



Implied Political Pedagogy

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Abstract: Public education in the United States intertwines with politics. The historical accounting of public education in America, from funding and regency to learning standards and assessments, reveals politician's direct public education at national, state, and local levels (ERIC Clearinghouse for Social Studies/Social Science Education, 1994; No Child Left Behind Act, 2002). Although this political-education nexus presented throughout the country's history, it experienced heightened engagements in recent years as statements, beliefs, and activities were widely debated and, in some cases, codified into law (American Association of University Professors et al., 2021; Office of the Governor, 2022; The White House, 2023, para. 44; Turley, 2022). While much research and theory exist on the practice of education's engagements with and through politics (Apple, 1996; Giroux, 1981; Giroux & McLaren, 1986; Ladson-Billings, 2006; McLaren, 2016), research by Epps and Wilcoxson (2024) revealed a previously unidentified educational practice, Implied Political Pedagogy, influenced and shaped by politics. Building on Epps and Wilcoxson's initial broad categorization of Implied Political Pedagogy, this article relies on a brief historical accounting of the American political-public education relationship and research data to position and expand the pedagogy's application by educators and explore its characteristics, structure, scope, and pedagogical relationships.

Keywords: implied political pedagogy, politics, education, pedagogy.

Education is always political. There is no such thing as an education that is not political, H. Giroux (personal communication, November 22, 2022).

The Political-Education Relationship in America

American politics shape American public education. From the country's initial democratic efforts to its continuing evolution in the contemporary

world, American politics immutably directed, guided, and intertwined with the country's public education construct to form an undemocratic education ingrained within legitimizing, hierarchical, circular, and decontextualized constructs of education (Freire 1968/1970; Giroux, 1982).

One of America's earliest successes at such comingling occurred through the Land Ordinance (1785). This law, codified by the unicameral Confederated Congress two years after the formal end of the American Revolutionary War, set aside land lot number 16 in each township plat for maintaining public schools; a demarcated requirement that foreshadowed the republic's reticulating inculcation of the dynamic political-public education association (Schmitt, 1996/2007).

The Confederated Congress, two years after passing the Land Ordinance of 1785, approved the Northwest Ordinance (1787) by a vote of 17–1. This law deepened the political echelon's influence on public education by noting its vision of education through academic and non-academic associations (i.e., religion, morality, knowledge, good government, happiness of mankind) (Art. 3). Renewed by the First Federal Congress in 1789, the ordinance provided new visibility on the political-education nexus through what Jackson (1968/1990) later described as the curriculum embedded and hidden within education.

America's federal legislative, executive, and judicial actions and decisions associated with public education increased in scope throughout the next three centuries. In the early 1800s, the Committee on Public Lands became one of the country's first legislative body's to stipulate the necessity for government-appropriated public schools when it issued its panoply report supporting the legislative branch's use of power to direct public education "for the improvement of the minds and morals of the present generation, and of generations to come" (Strong, 1826, p. 939). In contrast to the Northwest Ordinance's (1787) call for land set aside for public schools, the Committee on Public Lands report promoted the government's unilateral vision of education through a permanency of political institutions, an idyllic vision of America that connected its founding themes with the committee's impetus for the country's evolving political-public education associations:

The continents and the islands of the sea, are mostly inhabited by men, born under governments, and brought up under the influence of principles and habits, with few exceptions, utterly hostile to our notions of freedom. Since this is so, our obligations do not end with ourselves. We owe much to the great cause of liberty. This debt we can discharge the best and the most honourably by securing well the foundation and

superstructure of our own liberties; thus giving to the human family the influence of a perfect example of civil freedom. The foundation of our political institutions, it is well known, rests in the will of the People, and the safety of the whole superstructure, its temple and altar, daily and hourly depend upon the discreet exercise of this will. How then is this will to be corrected, chastened, subdued? By education – that education, the first rudiments of which can be acquired only in common schools (Strong, 1826, p. 944).

Congress' pursuit of a political-public education convergence continued through the Civil War-era Morrill Act (1862). Where earlier legislative efforts established the political entities' initial reaches into public education, the Morrill Act, signed into law by President Abraham Lincoln, tentacled into post-secondary education curriculum. Like the Land Ordinance (1785), this law provisioned public land associated with public education; however, unlike the former, the Morrill Act included the position that each state may take the benefit of the law for "the endowment, support, and maintenance of at least one college where the leading object shall be...to teach such branches of learning as are related to agriculture and the mechanic arts" (Sec. 4).

