

The Information Inquisition: High Priests of Knowledge

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Abstract: In this paper the author examines the relationships between the educational technology movement, the computer industry, the Bush administration's education policies, and the Inquisition. Examples of ways in which information is manipulated, distorted, and denied public scrutiny are discussed.

Key words: educational technology, sophism, deception, Bush administration

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...was there ever any domination which did not
appear natural to those who possessed it?
(John Stuart Mill, 1869)

Introduction

Despite well coordinated attempts by the popular media, corporate interests, the U.S. government, and educational bureaucrats to oversimplify and mediate the events that shape postmodern existence, close examination of recent trends in each of these areas, as well as interactions among them, suggest that, perhaps, a well-articulated and concerted effort to deceive the public is a more accurate representation of the current intellectual environment in the United States of the 21st century. This manuscript will attempt to clarify the religiously inflected discourse surrounding educational technology/big business, examine and provide examples of the historical basis for such rhetoric, demonstrate how such rhetoric has impacted public schools, and finally, disclose the manner in which the current Bush administration has willfully employed misinformation in keeping the populace “in the dark,” and purposely quashed democratic involvement.

In the last 10-20 years educational technology has become increasingly ubiquitous in the popular discourse of the school reform movement. As argued in earlier manuscripts (Engle 2001a, 2001b), the privileged position of technology in the understanding of the evolution of human cognition has been accomplished largely through the promotion of what Lewis Mumford (1966) referred to as the “myth of the machine.” This self-perpetuating belief system, or mythos, has surfaced as the primary form of materialism informing educational thought in the late 20th century (see Engle, 2001a). Largely through a systematic, highly organized, and well-financed public relations campaign the high tech industry and its supporters in government and education have created the popular perception that educational technology is immune from all forms of critical analysis. Those who dare to openly question technology’s role in education have been routinely cast as postmodern heretics and subjected to various forms of marginalization. It is my contention that today’s proponents of educational technology have more than a little in common with earlier practitioners of the Spanish Inquisition.

Between the twelfth and sixteenth centuries, in Europe, the institution of the Inquisition evolved, in order to preserve orthodox religious beliefs, identify and punish heretics, and suppress unpopular opinions from being openly expressed (Peters, 1988; Coulton, 1929). Although the Inquisition developed, in large measure, as a highly complex institutional counterbalance to the turmoil and intellectual stagnation of the dark ages, the Roman See rapidly amassed papal authority that eventually evolved into universal jurisdiction over all matters concerning the fate of mankind. Even the humblest priest wielded purported supernatural powers that elevated him above the level of common humanity, protected him from prosecution for criminal activities, and often conferred upon him virtual immunity in all legal matters (Lea, 1955).

Despite the passing of approximately 500 years and the putative evolution of academic institutions predicated on the same democratic ideals which led to the creation of the U.S. Constitution, postmodern citizens are subjected to systematic

ploys by bureaucrats, multinational corporations, and politicians designed to preserve orthodox beliefs (religious and otherwise), identify and punish those who oppose their vision for the future, and suppress opinions that are not in consonance with officially sanctioned versions of reality.

One need not look far back into the history of the United States educational establishment in order to identify the precursors of this postmodern bureaucratic notion of information management. In the 1930s Harold Rugg, a faculty member of the Teachers College of Columbia University was experiencing professional success, as the author of a popular social science textbook, and receiving accolades from other progressive educators concerned with issues such as freedom of expression, racial cooperation, and social equity (Spring, 1988). In 1939 a well-funded, highly orchestrated campaign, by the Advertising Federation of America, the American Legion, and the National Association of Manufacturers was launched against Rugg and the textbook. As a result, between the years of 1939 and 1944 annual sales declined from 300,000 copies to less than 21,000 copies. In some communities the banning was actually celebrated by public burning of the book (Schugurensky, 2001).

His series of social studies texts was not radical in the sense of being Marxist, but it did portray many of the difficulties and failures in American society. During a period of racial intolerance, the books promoted racial understanding and social justice. Rugg also advocated national economic planning and included problems related to unemployment, immigrants, and consumerism (Spring, 1988, p. 135).

