**Rhetorical Reforms: Markets, Standards and Inequality**

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**Right Turn**

In his influential history of curriculum debates, Herbert Kliebard has documented that educational issues have consistently involved major conflicts and compromises among groups with competing visions of "legitimate" knowledge, what counts as "good" teaching and learning, and what is a "just" society (Kliebard, 1986). That such conflicts have deep roots in conflicting views of racial, class, and gender justice in education and the larger society is ratified in even more critical recent work as well (see, e.g., Rury and Mirel, 1996; Teitelbaum, 1996; Selden, 1999). While I believe neither that these competing visions have ever had equal holds on the imagination of educators or the general citizenry nor that they have ever had equal power to effect their visions, it is still clear that no analysis of education can be fully serious without placing at its very core a sensitivity to the ongoing struggles that constantly shape the terrain on which education operates.

Today is no different than in the past. A "new" set of compromises, a new alliance and new power bloc has been formed that has increasing influence in education and all things social. This power bloc combines multiple fractions of capital who are committed to neo-liberal marketized solutions to educational problems, neo-conservative intellectuals who want a "return" to higher standards and a "common culture," authoritarian populist religious fundamentalists who are deeply worried about secularity and the preservation of their own traditions, and particular fractions of the professionally oriented new middle class who are committed to the ideology and techniques of accountability, measurement, and "management." While there are clear tensions and conflicts within this alliance, in general its overall aims are in providing the educational conditions believed necessary both for increasing international competitiveness, profit, and discipline and for returning us to a romanticized past of the "ideal" home, family, and school (Apple, 1993; Apple, 1996).

In essence, the new alliance has integrated education into a wider set of ideological commitments. The objectives in education are the same as those which guide its economic and social welfare goals. They include the dramatic expansion of that eloquent fiction, the free market; the drastic reduction of government responsibility for social needs; the reinforcement of intensely competitive structures of mobility both inside and outside the school; the lowering of people's expectations for economic security; the "disciplining" of culture and the body; and the popularization of what is clearly a form of Social Darwinist thinking, as the recent popularity of The Bell Curve (Herrnstein and Murray, 1994; see also, Kincheloe and Steinberg, 1996) so obviously and distressingly indicates.

The seemingly contradictory discourse of competition, markets, and choice on the one hand and accountability, performance objectives, standards, national testing, and

national curriculum have created such a din that it is hard to hear anything else. As I have shown in Cultural Politics and Education (Apple, 1996), these tendencies actually oddly reinforce each other and help cement conservative educational positions into our daily lives in many nations.

**New Markets, Old Traditions**

Behind a good deal of the New Right's emerging discursive ensemble was a position that emphasized "a culturalist construction of the nation as a (threatened) haven for white (Christian) traditions and values" (Gillborn, 1997a, p.2). This involved the construction of an imagined national past that is at least partly mythologized, and then employing it to castigate the present. Gary McCulloch argues that the nature of the historical images of schooling has changed. Dominant imagery of education as being "safe, domesticated, and progressive" (that is, as leading toward progress and social/personal improvement) has shifted to become "threatening, estranged, and regressive" (McCulloch, 1997, p.80). The past is no longer the source of stability, but a mark of failure, disappointment, and loss. The notion that progressivism is now in the dominant position in educational policy and practice and has destroyed a valued earlier past is echoed in the public pronouncements of such figures as William Bennett, E.D. Hirsch, Jr., and others. All of them believe that only by tightening control over curriculum and teaching (and students, of course), restoring "our" lost traditions, making education more disciplined and competitive as they are certain it was in the past--only then can we have effective schools. These figures are joined by others who have similar criticisms, but who instead turn to a different past for a different future. Their past is less that of awe and authority, but one of market "freedom." For them, nothing can be accomplished--even the restoration of awe and authority--without setting the market loose on schools so as to ensure that only "good" ones survive.

We should understand that these policies are radical transformations. If they had come from the other side of the political spectrum, they would have been ridiculed in many ways, given the ideological tendencies in our nations. Further, not only are these policies based on a romanticized pastoral past, these reforms have not been notable for their grounding in research findings. Indeed, when research has been used, it has often either served as a rhetoric of justification for preconceived beliefs about the supposed efficacy of markets or regimes of tight accountability or they have been based--as in the case of Chubb and Moe's much publicized work on marketization (Chubb and Moe, 1990)--on quite flawed research (see, e.g., Whitty, 1997).

