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The governance of public education has traditionally been conceived as the governance of government schools. However, as a number of recent commentators have pointed out, the revision of the Commonwealth policy under the Whitlam Government and the allocation of Commonwealth funds in order to rescue impoverished Catholic schools opened the gates more widely to government funding of non-government schools; a process that is argued to have significantly diminished the usefulness of the distinction between government and non-government, public and private. Indeed, it is now the case, as Caldwell and Roskam (2002) point out, that

If funding was a criterion, nearly every school in Australia would be 'public' as many non-government schools gain more than half of their revenue from government. As a group, non-government schools derive 57 per cent of their income from the Commonwealth and State and Territory governments.

(Caldwell and Roskam 2002:31-32)

The consequence of this historical change is said to be that all schools should now be considered 'public'. As Caldwell and Hayward put it in 1998

...we think it is timely for there to be a new agreement on the concept of 'public'. The emerging common theme across nations is that such a concept should apply to schools that receive funds from the public purse....Essentially, we propose that, in Australia...all schools that receive funds from the public purse should be considered public schools...

(Caldwell and Hayward, 1998: 151)

This is, on the face of it, an arguable proposition. But it has consequences that go beyond those proposed by Caldwell and his colleagues whose main conclusion is that 'the basis for the recurrent funding of all such (public) schools should be the same' (Caldwell and Hayward, 1998).

The issue of funding is not central to my argument here except as a basis for the definition of the 'public' school. In any case that issue is addressed elsewhere in this volume. My interest is in exploring the question of what are the public responsibilities of public schools and what forms of governance would ensure the execution of those responsibilities? Or, to put part of the issue more pointedly perhaps, what are the public responsibilities of both 'government' and 'private' schools to the extent that they are funded from the public purse and what forms of governance would ensure their execution of these responsibilities?

The Public Responsibilities of Schools.

Schools serve both public and private agendas, as Margison (1997) so ably explains. But, beyond providing a landscape within which the battle for private positional advantage can be fought, schools have public responsibilities to develop the capacities which allow individuals to participate in the broader

structures of society. One way of understanding these structures is to see them as mechanisms for the organization of activity. Modern societies appear to have two types of mechanism. The first is what Habermas calls the 'system' - which is governed by technical rationality and steered through the imperatives of money (the economy) and power (the polity). The second is what he calls the 'lifeworld' which is constituted through communication and is steered through morality, values and the practices of everyday life. Schools have a public responsibility to ensure that their students are prepared for participation in both the 'system' (through being equipped to take part in a productive economy and a democratic political process) and the 'lifeworld' (through the development of communicative competence and the development and expression of values and morality in everyday life). One of the great public difficulties of contemporary life is how these two mechanisms, built around differing principles, can be made to interact in ways that preserve and enhance productivity on the one hand, and individual freedom on the other.

One solution to this difficulty is contained in the notion of the 'public sphere' where certain rights (of free assembly, a free press, and the right to freely participate in political debate and decision making) are legally guaranteed and allow the communicative competence, values and morality of the 'lifeworld' to shape or constrain the excesses of money and power in the economic and political systems. The vehicle for this activity is a conception of democracy in which the citizens are informed, capable of argumentation and participation and actively organized to become a transformative political force (Kellner 2000:276-77).

While Habermas (1989) seems to conceptualise the vehicle for such public activities being face to face interactions and print media, commentators such as Kellner (2000) argue that the new media technologies have significant potential for the construction of a democratic politics.

A new democratic politics will...be concerned that new media and computer technologies be used to serve the interests of the people and not corporate elites. A democratic politics will strive to see that broadcast media and computers are used to inform and enlighten individuals rather than manipulate them. A democratic politics will teach individuals how to use the new technologies, to articulate their own experiences and interests, and to promote democratic debate and diversity, allowing a full range of voices and ideas to become part of the cyber democracy of the future.

