The Strange Non-Death of Neoliberal Privatisation in the World Bank's Education Strategy 2020

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Introduction

In 2012, the World Bank Group will celebrate half a century of engagement in the field of education development (Jones, 2007). And whilst "…arguably the most prestigious and ... most powerful producer ... of international development knowledge" (Berger and Beeson, 1998: 487), to many observers, the Bank's pro-poor achievements, especially over the past quarter of a century, have been way too few. Instead, since the 1980s and the turn to 'neo-liberalism' as the ideological paradigm guiding development, Bank policy has had detrimental outcomes for economic growth and global social equality. The education sector was not exempted from this paradigm shift, or its effects. Klees describes the Bank's neoliberal policies in education as a 'Great Experiment' (2008: 312) involving "…user-fees, the privatisation of more educational activities; and the direct connection of management and financing of education to measurable output".

This mix of policy—widely referred to as the Washington Consensus—"…derived its appeal from a simple narrative about the power of globalization to lift nations out of poverty" (Rodrik, 2011: 164-165). By the mid 1990's, however, the Washington Consensus was widely regarded as a "damaged brand", not only because of the ideological opposition it had engendered, but because of growing evidence that two decades of neoliberal development policies had reinforced, rather than mitigated, global poverty and inequality (cf. Wade, 2004; ILO, 2004; Klees, 2008; Rodrik, 2011). The attempt to find a path forward through promoting 'good governance'—known as the post-Washington consensus—was not sufficient to stave off the crisis that was the inevitable outcome of financial deregulation. By 2008, with the world was facing its worst global financial crisis since the 1930s, neo-liberalism as a development paradigm was again called into question. Indeed, some intellectuals went so far as to talk about a new 'post-neoliberal' world order whilst the Bank, for its part, promised the modernization of the multilateral system and a 'New World Bank Group'. Had the Bank finally changed its mind on neo-liberalism, and instead sought to lay out a new development trajectory for the next decade?

According to Graham Harrison (2005), shifts in direction are not new for the World Bank. In looking back over the Bank's post-war history, Harrison (2001; 2005), argues what is most striking about the Bank is that it has trouble sticking to its own convictions. He notes a constant set of forward and backward movements, declaring war on those states it had previously funded with optimism, to be followed by tactical retreats from policies it had promoted with great zeal. Harrison goes on to argue: "In reviewing all of these changes in direction – often unexplained by the Bank – one gets the impression of an inconsistent and reactionary institution, unsure of how to represent itself to the outside world, yet at the same time deploying considerable resources to rebut or partially assimilate the criticisms of others" (Harrison, 2001: 530).

Given this history, one might be encouraged to think the Bank would, at last, engage in a tactical retreat from neo-liberalism. Yet, despite the crisis that has engulfed the heartlands of neoliberal ideology, the United States of America and the United Kingdom, if we look critically at the Bank's *Education Strategy 2020*—the focus for this chapter—free-market economics is alive and well. In the World Bank's *New World, New World Bank Group: (I) Post Crisis Directions* report (2010) that framed the priorities for the *Education Strategy 2020*, whilst regulatory and supervisory failures are recognized as laying at the heart of the crisis (World Bank, 2010: 4), the Bank nevertheless goes on to argue for bigger role for itself in global governance, and for an expanded role for the private sector in development. Paradoxically, rather than a *retreat* from these policies, as Harrison suggests, it is clear that the Bank proposes to deal with the failures of neo-liberalism by *reinventing* further rounds of neoliberal intervention (Peck, 2010).

I'll be exploring this strange 'non-death of neo-liberalism' (Crouch, 2011) in the Bank's education sector policy priorities, and its implications for education as a societal good and human right. A key point of entry will be the two education sector strategy reports, *Education Sector Strategy 1999* (World Bank, 1999) and the *Education Strategy 2020* (World Bank, 2011), used to guide the Bank's education operations. In order to locate these reports in wider political and economic developments, I begin with some opening remarks on neo-liberalism as a political project. Second, I then focus on the *Education Sector Strategy 1999* Report, focusing particularly on the ways in which an expanded private sector, together with the International Finance Corporation (the Bank's private sector investment arm) are promoted as having the knowledge, and capacity, to play a more central role in education as 'an emerging market'. Third, I show the ways in which a small group of global education policy entrepreneurs advanced, and sought to materialize, this agenda for education under the rubric of Public Private Partnerships. I examine the evidence these policy entrepreneurs create, and use, to advance their arguments, and highlight the circumscribed nature of this evidence. Fourth, I show the ways in which this agenda is not only continued, but expanded in the *Education Strategy 2020 Report*. This is despite the causal role of neo-liberalism in the current global economic crisis, the tenuous nature of the evidence that the private sector is more efficient, and the questionable investments of the International Finance Corporation. Finally, I reflect on neo-liberalism as a political project, and the fact that, despite its manifest failings, for the moment at least, these failings appear to animate further rounds of neoliberal invention in the education sector.

