Abstract

In this article I examine the nexus, the mutually reinforcing connection between neoliberal and neoconservative ideology and social and political forces, and variation between countries such as Britain, the USA and Turkey. This analysis is then applied in particular to neoliberal/neoconservative education ‘reform’ in England, focusing on marketisation, high-stakes testing, privatization and pre-privatisation, and the increased surveillance of teachers as a result of new public managerialism in education, as reinforced and enforced by the school inspection system. These effects are then related to the lived work experiences of specific teachers, using their own word. I conclude the article by examining and calling for resistance, for teachers and critical education workers to educate, agitate and organize in various arenas, and to consider the importance of political programme- in particular to consider the utility of the transitional programme as advanced by Trotsky.
Neoliberalism and (Neo)-Conservatism

Neoliberalism—marked, *inter alia*, by the marketisation, commodification, degradation, managerialisation and privatization/preprivatisation of public services (Giroux, 2004; Harvey, 2005; Hill, 2013a, b; Hill and Kumar, 2009; Hill and Rosskam, 2009)—does not come unaccompanied. It usually has a twin—neoconservatism—albeit, a twin with which it has an often fractured relationship (Gamble, 1988). As Saad-Filho puts it,

In essence, neoliberalism is based on the systematic use of state power, under the ideological guise of ‘non-intervention’, to impose a hegemonic project of recomposition of the rule of capital at five levels: domestic resource allocation, international economic integration, the reproduction of the state, ideology, and the reproduction of the working class. (Saad-Filho, 2011).

The strength of the neoliberal alliance with (neo)-conservatism, with conservative forces, is particularly strong in Turkey, where the Erdogan government is very nakedly pushing forward with Islamicisation of society and the education system, and with brute use of the repressive apparatuses of the state— as seen in the summer 2013 national police brutality against the Gezi Park resistance movement. Thus, in Turkey, neoliberalism is accompanied by traditionalist, Islamic conservativism in and through the ideological state apparatuses of the media, the mosque and the education system, accompanied by the naked use of the repressive state apparatuses—such as the bullets, tear gas and chemically treated water cannon used across Turkey through summer 2013.

Today we have been experiencing both neoliberalisation and neoconservatisation in England, in Europe generally, in Turkey, and globally. There are, of course, resistances within neoliberalised states, and also isolated states resisting neoliberalism, such as the governments and states of Cuba and Venezuela. Britain, in contrast, with the United States, is and has been one of the centers of this neoliberal/ neoconservative transformation of economy, society, and of education.

It is important to make clear that neoliberalism is simply the latest stage of capitalism. It is current capitalism. This article is written as a critique of neoliberal capitalism and its (neo)-conservative allies. But, importantly, this critique is, *in essence*, a critique of capitalism itself, of capitalist economic relations, of capitalist social relations, of the Capital-Labour relation. Removing neoliberalism and (neo)-conservatism, for example through social democratic reforms may lead to a more compassionate society with some valuable welfare, workers’ rights reforms and even a slight equalization of income and wealth and power in society. But such reforms, while, to repeat, hugely valuable, will not remove class exploitation by the capitalist class of the labour power of the working class.

One purpose of this article is to show, to warn of what a neoliberal/ neo-conservative future might look like as it develops. National capitalism in Turkey is already adopting and adapting the neoliberal Anglo-Saxon model of profiteering and privatization, of diktat and control, of increasing immiseration and degradation of public services, public service workers, and those in society dependent on public services (Hill, 2012a, 2013b).
Neoliberalism and (Neo)-conservatism and The Nature and Power of the Resistance

The paths of neoliberalisation and (neo)-conservatism are similar in many countries. But each country has its own history, has its own particular context; each country has its own balance of class forces, its own level of organization of the working class, and levels of confidence within the working class and within the capitalist class. In countries where resistance to neoliberalism is very strong, as in Greece, then the government has found it actually so far very difficult to engage in large-scale privatization. When the Greek government tries to privatize public-sector activity, the ports, the buses, the trains, the museums, and so on, these efforts are met with general strike. In Greece, working-class consciousness and class organization, in a situation of naked class war from above, are highly developed.

But in some countries, where trade-union resistance and working-class organizations’ resistance are historically very weak, for example, Ireland, the United States, then neoliberalism and the capitalist class have an easier path. There has been little resistance even to extreme measures taken by, for example, recently in Wisconsin in the United States, the state government’s passing a law which made it illegal to negotiate with trade unions. In other words, it has said there would be no more collective bargaining with trade unions. There were major demonstrations, and trade union protests—but the law passed, even if it did electrify the left and the trade union movement in the US.

To Leftists in Britain this was incredible, in the sense of it being hard to believe. Although there has been as succession of neoliberal and neoconservative governments in Britain, both Conservative and New Labour, the trade unions still have great strength. The Trade Unions Congress (TUC) in Britain has around six million members. On October 20, 2012, one hundred fifty thousand of us went on the march in London against austerity. That followed on from the student and worker marches against education cuts of 2010 and 2011.

