

# Essay on neo-liberalism in public education

[Profession](#), [Student](#)



## **Neo-liberalism and Other Current Issues in Public Education**

Neo-liberalism is defined as cluster of economic policies advocating for economic liberalization, open markets and free trade. It advocates for the privatization of government owned businesses and enterprises, support for the role of the private sector in the society and deregulation of markets. 1 A clear example of the effects of neo-liberalism is where the wealthy keep getting wealthier as the poor people keep getting poorer. Liberalism refers to ideas that are political, religious or even economic. It has been used as a strategy to hinder social conflict in the United States.

Neo-liberalism is more concentrated in shifting the control of economic and social factors from the public or government sector to the private sector. This theory derives its principles from the neoclassical economics and suggests that states should reduce shortage spending, increase the tax base, limit subsidies, eliminate fixed exchange rates and allow private property and support deregulation. 2

There are several main points of neo-liberalism. They include:

The rule of the market – this advocates freeing private enterprise from and all bonds enforced by the state or government regardless of the social damage this brings about. Create much more open mindedness to international trade. Minimize wages by eliminating workers unions and workers rights that were gained through countless years of great effort. It also advocates for market without price controls, and overall freedom in the movement of goods, services and capital.

Though capitalists argue that this is best for economic growth it leads to exploitation of workers as this wealth never trickles down. 3

Cutting public expenditure for social services – capitalists support the reduction of social amenities such as health care and education so as to reduce the safety net for the pitiable. That is why they also do not oppose the government financial support and business tax benefits.

Deregulation – Neo-liberalization has to point of minimizing all government regulations that affect profits negatively including regulations to protect the environment as well as workers safety on the job.

Privatization – Neo-liberalization advocates selling enterprises owned by the government to private financiers. This includes amenities such as schools, hospitals, banks, major industries and electricity. Though capitalists claim that this is done for efficiency, privatization is more focused on making the wealthy wealthier while the public pays for it.

Public good concept elimination- the concept of “ community” is eliminated and replaced by the idea of individual responsibility. This forces the pitiable people in the society to look for ways of getting access to amenities such as hospitals and schools.

Privatization is one of the key points of neo-liberalism that has highly affected the education system. The last several years have marked significant reduction in funding for public education as well as the advancement of interest from private investors into the public education circles. Critics of this process often refer to it as the neo-liberalization of

public education. This has seen the public schools transform into large profitable corporations complete with senior administrators who are highly paid and with interest to the economic as opposed to the humanistic validation to the faculty's actions.

Privatization of public schools poses a lot of risks to the general public. This is because students more and more face for-profit, corporate schools with credentials that are not proven as the only substitute to the presently existing public schools. Teachers also face an increased risk of weakening of their labor rights as for-profit school only hire teachers who are not in a union so as to minimize on their expenses and increase profits. 4

Researchers in the field of education also risk marginalization of academic innovations that could negatively affect a company's objectives and disapproval of research that critiques private sector participation in schooling. Another risk involved in privatization of public schools is the threat to personal freedom and social integrity as corporations gradually apply their control on the curriculum and the dissertation of schooling. Privatization has wormed its way into schooling through getting contracts into the management of schools and counteractive education services; and coupon programs that have transformed education into a purchasable product in the private sector. Public schools have been deemed failures and have been taken over by private profit based institutions even though they are still being funded with taxpayer's money. Even with all the risks involved in the privatization of public schools, capitalists still claim the privatization increases the effectiveness of management.

Academic staff, which is lecturers, professors and teaching assistants, is important elements of neo-liberalization of public education through the grading practice. They can use the practice of not grading as a highly powerful tool to oppose additional enforcement of neoliberal practices on public education. Grading has become an integral function of the contemporary education system. Almost all the processes in the education system depend on grades. Processes such as enrollment in class, matriculation, graduation, departmental accreditation, financial aid and the school's reputation all require grades.

The current academic staffs in public schools are encouraging neo-liberalism by creating learning environments that imitate the current work place, a work place that is non-democratic and controlled by corporations and politicians who destroy unions. This learning environment is characterized an enforced hierarchy between educators and learners, it encourages competition between learners, uses coercive measures to guarantee compliance and discourages critical thinking and creativity. Apart from having negative effect on scholars learning, the grading system is also a major problem as it makes way for the expression of neoliberal capitalism.

Neo- liberalization has turned teachers into class managers. Allowing students to grade themselves would free educators so that they are able to facilitate learning. Instead of punishing students for their apparent failures, educators should focus their energy in assisting these students to achieve what they ought to achieve. More time should be spend producing learning exercises that actually stimulate the interest of students instead of spending

time creating multiple choice questions and marking unnecessary essays. Students would actually become interested in asking questions on what they are learning in class instead of focusing on their marks.

Grading creates an environment that has extrinsically obligatory competition and intimidation and eliminating grading would create a more conducive environment for learning. Competition and intimidation doesn't motivate students to enjoys learning instead it causes students to loose interest in learning.

Grading of students creates a barrier between the apparently bright students and the not so bright students. This demoralizes the students who are considered to be not so bright leading to the compromising of the learning process of students<sup>6</sup>.

In conclusion not grading students would be helpful in confronting the neoliberal idea that the education system must rationalize its actions and being through economic validation. Learning is more than just the quantifiable accretion of knowledge and skills. Rejecting the imitation of the hierarchy of neoliberal capitalism in the learning environment gives the academic staff a better standing on issues relating to the role of education in the society.

## **Bibliography**

Canally, Culum. " Intervention – Where's our agency? The role of grading in the neoliberalization of public universities." <http://antipodefoundation.org>. March 30, 2012. <http://antipodefoundation.org/2012/03/30/intervention->

wheres-our-agency-the-role-of-grading-in-the-neoliberalization-of-public-universities/ (accessed June 26, 2012).

Martinez, Elizabeth, and Arnoldo Garcia. " What is Neoliberalism?" www.corpwatch.org. August 3, 1996. <http://corpwatch.org/article.php?id=376> (accessed June 25, 2012).