



PRIVATISATION OF SCHOOLS

SELLING OUT THE RIGHT TO QUALITY PUBLIC EDUCATION FOR ALL



Education Rights for
Learners, Parents
and Educators

book
20



PRIVATISATION OF SCHOOLS: Selling out the right to quality public education for all

Carol Anne Spreen, Lauren Stark and Salim Vally

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How to contact us:

Centre for Education Rights and Transformation (CERT)
Cottage 8, Research Village, Bunting Road Campus
University of Johannesburg, Auckland Park, 2006

Tel: +27 11 559 1148
Fax: +27 11 559 1128
Email: ysaint@uj.ac.za

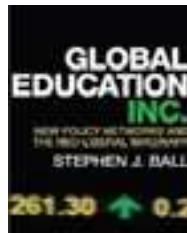
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Reading the word and the world
Changing the text and the context

For more information on the global assault on public education, we recommend the following three books and the Special Edition of Our Schools/Our Selves:

Global Education Inc.: New Policy Networks and the Neoliberal Imaginary
Stephen J. Ball



In *Global Education Inc.* (2012), University of London education policy researcher Stephen J. Ball analyses the shifts in education policy around the globe from free public education to market-based corporate education reform. Ball's work is especially useful in showing how policymakers, business leaders, and 'philanthropists' have collaborated to reimagine education as a marketable commodity that can be sold to the highest bidder.

Reign of Error: the Hoax of the Privatization Movement and the Danger to America's Public Schools
Diane Ravitch



In *Reign of Error* (2013), Diane Ravitch breaks down the myths behind corporate education reform in the United States. An educational historian by training, Ravitch places educational privatisation in historic context, constructing a compelling narrative that details how corporate reformers took over public education in the United States for their own profit. **Ravitch also offers a compelling argument for alternatives through well-funded public schools with trained teachers, adequate health care, smaller class size, and early childhood education.**

Capitalizing on Disaster: Taking and Breaking Public Schools
Kenneth J. Saltman



The movement to privatise education is also masterfully critiqued in Kenneth Saltman's *Capitalizing on Disaster* (2007). Saltman pays particular attention to venture capitalists' opportunism in taking advantage of natural and social disasters to capitalise on the struggles of low-income public school students. Using post-Katrina New Orleans, post-war Iraq, and post-austerity Chicago as case studies, Saltman examines how public policy can be used to benefit private interests, to the detriment of students and society as a whole.



This summer 2014 issue of *Our Schools / Our Selves* encourages readers to connect the dots between the various manifestations of privatisation, and how, under the guise of neoliberalism (sometimes referred to 'austerity') it is being sold to schools and society; it also includes a section that examines the privatisation of education on an international scale.

ERP BOOKLETS IN THIS SERIES

- 1 **HIV/AIDS: The Rights of Learners and Educators**
- 2 **Sexual Violence: The Rights of Learners and Educators**
- 3 **The Education Rights of Refugees, Asylum Seekers and Migrants**
- 4 **Language Rights and Schools**
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- 6 **Disability: The Rights of Learners**
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- 8 **The Cost of Schooling: Your Rights**
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- 10 **The Rights of Adult Learners**
- 11 **Corporal Punishment and Bullying: The Rights of Learners**
- 12 **Early Childhood Development and Education Rights**
- 13 **Racism and Education**
- 14 **School Nutrition and the rights of Learners**
- 15 **Facilitating Literacy: A Handbook for Community-Based Literacy Workers**
- 16 **Sexual Orientation and Gender Identity Rights in Education**
- 17 **Environment and Education: Rights and Responsibilities**
- 18 **Children's Rights to Education in Hospital**
- 19 **Reading Clubs and Community Literacy**
- 20 **Privatisation of Schools: Selling out the right to quality public education for all**



Reading the word and the world
Changing the text and the context



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Introduction

Over the last two decades a passionate debate over public education has taken place including how to fix it. In the face of the many weaknesses that confront public education systems, the privatisation of education, in its different guises has seduced many policy and decision makers.

Discussions have shifted away from education as a public good and the platform for this debate has been staged by what has become known as the Corporate Education Reform Movement. Complex alliances and power blocs have formed across a number of countries that have increasing influence in education policymaking (from driving testing, assessment, to providing curriculum, teacher training and credentialising, to school organisation models and packaged online curriculum). Their reach is extensive and transnational companies have begun to accumulate massive profits.

From the much promoted 'low cost schools' to shadow schools to vouchers and for-profit charters, this movement is simply profiteering disguised as philanthropy: an evangelising and moralising endeavour assisted by the failure of many governments to fulfill their mandate to provide quality public education. Privatisation is an assault on the very essence of public education and education as a human right.

It is falsely argued that privatisation provides choices to parents, makes schools more responsive, and produces greater cost efficiencies and even better quality education. This approach is derived from the idea that the state should have as little as possible to do with the delivery of education and other services which are best left to market mechanisms for their resolution. We argue that the proposed 'market solution' to our education crisis, even with state regulation, is less a case of a pragmatic attempt at resolving the problem than a case of ideological wishful thinking. Privatisation does not solve the problems in education; rather, it makes them worse.

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

good' purposes of education, and of its role in producing social cohesion and social equity through the provision of education that is of high quality for all members of society. Reducing education to a business distorts the purposes of good quality public education.

It is not for nothing that many communities have mounted important challenges against the failure of the state to deliver good quality public schooling - even to the highest courts in the land. Abandoning these challenges for the false promise of privatisation is to discard the rights enshrined in many states' constitutions, the Universal Declaration of Human Rights and many international treaties protecting education as a human right - it is to abandon the citizenry's entitlement to a democratic society and to favour a narrow and increasingly self-serving meritocracy that represents none but its own financial and social interests.

Public education has developed over more than a century to become a core aspect of the work of governments especially because it is very much a part of their democratising mandate in providing a basic human right to all members of society. Nowhere is there an example of a country with high educational outcomes where the provision of basic education has been in private hands.

This booklet brings together educators from different countries to examine the negative effects of privatisation on the right to education, education quality, equity and teaching. We argue that privatisation, increases inequality and stratification in education, and substitutes good public policy with the vagaries of charity or the single-mindedness of profit-making.



We show how communities around the world are demanding good quality public schooling and are resisting the privatisation and marketisation of education. The cover of this booklet shows communities, students and educators around the world demonstrating against privatisation and developing a counter movement to the corporate education reform movement.



