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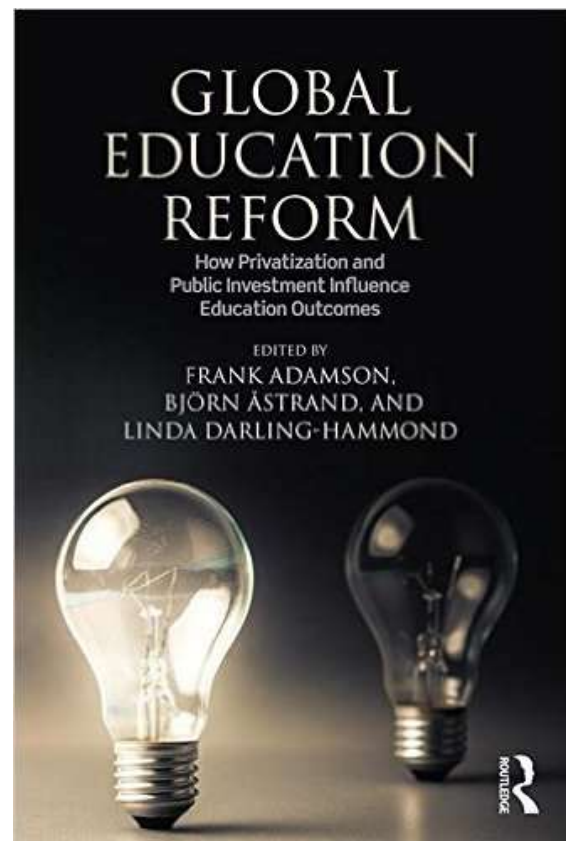
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Education is inherently open-ended. In given historical conjunctures, however, societies find themselves facing simple and diametrically opposing paths in regard to the future of their school systems. According to the authors of *Global Education Reform: How Privatization and Public Investment Influence Education Outcomes*, such a forced choice increasingly confronts policy makers, educators, and publics in nations across the globe. Will the future of education be one of the outsourcing of traditional public school systems to a wide variety of private vendors, or will public schools be viewed and supported as cornerstones of free and socially just multicultural societies?

The organization of this volume supports rigorous inquiry into this overarching question. Countries that have moved to privatization, however fitfully, or those that retained public investment, however tentatively, are neatly contrasted with one another. The two Spanish-speaking Latin



American nations of Chile and Cuba are paired with one another, as are the two Nordic nations of Sweden and Finland. The United States, which has been more open to privatization, is compared with Canada, which has favored public investment instead. By matching countries with numerous cultural and linguistic similarities to one another, it is possible to see how small differences in policy making related to teachers' professionalism or substantial investments in the public sector as a whole have produced enormous differences in student attainment.

Through this comparative structure, the contested nature of recent reforms in different settings becomes visible. Chile had an impressive public school system until it was privatized during the military dictatorship of Augusto Pinochet from 1973 to 1990, but massive student protests against the inequities of the system recently have forced policy makers to reverse those reforms. In Sweden and the US, policy makers backed privatization and introduced reforms that have taken off in the past quarter century, but these have existed in an uneasy tension with residual institutions and beliefs in public schools. Even Finland, the polar opposite of privatized Sweden, was in the midst of public debates about greater school choice until that country's top-ranking on the Program of International Student Assessment (PISA) of the Organization of Economic Cooperation and Development (OECD) silenced those intrigued by marketplace models of reform. Only communist Cuba steadfastly resisted privatization, although one wonders how long this will continue given the recent removal of trade barriers with the US.

The academic outcomes described in *Global Education Reform* demonstrate that students consistently fare better in environments characterized by public investment rather than privatization. Why is this? The answer varies from one case to another. Martin Carnoy argues that Cuban schools benefit from "state-sponsored social capital" that reduce students' income

inequality and tightly coordinate teacher education with the curriculum. Pasi Sahlberg provides a synoptic overview of the Finnish system, and then chastens outsiders who want to borrow one or two isolated policies without recognizing "how Finnish society as a whole was tuned to care for and support children and youth." (p. 127) Michael Fullan and Santiago Rincón-Gallardo describe how meticulously designed reforms that were demanding, but not overwhelming, enabled Ontario's educators to produce steady gains in both achievement and equity.

