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A Discursive Analysis of Neoliberal Policies and Practices in Education

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Key Questions

- 1 What were the originations of the neoliberal movement in education in the United States.?
- 2 How did wealthy donors and elites fund neoliberal causes and perspectives to create the basis for mounting 'jurisdictional challenges' to public schools and public school support?
- 3 How did the case of *Citizens United* help neoliberals propagate their political views and expand their influence within the political system?
- 4 What was the major flaw as indicated by Alan Greenspan in the neoliberal free market hypotheses?
- 5 How does excessive executive pay promote social inequality and shareholder loss?
- 6 Why are neoliberals so opposed to government regulation?

Background

Beginning with Milton Friedman's economic shot across the bow in 1962 in his seminal *Capitalism and Freedom*, the rise of neoliberal policies and practices have come to be the dominant and nearly all pervasive discourse of management in elementary and secondary education and increasingly in higher education. The essence of neoliberalism, not a well-known concept outside of academe or the op-ed pages of the more intellectual public media such as *The New York Times*, *Wall St. Journal* or *The Economist* (Porfilio, 2007), can be reduced to the concept that:

The market is the most effective (or least irrational) method of distributing goods and resources, and the role of the state should be limited to the maintenance of necessary order, legality, and stability. (Barker, 2002, p. 369)

At the center of the political view of neoliberalism is the *free market hypothesis*, that is, a belief that markets left alone and unregulated or only minimally regulated, almost always get things right over the long haul. This is the extreme libertarian perspective which rests on the principle that “The individual is the best and only judge of his or her own interests and government and law should do no more than provide a minimal framework of order in which these interests can be pursued” (Barker & Lacey, 2002, p. 311).

Libertarianism holds that the power of government, even to perform the most basic of rudimentary functions, is almost always negative and destructive. The only judge of economy is action of the individual and his or her right to pursue happiness and monetary gains. In other words, selfishness is part and parcel of economic justification and greed is good (Madrick, 2011).

The supreme goddess of this outlook was Ayn Rand, popular novelist and political philosopher, who wrote such works of fiction as *Atlas Shrugged* and preached the extreme virtues of unfettered capitalism and unregulated markets (Burns, 2009). Among her acolytes was Alan Greenspan (Cassidy, 2009, pp. 228–229), who was the Federal Reserve chairman for nearly 20 years (1987–2006) and whose laissez-faire approach to market regulation ultimately became a disaster and helped lead to the collapse of the financial markets in 2007–2008. This was the same Alan Greenspan who had to confess to members of Congress that, “I found a flaw in the model” and by that he was referring to the economic model he had held for over 40 years as inviolate (Smith, 2012, p. 217). In retrospect the chief federal financial guru stood in the financial ruins of his miscalculations that saw huge banks go under and companies such as General Motors tilt on the verge of dissolution. It took a government bailout of \$700 billion to put a band aid on “the flaw” in the model for the financial sector (Patterson, 2010, p. 262). Greenspan’s late enlightenment cost “80 percent of U.S. GDP, some \$12 trillion” (Pittman & Ivry, 2009, as cited in Stiglitz, 2010, p. 110). Greenspan had gotten it wrong. Ayn Rand was mistaken.

The Ideology and Tenets of Political Neoliberalism

Neoliberalism is not a scientific theory, nor is it a philosophy. Rather it is an ideology. Alan Greenspan acknowledged that his view of the financial market was an ideology when he answered Congressman Henry Waxman who asked him if his *ideology* “pushed you to make decisions that you wish you had not made?” (Patterson, 2010, p. 263). Greenspan replied, “To exist you need an ideology. The question is whether it is accurate or not” (Patterson, 2010, p. 263). And what then was wrong with his ideology Greenspan was asked, “A flaw in the model that I perceived is the critical functioning structure that defines how the world works, so to speak” (Patterson, 2010, p. 264).

It is somewhat ironic that the creator of the term *ideology* was none other than Karl Marx who used the term to explain the concept of “false consciousness” that capitalists possessed to explain their beliefs that “...the laws of the competitive market are natural and impersonal, that workers in a competitive market are paid

all that they can be paid, and that the institutions of private property in the means of production are natural and justified” (Sterba, 1999, p. 416).

Popper (1965) defined an ideology as “a convention or a tradition based on faith” (p. 57). Feyerabend (1999) similarly indicated that an ideology was “a worldview illuminated by faith” (p. 120). Boudon (1989) discusses the nature of ideology among rival views in science. Sometimes ideologies have their origin in scientific explorations but later prove to be false. How this occurs is explained by Boudon:

A research scientist is located within a linguistic framework which tradition provides, and which as a general rule the scientist does not question... it is not only a lexical corpus which is inherited, but also a syntax, and at a still higher level of abstraction, might be called a theoretical and methodological perspectives...paradigms. (p. 90)

This total frame or context is a *discourse* and the ideology of neoliberalism has a specific context, both written and oral, as well as a set of prescriptive tenets, that comprise an entire lexical corpus. The definition of a *discourse* involves “the search for the rules or conventions which govern...a well-formed text” (Blakemore, 2003, p. 101). The second definition is that discourse is viewed as the “terms of communicative behavior” where what it does is “to discover the social conventions which determine which utterances may occur and what they may be combined with” (Blakemore, 2003, p. 101). In this chapter we are concerned with the latter, that is, what are the principal tenets and corollary beliefs of the discourse of neoliberalism in the politics of educational management.

The nexus of neoliberalism is economics. Harvey (2009) locates it as such when he indicated that it was a narrative of:

political economic practices that propose that human well-being can best be advanced by liberating individual entrepreneurial freedoms and skills within an institutional framework characterized by strong private property rights, free markets, and free trade. The role of the state is to create and preserve an institutional framework appropriate to such practices. (p. 2)

We now explicate the basic tenets of neoliberalism with examples in education.

The Basic Tenets of Neoliberalism

Here are the tenets of neoliberalism that most often get translated into educational policy and practices:

1. The Twin Components of Economic and Political Freedom Are Conjoined

Unless there is complete freedom for an individual to select his/her economic options within any given society, political freedom is compromised. Complete freedom means all options are open to select goods and services. In the words of Milton Friedman (1962) “...economic freedom, in and of itself, is an extremely important part of total freedom” (p. 9).

Educational Implications: Having only one public school system means that citizens have no options to select anything else. Their political freedom is therefore compromised. The creation of alternatives in the form of charter schools and the installation of parental vouchers create the necessary alternatives to ensure that true political freedom exists because there are alternatives to public schools.