When the organized working class wakes up, then we can take very strong action. But some trade-union leaders sometimes live comfortable lives; sometimes they have good relations with the government and are incorporated into the (capitalist) state apparatuses. Not all the trade-union leaders are radical. However, some union leaderships are Marxist. In Britain the Communist Party of Britain has some power in unions at the top level; so does the Trotskyist group called the Socialist Party, the Committee for a Workers International, and so does the Socialist Workers Party. And of course, socialists and Marxists are very active within the membership of trade unions, pushing the leaderships into more radical action. The power of the organized working class, if spurred into action, can have very considerable impact. We hope in Britain to have a general strike against ‘Austerity Capitalism’. We (Marxists, activists) are working towards that. This would be only the second general strike in British history, the first since 1926.

Levels of resistance vary very much in different countries. In Portugal, for example, recently there were one million on strike, one million in demonstrations. That is in a small country of eight million people. In Ireland, there are very small demonstrations. The most noteworthy action in Ireland against austerity and neoliberalism was one worker driving his big digger truck into the gates of parliament.

Levels and types of resistance against neoliberalism and austerity capitalism in the USA, England and Wales (Canaan et al 2013), Greece, Ireland and Turkey (İnal & Ozturk, 2013) are
described and analysed in great detail from a Marxist perspective in the chapters on ‘Resistance’ in *Immiseration Capitalism and Education: Austerity, Resistance and Revolt.* (Hill, 2013b).

### The Neoliberal/Neoconservative Education Revolution in Britain

Education, and other public services in Britain, has been subject to neoliberalization since the Margaret Thatcher (Conservative Party) governments of 1979–90, in particular with the Education Reform Act of 1988. This established classic neoliberal policies of prompting the marketisation of schooling (through so-called “parental choice” and through “league tables” of schools, whereby the exam results and academic test results of each school are published in league table format). It also (together with the 1986 Education Act and subsequent legislation) changed the composition of school-governing bodies, adding “business” governors, and reducing the numbers and influence of governors appointed by locally democratically elected councils. And under the “Local Management of Schools” (LMS) section of the 1988 act, local authority/school district influence was further weakened, when most budgetary control was handed to school head teachers/principals and governing bodies (Ball, 1990; Hill, 1997, 2001).

Since Margaret Thatcher’s governments, of 1979-1990, successive Conservative (1990-97 under John Major), New Labour (1997-2010 under Tony Blair and Gordon Brown) and Conservative-Liberal Democrat Coalition (2010- under David Cameron) governments have intensified the neoliberalization of schools and of universities dramatically, alongside cuts in funding.

One notable recent cut in public expenditure was (from September 2011) that of EMAs, ‘education maintenance allowances’, paid to young people aged 16–19 from poor families, of (usually) £30 a week, to encourage them to stay on at school. I benefited from a similar scheme in the 1960s; one of my grandsons received an EMA, 2006–2009. For university students the free university education that, I, for example, received has been replaced by the imposition of annual university tuition fees of (usually, currently) £9,000 per annum (see Hill, 2010a). (The New Labour government of Tony Blair, abandoned free university education and introduced university tuition fees in 1998).

Ideologically these neoliberal developments such as marketisation and the introduction of ‘New Public Managerialism’ (management methods drawn from private enterprise) can be interpreted as “the businessification” of education (Rikowski, 2002, 2003, 2007), the softening up, the preparation for the wholesale privatization of schools, vocational colleges (called, in Britain, further education colleges) and universities. Currently (2013) there is only one private university in Britain, but degree-awarding powers have been granted to a number of other organizations, and the current (2010- ) Conservative–Liberal Democrat coalition government in Britain is planning more private universities. It is, indeed, likely that in the fairly near future, some, currently public/state universities in Britain will become private, bought and sold on international stock markets by transnational corporations and hedge funds. Ball (2012) is very clear on such developments, regarding schools, colleges, and universities, detailing such developments in Britain and globally. This development was warned about/foreseen by Rikowski (2003) and by Hirtt (2004). Hirtt warned, in 2004, about state education provision and state health provision being “the last great El Dorados” for capitalist privatization and profit from public-sector-provided services.
Marketization/Competition/Choice
“Parental Choice,” League Tables, and High-Stakes Testing

Let me now go into more detail about some of the main aspects of neoliberalism, marketisation, and privatization/pre-privatization in schools and universities in Britain (or, to be more precise, England. Wales, Scotland, and Northern Ireland have a degree of autonomy/self-government regarding education policy and provision).

With schools there is now a system of market competition between individual schools. Under the 1944 Education Act, which the Thatcher 1988 Education Act replaced, local authorities/school districts (which were directly elected) had allocated children/students to schools, sometimes taking into account a degree of parental choice, but sometimes attempting to ensure that within a largely “comprehensive”/all-ability intake of students, there was a mix of students of all “bands” of ability/attainment (Hill, 1997, 2001), what in the USA is termed all ‘tracks’ of students.

