

“Teachers Teach and Do the World Good...”: Teacher Resistance to Policies That Negatively Impacts Their Profession and Society

Keith E. Benson

Rutgers University, Camden, USA
Email: keith.benson@rutgers.edu

How to cite this paper: Benson, K. E. (2022). “Teachers Teach and Do the World Good...”: Teacher Resistance to Policies That Negatively Impacts Their Profession and Society. *Open Journal of Social Sciences*, 10, 217-233.

<https://doi.org/10.4236/jss.2022.103016>

Received: February 11, 2022

Accepted: March 13, 2022

Published: March 16, 2022

Copyright © 2022 by author(s) and Scientific Research Publishing Inc. This work is licensed under the Creative Commons Attribution International License (CC BY 4.0).

<http://creativecommons.org/licenses/by/4.0/>



Open Access

Abstract

Both popular media and academic research abound with conveyances of teachers exiting the profession in frustration and exasperation. Even in trying times however, teachers, often were the vanguards in defending the sanctity of their profession, protecting quality education for students, and pushing for a better society for all against harmful governmental policies. This brief essay seeks to remind educators specifically, but indeed all readers, where teachers exhibited resistance efforts in defense of their profession in the contemporary fight over the privatization of public education, as well as highlighted a few instances where teachers stood up against governmental policies to benefit the broader public.

Keywords

Teacher Resistance, Education, Neoliberalism, Workplace Resistance

“Our memory is our coherence, our reason, our feeling, even our action. Lose your memory and you lose a basic connection with who you are.”—Buñuel, 1983

“... Teachers teach and do the world good...”—KRS-One (1988: My Philosophy)

1. Introduction

Both popular media and academic research abound with conveyances of teachers exiting the profession. Whether the causes are connected to feelings of demoralization, feeling devalued at work and by larger society, insufficient pay, and workplace benefits, or sensing their professional capacities are disregarded,

what is clear is that educators are not staying in education for as long as past generations, and are leaving faster (Kamenetz, 2022; Santoro, 2018). A survey by the National Education Association found that 90% of its members say that feeling burned out is a serious problem; 86% say they have seen more educators leaving the profession or retiring early since the start of the pandemic, and there are 567,000 fewer educators in America's public schools today than there were before the pandemic (Kamenetz, 2022). Certainly, the contemporary struggles (and politics) around mask-wearing for staff and students, and vaccination requirements connected to the Covid-19 pandemic is not leading teachers to feel more valued at work and in society, but instead has proven to be yet another stressor on an already anxious labor force. Worse still, the raging political battle waged in conservative states over outlawing non-existent Critical Race Theory (CRT) and any other topics deemed divisive that may "cause discomfort for some students," combined with multi-state initiatives calling for banning and destroying books, is further pushing swaths of teachers to the brink.

History, however, demonstrates that teachers as a workforce are not mere shrinking violets, but have a history of confronting harmful education and governmental practices both domestically and abroad. Teachers, often, were the vanguards in standing up for the sanctity of their profession, the delivering of quality education for students, and pushing for a better society for all. This brief essay seeks to remind educators, indeed all readers, of the mechanisms and circumstances where teachers exhibit resistance connected to their work, the current global fight against the privatization of public education and highlight just a few instances where teachers stood up against governmental policies to benefit their surrounding polity.

This essay is framed, first, by offering brief comments on employee workplace resistance generally, before discussing American and international teachers' resistance to governmental reforms that impact their professional practice. Next, I will broaden the scope of this paper to explore teachers' resistance efforts against policies they deem harmful to their broader societal ecology. To be sure, teachers have a rich and valuable history of standing up and pushing for the best interests of their societies, and it is my intent to discuss just some of that here.

2. Framing Workplace Resistance

Despite popular conceptions of what constitutes worker resistance, there exists little consensus in literature differentiating worker resistance from worker insubordination. Workplace resistance to political oppression, racial, and sexual discrimination is prominent in research literature, but most literature describes *forms* of resistance, rather than defining resistance itself. Hollander and Einwohner (2004) write, "Scholars have used the term resistance to describe a wide variety of actions and behaviors at all levels of human social life and in a number of settings. Indeed, everything from revolutions to hairstyles has been described as resistance" (pg. 533). Across relevant literature, resistance actions have been

attributed to everything from human rights protests against atrocities in Kenya and Argentina, church organizations covertly granting housing to undocumented Mexican refugees in America during the 1980s (Coutin & Hirsh, 1998); Portuguese and Dominican women's decision to reside in either nation in response to workplace and domestic oppression (Giles, 1992); women's choice in workplace attire (Prasad & Prasad, 2000), as well as community members uniting in protest to the cancellation of a popular Mexican-American ethnic studies program in Arizona, USA (Huicochea, 2010; Acosta, 2014). As a research topic, resistance is presented in a plethora of iterations where marginalized persons, act in opposition to power, and believe they stand to benefit by participating in some manner of resistance.

Work-related resistance, regardless of manifestation, can stem from either long-standing realities employees consider problematic or unjust, new workplace policy changes workers believe encroach on favorable working conditions (Hollander & Einwohner, 2004); or as a response to poor workplace treatment and other broader grievances (Roscigno & Hodson, 2004). Prasad and Prasad (2000) share workplace resistance can be "formal, informal, or routine" adding,

"The former refers to any kind of organized collective opposition that typically takes the form of organized worker protest, strikes, grievances, output restrictions, etc. Routine resistance on the other hand, refers to less visible and more indirect forms of opposition that take place in an unplanned, spontaneous, and covert nature. Routine resistance is actually far more pervasive in organizations even though it is less obvious to the casual observer" (pg. 388).

Resistance at work similarly varies in scale and level of worker coordination. It can be limited in size and scope to one individual "walking slowly" to their assigned work location, "feigning sickness", stealing office supplies (Hollander & Einwoher, 2004); or it can be a massive collective effort resulting in "riots, rebellions, revolutions; strikes and civil disorders; marches, demonstrations, protest gatherings and the like" (Oberschall, 1978: p. 291).

