

Book Review: (2023) *The Palgrave International Handbook of Marxism and Education* (Edited by Richard Hall, Inny Accioly & Krystian Szadkowski). Palgrave Macmillan. ISBN: 978-3-031-37254-4

Jesus Jaime-Diaz

Colorado State University, Pueblo, Colorado, USA

The *Palgrave International Handbook of Marxism and Education* edited by Richard Hall, Inny Accioly & Krystian Szadkowski offers a collection of readings from the Marxist school of thought. Marxist theory provides a dialogical lens for enacting change within various venues of education, and various social structures throughout the international community. Such an approach provides a way to take the history of capitalism's reach seriously, thus embracing the Peoples' class struggle in terms of a complex balance of forces comprising of an array of actors, institutions, strategies and tactics (Panitch & Gindin, 2015). In ideological skirmishes for human emancipation in the war of position (Egan, 2014; Mayo, 2005), as agents of change there must be an ongoing protracted struggle in and for the self-realization of a humanistic community (Burke et al., 1981; Pepper, 2014).

The book's content is organized with thirty chapters and arranged within three parts: Part I. In: Marxist Modes and Characteristics of Analysis in Education; Part II. Against: Emerging Currents in Marxism and Education; Part III. Beyond: Marxism, Education and Alternatives In this book review I select four chapters from each of the three chronological parts for providing a holistic overview.

Part I. In: Marxist Modes and Characteristics of Analysis in Education,

In *Introduction: The Relevance of Marxism to Education*, Richard Hall, Inny Accioly & Krystian Szadkowski (2023) begins by asking readers the following thought-provoking questions, “What is the role of education in the reproduction of the world? What is its role in capitalisms valorization process? How do education structures, cultures, and practices reproduce the ways in which capitalism mediates everyday life for-value, through private property, commodity exchange, the division of labor and the market?” (p. 3). They go on to ask the reader to consider how struggles are pedagogically nurtured both materially and historically, while proclaiming that authoritarian regimes have controlled education through violence. They advise this is crucial for challenging political and economic modes.

Hall, Accioly & Szadkowski (2023) advance disparaging realities as they relate to the teaching profession such as symptomatic coping behaviors like cynicism, and suggest such symptoms derive from “teachers lacking autonomy, assaults on professional identity and professionalism, job dissatisfaction, absenteeism, worsening mental health, burnout and stress, insufficient resources and high demands” (p. 5). The authors take aim at capitalism, emphasising it relentlessly creates misery, hunger and death. The authors argue there is a moral responsibility to transform such toxic reality, and center capitalist education as a culprit that sublates the human, and imposes constraints on teacher, learning, and research. Problematically they assert that such a type of education reduces human activity for the enrichment of labor-power, or capacity for knowledge exchange and commercialization. Stratton (2016) supports such a position and references U.S. colonialism and empire building as examples throughout history in which foreigners were demarcated within schooling as the racialized oppositional other,

whereby, White educators served as agents of the state in policing racial boundaries that were acceptable for good/acceptable citizenship.

Chapter 2. *Marx, Materialism and Education*, Richard Hall begins the chapter by asking: How might we understand the essence of our existence in the world? How might we understand what capitalism does to that essence? Hall states this was Marx's attempt in relating the philosophical to the political economic, and the conceptions of the ideal/universal to the material/concrete. In addition, Hall avows that Material practice cannot be critiqued independently for the purpose it assumes under given social conditions. This holds sway when applied to teaching, learning and research. Hall further advises in the chapter that storytelling serves as a methodology for emancipation by utilizing it dialectically to uncover intersectional experiences in education, especially in relation to social structures, cultures, and practices that are in opposition to particular identities which devalue those othered to passive subjects.

In *The Class in Race, Gender, and Learning*, Sara Carpenter & Shahrzad Mojab, discuss the importance of building an intersectional dialectical framework through a historical materialist analysis of education. In order to unpack thinking on social capitalist relations, they critique the problem associated with Equity, Diversity & Inclusion (EDI), as it being an ongoing demand from historically oppressed and marginalized communities. They discuss the contradictions of EDI work as it allows for a deeper thinking regarding capitalist relations in parallel to the conceptualization of social difference which limits a critique of class, class formation and identities. The authors offer from a Marxist feminist lens the need to break down the ontology of capitalism into different forms of oppression and identities.

