

Entrepreneur or Perish: How the Capitalist Regime Indoctrinates in Schools

Emprender o perecer: el régimen capitalista adoctrina en la escuela

Comprometer-se ou perecer: o regime capitalista doutrina nas escolas

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Abstract

This review is an analysis of the recently published book by Miño y Dávila in 2025, within the Crestomatías collection, directed by Dr. Félix Angulo Rasco, entitled *Emprendimiento o emprendedurismo educativo. Educar en las reglas del capitalismo: la nueva guerra cognitiva neoliberal en educación*, whose author, Enrique Javier Díez Gutiérrez, is a Professor at the Faculty of Education of the University of León (Spain), and has published several books in recent years that frame what is developed in this one: *Pedagogía del Decrecimiento* (2024). *La memoria histórica democrática de las mujeres* (2023), *Pedagogía Antifascista* (2025), *La historia silenciada* (2022), *Educación crítica e inclusiva para una sociedad poscapitalista* (2021), *La asignatura pendiente* (2020), *La educación en venta* (2020), *Educación para el bien común* (2020), *La revuelta educativa neocon* (2019) o *Neoliberalismo educativo* (2018).

Keywords: Entrepreneurship, education, neoliberalism, capitalism, educational indoctrination, critical thinking, educational sociology.

Resumen

Esta reseña es un análisis del libro de reciente aparición, publicado por la editorial Miño y Dávila en 2025, dentro de la colección Crestomatías, dirigida por el Dr. Félix Angulo Rasco, titulado *Emprendimiento o emprendedurismo educativo. Educar en las reglas del capitalismo: la nueva guerra cognitiva neoliberal en educación*, cuyo autor, Enrique Javier Díez Gutiérrez, es Catedrático de Universidad en la Facultad de Educación de la Universidad de León, y ha publicado estos últimos años varios libros que enmarcan lo que se desarrolla en este: *Pedagogía del Decrecimiento* (2024). *La memoria histórica democrática de las mujeres* (2023), *Pedagogía Antifascista* (2025), *La historia silenciada* (2022), *Educación crítica e inclusiva para una sociedad poscapitalista* (2021), *La asignatura pendiente* (2020), *La educación en venta* (2020), *Educación para el bien común* (2020), *La*

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Palabras clave: Emprendimiento, educación, neoliberalismo, capitalismo, adoctrinamiento educativo, pensamiento crítico, sociología de la educación.

Resumo

Esta recensão é uma análise do livro recentemente publicado por Miño y Dávila em 2025, dentro da coleção Crestomatías, dirigida pelo Dr. Félix Angulo Rasco, intitulado *Emprendimiento o emprendedurismo educativo. Educar en las reglas del capitalismo: la nueva guerra cognitiva neoliberal en educación*, cujo autor, Enrique Javier Díez Gutiérrez, é professor na Faculdade de Educação da Universidade de León (Espanha), e publicou nos últimos anos vários livros que enquadram o que é desenvolvido neste: *Pedagogía del Decrecimiento* (2024). *La memoria histórica democrática de las mujeres* (2023), *Pedagogia Antifascista* (2025), *La historia silenciada* (2022), *Educación crítica e inclusiva para una sociedad poscapitalista* (2021), *La asignatura pendiente* (2020), *La educación en venta* (2020), *Educación para el bien común* (2020), *La revuelta educativa neocon* (2019) o *Neoliberalismo educativo* (2018).

Palavras-chave: Empreendedorismo, educação, neoliberalismo, capitalismo, doutrinação educativa, pensamento crítico, sociologia da educação.

Chrestomathies

Chrestomathy is defined by the Royal Spanish Academy as a “collection of selected writings for teaching purposes.” It is a compilation, a selection which, as Professor Félix Angulo (2025) explains in his introduction to the collection,

(...) is intended to be a ‘discursive act that takes part in a large-scale ideological debate: it responds to something, rejects something, affirms something, anticipates possible responses and refutations, seeks support, and so on.’ For this reason, we have named the collection Chrestomathies: Documents for Critical Education—texts as discursive acts that aim to engage actively and ideologically in the struggle over the meaning of words, thereby seeking to transform praxis and help us think critically about education.