As we write the persistence of Chilean students, teachers and workers for free and quality public education after eight years of tenacious struggle has forced the newly re-elected president, Michelle Bachelet, to announce reforms prohibiting for-profit private providers of education. Chile's review of its decades-old education policies (described later in this booklet) is particularly significant since its market orientation following 'advice' from Milton Friedman of the University of Chicago to Pinochet's military junta was meant to serve as a social laboratory for the world. The new reforms are aimed at making all primary and secondary education free, reversing the voucher system and public funding for private, for-profit schools, and ending selective practices used in school admission policies.

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

In the US, this movement consists of private philanthropic and corporate interests funded by the 'billionaire Boys Club' of Wall Street business executives, technology moguls, corporate media leaders, right-wing religious groups and 'think-tanks' and even some Hollywood film-makers. This platform is centred on privatisation as THE solution to the education crisis.

The pro-market 'think-tanks' such as the Walton and Heritage Foundations, the Fordham Institute, the CATO Institute and others have been embraced by right wing politicians, media moguls like Rupert Murdoch and big companies like Pearson. These 'think tanks' do not limit their scope to North America, they have also incubated a generation of academics and journalists who promote privatisation as 'common sense' to the global education community.

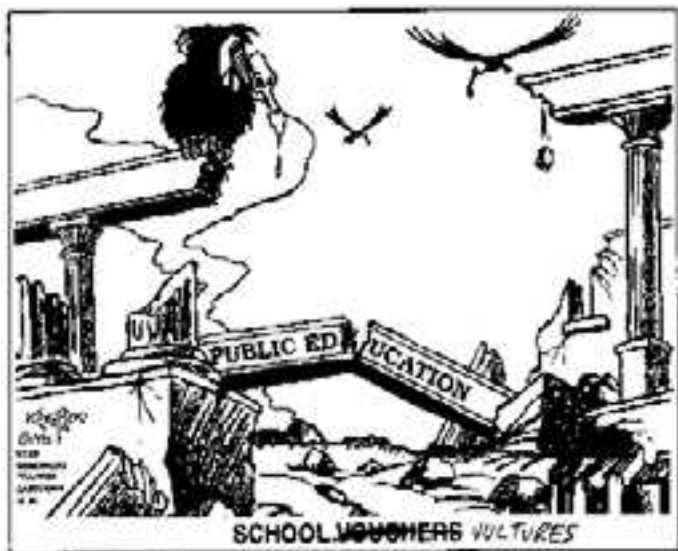
In South Africa, the aggressive promotion of privatisation is pursued by a number of well-funded institutions led by notable market fundamentalists such as Ann Bernstein's Centre for Development and Enterprise, John Kane-Berman's South African Institute of Race Relations and Leon Louw's Free Market Foundation. Their efforts are replicated by some academics and largely right-wing economists and pro-business commentators and journalists.

Policy makers in many countries (for example, South Africa, Chile, Ghana, Kenya, India, among others) are wont to borrow policies and their prescriptions largely from North America and the UK, regardless of the vastly differing histories, contexts and circumstances under which such policies were developed or the approaches to development that these signified. In effect although many of the borrowed policies have been shown to be ineffective in the very countries of their origin, they continue to be purveyed as policies and 'best practice' useful to development elsewhere. Such policy borrowing is fostered, regrettably,

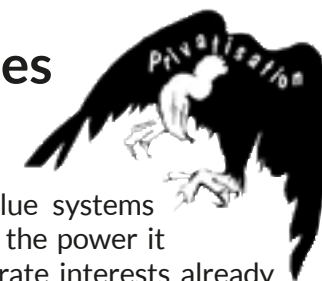
not only through the work of 'expert' consultants (often from developed economies) but also by 'native' researchers who have little regard for the critical literature.

The ideology of privatisation is associated with the idea that the role of education is largely about meeting the skills requirements of business. Corporate globalisation's narrow focus on business and the market system continues to undermine and distort the purposes of good quality public education. It has the potential to negate the struggles for a fair, just and humane society, substituting these for unaccountable and avaricious global autocracies based on the power of money.

We simply cannot abandon the public mandate of the state and a mobilised, active and informed citizenry if we are to have any hope of achieving the goal of a democratic and humane society, free of corruption, accountable public services promoting decent employment and socially useful work, the provision of 'public goods' and the development of a genuinely democratic society for all citizens. For public education to work we need motivated, professional and happy educators, competent managers and state officials, adequate resources and infrastructure, a conducive community environment, addressing the social context and consequences of poverty and proper enforcement of standards. We develop these public alternatives to address the crisis in education later in this booklet.



The Negative Consequences of Privatisation



The most troublesome issue relates to the value systems inculcated by the privatisation of education and the power it vests in unaccountable and undemocratic corporate interests already hugely dominant in the world.

Corporations and their 'experts' have a large part to play in the development of the curriculum, in shaping the orientation and outcomes of education through narrowly prescribed standardised testing, and determining the 'suitability' of teachers and administrators. Of necessity, this is associated with the rationalisation of costs and the determination of what is 'relevant' and what is not. In effect it converts education into a commodity to be purchased and sold in a highly commercialised and competitive market. These overriding characteristics of privatisation are further augmented by:

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

Education is not a Business

The Blueberry Story: The teacher gives the businessman a lesson

"If I ran my business the way you people operate your schools, I wouldn't be in business very long!"

I stood before an auditorium filled with outraged teachers who were becoming angrier by the minute. My speech had entirely consumed their precious 90 minutes of inservice. Their initial icy glares had turned to restless agitation. You could cut the hostility with a knife.

I represented a group of business people dedicated to improving public schools. I was an executive at an ice cream company that became famous in the middle 1980s when People Magazine chose our blueberry as the "Best Ice Cream in America."

I was convinced of two things. First, public schools needed to change; they were archaic selecting and sorting mechanisms designed for the industrial age and out of step with the needs of our emerging "knowledge society". Second, educators were a major part of the problem: they resisted change, hunkered down in their feathered nests, protected by tenure and shielded by a bureaucratic monopoly. They needed to look to business. We knew how to produce quality. Zero defects! TQM! Continuous improvement!

In retrospect, the speech was perfectly balanced – equal parts ignorance and arrogance.

As soon as I finished, a woman's hand shot up. She appeared polite, pleasant – she was, in fact, a razor-edged, veteran, high school English teacher who had been waiting to unload.

She began quietly, "We are told, sir, that you manage a company that makes good ice cream."

