

Book Review

Surviving Economic Crisis through Education

David R. Cole, editor
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In the introduction to *Surviving Economic Crises through Education*, editor David R. Cole positions the anthology as an investigative assemblage, or a gathering of productive essays, that works to examine the social realities of education following the 2008 global economic crisis. This book is a result of the collaboration of researchers from the United States, the United Kingdom, Australia, Canada, Argentina, and Norway. It does not provide ideal solutions nor does it intend to valorize or refute the current state of affairs. Instead, this book calls for a reevaluation of education in light of economic crises and in turn, the creation of new survival narratives.

It can be argued that the effects of the 2008 global financial crisis continue to reverberate in educational contexts today. Under the flexible and dynamic auspices of neoliberalism, capitalism is now conceived as a force driven by knowledge (Peters, 2012), and is accelerated (Cole, 2012) and “mutative” (Haworth & DeLeon, 2012, p. 184) in character. Within this formation, capitalism functions in a manner where humans, including students, are recognized as social capital, and the individual is conceptualized as a guided consumer citizen embedded within the larger economy (Peters, 2012). In light of this transformation, a more intricate and critical analysis is required, not just of capitalism but the continuous transformations that it is undertaking. As Jason Wallin states in the final chapter of this volume, “the contemporary economic crisis in education must be rethought in relation to the deterritorializing pole of social-economic production intimate to capitalism” (p. 233). Put otherwise, any pedagogical response to economic crisis must fully consider the complexity of the socio-political and economical forces involved.

The task of this book is therefore multifaceted. The primary goal is to link economic crisis with education without cloaking the intertwined social realities, apparatuses of power, and imperious traumas at work. Contributors to the book endeavor to recognize the dominant and often orthodox discourses that carry on during times of economic downturn, and at the same time, pull apart the interstices that form within such conversations. In a concomitant move, then, the book works within these chasms to develop new narratives that offer creative responses to the contemporary economic crisis. In this way, the book itself “signifies a survival narrative for the present and future; it is a means of drawing disparate yet combinatory threads together about economics, teaching and learning, and the evolution of culture and society” (Cole, 2012, p. 8). This book is, therefore, of use to scholars who seek to understand the causes and effects of the 2008 economic crisis, particularly in relation to education, but also for those

who seek to carry on the discussion in the creation of new *lines of flight*. These lines of flight, or what Deleuze and Guattari (1987) consider “paths of mutation precipitated through the actualisation of connections between bodies that were previously only implicit” (Parr, 2010, p. 147), are that which have the potential to release new powers in educational thought to act and respond to economic crises.

The edited volume, multiple in its perspectives and heterogeneous in its theoretical and methodological approaches, is comprised of three sections. The first section, *Educational Responses to the Crises*, explores the types of responses that occurred during and after the economic downturn of 2008. In the second section, *Case Studies of Argentina*, readers are transported to the Argentinian financial crisis of 2001 through several studies that examine the impact of the crisis on educational policy and practice. The third section, *Educational Theory and Economic Crisis*, builds on the first two and offers a series of conceptual investigations into the connections between economic and educational theory.

The first section, *Educational Responses to the Crises*, depicts a range of educational responses to the most recent financial downturn. Although varied in approach, each chapter offers insight into the way “one survives economic crisis through education by closely examining the breaks and rupture points through which new tendencies in society are disclosed and made apparent” (Cole, 2012, p. 2). Jim Crowther and Mae Shaw, for example, look to educational policy in the United Kingdom to examine the particular breaking points that occur when a language of resilience is employed as a response to economic crisis. Mike Cole also focuses on the UK context, this time investigating the lurch to the right in British politics with a detailed look at the rise and fall of the British National Party after the 2008 crisis. Cole explores the breaking points that accompanied this lurch and addresses issues for Marxist educational practice and antifascist education. Gustavo E. Fischman and Victor H. Diaz then take readers to the United States in an investigation of beginning teachers’ reflections on the Teach for America program. In this chapter, the authors suggest that although the redemptive narrative of neoliberal models of education is strong in such programs, through reflection and collaboration, fissures can be created wherein teachers are able to imagine alternative solutions and build new narratives that question commonsense responses to economic crises.

Two particularly strong chapters in the first section, in terms of creating rupture points and subsequent counter-narratives, are those by Michael A. Peters and Patrick Carmichael and Kate Litherland. Peters chronicles the crisis of Western capitalism, landing on cognitive capitalism, a theory that focuses on the socioeconomic changes ushered in with new technologies that have transformed modes of production and the nature of labour. Critical of the way in which cognitive capitalism harnesses immaterial labour to direct flows in particular and often limiting ways, Peters looks to open science and new open communications environments as potential lines of flight that have the capacity to create “radically decentred forms of social nonproprietary and nonmarket models of academic production and exchange” (p. 36). Similarly, Carmichael and Litherland examine the “social-material-methodological assemblages” (p. 106) created through technology-enhanced learning at the university level. Drawing on the work of Guattari (1984) and Deleuze and Guattari (1994), and particularly Guattari’s strategy of transversality, the authors seek to open up a space for alternative envisioning of technology-enhanced learning couched in “terms of extractions, innovations and new combinations” (p. 97). Both chapters not only analyze current responses to the economic downturn but also actively produce pedagogical reconfigurations and alternate circuits of educational thought.