Educators, despite not commonly being conceptualized as a rebellious lot, literature suggests government and education policies perceived as harmful, can yield both subversive and overt resistance from teachers as isolated actors, or alongside fellow educators as part of a broader resistance coalition.

3. Teacher Workplace Resistance within an American Context

Prior literature communicates the general conception that within the workplace, teachers are resistant to new ideas and changes that affect their normal routines (Thornburg & Mungai, 2011), as teacher reliance on long-held habits is a labor-saving approach (Welner & Welner, 1999). To be sure, a sizable population of teachers comply with top-down directives without opposition, yet, in the modern era of standards-driven reform and accountability, teachers who perce-

ive their professionalism and classroom autonomy are being encroached upon often exercise opposition (Tyack & Tobin, 1994). Teacher resistance, however, should not be considered a “guarantee” whenever new procedures and protocols are enacted. Waugh and Punch (1985) suggest that teachers are often open to systemic change provided the new policies are easy to implement and have a positive impact on their practice. Teachers are, however, prone to rebuff new reforms when they are initiated without the inclusion of teacher and student perspectives, consideration of their respective realities (Gitlin & Margolis, 1995); are seen as driven by autocratic outsiders who are oblivious to the workings of schools (Craig, 2009), or are perceived to be the latest fad amongst a string of temporary and irrelevant policies (Gitlin & Margolis, 1995). Perceived workplace encroachments mandated by “elements beyond the perimeter of the classroom walls are often considered [by teachers] to be near intolerable and counterproductive to the schooling process” (Leonard & Leonard, 2005: p. 103); thus, educators will exhibit resistance.

Though American teachers’ workplace satisfaction varies, teacher satisfaction is tightly correlated with district affluence, parental and administrative support, and student achievement, with teacher dissatisfaction more apparent within the localities with lower SES and where widespread top-down reforms are enacted (Moore, 2012). Growing educator frustration due to eroding professional autonomy, greater emphasis from administration on testing and standardization of curriculum, increasing job insecurity, insufficient teacher preparation programs (Boe et al., 2008), in urban districts especially (Ronfeldt et al., 2011), is prompting teachers *en masse* to exercise workplace resistance through teacher turnover and attrition.

3.1. Individual Teacher Resistance

Teachers departing from the profession entirely are one mechanism by which teachers as individuals may demonstrate resistance to lackluster working conditions including poor administrative support, ineffective school leadership, increased mandates and education policies that negatively impacts pedagogy, but is by no means the only manifestation of individual educator resistance (Boyd et al., 2009; Ronfeldt et al., 2011). Some teachers adhere to the belief that “silence is the way to survive” resist top-down reforms by withdrawing from participation in meetings and surveys concerning new policy implementation, while others resort to venting to other staff members, or by refusing to enact new mandates within their classrooms altogether (Gitlin & Margolis, 1995). Additionally, research references teachers exhibiting pushback to administrator-directed reforms by complaining directly to students during class time, lamenting to parents about administration, voicing concerns at local board of education meetings, and by authoring editorials in newspapers (Welner & Welner, 1999). The size, scope, and duration of resistance efforts mounted by individual teachers does have determinant factors that includes the subject area taught by the educator (high-need vs. low-need), years of teaching experience, union affiliation,

and teacher tenure status (Bushnell, 2003). Some subject-area teachers, specifically those oriented toward the social sciences and social justice, and educators within secondary education are more inclined than teachers of other subject areas and younger age groups to participate in resistance demonstrations, as well exhibit more vocal and kinetic resistance activism (Montano et al., 2002).

3.2. Collective Teacher Resistance

Similar to the motivations influencing educators to resist top-down reforms as individuals, teachers also may exhibit a willingness to band together and practice resistance to policies enacted without their input collectively. While individual teachers may participate opposition within their classrooms by “blocking out” unsolicited mandates and policies, teachers working collectively as professionals has a broader impact. As a unified body, teachers in America have demonstrated occupation-related resistance by withdrawing from participation in, and opposition to, drafting national standards (Weiner, 1995); and in demanding more professional autonomy in rejection to standardized lessons, curricula, and testing (Croll et al., 2010).

Compared to individual teacher resistance, collective resistance is more effective at attracting greater public awareness to the difficulties educators experience resulting from top-down mandates deemed harmful, yet there has been little evidence in literature pointing to widespread success in beating back top-down reform policies. Collective resistance, in some instances, has been effective in galvanizing local support among the public in opposition to education reforms that reach beyond the borders of teachers’ specific schools or districts as teachers recognize policies that are not directly connected to education, can still have systemic impact that affect students and broader society (Acosta, 2014; Peterson & Charney, 1999). Collectively, and both with or without formal local union organizational approval, teachers are becoming more politically active by working on potential candidates’ electoral campaigns, drafting petitions, and phone-banking; in some cases, looking to attack the very politicians they view as responsible for instituting intrusive top-down education reforms that are harmful to their practice (Brickner, 2016).

3.3. Neoliberalism in American Public Education

Attacks against public education as a societal responsibility for the collective good, dates back to the post-manufacturing age in the United States. Conservative backlash to the War on Poverty of the 1970s began in earnest under Reagan in the 1980s. Where the social safety net, anti-poverty, pro-worker policies of the 1960s and 1970s offered a moment where America’s policymakers centered the needs of the working class, for the subsequent forty years, the tide of neoliberal individualism engulfed American economic and public policy—including public education. Since the publishing of *A Nation at Risk* (1983), teachers in the United States have been under accelerated attack by right-wing religious conservatives, the ultra-wealthy in both the finance and technology sectors, and

corporate Democrats alike. Neoliberal Democrats like Hillary Clinton, Rahm Emmanuel, Barack Obama, Cory Booker, and Andrew Cuomo, much like Republicans and Libertarians, view education less as a social responsibility where through its process students are empowered to think critically and view themselves as agents of change, *a la* Freire, Greene, and hooks, but more of private commodity whereby students increase their human capital for their personal economy. American politicians of both major parties accept the neoliberal view that education should serve, primarily, the needs of both corporate interests (Saltman, 2016), and that of individual private interests by, theoretically, maximizing their potential economic gain.

