

# International Aid Agencies, Learner-centred Pedagogy and Political Democratisation: a critique

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**ABSTRACT** *Recent pronouncements by international aid agencies on their interest in and preference for a learner-centred pedagogy so far appear not to have attracted much scholarly attention. This paper attempts to explain this interest. It argues that although the efficacy of the pedagogy is often couched in cognitive/educational terms, in essence, its efficacy lies in its political and ideological nature. The fact that the aid agencies' interest in the pedagogy became explicit soon after the fall of the Berlin Wall is in itself significant. The paper argues that aid agencies' apparent lack of interest in pedagogical issues before 1989 lay partially in the very central hypothesis of the modernisation theory of development which became enshrined in policies of aid agencies soon after the latter were created. The hypothesis, coupled with human capital theory, viewed education in technicist terms. However, the ascendancy of neo-liberalism as a development paradigm in the 1980s and 1990s elevated political democratisation as a prerequisite for economic development. Education, then, assumed a central role in the democratisation project. Given its democratic tendencies, learner-centred pedagogy was a natural choice for the development of democratic social relations in the schools of aid-receiving countries. Aid agencies, therefore, had to be explicit about their preference for the pedagogy. Thus, the pedagogy is an ideological outlook, a worldview intended to develop a preferred kind of society and people. It is in this sense that it should be seen as representing a process of Westernisation disguised as quality and effective teaching.*

## Introduction

In the mid-1980s Mikhail Gorbachev launched the twin movements of *perestroika* and *glasnost* in the Soviet Union. *Perestroika* was about economic reforms and *glasnost* about political reforms. The latter movement emphasised openness in, and democratisation of, the Soviet political system. No sooner had the movement taken off than states in the Baltics started organising and campaigning for autonomy and independence. The fall of the Berlin Wall in 1989 not only marked the culmination of the campaign, it also marked the demise of the Soviet bloc. The effects of this event were to be felt all over the world, for the event itself marked a turning point in international relations and world politics. The end of the bipolar world order ushered in a 'new world order', one in which democratisation assumed centre stage. Since the fall of the Berlin Wall 'democratisation' has become a buzzword. For the developing countries evidence of political democratisation has become a conditionality for receiving overseas aid from the developed North (Crawford, 1995). International aid agencies and other world aid institutions, such as the World Bank and the International Monetary

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Fund (IMF), have publicly declared their preference and support for Western liberal democracy [1]. The position of aid agencies is summarised by Burnell (1991) in the following words:

[T]he ascendant assumption now seems to be that political pluralism is essential for development. Put another way, a movement towards greater political accountability will enable a robust and free-market economy to flourish. (p. 7)

‘Political pluralism’ in effect refers to ‘liberal democracy’ and ‘free-market economy’ to ‘competitive capitalism’. Thus the promotion of liberal democracy is necessarily the promotion of competitive capitalism, as far as aid agencies are concerned [2]. For the agencies, economic development is perceived as only possible under liberal democracy, so that promoting the latter should be a priority for any country serious about development. It is, therefore, not surprising that aid agencies have made the adoption of multi-party democracy by aid-receiving countries a condition for giving aid.

The aid agencies have cited the democratisation of education as one of the most important ways of promoting liberal democracy at the macro-level. For example, consider the following policy statements from the bilateral aid agencies of the United Kingdom (UK) and Norway. In the UK, the Overseas Development Administration (ODA) and the Department for International Development (DfID) [3] have stated clear positions:

Citizens who have been exposed to learning styles which require the questioning of assumptions, empirical styles of studying and the exploration of alternatives are seen as likely to have more chance of participating fruitfully in a pluralistic political process than those who have not. (Overseas Development Administration (ODA), 1994, p. 3)

The relationship between education and the political process is well illustrated in Eastern Europe and the former Soviet Union, where the process of democratisation is seen to be hampered by outdated curricula and teaching methods. (Department for International Development (DfID), 1997, p. 7)

In Norway, the position has been illustrated by the Ministry of Foreign Affairs:

For the growth and consolidation of a democratic system, it is important that the attitudes and values of such a system, like respect for human rights, should be expressed and reflected in different contexts. For example, in the educational system information about democracy and human rights needs to be imparted from the elementary level onwards. (Royal Norwegian Ministry of Foreign Affairs, 1993, p. 19)

Similar statements have also been made by other bilateral aid agencies in the USA, Canada and Denmark. All the statements stress the perceived significance of the relationship between education and politics—specifically, that education has the potential to contribute significantly towards the democratisation process. As Harber (1997) has noted in the African context:

Western governments and aid agencies not only seem, in principle at least, to favour democratisation of African political systems, they also see education playing an important part in the process. (p. 22)

Often singled out (as in the UK statements above) as the nexus between education and the broader principle of democracy is the learner-centred pedagogy. That this should be the case is not surprising, as Shukla (1994) observes:

[D]emocracy in relation to education cannot but be an extension of child-centredness (paedocentrism) to the social dimension. (p. 11)

Learner-centredness has often been used interchangeably with 'participatory', 'democratic', 'inquiry-based', and 'discovery' methods. All these are strands of 'Progressive Methods' whose origins can be traced to Jacques Rousseau. These strands differ from each other only in so far as they emphasise different degrees of learner autonomy. Otherwise these strands are united by four common themes: (a) their wish to escape from the formal and rigid structures of 19th and 20th century education systems; (b) their emphasis on activity as the central element in their methods; (c) their emphasis on the centrality of the learner in the educative process, hence the term learner-centred methods (it is this term that is used in this paper); and (d) their common epistemological foundation. With respect to the latter theme, there is general agreement that learner-centredness is founded upon the social constructivist epistemology. As a philosophy of knowledge, social constructivism holds that 'knowledge is a product of social processes and not solely an individual construction' (William, 1999, p. 205). It is a product of social interaction. As a philosophy of learning, social constructivism rejects the pervasive 'assumption that one can simply pass on information to a set of learners and expect that understanding will result' (Confrey, 1990 as quoted in William, 1999, p. 207). Thus, learner-centred pedagogy views students as active participants in the learning process rather than meek recipients of ready-made factual knowledge from the teacher. The pedagogy is seen as democratic since it demands a relationship between teachers and students in which dialogue is an important means of learning. Dialogue, in Bassey's (1999) view, 'not only draws from and contributes to the education of the individual, but is the foundation of a true democratic society' (p. 120).

