

EDUCATION REFORM AND CIVIC IDENTITY: GLOBAL AND NATIONAL INFLUENCES*

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Introduction

In recent years, many nations have sought to reformulate the relationship between government, schools and parents. My own research has looked at the growing emphasis on parental choice and school autonomy in England, Sweden, Australia, New Zealand and the United States (Whitty et al 1998), but similar policies are being pursued or advocated elsewhere. To what extent are these policies comparable? Can they be said to constitute a coherent trend? And, if so, what does it signify? Is the widespread emergence of devolutionary policies nothing more than a series of local responses to local crises, or does it indicate a more profound restructuring of relations between state and civil society on an international scale?

The almost simultaneous emergence of similar reforms across continents has led some to suggest that the current restructuring of education needs to be understood as a global phenomenon. Indeed, it has been argued that this trend is part of a broader economic, political and cultural process of globalisation in which national differences are eroded, state bureaucracies fragment and the notion of mass systems of public welfare, including education, disappears. But, rather than embracing such grand theories wholeheartedly, we need to consider whether contextual specificities are at least as significant as any broader cross-national developments. In other words, we need to explore the degree of commonality and coherence within the education reforms of different countries before going on to consider the extent to which we are witnessing a fundamental change in the governance of national systems of education.

Policy-makers are often criticised for looking overseas for solutions to domestic problems in the naive belief that policies designed in one context can be unproblematically transported elsewhere. Those involved with analysing these policies also need to be wary of decontextualising reforms. To compare across countries without recognising the distinctive historical and cultural dimensions of policies is to risk 'false universalism' (Rose 1991) whereby similarities are spotted without reference to the context in which they were developed.

Certainly, any cross-national comparison needs to acknowledge the differences in the degree and manner in which education is being restructured. The extent to which responsibility has been devolved downwards differs greatly both between and within countries. The reforms in New Zealand have eliminated all intermediate levels of decision-making between central government and schools. This has resulted in a situation where extensive powers have been

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delegated to schools, but many have also been retained by, even consolidated within, central government. Recent reforms in England have been less dramatic, but are probably closest to this mode of devolution in so far as grant maintained schools in particular bypass the intermediate level influence of local education authorities (LEAs) and stand in an unmediated relationship with central government. While schools in New Zealand have more powers than any of the other 14 countries in an OECD (1995) study, mainstream public schools in the United States have the second fewest. Federal government there is deemed to have no decision-making powers, while even state governments have relatively few. Decision-making is concentrated at local levels, but principally within the district rather than the school. Within the Swedish public education system, decision-making is now concentrated at the local levels, but, unlike in the United States, it is divided evenly between the school and the district. In some ways, Sweden is probably of particular interest to Japan in this respect, having traditionally been a rather centralised, regulated and relatively successful educational system, which nevertheless has reduced the degree of prescription in its national curriculum and embarked on a process of restructuring through devolution and choice. The first stage of devolution was down to local government level, but there has subsequently been experimentation with competition and choice between individual schools, including state funding of private schools. This was taken furthest under a centre/right government in the early 1990s, and more recent social democratic governments has retained the main elements of the reform but tried to find a better balance between collective and individual interests (Miron 1993).

We clearly need to acknowledge differences in the political complexion of reforms which may look similar. In England, New Zealand, Sweden, Australia and the USA, or at least in individual states within these last two countries, devolution, institutional autonomy and school choice have often become associated with a conservative agenda for education. Yet, support for at least some aspects of these policies is by no means limited to New Right politicians who argue that social affairs are best organised according to the general principle of consumer sovereignty. Indeed, some of the early moves to devolution in Victoria, Australia in the 1980s were talked of in terms of professional and community empowerment, even though more recent policies there have been associated with a New Right marketising agenda (Angus 1995). This was also the case with some of the devolution initiatives in New Zealand in the 1980s, despite the fact that subsequent reforms there too have been more concerned with fostering market freedom than with equity (Grace 1991; Gordon, 1992). In both countries, governments of different political complexions have supported reform, albeit with somewhat different emphases. In the United States, the Chicago reforms were originally supported by a curious alliance of black groups seeking to establish community control of their local schools, white old-style liberals who had become disillusioned with the performance of the School Board, New Right advocates of school choice and some former student radicals of the 1960s. Similarly, radical reformers of many shades of opinion are currently looking to the United States' Charter School movement as the way to create their own 'educational spaces' (Wells et al 1996). In Sweden, while the balance has shifted back to a concern with equity issues with the return of a Social Democratic government, there has been cross-party support for the general direction of the reforms. And, even in England and Wales, where the reforms were most closely and consistently associated with the New Right Thatcher and Major governments, some of the key elements are being kept in place by the New Labour administration under Tony Blair.