Enter Neoliberalism - Chicago-Style; Exit State Regulation - and Keynes

Whilst most of us are familiar with the contours of neo-liberalism as a hegemonic project, there are several points to make that are germane to this chapter. The first is that to understand the significance of opening up education to the private sector, we need to look back to the early 1970s, to the crisis of the post-war capitalist development project (a marriage between economic liberalism and social democracy) (Hobsbawm 1994; Harvey 2005), and the eventual introduction of free market economics as the dominant vision of how best to organize societies. Yet, realizing this vision was not inevitable, and therefore nor is its eventual dislocation and demise. The second is that the 1970s crisis was not just a crisis of political ideas. Rather, it was also a structural crisis in the advanced economies of the West as a consequence of the exhaustion of the post-war Fordist development model (Harvey, 2005).

Ideas about a minimally regulated free market had circulated from the 1930s onward, but its advocates had not been able to secure a toehold in political and policy circles. Instead, Keynesianism, or a state-managed economy, dominated. Nor indeed were neoliberals in agreement with each other. As events unfolded, a clear divide emerged over the following decades between the eventually triumphant Chicago School, and the European-anchored Ordo-liberal position. These differences can be contrasted as a free-economy-and minimal state, on the one hand, and a socially-embedded market order, on the other. What held neoliberals together, however, was the shared embrace of market utopianism, and a visceral distaste for Keynesianism and socialism. And yet, as Peck (2010: 65) points out, neo-liberalism's curse is that can live neither with, nor without, the state. However, they differed sharply on where to draw the line with regard to the role of the state.

In any event, from the 1980s onwards, the ideas of the Chicago School, driven by the economists Friedrich von Hayek and Milton Friedman, were to eventually dominate. Picked up by the Thatcher and Reagan administrations in the UK and US respectively, Chicago-style neo-liberalism was to affect a 'great moving right show' (Hall, 1979). As projects were rolled out in the 1980s, a cluster of key ideas featured: the unpicking of the state's protectionist policies to enable the freer movement of finance, trade and labour across national boundaries (referred to as deregulation); the implementation of competition policies across the public and private sectors aimed at creating efficiencies; the privatization of a range of former state activity; and the rescaling of state activity (involving a dual process of decentralisation and recentralisation). The state went from being a handmaiden of economic growth to the principal obstacle blocking it, whilst "…the international division of labor was transformed from a threat to a savior" (Rodrik, 2011: 163).

In policy and development circles, this cluster of ideas came to be referred to as 'the Washington Consensus' (Williamson, 1993). Markets and competition, and the role of the private sector in new and old areas of service delivery, including education (Ball, 2007), were presented as 'in the national interest', central to global economic competitiveness, as a means of arresting poverty and slowing economic growth, and the basis for building knowledge-based economies. From the 1980s onward, key international agencies, such as the World Bank Group (WB), the International Monetary Fund (IMF) and the Organization for Economic and Cooperative Development (OECD), played an increasingly instrumental role in promoting the Chicago School's free market ideas globally. In low-income countries, neo-liberal political projects—often referred to as 'policy in a suitcase'—were advanced through the WB/IMF's Structural Adjustment Policies (SAPs) (Samoff, 1994). However, this policy repertoire (decentralisation, privatisation, user fees, community financing), had devastating consequences, not only on the quality and capacity of these education systems but on their wider societies (Bonal, 2002; Ilon, 1994; Klees, 2008).

By the mid-1990s, the manifest failures of the Washington Consensus, in particular the considerably lower levels of economic growth it had presided over, left neoliberals with a conundrum. How to move forward without repudiating neo-liberalism as a project? The Washington Consensus was rehabilitated by retaining its broad features whilst expanding it to include a range of additional reforms under the rubric of 'good governance'; extensive reforms in public administration, Public-Private-Partnerships, the elimination of barriers to trade, and a new round international trade agreements. The latter of these, however, was to grind to a halt as the newly formed World Trade Organization in 1995 was confronted with major difficulties in advancing negotiations that protected the interests of the developed economies at the expense of the developing economies. With regard to opening education to negotiations though the WTO as a global services sector, it too was faced with major organized protests around whether or not education was a commodity for sale.

These ongoing movements forward, collisions and backflow of neoliberal restructuring lead to my third point. That because the utopian vision at the core of neo-liberalism—of a free market and free economy—is ultimately unrealizable, it inevitably faces failure. Yet, as Peck argues, this vision also drives a forward dynamic because:

> …the pristine clarity of its ideological apparition, the *free market,* coupled with the endless frustrations borne of the inevitable failure to arrive at this elusive destination, nevertheless confer a significant degree of forward momentum on the neoliberal project. Ironically, neo-liberalism possesses a progressive, forward-leaning dynamic by virtue of the very unattainability of its idealized destination. In practice, neo-liberalism has never been about a once and for all liberalization, an evacuation of the state. Instead, it has been associated with rolling programs of market-oriented reform, a kind of permanent revolution (Peck, 2010: 7).

