

Self-Destruction and Modern Educational Systems

The Distribution and Production of Knowledge

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Since the nineteenth century, the state has increased its control of the distribution and creation of knowledge. The central mechanisms for the distribution of knowledge are government operated elementary and secondary schools, and universities. Control of the creation of new knowledge has been accomplished through government funding of research. This funding has resulted in research primarily serving the policy objectives of the state.

The results of state control of the distribution and creation of knowledge has been the education of the apolitical technocrat, who is willing to make and use the instruments of self-destruction. State control of research has resulted in the creation of a military technology capable of world destruction. State control of educational institutions has resulted in the education of individuals willing to conduct this type of research. In other words, state education has produced individuals who are willing to commit suicide.

It is important to understand in this discussion that I am describing educational systems in both socialist and state capitalist societies. Also, I am primarily talking about the

their achievements. State schooling has not been effective in shaping all human behavior, but it has affected the behavior of some people. The great fear should be that state educational systems might be able in the future to achieve their goals. In other words, state educational systems have been effective in educating some apolitical technocrats, but it has not been effective in making all people into apolitical technocrats. But, I maintain, it is those people who have been effectively educated in state schools that are leading the world down the road of self destruction.

Current methods and purposes of state control of the distribution of knowledge are a combination of nineteenth century political goals for education and twentieth century economic goals for education. It is the cumulative product of the evolution of state controlled schools which has resulted in the education of the modern, apolitical, technocrat. This education involves the teaching of selected knowledge, the channeling of emotions and the shaping of behavior. The individual produced by this education can be best described as having specialized knowledge and generalized ignorance, a political consciousness that has been narrowed to service to the state, a sense of self worth and self esteem which is dependent upon rewards from the state economic system, and a belief that good mental health depends on obeying the rules of the state and the workplace. The apolitical technocrat is taught to love and work for society, but the boundaries of that society and love are defined by the state.

To understand the education of this type of personality, one must examine the cumulative effects of nineteenth and twentieth

century state educational systems. It is important to understand that state educational systems have served similar purposes in both socialist countries and countries with state capitalism.

The primary goal of nineteenth century educational systems was the education of the citizen. This education involved teaching selected types of knowledge. The student was often taught national history, national literature and national traditions as a means of building patriotism. Understanding national laws and the system of government was considered essential for future obedience to the state.

In addition, the training of emotions was considered essential for the development of patriotism. The student was taught to love their country through emotional attachment to symbols of the state. This emotional attachment was achieved through worship of the flag, national songs and marches. The ultimate goal of creating emotional attachment to symbols of the state was a citizen who was willing to die for their country. The army of the nineteenth century was dependent upon a citizenry who loved their country and hated the enemy. This combination of love and hate was to create an emotion strong enough that a person was willing to die for the symbols of the state.

Also, the behavior of the student was to be shaped to meet the needs of the state. Submission to the rules of the school was believed to be preparation for submission to the rules of the state. School government was considered a miniature form of state government.

Ideally, nineteenth century systems of state education hoped

the shaping of behavior to conform to the needs of the state, individuals would become extensions of the state.

In the twentieth century the major goals of state educational systems became economic. This did not mean the abandonment of nineteenth century concerns, but an addition or overlay of economic goals. The primary interest of twentieth century state school systems has been the development of human capital or human resources to meet the needs of the labor market. This concept of education has made the student an object of the economic system to be shaped to meet its needs as defined by the state.

The goal in the development of human capital has been training for a specialist place in the labor market. Within this framework, the knowledge to be taught to the individual student is determined by the future occupation of the student. This results in a high degree of specialized knowledge and understanding, and a low degree of understanding and knowledge about the operation of the state's social, political and economic system.

