NEOLIBERAL MECHANISATION OF EDUCATION

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BACKGROUND OF THE STUDY

When education is historically analyzed, it is mainly observed that educational change is generally driven by ideological or political forces. The main aim is imposition of state ideologies on millions, who are considered to be the future of a nation, for mental and social control. Another impact forcing educational change is the effect of technological change requiring capable and skilled labor force for the changing occupational structures (Hogan, 1979). It is a fact that the nature and functions of education cannot truly be understood apart from the matrix of economic life (Bowles & Gintis, 1976).

With the development of new technologies, mechanization and the need for skilled technical labor force began to gain significance in the early eighteenth and late nineteenth century. According to Bowles and Gintis, the major function of schooling is to socialize students into habits and personality traits appropriate for their later work life. Education was, then, seen as "a system to produce amenable and fragmented labor force (p.125). For Callahan (1962), "…the history of twentieth century education is … the history of imposition upon the schools of 'business values' and social relationships reflecting the pyramid of authority and privilege in the burgeoning capitalist system" (in Bowles & Gintis, 1976, p. 44). Education was based on the notion "different but equal" for all which was also adopted by John Dewey (1859-1952) and formulated as 'a common and equal opportunity for all' but later altered into 'a different but equal education for all' by the liberals (Bowles & Gintis, 1976). This was justified by democratic concerns based on the fact that every child will be going into different directions when their future occupational needs are concerned so why not "equip students with appropriate habits and skills necessary for their integration into different occupational structures" based on their skills and abilities (p.227). The schools, thus, were considered as institutions serving the market system which in turn served liberal capital economy.

Education, in this perspective, served as a system linking the supply and demand for talent and skill by selecting and sorting people on the basis of ability and achievement. This was mainly carried out with a pragmatist/experientialist perspective, stressing the fact that in order to be learned, things must be observed or experienced as real. However, the idea of real was contradictory to the Realist and Rationalist perspectives believing that reality is constantly changing and people learn best by applying experiences and thoughts to problem solving. Peirce (1839-1914) believed that thought must produce action, rather than linger in the mind and lead to indecisiveness. For Pragmatists education meant hands-on problem solving, experimenting, and projects often with students working in groups (cooperative learning). As opposed to pragmatist cooperative learning, existentialists stress the importance of individualism. For them, individual choice and individual standards, rather than external standards are central. People do not define themselves within a group but in relationship to existence by the choice they make. Thus, they should not accept anyone's predetermined philosophical system; rather, they must have a philosophy of existence of their own, focus on their freedom and make meaning for their own lives. Existentialists believe that the classroom should have the freedom of choice. Learners must take responsibility for their own learning and the classroom environment should provide a context in which the learner confronts others' views to clarify his own. Real answers and real solutions to problems come from within not from an outside authority.

Existentialist views on education led to individualized instruction/tailored teaching referring to instructional maneuvers attempting to tailor teaching and learning to a learner's unique strengths and needs (Cruickshank, et. al., 2008). Programmed and computer assisted instruction, and distance education are both outgrowths of individualized instruction. Both programmed and computer assisted instruction are self-instructional formats. Material to be learned is broken down into segments and when the student successfully completes one segment goes on to the next. If the program is sophisticated enough it can diagnose student's mistakes and gives individualized feedback. Thus the learner rather than communicating with the teacher interacts with the computer. Distance education, on the other hand, is a variation of individualized instruction serving learners who

cannot possibly access education in school environments. Such programs may include radio, television, computer programs supported by printed materials. But how effective is computerized education? Can it replace classroom teaching?

