

Review:

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Dennis Beach, Tuula Gordon & Elina Lahelma (Eds.) (2003).
Democratic Education: Ethnographic Challenges. London, UK:
The Tufnell Press, 159 pages, ISBN 1-872767-427, \$19.85

Key words:
ethnography,
Nordic countries,
policy analysis,
educational
policies-practices,
social justice and
democracy,
gender, social
class, ethnicity,
nationality

Abstract: *Democratic Education: Ethnographic Challenges* is an important resource for all who are interested not only in education but also in research, public administration and policy analysis. Ethnographers from Norway, Sweden, Denmark, Finland, the United Kingdom and the United States share with us research conducted in their countries. The ten studies examine in depth the impact of new-right policies in educational settings. In this regard, democracy and social justice are discussed while focusing on gender, social class, ethnicity and nationality. The authors frame their work in diverse ways including the use of Marxist, feminist, poststructuralist and postcolonial theories. The findings invite us to think critically about daily life in schools. Aside from the overall importance of the topic, this book is also a good example of interdisciplinary and international collaboration.

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1. Globalization and Education

Teachers around the world have been dealing with change and reforms. We often do not realize either what the real purpose of change is or who the "winner" is in this game called "reform." The authors of this book take us into this issue. They study the impact of global market forces on education and invite us to think about the meaning of change for those involved. In doing ethnography, the writers of this book share with us critical analyses of social and cultural processes, practices and meanings in educational sites. They also explore the impact of educational politics and policies on daily routines in school. Specifically, the research allows us to see people usually invisible: strangers, immigrants, young women or just poor people. [1]

Even though the studies were conducted mostly in Nordic countries I found connections with other experiences, such as that of Latin America. Globalization and restructuring are the common point (BELLO 2003). The research shows us concrete examples from specific countries, but the findings made me reflect about my own local reality. [2]

The book is organized in ten chapters grouped into three parts: Part I, "From policies to classroom," Part II, "Construction of normality and difference," and Part III, "Discourses and practices." [3]

The researchers craft their stories of action within diverse educational settings ranging from preschool to teacher education. Studies were framed with diverse theoretical approaches from poststructuralist to Marxist, interactionist and feminist perspectives. Questions of power are raised in each of the ten studies in the book. As ethnographies, findings are presented as analytic narratives that tell different stories since they come directly from the field's actors rather than from either politicians or policy makers. Teachers learn that New Right policies aren't the only possible future and that there is always room for creativity and resistance. [4]

2. Inclusion vs. Exclusion

Part I, "From policies to classrooms," contains three studies. These share a common topic: inclusion/exclusion. Even though they focus on different populations, each of these ethnographies shows diverse ways in which people have been excluded. [5]

2.1 Comparative ethnography

The first work is "Comparative ethnography: Fabricating the new millennium and its exclusions" by Sverker LINDBLAD from University of Uppsala, Department of Education, Sweden and Thomas S. POPKEWITZ from University of Wisconsin-Madison, USA. [6]

The aim of the research was to study social inclusion, exclusion and governance. The cases are: three Mediterranean states, Greece, Spain and Portugal; three Nordic welfare states under reconstruction, Finland, Iceland and Sweden; two UK cases, England and Scotland. Australia and Germany are also included. The sources of information were people, who talked to the researchers about the culture of schooling, and texts, in the form of government documents and statistical reports. [7]

Comparing the countries in the study, we can find similarities. One of them was fatalism about the globalism of the changes. The teachers who appear in this study take change to be inevitable in their national school system. As LAVAL (2003) suggests, these findings can be understood since the new liberalism forces are introduced as the universal, the unique and the ideal way forward; in short: "the solution." [8]

The authors compared these findings with those from a study they carried out in the 1980's. We learn that marginalization and exclusion are expressed in different ways in relation to social problems and then school problems. A shift is seen in categorizing the problem of exclusion in educational statistical reports to changing governing practices. There is also a shift from governance by rules that focus on input approach (how much money a country spends in education, what social class achieves and stays in the educational system) to governance by goals that focus on output evaluation. What is clear in this report is that the focus on outputs as a means of control is shaping school practices; now, like industries, schools are judged by their capacity to produce specific results. [9]

