

Overview of New Pedagogies for Social Change

Susan Roberta Katz and Cecilia Elizabeth O'Leary

AS THE UNITED STATES ENTERS THE 21ST CENTURY, WE FACE MAJOR CHALLENGES in achieving equity, diversity, and democratic access to higher education. Over the last 50 years, educators and students alike have witnessed both profound gains and losses. A period of significant expansion and transformation took place between the passage of the post-World War II G.I. Bill and the implementation of affirmative action policies during the 1960s to the mid-1970s. This profound democratization of higher education was also accompanied by far-ranging changes in student and faculty diversity. The impact of multiculturalism was particularly seen in the design of new courses and the emergence of new social relations on university campuses.

The 1978 Supreme Court decision in the *Bakke* case signaled the contraction of affirmative action policies and the beginning of a profound retrenchment and reorganization of higher education; attacks on affirmative action and on civil and linguistic rights in education intensified. By the 1980s, pedagogy and curricula that had once fostered critical analysis began to reflect the political-economic status quo. "Separated from its original political base in the civil rights and women's movements," argues Tony Platt (1999: 13), "multiculturalism became increasingly apolitical and managerial in its orientation to diversity." An emphasis on cultural contributions — such as food, dance, and music — often replaced critiques of power.

Throughout the 1990s, budget cuts in public education and public health, paralleled by the unprecedented growth of police and prisons, further narrowed educational opportunities. Today, class inequalities and educational tracking, combined with the rising costs of education, are making it almost impossible for poor students to move up the educational ladder. We need to demand, Platt argues, "changes in public policy that recognize the interrelationship of educational, social, and economic issues" (*Ibid.*: 30).

Today, educators, students, and communities find themselves at a critical crossroads. This is a time when dialogue and alliances across disciplines and communities need to be forged so that gains from the past are not irrevocably lost

SUSAN ROBERTA KATZ and CECILIA ELIZABETH O'LEARY are members of the Editorial Board of *Social Justice* (P.O. Box 40601, San Francisco, CA 94140).

and new strategies for teaching and learning can emerge. We offer this special issue of *Social Justice* as one vehicle toward accomplishing these ends. From around the country, even extending beyond its borders to Brazil, we found individual educators committed to developing learning communities in which critical thinking, collaboration, and active engagement are at the forefront. However, too often these individuals work in small groups and in isolation from each other. A rare example of collaboration in a progressive community exists in a new university, California State University, Monterey Bay (CSUMB). In this issue, we share some of these inspiring examples as well as provide a critical analysis of higher education.

Clearly, what we are witnessing today in the U.S. and around the world is the dominance of a new market economy paradigm in the field of education. Local knowledge in the hands of teachers and students is increasingly devalued in contrast to corporate expertise. Discourses of “accountability,” “standards,” and “high stakes testing” are too often used as a mask, disguising real questions: Who controls learning and teaching? What should be the purpose of education for historically underrepresented populations? These questions are fraught with tension in our global capitalist society. At the K-12 level, educational decisions such as the language of instruction, the content of the curriculum, and the nature of assessment are no longer made by classroom teachers, or even by local school districts, but by business-directed state and national policies.

At the university level, faculty are undergoing increasing pressure to sacrifice academic freedom in the name of “standards” and to follow a paradigm of “outcomes-based education” that favors memorization over critical and creative thinking. Moreover, the hiring of “temporary” instructors (part-time and non-tenure track) is steadily rising in comparison to the number of tenure-track faculty (NCES, 2002), resulting in less job security and more risk to innovative teaching and research. This pattern has created a “reserve army of labor” — last hired and first fired — that is often disproportionately composed of faculty of color and women. In the next decade, an unprecedented number of tenured professors will retire. If the current pattern continues, these positions will not be replaced by tenure-track lines, but will either become consolidated or replaced by temporary faculty, all in the name of “cost saving.” As Gandin and Apple state in this issue:

In this period of crisis in which we are living, we are told by neoliberals that only by turning our schools, teachers, and children over to the competitive market will we find a solution. We are told by neoconservatives that the only way out is to return to real knowledge. Popular knowledge, knowledge that is connected to and organized around the lives of the most disadvantaged members of our communities, is not legitimate. Yet, are the neoliberal and neoconservative positions the only alternatives? We do not think so.

In a similar spirit, the editors of this special issue of *Social Justice* have collected articles that reflect either critiques of, or alternatives to, the market-economy model of education. A founding faculty member of CSUMB, Christine E. Sleeter, shows how state control of curricula serves a key ideological function in Western capitalist democracies. Sleeter argues that the movement for state standardization of curriculum has ideologically disguised the triumph of market forces in the control of knowledge and the framing of educational goals. In “State Curriculum Standards and the Shaping of Student Consciousness,” Sleeter analyzes a specific, state-mandated History-Social Science Framework, which on the surface appears to make multicultural contributions, but in actuality counters the critical scholarship developed by historically marginalized groups. Sleeter concludes by calling on educators to “uncover the deep structure of ideas” underlying state-adopted curriculum and to critically evaluate how the use of national testing is likely to widen gaps along lines of race, class, and gender.