I smugly replied, "Best ice cream in America, Ma'am."

"How nice," she said. "Is it rich and smooth?"

"Sixteen percent butterfat," I crowed.

"Premium ingredients?" she inquired.

"Super-premium! Nothing but triple A." I was on a roll. I never saw the next line coming.

"Mr. Vollmer," she said, leaning forward with a wicked eyebrow raised to the sky, "when you are standing on your receiving dock and you see an inferior shipment of blueberries arrive, what do you do?"

In the silence of that room, I could hear the trap snap.... I was dead meat, but I wasn't going to lie.

"I send them back."

"That's right!" she barked, "and we can never send back our blueberries. We take them big, small, rich, poor, gifted, exceptional, abused, frightened, confident, homeless, rude, and brilliant. We take them with ADHD, junior rheumatoid arthritis, and English as their second language. We take them all! Every one! And that, Mr. Vollmer, is why it's not a business. It's school!"

In an explosion, all 290 teachers, principals, bus drivers, aides, custodians and secretaries jumped to their feet and yelled, "Yeah! Blueberries! Blueberries!"

And so began my long transformation.

Since then, I have visited hundreds of schools. **I have learned that a school is not a business. Schools are unable to control the quality of their raw material, they are dependent upon the vagaries of politics for a reliable revenue stream, and they are constantly mauled by a howling horde of disparate, competing customer groups that would send the best CEO screaming into the night.**

None of this negates the need for change. We must change what, when, and how we teach to give all children maximum opportunity to thrive in a post-industrial society. But educators cannot do this alone; these changes can occur only with the understanding, trust, permission and active support of the surrounding community. The most important thing I have learned is that schools reflect the attitudes, beliefs and health of the communities they serve, and therefore, to improve public education means more than changing our schools, it means changing America.

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A Focus on Low-Fee Private Schools

What's Wrong With Low-Cost Private Schools for the Poor?

Steven Klees

Right now, there is considerable attention being focused on a growing phenomenon in a number of developing countries - private primary schools that charge relatively low fees. They are described in miraculous terms, as private schools, once the bastion of the well-to-do, are now reaching disadvantaged families and thus have become essential to the provision of quality primary school for all, as envisioned in the Millennium Development Goals (MDGs) and the Education for All (EFA) compact. As the economists say, poor people "vote with their feet" by sending their children to private schools where they have to pay instead of public schools. What could possibly be wrong with low-cost private schools for the poor? Plenty.

- 1 Right to Education Guaranteeing that education is a right, as enshrined in numerous international agreements, is perhaps one of the most significant changes in the approach to education policy. Yet, using private schooling, as a way of meeting EFA targets and MDGs, is a direct violation of the right to education. Primary education is supposed to be universal and free. How can we justify an approach where it is considered legitimate to charge the poorest people in the world for education? A response that public schools often charge fees is not sufficient. Public school fees are not considered legitimate, and there are movements to eliminate them. These fees need to be eliminated, not used as an excuse to promote fee-paying alternatives.
- 2 Quality There is no credible evidence that children learn more in low-cost private schools than they do in public schools. As usual, proponents find some advantages, and critics find none. Actually, the broader comparison of public and private schools around the world is a settled question - there is no difference in outcomes. Since most private schools have an advantaged clientele, their students generally do better on tests. But once you look at the performance of similar students, there is no difference.

- 3 Equity The biggest problem with privatisation is that it always increases stratification and inequality. Superficially, one might think that private schools that are low-cost would be different. But low-cost is not so low - one study in Ghana found that poor parents paid 30% of their family income to send their children to private schools. Many poor families cannot afford that. Low-cost private schools simply stratify the poor into the better off, who go private, and the worse-off, who go public. Moreover, there is some evidence that these schools increase stratification by factors other than class and wealth, such as gender and caste.
- 4 Public Schools The logic of privatisation is that the mere presence of private schools will improve public schools by forcing them to innovate and compete. Nothing could be further from the truth. The attention being given to privatisation as the magic bullet to solve problems with educational access and quality has resulted in the neglect around the world of the need for attention and resources towards improving public schooling.
- 5 Teachers The privatisation bandwagon has been disastrous for teachers. It has contributed to the de-professionalization, loss of status, and loss of hard-won influence and protection of teachers. Private school teachers are generally not unionised, can be fired at will, and receive lower pay and benefits. One study of low-cost private schools in India found that teacher salaries were only 10% to 20% of public teacher salaries. They also found «poorly qualified and poorly paid teaching staff with high turnover.» This is the exact opposite of the need to build a highly-qualified, well-paid, and well-motivated, professional teaching force.
- 6 Business While some point to the 'mom and pop' nature of these private schools, big business sees money to be made. Pearson recently invested 10-million pounds in a chain of low-cost private schools. They are not alone. Education should be a public good, not a private one. While some may not want to go as far as Cuba and Finland which ban private education, the aim should be to improve public schooling so there is little need for private education.



- 7 Public Private Partnerships (PPPs) As part of privatisation ideology and the promotion of Public Private Partnerships (PPPs), ideas from business and business leaders have been marketed as important to the improvement of education. Sometimes this entire business-oriented approach is subsumed under the heading of “new public management.” This is ubiquitous and has given most educators a lot of headaches. Right-wing think tanks and foundations (I include the World Bank here) have proliferated, offering neoliberal educational advice and steering educational policy.

Primary, secondary, and higher education have suffered from the call for business plans, strategic plans, performance budgets, right-sizing, impact evaluation, merit pay, and the like. Evaluations of teachers have multiplied, usually illegitimately tied to a few very narrow indicators. School district superintendents and university presidents are now called chief executive officers, and too often are selected with a business background instead of an education one. And, most common, is that task forces and commissions on education routinely give pride of place to business executives, as if business strategies translate to education strategies. This is quite visible globally, to take one of many examples, in the World Economic Forum’s task force on education. They have been a major voice in global education reform such as the post-2015 discussions.

Privatisation is based on ideology, not evidence. Some years ago, I attended a meeting about health policy at the World Bank. The World Bank presenter pointed out how, in many poor countries, poor people chose to be treated at private health clinics for a fee instead of going to free public clinics. This was touted as evidence of the success and value

of privatisation. To the contrary, I pointed out that this is simply evidence of the success of 30+ years of neoliberal ideology in which public clinics had been systematically decimated, ending up without doctors, nurses, or medicine.

