

The Gates Foundation and the Future of US Public Schools (Routledge Studies in Education and Neoliberalism)



Bill Gates is currently engaged in a massive campaign to reshape public schools. This book uses theoretical and empirical argument to critique his efforts to do so. Americans are repeatedly told by Bill Gates as well as the Gates-influenced U.S. Dept. of Ed. that our children are falling behind international peers (not at all true) which will result in economic decline. While the U.S. is undoubtedly in a period of economic decline, it should not be linked to schools or teachers, as neither has any control over macro-economic policy. Arguing against Bill Gates reform initiatives puts one in the uncomfortable position of defending the status-quo. It is now common sense that schools are failing, and in some ways that is true, in part due to corporate calls for back to basics and a very limited understanding of what schooling should and could be. Schools are failing to produce transdisciplinary problem solvers who employ the arts and sciences to puzzle-out our most pressing problems; failing to generate resilient, persistent, metacognitive, engaged actors capable of controlling impulses, taking calculated risks, and working with others in order to get things done; failing to develop citizens with the skills and capacities necessary to maintain their communities and their country in a state of integrity and worth. This book presents a compelling case for turning away from Gates Foundation initiatives and towards reforms that help children become engaged doers. Instead of dumping knowledge into heads (an epistemological stance embraced by Gates Foundation leadership and many charter school advocates, see *Waiting for Superman*) we need to help children identify, access, and utilize information from various knowledge systems in order to get things done. We might start by asking our children to remake our country into one where terms such as liberty and justice are more than empty pledges.

Before that can happen we will have to save public education from corporate reform.

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