PRIVATIZATION OF SCHOOLS

SELLING OUT THE RIGHT TO QUALITY PUBLIC EDUCATION FOR ALL

CONTENTS

CAROL ANNE SPREEN AND SALIM VALLY

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Increasingly across the world the provision of private education is justified by invoking Education for All (EFA) targets and Millienium Development Goals (MDGs). In the face of the egregious weaknesses that confront public education systems globally, the privatization of education, in its different guises, including the much vaunted "low-cost private schools" for poorer countries has seduced significant numbers of policy and decision makers. The corporate-driven "education reform movement" is simply profiteering disguised as philanthrophy: an evangelizing and moralizing endeavour assisted by the failure of many governments to fulfil their mandate to provide quality public education. Privatization is an assault on the very essence of public education and education as a human right.

It is argued that privatization provides choices to parents, makes schools more responsive, produces greater cost efficiencies and even better quality education… however such "quality" is defined. This approach is derived from the idea that the state should have as little as possible to do with the delivery of education and other services which are best left to market mechanisms for their resolution. We argue that the proposed "market solution" to our education crisis, even with state regulation, is less a case of a pragmatic attempt at resolving the problem than a case of ideological wishful thinking.

Covering an array of issues and concerns, this special issue of *Our Schools/Our Selves* illustrates how across a number of countries a complex alliance and power bloc have been formed that have increasing influence in education policymaking (from driving testing and accountability, to providing curriculum, teacher training and credentialing, to school organization models and packaged online curriculum). Their reach is extensive and trans national companies have begun to accumulate massive profits.

In this compilation of articles the authors suggest that the corporate education reform movement needs to be unpacked and understood in relation to the broader political, ideological and cultural landscape — namely neoliberalism and neo conservatism (Klees, 2014; Saltman, 2007; Apple 2010, etc) — that not only dominate discussions about reforming and improving education in the global north, but is being promoted and exported across the world.

In his book *Capitalizing on Disaster: Taking and Breaking Public Schools*, Kenneth Saltman describes how, "From the Gulf Coast of the U.S. to for-profit U.S. educational profiteering in Iraq, from Chicago's Renaissance 2010 plan to the federal No Child Left Behind Act … the new predatory form of educational privatization aims to dismantle public schools to privatize and commodify them" (Saltzman, 2007, p. 1).

Another dimension of the global movement of corporate education reform involves an expanding role of for-profit corporations in enacting foreign policy and exporting neoliberal policies overseas. In an especially alarming case, Creative Associates International, Inc. made over $100 million on no-bid contracts from USAID for "educational rebuilding" (rebuild schools, develop teacher training and procure education supplies, much of which has been subcontracted to consultants from the Heritage Foundation) in post-conflict regions of Iraq that included fostering education privatization and the establishment of charter schools (Saltman, 2007, p.2).

The purveyors of privatization ignore the adverse consequences on education. This special issue on privatization brings together academics and union activists to discuss global issues around privatization and specifically looks at emerging movements in Canada, the United States and South Africa and with teachers' unions across the world. These articles will examine the deleterious effects of privatization on the right to education, education quality, equity

and teaching. Each article argues that at the behest of neoliberal ideology, privatization, far from reducing inequality and stratification in education, substitutes good public policy with the vagaries of charity or the single-mindedness of profit-making.

In reality the privatization of education is the pursuit of a global ideological agenda rationalized on the ostensible (and often real) failure of governments to supply good quality public education to the majority of its citizenry. This ideological agenda is uncaring about any idea of the 'public good' purposes of education, of its role in producing social cohesion through the provision of education that is of high quality for all members of society and social equity. The corporate education reformer's narrow focus on business and the market system continues to undermine and distort the purposes of good quality public education.

Many communities around the world have mounted important challenges against the failure of the state to deliver good quality public schooling and simultaneously against the privatization and marketization of education. As we go to press the persistence of Chilean students, teachers and workers for free and quality public education after eight years of tenacious struggle has resulted in the newly re-elected Michelle Bachelet's announcement of reforms prohibiting for-profit private providers of education. Chile's review of its decades-old education policies is particularly significant since its market orientation following "advice" from Milton Friedman to Pinochet's military junta was meant to serve as a social laboratory for the world. The new reforms are aimed at making all primary and secondary education free, reversing the voucher system and public funding for private, for-profit schools, and ending selective practices used in school admission policies.

In the first article, "The Rhetoric and Reality of Business Distorts Education," Steve Klees explains how beginning in the early 1980s, neoliberal thought and policy began to dominate economic and social policy. Perhaps the most central feature of neoliberalism was the call for market solutions with its emphasis on privatization. In education, this has led to promoting policy directions like private schools, voucher plans, charters, and user fees. There is no verifiable evidence that these measures have resulted in quality education. Yet, over time, privatization has become increasingly accepted as it has been heavily marketed by those who have profited.

Klees's article examines the changing rhetoric used to justify this sales pitch, paying special attention to contemporary responses as NGOs revise their plans for the Post-2015 period. While groups such as the UN's High Level Panel discuss potential strategies for realizing the unfulfilled promise of quality public education for all, their recommendations continue to fall back on market-based reforms. As Klees argues, the only solution for countering the failure of neoliberal educational reform is to strengthen the public sector's commitment to policing the market and combatting economic and educational inequalities.

The rhetoric of privatization is also salient in the Canadian context, as Erika Shaker argues in her article. Shaker traces the logic of privatization in Canada from Paul Martin's budget cuts in 1995 to the contemporary move toward underfunding and over-testing Canadian schools. As Shaker demonstrates, these shifts in Canada's education system align with the broader international agenda of privatizing schools and unravelling the very fabric of the social safety net, from teachers' rights to collective bargaining to students' rights to a quality public education.

By allowing businesses and "philanthropists" to shape the structure and curriculum of Canadian schools, reformers are demonstrating a misguided trust in the ability of the market to provide solutions to the very problems it has created. This trust goes so far as adopting measures mimicking failed reforms in U.S. schools, such as Teach for Canada and merit-based pay. Rather than strengthening the nation's educational and economic systems, these "reforms" have only served to exacerbate existing inequalities. In many cases, students in well-funded schools benefit from private donations, enrichment programs, and specialized curricula, whereas students in underfunded schools are further deprived by low-level classes and unprepared teachers.

As Shaker's article sardonically points out, neoliberal logic has become so ubiquitous in Canadian schools that even critics of these reforms use the language of the market to critique them. There is a danger in adopting this language, as it ignores the vital and increasingly neglected fact that quality education is a human right that the state has an obligation to provide. Rather than advocating for progressive economic and educational funding measures in the name of increased student performance, we should advocate for these measures as a basic right for all students — in Canada and throughout the rest of the world.

A new language for reform is also needed in the U.S. context. Over the last two decades in the U.S. there has been a debate over the crisis in public education and how to fix it. The most recent discussion has shifted away from education as a public good and the platform for this debate has been staged by what has become known as the Corporate Education Reform Movement — comprising some of America's most powerful people and institutions. Their platform is centered on privatization as THE solution to the crisis. They have a powerful message: "The American PUBLIC education system is a failed enterprise. And (they argue) it's not more money — schools already spend too much — children are not learning because of bad teachers." These reformers suggest that what is needed is accountability and efficiency and more competition to spur innovation. At the center of this corporate myth is standardized testing and the use of "data" to show schools are failing and teachers are to blame. In the article, "Privatization Nation: How the United States became the land of 'edupreneurs'" Carol Anne Spreen and Lauren Stark analyze this popularized version of the crisis and specifically illustrate the use of testing, education management organizations, and the promotion of mass produced, teacher-proof curriculum, making "education reform" a multibillion dollar industry. The U.S. is one of the more extreme versions of privatization that has been promoted by private philanthropic and corporate interests funded by "the Billionaire Boy's Club" of Wall Street hedge fund managers, technology moguls, corporate media leaders and filmmakers.

The article describes corporate education reform as contrary to progressive education reforms which began in the late 1980s, fueled by Deborah Meier, Ted Sizer and Linda Darling-Hammond. Progressive reformers initiated discussions on ways to improve public education and make it more responsive and equitable to diverse learning communities. Proposed reforms were centred on promoting practices that inspired critical thinking and encouraged citizenship and global awareness. Corporate reformers though currently focus on narrowly prescribed and standardized sets of learning outcomes that can be tested and more importantly, mass produced and distributed. Using evidence and "data" provided by the corporate reformers, this article shows how these efforts fail to improve education for the majority of children and, most importantly, how this approach destroys schools,

undermines education as a public good, and dramatically exacerbates inequality.

The pro-market "think-tanks" do not limit their scope to North America where privatization advocates found a home with "free" market bodies such as Pearson, the Bridge Foundation, the Walton and Heritage Foundations, the Education Policy Institute, and the Fordham Institute (among others). These "think tanks" have incubated a generation of academics, policymakers and journalists who promoted privatization as "common sense" to the general public. Although these policies have been shown to be ineffective in the very countries of their provenance, they continue to be purveyed as policies and "best practice" useful to development and "economic growth" in a variety of countries, including South Africa. Such global policy borrowing is fostered not only through the work of "expert" consultants (often from North America) but also by "native" researchers who have little regard for the critical literature and practice.

The chapter "The Rise of Privatization in South Africa" by Salim Vally highlights the efforts of a particularly evangelising group in South Africa — the Centre for Development and Enterprise and their promotion of "low cost private schools". The post-apartheid education landscape has seen an increase in private schools, the outsourcing of activities by provincial and national education departments and the growth in the market of education services. The article details this phenomenon and will focus its analysis on 'low cost private schools' and on those who promote them. It outlines the deleterious effects of the privatization of schools in terms of stratification and inequality and indict the policies and practices of the post-apartheid state for reproducing the parlous state of quality public education in South Africa and thus encouraging the growth of privatization.

In the global context of growing private sector involvement in education increasingly being positioned as the solution to meeting commitments to the EFA and MDG agendas, teachers are often the target and blamed for the failures of the public education system. The critique of teachers has two main goals: deprofessionalizing the status of teachers and weakening the labour force, creating a space for private takeovers of public schools and non-unionized teachers (e.g. TFA and paraprofessionals).

Despite a growing body of evidence on forms of privatization in

and of education (Macpherson, Robertson, & Walford, 2013), the implications for teachers' work and professional status are yet to be fully understood. Through various on-going studies conducted by Education International (EI), Guntars Catlacks analyzes privatization trends from the perspective of teachers, looking specifically at the impact of such policies on teachers' work and, consequently, their ability to deliver quality education. Through EI's research and monitoring activities, there is increasing evidence that privatization in and of education poses a serious threat to equitable participation in education and teaching.

The growing dimensions of education privatization worldwide require a strategic response from teacher unions. The increased diversification of education provision, delivery and financing, challenges the role of the state and the role of teachers in providing quality education for all. In turn, this raises fundamental questions in relation to the post-2015 development agenda. This chapter discusses these issues and concerns through EI's research and activities sharing the main challenges faced by teachers globally, and lastly explores strategies for countering these trends.

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STEVEN KLEES

The Rhetoric and Reality of Business Distorts Education

Capitalism became a global force centuries ago. But for most of its history, there was a struggle through which the inequalities and excesses that came along with it were tempered, at least partially, by government interventions. That led, in many countries, to about 50 years of the welfare state, from the 1930s to the 1970s, in which government was seen as playing a major and legitimate role in reigning in capitalism. All that changed in the 1980s with the election of Thatcher in the U.K., Reagan in the U.S., and Kohl in Germany. Since then, neoliberalism has dominated, within which government is maligned and seen as illegitimate, and business and the market reign supreme. This has had enormous and harmful consequences for public policy, in general, and for education, in particular. Business, embedded in a market system, has been the driving force for education throughout the past 30^{+} years of the neoliberal era around the world. The global emphasis on business and the market system has distorted education in myriad ways, including:

Mismatch. Even before the neoliberal era and continuing through to today, educational failures have been blamed on the mismatch with the needs of business. Unemployment, in particular, is put at education's door, arguing education is not teaching what the economy needs.