Nick Grant in the foreword of 'Neoliberalism and Education and its Consequences' (Hill & Kumar, 2009, pp. vii, viii) says that "The social delight in what a person is trying to say to another, and the dialogue it starts , should be the educationalist's starting point" . He goes on to say that this should be kept in mind when education is being considered for pupils from all over the world and from all kinds of different economical backgrounds. However, he says, much learning today is "far from being delightful, mostly mechanical, pointless, and disenchanting". There is great irresponsibility, and even exploitation in educational funds, administration and purpose. Educational materials are prepackaged and curricula are imposed. He calls this "edubusiness" and the people dealing with such programming and packaging "edupreneurs". This new learning process imposed on pupils is passive, away from creativity, "lacks dialogue and intimidates speculative learning and discovery". He argues that the connotations of the notions of creativity and internationalism are distorted and they exist in educational terminology as "necessary elements for global capitalist market competition, not universal hallmarks of humanity". Teachers are mainly concerned with "delivery" and learning becomes totally "instrumental". The delight is not in the dialogue between the learner and the teacher or for the sake of learning or for its social usefulness but in the "accumulation of credits". The delight of the 'learning package' producers comes from the profit made from the wide spread usage of the package. This inevitably creates a *Global Education Industry* producing pre-prepared and programmed digitally usable materials, depriving teaching and learning from the 'delight' of the warm and caring human voice and touch.

Hill (2003) argues that in education, especially in universities and higher vocational education "the language of education has been very widely replaced by the language of the market. The lecturers function as the 'deliverers of the product', they 'operationalize delivery', and 'facilitate clients' learning' within a system in which the motto is 'quality management and enhancement'; students are 'customers' who select 'modules' on a pick' n' mix basis', and critical thought is degraded and replaced by 'skill development'" (p.39).

Taking this new educational phenomenon around the world today as an outgrowth of neoliberal capitalism, this paper aims at examining how neoliberalism actually functions in universities and whether human instruction can actually be replaced by computerized instruction.

THEORETICAL BASIS FOR THE STUDY

In *A Brief History of Neo-liberalism* David Harvey (2011) describes neo-liberalism as "… a theory of political economic practices that proposes that human well being can best be advanced by liberating individual entrepreneurial freedoms and skills within an institutional framework characterized by strong private property rights, free markets and free trade" (p.2). Harvey continues to say that the state functions as a body establishing an 'institutional framework' which safeguards these practices and moreover, sets up, where they lack, markets such as 'land, water, education, health care…' but refrains from intervention beyond this point. Following on the traditional idea that a state exists for the good of its citizens, and taking the above into consideration an understanding that neoliberalism becomes an ethic, a "social good … maximizing the reach and frequency of market transactions … seeking to bring all human action into the domain of the market" (p. 3), is deduced. This harbors the neoliberal conviction that human nature is competitive, rationalizing personal gain for benefit, hence, regarding the private as beneficial as opposed to the public which is considered bad. Clinging to this ethic, therefore, the economic rationality hinges on competition and the understanding of a non-interventionist but guardian state. For Harvey, "this requires technologies of information creation and capacities to accumulate, store, transfer, analyze and use massive data bases to guide decisions in the global market place (information society)" (p.3) creating a hegemony based on "manufactured consent" (Gramsci, 1891-1937; in Norton Anthology of Literary Criticism, 2001, p.1135).

One of the most appropriate sites for the creation of a neo-liberal hegemony are a plurality of institutions a part of what Louis Althusser (1971) refers to as Ideological State Apparatuses (ISA), which function extensively through ideology in clandestine ways, among which are political parties, churches, news papers, cultural ventures, and schools which are the most important for the purpose of the study.   Such institutions, among which are primarily schools, are vessels that indoctrinate people with the dominant ideology, nowadays the neo-liberal ideology presented as values and principles paraded as equality, opportunity, welfare, and freedom. Clearly to be seen is the fact that neo-liberal profit oriented economic policies are driven hand-in-hand with educational policies as Bowles and Gintis (1976) also point out by arguing that schooling in capitalist America (and in general in countries pursuing neo-liberal policies) has two functions; "the reproduction of the labor power essential to the process of capital accumulation" and "the reproduction of the social relations of power"

(p.129). Bowles and Gintis identify the former function as the supply of students to meet the demand of future skilled workers possessing "technical and cognitive skills required for adequate job performance". They identify the latter function as "institutions and social relationships which facilitate the translation of labor into profits" (Hogan, 1979, p. 388). They claim that the education system justifies inequality by feigning to support an objective meritocratic system to delegate people to economic positions that are disparate. Through these function they conjoin educational and capitalist (neo-liberal) policies suggesting that schools as ISAs do better to indoctrinate than to impart objective knowledge and analytical skills (p.389).