Important to note is that learner-centred pedagogy has social, epistemological and philosophical foundations. For this reason, the pedagogy is not value-neutral. It is a view about the world, about the kind of people and society we want to create through education. However, this nature of the pedagogy is often not recognised. This is because it is often presented as if it were value-free and merely technical. Its implementation is often informed by the ideology of technical rationality with its stress on value-neutrality (Tabulawa, 1998). This explains why it is often presented as a one-size-fits-all pedagogical approach (Reyes, 1992), that is, it is a universal pedagogy, one that works with equal effectiveness irrespective of the context. It is this technicist view of the pedagogy that masks its ideological/political nature.

### **Aid Agencies and Learner-centred Pedagogy**

The interest of aid agencies in learner-centred pedagogy is unprecedented and, therefore, calls for serious scholarly attention. Current curricular reforms in many African countries (e.g. Botswana, Namibia and South Africa) emphasise a learner-centred pedagogy as the official pedagogy in schools. However, analysis shows that the pedagogy has partly come as a 'prescription' from aid agencies through educational projects and consultancies funded by the aid agencies. For example, in Botswana this pedagogy was heavily emphasised in both the Primary Education Improvement Project (PEIP) (1981–1991) and the Junior Secondary Education Improvement Project (JSEIP). These projects were largely financed by the United States Agency for International Development (USAID).

Justification for adopting the pedagogy is usually expressed by the aid agencies in benign and apolitical terms. For example, the justification is often couched in educational and cognitive terms, such as the pedagogy leads to improvements in learning outcomes and that

it is more effective. Pertinent questions, such as: What learning outcomes? and Effectiveness for what?, are rarely posed or addressed. Also rarely questioned is the assumption of equating change in the quality of teaching with change in teaching styles. Guthrie (1980) argues that there is no causal relationship between the two and that to date there is no study that has conclusively established that learner-centredness is necessarily superior to traditional teaching in Third World countries in terms of improving students' achievement in test scores. In his view, the pedagogy has a hidden agenda in that it aims at inculcating 'affective, moral and philosophical values about desirable psycho-sociological traits for individuals and for society' (Guthrie, 1990, p. 222). It reflects the norms of a liberal Western subculture. For this reason, Guthrie questions the desirability of this pedagogy in developing countries. His conclusion is that the learner-centred pedagogy represents a process of Westernisation (with all its political and economic connotations) disguised as 'better' teaching. However, Guthrie does not elaborate on his thesis. This omission notwithstanding, his observation is valid and deserves further exploration.

Building upon Guthrie's thesis, I argue in this paper that learner-centred pedagogy is a political artefact, an ideology, a world-view about how society should be organised. Because it is inherently ideological, justification of the pedagogy on educational grounds is questionable. Adopting a world systems approach, I argue that the interest of aid agencies in the pedagogy is part of a wider design on the part of aid institutions to facilitate the penetration of capitalist ideology in periphery states, this being done under the guise of democratisation. The hidden agenda, I argue, is to alter the 'modes of thought' and practices of those in periphery states so that they look at reality in the same way(s) as those in core states. This process is being accelerated by the current wave of globalisation, which is a carrier of conservative neo-liberal ideology.

To illustrate the issues raised in the paper I take the case of the Primary Education Improvement Project (PEIP) (1981–1991), a USAID sponsored project in Botswana whose aim was to increase access and improve the quality and relevance of primary education in the country. I analyse three instructional innovations that were implemented through PEIP, namely the Breakthrough Project, the Project Method and the Botswana Teaching Competency Instruments (BTCI). I demonstrate that embedded in these innovations were certain social values and forms of participation related to political orientation that the project wanted students to develop. I conclude that there is scant evidence to support the view that the project aimed at improving teaching and learning. What is clear is that the project aimed at developing democratic social relations in both the classroom and the school. Thus, the project's purpose should be understood in political and ideological terms, not in cognitive/educational ones.

Although literature abounds on how aid in general is used by core states for hegemonic purposes (e.g. Hayter, 1971; Carnoy, 1974; Arnove, 1980; Bray, 1984; Stokke, 1995; Youngman, 2000), there is still a relative dearth of studies which take more specific aspects of aid and demonstrate how those aspects are used by aid agencies for hegemonic and ideological ends. For example, although transfer of teaching methods (such as the learner-centred pedagogy) from the North to the South is well documented (Hurst, 1975; Crossley, 1984), there is still no detailed examination of how these transferred teaching methods contribute to hegemonic relationships in the global setting. In this paper I demonstrate that aid agencies' interest in the learner-centred pedagogy since the fall of the Berlin Wall in 1989 is motivated by ideological rather than educational intentions. I argue that this interest can be traced to the rise of neo-liberalism as the dominant theory of development in the 1980s. To this end, I intend to demonstrate that pedagogical practices are profoundly influenced by political/economic theories.

## **Aid to Education from a World Systems Approach**

The world systems approach conceptualises the contemporary world as integrated but dominated by the capitalist economic system of the USA, Western Europe and Japan (Clayton, 1998). These countries constitute the 'core' zone and are characterised by a higher level of industrialisation, whilst the less industrialised nations of the world constitute the 'periphery' zone (Wallerstein, 1984). The two zones are characterised by unequal economic and power relations. The world economy differentially rewards these zones, with a disproportionate flow of surplus to the core zone. In addition to supporting the dominant (capitalist) classes (oriented towards the world market), the economic structure of each zone also supports states in the zones which operate in the interests of those classes. These states tend to be weaker in the periphery and stronger in the core zone of the world system. As Stocpol (1977) states:

the differential strength of the multiple states within the world capitalist economy is crucial for maintaining the system as a whole, for the strong states reinforce and increase the differential flow of surplus to the core zones. (p. 1077)

Stronger states assist their dominant (capitalist) classes to manipulate and enforce terms of trade in their favour in the world market. This ensures the exploitation of periphery states.

However, the privileged position in the world system of core states cannot be guaranteed, for their relations with periphery states are dynamic. Thus unlike dependency theorists, who tended to adopt a deterministic stance on the issue of core-periphery relationship, world system theorists do not regard periphery states as doomed to their subordinate position in global power relations. This fact alone means that there is tension between the two zones, and the privileged zone would naturally want to perpetuate and preserve the status quo. In the past (for example, during colonial conquest) this tension would manifest itself in open warfare (Magdoff, 1982). Today the preferred means of legitimising global power relations is through the inculcation of what Wallerstein (1984) terms 'modes of thought and analysis' (p. 117). Largely used to carry out this function are aid agencies. Through the aid agencies, core states use their funds in 'many different ways to promote their versions of Third World improvement' (King, 1991, p. 25), and one of those versions is that of a capitalist South. This is least surprising since the agencies are 'dominated by capitalist ideologies' (Bray, 1984, p. 13). Their aid, which comes in the form of grants, loans, equipment and personnel, promotes the conditions necessary for the reproduction of capitalism (Hayter, 1971).

