

**Book Review: (2022) *Encyclopedia of Marxism and Education* [Edited by Alpesh Maisuria]. Brill. ISBN: 978-90-04-50561-2**

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The book *Encyclopedia of Marxism and Education* edited by Alpesh Maisuria provides a compilation of Marxist thought as a dialogical tool for the critique of neo-liberal capitalism and its reinforcement through state institutions with a unique focus on education. Throughout the book, the realities of pervasive social stratification which are socially reproduced in and by education are addressed by a cadre of critical educators incorporating Marxist intercommunal perspectives for resistance and change in the 21<sup>st</sup> century. As such, a revolutionary intercommunalism struggles for eradicating capitalist social relations are needed, as is the redistribution of economic and political power to benefit all of the earth's people (Narayan, 2019; Rodriguez, 2006).

The book is organized into forty chapters under five underlying themes: 1) The resistance and relevance of Marxism in the 21<sup>st</sup> century, and its relation to climate catastrophes and technological advances; 2) Marxism and education in relation to fields like disasters, ethnography, philosophy of social science, human rights and the Middle East; 3) Clarifications and update on contemporary issues with Marxist educational theory, practice and pedagogy; 4) Marxist thinkers and their contributions to education and their legacy; and 5) Definition of social class and its interactions with identity politics from different perspectives. In this book review review I sample chapters from each of the five overarching themes.

In the introduction, Alpesh Maisuria discusses the pervasiveness of capitalism on a global scale and poses questions, such as how can we understand the development of the capitalist political economy and the implications for scholars? And what about communism? He reminds readers of the decline and narrowing of Marxism in the 1980s, incorrectly cast as a failure and in terminal decline. The response to such criticism by Marxist thinkers has come in the form of re-invigoration, re-articulation and consolidation. The first critiques bring to light the importance of Antonio Gramsci. Maisuria references the works: of Paulo Freire's (1968) on *Critical Pedagogy*, Bowles & Gintis' (1976) on *Social Reproduction*, and Paul Willis' (1976) contribution to *Resistance Theory* as key developments in resurging the connection between Marxism and education.

Maisuria asserts that the personal is political, and the political is personal, with Marxism in education as a firm commitment in the struggle against the chains of capitalism. The introduction concludes by affirming that Marxism has been in the intellectual boxing ring since the nineteenth century. Marxism has been an invaluable dialogical instrument for understanding the historical development of the world, in essence, critiquing reproduced intersectional forms of oppression and social class inequality. Alpesh Maisuria affirms that dialogue recalibrates and maintains Marxism's political punch power, while emphasizing that Marxism cannot be dogmatic, but it must be theoretically relevant as a historical and dialogical guide for critically assessing education in the world in the protracted struggle for changing the status quo and realizing social emancipation.

### **The Resistance and Relevance of Marxism in the 21<sup>st</sup> Century**

In Chapter 2. *The 4<sup>th</sup> Industrial Revolution, Post Capitalism, Waged Labour and Vocational Education*, James Avis uses Marxism as a relevant dialogical tool to

problematize social inequality in the 21<sup>st</sup> century. Avis interrogates what has been coined as the Fourth Industrial Revolution and its technocratic influence on education. His critique highlights the deepening of economic and social polarization throughout society. Avis argues that the continued intensification of educational inequalities and changes in the labour market has created unemployment through technology reducing the need for labour power. This has occurred while simultaneously socially stratifying a surplus population excluded from wage labour, an exclusion which is justified through the ideology of meritocracy.

*Alienation and Education*, Richard Hall's contribution critiques ideologies through the influential force of education in serving as a tool to subordinate the masses through alienation. Previously, Stephen Ball (2013) explained such social control in *Foucault, Power, and Education* and signaled such practices as the apparatuses of intensification in the heightened conditioning of insecurity through schooling- whereby students and teachers alike are surveilled through a scripted curriculum, standardized testing, productivity through discipline- designed for maintaining the status-quo.