This may seem contradictory particularly in the light of developments regarding the restructuring of the schooling system, especially in Western capitalist (neo-liberal) nations, spearheaded by the United States and the United Kingdom. In these countries, governments are clamping down on funds for public schools in favor of them being funded by private business organizations or corporations (Lipman, 2007). Glen Rikowski (2007) draws attention to this phenomenon that came to exist after being unleashed by the World Trade Organization (WTO) in 1994 as the General Agreement on Trade in Services (GATS), which he regards as having "a strange kind of social existence" (p.145). Rikowski considers the GATS as "the monster casting a shadow over state schools" (p.146). He also points out that GATS is to open up as many as 160 service sectors, including education, to international capital; a move, he says, regarded as 'irreversible' by Kelk and Worth (2002, in Rikowski, 2007, p. 151). Hence, under the diktat of international capitalist centers, governments become the guardians of neo-liberal ideologies and policies. In line with this argument, Hill (2003) invites one to look at the big picture:

> Markets in education, so-called 'parental choice' of a diverse range of schools (or, in parts of the globe, the 'choice' as to whether to send to children to school or not) privatization of schools and other education providers, cutting state subsidies to education and other public services are only a part of the educational and anti-public welfare strategy … (p.2).

Hill goes on to argue that both national and global neo-liberalism desire cuts in public funds, which he believes they have largely succeeded. However, he points out that besides saving tax on capital to increase profit, the capitalist/neo-liberal agenda consists of a series of plans 'for education', 'in education', and 'for educational businesses'. Plans for education concentrate on forming, as Bowles and Gintis (1976) also noted, labor power for business corporations, 'plans in education' concentrate on liberating business activities for profit in the field of education, and finally the plan 'for educational businesses' is to make profit from international privatizing activities (p.2). For all such neo-liberal strategies to unfold Hill recalls Kagarlitsky's (2001) words: "Globalization does not mean the impotence of the state, but the rejection by the state of its social functions" (p.5). Moreover, Hill extends the popular idea that a "strong Interventionist State" is needed by the Capital particularly in the field of education and training – in the field of producing an ideologically compliant but technically skilled work force (p. 8).

Therefore, in the light of the above ideas, schools, coupled with the media (Lipman, 2007) have transformed into institutions (ISAs) incorporating a hegemonic structure of neoliberal cultural/ideological domination. Regarding this hegemonic structure of domination, Shapiro (1984) notes that "active consent is ensured by including not only dominant social interests but also those of subordinate interests". Shapiro expounds this idea by saying that culture must be considered a totality "containing compromises and concessions by dominant groups", to a point where the nature of the (neoliberal) social structure still remains the key player. Drawing upon the emergent model in the United States, Shapiro, like Hill (2003), Bowles and Gintis (1976) and others, claims that "in the U.S., it is possible to distinguish, for example, the extent to which corporate interests have ensured an educational system that is strongly vocational, utilitarian, and professionally oriented" (p.29).

The picture is more or less the same within the European Union (EU). Hirtt (2011), talking about the situation that educational policies have come to be by bodies such as the OECD, WTO, the World Bank, and the European Commission, points out that "their priority in education is no longer the 'formatting' of citizens … but rather the preparation of producers and consumers for their role in the economy" (p. 213). Hirtt clearly states the fact that education or 'edubusinesses' in the hands of 'edupreneurs' has become a lucrative field in the service of international capital to be exploited for profit. However, this is not just a one-way street housing a '$ 2000 billion' world education market, but at the same time an operation to produce a skilled labor force for the economic market (p.217). To this effect, Hirtt states, alluding to the European Council (EC) meeting in Amsterdam in 1997 that the EC recommended "giving priority to the development of professional and social skills for a better adaptation of workers to the evolution of the labor market" (p. 219). Hirtt draws attention to the downgrading of general knowledge in favor of the new knowledge and adaptability skills in the face of constantly changing technologies and the consequent need to adapt. As can clearly be understood, the purpose

