

Teaching in contemporary Kyrgyzstan:

From the perspectives of de-
skilling
and up-skilling theses

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Central arguments

- Continuous scholarly quest for bridging gaps between structure and agency, policy and practice, thinking and doing;
- A call for locating and understanding educational work, as any work in the larger conditions of economy and politics;
- Teaching in contemporary Kyrgyzstan should be analyzed in the context of past Soviet, current national as well as global developments and conditions of education;
- If education reforms to be successful, teachers' work and expertise should be central and their intellectual labour should be valued and welcomed;
- Developing a conceptual framework that accounts for collective struggle for defining labour and public duty of teachers as creative workers and transformative intellectuals.

Theorizing public teachers' work in global capitalist contexts

- Why should you read theories, such as the labour process theory of Henry Braverman or a Marxist analysis of educational work of Henry Giroux?
- Why should we even need any Marxist or neo-Marxist analysis when we had experiences of work under a regime that proclaimed to create a society in which the workers' happiness was at the core?

Theorizing teachers' work in global capitalist contexts

- How teachers work is currently controlled? What effects these controls have on teachers' work?
- What could teachers in Central Asia (Kyrgyzstan; Kazakhstan) do to shape their identities as professionals and public intellectuals?

Labour process of teaching

- Public school teachers sell their labour power to the state, and by doing so, they surrender their capacity to produce creative labour (HOW)
- The state uses control to realize the labour power of teachers into productive/realized labour (in the form of future skilled workforce)
- Control is carried out by diminishing teacher roles in developing curricula and take major decisions beyond their classrooms and schools

Deskilling thesis

- Theorists: Braverman, Reid, Apple, Giroux etc
- Teachers are deskilled as
 - They increasingly lose control over their own labour (they are reduced to implementers or executors of curricula, not the producers or conceivers of ideas);
 - They are imposed a set of non-curricular responsibilities (collecting data on students for EMIS, collecting parental contributions, monitoring election process);
 - Teachers' work is evaluated through a set of narrow indicators, mostly based on learning outcomes of students (standardized);
 - Routinizing teaching and learning pedagogies that are 'transposable' (Giroux > World Bank pedagogies)
- Teachers are predominantly sidelined from major education policies, as their expertise and competencies are largely ignored and not accounted for.

Upskilling thesis

- Daniel Bell – the analytical framework for a post-industrial society
- Greater demand for skilled labour as societies progress
- Greater demand for employees to upskill or upgrade their knowledge and skills e.g. ICT and workplaces
- Teachers are expected to learn new paradigms of educating, teaching, and learning (often theorized, tested and ‘succeeded’ in ‘foreign’ contexts)

Between deskilling and upskilling theses continuum, where do Kyrgyz teachers stand?

- Historical contexts of centralized education system in which teachers were, have always been and continue to be controlled;
- Intensification of teachers work with little improvement in their work conditions by bureaucratic and top-down approaches to 'managing' them > now 'competing and being compared to teachers in the globe'
- A continued culture of a 'centralized' 'national teacher union' that lacks power and autonomy from the state/government and which is able to demand professional dignity and defend its members against all kinds of atrocities
- Individual strategies of resilience or creativity at the individual level