhaka’s Malek slum (or Kenya’s Kibera where one third of Nairobi’s residents struggle to survive) have no right to access any form of education. Addressing participants of the World Social
Forum in early 2007, UN-HABITAT Director Mrs. Anna Tibaijuka observed these dynamics, and that the Nairobi event was being held at a crucial time in human history with half the world’s population now living within urban areas. This is a result of natural population growth, human mobility – including rural-urban and international migration – as well as the reclassification of rural areas. “It is therefore important to consider the challenges of urbanization as you discuss women and poverty and listen to testimonies of women”. Mrs. Tibaijuka challenged participants to a greater appreciation of the hardships faced by these demographics of extreme poverty. “Slums pose serious challenges to…women and the girl child who bear the brunt of all this because of their disadvantaged position in society as proscribed by our cultures, traditions, values and belief systems” (UN-HABITAT 2007 electronic cite; also Conway’s analysis this volume). Achieving equity in anyone’s classroom or within their political and cultural systems is a foremost expression of social justice in this era since education has emerged as the cornerstone for establishing all other human rights (Mundy 2002; Tomaševski 2006a, b; this volume).

Although definitions of social justice vary in depth and breadth, equity and fairness are two of the most common concepts. From a US perspective, qualitative theorist Charmaz (2005: 508-513) emphasizes that “a social justice focus can sensitize us to look at both large collectivities and individual experiences in new ways”. However, “not only are justice and injustice abstract concepts, but they are, moreover, enacted processes, made real through actions performed again and again”. Thus, in most classrooms it is apparent there are pedagogical processes embedded within larger societal structures that run along a north/south divide – the development of trade and new technologies, for example, has benefited northern economies the most over centuries of colonialist exploitation. Clearly, most students in the industrialized regions of the globe are thus beneficiaries of the newest technologies. The current, rapid exchanges of new information in a “rhizomatic” fashion first described by psychoanalyst Carl Jung (1956), taken up in greater depth by philosophers Deleuze and Guattari (1987), and more recently by educators such as Allan and l’Anson (2004), Bloch, Kennedy, Lightfoot and Weyenberg (2006), Mitchell (2007), and Moore (2007) to describe theoretical development is only the latest example. This rhizome metaphor conceptualizes educational research in a fashion similar to Charmaz (2005: 507) who contends that social justice inquiries are where social scientists may fruitfully apply “constructive social critique and change through qualitative research”.

Moreover, educational philosopher Clark (2006: 272) adroitly observes “in one sense we are all for social justice – it would be hard to imagine that anyone would be for social injustice”. Fair enough, perhaps, yet one must frequently question this premise particularly when dimensions of religiosity, poverty, ethnicity, gender, ability, sexual identities, or abuses of educational power converge. Recalling Scraton (1997: 186), this convergence often concerns…

…adult power…a power readily and systematically abused. It is a dangerous and debilitating power, capable of stunting the personal development and potential of even the most resilient children….What is so difficult for adults,
as power-brokers, to accept is that the ‘crisis’ is not of childhood’ but one of adulthood.

While the CRC has been widely critiqued by social scientists for the universalized, general notions of childhood that shaped its negotiations from 1979-1989 (Mitchell 2005), such views are visible within legal discourses as well. Pupavac (1998), for one, is quite skeptical of underlying psychoanalytic theories within the CRC and their “protective view of childhood not part of the experience of most countries of the South . . . [the CRC] infantilises children from Southern nations” (in Steiner and Alston 2000: 517). Notwithstanding similar early concern, Burman (2001) has encouraged exploration of the linkages between women’s and children’s rights urging researchers to engage in a little “cultural and disciplinary tourism and experiment with ideas from outside western psychology”, and to move away from more reified models of childhood and perhaps human rights (see also Burman 1995, 1996).

As feminists and child-rights activists have rightly pointed out [Jackson, 1993], it would be ironic indeed if we dispensed with the notion of the individual as cultural baggage just at the very moment that women and children were beginning to acquire some hard-won rights there-by . . . we should [work alongside] . . . rights approaches . . . towards formulating more genuine interpersonal and intersubjective approaches to development and education (Burman 2001: 14–15; also Woodhead 1999, 2000; Wyness 1999 for similar views).