Education as the 'dominant Ideological State Apparatus' (Althusser, 1971) is a tool used by core states to disseminate those ideologies supportive of their interests. After all, education is a political and moral activity and, by its very nature, embodies cultures and ideologies (Ginsburg *et al.*, 1992). It can therefore be used to transmit modes of thought and practice. Development aid agencies are particularly well placed to transfer these cultures and ideologies from core to periphery states. Educational aid, just like all foreign aid, 'represents a transfer not only of resources and technologies, but of culture and values as well' (Stokke, 1995, p. 21). Clayton (1998) conceptualises the effects of educational assistance to periphery states in terms of its ideological effects which take place through what Samoff (1993) terms 'intellectual socialisation.' This form of socialisation takes place through being taught by 'core' teachers, attending core institutions, and through reading books and curricular materials produced by core enterprises. All these are 'imbued with core values, ideas, and structures' (Clayton, 1998, p. 151). Teaching methods (such as learner-centredness) transferred from core to periphery states also transmit a way of thinking, or what Bourdieu (1971) terms 'habit of thought'. Some of the central values learner-centredness purports to promote are individual autonomy, open-mindedness and tolerance for alternative viewpoints. All

these are in line with the individualistic Western culture and are also character traits deemed necessary for an individual to survive in a pluralistic, liberal democratic capitalist society. It is for this reason that I argue that by purporting to promote democracy, learner-centredness invariably promotes the reproduction of capitalism in periphery states. It is therefore not surprising that aid agencies have shown so much interest in the pedagogy. However, it should be recognised that learner-centredness relates to capitalism in an indirect and non-causal way.

To appreciate the interest of aid agencies in the learner-centred pedagogy it is important to look at how ideas about development have changed since the emergence of development aid in the late 1940s to the point where now democratisation is viewed as a condition for economic growth. This helps to put aid agencies' current interest in the learner-centred pedagogy in perspective. More specifically, the historical perspective shows how capitalist democracy (as an ideology as well as a political-economic system) permeated and became enshrined in the policies of aid agencies when the latter emerged in the 1940s and 1950s. However, it was during the 1980s that the aid agencies' interest in liberal democracy, and consequently in the learner-centred pedagogy, became explicit. But before looking at the changes that have occurred in ideas about development let me first explain the democracy-capitalism nexus.

### **Liberal Democracy and Capitalism: the (in)separable marriage?**

There is a general misconception that the association of economic development with liberal democracy is a post-1989 phenomenon. On the contrary, this view of the inseparability of development (here understood as the spread of the free-market economic system) and political pluralism (liberal democracy) now enshrined in aid agencies' policies has a history far older than that of the aid agencies themselves. There is unanimity among scholars of liberal democracy that the latter emerged in the wake of capitalism, and that there is concordance between the two. However, there is less agreement on the question of how liberal democracy evolved from capitalism. Those in the neo-liberal camp (such as Lipset, 1959; Friedman, 1962) aver that capitalism produced a complex and differentiated economy. This in turn produced a 'complex and differentiated political system where there [were] multiple centers of power' (Dryzek, 1996, p. 25). Decentralised power is conducive towards liberal democracy. For Lipset (1959), capitalist prosperity increased the size of the middle class—that class committed to liberal virtues. Thus it was the capitalists themselves who produced democracy because they wanted it. So capitalism is inseparable from liberal democracy, a point emphatically stressed by Friedman (1962) who asserts that there exists an

intimate connection between economics and politics, that only certain combinations of political and economic arrangements are possible, and that in particular, a society that is socialist cannot be democratic, in the sense of guaranteeing individual freedom. (p. 8)

This liberal version of history is vehemently contested by radical historians/scholars (such as Macpherson, 1973; Rueschemeyer *et al.*, 1992; Boron, 1995; Dryzek, 1996). Whilst these scholars agree that liberal democracy was born in the wake of capitalism, they however oppose the view that it was the emerging capitalist class that ensured the 'flourishing' of democracy. Boron (1995), for example, argues that capitalism led to liberalism and the emergence of a working class. It did not lead to democracy. The latter only emerged as a result of the actions of the almost disenfranchised working class. It was the plight of this class

that precipitated 'popular mobilizations and workers' struggles' (Boron, 1995, p. 11) which gave birth to liberal democracy. Otherwise, he argues, the American and the French Revolutions of the 18th and 19th centuries would have easily 'crystallized as sheer oligarchical domination barely disguised under some restricted liberal institutions ...' (Boron, 1995, p. 11). Thus democracy and capitalism are inherently antagonistic to each other. As long as capitalism thrives there will always be a working class which has more to gain from democracy, and thus will always push for democratisation (Rueschemeyer *et al.*, 1992). Thus capitalist development necessarily entails a curtailment of political freedom.

This debate notwithstanding, the view of the inseparability of capitalism as an economic system and liberal democracy as a form of political organisation has always been ascendant in much of the capitalist world. With the demise of communism in 1989 the legitimacy of this view has won even greater credibility in the West.

When they emerged in the late 1940s and early 1950s aid institutions (the World Bank and the International Monetary Fund, United Nations organisations, and bilateral donor agencies) were informed by the modernisation theory of development—a theory that implicitly celebrated the inseparability of liberal democracy and capitalism. It is to this development paradigm that I now turn.