It is, unfortunately, true that many children and youth leave schools without basic reading, writing, and social skills which are necessary for work and life. However, the mismatch argument is usually not about basic skills but vocational skills. The mismatch argument, while superficially plausible, is not true for at least two reasons. First, vocational skills, which are context specific, are best taught on the job. Secondly, unemployment is not a worker supply problem but a structural problem of capitalism. There are three or more billion un- or under-employed people on this planet, not because they don't have the right skills, but because full employment is neither a feature nor a goal of capitalism.

Entrepreneurship: Periodically, a solution to education and employment problems is posited to be teaching entrepreneurship. This was popular in development circles in the 1970s and 1980s, especially tied to the idea of connecting education to jobs in the informal sector in developing countries. In more recent decades, it emerged focused on rural women, often tied to microfinance, and sometimes more broadly seen as an essential part of the primary and secondary school curriculum in developing countries, again as a route to jobs in the informal sector. Most recently, university curricula in some developed countries have emphasized entrepreneurship to promote innovative employment. But all this is simply the same failed labour supply approach embedded in the mismatch argument. Moreover, this version is even more problematic. Instead of preparing people for existing jobs a la mismatch, entrepreneurship is preparing them for jobs that do not exist. Entrepreneurship is the result of our failure to make good on the promise of decent work and substitutes hope and prayer for effective economic policy that creates employment.

Human capital theory and labour economics: Tied to both issues above, capitalist economics in the 1950s, and earlier, had a problem understanding labour. While the economic framework was centered on supply and demand by individuals and small firms, at the time, labour economics was more sociological, dealing with institutions like unions and large firms, and phenomenon like strikes, collective bargaining, and public policy. The advent of human capital theory in the 1960s took the sociology out of labour economics and focused

it on individuals and the supply of and the demand for workers, mostly on supply. Education was seen as investment in individual qualities that made one more productive and employable. This was operationalized by measuring rates of return (RORs) to different levels or types of education. Unfortunately, these RORs had no legitimacy for two reasons. First, in theory, they should have been looking at much more than the impact on income, and, since they did not, the results were distorted. Second, they could not even accurately measure the impact of education on income since income is affected by dozens of variables and there is no correct way to control for them.

While ROR measures were a form of voodoo economics, nonetheless, in the abstract, there is some truth to this supply version of human capital theory. However, that truth is partial at best, and actually more empty than useful. That is, abilities like literacy, numeracy, teamwork, problem-solving, critical thinking, etc. can have a payoff in the job market but *only* in a context where such skills are valued. The more useful and important question is the demand-side one, too often ignored by human capital theorists, regarding how can we create decent jobs that require valuable skills. Under neoliberalism, government intervention, at best, furthers human capital formation. Government intervention for other purposes, like decent job creation, is considered anathema under neoliberalism; the market is supposed to take care of the demand side. We have seen how spectacularly unsuccessful reliance on the market has been for creating decent employment.

Education and economic growth: Tied to the human capital argument that education yields individual income and jobs is a related, broader argument that education and other forms of human capital yield overall economic growth, thus providing some aggregate benefits to society. Unfortunately, this has also not proven to be a fruitful line of empirical inquiry. The death knell for this research was sounded early, in 1970, when Mark Blaug, perhaps the preeminent economist of education, showed how absurd were empirical forays into the question. The basic problem is that GNP is the result of literally hundreds of variables, and our research methodologies have no way of controlling accurately for all of them in order to isolate the effect of one variable, like years of schooling. It is not that you can't get empirical estimates. You can, they are just not believable. Over the years, since

Blaug's analysis, a few economists have attempted to estimate the effects of education on GNP. Two foolhardy souls actually estimated the effect of one more textbook available or one additional student in a class, supposedly tracing through the consequences of those factors until their impact on GNP. But the idea that such a tenuous connection can be estimated empirically is simply unbelievable.

However, most recently, two intrepid economists, Erick Hanushek and Ludger Woessman, published a few studies purporting that Blaug was wrong and that we can empirically measure the effect of years of schooling, and moreover the quality of that schooling, as measured by test scores, on GNP. Well, for me, this is as farfetched as the textbook and class size example for the reasons above — but it seems like many people are unreflectively accepting this tenuous chain of reasoning. It has become commonplace to argue something like a 1% increase in education quality will get you a 1.3% increase in GDP.

This is simply absurd. And the upshot is that these economic/business/market arguments further distort education and education policy. They continue to privilege a narrow discourse about education and the economy, they are used to market very narrow approaches to and measures of educational quality, and they undermine other discourses which take more sensible and legitimate approaches to making educational policy such as ones based on human rights and participatory democracy.

Direct investment: Business does not only influence educational discourses, as discussed above. Education itself has become big business. It is estimated that the private market for education is worth at least $50 billion a year worldwide. Private schooling continues to be a significant part of primary and secondary schooling around the world and, in the neoliberal era, an ever more significant part of post-secondary education. Organizations like the International Finance Corporation (IFC), part of the World Bank Group, while created in 1956 to invest in private companies in developing countries, grew precipitously in the neoliberal era. Education was initially a small area of investment but has grown to where the IFC in 2012 has over $850 million in commitments. Direct foreign investment in education has also been promoted by the World Trade Organization's (WTO) General Agreement on Trade in Services (GATS). GATS encourages countries to

open their economies to foreign investment in education (and other services), raising questions of accountability, control, and sovereignty.

Privatization: Direct private investment in education did not begin under neoliberalism but was greatly facilitated by it. As said above, neoliberalism brought an ideology that deprecated government and exalted the private sector. The privatization of public services was encouraged and, in education, private schools, vouchers, charters, user fees, and the like were recommended as solutions to problems of educational quality and even educational inequality. This marketing of privatization was pure ideology. There was only trumped-up evidence that these approaches improved some narrow version of educational quality and there was overwhelming evidence that they exacerbated inequalities. Moreover, the recognition of education as a public good — so strong in the 1960s and 1970s — got short shrift in discussions of education policy after that. Privatization is a strategy of triage — perhaps, at best, sometimes improving education for a few and selling out the right to quality public education for all.

Public-private partnerships (PPPs): An outgrowth of this neoliberal obsession with the market and its promotion of privatization are PPPs, which come along with a belief in the need for increased corporate philanthropy in education and other sectors. The argument is that the know-how and resources of business, on its own or in partnership with government, can be applied to improving education. This follows directly from neoliberal ideology, made more salient by the vast shortfall of public resources to achieve EFA and the MDGs. However, business has little to offer education as a recent Brookings Institution study of U.S. corporate philanthropy and PPPs made clear; the resources offered were "small change," and efforts were self-interested, uncoordinated, small in scale, and misdirected. I had a business school professor who once wrote a paper entitled, "The Social Responsibility of Business and Other Pollutants of the Air." He was very pro-business; his point was that the business of business was business, and we shouldn't want or expect them to help solve problems that are fundamentally government's. PPPs are pushed by companies like Pearson who stand to make substantial profits off government expenditures on education. PPPs exist mostly because

of neoliberalism's abrogation of responsibility by government for the social welfare, in general, and education, in particular.

Business approaches to education: As part of privatization ideology and the promotion of PPPs, ideas from business and business leaders have been marketed as important to the improvement of education. Sometimes this entire business-oriented approach is subsumed under the heading of "new public management." This is ubiquitous and has given most educators a lot of headaches. Right-wing think tanks and foundations (I include the World Bank here) have proliferated, offering neoliberal educational advice and steering educational policy. Primary, secondary, and higher education have suffered from the call for business plans, strategic plans, performance budgets, right-sizing, impact evaluation, merit pay, and the like. Evaluations of teachers have multiplied, usually illegitimately tied to a few very narrow indicators. School district superintendants and university presidents are now called chief executive officers, and too often are selected with a business background instead of an education one. And, most common, is that task forces and commissions on education routinely give pride of place to business executives, as if business strategies translate to education strategies. This is quite visible globally, to take one of many examples, in the World Economic Forum's task force on education. They have been a major voice in global education reform such as the post-2015 discussions.

Post-2015 directions: EFA targets and MDGs will not be met in 2015, and there is lots of activity, around the world, examining potential post-2015 directions. Perhaps the most comprehensive and influential is that done by the U.N. appointed High Level Panel (HLP) which sets out 12 goals and 54 measureable targets. Goals such as the elimination of poverty and hunger — as well as the others — are laudable, as is the ethos of sustainable development that underlies the whole report. But unfortunately, the report is based on an ideological commitment to a neoliberal context. For example, the report acknowledges that the eradication of poverty has been "promised time and again." But there is no recognition of the causes of the repeated failure to achieve this goal — causes that are built into our economic system. Poverty is not a failure of

our economic system; inequality and poverty are the result of the successful functioning of our economic system.

At one point, the report does recognize the need for "structural changes in the world economy," yet, throughout, the HLP report just calls for more of the same. It takes almost a religious fundamentalist view of a market system and a pro-business ethos. It calls for an "enabling business environment." It argues that "business wants, above all, a level playing field," and is willing to pay "fair taxes" and "promote labour rights." What nonsense! No business wants a level playing field. Wasn't it Lee Iacocca, former chair of Chrysler, at the time of his government bailout, who said, "Socialism for me, capitalism for everyone else." Profit-maximizing businesses naturally want any advantage they can get. If they can get away with it. They want to pay no taxes, and many do not pay any. And they certainly do not champion labour rights. The history of capitalism is one of struggle, where business has been dragged kicking and screaming to give concessions to workers.

This is not particularly a criticism of business, it is simply a description of its natural state in a market system. Our market system has been eulogized and subsidized for a long time, most especially for the past 30 years, yet inequality, poverty, and unemployment remain rampant. Why would we expect the market system to perform any better between now and 2030? Where are decent jobs supposed to come from? How will "no person be left behind?" The best that the HLP can come up with is the by now shopworn idea of a global partnership. But this is a false partnership; we are not all in this together. We live in a world full of conflicting interests, there are debates that permeate every aspect of policy. The report touches on none of this.

Engaging post-2015 goals while neoliberalism operates business as usual will not get us very far. Many would argue that EFA and the MDGs have not gotten us very far. For example, the international community has been promising Universal Primary Education (UPE) for 50 years. And now, unconscionably, it is once again postponing this and other goals, this time to 2030. By the time UPE is reached the payoff to primary education in terms of jobs and access to further schooling will be considerably reduced, and the disadvantage of not having primary education will be replaced by the even bigger disadvantage of not having secondary education. It could be argued that, despite good

intentions, EFA and the MDGs were not serious efforts. Instead, they were there to legitimate a fundamentally unfair system by promising education and social improvement but delivering little.

We have endured 30+ years of a Great Experiment. With no evidence whatsoever, government was attacked and, in many ways, dismantled, and business and the market were put forth as saviors. However, in education and elsewhere, the results of this Great Experiment have been dismal. It is time to end this experiment with neoliberal capitalism. Whether this means trying to move beyond capitalism entirely or whether it means the development of a new kind of welfare state is worth discussion. What it certainly means is to re-establish the legitimacy of government. What needs to be front and center is the call for a large, vibrant public sector that puts limits on the market, that promotes and creates decent employment, that provides for the production of public goods, that develops an adequate and fair system of taxation, that redistributes wealth, not just income, and that is run as a very participatory democracy.

STEVEN KLEES did his Ph.D. at Stanford University and his work focuses on the political economy of education and development. He is the author of many articles and co-editor of the recent book, *World Bank and Education: Critiques and Alternatives*. A number of his blogs can be found at: http://educationincrisis.net/blog/contributors/itemlist/user/52-steveklees.