(Kellner, 2000: 280)

Be that as it may, it would seem quite uncontroversial to suggest that the public responsibilities of schools at least include developing the capabilities for students to take part in productive and political processes (the system); moral, normative and communicative processes (the lifeworld); and in the public sphere through various media and democratic processes. Moreover it would also seem uncontroversial to suggest that access to schools that provided opportunities for the development of such capabilities should be equitable in terms of resources and curricular,

pedagogical and assessment processes. Indeed, the Adelaide Declaration (MCEETYA, 1999) embraces similar principles in terms of capacity building, curriculum breadth and social justice.

Ideals and Reality

The problem is, of course, that the ideals that are promulgated publicly as a matter of general policy are articulated in to the reality of life in schools in dramatically different ways. What we know of schools and communities in Australia is that they are markedly and increasingly distinct and operate in a hierarchy of opportunity and achievement that is closely allied to broader social differences of wealth, employment, ethnicity, religion and social advantage and disadvantage. While, as Basil Bernstein (1970) famously pointed out 'Schools Cannot Compensate for Society' in that they can have little direct effect on the distribution of wealth, health, employment or geography, and Roy Nash (1983) who pointed out that 'Schools Can't Make Jobs' it seems clear that they are expected to do so. Except, that is, for the structural effects that prevent such redress as they might provide.

These effects are dramatically displayed in two recent publications. Firstly, Pat Thomson's (2002) powerful analysis of the effects of the ending of the Disadvantaged Schools Program on schools in the Adelaide rust belt. Here the combination of deteriorating employment opportunities, local infrastructure and social support provide an environment of considerable instability within which schools are preoccupied with welfare functions which precede but draw considerable time, effort and resources away from their educational responsibilities. Secondly, Richard Teese's two volumes (2000, 2003) show how the distribution of public and private schools by Victorian post codes maps the systematic relationship between academic success and social power. More than this, his analysis goes further and explicates the mechanisms by which such social power is mobilised by the upper middle class to ensure that the structures of curriculum and assessment combine with their cultural and financial resources to construct a system of segregated schools which provide them with 'guarantees' of academic and social success.

Such stratagems have become increasingly necessary for the upper middle class as the secondary system expanded during the latter part of the 20th century and increasing numbers and proportions of students from all classes completed secondary school thus significantly increasing competition for access to universities, especially elite courses in elite universities which provide a gating mechanism in terms of economic and social power. As Teese puts it

Combining their cultural and financial resources to create segregated social settings is the answer which educated and better-off families give to the curriculum when its intrinsic demands are raised and when competition over access to the curriculum increases. Freedom to choose and public resources to subsidize this choice – without forgoing the segregated advantages of fees- are essential to this collective

strategy. The effectiveness of choice, subsidy and fees as weapons for waging academic war can be seen in the highly stratified nature of the secondary school system.

(Teese, 2003:118-9)

The effectiveness of this strategy is illustrated in Figure 1.

FIGURE 1 HERE
Teese Fig 8.1

Here, the relationship between social class and achievement in Year 12 is displayed. The overwhelming proportion of private schools lie in the top right quadrant signifying both academic success and social power. The few private schools outside this quadrant are either provincial grammar schools serving farmers, small business, professional and white collar families or small metropolitan grammar schools with a large ethnic intake or ethnic community schools. It is noticeable that Catholic schools are spread across all four quadrants in a manner not dissimilar to public schools.

And here is the crux of the matter: the reason why -despite all but universal public funding of schools - private schools in their current incarnation can never be public. Both Catholic and State schools are driven by notions of the public interest or in the case of Catholic schools - the common good. This implies both universal access and directing resources to where the need is greatest. Both the physical location and the social location of public and Catholic schools is a demonstration of these concerns. Conversely the physical and social location of private schools and their determination to concentrate social and cultural as well as financial resources in segregated facilities devoted to consolidating positional advantage against other schools and individuals denies the possibility of their serving the public interest or the common good. Were private schools interested in serving the public interest or the common good we would see them following the Catholic schools and directing their public funding to the establishment of campuses in areas of great need- Footscray, Broadmeadows, Sunshine, Preston- where their daimed educational and managerial expertise would be put to the test.¹ In areas of great need, private schools are not only absent.