These implications denounce the common good of society approach. Does the nation/state feel the need to teach common elements of good citizenship? Are democratic lessons relating to social justice 'isms' in society encouraged? Protecting the earth by learning the earth's resources are finite is yet another example of a common good society that allows a participatory parity in which all citizens believe they have a fair chance to achieve. This aspiration requires voting rights that encourage citizens to exercise their voice through participation in the democratic process.

2. Political Freedom is Compromised by Monopolies

The greatest danger to political freedom is (a) government restrictions and imposed practices which limit the range of goods and services open for purchase of acquisition such as licensing, regulations, and so on. and which compromise the working of free markets, and; (b) monopolies which impose "a limitation on voluntary exchange through a reduction in the alternatives available to individuals" (Friedman, 1962, p. 120). "Exchange is truly voluntary only when nearly equivalent alternatives exist. Monopoly implies the absence of alternatives and thereby inhibits effective freedom of exchange" (Friedman, 1962, p. 28).

Educational Implications: All forms of licensing must be abolished because it leads to monopoly and therefore restricts voluntary exchange. Friedman (1962) observed that, "The efficient way to get control over the number in a profession is therefore to get control of entry into professional schools" (p. 151). Drives to de-license teachers from professional preparation in schools of education and to erase state imposed licensure requirements to be school leaders such as principals and superintendents would lead to more options for consumers to select different teachers and leaders than only those sanctioned by any licensure system.

This posture leads to encouraging its citizens to be undereducated if they are poor and cannot afford to send their children to schools that have licensed teachers and certified school administrators. The deregulation abandons its citizens as it does not support parity, justice, nor fairness, while increasing the 'haves' and 'have nots' within its citizens, in defiance of a democracy that exists to protect all of its citizens.

3. Unions and Professional Schools Restrict Voluntary Exchange

Trade unions and professional schools work to restrict access to goods and services by functioning as a means to disempower individual voluntary exchange in a free market. They are forms of monopoly. "Licensure therefore frequently establishes essentially the medieval guild kind of regulation in which the state assigns power to the members of a profession" (Friedman, 1962, p. 141).

Educational Implications: Political initiatives to de-professionalize educational preparation on university campuses would work towards de-establishing state

supported monopolies. The de-coupling of the acquisition of master's degrees for teachers from obtaining salary advancement is a strategy behind this initiative (Banchero, 2013). Neoliberal think tanks have also sent salvos of derisive op-ed articles on the idea that leadership requires a license, even as licensing in other professions, including business, are a regular feature of the work environment (Hess, 2003).

The loss of tax dollar support of schools and universities has not led to a deregulation from the politicians. Instead, more regulation with very little tax support has crushed the meaning of 'public.' Worker protections have been devalued as corporate decisions and commodification of the worker destabilizes a democracy as it no longer sustains the majority of its citizenry. A democracy that is focused on the production of happiness in its citizens, shows care in the common working class.

4. The Role of Government Is to Foster Competitive Markets

"The scope of government must be limited" (Friedman, 1962, p. 2). The purpose of government is to "protect our freedom...; to protect law and order, to enforce private contracts, to foster competitive markets" (Friedman, 1962, p. 2). "Competition—between individuals, between firms, between territorial entities (cities, regions, nations, regional groupings)—is held to be primary virtue... Privatization and deregulation combined with competition, it is claimed, eliminate bureaucratic red tape, increase efficiency and productivity, improve quality, and reduce costs..." (Harvey, 2009, p. 65).

Educational Implications: Governmental power must be used to curb monopoly, de-license, and de-regulate the production of goods and services available to citizens to promote maximum voluntary exchange. Centralized power must be used to de-centralize restrictions. Recently, Tea Party advocates and Libertarians in Kansas have taken to calling public schools "government schools" (Bosman, 2016, p. 10). The purpose is to try and rebrand public education in a light of calculated scorn and public schools as a form of governmental imposition.

The use of the term 'government schools' is part of a broad education agenda that includes restraining costs. The far-right and libertarian wings of the Republican Party are pushing the state to loosen its laws to allow more charter schools. They oppose programs that offer free or reduced-price breakfasts and lunches, believing that schools have become part of the 'nanny state'—another charged term—and are usurping the role of parents. (Bosman, 2016, p. 10)

5. Government Interference Works Against Creativity and Progress

Governmental actions work towards mediocrity and stifle individual initiative because "government can never duplicate the variety and diversity of individual action" (Friedman, 1962, p. 4). Governmental action works towards replacing "progress by stagnation..." (Friedman, 1962, p. 4).

Educational Implications: The government should stay out of any and all actions to improve the lot of individual citizens through the imposition of

regulations, laws, or standards. Government cannot create the new technologies and ideas that abound in the private sector. Government should simply stay out of the way. Writing on the op-ed page of *The Wall Street Journal* Charles Koch (2016) struck a familiar neoliberal theme:

Government, which often has strong incentives to stifle the revolutionary advances that could transform lives, may be the most dangerous. The state often claims to keep its citizens safe, when it is actually inhibiting increased individual well-being.... unleashing innovation, no matter what form it takes, is the essential component of truly helping people improve their lives. (p. A13).

Mariana Mazzucato (2014) calls Charles Koch's neoliberal tenet *a myth*. She dismantles the prevailing neoliberal claim that the withdrawal of the state will render the economy "more dynamic, competitive and innovation. Business is accepted as the innovative, while the State is cast as the inertial one..." (p. 1). She presents compelling testimony that

...most of the radical, revolutionary innovations that have fueled the dynamics of capitalism—from railroads to the Internet, to modern-day nanotechnology and pharmaceuticals—trace the most courageous early and capital-intensive 'entrepreneurial' investments back to the state. (p. 3)

Then in a telling exposition Mazzucato (2014) explains that when it comes to what is considered a breakthrough technological feat, that of the Apple iPhone and what made it so 'smart'...

were government funded (Internet, GPS, touch-screen display and the recent SIRI voice activated personal assistant)—did not come about due to the presence of venture capitalists, nor of 'garage tinkerers.' It was the visible hand of the State which made these innovations happen. (p. 3)

She warns that "had we waited for the 'market' and business to do it alone—...[it] would not have come about" (p. 3).

The predatory behavior of Apple in stealing innovation from government funded research recently concluded when a federal jury ordered the producer of iPhones and iPads "to pay the University of Wisconsin \$234 million dollars for illegally using the university's technology in its processors" (Nicas, 2015, p. B4). Mazzucato (2014) caps her extensively researched argument regarding the entrepreneurial state by noting, "Despite the perception of the US as the epitome of private sector-led wealth creation, in reality it is the State that has been engaged on a massive scale in entrepreneurial risk taking to spur innovation" (p. 73).