The researchers' approach is to think of the local and the global as in interplay and overlapping. Global discourses are part of local practices and talk. Ethnographers realize that globalization and restructuring require thinking about actors in multiple sites who are present in any speech or school practice. When this occurs, the meaning of inclusion/exclusion meaning is built into the scenery of both the local and the global. [10]

This research makes us reflect about diverse issues. I used BOURDIEU's approach to ask myself some questions, such as: How does any local society link global economy to local symbols while building new meanings of "inclusion," "exclusion" and "governance?" Can global meaning be shaped by local culture and practices? Do the teachers realize this chance? [11]

2.2 Citizenship in schools

The second study is "Nation space: The construction of citizenship and difference in schools," by Tuula GORDON and Janet HOLLAND. It was carried out in four secondary schools in Helsinki and London. Practices at school are explored through comparative, cross-cultural contextual and cooperative ethnographic research. Data collection involved teachers, students, textbooks and teaching materials. The pedagogic relation, youth cultures, school-home relationships,

space and embodiment were explored. The focus was regulation and emancipation while exploring the process of "making space." [12]

Studying the construction of citizenship, the researchers focused on both nation space and school space. Certainly these are connected; national educational systems are purposefully created, and in that sense what happens in school space is connected to nation space but is not determined by it. Earlier literature reported a mechanistic correspondence: that school replicates the hierarchical division of labor in production. In this work, the researchers argue that the correspondence is less deterministic and that cultural context must be taken into account. [13]

The nation space has a physical dimension in terms of its borders, a social dimension in the net of social relations that connects it, and a mental dimension in the representation of images of a common past and shared present. In the school, an official layer is shown in the curriculum, textbooks, teaching materials and methods and in classroom interactions. An informal layer is seen in the interaction among students in other areas of the school, between teachers and students beyond classroom interactions, and in other groups working in the school. [14]

The authors conclude that informal and physical practices at school include complex processes constructing gendered and racialized otherness. Their findings show us a complex interplay between race, gender, ethnicity and nationality in which masculinity and the exercise of male power are dominant features. These findings are consistent with those of researchers in a Mexican context, including mine (CORTES, CHE & SOSA 2000), but the researchers also reported other processes involving more fluidity and diversity. [15]

Space becomes a place for hierarchical space organization. Schools organize space, time, movements and talks. According to these authors, students respond to this organization in a socially differentiated fashion; at the same time, correspondences between physical, social and mental areas of nation space and of school space are not simple and involve breaks and tensions which provide more inclusive practices and contribute to the building of citizenship. School practices can contribute to questioning and challenging exclusive conceptions of nations and nationality, something which is not easy in a neoliberal context. The authors remark that while educational policies foster multiculturalism in both UK schools and Finnish schools, some racist practices prevail in both countries. It is clear that New Right politics do not provide a sufficient framework for inclusion and democracy. [16]

2.3 Being a girl at school

Usually we see the Nordic countries as providing a "model" of gender equality, but this section of the book leads us to question this view. The study "Strong Nordic women in the making? Gender policies and classroom practices," conducted by Elina LAHELMA and Elisabet ÖHRN, reports that in the Nordic

countries the result of new right thinking has been the weakening of social democratic policies committed to gender equity. [17]

The study is an ethnography conducted in Helsinki secondary schools. It traces the trajectory of educational policies from the macro level of the broad social context to the micro level in the classroom. The research includes analysis of the effect of gender on the research agenda and on educational policies, on the meaning of girls' success, and on students' informal relations in school. [18]

The results show us that the myth is just that. There is not a monolithic understanding of girls at school as either strong and powerful or powerless and discriminated against. What draws our attention is that restructuring the school takes us back to gender issues even in those countries that are "well known" for their promotion of gender equality. [19]

The researchers found, of course, "strong young Nordic women," but found also that their success has been costly. Such women have to fulfill higher demands and to pay emotional cost as well. Sometimes women who want to achieve academically have to take time and energy from other parts of their lives. Success is expected but not valued. Moreover, social class plays an important role. The quiet middle class girls who don't achieve at school are those who are most easily overlooked; on the other hand, teachers call those who are visible and audible "difficult girls." [20]