O’Byrne (2003) also observes that “within academic circles, children’s rights are often discussed separately from human rights”. A key problem with conceptualizing children’s rights lies squarely with the multiple definitions of childhood “which of course differ across time and space”. To address this apparent under-theorizing and the resultant lingering confusion about the CRC within childhood, educational, developmental, justice and health studies, Lenzer (2002) calls for “a reintegration of the isolated segments of the children’s rights agenda within the framework of human rights” (207-208). In-so-far as children are human, they are subjects of “human rights standards, specifics of age are irrelevant”, contends O’Byrne (2002: 374) in agreement.

The UN Millennium Development Goals echo the same principles found within the CRC, and the treaty remains unique within international law as the most ratified agreement in history. The CRC asserts the human rights of children in 192 states including the centrality of access to publicly funded education obliged in Articles 28 and 29. CRC Article 42 further obliges states to inform both children and adults of the treaty ‘principles and provisions’, and that this rights-based approach applies to all young people less than eighteen years of age throughout the world. Research by Mitchell (2005) comparing educational policies in two northern democracies also found that metanarratives such as the CRC straddle the modernist/postmodernist divide when applied according to local culture (see also Freeman 2007; Mitchell 2000, 2003). On the whole, the authors drawn upon to this
point emphasize the necessity for a transdisciplinary appreciation of human rights education, and the subsequent exercise of political, institutional, and interpersonal power relations. We also contend that a transdisciplinary appreciation of UN metanarratives offers a new framework for reconceptualizing this exercise of power, and along with this, a new understanding of our increasing interdependencies within local, national, environmental and transnational pluralities (Mitchell 2007).

Nevertheless, such transparent, democratic, rights-based approaches where power is exercised with accountability in mind may be more easily achieved in theory than in practice. The suggestion here is to forge a way forward by understanding how such globalized discourses may be applied in the everyday lives of oppressed or marginalized young people. In this project, we find ourselves agreeing with Dutch feminist Sevenhuijsen (1999) who argues:

Policy texts are sites of power…by establishing narrative conventions, authoritative repertoires of interpretation and frameworks of argumentation and communication, they confer power upon preferred modes of speaking and judging, and upon certain ways of expressing moral and political subjectivity (cited in Moss and Petrie 2002: 81).

Simply stated, no nation-state needs any more new laws or human rights agreements; instead all states and the power-players regulating the systems within them need to uphold existing commitments (Kienge-Kienge Intudi 2007). With this exercise of power in mind, we move to a discussion of transdisciplinarity as a congruent conceptual framework for understanding and applying rights-based relationships in the globalized classroom.

TRANSDISCIPLINARY STANDPOINT

Anglo-American ethnographers Canaan and Montgomery (2004) discuss the nuances confronting contemporary academic knowledge workers, and argue that an analytical framework locating students, staff, and institutions within both local and extra-local patterns of stratification…

…in particular those being created by increasingly globalizing capital flows, production processes, and labor use – would clarify our theoretical understanding of empiricism in this growing field of study. Such analysis is of growing importance as the role of the university is undergoing profound transformations and students, faculty, and administrations might be operating with contradictory ideas about their own positions and about what higher education is and can be. We contend such an approach will clarify the theoretical significance of students’ practices in particular educational contexts (740).

In a meta-analysis of literature looking at similar barriers, Theoharis (2004: 2) maintains the US system fails to educate too many students on the margins, and he offers one definition, not in universalized terms, “but in the realities of public
school work, in that social justice means that these administrators and teachers advocate, lead and keep at the center of their practice and vision issues of race, class, gender, disability, sexual orientation, and other historically marginalizing conditions”. His work results from an activist’s need to create social justice in public education and to help enlarge the body of scholarship focused on equity issues.