Neoliberal influences on and in American public education is evident in the increased spending on corporate prepared “teacher-proof” curriculum, adherence to the values of anti-union *edu-philanthropist* billionaires like Eli Broad and John Arnold; and more recently, a growing reliance on the ed-tech sector (Giroux, 2009). Such profound influence from the business community on public education decreases teachers’ professional autonomy, reduce job satisfaction, weaken teacher unions, and shrink the role of students to information receptacles, rather than burgeoning agents of societal change (Weiner & Lee, 2016).

Nowhere has the contemporary zeitgeist of neoliberal dominance within public education had a more pronounced impact than in public education in urban America. American inner-cities with high rates of poverty and students of color raised in economically tenuous circumstances, witness their schooling realities upended since the days of *No Child Left Behind* (2001) and *Race to the Top* (2009). From food and custodial services, afterschool programming, subject curriculum, to routinized assessments, most operations within the schoolhouse have been delocalized, and instead corporatized (Giroux, 2009). Corporate reformers and policymakers employ the strategy of painting urban schools as “failing” and identifying public schooling within urban contexts, itself, as a problem to be remediated, before working to weaken teacher unions by labeling them as self-interested barriers to reforms needed to optimize urban student success. Wealthy anti-union ideologues and policymakers alike recognize that urban public school districts have few powerful allies in today’s neoliberal environment where educational failure or success is thought to be the result of the individual ethic, and not the responsibility of the broader public (Maranto, 2005). Neoliberal reformists identified opportunities to solidify and grow their influence within public education as natural disasters Hurricane Katrina in 2005 and Hurricane Maria in 2017 ravaged New Orleans and Puerto Rico, respectively; economic disasters in Detroit’s declaration of bankruptcy in 2013, and the global economic meltdown of 2008 ravaged state economies (Carr, 2013; Klein, 2007) forcing state education agencies and local school districts to turn to wealthy philanthropists and ideological foundations for needed financial assistance—along with the strings that came attached.

Education privatization efforts in cities as large as New Orleans (Buras, 2011), and Detroit, along with lesser referenced locales like Puerto Rico and Provi-

dence, Rhode Island (Morel, 2018), and cities as small as Chester, Pennsylvania (Maranto, 2005) and Camden, New Jersey (Benson, 2018) serve as exemplars where the blueprint of weakened teachers unions, increased standardization of curriculum and assessments, and installation of corporate-operated charter schools coalesced to cripple the delivery of traditional, democratic public education. Additionally, the appointment of Broad Foundation superintendents who commonly have little background in education to exclusively in urban districts, are positioned to lead districts as large as Chicago (Lipman, 2011) or as small as Montclair (NJ) with a focus on corporate style efficiency, cost-cutting, and anti-unionism. A glaring embodiment of this approach is former Secretary of Education, Arne Duncan who, as Chicago Public Schools' CEO, implemented the neoliberal school and neighborhood restructuring plan *Renaissance* 2010 closing over 100 public schools, and turning them over to corporate charter schools and private interests (Lipman, 2011). Duncan's stewardship of Chicago schools is far from an anomaly as we have witnessed similar occurrences in Philadelphia under Superintendent William Hite; in Camden under Paymon Rouhanifard, and in Washington, D.C. under Chancellors Michelle Rhee and Kaya Henderson (Benson, 2018).

The neoliberalization of American education is not circumstantial but is the result of deliberate planning and execution of multinational corporations, corporate philanthropies, neoliberal foundations, and NGOs explicitly seeking to establish a drone-like workforce devoid of critical thought or agency (Giroux, 2013). Such agencies recognize teachers "ideas people" and are threats to their influence (Weiner, 2012). Educators, with their potential to foster an informed and critical generation equipped to confront unjust social and economic hegemony are antidotes to the corporate goal of dumbing down the public (Weiner & Lee, 2016)—the specific outcome of public education the privatization movement in education seeks to eliminate. Additionally, the neoliberal attack on teachers' pedagogical agency represents an effort to devalue the role of educators as both critical intellectuals and public servants tasked with delivering agency-affirming pedagogy to all students—"dream keepers" (Ladson-Billings, 1994).

3.4. Response of Teachers Globally to Neoliberal Education Reforms

While the focus on the struggle against neoliberal influence in education often centers teachers in the United States domestically, teachers in around the world are fighting similar battles in efforts to ensure students get a quality education. In prosperous nations, typically understood as those in the Global North and in Western democracies, teachers' influence in policymaking and professional autonomy has been reduced thanks to many of the same actors and motivations as those impacting teachers in America. Despite the Universal Declaration of Human Rights from the United Nations identifying a child's access to a quality education is a human right, interventions from NGOs like the International Monetary Fund (IMF) and World Bank (Weiner, 2012), for the benefit of mul-

tinational corporations, have commodified education—most evident in struggling developing nations like Haiti and those of the Global South. Though I cannot provide a full analysis of international teachers' activism against neoliberal forces globally here, I will briefly reference selected teacher opposition movements against neoliberal and anti-democratic forces within their respective regions.

