



Are we Creating Neoliberal Subjects ?

Shift Conference 2021 – D. Fadipe

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BACKGROUND

1. Neoliberalism is difficult to define . . . !

- “a hegemonic ideology, a state form, a policy and programme, an epistemology, and a version of governmentality . . . “

- Springer, Birch, and MacLeavy (2016)

2. A Key aspect . . .

“a narrative of investment in human capital, both by individuals to increase their own employment prospects, and by the state to drive up national productivity (Foucault, 2010; Hill, 2010; Huber and Solt, 2004; Olssen and Peters, 2007).

3. Neoliberalism - as high-level policy, discourse , ideology - but also as enacted in individual, everyday lives .

NEOLIBERAL SUBJECTS

1. Mirowski – ...an employee or student, but also simultaneously a product to be sold, a walking advertisement, a manager of their résumé, a biographer of their rationales, and an entrepreneur of [their] possibilities [...] provisionally buying the person the] must soon become. (2013: 108)
2. Education - a means to become economically competitive . . ?
3. The Main goal is economic freedom and security – deemed to bring independence through self-reliance and an appropriate response to market forces.

EVIDENCE OF BUSINESS STUDENTS AS NEOLIBERAL SUBJECTS

1. Environmental factors.
2. Business Curricula actually *teach* some of the axioms of a Neoliberal Subject
3. But - are these having an effect . . ?

PEDAGOGY . . .

1. How do HE Educators come into this ?
2. Teaching Theory . . . (good ol' Bloom !)
 - Cognitive – learning theories , models applying to cases of how things work.
 - Psychomotor – skills etc. incl. entrepreneurship.
 - Affective - values etc .
3. BUT – all domains are very much inter-related and interdependent.

DIFFICULTIES & DANGERS IN PEDAGOGY

1. **Raises issues of Individualism vs Collectivism.**
2. **But there is danger in feeding values - either implicitly, explicitly, by accident or on purpose – so what to do ?**
3. **So – can we be Bystanders ?**

IS THERE AN IMPETUS FOR CHANGE ...?

1. “Recent economic uncertainty has called into question whether neoliberalism can ever be a sustainable economic model, let alone one that can support social and ecological sustainability.”

- Rudd, T., & O'Brien, S. (2019)
2. Recent Developments signify change ...
3. But - would this be so counter-cultural ?

CAN WE ... ?

1. Acknowledge Higher Education as a system that responds to its environment ?
2. Cross fertilise Business with other disciplines ?
3. Be Mindful of Transformative experiences ?

“The key point is that human being is best realized when we deploy our learning to help us to reach a position about life, not just about skills and subjects. Necessarily, this involves the scrutiny of values, the development of a reasoned beliefs system, an attitude of continued learning (and not just learning within a profession or job, but also learning for life) and the motivation to do so. Therefore, higher education is about transforming the person, not (simply!) about transforming their skills or domain understanding. “

[Harvey and Knight, (1996)

4. Look at Business Schools differently ?
5. Take a Holistic view of Student Development ?



THANK YOU FOR LISTENING.
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