Here, the authors make us think about two important issues: (1) that there is an important contradiction between the principle of "equal opportunities" posted by new-right thinking and that of regular school practices; (2) that gender equality has been lost in countries that were known as models in this regard. [21]

3. Insider vs. Outsider

The title of Part II is "Construction of Normality and Difference." In this section, three pieces of research are included. They share an important topic: exclusion. Either because of socio-economic status, gender or ethnicity, some kids are left on the roadside. In this part of the book, we learn who decides who is the stranger, the other, the outsider. [22]

3.1 Outsiderness

The fourth chapter is titled "Construction of an 'outsider': Contradictions and ambiguities in institutional practices." This research explores how teachers perceive, construct, and manage "outsiderness" and "otherness" in everyday social and discursive practices, with the particular aim of understanding what the impact of this is on a 14 year-old girl. The study was conducted by Anne-Lise ARNESEN, an Associate Professor in Oslo University College, Norway. [23]

It is clear that most countries are working toward equity in education. The author presents the Norwegian case. She starts pointing out a crucial contradiction in

Norwegian schools. Educational reforms have introduced new ideas about diversity, professionalism, responsibility and knowledge, and the curriculum is committed to "school for all": embracing diversity, inclusive community, humanism and democracy. At the same time, schools are seen as the starting point for training for global competition and adaptation to a changing market. [24]

In this study one can witness how exclusion is found in the heart of school. This report shows one of the most important concerns for teacher education programs: inclusion for special needs children. Some important questions are raised: who are the children with special needs? What should teachers do in building an inclusive classroom environment? [25]

3.1.1 Helen and her school

This piece of research allows us to go inside the school. Doing so, we can see how policies work in daily routines. Contradictions emerge. Helen's school was formally committed to inclusive education, but very few changes had been made in the school in order to meet this standard. If any student was not working as well as the rest of the class, he or she would be in regular class with some hours a week of special support. Other students, like Helen, were placed in special care homes for shorter or longer periods of time during which kids attend nearby regular schools. Once the prescribed period is over, the kids return to the regular school. [26]

According to the author, Helen's school class was regarded by most of the teachers and students as a "problem class." Following observation, the researcher's conclusion is that the children were sometimes sociable and industrious and sometimes messy and full of conflicts. [27]

The researcher interviewed teachers; they described Helen as an isolated girl. The head teacher said, "Helen must learn to live with and be among other people" (p.57), and expressed the opinion that in her case the subject matter content was less important than her socialization; the same teacher regarded Helen as a "pitiable and wretched creature" (p.58). Describing Helen, the social-science teacher said: "Helen just sat there." The teacher also described her as "smiling girl" but suggested that this would not help her in any way. Another teacher said that it was easy to forget that Helen was there, describing her as someone who does not say a word. In contrast, the head teacher described a casual encounter with her at the bus, in which informal situation she talked to the teacher. [28]

I would ask the researcher why she did not interview Helen. Who is speaking about Helen? Why not Helen did describe herself? Whose voice is important? [29]

3.1.2 Helen's family

I understand that the researcher was looking for a holistic view of the girl, so she got information about her family. Teachers described Helen's family as "a mess."

They said that though they tried to make contact with Helen's family their calls were not answered. When they went to visit at her home, she did not even open the door. It was a school recommendation that Helen must go to a special care house. Talking about Helen's family, another teacher expressed that Helen was in an "evil circle" (p.59) and mentioned that Helen's brother was also a failing student. During conversations, the researcher learned that the Helen's mother's childhood followed a very similar story. Helen's mother was described as "not very smart either." [30]

I ask myself: how do people come to describe other people in this way? How are people assigned to categories of deviance? In the teachers' descriptions, what is the focus and what is left out? The teachers' accounts focus primarily on Helen's disabilities and dysfunctional home environment rather than on her problems in school. They see problems both when Helen is absent and when she is present, with Helen herself as the center of the problems. The researcher concludes that the main explanations were related to her family without any connection to social situations or educational policies and practices. Only one understanding was individually based. [31]

From this study, one can learn that the traditional school is still present in most classrooms. Since basic education is compulsory, we must hope all kids are in school. This case study invites us to think about the way we teachers define the responsibilities of a school and then how we perform in pursuing goals. What are our standards? How did we establish them? Is the school really supporting inclusion or is it leaving some children even more vulnerable and subject to stigmatization than before? There are many questions to ask ourselves and our administrators and policy makers. [32]

