

Educational Administration: Theory and Practice
Summer 2006, Issue 47, pp: 423-444
Kuram ve Uygulamada Eğitim Yönetimi
Yaz 2006, Sayı 47, ss: 423-444

The Decline of Western Education Research and the Unfortunate Balance of Trade in the Marketplace of Bad Ideas about Schooling

Craig B. Howley

The thesis of this article is that Western education research has widely failed to shape educational systems that cultivate public purpose in mass education and that, hence, other cultures that import this project play into the hands of transnational corporations ready to update those cultures to serve their purposes. This poor trade in the marketplace of bad ideas is already being made and it seems an unwise choice everywhere, but particularly among nations that confront most stringently the depredations of globalization. I warrant the thesis (1) with evidence of the shift of recent decades in Western educational aims from public to private purposes and (2) by describing the consequent accommodations made by Western education research, with particular attention to the role played by research in school administration. Two warnings and four alternatives seem especially apt. These are the warnings: (1) because power elites find critique inconvenient, they seek to undermine or hobble the critical mission of education research; (2) because globalization suppresses local conceptions of a decent life, the aims of imports from Western schooling should be greeted with doubt—and doubt is the home of critique in research. I suggest these alternatives to the unfortunate balance of global trade in bad ideas about schooling: (1) looking at schooling from the perspectives of ordinary people, not from that of the power elites or the school profession; (2) thinking about what distinguishes research that honors a critical mission from other sorts of writing and other sorts of action; (3) regarding the deployment of methods critically studying locally a trendy Western only by first problematizing it; (4) when thinking about schooling, keeping education much more clearly in view.

Craig B. Howley

The Decline of Western Education Research and the Unfortunate Balance of Trade in the Marketplace of Bad Ideas about Schooling

Arguably, research in school administration is responsible for the failure of education research in the West. This seems a sweeping judgment, on two accounts—the failure and the responsibility. But the charge is grounded in a quite simple fact. The field of school administration created and imposed designs for education systems, and the West (with cooperation from school administrators and school administration researchers) has exported the models worldwide. An important part of what has been exported is ways of thinking about schools. The responsibility is clear, and so is the failure, I will argue. What is to be done? Other forms and purposes must supplant the dominant Western mode of education research, and non-Western education researchers are in a good place to take up this work (see, for example, Prakash & Stuchul, 2004).

Research about school administration in the West has made its poor contribution, not surprisingly, based for a long time on business principles, according to such early critical observers as Raymond Callahan (1962). Schools run like businesses do not logically position themselves to accomplish public purposes, but to accomplish private business purposes. When Callahan wrote his classic history, *Education and the Cult of Efficiency*, he may have hoped to unmask and undermine the “cult” of which the U.S. (and many other nations) as the privatization of schooling and internationally as the globalization of schooling (“McEducation” for Prakash & Stuchul, 2004). But these are not different realms and globalization means the privatization by transnational corporations of as many public spaces as possible, including the public space of schooling (Spring, 1998).

Public to Private Purposes of Schooling

Henry Adams, a reluctant teacher and historian, and great-grandson of the second American president, observed in his autobiography that schooling “is a sort of dynamo machine for polarizing the popular mind; for turning and holding its lines of force in the direction supposed to be most effective for state purposes” (Adams, 1918/1992, 14). Adams was well aware that business models and imperial intentions were, in his day, increasingly determining what the purposes of the state itself would be, and hence the future course of schooling. He resented his own schooling (at Harvard) for not teaching him that fact.

The fact, however, began with hopes for something quite different about 1790, a hope grounded in the relationship between two new ideas: the citizen and the nation state. During its rise, the West invented the “nation-state,” a concept that standardized a defensible sovereignty with ideals of large geographic spread, a single national language, and a singular cultural outlook. As Hobsbawm (1992) points out, however, the ideal of the nation state has rarely been met, though the West does a predictably good imitation of its own invention of the ideal they invented, but they have applied it (via international regimes of trade, politics, and war—in the epochs of colonialism, post-colonialism, imperialism, and globalism) to places with small territories or hundreds of languages and cultures. The application has always been in the name of doing business, and the nation-state was engineered variously, often oddly, across its short history. It is surely amusing to see Singapore treated as if it were a nation state, for instance in international comparisons of student achievement (Singapore is a *city state*).

Of specific concern to schooling (also known as “mass education”) is the revolutionary nation-state circa 1790 in North America and France (and, to be sure, Haiti though its coeval revolution is seldom cited; see Wills, 2003). Education, in these places and times, was about creating the *citizen* from ordinary people, previously dismissed by the aristocracy as peasants, tradesmen, or merchants (not to mention *slaves*). Hobsbawm (1992, p. 20) wrote, “What characterized the nation-people as seen from below was precisely that it represented the common interest against particular interests, the common good against privilege.” The nation-state, in short, was to be founded on the capacity of ordinary people, particularly their capacity for self-governance. What was to equip them with this capacity? It was a suitable education, increasingly to be delivered in schools, but, at least in the U.S. not originally imagined exclusively or most effectively as schooling (Cremin, 1980).