Thus, as Professor Angulo argues, the purpose of this collection—which includes volumes such as *Entrepreneurship or Entrepreneurialism in Education. Teaching the Rules of Capitalism: The New Neoliberal Cognitive War in Education* (Díez-Gutiérrez, 2025), and *Critical Education and Inclusion. The Value of Difference in a School Without Exclusions* (Melero et al., 2025)—is to resist hegemony and radicalize the epistemic space in order to renew debate and discussion around critical education.

The goal is to de-banalize and de-neutralize critical education, and to insist that the hegemonic struggle is not lost, despite the current success of the "culture wars" being waged by the resurgent neofascist movements in Europe and Latin America. For this reason, Angulo stresses the need to rethink critical education, as doing so is essential to sustaining our potential for a radically transformative praxis in education.

This is the strength of the collection, and of the decision to inaugurate it with these two volumes authored by scholars who are not only established academics but also activists defending public education. It is worth noting that Professor Enrique Javier Díez Gutiérrez was awarded the CODAPA 2023 Prize by the Andalusian Confederation of Parent Associations (CODAPA) for his advocacy of public education and for promoting alternatives toward building an inclusive, democratic, and common-good-oriented pedagogy. He is currently director of the recognized Research Group Educational Research and Social Justice at the University of León, and also leads the European research project Building an Inclusive and Democratic Europe in Response to the Rise of Fascism and Xenophobia.

Indoctrinating in Capitalism

The book is structured into four sections. The first section analyzes how "entrepreneurial education" is permeating the educational system through recent reforms whose narrative framework of entrepreneurship has been embraced across the political spectrum—including far-right, conservative, and social-democratic governments alike. These reforms have subordinated education to the demands of the market, aiming to produce neoliberal subjects whose life trajectory is increasingly shaped by a cycle of paying and owing -living to pay, dying in debt- in an endless loop.

In this first section, the author critically examines the ideology of entrepreneurship and the corresponding education policies, including so-called entrepreneurial textbooks that help indoctrinate younger generations into this ideology. Perhaps the lyrics of the rapper Nega -"Loser, why don't you become an entrepreneur?" (2013)- offer the sharpest diagnosis of the neoliberal society being constructed through this ideological apparatus in both schools and universities.

The section concludes with three key discussions: how corporations are entering schools and universities under the banner of promoting "entrepreneurial education," how an entrepreneurial culture is thus being institutionalized, and, ultimately, how what is being established is a regime of capitalist indoctrination. It is therefore unsurprising that a large-scale study of over 12,000 Spanish youth (Llaneras and Pérez, 2017) found that the dominant image of social success is unidirectionally associated with the entrepreneur, now a talismanic figure. In this survey on their professional aspirations, students proclaimed: "When I grow up, I want to be like Amancio Ortega," the billionaire owner of Inditex and the Zara brand—hailed as a national model of entrepreneurial success but also

accused of tax evasion, fraud, and exploiting child labor in factories across the Global South (Rojas, 2025; Tataret, 2016).

The second section examines the financial education programs being introduced in schools, promoted by none other than those responsible for the 2008 global financial crisis: banks and financial corporations. These actors now proclaim that the crisis was due to the public's lack of financial literacy—thus shifting the blame to citizens for having been defrauded, plundered, and forced to sacrifice billions in public services to bail out these very institutions, which, of course, will never repay what was lost. Echoing Bill Clinton's famous campaign slogan against George H. W. Bush, one could say: "It is capitalism, stupid" (Lou, 2025).

The third section explores how entrepreneurial education and financial literacy initiatives are shaping the rules of capitalism and constructing a new neoliberal subject. It analyzes how a capitalist habitus is being cultivated based on a foundational assumption: that there is no alternative to a market society, where all human relations are reduced to profit-driven exchanges, competitive advantage, and the pursuit of opportunities others have failed to identify. In this society of competition, risk (speculative investment) becomes a lifestyle, and others are framed as competitors to be defeated. Consequently, the common good, solidarity, and public welfare are reframed as obstacles. This is how the new neoliberal aspirational subject is forged: opportunistic, hyper-competitive, and committed to securing personal happiness in a war of all against all.