The manner in which special interest groups freely exercised their hegemonic dominance in public spheres was a mere hint of what was to come. Today, postmodern educators are confronted with a formalized and systematic assault on all forms of critical discourse that may potentially constrain the profit-making capabilities of corporations, intent on transforming American school children into the next "killer market."

Manufacturing the Information Age

The rhetoric of "the information age," has emerged as the dominant theme of both corporate and educational discourse in the twenty-first century. This is no accident, but rather a well-articulated campaign that has come to fruition, only after arriving at favorable sociohistorical conditions, in which the intellectual and economic environment is ripe for aggressive marketing strategies, stable markets (school children), and palpable public support. Close examination of the historical record, however, demonstrates that the "public relations/advertising" industry had already begun employing the term "information age" as early as 1903 (Lubar, 1993). After several generations of advancing the ostensible benevolence of information technologies and all that surround them, the high tech industry "has generated a religiously inflected rhetoric celebrating moral, political, and social improvements" that reportedly accompanies them (Czitrom, 1982).

Most scholars concur that certain monumental historical events have dramatically altered the educational endeavor. These events typically include the development of cuneiform writing (circa 3500 BC), the rapid appearance of hieroglyphic writing in Egypt (circa 3100 BC), the invention of the Phoenecian

alphabet (circa 1500 BC), the Gutenberg press (1496), and the Common School movement of the 1800s, to name a few.

It might be argued however, that one of the most significant, yet commonly overlooked, educational developments in the late twentieth century is related to the notion that management and business leaders, trained not in education, but in manufacturing and marketing, might understand the educational endeavor better than educators themselves.

This was clearly the belief of Frederick W. Taylor, spokesperson and promoter of the field of scientific management (Spring, 1990) referred to as Taylorism. Taylorism adhered to a rigid "top-down" hierarchical model, in which all decision-making was concentrated, and limited to those managers /school administrators, who purportedly had the benefit of scientific data, inaccessible to mere classroom teachers. In a short several years scientific management literally exploded onto the educational scene, resulting in an unprecedented epistemological shift that provides the historical framework for today's assault on education by the corporate business community.

Tyack and Cuban (1986), assert that: (p. 114)

In the early decades of the twentieth century, business and professional elites increasingly controlled the school boards of cities. In their attempt to counter criticism that the schools were inefficient, superintendents and university education experts rushed to borrow language and concepts from business, and "businesslike" became almost synonymous with "scientific."

By the 1930s the role of school administrator had already undergone a dramatic conceptual shift from the traditional role as scholar and philosopher, to that of business manager, fund-raiser, and account executive (Callahan 1962). Although the routing of Harold Rugg from the educational community offers one example of the burgeoning influence of corporate attempts to monopolize the dissemination of information and direct public opinion away from open scrutiny, it is certainly not an isolated case. In fact, by the early 1930s the International Business Machines Corporation (IBM) and its CEO Thomas Watson had already initiated a sordid collaboration with Nazi Germany in order to establish a market monopoly (Black, 2001). Through an elaborate series of illegal, and insidious machinations, Watson provided Hitler with the necessary, custom-designed IBM equipment that enabled the Third Reich to successfully round up Jews, deport them to concentration camps, and ultimately enact the Final Solution (Black, 2001), all the while deceiving the American public and business community by camouflaging profits in clandestine foreign accounts that were illegally funneled into IBM accounts in the U.S.

After the war, anxious to benefit from the politics of the Cold War economy, IBM aggressively marketed the same technologies in the U.S. intelligence community (Black, 2001), while simultaneously canvassing the U.S. government for public tax revenues for basic research and development. By the late 1950s criticism of schools from the military and business reached a fevered pitch (e.g., Rickover, 1959; Eisenhower, 1957), resulting in the successful passage of the National Defense Education Act, legislation which explicitly laid the blame for perceived deficits in

national security on the alleged scientific/ technological indifference of American schools. The National Defense Education Act provided for funding of computer research at a rate of more than \$20 million (current) per year (Flamm, 1988). Furthermore, Congress concurrently created the National Science Foundation (NSF), and aggressively began work on development of a communications system capable of withstanding a nuclear attack. One significant outcome was the Advanced Research Projects Administration Network (ARPANET), designed to link a number of military sites together. ARPANET was the conceptual design for what is now the Internet.