Part II Against: Emerging Currents in Marxism and Education

In Chapter 14. *Critique of the Political Economy of Education: Methodological Notes for the Analysis of Global Educational Reforms* Inny Accioly informs the reader on global educational reforms and provides an analysis of the dynamics of capitalist accumulation. Accioly argues education has been transmuted into bankable merchandise that compliments a pivotal role for labor power that is subservient to a regime of bourgeoisie domination. Accioly draws upon Marx's critique of political economy and the implementation of dialectical historical materialism as a method of research and description. Accioly goes on to explain research as it relates to educational policy is saturated with disputes and tensions over education and economic growth as they both align with intersectional disempowerment. She suggests that research on educational policy is constantly consisting of "analyzing data such as public and private school enrollment, illiteracy rates, gender and race disparity, educational budgets, success rates, and school dropouts" (p. 273), Accioly suggests that such indexes are more than related to the concept of population as it captures such realities as they appear.

In *The Beginnings of Marxism and Workers' Education in the Spanish-Speaking Southern Cone: The Case of Chile*, Maria Alicia Rueda provides enlightenment in relation to Marx's *Das Kapital* and a Spanish translation in 1898 by the *Argentino* Juan B. Justo. The work championed that workers organizations which were prospering in Argentina & Chile beginning in the twentieth century "could incorporate its reading into the ongoing educational activities in their mutual aid societies, resistance societies, trade unions, labor unions, and federations of workers" (p. 281). Rueda refers to the historical works of Luis Emilio Recabarren and his educational efforts carried out in Chile during the era of British imperialism and exploitation of resources in the region. Rueda compliments

Recabarren's socialist morals as a civilizing force that would redeem and regenerate society in all functioning aspects, as it would eventually oversee its goal of happiness for all.

Chapter 17. *Critical Environmental Education, Marxism and Environmental Conflicts: Some Contributions in the Light of Latin America*, César Augusto Costa and Carlos Frederico Loureiro provide insight into the relationship between environmental education through a critical theoretical perspective in relation to environmental conflicts in Latin America. The authors recommend bringing about theoretical contributions for emancipatory and anti-systematic educational practices for those impacted by the intensification of capital. Costa & Loureiro analyze that labor power has been transformed into a commodity with the purpose being social production which transmits into surplus value, "material wealth obtained by the exploitation of the surplus labor in relations of worker expropriation" (p. 319). Costa & Loureiro describe a pedagogy of environmental conflict for understanding conflict that occurs when the destruction of nature reinforces social inequalities and limits the survival of differentiated social groups.

Making Sense of Neoliberalism's New Nexus Between Work and Education, Teachers' Work, and Teachers' Labor Activism: Implications for Labor and the Left, Lois Weiner takes to task what she refers to as a new iteration of the neoliberal project by profits accumulated through information technology. She also states this is globally manifested via teachers' work and education. Weiner further mentions that educational reforms within the last three decades have "reflected and reinforced tectonic shifts in capitalism and refashioning of work that started well before the Left named what was occurring as neoliberalism" (p. 399). Weiner reminds the reader that education is located at the intersections of cultural,

political, social, ideological, and economic forces, and how schooling is used to reproduce or disrupt contemporary social, political, and economic relations.

Weiner further puts forward what is considered “new normal” in capitalism is not *per se* new. Weiner asserts the creation of deepening and new forms of social control, and the control of Edu-business relying upon information technology and new forms of privatization began before the pandemic. Weiner advises one critically examine work and workers’ lives in a holistic manner, and to contextualize such realities with a critical analysis of capitalism in it being a global social system that affects the well-being of the human experience.

Part III. Beyond: Marxism, Education and Alternatives

In Chapter 23. *Revisiting and Revitalizing Need as Non-dualist Foundation for a (R)evolutionary Pedagogy*, Joel Lazarus begins by interacting with the reader about change, and how it is a pedagogical question---how do we change? Lazarus continues the conversation by reasoning that change begins as individuals and communities but reminds one that personal change is also systemic change.