The fourth section offers a call for hope. Entitled "Reclaiming a Post-Capitalist Education," it presents proposals and strategies for a pedagogy of resistance and hope. It envisions the construction of an education that is post-capitalist, post-colonial, and post-patriarchal—an education that is anti-fascist, anti-capitalist, socialist, decolonial, and feminist. The section includes a ten-point manifesto for actions that educational communities should implement to foster an alternative education. Of course, such efforts must be accompanied by supportive education policies and a broader societal commitment, because -as the well-known adage reminds us- it takes a whole village to educate even one of its members.

Guerra cognitiva neoliberal

The author reminds us that current European educational policies promoting entrepreneurship serve as a technology of governing at a distance, designed to shape students' behavior and transform them into entrepreneurs of themselves. This constitutes a new project of social engineering, one that trains individuals to behave according to the corporate model. It establishes competition as the norm for behavior, and the corporation as the paradigmatic model for society. The primary goal of neoliberal governance is to construct a competitive society. To achieve this, neoliberalism proposes a wholesale reinterpretation of the social sphere in terms of human capital.

Drawing on the neoliberal ideology of the Austrian-American school, closely aligned with anarcho-capitalism, as theorized by Ludwig von Mises and Friedrich Hayek, the argument holds that any form of state intervention leads inevitably to widespread impoverishment and, ultimately, to totalitarianism. For classical liberals, the market was a space for the production and exchange of goods. In contrast, neoliberals conceive of the market as a subjective process of self-formation —a profound shift that redefines human action in terms of the *homo economicus*.

This new economic subject learns through entrepreneurial action: a process of lifelong learning, self-adjustment, and individual and interpersonal transformation. To be an entrepreneur requires two core attributes: (a) a strong entrepreneurial spirit and (b) the ability to take risks. These grant individuals a sense of opportunity. The entrepreneur is not merely a producer of goods but someone who -armed with information that others lack- can exploit any opportunity that arises. There is no entrepreneurship without speculation; entrepreneurial success demands constant vigilance for new business opportunities.

This was precisely the objective behind embedding entrepreneurship as a key competence across various levels of education under the European Education Area's strategic framework. The goal is to foster in individuals an ongoing project of self-improvement —aimed at increasing their market value. The responsibility for this endeavor lies solely with the individual: the neoliberal subject must become an entrepreneur of the self, living entirely in conditions of risk. To thrive, one must continuously adapt, demonstrate flexibility and proactivity, push personal limits, and never pause..

Since the 2008 financial crisis, the European Commission has sought to drive a profound cultural shift starting in early education. This has been pursued through education policies promoted by the OECD (Organisation for Economic Co-operation and Development) and the World Bank, with the aim of extending entrepreneurial conduct across society —the entrepreneurialization of life. The learner is redefined as an individual who learns in order to undertake. This project of social engineering - constructing society as a business, echoing the title of Almudena Grandes' (2022) final novel *Todo va a mejorar* (everything is going to improve)- is intertwined with the crisis of the welfare state and the declining status of the wage-earning worker. The goal is to replace collective rights with individualized risk management, consistent with the neoliberal principle of personal responsibility.

In this paradigm, individuals are positioned as primarily responsible for their own performance in the labor market, establishing a direct link between education -as a strategy for self-valorization- and self-employment. Achieving this entrepreneurial culture required a perceptual shift. A positive image of the entrepreneur has been carefully constructed through legislative texts, expert reports, competitions, awards, radio and television programs, internet channels, and public education policies —even within classrooms themselves.

Effectively -though this is rarely acknowledged- this marks a departure from the idea that education should primarily serve the holistic development of individuals and the formation of critical citizens capable of active engagement and transformative action. Instead, what is promoted is an educational model focused on efficiency and effectiveness, both in serving market needs and in homogenizing and integrating learners into a pragmatic, "realistic," uncritical, yet socially acceptable worldview.