Yet, no matter how radical some of these proposed "reforms" are and no matter how weak the empirical basis of their support, they have now redefined the terrain of debate of all things educational. After years of conservative attacks and mobilizations, it has become clear that "ideas that were once deemed fanciful, unworkable--or just plain extreme" are now increasingly being seen as common-sense (Gillborn, 1997b, p.357).

Tactically, the reconstruction of common-sense that has been accomplished has proven to be extremely effective. For example, there are clear discursive strategies being employed here, ones that are characterized by "plain speaking" and speaking in a language that "everyone can understand." (I do not wish to be wholly negative about this. The importance of these things is something many "progressive" educators,

including many writers on critical pedagogy, have yet to understand {Apple, 1988}.) These strategies also involve not only presenting one's own position as "common-sense," but also usually tacitly implying that there is something of a conspiracy among one's opponents to deny the truth or to say only that which is "fashionable" (Gillborn, 1997b, p.353). It is hard to miss these characteristics in some of the conservative literature such as Herrnstein and Murray's (1994) publicizing of the unthinkable "truth" about genetics and intelligence or E.D. Hirsch's (1996) latest "tough" discussion of the destruction of "serious" schooling by progressive educators.

**Markets and Performance**

Let us take as an example of the ways in which all this operates one element of the conservative restoration--the neo-liberal claim that the invisible hand of the market will inexorably lead to better schools. As Roger Dale reminds us, "the market" acts as a metaphor rather than an explicit guide for action. It is not denotative, but connotative. Thus, it must itself be "marketed" to those who will exist in it and live with its effects (Roger Dale, quoted in Menter, et al, 1997, p.27). Markets are marketed, are made legitimate, by a depoliticizing strategy. They are said to be natural and neutral, and governed by effort and merit. And those opposed to them are by definition, hence, also opposed to effort and merit. Markets, as well, are supposedly less subject to political interference and the weight of bureaucratic procedures. Plus, they are grounded in the rational choices of individual actors (Menter, et al, 1997, p.27). Thus, markets and the guarantee of rewards for effort and merit are to be coupled together to produce "neutral," yet positive, results. Mechanisms, hence, must be put into place that give evidence of entrepreneurial efficiency and effectiveness. This coupling of markets and mechanisms for the generation of evidence of performance is exactly what has occurred. Whether it works is open to question.

In what is perhaps the most comprehensive critical review of all of the evidence on marketization, Geoff Whitty cautions us not to mistake rhetoric for reality. After examining research from a number of countries, Whitty argues that while advocates of marketized "choice" plans assume that competition will enhance the efficiency and responsiveness of schools, as well as give disadvantaged children opportunities that they currently do not have, this may be a false hope (Whitty, 1997, p.58). These hopes are not now being realized and are unlikely to be realized in the future "in the context of broader policies that do nothing to challenge deeper social and cultural inequalities" (Whitty, 1997, p.58). As he goes on to say, "Atomized decision-making in a highly stratified society may appear to give everyone equal opportunities, but transforming responsibility for decision-making from the public to the private sphere can actually reduce the scope of collective action to improve the quality of education for all" (p.58). When this is connected to the fact that, as I shall show shortly, in practice neo-liberal policies involving market "solutions" may actually serve to reproduce--not subvert--traditional hierarchies of class and race, this should give us reason to pause (Whitty, 1997; Whitty, Edwards, and Gewirtz, 1993; Apple, 1996).

Thus, rather than taking neo-liberal claims at face value, we should want to ask about their hidden effects that are too often invisible in the rhetoric and metaphors of their proponents. Given the limitations of what one can say in an article of this length I shall select a few issues that have been given less attention than they deserve, but on which

there is now significant research.