In other words, including education, neoliberal projects tend to 'fail forward' (Peck, 2010: 6). These rounds of neo-liberal intervention, of de- and re-regulation, of flows, backflow and undercurrents, create the actually existing worlds of neo-liberalism. Furthermore, they are "…not pristine spaces of market rationality and constitutional order; they are institutionally cluttered places marked by experimental but flawed systems of governance, cumulative problems of social fallout, and serial market failure" (Peck, 2010: 31). In the following sections we'll see these dynamics at work in the ongoing reinvention of the Bank's free-market project within the education sector, and in the accumulation of experiments regarding different privatization projects.

Locating the *Education Sector Strategy 1999* Report

It is against this backdrop, of a concerted effort to keep the failed Washington Consensus on the road through its revamping and repackaging, and the developed economies attempt to advance a new economic model based on a globalizing services sector that we can now locate the World Bank's *Education Sector Strategy 1999*. These Reports are forward looking documents, playing play a crucial role in guiding the Bank's investments in the education sector over a longer temporal horizon. In this case, the *Education Sector Strategy* is the 4th Report in 30 years (the others were presented in 1970, 1975, and 1980) with 20 years between the 3rd and the 4th reports. This temporal lag of 20 years suggests that the broad policy trajectory for the Bank's education sector over those years had, until the later 1990s, not changed in any significant way.

Despite difficulties the Bank was encountering with its hard-nosed, free-market policies, the Report confidently proclaimed that market economies now dominated the global economy, accounting for over 80% of the world's population (World Bank, 1999: 11). Contrasting a "centrally planned economy of the past" (presented as having "more certainty but fewer opportunities") (World Bank, 1999: 11), with a dynamic market system, we are left in little doubt which was preferable. Yet, the Report encourages us to suspend judgment about the moral anchor of this market society that is driven by a relentless search for "wafer thin profit margins" and "do or die profit margins" (ibid). Instead, education, and educators are invited onto "centre stage"; to be the means by which the future is either won, or lost, for "individuals, communities and nations" (ibid). That there might be another more humane game in town is not countenanced. Instead, the Report offers full support for this revamped political project, asserting that now governments were becoming less the provider of goods and services, and more the facilitators and regulators of economic activity. The challenge for the education sector was also clear; how to create learners who were enterprising, agile and risk takers, on the one hand, and engaging the private sector in a wider range of education activities (such as on-the–job training, publishing, technology initiatives, education provision), on the other.

The Bank Report, seemingly mindful that strong claims around privatization in education would likely be controversial, began by noting: "…education in most countries is both publicly financed and provided" (1999: 34) but that "…there is no *a priori* reason for all education to be publicly provided, funded and managed" (op. Cit). It goes on: "…there are arguments in favor of (1) selectively encouraging management and or ownership of institutions by NGOs, community of religious groups, and entrepreneurs, (2) allowing students and their parents to choose among different options, and (3) requiring some level of private financing at post-basic levels".

The Report then turns to legitimate its embrace of a greater role for the private sector, laying out a set of justifications in line with the Bank's pro-poor development mandate. For example: a greater private sector would extend educational opportunities to less well-off students; private financing would expand the number of places available – especially at the secondary and tertiary levels; public resources would then be freed up to be used by the poor; families would be provided with choices beyond the public sector; the private sector would be more efficient than the public sector whilst quality would be maintained at a lower unit cost; and the private sector would increase the potential for innovation (World Bank, 1999: 28-29). These claims display a limited engagement with, or understanding of, the wider evidence that had been generated by national education systems who had moved to choice policies (Gewirtz et al, 1995), to new forms of financing - particularly of education infrastructures (Hatcher,2006) and nascent commercialization (Molnar, 2006). Instead the Bank drew on Bank-financed and supported projects, such as a primary education project in the Dominican Republic using Milton Friedman's famous voucher system, scholarships for girls to enable them to attend private schools, and private sector development of education in Mauritania and Burkino Faso.

Arguably the more ambitious project regarding the expansion of the Bank's new engagements with the private sector was the perceived potential for the International Finance Corporation (IFC) to expand its role in education. The IFC has the task, distinct from the other four branches of the World Bank Group, of supporting the private sector in what the IFC described as 'emerging markets'. The IFC was founded as a separate arm of the Bank in 1956, when member governments became concerned that private entrepreneurs were not being effectively supported by multilateral lending agencies. The IFC also grew out of a belief that economic development, and thereby poverty alleviation, was dependent on a robust private sector. According to the Sector Strategy Report 1999, the IFC's expertise in "…understanding the actual and potential roles of private sector involvement in education" (World Bank 1999: 28) meant that it could then be able to;

> …play a role in the further development and nurturing of that private segment of the education market that expands educational opportunities for low-income students. ….the more that better off families pay for education (as they do when they chose private education), the more the government can use its resource for the poor" (ibid).