3.2 Ethnicity

The next chapter is titled "Representation of ethnicity: how teachers speak about ethnic minority students" and is based on research conducted in Denmark by Thomas GITZ-JOHANSEN from Roskilde University. This chapter focuses on ethnic diversity in school, specifically in relation to teachers' attitudes and expectations. The material presented here is part of a broader study called "The School as a Cultural Meeting Place" and funded by the Danish Humanistic Research Council. [33]

The data analysis is based mostly on informal talks with teachers and school administrators. I presume the students' views were also included in the broad research work, but while it would be really interesting for us to have that information in this section we only have the "legitimate" voices. The participants talk about pedagogical and other issues while doing their jobs in a regular routine and context. Immediately the talk was over, the researcher recorded the conversation in a notebook while it still was fresh in his memory. The emphasis here is on recapturing the general flow of talk and the negotiation of meaning in the conversation. [34]

Studying representation has been found to be crucial to the study of identity. In this case, the researcher aimed to identify and characterize the way teachers create such images and how they apply these to students. [35]

Although the teachers claim to be "color blind" this research allows us to note some contradictions. For example, when the talk was about problematic students, teachers linked problem children to ethnically diverse backgrounds, something a teacher called "social inheritance." In this way, being part of a minority was seen as a "danger" to the children's development. It would seem that society and social institutions like school don't play any role and that individuals are responsible for their social inheritance: the blame is on them. [36]

Another representation that emerges from the talk is "the family." Teachers often represent children's families as weak, unresourceful and stricken with social problems. This included lack of linguistic competence and affected children were, in the teachers' view, "linguistically impoverished." In sum, if children were poor and migrants, they must be in trouble with reading. Again, the school is right and students are wrong. [37]

Teachers linked the term bilingualism to "immigrant," "foreign" or "ethnic minority," and to children seen as a "linguistically impoverished." Teachers worried about bilingual children who do not speak Danish at home. [38]

The meaning of "normal" was also explored. What is the teachers' view of "normal"? The interesting thing is that minority students' families were characterized by their lacks, their problems. Because of their ethnic background, to be problematic is normal. If we take a look into the gender issue, the problem becomes even worse. Since being a boy or girl is a social construction, to be either a minority boy or girl means to be connected with a social pathology. Boys were often perceived as "troublemakers" while girls were seen as under-stimulated at home or afflicted by lack of ambition. Problematic Danish children were seen as an exception to the norm. Problems for Danish children were understood on an individual basis, whereas problems for minority students were explained as a result of their cultural inheritance. [39]

Unfortunately, the two Danish schools involved here are not the only places where minority students are characterized in terms of deficits in contrast to children who belong to the majority. One may think that representations are just words. I found this research work illustrative of at least in one important issue: language and power. From this major theme, I could think about how teachers' representations impacts teachers' practices, how much teachers' representations are shared by mostly of society. [40]

3.3 Celebrating cultural diversity

The sixth chapter is devoted to exploring ways in which nation, nationality, ethnicity and gender are constructed in a Finnish preschool context. The study was conducted by Sirpa LAPPALAINEN from University of Helsinki, Finland. [41]

According to the author, the Finnish educational system has traditionally been based on an overemphasis on cultural homogeneity. Increased immigration in recent decades has led to challenges to this and to changes that have driven curriculum and teachers' practices towards tolerance as a goal of ethical education. Some contradictions are found in the preschool curriculum. On one hand it gives importance to the education of cultural minorities and immigrants while, on the other hand, Finnish cultural heritage and national values are fostered without being clarified. [42]

Historically, education has played an important role in the construction of national representations and citizenship. Since Finland has traditionally defined itself as a homogeneous society, this research aimed to answer the question of who, in a particular discourse, in a particular practice, is allowed to be a subject, and who is not. Can one who is subjected become, at the same time, an agent and a speaking subject? [43]

The findings that LAPPALAINEN shares with us in this chapter come from interviews with children. Following GORDON and HOLLAND (in Chapter Two) the author focuses on official and informal layers of preschool and on their intertwining. Here these are classified in such a way that we learn that nationality is constructed in the official layer through learning materials, teaching strategies and school rituals. Informally, nationality is constructed in school by daily interactions. [44]