Although the Internet was clearly a product of the military-industrial establishment, for many years (1969-1996) basic research in computer networking was, in large measure, conducted in academic institutions and funded through various federal granting programs including the Defense Advanced Research Project Agency (DARPA), the Information Processing Techniques Office (IPTO), the National Science Foundation (NSF), the Department of Energy (DOE), the Department of Health and Human Services (DHHS), and the Computer Science and Telecommunications Board (CSTB). By 1995 federal support for research in computer science had climbed to almost \$1 billion per year (National Research Council, 1999). As such, the vast majority of academic scientists involved in the creation/development of the Internet were neither apprised nor consulted about negotiations between the U.S. government and private vendors to open the Internet to the commercialism that pervades the media industry.

All historians of the Internet recognize that it is a product of the public sector, and that it was closely associated with the military. But every bit as important, many, perhaps most, of the university scientists who designed the architecture of the Internet did so with the explicit intent to create an open and egalitarian communication environment. They had a vision of a noncommercial sharing community of scholars and eventually, all citizens of the world. It would be a public utility (McChesney, 1999, p. 129).

Although the official rhetoric surrounding the Internet still hearkens back to its publicly funded, noncommercial, egalitarian origins, providing information access to communities of learners and scholars, those very attributes have recently become the latest victims of a clandestine market takeover by the high tech industry, which has been fully sanctioned by the U.S. Congress.

In 1995, after more than 25 years of public sponsorship and funding, the National Science Foundation (NSF) relinquished its role in maintaining and providing Internet services to the academic community and the world. In a virtual "giveaway" the backbone of the Internet was transferred over to media giants such as IBM, MCI, GTE, and AT&T.

This was accomplished with little fanfare. In fact, it was virtually ignored in the popular media, the very entities that would benefit most from it, and, not surprisingly, current popular histories of the Internet seldom include reference to its existence or impact.

In 1996 the U.S. Congress contributed a further weakening blow to the notions of benevolence and egalitarianism on the Internet, by passing the Telecommunications Act of 1996. The legislation enacted dramatic deregulation of the entire telecommunications industry and led to massive wave of corporate consolidations. Cognizant of dramatic growth potential in the technology sector, the telecommunications industry and popular media reconceptualized the Internet to be one of numerous modes of delivery (e.g., cable television, satellite television, radio, film, etc.) that would become part of an indistinguishable, highly efficient, anonymous information pipeline, delivering digital information in a seamless, global fashion to information-hungry consumers. In 1995 Nicholas Negroponte, director of the MIT Media Lab wrote:

..computers are moving into our daily lives: 35 percent of American families and 50 percent of American teenagers have a personal computer at home; 30 million people are estimated to be on the Internet; 65 percent of new computers sold worldwide in 1994 were for the home; and 90 percent of those to be sold this year are expected to have modems or CD-ROM drives. These numbers do not even include the fifty microprocessors in the average 1995 automobile, or the microprocessors in your toaster, thermostat, answering machine, CD player, and greeting cards...And the rate at which these numbers are growing is astonishing. The use of one computer program, a browser for the Internet called Mosaic, grew 11 percent per week between February and December 1993. The population of the Internet itself is now increasing at 10 percent per month. If this rate of growth were to continue, the total number of Internet users would exceed the population of the world by 2003 (p. 8).

Caught in the endless hyperbole surrounding the wonders of the Internet and instructional technologies, the U.S. Congress has consistently funded educational technology endeavors at a rate exceeding \$5 billion per year (Cordes and Miller, 2000), a figure that the Clinton administration recommended be increased by \$15 million.

In 1999, under the authority of the Elementary and Secondary Education Act of 1965, Congress authorized the U.S. Department of Education to expend \$75,000,000, in awarding grants to educational institutions desiring to engage in the dramatic "transformation of teacher education" through the use of technology. In 2000, the funds were matched, and in 2001 the funding was increased to \$125,000,000. In spite of the virtual absence of empirical evidence linking technology to demonstrable learning gains, technology proponents continue to employ gushing terms, such as "revolutionize," "transform," and "digital schoolhouses," in their discourse related to educational technology. Furthermore, "Preparing Tomorrow's Teachers to Use Technology Program" (PT3) oversight has been disappointing. In some institutions PT3 funds have been misused, funding projects that are totally removed from the realm of teacher education. This is not surprising, given the nature of PT3 evaluation. On the U.S. Department of Education's official PT3 website (2003) grantees are informed: 1) there are no systematic standard methods designed to evaluate PT3 projects, and 2) grantees may modify evaluation models at any time, employing "internal" or "external" reviewers.