As Mirchandani (2005: 86) shrewdly observes, after decades of interdisciplinary rumination on postmodernism isn’t it high time to move “from the epistemological to the empirical”? Transcending disciplines and embedded binaries such as modernity/postmodernity or quantitative/qualitative is also the handiwork of critical social pedagogues. Thus, the editorial standpoint of this collection reflects the increasing complexity of young people’s lives in both hemispheric contexts while cutting across and standing against the anti-child/anti-youth hegemonies noted by Giroux (2003), Giroux and Searls-Giroux (2004), McLaren and Farahmandpur (2001 a, b), Moss and Petrie (2002), Scraton (1997), Tomaševski (2006a, b) and other critical theorists in childhood and youth, cultural, human rights, [dis]ability, and pedagogical studies.

Lingard (2000) has also noted the disjuncture between the global economy and individual nation-states, with the latter seen as both complicating and mediating entities (see also Conway 2006; Crossley 2000; Escobar 2004; Fisher and Ponniah 2003; Mundy 2002 for additional analyses). This rupture may be more pronounced since power politics are still organized within the boundaries of nation-states, but to appreciate the new contours emerging within any one educational system, one must also reconceptualize how national, cross-national, post-national and supranational politics are unfolding simultaneously through multilateral international organizations in a systemic complexity described by legal theorist Niklas Luhmann as “social autopoiesis” (1982, 1997). The World Bank, IMF, UN, UNESCO, and OECD, for example, play larger leadership roles in financing, research and policy development than many individual actors in the 50 poorest states exert on their own destinies (Conway 2006 and this volume; Mundy 2002, 2006, 2007 and this volume). Recalling the Foucauldian sense of relations of power, these dimensions are both discursive and political forces that disperse, circulate, produce and regulate relationships between students and pedagogues – social and political. We view the problems of creating social justice in anyone’s classroom as those diverging from gender, ethnicity, religion, culture, poverty, sexual identity and physical ability.

The authors drawn upon thus far each in their own way foreground a fundamental tension we confronted as editors in our analysis of relevant literature. In the effort to avoid universalizing any one educational issue, we must first acknowledge the privileged positions we occupy as educators who would philosophize social justice when it is existentially reduced to life and death for so many beyond our borders. In line with Crossley (2000) and other contemporary educators, we take up some responsibility to uncover new theoretical and practice perspectives with our argument for a transdisciplinary approach to better understand the intersections amongst critical pedagogy, social justice and human
assumption that education might also be emancipatory, and finally, that praxis is a minimum standard for entering any related discourse. Thus, we aim to move beyond the limitations of a single pedagogical lens by opening up a more organic episteme that coincidentally offers previously silenced actors opportunities to be heard (as Conway; Giroux; Linds and Goulet; Kellett and Ward; McLaren and Jaramillo; Moore, Mitchell and Melchior; and Smith argue in this volume).

Comprehensive responses to the question of how we might begin to address humanity’s uneven “globality” (Schafer 2005) are emerging within cross-cultural dialogues that embrace transdisciplinary thinking within and through education (Freeman 2007; Mitchell 2007; Moore 2007; Tomaševski 2006a, b; Woodhead 1999). In line with Kincheloe’s (2008) recent analysis, Nicolescu (1999: 4) articulates this vision most succinctly: “The emergence of a new culture, capable of contributing to the elimination of tensions menacing life on our planet will be impossible without a new type of education which takes into account all the dimensions of the human being”. Change and permanent interrogation are focal points of transdisciplinarity, and through these lenses we also take the stance that human populations are being re-orientated towards interconnectedness and social justice (for example globalized humanitarian relief efforts during environmental disasters). These are, in fact, the core expressions for transforming disequilibrium and peace-building contend authors such as Moore (2004) and Nicolescu (2002).

To illustrate the need, when individual young people ‘fall through the cracks’ – a common Anglo-American euphemism describing early, preventable deaths through sexual and/or physical abuse, neglect or addiction – critics respond with a type of blame that includes myopic interventions directed at single professions. As Foucault has argued, disciplinary approaches such as this are modernist in their origin (Dahlberg Moss and Pence 1999; Mitchell 2005, 2007) whereas in this post- or late-modern moment the lived realities of young people in both northern and southern spaces are complex and pluralistic, pointing epistemologically even ontologically towards new interdependencies (Baumann 2005: 1090; Conway 2006; Luhmann 1997; Mitchell 2003, 2007; Moore 2007). Acknowledging Appadurai’s (1996) seminal work illuminating similar themes, we nevertheless take up a different standpoint towards development of a congruent theoretical framework for this project (see also Tikly’s 2001 and Crossley’s 2000 trenchant contributions).