### **Marxism and Education**

In Chapter 5. *Capital Accumulation and Education*, John Fraser Rice explains that contemporary education has been aligned with capital accumulation. Such practices have an overt influence on pedagogy. He posits the following question: what pedagogical forms and practices can we currently see around us that manifest industrial capitalist pedagogies? In his critique he reminds the reader that the exploitation of the world market has been through a cosmopolitan character of production and consumption. It problematically entrenches itself as the economic

and hegemonic rationale for education, and in its path entropically destroying diverse pedagogical forms and content under the guise of the free market. Rice maintains, “Other traditional and non-traditional labour forms and associated knowledge that are “non-productive” in the Marx-ian sense- that is, labour that does not produce surplus value- become more and more rapidly marginalized” (p.70). Often minimized are culturally and linguistically centric responsive pedagogies and forms of knowledge, through the imposition of Eurocentric forms of knowledge.

In *Colonialisms and Class*, Spyros Themelis examines neo-liberal globalization as a neo-colonialism being a new domain of capital expansion (Themelis, 2020). He calls for the need to further advance renewed agency in the struggle against racialized class divisions as they are utilised for labour exploitation. Themelis provides insight on the World Bank and how ‘structured adjustment loans’ were provided to third world countries under the condition that they embrace neo-liberalism. Such ideology saturated social structures, such as education and has influenced its purpose as one in serving for the exploitation of labour.

Chapter 7. *Communism: The Party-Pedagogy and Revolution from Marx to China*, Collin I. Chamber and Derek Ford provide a catalyst for critical thinking in advising that Marxism is not a dogma but a guide to action. They suggest that when speaking of the pedagogy of the Party they are referring to particular educational logics rather than curricular content (Ford, 2016). They affirm that it is not about what the Party teaches, learns and studies, but rather what it means to teach, learn and study. Therefore, “...the Party’s role is, among other things to provide, an educational infrastructure to navigate these distinct logics as they play out in the Party and in society more generally” (p.96).

In *Cuban-Marxist Education*, Rosi Smith, Leticia de las Mercedes Garcia Rosabal and Maikel J. Ortiz Bosch, posit how Marxist-Leninism continues to be depended upon for cultivating a collective consciousness in the Cuban education model. Particularly, for recognizing intercommunal solidarity, where diverse communities, languages, cultures, and identities are autonomously recognized and linked to schooling through a sociocultural context using scientific methods for understanding and transforming reality. The late neo-Marxist scholar Jean Anyon (2011) in *Marx and Education* affirmed that there should be a resurgent development of Marxist Theory in the U.S., thus applying such methodology of practice for the cultivations of a collective consciousness to encourage the political participation of young people in the struggles for social justice.

### **Marxist Educational Theory, Practice and Pedagogy**

In Chapter 12. *Dialectical Materialism (Materialist Dialectics)*, Constantine (Kostas) Skordoulis affirms that the method of Marxism entails an appropriation of data acquired by scientific methods linked to the emancipation movement of the working class. The work revisits dialectical materialism and highlights that: 1) Material Reality (Nature and Society) exist separately from the intentions of those who interpret it; 2) Thought can never completely identify with an objective reality because the latter is in perpetual transformation; 3) Scientific thought is effective insofar as explaining existing processes, while also being used to predict what does not exist (Skordoulis, 2019).

*Early Childhood, Feminism and Marx*, by Rachel Rosen and Jan Newberry contribute Marxist-Feminist approaches by utilising insights from Childhood Studies to critique the social reproduction in labour relations of women and children in anchoring socially necessary labour. By drawing upon feminism within

such a lens the authors promulgate that there is a shifting organization of social reproduction in creating new forms of subordinated gender roles with shifting traditions attributed to labour relations. Thus, early childhood education is a vital site for both linking and differentiating the value of social reproduction.

Particularly how woman-child relations critiqued through social reproduction hold the potential for emancipatory efforts.

In *Ethnography of Education and Marxism: Education Research for Social Transformation*, Dennis Beach provides guidance for incorporating Marxism into critical ethnography for social transformation. The author asserts that counter-hegemonic intellectuals must be self-reflexive in abolishing class privilege from which their very own conditions exist, thereby voicing through their work the plight of the oppressed.