### **The Modernisation Paradigm: 1950–1980**

Capitalist democracy as both an ideology and a political-economic system formally entered the global stage in the 1950s and 1960s. These decades witnessed the formulation by US social scientists of the modernisation paradigm. This paradigm was subsequently 'enshrined in the policy of the US Government and multilateral aid agencies' (Dryzek, 1996, p. 18). The modernisation paradigm of development was closely associated with Rostow's (1960) stages of economic growth. Rostow's 'non-communist manifesto' held that the stages of economic growth would 'culminate in a liberal capitalist economic system with the political characteristics of the Western democracies' (Dryzek, 1996, p. 18). It was thus a re-statement of the inseparability of capitalism and liberal democracy thesis. The implication of this was clear: societies that needed to develop could follow the core nations of Europe, America and Japan as models. Third World countries, as Peet (1991) states, could

encourage the diffusion of innovation from the centre [Euro-America and Japan], [could] adopt capitalism as the mode of social integration and [could] welcome United States aid and direction. (p. 33)

That the modernisation theory of development was Eurocentric is beyond doubt. The theory's basic assumption was that the West's experience with development was the norm for historical progress and had to be emulated by the rest of the world, not least by the developing countries. With its basis in structural functionalism, modernisation theory believed that for Third World countries to modernise they needed to erode and break old social, economic and psychological commitments. This could be done by introducing structures of capitalism into those countries. Western education (as one of the structures of capitalism) in periphery states was aimed at eroding traditional modes of thought. It was envisaged that economic growth in developing countries would ultimately lead to a more differentiated political system (liberal democracy) in those countries.

Much of development aid to developing countries until the 1980s was underpinned by this belief, although this ideological and political mission of aid was rarely explicitly expressed. It is this belief and its implicit nature that explains why until the 1990s aid agencies and multilateral institutions extended aid even to some of the most brutal and authoritarian

regimes in the world (such as Chile and Malawi) without conditions. Of course there were many instances when such regimes were sustained by core states because of their strategic location as buffers to the spread of communism. But, on the whole, development aid was premised on a basic hypothesis of the modernisation theory of development—that economic growth (that is, the spread of capitalism) moves authoritarian regimes towards liberal democratic values. For this reason political conditionalities were unnecessary.

We can now understand why Western governments and aid agencies could stand tall and argue that their assistance was benign, philanthropic and politically neutral—because they did not explicitly prescribe any favoured political system (such as liberal democracy) to the recipients of aid. After all, this political system would emerge automatically once the structures of capitalism had been introduced. Thus, underpinning the modernisation theory of development enshrined in the policies of aid agencies was an ideology—capitalist democracy.

### **Educational Aid and the Modernisation Project**

Education occupied a special position in the modernisation project. As an agent of social change, education was expected to promote ‘individual modernity’, defined as the ‘process by which individuals supposedly change from a traditional way of life to a rapidly changing, technological way of life’ (Gottlieb, 2000, p. 161). At its conception, educational aid to periphery states was based on this perspective. In those states, Western education was expected to erode old social and psychological commitments. It was expected to produce an educated élite with Western values and entrepreneurial attitudes. This élite would then lead their states on the path to modernity.

Thus, just like ‘development’, education was viewed as a technical undertaking. This technicist view of education was accentuated by human capital theory which, ‘more than any other theoretical construct, had a profound influence on concepts of the place of education in Third World modernisation and development’ (Gottlieb, 2000, p. 161). Woodhall (1985) defines human capital as the investment human beings make in themselves ‘by means of education, training, or other activities, which raises their future income by raising their lifetime earnings’ (p. 2312). The central tenet of human capital theory is that educated individuals are more economically productive than less educated ones. Studies of the economics of education mushroomed in the 1960s and 1970s. These studies concentrated on both the social and private rate of returns to educational investment (Psacharopoulos, 1981). This view of education was subsequently adopted by multilateral and bilateral aid agencies such as the World Bank. The Organisation for Economic Co-operation and Development (OECD), for example, was unequivocal in its approval of human capital theory:

The development of contemporary economies depends crucially on the knowledge, skills, and attitudes of their workers—in short on human capital. In many respects, human capital has become even more important in recent years. (OECD, 1987, p. 69)

The pedagogical implications of human capital theory have been analysed by Baptiste (2001). After a lengthy interrogation of the basic assumptions of the theory, Baptiste reaches the conclusion that individuals described in human capital theory resemble what he terms ‘lone wolves’ (Baptiste, 2001, p. 196). The kind of education that suits these ‘lone wolves’ would be ‘apolitical, adaptive, and individualistic’ (Baptiste, 2001, p. 198). Pedagogically, educational activities of lone wolves are determined by ‘technical considerations ... rather than by any ethical or moral philosophy of the educator or program’ (Baptiste, 2001, p. 196);

being adaptive, lone wolves are mechanical beings who are only spectators in their universe; and, being rugged individuals, as learners they lack a collective purpose. Being wedded to the view of education as apolitical, adaptive and individualistic (in short, to human capital theory) it could hardly be expected that aid agencies would show much interest in pedagogical matters. The technicist view of education treats pedagogy as value-neutral and, thus, non-problematic (Tabulawa, 1997).

However, aid agencies' view of pedagogy as benign and apolitical was to change in the early 1980s with the rise of neo-liberalism in the West, displacing the modernisation theory of development. This paradigm shift led to a re-conceptualisation of education in the service of the economy. All aspects of education, from curricular content to classroom practices, were affected. In the section that follows, I account for the rise of neo-liberalism (free-market capitalism), its impact on the role of education in economic development in periphery states, and how it ultimately helped to shape the pedagogical orientation of aid agencies thereby leading to their current interest in learner-centred pedagogy. Explication of these developments will demonstrate that 'educational practice is profoundly influenced by theories of human and social behaviour' (Baptiste, 2001, p. 184), and that teaching is inherently a political and value-based activity.

### **The 1980s: a shift in emphasis**

In the 1970s the modernisation theory of development came under attack from dependency and world systems theorists. Although in academic circles dependency and world systems theories seemed to displace modernisation theory, in aid agencies the displacer was neo-liberalism, first introduced in the domestic policies of core states in the late 1970s. To justify their policies theoretically aid agencies turned away from development sociology to neo-classical economics, particularly monetarism. This paradigm shift was to have a profound impact on how aid agencies presented themselves as it, in practice, required them to be explicit about development aid's political and ideological mission. It also led to a reconceptualisation of the role of education in the development of periphery states. It is thus important to look in more detail at how this occurred.

In the economic and political spheres, the 1970s witnessed two very significant events: (i) an enduring economic recession which in itself was an indictment of Keynesian economics that underpinned welfare state capitalism; and (ii) the rise of neo-conservative governments in the USA (the Reagan Administration), Britain (the Thatcher government) and Germany (Chancellor Kohl) which presided over the demise of communism, symbolised by the fall of the Berlin Wall in 1989. These events are largely responsible for the current dominant view among Western aid agencies that political pluralism (liberal democracy) is a necessary condition for economic development. It is therefore not surprising that democratisation should have such a high priority in the educational agenda of aid institutions for periphery states. The basic premise is that learner-centred pedagogy will promote democracy, a necessary condition for the development of a free market economy. In a way, therefore, learner-centred pedagogy is perceived as conducive to capitalism, although as already indicated, the relationship between the two is an indirect one. The two developments stated above are looked at in detail below.