Multidisciplinarity concerns studying a research topic not as just one discipline but in several at the same time...it brings a plus to the discipline in question [but this plus] is in exclusive service to this discipline...Interdisciplinarity concerns the transfer of methods from one discipline to another...like multidisciplinarity, interdisciplinarity overflows the disciplines, but its goal still remains within the framework of disciplinary research...transdisciplinarity concerns that which is between disciplines, across the different disciplines, and beyond all disciplines (Nicolescu 2002: 42-44).
Throughout this text, activists, researchers, scholars and pedagogues have been brought together in a transdisciplinary ‘bricolage’ (see Kincheloe and McLaren’s 2005 discussion of this notion) to analyze what they contend social justice looks like from their vantage points. These discussions integrate critical, cultural, legal, pedagogical, sociological, psychological, physiological, medical, biological, social work, performance, [dis]ability, humanities, and Indigenous discourses. At the same time, each illuminates in their own way the growing need to transcend intellectual silos in order to offer a fresh look at how pedagogical practices with young people are being created and destroyed. Addressing this need also addresses the active, reflexive, critical demands of democratic forms of citizenship, and challenges pedagogues and pupils alike who view themselves being herded into narrow chutes of consumerism by the present generation of elders. Along with our own voices, each author adds their own call for a more radicalized, even revolutionary expression of democratic citizenship as Beck and Beck-Gernsheim (2002), Giroux (2003), and Stromquist (2000: 171) have previously articulated (also Connolly; Fancy and Spearey; Wotherspoon this volume).

In these ways, transdisciplinarity within educational contexts concerns emergent new thinking, new ways of accessing old ways of thinking, construction of new ways of knowing, and praxis in order to transcend tired, dichotomous critiques by recognizing multiple new sites and forms of knowledge creation. Somerville and Rapport (2000: 6-7) emphasize that transdisciplinary approaches to science, politics, education, and cultural studies of media and the arts sharply contrast multi- or even interdisciplinary methodologies, and are fundamentally associated with critique. In a description of peace research and education, for example, “Eckhardt (1974) spoke of ‘breaking through disciplinary barriers, disobeying the rules of disciplinary etiquette.’ In contrast to disciplinarity… transcendence is heretical. It is a generic rebel pushing beyond orthodoxy… the term connotes transformation”. In this regard, “Michel Foucault, not Aristotle or Plato…is the paradigmatic figure of transdisciplinary studies”. Transdisciplinarity is defined by Nicolescu (2002), Russell (2000) and others as moving beyond traditional epistemological expressions of scholarship—a way of knowing “that will be essential in the 21st and later centuries” (Koizumi 2001: 219).

Drawing upon a wide range of contributors during a 1999 Montreal symposium Visser (1999) describes this integrative, transdisciplinary view of education in the coming era:

- Learning is still an underdeveloped concept, but it is necessary for all humans to be able to adapt to continuous and ever-faster change in an increasingly complex world. Fundamental changes are urgently required in the way school systems throughout the world are organized that must include more holistic conceptualizations of schools themselves as only one part of a comprehensive learning environment.
- Learning is a transdisciplinary concept related to overarching concerns such as change and growth; community-based processes and development; complex, diverse, and emerging adaptive expressions; new
designs for systems of knowledge construction interacting with, and building upon, existing knowledge bases; lifelong learning at different levels of organizational complexity; neuroscience and lifespan cognitive development; the interconnections and distinctions between and among data, information, knowledge and wisdom; and new technologies for learning, languages, cognition, and meta-cognition. Efforts to transcend these currently separated views will acquire a transdisciplinary, integrative vision of learning.

- Learning has to do with the capacity to interact creatively and constructively with problems. In most of our current pedagogical practices throughout the minority and majority worlds such problems are often concealed or ignored altogether. In a similar manner to Freire (1970, 1999), learning therefore needs to be re-focused on problems, including their historical and epistemological contexts.