In “Can Education Challenge Neoliberalism? The Citizen School and the Struggle for Democracy in Porto Alegre, Brazil,” Luis Armando Gandin and Michael Apple look beyond the U.S. to examine how negotiating local control of schooling can be a powerful force of resistance against the market-economy paradigm of education. In general, education in Brazil is highly centralized and focused on conservative modernization, in which opportunities for local control are limited. The municipal government of Porto Alegre, under the leadership of the Workers’ Party, is an exception to this trend, having specifically allocated resources and decision-making to residents of its most impoverished neighborhoods through a measure called “Participatory Budgeting.” A major project of the city is the “Citizen School,” where social transformation is at the core of its curriculum and pedagogy. Porto Alegre shows what is possible for the democratization of education when renegotiation of relations of power takes place at the local, state, and national levels.

Tony Platt, like Christine Sleeter, provides a critique of the superficial nature of reforms in higher education. He analyzes how the movement toward multiculturalism has become co-opted, serving as a smokescreen for deeper structural problems like institutionalized racism. In “Desegregating Multiculturalism: Problems in the Theory and Pedagogy of Diversity Education,” Platt poses the question: To what extent has multicultural education at the college level become an apology for inequality and segregation? He broadly reviews the contributions and contradictions of multiculturalism over the last 30 years, documenting ways in which the focus on “culture” has blurred a clear, historical understanding of racism. As Platt states, “celebrating differences is a far cry from dismantling inequalities.”

While multicultural curricula have too often supported the status quo, assaults on diversity and affirmative action have proceeded at an accelerated rate. Eugene E. García and Julie Figueroa look at the roots and consequences of a deepening

social divide at elite public institutions. In particular, they focus on the dramatic under-representation of Latina/os at the University of California. García and Figueroa also document the unique social challenges that underrepresented university students face after being admitted, demonstrating the need for institutional support that values students' culture both inside and outside the classroom.

In this vein, the second half of this issue looks at new pedagogies in institutions of higher learning that build upon the lived experiences and resources of working-class and historically underrepresented students. Pedagogies are designed to facilitate academic success, as well as engage students in work for social justice. Overall, a spectrum of models for teaching and learning are proposed — from activism in the academy to community/university reciprocity — all of which are based on reflection, praxis, and critical thinking. These pedagogies, which transform traditional concepts of knowledge and relationships of power, draw upon the work of Paolo Freire, the radical Brazilian educator who influenced revolutionary literacy campaigns throughout the world. Freire (1987: 127) stated:

Educators cannot work successfully by themselves; they have to work collaboratively in order to succeed in integrating the cultural elements produced by the subordinate students in their educational process. Finally, these educators have to invent and create methods in which they maximize the limited space for possible change that is available to them. They need to use their students' cultural universe as a point of departure, enabling students to recognize themselves as possessing a specific and important cultural identity.

Taking a Freirean approach in "Toward a Critical Teacher Education: High School Student Sociologists as Teacher Educators," authors Ernest Morrell and Anthony Collatos describe an innovative teacher education program at the University of California, Los Angeles (UCLA), in which urban high school students of color actually trained pre-service teachers. The students took UCLA summer courses and participated in research projects in the sociology of education. Then, along with teacher education faculty, they helped to train pre-service teachers by giving guest lectures, presenting their research findings, and participating in critical dialogue. This reversal of the traditional teacher-student relationship provides a way to develop pedagogy and curricula rooted in diversity and real-life issues of social justice as understood from the perspective of urban students of color.

June Gordon of the University of California, Santa Cruz (UCSC), similarly discusses how she has incorporated the voices of marginalized university students into the foundation of her course on "Race, Culture, and Class." Gordon invited her students who were ex-gang members to participate in an ethnographic research project in which they interviewed other gang members from their home communities. These students then shared their research findings in the class and, in turn,

educated more privileged middle-class UCSC students on the complex realities of urban life. Gordon found that “engaging students in authentic research and inquiry brings about their own best efforts and eventual success.” In the process of conducting and sharing their research, the once marginalized students found a bridge to their own changed position as university students.

Working within the urban community, Shawn Ginwright and Julio Cammarota propose a new “Social Justice Youth Development Model” that addresses structures of power and teaches young people to understand how their opportunities are circumscribed by larger political, economic, and social forces. This model offers a critique of two dominant approaches to youth development: a traditional approach that focuses on individual and psychological outcomes for youth, and a more liberal service learning approach that perpetuates paternalism, but does not change external conditions of power relations. Both models can be, and have been, particularly oppressive for urban youth of color. Instead, Ginwright and Cammarota’s model views youth as agents of social change and fosters “the praxis of critical consciousness and social action” by taking youth through three stages: self-awareness, social awareness, and global awareness.

