



ISSN: 0975-833X

Available online at <http://www.journalcra.com>

*International Journal of Current Research*  
Vol. 9, Issue, 11, pp.60744-60746, November, 2017

**INTERNATIONAL JOURNAL  
OF CURRENT RESEARCH**

## RESEARCH ARTICLE

### GLOBAL NEOLIBERALISM AND DEWEY'S LEGACY

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#### ARTICLE INFO

##### *Article History:*

Received 25<sup>th</sup> August, 2017  
Received in revised form  
14<sup>th</sup> September, 2017  
Accepted 29<sup>th</sup> October, 2017  
Published online 30<sup>th</sup> November, 2017

##### *Key words:*

Dewey, education,  
Democratic society,  
Globalization,  
Mercantilization of education.

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**Citation:** Paulo Brazão, 2017. "Global neoliberalism and dewey's legacy", *International Journal of Current Research*, 9, (11), 60744-60746.

#### ABSTRACT

This article intends to identify some restrictions of globalization for western societies. We discuss how the mercantilization of education influence western societies, modify the education, and how can Dewey's thinking to contrast. We reclaim the prevalence of experience, participation and critical thinking, as a construct of democratic society, a perspective of resistance and hope in solving the constraints of the post-contemporary world.

#### INTRODUCTION

Some constraints on Education today are provoked by economic globalization, powered by the action of technology. For Dave Hill (2003) the policies of neoliberal capitalism have resulted in increasing inequality in social, educational and economic systems. These systems were restructured under the influence of local and international organizations on the most permeable governments. These inequalities have diminished democratic accountability and stifled critical thinking (Hill, 2003). Education for democratic society was rescued by technology. Often the new technological prodigies are shown with the same pertinence and effectiveness as the manipulation of information for social control and the debauchery of private life. In the context of educational change, there is an ideological offensive with a business plan on education. Educational markets had an exponential growth in the inequalities of access to education, a little throughout the globalized world.

Hill (2003) makes explicit three goals of this business plan:

- Produce socially the strength of work, by preparing and selecting individuals for job;
- Provide and facilitate profit with Education;
- Making the business profitable on an international scale, through privatization actions.

There are a pathologization of the "free market model" because it is not really a free market, but a global business model with distorted rules that destroy and reduce the possibilities of competition in the business by incorporating innovative small businesses. This system of rules is circumvented by the US and the European Union on countries receiving aid from the FMI and the World Bank with indications that they open their markets to imports from large corporations. Hill (2003) announce some consequences:

- A loss of equity and economic and social justice;
- A loss of democracy and democratic accountability;
- A loss of critical thinking within a performance culture. Hill (2003: 28)

Hatcher (2001, 2002) shows that the business agenda for education is aimed at ideological and economic reproduction over states and schools to make them conducive to market needs. The mercantilization of education is more visible in the United States but also in England and Australia, and has altered the view of childhood culture. We see the uncontrollable growth of commercialization of education, and consumption (Giroux, 2012). Multibillion-dollar companies have become the educational and cultural vehicle that shape and hijack the way young people define their interests, values, and relationships with others. This valuation only determines profit as success and the commodity as social relation, regulated by markets (Grosseberg, 2005). Economic groups continue to pressure governments to open education to the free

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market. This resulted in a conception of childhood as a commodity and democracy as a social enemy.

### **Educating for a democratic society: The Dewey legacy**

#### **What is to educate for a democratic society?**

According Dewey (1916), Education consists of transmission through communication. As societies become more complex in structures and resources they have had to implement intentional formal teaching and learning (Dewey, 1916). The development of the younger cannot take place by the direct transmission of beliefs and values, emotions and knowledge. It is done through the environment. The social environment has an educational effect and consists of the combination of all the activities that involve the individuals and where they acquire the necessary skills, when the appropriate emotional state is gathered (Dewey, 1916). Education must have a purpose. The purpose of education is to enable the human development and growth of all members who establish reciprocity, (Dewey, 1916). The School assumes an important means of transmitting culture. To educate is to reconstruct or to reorganize the experience finding the intrinsic sense of the same, conducts it to new cycles of action. Thinking is the method of educating and producing knowledge.