The conservative governments in Britain, those of Thatcher (1979–1990) and of John Major (1990–1997), introduced and extended what they termed “school choice,” or, more specifically, “parental choice.” However, in such systems it is not the parents who choose; it is the (more prestigious, ‘high attaining’) schools which choose the children/students, the “preferred” children/students being those with high test scores and “acceptable” (high status, “middle class”) cultural capital (Gewirtz et al., 1995; Gillborn & Youdell, 2002; Weekes-Barnard, 2007; Sellgren, 2013). This has led to considerably increased hierarchy and elitism within the state education system, elitism that is social class based, and also based on ethnicity (Weekes-Barnard, 2007).

This leads to much increased hierarchy and elitism within the state education system, elitism that is “raced” social-class based. The Academies Commission Report of January 2013, Unleashing Greatness (Academies Commission, 2013) says it has received numerous submissions suggesting that ‘academies are finding methods to select covertly’, that some academies may "covertly" select pupils by using extra information on families or holding social events with prospective parents’ (Sellgren, 2013). The report says it has received evidence that some popular schools, including academies, attempt to select and exclude pupils.” despite the fact that the government admissions code says that schools cannot interview children or parents, or give priority to children whose parents offer financial or practical support (Sellgren, 2013).

That is one aspect of the neoliberalisation in schooling, a class-based increased hierarchicalisation of schools. And this choice is facilitated by the creation of the league tables of schools and of universities, league tables of schools (and universities) sorted by exam results, by “high-stakes testing.” (It needs noting that this discussion is about state schools, that is, publicly funded schools. In the UK, 93% of school pupils/students attend state schools, with 7% attending private schools).

Neoliberalism requires that in a market, it is necessary to be able to test the efficiency and value of the products. In England there is now a very rigid system of testing children at different ages, even, when they first enter the schools. That could be either at age four or five. As result of the exam results of the children, of the assessment results of the children, there becomes a league table in every municipality; in every part of the country, in every area, there are league tables of schools. It is “middle-class” parents who have the means, the cars, the ability to pay transport
costs, to take the children to the schools, which have higher results, which may be some distance away.

As a result of “parental choice” and published/public league tables, there has been a notable increase in differentiation between the high-achieving schools and low-achieving schools. In Britain 13% of children have “free school meals” (FSM); the poorest 13% have free dinners at school. I did when I was a boy. If we look at two maps in England, the map showing who receives free school dinners, and the map of exam results, the maps are virtually identical. The map showing assessments at tests and exams, the map of high and low attainment in school tests, mirrors the map of the existing income inequality.

**Privatization/Pre-privatization of Schooling: Academy Schools (State-funded Schools Managed and Controlled by Corporations)**

In Britain, the government is engaging with schools on a program of pre-privatization, setting up a so-called “academy system” where numerous state schools remain state funded, and within the state system, but are re-designated as “academies.”

Thus, in the school sector, state-funded schools are actually being handed over to private companies, to chains of schools, to a variety of religious organizations, to become “academies” (formerly known as City Academy Schools) (Beckett, 2007; see also Benn, 2011; and Anti-Academies Alliance, n.d.). These schools (currently more than half of all state secondary high schools, and increasing numbers of primary/elementary schools) are taken away from democratically elected local authority/school district control and residual funding, to become quasi-independent schools, actually receiving their funding directly from central government. At the stroke of a ministerial pen they could easily, at some stage, become fully independent, fully private schools, offered for sale on the market.

An academy school is where government gives to any religious group, Muslim, Jewish, Christian, or to any rich businessmen or any rich businesswomen, for example, and can say, “Look, have this school; you can call it and name it with your name and you can name it after your wife or your business/company. You can name it, and then you can have control over the school! You can appoint a majority of the governors, the people who run the schools, the people who oversee the head teacher. You can change the contracts of the teachers ultimately. You can change the skill mix of staff, that is, the numbers of fully qualified teachers, and the numbers of less-well-qualified (and much-lower-paid) “teaching assistants.” You can have less teachers and more teaching assistants. You can change the length of the school day and you can change the curriculum”. If you want much more religion, for example, fundamentalist religion, more fundamentalist Christian religion, then the government says that is fine.

This, academy schooling, is an aspect of pre-privatization. At the moment all these academies are “not-for-profit” organizations. At the minute, in England, those who control schools cannot make a profit from actually running schools. But the new “owners” can pay themselves inflated salaries and award contracts for services such as cleaning services to their friends and business associates. (See Hill et al, 2013 for detail on this). We can also look at the United States, where there are charter schools, and we can see that some of them are “for profit,” with multinational and national capital companies / corporations making profits from running state schools!
Neoliberalism

Neoliberalism is often, but not always accompanied with neoconservatism. Because the capitalist class, and the governments they control, have to make sure that this freedom in the market is controlled, in Britain the Thatcher government in the 1988 Education Reform Act instituted a national curriculum. Prior to 1988, schools and local education authorities (LEAs)/school districts had considerable autonomy over curriculum design and also teaching methods/ pedagogies. However, the national curriculum for state schools – and the accompanying assessments- are quite rigid, and it is a conservative curriculum. Margaret Thatcher herself looked at some of the curriculum proposals and said “No, that is too liberal.” She herself changed the curriculum (Hill, 1997). That is an element of state control, control of the free market: an example of where neoliberalism, “free choice,” is accompanied by state supervision/control, and a rigid control of the curriculum for state schools. Not, interestingly, for private schools. They decide their own curriculum. (In Britain, the 7% of children who go to private schools are overwhelmingly middle class and upper class. Almost 100% of the ruling capitalist class sends their children to elite private schools).

