

EDITORIAL INTRODUCTION

Education in the Market: Free Markets, Flea Markets and Supermarkets

(...) public education, which has been the repository of egalitarian aspirations and opportunities, has become more and more a force for social division and inequality. Education and the market have become increasingly entwined. (...) If these trends are to be reversed, popular movements and democratic decision making will have to assert themselves on behalf of schooling for all.

-Ira Katznelson & Margaret Weir, Schooling for All

In the Spring 1999 issue, CICE presents comparative international perspectives on the effects of market forces on education systems, administration and pedagogy. To frame the debate, we consider various concepts of the market. Do school choice and voucher programs function like free markets, with an invisible hand ensuring a socially just regulatory system? Are curricula and pedagogy just so many goods on a supermarket shelf? Or, could the enterprise of schooling resemble a global flea market where autonomous individuals interact unencumbered by institutional structures? Without implying that the marketization of schooling is a *fait accompli*, CICE submits that a profound discursive shift in educational debates has made the metaphor of the market a significant conceptual lens for viewing education. With this issue, it is our hope to shed light on these shifts and bring an international and comparative perspective to the debate.

According to its proponents, broadly speaking, privatization of public schooling provides greater choice for parents in selecting a school to meet their children's needs, improves academic satisfaction among parents, teachers and students, cuts costs and streamlines education bureaucracies. Opponents hold concerns for social equity (i.e. that providing parents choice will leave some students behind if their parents do not have access to information, or if not all parents hold the same interest in their children's education), consumerism, and removing decision-making from the public sphere. It is important note that these issues are generally debated on two different levels. The first is at the level of practical outcomes and solutions, and the second is theoretical and political. The articles published here speak to these issues.

The launch article to foster debate is a paper given by Michael Apple delivered at a CICE-sponsored lecture. In the paper, Apple argues that the neo-liberal policies involving markets, values and choice in education, coupled with neo-conservative mechanisms of cultural control, such as national testing and national curricula, increasingly result in "traditional" education and inequality. He contends that the shift from defining education as a public concern to a private good advantages privileged groups with economic, social and cultural capital rather than leading to more responsive and diverse options.

Steve Klees largely supports Apple's argument in *Privatization and neoliberalism: Ideology and evidence in rhetorical reforms*. He adds, however, that neo-liberal policies in fact "delegitimize government and disengage government and society from any collective responsibility for social welfare". He also believes that Apple elevates the

significance of the empirical evidence presented by proponents of privatization unnecessarily through debating its claims rather than exposing the weaknesses of those claims.

Peter McLaren carries Apple's arguments into the context of expanding the work of critical theorists in *Contesting capital: Critical pedagogy and globalism - a response to Michael Apple*. He believes that critical pedagogy must move toward revolutionary pedagogy in order to form a "counter-hegemonic alliance" (quoting Apple) opposing neo-liberal regimes. He exhorts educators to examine the mechanisms that ensure the reproduction of capitalist social and economic relations, as well as to "unravel the complex ways in which schools participate in the asymmetrical distribution of technical knowledge and skills".

Adriana Puiggrós writes from Argentina. In *The consequences of neoliberalism on the educational prospects of Latin American youth*, she analyzes the trends in privatization from the perspective of a country that has implemented packaged reforms and observes that these policies have weakened the entire education system without achieving improvement in the quality of basic education. According to Puiggrós, "decentralization has introduced disorder, not efficiency, in educational systems, creating serious problems for societies that are growing poorer and more indebted". World Bank and International Monetary Fund development policies have exacerbated disparities in Argentina.

In post-apartheid South Africa, "changing education is considered a pre-requisite for economic growth" and "outcomes based education" is seen as the means to achieve that growth, according to Jonathan Jansen. It is intended to develop citizens who are "technologically literate and able to function in a knowledge-driven economy". In *Globalization, curriculum and the third world state: In dialogue with Michael Apple*, he points out, however, that the new "reductionist pedagogical strategies (like 'outcomes based education')" is justified through language of redistribution. Yet words do not translate intended impacts into reality. According to Jansen's empirical work, the disparity between traditionally white schools and traditionally black schools has only increased since implementing these strategies.

More and more public schools in China are becoming privatized to meet the "differentiated demand" of parents unsatisfied with their current options, according to Haojing Cheng and Brian Delany. In *Quality education and social stratification: The paradox of private schooling in China*, they explore the complicated groupings and break down the various definitions of private schools in China. With the advent of privatization, Cheng and Delany question the assumption that "private schools only strive toward quality education for a public good". They point out the unintended impact private schooling may have on social stratification in China and expresses concern that these assumptions be examined.

Like Cheng and Delany, Peter Cookson, in *Privatization and educational equity: Can markets create a just school system?*, examines the assumptions inherent in privatization of public schooling, focusing particularly on voucher programs in the U.S. He analyzes the "theory of quasi-markets which blends state regulation with entrepreneurship"

promoted by market advocates. Through pointing out inconsistencies in market theory, Cookson seeks to show that when applied to public schooling, the same theory cannot govern education in a socially just way.

Charles Glenn believes in a strongly regulated market, with effective constraints in the interest of social justice (more effective than the present system of residential allocation of schooling opportunities in the U.S.), not in "letting the market rip". He supports choice in public schooling in the U.S. and abroad in the form of vouchers, charter and religious schools. He argues that progressives do themselves a disservice by discounting positive benefits of certain aspects of the privatization of public schooling, and notes the progressive claim that privatization "undermines the common public school and thus divide American society" is applied inconsistently. If it were consistent, private schools should not exist at all. Striving toward greater accountability within public schools and focusing on insuring that choice function equitably, Glenn lauds the efforts of the choice movement in public schools and encourages furthering these programs in *Why are progressives so hostile to school choice policies?*

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