Rina Benmayer’s “Narrating Cultural Citizenship: Oral Histories of First-Generation College Students of Mexican Origin” uses research produced by her students to analyze how students negotiate multiple cultural worlds, drawing upon different funds of knowledge. “Too often traditional forms of assessment,” explains Benmayer, “stigmatize bilingual and bicultural students as academically deficient.” Rather than being viewed as “problems,” her oral history course intentionally provides space for first-generation students to draw upon their lived expertise. Benmayer finds in the oral histories of Mexican-origin, first-generation students a “process of turning histories of cultural and economic subordination into empowering integrative spaces.” At CSUMB, these students are able to model the possibility of creating a better future not only for themselves, but also for their families and communities.

In “Making Multiple Literacies Visible in the Writing Classroom,” Diana Garcia describes how she changed her pedagogy to draw upon her Spanish-speaking students’ assets. “Here I was, a Chicana, the daughter of one-time farm workers, a nontraditional student,” writes Garcia “and I had forgotten that when our non-native-speaking students cross the quad and enter the classroom, they are entering foreign territory.” Out of this realization, Garcia has created an innovative model for second-language acquisition in the English Composition classroom at CSUMB that combines student research of local communities with the expressive use of poetry.

Frances Payne Adler, founder of the CSUMB Creative Writing and Social Action Program, also teaches students to “break silences, to witness their lives, to be engaged and responsible members of their communities, to bring together craft and critical inquiry.” Yet taking this approach is not easy, cautions Debra Busman,

another member of the program. In her prose essay, Busman tells us that “You Gotta Be Ready for Some Serious Truth to Be Spoken” when you ask students to connect their lives with broader issues of power and powerlessness. Bearing witness is an essential part of facing hard truths, which can lead to the linking of creative writing to social activism. In one example, Adler describes a class in which students must confront their own views of welfare as they collaborate with single mothers at a local community college. Their product, a co-authored book titled *Education as Emancipation: Women on Welfare Speak Out*, has gone through several reprintings and has been used extensively to educate communities and legislators about the need for welfare reform.

David Takcas in “Positionality, Epistemology, and Social Justice in the Classroom” describes how he begins each semester by asking students in his science department, “How does who you are and where you stand in relation to others shape what you know about the world?” Takcas believes that by enabling each student to speak out of their unique experience, the class is better equipped to understand and effectively deal with the power relations that are part of every classroom discussion. In creating an assets model of multiculturalism, Takcas promotes listening, self-reflection, and consensus building. Even “bias” can be a resource, he explains, as students listen to each other and delve into assumptions that have been blindly followed.

In “Digital Technologies and Pedagogies,” Tracey Weis, Rina Benmayor, Cecilia O’Leary, and Bret Eynon share their experiences with using New Media to change approaches to teaching and learning. The four short papers — presented at the Annual Meeting of the Oral History Association, 2002 — are snapshots of how they have developed technology-enhanced classrooms into places of active inquiry and authorship.

Richard Bains and Amalia Mesa-Bains move us beyond the creation of knowledge in the classroom by proposing how the concept of reciprocity in an arts-education model can radically change relations between universities and their surrounding communities. “We begin from a belief system,” explains Amalia Mesa-Bains, “in which art is a transformative practice...a language and a form in which people express the deepest needs and beliefs that they have.” The role of the arts, service learning, social justice, and cultural citizenship are all addressed in this far-ranging, open-ended dialogue about the philosophy and the experiences of co-founding a Reciprocal University Arts Program between CSUMB and community groups in Watsonville, Salinas, Seaside, and Monterey.

In all of the articles in this issue, the authors confront the dynamics of inequality and the need for equity. Racism, as an ideology and as practice, creates one of the most formidable barriers to the democratization of education. In the university classroom, tackling the impact of institutionalized and individual racism is a challenging and sometimes explosive endeavor. Few instructors are courageous enough to take this on. Ann Berlak and Sekani Moyenda’s book,

Taking It Personally: Racism in the Classroom from Kindergarten to College, describes their experience in uncovering the many layers of racism in Berlak's graduate education class. According to Herbert Kohl's review, this book "presents as raw and direct a discussion of racism as I have seen in the educational literature." The book focuses on an analysis of a class session in Berlak's diversity course at San Francisco State University, in which Moyenda, the guest speaker, set off sparks among students. Kohl questions the effectiveness of the authors' "assault strategy" to get students to confront their own racism. In response to this critique, Ann Berlak and Sekani Moyenda provide two individual commentaries, thus building a complex dialogue on the question of how to best address racism in the classroom.

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