For teachers and schools, the (privatized) school-inspection system, the Office for Standards in Schools, Ofsted, has changed from its (pre-1988) role of “light touch”/supportive school inspection to its current, feared, draconian role with regularly used powers to close what it regards as “failing” schools and/or force them to become Academies—often against the wishes of parents, teachers, and governors (Anti- Academies Alliance, n.d.; Benn, 2011; Local Schools Network, n.d.).
And for radical and critical educators in general, those of us trying to engage in “deep critique” (Rikowski, 2008) of capitalism, of capitalist economic, social, and political relations, and how these operate within schools and universities, there is often marginalization, non-promotion, dismissal, pressure to conform to, to comply with pro-capitalist norms in ideology. And there is the pressure of performativity, of the endless form-filling and surveillance and control of teachers.

**Neoconservatism in Turkey**

The Islamicisation of Turkey’s social and education systems may be described, in relation to jihadi Islamicisation in Pakistan, Afghanistan, Somalia, Mali, Egypt, for example, as ‘soft Islamicisation’. There are no beheadings, amputation of limbs, widespread killings of religious minorities.

But for those choking on tear gas in Istiklal Street and Gezi in Ankara, or in Kezilaye in Ankara (as I was, accompanied by brave comrades from Leftist movements in Turkey) or for those tragically killed and blinded by Turkish police in recent demonstrations, there is nothing soft about the state repression of dissent by the Turkish government. In Turkey, neoliberalism is accompanied by a conservatisation of society and education, backed up by police batons. It may not be of the same nakedness and institutionalized brutality as during the Turkish military dictatorship. But what is happening now is perhaps even more dangerous. In schools for example, the new curriculum, introduced by the AKP government, including, for the first time since the Kemalist revolution nearly a century ago, the study in schools of two hours a week on the Koran, and two hours a week on the life of Muhammed is, for Leftists and secularists (and liberals) very worrying. It is very convenient for capitalism if major sections of the population start to become more religious, more subservient to the afterlife, more subservient to conservative morality as opposed to Marxist collectivist morality.

I am also very well aware that leftists in schools and universities in Turkey feel pressures- not so much in the largest, most prestigious universities, but in small universities. Numerous comrades have told me of the increasing official pressures on, against them, because of their Marxist/Communist beliefs. In the small universities I have comrades who are saying it is much more difficult for them to teach critical pedagogy, for them to teach Marxist analysis of society. This is a dangerous, repressive development. Fevziye Sayiland and Nuray Turkmen describe and analyse in detail this neoliberal and neoconservatism in Turkish society and education (Sayilan & Turkmen, 2013).

In the last decade, Islamic conservatism has left its mark…. Public education has evolved dramatically under siege by both religion and market. While on the one hand the subsidy for public education has been gradually reduced, private schools and universities are encouraged and as a result, education and schools have accorded with the class and status structure of capitalism more clearly than the previous period. On the other hand, the content/curriculum and structure of education have been Islamized. Today the integration of Turkish capitalism with global capitalism has been largely completed. The economy has been restructured to provide the terms of the expansion of capital accumulation. Over a period of more than thirty years, schools and universities have been the most affected areas by all of these changes .... In this process, the basis of relatively democratic society, which was formed on the basis of the relationship between the state,
market and society, has also dissolved. Accordingly, the modernist ideology (scientific, secular and co-educational) that created a historically dominant philosophy of education in Turkey is also undergoing a major change.

Fevziye Sayiland and Nuray Turkmen continue,

As in the rest of the world, marketization of education was realized in both hidden and open ways (see Ball & Youdell, 2007). Privatization and commercialization policies in education have openly focused on reducing state subsidies for the financing of public schools, using the subsidies, instead, in favour of private schools, and charging families for education at every level under the name of ‘contribution’ (Ercan, 1998; Gök, 2004; Sayilan, 2006; İnal, 2012). The education share of national income continued to decrease (Ercan, 1998; Kurul, 2012).

Sayilan and Turkmen further continue,

The other face of educational inequality is the growing inequalities between schools. Insofar as much as the financing of schools and education is left to the families, the inequality between the elite state schools and ordinary state schools with regard to the quality of education and the learning environment has also increased. Furthermore, private schools, because of their having infrastructure, proper learning environment and social facilities, cause the increase of inequality between private schools and ordinary state schools. As a result of these policies, the schools became ever more openly characterized by their social class characteristics. So neoliberalism consolidates the reproduction of capitalist social relationships through education and schools.