Ironically, the same laxity was not exercised by the National Reading Panel. In 1997 Congress passed legislation authorizing the creation of a panel of fifteen experts (e.g., leading scientists in reading research, representatives from colleges, reading teachers, educational administrators, and parents) to examine the extant literature in the field of teaching reading. While lending the appearance of objectivity, the panel was actually comprised of twelve hand-picked university professors (five with absolutely no background in reading), two medical doctors, one teacher of language arts, one parent, and one school principal. Conspicuously absent from the panel were any reading teachers. More troubling, was the fact that of the university professors “All held the same view of the reading process” (Yatvin, 2002), that being a “bottom-up” view, which adheres to the belief that reading is a discrete, sequential process, that focuses primarily on student ability to translate graphemes into sound, or phonemes. During the first meeting of the panel, it was decided that this model of reading was the only legitimate model, and that no other model would even be considered in their review of the reading literature. The panel referred to such research as “scientific based reading research,” or SBRR. In other words, the panel consciously decided to simply ignore any view which diverged from their own, pretending that other views (e.g., top-down, interactive, and constructivist) were nonexistent. This is reminiscent of the infamous wholesale buyout of the academic community by the tobacco industry, in which the truth about the dangers of tobacco were suppressed for fifty years, in order to maximize profits from tobacco sales.

It is no coincidence that the NRP (National Reading Panel) played prominently in President George W. Bush’s plans for the reauthorization of the Elementary and Secondary Education Act, dubbed “No Child Left Behind.” It seems that since Bush’s early days as Governor of Texas, he has had a cozy relationship with the publishing industry. In fact, the Bush and McGraw families have been intimates since the 1930s, when they met on Florida’s Jupiter Island, a vacation destination for wealthy socialites and industrialists from the Northeast (Metcalf, 2002). Bush himself is close friends with the current CEO, Harold McGraw III. Neither is it coincidental that McGraw-Hill happens to be the largest publisher of discrete, skill based, phonics books in the world. Bush has invited Harold McGraw III into the White House and in fact, appointed him to his transition advisory team, along with other McGraw-Hill executives. The day that Bush took over as the President he stated that he would eliminate the nation’s “reading deficit,” and “loosen the purse strings” on the condition that instructional practices be based on “scientifically based reading research.” It seems McGraw-Hill’s mantra has been, “scientifically based,” and that McGraw-Hill will realize huge profits from the new legislation.

Another important facet of the legislation mandates yearly testing of all students from third grade through eighth grade (Metcalf, 2002). According to Bush, and his cadre of “educational leaders,”(including Lou Gerstner, CEO of IBM, Harold McGraw CEO of McGraw-Hill Publishing, and former Houston Public School Superintendent, Rod Paige), “results matter.” Results, of course, are dependent on testing regimens. Thus, in the last 5 years alone, state expenditures for standardized testing have tripled. It is no coincidence that this provision to NCLB may potentially funnel as much as \$7,000,000,000 (more than a third of the entire 1998-1999 federal contribution to education) into the hands of the “Big Three” standardized test producers, McGraw-Hill, Houghton-Mifflin, and Harcourt General (Metcalf, 2002).