The personality of the individual in twentieth century educational systems is shaped by their specialized role in the labor market. This involves several factors. First, the modern worker must learn to cooperate with others if modern complex business and industrial organizations are to function. Secondly, the individual must learn to work for the good of the organization and society. Educational systems in both socialist and state capitalist systems have placed an emphasis on

teaching cooperation and sacrifice for the good of society. Of course, the boundaries of society are defined by the state. Therefore, cooperation and sacrifice are to take place within the boundaries of the state economic system.

The combination of the political goals of the nineteenth century and the economic goals of the twentieth century defines the education of the modern, apolitical technocrat. First, the concept of citizenship now includes obedience to the laws of the state and being a good worker. Secondly, political consciousness is narrowed to service and cooperation for the good of society. Society, of course, is defined by the boundaries of the state. Therefore, service and cooperation mean service and cooperation for the good of the state.

In addition, the traditional teachings of patriotism link the emotions of the individual to the symbols of the state. The student is taught to love the state and work for the good of society. Since the state defines the boundaries of society, the student is really taught to love and work for the state economic system.

Therefore, a major change in the goals of schooling between the nineteenth and twentieth century is the degree of emotional attachment to the state. In the nineteenth century, students were taught to love their country, hate their enemies and to be willing to die for their country. In the twentieth century, state educational systems continue to prepare for the ultimate sacrifice to state, but now the sacrifice is to be made for the political system, and the social and economic system. In other words, the student of the twentieth century is now taught an

emotional attachment which extends beyond the symbols of the state to something called, "a way of life."

Therefore, twentieth century educational systems attempt to shape the personality of individuals by preparing them for their specialized tasks in the labor market, for cooperation and self sacrifice, and for love of country. In addition, self esteem and recognition are made a function of the rewards of the state economic system. In school, the student's self esteem and recognition are made a function of grades. The grading system is psychological preparation for the control of self esteem by the state economic system.

The psychological condition of students is also affected by the image of state institutions being benign. State schools and other institutions are presented as models of goodness that are only interested in working for the welfare of citizens. Within the context of this image, disobedience to state rules or lack of cooperation is considered deviant behavior, because the individual is denying the good intentions of the state. Normal or mentally healthy behavior involves obedience and cooperation with the institutions that are claiming to work in the citizen's best interests. Within modern educational institutions, good mental health is defined as obedience to the rules of the school and cooperation with authority. If the objective of the educational institution is achieved, the student leaves school believing that their sanity depends on obedience and cooperation with state authorities.

From the combination of these nineteenth and twentieth century objectives of schooling there emerges a portrait of our

apolitical, technocrat. It is an individual who is a true servant of power. Love, mental health, self esteem, cooperation and self sacrifice have all been brought within the power of the state. Political consciousness has been narrowed by specialization and a belief in service to the needs of the state.

As a servant of power, the apolitical technocrat is willing to make and use the weapons of destruction because they feel it is an act of love to the state, they gain self esteem because of recognition of their work by the state, and they feel mentally healthy because they are fulfilling the needs of the state. In other words, state educational systems prepare the citizen for suicide.

These suicidal tendencies are made possible by government control of the creation of knowledge. The ideal of the German research university of the nineteenth century was the freedom to pursue truth. The ideal of the American university of the twentieth century is research to fulfill government and corporate policies. State control of research since World War II has resulted in increased development of the weapons of destruction. The scientist in the government sponsored military research laboratory is the model of the twentieth century apolitical technocrat.

It is important to understand that the above arguments deal with the goals of educational systems and not necessarily with results. State educators have not had the methods and techniques necessary to change all students to meet these educational goals. In fact, a great salvation of educational systems is that their

cumbersome bureaucracies have been an impediment to accomplishing the state's educational ideals. The real nightmare will occur when the state educational systems can actually accomplish their goals.

This nightmare might become a reality as educators improve their techniques of psychological and behavioral control in the classroom. To keep this nightmare from becoming a reality, we must begin to separate the distribution and creation of knowledge from the power of the state. A truly free society will not be possible until this occurs. Separation of school and state will not by itself create a peaceful and free world, but it will be an important part of the march down that road.