The same has happened in education. Thirty+ years of neoliberal policies have often left public schools overcrowded, with poorly trained teachers, few learning materials, dilapidated facilities, and not close by. It is no wonder that some parents opt out. However, while it is rational for disadvantaged individuals to sometimes send their children to private schools, it is poor public policy for the reasons above. Privatisation is supposed to help meet the growing education gap resulting from years of attack on the public sector, but all it does is replace an attempt to develop good public policy with the vagaries of charity or the single-mindedness of profit-making. Too often everything is about the bottom line vs. interests of children.

The goal of EFA and the MDGs should be to eliminate the need for private schools, not champion them. Public policies like these have been doing the opposite, creating the need for private schooling. By their focus on access, they have expanded schooling that often does not deliver an education. By some estimates, 200-million children are in primary school but not being educated, raising questions of whether real access has been improved at all. Moreover, our sights must be set much higher. “Low-cost private schooling for the poor” is not what we want. “Low-cost” schooling must not be a goal, public or private. We need good schooling for the poor. Equity really means that the poor get schooling as good as the well-to-do. This means we need a high-quality public education system for all, and this should be our post-2015 target.

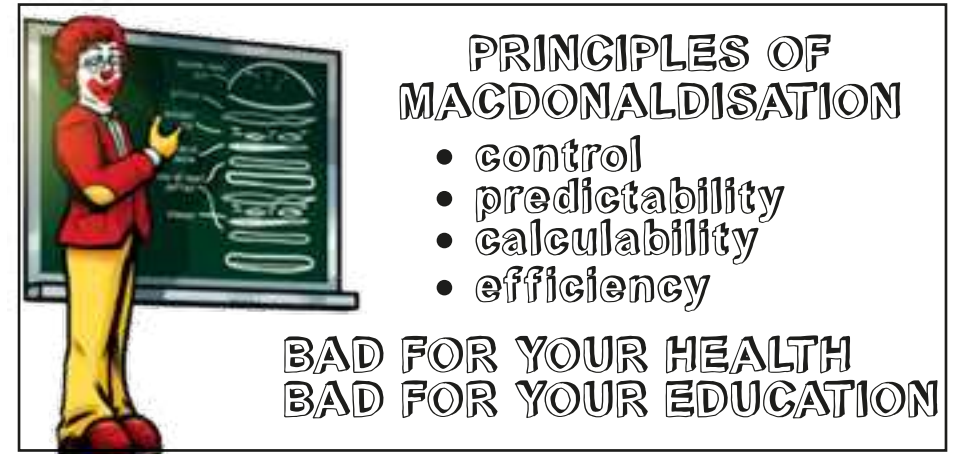
<http://www.educationincrisis.net/blog/item/904-whats-wrong-with-low-cost-private-schools-for-the-poor>

A Case Study of 'Low-Cost' Schools in Ghana

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

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

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



Stories of Privatisation from Across the World:

The United States, Chile, South Africa and Canada

The United States

The US is one of the largest proponents of privatisation and the Corporate Education Reform Movement. Over the past several decades, public schools have faced an onslaught of attacks from conservative 'think tanks', corporate philanthropists, venture capitalists and politicians who promote the myth that the only way to address the education crisis it is to close down public schools and reopen them as for-profit charters, fee, or low-fee schools. These influential "edupreneurs" are part of a powerful group of corporate reformers who, over the last few decades, are set on dismantling public institutions, including education, and turning them over to private companies.

Their **pro-privatisation narrative** reads like this:

- Education is in crisis, so we need to increase standardisation and assessment.
- Schools are failing due to mismanagement, poor teaching, and wasted money.
- Teachers' unions are corrupt and protect incompetent teachers.

- Teachers are ineffective and need to be held accountable through evaluations based on student test scores.
- Schools should invest in teacher-proof curricula to increase test scores.
- Market-based reforms such as school choice, charter, fee, and low-fee schools will give students a higher-quality education for a lower price.

This refrain does not address the real causes of the education crisis, including: unequal education funding, increasing economic and systemic inequality, and widespread child poverty. Moreover, it ignores the solutions progressive reformers have been calling for throughout this period: strong public investment in quality public education, democratic control of schools, and policy changes to combat poverty and economic inequality.

The Slowly Boiling Pot: Normalised Privatisation

What is important is to understand how so many people have come to believe that privatising education is the only solution. One of the major reasons for the widespread and generally unquestioning support of privatisation is that - like a lobster in a slowly boiling pot - our thinking about education has gradually been altered. Through considerable financial support, predatory political maneuvering, and a concerted public media campaign, edupreneurs have over the last decades grown to dominate the education debate to the point where it is hard to hear or imagine anything else is possible. They have repeated this refrain so many times that corporate reform is now deeply associated with the idea of improving education in the US and the very idea of 'education as a public good' has virtually disappeared.

Corporate reformers believe they are helping improve schooling through rules, procedures and accountability measures that will drive improvements through the market. By identifying these 'problems' and offering seemingly clear and easy solutions, reformers are capitalising on the education crisis in order to shut down, then privatise and profit from public schools. However, after a few decades of experimenting with these ideas through choice, vouchers, for-profit, fee, and low-fee schools, there is still very little evidence to support their claims.

Likewise, the pathway to becoming an educator has changed dramatically, bypassing schools of education, with teachers trained in other disciplines recruited through alternative certification programs like Teach for America, Teach for Canada, or Teach for All, quickly rising to administrative positions without gaining the degrees or experience necessary for these positions.

How did we get here?

Over the last 25 years, there has been a growing campaign to dismantle public education in the U.S., the U.K., and throughout the world. This campaign included the crafting of conservative policies, commissioned research, marketing campaigns, and media efforts to frame the general public sentiment about ineffective government and failing public schools. Through supporting pro-privatisation research and policy briefs, legislation, newspaper articles, and films like *Waiting for Superman*, the idea of 'normalized privatisation' has been embraced with bipartisan political support. Through this on-going campaign, most American's commonsense beliefs about the purposes of education have shifted from education as a common good and great equalizer to education as a personal investment with individual returns based on competition.



From the late 1970s through the 1990s, conservatives in the U.S. and U.K. launched a policy shift away from progressive, child-centered reform and toward corporate reform through high-stakes testing. With the 1976 *Ruskin Speech* in the U.K. and the 1983 publication of *A Nation at Risk* in the U.S., the education policy agendas in both countries shifted from progressive reform to standardisation, accountability, and economic competition. This shift gained momentum under Margaret Thatcher in the U.K., who pushed standardised curricula to rank schools in support of 'school choice.' In the U.S., school choice gained currency in the 1980s and early 1990s as an increasing number of magnet and charter schools opened, in many cases as an alternative method to court-mandated school integration.