Rod Paige (the former Secretary of Education in the Bush administration) was so enamored with “results” that, not unlike Enron’s Ken Lay, he was willing to fabricate them. Recently, several principals working for Paige during the purported “Houston Miracle” have reported that Paige held frequent meetings in which he demanded principals “make their numbers,” or lose their jobs (Winerip, 2003). Among a host of strategies to “make the numbers,” administrators were directed to replace the established curriculum with non-stop test practice drills, encourage low scoring students to drop out of school, and place ninth grade failing students into a category dubbed “technical ninth-graders,” where they could remain “ninth-graders” for three years, and never take the tenth-grade exit exam (Dubose & Ivins, 2003). Paige, appointed by Bush in 2001 to head the Department of Education, had reported dropout rates of under 1.5% during his tenure as the Houston School District superintendent. In some inner city high schools in Houston dropout rates were reported to be zero, leading to a state audit of the Houston School District. Upon completion of the audit it was found that the actual dropout rate was closer to 50%. It seems Paige was able to “get results” simply by offering \$5,000.00 bonuses to principals and \$20,000.00 bonuses to district administrators who were willing to lie about the true numbers (Winerip, 2003). In a recent letter to the New Yorker magazine Paige stated:

Henry Ford created a world-class company, a leader in its industry. More important, Ford would not have survived the competition had it not been for an emphasis on results. We must view education the same way. Good schools do operate like businesses (Paige, 2003).

In fact, Paige seems to have adhered closely to the practices of renowned businessman, and close associate of George Bush, Enron CEO, Ken Lay. Lay, known to Bush as “Kenny Boy” (Schorr, 2002), illegally cashed in Enron stock options that netted him, and his Enron cronies over \$500 million, while investor, employee, and pensioner holdings were reduced to nothing. Neither Paige, nor Lay has faced punishment of any sort, and according to most analysts, Lay may never be brought to justice (Toobin, 2003). Despite public awareness of Lay’s gross malfeasance, he and other Enron executives attended a total of six clandestine meetings with Vice-President, Dick Cheney, in which national energy policy was drawn up. Cheney, a huge supporter of deregulation of the energy industry (still on Halliburton’s payroll), refuses to release details regarding the meetings that will affect all Americans.

Neither does Cheney desire to discuss his blatant misrepresentation of facts, regarding rumors of Iraqi attempts to purchase materials for “weapons of mass destruction.” In November of 2001, an unsubstantiated rumor emerged, suggesting that Iraq was buying weapons-grade uranium from Niger. Two officials from the CIA (ex-diplomat Barbro Owens Kirk-Patrick and ex-diplomat Joseph Wilson) were sent to Niger by Cheney to attempt to substantiate these claims. Both Kirk-Patrick and Wilson reported back to CIA director, George Tenet, that the claim were absolutely ungrounded, and in fact nothing more than “crude forgeries” (Thomas, 2003). Unswayed by facts, Cheney met with Tenet and insisted that the unsubstantiated rumor be included in Bush’s State of the Union Address to the American people (McIntyre and Ensor, 2003), in which Bush made a case for the invasion of Iraq. Unfortunately (for the American people), Bush neglected to mention that Cheney’s

company, Halliburton, had already been awarded a multibillion dollar, noncompetitive contract to “rebuild” Iraq (Dobbs, 2003), after the war.

Therefore, it should be no real surprise that Bush, the self proclaimed “education president,” has proposed a federal budget for education (\$50 billion) that is approximately one fiftieth of proposed amount of tax cuts for the country’s wealthiest one percent (AFL-CIO, 2003). In reality, the education bill is a thin disguise by the administration to further promote the transfer of public funds to private schools. The centerpiece of the bill would drastically slash funding for public school vocational training, after-school programs, and higher education, in order to supply hundreds of millions of dollars to support a voucher program, in which private, religious, and home schools would receive federal funds for operation (Miller, 2003). Conveniently, private schools are not, nor will they become, accountable to meet standards, as public schools are. More importantly, private schools may openly reject any applicant, for any reason, whether it be a special need, limited English proficiency, or socio-economic status. The myth that vouchers will provide “choice” for all students is simply another smokescreen by the Bush administration to funnel public tax dollars into private and religious enterprises.

Despite Bush’s unflagging loyalty to the corporate elite, he is clearly cognizant that his ideas may be incapable of garnering popular support if spoken about, and discussed openly. To avoid public awareness of the types of misrepresentation and lies described above, the administration has initiated a campaign of extreme and unrelenting secrecy. Since George W. Bush assumed the presidency, he has taken every measure possible in order to protect himself, and his administration from public scrutiny (Ivins, 2001). Essentially, any topic that might hinder the ability of his corporate cronies to maximize profits has become taboo. This is clearly demonstrated in Bush’s appointment of corporate lobbyists, executives, and convicted criminals to key government positions that purportedly regulate those industries (see Table 1).