In such areas, state and Catholic schools cannot benefit from the pooling of social, cultural and economic power of the kind that characterises private schools for

¹ Ironically, one of Australia's most prestigious private schools (Geelong Grammar) is situated in one of Australia's most deprived postcodes- Corio. Needless to say, the school's clientele come from elsewhere.

In these schools there are high concentrations of learners who struggle with the curriculum. It is not cultural advantage that is pooled at these sites, but multiple disadvantages—poor language skills, fragmented family lives, poverty, low levels of parental education, lack of facilities, leisure that is distracting rather than supportive of school. These are indeed 'exposed sites' in which effective learning depends very largely on the capacity of teachers to make up for the gap between what the academic curriculum assumes about students and who students really are.

(Teese, 2003:123)

Moreover, it is in such exposed sites that the real conflicts of educational mandates come into sharp relief.

The institution of schooling has mixed mandates. Schools have an ambiguous and conflicting set of outcomes they are expected to meet. They must fulfil the potential of each child; ensure that all children are active, tolerant citizens, good parents and productive workers; sort and select for higher education and employment; keep children safe and occupied while their parents are at work; improve standards; deliver a hierarchy of credentials; discipline the disruptive and prevent future social mayhem; assist the national economy... the list seems endless.

(Thomson, 2002:12)

But the real point of the list is not that it is endless, but that many of the demands are incompatible, especially within working class schools.

In significant ways the expectations pull in different directions. Consider whether it is really possible to simultaneously achieve high standards, educate all children to the fullest and give out credentials, the value of which depends at least in part on their scarcity and their capacity to rank and create hierarchy. Sorting, selecting and distributing social and cultural capital to those that matter are significantly at odds with ideas of equity, justice and entitlements. They move in different directions.

(Thomson, 2002:12-13)

These tensions are especially apparent at transition points in the education system: the transition to secondary school; the transition to high stakes assessment in the upper secondary school; the transition from school to work; the transition from school to technical education; the transition from school to university. At each of these points the selection function of schools directed towards establishing a hierarchy of performance overwhelms the pedagogical function of universal learning and social justice. If class is a mechanism of exclusion then these are the points at which it is engineered.

Transitions, Exclusions and Governance.

These are also the points at which the effects of particular governance procedures come most strongly into play. These effects are largely ignored in the educational literature written, as it is, almost exclusively within the framework of existing institutional structures. For instance there is plenty of work on the governance of higher education, the governance of TAFE and the governance of schools. Indeed, governments everywhere are paying such governance procedures considerable attention in the face of instances of institutional failure and the requirements of accountability and performativity. There is substantially less work on the effects of such division.

The effects are quite strong, for the governance procedures of institutions at each level are directed towards maintaining standards; ensuring quality and improving performance. These are quite reasonable objectives. But, typically, they are pursued through mechanisms of exclusion rather than through pedagogical betterment. Universities seek the highest possible ENTER scores and to improve their rank in the pecking order by increasing the number of first preferences for their courses. TAFE institutions seek both to increase the 'quality' of their entrants and to articulate their programs with higher status university programs. Secondary schools, and especially private schools, seek to 'export' failure by 'counseling' students unlikely to perform well from withdrawing before the competitive reality of upper secondary school bites. Secondary, and especially private, schools seek to ensure success by entering into special arrangements for early placement of 'high performers' into preferred university courses. The transition to secondary school is structured by parental choice, but increasingly by competition among secondary schools in attracting and selecting students most likely to succeed.

