

A Review of Matthew Clarke and Anne Phelan’s Textbook Entitled “Teacher Education and the Political: The Power of Negative Thinking” Published by Routledge

Mojtaba Javandoust

Department of English Language and Literature, Urmia University, Urmia, Iran

Email: mojtabajavandoust@gmail.com

Book Summary

The book takes a first-hand look over teacher education in respect of political reasons of western governing system through which neo-liberalism and economic purposes try to affect negatively first, their countries, and then, all over the world, as they have been successful somehow. This policy will result in more impoverishment in society through two concepts of instrumentalism and consensualism. Instrumentalism involves the pervasive view that the main purpose of education is to serve the needs of the economy, while consensualism involves the demonization of disagreement and dissensus and the valorization of agreement and consensus in relation to the instrumentalist view regarding the economic purposes of education. But the opposite view could not tolerate the consensus and believes in the ethical and moral missions of teachers and education irrespective to economic purposes.

Content Evaluation

In the first chapter of the book, the authors start elaborating the above subject by the reality of western education system which is influenced highly by the hegemony of neoliberal policy makers of the government of Australia, Canada, England and the USA. They never want teachers to practically perform their true role of pure opinions and ethical missions, but they try to create inactive atmospheres in classrooms over their country to make their policy of neo-liberalism expanded. The system evaluates teachers according to their own defined criteria and forces them to obey their rules.

The second chapter of the book discusses the full concept of teachers' alienation and the excessive policy of western colonization in more detail, beginning with the fact that policy makers have influenced the education system beyond the mere reduction of teaching in that they imposed the policy of one group over another group, who are teachers.

Having criticized both policy makers' excess intervention and teachers' limited expertise in terms of unprofessional intervention of the former and the unused potentiality of required skills and knowledge of psychological, social, cultural and political innovative skills of the latter on one side of the coin and unpaid attention on the discovery and innovative nature of education in different circumstances by them as teachers on the other side, chapter three opens a new opposite window to the hegemony of neo-liberal agenda in western countries. Mathew Clarke and Anne M. Phelan call for a new and particular look of teachers with their unique and

innovative potentials to discover a new practical method every day to solve the students' problems psychometrically, culturally, socially, physically and the case of the book, politically. Besides, the authors portrait the education real atmosphere as a war battle in which different ideas and beliefs and research should conflict in order to find better ways of teaching and understanding of students everyday everywhere.

Chapter three ends in a solution in that teachers and new teaching educators in whole should use their potentialities in different opportunities to be able to mount their opposition against the hegemony of proliferated neo-liberalism to change it in the course of time gradually or if possible suddenly.

Although the parts of the chapters end with a question which provokes the reader to the next part including the answer that provides some applicable guides to change this hegemony, they could have sought another solution which is now in some other independent, but maybe developing countries such as Iran where the Education Ministry is allowed to employ free graduates outside of its education system from other universities. This kind of employment seems undoubtedly useful for every education system through which many experts with different experiences and levels of knowledge as well as political views could debate and finally reach in an outcome could be accepted by the whole as a guideline. However, such hegemony of westerns makes a scaffolding systematic network out of hard guard of which no other experts could enter.

References

Clarke, M., & Phelan, A. (2017). *Teacher education and the political: The power of negative thinking*. New York: Routledge.