



Research Article

The political nature of education and political placements in the struggle of hegemony in education¹

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Abstract

The modern political understanding defines politics only within the boundaries of a political society immanent to the state, such as parliament and political parties. Within the framework of this understanding, it is discussed whether education is included in the political field. In this direction, although formal education is planned under the control of political powers, they are trying to define it outside the political field and turn it into a unilateral hegemony device. As this limited definition of the political, the importance of civil society in politics began to increase, the political struggle first expanded to the field of hegemony between civil society structures such as Trade Unions, and then the borders of the political expanded from the field of the state to the entire social field, especially within the framework of Foucaultian biopolitics and understanding of power. As a matter of fact, Foucault draws attention to the emergence contingency of the power relation wherever there is a mode of subjectivity in a relationality while revealing himself in the subject, instead of positioning the power in the field of the state alone. Thus, wherever the power is, there is the opportunity for resistance to emerge and the boundaries of the political to expand (Foucault, 2014). In this framework, the expansion of the borders of the political sphere towards the social sphere destroyed the one-sided perception of the concept of hegemony under the control of the state or the ruling class, and with the influence of Gramsci (1999), the concept of counter-hegemony and the struggle for hegemony emerged. The field of education should be understood as a field of political struggle as it contains many political confrontations that conflict with each other, such as power, education trade unions, education policies, educational designs such as teachers, students and families. Thus, the field of education appears, on the one hand, in the structural political struggle between the political power and "Education Trade Unions", and on the other hand, as a field of hegemony that includes particular subject movements and political subject positions, such as students and teachers.

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Introduction

In general terms, education is defined in a position above politics and outside the political realm (Samuel&Mantel, 1956). Nevertheless, as our perspective on what the political is develops, the potential to see the education included in the political field would appear. The modern political approach defines politics only within the scope of the political society within the domain of the state, such as the parliament and political parties (Cohen&Arato, 2013). In the context thereof, whether education is included in the political field is considered controversial. Accordingly, although formal education was planned under the control of political powers and maintained an ideological character in the respect thereof, there has been a persistent effort to define the same outside the political field by the political powers and to turn it into a unilateral hegemony device.

The aforementioned limited definition of the political was challenged especially within the framework of Foucaultian approach towards biopolitics and power, and the borders of the political expanded from the state to the social sphere. As

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a matter of fact, Foucault considered power as a multiplicity of power relations spread over the entire social relations, but not positioned in the sphere of the state alone. Power is omnipresent, but this is not because of the wide spectrum of its sphere of influence or that it is all-encompassing, but because power relations appear everywhere. From the point of view, power reveals itself in the subject. Power is not vested a central position in historical and structural terms, and is composed of institutions and apparatuses. So, wherever there is a mode of subjectivity in a relationality, there emerges the contingency of the power relation. Thus, wherever the power is positioned, there is the opportunity for resistance to emerge and the boundaries of the political to expand (Foucault, 2014).

Accordingly, the perceived expansion of the borders of the political sphere towards the social sphere, the concept of hegemony unilaterally under the control of the state or the ruling class was destroyed and it was seen that the concepts of counter-hegemony and struggle for hegemony emerged also with the influence of Gramsci (1999). As a matter of fact, Laclau and Mouffe take Carl Schmitt's distinction between friend and foe and the conflictual nature of politics as a point of departure and identify the political as a kind of antagonism that spread to the social sphere. Thus, politics is shaped by the antagonistic struggle of opposing discourses.

A similar antagonism is included in Ranciere's definition of the political. According to Ranciere, the political is the confrontation of two processes of two distinct types as ruling and equality. In the light thereof, political is where the respective laws of Polis (administration) and equality (demos) meets as the law of organization of public order and governing. To consider the political as an antagonism of us and them or rulers or ruled in fact allows us to more clearly see a number of channels in the social sphere, which are originally political, and indicate the educational sphere as such an antagonism, i.e. a political sphere (Laclau, 2007; Mouffe, 2010; Ranciere, 2007).

The field of education should be understood as a field of political struggle as it contains a number of conflicted political confrontations, including the political power, trade unions, education policies, curriculum, teachers, students, and families. Therefore, it can be suggested that the field of education emerges as a field of hegemony struggle that includes particular subjectivity movements and political subject positions, including students and teachers, as well as structural struggles. In the framework thereof, the present article will study the political nature of education and the potential for the emergence of political subject positions that can take place in the struggle for hegemony in the field of education.