Table 1.

Appointment	Post	Qualification
B. John Willimas	Chief Counsel Internal Revenue Service	Creation of tax havens for corporations to avoid paying taxes
Steven Griles	Deputy Secretary Department of Interior	Lobbyist for oil, gas and coal industries
Linda Fisher	Chief of Staff Environmental Protection Agency	Vice-President Monsanto Corporation
Jon Huntsman Jr.	Deputy Trade Representative	Has paid millions in fines for burn-offs of benzene, butadiene & other carcinogens (A Bush associate from Odessa, TX)
Michael Leavitt	Adminstrator Environmental Protection Agency	Former Governor Utah, has worked to undermine environmental protection
David Hager	Food & Drug Administration	Has authored books on Christ's ability to help women heal illnesses through prayer
Mark Rey	Undersecretary of Natural Resources & Environment	Served as lobbyist for timber industry & authored "salvage rider," enacting the suspension of all environmental laws & allowing the clear cutting of old growth forests
Ken Lay	Energy Department Transition Team	A Bush "Pioneer" (raised in excess of \$100,000 for Bush campaign)
Elliot Abrams	Office of Democracy Human Rights & International Relation	Secretly funnelled arms, lied under oath during Iran-Contra scandal, & referred to himself as "gladiator"

In order to insure that public watchdog organizations are kept “in the dark,” and democratic involvement is quashed, Bush has authorized the EPA to classify any document that might cause unrest or questioning, as “secret.” Furthermore, under the leadership of Attorney General, John Ashcroft, the “Freedom of Information Act,” enacted by Lyndon Johnson to insure that “no one should be able to pull curtains of secrecy around decisions which can be revealed without injury to the public interest”(Public Citizen, 2003), has been reversed. In a memorandum written by Ashcroft, government agencies are encouraged to find reasons to deny the public access to information, and assures agencies that the Department of Justice will provide legal counsel and resources to avoid any such release (Public Citizen, 2003). The result of Ashcroft’s reversal immediately created a trend of increased denials of public requests for information. Pulitzer Prize nominated reporter, Duff Wilson, who relies heavily on FOIA documents for his stories, claims that since George W. Bush has taken office, denials have become more and more frequent. Furthermore, Wilson states that even documents that are successfully obtained are so heavily censored (blacked out) that they are seldom usable (Dunham, 2003). According to researcher Jennifer LaFleur (2003), the incidence of government agencies denying FOIA requests on the “privacy” exemption has risen from 55,000, in 1988, to 380,000 in 2002, a sixfold increase (LaFleur, 2003).

Such draconian measures will become even more common if Ashcroft succeeds in gaining congressional support for Patriot Act II. The original USA Patriot Act, passed within seven weeks of the September 11th attack on the World Trade Center, gave the federal government unbridled power to engage in wiretapping, confiscation of suspected terrorist property, spying on the American citizenry, and examining library patron check-out records. Patriot Act II would expand these powers even further, to include:

1. Revocation of American citizenship to anyone found to have contributed “material support” to an organization deemed by the government to be “terrorist;”
2. Legal permanent residents could face instantaneous deportation, without any criminal charge or evidence;
3. The creation of a huge database of citizen DNA information. Anyone refusing a “cheek swab” could be fined \$200,000 and jailed for a year;
4. Authority to wiretap any citizen for 15 days, and to indiscriminately (without a warrant) monitor Internet usage and email correspondence;
5. Engaging in “secret” arrests of suspected terrorists with no notification to the suspect’s immediate family;
6. Police who engage in illegal searches would be granted automatic immunity;
7. Local law enforcement agencies would be given new freedom to conduct citizen surveillance and spying;

8. American citizens could be subject to surveillance by the government on behalf of foreign countries;
9. The “Sunset” provision to the USA Patriot Act (which limited the duration of expanded powers) would be erased, making the act permanent (Welch, 2003).