The impact of 2008's global economic downturn is evident across all sectors of public life in Latin America (Sanchez, 2008). Bourgeois governments in Costa Rica, Honduras, and Chile are seeing public sector worker strikes in response to being viewed as hostile to public education and the working class as efforts toward privatization of public education are apparent in Latin America. Similar to what we witnessed in America over the past twenty years, Latin American educators are cast by their respective governments as hindrances to the educational and economic progress of their students and, by extension, their respective nations' economy as well (Lobo, 2019a). Educator-led resistance has been intense and widespread internationally, often protesting privatization policies that are financially supported by the U.S. government. For example, in Honduras, two bills that would have resulted in massive layoffs of healthcare workers and educators while increasing private corporate influence in both sectors (Open Democracy, 2020), sparked Honduran citizen and educator protests. Such overt resistance prompted the Honduran government to turn to "American-trained Honduran special forces, along with undercover police, to murder and kidnap protesters—reminiscent of the ultra-right wing death squads of the 80s and 90s" (Lobo, 2019b: p. 2).

In Chile, up to 75,000 educators held a month-long strike along with doctors confronting state sanctioned death squads as they resisted corporate privatization efforts in education and healthcare (Lobo, 2019b). *Carabineros* used water cannon, tear gas, rubber bullets and stampeded to put down protests in response to teachers protesting the deplorable conditions in Chilean public schools rife with rodent infestation, damage to buildings, not receiving books until two months in the school year, unsanitary bathrooms, and an elimination of history from Chile's curriculum requirements—seen as a move to whitewash the violence of the right-wing Pinochet era (Gaitan-Barrera, 2017; Reuters Staff, 2017).

In Argentina, educators took to the streets in resistance movements against acts of repression against democracy by the Argentinian government (Samartin, 2017). In Costa Rica, seven thousand of teacher joined a nationwide general strike against austerity and cuts to wages, as well as a proposed bill outlawing all strikes by public workers including picketing and roadblocks (Crisis 24, 2017).

Beyond Latin America examples of educators involved in and leading social movements for political, economic, and social justice also abound, little noticed in the U.S. media or education journals. In Iran, government authorities have cracked down on teachers exercising their right to collectively bargain, using national unity and resistance against foreign pressure as a rationale. Iranian teach-

ers of the Coordinating Council of Teachers Union in 2018 participated in regular protests in opposition to poor pay and poor purchasing power, and in favor of the ideal that quality public education be “equal, free, and for all”, and the immediate release of jailed education activists (Niknejad, 2019). Teachers and labor activists are being targeted and charged with disrupting the public order for protesting poor salaries, high inflation, and poor living conditions. Further, some education activists are being charged with acting against the state and dispensing propaganda against the state resulting in arrests and convictions resulting in prison sentences up to seven years (Human Rights Watch, 2018).

Globally, educational pursuits for social justice and equity are deprioritized in favor of preparing students for a lifetime of being mere wage earners for corporate interests. International teachers and their unions, much like their American counterparts, play a vital role in reclaiming and acting upon their power. In Latin America for instance, policy makers understand the potential power within teacher unions; likely more so than teacher unions themselves. Over the past three decades, Latin American teacher unions played a major role in policymaking positively impacting education at the schoolhouse primarily through professionalization of the field, and policy advocacy through informing law makers about education, contributing to research, and push against neoliberal influence (Gindin & Finger, 2014).

Similar to educators in the United States, the majority of Latin American *maestros* work in the public sector where unions are strongest and where students are the most disadvantaged. The demand for strong educators and a liberatory pedagogy is paramount (TeleSUR, 2017). Where neoliberalization of education begins to take hold, demonization of teachers and their unions began. Much like the criticism lodged against educators in America, Latin American teachers have been attacked for hindering educational progress of their students locally, which has catastrophic impacts on national economies (Samartin, 2017). Not dismayed, Latin American teachers contend they contribute positively to educational quality by stressing professionalization through the formalized development of teacher skill and practice, and by advocating for educational improvements for their students.

The struggle for quality education for students and suitable working conditions for educators is not an easy one within a neoliberal context where corporate interests are prioritized, social responsibility is an afterthought, and the influence of the wealthy are lionized. As such, a million educators and students united in struggle in Brazil to resist government cuts to public education. In Colombia, Venezuela and Mexico both teachers and students united against cuts to teacher salaries, bonuses, pensions, and pushes toward privatization (Abbott, 2019).

In Iran, government authorities are cracking down on teachers who are exercising their right to collectively bargain under the guise of national unity and resistance against foreign pressure. Iranian teachers of the Coordinating Council

of Teachers Union began peaceful nationwide protest in October 2021 in opposition of poor pay and poor purchasing power and inferior curriculum, but also in favor of more professional autonomy equal access to education “equal, free, quality education for all”—both male and female students. In January 2022, Iranian teachers and labor activists are demonstrating in resistance to poor salaries, high inflation, and poor living conditions still. If arrested, educators can be charged with disrupting the public order, acting against the state and dispensing propaganda against the state, resulting in imprisonment of up to seven years (Joffre, 2022).

In the United States, in resistance to growing neoliberal influence impacting educators’ practice embodied in the surge in mandated computerized testing, teachers along with parents staged rallies and demonstrations in opposition. Dubbed the “Opt-out Movement” where teachers refused to administer tests, and parents refused to have their child participate in assessments, what was noteworthy was parents and educators’ mutual participation in this resistance with more than half of the participants in the opt-out movement being teachers (Pizmony-Levy, 2018). To be sure, the Opt-out Movement was highly racialized, and class determined as the outcry to resist such testing only increased as the ramifications of expanded widespread testing began to negatively impact more affluent and whiter suburban districts (Hairston, 2017). Teachers mounted resistance to *InBloom*, a major beneficiary of Gates Foundation largesse in efforts to rebuff edu-tech firms’ growing influence in schools and as well as their propensity to collect and store students’ and teacher data (Schaffhauser, 2017).