ERIKA SHAKER

Grades of Inequality in Canada's Classrooms

I tend to pinpoint Canada's neoliberal watershed moment as Paul Martin's infamous 1995 "the deficit must be slain come hell or high water" budget, when attacks on the role of the state begun by Thatcher and continued by Reagan intensified and accelerated. And while the market-based onslaught is certainly being carried out in the interests of the corporate elites, I should also add that many of these attacks are self-inflicted, as elected politicians insist they are not actually "government," but rather the people elected to "fix government."

This is not to suggest that the state is not perfectly capable of and very efficient at reinforcing oppressive colonialist attitudes, policies and infrastructures since long before 1995. But, at least from a general economic perspective, inequality was on the decline in Canada as a direct result of our social safety net. That is, until Paul Martin's carefully crafted budget, designed to appease the Business Council on National Issues, slashed billions from social programs like education, training, benefits for the unemployed, and pensions. It also changed the mechanism by which funding was allocated.

And with these fiscal and structural changes, inequality began to creep upward. In our biggest cities the bottom 90% are worse off today than they were in 1982, wages have been stagnant for close to the past 30 years for the vast majority of us, and household debt is at

164% of income. Meanwhile, vulnerable populations — particularly First Nations — are further marginalized. The impacts of inequality are tangible — in the entrenchment of wealthy and poor neighbourhoods; in growing poverty for working age adults and seniors; in shameful child poverty rates; in declining inflation-adjusted earnings.

More people are trapped in precarious work, without benefits or job security, with no sense of whether they will be working at the same job a year from now. There are financial implications to the rise of precarious work, to be sure. But there is other evidence of how insecurity and precarity changes how people socialize.

This is significant because we're talking about changing how communities, families, friendships and personal relationships work — or if they work at all. We're talking about social regression at a very basic level.

This is significant because we're talking about changing how communities, families, friendships and personal relationships work — or if they work at all. We're talking about social regression at a very basic level.

Now, I'm not going to talk exclusively about the shifts in Canada's economy. But the growth of inequality and the resultant undermining of healthy communities is directly linked to what our schools have now been made responsible for — actually, what has now become their "liability" — as our educational institutions are being consistently underfunded and held to more stringent and less relevant measures of academic quality and achievement, and teachers continue to be blamed for shortchanging everyone *and* failing Canada's future.

Of course, the very people who make the decisions that are driving the growth in inequality are the same crew that are busy demanding more "accountability measures" in schools, blaming teachers, contracting out,villifying unions, and continually squeezing already-inadequate school funding while arguing for lower tax rates.

And as a result, students sell chocolate and wraping paper or get pledges from neighbours for dance-a-thons so their school can repair their gymnasium roof. Or they can buy bathroom sinks. Or desks.

Or boards sell off inner-city schools to build super schools, possibly a public-private partnership — in the suburbs and bus hundreds of kids there. Or schools recruit international students and charge them thousands in fees to benefit — and, of course, to benefit *from* — our "public" education system.

To help facilitate this process, school boards have created education foundations to encourage donations in return for a charitable tax receipt. But as several groups have pointed out, the vast majority of the money is raised by the wealthiest schools (the top 10% raise as much as the bottom 70-80% of schools) so dependence on this form of private funding only further exaggerates the gap between schools.

In some cases, schools themselves engage in initiatives that intensify the inequality between students along socioeconomic class lines. Last spring in our neighbourhood, elementary school parents were "offered" the opportunity to enrol their kids — for a price — in a cross between gym class and personal training instead of having to cope with plain old recess. Because apparently climbing on the play structure is inferior to, as the brochure says, "play … with a purpose". Here's the kicker — I was excited when I heard the program was being cancelled for a "conflict of interest" … until I found out that conflict was that the company was owned by … wait for it … the gym teacher.

Those examples are, of course, pretty easy to identify as evidence of the privatization agenda and its impact on the school day. But the last example I cited does provide an opportunity to look at how schools are, in many cases, internalizing the neo-liberal market mantra in a much more insidious manner — with the best of intentions, of course.

I'm speaking of actual structural shifts: the internalization of market-based measurements of school "achievement" in standardized testing and school ranking, intensified by right-wing think tanks that use this an another opportunity to rail against public "state" schools; incentivizing teachers through "merit pay schemes"; implementation of "boutique programs" to attract the "right kind" of students; more surveillance of teachers to determine their classroom performance; tying teacher reputation to student achievement; the call for more "real world" skills being taught in the classroom — because presumably courses in Walmart Checkout-ology are precisely what we need to save so-called slacker youths from their culture of "entitlement".

In Alberta, the major oil companies are being consulted on a massive overhaul of the province's curriculum because, according to the Education Minister, "We want the economy involved in the education system. If we're going to build a relevant education system, we need the voice of the employer, the business community, economic development — we need those people at the table." In Manitoba, social studies, math and language arts curriculum for grades 4-10 is being rewritten to integrate personal finance and business enterprise. The Canadian Foundation for Economic Education has been working with the NDP government to ensure kids will learn about things like entrepreneurship, investments, credit cards, and debt repayment through the Building Futures program to help students "gain the skills they need to navigate their financial futures as lifelong learners."

Calls to "rank" schools or "monitor" teachers or "test" students or "modernize" the classroom or "relevantize" the curriculum or "monetize" the educational process are not new. The Canadian Council of Chief Executives' paper on merit pay and performance assessment for teachers is only one of the most recent contributions to this mentality that. Business. Always. Knows. What's. Best.

But when society becomes more unequal, schools reflect how this manifests itself in communities: in the kids who come to school unfed; in the parents who cannot help with homework or attend school meetings because they're catching up on sleep after another double shift; in the lack of public money for educational "extras" like gym equipment or music instruments or school trips or library books or school supplies; in the elevated stress levels; in the emotional pain that teachers and guidance counsellors deal with every day.

The ongoing reinforcement of socioeconomic inequalities is compounded by the policy of streaming in schools, a topic that has recently come up for renewed scruitiny as educators and parents debate whether or not it's liberating or regressive to have kids directed into the "trades" or "academics" in elementary school. We also have a domestic start-up version of Teach for America — Teach for Canada, recruiting well-meaning grads for a two-year teaching stint in First Nations communities — where education is abysmally underfunded and underserviced, but the solution is hardly to privatize, outsource and further colonize through tourism teaching.

Growing inequality is the reality documented by standardized

testing and the punishing culture of assessment and surveillance, but the results are used not to call for massive public investment into existing and new social programs that can mitigate the class divide. Instead, the results are used as evidence that schools and teachers are failing kids — especially the most vulnerable — when the culprit is an increasingly inequitable society. It is always much easier — and politically expedient — to blame teachers and their unions for being obstructionist, or entitled, or unrealistic. We saw this in Ontario with Bill 115 which enshrined government disdain for the collective bargaining process, and we are seeing this in BC when the government was revealed to have tried to force teachers into a strike which could then be used to whip up anti-union sentiment among the electorate. (The situation in BC has continued to escalate into a full-scale strike, at the time of writing.)

As a result, while properly funded and accessibly run and publicly accountable schools are in the best position to help compensate for and even overcome these widening socioeconomic inequities, they often, as a result of sustained undermining and underfunding now just reinforce them. Because how can schools counter market injustice by internalizing and upholding market-based measurements, conflating them with education? Especially if the curriculum is being rewritten by Investors Group — among others — to make it very clear to kids that had their parents learned to better balance their chequebooks and manage their credit card debt they might not have even noticed that pesky Recession. Take that, 99%!

However — one of the most troubling aspects of this process of internalized privatization or neo-liberalism is the degree to which it informs even so-called progressive debate. By which I mean, self-declared public education advocates who find themselves using test scores to "prove" how well our schools are doing, while the elephant in the room — that when it comes to education, the tests themselves are destructive — goes unaddressed.

Or we see it in the relentless focus on the "economic returns" of higher education — people who have access to education are healthier and eventually wealthier, so we should fund education properly because it "pays off".

One example: the Ottawa Carleton District School Board Education Foundation used to promote its Breakfast Program to potential donors

by explaining that kids who were well-fed did better in school … there was an tangible educational and economic payoff to giving kids a hot breakfast. The obvious and justice-based reason for feeding hungry kids — because they're hungry — apparently wasn't incentive enough.

Commodification and marketization is by no means limited to education, of course — unions now defend themselves by pointing out the individual economic benefits to potential members. And the pervasiveness of this framework in determining what is "good" or "right" or "worthwhile" for society in general drives this language of why public investment in social infrastructure is a "good investment".

I'd agree that the market-based rationale is certainly effective for some audiences — I've used it myself, from time to time.

But here's the problem about reinforcing this frame: it naturalizes a set of norms that are, frankly, antithetical to public education — where grades are currency, teachers are service providers, education is evaluation, and the customer is always right.

ERIKA SHAKER is the Executive Editor of *Our Schools/Our Selves*.

Sources are available from the author. For more information on standardized testing in schools, or the ongoing (at the time of writing) BC job action in education, please refer to other articles in this issue of *Our Schools/Our Selves*. More information about Teach for Canada is available in the spring 2014 issue.


CAROL ANNE SPREEN AND LAUREN STARK

Privatization Nation
How the United States became the land of "edupreneurs"

Over the past several decades, public schools across the United States have faced an onslaught of attacks from conservative "think tanks", corporate philanthropists, venture capitalists and politicians who promote the myth that education is in crisis and the only way to improve it is to close down public schools and reopen them as for-profit charters. These attacks rely on a common refrain: schools are failing due to mismanagement, teachers are ineffective and need to be held accountable, unions are preventing reform and innovation, and students simply lack the skills to compete in the global market. These influential "edupreneurs" are part of a powerful group of corporate reformers who, over the last two decades, have been set on dismantling public institutions, including education. Through considerable financial support from billionaires, predatory political maneuvering, and a concerted public media campaign, they have over the last several years grown to dominate the education debate to the point where it is hard to hear or imagine anything else is possible. They have repeated this refrain so many times that privatization is now deeply associated with the idea of improving education and the very idea of "education as a public good" has virtually disappeared.

What is important is to understand how so many Americans have come to believe this myth and why so many think that privatizing

education is the only solution. As this article explores, one of the major reasons for the widespread and generally unquestioning support of privatization is that — like a lobster in a slowly boiling pot — our thinking about education has gradually been altered. Our commonsense beliefs about the purposes of education have shifted from education as a common good and great equalizer to education as a personal investment with individual returns based on competitive measures (Labaree, 1997). For edupreneurs who support privatization, their "position is grounded in the belief that the more we marketize, the more we bring corporate models into education, and the more we hold schools', administrators', and teachers' feet to the fire of competition, the better they will be" (Apple, x, 2004).

This article illustrates how over the last 30 years a conservative policy agenda has been promoted across the U.S. though numerous policy briefs and legislation spun by right wing think tanks, various news and media articles, and both documentary and feature films like *Waiting for Superman* and *Won't Back Down*. As a result, the idea of "normalized privatization" has been embraced with bipartisan political support, allowing philanthropists, conservative think tanks, and venture capitalists to create new understandings about education.

- "American education is in crisis and is falling behind other countries, so we need to get back to basics and increase standardization and assessment;"
- "Teachers are underperforming and need to be made accountable through high-stakes standardized testing" (e.g. evidenced by an increased attack on unions, calls for abolishing tenure, basing teacher salary/merit pay on student performance);
- "The government has wasted too much money on fads and progressive reforms that dump money on urban schools;"
- "Public institutions and related bureaucracy are ineffective, and teachers' unions are corrupt;"
- "We must look to leaders in the business and tech industries for efficient and innovative solutions;"
- "Schools should 'invest' in teacher-proof curriculum that is guaranteed to increase test scores" (e.g. growing emphasis on standardized, off-the-shelf curriculum increasingly

provided by the for-profit education technology industry guaranteeing a growing market for testing companies);
- "Public schools should be replaced by charter schools, virtual academies, and vouchers for private schools, which will give them a higher-quality education for a lower price."