Television abounds with programs and reports about young people becoming millionaires overnight through hard work and a brilliant idea hatched in a garage, waiting to be bought by Google —dreams sold to viewers. The public was convinced that entering the post-industrial era meant transitioning from worker to entrepreneur, from working class to aspirational class. Yet the reality has proven to be a revival of the myth of entrepreneurial populism, rooted in the American Dream, now reframed as individualistic entrepreneurship -until one's unemployment benefits run out- often leading to a nightmare of limitless self-exploitation without protections.

In today's hyper-neoliberal labor landscape, we witness the growing uberization of the entrepreneurial model. Platforms like Uber exemplify a scenario in which capital no longer needs to invest or take risks, while workers generate profits for these platforms while assuming all risk themselves —grateful, even, not to be classified as "workers," but as shrewd "entrepreneurs," members of the aspirational class.

In the long term, any empire seeking to endure must domesticate minds. McDonaldisation becomes deeper and more enduring when the dominated remain unaware of their subjugation. Capitalism, in its neoliberal phase, has learned that it need not rule through coercion, but through seduction, so that individuals voluntarily submit.

We are being educated to become entrepreneurs —the heroic figure of the new aspirational class: working tirelessly on caffeine, performing as if they owned the company, but earning an intern's wage. Entrepreneurial ideology not only masks the reality of self-exploitation but shifts the risk and responsibility for precarity onto the individual's employability and ability to compete and succeed. Indeed, the ideology of entrepreneurship shares its roots with neoliberal ideology, the ideology of competition, and the ideology of meritocracy: self-interest. It champions a pedagogy of selfishness.

If entrepreneurial ideology blames the victim for their failure and demands that they assume individual responsibility for their fate, then positive thinking ideology serves as its necessary counterpart — helping individuals adapt to exploitation and even feel like free collaborators, through emotional coaching. The "science of happiness" -used to manage the frustrations of populations devastated by mass layoffs- has now entered educational pedagogies through positive psychology and self-help manuals à la Paulo Coelho, teaching people to change their perceptions instead of changing their material conditions. These methods encourage voluntary servitude. Failure becomes a personal

problem, a matter of attitude: crisis as opportunity.

The ideology of self-motivation, combined with rising psychotropic drug consumption—which has tripled since the onset of the crisis (Martín, 2024) —now performs the role once played by the factory foreman overseeing piecework. It consolidates a new type of person: an entrepreneur of the self, trained in the logic of competition, whose relationships are reduced to calculation, exchange, advantage, and interest. It is *The Hunger Games*, dressed in coaching language. But there is a warning: in this new world, there is no place for losers. Protest and social conflict are rendered meaningless, because the demands placed upon the self lack any external source of accountability. Failure is personal, pathologized. Thus, instead of filling union halls, today it is the offices of psychiatrists that overflow with those experiencing depression amid unemployment...

This ideology of success, of the person who “owes nothing to anyone”, breeds mistrust—and even hatred—toward the poor (“lazy”), the elderly (“unproductive and a burden”), or immigrants (“taking our jobs”). But it also backfires: everyone fears becoming useless one day. The problem is that it is easier to escape a physical prison than to break free from this seemingly “freely chosen” rationality, which is maintained through sophisticated technologies of self-control.

Breaking Free from "Entrepreneurial Rationality"

We must recover from this mutation. We must resist the shift in how the right to education is now conceived: what was once a social cause is increasingly reframed as an economic imperative —a private good, an investment, a competitive advantage in the entrepreneurial marketplace. We must reclaim education as a fundamental right, one that should be guaranteed collectively in the name of the common good —a domain where profit, self-interest, calculation, gain, and the pedagogy of selfishness have no place. This means that in opposition to the radically neoliberal model that sells us entrepreneurship, we must envision education through the lens of radical transformation.