The federal judiciary also contributed to norming the political-public education connection by issuing opinions relating to political actions directly and indirectly associated with educating the population. In 1896, the United States Supreme Court issued its landmark *Plessy v. Ferguson* (1896) ruling that constitutionalized the separate but equal doctrine. Although this case initiated from a challenge to Louisiana's Separate Car Act (1890), Justice Henry Billings Brown's majority opinion affirmed prior court rulings and legislation that separate but equal facilities or accommodations based on race, including those in education, as constitutional:

So far, then, as a conflict with the Fourteenth Amendment is concerned, the case reduces itself to the question whether the statute of Louisiana is a reasonable regulation, and, with respect to this, there must necessarily be a large discretion on the part of the legislature. In determining the question of reasonableness, it is at liberty to act with reference to the established usages, customs, and traditions of the people, and with a view to the promotion of their comfort and the preservation of the public peace and good order. Gauged by this standard, we cannot say that a law which authorizes or even requires the separation of the two races in public conveyances is unreasonable, or more obnoxious to the Fourteenth Amendment than the acts of Congress requiring separate schools for coloured children in the District of Columbia, the

constitutionality of which does not seem to have been questioned, or the corresponding acts of state legislatures (pp. 550–551).

Three years after deciding *Plessy v. Ferguson* (1896), the United States Supreme Court issued another prominent opinion in *Cumming v. Board of Education of Richmond County* (1899). This case, like the Plessy case, included racial segregation in public schooling; however, the *Cumming v. Board of Education of Richmond County* case differed from its 1896 predecessor by centring on taxation of citizens that provided public education for one race of citizens without providing an education for a different race of students. In its *Cumming v. Board of Education of Richmond County* decision, the United States Supreme Court found agreement with the Georgia Supreme Court ruling by determining that the local unit of administration did not violate the constitutional rights of students for several reasons:

Under the circumstances disclosed, we cannot say that this action of the state court was, within the meaning of the Fourteenth Amendment, a denial by the state to the plaintiffs and to those associated with them of the equal protection of the laws or of any privileges belonging to them as citizens of the United States. We may add that while all admit that the benefits and burdens of public taxation must be shared by citizens without discrimination against any class on account of their race, the education of the people in schools maintained by state taxation is a matter belonging to the respective states, and any interference on the part of federal authority with the management of such schools cannot be justified except in the case of a clear and unmistakable disregard of rights secured by the supreme law of the land. We have here no such case to be determined, and as this view disposes of the only question which this Court has jurisdiction to review and decide, the judgment is Affirmed (p. 545).

America's entry to the twentieth century witnessed the federal government's continuation of efforts to express their constitutional authority in ways that significantly influenced public education. In 1917, President Woodrow Wilson advanced political influence into education by signing the Smith-Hughes Act (1917). Where the Committee on Public Lands (Strong, 1826) report discussed appropriating funds for public education, the Smith-Hughes Act furthered political engagement in public education by promoting and appropriating money for vocational education, including money to pay salaries for teachers, supervisors, and directors of agricultural subjects. The federal government's encroachment into public education advanced in post-World War II America as the United States Supreme Court departed from

stare decisis and overturned *Plessy v. Ferguson* (1896) through its transformative *Brown v. Board of Education* (1954) decision. In shifting the court's opinion away from its former ruling, Chief Justice Earl Warren's unanimous majority opinion simultaneously ended the constitutionality of racial segregation in public schools and established a super precedent for public education in America.

Four years after the court's *Brown v. Board of Education* (1954) decision, Congress and the presidency reasserted their constitutional authorities into public education by bringing the National Defense Education Act (1958) into existence. This law, unlike its predecessors, contextualized education as a national defence interest and, as such, sought to correct what legislators identified as an imbalance of the population educated "in science, mathematics, and modern foreign languages and trained in technology" (Sec. 101). The law's influence on education, however, went beyond its stated academic directionality by also requiring those states and named territories that desired to receive their portion of appropriated funds to submit testing plans to identify public secondary students with outstanding aptitudes and abilities. Through this new enjoinder of education, national defence, and appropriations, the law perpetually linked students, economic opportunities, and the country's safety with the categorization of students and stratification of standardized assessment necessary for such categorization.

The federal legislature and executive branch expanded their shaping efforts of public education in the latter decades of the twentieth century. Where *Brown v. Board of Education* (1954) ended racial segregation in public education, President Richard Nixon, in 1972, signed into law the Patsy Mink Equal Opportunity in Education Act (1972), which ended sex discrimination in public education aside from exceptions provided for in the law. Congress and the executive branch also partnered to influence special education through the Education for All Handicapped Children Act (1975). The legislators purposed this law, later amended by the Individuals with Disabilities Education Improvement Act (2004), to assure that all handicapped children were provided a free appropriate public education designed to meet their needs and prepare them for future opportunities.