The 19th and 20th centuries, however, increasingly built schools to the specifications that so troubled Henry Adams: the purposes of the *regime* and by no means of the people. Adams knew that the state’s regime was guided by the will of the emerging capitalist class (emerging, that is, in the U.S. from about 1865 to 1915 and in Britain for more than 100 years before that). Callahan documented the subsequent consequences for schooling in the U.S. Joel Spring (1998) and many others have updated Callahan’s cheerless picture.

Such a critique does not deny the existence of many good schools in the

Craig B. Howley

West concerned to help ordinary students think for themselves (many, but constituting a small minority of the whole). There are proportionally *far more* schools providing such schooling to the children of power elites, children who are themselves most likely to occupy positions among the power elite.

What is the power elite? The critical sociologist C. Wright Mills famously identified the power elite to be those occupying the “strategic command posts of the social structure” (Mills, 1956, 3). It’s recognizable everywhere, and now on a global scale.

There is simply no doubt that *the people* are not in command of the state, especially the American state, the state which so loudly boasts that it is the democratic model for the planet. The world is not buying this jingoism, but the hubris is similar throughout the West (and increasingly so under the hegemony of globalized capital). The most troubling fact is that the people have so little influence over the emerging global political regimes.

In fact, as many critics of globalization have noted, *the citizen*—as an individual actor whose existence justifies the state—is dead. The citizens of the new world order announced by Bush the First are transnational corporations (Bauman, 1997; Sassen, 1996), not individual ordinary people. These New World Citizens don’t require nation states in the long run, though according to Saskia Sassen, they will likely tolerate them. And they certainly don’t need competition from, and cannot even tolerate, the old-style (individual) citizen. What they need instead are clever and loyal workers on the job-site, and lazy and greedy consumers at home—not interfering with corporate prerogatives, and certainly not offering any critique of local, national, or global politics, economics, ethics, or aesthetics. The New World Citizens seem to be getting what they need and there is little doubt that Western schooling (exported worldwide) is helping them to get it.

Adams, Mills, Callahan, Bauman, and Sassen (among many others) have shown their readers what is up. Their reading of events is not narrow, biased, or selective, but broad, objective, and comprehensive. Their counsel is useful in putting the peculiar jingoism of globalism into proper perspective. The schooling imagined by this regime cultivates greed, technical problem solving, and competitive individualism instead of generosity, thinking, and collaborative community (Giroux, 2000). If readers doubt such claims, they may visit almost any website sponsored by the various state education agencies in the U.S. for the varied and quite explicit statements to this effect. There is occasional lip-service to

community and the public good, but not much of it.

My own favorite example of this jingoism, though, is a road sign in the American state of Kentucky. For several years, that state posted signs on all entering roads that read: “Education pays! Kentucky thus announced *greed* as the guiding principle of the schooling it sponsored. And the school system in Kentucky is the most radically “reformed” in the U.S. These sorts of episodes, multiplied hundreds of times (with less overt offense), indicate that public purpose has nearly foundered in the U.S.—under the sway of global capitalism and its shrill ideology. It is surely past time to think differently about schooling (see Howley & Howley, 2006, for one example framed for the North American context).

The Accommodations of Western Education Research

The preceding account is a true one, but can seem irrelevant to those struggling in the day-to-day flow. Teaching is everywhere a challenging work, even in well-funded schools dedicated to thoughtful instruction aimed at enabling the public good instead of private greed. It is in the day-to-day flow, also, that *education researchers* make their accommodations to the regime of post-industrial capital and its State schools and deploy scholarly resistance to it. It’s important to remember, though, that education research is not a very old field, nor one with much status in the West. Education researchers are simply professors in colleges of education, some of whom conduct research as part of their quest for tenure. Colleges of education, moreover, have a very short history and a very low academic place in the ranking of academic vanities. Indeed, the expectation that their faculty will do legitimate empirical research is relatively new, emerging most strongly only in recent decades (with some vigor only after the Second World War, and not with real vigor until at least the late 1960s).

Readers should temper the critique on offer in this essay with their understanding of the implications of this history. That is, education research in the West struggles for a respectable identity, and the need for that struggle is a large part of its failure. It seeks to fit into the usual ways of doing business in the Western academy.

Economics. On one hand, under the prevailing regime, money (funding) is the surest route to the highest respectability. The larger the grant, the more respectable is the research—and the more respectable the researcher. On the other hand, programs in school administration are “cash cows”—many students, much tuition, some grants, and famous and durable

Craig B. Howley

allegations of low program quality, in the U.S. at any rate. Their respectability, therefore, is enhanced disproportionately when they secure substantial external funding.

In an organizational sense in American higher education, research is defined operationally as the quest for grants. A \$US20 million grant confers not only great respectability, but considerable power. Grant programs offering hundred of millions of dollars—in education “research” funds—are rather common in the U.S. Increasingly, public universities in the U.S. are being privatized. Originally supported by the various state legislatures, U.S. most public universities currently receive a small fraction of funding in that manner. As a result, they now market degrees aggressively and pursue grants furiously. This is how privatization works.

