Handbook of Social Justice in Education

William Ayers, Therese Quinn, David Stovall

Critical Pedagogy and Hope in the Context of Neo-Liberal Globalization

Publication details

Gustavo E. Fischman, Eric Haas

Published online on: 17 Dec 2008


Accessed on: 22 Nov 2023

PLEASE SCROLL DOWN FOR DOCUMENT

Full terms and conditions of use: https://www.routledgehandbooks.com/legal-notices/terms

This Document PDF may be used for research, teaching and private study purposes. Any substantial or systematic reproductions, re-distribution, re-selling, loan or sub-licensing, systematic supply or distribution in any form to anyone is expressly forbidden.

The publisher does not give any warranty express or implied or make any representation that the contents will be complete or accurate or up to date. The publisher shall not be liable for an loss, actions, claims, proceedings, demand or costs or damages whatsoever or howsoever caused arising directly or indirectly in connection with or arising out of the use of this material.
I appreciate your efforts.... I understand that it is good to have access to those ideas. I mean it. Now at least I know what neoliberalism is, how it operates, and how it affects my personal and professional life. Perhaps...I don’t think that I am a naïve teacher that doesn’t know about exploitation, racism and oppression...and also the criticisms that should be made to bad schools, but...after reading and discussing all these books, I don’t know but I am feeling sad, I am feeling that no matter what, we cannot win.

Those were the thoughts and emotions that Nancy shared with the class during the evaluation of a seminar on Paulo Freire and critical pedagogy conducted by one of the authors, Gustavo Fischman. At that moment, Nancy was 32 years old. She was the first one in her family to attend college, a proud Mexican American, a self-described “caring and competent” fourth grade math teacher pursuing her doctoral degree. Nancy often expressed a tremendous sense of pride about her work in an urban school in Phoenix. Nancy was a straight A student, and during the semester she did not hide her difficulties and disagreements with some of the texts. As the student who most frequently and consistently defended what she called “the perspective of the teachers in the trenches,” Nancy’s opinions were very important for the group. For the first time during the whole semester, she concluded, “we cannot win.”

As the instructor, I did not expect this conclusion to the seminar. Yet, Nancy had voiced some of my own fears and concerns. I had worked as a grassroots educator before moving into formal education and the world of schools, and so I have personally experienced the frustration of trying to improve an education system. Thus, I have continually looked for ways to incorporate into my teaching the necessary criticisms of the actual functioning of schools, administrators, and teachers with the ideas that will empower teachers to change schools, not scare them away. I concluded that, at least in this seminar, I didn’t accomplish that goal.

The class was silent. I looked for a student who could add another perspective to Nancy’s reflections, but I felt that the rest of the class was avoiding my attempts to make eye contact. To me, the silence was a robust indication that the students shared Nancy’s opinions.

A feeling of despair and self-doubt began to inundate me. I counted to 60, or maybe to 100, and then asked,

I have the impression that reading about and discussing Freire and critical pedagogy had the emotional effect of creating a sense of despair and hopelessness in the group. Am I right?
Several in the group shook their heads. Paula, who was one of the youngest in the group and usually not very talkative, said with a laugh, “Don’t worry, you didn’t Ellsworthize us…well, maybe a little, but not too much and we can handle it.”

Paula’s remark recuperated notions from previous discussions which the group debated and after a few minutes of dialogue, Nancy’s words grabbed the group’s attention:

I would like to say something. I don’t want to be misunderstood. No, I don’t feel hopeless. I don’t think that you hammered us with the “bad schools-oppressive teachers” message or “Ellsworthized” or even tried to “Freireized” or “brain-washed” us….