Problem of Research

The main problems of the study are stated below. According to this;

- Why does education have a political nature and what kind of a struggle for hegemony exists between the components of this political process?
- What kind of political subjectivation potential do structural political components such as political powers and trade unions and non-structural social subjects such as educators and students have in this struggle for hegemony?

Method

Research Design

In the field of education policy, the research aims to draw the boundaries of the political nature of education and the phenomenon of hegemony in education and to bring a critical approach to how it works, by researching the sources in the domestic and foreign literature on how the political nature of education and the struggle for hegemony in education work. For this purpose, the "literature review method" (Kızıltepe 2015), one of the qualitative research techniques, is used in the research.

Results and Discussion

In this section, it will be discussed why education has a political nature, what the political actors may be in the political process of education, what kind of hegemony struggle may take place among these actors, and how the components of the education process have a political subjectivity potentials.

The Political Nature of Education and the Struggle for Hegemony in Education

The modern political approach defines politics in an area immanent to the state, just within the boundaries of the political society, such as the parliament and political parties. Accordingly, it has been debated whether education is included in the political field. Therefore, although formal education was planned under the control of the political power and has an ideological character in that respect, there is an ongoing persistently effort by the political power itself to define the same outside the political realm. Thus, the aim has been to keep education away from politics and the political struggle of social segments, but make it serve as an area where the power would maintain the liberty of control. This approach transforms education into a unilateral hegemony device in favor of political power.

The aforementioned limited definition of the political was contested when the political struggle expanded to the field of hegemony struggle between civil society structures and the importance of civil society in politics increased especially with modernism (Cohen&Arato, 2013; Keane, 1993) and gradually it has been transcended within the framework of Foucaultian biopolitics and understanding of power, and therefore borders of the political expanded from the state to the social sphere. As a postmodern political strategy of the capitalist state, it was aimed to reproduce the power with an inclusion strategy that would include civil society through the demonstration of democratic participation, where the decisions are taken via participatory methods and the entire civil society is included, and by creating a great neo-corporatist machine (Schmitter, 1974), resulting in the fact that the state as Gramsci stated, becomes an expanded state (Thomas, 2010).

The Foucaultian idea that ‘power is everywhere in every sense’ also expands the areas of confrontation with power. Therefore, the universal discursive influence of power can never fully establish hegemony over the molecular space; otherness is complete otherness and includes absolute ‘differance’. Thus, a contingency emerges thanks to this ontological non-coincidence phenomenon (Butler & Laclau & Zizek, 2009). Contingency hands over the direction of particular movement to anarchy; in other words, the movement of particularity can never be determined, it is an otherness in itself. In the Derridean sense, it won’t be spoken (Derrida, 1999; 2010), it always deviates from the envisioned universal, revealing a movement of political subjectivity that cannot be determined in the molecular sense. Laclau suggests that such a phenomenon of non-coincidence is a social particularity taking on the representation of a universality that would never fully coincide with itself, that is, as the condition of hegemony. Therefore, each particularity will always have the potential to be re-incorporated into a new universality. This suggests a struggle for hegemony over universal discourses (Laclau & Mouffe, 2008).

Contingency creates, in this sense, an open arena for the struggle of a number of political figures or groups, who seek to build hegemony through their own universal discourse against the hegemony of power, universality or homogenization in the political arena. In the context thereof, different socio-political groups compete fiercely to ascribe a temporary, albeit temporary, universal representation function to their particularism according to Laclau. Society generates a whole glossary of empty signifiers; how they would embrace a signified or a meaning is a matter of political competition (Laclau, 2003).

Accordingly, the main determinant and central category of the political relationship is hegemony. Different colors, values or ideological positions that make up the society are in political competition for the acceptance of different ideas, and the foregoing competition takes the form of a struggle for hegemony in the field of discourse. The occurrence of the masses fixed in the discursive field, on the other hand, shows that the hegemony process is working. Therefore, the democratic politics, according to Laclau and Mouffe can only be possible with a political possibility in which different discursive totalities can struggle in accordance with the very antagonistic nature of society, and social particularities can be freely articulated into any of those discursive totalities (Laclau & Mouffe, 2008).

Nevertheless, while the expansion of politics into the field of civil society and transcending the modern civil society - state duality, or non-separation of the state from civil society and the politics from bare life, in fact gives a rise to a biopower approach, in which the control of politics infiltrates all the cells in the depths of society, as well as daily life, thus leads to a kind of new totalitarianism (Agamben, 2013), it also makes it possible for us to conceive of an innate

understanding of resistance against this innate understanding of power, as well as an area that has the potential to weave the field of civil society as an area of resistance against power (Hardt & Negri, 2011).