Similar to the concerns raised by both educators and parents in America, the New South Wales Teachers Federation in Australia protested against student data being stored by edu-corporations for ethical and privacy issues (Gavrielatos, 2020). Among other matters like matters of teacher pay and collective bargaining, Australian teachers are showing resistance to neoliberal education approaches occurring in other countries including the propensity for public schools to adopt a business approach with the increasing presence of business vernacular within school settings especially among building leaders, the outsourcing and de-professionalization of elective curriculum like health and physical education and music (Reid, 2019). Australian teachers cautioned that the corporatization of schooling was, as noted in other global contexts, diverting governmental and social responsibility to provide education as a societal good and a collective responsibility. Where schools should, in their view, stress social justice, democracy, and the common good as the aspirational ideal, instead, Australian schools are witnessing increased influence of corporate think tanks and consultancies that shape the delivery of public education to suit corporations’ economic needs (Reid, 2019).

4. Teacher-Led Resistance for the Societal Good

Despite the common depiction of teachers as docile, timid, rule-followers,

teachers have commonly been vanguards of goodwill and on the frontlines in the struggle to see a more socially just society. In 1942, 13,000 Norwegian teachers were arrested for their resistance to Nazi sanctioned curriculum where half of those educators were sent to Arctic prison camps to work alongside Russian prisoner of war, while others were sent to concentration camps in Oslo (Goldberg, 2009). Teachers resisted fascism in Italy through the 1950s (Delzell, 1975). In the late 1960s to early 1970s, Portuguese teachers created “study groups” to promote adult literacy and were active participants in resisting fascism through their role in the Carnation Revolution (Gomes et al., 2015). Teachers were active in Spain’s transition to democracy in 1970s (Groves, 2014). Research on teacher activism outside the U.S. demonstrates their vital role in reclaiming and activating their power as influencers of governmental policy (Brickner, 2016; Gindin & Finger, 2014). Throughout America’s Civil Rights Movement, Black teachers in the South, specifically Black women educators, played significant roles in the struggle for civil rights within their classrooms through the deliverance of liberatory pedagogy, in demonstrations, and as financiers of Black resistance efforts (Loder-Jackson, 2015). Similarly, in South Africa, the Soweto riots in resistance to state-sanctioned apartheid saw schoolteachers actively forwarding efforts to bring a centuries-old, oppressive race-based social and political system to an end which occurred in 1994 (Ndlovu, 2011).

Today, such movements with educators as active participants in the struggle for a more socially just and equitable society rages on, albeit, in a more modern context against policies that victimize the broader public. As discussed above, Latin American teachers play an important role in setting education policy in Latin American nations like Argentina, Uruguay, Brazil and Colombia, but also recognize their role in working toward social justice through a collective belief that everyone must have access to a quality education and the requisite agency to be fully human. Teachers across Latin America see themselves as defenders of democracy. In Argentina, educators faced demonization in corporate media and by capitalist politicians in response to their demonstrations decrying growing poverty among their countrymen, the lack of adequate social services for students and citizens and increasing government repression. In Chile, up to 75,000 educators held a month-long strike along with doctors confronting state sanctioned death squads as they resisted corporate privatization efforts in education and healthcare. Likewise in Costa Rica, in 2014, thousands of teachers joined a nationwide general strike against austerity and cuts to wages (The Tico Times, 2014). And in 2020, strikes in Costa Rica erupted in response to a proposed bill outlawing all strikes by public workers including picket lines and roadblocks. Despite such protests comprising the working-class including healthcare workers and educators, popular portrayals of such protests in media were labeled the work of violence seekers while painting teachers as selfish and lazy (The Tico Times, 2020). The recent spate of educator strikes in Latin America in resistance to government austerity and privatization of public sector services, coincides with similar struggles as educators in New Zealand, Poland, India, North Africa,

and the United States.

In the United States, teachers have been taking activist stances across matters not directly tied to the schoolhouse as advocated by teacher union researcher [Weiner \(2012\)](#) in *the Future of our Schools: Teacher Unions for Social Justice*. Since the police killing of Michael Brown in Ferguson, Missouri in 2014, educators across the nation have allied themselves with the Black Lives Matter Movement; protests against the Keystone Access oil pipeline ([Light, 2014](#)); pro-immigrant rights groups ([Teachers for Immigrant Rights, 2019](#)), the Fight for \$15 ([Eljalde-Ruiz, 2016](#)), clean water groups ([Snyder, 2017](#)), and efforts to rebuff urban displacement and gentrification ([Heiman & Nuñez-Janes, 2021](#)). The St. Paul Teachers Association using the approach, “Negotiating for the Common Good,” was able to successfully utilize the teacher-school district contract negotiations to lobby for the availability of affordable housing in St. Paul, Minnesota ([McCartin et al., 2020](#)). The Chicago Teachers union pointed out that a school reform plan Renaissance 2010, was not just a school plan but a municipal redevelopment plan intended to foster gentrification and displace low-income residents. Though largely unsuccessful in rebuffing the advancements of Renaissance 2010, the Chicago Teachers Union took on a fight backed by neoliberal politicians on behalf of the broader Chicago community ([Vevea, 2013](#)). Similarly, education philosopher [Giroux \(2013\)](#) invites educators in the post-Sandy Hook era to become vocal in their opposition against the gun-lobby, using the frequency of school shootings as a pretext for educator engagement. Giroux advises public school teachers to find alliances with groups outside education like churches, mosques, synagogues, and other institutions to address the issue of gun violence and other matters impacted by socio-economic issues.

