



Education plc: Understanding Private Sector Participation in Public Sector Education

Stephen J. Ball

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Is the privatisation of state education defensible? Did the public sector ever provide a fair education for all learners?

In *Education plc*, Stephen Ball provides a comprehensive, analytic and empirical account of the privatisation of education. He questions the kind of future we want for education and what role privatisation and the private sector may have in that future. Using policy sociology to describe and critically analyse changes in policy, policy technologies and policy regimes, he looks at the ethical and democratic impacts of these changes and raises the following questions:

- Is there a legitimacy for privatisation based on the convergence of interests between business and the ‘third way’ state?
- Is the extent and value of private participation in public education misunderstood?
- How is the selling of private company services linked to the remodelling of schools?
- Why have the technical and political issues of privatisation been considered but ethical issues almost totally neglected?
- What is happening here, beyond mere technical changes in the form of public service delivery?
- Is education policy being spoken by new voices?

Drawing upon extensive documentary research and interviews with senior executives from the leading ‘education services industry’ companies, the author challenges preconceptions about privatisation. He concludes that blanket defence of the public sector as it was, over and against the inroads of privatisation, is untenable, and that there is no going back to a past in which the public sector as a whole worked well and worked fairly in the interests of all learners, because there was no such past.

This book breaks new ground and builds on Stephen Ball’s previous work on education policy. It should appeal to those researching and studying in the fields of social policy, policy analysis, sociology of education, education research and social economics.

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