of education is rapidly becoming one to prepare students to conform to the neoliberal view of society in which they can be trained to compete in the international work force. Hirtt, also points to the fact that it has now become a common place with employers to ask for diplomas in information and communication technologies (ICT) based on a EC concept paper regarding the objectives of education: "It is the opinion of all Member States that the basic skills acquired by young people at the end of their education or professional training should be reviewed and broadened to include information and communication technologies" (EC, 2001, in Hirtt, 2011, p. 220). As a result, Hirtt states that schools are finding themselves under pressure to introduce more courses and course hours in computer studies.

Faced with decreasing funds, universities are, nevertheless, expected to raise their productivity and find sources of income either through the commodification of learning and/or knowledge, or through partnerships with businesses. One way of doing this is through the use of ICT by standardizing and packaging knowledge and making it available online. Levidow (2007) illustrates such an approach by exemplifying a practice undertaken by the University of California, Los Angeles in 1997 when the university "established an Instructional Enhancement Initiative that required computer Web sites for all its arts and sciences courses. Its aims were linked with a 'for profit business' for online courses, in partnership with high-tech companies" (p.245). Levidow continues to say that particularly in the U.S. (the EU followed suit shortly after) universities were adapted to suit profit making activities, among which was the commodification of all research undertaken by universities. As a means of income, research was foregrounded and teaching was given a secondary position. Levidow points out that these developments, in order to increase teaching efficiency, resulted in standardization of course materials and their posting on web pages which could be "merchandized to other universities" (p.246).

The route that educational strategies seem to be following are towards economics of education in which all institutions, particularly universities, become businesses and knowledge, as instructional material, becomes a commodity. For this to happen on a global scale, marketing strategies which rely on speed, availability and standardization are necessary elements which can only be provided through the use of technology, namely ICT. The use of ICT in higher educational institutions (to deliver the commodity) takes the form of varieties of online education programs at different degree levels, online instruction, material and interaction supply and opportunities for distance education. In the dichotomy between teacher-student and computer-student or the real world education and virtual education, it seems that it is the student who loses, evident in what Levidow says, "this approach changes the role of the students, who become consumers of instructional commodities. Student-teacher relationships are reified as relationships between consumers and providers of things. This marginalizes any learning partnership between them as people" (p.246). The implication of what Levidow asserts is superficial learning in which knowledge is transmitted without critical perspective in a wholly mechanistic manner.

METHODOLOGY
The study is a qualitative study since it takes reality as a subjective human experience happening in a social context, and in historical time (Thorne, 2000). It mainly employs methods of qualitative research to uncover what academicians think and feel about neoliberal approaches to education and computerized teaching and distance education. The validity of the data collected is mainly connected with theoretical knowledge and judgments are made on the grounds of the findings from relevant studies.

Because to the inductive reasoning process involved in the study, it employs a semi-structured interview format with open ended questions to academicians concerning effects of neoliberalism on education and effectiveness of computer programmed or various forms of computerized distance education on student- teacher interaction. It also makes use of the grounded theory method of qualitative research since a variety of resources such as review of records and interviews are used. As this method operates in a reverse fashion; rather than beginning with a hypothesis, data will be collected, key points will be marked and from the concepts and categories collected a hypothesis related to the study will be created.

Sample
The sample used in this study is rather small. The academicians involved in the study are mainly faculty members from Faculties of Arts and Sciences in North Cyprus. For the purpose of the study, a semi structured group interview was held, during the interview notes were taken, the interview was recorded, recordings were transcribed, related parts for the study were selected and data was analyzed into main topics.

Data Analysis
The study applied a truly analytical process because it approached the phenomenon of neoliberalist education and computerization of instruction from a subjective point of view of the researchers as to what might count as

relevant or important during data analysis for the purpose of the study. Data analysis did not make use of any computer programs to analyze data since such programs are not capable of intellectually conceptualizing and transforming data into meaningful findings. The study rather employed human intellect through explicit steps in analyzing and conceptually interpreting the data set as a whole, to transform the raw data into a new and coherent depiction of the phenomenon.

