1. Introduction

Gita Steiner-Khamsi and Alexandra Draxler

Public–private partnership (PPP) in education has gained enormous momentum in different parts of the world, including in developing countries. What started out in the 1960s with the notion that technology could help bypass teachers and therefore supposedly individualize learning, rapidly became a highly desirable business model for technology companies such as IBM, Dell Computers and later Apple. The sale of machines, programs and courses to interested districts and schools has half a century later reached an unprecedented economy of scale. Over the last dozen years or so, as proponents of privatization have successfully promoted a transformation of the role of business from supplier to "partner," the notion of public education has become diluted by increasing state contracting or subsidy to for-profit entities carrying out whole-school and university establishment and management. What is more, the education industry is doing remarkably well despite periodic scandals.

All along, scandals and controversies have accompanied the recent boom of the global education industry. Beginning in the U.S., moving on to the U.K., and heavily promoted for developing countries by aid agencies, loosely-regulated private schools operating under "charter" or as "academies" with state or city authorities have multiplied, as have examples of fraud, corruption, closure, high costs and poor results. Nowadays, the for-profit model of Bridge International Academy schools in Uganda (Riep and Machacek, 2016) and in Liberia (Romero, Sandeful and Sandholtz, 2017) has become a topic of great concern and heated debate. Similarly, the education giant Pearson has come under siege for developing tests (e.g., 6th and 8th grade English Language Arts in

New York State, or PISA 2018 globally) and simultaneously selling the books and the teacher training in preparation of the test. It is important to bear in mind, however, that substandard quality, unfair competition, and other "irregularities" have plagued PPP dating back to its early days. In the United States, the disenchantment with the education industry and its periodic scandals grew to the extent that businesses were locked out of schools for several decades (see Tyack and Cuban, 1995). The expulsion did not last. In fact, the question has become: given these setbacks, why has the education industry returned in recent years with full force, become an influential actor in public education, and is likely to further expand its role and its geographical reach in the near future?

There is no dearth of compelling analyses that explain the explosive growth of PPP in education. We would like to confine our summary to three frequently discussed explanations: (1) the shift from government to governance has benefited businesses; (2) businesses rely on the prospects of an economy of scale and therefore actively engage in a continuous standardization of education; and (3) governments have managed to reframe PPP as a global solution to their local problems. As we will highlight at the end of this introductory chapter, much could be gained if one would also include a fourth perspective: a system-theoretical perspective which focuses on the interaction between the public and the private sector.

THE SHIFT FROM GOVERNMENT TO GOVERNANCE: A BUSINESS OPPORTUNITY

The shift from government to governance is commonly seen as the result of new public management policies that most OECD countries introduced in the wake of neoliberal reforms of the 1980s and 1990s. In the education sector, the shift implied a new role for the state, new ways of regulating the education system, and new tools for generating or alleviating reform pressure. The reforms were undertaken with the rhetoric of breaking the "state monopoly," using "market forces" (demand and supply) to improve the quality of public education, and cutting inefficiency in the "state bureaucracy." Regardless of whether the public education system was high- or low-performing, governments were under political pressure to selectively borrow new public management policies that encouraged non-state actors such as businesses, churches, communities, and families to open and operate schools with funding from public resources. Within a short period of time, the governments scaled back the role of the state in education from one in which it was at the same time provider and regulator to one in which it could withdraw to being only a standard-setter and regulator. Target-setting and benchmarking became the key governance tools. In education, the outcomes orientation of new public management reform triggered a proliferation of standardized student assessment. The tests have, for a variety of reasons, been utilized as the primary monitoring tool for governments to assess the quality of teachers, the school, the district, and the education system, and to make policy decisions based on these standardized assessments. The shift from government to governance has not only fueled a "governance by numbers" (Ozga, 2009) but also required from governments that they engage in "network governance" (Ball and Junemann, 2012) in which non-state actors, including education businesses, are not only seen as providers of goods and services but also as key partners in the policy process. The empowerment of non-state actors in the new millennium, notably businesses and philanthropies, as key policy actors has been interpreted as a clear sign of the "disarticulation and diversification of the state system" and the "destatalisation" of the policy process (Ball and Junemann, 2012: 24) which neoliberal reforms of the past century intended to achieve.