I’ve been thinking about this since the beginning of this class, but I didn’t have the words to express myself. I said that we couldn’t win. I was sad, but that is not all. It was also…I was ashamed…it is just that I realized that my hopes, were “easy hopes,” kind of “Hello Kitty hopes”…and then…working with all of you I have to give up the idea that by being the “super-caring-knowledgeable-efficient” teacher—and you know that I am all of that—I was going to first, fix my grade, then my school, later the district and so on. Please, don’t laugh…that may have been unrealistic but it was my dream. That was my goal…I was sad not because I felt hopeless about what we can do as teachers. I think that I was sad because I realized I was trying to convince myself that teachers can win without pissing off people, without making enemies…I was sad of letting my “Hello Kitty Hopes” go. That is sad…that is scary, but it’s not hopeless.

The class was silent. I couldn’t tell if the new silence that greeted Nancy’s words was an expression of respectful agreement or disagreement. But I clearly remember that when the students left the room saying, “I hope to see you again,” I felt that they meant it.

We begin with the recollection of what happened in one of the authors’ classes, not because we give to these testimonies some sort of magical power, or because we think that this example illustrates that critical pedagogy is effective and we need more of it. In fact, it is just the opposite. We share Nancy’s reflections and reactions because we think that her words and thoughts encapsulate the limitations, and possibly even the dangers, of how critical pedagogy is practiced in the United States during this period of global neoliberalism. In this chapter, we provide an overview of globalization and neo-liberalism, and then we describe their relationship to critical pedagogy. In setting forth this relationship, we argue that in order for critical pedagogy to become a viable educational–political discourse three developments should take place:

- the use of a thorough and teachable analysis of globalization, that includes an acknowledgment that aspects of global neo-liberal policies and practices have made, and can make, some positive contributions to school reform;
- the articulation of discourses of hope that go beyond notions of individual superteachers and “narratives of redemption”; and
- the implementation of pedagogical practices that both recognize and support educators as committed intellectuals, more than heroic critical ones.

**Globalization, Neo-Liberalism, and Education**

Doubtless, globalization has resulted in increased levels of capital accumulation, information dissemination, and technological discoveries, but it has also created disparities...
Critical Pedagogy and Hope in the Context of Neo-Liberal Globalization

and inequalities between and within nations (Hill, 2005). These gains, disparities, and inequalities are reflected in differences in the top and bottom perspectives of globalization (Tabb, 2006). In financial terms, the benefits of globalization have disproportionately gone to the top of society (Stiglitz, 2002; Tabb, 2006; United Nations, 2005).

At the same time, it is undeniable that processes associated with globalization have produced other benefits even for those who are considered the weakest economic actors in the global landscape (Friedman, 2005; Hardt & Negri, 2000). For example, globalization has increased access to technological innovation, expanded global networks for human rights and social activism, and developed alternative forms of communication and information, which have the potential to benefit most people in the world (Kellner, 2005).

Recognizing the complexity and contradictory features of these processes does not imply, however, that one should overlook the totalizing features and power of those discourses, which naturalize globalization and advocate it as new gospel. Among those discourses, one of the strongest perspectives and most cohesive arguments about the benefits of globalization has been elaborated by institutions and individuals associated with the neo-liberal school of thought (Ball, Fischman, & Gvirtz, 2003; Hursh, 2006). Neo-liberal discourses both theoretically and ideologically rest on a set of beliefs in the self-correcting qualities of the corporatist logic of the free market, as part of a self-proclaimed ideologically neutral discourse of efficiency and accountability (Fischman et al., 2003).

A central feature of the neo-liberal argument as applied to education is that schools must align their policies and practices with the notion of knowledge as a regular tradable commodity. Based on this perspective, it is easier to understand the two main criticisms of neoliberal educationalists: (1) state monopoly and “producer capture” cannot but create educational inefficiencies; and (2) educational inefficiencies resulting from public intervention stifle productivity, waste resources, and prevent economic, as well as social and even moral, improvements. The argument goes that in the post-9/11 and restructured global economy, for any society to remain competitive it will need to implement educational reforms emphasizing the development of a flexible, entrepreneurial teaching workforce (i.e., broadly educated, specifically trained, and without tenure), and a teacher-proof, standards-based, and market-oriented curriculum (Fischman & McLaren, 2005; Peters, 2005). Education is held to account. Its efficiency is measured. But this is not simply a process of measurement and comparison; it also affects and changes what it measures, driven by the reductionist idea that everything is a matter of accounting (Readings, 1996) and the only things that are worthwhile are those than can be counted or measured.