The members of the group in which the study was conducted had diverse cultural backgrounds. There were three girls and two boys who between them recognized Finnish, Somalian and Russian nationalities. They had a Finnish teacher and a Russian teacher's assistant. [45]

The author makes us aware that in the preschool the teachers' practices show ambivalence towards the curriculum. Teachers sometimes fostered cultural sensitivity among children, as when organizing an international week or in the way the teacher approached speaking Russian. At other times "Finnish" was the "right" answer to the questions about "the language" of Finland and the nationality or people who live in Finland. LAPPALAINEN states that the lesson learned by the children is a fiction that naturalizes the hegemony of one collectivity in which minorities are constructed into assumed deviances from the "normal." In getting this status, people have to be Finnish in the only way that it was possible to be: excluding "the other people" from important sources of power. Although the curriculum directs teachers towards fostering cultural sensitivity, the teachers' practices sometimes take this path and sometimes do not. [46]

One of the girls in the study had a Somalian father. During the international week, Somalia was represented because the children were invited to bring souvenirs from different countries. The teacher was in charge of the learning experience and conducted discussion, but the result was that the children conceptualized Somalia as a poor and unpleasant place. While describing a Somalian woman,

attention was focused on the veil that protected her from the gaze of men rather than on Somalian culture, values and traditions. [47]

A final reflection from the researcher invites us to ask questions about ourselves. Fostering sensitivity to other cultures, teachers usually invite children to compare and contrast in such a way that will help them become aware of differences between and among cultures. Behind the differences, the author shares with us a question. Would it be a good idea to look for the commonalities? I wonder if paying attention to the characteristics of just one people allows us to understand a culture better. Why don't teachers, rather than paying attention to those differences, try to understand them? Besides, why don't teachers think about the meaning of nationality? Is national spirit based in homogeneity? [48]

4. Freedom vs. Control

Part III of the book is titled "Discourses and practices." Here, four pieces of research invite us to examine different levels of education while discovering forms of control and lack of reflection in everyday school interactions. The students who "talk to us" range from first graders through secondary and upper secondary students to future teachers. [49]

4.1 Politics of time

Daniel SUNDBERG conducted the study called "Politics of time in educational restructuring" in Sweden. His departure point in this study is based on a critical perspective on reform. He argues that educational restructuring is increasingly becoming a nexus for social control in education and schooling and explores the educational consequences of the reform of time frames in Swedish compulsory school. He tries to identify how new policy shifts discursively, from outer-direction prescriptions (like the national timetable, NTT) to inner-direction self-regulation of time in a secondary school (grades 7 to 9). [50]

Usually time is seen as "just time" but the author approaches it as a political resource. Doing so, he contributes to understandings of how time is organized in terms of power. He uses an ethnographic approach and takes advantage of its contextual sensitivity and capacity to look at things in depth. Observation and follow-up interviews with teachers, students and principals help us understand the complexities involved in the implementation of the reform. [51]

As mentioned earlier, immigration has called into question cultural homogeneity in Nordic countries. The new economic situation called for a more innovative and effective school organization. Some changes were needed and schools were asked to follow principles of flexibility. A discourse of "self-regulation" emerged. [52]

What SUNDBERG invites us to reflect on in this work is the tension between economic and democratic imperatives. Some questions could help us to frame this: Is school self-regulation working toward local freedom, democracy and collegiality, or towards managerialism, performance measures and

accountability? Does the new discourse aid democratic participation or represent a subtle form of commitment to market rationalities? It is clear that the values, purposes and procedures involved here are linked with effectiveness and accountability rather than with community and equality. [53]

Sweden had been using a national timetable since the 1960's, when compulsory schooling was established. In 1999, a reform was introduced in the Swedish educational system. Apparently, the goal was to foster equality. The principles that guided the change were: first, that every school, not the state, will establish its own ways of achieving equality. Second, that the school must be able to plan and use resources in a flexible and rational way. Third, that the national timetable was decided to be outmoded, unnecessary and an obstacle to effective teaching. Fourth, the NTT-Reform must be regarded as a tool in removing further obstacles. [54]