In other words, funding the well-off—the argument was—would benefit the poor. To advance its efforts to open up education as an investment sector, the Report proposed continued support for EdInvest launched a year earlier (1998); a joint venture between the British-based not-for-profit education firm, the Centre for British Teachers (CfBT), and the IFC, as an information portal for global investments in the education sector.

How to advance such an agenda in the face of considerable hostility toward the Bank's privatization agenda that the Washington Consensus had engendered? The solution? The idea of partnerships, in particular Public-Private-Partnerships (PPPs), was canvassed in the Report. Arguing that "the job of strengthening education is too big for any single institution" (World Bank, 1999: 18), partnerships were a means of smoothing over the damage done by earlier forms of privatization whilst not abandoning them. Most importantly, partnerships enabled multiple framings, interests, and objectives to be realized (Newman, 2001: 107). The idea of partnerships, therefore, was a useful portmanteau for the bank to continue to advance its privatization of education agenda. PPPs not only brought different actors together and therefore different constituencies and kinds of expertise, but they helped to broker in, rather than mitigate or mediate, privatisation *in*, and *of*, education.

This Report therefore coincided with a wider set of strategies being advanced by the developed economies and the multilateral agencies aimed at creating competitive knowledge-based service economies that included an expanding education services sector. These included bringing private actors into the governance of education on the pretext they generated greater efficiencies than the public sector; opening up the education sector to global trading rules; and the promotion of trade in education (rather than aid) as the basis for capacity building and delivering on access and quality in education (Robertson et al, 2002).

Taken together, these priorities in the *Education Sector Strategy 1999* Report extend the Bank's activities in the private sector into new areas - beyond fees and private schools (Klees, 2002: 463). In offering an assessment this Report, Klees (2002), argues that, despite the promissory vision (of 'Quality Education for All'), closer scrutiny revealed not only very little substantive change, but that the Report is full of "…unexamined assumptions, questionable facts, and ideology substituting for knowledge" (2002: 451). Klees' assessment of the Report points to the clear continuities in the Bank's position on education with the earlier discredited Washington Consensus. Yet he underplays the extent to which the Bank's privatization agenda has been strategically advanced to include new actors with the Bank group and a remodeled packaging of free-market ideas for reforming education provision.

Brokering in Privatization through PPPs: the Global Education Policy Entrepreneurs

It is tempting to think of neo-liberalism as a global regulatory architecture imposed from above. Yet like all political projects, neo-liberalism requires continual work by socially-situated actors. These actors are the brokers of myths, the mediators of projects, and the makers of new spaces of neo-liberalism. In this section I want to now focus on an one privatization strategy—Public Private Partnerships—referred to briefly in the *Education Sector Strategy 1999* Report under Partnerships, but which is given life, direction and substance. This brokering work by the education policy entrepreneurs highlights the ways in which neo-liberalism is not only lived, but it is a constructed project by a network of actors located within and beyond the Bank.

The brokers of the Bank's privatization of project through education PPPs are a small network of policy entrepreneurs and education experts located at the interstices of a select range of international organizations, transnational education consultancy firms and global universities who have been responsible for promoting the idea of PPPs (Verger, forthcoming). In the nineties, representatives of these organizations came together in the World Bank Economics of Education Thematic Group and opened a research and discussion line on private and alternatives forms of education provision, initially with a focus on Sub-Saharan Africa. They started thinking about partnerships in education as an evolution of, and solution to, the hostility facing the privatization agenda. As Crouch remarks:

> A full blooded neoliberal approach to public services would have these moved fully into the market, with consumers paying for them themselves and government having no role at all. This has proved impossible, mainly for democratic reasons: the majority of voters will not support the abolition of the public services established during the heyday of universal suffrage (Crouch, 2011: 95).

In 2001, the IFC launched a handbook on PPPs in education. The main authors of this collaboration were Normal LaRocque, then Director of Corporate Finance at Anderson Consulting Company in New Zealand, James Tooley, Professor of Education Policy in the UK, and Michael Latham, Education Advisor to CfBT Education Services, along with Harry Patrinos, Senior Education Economist with the Bank. The network is narrow in scope, but very cohesive, and can best be described as a small epistemic community who shares a common commitment to the ideas of the Chicago School, as well as being informed by a small group of largely US-based economists of education. This group is central to advancing the PPPs agenda in education more globally; they are also behind the most well-known publications, policy-briefs and toolkits on PPPs which have culminated in the widely disseminated World Bank report, *The Role and Impact of PPPs in Education* released in 2009. The network has organized a range of events where PPPs are discussed among policy-makers, donor agencies, with the staff of international organizations, and amongst select academics. Their members write and speak at each other's initiatives (publications, seminars, courses, and so on).