#### *The Economic Crisis of the 1970s*

The severity of this economic crisis prompted some (for example, Gamble & Walton, 1976) to talk of a 'crisis of capitalism'. The crisis led to hyper-inflation and a stagnation in

production. It also led to high and rising unemployment. To many neo-liberals it soon became clear that the capitalist system needed re-ordering. The 'answer' to the crisis was to be found in the works of neo-liberal economists, amongst them Friedman, the winner of the 1976 Nobel Prize in Economics, and Hayek, whose writings influenced the policies of the New Right in Britain [4]. Friedman's views deserve some detailed consideration here because his influence is so far unsurpassed and has penetrated every part of the globe, mainly because his economic formulations have, by and large, been adopted by core states and multilateral aid agencies. The same formulations have subsequently been thrust upon periphery states.

Friedman saw the economic crisis as resulting from state interference in the economic arena, which in turn tended to stifle the 'creative and liberating potential of the market' (Boron, 1995, p. 33). The only way out of the crisis, in Friedman's view, was through monetarism:

an economic policy which sees the control of the money supply as crucial to the control of inflation and which, by implication, condemns government attempts to regulate the economy through public spending ... (Scruton, 1982, p. 304)

In short, Friedman wanted drastic cuts in government spending and the promotion of private enterprise. This would involve the removal of government subsidies, dismantling the welfare system and privatising state-owned enterprises, all of which had characterised the 'Keynesian consensus' of the post-1945 period. These ideas coincided with the rise of neo-conservative governments in the USA and Britain which, desperate for a solution to the economic crisis, took some of Friedman's ideas on board. As Boron (1995) states:

... Friedman's ideas are at the core of the prevailing neo-liberal orthodoxy and have been the rationalizing principles of the neo-conservative governments all around the world. (p. 34)

My interest in Friedman's theory is that not only is it an economic theory, it is a political theory as well. This is one reason why it was so appealing to neo-conservative governments.

The notion of the 'market' is what is central in Friedman's political and economic formulation. In his view, the market involves voluntary co-operation among individuals. It has two qualities: (i) it resonates with the idea of non-government interference; and, resulting from this, with (ii) individual autonomy. Friedman sets the market against the state, treating the two as inherently antagonistic. The state represents coercion and authoritarianism, while the market is the cradle of freedom and democracy (Boron, 1995). So where the state is heavily involved in economic activities there cannot be talk of individual autonomy and freedom. Thus, not only is the market important for good economic performance, it is also at the same time the 'fundamental sanctuary that preserves economic and political freedoms' (Boron, 1995, p. 36). So freedom can only be defined in terms of the struggle between the state and the market. The latter is about competition, and this competition impacts positively on the state and democracy. The dominance of the market necessarily ensures contraction of state activities in the economy, in itself a desirable situation in Friedman's view. Furthermore, since the market limits the expansion of the state, a situation is avoided where political power is concentrated in a few hands. Devolved political power favours liberal democracy. Thus without a market and a free-market enterprise, there cannot be liberal democracy, nor can a free-market system thrive where there is no liberal democracy. This is a re-statement of the inseparability of capitalism and democracy thesis, whose origins, as we saw earlier on in the paper, are to be found in eighteenth-century liberalism.

This synopsis of Friedman's political/economic theory identifies the ideological nature of the theory. It must be inferred, too, that socialism, because it is the anti-thesis of

free-market enterprise, cannot be democratic. Only competitive capitalism is compatible with political freedom/liberal democracy. Friedman (1962) himself is frank about it:

... the kind of economic organization that provides economic freedom directly, namely, competitive capitalism, also promotes political freedom because it separates economic power from political power and in this way enables the one to offset the other. (Friedman, 1962, p. 9)

When this reasoning is followed to its logical conclusion,

[D]emocracy simply becomes the political organization proper of capitalism—competitive *ex definitione*—and capitalism is posited as the sole structural support congruent with the specific needs of a democratic state. (Boron, 1995, p. 6)

Thus, free-market capitalism and liberal democracy are two sides of the same coin; you cannot advocate one without necessarily advocating the other [5].

### *The Rise of Neo-Conservative Governments in the West*

As is clear from the aforesaid, the apparent failure of Keynesianism in the 1970s set the stage for the revival of neo-classical economics. This revival coincided with the rise of neo-conservative governments in the West. These were the years when the Thatcher government, the Reagan Administration and Chancellor Kohl swept into power in Britain, the USA and Germany respectively. No sooner had these neo-conservative governments come into office than they started administering Friedman's prescriptions (albeit modified) on their ailing economies. Subsequently, international aid agencies under the control of the West, such as the World Bank and the International Monetary Fund, followed suit. The Reagan administration and the Thatcher government spearheaded economic deregulation and the privatisation of state owned enterprises—thus limiting the stake of the state in the operation of their economies. These economic reforms were subsequently thrust upon periphery states by core governments and aid agencies.

Periphery states since the early 1980s have been told to cut government spending if they wish to foster economic growth. Under Structural Adjustment Programmes (SAPs) these states are told to remove subsidies on essentials (a very bitter pill whose swallowing is often accompanied by riots) and to privatise public-owned enterprises. In short, they are being pressurised to adopt the free-market system of competitive capitalism. Simultaneously, periphery states are told to democratise, that is, to adopt liberal democracy. This is made a condition for foreign aid. The assumption is that efforts to implement a free-market economic system would not yield the desired results where there is no liberal democracy. This contrasts with the earlier view informed by modernisation theory that economic growth (i.e. the spread of capitalism) in periphery states would ultimately yield democracy.

This paradigm shift, as already indicated, resulted from the ascendancy of the political theory of monetarism as well as the demise of communism in 1989. The latter event signalled the end of the 'bipolar international system which had dominated international relations and world politics since World War II' (Stokke, 1995, p. 9). This has led to the much spoken-about New World Order. This is a world order in which Western governments now feel freer than ever before to pursue their political concerns in relation to periphery states. The political norms and interests being pursued by core governments relate to governmental organisation and economic concerns, that is, democratisation and the adoption of free-market economics. Thus behind the clarion call for democracy in periphery states by core states and aid agencies is an agenda—the ideology of market capitalism. However, in general, the free-market capitalism is not really penetrating the developing world in accord with the Western model.