Data collected from the review of texts and documents previously written on the phenomenon was carefully read to be fully understood and correctly interpreted and the data collected from the interviews in the form of recordings and transcripts was carefully sorted, organized, conceptualized, refined and interpreted so that findings could be evolved and constructed clearly.

The study has a phenomenological approach because it is oriented towards the depth and detail gained through exhaustive, systematic and reflective study of what theoreticians write and what academicians say based on their experiences. The study mainly makes a comparative analysis of teaching-learning experiences through human interaction and computerized instruction. Cognitive processes involved for the analysis of data can mainly be listed as comprehension of the phenomenon under study; synthesis of the relations and linkages within the aspects of the phenomenon; theorization of how and why these relations appear as they do; and recontextualization of the new knowledge. Thus, the data will be considered, examined, and reformulated as the research product.

The study will set an argument to be accepted or rejected based entirely on the experiences and beliefs of the reader. It will only try to put findings in a logical and explicit manner so that the critical reader will be able to see the relation between the actual data and the conclusions drawn.

FINDINGS AND DISCUSSION
During the semi-structured interview, two questions were posed as quoted below and the discussion evolved around these two basic questions asked to participating academicians:

"Our conviction is that market oriented neoliberal policies have not left the education sector untouched, as a result of which the commodified education in our day has begun to rely more on ICTs. Within this context what is your opinion of:

1.   the impact of neoliberal policies on education; in particular on higher education?
2.   the growing urge to use ICTs to facilitate computerized online instruction to be a substitute for human instruction?

The responses concerning the first question were categorized into three main topics based on the discussion that took place during the semi-structured interview: shift towards commercialization of education; related to this, an abandonment of traditional ways in favor of utilizing the web or the virtual environment; and the pressure put on universities for competition and survival in turn affecting faculty.

Commenting on the direction taken by universities under neoliberal policies, it was noted that the university felt the need to open new departments based on training rather than education to meet market demands by preparing students for newly emerging job positions at the expense of the closure of programs within the social sciences and humanities. Instrumental in such a move was the decision taken by the Higher Education Board of Turkey (YÖK) to delegate the training of teachers to the Faculties of Education rather than prospective teachers being educated at related disciplines in Arts and Sciences Faculties and being certified with a pedagogical certificate. This meant a loss of blood for the faculties of Arts and Sciences and even closing down of some departments. Also noted by the participants was the fact that derivatives of management courses such as tourism management, hotel management, hospital management, etc. to cater for industry and the service sector needs were devised and opened. This conforms to the complaints and the general critique voiced by academicians, educators and the critics in the West of neoliberal policies pursued in the field of education. One of the foremost critics of such neoliberal policies of education, writer and teacher educator Dave Hill (2011) states. "across the globe and more so in the newly liberalized economies … there is a trend towards looking down upon social sciences on the grounds that they do not produce an employable population. The mantra is of job-oriented courses, which is reflected when many universities and colleges transform their history courses into travel and tourism courses" (p. 18).

Another issue voiced by the participating academicians was the constant urge to go online within the context of advertising the university. Among the new promotion criteria for faculty introduced by the universities require

individual lecturers and academicians to make their course material available online, conduct correspondence with their students, assign papers and projects and check work produced by students online. The Web-o-metrics has become an important tool for defining the place of the university within the league of world universities, thus opening new programs within the framework of distance education has been interpreted as steps towards commercialization as addressed within the body of the paper.