Variations on the above themes are the script of every corporate reformer and increasingly have made their way into the lexicon of the public schools with the appointment of non-educator administrators like Joe Klein, Michelle Rhee, and Arne Duncan. This shift can also be seen in the new language of reform, as principals and superintendents of schools become CEOs of EMOs (Education Management Organizations) and neighborhood schools are gutted, closed, and rebranded with catchy titles like Knowledge is Power Program (KIPP), IDEA, SEEDS, Harlem Success or Mastery Charter Schools. Likewise, the pathway to becoming an educator has changed dramatically, bypassing schools of education, with teachers trained in other disciplines recruited through alternative certification programs like Teach for America, quickly rising to administrative positions in charter schools and districts without gaining the degrees or experience traditionally necessary for these positions.

Employing business rhetoric of supporting "innovation," to "turn-around," schools based on "evidence" and "data-based decision making" by better run "education management organizations," corporate reformers resonate with the new ideological umbrella of professional and managerially oriented middle class — what has been termed by Michael Apple as the "new audit culture" of people who are committed to the ideology and techniques of accountability, measurement, and "big data" through new forms of managerialism (Apple, 2005). These corporate reformers believe they are helping improve schooling through rules, procedures and accountability measures that will drive improvements through the market. By identifying these "problems" and offering clear and easy solutions in public education, "reformers" are capitalizing on the education crisis in order to shut down, then privatize and commercialize public schools. However, after a few decades of experimenting with these ideas through choice, vouchers and for-profit schools, there is still very little evidence to support these claims (Ravitch, 2013).

While it is widely recognized that there is a crisis (and the crisis is real — especially for poor and marginalized kids whose needs have never

been served well by under-resourced large bureaucratic institutions), none of the proposed reforms are designed to addresses poverty or systematic discrimination, barriers due to language or culture, issues of power or politics in schooling — all of which are central to transforming education in a diverse and inequitable democracy. Instead the debate has focused on whether there is too much spending on education or efficient use of resources, or how to hold schools and teachers accountable — measured almost exclusively based on students test score performance. The real issue is not the overall funding of schools or "closing the achievement gap", but the great funding inequities within and across schools and the different opportunities for rigorous and deep learning that children from different zip codes are afforded.

When privatizers talk about "addressing inequality" by offering families a "choice" in education, these reformers never mention the deleterious effects and impact of poverty on children or how broader structures of social inequality differentially impact opportunities for children and their families. They also do not mention how the "market" isn't interested in equal opportunities for all kids to attend schools that provide rich and meaningful learning. Despite the financial meltdown of recent years and the increasing gap between the ultra rich and the rest, the U.S. believes it is a classless society and will not acknowledge these broader influences on the classroom — it's easier to provide a test score and then blame the teachers and the kids for failing.

A central issue in this article is tackling head-on the link between privatization and standardized testing. The recognition that there was a concerted effort by those who promoted policies like *No Child Left Behind* not to improve public schools, but instead to "prove" they were failing by setting unrealistic expectations and measures, then moving in to shut schools down once they didn't meet this goal. A brilliant historical overview of this dramatic policy shift and its impact and consequences today is Diane Ravitch's *The Death and Life of the Great American School System: How Testing and Choice are Undermining Education* (2010).

No Child Left Behind (NCLB) — then-President George W. Bush's signature education law introduced in 2001 — linked federal education funding directly to state education policy through compulsory standardized testing, and states not complying with NCLB testing and reporting requirements risked losing millions in compensatory-education funding (that is, funding for programs for children at risk of

dropping out of school). Similarly, Race to the Top (RtT), the $4.35 billion "competitive grant program," incentivized the adoption of common core curricula, standardized assessments, and new teacher evaluation systems (U.S. Department of Education, 2009). It also required states to "turn around" schools that did not meet prescribed achievement benchmarks. In this article we show how as schools face increasing pressure to meet the unrealistic expectations of NCLB and RtT, politicians have responded with a series of laws advancing privatization by closing schools and challenging teachers' protections through tenure and collective bargaining rights.

As former public school teachers and an educator who has worked in the "progressive" education reform movement for the last 20 years, we both readily recognize that public education is indeed in crisis and needs to improve. Through our teaching, research and advocacy work we have long advocated for changes that promote quality public schooling for ALL children — not just innovation for rich kids and rote learning to pass standardized tests for poor kids.

Nearly one-quarter of American children are poor (Chumley, 2013). As Ravitch (2013) shows in her recent book, *Reign of Error,* poverty is the "central tragic fact about the nation and its schools" (Featherstone, 2014). In focusing on this point, Ravitch is able to reveal the deceptive nature of reformers' promises, which ignore "the true forces of deterioration in the public sector: constant school budget cuts and swelling class sizes; the tailoring of the curriculum to what tests easily in a multiple-choice format; and an impoverishment of educational services and vision that erodes the prospects for poor children more than anyone else" (Featherstone, 2014). This results in a school system where poor and working class children are bombarded with endless practice tests and retests in deteriorating, overcrowded buildings that "resemble those of a failed state" (Featherstone, 2014). Needless to say, this Dickensian educational experience is not shared by the children of wealthy school reformers, pundits, and edupreneurs.

While we agree that there is a crisis in education, the question is: who is to blame for the crisis and what solutions do we pursue? Our response is quite different from corporate reformers and private philanthropists. Progressive educators concerned with improving and expanding public education as a necessary element of a democratic society have very different ideas about what the purposes of education are (see Deborah

Meier's great work on the importance of democratic schooling, e.g. Meier, 2002). So, why do we think that venture capitalists, filmmakers, and tech industry moguls know how to run schools and make better education decisions than teachers? And if they do have the answers why aren't they offering the same thing to their own children (Meier, 2014)?

Through this article we explore in greater detail the evolution of the privatization movement, its key players and beneficiaries, and the impact it is having on children and their families. We hope international readers will develop a critical sense of the growing role and influence of philanthropy and business interests in education, questioning the overall dismantling of public support for education (or responsibility for it) through "normalized privatization" promoted by a conservative policy agenda and research think tanks over the last 30 years. This should be a warning sign for all countries. Finally, we conclude with some stories of resistance to attempts to privatize as parents, teachers, and community members across the U.S. are beginning to refuse to administer standardized tests and are fighting school closures, and suggest there is hope for restoring education as a public good.

Who is reform for? Who is benefiting?: The role of venture philanthropy in U.S. schools

Beginning in the new millennium, mainstream news outlets like *The Economist* (1999) promoted education as the next big investment area, "ripe for privatization" and commodification, comparing it to private takeovers in the health care and defense sectors and indicating that the U.S. education market promised a $600 billion a year industry to tap into. More recently, in its 2012 Annual Report, Pearson CEO John Fallan claimed that "education will be the great growth industry of the 21st Century" (Pearson, 2012, p. 8).

Private philanthropies, media and movie moguls, venture capitalists, publishing companies, software producers, online education providers, and lobbyists all serve to benefit from their "investments" in the education system. Private philanthropies in the U.S. spent almost $4 billion annually to promote their education reform agenda (Barkan, 2011). These large contributors include the Gates Foundation, the Broad Foundation, the American Enterprise Institute, the CATO Institute, the Heritage Foundation and the Walton Family Foundation

(known from Walmart). All have market-based goals for overhauling public education: supporting choice, competition, deregulation, accountability and data-based decision-making. The Gates, Walton and Broad Foundations have been referred to by critics as the "unholy triad of the education reform complex." As Jonathan Pelto (2014) argues, their strategic investments have had a substantial impact on education policy and practice: "While exact numbers are hard to pin down, since 2008 the Bill and Melinda Gates Foundation has spent at least $2 billion, the Walton Foundation at least three-quarters of a billion and the Broad Foundation an estimated half a billion dollars on efforts to 'reform' America's system of education by promoting charter schools, pushing the use of standardized testing, lobbying for teacher evaluation programs based on student's standardized test results and other corporate-driven initiatives."

Other policy think tanks such as the Heritage Foundation, Hoover Institution, American Enterprise Institute, Heartland Institute and the Urban Institute also push long-standing privatization schemes. As Lauren McDonald (2013) notes in her study of the neoliberal and neoconservative discourse of think tank researchers, education "think tanks" have historically been viewed as sites of neutral, objective research (p. 2). This expectation remains true despite the substantial rise of partisan conservative think tanks since the 1971 "Powell Memorandum" (McDonald, 2013, p. 3). While there were only four conservative think tanks working on education policy before 1970, there are now over fifty-six (p. 4). This meteoric rise can best be understood within the context of the "expansion of business in politics, the rise of neoconservatism, a new paradigm of neoliberal economics, and the political mobilization of fundamentalist Christians" (McDonald, 2013, p. 3). Throughout this period, education policy has taken on an increasingly neoliberal and neoconservative bent, with such policies as school choice, vouchers, high-stakes testing, and evaluations (McDonald, 2013, p. 4).

The growth of "new educational privatization" has brought astronomical financial gains to edupreneurs, as well. These gains were recently chronicled in an article by Julie Landry Peterson (2014) in *Education Next*, which featured three "success stories" in educational entrepreneurship. One such "success story" was Ron Packard of the virtual charter school company K12, who made revenues totaling

$162 million upon selling his education company (Peterson, 2014). Peterson (2014) also highlighted Jonathan Harber of Schoolnet, who sold his company to Pearson for approximately $75 million, and Larry Berger, whose company *Wireless Generation* was sold for $60 million. As Peterson (2014) blithely observes, their success serves as a reminder that educational entrepreneurs are successful if they "push (or pay) for policy change."

Several additional patterns are emerging. As Patricia Burch (2006) has noted in her study of the "new educational privatization," there is a "growing market for products and services driven by Federal and local accountability mandates" (p. 2589). This market has expanded significantly since the early 1990s, to the point where local education agencies are spending over $20 billion a year on materials such as test preparatory programs and services such as education consultant workshops and preparatory student tutoring and remediation (Burch, 2006, p. 2588). This figure is in addition to the amount that state and federal agencies are spending to develop assessment programs with contractors such as Pearson. Texas, for example, made a $462 million five-year contract with Pearson as part of their STAAR testing program, and the State Auditor's Office recently submitted a report noting that there is not sufficient oversight on the implementation of this contract and potential conflicts of interest (Smith, 2013).

With so much money at stake and so little oversight, it is no surprise that investors are clamoring to enter the education market. Among these efforts, business analysts have pointed out "ed tech" as a key area of growth and investment. According to EdWeek, the largest education news journal in the U.S., educational administrators believe that "digital tools and applications will allow schools to individualize learning" and improve educational outcomes. This belief has fueled a "multimillion-dollar market for educational technology," making education "a hot new investment opportunity" for venture capitalists (Davis, 2014). Investments in education technology "hit a record high in the first quarter of this year, with $559 million flowing into the sector via 103 investment deals" (Davis, 2014).

Importantly, these private interests and trusts also drive public perceptions in the U.S. about what good schooling should look like, and they pretend to offer innovative solutions to the education crisis. Through films that have been supported by high-profile movie

stars and billionaire philanthropists, reformers use sleek footage, emotional appeals, and digital marketing to promote their message of market-based reform. This genre includes popular documentaries such as *Waiting for Superman*, which can be seen as a "project to affect common sense by further legitimizing the decisions of powerful people who treat schools as markets, who connect hedge funds with charter schools, who focus on the symptoms of social inequality rather than its root causes, and who continue making decisions for other people's children" (Swalwell & Apple, 2011). These themes were echoed in Madeleine Sackler's 2010 film *The Lottery*, a pro-charter documentary that followed students applying to Geoffrey Canada's Harlem Success Academy. Similarly, movie producer Bob Compton has focused his career on making documentaries such as *Two Million Minutes: A Global Examination and A Right Denied: The Critical Need for Genuine Education Reform* about "innovation" in education, erroneously presenting models like Harlem Success and SEED as viable scale-able alternatives to public schools without disclosing the nearly $40,000 per pupil annual expenditure it would take to give each child that type of education.