## Education and Democratisation in Periphery States

It was inevitable that education in periphery states would be affected by all these economic and political changes. With emphasis now on political democratisation in periphery states, education as the dominant ideological state apparatus has a significant role in the process. Its mandate has been expanded. Whereas in the past education in periphery states largely focused on inculcating the skills, attitudes and knowledge deemed necessary for economic development, today it has the additional task of promoting the neo-liberal version of democracy. For this to be achieved schools themselves are expected to be democratic communities if learners and their teachers are to 'acquire those qualities of mind and social attitudes which are the prerequisites of a genuinely democratic society' (Carr, 1991, p. 185). In periphery states this democratic ethos can only be developed if schools function in 'ways which challenge the conformism of students and teachers and the society around them' (Meyer-Bisch, 1995, p. 15). The authoritarian climate of classrooms of Third World schools is seen as inimical to the development of liberal democracy. For democratic social relations to be promoted in the classroom, democratic teaching methods have to be employed. Because it is 'more democratic than authoritarian teaching' (Baker, 1998, p. 173), the learner-centred pedagogy emerges as the natural choice for the cultivation and inculcation of a liberal democratic ethos.

We can now appreciate why aid agencies, such as DfID, USAID and the Norwegian Aid Agency (NORAD), now emphasise the democratisation of classrooms through the adoption of a learner-centred pedagogy. The pedagogy is expected to break current authoritarian practices in periphery schools so as to produce individuals whose mind sets would be compatible with political conditions deemed necessary for the penetration of the free-market economic system. Interestingly, the aid agencies are exporting the pedagogy at a time when the same pedagogy is being denigrated in the very same donor countries that are exporting it [6].

That a pedagogical style can be used as a political instrument should not be surprising at all because education is a political activity, and to make curricular choices, such as adopting a particular pedagogy, is to engage in a political activity. Ginsburg *et al.* (1992) contend that the way educators organise their classrooms and the way they relate to and interact with their students is a form of political activity:

different forms of classroom social relations facilitate or impede the developments (*sic*) of students' political efficacy and orientation to public forms of political involvement. (p. 424)

Ginsburg and his colleagues conclude that adopting pedagogies that are authoritarian or democratic may either reinforce or contradict the political structures obtaining nationally or globally. Thus, there is a close affinity, say, between a democratic pedagogy (such as learner-centredness) and political structures associated with democratic practice. It is therefore reasonably safe to conclude that aid agencies' interest in learner-centred pedagogy is intended to reinforce liberal democracy in periphery states. To illustrate this point, I shall take the Primary Education Improvement Project (PEIP) (1981–1991) in Botswana as an example. This was a USAID-funded project whose aim was to 'provide technical assistance to the GOB [Government of Botswana] in the areas of primary pre-service and in-service education improvement' (United States Agency for International Development, 1986, p. 6). Analysis of some of the instructional interventions that were implemented during the project reveals that embedded in the interventions was a form of classroom practice akin to the constructivist learner-centred pedagogy.

### **PEIP and the Consolidation of Democracy in Botswana: the role of USAID**

PEIP emanated from the influential *Education for Kagisano (Social Harmony)*, the report of the 1977 National Commission on Education which was set up to look into ways of improving both the qualitative and quantitative aspects of the Botswana education system. The report identified primary education as being terminal for almost half of the children completing standard seven (Republic of Botswana, 1977). It was thus crucial to increase access and improve the quality and relevance of primary education. The government subsequently set out to address these concerns, but was faced with severe shortages of human and financial resources to execute its plan. To circumvent this pitfall, the Botswana Government sought assistance from the United States of America. The result of this effort was the GOB—USAID collaboration which gave birth to PEIP.

When the project terminated in 1991 it had accomplished the following amongst others: a fully functioning Department of Primary Education at the University of Botswana (UB), a Master of Education Degree programme in primary education at UB, curriculum and institutional development at the Primary Teacher Training Colleges, and an In-service Education Network had been established (Evans & Knox, 1991). The ultimate goal of all these developments was to improve the quality, relevance and effectiveness of teaching and learning in the primary schools. However, it is not explicit what terms like ‘quality’, ‘effectiveness’ and ‘relevance’ really meant, the more so that their meanings are relative. Nevertheless, one can glean the image of quality teaching and learning the project was intended to promote from the nature of the interventions that were put in place. It is clear from the interventions that there were certain social values and forms of participation related to political orientation that the project wanted students to develop. Through the interventions the project sought to promote democratic social relations through a constructivist and co-operative approach to teaching and learning. To illustrate this I will briefly discuss three instructional innovations that were implemented through PEIP with the aim of altering teachers’ and students’ classroom practice. These are Breakthrough to Literacy in Setswana, the Project Method, and the Botswana Teaching Competency Instruments. The first two were initially British-sponsored, but on realising that they could contribute ‘markedly to the achievement of the stated PEIP objectives’ (Evans & Knox, 1991, p. 56), USAID materially supported the innovations.

But why would USAID be interested in a democratic pedagogy in Botswana? USAID interest in a democratic pedagogy can be understood in the context of the USA’s foreign policy. The US Government funds projects aimed at promoting democracy globally as part of its wider foreign policy. This legislative mandate has existed since 1961. In the 1980s and 1990s, the US Government initiated two projects, Project Democracy and the Democracy Initiative respectively. Both were aimed at integrating democracy into the USAID programme. As Crawford (1995) observes, through the Democracy Initiative, for example, democracy was to be ‘incorporated in all development projects and programmes both as a desired end in itself and as means to increase effectiveness’ (p. 105). It is, therefore, not surprising that PEIP, as a USAID funded project, aimed at democratising classroom social relations ostensibly through learner-centred pedagogy. I now turn to the three instructional interventions mentioned above with a view to demonstrate that they all aimed at promoting democratic social relations in schools.