Following this reform, the school that was in the study constructed a school-based timetable. The goal was to leave students more opportunity to choose their courses, so they organized the courses in two schedules. During the morning, the "traditional" courses were scheduled; during the afternoon, the new ones. Students were expected to select their courses and their schedule. Some difficulties were found during the reform implementation. SUNDBERG reminds us that time is linked to culture since the temporality of the school involves identity, self-perception, interpersonal relationships, confidence and trust. Teachers made both positive and negative comments. Some teachers valued students' freedom as well their opportunity to select courses according to their needs. Others' were concerned about the lack of control teachers had, since for some teachers being a good teacher means keeping control of students. Other teachers pointed out that this reform fostered individualism rather than collaboration. [55]

This work makes clear to us that time is a matter of power and makes me to think about time in two ways. On one hand, time is a scarce resource in schools. Struggles over time were found in almost every school arena: the allocation of subject time between teachers and classroom time between teachers and students, as well as teaching time and non-teaching time between the head teacher and other teachers. It is clear that time was an important issue in this school. On the other hand, I ask myself, if time is a matter of power, why is the educational system willing to lose that control? I learned from some of the research in this book that other forms of control have emerged, like control over output. In my experience as a Mexican educator I can see both means of control. The Mexican educational system has not lost control of time, and Mexican schools have started to be under output control. Is there any difference? I am not quite sure. Does it make any difference in regard to educational equity and quality, and to how we measure them? The experience reported in this book made me think twice. [56]

Eventually, I would like to go back to the questions I posted earlier: Are these reforms working toward equity? The evidence suggests that they are not. Very often teachers take reforms into our own hands and implement them. In Mexico

and Latin America, we often do so while making many complaints but without raising many questions. The time has come to change this. [57]

4.2 Starting school

The eighth chapter presents a study conducted with first graders by Ulla-Maija SALO from University of Helsinki in Finland. [58]

Every year, new children go to school. In Finland, as in many other countries, it happens when children are about seven years old. The author uses an interactionist approach as a theoretical frame while studying the construction of the pupil's own meanings. In terms of methods, the author explains that the analysis linked thick ethnographic description and dramaturgical approaches to social reality while focusing on the social dynamics of school interactions. The study was conducted in a Finnish comprehensive school. [59]

One of the crucial concepts linked to school is "order," something that seems to be part of almost every single school activity. Order is present in completing assignments, performing routines, doing sports and even starting or finishing the school day. From an ethnomethodological perspective, order is external, although taken more or less as natural, and then contextually shaped. [60]

Ulla-Maija SALO says that for new school children becoming a pupil is the result of their social interactions either with teachers or peers. In this process, children become familiar with the "new world." Doing so, they learn and construct meaning from activities such as playing games, talking and even laughing. In this study we see that, from the very beginning, young children learn that school means work and order. This can be understood in broad range of ways, such as self-control, awareness of one's weaknesses, being well behaved and so on. Children who were interviewed did not hesitate when they said that at school they are expected to act like an adult. Thinking as a teacher, I would say that we teachers know that children are expected to act as an adult as well as a child. We ask them to be as well behaved as an adult and to be obedient as a child. In this way, children learn in school what is right and what is wrong, and learn to distinguish work from play very fast. [61]

It seems like the crucial idea in becoming a pupil is being an adult. But should school do what it has been doing? I found this piece of research very informative; it also made me question myself as a teacher educator. If teachers have not understood that they work with children, who should be expected to behave as children, what are they learning in our teacher education programs? How much impact do teacher education programs have on real teaching? [62]

In regard to the methods used, I liked hearing the voices of children. For adults, working with children is harder than with adults. The author does not provide details in this regard and as an educational researcher and an educational research teacher, I would have liked to know more about the challenges the ethnographer dealt with while working with children. [63]

4.3 Does Math work?

Chapter nine presents an ethnographic study conducted by Dennis BEACH from Göteborg University, Sweden. The aim of this research is to explore the impact of new liberal policies in an educational reform that took place in an upper secondary school in Sweden. Talk and behavior inside mathematics classrooms were observed. The findings are consistent with other studies in the book. The author found correspondence between classroom activities and market values. [64]