In addition to funding documentaries, Hollywood producers and education reformers have collaborated to bankroll feature films that further reinforce the myth that public schools are failing and need to be saved by private companies and organizations. A prominent example of this is Daniel Barnz's 2010 feature film *Won't Back Down*, a simplistic and one-sided take on California's parent trigger laws that starred Maggie Gyllenhaal, Viola Davis, and Holly Hunter. As parent activist Rita Solnet of Parents Across America commented in her response to the film, *Won't Back Down* "depicts a story that is more about good vs. evil than about the truth behind public schools today and the movement to privatize them" (in Strauss, 2012). The reality masked by these films is that innovation happens in schools that have the resources and serve middle class students, while remediation and rote test-driven instruction is served up for poor and working class kids.

As we will argue later in this article, these films' claims have been met by substantial resistance on the part of parents, teachers, and students. In addition to boycotting standardized tests, these groups which include not only unions but also grassroots teacher and parent organizations — have supported a counterdiscourse to the reform

movement through films such as *Race to Nowhere* (2009), which was co-directed by parent activist Vicki Abeles.

Why and how did this happen?

Over the last 25 years, there has been a growing campaign to dismantle public education in the U.S. This campaign included the crafting of conservative policies, commissioned research, marketing campaigns, and media efforts to frame the general public sentiment about ineffective government and failing public schools.

The initial shift in thinking about whose responsibility it should be to fund and deliver education began with authoritarian populist religious conservatives who were very concerned about secularity and the preservation of their own traditions (Apple, 2006). In the early 1980s and throughout the 1990s, conservatives launched a policy shift offering "school vouchers" that would give parents a "choice" in where children went to school. "School choice" advocates argued that per pupil spending should travel with individual students to private (mainly religious) schools instead of being allocated to public schools. The "school choice" movement was gradually joined by many low-income families in under-served school districts, who felt their options in inner-city public schools were limited. In some cases, vouchers and magnet schools were proposed to allow white families to avoid integration while in others they offered an option out of failing public schools for black families. During the 1990s, progressive reformers began to promote "public charters" that teachers and communities would control. However, due to lack of funding, growing district bureaucracies, and increasing regulatory procedures placed on these schools, public charters were unable to operate with any real autonomy or respond with their own innovative solutions.

At the turn of the 21st century, federal legislation introduced in the *No Child Left Behind Act* set up public schools to be disinvested and made into business opportunities by emphasizing high-stakes testing and punishing failing schools by closing them down or handing them over to privately run education management organizations. NCLB has been described as the "Trojan horse" for the privatization agenda. Susan Neuman, the Assistant Secretary for Elementary and Secondary Education during the rollout of NCLB, admitted in *Time Magazine* that

Bush's Department of Education saw NCLB as "the way to expose the failure of public education and 'blow it up a bit'" (cited in Wallis, 2008).

At the state level, governors from both political parties, seeing the strong rightward drift of American politics, have jumped on the privatization bandwagon. Much of the conceptual work around state level privatization was done through lobbying organizations who lobbied and wrote legislation for each state. According to Diane Ravitch, the privatization movement has been spearheaded by the work of ALEC (American Legislative Exchange Council), a "shadowy group" made up of "nearly 2,000 conservative state legislators" who advocate "privatization and corporate interests in every sphere" (Ravitch, 2012). ALEC is best known for crafting almost a thousand model bills per year, 20% of which are adopted by states. As Ravitch (2012) notes, the greatest appeal of the ALEC bills is that they can essentially be copied verbatim in state legislation throughout the country.

In this way, ALEC has dictated the policy agenda for education reformers throughout the country. This agenda includes input from its estimated 300 corporate sponsors, including Walmart, AT&T, and the Koch Brothers (Ravitch, 2012). The members of ALEC's education task force include several edupreneurs from for-profit online education companies, including the co-chair from Connections Academy, representatives from the Foundation for Excellence in Education (Florida Governor Jeb Bush's online education foundation), as well as charter school CEOs, and a long list of state legislators, from at least 37 of the 50 states (Ravitch, 2012). ALEC is registered as a "charity" with the Internal Revenue Service and is accordingly granted tax-exempt status, but much of its work is dedicated to shaping state laws in a way that benefits its members and corporate sponsors (Ravitch, 2012).

ALEC model legislation is influences policy in at least 37 individual states. As Ravitch (2012) notes, ALEC legislation is likely to be present "[w]herever you see states expanding vouchers, charters, and other forms of privatization, wherever you see states lowering standards for entry into the teaching profession, wherever you see states opening up new opportunities for profit-making entities, wherever you see the expansion of for-profit online charter schools." In New Jersey, for example, Chris Christie's education reform bills have been linked to ALEC model legislation (Rizzo, 2012). In another example, Michigan used ALEC model legislation to open the door to additional cyber

charters despite the vast body of academic evidence suggesting that cyber charters are not effective (Ravitch, 2012).

From testing to charters

As described above, NCLB and RtT laid the groundwork for privatization by making impossible demands for continual improvement and labeling schools as failures after they couldn't meet those demands, ultimately allowing "reformers" to claim that there isn't much worth saving. In a prescient critique of NCLB, former teacher and scholar-activist Alfie Kohn writes, "This law's criteria for being judged successful — how fast the scores must rise, and how high and for how many subgroups of students — are nothing short of ludicrous. NCLB requires every single student to score at or above the proficient level by 2014, something that has never been done before" (Kohn, 2012, p. 85). In a brilliantly argued chapter, "Test Today, Privatize Tomorrow," Kohn cynically observes, "One way to ascertain the actual motivation behind the widespread use of testing is to watch what happens in the real world when a lot of students do well on standardized tests. Are the schools and teachers credited and congratulated? Hardly. The response […]is instead to make the test harder" (Kohn, 2012, p. 83). Tougher standards are usually justified in the name of excellence and equity. The real point of the standards-and-testing business is to make schools look bad to justify a free market alternative. A NCLB watchdog website (NoChildLeft.com) created by a former school superintendent explains, "Misrepresented as a reform effort, NCLB is actually a cynical effort to shift public school funding to a host of private schools, religious schools and free-market diploma mills or corporate experiments in education."

As Kenneth Saltman (2007) argues, this connection between testing and privatization is clear:

> No Child Left Behind sets schools up for failure by making impossible demands for continual improvement. When schools have not met Adequate Yearly Progress, they are subject to punitive action by the federal government, including the potential loss of formerly guaranteed federal funding and requirements for tutoring from a vast array of for-profit Special Educational Service providers. A number of authors have

> described how NCLB is a boon for the testing and tutoring companies while it doesn't provide financial resources for the test score increases it demands. (This is aside from the cultural politics of whose knowledge these tests affirm and discredit). Sending billions of dollars of support the way of the charter school movement, NCLB pushes schools that do not meet AYP to restructure in ways that encourage privatization, discourage unions, and avoid local regulations on crucial matters. (Saltman, 2007, p. 138)

Incidentally, 48% of public schools did not make AYP standards set by NCLB in the 2010-2011 school year, an increase of almost 10% from the previous school year's failure rate (Usher, 2012).

In the last few years, as a direct result of NCLB, there have been hundreds of school closings around the country, particularly in large urban districts in New York, Chicago, Philadelphia, New Orleans, Newark, and Washington, D.C. These closings have been championed by corporate reformers and edupreneurs and supported by the U.S. Department of Education, who closed schools citing a variety of reasons such as "underutilization" and "academic failure" and reopened them the following year as for-profit charters. The Broad Foundation (2009) has gone so far as to offer "best practices" for this process in their "School Closure Guide," offering examples of statements to minimize resistance and dissent. As Parents Across America (2013) noted in their position paper against school closings, this document serves as a "guidebook of the mass school closing movement" which "boasts of training and placing non-educator superintendents and high-level school leaders in urban districts across the country to enact a brand of education reform that focuses on competition and privatization."

In city after city, these widespread closings have done more harm than good. The vast majority of closed schools have high minority enrollments, and communities of colour have been disproportionately affected (Lipman, 2011; Saltman, 2007). These public school closings are accompanied by the simultaneous expansion of charter schools and non-public options — whose track records are often worse than those of comparable public schools. They do not lead to improved academic performance, they do not fix budget deficits, and children that are displaced from the closures are rarely placed into better performing schools (see, for example, Lipman 2011).

In 2013, parents and teachers from 18 cities filed discrimination complaints with the U.S. Department of Education's Office for Civil Rights, claiming that the closings are having a disparate racial impact and citing issues of safety, transportation, equitable access, and service for high need and at-risk student populations (Hurdle, 2013). Many of these closings have been fast-tracked by school boards linked to corporate reformers, including Newark's former mayor Cory Booker, who has pushed through corporate school reforms with the financial support of a $100 million grant from Facebook's Mark Zuckerberg and legislative support from New Jersey governor Chris Christie (Russakoff, 2014).

The "testing to school closing to charter" movement was not only promoted by NCLB and spurred on by "think tanks", but also gained the interest of investment groups like the Texas Association of Business, whose CEO and President Bill Hammond was one of the most vocal supporters of Texas's Pearson-crafted STAAR test (Scharrer, 2012). And in Chicago, the Commercial Club and the Metropolitan Planning Council planned and coordinated the closing of nearly 100 public schools, primarily those serving poor, working-class and non-white children. These closings targeted neighborhoods that are being gentrified and occupied by richer and whiter people who are buying up newly developed property, and the schools will be reopened as for-profit and non-profit charter schools, contract schools and magnet schools, bypassing important district and state regulations and teacher labour agreements (Lipman, 2011). Furthermore, these efforts involved vast privatization and decimation of public services while promising profits for investors, while public resources were funneled to education profiteers (textbook, assessment and software publishers), real estate developers, and lawyers.

This wide-spread predatory approach of the corporate reform agenda enabled the growth of charter schools throughout the nation, which also became a source of economic windfall for investors and entrepreneurs. Charter school alternatives are described by the edupreneurs as providing more autonomy and room for innovation. They explain their goals and funding strategies through innocuous rhetoric. For example, the Gates Foundation uses the language of community-building to describe their investment priorities: "We invest in programs with a common aim to strengthen the connection

between teacher and student. To that end, we work with educators, policymakers, parents, and communities to expand and accelerate successful programs and identify innovative new solutions that can help unlock students' potential" (Gates Foundation, 2014).

Yet, despite this relative windfall of policies and massive financial support, charters have been shown to have little effect on improving education (e.g. Carruthers, 2012, Lin, 2001; Silverman, 2013). Moreover, despite the get-tough rhetoric of standards and accountability, there has been little or no accountability for charters; in fact, even the charter-supporting Thomas B. Fordham Institute noted that it "verges on the impossible" to obtain reliable information and statistics about charter schools (Miron & Urschel, 2010, p. 10). This difficulty can in part be explained by the fact that many charter schools open and close in few years, have high attrition rates for both students and teachers, face little financial accountability, and very little obligation to meet government regulations. Regardless of their for-profit or nonprofit status, the majority of charter schools bring in substantial salaries to their administrators and profits to their contractors. As Miron and Urschek (2010) demonstrate, "charter schools pay more for administration, both as a percentage of overall spending as well as for the salaries they pay administrative personnel" (p. 4). In New York City, for example, charter school CEOs Deborah Kenny of Village Academies Network and Eva Moskowitz of Success Academy Charter Schools earn nearly $500,000 a year to manage a small network of charter schools (Monahan, 2013). This brings their annual salary to over twice that of New York's Chancellor of Education, who manages over 1,600 schools (Monahan, 2013).

