Critical Voices in Teacher Education
EXPLORATIONS OF EDUCATIONAL PURPOSE

Volume 22

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Joe Kincheloe (1950–2008)

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Series Scope

In today’s dominant modes of pedagogy, questions about issues of race, class, gender, sexuality, colonialism, religion, and other social dynamics are rarely asked. Questions about the social spaces where pedagogy takes place – in schools, media, and corporate think tanks – are not raised. And they need to be.

The Explorations of Educational Purpose book series can help establish a renewed interest in such questions and their centrality in the larger study of education and the preparation of teachers and other educational professionals. The editors of this series feel that education matters and that the world is in need of a rethinking of education and educational purpose.

Coming from a critical pedagogical orientation, Explorations of Educational Purpose aims to have the study of education transcend the trivialization that often degrades it. Rather than be content with the frivolous, scholarly lax forms of teacher education and weak teaching prevailing in the world today, we should work towards education that truly takes the unattained potential of human beings as its starting point. The series will present studies of all dimensions of education and offer alternatives. The ultimate aim of the series is to create new possibilities for people around the world who suffer under the current design of socio-political and educational institutions.

For further volumes:
http://www.springer.com/series/7472
It Ain’t Easy: Social Justice in Unjust Societies

It was over a decade ago, in New York City, when university faculty members were addressed by Mark Green, mayoral candidate for New York City. Green was advising those in higher education how to negotiate a growing conservative trend in education by those engaged in municipal teaching and research. He pointed out possible grants for us to apply for, reminding us that securing research money required certain nuance. As he discussed the importance of national, local and corporate sponsorship, he emphasized that the language we used was often more important than the actual grant application information forms. He paused, then advised us: ‘Pay attention to the words you use as you apply for monies. Never use the word democracy, nor the phrase social justice. If you do, you won’t get funded’.

How do we educate for social justice in a world that is neither just, nor social? How do we avoid becoming just more voices with sound bites, lesson plans and speech/book titles, which include social justice, but never discuss the underpinning notions surrounding social injustice in education? In short, how do we authentically create a conversation and space to recognize that an educated and democratic citizenry cannot exist without pedagogical engagement (or intervention?) in existing curricular and formal school settings?

And, of course, there are no answers for these questions, only more questions. Indeed, Paulo Freire taught us that within our questions, we can begin to shape our answers… and then ask more questions. The Buddha reminds us that within humanity, we will continue to struggle, and that struggle is a part of being human. And so we begin a never-ending mission, a vision of a socially just teacher education, which must continually change to meet the needs of societies which continually change… we have some challenges here.

A critical pedagogy is a political pedagogy. Freire introduced us to the realization that teaching is a political act, and as educators, we are in subjective, anti-neutral worlds, which are orbited by curricular and administrative verbosity proclaiming objective neutrality. We enter into our pedagogical galaxies knowing that embracing
subjectivity and dialogue is necessary . . . but it ain’t easy. In fact, it is damn hard. The authors and editors of Critical Voices in Teacher Education: Teaching for Social Justice in Conservative Times have created a volume which begins the conversation and actions needed to reconceptualize education as a social theoretical and political act, an act which is required to emerge, grow, morph and emerge again with societal changes. The volume has gathered teachers/scholars who have dedicated their lives to asking that question, how do we educate for social justice in a world that is neither just, nor social?

A pedagogy of social justice is inherently critical in its orientation. In the critical theoretical lens, we view societal conditions through the glasses of power. We ask: What are the underlying forces of power influencing society? How does this power work? Who controls those who are in power? What finances control those who control those in power? We begin with an etymological journey in tracing historical sources and current sources of power and the support of the power bloc(s). Along with the historical knowledge of power we investigate the historiographical narratives of power . . . asking: How does power perpetuate itself? How does society support this perpetuation? How do schools act as the backdrop to hegemonic curricula, which supports power? How are we, [even] as critical scholars often part of the power bloc? And we ask questions of oppression: Who are oppressed by power blocs at the local level, the pedagogical level, the societal level? How do we identify our own oppression as teachers (employees) of the power blocs? How does economy create oppression and curricular fascism in our schools?

And, how do we avoid sounding like whining, archaic Marxist theorists, who are disconnected with schools, teachers and children? Part of a smart, socially grounded theory of critical pedagogy for social justice demands that we check our political egos at the door and join the audience as participants/mentors who do not view ideology through thin Prada lenses. Rather, we share our knowledges of society and theories of power with humility and leadership. We do exactly what Barry and John have encouraged the authors in this volume to do . . . we recreate society as a dialogical and healthy entity, truly determined to find this elusive phrase, this dangerous phrase, social justice.