#### *Breakthrough to Literacy in Setswana*

This innovation was based on the Breakthrough to Literacy approach that was developed

and first used in England. It was introduced in Botswana in the 1980s. As a method of teaching it was aimed at improving Standard One children's reading and writing abilities. As a philosophy of teaching, it is anchored in the ideology of learner-centredness. It involves children taking some control of their learning and co-operating with each other in the learning process. It intends changing the prevailing authoritarian student-teacher relationship to a more democratic one in which the teacher is a facilitator of the students' learning, not an arbiter of all knowledge. For example, it emphasises a shift from whole class teaching to group and individual teaching, from competition to co-operation, from students as followers to students as leaders, and from students working in isolation to co-operative and differentiated learning in which students freely discuss their work. The approach recognises the value and legitimacy of students' existing knowledge and daily experiences (Horgan *et al.*, 1991). Breakthrough aims to develop questioning individuals, capable of carrying out empirical investigations and arriving at rational conclusions. One criticism of African education systems is that they produce people who cannot think independently and critically (Bassey, 1999). These are people who, for example, unquestioningly accept authority. Such a character trait is seen as inimical to democracy. It is therefore not surprising that PEIP, as a USAID-sponsored project, supported the Breakthrough Approach since it aimed at eroding traditional habits. There is evidence that the innovation is succeeding in this regard. In her study of the Breakthrough Approach in Botswana, Arthur (1998) pointed out that it has:

prompted expressions of concern on the part of parents that children in these classrooms are being socialised ... into culturally inappropriate behaviour such as approaching adults (for help or showing off their work), instead of waiting at a respectful distance. (p. 320)

That is, Breakthrough challenges the hierarchical social relations that characterise the Botswana culture.

### *The Project Method*

Just like Breakthrough, the Project Method is a child-centred method of teaching and learning. It was incorporated in primary schools to consolidate the successes of the Breakthrough Approach. As already stated, one objective of the latter was to produce individuals capable of investigating and discovering the world around them. The Project Method was an attempt to achieve this objective. With this method, students work independently as individuals or in groups to investigate an identified problem. Working together in groups students share ideas and listen to the views of others, in the process evaluating these views in relation to their own. Also important is that students become less dependent on their teachers. This empowers them, giving them the freedom to exercise choice, an important aspect of liberal democracy (Komba, 1998). Thus, in the process of carrying out investigations, students develop psycho-social skills that are congenial to a liberal democracy.

The architects of PEIP also realised that altering classroom practices through the two innovations discussed above would not succeed without a democratic supervision model. School inspection activities in Botswana could best be described as fault-finding and oppressive by emphasising the expert-inexpert dichotomy, thus perpetuating the teacher's dependency on the inspector. These hierarchical social relations in effect mirror the hierarchical organisation of schools in the country. The hierarchical organisation is also expressed in the classroom in the form of the authoritarian teacher-centred methods of teaching and learning.

Thus it would be a futile exercise to attempt to alter classroom social relations while the enveloping school social structure remained oppressive. As Smyth (1986) rightly points out:

Where the possibilities for genuinely unconstrained communication are limited because of hierarchical relationships, it is not difficult to see how more democratic means of learning can be thwarted. (p. 143)

The architects of PEIP were clearly aware of this fact and consequently proposed a mode of instructional supervision, the Botswana Teaching Competency Instruments, that would, if properly implemented, dissipate a democratic ethos throughout the entire school social structure.

### *The Botswana Teaching Competency Instruments (BTCI)*

This was based on the Teacher Performance Assessment Instrument (TPAI) developed by the University of Georgia, Department of Education. The BTCI comprised two sets of competencies which fell into two main categories: Classroom Procedures and Interpersonal Skills. Yoder and Mautle (1991) state that 'The instrument identifies characteristics of good primary school teaching; focussing in general on what could be broadly termed child-centred teaching methodologies' (p. 33). The instrument sought to democratise supervision by emphasising the notion of 'collegiality', defined as:

the genuinely non-threatening state of mind that exists between teachers who are prepared to assist each other in arriving at a joint understanding of their own and each other's teaching; in other words, the development of a shared framework of meaning about teaching. (Smyth, 1984, p. 33)

This collegiality was to be exercised in a variety of ways; headteachers observing teachers teach and vice versa; education officers observing teachers and vice versa; and teachers observing one another. In all these settings the observer was not to act as an expert, but rather as a partner in an attempt to improve teaching and learning in the classroom. Using the BTCI required the supervisor and the supervisee to agree in advance on what was to be observed and when. After the lesson the partners had to discuss the observations, giving feedback to each other, ultimately coming up with a product each felt they had an opportunity to produce. This conceptualisation of instructional supervision represented a fundamental shift from the authoritarian and manipulative approach prevailing then.

It is not difficult to see the effects a mode of instructional supervision such as the BTCI, if properly implemented, would have on social relations in the school; it would break the hierarchical relationships between the education officers, head teachers and class teachers. It would bring class teachers closer to each other, thus, breaking the isolation and privacy that so much characterise teaching (Denscombe, 1982). A democratic school environment can greatly facilitate institutionalisation of innovations (such as the Breakthrough Approach and the Project Method) aimed at democratising classroom social relations. No wonder PEIP found it necessary to support and co-ordinate the implementation of the three innovations discussed above.

Thus, it is not difficult to see the kind of image of quality and effective teaching these PEIP instructional innovations intended promoting: it would appear that the basic criterion for judging improvement in the quality of teaching and learning in primary education was to be the presence of democratic social relations in the classroom. That is, in the view of PEIP, promotion of democratic social relations was a desired end in itself. If it were anticipated that democratic classroom social relations would then lead to improved student achievement, one would question the research basis of such expectation. Any positive correlation between the

two might simply be incidental. Bantock (1981), commenting on studies carried out by Anthony (1979) and Bennett (1976) [7], concludes that the 'superiority of discovery methods cannot at present be justified on grounds of empirical research' (p. 63). Thus, PEIP's version of quality and effective primary education should be understood in non-cognitive terms. Its intentions were political and ideological. What is clear at least is that learner-centred pedagogy that was embedded in PEIP was aimed at inculcating social and political values of individual autonomy, open-mindedness and tolerance for other people's views, all these being essential character traits required for an individual to operate effectively in a liberal democratic political environment. Given Botswana's own concern with nurturing its nascent democracy and the USA's official policy of spreading democracy globally through its international aid programmes, it is not surprising that PEIP emphasised learner-centred pedagogy which was aimed at democratising the school ambience.