It is of course what the USA government and transnational/ national capitalist classes want. The USA, and multinational capital are very happy now to work with pro-business, pro-neoliberal what they regard as “moderate Islamic” states. The USA has clearly seen Turkey as a possible future model for Egypt, Libya. It is noticeable in Egypt, where the strong trade unions and workers’ organizations have a long history, that one of the first acts of the so-called ‘democratic’ new Egypt was to attack to trade union rights and attack to trade unionists, a policy continued by the new post-Morsi military dictatorship. For the USA, for capitalism, nothing must get in the way of the reproduction of capitalist social relationships and capitalist economic relationships.

**Schools and Universities as Ideological State Apparatuses:**

*Stimulating Individualistic Competitive Entrepreneurship in Schools and Universities*

In many countries there is now in schools and in universities an emphasis on designing, applying, and updating education and school teaching programs that seek to develop and stimulate students to develop very specific values/ value systems. In some states of the USA, these values are Christian fundamentalist, socially illiberal, economically individualistic. In Turkey, religion plays a similar role. While the values are Islamic and specifically Turkish and Islamic conservative, the same partnership thrives- the partnership between social illiberalism and conformity with economic individualism. In Britain, the hold of religion is very weak, it is a
far more secular society than the USA or Turkey. The specific value system being advanced by governments is for students to become individualistic, entrepreneurial, and competitive. For example, some British universities now have institutional targets such as “at least 7% of students will go on to set up their own business.”

This is very good demonstration of what Louis Althusser (1971) wrote about education being one of the major ideological state apparatuses. The major ideological state apparatuses are the capitalist-controlled mass media and the (again, capitalist-controlled, through governments of political parties bankrolled by capital) state education systems. In every capitalist country, and in England, capitalists have an ideological agenda. Children are told to be competitive, individualistic; children are told to set up businesses, to value moneymaking, and “the spirit of enterprise.” This is against leftist notions of collectivity, solidarity, public service, and public good.

**Effects of Neoliberalism and Conservatism on Teachers in Schools: Managerialism, Surveillance, and Control**

Neoliberalism is enforced through increased forms of surveillance and control in society, such as, for example, by the importation into public services such as education of ‘new public managerialism’- more brutalistic, finance-driven, authoritarian forms of management (Deem, 1998; Beckman and Cooper, 2004; Beckmann, Cooper and Hill, D., 2009). Public services such as schools and universities, are increasingly run in accordance with the principles of ‘new public managerialism… based on a corporate managerialist model imported from the world of business. As well as the needs of Capital dictating the principal aims of education, the world of business also supplies the model of how it is to be provided and managed. (Beckmann and Cooper, 2004).

Stevenson (2007) is one of many analysts (see also Lewis, Hill, & Fawcett, 2009) who note that

A key feature of current school-sector reform in England is the restructuring of teachers’ work and the increased use of support staff to undertake a range of activities previously undertaken by teachers. Supporters speak of a new teacher professionalism focused on the “core task” of teaching. Critics fear deprofessionalization through a process of deskilling, work intensification, and labor substitution.

Stevenson continues, describing a

relentless drive to raise productivity, teachers have often found themselves the victims of unwelcome change in which they have had their professional judgment curtailed, witnessed the increasing managerialization of the educational process, and been subjected to ever more forensic scrutiny of their work by external agencies (Ball, 2003). . . . These developments have inevitably affected the work pressures on teachers and resulted in an intensification of the labor process of teaching… (Smyth, Dow, Hattam, Reid, & Shacklock, 2000).

In the section below I use some primary research about “teachers’ work” carried out between September 2012 and January 2013 by James Lloyd Hill, who has worked in four different secondary (high) schools in England (Hill, J., 2013).
James quotes a colleague who summarised her view of being a teacher as ‘you’re not a teacher anymore, you’re someone who works in a school’—she’s been teaching 6 months, and was backed up by another colleague in the room with 12 years teaching experience behind her. The same teacher also said ‘I didn’t get into teaching to deliver lessons which are already pre-planned for me which I have to follow, or teach subjects which I never trained for and to only deliver other peoples’ resources, I wanted to inspire them to learn History’ (her subject).

James’s view is that it seems to me the ability (time/insight) to inspire is taken up with filling in tracking data, data in-putting, filling in spreadsheets when homework has been set, making sure your room is not untidy for fear of senior management noticing and ‘having a word’. The extra work that teachers now have to do has very little to do with the delivery of lessons, but ticking the boxes which senior management feel they should have ticked, in case Ofsted come calling. There is a lot of talk among heads of department about ‘how can we show this?’ and ‘where’s our evidence for that?’, and as a result, we don’t hear as much of ‘I think I’m going to try this with that group of students’.

This view exemplifies research carried out by McBeath in 1995 (p. 12), not long after the National Curriculum and its testing and surveillance regime came into operation. McBeath quotes a student teacher as saying “I used to feel that this school cared about how well I was doing. Now I just think it cares about how well it’s doing.”

James continues, I’m not suggesting that as teachers we are not accountable for students’ attainment in our lessons, but there is a limit on our ability to be accountable, and certainly a limit on how that accountability is tracked; lesson plans, intervention documentation by teachers—what have you done about student x, y and z? Why are they still failing?! Documentation on each student, and each aspect of a student accounted for on your lesson plan (such as average reading age; SEN status; Gifted and Talented status; preferred learning style (VAK), learning goal; current grade.