Schools are assisted in these processes by a variety of institutions which legitimate selection processes through examinations, the results of which are scaled in order to advantage those undertaking the 'hard' core subjects which constitute the curriculum of private schools. Similarly, curricular authorities systematise and hierarchise knowledge within and between subjects in ways that make such discriminations by examination possible. The result, as Teese observes, is a system which allows some schools to, quite reasonably, set their sights on eliminating failure. However

The elimination of failure from 'secure' sites within the system- private schools and other selective schools - can only be accomplished by intensifying the incidence of failure at other sites. What appears to be an entirely plausible and valid claim for one or two types of school to pursue- the total elimination of failure from among their own ranks- becomes unfeasible or completely illegitimate when stated as an objective for the school system as a whole or indeed for the weakest sections of it, among the populations who can least afford to fail.

(Teese, 2000:209)

These effects are achieved not solely by the internal governance of various educational institutions but by the systematic linkages between them which

produce and sustain structural inequalities that privilege a hierarchy of performance and militate against the possibility of a socially just pedagogy.

Structural inequality arises from the vertical integration of schools with universities through the medium of the curriculum and the elaboration of an institutional hierarchy among universities, from the peak of which power is exercised over the curriculum in favour of the strongest users.
(Teese, 200:209)

We are so used to this ascendancy that such a form of governance appears often to be 'natural' or 'in the order of things'. This is not so. Particular forms of governance within and between institutions are the result of political and administrative action which structure relationships, possibilities and impossibilities in particular ways.

The system of structural inequality is not self-sustaining. It depends on continual political action. It has taken more than three decades of state and federal government subsidies to modernize hundreds of private schools, which were once small, inefficient and unlikely to recommend themselves as objects of any public policy aimed at improving the quality of learning of the average child. Transformed into large and usually efficient establishments, private schools have seen no loss of their autonomy or had their accountability broadened in line with their changed funding base. On the contrary, their capacity to be socially selective has actually been increased thanks to an enhanced academic emphasis. So to have their ability to weaken other schools through predatory recruitment and selective dumping practices.
(Teese, 2000:211)

It is this insight which links issues of governance to issues of power. Oddly, however, the issue of power is usually absent from discussions of governance. But it is by no means irrelevant to the instantiation of educational priorities in educational systems and it is particularly evident to those who suffer most from educational institutions – the poor.

Educators are uncomfortable with the language of power; to talk of 'disadvantage' is easier. But schools are literally power-full institutions. Public schools exercise power, both in the general compulsion to attend and in the particular decisions they make. School grades, for instance, are not just aids to teaching. They are almost judicial decisions with legal status, which cumulate into large authoritative decisions about people's lives – progression in school, selection into higher education, employment prospects. Poor people, like the rest of the working class, by and large understand this feature of schools. It is central to their more dire experiences of education.
(Connell, 1994:134)

Now if the governance of the Australian education over the past several decades has instantiated the cultural and social power of already powerful

groups the question arises as to how just or defensible an arrangement this might be. Rawls (1972) position is relevant here in his argument that social arrangements are just if they would be accepted by any person who took part in designing them behind a 'veil of ignorance'.

Among the essential features of this situation is that no one knows his place in society, his position or social status, nor does any one know his fortune in the distribution of natural assets and abilities, his intelligence, strength and the like. The principles are chosen behind a veil of ignorance. This ensures that no one is advantaged or disadvantaged in the choice of principles by the outcome of natural chance or the contingency of social circumstances. Since all are similarly situated and no one is able to design principles to favour his particular condition, the principles of justice are the result of a fair agreement or bargain.

(Rawls, 1972: 12)

It seems rather obvious that under such conditions the design and governance of education would take a somewhat different form. The current principles seem rather to be based on ideas of hierarchy and social power which provide a very different outcome. It is, however, an outcome which is very much in keeping with the ethics of neo-liberal economists such as Hayek and Friedman and their educational repetiteurs such as Chubb and Moe (1992). It is a position closely related to Habermas's typification of the 'system' and its instrumental rationality

On the other hand it is not a principle that is likely to encourage the development of the 'lifeworld within which individuals form their identity, develop their sense of morality and values and engage in socially behaviour. If these issues are of significance in our pursuit of a democratic, inclusive and participatory society then it would seem that the governance of educational institutions is weighted in the wrong direction. Both resources and procedures, whether directed towards the control of curricular, pedagogical or assessment systems and practices are governed in ways that enhance the social, cultural and economic power of the already privileged at the expense of those on the social, cultural and economic periphery of our society.