The munificence of large grants is therefore universally welcome, and cause for celebration when one is secured. I’ve been involved with several. In the day-to-day flow, however, few of us stop to observe that the grants come from the *regime*, and with substantial implications for the funded work.

In particular, this funding scheme turns researchers’ attention to the issues defined as important by the regime. The grants, after all, are one tool for “turning and holding its lines of force.” Researchers with principles at odds with the lines of force need to understand that they will be making enemies when the work done under such arrangements is offensive to the regime. Excellent education research can also be done—and perhaps done more certainly and directly—in other ways, with much less funding, if not for free.

Professional myopia. The grant programs define issues broadly, but education professors are left to their own devices in responding to actual requests for proposals (known in the trade in the U.S. as “RFPs”). What determines their responses?

In nearly all cases, *conventional wisdom* is what determines researchers’ responses to RFPs. These are the responses that stand the greatest likelihood of being understood and approved. Indeed, the cycle of getting and spending such “research” funds is now a strong force in shaping conventional wisdom itself. For researchers who are professors in colleges of education in universities increasingly dependent on grants to escape this trap, escaping this trap is a difficult exercise.

Certainly, imaginative and talented faculty can argue an unconventional perspective, even one critical of the regime. Yet, in the nature of things,

these successes are quite rare and the very character of their work (critique) renders the projects and their success unstable if not always ephemeral. The regime, however, does require a modicum of tension, which limited and channeled critique supplies. But the regime doesn't need much such work. In general, successful grants twist conventional wisdom slightly, or organize and sequence it cleverly.

Why are Western education researchers generally uncritical? First, many *are* critical. These “many” like the “many” good schools for the poor constitute a small minority of the whole. The clever researchers in favor with the regime, by contrast, accept a substantial degree of professional myopia partly as part of the bargain of playing with the regime, but in large measure the myopia arises from a commitment to a narrow empiricist conception of the project of research. This conception limits an anemic critique to footnotes or literature reviews. Numerous examples can be found in any ERIC search, and the current regime in control of ERIC cynically seeks to provide more such examples in the name of science—its myopic version of science.

Such are the researchers, for instance, that have recently leapt to become experts in randomized controlled experiments, which the regime in its U.S. manifestation seriously argues is the one true path to certain knowledge in education research. This outlook is just stupid and unworthy. The charge of stupidity is not mine exclusively and certainly not most notably (for a careful exposition of the charge and its scientific myopia, see Phillips, 2006; and for a pointed case study from someone whose astute scholarship was prominently discounted by the regime, see Schoenfeld, 2006). Such experimentation is certainly necessary, but it is a small part of the whole and it only makes sense contextualize to that larger whole. The story of controlled experiments in the U.S. context is another apt example of the sort of narrowing and channeling of critique that the regime intends (the story of grants programming being the other).

Vanity. To be a university professor is a wonderful privilege anywhere on the planet. With success in securing the position of professor, unfortunately, too often comes a measure of vanity associated with having completed an academic degree widely misunderstood as the pinnacle of academic accomplishment. The Ph.D. is not that. Instead, it is simply another qualification under the current regime, in this case the qualification needed to enjoy the privileged life of professor.

Gaining entry to this profession, especially in a college of education, is not much to be proud of. Doing good work in the role, however, most

Craig B. Howley

certainly is a source of legitimate satisfaction. That satisfaction is betrayed by anyone who wants the accomplishment of good work to incite envy. Vanity is at work at several levels in our calling.

The privilege of being a professor, must, to the contrary, be redeemed through hard work, in this case *critical* scholarship—work that flies in the face of the regime of privatization and globalization. The reason has already been intimated: public purpose requires it, and public purpose is needed for the social construction of a reality that attends to issues of justice and (arguably) human survival on a planet being ravaged by unopposed global capital.

Two Warnings

The New World Citizens are delighted to have Western models of schooling adopted worldwide and they are also pleased to have schooling managed by a technocratic sort of research apparatus—one that avoids the very thing that makes education research *research* (as opposed to evaluation or engineering). Education research that lacks critique is sterile; the regime’s tendency is to reconstruct research as mere evaluation (read on). The two warnings that follow are implicit in the preceding discussion.

First warning. The first warning is that power elites need to blunt or subvert the critical work of researchers. Pushing the critical project of research (Adams, Callahan, Mills, Bauman, and Sassen are among the decent models) is therefore essential to “good science” in education.

What’s critique? Critique is the habit of asking questions, especially difficult, dangerous, and certainly peremptory questions. It’s founded on skepticism. The more research is regimented, prescribed, and standardized (usually on the basis of the regime’s articulation of quality), the less skeptical, the less circumspect, the less critical—and the less *useful*—the effort becomes. In the end, research conducted along these lines turns into evaluation or engineering and abandons the project of research all together.