According to BEACH, in recent decades Sweden, like the other Nordic countries, has experienced a change in the concept of education. Starting in the mid-1980's, new right-wing policies have undermined cost-effective services and individual responsibility and have replaced previous ideas about education as part of civil society. Market ideas and economic incentives are becoming the guiding principles for welfare provision controlled by welfare agencies and economic relations. [65]

In this frame, an important reform started in 1990/91 when a government proposal expressed that the traditional way of controlling education by state regulation should end. Now, parliament states objectives and frameworks and municipalities take responsibility for execution. The aim is to help create new schools that emphasize self-regulation and life-long learning for tomorrow's knowledge society. As a result of this reform, a new national curriculum was introduced in 1994. [66]

The author interviewed teachers, head teachers and students. They talk about the new curriculum: "this school gives lots of individual responsibility and freedom of choice to students and teachers"; "We have moved from governing by rules to goals" (p.118). At least theoretically, school actors gained the opportunity to define learning, methods and goals. The author shows some forms of control have remained the same as they were before the reform, such as formal accountability measures shaped by examinations, national equivalence examinations and university requirements. Instead of state regulations or supervision, students and teachers have competition as a way of control. They need to get good grades and compete for a university place. Freedom of choice is brought into question. [67]

This research helps us to see the relationship between education and market values. It has to be understood in the frame of the new liberalism. Teachers' concerns drive us into this issue. From the researcher's field notes one learns that teachers want to make their students successful, and in doing so they treat kids as investment objects on the basis of how they use the resources and consume the mathematical activities given to them. Students' interests are the other side of this coin. They want to succeed, they want to get a place at university, and eventually they want to get a job. Education in these terms is not of value itself, it is of instrumental value; it is a market value. Education is the current money. [68]

One can ask, what is wrong in letting market logic inside schools? Better-educated people will get better jobs. Dennis BEACH invites us to think about the impact of the reproduction of economic tendencies in school. When market interests override equity and equality, the educationally rich students will get richer and the educationally poor will remain at the bottom of the socio-economic ladder, reinforcing inequalities and producing distress. The author points out that this situation is becoming more and more common within the Nordic education system. [69]

4.4 Future teachers

The final chapter is devoted to teacher education in Norway. The focus is on how student teachers pursue their studies at college and how they learn what they consider to be relevant knowledge and appropriate conduct in their preparation to become teachers. The author of this chapter is Inger Anne KVALBEIN from the Department of Teacher Education, Oslo University College, Norway. She conducted two comparable ethnographies. They were carried out with an interval of eight years, in 1993/1994 and 2000/2002. She explores how student teachers emphasize some forms of knowledge more than others when they fulfill their institutional requirements and achieve certification within the requirements of current educational policies. [70]

The history of teacher education in Norway looks very similar to that of many other countries. It started formally about 170 years ago, but became higher education just in 1975. KVALBEIN says that as in any community, culture regulates everyday life. Because of a long tradition, teacher education has a strong culture that limits the impact of any reform. In Norway, educational models have been changed many times but the way students work and learn is a matter of culture. How is the culture of teacher education impacted by the new policies? This is a question that as a Mexican teacher-educator caught my attention in this research. [71]

As in the preceding chapter, contemporary Western policies of restructuring show tendencies towards accountability and closer links to economic life, but also towards individual freedom. People conduct themselves as free and autonomous individuals and at the same time as producers of expected objectives and social functions. This means we are aware that freedom and control coexist in diverse degrees. In this regard, what is very interesting in teacher education is that, as a result of its history, the education of teachers did not initially belong to the university tradition. Teacher education culture has been constructed based on the basic school it serves. [72]

KVALBEIN conducted the first ethnographic work in 1994. She found that the teacher-education institution she was studying was very similar to basic school. Students were in the same group for almost the complete program, attendance at some activities and lectures was mandatory, and the curriculum included almost the same things the compulsory school did. Attendance and participation in college activities were enough to fulfill teacher educators' expectations. Actually,

it was described as a special culture in which student teachers renounced freedom in their education and qualifications. Teacher educators make a supportive social climate and take into their own hands the decisions in regard of the knowledge they need to pass exams and take care of their students. The researcher tells us that there were not many, if any, cultural symbols in the college that were a sign of higher education. [73]