Thus, transdisciplinary research and scholarship generally create their own criteria and standards because of the unique, emergent qualities listed above, including a greater legitimization of knowledge creation by Indigenous stakeholders, and other more marginalized actors located in spaces outside the political confines of the ‘corporate-academic-military-industrial’ complex (McLaren and Jaramillo 2007 and this volume). As critical social pedagogues, we contend that transdisciplinarity is also the most cogent framework for approaching social justice praxis in order to achieve a progressive realization of the human right to education in all nation-states.

A GLOBALIZED CLASSROOM?

As highlighted, we have gained in this project from the posthumous research contribution by Dr. Katarina Tomaševski and her final study on the human right to education in 170 non-OECD states. Her commitment to uncovering the reasons for the collective global failure to uphold education as a basic human right reveal the pivotal shift from ‘free’ to ‘fee’ in many states, and the language of the free market led by the often insidious role of World Bank directors as architects in the globalized classroom. Primary education was Tomaševski’s focus since the original rationales for declaring education as the birthright of all children remain unchanged in the present era. In this concern she echoes Spring (2004: 64-65) who concludes that the Bank is simply “extending the reach of colonialism” through its lending practices. The basis for her analysis and findings comes from exhaustive fieldwork that made it transparent how and why children in poor countries could not afford to go to primary school: Public education in name: legally free but really for fee. The rhetoric of international resolutions, declarations, and recommendations are churned out by parts of the international community while other parts erode the possibility of realizing this right to education for tens of millions. Any explanation of this simultaneous affirmation and denial of the right to education within the United Nations (UN) - an organization committed to human
rights, loudly proclaiming then quietly betraying - is not easy to reconcile when the
global division of labour keeps human rights in their place, and when challenges of
exclusion are impeded by vehement denials and exhortations that education is a
human right.

Singh, Kenway and Apple (2005: 1) decry the “relative dearth of education
research” while at the same time identifying a zeitgeist for globalized knowledge
and its mainly minority-world educational agenda including “a scaffold for
considering the effects on education of [both] neoliberal and neoconservative
globalisms”. In response, this volume is empirically well anchored with
Tomasevski’s analysis of the rhizomatic flow of knowledge and resources from
external structures, and resulting practices within individual classrooms located
within both northern and southern hemispheres.

Tomasevski (2006b) charges that there is a lack of vocabulary relating to
payments levied in public primary education which should be free, but the World
Bank’s term, “user or school fees”, is the most widespread since many such
charges originated from the Bank’s policies. Thus, it transpires that “the cost of
education can be prohibitively high and prevent poor children from enrolling or
force them to drop out before completing schooling which is, in the laws of most
countries, defined as compulsory.” Tomasevski contends this problem is linked to
the well-documented exemption of international institutions from the law. The first
step toward eliminating the present global phenomenon of poverty-based
exclusion, she maintains, is through the integration of governmental human rights
obligations into domestic education policies and strategies. At the core is this fact:
“Public funding for education necessitates acceptance of governments’ powers to
raise revenue through taxation and to prioritize the right to education in its
budgetary allocations.” It follows then that in cases where this is not financially
viable, international cooperation should facilitate rather than hinder the
universalization of education in one state at a time. When this omission hinders the
birthright of every child to free, primary education Tomasevski (2006) advocates
this be constructed, understood and denounced as a violation of fundamental
human rights.

Most observers will recall how the World Bank was created as an integral
dimension of post-World War II Bretton Woods agreements to avoid future world
wars by international and multilateral institutions, and to ensure an open
international trading system with global financial stability. Their loan strategies
have gradually evolved from support of public infrastructure projects such as
roads, railways, and power plants, to the provision of capital for other inputs
necessary for development, namely the maintenance of educational and health
services. The World Bank group comprises four agencies: the International Bank
for Reconstruction and Development; the International Development Association;
the International Finance Corporation; and the Multilateral Investment Guarantee
Agency (see also Conway 2006; Mundy 2002; Weekes 2006). Nonetheless, the
combined experience of vast populations of young people impacted by the Bank’s
‘development’ projects within dozens of nation-states is found to be disturbingly
discriminatory.