A central assumption made by this policy network is that "…education is a consumer good, and that the student is the principal consumer through parents" (World Bank, 2001: 1). What follows from this assumption is that in order for parents (and students) to choose, the education sector needs to be organized so that it operates according to the logic of a free market. This includes information on the nature of the provider's education offer including its quality; a set of incentives that ensure the right kind of performance behaviour; regulatory guarantees to protect the interests of private investors; competition amongst providers; and an evaluation system that is able to feed back into the information system, creating a virtuous circle. A virtuous circle is also created between the Bank's objectives concerning what it is that PPPs should be able to realize (access, quality, cost and overcoming inequalities), the ways in which different types of PPPs can affect educational outcomes, and the use of empirical evidence – much of which is funded by the Bank as part of its impact studies, or which comes from a select group of education economists.

PPPs are proving to be the perfect umbrella, for whilst the education provision operates according to free market principles (competition, efficiency and so on), the state ensures the enabling policy environment, and most importantly, funding. As key Bank staffer, Harry Patrinos, observes:

> …government guides policy and provides financing while the private sector delivers education services to students. In particular, governments contract out private providers to supply a specified service of a defined quantity and quality at an agreed price for a specific period of time. These contracts contain rewards and sanctions in which the private sector shares the financial risk in the delivery of public services (Patrinos et al, 2009: 1).

And, as Crouch notes, almost no-one talks about the fact that universal public services, funded by government rather than by individual choice, provide wonderfully secure markets for those firms that specialize in contracting for public business. He points out: "…neo-liberalism departs astonishingly from the political and economic legacy of liberalism in not seeing any problem in a close relationship between firms and the state, provided the influence runs from firms to the state and not vice versa" (Crouch, 2011: 95). He is right. In countries such as the UK and the USA, where education had been part of the state-citizen contract, reversals to the point that the market trumped the state have proven impossible. Instead, a new position has emerged that has suited the private sector; a publicly-funded, privately-provided education sector through PPPs. The question of how the state regulates private actors in the education sector, particularly when private actors hide behind 'commercial sensitivity' laws, is an important issue with no evident solution. But an equally important question is how the state manages the deepening contradictions between education as a human right, public good, tradeable commodity and mechanism for social cohesion, and the crisis of regulation that now pervades the global political economy.

Crisis, Modernising Multilateralism, and the Education Strategy 2020 Report

Whilst the global financial crisis began to emerge well before it attracted attention in 2007-2008, 2008 has become identified as its moment of rupture. Jessop argues that

> …the global crisis is the product of the interaction of at least five processes: the global environmental, fuel, food and water crisis; the decline of US hegemony, dominance and credibility in the post-Cold War geopolitical order; the crisis of a global economy organized in the shadow of ongoing neo-liberalisation; a range of structural or branch crises in important sectors (such as automobiles and agriculture); and the crisis of finance-dominated accumulation regimes (Jessop, forthcoming, 17).

And whilst the crisis has passed through different stages and spread unevenly, our interest here is in whether, how, and in what ways, the crisis has destabilized the Bank's commitment to education development policy that has, as I have shown, been driven by market liberalism since the 1980s. In its opening remarks in its *New World, New World Bank Group (I) Post-Crisis Directions* published in April 2010, the Bank is confident that the worst of the crisis is behind it, but that new efforts are required in order move forward in this new world order. And whilst noting that "financial and supervisory failures lay at the heart of the financial failure" and that "effective government" (p. 4) is critical, its own role in advancing policies that have sought to limit state regulation is absent. Instead the Report calls for an expanded role for the World Bank Group under what it refers to as 'multilateral modernisation' and a central role for the private sector in mechanisms such as PPPs, in order to meet the needs of the poor. Yet its own view of what is to be done continues to be shaped by an agenda that views less regulation, rather than more, as the basis for competitiveness. It states:

> Creating opportunities for private sector growth will be critical, particularly as stimulus packages wind down. A vibrant entrepreneurial private sector will be required to sustain growth. This will involve policy, technical and operational support for a broad competitiveness agenda to eliminate barriers and promote opportunities (World Bank, 2010: 17).

It is this set of priorities that shape the Bank's Education Strategy 2020 report released in April 2011. Arguing that a 'new' strategy is essential to help realize its goal for education – of ensuring 'learning' in order to deliver a high quality knowledge base for economic development – the Bank sees both an important role for governments (p. 3) on the one hand, and an increased role for the International Finance Corporation in education development (p. 31), on the other. In arguing that there are strong rationales for governments' promotion of education, including correcting for the failure of the market to invest sufficiently in education, and in ensuring access to those who cannot pay for education up front (p. 3), the Bank appears to recognize the limits of the market as a model for education development. Yet it also implicitly promotes a view that the state provides a safety net for those with insufficient resource to participate in the private sector.