### **Marxist Thinkers and Their contributions to Education and Legacy**

In Chapter 18. *Antonio Gramsci (1891-1937): Culture and Education*, Peter Mayo revisits Gramsci's theory of hegemony as it is concerned with the exercise of influence and winning consent (Mayo, 1999). Mayo focuses on cultural production and its relation to immigration in contemporary times (Mayo, 2023). He advises that in the Gramscian vein culture should be presented dynamically and organically, therefore assisting teachers to appreciate and view culture for "good sense". Whereby, through the conception of reality it transcends a common sense, and even if within narrow limits it becomes one of critical consciousness in relation to what is marginalised and 'othered'.

*Ernesto "Che" Guevara (1928-1967)*, Peter McLaren and Lilia D. Monzó argue that in the present moment we witness the world's only super power implement

domination across the globe through the savagery of war and dehumanization of immigrants by invoking their (the immigrants') supposed cultural inferiority. They draw on Che Guevara's notion of the "new man". The authors highlight that the transformation of the human being through critical consciousness can transmute historical experiences of exploitation and turn them into a praxis of liberation by way of a love for the common people (McLaren, 2000).

In *Lenin, Vladimir (1870-1924) and Education*, Juha Suoranta and Robert Fitzsimmons explain how Lenin emphasized that formal education is part of any political regime's ideology. Thus, education is a tool for official doctrines and teachers are the vehicle, hence education is in essence political and teachers do not conduct it in isolation from political influence.

### **Definition of Social Class and Its Interactions with Identity Politics**

In Chapter 28. *Marxist Feminism and Education: Gender, Race and Class*. Sarah Carpenter and Shahrzad Mojab assert that a Marxist Feminist Theory within a broader theoretical position calls upon an examination of many shared histories in addition to feminist, anti-racist, queer, and anti-imperialism (Carpenter, 2012). The authors suggest a recognition of particularities in relation to different historical formations such as colonialism, capitalism, and imperialism. "For example, in our work on democracy and education, we have elaborated the ways in which forms of "citizenship education" are premised upon and reproduce ideologies of liberal democracy" (p.460). Thereof, they advise on the theoretical value of intersectionality and of social reproduction for engagement with educational theory and social inequality.

*Poverty: Class-Poverty, and Neo-Liberalism*, Terry Wrigley draws upon Marxist theory to explain the concept and significance of the working class in terms of relations of ownership and control. He provides a detailed examination of the trend in relation to culture, social class, consciousness and politics for examining poverty under the weight of neo-liberalism and the social reproduction of stratification through education.

In Chapter. 36 *Public Pedagogy*, Mike Cole promotes public pedagogy by drawing upon informal sites that are social justice oriented. Utilising such an approach provides a bridge in understanding public contemporary struggles.

In *Social class: Education, social class and Marxist Theory*, Dave Hill and Alpesh Maisuria critique definitions of social class from a Marxist perspective. They discuss how social class creates what Bourdieu termed 'distinction' in relation to creating and perpetuating social, economic and cultural differences, thus creating significant differential treatment (Greaves, Hill & Maisuria, 2007).

## **Conclusion**

The *Encyclopedia of Marxism and Education* is a critical compilation of Marxist thought to be advanced as a dialogical tool for inquiry in the critique of capitalism's social structures. Particularly, neo-liberalism's never-ending assault in attempting to impose a master scroll on the meaning and purpose of education. This book should be put to use for critical analysis by schools of education, practitioners, political scientists, philosophers, grass root activists, and schools of liberation as a means of resistance.

As a criticism, the book would have greatly benefited from a Marxist analysis of the oppression of subordinated ethnic groups in regard to language, culture and identity within capitalist nation-states. However, this book should be deployed as revolutionary intercommunal bridge, where privilege, power, and difference are critically scrutinized for the educational empowerment of all peoples into the 21<sup>st</sup> century and beyond.

A common belief shared by critical pedagogues was that during the Industrial Revolution the back door of the school led to the front door of the factory. In the 21<sup>st</sup> century such critique, such critical ideology as Marxism- and its educational analysis has evolved, and the struggle against the tentacles of capitalist social control which breaks the human spirit through schooling will continue. Emboldened and informed by books such as this.

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**NOTE:** three online book launches with the chapter authors are available on YouTube:

<https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=8arO9WeeKX0&t=1104s&pp=ygUkZW5jeWxvcGVkaWEgb2YgbWFyeGlzbSBhbmQgZWR1Y2F0aW9u>

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