We need a Critical Pedagogy. Education is inherently a political intervention in the world, and it holds the potential to create spaces for social transformation and for promoting the logic of the common good —if and only if it remains critical across all subjects, at all times, and in all contexts. Such a pedagogy must be accompanied by a Pedagogy of Human Rights —encompassing all generations of rights; First generation: civil and political rights; Second generation: economic, social, and cultural rights; Third generation: collective rights and rights of solidarity —such as the right to peace, international justice, environmental stewardship, and the overcoming of predatory capitalism; Fourth generation: rights to democracy, access to truthful information, and digital sovereignty; Fifth generation: rights that transcend anthropocentric paradigms —teaching us to coexist in respectful harmony with other living beings.

In the same way, we need a Pedagogy of Memory that prevents historical amnesia -the “memoricide” imposed upon the genocides perpetrated by fascism since the 1920s in our countries- and guarantees future generations their right to truth. We also need a Feminist Pedagogy to counter both the anti-feminist discourse of neo-fascism and the victimizing narratives of neo-masculinism. Moreover, we require a Pedagogy of Mutual Support, one that allows us to rethink life through cooperation and solidarity —since, as philosophers like Kropotkin (Kinna, 2025) and esteemed biologists such as Lynn Margulis Sagan (Fecteau, 2025) have shown, mutual support is the very foundation of human evolutionary development.

To advance radically toward an Inclusive Pedagogy -one that goes beyond mere integration- schools must be reformed so they can respond positively to the full diversity of students. This, in turn, requires significantly smaller classroom sizes (15 students in early childhood education, and 20 in compulsory education). What we need is an Essential Pedagogy that prioritizes a curriculum focused on fundamental knowledge, connected to real life. Schools cannot simply be spaces where content is taught to pass exams and then forgotten —content oriented exclusively toward preparing students for the future labor market. Is it truly critical for a 12-year-old student to know that eukaryotic cells have a Golgi apparatus?

What if we began instead by analyzing the present in order to better understand the past? Take the subject of History, for example. What if we reframed subjects around today’s most urgent and challenging issues -ecology, social justice, and so on- and used these as the foundation for developing essential instrumental learning (language, mathematics, etc.)? Through project-based learning and cooperative work rooted in a holistic and interdisciplinary approach, we can connect schools to students’ everyday realities and social concerns. In this way, instrumental learning gains real meaning and purpose —not simply as a means to pass an exam, but to enable students to “face the world, understand it, and act within it as citizens,” which is the ultimate goal of education.

A Pedagogy of Democratic Assessment should be grounded in a Pedagogy of Error, where mistakes are viewed as opportunities for learning and growth, helping students to develop alternative approaches and overcome identified difficulties, rather than simply occasions for punishment or negative grading. Assessment should involve all participants in the educational process and serve as a means for improving both teaching and learning. Likewise, we need a Critical Digital Pedagogy to reclaim our digital sovereignty. And a Slow Pedagogy that fosters more deliberate teaching, one that decelerates the frenetic pace of both school and everyday life, allowing space for thoughtful reflection, contemplation, enjoyment, and meaningful relationships —a truly “slow and mindful education.”

Equally essential is the development of an Intercultural and Anti-Racist Pedagogy, one that educates for inclusive global citizenship and regards cultural diversity as a value to be embraced. Alongside

this, we must advance an Insurgent Decolonial Pedagogy, rooted in the ideas of Frantz Fanon and Paulo Freire (Laubscher, 2024) —an alternative form of education that decolonizes knowledge and affirms difference through recognition, inclusion, and the affirmation of the "Other," as advocated by Catherine Walsh (Faculty of Medical Sciences, University of Santiago de Chile, 2024). We need a Democratic Pedagogy that transforms our schools into true laboratories of democracy.

Furthermore, we must embrace a Pedagogy of Critical and Civic Disobedience in the face of an unjust system that fosters neo-fascism, neoliberalism, and capitalism. The true ammunition of this system is not only rubber bullets or tear gas, but also our silence and our complicit indifference. We believe in a Pedagogy of Commitment, for as the saying goes: "When teachers fight for justice, they are also teaching." This manifesto is a call for precisely that alternative education envisioned by Professor Díez.

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