For an image of this sort of perversion, visit the What Works Clearinghouse—the subject of Alan Schoenfeld’s report (Schoenfeld, 2006). Much more can be said about critique, but not here.

Second warning. The second warning is that globalization suppresses local conceptions of a decent life, with Western schooling (and its scholarly toolkit in school administration) prominently assisting (Foster, 2004). In the West there is much chatter about “world-class” phenomena. A Google

search will prove illuminating to skeptics. “World-class” is thought to describe the best of the very best, on a planetary scale. It is made out to be what everyone should strive toward (excellence), want (buy), or accept (pay for as if it were in the public interest).

It’s nonetheless possible that the best life is a one lived locally, aimed at improving local realities through the appreciation and development of local meanings and practices. On existential terms, of course, a local life is the only one really possible, except for select members of the global power elite (Bauman, 1998). But talk about “the best life” is entirely foolish because humans live well in many places and in many ways. These differences are famously incompatible, commensurate, and valuable. Education must accommodate this diversity, and so must education research.

Four Alternatives

If Western models of schooling and of education research are not as advertised, then what are the alternatives for education research? Centuries of colonialism and imperialism have spread the Western model so widely, that the question must be posed again and again, pressingly.

The alternatives seem to me to include the following prominently: (1) looking at schooling from the perspectives of ordinary people, not from that of the power elites or the school profession; (2) thinking about what distinguishes research that honors a critical mission from other sorts of writing and other sorts of action; (3) regarding the deployment of methods critically studying locally a trendy Western only by first problematizing it; (4) when thinking about schooling, keeping education much more clearly in view.

Education from the perspectives of ordinary people. Systems of schooling are commonly sponsored by national regimes for their own purposes. Ordinary people in local communities often do not share—and should not rightly be anticipated to share—these national priorities (Scott, 1998). In the contemporary world, moreover, national priorities are increasingly shaped by the priorities of the global power elite—by the ideology of globalism and the supposedly natural process of globalization. This general observation is not less true, for instance, in the U.S. than in Turkey. But it remains a question of who is doing what to whom—and why.

Often, for instance, professional educators assume that they know what is educationally best for students and families. They most often assert this claim in total ignorance of the lives of families. In national systems that

Craig B. Howley

assigns teachers to local schools from the center (as in Turkey, France, Greece, and many if not most nations), the odds favoring this ignorance increase. But even in the U.S., with schools not organized nationally, such ignorance is common. When the ignorance is not profound, as in many rural places, the norms of the profession—its ideology as a technology, for instance—impose a kind of amnesia on many teachers and administrators who are themselves local people.

The widespread ignorance has been reinforced by 100 years of work in school administration and 50 years of research in school administration. This body of research has never taken up the organization of systems that take into respectful account the circumstances, needs, and local aspirations of families. Instead, it has focused on organizing (and perfecting) systems that honor the convenience of the state, meet the requirements of business, and that seek to “raise” the aspirations of local people to include many years of schooling to the detriment of their education.

Obviously, this abandoned project—abandoned early in the history of the field—harbors a vast unexplored and unarticulated research agenda. Its motives will differ from the familiar ones, its products will differ, and its utility will certainly differ. There is, however, one thing to make clear. Decent education on these terms will not be inferior to the currently favored Western model. It will teach reading, writing, mathematics, science, and history. Students will learn a variety useful things and be able to do them.

What distinguishes research from other sorts of writing and action? The issue here is practicality and usefulness and whose conceptions of these matters researchers accept. Indeed, looking to education research to solve immediate practical problems reconstructs research as something it is not—but this argument is not the old, sorry one about the distinctions between “basic” and “applied” research. All of education research is applied research.

The distinction being made will be difficult for some researchers to grasp. It turns on a subtle point of ontology. Oscar Wilde, the playwright and Anglo-Irish bad boy of the late 19th century, may have put it best:

For what is a practical scheme? *A practical scheme is either a scheme that is already in existence, or a scheme that could be carried out under existing conditions.* But it is exactly the existing conditions that one objects to; and any scheme that could accept these conditions is wrong and foolish. (Wilde, 1891/1992, 43)

Education research proper—that is, a legitimate *research* effort—will begin with a sharp appreciation of such *impracticality*: with an appreciation of the posture of power elites that “resistance is futile.” Resistance, of course, certainly does *not* entail effects anticipated by the power elites to be helpful. And that perception of unhelpfulness is the source of the charge of impracticality.

One thought, perhaps a practical one, is that education research that takes seriously the outlook of *ordinary people*—as opposed to that of the school profession or the power elites (global or national)—will be appropriately skeptical, critical, and therefore will be more objective and more useful than the typical exercise in education research. In this light—understanding the critical project of education research and its stronger claim to objectivity than research that is insufficiently skeptical and critical—it’s important to distinguish research proper from other, quite different projects, that are commonly confused with research in the academy.