Much of this confusing complexity derives from the many shades of meaning behind apparently similar policies. Not only do concepts like devolution and choice enter into different relationships with each other, they are 'multi-accented' concepts or 'sliding signifiers' in their own right. As Lauglo (1996) points out, in discussing 'decentralisation', it should not be thought of as a unitary concept. Indeed, he identifies eight alternatives to the conventional bureaucratic centralism of mass education systems, four of which reflect different political legitimations for redistributing authority and four which reflect different arguments concerning the quality of education provision and the efficient use of resources. These alternatives are variously, and often simultaneously, emphasised within each of our countries. Liberalism, or more accurately neo-liberalism, is evident within all of them, but perhaps most particularly in England and Wales where it has become closely articulated with the so-called 'new public management' combining what Lauglo terms 'market mechanisms' and 'management by objectives'. Such developments are also strongly in evidence in New Zealand and in some states in the USA and Australia. However, justifications for decentralisation within some American districts, such as Dade County Florida, can be seen as being related to pedagogic professionalism - at least within the reforms of the 1980s - while professional control was also an aspect of Swedish reforms at that time. A further feature of some justifications surrounding restructuring has been references to the democracy of local participation. This often takes the form of local populism, however, rather than participatory democracy. Any cross-national discussion of educational restructuring needs therefore to bear in mind a wide range of variance. Educational reform is being conducted within contexts with different histories, different constitutional and administrative arrangements and different political complexions. Moreover, the nature and extent of decentralisation, and the ways in which policies are interconnected, vary both within and between countries.

However, while such variance needs to be acknowledged, it should not obscure the common factors. It is clear from the above discussion that there are common trends across countries. As Fowler (1994) comments, despite the large body of 'exceptionality literature', 'important variations among institutions and cultures do not erase deeper similarities' - particularly between advanced industrial democracies. Despite the differences, there does appear to be considerable congruence in the policies in many different countries. Within the range of political rationales, it is the neo-liberal alternative which dominates, as does a particular emphasis on market type mechanisms. This decentralisation via the market is also articulated with justifications of quality and efficiency, drawing on the discourse of the new public management with its emphasis on strong school management and external scrutiny - made possible by the development of performance indicators and competency-based assessment procedures reinforced in many cases by external inspection. These developments in education policy reflect a broader tendency for liberal democracies to develop along the lines of what Gamble (1988) has called the 'strong state' and the 'free economy'. This strong state increasingly 'steers at a distance' and the notion of the free economy is extended to a marketised 'civil society' in which education and welfare services are offered to individual consumers by competing providers rather than provided collectively by the state for all citizens. In other words, bureaucratically provided welfare is increasingly being replaced by welfare distributed through 'quasi-markets' (Levacic 1995).

Accounting for Policy Convergence

Even though these directions in education policy have not penetrated all countries (Green 1994), and have so far had only limited influence in Japan, the similarity between the broad trends in many parts of the world suggests that education policy may well be witnessing something more significant than passing political fashion. In seeking to understand the similarities between policies, a range of explanations can be invoked. At one end of the continuum are those that highlight the role of individual policy-carriers, and at the other end are theories of globalisation and post-modernism where the traditional role of the nation state is overridden by multi-faceted international restructuring. Of course, these various explanations may not be mutually exclusive, but each emphasises a different locus of change which may have important implications for the possibility of generating potential alternatives to current policies.

One form of explanation is that ideas developed in one context have been copied in another. To some extent, neo-liberal policies have been actively fostered by international organisations, for example by the IMF and the World Bank in Latin America and Eastern Europe (Arnové 1996). But informal modes of transmission are probably more common (Whitty and Edwards 1998). There is certainly evidence to suggest that when education policy-makers formulate proposed reforms they look to other countries for inspiration and justification. Kenneth Baker, English Secretary of State for Education under Margaret Thatcher, drew inspiration for the City Technology College experiment from reports about and personal visits to specialist schools in New York City and elsewhere in the United States. Conversely, Britain's grant maintained schools policy apparently inspired some charter school legislation in the United States, notably in California, where the state superintendent is said to have been impressed by the policy following a brief visit to the United Kingdom. Moreover, some of the principals of the first schools to opt out in England have 'carried' the policy across the Atlantic in the course of attending programmes of study at the University of Southern California as part of their work for an MBA degree. With reference to Australia and New Zealand, Smyth (1993) claims that Victoria's *Schools for the Future* framework bears an 'even plagiaristic' resemblance to New Zealand's policy blueprint *Tomorrow's Schools*, which, he claims, was itself 'hijacked directly from Thatcher's England'. Seddon (1994) argues that Australia in general has displayed 'a dependent and subservient preoccupation with developments in the UK and USA' (p.4). Finally, Miron (1993) suggests that the centre-right coalition in Sweden looked to Thatcherite England for its inspiration, but then itself sought to become a 'world leader' in fostering choice policies in education.

But while policy-borrowing has clearly been a factor in the move towards choice within devolved systems of schooling, it only begs more questions. What gives these particular policies such widespread appeal across different countries and different political parties? To what extent does their appeal stem from a disillusionment with existing modes of education provision, or does it rather reflect a more general crisis within the state or even a shift of global proportions?