THE ECONOMY OF SCALE AND STANDARDIZATION OF EDUCATION

The fast advance of PPP needs to be understood against the backdrop of critical studies on how capital works. A wide array of scholars in political economy (Robertson and Dale, 2015; Jessop, 2016; see also Jules, 2017), market sociology (Beckert, 2010; see also Verger, Steiner-Khamsi and Lubienski, 2017), and world systems theory (Wallerstein, 2004) have convincingly dissected the logic of the capitalist world system and also, more specifically, explained the fast pace with which the global education industry has grown (Verger, Lubienski and Steiner-Khamsi, 2016). Arguably, the logic of the education industry reflects the workings of capitalism at large: the objectives being to:

- Transfer a significant proportion of education expenditure from human intervention to manufactured products by lowering the cost of teacher preparation through modularized teacher training, lowering salaries and producing high-volume standardized teaching and learning materials, all in the name of efficiency and cost-effectiveness;
- Create new markets by propagating the need for individual and public investment in longer educational attainment, credentials and life-long learning that are supposedly required in a globalized knowledge economy; and
- Compete with other providers of goods and services, notably the public sector, by framing the private sector as more flexible, transnational and cosmopolitan than the public sector. In fact, the private sector presents itself as a modernization project which "gives priority to newness, change, progress" (Wallerstein, 1990: 47).

These are but three basic strategies that enable businesses to generate economy of scale and thereby amass profit. The cultural dimension is not to be underestimated. Providers tend to present themselves as better equipped for responding to labor demands and for preparing students for twenty-first century skills. The facts that the schools of the global education industry, ranging from the low-fee Bridge International Academy to the high-fee International Baccalaureate schools, are accredited internationally, use English as a language of instruction, and make ample use of technology are important selling points. As a media analysis of three major financial media outlets (*Economist*, *Financial Times*, *Wall Street Journal)* has shown, the three most common narratives in the business community are the following: (1) public education is in crisis; (2) there is no correlation between spending and education outcome; and (3) school accountability, teacher performance and decentralization represent the most effective policies to improve the quality of education. Drawing on these three common narratives, the financial media outlets present a particular vision of how to improve education; a vision in which the private sector is supposed to play a major role (Steiner-Khamsi, Appleton and Vellani, 2018).

Strikingly, with the fast advance of the global education industry, we have now entered a vicious cycle or, more specifically, a standardization helix: As briefly sketched above, the new public management reforms reduced the state responsibility to the tasks of paying for compulsory education, standard-setting and benchmark monitoring. Standardization of education was a necessary condition for businesses to enter the education market. However, once businesses entered the education sector, they further standardized and modularized education to lower production and delivery costs and to increase the number of customers (see Verger, Lubienski and Steiner-Khamsi, 2016). As a result of outcomes- or standards-based educational reform, the same test, textbook, teacher education module, and so on may be sold not only once, that is, to the client (a school or a district) who pays for its development, but to many new clients. Intellectual property rights are captured by the private sector, locking the public sector into long-term dependency. To be fair, the process of continuous standardization, rationalization, and normalization has occurred in every sphere of society (Bromley and Meyer, 2015). In the education sector, this process has benefited businesses and has run counter to highly-valued pedagogical principles of teacher autonomy and individual student needs.

RECEPTIONS AND TRANSLATIONS OF GLOBAL EDUCATION POLICIES: THE CASE OF PPP

Finally, PPP needs to be seen as a global education policy that started out in a few countries and then, with every new government adopting PPP policies, become de-territorialized to the extent that it could be catapulted as an international "best practice" from one corner of the world to the other (Robertson and Verger, 2012). The role of the International Monetary Fund, the World Bank, USAID, DFID and other international and bilateral aid agencies in disseminating, and funding, PPP policies was substantial. D. Brent Edwards (2017) examined how the program EDUCO (Education with Community Participation), established during the post-civil war period of El Salvador, was funded by USAID and the World Bank, propagated as a "best practice" for teacher accountability and decentralization, and was actively transplanted to other aid-recipient countries. Similarly, other PPP models—some of which are presented in this book—have been transferred with international funding from one country to another. Researchers who study "traveling policies" typically adopt a bird's eye view on dissemination. Their "perspective from above" enables them to understand why some policies scale up and spread, and other do not. Clearly, the active role of international organizations in lending or disseminating specific policies and programs, coined as "best practices" or "international standards," needs to be acknowledged. However, the perspective from above—often associated with world culture theory—provides only one of several angles for understanding the spread of global education policy (see Steiner-Khamsi, 2012).