Adding to the political-education structures emplaced earlier in the decade, Congress established a new Cabinet department through the Department of Education Organization Act (1979), which was signed into law by President Jimmy Carter. The Department of Education, downsizing in President Donald Trump's administration, purposed, in part, to ensure

“access to equal educational opportunity for every individual...and to increase the accountability of Federal education programs to the President, the Congress and the public” (Sec. 102).

The federal legislative branch, having reorganized national-level public education efforts within the executive branch, continued codifying education-related segments in the first quarter of the twenty-first century. The political majority achieved legislative milestones through the No Child Left Behind Act (2002), signed into law by President George W. Bush, and the Every Student Succeeds Act (2015), signed into law by President Barack Obama. Where earlier education-related legislation purposed educational pursuits similar to the No Child Left Behind Act, the 2002 law differed from its predecessors by linking determination of a high-quality public education with students achieving proficiency on state academic (i.e., standardized) assessments. The No Child Left Behind Act also differed from earlier legislation in its inclusion of an accountability section that required each state to demonstrate it developed and implemented a single statewide accountability system designed to effectively ensure public schools and agencies achieved adequate yearly progress, as defined by the state and in accordance with the law’s delineations.

The Political-Education Relationship in Georgia

Georgia’s legislative, executive, and judicial branches of government, like their federal counterparts, acted throughout their individual and collective history to establish and entrench the political-public education bond across the state. The state’s first legislative representatives, in the Georgia Constitution of 1777, established a political-education relationship by declaring that “schools shall be erected in each county” (Sec. LIV) with appropriations determined by the state legislature. The following decade, Georgia revised its first constitution through a constitutional convention one year after ratifying the United States Constitution. Similar to the latter, the Georgia Constitution of 1789 brought into existence a bicameral legislature and provided for executive and judicial branches of state government, each of which would later contribute to the advancing the political-education relationship in the state.

Although Georgia adopted several constitutions in the following decades, in 1868, the state’s political majority crafted a new constitution to replace its confederate constitution, a requirement necessary for readmission to the Union. In the Georgia Constitution of 1868, state constitutional delegates,

including soon-to-be governor Rufus Bullock, effected another political-education connection by creating a tax-supported public education system that was “forever free to all children of the State” (Art. VI). Equally as important to the co-relational political-public education construct, the 1868 constitution provided a governor-appointed state school commissioner with the same term as the governor and an office located at the seat of government in Atlanta. In establishing such a Reconstruction Era educational paradigm, the state’s political majority embedded their chosen oversight, compliance, and enforcement appointee within the system it created to educate its population.

Georgia’s legislators and executive increased efforts to direct the political-education relationship in the years following the 1868 constitution’s adoption. In 1870, Georgia politicians established statewide permanency in the relationship by creating a board of education in each county in the state that “shall be a body politic and corporate in law” (Georgia Laws, Sec. 20, 1870). In the first half of the following century, the state’s General Assembly and governor added another layer to this permanency through the Compulsory School Attendance Act (1916) and their subsequent updates to the law. Unlike the federal laws of the time, the act contributed to a more comprehensive political-education connection by requiring school-age children to attend public schools for a minimum period of time stipulated by the state legislature.

Like their federal counterparts, Georgia’s political elements implemented rapid and widespread changes in public education in the latter half of the twentieth and early twenty-first centuries. Governor George Busbee and the Georgia General Assembly, in 1977, propagated their political messaging through the Adequate Program for Education in Georgia Act (1977). Here, the legislative and executive branches allied to enact a desired equitably financed public education system that provided “students with the knowledge and understanding necessary to develop good physical and mental health..., to participate actively in the governing process, ...and to be effective workers and responsible citizens” (Part 1, para. 2).

Near the end of the century, Governor Joe Harris and the General Assembly brought in the Quality Basic Education Act (1985). This law, in contrast to previous state legislation, connected school funding with Quality Core Curriculum, which served as the state’s first prescribed curriculum. Six years after passing the Quality Basic Education Act, Governor Zell Miller continued the political inroads into public education by signing into law Senate Bill 328, which remained in effect until 2015. Unlike earlier

legislative-executive efforts that shaped public education, Senate Bill 328 created minimum required scores on standardized assessments for learners in specified grades, which, in part, functioned as a gateway that allowed or prevented graduation from a public secondary school (Georgia Department of Education, 2025; Georgia State University Law Review, 1992).