**The State and Neo-liberal Reform**

The English experience is apposite here, especially since proponents of the market such as Chubb and Moe (1990) rely so heavily on it and because that is where the tendencies I analyze are most advanced. In England, the 1993 Education Act documents the state's commitment to marketization. Governing bodies of local educational authorities (LEAs) are now mandated to formally consider "going GM" (that is, opting out of the local school system's control and entering into the competitive market) every year (Power, Halpin, and Fitz, 1994, p.27). Thus, the weight of the state stands behind the press towards neo-liberal reforms there. [1] Yet, rather than leading to curriculum responsiveness and diversification, the competitive market has not created much that is different from the traditional models so firmly entrenched in schools today (Power, Halpin, and Fitz, 1994, p.39). Nor has it radically altered the relations of inequality that characterize schooling.

In their own extensive analyses of the effects of marketized reforms "on the ground," Ball and his colleagues point to some of the reasons why we need to be quite cautious here. As they document, in these situations educational principles and values are often compromised such that commercial issues become more important in curriculum design and resource allocation (Ball, Bowe, and Gewirtz, 1994, p.19). For instance, the coupling of markets with the demand for and publication of performance indicators such as "examination league tables" in England has meant that schools are increasingly looking for ways to attract "motivated" parents with "able" children. In this way, schools are able to enhance their relative position in local systems of competition. This represents a subtle, but crucial shift in emphasis--one that is not openly discussed as often as it should be--from student needs to student performance and from what the school does for the student to what the student does for the school. This is also accompanied too uncomfortably often by a shift of resources away from students who are labelled as having special needs or learning difficulties, with some of these needed resources now being shifted to marketing and public relations. "Special needs" students are not only expensive, but deflate test scores on those all important league tables.

The entire enterprise establishes a new metric and a new set of goals based on a constant striving to win the market game. What this means is of considerable import, not only in terms of its effects on daily school life but in the ways all of this signifies a transformation of what counts as a good society and a responsible citizen. Let me say something about this generally.

I noted earlier that behind all educational proposals are visions of a just society and a good student. The neo-liberal reforms I have been discussing construct this in a particular way. While the defining characteristic of neo-liberalism is largely based on the central tenets of classical liberalism, in particular classic economic liberalism, there are crucial differences between classical liberalism and neo-liberalism. These differences are absolutely essential in understanding the politics of education and the transformations education is currently undergoing. Mark Olssen clearly details these differences in the following passage. It is worth quoting in its entirety.

Whereas classical liberalism represents a negative conception of state power in that the individual was to be taken as an object to be freed from the interventions of the state, neo-liberalism has come to represent a positive conception of the state's role in creating the appropriate market by providing the conditions, laws and institutions necessary for its operation. In classical liberalism, the individual is characterized as having an autonomous human nature and can practice freedom. In neo-liberalism the state seeks to create an individual who is an enterprising and competitive entrepreneur. In the classical model the theoretical aim of the state was to limit and minimize its role based on postulates which included universal egoism (the self-interested individual); invisible hand theory which dictated that the interests of the individual were also the interests of the society as a whole; and the political maxim of laissez-faire. In the shift from classical liberalism to neo-liberalism, then, there is a further element added, for such a shift involves a change in subject position from "homo economicus," who naturally behaves out of self-interest and is relatively detached from the state, to "manipulatable man," who is created by the state and who is continually encouraged to be "perpetually responsive." It is not that the conception of the self-interested subject is replaced or done away with by the new ideals of "neo-liberalism," but that in an age of universal welfare, the perceived possibilities of slothful indolence create necessities for new forms of vigilance, surveillance, "performance appraisal" and of forms of control generally. In this model the state has taken it upon itself to keep us all up to the mark. The state will see to it that each one makes a "continual enterprise of ourselves"...in what seems to be a process of "governing without governing." (Olssen, 1996, p.340)

The results of Ball and his colleagues' research document how the state does indeed do this, enhancing that odd combination of marketized individualism and control through constant and comparative public assessment. Widely publicized league tables determine one's relative value in the educational marketplace. Only those schools with rising performance indicators are worthy. And only those students who can "make a continual enterprise of themselves" can keep such schools going in the "correct" direction. Yet, while these issues are important, they fail to fully illuminate some of the other mechanisms through which differential effects are produced by neo-liberal reforms. Here, class issues come to the fore in ways that Ball, Bowe, and Gewirtz (1994) make clear.