At the turn of the 21st century, choice and accountability were increasingly emphasised under Tony Blair in the U.K. and George W. Bush in the U.S. With the *No Child Left Behind Act*, Bush set up public schools to be disinvested and made into business opportunities by emphasising high-stakes testing and punishing schools that serve low-income students. This agenda was furthered by *Race to the Top*, Barack Obama's competitive grant programme, which incentivised accountability, teacher evaluation, and school closures. In each of these policy shifts, standardised testing might be considered the 'Trojan horse' for the privatisation agenda, boosting the testing and curriculum industry and allowing for the creation of for-profit, charter, voucher, fee and low-fee schools.

This agenda is especially clear in the work of lobbyists to promote accountability-based education policies. In the U.S., lobbying organisations such as ALEC (American Legislative Exchange Council), a group of 2,000 legislators who advocate "privatisation and corporate interests in every sphere," dictated the policy agenda for education reformers throughout the country by crafting a thousand model bills per year. These bills were crafted with input from its estimated 300 corporate sponsors, including edupreneurs from for-profit online education companies and charter schools. Throughout this time, conservative policy think tanks such as the Heritage Foundation, American Enterprise Institute, and the Fordham Institute also pushed long-standing privatisation schemes.



Who Really Benefits from Privatisation?

While the rhetoric around charter and free schools emphasises their impact on kids, a closer look reveals the financial incentives for investors. Beginning in the new millennium, mainstream news outlets like *The Economist* promoted education as the next big investment area, "ripe for privatization" and commodification, comparing it to private takeovers in the health care and defense sectors and indicating that the U.S. education market promised a \$635-billion a year industry to tap into. More recently, in its 2012 Annual Report, Pearson CEO John Fallan claimed that "education will be the great growth industry of the 21st Century".

Private philanthropies, media and movie moguls, venture capitalists, publishing companies, software producers, online education providers, and lobbyists all serve to benefit from their "investments" in the education system. Private philanthropies in the U.S. spent almost \$4-billion annually to promote their education reform agenda (Barkan, 2011). These large contributors include the Gates Foundation, the Broad Foundation, and the Walton Family Foundation. All have market-based goals for overhauling public education: supporting choice, competition, deregulation, accountability and data-based decision-making.

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

As this pro-privatisation legislation spreads throughout the country and similar models appear throughout the world, we must ask: why do we think that venture capitalists, think tank pundits, big filmmakers, and tech industry moguls know how to run schools and make better education decisions than teachers? And if they do have the answers why aren't they offering the same thing to their own children?

Linking Standardised Assessment and Privatisation

Standardised testing lays the groundwork for privatisation by making impossible demands for continual improvement and labeling schools as failures after they fail to meet those demands, ultimately allowing 'reformers' to claim that there isn't much worth saving. As former teacher and scholar-activist Alfie Kohn writes, “One way to ascertain the actual motivation behind the widespread use of testing is to watch what happens in the real world when a lot of students do well on standardised tests. Are the schools and teachers credited and congratulated? Hardly. The response [...] is instead to make the test harder” (Kohn, 2012, p. 83). Tougher standards are usually justified in the name of excellence and equity, but the real point of the standards-and-testing business is to make schools look bad to justify a free market alternative.

In city after city in the U.S., these widespread closings have done more harm than good. The vast majority of closed schools have high minority enrolments, and communities of colour have been disproportionately affected. These public school closings are accompanied by the simultaneous expansion of charter schools and non-public options. Their track records are often worse than those of comparable public schools. They do not lead to improved academic performance, they do not fix budget deficits,

and children that are displaced from the closures are rarely placed into better performing schools. Rather, they allow for the vast privatisation and decimation of public services while promising profits for investors and funnelling public resources to education profiteers, real estate developers, and lawyers.

The standardised testing market has expanded significantly since the early 1990s, to the point where local education agencies are spending \$20-billion a year on materials such as test prep programs and services such as education consultant workshops and student tutoring and remediation in the U.S. alone (Burch, 2006, p.258). This figure is in addition to the amount that state and federal agencies are spending to develop assessment programs with contractors such as Pearson. Texas, for example, made a \$462-million five-year contract with Pearson as part of their STAAR testing program, and the State Auditor's Office recently submitted a report noting that there is not sufficient oversight on the implementation of this contract and potential conflicts of interest (Smith, 2013).

Yet, despite this relative windfall of policies and massive financial support, charters and fee schools have been shown to have little effect on improving education. Moreover, despite the get-tough rhetoric of standards and accountability, there has been little or no accountability for these schools. Many open and close in a few years, have high attrition rates for both students and teachers, face little financial accountability, pay low salaries to teachers and high salaries to CEOs, and show very little obligation to meet government regulations.

Given the obvious failures of a number of high-profile privatisation initiatives and the increasing push back from teachers, parents and community-based organisations who are resisting shut downs and closures in the U.S., one would assume the corporate reformers might begin to question their efforts. In fact they are expanding and operating in a far more strategic fashion – in 2010 there were at least 4,132 brick-and-mortar charter schools and 16 virtual charter schools operating in the U.S. (Miron & Urschek, 2010, p. 5).

The fact of the matter is that there *is* a crisis in public education that affects children throughout the world. But, it isn't a crisis of too little testing or too much teacher tenure. It is a crisis of too little access to well-funded, public education for poor and marginalised kids and too much

economic inequality and poverty. Privatisation has not brought about the changes necessary to address the conditions these children face: poverty, systematic discrimination, barriers due to language or culture, and issues of power or politics in schooling.

Instead the debate has focused on whether there is too much spending on education or efficient use of resources, or how to hold schools and teachers accountable – measured almost exclusively based on students test score performance. The real issue is not the overall funding of schools or “closing the achievement gap,” but the great funding inequities within and across schools and the different opportunities for rigorous and deep learning that children from different communities are afforded.

When privatisers talk about “addressing inequality” by offering families a ‘choice’ in education, these reformers never mention the impact of poverty on children or how broader structures of social inequality differentially impact opportunities for children and their families. They also do not mention how the ‘market’ isn’t interested in equal opportunities for all kids to attend schools that provide rich and meaningful learning. Despite the financial meltdown of recent years and the increasing gap between the ultra-rich and the rest, national education systems increasingly ignore the problem of economic inequality because it’s easier to get a test score and then blame the teachers and the kids for failing.