6. Change Will Entail 'Creative Destruction' of Current Institutional Frameworks

The neoliberal position is that "social good will be maximized by maximizing the reach and frequency of market transactions, and it seeks to bring all human

action into the domain of the market” (Harvey, 2009, p. 3). This approach will work to change current institutional arrangements, various forms of state supported or defined activities, existing social arrangements, welfare support, “technological mixes, ways of life and habits of the heart” (Harvey, 2009, p. 3).

Educational Implications: Those advancing the neoliberal perspective see themselves as engaging in ‘interruptive’ activities. They see crises as an opportunity to alter existing arrangements and to install the forces of the market place as a substitute. In the words of Pierre Bourdieu (1998):

That state nobility, which preaches the withering away of the state and the undivided reign of the market and the consumer, the commercial substitute for the citizen, has kidnapped the state; it has made the public good a private good, has made the ‘public thing,’ *res publica*, the Republic, its own thing. What is at stake now is winning back democracy from technocracy. (pp. 25–26)

Bourdieu also spoke of the ‘left hand’ and the ‘right hand’ of the state (1993). The ‘left hand’ represented public officials, teachers, and social workers while the ‘right hand’ represented bankers, business people, politicians, technocrats, and right-wing think tank pundits. Over time the ‘creative destruction’ of the ‘left hand’ of the state has resulted in the ‘hollowing out’ of a whole range of social services for the destitute, the elderly, the mentally ill, and the children of the poor (see Giroux, 2004) and something which Kimber and Ehrich (2011) identified as the ‘democratic deficit’ characterized by “the removal of public goods and services from the public sector and the reduction of citizens to customers or clients” (p. 180).

Mullen, Samier, Brindley, English & Carr (2012) argue that:

the instruments of neoliberalism—the market model, commercialization, and globalization—work against the largest mass of people; that neoliberalism is, in the main, a strategy of domination and subordination of the few over the many. Neoliberalism is thus its own theodicy of social privilege and economic hegemony. (p. 3)

Paid Handmaidens of Neoliberal Views: The Rise of Neoliberal Foundations And Think Tanks

The assault on government and the policies of its ‘left hand’ did not happen overnight. Harvey (2016) indicates that the rise of neoliberalism happened ‘bit by bit’ over a nearly 40-year period. He called it a ‘political project’ aimed primarily at stopping the labor movement and curbing its power. Harvey (2016) comments:

...trade unions had produced a Democratic Congress that was quite radical in its intent. In the early 1970s they, along with other social movements, forced a slew of reforms and reformist initiatives which were

anti-corporate: The Environmental Protection Agency, the Occupational Safety and Health Administration, consumer protections, and a whole set of things around empower labor even more than it had been empowered before. (p. 3)

Several important events occurred in the 1970s which galvanized a loose confederation of neoliberal, neoconservative, and libertarian thinkers, backed by corporate donations, to revise and reform a political activist attack on government and what they perceived as anti-corporate interests, regulations, and laws. First was what came to be called ‘the Powell Memorandum’ written by Lewis Powell, a prominent Southern conservative lawyer from Richmond, Virginia, and a future U.S. Supreme Court judge, who was chair of the Education Committee of the U.S. Chamber of Commerce.

The ‘Powell Memorandum’ became a call to arms for business, business interests such as the Business Roundtable and corporate moguls to stem the tide of democratic legislation endorsed by labor. ‘The Powell Memorandum’ became a political battle plan for how business was to ‘take back’ the political initiative. Powell, in addition to serving on the Richmond, Virginia Board of Education 1952–1961 (Van Doren, 1984, p. 842), not only enjoyed a lucrative corporate law practice but he “held seats on the boards of over a dozen of the largest companies in the country, including the cigarette maker Philip Morris” (Mayer, 2016, p. 72).

One of the persons who read the “Powell Memorandum” was beer magnate Joseph Coors who was deeply impacted by its contents. “A supporter of the John Birch Society, Joseph Coors regarded organized labor, the civil rights movement, federal social programs, and the counterculture of the 1960s as existential threats to the way of life that had enabled him and his forebears to succeed” (Mayer, 2016, p. 78). What followed was a donation to two former congressional aides, Paul Weyrich and Edwin Feulner Jr., who were establishing what became known as the Heritage Foundation, the first of the right-wing, neoliberal think tanks. The policy papers produced by these organizations are designed to be partisan, brief, and easy to read. The policy perspectives take biased positions at the outset. There is no pretense about trying to weigh both sides of an argument or an issue. The ‘facts’ almost always are tailored to support the position taken. And it is no secret that the policy briefs adhere to the biases of the wealthy donors who support these organizations.

A partial list of the ideological right-wing think tanks are shown below:

- 1) The Heritage Foundation
- 2) The American Enterprise Institute
- 3) Cato Institute
- 4) Center for Strategic and International Studies
- 5) Hoover Institution
- 6) Lexington Institute
- 7) Manhattan Institute (Skinner, 2012, p. 233).

Other neoliberal think tanks would be the Thomas B. Fordham Institute and Broad Foundation; The Bush Institute of Texas; Students First; the Reason Foundation; Friedman Foundation; Progressive Policy Institute; Gates

Foundation; Heartland Institute and Education Trust; the Bradley Foundation, the Olin Foundation and the Brookings Institution. There are also other more regional and local foundations and neoliberal think tanks that are also advocacy groups to promote a neoliberal change agenda. To provide a glimpse of the magnitude of the operations of these partisan organizations, an interview with Arthur Brooks the President of the American Enterprise Institute revealed that “In the six years since he took over as president, annual donations have nearly doubled, to \$40 million today from roughly \$22 million in 2009...There are more people too—225 full-time scholars and staff, up from 145” (Mcgurn, 2015, p. A9).

The forms of advocacy adopted by these neoliberal think tanks take on the mantle of open policy briefs and more lately the sponsorship of so-called ‘research’ on issues, actions, and concepts backed by the specific policy agendas of each. There have been so many such ‘research’ reports released that a special center has been established at the School of Education at the University of Colorado at Boulder to evaluate and issue independent commentary about the adequacy and accuracy of these reports. The National Education Policy Center is supported by the Great Lakes Center for Education Research and it employs a broad cross section of well-known researchers to independently assess thinktank research.

A quote from Kevin Welner, a professor at the University of Colorado at Boulder indicated that, “Across the nation, think tanks are churning out a steady stream of often low-quality reports that use weak research methods, offer biased analyses, and make recommendations that do not fit the data” (EPIC, 2010, p. 1). Alex Molnar, a professor at Arizona State University also commented about the nature of think tank reports when he observed that, “...in the political process, the influence of a report often has little relation to its quality. As a result, new school policies and reform proposals frequently are based on research of questionable value” (EPIC, 2010, p. 1).