**Economic, Social and Cultural Capital**

Middle class parents are clearly the most advantaged in this kind of cultural assemblage, and not only as we saw because schools seek them out. Middle class parents have become quite skilled, in general, in exploiting market mechanisms in education and in bringing their social, economic, and cultural capital to bear on them. "Middle class parents are more likely to have the knowledge, skills and contacts to decode and manipulate what are increasingly complex and deregulated systems of choice and recruitment. The more deregulation, the more possibility of informal procedures being employed. The middle class also, on the whole, are more able to move their children around the system" (Ball, Bowe, and Gewirtz, 1994, p.19). That class and race intersect and interact in complex ways means that-even though we need to be clear that marketized systems in education often expressly have their conscious and unconscious raison d'etre in a fear of "the other" and often are hidden expressions of a racialization of educational policy--the differential results will "naturally" be decidedly raced as well as

classed. [2]

Economic and social capital can be converted into cultural capital in various ways. In marketized plans, more affluent parents often have more flexible hours and can visit multiple schools. They have cars--often more than one--and can afford driving their children across town to attend a "better" school. They can as well provide the hidden cultural resources such as camps and after school programs (dance, music, computer classes, etc.) that give their children an "ease," a "style," that seems "natural" and acts as a set of cultural resources. Their previous stock of social and cultural capital--who they know, their "comfort" in socialencounters with educational officials--is an unseen but powerful storehouse of resources. Thus, more affluent parents are more likely to have the informal knowledge and skill-what Bourdieu would call the habitus (Bourdieu, 1984)--to be able to decode and use marketized forms to their own benefit. This sense of what might be called "confidence"--which is itself the result of past choices that tacitly but no less powerfully depend on the economic resources to actually have had the ability to make economic choices--is the unseen capital that underpins their ability to negotiate marketized forms and "work the system" through sets of informal cultural rules (Ball, Bowe, and Gewirtz, 1994, pp.20-22).

Of course, it needs to be said that working class, poor, and/or immigrant parents are not skill-less in this regard, by any means. (After all, it requires an immense amount of skill, courage, and social and cultural resources to survive under exploitative and depressing material conditions. Thus, collective bonds, informal networks and contacts, and an ability to work the system are developed in quite nuanced, intelligent, and often impressive ways here.) However, the match between the historically grounded habitus expected in schools and in its actors and those of more affluent parents, combined with the material resources available to more affluent parents, usually leads to a successful conversion of economic and social capital into cultural capital (see Bourdieu, 1996; Swartz, 1997). And this is exactly what is happening in England.

These claims both about what is happening inside of schools and about larger sets of power relations are supported by even more recent synthetic analyses of the overall results of neo-liberal and neo-conservative policies examines the tendencies internationally by comparing what has happened in a number of nations--for example, the United States, England and Wales, Australia, and New Zealand--where this combination has been increasingly powerful. The results confirm the arguments I have made here. Let me rehearse some of the most significant and disturbing findings of such research.

**Beyond Test Scores**

It is unfortunately all too usual that the most widely used measures of the "success" of school reforms are the results of standardized achievement tests. This simply will not do. We need to constantly ask what reforms do to schools as a whole and to each of their participants, including teachers, students, administrators, community members, local activists, and so on. To take one set of examples, as marketized "self-managing" schools grow in many nations, the role of the school principal is radically transformed. More, not less, power is actually consolidated within an administrative structure. More time and energy is spent on aintaining or enhancing a public image of a "good school" and

less time and energy is spent on pedagogic and curricular substance. At the same time, teachers seem to be experiencing not increased autonomy and professionalism, but intensification (Apple 1988; 1993). And, oddly, as noted before schools themselves become more similar, and more committed, to standard, traditional, whole class methods of teaching and a standard and traditional (and often mono-cultural) curriculum (Whitty, Power, and Halpin 1998, pp.12-13). Only directing our attention to test scores would cause us to miss some truly profound transformations, many of which we may find disquieting.