Chile

Chile stands as a striking example of the long-term consequences of austerity and privatisation in education and other public-sector institutions. In the wake of a 1973 military coup, Chile entered a seventeen-year dictatorship under Augusto Pinochet. Pinochet’s regime gained the support of the U.S. government, which saw in Chile the opportunity to promote free-market capitalism in Latin America. Under the guidance of



the ‘Chicago Boys’ - Chilean economists trained by Milton Friedman at the University of Chicago with U.S. funding - the military regime shifted to a free-market model, slashing funding to education, health, and other public institutions.

In 1979, the government released a Presidential Directive which argued that secondary and higher education were a privilege that would not be supported by the state. The regime went on to dismantle the University of Chile system, cutting funding and opening other private institutions to encourage ‘competition’ among the country’s schools of higher learning. This change has led to the growth of a number of low-quality, for-profit colleges and trade schools throughout the country, as well as making it the country with the highest income-adjusted cost of higher education in the world.

The country’s primary and secondary schools have been privatised as well, with unions abolished in 1973 and a voucher system instituted in 1980. Other changes followed a corporate reform model, including an emphasis on standardised curricula and assessment. While the stated intention of these reforms was to improve education for all students, they resulted in an education system that widened the gap between the rich and the poor by offering higher-quality education to middle and upper-class students through private schools, leaving students without the means to access the subsidised or elite private schools to struggle in the underfunded public system.

Despite the country’s history of silencing and, in many cases, punishing political dissent, as many as 800,000 high school students organised to protest Chile’s privatised school system in 2006. This movement, which came to be known as the Penguin Revolution (because of the white and black uniforms of students), focused its attention on protesting the Organic Constitutional Law on Teaching (LOCE), a law that attempted to make the Pinochet regime’s free-market education laws ‘permanent’. In the years that followed, the government offered a series of concessions to the protestors, including protections against discrimination in school admissions and scholarships for the country’s poorest students.

Students have continued to protest what they see as insufficient reforms to this system by newly-elected President Michelle Bachelet. Bachelet promised to work toward to dismantle the privatised school system and offer free education for all students in her 2013 campaign.

South Africa

Just over twenty years since the first democratic elections in South Africa, the combined weight of apartheid's legacy exacerbated by the two-tier education system - one for the middle class and the affluent and one for the poor - has meant that the promise of a quality public education system remains elusive. While many new official policies for every aspect of education have been developed and very importantly, racially-based laws removed from the statutes, the education system as a whole reflects and reproduces the wider inequalities in society. While schools of excellent quality exist, intractable problems remain for the vast majority of public schools attended by the poor and the working class. In this atmosphere, calls for the privatisation of schools in all their permutations are receiving greater resonance. Advocates of right-wing reform stridently demand a variety of responses ranging from outright privatisation of education and the withdrawal of the state, to various versions of market-friendly policies and public-private-partnerships.

Of the over 25 000 schools in South Africa with an enrolment of over 12-million learners, private schools relative to many countries remain numerically few. Official statistics are inconsistent, most often setting private schools at roughly 4% of all schools although many observers believe that they are more accurately at 9%. The sector is far from homogenous and includes unregistered 'fly-by-night' schools, non-profit religious schools and for-profit schools. Over the past few years the growth of what is called 'low-cost' private schools have grown unmistakably and the recent entry of the UK-based transnational behemoth, Pearson, in the 'low-cost, technology driven' schooling market will increase this trend. South Africa's premier business daily gushed (BDlive, 22/05/2014), "The Pearson pitch seems well-timed as the private education sector has become a darling of the JSE [Johannesburg Stock Exchange] with well-established Advtech and fast-growing Curro Holdings attracting strong market ratings."



South Africa is seeing the rapid growth of private schools. Curro Holdings for example boasts that it will reach 80 schools in the next six years. Ominously, the Government Employees Pension Fund via their asset manager the Public Investment Corporation (PIC) together with the corporate, Old Mutual Life Assurance Company has invested R440-million in Curro Holdings (Moneyweb, 03/06/14). The latter's revenue increased by 91% to R309-million and that of its earnings before interest and taxes increased by 178% to R51-million for the period ending 30 June 2013. There are other South African companies with huge profits in the education sector. Old Mutual and the Government Employees Pension Fund have formed the R1.2-billion Schools and Education Investment Impact Fund. The latter fund has invested in the following 'low cost schools': Prestige Schools, Royal Schools, BASA Educational Institute Trust and Meridian Schools, a subsidiary of Curro Holdings.

Canada

While not a particularly recent phenomenon, privatisation of education in Canada has increased since 1995, the year of the infamous Paul Martin federal budget that promised to eliminate the deficit "come hell or high water"—and did so by slashing billions from the social programmes which had (to that point) managed to generally keep socioeconomic inequality at bay. Additionally, fiscal pressure was put on the provincial governments to cut (or "streamline") funding for programmes under their jurisdiction—including education.

The result has been a marked increase in inequality, household debt at over 160% of income, wages stagnant for close to 30 years, a rise in precarious work, while social programmes and particularly education have been stretched and underfunded.



The cruel irony is that ‘accountability measures’ and standardised evaluations—which say more about the socioeconomic makeup of the community in which the kids live than it does about what they learn in class—are being used to hold schools responsible for those children who are bearing the brunt of living in a society increasingly divided along class lines.

All this is taking place in the shadow of renewed attacks on labour and public sector workers as teacher unions are being vilified as “greedy” and “unrealistic”; unions are politically expedient targets of blame than government’s own self-inflicted austerity policies that have reduced the tax base, undermined community cohesiveness and left the most vulnerable even further behind.

Simultaneously, schools, parents, students and teachers often go cap in hand to donors to compensate for inadequate funding; gymnasiums, desks, school trips, school supplies, physical-education equipment, musical instruments are in short supply at many schools. But we also know that private fundraising also benefit schools along class lines, with the top 10% of schools raising as much as the bottom 70-80%.

But this might be considered the ‘softer’ side of privatisation—the kind that is often internalised by the school and its advocates who use ‘higher than average’ test scores to ‘prove’ how well the school is doing (rather than underscoring how little the test is about education at all). Or the fundraising campaigns that are about bringing communities ‘together’ in a big show of school spirit to raise money some money for ‘their’ school (rather than highlighting the declining value we as a society place on education for all kids—not just our own).