Another angle illuminates why, how and when national or local policy actors selectively borrow global education policy. This "perspective from below" pays attention to processes of reception and translation when global education policies, such as PPP, are borrowed at the local or national level. A new body of research emerged over the past few years in which the "perspective from below" was advanced in important new ways. There is a long-held tradition in comparative education to investigate the reasons of "cross-national policy attraction," that is, to examine why governments borrow, emulate, or transfer policies from elsewhere (Phillips, 2012). In a similar vein, Antoni Verger pursues an important question in his studies of PPP and privatization: why does a global education policy resonate in a specific context, that is, why did the policy actors "buy" or buy into the policy? He used this interpretive framework to understand how the PPP reform package was "sold" to governments in low-income countries and why they bought into it (Verger, 2012). A logical consequence of his first analytical approach to understanding cross-national policy attraction was to further ask: what did the borrowed global education policy build upon or what did it replace? What was in place before the global education policy was adopted? He used the second type of research question to trace the pathways to privatization in different countries (Verger, Fontdevila and Zancajo, 2016). Verger and his associates identified six different pathways: privatization as a drastic state sector reform (e.g., Chile, the U.K.), as an incremental reform (e.g., the U.S.A.), in social-democratic welfare states, as historical public–private partnerships (e.g., the Netherlands, Spain), as de facto privatization in low-income countries, and privatization via disaster.

The assertion that global education policies resonate for different reasons in different contexts has also been made in recent studies on why international large-scale student assessments (ILSAs), such as PISA or TIMSS, resonate in different countries. The question is relevant given that ILSAs have experienced an exponential growth both in terms of frequency with which such student assessments are carried out and in terms of educational systems that participate. The most widely advanced rationales concern the claims that valuable lessons can be derived from comparing educational systems both at a certain point in time and over time. Camilla Addey, Sam Sellar, Gita Steiner-Khamsi, Bob Lingard and Antoni Verger (2017), however, move beyond these rationales and present instead a sophisticated analytical framework that allows them to identify the wide array of reasons of why national governments participate. The seven most common reasons for governments' engagement with ILSAs are: (1) evidence for policy; (2) technical capacity building; (3) funding and aid; (4) international relations; (5) national politics; (6) economic rationales; and (7) curriculum and pedagogy.

PUBLIC AND PRIVATE SCHOOLS: BECOMING INCREASINGLY SIMILAR OR DIFFERENT?

The three bodies of studies, presented above, form the theoretical foundation for this book. All the chapter contributors have drawn in one way or the other from these three different interpretive frameworks, each of which is well-established in comparative policy studies. For this book, we have also introduced a fourth interpretive framework that is, however, less known in educational research: sociological system theory as formulated by Niklas Luhmann. In fact, the title of the edited volume is intended to provoke associations to a perspective typical of a system-theoretical approach: analyzing what happens when two systems (public education system and private education system) interact. How do the two systems change as a result of this interaction?

Several authors in this book have observed that the close collaboration between the public and private for-profit sectors, advanced as part and parcel of managerial reforms of the past twenty years has blurred the boundaries of how the two types of providers conceive, design and speak of basic educational services and goods. The private sector has adopted concepts from the public domain and thereby attempts to speak the language of the public sector by emphasizing issues of learning and quality of education. Vice versa, the public sector seems to emphasize the cost-effectiveness of its endeavors and has introduced, among others, a creeping scheme of a fee structure (free education for basic services but parental contribution for all extra services and goods), lowering investment in teacher education, and promoting an economy of scale for introducing the same standards, textbooks, and the same twenty-first-century skills regardless of national education system, and so on. While the vocabulary of commitment to inclusiveness, nurture of diversity, and multiple paths for individual journeys to the acquiring of skills and competencies is still used, the mass production model has become the more accepted one in both national and international circles. Scripted teaching, international standardization of process and desired outcomes, and a focus on measurable performance are the benchmarks of a manufacturing approach. The adoption of private-sector language and techniques for education as pointed out earlier thrives on a narrative of failure of public institutions and trust in the private sector as the favorable alternative.

The chapters in this book examine the consequences of these developments by analyzing the impact that PPPs, voucher schemes, for-profit fee-based basic education and other forms of public support for the private sector have had on *public* education, in particular, on promises of ensuring equality, serving the common good, and promoting equitable quality learning opportunities for all.