The second section, *Case Studies of Argentina*, features several studies that examine the

2001 financial crisis in Argentina. After almost a decade of being recognized as a successful model of neoliberal reform in 2001, Argentina experienced a major financial crisis, which has been noted as one of the “most extensive economic crises in history” (p. 10). The three chapters in this section paint a picture of the ways in which Argentinian education was affected by the crisis and suggest that the impact was more far-reaching than just financial. Silvina Gvirtz and Ana Laura Barudi describe and analyze the effects of the 2001 crisis focusing on three specific dimensions: the internal efficiency of the education system, the academic performance of students, and the transformations that occurred to material conditions within the system. Through their study, the authors demonstrate that each of these elements worsened due to the crisis. Ana Ines Heras’s chapter also looks at the effects of the crisis, this time focusing on agency, for both students and families, and the conceptual tension created between “education as a right” and “education as a commodity” (p. 133). Silvia Grinberg and Eduardo Langer’s chapter also looks at the student experience and delves into the particularities of pedagogical devices in degraded territories such as the urban areas of Buenos Aires. This reflective chapter asks: how does survival become possible in a context where crisis and change has become the norm? The authors look to Deleuze (1987, 1990, 1992, 2005) and Deleuze and Guattari (1997, 1987) to understand the forms of control in motion and the ways in which non-codified flows and resistance play out. Couched between educational responses to the current crisis and broader theoretical explorations, the second section of the volume offers a powerful site for developing perspective on the long-term effects of economic crisis for education.

The third section, *Educational Theory and Economic Crisis*, builds on the previous two sections, this time looking toward educational theory. This section, the most demanding of the reader in terms of language and theoretical synthesis, seeks to explore economic crisis in terms of its conceptual complexity. Although demanding at times, the strategies used by the authors, including comparisons of economical phenomena to contemporary film and the *stealing* of dominant pedagogical thought, position this section as the strongest in terms of creating an intricate and critical analysis of the implications of the current economic crisis for education. Additionally, the contributors are the most active in deterritorializing and subsequently reterritorializing dominant survival narratives through the active transformation and creation of concepts. Torill Strands’s chapter employs several outlooks that are sociological, discursive, and semiotic in nature and examines and reformulates the way in which professional expertise, including that of teachers, is conceptualized within the current economic crisis. R. Scott Webster also develops a reformulation, focusing on the ontological aspects of education by questioning the conception of individuality under capitalism.

In the creation of de/reterritorializations, several contributors to the third section employ the conceptual toolkit developed in the work of Deleuze (1989, 1992, 1995, 1997) and Deleuze and Guattari (1983, 1987). Cole, the editor of the volume, analyzes the multilayered situation of the current economic crisis. Using a Deleuzo-Guattarian philosophical lens, Cole seeks to understand Deleuze and Guattari’s (1987) concept of immanent materialism in relation to “regimes of work” (p. 165) and educational practice. Focusing on the regimes of work associated with the crisis and their connections to education, Cole develops a counter-narrative wherein students are positioned as agents of the future whose creativity lies in accessing the world as an assemblage of multiplicities rather than a reality that is merely an inversion of the past (p. 176). Robert Haworth and Abraham P. DeLeon also use a Deleuzo-Guattarian lens drawing on the book *A Thousand Plateaus* (1987) to investigate the mutative characteristics of capitalism and the particular narratives that accompany this mutation. The authors explore the subjective

positions of the smith, characterized by innovation and the ability to construct possibility, and the nomad, characterized by the ability to move through space freely giving little credence to borders. These positions are put forward as potentially transformative subjectivities, which can create educational imaginaries outside of dominant formations of global capitalism. In the final chapter of the anthology, Wallin attempts, and arguably succeeds, in stealing Paulo Freire's conceptualization of banking education to decode the neodespotism at the heart of education today, and in turn, to speculate on the ways in which pedagogical life can be freed and "alternative forms of social arrangement and desiring production [can work to] ultimately demote the ostensible inevitability of capitalist processes" (p. 244).

To conclude, this edited volume provides a variety of diverse entry points to explore economic crises and the connection to education. Additionally, the common threads intertwined within each section and subsequently woven throughout the entire book create a new survival narrative. The narrative here is that both contemporary capitalism and educational practice are complex phenomena that cannot be understood with simple reductionist approaches to problem solving. Although focused on *surviving economic crisis through education*, this book is not a survival guide. It does not offer specific solutions to the changing face of education under mutative capitalism but instead challenges the reader to delve into the complexities at play within such a situation. For this reason, Cole's edited book is a powerful tool for current and future scholars, both within the field of education and outside, as it recognizes the complex nature of contemporary economic systems and the resultant implications for education. As Deleuze and Guattari (1983, 1987) proposed in their *Capitalism and Schizophrenia* project, capitalism only deterritorializes to bring about a more powerful reterritorialization. The challenge both philosophically and politically is, therefore, to supersede capitalist repetition of de/reterritorializations with forms of productivity that have the capacity to break beyond the limits of capitalistic capture. It is to this challenge that this book responds. There is no easy solution offered here but instead new questions posed that urge the reader to take up creative lines of flight in both research and practice.

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