The state's political majority expanded further into education by codifying charter school-related elements in the Charter Schools Act (1993/2005) and the Charter Systems Act (2007). These state laws, like the municipal laws examined in *Cumming v. Board of Education of Richmond County* (1899), underwent review by the Georgia Supreme Court. Where the Cumming decision centred on the management of public schools, including the appropriation of public funds and segregated schools, the *Woods v. Barnes* (2024) majority opinion reversed lower court decisions and ruled against the educator's contractual challenge under Fair Dismissal Act (1975/2015) provisions.

Protect Students First Act of 2022

Undergirded by political successes across the federal and state branches of government, the comingling of politics and education in Georgia continued unabated into the twenty-first century when, in 2022, Governor Brian Kemp signed into law the Protect Students First Act (2022). The core of this act, which passed along political party lines, addressed nine concepts that the legislators and governor termed divisive:

1. 'Divisive concepts' means any of the following concepts, including views espousing such concepts:

- A. One race is inherently superior to another race;
- B. The United States of America is fundamentally racist;
- C. An individual, by virtue of his or her race, is inherently or consciously racist or oppressive toward individuals of other races;
- D. An individual should be discriminated against or receive adverse treatment solely or partly because of his or her race;
- E. An individual's moral character is inherently determined by his or her race (Protect Students First Act, 2022, Section 1–2).

Adding to America's and Georgia's history of politicians influencing and guiding public education, the Protect Students First Act (2022) indirectly codified the political majority's beliefs and priorities by prohibiting an individual, while performing official school duties, from espousing their personal political beliefs within the politically constructed education paradigm. This law, in essence, crafted a legal means to force educators to be the deliverer and enforcer of the political majority's political paradigm while concurrently demanding educators do not engage in political conversations unless directed by the political entity itself (e.g., learning standards). It was this junction of the political-education nexus that led Epps and Wilcoxson (2024) to take a closer examination of the Protect Students First Act relative to educators' perceptions and practices.

The Educator and Implied Political Pedagogy

Research Framework

Selecting a constructivist epistemology shaped by Vygotsky's (1978) theory of social development and von Glasersfeld's (1981/1984) theory of interconnected knowledge, reality, and truth, Epps and Wilcoxson (2024) engaged in a qualitative descriptive case study of public primary and secondary United States History educator participants' perceptions of Georgia's Protect Students First Act's (2022) and the law's influences on the educators' practices. Specifically, the researchers examined the participants' views of, and practices influenced by, the law, which codified and provided meaning to nine divisive concepts, each of which included racial elements.

The researchers selected the study's participants (i.e., three fourth-grade educators, three eighth-grade educators, and three eleventh-grade educators) through convenience sampling (Given, 2008), which they chose for its allowance of limiting participation to those educators who shared the inclusion criteria (i.e., state certification, experience requirement, expressed familiarity with the Protect Students First Act (2022)). Researchers engaged in a virtual semi-structured interview with each individual participant, who self-selected a research pseudonym, to collect the educator's thoughts, views, and professional practices pre- and post-Protect Students First Act.

Aligning with Bhattacharya's (2017), Tomaszewski's et al. (2020), and Willig's (2008) approaches to qualitative research, the investigators' methodological application allowed the participants to respond in their

vernacular and allowed researchers to form a more complete analysis of participants' stories while contextually positioning their stories relative to the case. Epps and Wilcoxson (2024) did not conduct a second interview with any participant although the data collection protocol allowed for such engagement, at the researchers' discretion. The data collection plan also included the collection and analysis of participant-provided local unit of administration or school documents, including hardcopy or softcopy guidance, related to the law; however, each participant stated that they did not receive such documents. Finally, the researchers triangulated data via independent coding and analysis followed by member-checking and researchers' collaborative analysis and data interpretation.

Participants

Nine educators who met the inclusion criteria (i.e., licensed by the Georgia Professional Standards Commission, expressed familiarity with the Protect Students First Act (2022), taught United States History in grade 4, 8, or 11 in Georgia during the 2021–2022 and 2022–2023 school years) participated in the case study. These participants, who were the only subjects consented in the study, self-declared their Table 1 demographic information to researchers during their individual interviews.

Table 1: Participant Profiles.