Almost by all participants it was noted that universities in Turkey and in North Cyprus have more than ever before in their history been subjected to pressure to step up competition with the aim of attracting and recruiting students both at the undergraduate and the graduate levels. These observations, of course, pertain to private universities and universities run by foundations which receive little or no state funding.   The nationwide competitiveness among universities initiated by the Higher Education Board of Turkey (YÖK) has particularly affected universities in North Cyprus in terms of student enrollment. This resulted from the establishment of numerous private higher education institutes in Turkey due to the neoliberal perspectives to education viewing it as lucrative business. Therefore, with this new conjecture private universities in North Cyprus try their best to recruit students and establish partnerships with business because they generate income solely from student tuitions and marketable research. These moves seem to be ushering in the neoliberalization of education within this geography. A move initiated almost two decades ago in Western capitalist nations, the U.K. model seems to have set a precedent. Levidow (2007) referring to the U.K. speaks of a strikingly similar picture: "The government has pressed for a substantial increase in student numbers, while providing little increase in funds. Under pressure from the Research Assessment Exercise, many university departments have shifted resources from teaching to research, while seeking more research funds from industry" (p.248)..

The discussion evolving around the second question mainly centered on the reproductive nature of transmission and reception of information/knowledge and exposition of knowledge through an encouraging and motivating medium both for the learner and the instructor (which could only be achieved through human interaction). It also clarified that computerized teaching disregards student diversity in background and learning styles and that it eliminates different teaching styles and adaptability and flexibility of teachers in a real classroom setting since it is a prepackaged program.

Participant 1: "I do not believe that computerized instruction can fully develop reproductive knowledge. Full understanding of knowledge, learning something completely new can be achieved through explanations, exemplifications, elaborations and discussions which need the assistance of a teacher who could be considered as the facilitator".

Participant 2: "The students might not have difficulty understanding the material, but they seem to have difficulty in solving everyday problems or applying ideas and knowledge to other related concepts which is killing interdisciplinarity".

Participant 3: "When students do not understand, the program allows them to revise the content, which they might not have the opportunity to do in a real classroom, however, it requires a lot of time to initially explore and understand the system and how it works. This requires a sound computer literacy".

Karal, Çebi & Turgut also make a reference to the same issue by saying: "Communication complexity exists because the device, the infrastructure, the support and faculty development have all to coinside…" (p. 272).

Participant 4: "We are only looking at the issue from the students' perspectives. How about the nature of the course and the teaching style of the instructor? The organization and presentation of material depends on the nature of the course within a discipline and the teaching philosophy and methodology preferences of the instructor. However, online packages are generally prepared by ICT companies working in collaboration with universities. Such companies which are mainly oriented towards business and profit are provided with the content but the organization, design and animation required by the course is constructed by technicians who lack pedagogical knowledge and the job satisfaction and inspiration a teacher gets from teaching, so the material becomes mechanical and dull".

Participant 2: "This brings to my mind that human beings are social creatures. They need to interact with each other which is a true learning experience because people learn from each other.   When we talk about university students, we should not forget that online education deprives young adults from the social interaction which they most certainly need because social interaction provides them with the opportunity of intellectual intimacy for their social and academic self-concept development".

Participant 3: "I believe it (online instruction) also kills the motivation of the instructors on the other end of the line since they are deprived of the lively intellectual discussion accompanied with emotions, gestures and jokes".

Participant 1: "It (online instruction) simply teaches preprogrammed interaction patterns with a machine. It does not take into consideration how attitudes, emotions and interpersonal skills are acquired and how these might help to develop the social and emotional intelligence of a person. This simply means that a person acquiring new skills does not need to acquire these because s/he is not expected to have interpersonal relations at his/her future work place. Probably the less interaction means the more work".

Even though the data is small due to the small number of participants taking part in the study, it nevertheless, gives suggestions sufficient to generate an understanding of how academicians working in the field of social sciences view online education/instruction. More significantly, a very large proportion of the responses are aligned with what has been said and discussed by both academicians and critics within the body of the paper. It is a fact that online education poses a communication barrier between the instructor and the learner (İşman, Dabaj, Altınay & Altınay, 2003, 2004: Bozkaya & Aydın, 2007). There has been extensive work to conceptualize and understand social interactions and constructs within a classroom, where there has been little work concerning the social, attitudinal and cognitive results of subject-specific online instruction. This means that time is an important element to be able to see how the packaged instructional programs and online education in general will affect the society as a whole.