These neoliberal think tank ‘research reports’ are rarely, if ever, vetted at academic research conferences, nor do they appear in blind reviewed, referred academic journals. They simply could not pass muster. Rather they are sent to newspapers and topical magazines whose editorial staff lacks the methodological and conceptual sophistication to know good research from mediocre and bad research. To the unsophisticated editors of most op-ed pages ‘research is research is research.’ And when the results match the editorial biases of newspapers such as *The Wall Street Journal*, such research is guaranteed to be cited as though it was credible and reliable. That the neoliberal think tanks only publish research which reinforces their biases and that of their sponsors is rarely the basis for editorial skepticism.

The sponsors of the neoliberal think tanks include some of the wealthiest individuals in the top 1% of the nation’s layered social class structure. In addition to beer baron Joseph Coors, the Heritage Foundation was also sponsored by the Sarah Mellon Scaife Foundation, the Bradleys (Lynde and Harry) of Milwaukee funded the Bradley Foundation and backed think tanks who were the spearhead of the movement to break public employee unions in Wisconsin (Mayer, 2016, p. 308); the Smith Richardson Foundation (of Vick’s vapor rub brand and other cold remedies fame) and the Koch Brothers (Charles and David) who have invested millions into the Cato Institute and other agencies, and institutions

sympathetic to their libertarian causes. The Koch network is so lavishly funded and extensive that it has been called “The Kochtopus” (Mayer, 2016, pp.141–158) and they have built “a political machine that in size, scope, sophistication, and fundraising prowess rivals the Republican Party itself” (Schulman, 2014, p. 21).

David Brock (2004) has indicated that the Philanthropy Roundtable is a group that coordinates the work of these family foundations and develops the ideas and battle plans for the multi-headed agenda of neoliberal activism. He quotes Grover Norquist, one of the leaders as saying, “Our goal is to cut government in half as a percentage of the economy over twenty-five years, so that we can get it down to the size where we can drown it in the bathtub” (p. 50).

Neoliberal funds have also been donated to some of the leading universities in the nation, sometimes with strings attached. A prime example is that of George Mason University in Northern Virginia, a large-scale recipient from the Koch Brothers who “...pumped nearly \$50 million into George Mason from 2011 to 2014, according to an analysis of tax forms conducted by the Associated Press” (Stripling, 2016, p. A27). George Mason’s indebtedness to Koch money began in 1980 when they funded the Mercatus Center. This Center operates as a private, non-profit research center but at least one insider within Koch industries has called it “a lobbying group disguised as a disinterested academic program” (Stripling, 2016, p. A28).

The Mercatus Center also supplements the salaries of some professors as well as financial support for graduate students, largely in economics. The economics department tilts heavily toward limited government from the libertarian perspective. The entire row over the role of the Koch Brothers at George Mason was sparked by a gift of \$10 million dollars to the law school which would be renamed The Antonin Scalia School of Law. The proposal drew faculty criticism when the deal became public.

Koch funds have also been channeled to other U.S. universities such as Brown University, Ohio State, Northwestern University School of Law, Texas A&M University, Baylor University, the University of Arizona, George Washington University, University of North Carolina at Chapel Hill, Clemson University, West Virginia University, New York University, Oklahoma State University, Florida State University, and Utah State University (Mayer, 2016). The transformation of neoliberal ideology into the university setting has also been accompanied by state legislatures and cutbacks in public funding. Budget stringencies are another form of deregulation. David Harvey trenchantly noted that, “I think now we’ve reach a point where you don’t need something like the Heritage Foundation anymore. Universities have pretty much been taken over by the neoliberal projects surrounding them” (2016, p. 4).

Follow the Money: Who is Funding Whom about What?

In politics it has become more and more difficult to follow neoliberal money from its source to its true destination. The U.S. Supreme Court’s decision in *Citizens United* made it easy for large donors to conceal their cash contributions to idiosyncratic causes and political projects. The Court’s decision made it

convenient to hide millions of dollars when super rich donors could give funds to foundations and other non-profit organizations that could, in turn, keep their donors' names secret. These super political slush funds became known as "dark money" (Mayer, 2016, p. 229). They have become the tools of corruption of democracy by shifting "the balance of power from parties built on broad consensus to individuals who were wealthy and zealous enough to spend millions of dollars from their own funds. By definition, this empowered a tiny atypical minority of the population (Mayer, 2016, p. 239). In an editorial in *The Washington Post* (The Editorial Board, 2015) it was noted when it comes to elections, "... candidates are becoming dependent on a small pool of wealthy Americans. The analysis found that about 130 families and their businesses provided more than half the money raised through June by the Republican candidates and their super PACs" (p. A16). In pointing out the danger with this trend towards oligarchy, "The nation has often been ruled by elites, and rued it. But the potential to warp the political system is ever-present when such large sums are poured into politics" (p. A16).

Reckhow and Synder. (2014) were able to collect data from grants from the 15 largest K-12 philanthropic grant-makers for 2000, 2005, and 2010 and examine the data to observe funding targets and trends. They examined a data base for 2000 which consisted of 1,200 grants totaling over \$486 million; in 2005 the database was 1,600 grants totaling \$738 million, and for 2010 a base of 2,600 grants comprising over \$843 million. They identified two distinct trends in philanthropic funding. The first was increasing support for "jurisdictional challenges" to the educational establishment. These challenges "provide organizational replacements and alternate routes for teacher and principal training/credentialing, production of knowledge and research in education, as well as schools and school systems" (p. 187). These initiatives were comprised of two approaches. The first regarded funding for "organizations that provide alternative modes of running schools, primarily charter schools [and] organizations that provide alternative sources of human capital in education, primarily alternative certification of teachers" (p. 190).

The second trend was the enhanced role of the federal government in promoting neoliberal ideas chiefly through *No Child Left Behind* and the most recent Secretary of Education Arne Duncan's *Race to the Top* initiative. The importance of the second trend is that venture philanthropies have turned to a national focus to promote their ideologies instead of trying to influence policy and practice in the 50 states and/or thousands of local school districts. Six of the largest groups were the Bill and Melinda Gates Foundation, Walton Family Foundation, Michael & Susan Dell Foundation, Robertson Foundation, Eli & Edythe Broad Foundation and the Doris & Donald Fisher Fund. As Reckhow and Snyder observe, "Collectively, these six benefactors each made their fortunes as business entrepreneurs—two in technology (Gates, Dell), two in real estate (Walton, Fisher), and two in investment businesses (Robertson, Broad)" (p. 188).

