

# 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