In the framework thereof, the field of civil society becomes a political field, where the control of the state infiltrates and expands, but precisely for this reason, it creates the possibility of resistance by politicizing the entire social field. The politicization of civil society transforms the associations pertaining to the field of civil society, including trade unions, parties, or associations, which do not look to have a political character, into a tool for hegemony by instrumentalizing the state's control, management, and persuasion mechanism, but on the other hand, it was able to transform it into organizing a resistance in other words a counter-hegemony mechanism against the system by attracting such civil society associations to the political arena. The expansion of the political sphere and its transformation into a field of contingency introduces a field of struggle for hegemony. Here, education can be conceived as one of the areas of struggle for hegemony with an aforementioned political nature, and in that sense, politics is not only a monopoly of the state, parties, or trade unions, but also in an expanded view as a hegemony of power and at the same time the possibility of resistance via an approach that all the components of education participate, for example, teachers can be political subjects. In that respect, as in all areas of society, the expansion of the political beyond the structural boundaries in the field of education means the expansion of power and the construction of hegemony, as well as the result of dialectical inevitability, which also means the possibility of resistance and counter-hegemony (Kükürt, 2020).

Therefore, the area of political struggle also expands to the extent that the area of power expands. Accordingly, the expansion of the borders of the political sphere towards the social sphere has destroyed the unilateral perception of the concept of hegemony as under the control of the state or the ruling class. Therefore, Gramsci's idea of counter-hegemony (Gramsci, 1999; Bobbio & Texier, 1982), could be reinterpreted within the framework of an enlarged biopolitics and allowed the extension of the concept of hegemony struggle from political society to civil society, and then to the depths of institutional and personal relations. Thus, the political relationship has the potential to appear as an antagonism in each field of intersubjectivity.

As a matter of fact, Laclau and Mouffe take Carl Schmitt's distinction between friend and foe and the conflictual nature of politics (Schmitt, 2006) as a point of departure and identify the political as a kind of antagonism that spread to the social sphere. Accordingly, politics is shaped by the antagonistic struggle of opposing discourses. This political perception is indicative of the fact that the struggle for hegemony has spread to all areas. Notwithstanding the fact that the said political approach expands the field of politics, it is still associated with political struggle perceived as structural, that is, as a struggle between structures (union, or education trade unions, organization, party, group, etc.) innate to civil society. However, based on the idea of bio-politics and antagonism, the present study suggests that along with the structural functioning of the political, it can also present in (deconstructive) personal processes that can be manifest between spouses in a family, or even between teachers and students in a school. The political nature of the field of education should be perceived in this context.

The Potential of Political Subjectivation in Education

Foucault sees power as a multiplicity of power relations that spread over the whole of social relations, rather than positioning it only in the realm of the state. Power is omnipresent, but it is omnipresent not because of the magnitude of its area of effect or omnipresence, but because power relations appear everywhere. From a Foucaultian point of view, while power opens up itself in the subject, instead of placing power in a certain historical and structural central position consisting of institutions and devices, the contingency of the emergence of the power relation stands out wherever there is a mode of subjectivity within a relationality (Foucault, 2014). Thus, wherever the power is, there is the opportunity for emergence of resistance and the expansion of the boundaries of the political (Foucault, 2015).

Nevertheless, this is not to indicate that a central power has completely disappeared. Contrarily, it is indicative of the fact that forms of power can be present both in central and institutional terms, and even in intersubjective personal processes. In this framework, the political begins to emerge both through structural politics, but also in all institutional and intersubjective personal processes innate to society. Furthermore, the "political" and "political struggle" conceptions in the present study is suggestive of the fact that political subjectivity can be manifest not only between larger structures,

but also in particular or molecular relationship processes. "The private (personal) is political" (Hanisch, 1969) motto, which has become an important feminist slogan today, should be perceived in this context as well. Accordingly, Ranciere's understanding of the "political" offers a more convenient set of concepts for comprehending the potential of the political to emerge even in personal processes. Ranciere's definition of "political" also takes a similar idea of antagonism as a point of departure. In the light thereof, political is where the respective laws of Polis (administration) and equality (demos) meets as the law of organization of public order and governing. Therefore, the political refers to the phenomena of egalitarian opposition to injustices that appear in the process of domination. In a sense, for Ranciere, politics is this process of emancipation that is innate to the principle of equality. In the context thereof, for the purposes of the present study, the police-demos encounter is perceived not as a mere structural encounter, but as a molecular antagonism that can be manifest in all social relations, personal processes, even in the family and at school.