These seemingly related genres include education evaluation, education development (engineering), and education journalism:

- Evaluation is a kind of investigation that is specifically paid to judge the worth of a program or material, most often by the operators or sponsors of the program or by the developer of the materials to be evaluated.
- Development is the process of creating programs or materials (of the sort later subjected to summative evaluation); the investigations of developers relate to creating the project, with small-scale formative evaluation part of their toolkit.
- Journalism about education is by nature *biased*. Corporate ownership and freedom of the press (where applicable and especially where not applicable) ensure this bias.

Subsequent discussion considers some of the relevant details and contrasts, but each of these differing projects (evaluation, engineering, and journalism) harbors exceptions that prove the rule. The point, here, though, is not their similarities, but their differences.

In the case of *evaluation*, economics clumps trumps objectivity quite overtly. Evaluators are most often paid by the very programs or materials they are evaluating, and their job is to pronounce the worth of such programs or materials (Scriven, 1999). Pronouncing such a judgment is a responsibility fraught with practical difficulty (offending the clients), and it

Craig B. Howley

is therefore most often poorly discharged. Even when done very well, evaluators must moderate the project of critique in the name of not alienating the client. Compromises of all sorts are imposed by the nature of this work. This observation is not an indictment, but an observation.

Development cannot even hope to engage the issue of objectivity. Its ends are preconceived to match a marketable need and the only “objectivity” that development offers is the product itself. No representation is being made in development per se: the product speaks, one might say, for itself. Subsequent to development, of course, many representations are made about the usefulness or effectiveness of the product, and in the case of commercially produced school materials these representations take the form of advertising and are often inadequately warranted, unwarranted, or even misleading. Sometimes they are just fraudulent.

Journalism aims to report a story already identified as “newsworthy” (by criteria seldom publicly disclosed). Although a very good investigative journalist can work in ways that resemble the ways a good qualitative researcher works, journalists nearly always labor under pressing deadlines that are not kind to the care required in good research. Journalists, further, serve at the pleasure of editors and owners whose interests not only determine content and style but even the fine details of diction that are the trademarks of particular newspapers or magazines. Again, this is not an indictment, but an observation (and as with the observation about evaluation, these come in part from my personal experience). Finally, demonstrable bias is not only *permissible* in journalism, it is sometimes *explicitly desired* (this bias is what the phrase “freedom of the press” permits and rightly values).

Given these distinctions, it would also seem that research that is properly skeptical and adequately critical would be more objective than research that exhibits little (or narrow) skepticism and minimizes critique. Certainly, deft practitioners of these arts (research, evaluation, development, and journalism) can produce work that blurs the posited distinctions. Nonetheless, the objectivity of research is not a airy hope or a dubious assertion. Its objectivity stems from, and is grounded in, the role of *doubt* as the central value of the research endeavor. Research, for instance, embraces well-worn routines to minimize a wide range of threats to validity.

Doubt and problematize to ensure objectivity. In this light, it is essential to regard the deployment of methods critically and never to study locally an imported school practice (imported, that is from trendy Western practice),

certainly not without first problematizing the practice, based on local knowledge and the outlook of ordinary people. Failing this outlook, researchers abandon both critique and much hope for objective outlook.

Why would research that problematizes local issues be more objective than research that does not? In education research conventional wisdom and the influence of power elites too often determine theoretical frameworks (what counts as important), the actual research questions (problems considered in need of “practical” attention), and the nature of acceptable answers (conclusions and recommendations, in particular, but also actual findings). If this claim seems preposterous or unfair, let me suggest an illustrative case of compromised objectivity in a line of Western education research in school administration and policy.

The example relates to one of my lines of research—the circumstances of smaller rural schools. Turkey has many more of these (per capita) than the U.S., but still, nearly 40% of U.S. schools are located in rural places and small towns, even in a nation in which 80% of the population lives in metropolitan areas. Rural and small-town schools, in the U.S. as in many nations, are simply smaller than schools in other locales.

From 1950 through about 1990, U.S. education research in school administration firmly insisted that bigger schools and school districts¹ were inherently, and for many reasons, better than smaller schools and school districts. And many schools and districts were closed. The U.S. now has only 10% of the school districts it had in 1930 (see the various historical reports from the U.S. National Center for Education Statistics, all easily accessible online).

The closures of schools and even districts continue. The massive closures represent 100 years of conventional wisdom, with an uncritical research agenda to support it.

Recent research on small schools and districts has nonetheless taken a

¹ “School districts” in the U.S. are geographic regions in which local authority for education is vested. These Local Education Agencies (another term for “school district”) are lead by a “superintendent” and a local school board (most often elected, but sometimes appointed) who make and execute policy for the district. The U.S. maintains some 14,500 such public school districts, which administer some 86,000 elementary and secondary schools. School districts themselves are linked in a chain of command to the State Department of Education (SEA) of the state in which they are located. Increasingly, research has shown that the influence of the SEA sharply circumscribes the actions of the LEAs, although the strength of this influence certainly varies among the 50 states.

Craig B. Howley

decidedly critical turn in the U.S. It has shown that there are test-score advantages to smaller schools and districts for impoverished students (see Howley & Howley, 2004, for an example and a summary of this line of research). For students from affluent families, larger schools seem to confer academic advantages.