5. Conclusion

Working in public education has always had its inherent difficulties and trials. Educators tasked with raising a burgeoning generation of change agents and critical thinkers, even under ideal conditions is a herculean task. As if not difficult an endeavor enough, teachers, globally, for the past forty years have witnessed an erosion of their professional autonomy concerning what they teach, and how they teach as the influence of corporatism and neoliberalism have dramatically reshaped the realities of the profession. Adding to the difficulties educators worldwide are experiencing at present, a global pandemic that claimed over 5.75M lives worldwide ([Our World in Data, 2022](#)) will undoubtedly contribute to a further radical remaking of the profession as the presence of Big Tech appears to be less of an emergency stopgap to deliver educative services to students barred from attending school in person, but likely here to stay. Indeed, after witnessing how “well” virtual classrooms “worked” for NYC students, newly elected mayor Eric Adams, commented that now New York City teachers can lead virtual classrooms of up to “three or four hundred students year-round” ([Stieb, 2021](#)). *Sigh.*

There's more unfortunately. The recent attacks on CRT in America's schools, state government-sanctioned book bans, and parent groups armed with tip lines to ensure teachers are not teaching content deemed divisive, teachers in America find themselves in a new, strange era where teaching accurate history can lead to a loss of their employment if not "prosecuted as criminals" (*The Roanoke Times*, 2022). To be sure, these are difficult days, but they also are part of a global context and continuum of educators being met with oppressive government and ideological interference within their profession. Educators, however, must reflect on their noble, albeit imperfect, history, of standing up to subjugation and risking their careers in the pursuit of a better society. This moment is no different; but is yet another opportunity for educators to remember their journey and continue the struggle.

Conflicts of Interest

The author declares no conflicts of interest regarding the publication of this paper.

References

- Abbott, J. (2019). The Other Americans: Latin America's Uprising against Neoliberalism. *The Progressive*.
<https://progressive.org/latest/latin-americas-uprising-against-neoliberalism-abbott-191204/>
- Acosta, C. (2014). Dangerous Minds in Tucson: The Banning of Mexican American Studies and Critical Thinking in Arizona. *Journal of Educational Controversy*, 8, 1-18.
- Benson, K. (2018). *Education Reform and Gentrification in the Age of #CamdenRising: Public Education and Urban Redevelopment in Camden, NJ*. Peter Lang Publishers.
- Boe, E., Cook, L., & Sunderland, R. (2008). Teacher Turnover: Examining Exit Attrition, Teaching Area Transfer, and School Migration. *Exceptional Children*, 75, 7-31.
<https://doi.org/10.1177/001440290807500101>
- Boyd, D., Grossman, P., Lankford, H., Loeb, S., & Wyckoff, J. (2009). Teacher Preparation and Student Achievement. *Educational Evaluation and Policy Analysis*, 31, 416-440.
<https://doi.org/10.3102/0162373709353129>
- Brickner, R. K. (2016). Tweeting Care: Educators' Dissent through Social Media in the US and Canada. *Labour/Le Travail*, 77, 11-36.
- Buñuel, L. (1983). *My Last Breath*. Alfred A. Knopf Inc.
- Buras, K. (2011). Race, Charter Schools, and Conscious: On the Spatial Politics of Whiteness as Property (and the Unconscionable Assault on Black New Orleans). *Harvard Education Review*, 81, 296-331. <https://doi.org/10.17763/haer.81.2.6142343qqw360j03>
- Bushnell, M. (2003). Teachers in the Schoolhouse Panopticon Complicity and Resistance. *Education and Urban Society*, 35, 251-272.
<https://doi.org/10.1177/0013124503035003001>
- Carr, S. (2013). *Hope against Hope: Three Schools, One City and the Struggle to Educate America's Children*. Bloomsbury Press.
<https://doi.org/10.5040/9781350091344>
- Coutin, S. B., & Hirsch, S. F. (1998). Naming Resistance: Ethnographers, Dissidents, and States. *Anthropological Quarterly*, 71, 1-17. <https://doi.org/10.2307/3317600>

- Craig, C. J. (2009). Teacher Research and Teacher as Researcher. In L. J. Saha, & A. G. Dworkin (Eds.), *International Handbook of Research on Teachers and Teaching* (pp. 61-70). Springer. https://doi.org/10.1007/978-0-387-73317-3_4
- Crisis 24 (2017). Costa Rica: Teacher Strike and Protest in San José June 27. *Crisis 24*. https://crisis24.garda.com/alerts/2017/06/costa-rica-teacher-strike-and-protest-in-san-jose-june-27?origin=fr_riskalert
- Croll, P., Abbott, D., Broadfoot, P., Osborn, M., & Pollard, A. (2010). Teachers and Education Policy: Roles and Models. *British Journal of Educational Studies*, 42, 333-347. <https://doi.org/10.1080/00071005.1994.9974007>
- Delzell, C. F. (1975). The Italian Anti-Fascist Resistance in Retrospect: Three Decades of Historiography. *The Journal of Modern History*, 47, 66-96.
- Elejalde-Ruiz, A. (2016). Fight for \$15 to Join Chicago Teachers Union's April 1 Strike. *Chicago Tribune*. <https://www.chicagotribune.com/business/ct-fight-for-15-joins-teachers-strike-0326-biz-20160325-story.html>
- Gaitan-Barrera, A. (2017). Chile's Use of Pinochet-Era Anti-Terrorist Law against the Mapuche Movement. *Intercontinental Cry*. <https://intercontinentalcry.org/chiles-still-using-pinochets-anti-terrorist-law-mapuche/>
- Gavrielatos, A. (2020). Edtech and COVID-19. *Education*. <https://news.nswtf.org.au/blog/columns/2020/07/edtech-and-covid-19>
- Giles, W. (1992). Gender Inequality and Resistance: The Case of Portuguese Women in London. *Anthropological Quarterly*, 65, 67-79. <https://doi.org/10.2307/3318135>
- Gindin, J., & Finger, L. K. (2014). *Promoting Education Quality: The Role of Teachers' Unions in Latin America*. UNESCO, 41 p. <https://unesdoc.unesco.org/ark:/48223/pf0000225931>
- Giroux, H. (2009). Neoliberalism, Youth and the Leasing of Higher Education. In D. Hill, & R. Kumar (Eds.), *Global Neoliberalism and Education and Its Consequences* (pp. 30-53). Routledge.
- Giroux, H. (2013). Neoliberalism's War against Teachers in Dark Times. *Cultural Studies, Cultural Methodologies*, 13, 458-468. <https://doi.org/10.1177/1532708613503769>
- Gitlin, A., & Margonis, F. (1995). The Political Aspect of Reform: Teacher Resistance as Good Sense. *American Journal of Education*, 103, 377-405. <https://doi.org/10.1086/444108>
- Goldberg, J. (2009). *Norwegian Teachers Prevent Nazi Takeover of Education, 1942*. Global Nonviolent Action Database. <https://nvdatabase.swarthmore.edu/content/norwegian-teachers-prevent-nazi-takeover-education-1942>
- Gomes, I. P., Amorim, J. P., Correia, J. A., & Menezes, I. (2015). The Portuguese Literacy Campaigns after the Carnation Revolution (1974-1977). *Journal of Social Science Education*, 14, 69-80.
- Groves, T. (2014). Political Transition and Democratic Teachers: Negotiating Citizenship in the Spanish Education System. *European History Quarterly*, 44, 263-292.
- Hairston, S. (2017). Promoting White Privilege: A Look at the Opt-Out Movement. *American Journal of Education Forum*. <http://www.ajeforum.com/promoting-white-privilege-a-look-at-the-opt-out-movement-by-sarah-l-hairston/>
- Heiman, D., & Nuñez-Janes, M. (2021). "Research Shows That I Am Here for Them": "Acompañamiento" as Language Policy Activism in Times of TWBE Gentrification.