Name*	Years Teaching in Georgia	Gender	Age	Ethnicity	Political Affiliation	Grade Level Taught
Bob	11–20	Male	30–39	White	Republican	11
Dell	21–30	Female	50–59	White	Democrat	4
Jane	11–20	Female	40–49	African American	Democrat	8
Jean	11–20	Female	Over 60	White	Republican	4
Jim	2–10	Male	20–29	White	Soc-Dem	11
Mary	2–10	Female	30–39	White	Democrat	11
Nicole	2–10	Female	20–29	White	Democrat	4
Stanley	11–20	Male	40–49	White	Republican	8
Steven	21–30	Male	Over 60	White	Democrat	8

*Participant-chosen pseudonym
(Epps & Wilcoxson, 2024, p. 61).

Fourth-Grade Educators

Dell, one of the most experienced educator participants, used primarily political context to convey her thoughts on the Protect Students First Act's (2022) associations with education. She personalized her initial comments

on the law by stating “I feel like we have whipped these people [supporters of the law] up [to the extent] that they are seeing concerns where there are not any concerns” (Epps & Wilcoxson, 2024, p. 61). The only participant who made a connection between the law and the electorate, Dell subsequently contextualized her comments on the Protect Students First Act in a comingled political-personal-pedagogical framework:

Even my most conservative friends have always been respectful of other students, [other] religions... So, I think that the [reason for the] legislation is they're looking for solutions where there's no problem... I'm a blue dot in a red world (...) I don't see it [the topics addressed in the legislation] as a problem (...) We're not gonna tell people [to] be ashamed of their race. It's like, well, we don't do that anyway. That's stupid (...) that's how I feel (Epps & Wilcoxson, 2024, pp. 62–63).

Dell added that public discourse on education in the Protect Students First Act (2022) era would lead to her weighing the words she uses to educate learners, although she would continue to say what needs to be said and not change what she believes about education and the law's stated divisive concepts. In this positioning, “the way I read the legislation is, you just need to sweep this under the rug and just move right on. And I refuse to do that” (Epps & Wilcoxson, 2024, p. 64), an ethical consideration on the law not expressed by other fourth-grade educator participants.

Jean, one of the oldest participants and one of three participants who identified a Republican political affiliation, personalized her views on the law and educational practices by noting that she felt the law was

valid because as educators we're supposed to not put our politics, at least in an elementary school, not put our politics in there, not give skewed information (...) nothing (in the law) really popped out at me like it was going to be a deficit for me as an educator or a deficit for the students (Epps & Wilcoxson, 2024, p. 65).

She added that the Protect Students First Act (2022) reinforced her pedagogical decisions and actions because the law led her to realize that “I was doing a lot of things correctly and, so it didn't make me change what I was doing” (Epps & Wilcoxson, 2024, p. 65), an uncommon view among the study's participants. Jean added to her political-pedagogical comments by noting that the law led her to be more aware of being in compliance with the law and led her to be hyper-vigilant about her choice of words and possible bias in her practice.

Nicole, one of the youngest and least experienced educator participants, like Jean, differed from Dell by finding a positive relationship with the Protect Students First Act (2022). First, she leaned into the political arena by saying she was “sure it (the law) was done with good intention, as most things hopefully are” (Epps & Wilcoxson, 2024, p. 66). Nicole’s political-pedagogical convergence was grounded in her belief that educators should be careful about what they tell learners and should not enforce their “personal political beliefs on the children” (Epps & Wilcoxson, 2024, p. 67). As for her pedagogy during the 2023–2024 school year, Nicole stated that the law probably will lead her to add increased emphasis on not faulting today’s generations for prior generations’ actions. She noted this increased emphasis, however, will occur within the same content topics taught in prior years.

Nicole also noted a political relationship between the law and school district-provided curriculum for the 2022–2023 school year. She remarked that this relationship, absent from other participant’s comments, centred on her school district’s update of its terms used to describe people groups and events. Nicole stated that this update was directly or indirectly due to politics, either changes related to the Protect Students First Act (2022) or from politically correct district leaders, rather than for any educational or pedagogical reason.

Eighth-Grade Educators

Jane, a mid-career educator and the study’s sole African American participant, noted the political-education-historical divergence in her comments. Jane contextualized her professional and personal views of the Protect Students First Act (2022) in a political lens by saying for “me personally, I feel like it’s overkill (...) like those who are making the decisions don’t know what happens in a classroom. They see it from a different point of view. I really don’t think that law was necessary” (Epps & Wilcoxson, 2024, p. 69). She added that what the law “said to me is to just teach exactly what the state of Georgia and [district name redacted] says or they’ve approved for me to teach for my grade level” (Epps & Wilcoxson, 2024, p. 69), which positioned the law’s political-education application in an implied, rather than delineated, direction or meaning.