One of the reasons these broader effects are so often produced is that in all too many countries, neo-liberal visions of quasi-markets are usually accompanied by neo-conservative pressure to regulate content and behavior through such things as national curricula, national standards, and national systems of assessment. The combination is historically contingent; that is, it is not absolutely necessary that the two emphases are combined. But there are characteristics of neo-liberalism that make it more likely that an emphasis on the weak state and a faith in markets will cohere with an emphasis on the strong state and a commitment to regulating knowledge, values, and the body.

**Performance**

This is partly the case because of the increasing power of the "evaluative state." This signifies what initially may seem to be contradictory tendencies. At the same time as the state appears to be devolving power to individuals and autonomous institutions which are themselves increasingly competing in a market, the state remains strong in key areas (Whitty, Power, and Halpin 1998, p.36). As I claimed earlier, one of the key differences between classical liberalism and its faith in "enterprising individuals" in a market and current forms of neo-liberalism is the latter's commitment to a regulatory state. Neo-liberalism does indeed demand the constant production of evidence that one is in fact "making an enterprise of oneself" (Ollsen, 1996). Thus, under these conditions not only does education become a marketable commodity like bread and cars in which the values, procedures, and metaphors of business dominate, but its results must be reducible to standardized "performance indicators" (Whitty, Power, and Halpin, 1998, pp.37-38; see also Clarke and Newman, 1997). This is ideally suited to the task of providing a mechanism for the neo-conservative attempts to specify what knowledge, values, and behaviors should be standardized and officially defined as "legitimate," a point I shall expand upon in the next section of this paper.

In essence, we are witnessing a process in which the state shifts the blame for the very evident inequalities in access and outcome it has promised to reduce, from itself onto individual schools, parents, and children. This is, of course, also part of a larger process in which dominant economic groups shift the blame for the massive and unequal effects of their own misguided decisions from themselves onto the state. The state is then faced with a very real crisis in legitimacy. Given this, we should not be at all surprised that the state will then seek to export this crisis outside itself (Apple, 1996; Whitty, Power, and Halpin, 1998).

Other, more proximate, effects inside schools are equally striking. For instance, even though principals seem to have more local power in these supposedly decentralized schools, because of the cementing in of neo-conservative policies principals "are

increasingly forced into a position in which they have to demonstrate performance along centrally prescribed curricula in a context in which they have diminishing control" (Whitty, Power, and Halpin, 1998, p.63). Because of the intensification that I mentioned before, both principals and teachers experience considerably heavier work loads and ever escalating demands for accountability, a never ending schedule of meetings, and in many cases a growing scarcity of resources both emotional and physical (Whitty, Power, and Halpin, 1998, pp.67-68).

**Traditionalism**

Further, as in the research in England, in nearly all of the countries studied the market did not encourage diversity in curriculum, pedagogy, organization, clientele, or even image. It instead consistently devalued alternatives and increased the power of dominant models. Of equal significance, it also consistently exacerbated differences in access and outcome based on race, ethnicity, and class (Whitty, Power, and Halpin, 1998, pp.119-120).

The return to "traditionalism" led to a number of things. It delegitimated more critical models of teaching and learning, a point that is crucial to recognize in any attempt to think through the possibilities of cultural struggles and critical pedagogies in schools. It both reintroduced restratification within the school and lessened the possibility that detracking would occur. More emphasis was given to "gifted" children and "fast track" classes, while students who were seen as less academically able were therefore "less attractive." In England, the extent of this was nowhere more visible than in the alarming rate of students being excluded from schools. Much of this was caused by the intense pressure to constantly demonstrate higher achievement rates. This was especially powerful in marketized contexts in which the "main driving force appeared to be commercial rather than educational" (Whitty, Power, and Halpin, 1998, p.90).

In their own analysis of these worrisome and more hidden results, Whitty, Power, and Halpin (1998) demonstrate that among the dangerous effects of quasi-markets are the ways in which schools that wish to maintain or enhance their market position engage in "cream-skimming," ensuring that particular kinds of students with particular characteristics are accepted and particular kinds of students are found wanting. For some schools, stereotypes were reproduced in that girls were seen a more valuable, as were students from some Asian communities. Afro-Caribbean children were often clear losers in this situation. The overall conclusions are clear. "[In] current circumstances choice is as likely to reinforce hierarchies as to improve educational opportunities and the overall quality of schooling" (Whitty, Power, and Halpin, 1998, p.14).