Ten or twenty years after PPP emerged as a growing force in the education sector, the two sectors have become in many regards alike. What aspects of public education are especially at risk of taking on the logic of the private sector? Do we see the contours of a "scandalization industry," accompanying international large-scale student assessments (ILSAs) such as PISA, PISA-D, IEA studies, and regional ILSAs? Even though the private sector directly benefits from the scandalization of the public education system, do government officials sometimes welcome the attack against public education because it enables them to mobilize financial resources and build political coalitions for introducing reforms? What is the role of the various policy actors (businesses, transnational actors, non-governmental organizations) in weakening public education and how do they differ in their strategies and approaches? What is happening in countries where the privatization of education has reached such a high volume that the middle class has started to show a disinterest to further support the public sector financially, and has created its own parallel educational system, funded from public as well as private means?

In addition to the critical analyses of why and how PPP has gone global, it is necessary to examine what the expansion has meant for public education. The quantum leap in privatization has in some countries had the effect of reducing the overall size of public education, indeed in a few countries there is a danger of virtual disappearance of public education as we know it. Privatization has also put in motion a gradual metamorphosis of the public education system. Rapid privatization has transformed how public schools are managed, teachers are hired, students are taught, and parents are involved. Clearly, the retreat of public education has generated new niches and opportunities for the education industry. Moving beyond a zero-sum assumption (more private schools means fewer public schools), other important questions arise. One of the key questions is whether the two systems gradually converge or diverge as a result of their interaction. These are only a few questions that the rise of PPP begs for investigation, analyses, and discussion. The chapters in this book represent an attempt to contribute to this important discussion.

OVERVIEW OF CHAPTERS

Two chapters pay special attention to the opening provided for public-sector influence and intervention by weak government.

Antoni Verger, **Adrián Zancajo** and **Clara Fontdevila** (Chapter 2) draw the link between weak government and privatization, either where the offer of public education does not meet numerical or quality demand, or in contexts of disaster. They illustrate how international organizations facilitate the supply of preferred solutions (technology-based, product-placement oriented, and/or designs which are not tailor-made but seen as incubating wide-ranging techniques or materials). They underline the scant or absent empirical base for the cost-effectiveness or quality improvements brought about by the introduction of for-profit low-fee private schools (LFPS) and the ultimate financial support by international organizations and subsequently governments needed to keep them operating. They demonstrate the legitimization process of reforms introduced in contexts of emergencies whereby the reforms can be subsequently disseminated with low scrutiny or democratic accountability. Similarly, market-based managerial reforms, often with the dual aim of higher control and reduced cost and influence of teachers as well as the generation of private profit, once tested in emergency settings, take on respectability and legitimacy for wider transfer.

Marina Avelar's study (Chapter 3) looks at the way in which new philanthropies are positioning themselves to become insiders in the policy-making landscape, blurring the lines between public and private influence and decision-making. With the growth of philanthropic giving comes a concurrent push on the part of individuals and institutions for greater influence in the broader policy landscape, beyond projects or single issues. Advocacy, based on research and policy papers by groups with an interest in the outcome, is produced and promoted by informal (or even not so informal) cartels.

Zeena Zakharia and **Francine Menashy** (Chapter 4) take an in-depth survey of private actors and their interventions in camps sheltering Syrian refugees in Jordan, Lebanon and Turkey. They find a mix of altruistic and self-serving motives in what another researcher has dubbed "disaster capitalism." The needs are great, and many more are attended to than they would be without private-sector involvement. However, overlap among actors, the strong incentive to mix philanthropy with product and brand placement, inappropriate technology-based solutions in circumstances without the requisite infrastructure for implementation, and straightforward profit motives, can ultimately slow recovery and further weaken already fragile state systems.

Three chapters examine the co-existence of public and private education in unevenly regulated environments, where providers compete, occasionally collaborate and diversify their offers according to local environments and the level of tolerance by authorities for market-oriented functioning.