Some observers suggest that the reforms can be understood in terms of the transportation of changing modes of regulation from the sphere of production into other arenas, such as

schooling and welfare services. They point to a correspondence between the establishment of differentiated markets in welfare and a shift in the economy away from Fordism towards a post-Fordist mode of accumulation which 'places a lower value on mass individual and collective consumption and creates pressures for a more differentiated production and distribution of health, education, transport and housing' (Jessop et al 1987, p.109). Ball (1990), for example, has claimed to see in new forms of schooling a move away from the 'Fordist' school towards a 'post-Fordist' one - the educational equivalent of flexible specialisation driven by the imperatives of differentiated consumption replacing the old assembly-line world of mass production. These 'post-Fordist schools' are designed 'not only to produce the post-Fordist, multi-skilled, innovative worker but to behave in post-Fordist ways themselves; moving away from mass production and mass markets to niche markets and "flexible specialisation" ... a post-Fordist mind-set is thus having implications in schools for management styles, curriculum, pedagogy and assessment' (Kenway 1993, p.115).

Kenway (1993) herself actually goes further and regards the rapid rise of the market form in education as something much more significant than post-Fordism; she therefore terms it a 'postmodern' phenomenon, accentuating the nexus between the 'global' and the 'local'. Although notoriously difficult to define, within the realm of social relations, post-modernity is usually associated with processes of globalisation, the rise of new technologies, the breakdown of old collectivities and hierarchies and sometimes an increase in social reflexivity. Part of the appeal of the recent education reforms may thus lie in their declared intention to encourage the growth of different types of school, responsive to needs of particular communities and interest groups. They may seem to connect to the aspirations of groups who found little to identify with in the 'grand narratives' associated with modernist class-based politics. In this sense, the reforms might be viewed as a rejection of all totalising narratives and their replacement by 'a set of cultural projects united [only] by a self-proclaimed commitment to heterogeneity, fragmentation and difference' (Boyne and Rattansi 1990, p.9). In other words, support for schools run on a variety of principles could reflect a broader shift from the assumptions of modernity to those of postmodernity.

However, there are various problems with these 'new times' theses. They are not only 'notoriously vague' (Hickox 1995) but also tend to exaggerate the extent to which we have moved to a new regime of accumulation. The more optimistic versions also exaggerate the benefits of the changes. Neo-Fordism may therefore be a more appropriate term than Post-Fordism (Allen 1992), while Giddens' concept of 'high modernity' probably captures the combination of change and continuity rather better than that of 'postmodernity' (Giddens 1991). Indeed, new cultural forms and more flexible modes of capital accumulation may be shifts in surface appearance, rather than signs of the emergence of some entirely new post-capitalist or even post-industrial society (Harvey 1989).

Exporting the 'Crisis'

To that extent, the reforms may be better seen as new ways of dealing with the vagaries of capitalism. In this situation, the state's dominant mode of regulation is changing to one of 'steering at a distance'. To various degrees, the reforms have been prefaced with allegations that bureaucratically controlled education is both inefficient and unproductive. Systems of

'mass' schooling were seen to have 'failed' on a number of counts. They have disappointed those who see education as a route to a more equitable society as differences in educational outcomes continue to reflect differences in socio-economic status. Mass systems of public education are also deemed to have been unproductive in terms of economic returns, as is evident in frequently aired concerns about educational standards and international competitiveness. The new arrangements for managing education and other public services can be seen as new ways of tackling the problems of accumulation and legitimation facing the state in a situation where the traditional Keynesian 'welfare state' is no longer deemed viable (Dale 1989).

In particular, there are two directions along which the state needs to secure legitimacy. One relates to the need to conceal, or at least displace responsibility for, the shortcomings and inherent inequities of capitalism itself. The second relates to the requirement that it legitimates its own activities - for instance, disguising its relationship with capital through a position of benign neutrality. As capitalism fails to bring prosperity and opportunity, there is a danger that people will 'see through' not just the structural problems of education systems, but the basis of the mode of production. In many Western countries, the 1980s saw rising unemployment rates and, while some groups prospered throughout the decade, the gap between rich and poor grew wider.

Through explaining economic decline and enduring poverty in terms of failures within the state infrastructure, attention is deflected away from the essential injustices and contradictions of capitalism. The management of the public sector is called into question and the demands for reform prevail. The generation of policy alone becomes part of the solution. As Apple (1996) argues, governments 'must *be seen* to be doing something ... [r]eforming education is not only widely acceptable and relatively unthreatening, but just as crucially, "its success or failure will not be obvious in the short-term"' (Apple 1996, p.88, his emphasis). But, whereas in the past, the attempts to restore legitimacy may have involved increasing bureaucratisation and greater 'expert' intervention, these processes are now seen as the problem rather than the solution. Bureaucratic control of education, it is suggested, stifles responsiveness to the needs of business and industry.