The groups that received most of the money for policy advocacy, "are typically professionalized organizations that produce reports and policy recommendations, maintain a paid staff, and have a presence in Washington, DC" (p. 188). Among the think tanks receiving support were the New America Foundation,

Brookings Institution, and the American Enterprise Institute. Among other groups receiving neoliberal largesse were Teach for America, Leadership for Educational Equity, Stand for Children Leadership Center, and Students First headed by former DC school superintendent Michelle Rhee who uses funds from the venture philanthropists to fight against teacher tenure and support political candidates who support her neoliberal agenda (Delbanco, 2013, p. 4).

Reckhow and Synder (2014) conclude their report by noting, “Major foundations in education have simultaneously shifted away from funding traditional institutions towards support for organizations that could create competition for the public sector” (p. 190).

The Rise of Neoliberal Corporate Managerialism in Educational Administration

Another aspect of neoliberal thinking in education concerns the form and spirit of the kind of leadership that is employed to improve educational organizations. We can derive some idea of what that is from prescriptive texts produced by neoliberal writers in think tanks who engage in criticisms of existing arrangements, and from descriptions of actual practices by neoliberal educational administrators.

To make this distinction as clear as possible we begin with a picture from the corporate world where much of what is recommended for educational organizations emanates (English, 2013). The *Wall Street Journal* ran a story of the new CEO, Hans Van Bylen, of the German Company Henkel and the issues he faces coming into his new position. First new CEO Van Bylen was following a leader who had “Americanized” Henkel, a company that manufactures industrial and household products. An external observer to Henkel characterized the previous Henkel leader’s approach as one which cut costs, established measurable targets, “moved German administrative jobs to lower-cost countries, closed plants, and shed 800 of Henkel’s 1,000 brands. Between 2008 and 2015, the workforce fell roughly 10%” (Jervell, 2016, p. B4). In addition, the old CEO eliminated the annual Christmas party in order to cut costs, and he “stopped attending the annual workers’ council meeting, a break with tradition that irked workers here” (Jervell, 2016, p. B4).

He also changed the company’s motto from ‘A Brand Like a Friend’ to ‘Excellence is our Passion’ because ‘you want to win ... and being friendly is not winning.’ (Jervell, 2016, p. B4)

The old CEO oversaw some veterans in the company being pushed out while others had increased workloads and had to work more hours. If they complained, they were encouraged to take buyouts of their contracts.

This “Americanized” version of corporate management in education was similarly put into place in Washington, DC by Michelle Rhee, a former Teach for America candidate who became Chancellor of the district at age 37 without any prior school administrative experience or training. “She refused to believe she

needed to build consensus, seek community input or involvement, or in any way inspire or rally the professionals who do the daily work of making school improvements” (Pitt, 2011). She admitted her solitary view of leadership when she told a *Wall Street Journal* editorial writer, “this is a onetime gig for me so I can make every single decision in a way in which I think is in the best interests of the kids—without the politics, without owing people, just with that in mind” (Levy, 2007, p. A11).

In 2008 she “dismissed thirty-six principals, twenty-two assistant principals, and before she was done, nearly three hundred teachers” ... she even “invited the camera crew of a PBS documentary to film her in the act of firing a principal ...” (Delbanco, 2013, p. 4). As with the Henkel story, Michelle Rhee’s personal philosophy of leadership is centered in the virtues of competition which Delbanco (2013) calls “... what is fast becoming the national education dogma” (p. 6) which “boils down to a single theme, (1) students should compete for test scores and their teachers’ approval, (2) teachers should compete for ‘merit’ rewards from their principal, (3) schools should compete for funding within their district, (4) school districts should compete for budgetary allocations within their state, (5) states should compete for federal funds” (p. 6). The virtues of competition are linked to the neoliberal ideology that economies are only possible with competition provided by the existence of alternatives. Michelle Rhee underscored that when she said, “I’m a huge proponent of choice, but I’m also an unbelievably competitive person, and my goal is ... to create schools within the system that I believe are the most compelling choices” (Levy, 2007, p. A11).

There is a Darwinesque specter to such approaches to management which is averse to consensus building within a less dog-eat-dog culture. When the DC mayor, Adrian Fenty went down to electoral defeat, Rhee lost her political support and resigned. Her stormy tenure echoes other tales of business leaders who think they can run school systems or universities like businesses. Today, Rhee runs Students First, a multi-million-dollar political advocacy group funded by the Walton and Broad Foundations among others (Reckhow & Snyder, 2014, p. 189) which is opposed to teacher tenure and teacher unions and engages in political support of neoliberal ideas and candidates in education.

The authoritarian management style of business practitioners has run more than one would-be educational administrator into the weeds. For example, Paul Vallas, a non-educator who has been superintendent of schools in Chicago and New Orleans ran amuck with his management approach to change in Bridgeport, Connecticut. Hernandez (2013) reported on his difficulties in Bridgeport:

Parents are upset over his plans to increase the use of student testing, Union officials have denounced his insistence that administrators frequently visit classrooms to evaluate teachers, as well as his history of enthusiastic support for charter schools. And community activists argue that he consistently shuts out dissenting voices. (p. A1)

As with Michelle Rhee in Washington, DC, neoliberal education leaders want greater centralized control and see teacher tenure and teacher unions as enemies

of their ‘reform’ education agenda. They also push for the abolition of school boards to be replaced by mayoral control in the big cities.

Among the most heralded fiasco of business leaders in education was the very short tenure of Cathie Black, an alleged superstar of magazine publishing, to the role of Chancellor of the New York City Schools. A non-educator without any experience in education she lasted all of 95 days on the job before being fired by Mayor Michael Bloomberg when an exodus of top level education leaders quit or left the school system (Martinez & Saul, 2011, p. A3).

Business leaders who have been appointed college or university presidents also suffer from the same flaws as those entering elementary and secondary education, a lack of understanding that an educational institution is not a business and is not about making a profit. Academic leaders must be consultative, especially with faculty. The uprising at the University of Missouri-Columbia over matters of race were only part of the problem there. The president, Tim Wolfe, a former computer software executive made the mistake of cutting funds which subsidized the University of Missouri’s Press. After 5,000 people signed a petition in protest Mr. Wolfe returned the subsidy “admitting to miscalculating the importance of the press and conceding he should have vetted the idea with faculty first” (Korn, Peters, & Belkin, 2015, p. A3).