## **Conclusion**

I set out in this paper with the objective of accounting for the interest that aid agencies have shown in the learner-centred pedagogy since the fall of the Berlin Wall. This interest, I have argued, was spurred by the rise of neo-liberalism in the 1980s as the dominant economic/political ideology. Neo-liberalism became enshrined in the policies of bilateral and multi-lateral aid agencies, displacing modernisation theory. In so far as Third World development was concerned neo-liberalism surmised that economic development was only possible where there was liberal democracy. Education, as a change agent, had an indispensable role to play in the democratisation process in those countries. To achieve this, aid agencies identified the learner-centred pedagogy (because of its democratic tendencies) as the appropriate pedagogy in the development and dissemination of democratic social relations in Third World schools.

The example of PEIP discussed in the paper illustrates this point. Thus, essentially, aid agencies saw the pedagogy's efficacy as lying in its ability to promote values associated with liberal democracy. It was envisaged that the pedagogy would assist with the breaking of authoritarian structures in schools and that the latter, through its erosion of traditional modes of thought, would produce individuals with the right disposition towards a liberal democracy. It is for this reason that I have argued in the paper that aid agencies' primary interest in the pedagogy is political and ideological, not educational. It is in this context that learner-centred pedagogy's much-praised capacity to promote 'quality' and 'effective' education should be understood. Given that there is no compelling empirical research evidence that there is a positive (and causal) relationship between the pedagogy and students' cognitive learning, couching its efficacy in cognitive/educational terms at best appears as an attempt to disguise its ideological mission.

Are there alternatives to colonising/domesticating pedagogies such as learner-centredness? Although one does not have a clear-cut answer to the question, one nevertheless believes that it is now time we invented alternative, culturally responsive pedagogies. There can be no justification for a universal and homogenising pedagogy if indeed teaching and learning are contextual activities. A universalised pedagogy necessarily marginalises pedagogies based on alternative epistemologies. For example, by treating learner-centred pedagogy as a one-size-fits-all approach to teaching and learning, pedagogies that are based on indigenous knowledge systems are marginalised. The potential of these alternative pedagogies has not been explored yet. There is, therefore, need to develop indigenous pedagogies. But this first requires that we recognise indigenous knowledge systems as legitimate knowledge systems that have potential for enriching students' educational experiences. However different the western knowledge and indigenous knowledge systems may be thought to be, surely

there must be ways in which they complement each other. Thus, research on the indigenisation and/or endogenisation of teaching may involve establishing if there are constants in the teaching/learning relationship which override cultural specifics. As Semali (2001) suggests, there is need for the 'study of indigenous pedagogies and how they interact with models of Western schools [as well as] the central role [the pedagogies] play in the social and cultural shaping of youth' (p. 646).

## NOTES

- [1] Hoffman (1988) notes that 'democracy is without doubt the most contested and controversial concept in political theory' (p. 131). Within the broad framework of liberal democracy, two polarised versions of democracy are usually identified, neo-liberal 'legal' democracy (which is narrow and restricted) on one end, and participatory democracy (which is broad and comprehensive), on the other. In a comparative study of policies of four northern hemisphere donors (Britain, Sweden, the USA and the European Union) Crawford (1995) comes to the conclusion that, generally, the four donors favour the narrow, neo-liberal form of democracy.
- [2] Cognisance is taken of the fact that amongst 'Western democracies' capitalism differs in form from one country to the other. The forms of capitalism range on the spectrum from free-market capitalism of the UK and the USA to welfare state capitalism of the Scandinavian countries. The former is basically characterised by the 'rolling back of the frontiers of the state', leaving economic activity to the 'guiding hand' of the market. In the latter, in contrast, the state plays a larger role with emphasis on social justice and re-distributive policies. Many sub-Saharan states have been pressurised to adopt principles of free-market capitalism (with no visible success) through implementation of the World Bank and the International Monetary Fund's structural adjustment policies. These policies, it is stressed, can only be institutionalised in a neo-liberal democratic set-up.
- [3] Overseas Development Administration (ODA) is the predecessor of the Department for International Development (DfID).
- [4] The New Right, the driving force in the globalisation of neo-liberal and neo-conservative policies, is not a coherent force with a common philosophical background. Walford (1994) suggests that to understand the nature of the New Right we need to separate its two major components: neo-liberalism (which prioritises the limitation of the government 'in the interests of the liberty of the individual and a free society' (p. 7)), and neo-conservatism which, while recognising the importance of the idea of the free-market, favours strong government to ensure the security of civil institutions such as the family and schools. In Britain, for example, the neo-liberal camp of the New Right greatly influenced the restructuring of the education system (with emphasis on the ideology of choice, for example) while the neo-conservatives' greatest influence was on the curriculum, hence the emphasis on a 'national' curriculum with its attendant rigid traditional subject divisions. This conservatism was captured in the slogan, 'back to basics'.
- [5] Whether there are causal linkages between democracy and capitalism is a hotly debated issue. Liberal democracy (as opposed to 'people's democracy' of Communist regimes and 'one party democracy' (such as that of Uganda)) has developed affinity with the economic system of capitalism to the extent that they are often seen as virtually identical. Thus, there has been a tendency to conflate the two. However, the relationship between democracy and capitalism is a complex one, and one that eschews straightforward explication. Although liberal democracy emerged in the wake of capitalism the relationship between the two cannot be said to be a logical/necessary one. That is, capitalism does not necessarily require democracy for it to flourish, nor does democracy necessarily require capitalist political economy to flourish. It is for this reason that Rueschemeyer *et al.* (1992) point out that although all full-fledged liberal democracies known are associated with capitalist political economy there are still examples of capitalist societies that have prospered without democracy (e.g. South Korea and Taiwan).
- [6] At first glance one might be tempted to offer a conspiratorial explanation of this contradiction/double standard. The explanation, however, lies in the observation made in [4] above, namely that having gained control of the curriculum, neo-conservatives began attacks on 'soft' progressive methods of teaching, claiming that the methods were responsible for the perceived low and declining education standards (Elliot, 1993) which in turn negatively impacted on the economy. It is, therefore, not surprising that the National Curriculum in the UK espoused a return to more formalistic and traditional methods of teaching and learning.
- [7] In his comparative study of progressive and non-progressive methods Anthony (1979) concluded that 'progressive methods are *not* generally superior to non-progressive methods for the teaching of reading and English, and that progressive methods are generally inferior to non-progressive methods for the teaching of arithmetic' (p. 180). On his part, Bennett (1976) in his seminal study *Teaching Styles and Pupil Progress* argued against the permissive classroom atmosphere in progressive schools, calling for more teacher direction and clear sequencing and structuring of learning experiences. This was a 'vote of no confidence' in progressive methods.

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