Given the obvious failures of a number of high-profile privatization initiatives (such as Edison Schools and Knowledge Universe) and the increasing push back from teachers, parents and community-based organizations who are resisting shut downs and closures, one would assume the corporate reformers might begin to question their efforts. In fact they are expanding and operating in a far more strategic fashion.

In 2006-2007, the U.S. Department of Education identified 4,132 charter schools operating in 21 states (Miron & Urschel, p. 14). Of these charter schools, 627 schools were operated by for-profit EMOs and 452 schools were operated by nonprofit EMOs (Miron & Urschel, p. 13).

The study also identified 16 virtual charter schools enrolling 25,953 students in seven states (Miron & Urschel, p. 9). More recently, charter school legislation has skyrocketed as charter laws passed in 80% of all states (Miron & Urschek, 2010, p. 5).

Why does it matter who is funding schools?

In critiquing the pro-charter, anti-teacher refrain of reformers and edupreneurs, we are not claiming that change isn't necessary. Rather, we are aligning ourselves with the progressive reformers of the 1980s, who sought to improve public education by challenging social inequities and promoting social justice through challenging, engaging curricula in well-resourced schools. We are also aligning ourselves with teachers, researchers, and community members who are fighting "the corporate agenda for public schools, which disregards our voices and attempts to impose a system of winners and losers," to quote the mission statement of a new coalition of teachers and their unions, along with parent, student, religious and community groups (The Nation, 2013). This coalition has made its goal to restore "the promise of public education as our nation's gateway to democracy and racial and economic justice" (*The Nation*, 2013). At stake in the struggle for public education is the value of critical and public education as a foundation for an engaged citizenry and substantive democracy (Meier, 2002; Ravitch, 2013; Saltman, 2007; Weis & Fine, 2004).

In a recent blog post, educational historian and anti-privatization activist Diane Ravitch christened the anti-privatization movement "the resistance," distancing the movement from accusations of supporting the status quo:

> What do we call the millions of parents and teachers, principals, superintendents, school board members, and researchers who fight for democratic control of education? The Resistance. […] We oppose segregation, budget cuts, high-stakes testing, closing public schools, rating teachers by student test scores, and labeling children by test scores. We will resist their bad ideas. We will resist their efforts to destroy public education. We will resist privatization. We will fight for a better future for all the children of our nation. (Ravitch, 2014)

Much of the resistance against testing has come from parents active in the national "opt out" movement. On the national level, parents have worked through organizations and groups such as Opt Out of the State Test, United Opt Out National, Parents & Kids Against Standardized Testing, Fairtest, and Opt Out of the Standardized Tests. Parents have also come together through organizations like Save Our Schools and the Network for Public Education to raise awareness, organize, and protest against the corporate takeover of education in the United States.

A number of vibrant parent groups have been established in states throughout the country as well. In Tennessee, the parent organization Tennessee Parents has dedicated itself to the mission of "reclaiming public education" by organizing to express their dissent against the state's testing and accountability system. Tennessee parents have boycotted the state test, embracing the peaceful protest strategies of the civil rights movement (Cook, 2014).

In Texas, the TAMSA (Texans Advocating for Meaningful Student Assessment) — commonly known as "Moms Against Drunk Testing" — movement has led the fight against the state's disastrous, expensive new STAAR test system (Stanford, 2012). Through parent brochures, marches, press releases, and legislative hearings, TAMSA advocated for modifications to the state's draconian STAAR end-of-course exams, successfully supporting House Bill 5, a bill to reduce the number of tests required for elementary and secondary students.

In New York, parent activist Leonie Haimson has actively worked against the privatization of education in a variety of venues, founding Class Size Matters and co-founding Parents Across America and publishing on blogs such as NYC Public School Parents and the Chalk Beat. Haimson has been especially notable in her work to build coalitions between researchers, parents, and teachers in the fight against the privatization of public education.

Across the United States, teachers are working independently and collectively to take a stand against state disinvestment, mandated tests, and privatization. As educator-activist and popular blogger Anthony Cody has noted, many teachers are "reluctant warriors" who would rather focus their attention on pedagogy than political activism (Cody, 2014). Many of these teachers have worked through their unions and other education organizations to fight for public

education alongside other educators, community members, and parents.

Teacher resistance has been especially notable in the nation's urban school systems, where schools have been key targets of the reform movement. In Seattle, public school teachers made national headlines for their boycott of the state's standardized tests (Brooks, 2014). Chicago Public Schools (CPS) teachers also gained national attention for their boycotts of the city's assessment and accountability system and related school closings (The Stream, 2014). In New York, the NYSUT teachers' union has organized to protest the education "reform" movement and "put the PUBLIC back in public education" through such events as "Picket in the Pines," a demonstration against the edupreneurs meeting to discuss business opportunities at an expensive corporate retreat.

Educator activists have voiced their dissent through popular blogs and letters to the editor, as well. Experienced teachers like North Carolina's Sarah Wiles have directly engaged with policy struggles by writing letters to the editor and emails to their state representatives (Dewitt, 2014). A number of current and former teachers have organized against the education reform movement through the Badass Teachers Association (BAT), which has advocated for supporting social justice and fighting the accountability and assessment movement through rallies, social media campaigns, and blog posts. Likewise, former teachers like Sabrina Stevens, Executive Director of Integrity in Education, have been dedicated to speaking out against corporate interests in public education through press releases, blogs, and public seminars. High school teacher and statistician Mercedes Schneider (2014) has voiced powerful arguments against the education reform and accountability movement on her blog, Deutsch 29, recently publishing a book on the privatization of education titled *A Chronicle of Echoes: Who's Who in the Implosion of American Public Education*. Former Oakland board certified middle school teacher Anthony Cody has been an active voice in the resistance, as well, publishing in such venues as the Education Week *Living in Dialogue* blog and co-founding the Network for Public Education.

Many of the progressive educators of the 1980s have continued to speak out against the "reform movement," as well, as Deborah Meier so eloquently does in her blog, *Bridging Differences*. Perhaps the

most visible educator activist in the fight against privatization stood on the other side of the debate in the 1980s. The aforementioned educational historian and former Secretary of Education Diane Ravitch has very publicly renounced the accountability, standardization, and assessment programs she previously supported, extensively chronicling the fight against privatization through her blog and books such as *The Death and Life of the Great American School System* (2010) and *Reign of Error* (2013). Ravitch has been a strong supporter of younger scholars such as Professor Julian Vasquez-Heilig, who has established a strong following for his public scholarship on the testing and accountability movement, sharing his insights through twitter and his blog, *Cloaking Inequity*.

Taken as a whole, the work of teachers, parents, researchers, administrators, students, and community members to defend the right to a quality *public* education for all students offers much hope for the future. In the past year, many stakeholders have spoken out against the privatization of U.S. schools, which has suggested that we may have reached a "tipping point" in the resistance to corporate education reform (Gladwell, 2000). Despite these signs of progress, however, public discourse on education remains dominated by reform logic, even within generally progressive outlets (e.g. Segrè, 2014). We hope that by countering the refrain of the corporate reformers and predatory privatizers, we can loudly and clearly reclaim education for the public good.

CAROL ANNE SPREEN is a faculty member in the Department of Leadership, Foundations and Policy at the University of Virginia. Her research addresses issues of education rights, school reform, and educational equity, specifically the long term impact poverty and inequality on educational access and outcomes. Her current research centers on political and socio-cultural studies of educational change, particularly the influences of globalization on teaching and learning. Her current book project describes teachers' global mobilization and resistance to privatization of education. Dr. Spreen received her Ph.D. in Comparative and International Education in 2001 from Teachers College, Columbia University. She also holds an M.Phil. in Educational Policy Studies from Teachers College, an M.Ed. in Instructional Leadership from the

University of Illinois, and a B.Ed. In International Education Development from the American University.

LAUREN STARK is a doctoral student in the Department of Leadership, Foundations, and Policy at the University of Virginia's Curry School of Education. She earned a master's degree in French Studies at the University of Pennsylvania and spent five years teaching secondary English, French, and world languages in public schools in Delaware and Texas. Her research interests include critical pedagogy; social justice and human rights-based education; ability grouping and tracking; critical race theory and whiteness studies; postcolonial theory; and teacher and student engagement in social movements. She is currently engaged in research on mindfulness in global citizenship education and teacher resistance against privatization

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SALIM VALLY

Privatization of Schools in South Africa

Just over 20 years since the first democratic elections in South Africa, the combined weight of apartheid's legacy exacerbated by neoliberal policies over the past two decades has meant that the promise of a quality public education system remains a chimera. While a mélange of new official policies in every conceivable aspect of education exists and racially-based laws have been removed from the statutes, the education system as a whole reflects and reproduces the wider inequalities in society. The editors of this special issue have in various editions of *OS/OS* documented the issues and struggles in South African education over the years (see *OS/OS* Spring 2006, Fall 2008 and Summer 2010). While schools of excellent quality exist, intractable problems remain for the vast majority of public schools attended by the poor and the working class. In this atmosphere, calls for the privatization of schools in all their permutations are receiving greater resonance. Advocates of right-wing reform stridently demand a variety of responses ranging from outright privatization of education and the withdrawal of the state, to various versions of market-friendly policies and public-private-partnerships. Thandika Mkandawire, adapting Gramsci's famous aphorism refers to this predatory maneuvering as, "The pessimism of the diagnosis and the optimism of the prescription" (Muller, 2012).

Of the 25,000 schools in South Africa with an enrollment of over 12 million learners, private schools relative to many countries remain numerically few. Official statistics are inconsistent, most often setting private schools at roughly 4% of all schools although many observers believe that they are more accurately at 9%. The sector is far from homogenous and includes unregistered "fly-by-night" schools, non-profit religious schools and for-profit schools. Over the past few years the growth of what is called "low-cost" private schools have grown unmistakably and the recent entry of the UK-based transnational behemoth, Pearson, in the "low-cost, technology driven" schooling market will increase this trend. South Africa has seen a mushrooming of private schools. Curro Holdings for example boasts that it will reach 80 schools in the next six years. Ominously, the Government Employees Pension Fund via their asset manager the Public Investment Corporation (PIC) together with the corporate, Old Mutual Life Assurance Company has invested R440 million in Curro Holdings (Moneyweb, 03/06/14). Curro's revenue increased by 91% to R309 million and that of its earnings before interest and taxes increased by 178% to R51 million for the period ending 30 June 2013. There are other South African companies with huge profits in the education sector. Old Mutual and the Government Employees Pension Fund have formed the R1.2 billion Schools and Education Investment Impact Fund. The latter fund has invested in the following "low cost schools": Prestige Schools, Royal Schools, BASA Educational Institute Trust and Meridian Schools, a subsidiary of Curro Holdings.

For South African observers of this trend, Keith Lewin (2013) from the University of Sussex usefully and timeously poses a number of largely rhetorical questions to the "Acolytes of Low Price Private Schools." These include:

- Will the engagement of the private sector guarantee the equitable delivery of the right to education to every child?
- Since publicly funded and managed education systems have delivered massive increases in access to education and are now working on improved quality why change a successful strategy and privatize services?
- If private provision does not increase access, if fee paying choices are rationed by price, and if some public schools

perform better than some private schools, then why should educational services be privatized?
- Why should public subsidies be directed at profitable businesses and what are the opportunity costs to public investment of the transfer of resources to private providers?

Lewin shows why arguments in favor of continuing to invest in the development of publicly financed school systems are compelling:

> First, public systems are guarantors of the right to basic education. Second, public systems have delivered much additional access at affordable costs and include many schools of quality as well as those which underperform. Third, public systems reach children in communities of little commercial interest, and can promote Rawlesian equity where investment of public resources is pro-poor. In all countries some public schools out perform some private schools and vice versa, demonstrating that performance differences do not depend only on school type, and that free public schools can sponsor inter-enerational mobility. Fourth, resource gaps are unlikely to be filled by private sector initiatives in sustainable ways since these require appropriate fiscal policy, the translation of political will into public financing, and pro-poor redistribution of educational opportunity. Fifth, the opportunity costs of diverting public finance to largely unregulated private-for-profit providers are substantial. Sixth, systemic risks are real where dependence on private sector delivery of public services increases, and where self-regulation is likely to be fragile, lacking in transparency, and may be subject to elite capture.