This is not to dismiss either the possibility or necessity of school reform. However, we need to take seriously the probability that only by focusing on the exogenous socio-economic features, not simply the organizational features, of "successful" schools can all schools succeed. Eliminating poverty through greater income parity, establishing effective and much more equal health and housing programs, and positively refusing to continue the hidden and not so hidden politics of racial exclusion and degradation that so clearly still characterize daily life in many nations (and in which marketized plans need to be seen as partly a structure to avoid the body and culture of "the Other")--only by tackling these issues together can substantive progress be made. Unless discussions

of critical pedagogy are themselves grounded in a recognition of these realities, they too may fall into the trap of assuming that schools can do it alone.

**National Curriculum and National Testing**

I showed in the previous section that there are connections between at least two dynamics operating in neo-liberal reforms, "free" markets and increased surveillance. This can be seen in the fact that in many contexts, marketization has been accompanied by a set of particular policies for "producers," for those professionals working within education. These policies have been strongly regulatory and have been quite instrumental in reconstituting common-sense. As in the case of the linkage between national tests and performance indicators published as league tables, they have been organized around a concern for external supervision, regulation, and external judgement of performance (Menter, et al., 1997, p.8) and have increasingly been colonized by parents who possess what is seen as "appropriate" economic, social, and cultural capital. This concern for external supervision and regulation is not only connected with a strong mistrust of "producers" (e.g., teachers) and to the need for ensuring that people continually make enterprises out of themselves. It is also clearly linked both to the neo-conservative sense of a need to "return" to a lost past of high standards, discipline, awe, and "real" knowledge and to the professional middle class's own ability to carve out a sphere of authority within the state for its own commitment to management techniques and efficiency. The focus on efficient management plays a prime role here, one in which many neo-liberals and neo-conservatives alike find useful.

There is no necessary contradiction between a general set of marketizing and deregulating interests and processes--such as voucher and choice plans--and a set of enhanced regulatory processes--such as plans for national curricula and national testing. "The regulatory form permits the state to maintain 'steerage' over the aims and processes of education from within the market mechanism" (Menter, et al., 1997, p.24). Such steerage has often been vested in such things as national standards, national curricula, and national testing. Forms of all of these are being pushed for in the United States currently and are the subject of considerable controversy, some of which cuts across ideological lines and shows some of the tensions within the different elements contained under the umbrella of the conservative restoration.

I have argued in Cultural Politics and Education that paradoxically a national curriculum and especially a national testing program are the first and most essential steps toward increased marketization. They actually provide the mechanisms for comparative data that "consumers" need to make markets work as markets (Apple, 1996). Absent these mechanisms, there is no comparative base of information for "choice." Yet, we do not have to argue about these regulatory forms in a vacuum. Like the neo-liberal markets I discussed in the previous section, they too have been instituted in England; and, once again, there is important research available that can and must make us duly cautious in going down this path.

One might want to claim that a set of national standards, national curricula, and national tests would provide the conditions for "thick morality." After all, such regulatory reforms are supposedly based on shared values and common sentiments that also create social spaces in which common issues of concern can be debated and made subject to

moral interrogation (Ball, Bowe, and Gewirtz, 1994, p.23). Yet, what counts as the "common," and how and by whom it is actually determined, is rather more thin than thick.

The authors of an extremely thorough review of recent assessment programs instituted in England and Wales provide a summary of what has happened in the struggle over a national curriculum. Gipps and Murphy argue that it has become increasingly obvious that the national assessment program attached to the national curriculum is more and more dominated by traditional models of testing and the assumptions about teaching and learning that lie behind them. At the same time, equity issues are becoming much less visible (Gipps and Murphy, 1994, p.209). In the calculus of values now in place in the regulatory state, efficiency, speed, and cost control replace more substantive concerns about social and educational justice. The pressure to get tests in place rapidly has meant that "the speed of test development is so great, and the curriculum and assessment changes so regular, that [there is] little time to carry out detailed analyses and trialing to ensure that the tests are as fair as possible to all groups" (Gipps and Murphy, 1994, p.209). The conditions for "thin morality"--in which the competitive individual of the market dominates and social justice will somehow take care of itself--are re-produced here. The combination of the neo-liberal market and the regulatory state, then, does indeed "work." However, it works in ways in which the metaphors of free market, merit, and effort hide the differential reality that is produced. While on the one hand this makes a socially and culturally critical pedagogy even more essential, it also makes it much more difficult to actually accomplish.