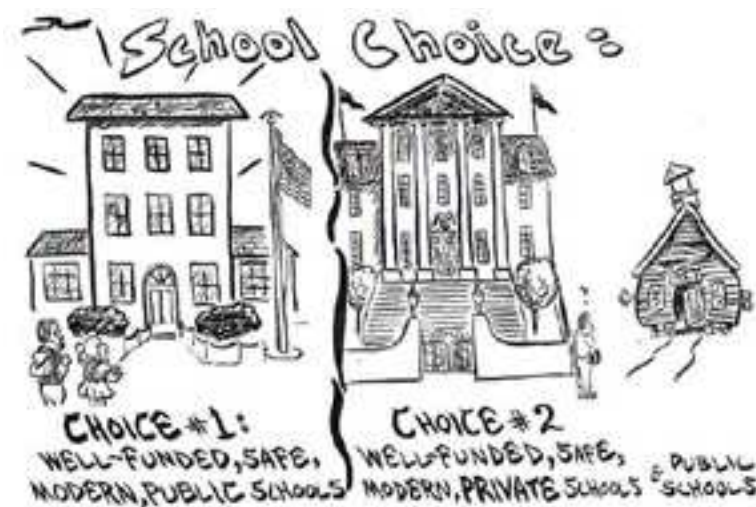
This is not to say that more tangible forms of privatisation do not exist—they are very much present in the Cola wars (Coke vs Pepsi—although increased focus on healthier food often results in juice or bottled water being made available while the corporate sponsors remain the same). Or public-private partnerships that oversee school construction and maintenance. Or the contracting-out of custodial services or school busing.

Corporate infiltration of the curriculum is also ongoing—from sponsored materials being distributed to schools for lesson ‘augmentation,’ to actual involvement in curriculum redesign. In Alberta, the oil companies are being

consulted on a massive overhaul of the province’s curriculum to ensure that “the economy [is] involved in the education system”. In Manitoba, math, social studies and language arts curriculum for grades 4-10 is being revamped to incorporate personal finance and business enterprise so kids can learn about credit cards, entrepreneurship and debt repayment.

Several provinces are calling for a return to a ‘back to the basics’ curriculum, driven by Canada’s math scores—which slightly slipped from previous years—on the PISA. Ironically, or perhaps not, the possibility that rising inequality or an increasingly stretched education system in Canada might have something to do with declining scores is not being addressed—Discovery Math (or, according to at least one former Minister of Education, ill-prepared teachers), on the other hand, is the culprit.

All of which is to say; as schools bear the brunt of a society increasingly divided along class lines, they are being held to higher and higher standards of ‘accountability’ that have very little to do with education and a whole lot to do with deflecting blame and scapegoating. Meanwhile, the collective bargaining process itself and fairly negotiated salaries for teachers are being used by provincial governments to stir up public hostility—not toward the inadequate funding of education, but toward teacher unions whose members are busy trying to compensate for austerity-induced cuts to classroom funding.



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Resistance to Privatisation

Teachers, researchers, students, and community members throughout the world are fighting the privatisation of public schools. This coalition has made its goal to protect quality public education as a right that should be guaranteed for all students. At stake in the struggle for public education is the value of critical and public education as a foundation for an engaged citizenry, social justice, and substantive democracy.

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

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

In some countries, students have led the way in the fight against privatisation. Students in cities such as Dublin, Santiago, Montreal, London, Mexico City and Philadelphia have led mass protests against privatisation, arguing that their education is not for sale. These protests have included sit-ins in governors' offices, walkouts, and organised marches to national and state capitals.

In the United States, teachers have campaigned against privatisation of education in large urban systems in New York and Chicago. They have also worked with non-union organisations such as the Badass Teachers Association (BAT) to advocate for supporting social justice and fighting the accountability and assessment movement through rallies, social media campaigns, and blog posts. Educator activists have also independently voiced their dissent through popular blogs and letters to the editor, collaborating with other activists through organisations like the Network for Public Education.

Teacher resistance has been especially notable in urban school systems, where schools have been key targets of the corporate reform movement.



In the United States, teachers in cities such as Chicago, Seattle, and New York have banded together to resist the overreliance on standardised tests in schools, recognising that these tests would be used to punish students and teachers in public schools, in many cases opening the doors for increased privatisation through charters and choice.

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

These educators have often worked alongside parent and community organisations, which have organised protests and, in many cases, boycotted standardised tests. Taken as a whole, the work of teachers, parents, researchers, administrators, students, and community members to defend the right to a quality public education for all students offers much hope for the future. In the past year, many people have spoken out against the privatisation of U.S. schools, which has suggested that we may have reached a "tipping point" in the resistance to corporate education reform.



The Unite for Quality Education campaign

We hope that by countering the refrain of the corporate reformers and predatory privatisers, we can loudly and clearly reclaim education for the public good as a step toward fixing the public school system. Teachers are also working independently and collectively to take a stand against state disinvestment, mandated tests, and privatisation. For these teachers, the emphasis on standards and assessment has diminished their ability to offer a quality public education to all students, and in many cases it has changed the very nature and purpose of public schooling.

Many of these teachers have worked through their unions and other education organisations to fight for public education alongside other educators, community members, and parents. Internationally, Education International has led this movement through their [Unite for Quality Education campaign](#), whose goal is “uniting 30-million educators, together with partner organisations and all those that support the public provision of education around the world, to ensure that quality education for all remains at the top of the agenda for a sustainable, peaceful and prosperous future.”

Education International's (EI) statement



Teacher unions around the world are increasingly concerned with the growing privatisation of education – not only because of the very direct impact of such policies on employment and working conditions of our members, but also because of the threat that privatisation poses to public education in general. Therefore, in 2013 Education International conducted a survey among its affiliated organisations, asking their opinions about the spread and forms of privatising policies and actions to counter these.

All surveyed teacher unions have a very critical view on the effects of privatisation to their educational systems, and an overwhelming majority oppose it. Of the surveyed organisations, a significant number have already developed policies dealing with privatisation in education.

In both the North and the South, unions are strengthening their involvement in education policy, combining collaborative (e.g. advocacy efforts oriented towards policy change) with confrontational ways of action opposing privatisation and building coalitions with community and parent organisations. The other most frequently used strategy is increased unionisation of teachers and other staff in individual privately managed schools thus re-creating the collective voice and power of the profession – core function of the unions.