Lazarus refers to Marx & Engels as they problematized capitalism as a structured system, “around two antagonistic poles of the basic survival need of workers and the singular need of capital for self-valorization” (p. 435), suggesting that the history of a hitherto existing society is in the history of class struggle. He further argues for a transformational epistemology where a Marxist pedagogy empowers individuals and communities to awaken to a consciousness of our radical needs, thus, being critically imperative for transcending capitalism.

In *Reproduction in Struggle*, David I. Backer begins by informing the reader that social reproduction in the Marxist sense refers to social classes maintaining a continuity of their productive life. He provides concrete examples by drawing upon

Marxist theories of social reproduction and utilizing such ideas as a lynchpin for critiquing and analyzing schooling/education. Becker reiterates that social reproduction refers to the preservation and maintenance of a capitalist society over time with ruling classes and their tentacles attempting to maintain hegemonic control of educational institutions through struggle. He suggests striking a balance between structuralism and culturalism by referring to Marx's concept of social reproduction and reproduction of struggle. Maisuria (2022) supports such stance arguing that Marxism is invaluable dialogical tool for understanding the historical development of the world and critiquing intersectional forms of oppression that reproduces social class inequality. Maisuria further advises that Marxism serves as a dialogical guide for critically assessing education throughout the world.

Chapter 26. *Marxism, (Higher) Education, and the Commons*, Krystian Szadkowski, states the common(s) lay at the beginning of Karl Marx's interests in his early work. Szadkowski's focus throughout the chapter is within the sphere of education, he states that countries in the global south still struggle to provide mass education, while elucidating that countries that have reached universal access to higher education remains stratified. Szadkowski suggests a conceptual clarification for the realm of commons in relation to higher education, while discussing beyond abstractions and grounds such approach to concrete operations of communities. According to Szadkowski this allows for the common in action "The commons are both historical and contemporary, preceding capitalism, inhabiting its margins but sometimes operating in the center of its interest, and sometimes transcending its rule" (p. 491). Szadkowski asserts the commons in higher education offers hope for social change within contemporary issues as they relate to education. Thus, a Marxist theory is implemented into practice for critiquing a deeper understanding

and seeing potential autonomous practices that offer a point of support for organized struggle against the status quo.

Toward a Decolonial Marxism: Considering the Dialectics and Analytics in the Counter-Geographies of Women of the Global South, Lilia D. Monzó and Nidžara Pecenkovic, make plain that Marxism should be drawn upon to engage today's concrete struggles. Such engagement requires a realization of the brilliance of Marx's philosophical revolution, in particular the humanism Marx developed that recognized human agency in the creation of history. Monzó & Pecenkovic remind the reader that much work has been developed that draws upon Marxist philosophy but also challenges it from the perspective of the global south. Van Ree (2019) supports this assertion by noting the limitations of race(ism) in Marxist theory, but alluding to the fact Marx & Engels conceptualized race as a natural element to humanity's conditions, and suggested race as being a materialist interpretation of history in which race was defined as part of the natural conditions in which production rests upon and depends. Monzó & Pecenkovic further discuss Karl Marx's analysis that the revolutionary subject was the proletariat, "While he did recognize the significant oppression of Black peoples and Women, and the impact of racism and other antagonisms on capitalism, he did not articulate these key aspects of the proletariat" (p. 548). Monzó & Pecenkovic speak to the communal efforts of *Ejercito Zapatista Liberacion Nacional* (EZLN), the indigenous Peoples of Chiapas, Mexico where females have had a strong presence in all areas of Zapatista life such as political leaders, insurgents, doctors and teachers. As a concrete example, the Zapatistas passed the Women's Revolutionary Law which grants women equal rights, safety, and dignity in rebel territory. Monzó & Pecenkovic advise that in respect to education, a decolonial Marxist education must scrutinize how education maintains racial-colonial capitalist patriarchy, while

recognizing the agency of teachers, students, and historically colonized communities to resist and struggle for social change.

Conclusion

The *Palgrave International Handbook of Marxism and Education* is a brilliant selection from the Marxist school of thought for applying Marxist theory into practice within the realm of education with an internationalist perspective. This book should be considered by schools of education, political scientists, philosophers, grassroot activists, and schools of liberation as a guide to resistance. A limitation that warrants criticism was language ideologies in relation to Marxist theory. The book would have greatly benefitted by showing with good examples, how in capitalist societies, the State apparatus has commodified language which further marginalizes the language and culture of historically oppressed groups (Combs & Jaime-Diaz, 2023).