Jane, like Dell, remarked on what she considered the Protect Students First Act’s (2022) disconnect between politics and pedagogy. Jane gave light to this disconnect by saying she felt “like the law is for adults and to make adults feel better, but we’re not helping children by changing history just so

they can feel better” (Epps & Wilcoxson, 2024, pp. 69–70). The disconnect further widened the political-education divide in that “They (i.e., Protect Students First Act supporters) don’t know how school functions. It just sounds great for them to say, ‘oh, let’s do this,’ but I’m like, that’s not how school works” (Epps & Wilcoxson, 2024, p. 70).

The law did influence Jane to alter the way she engaged students who asked certain questions. Amid the backdrop of the country’s and education’s changing political and social climates and concerned about possibly veering into conversations where students may express beliefs or views codified in the law’s divisive concepts, Jane said that she would tell students to talk with their parents about the topic or do their own research instead of answering, or asking other students to answer, some student questions.

Stanley, who along with Bob and Jean identified a Republican political affiliation, reasoned that the Protect Students First Act (2022) led him to change his educational practice during the 2022–2023 school year by redirecting learner discourse away from their histories, knowledge, and beliefs during learning engagements. He added that one example of the law altering his pedagogy occurred during learner examination and discourse during the Civil Rights unit of instruction. Stanley said that during such engagements, he tried to steer discussion away from learners making contemporary associations with historical events; a change that created an educational reality in which learning and the accurate accounting of history were replaced with the accounting and learning outcomes of the political majority. Stanley added that the law’s pedagogical impacts also led him to redirect learner-initiated discourse away from comparing or contrasting the civil rights movement of the 1960s with the modern LGBTQ movement due to the latter’s absence in Georgia eighth-grade social studies standards.

Steven, one of the oldest and most experienced educator participants, framed his views in similar contexts to other study participants. His personal perspective that he did not “feel like the law was appropriate” (Epps & Wilcoxson, 2024, p. 76) aligned with his statements on the Protect Students First Act’s (2022) pedagogical impacts. He said that while the law had a slightly restrictive effect on what he could teach compared to the pre-Protect Students First Act (2022) era, specifically during the civil rights movement, his professional view led him to feel like the law “was a little extreme in that it limited me as to what I could say and do in the classroom” (Epps & Wilcoxson, 2024, p. 75). This paradigm, like experiences expressed by other participants, resulted in pedagogy, learning, and education shaped by politics.

Eleventh-Grade Educators

Bob, one of three participants who identified a Republican political affiliation, provided the most linear and associative connection between the Protect Students First Act (2022) and his and his content team's pedagogical approach. Although he hypothesized on the law's foundational origins and its political entanglement with education, he noted definitively that his content team's summative assessments changed from a multiple-mode format to a single-mode multiple-select exam due to the law. Bob traced the change in assessment in both a hierarchical power structure and subordinate political structure; the latter which originated with the law and then flowed "straight from the county board [of education], [the school's] administration and then direct [to the] collaborative [content team] as a group" (Epps & Wilcoxson, 2024, p. 79), rather than a change for any direct or indirect educational reason.

Jim, one of the youngest participants and the only one who identified a Social Democrat political affiliation, grounded his views on the Protect Students First Act (2022) in personal, political, and professional constructs:

The biggest thing for me was being aware that you couldn't try to convince students of your personal political beliefs, which I knew already. Like, that's not our job as teachers (...) On one hand, I can recognize the fact that they're like, 'Hey, we don't want anyone to feel unwelcome,' but it also feels like an attempt, by at least at the state legislature, the dominant party, the Republican Party, to use the language of being welcome, or being not racist, or being anti-racist, to promote their version of history, to promote their version of the way of economics, of the way things operate, and the way the United States operates. At best, it sounds like something that has a good goal of making sure everyone feels welcome in a classroom, but it takes a step in the wrong direction. At worst, it's a way to deliberately teach students that the United States of America did not make mistakes, like it's just perfect and it's always been perfect when we know that it hasn't and that's something that I would view almost as unethical to teach to a lot of our students. (...) In some ways, it feels like lying to them (Epps & Wilcoxson, 2024, pp. 80–81).

Jim, like many of the study's participants, identified that the Protect Students First Act (2022) influenced his pedagogy and learners learning. He noted the law led him not to specifically "call out some of the things the founding fathers did as loudly or some of the things that we hold, some of the people we hold as in high regard, as loudly" (Epps & Wilcoxson, 2024, p. 82).