Taking FREIRE (1998) as a looking glass, one could say that students' pedagogical approaches belong to a "banking education" since very traditional views in regard to their own education were expressed by the student teachers. In this study they saw their teacher educators as the main source of knowledge. Future teachers understood their educational challenge as "participation, adaptation, reception and reproduction" (p.135). They saw their role as students in a very passive way; they mentioned that to be educated means "to be taught" (p.135). [74]

The second study was carried out in 2001/2002. During 1998, there was a national reform in Norwegian teacher education. One might have expected a big difference, but the author informs us that many things were not only kept but also reinforced. For example, the number of mandatory courses was increased, the detailed curriculum reinforced, the forms of exams were regulated, and the possibility to elect subjects was more limited than before. But even though many conditions remained the same, some changes were observed, especially with regard to the relationships between students and teacher educators. [75]

According to the findings, the year before the reform was introduced the Norwegian Ministry of Education laid down new rules for student participation in higher education. The students were given freedom to either attend lectures or other educational activities or not. They only could be required to attend at the colleges or universities that provided information the students could not get from books and could not be tested in exams. The new academic environment supported the neo-liberal "student ideal" of independence, self-management, self-regulation, and so on. The new policy fostered a shift that was observed in terms of responsibility for education. Teacher educators lost their power as they were not responsible for either teaching or grading. [76]

Yet it was found that the teacher educators eventually kept control in alternative ways. New disciplinary techniques were started; these included maintaining quality standards not only in terms of the amount of work the students are asked to do but also in terms of the quality of their work as well as rigor in meeting deadlines. In sum, the teacher educator's former solidarity with students has in most cases declined. [77]

Another important issue the researcher points out is the individualization of teacher education. Most work and preparation for tests is individual. The major concern for students is to be individually able to reproduce information in assignments and test. I could not avoid thinking about this finding in relation to the mountains of information we find in any literature review about "collaborative

work" (LEO & CORTES 2003). It is claimed that teachers must be working in collaboration with all the school actors, even with all the social actors, yet their education is pushing them to individualization. [78]

This research shows us that, as a result of this reform, the teacher education process has become subordinate to the educational products, particularly the assignments and tests. Hence, the claimed freedom for students' could be questioned since control is intensified in other ways. [79]

What are the challenges for Norwegian teacher education? The researcher invites us to reflect on three: efficiency in candidate production, popularity among students and economic success in looking for grand public support. They can be understood within the balance of traditional scholarship, the enterprising individual and market culture. It makes me think about teacher education, globalization and neo-liberal reforms. Putting everything together, the future is not as happy as we might hope. Teacher educators must be committed to analyzing our educational systems and then to promoting the future we want to construct. [80]

5. Final Comment

Critical educators are aware that we are working toward a theoretical language that expresses schools' complexity, as well as a political and moral praxis that questions current educational practices. This book is a good contribution since it challenges current reforms at school and analyzes how subjectivities are schooled, and how power time and space as well as age, social class, and ethnic and gender relationships in school. The ethnographers in this book narrate daily life in schools, paying attention to people, interactions and processes usually invisible. Much of the research included was just part of broader research projects, something which helped me understand some of the apparent absences. [81]

In sum, this book is important for teachers, administrators, researchers, educational policy makers and almost everyone who is working toward educational equity. Nordic experience provides just some examples of those reforms that have been promoted around the world. Ethnography allows us to challenge the monolithic view people usually assume with regard to schooling. I recommend this book even for those who still believe those current reforms are working in favor of equity. [82]

In finishing, I want to mention that putting together all these pieces of research conducted primarily in Nordic countries is like providing a "window" that invites us to be aware of the complexity of educational process in contrast to standardized tests' results. Finally, I really celebrate the international and interdisciplinary experience that this group of researchers shares with us. [83]

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Citation

Cortés Camarillo, Graciela (2004). Review: Dennis Beach, Tuula Gordon & Elina Lahelma (Eds.) (2003). Democratic Education: Ethnographic Challenges [83 paragraphs]. *Forum Qualitative Sozialforschung / Forum: Qualitative Social Research*, 6(1), Art. 20, <http://nbn-resolving.de/urn:nbn:de:0114-fqs0501206>.

Revised 6/2008