Another business oriented president, Scott Scarborough at the University of Akron resigned less than two years after he assumed the office. His style and approach did not mesh with an academic, consultative approach required to work with the faculty which had “voted repeatedly and overwhelmingly to express no confidence in him” (Basken, 2016, p. A11).

Hunter Rawlings, president of the Association of American Universities, spoke about the disturbing trend in replacing academic leadership with neoliberal, business oriented perspectives:

... too many politicians and their board appointees want ... to shape them as their ideology sees fit. This often means treating universities as businesses in which productivity and efficiency are the primary goals, and the academic and research principles that have been so important to our country’s leadership in talent and innovation are sacrificed to utilitarianism. ‘Accountability’ is the watchword—everything that can be counted is counted, and everything that cannot be counted doesn’t count. (Rawlings, 2014, p. A25)

Neoliberal Largesse and Self-aggrandizement—The Issue of Executive Pay

There is one clear area where neoliberal tenets work towards self-aggrandizement and that concerns executive pay. In Ayn Rand’s book *The Virtue of Selfishness* (1964) she exclaimed, “A right does not include the material implementation of that right by other men; it includes only the freedom to earn that implementation by one’s own effort” (Burns, 2009, p. 211).

The skyrocketing ascent of executive pay has assumed astronomical proportions and has been the subject of shareholder discontent. Krantz (2015) indicates that, “While the average CEO is paid 216 times more than workers now, they were paid just 20 times more on average in the 1950s” (p. 1B). Nine CEOs in the Standard & Poor’s 500 were paid 800 times more than their workers (Krantz, 2015, p. 1B).

The Economist (2016) reported that the ratio of average CEO pay to workers’ pay of listed companies in selected countries, 2011–2012, showed that the United States had the largest discrepancy of the nine nations cited. The list included Germany, Japan, France, Australia, Sweden, and Britain among others (p. 53).

Lublin (2015) indicated that the median compensation of 300 CEOs was \$13.6 million (p. B1). The justification for such huge discrepancies between workers and bosses continues to be the subject of great debate, except in the nation’s business communities where they are insulated from them. The rationale that such salaries are the result of the level of duties and the results obtained from their leadership does not hold up to the facts. A study by MSCI, a corporate-governance research firm studied the pay of 800 CEOs at 429 companies at the end of 2014. The study examined the return on shareholder investment during this time.

MSCI found that \$100 invested in the 20% of companies with the highest-paid CEOs would have grown to \$265 over 10 years. The same amount invested with the lowest-paid CEOs would have grown to \$367 ... The highest paid had the worst performance by a significant margin. (Francis, 2016, p. B1)

Six years earlier Carl Icahn (2013), a well-known million-dollar investor himself, wrote in *The Wall Street Journal*:

Is it fair that CEOs make 700 times what the average workers makes, even if the chief executive is doing a terrible job and thousands of workers are laid off? Why do CEOs get awarded huge bonuses by friendly boards when the share prices are down by double digits and then get their options reset to lower levels as an ‘incentive’? (p. A19)

An editorial in *The New York Times* (The Editorial Board, 2016a) also cast doubt on the value of high executive pay as benefiting shareholders. In contradicting the common rationale for high pay for CEOs *The New York Times* wrote, “... beginning around the 1970s and becoming increasingly common in the leverage-buyout era of the 80s, the defining characteristic of pay for performance has been an explosion in chief executive pay that exceeds the value that any human being who isn’t Midas could reasonably be credited with producing” (p. A26). But *The New York Times* also noted that not only has excessive executive pay led to rising inequality as worker pay has flattened out, but that it has become a drag on shareholder income as well.

The International Context of Neoliberalism and An Alternative Movement

Jacques (2016, August 26) recently wrote in *The Guardian* that the crisis in Western politics shouts the unravelling of neoliberalism. Since the late 1970s and marked by the Reagan and Thatcher partnership where the gifts to the world were global free markets in commodities and especially, services, saw the beginning of bank deregulation, first established during the Great Depression. “The hyper-globalization era has been systematically stacked in favor of capital against labor: international trading agreements, drawn up in great secrecy, with business on the inside and the unions and citizens excluded” (Jacques, 2016, p. 1). Examples of the behind-closed-doors politics and economic maldistribution are the Trans-Pacific Partnership (TPP) and the Transatlantic Trade and Investment Partnership (TTIP) which led the “politico-legal attack on the unions; the encouragement of large-scale immigration in both the United States and Europe...to undermine the bargaining power of the domestic workforce; and the failure to retrain displaced workers” (Jacques, 2016, p. 2).

As we posit in this chapter, the six basic tenets when seen through the perspective of Nancy Fraser’s three dimensions, the reality of those who have scorned inequality becomes real. Her three dimensions (2007, 1996) are: (1) economic defined as the distribution, maldistribution, and redistribution of goods; (2) cultural as recognition and misrecognition of social inequities; and, (3) the political frame from which Fraser insists all three dimensions must be present for participatory parity to exist. We agree with her sociopolitical theory. The ‘isms’ for example, sexism, racism, classism, and so on, demand a theory of justice inclusive of both the individual distinctions and the common moral and ethical sense of humanity (Papa, 2016a, 2017).

The six tenets, when conjoined with the Fraser dimensions explicitly focused on social justice, present a dialectic dimension between the tension of the individual human being and the common good of humanity. When only the cultural dimension and the economic dimension are joined, the result is social inequality unfortunately common in today’s world: a world of increasing ‘have’ and ‘have nots.’ The political dimension for participatory parity can ensure equal respect for all participants and opportunity for equal attainment for social esteem expressed in democratic citizens. The neoliberal tenets delimit the role of human beings as Bourdieu (1998) noted the transfer of public goods into private ownership.

In Figure 1.1, our discussion of international trading of services and goods has led to the where we are today: the destruction of many lives while exacerbating the reality of billions. We contend we must change from neoliberalism: creative destruction of the tenets.