Within the neo-liberal discourse, institutions associated with the market and loosely defined notions, such as private sector, choice, and businesslike, are sanitized and romanticized. Market failings, as well as corrupt operations (such as Enron and World Com) and potentially disastrous policies (such as ignoring global warming, or neglecting to implement adequate “public policies” as demonstrated during the Hurricane Katrina evacuation), are minimized or erased, while the “perfections” of competition are set over and against the “conservatism” of state bureaucracies. The role of the state in regulating the corporate sector and in implementing policies aimed at promoting basic social fairness, or even timidly redistributing forms of social capital (such as education, health, and retirement benefits), are glossed over as the “nanny state” in the enthusiasm for neoliberal politics (Cato, 2005; Huntington, 2005). In this sense, the world is facing what the late Pierre Bourdieu (1998) referred to as the “gospel of neoliberalism” a conservative ideology which thinks itself opposed to all ideology” (p. 126). This gospel is one that serves as a clarion call to combat “by every means, including the destruction of the environment and human sacrifice, against any obstacle to the maximization of profit” (p. 126).
This ideology without ideology is set over and against the “failures” of social democracy, and the inability of welfare systems to meet the needs of all citizens. Neo-liberalism gathers discursive strength and political influence from both its promises of a new kind of nonideological freedom, and a telling critique of democratic failures. It represents, in its own terms, a move beyond politics and back to a state of nature, back to the “natural” impulses of individualism and competition. It is important to emphasize that our criticisms of neo-liberalism in schools are not based on a nostalgic longing for a golden era, where supposedly a truly democratic public school system existed, but in the assessment that after more than 10 years of implementing neo-liberal inspired reforms they are far from delivering good educational results (Hursh, 2006).

Even if the measures of educational achievement do not produce the expected good results, it is undeniable that neo-liberalism as an educational discourse has been very influential not only in changing school practices, but also in defining the educational commonsense, what can be thought or imagined about schools. The hegemonic position of these discourses is easy to perceive. In most schools, it is nearly impossible to find discourses that emphasize the need for greater democracy or improvement of the quality of life not measured in economic terms. There is a hegemonic inevitability about the logic of neo-liberal reforms, particularly because they are presented as simply rational–technical solutions to the problems of underachievement, separated off from their ideological and philosophical origins (Fischman, Ball, & Gvirtz, 2003; Haas, 2006).

For many teachers, such as Nancy, the neo-liberal emphasis on individualism, measurement, and technical solutions can fit well with a commonly accepted (and also carefully and constantly monitored) characterization of schooling within the parameters of a redemptive function: teaching and learning are individual acts that when properly performed will solve most problems associated with the lack of formal education (poverty, productivity, morality among many more social ills). The neo-liberal educational discourse is also articulated as a redeeming narrative, and thus, schools should be apolitical institutions, implementing scientifically verified “best practices” which will be assessed through standardized testing (e.g., Elmore, 1996). Taken against public schools’ constant challenges and mixed record of success and failure, and the strong associations between notions of the “public” with authoritarianism, bureaucracy, inefficiency, and the paucity of truly democratic schools, neo-liberal perspectives reinforce educators’ common sense about their individual roles and the need for politics to be kept out of the classroom. In sum, neo-liberalism is a powerful educational discourse because some of the elements associated with the perceptions of “public = failure” are real and felt by countless students and teachers.

The experience of teachers like Nancy demonstrates that neoliberal globalization is a mixed experience. There are many educators who are entrepreneurial, upwardly mobile professionals, who benefit from their own hard work, while teaching students who, despite great effort, continue to be economically and socially left behind. What we want to note is the importance of trying to understand and deconstruct the neoliberal perspective and the arguments of its supporters in light of these strongly differing experiences.

