

I found this book to be a 'must-read' for educators. Although before reading this book, I was aware of ethical norms set for my profession, I did not consider my relationships with learners with any rigor. Of course teachers experience pleasure through teaching/learning relationships but we often craft these relationships intuitively and without contemplation. McWilliam provided me with a framework for understanding rewarding pedagogical relationships which involves elements of status, power, physicality, voice, emotional presence, and humour. She characterizes each element, explores issues, and describes context-appropriate behaviour for each. I hope to introduce McWilliam's ideas to learners in my teacher preparation program.

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Robertson, H.J. (1998). *No More Teachers, No More Books: The Commercialization of Canadian Schools*. Toronto: McLelland & Stewart, Hardcover, 354 pp.

According to Heather Jane Robertson, contemporary public education in Canada is currently under siege from transnational corporate interests seeking new markets and an all encompassing means of ideological control to advance their narrow world view. In *No More Teachers, No More Books*, Robertson identifies the various economic organizations and globalization forces presently shaping public education policy. Although I share Robertson's concern over the inappropriate educational influence that business interests currently exact on Canadian schools, and the role that technology often plays in advancing this trend, I take exception with her structuralist view that technology necessarily impacts deleteriously on the academic freedom of teachers and students.

Considering her earlier work, *Class Warfare*, co-authored by Maude Barlow, Robertson is well aware that education does not exist in a social vacuum, but is influenced by a range of forces

outside the classroom. By examining the impact global market economy culture presently exacts on domestic education policy, she situates the corporate influence on Canadian schools within a global context where the power of nation states to act independently has been considerably reduced. The ability of nation states to insulate citizens from corporate culture, and the social Darwinism it often entails, has been significantly limited by international trade agreements such as NAFTA and MAI that allow the unfettered international movement of capital. Robertson argues that under these circumstances the country with the worst possible environmental standards, lowest wages, and poorest labour protection laws provides an ideal milieu for transnational corporations seeking to enhance their profits. Governments find themselves dismantling social programs, renegeing on environmental commitments, and removing other elements of a once kinder, gentler, more humanitarian society to attract corporate presence and the capital investment it entails. Nations resisting globalization are punished by corporate departures, and thus the former have little choice but to capitulate to the latter's demands. Robertson explains that, "the private sector has moved from standing behind the throne of power to sitting on the throne itself" (p. 11).

Internationally, economic globalization has resulted in attempts to create a globally standardized education curriculum through the efforts of corporate friendly organizations such as the Organization for Economic Cooperation and Development, and the Asia Pacific Economic Cooperation. On a domestic level, the Conference Board of Canada, Industry Canada, and the Council of Education Ministers Canada are, according to Robertson, all working to achieve a similar objective. As part of this trend toward a standardized curriculum, occupational relevance and employability skills now provide the centrepiece for Canadian public education. Indeed, the Ontario Minister of Education recently suggested that "one third of high school credits be earned in part time and unpaid jobs" (p. 57). Robertson argues that a gross lack of public funding and purposely misinterpreted test results have been used to manufacture a crisis in public education in an attempt to justify what she sees as the transformation of schools into corporate training centres.

Robertson points out that centralizing control over education policy has at least two obvious advantages for those seeking major educational change: First, the dismantling of local jurisdictions such as school boards eliminates the need for consultation when radical, corporate approved policy changes are introduced, and second, a standardized curriculum ensures a global labour force possessing a minimal level of skills will be available to transnational corporations should they wish to relocate. As Robertson puts it, "to maximize profits, corporations look for a well trained [as opposed to well educated] but anxious workforce" (p. 12). Whereas, "an idle, well educated workforce generates unrest. A poorly educated, poorly paid workforce generates profits" (p. 26).

Robertson argues that technology is the primary tool with which corporations are presently wrecking havoc on traditional public education objectives. She suggests that computer technology, as well as the corporate influence and advertising it carries, have been introduced into schools through such programs as School Net to inculcate students with market economy values. Citing the example of how low underpasses were built around an exclusive area of New York City as a "bus barrier" to ensure that African American children could not attend the district's schools, Robertson contends that computer technology is similarly *not* value neutral, or as she puts it, "the tool shapes its users" (p. 145).

It is worth reiterating that I share Robertson's views and concerns with regard to the corporate take over of public education in Canada. I also agree that some form and/or method of resistance should occur to reverse this trend, and thereby protect the traditional moral and social objectives of Canadian public schools. I adamantly disagree with Robertson, however, that a Luddite form of resistance to technology offers a viable method to counteract the impact of corporate influence on public education. Computer technology is deeply ingrained in our culture both inside and outside school walls, and provides an increasingly indispensable tool for many different cultural groups. Even if computers were to be expunged from public education, the implicit, however unlikely, objective inferred from Robertson's argument, most students would simply access them at other sites.

Rather than removing computers from schools, those wishing to resist corporate influence on education might find more challenging ways to mobilize technology to facilitate that resistance. Robertson is correct in her observation that technology sets the stage for action, but this need not limit the forms of action that may be subsequently undertaken. Although cultural tools such as technology may set the scene within which human action will occur, even the most complete account of these cultural tools and the forces of production that give rise to them cannot ultimately determine their use. Indeed, computer technology fosters communication between teachers and students sharing concerns over environmental issues, corporate involvement in education, dismantling of social programs, and a range of other urgent educational and social issues. Rather than resisting technology in a Luddite fashion, a program that in spite of Robertson's romanticized account was largely unsuccessful, we may be able to appropriate the technological tools of corporate oppression, and employ them to promote the intellectual and vocational emancipation of teachers and students.

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Stromquist, N. (1997). *Literacy for Citizenship: Gender and Grassroots Dynamics in Brazil*. Albany, NY: State University of New York Press, 248 pages.

Literacy for Citizenship by Nelly Stromquist documents the Movimento de Alfabetização de Jovens e Adultos (MOVA), a literacy movement that took place in São Paulo, Brazil between 1989 and 1993. The aim was to discover how the particular needs and conditions of women's lives are addressed in this literacy program, and if and how an emancipatory literacy program benefits women. The lives and the experiences of the women were the central concern of the study. The MOVA movement was