A very significant innovation in the Report is the strong view around the reregulation of the education sector in what elsewhere I have referred to as the 'resectoralisation of education' (Robertson, 2011). In redefining the term 'education system' to now include a wider range of actors—from "…national and local governments to private education providers, individuals and their families, communities, and non-profit and for-profit organizations" (World Bank, 2011), the door is effectively opened in a systemic way to the private sector.

The strengthening support for the privatizing of education is also evident in the expanded role for the IFC. It states:

> The main focus of IFC's education strategy is to provide financing for larger network providers who have the ability to invest across borders and go down-market to reach poorer populations; financing for education to small and medium enterprises which typically target poor populations and to students through partner banks; and advisory services to companies to support quality of education and to banks to ensure responsible lending to the sector (World Bank, 2011: 16).

Despite these promises of pro-poor development, the IFC has been the target of considerable criticism because of its failure to meet the needs of the very poor. This then raises the question of what value it adds, particularly as many of the projects funded by the IFC do not have poverty or redistributional dimensions in their design. The Bretton Woods Project (2010: 3), a London-based watchdog organization that monitors Bank developments, argues that low income countries are concerned that IFC support goes mostly to a very few large projects and transnational investors, where the need for concessional financing is lower, and potential development benefits are smaller than in poorer countries and small and medium sized enterprises. They also point out that accountability and transparency are weak in the Bank's private sector work, and most of all for its expanding investments through financial intermediaries. The Independent Evaluation Group (IEG), the internal evaluation group within the Bank, has raised similar criticisms about the IFC and its failure to reach the very poor. Taken together, we can see that in the latest World Bank Education Strategy, far from reappraising neoliberal privatization, the crisis has created an opportune window for an expansion of this agenda. Like Colin Crouch (2011), we are encouraged to ask about the strange non-death of neoliberalism.

The Strange 'Non-Death' of Privatisation in World Bank Education Policy

I have been arguing that neo-liberalism as a political project, despite its manifest failings in the education development sector, for the moment at least, appears to animate further rounds of neoliberal invention. Understanding how this is the case, and why, despite the current global crisis, neo-liberalism is alive and well in World Bank education priorities is important for thinking through 'what is to be done'. As Peck argues, neo-liberalism displays a certain level of "reproductive doggedness" (Peck, 2010: 28), in part because of its capacity to reinvent itself, and because of the relational spatialities of neo-liberalism that continue to be embedded in a range of extra-local, transnational and cross-scalar dynamics. In other words and as I will elaborate shortly, neoliberal education projects have been advanced in national territorial and regional spaces which in turn reinforce the momentum and direction of the World Bank's privatizing of education policy (see Table 1).

WB Education Policy	***Report No.***	***Regime***	***Locating the 'private'***	***Interpretation***
Education Policy Report 1970	**1**	**Rostovian/ Keynesian**	**Expansion of state-funded education**	**State-led manpower planning**
Education Policy Report1975	**2**	**Rostovan/ Keynesian**	**Expansion of state-funded education**	**State-led manpower planning**
Education Sector Policy Paper 1980	**3**	**Washington Consensus**	**fees, private schools, efficiency**	**Pockets of private within a distinct public private sector**
Education Sector 1999	**4**	**Post-Washington**	**'Public-Private-Partnerships', competition/ efficiency, vouchers/nascent IFC**	**Blurring the boundary - using the private to discipline the public**
WB Group Education Strategy 2010	**5**	**New World Order/New World Bank**	**Redefining education *system* to include variety of actors/expanded role for IFC within WB group**	**Collapsing the boundary - redefining the education system to include the private 'within'**

Table 1: The World Bank, Regimes and Privatising in/of Education

This is certainly the true regarding the Bank's persistence with neo-liberalism as a paradigm. In addressing the question of 'how', my analysis of the Bank's ongoing engagements with the privatization in/of education agenda highlights two broad dimensions: one strategic, and the other structural.

Strategically, we can see how, over time, the Bank has used ongoing political and economic crises facing it to continue to reinvent its privatization of education agenda. We can see a number of different strategies and tactics being advanced, each triggered by crisis. To begin, we can see a shift from the Washington Consensus privileging of user-fees and private schools to the later advance of Public-Private-Partnerships under a reinvented neoliberal post-Washington Consensus (though with free-market economics continuing to be the dominant logic guiding private provision and state funding), to the most recent iteration in the *Education Strategy 2020* which redefines the meaning of an education system to now include, and enclose, the private sector (for profit/not for profit) as key actors *within*, as opposed *outside* the education system. Each movement forward has expanded the ambit and agenda for the Bank, rather than closed it down.