There is little doubt that globalization has not delivered all the benefits its public defenders have promised; however, the dynamics associated with it have impacted many and positively impacted at least some individuals in all sectors of society. “Globalization is not about what we all or at least the most resourceful and enterprising among us wish or hope to do. It is about what is happening to us all” (Baumann, 1998, p. 39, italics in original). Nancy’s experience in a critical pedagogy class gave her the opportunity to reflect on the limits of the “equity and democratization” aspects of neoliberal globalization—the impacts she receives and transmits go well beyond her lived experience, and perhaps, her
initial ability to affect change. Thus, some of the important challenges for teachers and teacher educators who want to use critical pedagogy become how to work on identifying and analyzing the effects of “naturalized” and oppressive dynamics (embedded in capitalism, racism, sexism, and other forms of oppression) on schooling, without instilling a sense of hopelessness and loss of agency. Moreover, how does one use CP with teachers like Nancy (ethnic minority, first generation college student) whose personal story illustrates that the neoliberal educational model offers, to at least a few individuals, so-called successful schooling? Why should Nancy be critical of neoliberalism and its schools?

Critical Pedagogy: Beyond the Narrative of Redemption

One of the strongest claims of most practitioners and supporters of critical pedagogy is that the concrete results of schooling are constructed in and through people’s linguistic, cultural, social, and pedagogical specific interactions which both shape and are shaped by social, political, economic, and cultural dynamics (Darder, 2002; Giroux, 1988, 1994, 2000, 2003; Giroux & McLaren, 1989; McLaren, 2005; McLaren & Fischman, 1998; McLaren & Lankshear 1993; 1994; McLaren & Leonard, 1993). From this perspective, societies, communities, schools, teachers, and even students engage in oppressive practices, and thus understanding those practices needs to connect with transforming them. The connection of awareness to transformation, we believe, is an important contribution of critical pedagogy as an educational theory and as shared praxis that advances an agenda for educational change; it forces us to understand educational practices in broader sociopolitical contexts. By emphasizing the importance of understanding-transforming pedagogical-social realities, critical pedagogy also points to the intrinsic relationship between educational and social transformations, keeping in constant view new means of breaking down all forms of oppression.

A second strong claim of critical pedagogy is that educators have a central, but not exclusive, role in maintaining or challenging educational systems. For example, Giroux (1993), building upon the Gramscian concept of praxis and the Freirean notion of conscientization (Freire, 1989, 1997a, 1997b), has extensively discussed the possibility of teachers becoming “transformative intellectuals.” Giroux contends that teachers need to engage in debate and inquiry, in order to open the spaces for taking critical stances toward their own practice and the practice of others. Through these activities, educators could begin reflexively and actively to shape their curricula and school policies. Transformative intellectuals are aware of their own theoretical convictions and are skilled in strategies for translating them into practice (Giroux, 1993, 2002).

Giroux’s perspective is widely embraced by those associated with critical pedagogy (Darder, 2002; Giroux, 2005; McLaren, 2005). The social and political dimensions of schooling, the need to understand and transform schools and society, and the key role that educators in these processes play are core themes shared by many critical educators (Darder, Baltodano, & Torres, 2003; Fischman, McLaren, Sünker, & Lankshear, 2005). Although it is hard to quantify or even qualify the influence of critical pedagogues in North America, it would be hard to deny that, as a collective movement, it has produced one of the most dynamic and controversial educational schools of thought of the last 30 years. Nonetheless, it is also hard to deny that there are many educators like Nancy who react to the proposals of CP with great skepticism and despair.