It is also possible to argue that the current move towards school decentralisation arises from the state's inability convincingly to present public education as a means of promoting a more equitable society and redistributing real opportunities. Such a position is taken by Weiss (1993) who draws on the work of Weiler (1983) to suggest that, in Germany, devolution is the latest in a series of strategies used by the state to legitimate its policies and practices. He suggests that policies of school autonomy and parent empowerment leave conflict to be dealt with at lower levels of the system, with the higher administrative structures appearing uninvolved, and therefore, above reproach. Malen (1994) too uses concepts drawn from Weiler's (1989) work on decentralisation to suggest that site-based management in the United States may have considerable political utility for managing conflict and maintaining legitimacy.

Whether decentralisation is seen as a complete abdication of responsibility by the state, 'a deliberate process of subterfuge, distortion, concealment and wilful neglect as the state seeks to retreat in a rather undignified fashion from its historical responsibility for providing quality public education' (Smyth 1993, p.3), or a selective withdrawal from areas in which it has difficulty succeeding, such as equality of opportunity (Nash 1989), making educational

decision-making the responsibility of individual institutions and families is an effective strategy for 'shifting the blame'. The failure of individual schools to flourish as 'stand alone' institutions can be attributed to poor leadership or teaching quality. Similarly, unequal educational achievement among students can be explained through poor parenting - either through failing to exercise the new entitlement to choose effectively, or failing to engage with schools as active partners and participants. The burden of sustaining meritocratic ideology is shifted from the shoulders of government.

Fragmenting public systems of education may not only legitimise the political authority of the state and the credibility of capitalism as the most feasible mode of production, it may also be an example of the way in which the state, during periods of gross economic pressure, seeks ways to cut back on public expenditure generally in order to privilege the needs of capital (eg. through tax cuts) and thus provide the best possible conditions for sustaining productivity and maximising profit. Certainly, the reforms have not been followed by increased investment into education beyond initial 'pump-priming' money or cash incentives for favoured schemes. The trend towards self-management of schools often brings little more than 'the capacity to "manage" specific resources and centrally determined policy at the school site within the context of increasingly contracting state revenues' (Robertson 1993). Some observers claim that devolution is 'not what it purports to be - it is a budget cutting exercise masquerading under the banner of schools getting more control of their own affairs' (Smyth 1993).

The Changing Role of the State

However, it seems clear that, although the extent of any underlying social changes can easily be exaggerated by various 'post-ist' forms of analysis, both the discourse and the contexts of political struggles in and around education *have* been significantly altered by recent reforms. Not only have changes in the nature of the state influenced the reforms in education, the reforms in education are themselves beginning to change the way we think about the role of the state and what we expect of it. Green (1990) has pointed to the way in which education has not only been an important part of state activity in modern societies, but also played a significant role in the process of state formation itself in the 18th and 19th centuries. The current changes in education policy may similarly be linked to a redefinition of the nature of the state and a reworking of the relations between state and civil society.

At one level, the new policies foster the idea that responsibility for education and welfare, beyond the minimum required for public safety, is to be defined largely as a matter for individuals and families. Not only is the scope of the state narrowed, but civil society becomes increasingly defined in market terms. As many of the responsibilities adopted by the state during the post second world war period begin to be devolved to a marketised version of civil society, consumer rights increasingly come to prevail over citizen rights.

Yet, while some aspects of education have been 'privatised' not so much in the strictly economic sense as in the sense of transferring them to the private decision-making sphere, others have become a matter of state mandate rather than local democratic debate. Despite the rhetoric about 'rolling back' or 'hollowing out' the state, certain aspects of state intervention have been maintained, indeed strengthened. The strong state is a minimalist one in many respects but a more powerful and even authoritarian one in others.

New modes of regulation reflect a shift from conventional techniques of coordination and control on the part of large-scale bureaucratic state forms and their replacement by a set of 'discursive, legislative, fiscal, organisational and other resources' (Rose and Miller 1992, p 189), what Foucault might have termed moral or disciplinary technologies. But, although these devices may appear to some people to offer considerable scope for local discretion compared to the 'dead hand' of centralised bureaucracies, they also entail some fairly direct modes of control, albeit in a different modality. For example, the devolution of funding to schools on a per capita basis requires schools to attempt to maximise their rolls. Schools which do not attract students are penalised in a direct fashion by the withdrawal of funding and staffing resources. And the publication of test results and school inspection reports potentially provides a powerful link between the requirements of the 'strong state' and the actions of individual schools and parents in the marketplace.