Thus, the field of education is not merely a realm for structural struggles of organizations, including unions or parties, but it can also be identified as a field of such molecular struggle, as a political field. Therefore, the field of education should be considered a field of political struggle, hosting a number of structural and personal political encounters, the educational designs of which are in conflict with each other, including political power, education trade unions, educational policy, teacher, student, and parents. This is because of the fact that as long as education is considered mass education, it is seen as the process of bringing in a behavioral change in a certain direction in the individual or group being educated (Aksoy&Eren, 2017). In this sense, an educator is in an effort to administer and control a group of students and to shape them based on the principles of the law of polis embodied in her/him as delegated via the senior management (Dewey, 1996). In this sense, education primarily indicates a political process in terms of student and teacher encounter. Nevertheless, the fact that education is a political phenomenon, is not limited to above but also embodies a number of increasingly complex polis vs. demos encounters within the process of governing and being governed (Ranciere, 2007).

It can be suggested that education is a political process on the grounds of the political antagonism processes in education, political power policies and its practitioners (such as school, school administration and teachers), political power and education unions, power policies and school administration, teachers and students in terms of the continuation of many more structural and personal antagonistic relations.

In that respect, the operation of the political process does not merely occur in the state-society-individual relations, in the institutional structures within the state or in the institutional associations within the civil society, but also in each institutional or non-structural relational area immanent to the society. Accordingly, the process of political subjectivation occurs in terms of being involved in the relationship of being governed and overturning the principles of governing in all the power formations that are inherent to the state and society.

For example in the educational process, the fact that the political power aims to keep the target group (under education) together as a 'congregation' and to create a monolithic nation out of it, imprisons the educator, that is, the teacher, as a part of the power's way of maintaining politics, and forces the teacher to be a tool of greater motivation of polis. In this sense, the field of education appears as a political process in which the state power 'fixes' the society in the desired direction under a certain identity and in the meanwhile seeks to instrumentalize not only the students but also the teachers as part of its own purpose (Freire, 2003; Ranciere, 2019).

Nevertheless, the denial of a student or a teacher to exercise power at school or in a classroom, or an effort to maintain its original practice instead, is indicative of the process of making politics, a practice of emancipation in which political subjectivation takes place. Let's take, for instance, a general educational design, a national education policy, states set goals for their own institutional education, make universal designs, but thousands of social particularities that come to the same education process, an educational construct particularly designed therefore, also have their own educational goals about their own education. Here an antagonism arises between the design of political power on the student and the student's design on themselves.

This is because of the fact that particularities are a political subject per se and exhibit a unique political subjectivity and a *molecular resistance*, no matter to what extent they were subject to being shaped. Therefore, we can call the agency

of resistance that emerges in spaces and micro-political processes that structural politics cannot reach, *molecular resistance*. Therefore, it is necessary to consider the field of education as a field of hegemony struggle that features particular subjective movements and political subjective positions, including trade unions, their members, students and teachers. In this sense, the field of education cannot be considered a mere apparatus of political power, because the processes included in education do not operate as merely governed by the law of polis. The field of education has the potential of raising the law of demos against both the sphere of hegemony of the political power, and to the laws of polis, where the subjects of education turn into political subjects and resist the principles of political power. In this sense, education should be understood as a political field in which the struggle and liberation process work together.

Conclusion

In conclusion, the political should not be considered as delimited by state or political society in the context of education. On the contrary, education should be considered a *political field*, where it is possible to exhibit political subjectivity including ethical objections in all areas of education, in school and in the classroom, where a *molecular resistance* in which objections can be raised against all forms of biopower that may arise in educational relations, and where a broad hegemony struggle that includes not only structures but social particularities may take place.

Such a political approach would not consider the political as a process that concerns merely large "structures" such as the state or class power and other large "structures" opposed to it, but on the contrary, pervasive throughout society and in daily life, family and work areas and of course, as a process that can be seen even in the field of education at school. Accordingly, the field of education cannot be seen as a mere power device, because the processes involved in it do not operate as processes by which the police law of power is realized. The field of education is indicative of *liberation processes* in which the law of demos is put against both the hegemony of the power and the law of the police, the subjects of education turn into political subjects and resist the principles of power.

Recommendations

It should be democratically regulated in such a way as to give sufficient subjectivity to all actors in the educational processes. Researchs should be conducted on the actors involved in the educational processes to be political subjects in the political struggles to solve the problems related to education.

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