We contend that a good deal of those reactions relate to the use of a narrative of redemption (NR) when arguing in favor of CP. NR involves a quasi-schizophrenic perspective in CP (as well as aspects of neoliberalism) in which schools are at present horrible and schools can be beautiful. The link between the horrible present and the beautiful
future is the narrative of redemption with the superteacher as its hero. This is a common
depiction in discourse about teachers not only in teacher training institutions but it is
also especially strong in popular culture. The NR provides the basic discursive structure
of most Hollywood characters from the films *To Sir with Love*, *Dangerous Minds*, and
*Stand and Deliver* and the teachers of television’s *Boston Public*. The NR works when
an individual teacher overcomes all the systemic failures through the sheer force of his
or her heroic and “organic” consciousness and deeds. When others follow the lead of
the superteacher, the class or school as a larger system is redeemed. This process follows
the biblical tradition of sin-crisis-failure-trauma and finalizes with archetypal myths of
redemption-absolution-success-recovery. If accepted, the redeeming vision will, after the
defeat of the enemy, create the ideal school, in which the perfect teacher and the model
student will learn in individual harmony, separate from the chaos of the surrounding
educational and social system.

The redemptive narrative is often used indiscriminately by both supporters and oppo-
nents of critical pedagogy, and one of its distinctive markers is that teaching appears as
both the target of harsh social criticisms and the last space of hope. In that critical junc-
ture of society’s imaginary about teachers, they become the makers of terrible presents
and hopeful futures. Further, the use of the NR in the teaching of critical pedagogy also
contributes to the proliferation of gloom and doom. In fact, it often does so quite well.
The references to Ellsworth (1989) and to Bullough and Gitlin (1995) by the students in
the seminar on Paulo Freire are illustrative of the complexities of the tasks ahead. For
these three scholars and for many teacher educators, there is a sense that critical pedag-
yogy can be a self-defeating endeavor, in part because its “rationalist assumptions” and
difficulties in analyzing power imbalances between critical pedagogues and their stu-
dents. Critique of public schools, and of our own roles as teachers and teacher educators,
is essential, but it can become debilitating, we believe, if not informed by a vision of hope
not structured in the NR fashion.

A remarkable characteristic of the NR is the normative presentation of confl icts and
struggles as expressions of hope in connection with educational and social change. Yet,
only within the redemptive mythology of heroic teachers and students, is it possible to
find “hope” inherent in racism, poverty, discrimination, and other confl icts, for to do so
requires one often to minimize or ignore the real-life risks and suffering associated to
those struggles.

We do not see any “natural connection” between struggle and hope, or even between
schooling and hope. Our position is to recognize that conflicts and struggles are part of
the everyday life of schools and societies, sometimes explicit and clear, often implicit and
confusing, but always anchored in complex manners and expressing multiple dynamics
of class, race, sexuality, language, and ethnicity relationships. It is in this unavoidability
of the educational confl icts that committed teachers “must speak for hope, as long as it
doesn’t mean suppressing the nature of the danger” (Williams, 1989, p. 322). It is for these
reasons that we find the intersection of critical pedagogy with the narrative of redemption
as expressed in Nancy’s Hello Kitty hopes to be counterproductive to the development of
critically aware teachers who are effective in developing socially just school reform.

We contend that the concrete results of schooling, as understood through the lived
experience of the pedagogical relationship between teachers and students, cannot be sim-
ply reduced to absolute and universal terms of either complete failure or total success. For
Nancy and for countless teachers, assessing the results of their/our pedagogical interven-
tion is constrained by confl ictive relationships and the ways in which each of us, as mem-
bers of multiple and specific social groups, recognizes, perceives, believes, and acts upon
complex and contradictory realities. We contend that this “lived irreducibleness” of most
educational processes, confronts teachers and students with unavoidable tensions, and underlies the sense of hopelessness and loss of agency that many progressive educators can feel at the end of a semester of critical pedagogy that focuses too strongly on binary opposition and a simplistic understanding of conscientization.