Particularly helpful in understanding how the state remains strong while appearing to devolve power to individuals and autonomous institutions competing in the market is Neave's (1988) account of the shift from the 'bureaucratic state' to the 'evaluative state'. This entails 'a rationalisation and wholesale redistribution of functions between centre and periphery such that the centre maintains overall strategic control through fewer, but more precise, policy levers, contained in overall "mission statements", the setting of system goals and the operationalisation of criteria relating to "output quality"' (p.11). Rather than leading to a withering away of the state, the state withdraws 'from the murky plain of overwhelming detail, the better to take refuge in the clear and commanding heights of strategic "profiling"' (p.12). In some cases, this brings about the emergence of new intermediary bodies - trusts, agencies and quangos - which are directly appointed by and responsible to government ministers rather than under local democratic control. Such agencies are often headed by a new breed of government-appointees who tend to have a higher public profile than conventional state bureaucrats and have had a significant role in setting new political agendas through close contacts with the media. The evaluative state also requires significant changes to be made at the institutional level. Schools and colleges have to develop new modes of response which require new structures and patterns of authority. In particular, it seems to encourage strong goal-oriented leadership at the institutional level, involving a shift from the traditional collegial model to that of the 'chief executive' and 'senior management team'.

Neave (1988) suggests that the evaluative state does not represent any one ideological viewpoint. Its key characteristic is a move away from government by 'bureaucratic fiat'. Yet there are close links between what he describes and Pusey's (1991) concept of economic rationalism in which education is framed as a commodity and education policy becomes the means by which it can be more efficiently and effectively regulated and distributed in relation to an overriding concern with economic objectives, so that the market becomes the ascendant metaphor and there is a clear permeation of business values and vocabulary into educational discourse (Marginson 1993). At the same time education is, in some respects, brought more directly and effectively under the control of central government agencies. Sweden, UK and New Zealand, and many states in America and Australia, have introduced competency-based performance indicators as a means of measuring educational output. Although justified in terms of consumer information and public accountability, these programmes enable government to scrutinise more effectively educational expenditure and productivity while at the same time blocking alternative definitions of what counts as appropriate learning.

In Australia, Marginson (1993) claims that the emphasis on economic objectives entails a distancing of education from social and cultural domains. In practice, though there is often another component to current policies that needs to be taken into consideration. The New Right in many countries is a coalition of neo-liberal advocates of market forces and neo-conservative proponents of a return to 'traditional' values (Gamble 1983). The balance between the neo-liberal and neo-conservative aspects of contemporary conservatism varies between and within countries. However, where neo-conservatives are strong, they expect the education system to foster particular values, especially amongst those whose adherence to them is considered suspect. The criteria of evaluation employed are thus not only those of economic rationalism, but also those of cultural preferences. This is particularly the case where there is a perceived to be a threat to national identity and hegemonic values either from globalisation or from supposed 'enemies within', who are sometimes seen to include 'bureau-professionals' and members of the 'liberal educational establishment'.

McKenzie (1993) argues that British governments have 'actually increased their claims to knowledge and authority over the education system whilst promoting a theoretical and superficial movement towards consumer sovereignty' (p.17). Although other countries have not been as prescriptive as Britain, many governments at state or national level have tightened their control over the curriculum in terms of what is taught and/or how this is to be assessed and inspected. This central regulation of the curriculum is not only geared towards standardising performance criteria in order to facilitate professional accountability and consumer choice within the education market-place, it is also about trying to maintain or create national identities. In England and Wales, the formulation of the National Curriculum has been underlain by a consistent requirement that schools concentrate on British history, British geography and 'classic' English literature. During its development, the influential Hillgate Group (1987) expressed concern about pressure for a multicultural curriculum and argued for 'the traditional values of western societies' underlying British culture which 'must not be sacrificed for the sake of a misguided relativism, or out of a misplaced concern for those who might not yet be aware of its strengths and weaknesses' (p.4).

Thus, although some theories of globalisation hold that the state is becoming less important on economic (Reich 1991), political (Held 1989) and cultural (Robertson 1991) grounds, at the present time there is little to support the postmodernist predictions of Usher and Edwards (1995) of the decline of the role of the state in education, at least in relation to the compulsory phase of provision. While this phenomenon of a strengthened state alongside policies of devolution and choice is particularly evident in Britain, similar trends can be identified in many countries (Gordon 1995, Apple, 1996, Arnove 1996). Even if we concede that there has been a reduction in the profile of the nation state as an international entity and a convergence of policy approaches, there is nothing to suggest that it has yet conceded its grip on areas of internal regulation.

Yet these particular political responses to globalisation and the situation confronting modern nation states are not inevitable. The specific policies are not simply explicable as irresistible outcomes of macro-social change. As indicated earlier, the particular combination of policies discussed here has been heavily influenced by the interpretations of such changes offered by various pressure groups from the New Right. We should remember that neither enhanced choice nor school autonomy is necessarily linked to a conservative agenda and that such measures have, in other circumstances, sometimes been part of a more progressive

package of policies. Indeed, as noted earlier, some of the reforms actually originated in a different tradition, but have subsequently been incorporated and transformed by a rightist agenda. And while we should not underestimate the significance of those changes which are evoked - but inadequately characterised - by terms such as post-fordism and post-modernity, we should not assume that the policy responses that are currently fashionable are the most appropriate ones. In many countries, the political left was rather slow in recognising the significance of the changes and thus allowed the right to take the initiative. This, in turn, has had serious consequences for the direction in which reform has gone and consequences for the particular forms of subjectivity which they encourage. But it has also generated some potential contradictions that may be exploited by those seeking an alternative agenda.