If public investment produces better results than privatization, why have so many countries turned to the latter in recent years? In their introductory chapter, Frank Adamson and Björn Åstrand describe the origins of neoliberalism in the pro-market convictions of Friedrich von Hayek (termed "neoliberalism 1.0") and its later apotheosis into the more rigid and self-enclosed ideology of Milton Friedman (dubbed "neoliberalism 2.0"). Whereas Von Hayek endorsed markets as an imperfect correction to the excesses of the totalitarian regimes of communism and fascism, Friedman tied them closely to the foundations of free and open societies.

Ironically, the country that first tested Friedman's ideas in education was Chile, under the military dictatorship of Augusto Pinochet. For Pinochet, opening up the state to marketplace forces provided an effective way to break teachers' unions, reduce public expenditures, and to create a veneer of choice in an overall authoritarian context. This draconian approach, however, was not necessary for marketplace models to spread to other countries. One of the ironies of Swedish reforms is that the Social Democrats who traditionally had upheld public schools up to the 1990s were following the transformation of "Labor" into "New Labor" in England and thought that a similar appeal to market ideologies would enhance their falling popularity in the polls. Frank Adamson and Linda Darling-Hammond's chapter underscores how U.S. neoliberal reforms in

education followed upon the gains of the Civil Rights Movement and the narrowing of the racial achievement gap in the 1960s and 1970s.

The contributors to this volume who describe systems predicated upon strong public investment in education agree overall with one another; yet differences from one chapter to another are worth noting, since the characterization of “public investment” versus “privatization,” while useful as a heuristic device, can mask important differences within and across systems. These differences are especially evident in regard to Cuba, grouped with Canada and Finland as a “public investment” system, but nonetheless with many features that make it a special case. Cuba’s communist leaders are shown to have provided schools with highly qualified and respected teachers who produced the highest and most equitable academic outcomes on reading and math in all of Latin America. Carnoy’s concept of “state-generated social capital” provides a framework in the chapter for describing the ways in which the Cuban government offers supports to schools and educators that then are used by the profession to sustain excellent teaching, curricula, and assessments. Although Carnoy appreciates the benefits of Cuban education for that nation’s young people, he recognizes that the suppression of dissent paralyzed political discourse for adults. One wonders if the chapter’s focus on reading and mathematics results has led Carnoy to produce a more sympathetic account than that island’s educational system merits. Yong Zhao’s (2014) warnings that observers should not be blinded to the role that a centralized dictatorship plays in promoting high test results in China may be more relevant for the Cuban case than the comparison case of Chile, where citizens enjoy the freedom of the press and can participate in a lively, argumentative civil society.

No such reservations can be made concerning the paired chapters written by Björn Åstrand and Pasi Sahlberg of Sweden and Finland, respectively. Each country is democratic and prosperous, but Sweden has

suffered the greatest declines of any country on PISA, while Finland, its former colony, has been a poster child for equity and excellence. What explains the differences? For Åstrand, Sweden veered off course from the strongly consensual Nordic model of consensus and public investment in the 1990s and has never entirely returned to its traditional Social Democratic norms of equity and solidarity. The decentralization, deregulation, and school choice aspects of Swedish reforms have led to a highly segregated school system without the necessary dedication of resources and steering at the top to create cohesion and shared professionalism. Finland, on the other hand, not only rejected the turn to market models of reform, but actually doubled down on policies that would uplift teachers’ autonomy, rejecting standardized testing, and supporting a central role for teachers’ unions in the creation of widely used curricula. Trendy policy reforms like value-added assessments, “flipped” classrooms, and data-driven decision making have been decisively repudiated by Finnish policy makers, in Sahlberg’s account. This does not mean that there have not been healthy debates in Finland, but it does mean that traditional Social Democrat norms have held fast, even while much of the rest of the world has moved in different directions, leaving Finland as an intriguing exception to global trends.

