

# HISTORY TO THE PRESENT TIMELINE: Neoliberalism



## 1970S-1980S: RISE OF NEOLIBERALISM

The word "neoliberalism" was initially used in the 1930s, but it wasn't until the 1970s and 1980s that neoliberal policies acquired prominence. Neoliberalism is a political and economic theory that advocates free-market capitalism, deregulation, and minimal government interference in the economy. This concept has had a considerable impact on education, since it has shaped the way education is funded, controlled, and assessed.

## 1983: A NATION AT RISK

The report titled "A Nation at Risk" was published by the National Commission on Excellence in Education in 1983. The report argued that America's educational system was ineffective and called for changes like more frequent standard testing and an emphasis on measurable results. The neoliberal education policies that have been put in place since this report have been made possible in part because of this research.



## 1992: THE END OF HISTORY

Francis Fukuyama claimed in "The End of History and the Last Man" that the development of liberal democracy and free-market capitalism signified the end of history because there was no longer any opposing ideology. This book contributed to the ideological justification for neoliberalism and the belief in the superiority of free-market capitalism over other economic systems.

## 1994: NORTH AMERICAN FREE TRADE AGREEMENT (NAFTA)

The NAFTA agreement, signed by the United States, Canada, and Mexico, opened up new markets and increased competition in the global economy. The impact of NAFTA on education policy has been significant, as it contributed to the push for neoliberal education policies such as school choice and market-based reforms. The idea behind these policies is to introduce competition and efficiency into the education system by allowing parents to choose from a variety of schools, including private and charter schools, rather than being limited to their local public school. The neoliberal approach sees education as a marketable commodity, with schools competing for students and funding, and student performance as the primary measure of success.



## 2001: NO CHILD LEFT BEHIND ACT

The No Child Left Behind Act, approved by the U.S. Congress in 2001, required schools to give standardized exams every year and to be held responsible for their students' academic progress. This is a significant illustration of American neoliberal education policy. The law mandated that schools be held accountable for student achievement through annual standardized testing, and schools that did not meet benchmarks could be subject to sanctions such as closure or restructuring. NCLB's focus on accountability and standardization reflects the neoliberal emphasis on competitiveness and efficiency, as it tried to incentivise schools to raise their test results and boost their "productivity."



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### 2015: THE MEASURE OF AMERICA

The Social Science Research Council has released a report called The Measure of America that assesses the opportunities and well-being of Americans. Significant differences in possibilities for education and employment depending on race, ethnicity, and socioeconomic background have been brought to light by the report. Neoliberal education policies, which put an emphasis on market competitiveness and individual success above collective social welfare, are directly responsible for these gaps. The idea that the free market can resolve social issues more effectively than government intervention is one of the key principles of neoliberalism. Due to this, policies like school choice and the growth of charter schools have been implemented that support privatization and market competition in the field of education.



### 2010: COMMON CORE STATE STANDARDS

The Common Core State Standards Initiative is a set of educational standards for kindergarten through 12th grade in English language arts/literacy and mathematics that were established in 2010. The standards were created to be more demanding and to offer a common framework for what knowledge and skills students should have in order to be prepared for college and the workforce. The Common Core is criticized from a neoliberal perspective because it strengthens the idea that kids are customers and that education is a commodity. The Common Core upholds a neoliberal vision of education where schools are expected to develop employees who can compete in a global economy by encouraging a limited focus on measurable results and stressing competitiveness and individual performance. The emphasis on testing and accountability also supports a top-down, mechanistic approach to education in which teachers are treated more like policymakers than as professionals with the knowledge and experience to choose what is best for their students.



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