- Language Policy*, 20, 491-515. <https://doi.org/10.1007/s10993-020-09577-7>
- Hollander, J. A., & Einwoher, R. L. (2004). Conceptualizing Resistance. *Sociological Forum*, 19, 533-554. <https://doi.org/10.1007/s11206-004-0694-5>
- Huicochea, A. (2010). TUSD Cancels Horne's Visit to Talk about Ethnic Studies. *Arizona Daily Star*.
https://tucson.com/news/local/education/tusd-cancels-hornes-visit-to-talk-aboutethnic-studies/article_97a68ede-c2c9-5772-9be7-7bc5b89f7405.html
- Human Rights Watch (2018). *Iran: Mounting Crackdown on Teachers, Labor Activists*.
<https://www.hrw.org/news/2018/11/22/iran-mounting-crackdown-teachers-labor-activists>
- Joffre, T. (2022). Iranian Forces Crack down on Teachers as Wage Protests Continue. *The Jerusalem Post*. <https://www.jpost.com/middle-east/article-695069>
- Kamenetz, A. (2022). More than Half of Teachers Are Looking for the Exits, a Poll Says. *NPR WHYY*. <https://www.npr.org/2022/02/01/1076943883/teachers-quitting-burnout>
- Klein, N. (2007). *The Shock Doctrine: The Rise of Disaster Capitalism*. Knopf Canada.
- KRS-One (1988). *My Philosophy. By All Means Necessary*. Jive Records.
- Ladson-Billings, G. (1994). *The Dreamkeepers: Successful Teachers of African American Children*. Jossey-Bass.
- Leonard, L. J., & Leonard, P. E. (2005). Achieving Professional Community in Schools: The Administration Challenge. *Planning and Change*, 36, 23-39.
- Light, J. (2014). *Hundreds of Students Arrested outside White House at Keystone XL Pipeline Protest*. BillMoyers.com.
<https://billmoyers.com/2014/03/04/hundreds-of-students-arrested-outside-white-house-at-keystone-xl-pipeline-protest/>
- Lipman, P. (2011). *The New Political Economy of Urban Education: Neoliberalism, Race, and the Right to the City*. Routledge.
- Lobo, A. (2019a). *Honduras Cracks down on Teachers, Doctors and Students Protesting Privatization Drive*. World Socialist Web Site.
<https://www.wsws.org/en/articles/2019/05/02/hond-m02.html>
- Lobo, A. (2019b). *Teachers Struggles Erupt across Latin America*. World Socialist Web Site. <https://www.wsws.org/en/articles/2019/06/08/lata-j08.html>
- Loder-Jackson, T. (2015). *Schoolhouse Activists: African American Educators and the Long Birmingham Civil Rights Movement*. SUNY Press.
- Maranto, R. (2005). A Tale of Two Cities: School Privatization in Philadelphia and Chester. *American Journal of Education*, 111, 151-190. <https://doi.org/10.1086/426836>
- McCartin, J. A., Sneiderman, M., & Weeks, M. B. (2020). Combustible Convergence: Bargaining for the Common Good and the #RedforEd Uprisings of 2018. *Labor Studies Journal*, 45, 97-113. <https://doi.org/10.1177/0160449X20901643>
<https://journals.sagepub.com/doi/full/10.1177/0160449X20901643>
- Montano, T., Lopez-Torres, L., DeLissovoy, N., & Pacheco, M. (2002). Teachers as Activists: Teacher Development and Alternate Sites of Learning. *Equity & Excellence in Education*, 35, 265-275. <https://doi.org/10.1080/713845315>
- Moore, C. M. (2012). The Role of School Environment Teacher Dissatisfaction among U.S. Public School Teachers. *SAGE Open*, 2, 1-16.
<https://doi.org/10.1177/2158244012438888>
- Morel, D. (2018). *Takeover: Race, Education, and American Democracy*. Oxford University Press.