The failure of transnational globalization has led to much human suffering worldwide. Despair and hopelessness among the working classes in the United States whose growth between the years of 1948–1972 was marked by “sizeable increases in their standard of living” (Jacques, 2016, p. 2), while in the United States, “the median real income for full-time male workers is now lower than it was four decades ago: the income of the bottom 90% of the population has

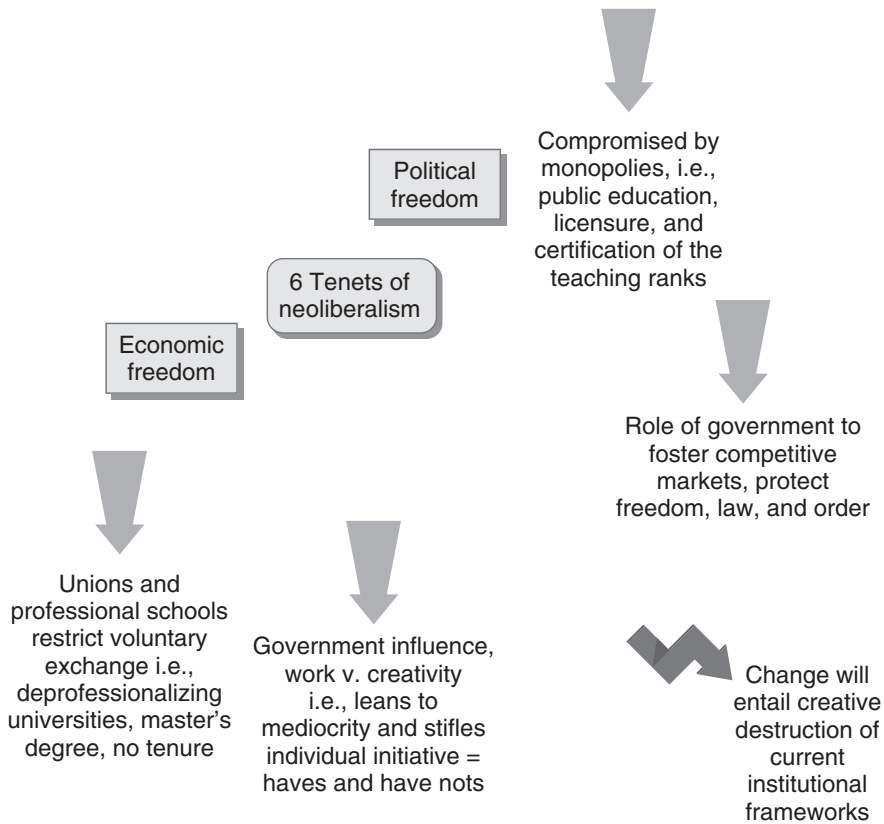


Figure 1.1 The Need for Change from Neoliberalism

stagnated for over 30 years” (Jacques, 2016, p. 2). Similarly, the U.K revolt. is evident in the Brexit vote, for similar reasons as in the United Staes where “social and economic chaos and the threat of a surge of migrants were alarming” (Burk, 2016, p. 16).

Within a multinational capitalistic country, it moves steadily towards inequality and what has been called the “democratic deficit” where more and more citizens are moved to the expanding economic bottom and have less and less to say about their lives. We see this in the shocking statistic of maternal mortality where the United States has steadily increased in deaths from pregnancy and delivery during this last decade. The cause is the inequalities built into “America’s health care system. The 2010 Affordable Care Act made health insurance available, but millions of families still cannot afford the care they need” (The Editorial Board, 2016b, p. 8). The increase in racism, misogyny, sexual orientation, environmentalism, global warming, when compared to classism, has been uneven in its outcomes leading to the working-class revolt as noted by the rise of Trumpism and Sanderism in the U.S. presidential election of 2016.

And, what of the initiatives to foster all children going to school? The World Bank is a powerful symbol of the commodification of education in poor countries.

Gevirtz described the World Bank and UN Sustainability Development Goals (Gevirtz, 2015, May 26) as:

The bank said it would spend \$5 billion by 2030—double its spending of the previous five years—in an bid to reach more than 120 million children who are out of school and some 250 million more who cannot read or write despite attending school ... *The truth is that most education systems are not serving the poorest children well*, Kim said in a statement. *With nearly a billion people remaining trapped in extreme poverty today, sustained efforts to improve learning for children will unlock huge amounts of human potential for years to come.* The World Bank, which aims to end extreme poverty by 2030, has spent \$40 billion on education since 2000 and describes itself as the world's largest international education funder. (Gevirtz, 2015, p. 1)

The World Bank president Jim Yong Kim believes in continuing to cite the failing of public education as the scapegoat to unparalleled capital growth. His solution is to adopt a results-based financing system where countries will only get money if they meet agreed performance targets.

Public universities are not primarily supported by taxpayer money, given their governors and state legislators in their zealous drive of 'no new taxes' has led to increased tuition costs placing the burden on students. This again encourages an undereducated citizenship in the 21st century that demands a retooled workforce for digital automation in service industries, while for universities philanthropy must be relied on as is the application of business approaches to science and research with external funding limiting research to what the corporate interests are. Given this direction how have the global organizations, such as UNESCO, supported children not in school?

UNESCO (2015, June 7) using the latest data maintains that the number of children not attending school has risen as aid to certain countries has fallen from the 2010 levels. As aid falls, girls are the first to be excluded. Yet, as noted in *Bloomberg*, economists know that when a country improves education for girls, its overall per capita income increases (Matsui, 2013).

According to UIS (UNESCO Institute for Statistics) estimates, 24 million children will never enter a classroom. Half of all out-of-school children in sub-Saharan Africa will never enroll. Girls are the most disadvantaged, particularly in South and West Asia, where 80% of out-of-school girls are unlikely to start school, compared to just 16% for boys. (UNESCO, 2015, June 7, para. 3)

In addition, 1 out of 6 adolescents is not in school, totaling 65 million in 2013. One third of these live in South and West Asia, another third in sub-Saharan Africa, where there are more adolescents out of school today than in 2000. (UNESCO, 2015, June 7, para. 4)

Military activity has increasingly become a major barrier to children in conflict regions attending school. The civil war in Syria has devastated the education of its nations' children. "Before the conflict, nearly every Syrian child was enrolled in primary school but by 2013 about 1.8 million children and adolescents were out of school. It took just two years of civil war to erase all education progress made since the start of the century" (UNESCO, 2015, June 7, para. 5). These numbers do not represent the refugee Syrian children in Turkey or dispersed across Greece and the rest of Europe. Those numbers are shocking as well given the inability of these nations to understand how to best deal with refugees coming in from conflict regions.

UNESCO (2015, June 7) notes the cost of educating children in all countries needs "an extra \$40 billion to provide 12 years of education to everyone in low and lower-middle income countries" (para. 7). We can ask then, how this shortfall will be addressed. "Donor countries must increase their aid to education by 600%. Instead, they are placing education lower on their list of priorities: half of donor countries decreased their aid to basic education from 2008–2010 and 2011–2013" (para 7). And, now part of the 2030 standard to attain requires results that politicians have designed, not educators.

Eisner (2005) described his perception of standards as implying "high expectations, rigor, things of substance" (p. 163) as well the illusion that without standards is to not know what is expected.