Like Cuba and Finland, Canada has rejected the infusion of marketplace models into education, although cities like Calgary with large numbers of American expatriates have experimented with charter schools. In a succinct and persuasive description of the Ontario experience, Michael Fullan and Santiago Rincón-Gallardo analyze the evolution of Canada’s largest province into a true international magnet for school reformers. Unlike high-achieving jurisdictions like Finland, Shanghai, South Korea, and Japan, Ontario is a real multicultural and multilingual society, with large numbers of immigrants who do exceptionally well in the schools. Although not addressed by Fullan and

Rincón-Gallardo, it would be valuable to learn why other Canadian provinces, such as Alberta, British Columbia, and Quebec achieve similar results.

Adamson and Darling-Hammond show how U.S. states that have resisted privatization have succeeded in attaining excellent results on international assessments. Their chapter provides an overview of just how problematic the school choice schemes have been in contexts such as New Orleans, Milwaukee, and Washington, DC. On the other hand, states that have resisted policy trends, like Connecticut, Massachusetts, and Vermont, have excelled, with Massachusetts ranked at the very top. These are states that are closer to the Canadian model, which uphold clear standards for teacher professionalism, respect the role of the government in regulating schools' policies, and view charter schools as interesting experiments, rather than as levers for uplifting systems as a whole. These are important findings that signal promising directions for policy makers in the US in the years ahead. If public investment models have shown greater success than marketplace models of reform in the US, even when the latter have prevailed in official policies, what gains in outcomes might be possible with a shift in policy paradigms?

Global Education Reform is a book with numerous strengths that should be studied carefully by policy makers and all students of educational change. One should note, however, that it is a volume organized through purposive sampling. Countries with similar cultures and languages are paired with one another intentionally for heuristic purposes. This necessarily excludes countries that are not subject to such neat matching. Take for instance, Italy, where I am currently residing as a Visiting Professor at Venice International University. The Italian government follows a public investment model, but Italy is below-average in its PISA results. Why is this?

Generally, Italy has not contributed to debates around PISA and has not experienced the "PISA shock" that mobilized policy

makers in other countries, such as Germany (Shirley, 2016a). In large part this can be explained by a distinctive model of student assessment, anchored in classical traditions of rhetoric, that places a strong emphasis upon oral evaluations of students. Many of my students here attended secondary schools where they received five years of rigorous training in ancient Greek and in Latin. These are not viewed as dead languages, but as indispensable foundational knowledge for any educated person.

There is strong resistance in Italy to the idea that schools exist first and foremost to prepare the human capital of future workers. What some might view as a weak culture of assessment is viewed here as a culturally distinctive form of evaluation with a long historical pedigree. Schools exist to transmit a rich cultural heritage to a rising generation. This requires training in the ability to explain complicated texts under scrutiny. Having been invaded so many times over the centuries, Italians are protective of their culture. This is unlikely to change at any time in the near future, regardless of the country's results on PISA or other large-scale international assessments.

Italy may be seen as an exceptional case, but then, every country has its own unique attributes. The most significant trends may be revealed not so much from PISA tests but in data from the United Nations Educational, Scientific and Cultural Organization (2015) and the OECD (2014) that show that the percentage of students who have enrolled in primary schools has been increasing for the past two decades. The most dramatic improvements have been in Africa, Asia, and Latin America. The evidence gathered in *Global Education Reform* should lead policy makers in those regions and elsewhere to avoid marketplace models of school improvement. This is a valuable contribution and should bring to a close what ultimately has proven to be a significant distractor rather than a catalyst for improvement.

What will be needed next will be a wave of studies on variations within and across public investment models themselves. As the “business capital” model described by Hargreaves and Fullan (2012) recedes in importance, in other words, we will need to do a better job at mapping out the varieties of “professional capital” that now exist (Shirley, 2016b). This will involve *learning from the*

evidence provided by PISA, but also getting better at interpreting *beyond* it. The more world cultures converge as a result of globalization, the more we should seek to preserve important cultural variations are not captured by the OECD or other transnational organizations with economic agendas in their documentation.


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About the Reviewer

Dennis Shirley is Professor at the Lynch School of Education at Boston College. His new book is entitled *The New Imperatives of Educational Change: Achievement with Integrity* (Routledge, 2017). He is Editor-in-Chief of *The Journal of Educational Change*.



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