The Hidden Curriculum of Reform

For example, the emphasis on competition and choice that the New Right has brought to the reforms has an associated 'hidden curriculum' of marketisation. Ball (1994) claims that 'insofar as students are influenced and affected by their institutional environment, then the system of morality 'taught' by schools is increasingly well accommodated to the values complex of the enterprise culture' (p. 146). Old values of community, co-operation, individual need and equal worth, which Ball claims underlay public systems of comprehensive education, are being replaced by values that celebrate individualism, competition, performativity and differentiation. These values and dispositions are not made visible and explicit, but emanate from the changing social context and permeate the education system in myriad ways.

In some cases, the messages of the market and the preferences of governments complement each other. In other instances, however, market forces may contradict, even undermine, the 'old-fashioned' values and sense of nationhood that governments ostensibly seek to foster. This contradiction may reflect more than the ideological distance between neo-conservatism and neo-liberalism. It could represent the tension between attempting to maintain a stable and strategic centre in an increasingly fragmented and atomised context. The market, as Marquand (1995) reminds us, is subversive - it 'uproots communities, disrupts families, mocks faiths and erodes the ties of place and history'.

To some extent the potential subversion of the market is contained through strong regulatory measures. But neo-conservative agendas may be increasingly compromised by the growing presence of corporate interests in the classroom. Whereas the school curriculum has traditionally transcended - indeed actively distanced itself from - the world of commerce (see Wiener 1981), the growth of self-managing schools and the promotion of market forces within education is forging a new intimacy between these two domains. In the USA, for instance, the commercial satellite network 'Channel One' offers schools free monitors on condition that 90 percent of students watch its news and adverts almost every day. Molnar (1996) cites a wide range of examples where corporate business entices schools to promote its products. In many countries, there are schemes whereby equipment can be purchased with vouchers from supermarket chains, the take-up of which is enhanced as a result of budget constraints and the removal of public control (Roberts 1994). Harris's (1996) report on the Australian Coles programme reveals not only the vast amount of time teachers can spend counting docketts, but also the promotional space occupied by visible tallies and scoreboards as well as the advertising

on the computer equipment eventually acquired. Such promotions are particularly attractive to schools in need of extra resources. In England, schools have been given clearance to sell space for advertising and the proliferation of commercially sponsored curriculum materials and promotions has been such that an independent organisation designed to protect consumer interests has published a good practice guide for teachers, governors, school boards and parents (National Consumer Council 1996).

Advertising in schools is likely to provoke a number of anxieties. Those on the left will be concerned that curriculum materials portray a partial, and inaccurate, account of business interests. In this connection, Molnar (1996) quotes a study guide on banking which defines 'free enterprise' as the symbol of 'a nation which is healthy and treats its citizens fairly'. One international survey of corporate products in the classroom found that 'the biggest polluters of the environment - the chemical, steel, and paper industries - were the biggest producers of environmental education material' (Harty 1994, p.97). Neo-conservatives, on the other hand, may be critical of the cultural threat of what is sometimes called 'McDonaldisation'. There are fears that schools will develop 'an anti-intellectual emphasis' and 'a consumptionist drive to purchase status goods'. Indeed, Harty alleges that the permeation of multinationals 'contributes to a standardised global culture of material gratification... [which will] impinge on the cultural integrity of whole nations' (ibid, 98-99). In this scenario, far from encouraging students to appreciate the particularities of their regional or national inheritance, schooling becomes implicated in the training of desires, rendering subjects open to the seduction of everchanging consumption patterns and the politics of lifestyling.

Thus, there are often contrasting messages coming from the overt and the hidden curricula. While at the level of direct transmissions, students are meant to be taught the neo-conservative values of the cultural restorationists (Ball 1990), the context in which they are taught may undermine these canons. The content of the lessons emphasises heritage and tradition, but the form of their transmission is becoming increasingly commodified within the new education marketplace.

This tension is discussed in a recent paper by Bernstein (1997). He argues that the increasing deregulation of the economic field and the increasing regulation of what he terms the symbolic field are generating new forms of pedagogic identity, in contrast to both the 'retrospective' identity of old conservatism and the 'therapeutic' identity associated with the child-centred progressivism that was evident in England and the USA in the 1960s and 1970s. An emergent 'decentred market' identity embodies the principles of neo-liberalism. It has no intrinsic properties, and its form is dependent only upon the exchange value determined by the market and is therefore infinitely variable and unstable. A 'prospective' pedagogic identity, on the other hand, attempts to 'recentre' through selectively incorporating elements of old conservatism. It engages with contemporary change, but draws upon the stabilising traditions of the past as a counterbalance to the instability of the market. While a decentered market pedagogy might be seen to foster 'new' global subjects, a prospective pedagogy seeks to reconstruct 'old' national subjects, albeit selectively in response to the pressures of the new economic and social climate. Thus, there may be an emphasis in the overt curriculum on 'imagined communities' of the past at the same time as real collectivities are being atomised in a culture of individual and institutional competition.