Barbara Schulte's study on private education in China (Chapter 5), based on fieldwork over a period of four years in Beijing and Kunming, takes a nuanced look at how private education so far fills a need, provides a niche for profit and takes a back seat policy-wise to public education. Several factors influence both demand and supply of private schooling, although until now public schooling has been widely seen as the quality option. Children of migrants of varying economic status have legal obstacles to accessing public schooling. Regional governments can provide subsidies to private schools, which can be established on the premises of public schools and share their name. Builders of gated communities are required to provide free schooling, which when it is of high quality drives up the value of properties and more than compensates for the cost outlay. Special needs children are poorly served by the public system, creating another niche for private actors. After-school tutoring is widespread, and there is a demand for private schools that offer such tutoring on their premises. Finally, although profit from private schooling is required to be "reasonable," the definition of what is reasonable is poorly regulated, leaving another opening for comfortable profits.

Mauro C. Moschetti (Chapter 6) studied state-funded low-fee private schools that are a singular form of public–private partnership in Buenos Aires, Argentina. The intention is to subsidize an expansion of the offer of schooling to complement inadequate government provision, principally through subsidies for teachers' salaries. On the whole, schools and their managers do not see the various types of state-funded private schools as being in competition with each other. Through a series of adaptive mechanisms (notably selection of students, operational style, and differentiation of curriculum) the for-profit schools manage to create their own niche market, with corresponding inequalities between the different types of education available and the students who attend different types of schools.

Two chapters describe research on low-fee private schools in Hyderabad, India, and Bangladesh, respectively. In environments where regulation is weak or non-existent and public provision is inadequate, demand is high for private education and entrepreneurs (including the largest NGO in the world, BRAC) are stepping in.

Carole Anne Spreen and **Sangeeta Kamat** (Chapter 7) look at the fast-growing influence of so-called "affordable" or "low-fee" private schools in Hyderabad, where the ratio of public to private schools has reached 1:4. The combination of a large technology community, combined with the identification by several technology corporations and international chains of India as one of the largest potential markets for low-fee, high-volume schooling where savings are projected through reduction of cost by using unqualified teachers, has made this the testing ground for a new model. The authors demonstrate that so far the model is not profitable independently of government support and that quality has not risen compared to public schooling. On the other hand, fees are affordable only for low-income, not poor families, exacerbating stratification in access to education.

Emily Richardson (Chapter 8) presents research on the evolution of BRAC, the largest NGO in Bangladesh and the world, from a provider of free or very low cost private education for the very poor financed entirely by international donors to a profit-making model for the modestly poor. Facing reduced funding and seeing an increasing lower middle class demand for private schooling, BRAC has moved since a relatively small-scale pilot in 2010 towards a for-profit model that has more than 7,000 one-room schools with 210,000 pupils. It has recently partnered with the publishing giant Pearson for advice on branding and marketing. BRAC seems to have benefited from its historically positive image, with many people unaware of its transformation. This pivot of a non-profit NGO with a positive name to a for-profit model may change the educational landscape in Bangladesh, and also motivate non-profits in other countries to try this potentially lucrative adaptation.

Finally, two overviews providing first, the conceptual framing of privatization in the broader perspective of dismantling regulation in the U.S., and second, pushback in the form of emerging international regulatory frameworks put forward by some key stakeholders, round up the research.

Joanne Barkan (Chapter 9) takes readers through the history and the current state of education privatization in the United States, the country that is arguably behind both the concept of privatization and its remarkable spread. She draws a link between neoliberalism and resistance to racial integration of schools. On the one hand, the use of public funds to subsidize children's attendance at whites only private schools emerged in the 1950s. On the other hand, Milton Friedman's neoliberal thinking included the insistence that even education should be regulated only by market forces that would enable consumers to choose. A third important factor in privatization is the widespread acceptance by public authorities of a narrative of school failure in which the villains are unions, public authorities, regulation, and lack of adequate standards.

Mireille de Koning (Chapter 10) provides a fitting closing, examining various efforts to develop an analytical and regulatory framework for public–private partnerships, private schooling and profit-making in the education sector, based on international and national human rights agreements and obligations. There are many, and sometimes conflicting aims of international and national actors: respecting commitments to offer free basic education to all, increasing access to education, providing education in situations where governments are weak or where crises have dismantled or disabled education institutions; ensuring equity and quality and pertinence. Based on a growing body of research that can inform policy, as well as consultation with stakeholders, the human rights lens can provide a tool for navigating in a challenging new educational landscape.

The chapters in the book demonstrate on one hand how the public and the private sectors in education have undergone in many countries a considerable transformation as a result of their interaction. On the other hand, they show that public–private partnership means different things in different countries. As a result, the responses to how to remedy the negative aspects of the PPP global education policy need to be nuanced and contextualized.

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