Second, by pushing the privatization of education agenda out to a less familiar arm of the World Bank Group, the IFC, the Bank has deployed the tactic of 'forum shifting' (Sell, 2009). Reflecting on the different ways in which the intellectual property agenda was tactically advanced through different UN agencies, including the WTO, Susan Sell notes:

> Forum-shifting can refer to several distinct dynamics, all of which are designed to yield preferred results by changing the game. Parties might move an agenda from one forum to another, exit a forum altogether (e.g. the US exiting UNESCO in the 1980s), or pursue agendas simultaneously in multiple forums. According to Peter Drahos, "forum shifting means that some negotiations are never really over" (Sell, 2009: 1).

Similarly, for the Bank, 'forum shifting' generates a new space, and breathes new life, into the controversial privatization of education agenda; it provides access to new resources, mobilises new kinds of expertise, legitimizes its activity through viewing education as an 'emerging market' in line with IFC objectives, and yet is able to remain less visible because of the fact that the IFC is not well known. Indeed most observers of Bank education policy tend to look at the activities of the International Bank of Reconstruction and Development (IBRD) as the space where education policy and programming is set rather than also the IFC. This

The Bank manages knowledge in a very tactical way. First, it strategically deploys what I call 'knowledge ventriloquism' - or what is an effort to create a virtuous circle between Bank 'policy-research-evidence' and back again. In developing policy on the role of the private sector in education, the Bank tends to draw evidence from a very narrow menu of studies; either those commissioned and funded by the World Bank, or from work undertaken by its own small circle of education policy entrepreneurs and economists of education. By limiting what might count as evidence for policy, it in turn limits the potential challenges this evidence represents for ongoing policy-framing and policy-making and therefore for neo-liberalism as an organizing paradigm. Second, it amplifies the evidence that supports the Bank's ideological position, on the one hand, and over-extends the particular pieces of evidence, on the other. For instance, the Bank's continued use of the education economist, Ludger Wossmann's analysis of the OECD's PISA data (Patrinos et al, 2009), and the performance of students in private schools is repeatedly used to justify the expansion of private education. Yet there are many kinds of 'private' education, some of it clearly not embedded in the same kinds of logics (competition/efficiency) that the Bank argues generates higher levels of student performance. The circle tightens even further when the Bank tends to over-generalize from limited pieces of evidence, take examples out of contest, or to smooth out differences in research findings. For example, in the chapter, 'What Do We Know About Public Private Partnerships in Education', from the Bank's report *The Role and Impact of Public-Private Partnerships in Education* (Patrinos et al, 2009), the report notes a mixed picture of evidence – for instance, in many cases as it is not possible to overcome problems of student and school selection, yet at the same time it goes on to make strong claims about the efficiency and effectiveness of the private sector in education provision.

Structurally, not only has neo-liberalism become embedded in a range of scales—from the local to the global—with the 2008 global crisis doing little to dislodge neo-liberalism for the moment, but there is a deepening dependence by countries, such as the US and UK, on opening up services as the new value base for ongoing economic development. This is what Polanyi calls 'economic institutedness' (Polanyi, 1992: 33) (in contrast to his concept of 'embeddedness - meaning that markets are always in societies, not outside). What he means by this is that markets are instituted processes in that they are articulated through social institutions and legal and political strategies. Unpicking processes that have constituted, and constitutionalized, education as a market become particularly difficult, for it requires more than shifts in political ideas. Undoing whole ways of organizing an education economy, without significant disruptions to daily life, become more and more problematic.

For example, a specialist (increasingly corporate) industry has now sprung up around PPPs, particularly in those developed economies who have taken PPPs furtherest (for instance, Australia, the UK, USA). This industry, which increasingly exports its expertise globally, includes a rapidly growing number of private actors, from Foundations, specialist PPP firms, global consultancy firms, banks, local consultants, think-tanks, dedicated websites, rapid response teams, and specialist law firms, who increasingly act as market-oriented sources of authority which "…establish rules, norms and institutions that guide the behaviour of the participants, and affect[s] the opportunities available to others" (Cutler et al, 1999: 4). This specialist PPP industry is then part of an emerging education services industry, that includes an expanding number of education consultants operating globally, education management organizations, as well as education foundations and philanthropists engaged in shaping education policy and practice (Saltman, 2010). Similarly, a small cluster of large, powerful, global management firms also have large interests in PPPs. A small number of large companies (such as KMPG, PricewaterhouseCoopers, Deloitte and Touche, Grant Thornton, Ernst and Young, McKinsey, the Hay Group) are engaged in PPPs; they also control almost half of the world management consulting market (Saint-Martin, 1998: 329; Hodge, 2006: 100). All have major education portfolios. "For sheer expertise in the development of the legal frameworks concerning PPPs and the actual practice on the ground in leading countries, the global consultancy firms, given their superior knowledge of how PPPs are progressing, have few rivals" (Greve, 2010: 506). Saint-