Green (1996), who believes we are seeing 'partial internationalisation' rather than rampant globalisation, claims:

'It is undoubtedly true that many of the advanced western states find it increasingly difficult to maintain social cohesion and solidarity. Growing individualism and life-style diversity, secularisation, social mobility and the decline of stable communities have all played a part in this ... In some countries, where markets and individualism have gone furthest in dissolving social ties, there is reason to wonder whether national solidarism has not vanished beyond recovery.' (p. 41)

Although Green himself acknowledges that states still retain strong control over the regulation of education systems through strategic performance-based funding, he argues that there has been a narrowing in the scope of educational ends where 'broader national educational objectives in terms of social cohesion and citizenship formation have become increasingly confused and neglected, in part because few western governments have a clear notion of what nationhood and citizenship mean in complex and pluralistic modern democracies' (p.58).

Inasmuch as the current wave of reforms mark a response by nation states to deal with the fundamental, and increasingly apparent, social and economic crises by which they are beleaguered - both from within and without - devolution can provide only a temporary solution. As Weiss (1993) argues, the conflicts and disparities within the education system are too deep-seated to be resolved by simply shifting the blame down the line. As the processes of polarisation become sharper and the failure of local initiatives more transparent, the structural limitations of the new educational policies will be re-exposed. In this context, Green (1996) argues that even the current degree of responsibility taken by governments for public education may not be enough 'as the social atomisation induced by global market penetration becomes increasingly dysfunctional. With the decline of socially integrating institutions and the consequent atrophy of collective social ties, education may soon again be called upon to stitch together the fraying social fabric' (p.59). While the demise of some forms a national solidarity may be long overdue, the general atrophy of collective ties and consequent loss of notions of citizenship which Green predicts must surely be cause for concern. The issue then becomes one of establishing how education might best help reconstruct the social fabric and who shall influence its design.

Seeking Alternative Futures

The impact of these developments on coming generations may only be a matter of conjecture at this stage, but it does seem clear that the very structures of education systems and their associated styles of educational decision-making impinge upon modes of social solidarity and forms of political consciousness and representation. However, rather than seeing the future in terms of resurrecting elements of old conservatism in the face of rampant marketisation, we should surely take the opportunity to consider how we might develop new and more genuinely inclusive collectivities for the future and put equity back on the agenda. In other words, we need to consider whether there are alternative prospective identities that we might wish to foster.

David Hargreaves (1994) argues that, while we should be happy to encourage a system of independent, differentiated and specialised schools to reflect the increasingly heterogeneous

nature of modern societies, we should also reassert a sense of common citizenship by insisting on core programmes of civic education in all schools. This idea is now being actively pursued by the New Labour government in Britain, as one of the ways in which it wishes to revise the Conservative government's National Curriculum. My own view is that such proposals pay insufficient attention not only to the effects of quasi-markets in exacerbating existing inequalities between schools and in society at large but also underestimate the power of the hidden curriculum of the market to undermine any real sense of commonality. The very exercise of individual choice and school self-management can so easily become self-legitimising for those with the resources to benefit from it and the mere teaching of civic responsibility is unlikely to provide an effective counter-balance. Attention therefore also needs to be given to the development of an alternative 'hidden curriculum', through the development of new sets of relations within schools and beyond them.

More specifically, if we want students to learn democratic citizenship we need to put in place structures of learning which embody those principles. In other words, as Apple and Beane (1999) put it, we need to develop more genuinely democratic schools. However, changes *within* schools are unlikely to be able to counter the hidden curriculum of marketisation coming from competition *between* schools and within civil society. We therefore need to think of alternative ways of organising political and economic life in the face of the macro-sociological changes that are occurring. Foucault points out that what he called new forms of association, such as trade unions and political parties emerged in the 19th century as a counter-balance to the prerogative of the state, and that they formed a seedbed for the development of new ideas on governance (Kritzman 1988). We need to consider what modern versions of these collectivist forms of association might now be developed as a counter-balance not only to the prerogative of the state, but also to the prerogative of the market.

Too little serious thinking of this type has yet been done, notwithstanding Giddens' recent espousal of a 'Third Way' that supersedes both social democracy and neo-liberalism (Giddens 1998). In Britain, despite claims that its policies embody that Third Way, the New Labour government has adopted largely rightist policies in its approach to education. Meanwhile, those still on the Left have done little yet to develop a concept of public education which looks significantly different from the state education that some of us spent our earlier political and academic careers critiquing for its role in reproducing and legitimising social inequalities (Young and Whitty 1977). Even if the social democratic era looks better in retrospect, and in comparison with current policies, than it did at the time, that does not remove the need to rethink what might be progressive policies for the next century. As Hatcher (1996) argues, 'it would be profoundly mistaken to respond to the Right's agenda, based on differentiation through the market to widen social inequalities, by clinging to a social-democratic statist model which serves fatally to depoliticise and demobilise those popular energies which alone are capable of effectively challenging the reproduction of social class inequality in education' (p.55).