What is the alternative? – Strengthen the public sector

In critiquing privatisation we are not claiming that change isn't necessary. Rather, we are aligning ourselves with the progressive reformers who sought to improve *public* education by challenging social inequities and promoting social justice through challenging, engaging curricula in well-resourced schools. We are also aligning ourselves with teachers, researchers, and community members who are fighting the privatisation of public schools.

As many of these activists and researchers have argued, there are many reasons to invest in public education for all students rather than supporting market-based reform. To begin with, the strongest way to defend high-quality public education as a human right is to ensure that it is adequately funded through public investment. As the past twenty years of pro-privatisation policy has demonstrated, private and corporate interests in education unduly influences policy, detracts from democratic control of schools, and diminishes the quality of education guaranteed to all students.

This is not to say that public education has met these goals in all countries, or that there is no crisis in education worldwide. Rather, the question is: who is to blame for this crisis and what solutions do we pursue? Our response is quite different from corporate reformers and private philanthropists. As progressive educators concerned with improving and expanding public education as a necessary element of a democratic society, we believe that the best way to solve the crisis in education is to recognise its root causes – poverty, systemic inequality, and limited access to quality public schooling – and address these causes directly through democratic change and public investment.

Unlike many market-based alternatives, a well-funded public school system has the ability to offer education to the poorest students without a financial incentive for doing so. This difference is crucial, as financial incentives open the door to corruption and the diversion of public funds to private investors. In addition, centuries of public schooling have demonstrated the ability and possibility of governments to provide quality education. While not all public schools have met this goal, the best public systems support and promote teacher professionalism, provide a rich and diverse curriculum, and promote equity by allowing for social mobility through quality learning opportunities.

There are many alternatives to privatisation that can be tailored to a specific country or sociocultural context. The following rights-based solutions would support high-quality education for all students:

- 1 Support access to high-quality, public primary and secondary schools for all students;
- 2 Combat poverty, racial segregation, and economic inequality, which are the most difficult barriers to academic achievement;
- 3 Invest in quality health care, nutritional support, recreation and social services for all students, especially those living in poverty;
- 4 Invest early in education through quality prenatal care and early childhood education;
- 5 Move beyond the basics by providing students with a varied curriculum that includes physical activity, literature, different languages, experiential learning, civic education and the arts;
- 6 Decrease class sizes to ensure individualised instruction for all students;
- 7 Provide mother-tongue and multilingual instruction that recognises the value of linguistic diversity;
- 8 Shift toward meaningful project-based assessments as an alternative to standardised assessments;
- 9 Ensure that education decisions are made through a democratic process that is based on the input of teachers and other educators; and importantly
- 10 Much more and better teacher support, training and professional development.

For more information on potential alternatives to privatisation, Diane Ravitch (2014) is a great resource.

Useful Resources and Organisations

Magazines

Our Schools/Our Selves, Summer 2014:
policyalternatives.ca/our-schoolsour-selves-summer-2014

Privatisation of Schools: A Global View:
policyalternatives.ca/publications/ourschools-ourselves

Rethinking Schools: Special Voucher Report:
rethinkingschools.org/special_reports/voucher_report/index.shtml

Selling Out Our Schools: Vouchers, Markets, and the Future of Public Education:
rethinkingschools.org/special_reports/voucher_report/v_sostoc2.shtml

Organisations, Websites and Blogs

Coalition for Public Education: forpubliced.blogspot.com

Education International: ei-ie.org/en/

Education International Unite for Quality Education Campaign:
unite4education.org/

Grassroots Education Movement: gemnyc.org/

New York Collective of Radical Educators: nycore.org

Our Schools, Our Selves:
policyalternatives.ca/publications/ourschools-ourselves

Rethinking Schools: rethinkingschools.org/index.shtml

Right to Education Project: right-to-education.org/

Scrap the Map Seattle: scrapthemap.wordpress.com

Teachers unite: teachersunite.net

United Opt Out-The Movement to End Corporate Education Reform
unitedoptout.com

Documentaries

1 Charter Schools Privatization

This is an on-going web documentary series following the changing landscape of the New York City Public Schools. The Department of Education proceeds to convert and abandon district schools for the charter school system. The documentary looks at the widening gap of disparity in New York City and the grassroots parent and teachers vowing to fight for quality public education:
dailymotion.com/video/xcojkh_charter-schools-privatisation-pt1_news

2 Chile Rising

Chilean students have taken over schools and city streets in the largest protests the country has seen in decades. The students are demanding free education, and an end to the privatisation of their schools and universities. The free-market based approach to education was implemented by the military dictator Augusto Pinochet. As the demonstrations in Chile coincide with protests erupting globally, Fault Lines follows the Chilean student movement during their fight in a country plagued by economic inequality:
roarmag.org/2012/01/chile-rising-a-documentary-on-the-student-revolt
and
[aljazeera.com/programmes/faultlines/...](http://aljazeera.com/programmes/faultlines/)

3 Chile's Student Uprising

This documentary tells the story of the student protests in Chile demanding a free and state-funded education system and radical change in society. The film puts the protests in their historical context of widespread dissatisfaction with the economic model put in place under the Pinochet dictatorship (1973-1990), but that still remains largely in place. The film's director Roberto Navarrete travelled to Chile in 2011 and 2012 to speak to student leaders such as Camila Vallejo and Giorgio Jackson, but also to ordinary students, and to understand why their protests are causing such effect in Chile and inspiring others in Chile and beyond: alborada.net/chilestudents.film

4 Go Public

This documentary is about the day in the life of a public school system in California. The film celebrates public schools without ignoring their troubles by veteran documentary filmmakers Jim and Dawn O'Keeffe. It is an antidote to the bleak and misleading message of "Waiting for

Superman” and “Won’t Back Down.” “Go Public” follows 50 people in 28 schools - teachers, students, parents, a school board member, principals, a baseball coach, librarians, a school psychologist, volunteers, and the district superintendent - during one day (May 8, 2012), from the time they wake up until the time they go to bed: gopublicproject.org/

5 Public Schools for Sale?

Preeminent education historian and public school advocate Diane Ravitch talks to Bill Moyers about the private sell out of public schools: billmoyers.com/episode/public-schools-for-sale/

6 Quebec Students on Strike/Red Square Revolt

Students in Quebec strike against tuition hikes, for free education and against privatisation: vimeo.com/42702955

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