Social Issues, Public Responsibility and the Governance of Education.

This bias in the governance of education through the distribution of resources, institutional structures and processes and controls over the fundamental message systems of schools - curriculum, pedagogy and evaluation - connects directly with current social problems. For instance the ghettoisation of poverty in Australia (Gregory and Hunter 1995) the associated redistribution of income from the bottom 70% of the population to the top 10% within which the incomes of the lowest 30% of men have fallen over the past 20 years (Sullivan, 1998) point to some considerable economic issues with serious social implications. The association of such issues with migrant status, non-English speaking backgrounds, lack of educational qualifications, low

employment, mothers in the labour force, single parent families in metropolitan areas (Australian Bureau of Statistics, 2001) indicates that as a society we fall well short of our ideals of social integration and the fair go.

If such issues are compounded rather than modified by an education system whose governing principles and governance procedures ensure that exclusion rather than inclusion is the dominant feature, it seems clear that education is not addressing two quite major social issues. Moreover, while job insecurity, lack of opportunity, low incomes, frequent mobility in search of employment, disrupted family life and pessimism about the future were previously correlated in the poor and working class recent evidence indicates that such insecurities now beset Middle Australia as well (Pusey, 1998, 2003). Moreover Middle Australia knows who to blame. Politicians, the economic system and big business are the three major culprits but the education system is listed as fifth on the list following the media (Pusey, 1998:195).

Much of the angst concerning education is conventionally directed towards supposed inadequacies in public education. However, what the analysis presented above suggests is that Middle Australia is not unaware of the transfer of resources from the public to private schools, nor of the fact that private schools are now gated communities from which most of Middle Australia is barred through fee structures and practices of exclusion, nor that the relationship between such schools and the tertiary sector diminishes their children's chance of access to further education. They read in the paper that 27,000 qualified secondary graduates were refused entry to universities in 2003 and their concerns over their own security are extended to concerns over their children's futures. Such awareness is not conducive to the building of social capital or social trust (Cox, 1998; Fukuyama, 1995; Putnam, 1995, 2002).

And yet the building of such social capital and social trust is a fundamental requirement in a democratic society. If the public sphere is to be constituted by open and accessible debate over crucial social, political and economic issues by citizens who are both informed and articulate, it is fundamental that the governance of social, political and economic institutions be seen to be fair, equitable and open to the scrutiny and influence of all. Only on such socially just foundations can social trust be built (see Carr & Hartnett, 1996).

This is particularly important in societies like Australia where significant groups of recent and less recent migrants have brought cultural identities with them that introduce a richness of alternative voices into Australian society. The importance of an open and accepting public sphere within which their voices can be heard is crucial to the development of Australian social capital and social trust.

Public education has a key role to play in the development of such trust, but it can only do so if its own governance and the principles that such governance instantiates in educational institutions are also seen to be just, equitable open and inclusive.

Principles of Governance and Public Education

It would be difficult to argue that the Australian education system could claim that its governing principles produce a just, equitable, open and inclusive practice. The balance between such values and those of hierarchy, exclusion, social and economic consolidation and the exercise of cultural and economic power that currently underpin our governance practices deny the impulses and aspirations not only of many students and their parents, but also of many teachers whose work is informed by principles which would, given the chance, sustain the lifeworld of their students and their communities but who are faced with governance processes which point in the opposite direction.

These tensions are most acute within government and Catholic schools for whom the competing demands of system and lifeworld collide in their everyday practice. Such tensions could well be reduced and teachers and students feel more supported if public education were underpinned by governance practices which were explicitly directed towards the building of social trust through socially just access, curriculum, pedagogy and assessment which addressed the issues of economic, social and cultural power- the not so hidden curriculum of schools.