Possibly, therefore, the creation of larger schools and districts helps the rich get richer and the poor to get poorer, and that growing separation of rich and poor is in fact a well documented phenomenon in recent U.S. history. More shockingly, very few ($n = 4$) actual studies of cost-savings from closures (a major claim of administrators seeking to close schools) have been undertaken by school administration researchers in 100 years of consolidation efforts. None that I know of has appeared in peer-reviewed journals.

These trends led an official task force in one state (Louisiana) to conclude, unusually and courageously, that 30 years of school administration research about school and district size had been *biased* (Louisiana Department of Education, 2003). This bias, in fact, favored the outlook of the power elite and the conventional wisdom of the field. I would argue that this situation is not unusual but pertains much more widely to education research than is thought to be the case. Predictably, ordinary poor people and communities are the losers.

Given this prevalent structuring of bias, where does the necessary fund of doubt and critical outlook arise that will facilitate objectivity? Happily, the first suggested alternative—viewing matters from the perspective of ordinary people—is an alternative full of opportunities to doubt. This outlook harbors opportunities to practice the sort of skepticism that makes research worth doing and that develops findings worth knowing and using. Why take this outlook? Education, one might observe—especially education in the guise of public schooling—ought to be on the side of ordinary people.

But there are, of course, many other opportunities. Each time leaders in the field of schooling or the makers of education policy announce a certainty, there is reason for researchers to exercise doubt on behalf of the common good. Neither education nor the mere running of schools rests on any certainty. What one confronts instead are approximate, and very changeable, probabilities or odds. Pronouncements that *everyone* shall adhere to the 101 provisions of policy 94.109 require a strong dose of objectivity. This is an extremely valuable public service that education researchers can supply.

To facilitate one's own doubting one can keep a permanent list of locally important issues that have received little or no attention from education research, but which are treated professionally as if no such research is needed (the supposed savings from closing schools is a good example). It is, however, difficult work to perceive these issues in the first place, let alone study them, because conventional wisdom is by definition blind to them, biased against studying them. Worse, we are all subject to, trained in, and encouraged to sustain conventional wisdom. Colleges of education give courses that accomplish this end. We teach those very courses. In attempting to see our way to this sort of research, we are struggling with our own blindness.

Nonetheless, I once kept such a list (pertinent, of course, to the U.S. circumstance): the dilemmas of rural school busing, the configuration of grades in a school, the teaching of math in particular contexts, the cost-savings of school closures, the character of the rhetoric used in school reform policies, the conflict of constructivist pedagogies and 'classical' management models for accountability, the strange lack of descriptions of "schools that *don't* work," and so forth. In Turkey, and everywhere, interesting issues lurk just behind the silence of whatever conventional wisdom prevails locally.

So the particular alternative suggested here is to problematize the very thing that seems most obvious, most taken-for-granted, or most out-of-bounds to one's colleagues, but especially to the power-elite as represented in the conventional wisdom of school administration—and in the usual procedures of the academic relations of school administration.

Keep education rather than schooling in view. Education is the big picture; schooling is supposed to supply *education*, but it can't. The reason schooling cannot simply "provide" education is that school-based education requires, as David Cohen (1988) suggested, the cooperation of students in schools—and this is often difficult to secure, for a variety of reasons having to do with the ordinary lives of ordinary people. Impoverished students in the West, for instance, often seem to understand whose interests schools serve (i.e., the power elite, the education profession itself), and they withhold cooperation. Cohen's observation, however, highlights a truth important to all human beings: each human is inalienably in charge of his own education. Prisoners have written about the strange freedom they can struggle to maintain within themselves while held captive. And schools too often—and increasingly—resemble prisons, confining people rather than helping them to free themselves.

Craig B. Howley

For education researchers, keeping *education* in view means remaining skeptical about the institution of schooling as it deals with the mission of education. And this outlook enables skepticism of Western trendiness in school practice and research, facilitates adherence to the critical project of research per se (rather than evaluation, engineering, or journalism), and it arguably obliges researchers to take the standpoint of ordinary people.

The Problem of the Education Baby and the Bad Bath Water²

The faultiness of Western approaches to education research do not in my estimation lie with the project of research founded on the ideals of doubt and objectivity. Some postmodern critics think otherwise, and they would not merely disown bad research, but the whole project of research (for instance, as a hegemonic Grand Narrative). It's possible they are right, but I doubt it.

Education research, it is also said, is all *application* and no *base*. Western analysts and researchers too often presume that, because a field is an "applied science," it must be conceived to accomplish or facilitate a particular action. For instance, naïve doctoral students (reflecting conventional wisdom) want to ask such questions as, "How can we raise achievement in mathematics?" as if *that* were a research question. It's not research, it's action, and posing such questions corrupts both action and research.