Martin argues it was not just the neo-liberalism's good governance tools that account for this increase; it is also the openness of some governments to this kind of expertise (economic knowledge/accounting), and the permeability of the sector to outside experts: "…there is a close relationship between the development of a given field of social knowledge—in our case management consultancy – and the openness of state institutions to the use of that knowledge" (Saint-Martin, 1998: 325). And it is here that governments, development agencies such as the World Bank, IFC, Asia Development Bank, along with the corporate consultants, have all played a critical role in shaping the conditions for the delivery of education by also constitutionalizing market liberalism in national territorial states' policies and regulatory frameworks. The term 'consultocracy' is used to describe the power of consultants in advising government, and in shaping government policy. As Hodge (2006: 99) notes, the concern voiced through this label "…is that the interests of profit-maximising management consultants may become the key determinants of managerialist policies". Given, that these consultants are, in some cases also the lawyers (cf. Lovells and Lee, 2009) and auditors (Greve, 2010) of PPPs, these consulting relationships raise major concerns over conflicts of interest, transparency and accountability.

There is also a vast and rapidly growing array of globalizing education companies, ranging from education consultants such as Cambridge Education, education management organizations (for instance operating charter schools in the US, or Academies in the UK); education corporations like Laureate, Cisco Systems, deVry, Bridgewater, Edison Schools; and large conglomerate companies that have major holdings which include 'education businesses', such as Apollo Global. All view the education sector as critical offering a range of education services investment potentials, as long as the conditions are in place to realize profit-making (see, for example, Ball, 2007; Saltman, 2010; Hentschke, Lechuga and Tierney, 2010).

How might we assess the rapid growth in private actors and their interests in a sector like education? Cutler's work on the legal implications of the blurring of the separation between private and public authority is compelling. Not only does she argue, like Gill (2003), that privileged rights of citizenship and representation are conferred on corporate capital, but that as the state divests itself of activities we traditionally associate with the public sector and in the public interest, we can see an upward trend in the management of national, regional and global affairs by economic and not state/political actors (Cutler et al, 1999). Cutler calls this the rise of 'private authority'; that is, when an individual or organization has decision-making power over a particular issue (p. 5). In the education sector, the state's ceding of the power to make decisions (as to how to frame the regulatory and operational basis of education activity) to economic actors (such as education corporations, consultant firms, venture philanthropists), or those who do their bidding and bargaining (such as the World Bank, the IFC) represents a shift in authority from the public to the private realm, and from the national to the supra-national. This has significant implications for education, for societies and for democracy (Crouch, 2011).

Yet there are that there are contradictions in the Bank's privatization of education strategy – which include: the Bank's ventriloquism between policy and evidence, versus its insistence on robust evidence and knowledge-driven policy; the IFC's privatization projects, which it insists are pro-poor, yet the very poor have limited financial resources to spend on education as a commodity; that profits to education firms emerge from economies of scope and scale leading to standardization, but this undermines the basis for competitiveness which is dependent on innovation and creativity; the consolidation and expansion of firm activity across borders which in turn undermines education's contribution to societal cohesion in national territorial states); pressures for the flexibility of teachers' labour which in turn generates diminished professionalism and increased costs in teacher surveillance and accountability; the transformation of education into a commodity which in turn generates debates around the political and social character of knowledge and education; the governance of education through forms of private (unaccountable authority) versus the centrality of some form of democracy to ensure the ongoing rule, and legitimacy, of the state.

On What is to Be Done - By Way of Conclusion

This chapter set out to explore, and explain, the strange non-death of neo-liberalism in the World Bank Groups policy and programming in education. In viewing the Bank's engagements over time and as articulated in key reports, policies and projects over the past decade, it is possible to trace out the ways in which the Bank has continued to strategically reinvent, and advance, this agenda in ways that contribute to the institutionalization of free market logics into the political, legal and social structures within national and global regulatory architectures.

The question, then, of what is to be done, is uttermost in my mind and in this chapter. I believe that in many of our accounts of the privatization of education – we do not *sufficiently* develop an analytic approach that links the structural with the strategic; the local with multi-scalar articulations; actors with actor-liness; the maneuverings with failings and reinventions over time and space; or the 'institutedness' of markets with the real work of constructing them. This is an intellectual project – but not one I see as the preserve of those within the academy. Rather, we must use our privileged space as organic intellectuals for the left to generate insights into the highly complex place of education in our societies and insist that education is political because it is about life chances and life changes. It is *more than* a human right, or just a system through which official knowledge is transmitted and acquired. It is also *more than* a public good. It is a highly contested space whose necessary 'publicness' and 'emancipatory' potential matters for our future, but whose very capacity to deliver on these, are placed into question.

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