On the concept of a democratic society, Dewey says that it will only be effective if citizens' lives are constituted by experiences of free participation, free joint construction and free communication of meanings. Only a democratic society will allow free communication of experience between individuals, Muraro (2013). To educate for democratic life it is necessary to develop reflective thinking about the problems of human experience. This thinking develops from an original problem of the individuals' experience, leading them to build beliefs and solve problems. An education for a democratic society should provide individuals with a personal interest in social relationships that enable social change. For Dewey, democracy is not just a form of government. It presents itself as the totality of human relations and possesses a moral and ideal meaning in the context of humanistic culture, on the one hand because it demands from everyone a social retribution, on the other hand because it gives everyone the opportunity to develop the aptitudes of each one. But for this logic of action to work, there must be no divorce between the two components mentioned. Only then does the consolidation of the idea of continuity, growth and development take place (Muraro, 2013).

The ideal of a democratic society should be the full and equal participation of all its members and at the same time ensure the flexible adaptation of institutions through the different forms of interaction of associative life (Dewey, 1916). Given that education is a social process present in the plurality of societies. For Dewey there are two criteria for the criticism and educational construction of an ideal society: extension, that is, the dissemination of group interests shared by all members and the fullness to observe the freedom with which the members of each group interact with those of another community. An undesirable society should be one that creates barriers to free exchange and free communication of experiences, internally and externally.

Muraro (2013) synthesizes four principles on the concept of education and democracy in Dewey:

- Education constitutes a reflexive experience based on the experience of the empirical field. This is the origin and destiny of thought;
- The act of thinking implies originality in transforming the situation experienced;
- Learning to think the problems of experience is the main function of education, a fundamental condition for democratic life.
- Democratic life does not develop with the repetition or application of definitive models and formulas, or of memorized knowledge, but is a continuous reconstruction of shared knowledge in which accumulated experience is essential content (Muraro, 2013, 819).

According Paraskeva (2007) Dewey argued that school was the place the ideal place to ensure the principles of a democratic society because through it equality would be achieved, but instead of proposing school as the basis of democracy, or a democracy with the importance social and political, supported in the intellectual freedom, defended democracy as a method and through the school, then society should be transformed. Dewey believed that school had an important role of production in changing society and that optimizing students' abilities to participate and evaluate social life could be achieved without indoctrination (Paraskeva, 2007).

#### **Resist and affirm the education for a democratic society**

What to do about the current constraints on education and democracy in a society with changes in hypersonic speed? (Sousa, 2016). It is necessary to create spaces of resistance, as stated by MacLaren (2000, 2002, cited by Hill, 2003).

According to these authors, the following guidelines may be considered:

- Think of Education as a political act. The issues educating for a democratic society must be given back to the area of pedagogy so that it can be legitimately debated by educators as intellectual workers.
- Maintain an intellectual and transformative public activity, remembering that educators are intellectual workers and must provide this social contribution.
- Maintain a critical attitude about digital culture in order to reverse the harmful potential of technology, to prevent and denounce social control; use technology to promote equity through inter-social dialogue; permeability of intercultural communication, among others.
- Thinking about education for social production. It is in education that we can obtain social production and the school is the privileged space to do so. Like Dewey, we believe it is in education that we can get social production and school is the ideal space to do so. Of course there are many other social spaces to do it too. Thinking about education as an element of intergenerational transmission will be interesting to understand the critical sense of the current embarrassment phenomena, observing the guidelines taken for public policies in the area of education. The consequences of the mercantilization of education must be addressed in the pedagogical debate. Policies of commodifying education with the logic of waste and

disposal leave permanent damage to the way societies face youth and childhood. These are not just issues of political or economic debate (Brazão, 2015).

- Resist the pressure of the neoliberal agenda and fight for the rescue of the educational space for emancipatory purposes. Criticism is consolidated by the affirmation of the cause and the cause cannot be unaware of the identity of who produces it.
- Educating for a democratic society is to educate for social participation, defending it as a principle, taking care of it in its process and criticizing it in its purpose.

After all, what is Education for?

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