James talks not just of the intensification of accountability, but of a managerial culture of control and fear:

The voices of the Unions are quieter than they once were in schools, there are still those brave enough to speak out on behalf of those who must not be named to senior management, even though they do ask ‘and who thinks that?’ but more recently it has had to be a case of safety in large numbers. We had a Joint Union meeting of the NUT ‘ (National Union of Teachers) ‘ and NASUWT’ (National Association of Schoolmasters/Union of Women Teachers) ‘where we agreed on ‘work to rule’ principles the unions had set out, but the added pressures being
placed on staff meant that we signed a petition. One member of staff set it up, and had to guarantee at least 60 signatures before he would show it to the head. Staff feel they can be got rid of so easily now. Having spoken to a Union leader in the school, she said staff are just too afraid to speak out now, because they know that if senior management want rid of you, they can do it now.

Senior management can observe you with their performance management duties (in some schools this may be once a year, in this, once every term). There are the ‘learning walks’ where they can ‘pop into’ your lesson (for however long they choose—this may have a different label, but it has the same effect on their view of your teaching, and your anxiety levels). There are also ‘book looks’, which have always been done, but now they must be standardised (making sure there are comments on how students can improve, and asking a ‘Learning Development Question’, which the students must answer. This is to tick another box in case Ofsted arrive). And the over-riding view of the reasons for many of these quality initiatives, is that if Management wants you out, they will force you out with the amount of pressure they will place on you from the observations, or you will slip up in an observation, which can then be used against you.

I was observed on a learning walk by a member of senior management, she came in as the class were doing an activity, there was music on in the background, I was sat at my desk looking over a student’s book. The member of staff left after a few minutes. At the end of the day I received an email from my head of department, who had received an email from the senior management observer. It was a complaint that I hadn’t got up and gone over to greet her at the door. She didn’t see the reason why I was playing that music and so therefore thought it questionable. The fact I was sat at my desk also gave her cause for concern, especially as another member of staff had also seen me sat at my desk once when they had walked past my classroom and looked inside through the window in the door.

This type of micro management is something you may expect from working in a cubicle in an office. How teachers relate to students, how they engage them, is being written out in a memo, so Ofsted can tick it off.

McBeath (1995) is among many who note that

inspections carry high stakes for schools and teachers and where the press for accountability overshadows the improvement motive. It also assumes that inspectors are able not only ‘see’ schools as they are but are able to tell the story in ways that depict the complexity, vitality and dynamic of a school’s character. Snapshots are by nature limited by both frame and focus.

James continues,

You hear they’re (Ofsted) in the area, you panic. They call, you plan like you’ve never planned before (because it’s impossible to do that amount of planning for 9 different teaching groups who you see at least 2/3 times a week, with the amount
of detail the school thinks Ofsted require). They observe your lesson, the students are amazing, because there’s a new person in the room who looks important. Your nerves are hanging by a thread because you don’t know if you’ve demonstrated 3 levels of progress in the 15 minutes the inspector has been in your room (possibly not, because they came in right in the middle of the activity). By the end of the lesson, the students may have learnt something, but if it hasn’t been measured by the inspector, you’re not a ‘good’ teacher. So you’ll be observed again, and again, and again.

**Resistance, Critical Education and Critical Educators**

*Critical Education and Critical Educators*

In schools, colleges, universities, many radical and Marxist critical educators try to affect four aspects of learning and teaching, asking questions about (at least) four aspects (see Hill, 2012b, c).

Some critical educators question the teacher-centred *pedagogy*, the pattern of teaching and learning relationships and interaction, and try to use democratic participative pedagogy which breaks down patterns of domination and submission and listens to children’s, students’ and local communities’ voices- but not uncritically. This is no uncritical, postmodernist, or liberal, uncritical acceptance of polyvocality. Critical Marxist educators engage in critique that frames educational experiences within the conditions of Capitalism and its current neoliberal form. Critical Marxist educators also attempt to utilise different types of pedagogy in teaching, to engage in non-hierarchical, democratic, participative, teaching and research, while by virtue of their role in actually teaching, may maintain an authoritative stance where appropriate. Such approaches are rooted in social constructivist Vygotskyan understandings of learning, and are also aimed both at producing co-learning, by teachers as well as taught, and at overtly welcoming and valuing more cultures than are commonly valued in a transmission mode of teaching. Of course critiques of over-dominant teacher-centred pedagogy are not restricted to Marxist educators. They are also made by liberal-progressve, child/student-centred educators and by some conservative educators, concerned about teaching effectiveness and preparation for the workplace.

But critical education is about far more than pedagogy (Hill, 2014). Indeed, it takes place outside schools and universities as well as inside (Hill, 2012a, 2013a,), as the rise of alternatives to the English university indicates. (Canaan et al, 2013; Hill, 2013b). There is educational resistance outside the state-controlled education structures, in connection with the teach-ins at Tent Cities, a Free University movement, and through oppositional media and cultural workers, as well as within trade union and student groups.