The political theorist Hannah Arendt (1959) pointedly reminds us that action is not a thing, not a product, and unlike a study, action never reaches any conclusions but feeds ceaselessly and unpredictably back into more action. Studies—*research* studies for instance—do reach conclusions with respect to their findings but also with respect to their reality as cultural objects. Studies end, reports are created, the researchers move on. The studies abide, unchanged forever (in most cases). This characteristic reminds us that research belongs to the realm of contemplation, even in an applied realm like education. Furthermore, if we cannot have contemplation, we cannot have education. So we had better have research that is sufficiently skeptical, critical, and informed by wide reading—and not narrowed to the point of powerlessness. *Lacking good research, it's all just schooling.*

² A familiar adage in English advises humans "not to throw out the baby with the bath water."

Batılı Eğitim Araştırmalarının Gözden Düşüşü ve Okullaşma Konusundaki Yanlış Düşüncelerle Piyasa Arasındaki Talihsiz Denge

Craig B. Howley

Batı'da eğitim araştırmalarının başarısızlığından okul yönetimi alanındaki araştırmaların sorumlu olduğu tartışılabilir. Bu iddia başarısızlık ve sorumluluk yönüyle ciddi bir iddia olarak gözükmektedir. Fakat bu iddia çok basit bir gerçeğe dayanmaktadır. Okul yönetimi alanı eğitim sistemleri için tasarımlar oluşturmuş ve Batı bu tasarımları okul yöneticilerinin ve okul yönetimi araştırmacılarının işbirliği ile ortaya konulan modelleri dünya çapında ihraç etmiştir. İhraç edilen şeyin önemli bir ögesi okullara ilişkin düşünme biçimidir. Bu bağlamda sorumluluk ve dolayısıyla başarısızlık çok açık. Bu nedenle, dominant Batı'lı eğitim araştırmalarının yanında başka biçimlerin ve amaçların oluşturulması gerekmektedir ve Batı'lı olmayan eğitim araştırmacıları bu işi yapmak için iyi bir konuma sahiptir.

Raymond Callahan (1962) gibi eleştirel gözlemcilere göre, işletme ilkelerine dayalı okul yönetimi araştırmalarının alana zayıf bir katkı sağlamış olması hiç de şaşırtıcı değildir. İşletme gibi yönetilen ve işletilen okullar mantıksal olarak kamusal amaçları gerçekleştirmeye değil özel işletmelerin amaçlarını gerçekleştirmeye göre kendilerini konumlandırmaktadır. Callahan "Eğitim ve Verimlilik Tabusu" adlı klasik tarih eserini yazdığında, okullaşmanın özelleştirilmesi ve küreselleştirilmesinin maskesini indirmeyi ümit etmiş olabilir. Küreselleşme ve özelleştirme birbirinden farklı şeyler değil ve küreselleşme, kamu okullaşma alanı dahil olmak üzere, mümkün olduğunca daha çok alanının uluslar arası şirketler tarafından özelleştirilmesi anlamına gelmektedir (Spring, 1998).

Geniş bir coğrafyada tek bir dilin konuşulduğu ve tek kültürel bakış açısının oluşturulduğu "ulus devlet" idealinin doğuşuyla birlikte (1790'lı yıllar), eğitimin aristokratlar için olmaktan çıkarılıp sıradan insanların yurttaş olarak yetiştirilmesine yönelik başlamıştır. Ancak, çoğu yerde bu idealin gerçekleşemediği ve bu idealin uluslar arası ticaret rejimleri, politikalar, koloni dönemi ve koloni dönemi sonrası savaşlar, ve nihayet küreselleşme aracılığıyla küçük coğrafi alanlarda ve yüzlerce dilin ve

kültürün olduğu yerlerde uygulanması ile Batı'nın kendi yarattığı idealin taklitlerini uyguladığı görülmektedir. Bu uygulama her zaman işletmecilik ve ticaret adına yapılmış ve Singapur gibi bir şehir devleti dahi uluslar arası çalışmalarda bir ulus devlet olarak adlandırılmıştır. Oysa, ulus devlet ideali ile birlikte, ulus devletin aristokrat sınıf dışında kalan “sıradan yurttaşların” kendi kendini yönetebilme kapasitesi üzerine kurulması ve bunu sağlayacak aracın da okullarda verilecek uygun bir eğitim olacağı öngörülmüştü.