Mary, one of the least experienced educator participants, shared a sharp rebuke of the Protect Students First Act (2022) by pointedly remarking that “I don’t feel that it was necessary (...) I think it created more divisiveness than it quotes ‘solved’” (Epps & Wilcoxson, 2024, p. 83). She added that the law’s implication is:

that teachers are inherently prone to do this kind of thing, and the teachers are the bad guy and that we’re trying to impose our personal beliefs. I don’t have time to impose my personal beliefs nor do I want to [impose my personal beliefs]. I’m there to teach history. I’m not there to teach students to think the way that I think. I don’t want them to think the way that I think. I want them to be able to think for themselves. So honestly, it was kind of a slap in the face to have to, I guess for them to feel like they needed this legislation for teachers to kind of, I don’t know, I guess kind of tell us what they think, what they thought we were doing (Epps & Wilcoxson, 2024, p. 84).

Mary stated that while the law’s most significant pedagogical impact was her move back to using primary documents, it also led her to reexamine her instructional materials to ensure they aligned with the law. She added that other Protect Students First Act (2022)-driven pedagogical changes included allowing students to select their work groups, specifically during a civil rights project, in lieu of educator-selected groups, and learner exploration-analysis-conclusion engagements with secondary source artifacts, instead of relying on direct instruction engagements accompanied by educator analysis and commentary. Mary also shared that, similar to Stanley’s pedagogical alterations, she did not allow learners to engage in learner-initiated discourse on certain topics. While Stanley based his pedagogical change on the law and state standards, Mary “felt like I needed to do that to protect myself” (Epps & Wilcoxson, 2024, p. 85).

Implied Political Pedagogy Revealed

Education is about real people and real lives, Dr. Michael W. Apple (personal communication, October 7, 2021).

Epps and Wilcoxson (2024) found that each study participant expressed that their educational practice continued or was influenced or altered through their independent analyses, interpretations, or applications of the Protect Students First Act (2022). This led the researchers to initially identify and develop an outline of a new educator practice they named Implied Political Pedagogy, which originated and thrived within nuanced and

complex paradigms as educators navigated “an internecine majority-minority conflict in the politicization of education, educator pedagogy, and curricula (e.g., compliance, bureaucracy, hierarchical control) (Apple, 1975; Freire, 1968/1970; Giroux, 1981)” (p. 109). In this positioning, researchers noted that Implied Political Pedagogy presented across participants’ self-identifiers and characteristics (e.g., grade level taught, geographic location) and may exist independent from or concurrent with other pedagogies (e.g., political, neo-liberalism, fugitive, critical).

Expanding on the researchers’ initial identification, Implied Political Pedagogy is characterized further as an educational practice (e.g., assessment, climate, instruction, knowledge, leadership, policy) created from or influenced by the individual educator’s analysis and interpretation of a formally or an informally conveyed idea, value, guidance, recommendation, statement (e.g., Krauth, 2022, para. 24; Office of the Governor, 2022; The White House, 2023, para. 44), action (e.g., Every Student Succeeds Act, 2015; Lyden, 2024; No Child Left Behind Act, 2002; Protect Students First Act, 2022), or activity (e.g., the 2024 election), originating from a political majority or political minority entity or entities. Inherent with this pedagogy, the political element or elements may be elected (e.g., President of the United States, governors, boards of education members) or unelected (e.g., secretaries of education, boards of regents’ members, superintendents, activists, editorial boards).

Complimentary to Apple’s (2019), Freire’s (1968/1970), and Giroux’s (1981) contextualizations of government-directed education serving as political agents, Implied Political Pedagogy affirms that educators are influenced by, think, or act within, not apart from, a political lens or paradigm, which may be concurrent or counter to an existing lens or paradigm (e.g., constructivist, liberationist, critical). This pedagogy also affirms that learning occurs within a politically-directed paradigm that supports, actions, enforces, degrades, ignores, or a combination of such, the political direction, terminology, or narrative emanating from one or more political entities at one or more levels of government (e.g., local, regional, state, national). As such, this pedagogy may replace individuality and divergency of educating and learning (Freire; Vico, 1710/1988; von Glasersfeld, 1981/1984; Vygotsky, 1978) with the political majority’s or minority’s convergence of history, terminology, perspectives, considerations, views, challenges, solutions, or combinations of such.

Pedagogically, this new practice may be the same as, or similar or dissimilar to, the educator’s current practice and may replace independent

analysis and conclusion formation with politically-directed reasoning and outcomes. A concurrent agreement and conflict within and between the political and educational institution systems, processes, and individuals also presents in Implied Political Pedagogy's identification and application. Absent this agreement and conflict, the political entity's effort (e.g., action, statement, policy) would be unnecessary to guide or direct the educator to create, adopt, continue, alter, or reengage and implement educational practices that support, action, enforce, oppose, degrade, or ignore a political entity's terminology or narratives.