A second question Marxists can and should ask is about the *curriculum-* who selected the content and how rigid is it? Even where the curriculum is very tightly controlled, even where it is very rigidly prescribed, there are, as Gramsci, taught us, always spaces, little spaces for us to infiltrate, to use, to colonise. For example this can be seen in the teaching schools, prison, youth clubs, universities and vocational colleges and in ‘tent cities’, teach-ins and teach-outs and in emergent alternatives.

Marxist educators, indeed critical educators in general, can, with students, look at the curriculum and ask, ‘Who do you think wrote this? ‘Who do you think decided on including this
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What do you/we think should be in the curriculum that is currently absent? Why do you think it is absent? Who do you think benefits and who loses from this curriculum? What is the ideology behind this book/task/lesson/curriculum piece? These questions can be asked with ten year olds, 16 year olds, 40 or 70 year olds.

However limited the spaces are, within a school, university or educational site, within a curriculum, we can always find some possibility to question and to encourage the children/students to do this as well so that they are, in effect, developing an awareness of what can be called `ideology critique' (Kelshe & Hill, 2006). And then we can suggest, and seek from students, an alternative, perhaps even if only for five minutes in a lesson/session. We can question existing versions of history. We can ask, `Is there a different version or view of the past, the present, or the future?'. So, looking at the work of Marxist and Communist teachers and Critical Educators, we can affect the content of curriculum, or, if that is, at any particular time/space, almost impossible, we can seek to develop ideology critique, an understanding of the Capital-Labour relation, of capitalism and its relationship to education systems, of ideological and repressive state apparatuses, and of how schools and universities are shaped and controlled into producing politically and ideologically quiescent and hierarchically organised and rewarded labour power. Where Marxist educators, and Revolutionary Critical Educators (McLaren, 2005; McLaren and Jaramillo, 2010) differ from more social democratic and liberal critical educators is in the emphasis placed on resistance and socialist transformation (Kelshe & Hill, 2006; Skordoulis and Hill, 2012; Hill, 2014).

A third question in education that critical/ Marxist educators can and should ask is about organization of the students. How should children of different social class, gender, and ethnic backgrounds and different sexual orientations be organised within classrooms, within institutions such as schools and universities, and within national education systems? Are some groups, such as girls, such as ethnic minorities, such as the poorer sections of the working class, in fact systematically labeled, segregated, divided, demeaned? In some countries virtually all children go to the same type of school. But children tend to go to schools where their own class predominates. There is also a question of how the education system inculcates a differentiated sense of class awareness in working, middle and ruling class students. And it tries to keep the working class as a working class that is obedient, subservient, individualistic, interested in only themselves not in collectivity, not in community. Marxist educators clearly prefer and work for what in Britain is called `comprehensive' schools, and in India, for example, is called `the common school'. But then, even where this happens (as in Finland, where there are only a single handful of private schools, where students up to the age of sixteen are taught in common/comprehensive schools in `mixed ability' classes) there are internal informal mechanisms, the hidden curriculum of differential (`raced', gendered' and `sexually oriented' expectations and responses to different cultural capitals (Reay, 2006; Hill, 2009).

A fourth question Marxist educators ask is about ownership and control of schools (and, indeed, universities). Who should own, control and govern schools, further education (vocational) colleges and universities? Of course we cannot change the law at a stroke, but we can lead a movement that at some stage- in two years time, ten years time, twenty years time- the ownership and governance of schools can be changed, made democratic, and secular and can attempt to be egalitarian. Instead of, as in some countries, schools, colleges and universities being run by a religious state, by transnational corporations (Ball, 2012), or by religious organisations themselves, by `for-profit' private companies, by companies that are in theory and public discourse `not-for-profit (but which reward handsomely their executives and their
friends), or schools that are run and governed by rich businessmen or women. Marxist educators (and others, of course) believe that schools, colleges and universities should be run democratically, with education workers and students, as well as elected representatives of local communities, having powers in and over those education institutions, within a secular, democratic national framework. Explicit in this is the assertion that education is a public good and a public right that should not be distorted and corrupted by private ownership—there should be no private schools, colleges or universities. (For an attempt to address these various aspects of education, in developing a socialist policy for education, see Hill, 2010c).

Of course the number of critical, radical, Marxist, counter-hegemonic school teachers and university teachers is limited, and it takes courage to be one, in the face of the repressive aspects (non-promotion, dismissals, harassment by management) of and within the education state apparatuses.

Educate, Agitate, Organize

We Marxists, and critical educators in general, seek to serve and advance the interests of the working class. We, as teachers, as educators, are working class, too, we sell our labor power to capitalists and to the apparatuses of the capitalist state, such as schools and universities. We have to consistently and courageously challenge the dominant ideology, the hegemony of the ruling class, the bourgeoisie, the capitalist class. We are in a battle for dominance of our ideas; there are “culture wars” between different ways of looking at/interpreting the world. We have to contest the currently hegemonic control of ideas by the capitalist state, schools, media, and their allies in the religions. If we sit and do nothing, if their ideas are not contested, then capitalism will continue to rule, to demean, to divide, to impoverish us, and the planet.