**Thinking Strategically**

In this article, I have raised serious questions about current educational "reform" efforts now underway in a number of nations. I have used research largely, but not solely, on the English experience(s) to document some of the hidden differential effects of two connected strategies--neo-liberal inspired market proposals and neo-liberal, neo-conservative, and middle class managerial inspired regulatory proposals. Taking a cue from Herbert Kliebard's historical analysis, I have described how different interests with different educational and social visions compete for dominion in the social field of power surrounding educational policy and practice. In the process, I have documented some of the complexities and imbalances in this field of power. These complexities and imbalances result in "thin" rather than "thick" morality and in the reproduction of both dominant pedagogical and curricular forms and ideologies and the social privileges that accompany them. Unless we honestly face these profound rightist transformations and think tactically about them, we will have little effect either on the creation of a counter-hegemonic common-sense or on the building of a counter-hegemonic alliance. The growth of that odd combination of marketization and regulatory state, the move towards pedagogic similarity and "traditional" academic curricula and teaching, the ability of dominant groups to exert leadership in the struggle over this, and the accompanying shifts in common-sense--all this cannot be wished away. Instead, it needs to be confronted honestly, and self-critically.

Having said this, however, I want to point to a hidden paradox in what I have done. Even though much of my own and others' research recently has been on the conservative restoration, there are dangers in such a focus of which we should be aware.

Research on the history, politics, and practices of rightist social and educational movements and "reforms" has enabled us to show the contradictions and unequal effects of such policies and practices. It has enabled the rearticulation of claims to social justice on the basis of solid evidence. This is all to the good. However, in the process, one of the latent effects has been the gradual framing of educational issues largely in terms of the conservative agenda. The very categories themselves--markets, choice, national curricula, national testing, standards-bring the debate onto the terrain established by neo-liberals and neo-conservatives. The analysis of "what is" has led to a neglect of "what might be." Thus, there has been a withering of substantive large scale discussions of feasible alternatives to neo-liberal and neo-conservative visions, policies, and practices, ones that would move well beyond them (Seddon, 1997, pp.165-166).

Although crucial, it is then not enough to deconstruct restorational policies in education. The Right has shown how important changes in common-sense are in the struggle for education. It is our task to collectively help rebuild it by reestablishing a sense that "thick" morality, and a "thick" democracy, are truly possible today. Perhaps some answers can be found in books such as Democratic Schools (Apple and Beane 1995) [3] or in publications such as Rethinking Schools. [4] Both provide critically oriented alternatives to the policies and practices now being proposed by neo-liberals and neo-conservatives. But one thing is certain, answers will not be found by mistaking the rhetoric of the market for reality.

**Notes**

[1] Whether there will be significant changes in this regard given the victory by "New Labour" over the Conservatives in the last election remains to be seen. Certain aspects of neo-liberal and neo-conservative policies have already been accepted by Labour, such as the acceptance of stringent cost controls on spending put in place by the previous Conservative government and an aggressive focus on "raising standards" in association with strict performance indicators.

[2] See the discussion of the radical state in Omi and Winant (1994) and the analyses of race and representation in McCarthy and Crichlow (1994) and McCarthy (1998).

[3] Translations of this volume have been or are due to be published Japan, Spain, Argentina, Brazil, Spain, Portugal and elsewhere. Thus, it is clear that providing critical answers to the pressing issues of "What do I do on Monday?" is seen as crucial in a number of nations.

[4] Rethinking schools is one of the best examples of the ways critical academics, elementary/middle/high school teachers, students, and community activists can work together in non-elitist ways. Information can be gotten from Rethinking Schools, 1001 E. Keefe Avenue, Milwaukee, Wisconsin 53212, USA. For faxes, the number is 414-964-7220. The email address is: RSBusiness@aol.com

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