

Marxists in Schools of Education Respond to NAS Article

Ashley Thorne

Crosspost from www.NAS.org Two weeks ago I published an [article](#) about a Marxist journal that has seized authority in the education world. The [Journal for Critical Education Policy Studies](#) (JCEPS) is published by the UK-based Institute for Education Policy Studies (IEPS), “an independent Radical Left/Socialist/Marxist institute for developing policy analysis and development of education policy.” It takes its cues from Che Guevara and Paulo Freire. Articles from JCEPS are required reading in some ed schools, and the editorial advisory board has representatives from universities in eighteen countries. In posting the NAS article on JCEPS, I thought that simply calling the journal what it is would be enough to discredit it.

I wrote:

While it is appropriate to study the now discredited but historically important ideas of Marxism in political science, philosophy, and economics courses, education schools have no need for radical ideology. Ed schools should be preparing teachers to train the minds of the next generation, not to arm them with socialist politics. To do so cheats both future teachers and their future students out of the sound, unbiased education they deserve.

I assumed that most people would agree that Marxist *politics* have no place in the classroom, and that the JCEPS folks would be reluctant to own their radical left agenda. I was wrong.

Since the article appeared on the NAS website, apologists for the journal have been coming out of the woodwork. We seem to have secured the attention of some of the last remaining Marxists on earth. One commenter, who seems not to be a native speaker of English, wrote:

Definitely, education should be explicitly involved in struggles for equity and justice, especially at the current situation. Therefore, it's very meaningful to arouse teachers and students' critical consciousness, as Professor Peter McLaren does. School and society shouldn't be separated. No matter it is in John Dewey's mind "school is society", or in other scholar's essay "society is school", schools have close relationship with society. George Counts once insisted that it was a great ideal that people should mainly focus on educating the children and care little about others, however, he thought that schools and teachers had to think about the injustice since the then unequal society greatly influenced teachers and students in 1930s. As for the current situation which is much worse than in 1930s in many aspects, the "ivory tower" ideal had gone and would never come back, colleges and universities are more and more involved in the society economically and politically, students have to fight for the equality, and teachers are forced to fight for their right they deserved. There are inequity and injustice in society, so **it's teachers' responsibility to arouse their students consciousness to seek for the equity and justice**. Those behind it are the ones who give up their responsibilities or the ones who own privilege, because they dare not to change the society or don't want to give up their privilege. [emphasis mine]

Another person, ironically self-nicknamed "[Cassiodorus](#)" after the devout Christian who kept alive the flame of liberal learning after the fall of Rome, added:

Marxism isn't discredited anywhere, education isn't unbiased, and "radical" refers to the notion of examining the roots ("radical," from the Latin *radix*, or root) of everyday practice, something which should be done more often in schools. The rest of this is a rather amateurish collection of soundbites on a number of subjects, the least understood of which is *critical pedagogy*. [emphasis mine]

This is a delightful bit of self-delusion. Marxism isn't discredited *anywhere*? Marxism is discredited just about everywhere, but if "Cassiodorus" needs a for instance, I can testify firsthand that Marxism is discredited in Novokuznetsk and other parts of Russia where I have stayed. From his nom de plume, I would think Cassiodorus is implicitly acknowledging this reality. His "Rome" would appear to be the Soviet State and the nations it held captive. He is keeping the holy flame of Marxism alive in an age dominated by the barbarian idea of human freedom. "Ferlaz" also chimed in:

In Argentina we are creating a new educational movement based on the critical pedagogies, especially the works of Paulo Freire, Peter McLaren. This article only serves to confirm that we are on the correct path of struggle. This educational movement is not intended to build ideological blocs but returning to education because their political neutrality is also a way of doing politics. This article ends endorsing own knowledge of the dominant classes, their ideologies and worldviews deny the possibility of conflict as natural and accepting the hegemonic discourse. From Argentina, from the popular

schools for youth and adults in factories recovered by their workers shouted: Che lives!,
As in Peter McLaren's page.

The grammar here is too shaky to figure out exactly what is making “ferlaz” so excited. Che, the murderous thug of the Cuban revolution, is fortunately long dead. He enjoys only the kind of immortality conferred by T-shirts and dorm-room posters. It does seem to me of absorbing interest that the great folly of Marxism—having burned through the twentieth century as a fire that killed more than 90 million people, enslaved countless others, and brought more misery and oppression into the world than any other political doctrine in human history—still has its proud defenders. And they are in schools of education.