The pedagogy's characteristics align with Apple's (1975, 2019) positions on the hidden curriculum and politicization of education. In this positioning, Implied Political Pedagogy shows that public education educators and learners are not insulated from political processes, rather, its application reveals the educator as a political agent of action or enforcement of one or more political entities or processes. Educators operating within this paradigm also may take direction from the pedagogy to ignore, devalue, or falsify certain aspects of their, or their learners, personal and professional knowledge and experiences, which presented in Epps and Wilcoxson's (2024) research data.

Implied Political Pedagogy's characteristics also align with Foucault's (2011/2011) position on power through the acknowledgement that political power is at work in education at both the macro (i.e., national, state) and micro (i.e., district, school, educator) levels. Applying a Foucauldian lens within Implied Political Pedagogy, this new pedagogy includes power (government) that subjugates, or may subjugate, knowledge (truth) and subject and reduces the latter within a hierarchical active-passive paradigm or legalistic theory or application, which also presented in the research (Epps & Wilcoxson, 2024).

Finally, Implied Political Pedagogy's characteristics reveal an anti-constructivist, anti-cultural, anti-liberation pedagogy in which formal education educators, and subsequently learners, are prohibited or discouraged from discovering, examining, or applying differing artifacts, views, facts, relationships, or outcomes within formal education. It also reveals how societal elements (e.g., executive, legislative, judicial, politics, religion) relationally link with education to form a guiding synergy that contributes to and maintains a dystopian (e.g., oppressive, fear, tyrannical, dehumanized) society.

Implied Political Pedagogy's Structure

What has been and what is now the nature of my educational experience? Dr. William F. Pinar, *The Method of "Currere"* (1975, p. 2).

Analysis of Epps and Wilcoxson's (2024) research data revealed three structures (Shulman, 2005) within Implied Political Pedagogy. First, the pedagogy's surface structure (e.g., educational engagement selections, presentations, demonstrations, analyses, applications, assessments) originates, evolves, and exists within a politically-influenced practice. Second, educator analysis and interpretation of a political entity's efforts (e.g., law, idea, guidance) shapes educator practice, in whole or in part. In this structural element, the educator serves as a political agent of action or enforcement and engages in practice that may include, exclude, emphasize, or deemphasize content material based on the educator's analysis and interpretation of the politically-affiliated item(s). This element also includes a pedagogy that shapes learner inquiry, analysis, and conclusion through its creation, adoption, continuation, alteration, or reengagement and implementation of politically-stated or implied desired or undesired educational opportunities, engagements, or terminology. Third, Implied Political Pedagogy's implicit structure includes the educator's moral concern(s), relative to personal or professional attitudes, values, or dispositions, which along with the preceding structures, presented in the research data.

Implied Political Pedagogy's Application and Relationships

Epps and Wilcoxson's (2024) participants' Implied Political Pedagogy application presented as a compromised pedagogy wherein an imbalance among the personal, professional, intellectual, technical, and moral existed (Shulman, 2005). Although the pedagogy's discovery delimited to primary and secondary public school educators in Georgia, this practice likely presents across educational institution levels (e.g., primary, secondary, post-secondary), types of institution (e.g., public, private, virtual, in-person, public-private), geographic locations (i.e., United States, international), political affiliations and movements, content or subject areas (e.g., social science, language arts, foreign language, performing arts), and pacing (e.g., semester, block, district-determined, educator-determined).

Implied Political Pedagogy's application, along with its structure and characteristics, affirmed that education's past informs its present. These

three elements also affirmed that the accounting of politics directing or influencing education shapes the educator's currere, including those experiences when the educator may not recognize or intentionally engage Implied Political Pedagogy within their practice.

Conclusion

America's culture includes an inheritance of politicians and politically-affiliated entities directing the country's education system. In all forward-facing aspects, from authorities and funding to organization and participation, American politicians influence American education; however, research by Epps and Wilcoxson (2024) on educator practices related to Georgia's Protect Students First Act (2022) revealed a newly identified, named, characterized, and structured practice, Implied Political Pedagogy, occurring in the background of the country's political-public education paradigm. While the pedagogy's discovery occurred through research on the Georgia law, Implied Political Pedagogy likely presents across academic and non-academic categorizations. It is therefore important the global community of educators, researchers, politicians, and policymakers understand this pedagogical phenomenon's influences and effects on educating and learning.

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