- Ndlovu, S. M. (2011). The Soweto Uprising. In S. A. Trust, (Ed.), *The Road to Democracy in South Africa* (pp. 317-368). South African Education Trust.
- Niknejad, M. R. (2019). *Why Iranian Teachers are Protesting?* Al-Monitor. <https://www.al-monitor.com/originals/2019/01/iran-teachers-protest-strike-siting-working-conditions.html>
- Oberschall, A. (1978). Theories of Social Conflict. *Annual Review of Sociology*, 4, 291-315. <https://doi.org/10.1146/annurev.so.04.080178.001451>
- Open Democracy (2020). *2019: Protests and Disruptive Changes in Latin America*. <https://www.opendemocracy.net/en/democraciaabierta/2019-movilizaciones-ciudadanas-y-cambios-disruptivos-en-am%C3%A9rica-latina-en/>
- Our World in Data (2022). *Covid19 Data Explorer*. <https://ourworldindata.org/explorers/coronavirus-data-explorer>
- Peterson, B., & Charney, M. E. (1999). *Transforming Teacher Unions: Fighting for Better Schools and Social Justice*. Rethinking Schools, Ltd.
- Pizmony-Levy, O. (2018). *OPINION: The Opt out Movement Is Gaining Ground, Quietly*. The Hechinger Report. <https://hechingerreport.org/opinion-the-opt-out-movement-is-gaining-ground-quietly/>
- Prasad, P., & Prasad, A. (2000). Stretching the Iron Cage: The Constitution and Implications of Routine Workplace Resistance. *Organization Science*, 11, 387-403. <https://doi.org/10.1287/orsc.11.4.387.14597>
- Reid, A. E. (2019). *Changing Australian Education: How Policy Is Taking Us Backwards and What Can Be Done about It*. Routledge. <https://doi.org/10.4324/9781003115144>
- Reuters Staff (2017). Chile's Students Return to Streets to Demand Education Overhaul. *Reuters*. <https://www.reuters.com/article/us-chile-protest/chiles-students-return-to-streets-to-demand-education-overhaul-idUSKBN17D2HL>
- Ronfeldt, M., Lankford, H., Loeb, S., & Wyckoff, J. (2011). How Teacher Turnover Harms Student Achievement. *American Educational Research Journal*, 50, 4-36.
- Roscigno, V., & Holden, R. (2004). The Organizational and Social Foundations of Worker Resistance. *American Sociological Review*, 69, 14-39.
- Saltman, K. (2016). *The Swindle of Innovative Educational Finance*. University of Minnesota Press.
- Samartin, M. (2017). *Argentina's Teachers Strike, with Fate of Country's Workers in Balance*. Labor Notes. <https://labornotes.org/blogs/2017/04/argentinas-teachers-strike-fate-countrys-workers-balance>
- Sanchez, A. (2008). The Education "Shock Doctrine": Disaster Schooling. *International Socialist Review*, 71.
- Santoro, D. A. (2018). *Demoralized: Why Teachers Leave the Profession They Love and How They Can Stay*. Harvard Education Press.
- Schaffhauser, D. (2017). Autopsy for the Failure That Was in Bloom. *The Journal: Transforming Education through Technology*. <https://thejournal.com/articles/2017/02/15/autopsy-for-the-failure-that-was-inbloom.aspx>
- Snyder, K. (2017). *Through Art and Activism Flint Teacher and Students Keep a Focus on the Water Crisis*. NEA Education Votes. <https://educationvotes.nea.org/2017/07/19/art-activism-flint-teacher-students-keep-focus-water-crisis/>

- Stieb, M. (2021). Eric Adams Criticized for Proposing 400-Kid Zoom Classes, Year-Round School. *Intelligencer*.
<https://nymag.com/intelligencer/2021/06/eric-adams-criticized-for-proposing-400-kid-zoom-class-sizes.html>
- Teachers for Immigrant Rights (2019).
<https://www.teachersunitedforimmigrantrights.com/>
- TeleSUR (2017). *Teachers Leading Way against Neoliberalism in Latin America*.
<https://www.telesurenglish.net/analysis/Teachers-Leading-Way-Against-Neoliberalism-in-Latin-America-20170309-0028.html>
- The Roanoke Times (2022). Editorial: New Anti-CRT Bill Wants Teachers Prosecuted as Criminals. *The Roanoke Times*.
https://roanoke.com/opinion/editorial/editorial-new-anti-crt-bill-wants-teachers-prosecuted-as-criminals/article_41fab586-7a65-11ec-add8-2b314c88b3fb.html
- The Tico Times (2014). Costa Rica's Month-Long Teachers' Strike Comes to an End. *The Tico Times*.
<https://ticotimes.net/2014/06/02/costa-ricas-month-long-teachers-strike-comes-to-an-end>
- The Tico Times (2020). Costa Rica's Legislative Assembly Votes to Regulate Strikes in Response to Country-Wide Protests. *The Tico Times*.
<https://ticotimes.net/2020/01/15/costa-ricas-legislative-assembly-votes-to-regulate-strikes-in-response-to-country-wide-protests>
- Thornburg, D., & Mungai, A. (2011). Teacher Empowerment and School Reform. *Journal of Ethnographic & Qualitative Research*, 5, 205-217.
- Tyack, D., & Tobin, W. (1994). The "Grammar" of Schooling: Why Has It Been So Hard to Change? *American Educational Research Journal*, 31, 435-479.
- Vevea, B. (2013). *WBEZ: CPS Wants to Close Arne Duncan's Renaissance 2010 Schools*. Chicago Teachers Union.
<https://www.ctulocal1.org/posts/wbez-cps-wants-to-close-arne-duncans-renaissance-2010-schools/>
- Waugh, R. F., & Punch, K. F. (1985). Teacher Receptivity to System-Wide Change. *British Educational Research Journal*, 11, 113-121. <https://doi.org/10.1080/0141192850110204>
- Weiner, L. (1995). Democracy, Pluralism, and the Teaching of English. *English Education*, 27, 140-145.
- Weiner, L. (2012). *The Future of Our Schools: Teacher Unions and Social Justice*. Haymarket Books.
- Weiner, L., & Lee, S. (2016). *Developing and Sustaining Mutually Respectful Alliances between Social Justice Activists in Communities of Color and Transformed Teachers Unions*. New Jersey City University Urban Education and Teacher Unionism Policy Project.
- Welner, K. M., & Welner, K. G. (1999). Contextualizing Homeschooling Data: A Response to Rudner. *Education Policy Analysis Archives*, 7, 1-13.