

ARE CURRENT EDUCATIONAL REFORMS REALLY DEMOCRATIC?

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EDUCATION AS A POLITICAL ACT

- ▶ Education is not neutral. It is a site of conflict.
- ▶ Never assume that today's victories are permanent. Always keep the critical understandings of dominant reforms in one's mind. Think internationally as well.
- ▶ Be very cautious about putting reforms in place that you cannot control when you no longer have power

HOW IS EDUCATION POLITICAL?

- ▶ Sorting and selecting
- ▶ Selective tradition
- ▶ Hidden curriculum
- ▶ Teaching and gender
- ▶ Realities of budgets and bureaucracy
- ▶ National agendas and priorities
- ▶ Whose voices are heard?

CONSERVATIVE MODERNIZATION

- ▶ The nature of hegemony
- ▶ Wars of position vs wars of maneuver
- ▶ Generating consent as a social/pedagogic process
- ▶ Changing common-sense
- ▶ Good sense and bad sense
- ▶ New hegemonic bloc

A NEW ALLIANCE

- ▶ Neoliberals
- ▶ Neoconservatives
- ▶ “Authoritarian populists” (religious conservatives)
- ▶ Professional and managerial new middle class

NEOLIBERALISMS

- ▶ Public is bad/Private is good. Social democracy and the “racial contract”
- ▶ Fiction of a weak state
- ▶ Competition and marketization
- ▶ Changes in the meaning of democracy
- ▶ Decentralization, but not really democratic
- ▶ Channel One—Students seen as commodities
- ▶ The real economy
- ▶ Neoliberalism as Gendered and Raced

NEOCONSERVATIVES

- ▶ Strong state control over knowledge and values
- ▶ Student and community cultures seen as deviant.
- ▶ Neoliberalism often requires neoconservatism
- ▶ National curriculum and national testing
- ▶ Restoring “tradition”, but *whose* tradition?
Bourdieu and symbolic violence
- ▶ Controlling teachers—deskilling and intensification
- ▶ Teaching for the test, reduction of knowledge as that which is testable
- ▶ Social Darwinism

AUTHORITARIAN POPULISTS

- ▶ Populism can be good or bad
- ▶ Religious roots
- ▶ Strong supporters of neoliberal and neoconservative attacks on the state and on educational policies
- ▶ Curriculum conflict
- ▶ Very conservative models of teaching and curriculum. Little student autonomy
- ▶ Theocratic vision
- ▶ Home schooling
- ▶ Influence in national and international policy

PROFESSIONAL AND MANAGERIAL NEW MIDDLE CLASS

- ▶ New managerialism
- ▶ Cultural capital of testing, accountability, and evidence. “Good” students and “good” teachers determined only by test scores
- ▶ Standards and standardization—swimming pool example
- ▶ Bourdieu and conversion strategies
- ▶ Who wins and who loses?

ALTERNATIVE REFORMS AND “THICK DEMOCRACY”

- ▶ Thin vs thick democracy
- ▶ Democratic schools movement—Students and teachers seen as protagonists
- ▶ Learning from the “south”: Citizen school and participatory budgeting in Porto Alegre, Brazil
- ▶ What can we learn from these examples?
- ▶ Even progressive reforms can be contradictory in the real lives of schools and communities.

THE LONG REVOLUTION

- ▶ While we shouldn't be romantic, we still have to act.
- ▶ Hope, mutual respect, love, care, and solidarity are crucial resources.