We propose that schools do not need and cannot sustain superteachers or critically super-conscious “organic intellectuals.” Instead, schools need teachers that can recognize their intellectual function and can then assume the role of “committed intellectuals” (Fischman, 1998). The committed intellectual is more of an orientation or a process than a final state of being, and perhaps more importantly, commitment likely precedes or at least develops with conscientization (Fischman & McLaren, 2005). Thus, the teaching of CP should begin here as well. Paulo Freire (1989) has noted:

Concientization is not exactly the starting point of commitment. Concientization is more of a product of commitment. I do not have to be already critically self-conscious in order to struggle. By struggling I become conscious/aware. (p. 46)

In other words, an educator who is a committed intellectual is sometimes critically self-conscious and actively engaged in social networks, but at other times is confused, or even unaware of his or her limitations or capacities to be an active proponent of social change. They will continue to be both oppressed and oppressor, even as they struggle to become less of both.

Freire came to recognize that a deep understanding of the complex processes of oppression and domination is not enough to guarantee personal or collective praxis. Commitment is central, but the commitment to struggle against injustice is not “organic” and is more natural for some people than for others (Fischman & McLaren, 2005). Further, this commitment is not just to an individual struggle, but also to a developing community of similarly committed fellow activists. Only by developing an understanding that is born of a commitment to social justice in cooperation with others can such an understanding lead to both the type of conscientization and the countersystemic networks necessary to challenge the hegemonic structures of domination and exploitation. The inequities of the globalization of capital can be challenged and even defeated, but not simply by understanding its formation and toiling individually; rather, it requires developing the will and the courage—the commitment—to struggle against it in cooperation with others.

The notion of the teacher as a committed intellectual is exactly the opposite of the teacher as the superagent of educational change, where he or she is able to do all the heroic tasks and thus everything is possible. Following Badiou (2001), we assume that the accomplishments of the committed intellectual will be a lot more humble:

The conception of politics that we defend is far from the idea that “everything is possible”. In fact, it is an immense task to try to propose a few possibles, in the plural—a few possibilities other than what we are told is possible. It is a matter of showing how the space of the possible is larger than the one we are assigned—that something else is possible, but not that everything is possible. (p. 115)

We contend that potentially all teachers could be committed intellectuals, based on the functions that they perform and not on any essential virtue or characteristic. For such a teacher it is not enough to understand how the multiple forms of exploitation are affecting their students, their families and communities; they are committed to reflectively act in their classroom (and beyond) as one of the focal points to transform the world. As Foucault (1980) convincingly indicates,
The essential political problem for the intellectual is not to criticize the ideological contents supposedly linked to science, or to ensure that his own scientific practice is accompanied by a correct ideology, but that of ascertaining the possibility of constituting a new politics of truth. The problem is not changing people’s consciousness—or what’s in their heads—but the political, economic, institutional regime of the production of truth. (p. 133)

The teacher as a committed intellectual recognizes that the Freirean notion of praxis and the capacity to engage in critical self-consciousness are not enough to transform both the repressive and integrative functions of the hegemonic orders. Nevertheless, they are necessary to finding ways to actively intervene in the world order in ways that have the potential to transform that world.

Contrary to the all-powerful “heroic-teacher” or the all-knowing “superconscious critical-teacher” of the NR, the teacher as committed intellectual that we propose is committed and oriented by the goals of educational and social justice without succumbing to essentialist positions or easy rhetorical discourses of good versus evil, populist nostalgia, possessive parochialism, or militant cultural particularism (Glass, 2004). We acknowledge that labor–capital antagonism is a fundamental dialectical contradiction within capitalist society, but reject as self-defeating the reduction of educational conflicts to simplistic binaries such as evil neoliberalism versus good social democracy.

Conclusions

Hope for a better and fairer future for our schools and societies is not problematic per se; however, hope that relies on a redemptive narrative of individual superteacher heroism, whether wrapped in neoliberal ideology or critical discourses, is ineffectual hope. Learning from Nancy’s example implies the recognition that using critical pedagogy to inform our work as teachers requires that our classrooms offer not only consistent theoretical analyses, but also the commitment to value and aid the concrete practical experiences of our students.

