The analysis of global educational policies: A new research challenge and a (network, multi-sited) and meta-ethnographic response

Dennis Beach, University of Gothenburg, Swedena
Introduction: from ethnography to meta-ethnography

Ethnography:

- The direct involvement and long-term engagement of researchers in particular settings
- A detailed focus on the content, processes and experiences of educational life
- Giving high status to participants’ perspectives
- A spiral of data collection, hypothesis building and theory testing
- Attentively watching and intentionally listening what is going on at particular times and places with the aim to open up possibilities for thinking differently about people’s lives, actions and experiences when analysing them.
- Examining relationships between macro- and micro-perspectives

Meta-ethnography makes use of the findings from a number of specifically focused works of this kind
Meta-ethnography

1. Identifying a sample of texts
2. Reading these carefully to identify or develop key concepts
3. Checking the relevance of each concept within the full corpus
4. Identifying and thematising patterns and common processes
5. Synthesising themes as a foundation for making general claims

Themes:

• (Re)conceptualising global(ising) capitalism, education justice and equity through ethnographies of educational experiences
• The problem of reform based change and the effects of neoliberal politics on concepts and possibilities of education justice and equity
The meta- and multi-sited ethnographies*


## Overview of the total body of analysed texts

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Conceptualising global(ising) capitalism, education justice and equity through ethnographies of educational experiences

Three important points:

• Falling performance levels and increasing threats to democratic values and equivalence between schools and increasing performance differences between pupils

• Decentralisation and the introduction of neo-liberal market politics has played a significant role in these developments

• These were risks that were already well known and that governments had been warned about at the time that the reforms were introduced
Conceptualising global(ising) capitalism, education justice and equity through ethnographies of educational experiences

- Migration and transnationalism with challenged concepts of citizenship identity and security
- A material hollowing out of the socially provided resources in the neighbourhoods in question
- High levels of un-, under- and unstable employment and reduced benefit levels that cannot maintain recognisably significant levels of economic consumption
- Local governments unable to economically sustain extensive and comprehensive public services
- The national introduction of market politics and the global concept of individual choice has become the principle arbiter of interest and development, with this adding to poverty effects rather than providing more effective welfare solutions
Conceptualising global(ising) capitalism, education justice and equity through ethnographies of educational experiences: Eight concepts

(i) Territorial stigmatisation
(ii) Material hollowing out and deprivation
(iii) The flourishing of discourses of cultural deficit
(iv) Linked together in a mental devaluation of people from ‘work-less’ trans-nationalist and under-resourced places,
(v) Market reforms and market failure
(vi) Youth creativity and learning
(vii) Significant misrepresentation
(viii) Broad failure of the official policies

- Segregation, territorial stigma, multi-dimensional poverty and the market
- Contrasting discourses of education need and value
Segregation, territorial stigma, multi-dimensional poverty, the market and contrasting discourses of education need and value

- The failure of welfare models
- A foundational critique of the centralised welfare State education concept motivating a reduction in public investment and the introduction of market based educational solutions
- The introduction and appropriation of the global market concept did not cause inequality. It exploited mediatised inequalities in order to develop a conceptual foundation from which to reduce public expenditure and launch private alternatives for generating surplus value
- Parasitic on the social fabric, including its investments in the recognition of systemic inequities
Segregation, territorial stigma, multi-dimensional poverty, the market and contrasting discourses of education need and value

- People from territorially stigmatized areas are characterized on the basis of place and class identities that are used to explain educational failure and other difficulties in these ‘off places’
- Subjects recognise this but their creative learning and communication actually contradicts these representations
- The people and their backgrounds aren’t a problem but a value. They don’t need special treatment or the help of special kinds of pedagogy to learn. They need a genuine recognition of (and solid basic support for) their ability and commitment to do so
Segregation, territorial stigma, multi-dimensional poverty, the market and contrasting discourses of education need and value

- Pupils; who are socially constructed as impossible, failing and hopeless; are far from as hopeless and impossible as they are portrayed. Symbolic creativity and creative critical learning are present and described.
- This “hopeless label” is ideologically and politically generated in a way that localises the difficulties of performance in a particular way.
- The predominant attitude in formal education toward the values, culture, beliefs, religions and traditions in economically poor areas are deficit, not the people there.
- White global upper-class hegemony and the values of the bourgeois cultural heritage of the middle class, the history of dominance of this class in public sector politics, and the self-assumed superiority of its educational code in educational organisations, policies and curricula is the problem.
- The globally introduced concept of the market solution as an economically effective and efficient saviour and redeemer of educational justice and inequality is totally false.
Conclusions

• The schooling of marginalised groups confronts many problems, but none of them usually pertain to individual motivation, intellectual abilities or family commitments.

• The problems are the history and contemporary presence of class and racial power, along with the ways current global social and economic conditions, and the now global concept of neoliberal marketization have helped turn the segregation, stigmatisation and discursive and material exploitation of social class and gender into the segregation and concentration of poverty and unemployment in the hyper-ghettos of present societies.

• The young people from the areas in question have shown involvement, commitment, effort, creativity and a learning potential that can be seized on by curriculum developers and political and institutional educational leaders but this is not always happening at the moment.

• Other groups may be taking advantage of these potentials instead and this is an important challenge for education organisations and their leaders, politicians, curriculum developers and researchers.
Revisiting some key points I

• The globally introduced concept of the market solution as an economically effective and efficient saviour and redeemer of educational justice and inequality is false.

• Market politics and privatisation are adding to poverty not providing welfare solutions for these experienced difficulties.

• The introduction of a market concept did not cause inequality but it has exploited mediatised inequalities in order to motivate reduced public expenditure and develop a conceptual foundation for private alternatives.

• The market concept should be understood as preying on and attempting to profit from existing inequities, which it also subsequently seems to then exacerbate.

• Young people from territorially stigmatized areas are ideologically and socially constructed as impossible, failing and hopeless but are far from as hopeless and impossible as they are portrayed.
Revisiting some key points II

• A “hopeless label” has been generated but creative behaviour suggests that it is the predominant attitude in formal education toward ‘off places’ and the values, culture, beliefs, religion and tradition of youth from these economically poor areas that are deficit. The problem has to be something else: e.g.

  (i) Colonialisation, post-colonialisation and white upper-class global hegemony

  (ii) The values of the bourgeois cultural heritage of the white middle class

  (iii) The history of dominance of this class in public sector politics

  (iv) The assumed superiority of its educational code in organisations and curricula

• Thus the problems of education justice and equity are problems of

  (i) The history and contemporary presence of class and racial power and politics, along with

  (ii) The ways current global social and economic conditions and the concept of marketization have helped turn the segregation, stigmatisation and discursive and material exploitation of social class into the segregation and concentration of poverty and unemployment in the hyper-ghettos of present societies. Thus,

• Although education is formally expressed as based on independence and academic neutrality, it is still as it has been in the past, in both theory and practice, highly ideological and political as well as culturally biased and socially and culturally reproductive