At certain times in history, and in certain locations, the disjunction—the gap, the difference—between the material conditions of workers’ existence on the one hand, our daily lived experience, and, on the other hand, what the newspapers and the media and the imam and the priest and the rabbi say/preach, that gap becomes so stark, so obvious, that workers’ subjective consciousness changes. At this moment—now—in some countries in the world, the gap between the “official” ideology that “we are all in together” and that “there is no alternative” (to austerity), or, in schools and universities faced by commodification and managerialism and (pre)-privatization—that gap becomes so large that the ruling party, and the ruling capitalist class, and capitalism itself, loses legitimacy. And so, as in Greece now, and in Portugal, in Spain, in Turkey and Brazil, and in other countries such as Britain, we Marxists are necessary. Necessary in leading and developing changes in consciousness, a change in class consciousness, and in playing a leading role in organizing for the replacement of capitalism.

Programme

In 1938, in “The Transitional Programme”, Trotsky addressed the types of programmes moving the discussion beyond the minimum programme (minimum acceptable reforms, such as those to protect and improve existing rights and entitlements, such as rights at work, social and political rights)) and the maximum programme (socialist revolution, with the type of society ultimately envisaged by Marx, a socialist non-capitalist/ post-capitalist society) that were advanced by late nineteenth and early twentieth century social democrats and by communists of the 3rd international and articulated a new type of programme: the transitional programme. Trotsky, with a distinct resonance to today’s struggles, wrote:
The strategic task of the next period – prerevolutionary period of agitation, propaganda and organization – consists in overcoming the contradiction between the maturity of the objective revolutionary conditions and the immaturity of the proletariat and its vanguard (the confusion and disappointment of the older generation, the inexperience of the younger generation. It is necessary to help the masses in the process of the daily struggle to find the bridge between present demand and the socialist program of the revolution. This bridge should include a system of transitional demands, stemming from today’s conditions and from today’s consciousness of wide layers of the working class and unalterably leading to one final conclusion: the conquest of power by the proletariat.

Classical Social Democracy, functioning in an epoch of progressive capitalism, divided its program into two parts independent of each other: the minimum program which limited itself to reforms within the framework of bourgeois society, and the maximum program which promised substitution of socialism for capitalism in the indefinite future. Between the minimum and the maximum program no bridge existed. And indeed Social Democracy has no need of such a bridge, since the word socialism is used only for holiday speechifying. The Comintern has set out to follow the path of Social Democracy in an epoch of decaying capitalism: when, in general, there can be no discussion of systematic social reforms and the raising of the masses’ living standards; when every serious demand of the proletariat and even every serious demand of the petty bourgeoisie inevitably reaches beyond the limits of capitalist property relations and of the bourgeois state.

Trotsky continued,

Under the menace of its own disintegration, the proletariat cannot permit the transformation of an increasing section of the workers into chronically unemployed paupers, living off the slops of a crumbling society. The right to employment is the only serious right left to the worker in a society based upon exploitation. This right today is left to the worker in a society based upon exploitation. This right today is being shorn from him at every step. Against unemployment, “structural” as well as “conjunctural,” the time is ripe to advance along with the slogan of public works, the slogan of a sliding scale of working hours. Trade unions and other mass organizations should bind the workers and the unemployed together in the solidarity of mutual responsibility. On this basis all the work on hand would then be divided among all existing workers in accordance with how the extent of the working week is defined. The average wage of every worker remains the same as it was under the old working week. Wages, under a strictly guaranteed minimum, would follow the movement of prices. It is impossible to accept any other program for the present catastrophic period.

[…] The question is not one of a “normal” collision between opposing material interests. The question is one of guarding the proletariat from decay, demoralization and ruin. The question is one of life or death of the only creative
and progressive class, and by that token of the future of mankind. If capitalism is incapable of satisfying the demands inevitably arising from the calamities generated by itself, then let it perish. “Realizability” or “unrealizability” is in the given instance a question of the relationship of forces, which can be decided only by the struggle. By means of this struggle, no matter what immediate practical successes may be, the workers will best come to understand the necessity of liquidating capitalist slavery. (Trotsky, 1938)

The `decay, demoralisation and ruin’ Trotsky speaks of, are, for many millions of workers’ families- including what in the USA and elsewhere are called ‘middle class’ workers, an everyday reality in this current era of capitalism, neoliberal capitalism, or ‘immiseration capitalism’. The precise organisation and characteristics of the resistance to the deprivations is a matter for strategic and tactical considerations, relating to the current balance (strength, organisations, (dis)-unity) of class forces in specific local and national contexts. What is clear, though, is that the problematic regarding capitalism, for Marxist activists and educators, is not just to reform it, welcome though such reforms, such as ‘minimum programme’ are, and active in campaigning for and to protect such reforms we must be. But, regarding capitalism, our task is to replace it with democratic Marxism.

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References


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