To this end, we present three main ideas to guide the practice of teaching critical pedagogy so that it confronts the complex influences of globalization and neo-liberalism with the lived experiences of successful teachers in a manner that results in an empowered agency more than feelings of sadness and defeat. First, teachers and practitioners of CP should develop pedagogies that understand why the discourse of neoliberal globalization has become so dominant in educational spaces. Second, CP and especially the concept of pedagogical hope should not be structured as narratives of redemption that cannot help but get trapped in a cycle of self-defeating demands that teachers perform ever more challenging, heroic tasks. Third, CP should focus on the development of the notion and practices for educators to be committed intellectuals first, rather than ones that are primarily superconscious, always and purely resisting global and neoliberal policies and practices as part of a system of school reform. Teachers as committed intellectuals can engage in individual and collective actions as an integral part of the always contradictory and conflictive on-going processes of conscientization and educational change.

Freire (1997a) believed that hope is a historical and ontological need and not an external characteristic of the pedagogical situation, alien to the daily struggle of teachers and students. Critical pedagogues have developed a great repertoire of concepts and practices alternative to the oppressive educational systems (be they neo-liberal or not), but in order to be effective CP should recognize that the starting point of many teachers is similar to Nancy’s original Hello Kitty hopeful attitude. As Freire vehemently stated “Just to hope,
is to hope in vain” (1997b, p. 9), but it is nonetheless a better starting point that a cynical or hopeless perspective. We are committed to rethinking our students’ as well as our own categories of analysis, and reflecting on the differences between hope in the individualistic heroic narrative of redemption and hope in a Freirean sense, which requires hope to be put in a concrete, practical experience of collective struggle, dialogue, and conflict. Then, critical pedagogy will attain its hopeful goals.

Notes

1. This seminar was taught by Gustavo E. Fischman at Arizona State University during the Fall 2005 semester.
2. Elizabeth Ellsworth’s “Why Doesn’t This Feel Empowering” (1989) was one of the required readings for the class. Ellsworth’s article is considered one of the most poignant criticisms to the theory and practice of CP because she concluded that far from providing a discourse of hope and transformation and the abilities needed to make reforms, CP made things worse. When participants in our class attempted to put into practice prescriptions offered in the literature [of critical pedagogy] concerning empowerment, student voice, and dialogue, we produced results that were not only unhelpful, but actually exacerbated the very conditions we were trying to work against, including Eurocentrism, racism, sexism, classism, and “banking education.”... Far from helping to overcome relations of oppression in the classroom, the “discourses of critical pedagogy”...had themselves become vehicles of repression. (p. 298)
3. The United Nations (2005) report on the world social situation concluded that “Surveys conducted in Africa, East Asia, Europe and Latin America indicate that a growing majority of individuals feel they have no control or influence over the economic, political and social factors that affect their lives. Economic and security concerns are causing a great deal of anxiety, and there is little confidence in the ability or commitment of State institutions to manage these growing problems” (p. 113).
4. We are not attempting to minimize the impact of the extensive use of information technologies and cyberspace in the transformation of everyday life, which is undoubtedly enormous, but to avoid considering cyberspace and IT as the new redeeming tool. As Wertheim (1997) noted, “Today’s proselytizers of cyberspace proffer their domain as an ideal ‘above’ and ‘beyond’ the problems of the material world. While early Christians promulgated heaven as a realm in which the human soul would be freed from the frailties and failings of the flesh, so today’s champions of cyberspace hail it as a place where the self will be freed from the limitations of physical embodiment” (p. 296, cited in Bauman, 1998, p. 19).
5. Bauman (1998) points out that the public no longer dominates the private: “The opposite is the case: it is the private that colonizes the public space, squeezing out and chasing away everything which cannot be fully, without residue, translated into the vocabulary of private interests and pursuits” (p. 107). Similarly, Lipsitz (2000) rightly argues that these discourses were very effective to “hide public concerns while foregrounding private interests—to encourage people to think of themselves as taxpayers and homeowners rather than as citizens and workers, to depict private property interests and the accumulated advantages accorded to white men as universal while condemning demands for redistributive justice by women, racial and sexual minorities, and by other aggrieved social groups as the ‘whining of special interests’” (p. 84).

References