In the ongoing protracted struggle for human emancipation, a strong line of thought must be maintained in relation to hope through profound dialogues that problematize the common People's quality of life within their lifetimes, and not in the afterlife, which is beyond the reach of humankind. Through moral and humanistic Marxism, a radical hope must be understood as an ongoing struggle for the liberation of the poor, marginalized, exploited, oppressed, insignificant, and the most despised within ethnocentric frameworks of capitalist societies (Zhixiong & Rowland, 2013). This compilation of Marxist thought upholds a commitment to human rights in the spirit of social justice for the common good.

References

- Burke, J. P., Crocker, L., & Legters, L. H. (Eds.). (1981). *Marxism and the good society*. Cambridge University Press.
- Combs, M.C. & Jaime-Diaz, J. (2023). Critical Languages as Capital and Commodity in Arizona. In Skordoulis, K., Gioti, L. & Laspidou, A. (Eds.) *Proceedings of the X International Conference on Critical Education: Education for Social Emancipation*. (pp. 152-166). Aristotle University of Thessaloniki, Greece.
- Egan, D. (2014). Rethinking war of maneuver/war of position: Gramsci and the military metaphor. *Critical Sociology*, 40(4), 521-538.
- Maisuria, A. (2022). Introduction. In A. Maisuria *Encyclopedia of Marxism and Education* (Ed). (pp. 1-7). Brill
- Mayo, P. (2005). 'In and against the state': Gramsci, war of position, and adult education. *Journal for Critical Education Policy Studies JCEPS*, 3(2), 1–14.
- Panitch, L., & Gindin, S. (2015). Marxist theory and strategy: Getting somewhere better. *Historical Materialism*, 23(2), 3-22.
- Peffer, R. G. (2014). *Marxism, morality, and social justice*. Princeton University Press.
- Stratton, C. (2016). *Education for empire: American schools, race, and the paths of good citizenship*. University of California Press.
- Van Ree, E. (2019). Marx and Engels's theory of history: making sense of the race factor. *Journal of Political Ideologies*, 24(1), 54-73.
- Zhixiong, L., & Rowland, C. (2013). Hope: The convergence and divergence of Marxism and liberation theology. *Theology Today*, 70(2), 181-195.

Author Details

Jesus Jaime-Diaz Ph.D. is Assistant Professor of Chicana/o Studies & Director of the Aztlán Research Center at Colorado State University Pueblo. He is a first-generation Mexican American/Chicano activist-scholar having earned a Ph.D. in Language, Reading & Culture with a Minor in Mexican American Studies from The University of Arizona. He also holds an MA in Interdisciplinary Studies and a BA with a double major in Ethnic Studies & Speech Communication from Oregon State University. Dr. Jaime-Diaz is also an AA and a GED recipient from Blue Mountain Community College in rural Northeastern Oregon.

His research has focused on *testimonio* and critical ethnographic methods for

exploring how Mexican American community college students in Oregon use their lived experiences as catalyst to “empower” them to pursue higher education. His current research utilizes racialized social class as a unit for analysis in the schooling experience(s) of Mexican American students along the Borderlands of Arizona.

His work has published in *Ethnic Studies Review (ESR)*, *Association of Mexican American Educators Journal (AMAE)*, *Journal of Latinos and Education (J. Lat. Educ)*, *Community College Review (CCR)*, *Journal of Class & Culture (JCLC)*, *Andragogical Studies (AS)*, and *Journal for Critical Education Policy Studies (JCEPS)*.

He is a Co-Director of The Association for Ethnic Studies (AES) and serves on the Board of Directors. He’s treasurer for the Marxian Analysis of Society, Schools, and Education (SIG 157) of the American Educational Research Association (AERA). He also works with the Editorial Collective of the Journal for Critical Education Policy Studies (JCEPS), based out of The Hellenic Republic of Greece at The National and Kapodistrian University of Athens.

Contact details. jesusjaimesdiaz@gmail.com