A revealing and important case study of the "low fee" private school model was recently conducted by Curtis B. Riep of the Omega Schools Franchise in Ghana — a joint venture between Pearson and Omega schools. This model has been called the "McDonaldization" of education because as Riep (2014: 266) explains, "This is because large-scale chains of low-cost private-school franchises like Omega are based on market-oriented principles of: 1. Efficiency (serving the largest amount of students at the lowest possible cost); 2. The standardization of services; 3. Brand reliability (as a form of quality control); and 4 consumerism ("pay-as-you-learn" and the commodification of basic educational services)."

Based on the findings of a 437-student sample across the Omega Schools chain, Riep finds that the "pay-as-you learn" scheme touted by Omega as "innovative" where families pay 75 cents U.S. a day per child for classroom services has been less than impressive. At any given day it results in an absenteeism rate of 20% of the student body. Riep explains, "One Omega School student expressed her experiences… 'I sell water on the streets one day so I can go to school the next.' This is indicative of the commodification of social relations inherent in Omega Schools' system of education, whereby students are transformed into consumers and the opportunity to "get and education" is dependent upon one's ability to pay."

The study also found that the main source of cost and efficiency savings came from the super exploitation of teachers' labour by hiring non-unionized labour and paying them 15-20% (Ibid, 267) of what Ghanian teachers in the public sector take home. The "standardisation of services" comes in the form of standardized lesson plans delivered by high-school graduates supported by a two-week teacher-training programme to prepare unqualified teachers "for their part in the production of uniform outcomes … Thus, the "McDonaldization" model of education demonstrated by Omega schools is related to … uniform products (ie. The standardization of services), replication of settings (ie. "school-in-a-box") abd scripting employee behaviours and interaction with customers (ie.controlled pedagogical processes)" (Ibid, 269). Curtis Riep concludes his study, "…while Ken Donkoh [one of the founders of Omega Schools] proclaims: "education is the first bridge out of poverty", the ironic and harmful failure is that the Omega bridge levies a high toll for all those who wish to pass, which is more likely to reproduce poverty, than it can be expected to alleviate it." (ibid, 275).

Public education in South Africa, as in many other countries, is struggling, though the solution does not lie with privatization nor euthanizing public schools (Muller, 2012). The proposed market solutions to the problems in our schooling system are less a case of pragmatic attempts at resolving the problems than a case of ideological wishful thinking. I agree with Klees (2013) when he argues that, "Privatization is supposed to help meet the growing gap resulting from years of attack on the public sector, but all it does is replace an attempt to develop good public policy with the vagaries of charity or

the single-mindedness of profit-making. Too often everything is about the bottom line vs the interests of children."

Public education has developed over more than a century to become a core aspect of the work of governments especially because it is very much a part of their democratizing mandate in providing a basic human right to all members of society. Nowhere is there an example of a country with high educational outcomes where the provision of basic education has been in private hands. Yet there is now an increasingly insistent view suggesting that the privatization of education whether through high-cost or low-cost private schooling, charter schools or the voucher system, is the solution to the problems of education systems. This "solution" is touted against the reality of the egregious weaknesses that face many public education systems and the prevailing view that education is not meeting the demands of the labour market and economy.

Firstly, it is argued that privatization provides choices to parents, makes schools more responsive, produces greater cost efficiencies and even better quality education, however such "quality" is defined. The underlying idea is that the state should have as little as possible to do with the delivery of education and other services which are best left to market mechanisms for their resolution. However, the purveyors of these ideas do not speak to the adverse consequences of privatization.

Of these perhaps the most troublesome relates to the value systems inculcated by the privatization of education and the power it vests in unaccountable and undemocratic corporate interests already hugely dominant in the world. Corporations and their "experts" have a large part to play in the development of the curriculum, in shaping the orientation and outcomes of education, and determining the "suitability" of teachers and administrators. Of necessity, this is associated with the rationalization of costs and the determination of what is "relevant" and what is not. In effect it converts education into a commodity to be purchased and sold in a highly commercialized and competitive market. These overriding characteristics of privatization are further augmented by:

- The absence of a national curriculum or forms of assessment that engender wider social outcomes and goals necessary for social cohesion and consistency;

- The effects on the (already parlous) state of the public system, which ends up catering to only students from the most deprived communities;
- The removal of especially middle-class children from the public schooling system based on the criterion of affordability and ostensible "choice" and their separation from a wider network of social engagements and interactions;
- Deepening social inequality and stratification amongst the citizenry, whatever the putative "gains" of private education;
- The frequent continued use of public infrastructure and almost invariable reliance on the best publicly trained teachers. There is little or no training of teachers in the private sector and consequently the privatization of education plays a parasitic role depending on the public provision of qualified teachers;
- The stimulation of perhaps the greatest outbreak of corruption in the public service, as the empires of many billionaires will attest , through textbook provision, standardised tests, school meals and other outsourcing measures; and
- Most importantly, the engendering of competitiveness and individualism as the overarching values in society.

The private market for education is now estimated to be $50 billion worldwide. Organisations such as the International Finance Corporation (IFC), the investment arm of the World Bank, have grown exponentially and, in 2012 had over $850 million in commitments to private initiatives in education. Direct foreign investment in education has also been promoted by the World Trade Organization's (WTO) General Agreement on Trade in Services (GATS) which encourages countries to open their economies to foreign investment in education (and other services) raising questions of accountability, control, and sovereignty.

In reality the privatization of education is the pursuit of a global ideological agenda rationalized on the ostensible (and often real) failure of governments to supply good quality public education to the majority of its citizenry. This ideological agenda is uncaring about

any idea of the "public good" purposes of education, of its role in producing social cohesion through the provision of education that is of high quality for all members of society.

It is not for nothing that many communities have mounted important challenges against the failure of the state to deliver good quality public schooling — even to the highest courts in the land. Abandoning these challenges for the false promise of privatization is to discard the rights enshrined in the Constitution — it is to abandon the citizenry's entitlement to a democratic society and to favor a narrow and increasingly self-serving meritocracy that represents none but its own financial and social interests.

Secondly, the ideology of privatization is associated with the idea that the role of education is largely about meeting the skills requirements of business.

As Steven Klees of the University of Maryland argues: "Unemployment, in particular, is put at education's door, arguing education is not teaching what the economy needs. It is, unfortunately, true that many children and youth leave schools without basic reading, writing, and social skills which are necessary for work and life. But the mismatch argument is usually not about basic skills but vocational skills. The mismatch argument, while superficially plausible, is not true for at least two reasons. First, vocational skills, which are context specific, are best taught on the job. Secondly, unemployment is not a worker supply problem but a structural problem of capitalism. There are two or more billion un- or under-employed people on this planet, not because they don't have the right skills, but because full employment is neither a feature nor a goal of capitalism … Entrepreneurship is the result of our failure to make good on the promise of decent work and substitutes hope and prayer for effective economic policy that creates employment."

In the U.S., privatization advocates found a home with "free" market bodies such as the Heritage Foundation, the CATO Institute and others. It was these "think tanks" which incubated a generation of academics and journalists who promoted privatization as "common sense" to the general public.

In South Africa, the aggressive promotion of privatization and research on the relationship between education, labour markets and the economy more generally, has been pursued by a number of institutions notably the Centre for Development and Enterprise (CDE).

The CDE's efforts are replicated by some academics and pro-business, "independent" think-tanks. Their research is reflected eclectically in a wide range of policy documents, strategies and pronouncements, all of which have in the main adopted an uncritical approach to the dominant conceptions about unemployment as well as education and its role in society. In a classic case of dissimulation, the CDE (2011) produced a workshop report titled, "A fresh look at unemployment —a conversation among experts" which largely re-cycled well-worn perspectives. According to the CDE (2011:2), "What, we asked [the experts], is preventing us from creating more jobs?" Predictably the CDE report concluded:

> we need to address the gap between the poor productivity of young, unskilled, inexperienced workers and their employment costs. This requires a fundamental re-examination of the labour market regime with a view to facilitating the emergence of lower wage industries and businesses. Labour market reforms of this kind would create opportunities for people who could not expect to find jobs in existing industries and firms.
>
> South Africa needs to learn the lessons presented by Newcastle's clothing industry. In this town (with an unemployment rate of 60%, workers have shown that they are willing to accept wages below the minimum levels prescribed by the industry's bargaining council, and have attracted more clothing factories as a result. Events in the Newcastle clothing industry should be seen as a model for a new industrial structure.(CDE 2011:7).

In other words, the key "fresh" solution for the millions of unemployed this august gathering of "experts" could come up with amounts to support for sweatshop-like low wage industries to compete with cheap imported goods from sweatshops abroad. South Africa's textile industry provides a grim reminder that vast numbers of highly skilled workers can lose their jobs very rapidly, for reasons that have less to do with any lack of skills or eagerness to work but rather with South Africa's adoption of a neoliberal macro-economic programme. Similarly, the employment of miners in the extractive industry is subject to fluctuations in the price of metals globally, on currency exchange rates and on investment decisions made by mine

owners. There is silence too about the estimated R500 billion in cash reserves that corporations hold and which they refuse to invest in ways that could create employment even while hundreds of billions are removed from the economy through the activities of the largest corporations in the land since 1994.

A legion of commentators largely employed by financial institutions, ignore these facts and instead tediously feed South Africans a daily diet of market fundamentalism through the print and electronic media. Their mantra is usually a permutation of the following clichés: "The labour market is too rigid and inflexible". "We must be competitive and entrepreneurial'" "Education fails to provide young people with skills for employment". "We need more investment and economic growth". Rarely do we hear dissenting voices and the simplistic statements and platitudes of these "experts" are seldom challenged.

We argue in essence that education might increase employability but is not an automatic guarantee for full employment; that an instrumentalist view of the role of education is unhelpful especially as such a view is always based on a raft of unjustified claims about the outcomes of education and skills; that education and training is not simply a handmaiden for resolving the problems of low economic output; and that a wide range of exogenous factors and social relations (inherent in all societies) circumscribe the potential value of education and training.

Policy makers and analysts in countries like South Africa are wont to borrow policies and their prescriptions largely from Europe and North America, regardless of the vastly differing histories, contexts and circumstances under which such policies were developed or the approaches to development that these signified. In effect although many of the borrowed policies have been shown to be ineffective in the very countries of their origin, they continue to be purveyed as policies and "best practice" useful to development elsewhere. Such policy borrowing is fostered, regrettably, not only through the work of "expert" consultants (often from developed economies) but also by "native" researchers who have little regard for the critical literature.

Neoliberal globalization's narrow focus on business and the market system continues to undermine and distort the purposes of good quality public education. It has the potential to negate the struggles for a fair, just and humane society, substituting these for

unaccountable and avaricious global autocracies based on the power of money. We simply cannot abandon the public mandate of the state if we are to have any hope of achieving the goal of a democratic and humane society, free of corruption, accountable public services promoting decent employment and socially useful work, the provision of "public goods" and the development of a genuinely democratic society for all citizens. And for public education to work we need motivated, professional and happy educators, competent managers and state officials, adequate resources and infrastructure, a conducive community environment, addressing the social context and consequences of poverty and proper enforcement of standards.

SALIM VALLY is the director of the Centre for Education Rights and Transformation, an associate professor at the Faculty of Education, University of Johannesburg and a visiting professor at the Nelson Mandela Metropolitan University. He was a secondary school teacher in the early 80s, a literacy educator and a trade unionist from 1984 to 1994. Vally's academic interests include education and social policy as these relate to social class, transformation, social justice, human rights and democracy. Vally serves on the boards of various professional and non-governmental organisations, the editorial boards of education journals and is active in social movements.

