

Pearson's Initiative Through McCowan's Lens

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Synopsis

Michael Barber, Pearson's Chief Education Advisor, states, "Technology and globalization are going to change everything, including the status quo in education." Needless to say, Kamenetz highlights when Pearson, "the largest education company in the world," joins forces with Ayala, "one of the Philippines' biggest conglomerates," to establish a for-profit alternative to traditional schooling in the Philippines - intentions are questioned (2016). Is Pearson a Slum Savior or Money-grubbing Mercenary? When Pearson's Initiative is filtered through the lens of McCowan's paradigms, there are alignments to Liberal Capitalism, Marxism, and Postcolonial Paradigms.

Liberal Capitalism

Pearson, a British owned company, offers a formal education alternative with APEC Institute in Tondo, Philippines. Pearson's deliberate target on school-aged children with minimal government interference can be viewed through McCowan's lens of Liberal Capitalism (2015). Pearson is intentional; his replacement shifts traditional Filipino schooling to more privatized company owned schools to boost economic growth; McCowan labels this educational privatization as Liberal Capitalism (2015). Kamenetz notes, "Pearson is subject to neither open democratic decision-making nor open-market competition" (2016). Since Pearson obtains economic gain from his alternative schools, the Philippines can be seen as a pawn for profit in a monopolized setting. Kamenetz accounts, "Investment firm GSV Advisors recently estimated the annual global outlay on (Pearson Initiative) education at \$5.5 trillion and growing rapidly" (2016). Pearson's alternative schooling methods yields rippling effects on the overall Filipino and global economy; however, Pearson's reciprocated net profit cannot be ignored.

Marxist Paradigm

Marxist Paradigm accounts dependency as a key economic factor. Kamenetz (2016) highlights the Privatization in Education Research Initiative which outlines, “when schools aren’t free, poor students must work one day and go to school the next, and boys are educated in favor of girls.” This oppressive mindset creates division between the haves and the have-nots, which in this case would be the alienation of those who cannot afford to send their children to school and those who can afford to do so. McCorwan highlights, “...poverty is caused by the wealthy countries and the relations of dependency they have created” (2015). David Archer of Action Aid adds, “the clear evidence is that when you charge children, the poorest cannot afford to go” (Kamenetz, 2016). Barber mentions, “Parents know that education for their children is the only route out of poverty.” Unfortunately, when cost is the determining factor between children having access to a quality education, dependency becomes an underlying circumstance. In contrast, teachers’ unions who oppose Pearson’s initiatives point out, “Pearson is essentially ensuring that a large number of the world’s most vulnerable children have no hope of receiving free, quality education” (Kamenetz, 2016).

Postcolonial Paradigm

The APEC educational framework downgrades the Filipino culture by exalting Western methodologies and the English language as a higher level of importance, which correlates to McCorwan’s Postcolonial Paradigm. Pearson did not align his pedagogical practices to the Filipino culture, but rather offered *Pearson’s* alternative measure to the existing education system in the Philippines. Kamenetz (2016) notes that Pearson’s goal is to serve more than 1 million students by 2020 using APEC’s disposition, which is centered around the gains of investors and stakeholders in that particular region. Kamenetz goes on to note that Pearson’s

Initiative is made possible with “cheaply rented spaces, hiring young, underpaid less-experienced teachers, and technology.” In addition, the rate of success of APEC schools is established by Pearson, administered by Pearson and completely explicated by Pearson, creating a biased barometer. Pearson’s grandiose façade seems like a wonderful alternative to slum situations; however, the UN’s Committee on the Rights of the Child declares, “charging a fee, no matter how low, excludes the neediest and magnifies social divisions” (Kamenetz, 2016).

References

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