And, it ain’t easy. It is hard work, important, no, essential work. Freire reminded us that we are cultural/societal workers, that we are part of the world we inhabit and that we are a privileged few who are able to facilitate learning and empowerment. However, he was ever mindful that facilitation and leadership be strong, be informed and also democratic . . . there is no place for ego in this struggle. We have had decades of liberal ego in society, in politics and in the academy, it is time we join the dialogues shared in this volume and begin to ask questions which will create more questions from our pre-service teachers, our colleagues, our administrators and, most importantly, our students. When our students start asking the questions, we are on the way.

University of Calgary

Shirley R. Steinberg
We can trace the genesis of this edited collection back to 1995 when I (Barry) invited John to present a keynote address to a gathering of classroom teachers in Bunbury, Western Australia. Following John’s insightful presentation on the changing nature of teachers’ work, one member of the audience, a senior administrator in the Faculty of Education, asked pointedly ‘How come you’re still doing all that Marxist rubbish, John?’ Today, we often reflect back on this exchange to remind ourselves not only of the obstacles and barriers to doing critical scholarship but the possibilities of creating truly transformative experiences for student teachers in universities and schools. That’s what this book is about.

In pursuing this project, we invited a number of our Australian colleagues to share their understanding and experience of teaching for social justice in conservative times. We are appreciative of their time, energy and scholarly expertise. We also thank them for their courage in speaking back to a range of prevailing orthodoxies and misconceptions about what it means to teach. Drawing on their own unique career trajectories, passions and perspectives, the contributing authors demonstrate the importance of thinking and acting in ways that are ethically, morally and politically informed.

To our overseas contributors, we say a special thank you. To Marilyn Frankenstein, for signing up with a group of Aussies on the other side of the globe, we appreciate your insights into student activism and popular culture as sites of critical education. To Wayne Martino, who now resides in Ontario, we appreciate your ongoing connection back home and the way in which you articulate matters of gender identity and social justice for us.

We are especially grateful to our long-time collaborators who continue to inspire and work alongside us. To Peter McInerney, who shows a remarkable capacity to capture narrative stories and link them to issues of social justice, and Sol Smyth, who continues to nourish and support our individual and collective work in so many ways, we owe a special debt of gratitude.
To Brad Gobby, for his proficient and tireless manner in compiling and editing the chapters for submission, we thank you for getting us to the finish line.

To Springer Author Services staff, in particular Bernadette Ohmer, Annemarie Keur, Naomi Portnoy, Sandra Vermeij and Sunil Padman, we are grateful for your guidance in pulling the project together and making sure the production process ran smoothly.

To Shirley Steinberg and Ken Tobin, series editors, who backed the publication of this collection of essays, we thank you for your ongoing intellectual leadership and support in getting important ideas to press. We appreciate your willingness to contribute so thoughtfully to the Foreword and Afterword, respectively. We also express our gratitude to the late Joe Kincheloe who once again provided us with the impetus to create conversations around critical teacher development and social justice.

Finally, we express our collective gratitude to our families for their ongoing tolerance of our time-consuming labour of love.

Illustrations

We wish to acknowledge the contributions of the artists who have generously granted permission to share their work in Marilyn Frankenstein’s chapter *Studying culture jamming to inspire student activism*.

Avram Finkelstein and the Gran Fury, an artist collective of ACT UP activists, have produced some of the most memorable visual work of the movement, which can be viewed at:

http://digitalgallery.nypl.org/nypldigital/dgkeysearchresult.cfm?num=0&word=gran%20fury&s=1&notword=&d=&c=&f=&k=0&lWord=&lField=&sScope=&sLevel=&sLabel=&imgs=20&pNum

*The Santa Cruz Comic News*, http://www.thecomicnews.com/ is published by Thom Zajac and John Govsky. Established in 1984, *Comic News* has inspired the creation of over 100 ‘comic newspapers’. The print edition is a monthly journal of progressive editorial cartoons. The online edition features weekly updates, and the website also has an archive of thousands of progressive editorial cartoons going back to 2005.

John Sims, http://www.johnsimsprojects.com/, is a conceptual artist, mathematician and educator. He is currently teaching in the Department of Art and Public Policy at the New York University and curating a series of nine exhibitions and performances focusing on the visual language of mathematical ideas and process as a way to explore a spectrum of themes from geometric landscapes to the socio-political for the Bowery Poetry Club, http://www.bowerypoetry.com/.
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Frankenstein, M. *Studying culture jamming to inspire student activism* from *Radical Teacher*, 89 (Winter 2010), pp. 30–46. Copyright 2010 by the Board of Trustees of the University of Illinois. Used with permission of the University of Illinois Press. Revised version.

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