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GUNTARS CATLAKS

Hidden Privatization and its Impacts on Public Education

Introduction

In 2006 Education International, a global federation of teacher unions, commissioned a study to Professor Stephen Ball and Doctor Deborah Youdell from London Institute of Education to map and analyse current education reforms from the perspective of how these affect public nature of education. The presentation at the conference and this article are based on the report of this study.[1]

What is hidden privatization? Terminology and practice

A range of policy tendencies that can be understood as forms of privatization are evident in the education policies of diverse national governments and international agencies. Some of these forms are named as privatization but in many cases privatization remains hidden whether as a consequence of educational reform, or as a means of pursuing such reform.

In some instances, forms of privatization are pursued explicitly as effective solutions to the perceived inadequacies of public service education. However, in many cases the stated goals of policy are

articulated in terms of "choice", "accountability", "school improvement", "devolution", "contestability" or "effectiveness". Such policies often are not articulated in terms of privatization but nonetheless draw on techniques and values from the private sector, introduce private sector participation and/or have the effect of making public education more like a business.

Embraced during the 1980s and early 1990s by Ronald Reagan and Margaret Thatcher, and more recently by George W Bush and Tony Blair in the U.S. and UK, by David Lange's Labour government in New Zealand, and long ago by Augusto Pinochet in Chile, among others, public service provision and management underpinned by the basic principles of a small state alongside a free market, in different forms, is now a dominant approach to public education around the world. The arguments which underpin this suggest that public service education delivered by state institutions is of low quality, is unresponsive to "clients" and risk-averse. It is, in other words, stultified by bureaucratic procedures and by "producer-capture". The neoliberal solution is to open up education to the disciplines of the market, to parental choice and competition between schools for student recruitment, and to allow new providers, including for-profit providers, to operate alongside or within the state school system. These "solutions" introduce various forms of privatization.

Privatization in this context can be understood as being of two key types:

Privatization in public education

Authors call this "**endogenous**" privatization. Such forms of privatization involve the importing of ideas, techniques and practices from the private sector in order to make the public sector more like businesses and more business-like. This is sometimes referred to also as "commercialization" — the introduction of private market/management techniques into schools. However, commercialization is also used more narrowly to refer to the deployment of products and brands and brand sponsorships in schools (Molnar 2005). The authors attempt to be clear in their use of terms in this report but generally there is considerable slippage and misunderstanding in the lexicon of privatization.

Authors call this "**exogenous**" privatization. Such forms of privatization involve the opening up of public education services to private sector participation on a for-profit basis and using the private sector to design, manage or deliver aspects of public education.

Tendencies of privatization *in* public education frequently pave the way for explicit forms of privatization *of* education. Even where privatization involves the direct use of private companies to deliver education services, this is often not publicly well known or understood.

The first form of privatization, where the public sector is asked to behave more like the private sector, is widespread and well established. The second form of privatization, where the private sector moves into public education, is newer but rapidly growing. These forms of privatization are not mutually-exclusive and are often inter-related, indeed, exogenous privatization in well-established state education systems is often made possible by prior endogenous forms. In particular, the introduction of the methods of service contracting, competitive funding and performance management into public education render it into a form which is then amenable to more thorough-going privatization and the participation of private sector providers. And the use of the private sector to introduce new education services in partial state systems simultaneously brings endogenous forms to those systems.

Both privatization *in* public education and privatization *of* public education often remain hidden and are not subjected to public debate — in the first case techniques and practices are not named as privatization, in the second case privatization is not publicly known about or properly understood. The degree of penetration of privatization processes is not fully understood and the consequences are often poorly researched. What research and reporting there is tends to come mainly from multi-lateral agencies like the World Bank or from pro-choice/pro-market foundations and think-tanks. This "research" typically does not follow social science protocols and is not subject to peer-review.

Forms of endogenous privatization: schools as enterprises

The "market form" is the key device of hidden privatization in education. The development of what are often known in the critical literature as quasi-markets rests primarily upon the introduction into the state education system of forms of school choice — the right of parents to choose between schools. Choice is facilitated by moves to diversify local education provision alongside the introduction of combinations of: per-capita funding; the devolution of management responsibilities and budgets to schools; the provision of school "vouchers" for use in public or private schools; the relaxation of enrolment regulations; and the publication of "performance outcomes" as a form of market "information" for parent-choosers.

An outcome that policy-makers seek from these moves is the production of competition between schools, competition that in principle is expected to have the effect of raising standards across the system; either through the closing down of "poor" schools which fail to attract sufficient parental choices or by raising the performance of these "poor" schools as a result of the competition for choices.

Advocates of competition either see the market as simply value-neutral, as a mechanism for the delivery of education which is more efficient or responsive or effective or they present the market as possessing a set of positive moral values in its own right — effort, thrift, self-reliance, independence and risk-taking, what is called "virtuous self-interest".

However, as such "markets" are never completely free — they are subject to extensive state regulation and compensation mechanisms to various deficiencies, they do not deliver the promise of increased quality through competition. Neither do they deliver sufficient efficiency in terms of management — the side-effects of choice and competition are, in most cases, an increase in time and expenditure on marketing and promotional activities.

Forms of exogenous privatization: private sector in education

The participation of the private sector in the delivery of public education is growing internationally. The private sector and NGOs have long been involved in the delivery of education in parts of

the developing world where universal state-funded education has not been established. Private providers have also long delivered elite, religious and other alternative forms of education in western industrialized nations. Indeed, the establishment of mass public schooling in places like Australia, Ireland and the UK depended on the extensive provision of elementary education by church schools. Yet the possibility of the public education sector as a site for significant profit-making has emerged only recently, often as an offshoot from or development of the sorts of often hidden forms of privatization in public education. In some cases private provision is an adjunct or complement to the public sector as in the case of the "cramming schools" in Japan (called "juku"), Taiwan and Korea, or personal tutoring as in the UK and U.S.

Impacts of privatization

Role of the state

What is emerging here is a new architecture of government based on interlocking relationships between disparate sites in and beyond the state. It is a new mode of state control — a controlled decontrol, that is the use of contracts, targets and performance monitoring to "steer" from a distance, rather than the use of traditional bureaucracies and administrative systems to deliver or micro-manage policy systems, like education or health or social services. In general terms this is a move towards a more "polycentric state". This constitutes the shift of emphasis that is the move from government to governance. This is not a break or rupture but a shift to a managing networks rather than directing state bureaucracies.

Impact of competition on schools

Competition as a device is only effective when market "failure" impacts on the survival or well-being of individual organizations or organizations are able to respond to competitive pressures. In education the competitive dynamic is animated by parental and student choice set alongside devolved per-capita funding. However, there is no simple relationship between parental choice and school

quality and nor do schools compete for recruits "on a level playing field".

One of the most frequent findings from studies of choice systems is that schools that are most successful in terms of published market information (test scores etc.) have skewed or unrepresentative student populations. As some schools secure a desired student population and strong position in the market, others become residualised, with an under-supply of students, and an over-representation of those who have been rejected by or selected out of the higher status, higher performing schools. These circumstances lock such schools into cycles of poor performance and student and teacher attrition.

Markets never guarantee best quality product to all, they simply establish balance between demand and supply. In education it means creating a highly unequal system where variation between schools is greater than inside them, and depends largely on socio-economic background of students.

Impact of new public management on teachers

Performance management in practical terms rests on the increasing use of data-bases, appraisal meetings, annual reviews, report writing, quality-assurance visits, the publication of student achievements, inspections and peer reviews to make schools and teachers visible and constantly accountable. The teacher is subject to a constant flow of judgments, measures, comparisons and targets.

One effect of these processes of surveillance is to re-orient teacher's pedagogical activities towards those which are likely to have measurable performance outcomes and away from aspects of social, emotional or moral development that have no immediate performative value. Relationships with colleagues may also be change as they come to be viewed more in terms of their performative worth than their value as persons and colleagues.

Impact on student achievement

The evidence of the achievement effects of privatizations is very unclear, contradictory and hotly-contested. Most of the evidence comes from the U.S. or UK and in the former some of it is funded or

promoted by pro-choice, pro-market organizations.

While some studies advocate that public schools respond to competition by becoming more productive, that students' achievement rises when they attend schools of choice and that students attending private schools with vouchers or who switch to charter schools are neither more advantaged nor higher achieving than other students (Hoxby 2003), others conclude that competition has no causal effect on the performance of schools. Most of the observed positive correlation between the number of competing schools and pupil attainments is driven by unobserved neighbourhood characteristics or endogenous selection of pupils with choice into better quality schools (Gibbons and Silva, 2006).

Nevertheless, as OECD observes in the latest PISA study,[2] education systems with smaller in-between school variation and lower impact of student socio-economic background characteristics tend on average to achieve better results.

Impact on identities

Targets, accountability, competition and choice, leadership, entrepreneurism, performance-related pay and privatization articulate new ways of thinking about what teachers and school leaders do; what they value and what their purposes are.

For head-teachers the transformation means the weakening and breaking-down of professional-ethical systems of decision-making in schools and their replacement by entrepreneurial-competitive ones — a process of "de-professionalization", what Richard Sennett calls the "corrosion of character" (Sennett 1998).

Impact on labour relations and trade union rights

Forms of privatization in education have provoked a re-working of labour relations and conditions of employment. This brings with it concomitant constraints on the role of education unions and undermines collective bargaining and employment agreements.

Individualized contracts, performance-related pay, flexible contracts and the mix of qualified and other teaching personnel differentiate teachers both inside education systems and even

inside individual schools. Moving from collective agreements to individualized temporarily contracts, makes it increasingly difficult to negotiate and bargain collectively, hence, undermining fundamental democratic rights to organize and defend interests collectively.

Impact on education perception as public good

The various approaches to education outlined above work together to make education more like a "commodity" owned by and benefiting the individual and her/his employer within which "everything is viewed in terms of quantities; everything is simply a sum of value realised or hoped for" (Slater and Tonkiss, 2001) rather than a public good that benefits the society as a whole. This is the displacement of *use values* by *exchange values*. While policy accounts of education matched to the needs of employment and the economy — a human capital approach–argues that this benefits society as a whole by creating a strong economy as well as individual wealth, it is difficult to see this in practice. Furthermore, there is a conceptual shift from education as an intrinsically valuable shared resource which the state owes to its citizens to a consumer product for which the individual must take first responsibility, as it is this individual who reaps the rewards of being educated. This conceptual shift changes fundamentally what it means for a society to educate its citizens.

Conclusion

Privatization of education leads not only to changes in the way education is delivered, but also sets a new language for education policy, and new roles, positions and identities for teachers, students, and parents. Privatization in education changes the way in which education is organised, managed and provided; how the curriculum is decided and taught; how students' performance is assessed; and how students, teachers, schools and communities are judged. Privatization tendencies also change how teachers are prepared; the nature of and access to on-going professional development; the terms and conditions of teachers' contracts and pay; the nature of teachers' day-to-day activities and the way they experience their working lives. Privatization also challenges the capacities of Education Unions to

bargain collectively on behalf of their members and more generally participate in education policy. Most importantly, it changes education as a whole — from the public service which serves community through the democratic process to the private good which serves consumer through the market.

GUNTARS CATLAKS is currently a senior research co-ordinator at Education International – World federation of education unions in Brussels, Belgium. His work includes monitoring on-going research as well as undertaking original surveys worldwide in the fields of education quality, equal access and teacher employment, development and work conditions. His primary focus is on current education policies in these areas. An important aspect of Guntars' work is the exchange of information among the EI Research Network's affiliates. Guntars previously worked as an expert and co-ordinator in education policy analysis. He has particular experience in social sciences and citizenship education, as well multicultural/bilingual education and reform policies in Central Eastern Europe. Guntars has working experience as a teacher, curriculum developer, textbook writer and researcher both in native Latvia and internationally.

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