Shredding the U.S. Constitution and severely curtailing American civil liberties, however, appears to be just the beginning for the Bush administration. Not content with dictating K-12 educational policy and curriculum, it seems that recent legislation in the U.S. House of Representatives (H.R. 3077) has recommended the creation of an “International Education Advisory Board.” The board would be appointed by the administration, with members from homeland security, the Department of Defense, and the National Security Agency. Ostensibly, the board would function to increase accountability, serve in an advisory capacity, and provide counsel on matters related to textual and curricular materials used in courses at universities that receive Title VI Foreign Language and Area Studies (FLAS) funding. In particular, the bill would provide a mechanism by which authors such as Arundhati Roy, Robert Fisk, Tariq Ali, and Edward Said could be removed from college curricula (Kurtz, 2003), or have sanctions imposed on professors who choose to use these books in their courses. Each of these authors has openly criticized U.S. foreign policy in the Middle East, as well as the recent U.S. war in Iraq. While it is difficult to imagine that the right actually possesses the hubris to wage such blatant intellectual imperialism, the events of the last two years give one reason to wonder. Already, the Bush administration has amassed unprecedented financial and legal power, assumed unilateral, hegemonic jurisdiction over the world, protected itself and its followers from legal prosecution of any sort, and blatantly disregarded the traditions that have defined “scientific discourse” for the last 500 years. In June of 2003, the White House deleted large portions of the Environmental Protection Agency’s “state of the environment,” report. The report purportedly contained descriptions of the risks of global warming and identified industries that emit greenhouse gases (Public Citizen, 2003). The White House didn’t like the report, so they simply altered it.

Like the medieval inquisitor, modern conservatives and their supporters (i.e., educational bureaucrats, CEOs of multinational corporations, politicians, etc.) appear to be intent on preserving orthodox beliefs, punishing dissenters, and suppressing opinions at virtually any cost, even if it entails dismantling the civil liberties that have represented the hallmark of our free, democratic society.

Conclusion

Postmodern educators have found themselves in a precarious situation in which political and educational discourse has been reduced to clichéd euphemisms (e.g., “no child left behind,” “transformational technology,” etc.). Public policy is discussed and determined behind closed doors, often excluding stake holders who possess the deepest understanding of the issues in question.

The dilemmas confronting teachers and others in the educational community concerning the suppression and manipulation of information are neither mysterious, nor new. As demonstrated, the high tech industry, political conservatives, and

bureaucrats have exerted an incredibly pervasive force upon the educational community. Once again, greed has trumped the altruism that has for time immemorial characterized the education profession. Teachers and other educational professionals must re-conceptualize their roles in determining course content and reclaim the territory usurped by market force and efficiency. Schools and schooling are much too important to be handed over to a market regulated industry. Educators should:

1. Organize and lobby state legislators to return curricular decision-making and funding formulas to local districts, schools, and teachers.
2. Create non-profit entities to provide objective evaluation of curricular materials, and provide legal services for educators that come under attack from state and federal legislation such as Patriot Act II.
3. The literature pertaining to the uses of educational technology should be critically re-examined with an emphasis on who funded the purported research.
4. Educate parents, children, and the public about blatant conflicts of interest that currently exist at the highest echelons of the U.S. government, the textbook publishing industry (e.g., Harold McGraw, CEO of McGraw-Hill served as the head of Bush's transition team and has garnered huge profits from recent administration initiatives, such as NCLB's notion of SBRR, and Bush's recent call for annual K-12 standardized testing), and the high-tech industry.
5. Move away from scripted "critical thinking" approaches that emphasize convergent, textbook driven outcomes, and adopt "critical thinking" outcomes that emphasize a) drawing upon student background knowledge, b) drawing upon diverse sources of information, c) teaching students to critically evaluate information for veracity and bias, and d) adopting constructivist teaching strategies that encourage students to examine any and all information and drawing their own critical conclusions, which they can openly articulate and defend before their peers.

Critical educators must engage in a continual questioning and challenging of simple panaceas offered by industry, politicians, and educational bureaucrats who typically conceive of children as a captive market for their next money-making scheme. Despite measures designed to create the illusion that market domination of schools is natural and benevolent, critical educators must create an intellectual environment in schools, in which the tyranny of the market is openly exposed, bringing about a post-modern enlightenment, grounded in ethics, humanitarianism, and logic.

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