But the explicit adoption of such principles would require that we examine the governance structures of universities to ensure that their selection processes, internal allocation to courses, their curricular, pedagogical and assessment practices were indeed non-discriminatory and inclusive and that their pursuit of knowledge was directed towards social justice as well as technical competence. There are some signs that some universities are embracing such principles. Currently, however, the inconsistency between such espoused principles and current university practice tends to produce cynicism among staff and students alike.

It might also be worth looking at the current separation of TAFE institutions and universities and whether the extension of dual sector responsibilities to all universities might serve to broaden their curriculum and their constituencies in ways that are significantly more inclusive and community based, for it is noticeable that institutions such as Victoria University are making significant progress in implementing open admissions policies and orienting their activities closely to local schools and the dynamics of their local communities as well as providing a bridge to national and international networks.

The most severe constraints appear to converge on the upper years of secondary schools. Here, the convergent academic curriculum is at its most powerful and its most decisive. Here is where structural reform of the governance of education is most required. As Teese notes

Structural reform has to address the two main ways in which social resources are concentrated in education- in the curriculum (as a

hierarchical system of learning demands) and in schools (as a hierarchical system of learning opportunities).

(Teese, 2003:218)

If, for instance, the hierarchy of the curriculum is monolithic and careless of the social and cultural capital of significant sectors of the school population then the governance of curriculum is clearly brought into question. For to establish a curriculum on the basis of a particular form of social and cultural capital and then establish a gradient of all other social and cultural capitals against that measure is surely the opposite of inclusion. To verify that gradient through forms of testing that simply confirm the hierarchy rather than question it is surely perverse. As Teese argues

There is little point in testing schools for their relative efficiency in teaching the curriculum, if the curriculum itself has not been tested for its relative sensitivity to the social groups attempting to master it. Though few teachers are surprised to see the gradients that link participation and attainment in various subjects to the socio-economic status of students, such comparisons play no role in how subjects are designed and accredited ... And yet the systematic links between achievement and socio-economic status afford important theoretical insights into the cognitive and cultural demands of school subjects, and therefore open the way to more effective pedagogical intervention.

(Teese, 2003:220-21)

Such testing of the curriculum might well lead to a more informed pedagogy. But the problem of governance for 'success' will remain if the secondary school continues to be dominated by university curricular and selection practices.

Here the key would seem to be a structural reform which linked the later stages of secondary education more closely to the social, cultural and economic development of the communities to which schools relate. This might well build on current efforts to introduce VET in schools but also provide a basis for linkage through TAFE institutions which typically have close relationships with their communities. Indeed, it might well be that such relationships might be consolidated within an expanded upper secondary school or indeed within a variant on the community college model. The objectives here would be the broadening of the curriculum, the orientation of parts of the curriculum to the solution of community problems, the motivational effect of research, the rewards of practical design and performance. Such an enriched curriculum might well be more responsive to the social, cultural and economic capital of communities and more productive of inclusive and socially just pedagogies.

On the Governance of Public Education.

The argument of this paper is that public education is that education which addresses public issues. More, that a truly public education is one that not only involves preparation for participation in the 'system' through the economy, but also one that speaks to the 'lifeworld' of various communities and the articulation of their interests into the public sphere.

I have also argued that the governance of our current educational institutions is founded on presumptions of hierarchy, exclusion and the privileging of current structures of social, cultural and economic power. Such principles exacerbate rather than ameliorate current social problems related to economic, social and cultural insecurity and exclusion. A truly public system would be informed by principles which protect the public interest rather than privileging private interest. Though claiming public status on the basis of public funding, private schools, as against government and catholic schools, undermine rather than articulate the public interest and indeed by appropriating not only funds, but curricular and assessment hierarchies in collusion with universities such schools act against the public interest, undermining the possibility of inclusive practice, not only within their own walls, but within government and catholic systems as well. Only a shift towards governance of public education through principles of social, cultural and economic inclusiveness will produce the social as well as the economic capital that is required if Australia is to have a future as a cohesive, democratic and participatory society with a strong sense of its communal identity.

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