Uniformity in curriculum content is a virtue *if* one's aim is to be able to compare students in one part of the country with students in others. Uniformity is a virtue when the aspiration is to compare the performance of American students with students in Korea, Japan and Germany. By why should we wish to make such comparisons? To give up the idea that there needs to be one standard for all students in each field of study is not to give up the aspiration to seek high levels of educational quality in both pedagogical practices and educational outcomes. Together, the desire to compare and the recognition of individuality create one of the dilemmas of a social meritocracy: the richness of a culture rests not only on the prospect of cultivating a set of common commitments, but also on the prospect of cultivating those individual talents through which the culture at large is enriched. (Eisner, 2005, p. 166)

This international dilemma of expecting results from children not in school, especially girls, bears the sin of neoliberal policies that exacerbates the realities of global corporate greed and monopolization of banking practices. What hope in the fight against despair are children offered if they are abandoned before they are able to read? In the absence of the nation/state to solve these problems we believe a small group of educators can change the world by elevating the discussion, bringing awareness, and inspiring global educators to act locally while thinking globally.

Educational Leaders Without Borders: An Alternative Movement

Educational Leaders Without Borders (ELWB) is an organization of global scholars, students, teachers, NGOs, and professional organizations that firmly rejects the neoliberal mantra that has rejected humanity in pursuit of the commodification of education and pursue the human right of all children to go to school. ELWB does not believe in the efficiency drive through standards that has encouraged a relentless and astonishing need to focus on the perceived weaknesses of American schools “that we have underestimated the diversity and hence the complexity that exists” (Eisner, 2005, p. 170).

ELWB is raising awareness of the ills of neoliberalism that has impacted schools around the world. ELWB promises to continue to challenge neoliberalism with the intention of ending the era of greed and its denouncement of contextualized differences that are denying social justice to all children in the world.

The underestimating of children in U.S. schools needs to stop and also the severe focus on standards which lives among the false presumptions that all children are the same. As we see in the greater society, inequality is rampant with mainly White undereducated males in open revolt over loss of jobs and wages. The need to build infrastructure that will retrain these workers is required. By providing this help to those unfranchised workers to overcome their misogynistic, racist, anti-immigration, and the inward drive to isolate the United States, is yet to be seen. This raises Eisner’s question to the same level: Can our education system[s] flourish without losers (p. 171)? Can our society become more equal to all while acknowledging the contextual diversity as an enrichment to schooling strategies and not as purely a commodification of winners and losers?

Ibrahim (2014) citing Makiguchi said, “Ten million young people forced to endure the agonies of cutthroat competition, the difficulty of getting into good schools, the ‘examination hell’ and the struggle for jobs after graduation...” (p. 109) sounds like the 21st century and not the 1930s when it was written.

ELWBs believe education is a basic human right, where

- 1) All children have a right to go to school;
- 2) Education should draw out of humans the potentialities of a progressive humanity which is inclusive and respectful of difference;
- 3) Schools are a leveraging institutional force for greater equality and opportunity; and,
- 4) Educational leaders can and must become emboldened to step out of the school/state nexus so that we can become true educational leaders without borders.

We recognize that the goals of humanity and its well-being may be in conflict with the nation/state’s agenda of economic dominance. We also believe that some problems of schooling girls and rural children are not solvable by any one nation state. And, the realities of knotting together the economic, cultural, and political elements that can be focused not on knowledge itself as a commodity, but as Makiguchi stated “to encourage the joy and excitement of learning that arises from learning” (Ibrahim 2014, p. 104) is what ELWBs understand.

Let us recommit ourselves to “social justice and schools as levers of social change... [that does not] hold poor people responsible for their choices that arise directly from the relatively limited set of options that poverty...gives rise to in the market [of neoliberalism greed]” (Barry, 2007, p. 87).

Conclusions

This chapter has sketched out the development and 40-year expansion and domination of neoliberal thinking in the private and public sectors in the United States and indeed around the globe and its impact on social and education policies and practices. The combination of neoliberal assumptions and tenets do not rest on any scientific theory. Nor are they scientific. They are, as Harvey (2016) notes a purely ‘political project’ camouflaged in the makeup of liberation, freedom, individualism, and choice which Bourdieu (1998) labeled “a very smart and very modern repackaging of the oldest ideas of the oldest capitalists” (p. 34) which portended a “return to a kind of radical capitalism, with no other law than that of maximum profit, an unfettered capitalism without any disguise, but rationalized, pushed to the limit of its economic efficacy...” (p. 35).

Chakraborty (2016) has quoted an article in the IMF (International Monetary Fund) flagship publication by three of the group’s top economists that are sounding the alarm about the continued growth and implementation of neoliberalism indicating that “more and more states have remade their social and political institutions into pale copies of the market” (p. 48).

The results, the IMF researchers concede, have been terrible. Neoliberalism hasn’t delivered economic growth. It has only made a few people a lot better off. It causes epic crashes that leave behind human wreckage and cost billions to clean up ... economists don’t talk like novelists, more’s the pity, but what you’re witnessing amid all the graphs and technical language is the start of the long death of an ideology. (p. 48)

One can only hope that the announcement of the demise of neoliberalism, especially in education policies and practices, is not premature and it occurs before it is impossible to return to policies and practices which actually reduce inequalities that threaten the life of democratic government and non-authoritarian forms of educational management in the schools.

ELWB seeks to shape the conversation away from neoliberal greed to refocus on the strengths of a diverse humanity and human beings are considered first, to unshackle the negativity that uber-globalization has flourished under neoliberalism. Clearly, the Democratic party in the United States and the Labour party of the United Kingdom must now renegotiate the fragmentation that affects both due to their embrace of the tenets which we have written about in other books and chapters (English, 2013, 2016; Papa, 2016b, 2016c, 2017). The Democratic party must reestablish itself as a defender of those that have been harmed by the juggernaut of neoliberalism. ELWB will continue to contest and challenge the tenets outlined and we hope you join us through your research, scholarship, and especially, your actions: *act locally and think globally*.

Key Ideas

- 1) Neoliberalism is not science nor is it based on a scientific theory; rather it is a political movement anchored in economic determinism;
- 2) While using the language of individualism, freedom, and liberty, neoliberalism is about benefiting only a privileged few in our society and therefore it will continue to be a force for greater economic inequality to persist in the nation;
- 3) Neoliberal educational agendas are re-segregating the nation's public schools and behind the reduction of public financial support for public education at all levels;
- 4) The dominant form of managerial practice employed by neoliberal leaders is anchored in virulent anti-unionism and forms of governance which expand top-down managerial control of schools and institutions. Any form of dissent is viewed as a heresy to neoliberal convictions.

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