CONCLUSIONS AND RECOMMENDATIONS
Neoliberalism, if considered along the lines Harvey (2011) describes it be as discussed earlier, seeks "to bring all human action into the domain of the market … within an institutional framework" (p. 3, 2). It was already indicated earlier that this move towards the marketization of society brought along a new ethic expressing competitiveness personal benefit and private ownership. For this ethic to become established, Harvey draws attention to the requirement of technologies of information creation and the building up of related technologies of collecting, storing, analyzing and transferring information through massive data bases, in other words a move towards what is commonly regarded as information society, which becomes central to the neoliberal project (Levidow, 2007). Levidow also draws attention to the centrality and vitality of an information society, arguing that "the management, quality and speed of information become essential for economic competitiveness" (p. 239). He also adds that the whole 'social project' depends on highly skilled labor, achievable only through the use of ICTs for an increased productivity and the provision of new services.

The above ideas, commonly voiced by writers and critics of neoliberal policies on education, shed light as to the route taken by educational institutions, in particular by universities which are considered to be the sources of more sophisticated and skill based knowledge, to employ and rely more heavily on ICTs. It is not, therefore, surprising that universities are compelled to make curriculum changes and standardize course materials rendering them to knowledge which can easily be digested without much debate and argumentation which in turn fosters critical reflection. Consequently, academicians are compelled to go on line, produce and present e-materials, e-communicate with their students, and offer online courses. Distance education programs are also offered within this framework. While treating the student as a satisfied customer, the main aim is to produce a competent individual furnished with the necessary skills to be a part of the qualified labor force required by the business world.

Arguments put forward by academicians participating in this study has shown that instruction in virtual environments hinders the reproductive nature of passing on and taking in information/knowledge, the emotive and intellectual exchange between the instructor and the student, does away with the instrumental elements of education such as humanly contact, expression of feelings through eye contact, gestures and mimics, and joking while learning in a delightful environment based on sharing. Learning in a virtual environment is being in contact with someone that one does not see and come to know as a person leading to indifference, which in turn will create individuality. Indifference may kill motivation of participating and sharing with others in a society. There is a motivation difference between motivation to learn through sharing and a motivation to benefit through profit.

Producers of digitally available/online materials seem also to be aware of the drawbacks of such systems as Chao, Hwu & Chang (2011) draw attention to work undertaken to develop a system that may minimize these drawback by building an "online learning framework" (p. 318) to allow knowledge sharing through organized interaction. They argue that some of the interaction patterns are not identified and included in their study because the relationships during interaction is complicated and are not truly possible to account for in a virtual

environment. Aware of the lack of a social environment Jou, Chuang, & Wu tried to create interactive web-based environments to scaffold creative reasoning and meaningful learning. They stress the importance of project based learning for interdisciplinary learning and discuss that the web-environment should provide a basis for creativity and project design. There seems to be many problems to be overcome when interaction, creativity, and critical thinking is concerned. On the other hand, all work undertaken to overcome these problems which have arisen when the human element (teacher-student interaction involving affective and cognitive factors) is taken out indicates the downsides of the mechanical path education seems to have taken.

Universities today, based on neoliberal ideology are turned into institutions producing a labor force with specific professional skills and equipped with the necessary flexibility skills to be able to adapt to the changing needs of the business world. The concerns of this new work force are economical rather than social. The connection between universities and society is being replaced by the connection between universities and businesses. University graduates are trained to view the world as a competitive market place and focus on profit rather than the good of the society. Individuality is replacing collectivity, and competition is taking the place of creativity and critical thinking. The ideas of critical thinking and interdisciplinarity that were the arguments peaking in the late 20th century is replaced by one area focused, skill based training. ICTs which are said to be connecting the world are actually separating and disconnecting people from each other and from their environment.

As it was stated earlier there is enormous research and study to conceptualize and understand social interactions and constructs within a classroom and their consequences on students' self-concept, self-esteem, and social relationships. However, there has been little work concerning the individual, social, attitudinal and cognitive results of online instruction serving neoliberal aims and objectives. This means that (a long) time is an important element to be able to see how the packaged instructional programs and online education in general will affect the society as a whole in the future.

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