If new approaches are to be granted more legitimacy than previous ones, we need to consider what new institutions might help to foster them - initially within a new public sphere in which ideas can be debated, but potentially as new forms of democratic governance themselves. Clearly, such institutions could take various forms and they will certainly need to take different forms in different societies. They will no doubt be struggled over and some will be more open to hegemonic incorporation than others. Some may actually be created by the

state, as the realisation dawns that a marketised civil society itself creates contradictions that need to be managed. Thus, there is likely to be both a bottom-up and a top-down to create new institutions within which struggles over the content and control of education will take place.

In England, there has been some discussion about ways of democratising the state and civil society. Geddes (1996), following Held (1987), contrasts legal democracy (modern neo-liberal democracy in a free market system), competitive elitist democracy (the conventional representational party system), pluralism, neo-pluralism (quasi-corporatism), and participatory democracy. Like many people working in this field, he sees the future in terms of attempts to combine the virtues of different approaches. In particular, he seems to favour combining representative and participatory democracy, by such devices as decentralising the policy process and establishing community councils, citizens' juries, and opinion panels.

Similarly, in the USA, there are moves to encourage new 'forms of group representation that stand less sharply in tension with the norms of democratic governance' (Cohen and Rogers, 1995, p.9) than the sorts of unaccountable 'factions' that are currently able to take advantage of both the market and existing state forms. Cohen and Rogers take the view that it is possible to improve the practical approximation of even market societies to egalitarian democratic norms. They argue that, by altering the status of 'secondary associations' within civil society, associative democracy can 'improve economic performance and government efficiency and advance egalitarian-democratic norms of popular sovereignty, political equality, distributive equity and civic consciousness' (p.9).

In every society, we shall now have to ask what are the appropriate constituencies through which to express community interests in the twenty-first century, and thus provide the conditions for what Mouffe (1989) argues strong democracy needs - an articulation between the particular and the universal in a forum for 'creating unity without denying specificity'. In the specific field of education, there is a similar need to develop new contexts of democratic decision-making in civil society, which are more genuinely responsive and inclusive than either the state or market forces. Community Education Forums have been suggested in both England and New Zealand, but we need to give careful consideration to the composition, nature and powers of such bodies if they are to prove an appropriate way of reasserting democratic citizenship rights in education in the late twentieth century. They will certainly need to respond to critiques of the class, gender and racial bias of conventional forms of political association in most modern societies.

We have to confront these issues as a matter of urgency since, at the level of rhetoric (though not reality), the recent reforms of the New Right *have* probably been more responsive than their critics usually concede to those limited, but nonetheless tangible, social and cultural shifts that have been taking place in modern societies. A straightforward return to the old order of things would be neither feasible nor sensible. Thus, if we are to avoid the atomisation of educational decision-making, and associated tendencies towards fragmentation and polarisation, we need to create new collective and experimental contexts within civil society for determining institutional arrangements that are genuinely inclusive.

Of course, this cannot be seen as an issue for schools alone. As Gerald Grace has argued, too many education reformers have been guilty of 'producing naive school-centred solutions with no sense of the structural, the political and the historical as constraints' (Grace 1984, p xii). Unfortunately, this is true of some contemporary approaches to school improvement (Mortimore and Whitty 1997). We need to recognise that struggles over the form and content

of education cannot be divorced from broader struggles over the nature of the sort of society that we want all our children to grow up in. But to say that is not to say that human agency is unimportant in determining the nature and direction of change. As we have seen, members of New Right networks helped to spread neo-liberal policies around the globe during the 1980s and 1990s (Whitty and Edwards 1998). It is equally important that those who contemplate alternative responses to global developments share and develop their ideas and experiences with like-minded people throughout the world, while recognising that specific policies must be grounded in the history and culture of particular national and local contexts.

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Abstract

This paper discusses the implications of the recent reforms that have brought marketisation into the education systems of much of the developed world. It considers possible explanations of that wave of reform, ranging from the influence of identifiable New Right networks, the condition of post-modernity, the effects of globalisation and changes in the mode of regulation of the modern state. It goes on to discuss the impact of the 'hidden curriculum' of reform on prevailing forms of social solidarity and the formation of identities. In doing so, it raises serious concerns about the growing atomisation and commercialisation of schooling and suggests that nation states will increasingly be confronted with the problem of maintaining social cohesion in civil society in the face of these developments. It concludes that there is an urgent need to develop new conceptions of citizenship and new approaches to education for citizenship in the modern world.

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