Ancak, ondokuzuncu ve yirminci yüzyıllardaki uygulamalar, okulların giderek “sıradan yurttaşı” dikkate bile almayan ve sadece rejimin amaçlarını göz önünde bulunduran özelliklere uygun olarak kurulduğunu göstermektedir. Okullara yönelik bu eleştiri yapılmakla birlikte, bu eleştirilerde “sıradan yurttaşların” amaçlarını da göz önünde bulunduran, öğrencilerin kendilerini de düşünmelerini sağlayan pek çok okulun da varlığını kabul etmektedir. Diğer taraftan, bu iyi okulların büyük bir kısmının elitlere hizmet ettiği de bir gerçektir. Bu durumda şüphesiz ki, devleti halk yönetmemektedir ve bu özellikle de yüksek sesle kendini evrenin demokratik modeli olarak gösteren Amerikan devleti için geçerli bir durumdur. Dünya bu aşırı milliyetçi tutuma aldanmamakla birlikte, küreselleşme hegemonyası altında genel olarak Batı'da bu yönde bir tutum görülmektedir. Bu ortamda en rahatsız edici gerçek, ortaya çıkan küresel rejimler üzerinde halkın kontrolünün son derece az olmasıdır. Hatta küreselleşmeyi eleştirenlerin çoğunluğu devletin varlığını meşrulaştıran bireysel aktörlerin, yani yurttaşın artık sonunun geldiğini öne sürmektedir. Yeni dünya düzeninin yurttaşları bireysel aktörler olarak “sıradan insanlar” değil, çok uluslu şirketlerdir (Bauman, 1997; Sassen, 1996). Bu yeni yurttaşların da “ulus devlet”e ihtiyaçları yoktur. Bu şirketlerin rekabet eden bireysel yurttaşlara tolerans göstermesi dahi söz konusu olamaz. Çok uluslu şirketlerin işyerinde zeki ve sadık çalışanlara, evde ise işletmelerin ayrıcalıklarına karışmayan ve kesinlikle yerel, ulusal ve küresel politikaları, ekonomileri, etikleri ve estetikleri eleştirmeyen açgözlü ve tembел müşterilere ihtiyacı var. Yeni dünya yurttaşları (çok uluslu şirketler) istediklerini elde etmekte ve şüphesiz ki Batı'da ve Batı'dan bu mantığın ihraç edildiği dünyada okullar onların istediklerini elde etmelerine yardımcı olmaktadır.

Adams, Mills, Callahan, Bauman, and Sassen (ve diğerleri) okuyucularına ne olup bittiğini göstermeye çalışmaktadır. Onların çalışmaları küreselleşmeyi doğru bir perspektif içine yerleştirmeye yardımcı olmaktadır. Küresel rejimin hayal ettiği okullaşmada, cömertlik, düşünme ve dayanışma yerine hırs, teknik problem çözme ve rekabetçi bireyselliği ön plana çıkarmaktadır. Okuyucuların bu iddiaların doğruluğundan şüphesi

varsa, devletin çeşitli eğitim kurumlarının web sitelerine bakarak bunların doğruluğunu görmeleri mümkündür. Elbette arada bir kamu yararı ve toplumdaki söz edilmektedir. Fakat uygulama da kamu ve toplum adına fazla bir şey olduğu da söylenemez.

Batı'da Eğitim Araştırmaları

Eğitim araştırmaları genellikle çok fazla değer verilmeyen araştırmalar olarak görülmektedir. Araştırmacılar çoğu zaman bu saygınlığı artırmak için Batı akademik dünyasında işlerin yürüyüş biçimine uygun davranmayı tercih etmektedir. Bu saygınlığın göstergelerinden en önemlisi araştırma için sağlanan kaynağın miktarıdır. Bu nedenle, küresel rejim ne araştırılacağı ve nasıl araştırılacağını da yönlendirerek araştırma fonları sağlamaktadır. Dışarıdan araştırma fonları ve burslar sağlanması üniversitelerin özelleştirilmesinde önemli bir rol oynamaktadır. Böylece araştırmacıların küresel rejim tarafından önemli görülen konulara odaklanması sağlanmaktadır. Bu fonlarla desteklenen araştırmalarda araştırmacılar çok nadiren sisteme yönelik bir eleştiri getirebilir. Bu fonlar araştırmanın niteliğini yükseltmekten çok saygınlığını artırmak için kullanılmaktadır. Oysa, çok daha az kaynakla ve hatta bu kaynaklar hiç olmadan da çok iyi araştırmalar yapılabilir.

Amerika Birleşik Devletlerinde, eğitim araştırmalarında random kontrollü deneysel çalışmaların gerçek bilgiye ulaşmanın tek doğru yolu olarak görülmesi doğru bir yaklaşım olamaz ve olsa olsa bir bilimsel miyopluk örneğidir. Bu deneysel çalışmalar gerekli olabilir, ama bir deneysel çalışma ancak bütünle birlikte değerlendirildiğinde bir anlam ifade eder. Bir eğitim fakültesinde öğretim üyesi olmak her yerde ayrıcalıktır. Ancak, bu ayrıcalığı kullanmak çoğu zaman yeni yurttaşların istediği çalışmaları gerçekleştirmeye bağlıdır. Oysa, öğretim üyelerinin bunun tam tersine özelleştirme ve küreselleşme rejimine eleştiren ve kamunun yararını ve halkın çıkarlarını gözeten çalışmalar yapmaları gerekir.

Yeni dünya yurttaşları Batı'nın okullaşma modellerinin bütün dünyada uyarlanmasından ve okulların teknokratik araştırmaların sonuçlarına göre yönetilmesinden memnuniyet duymaktadır. Eleştirmeyen eğitim araştırmaları steril araştırmalar olarak görülmektedir. Bu nedenle, elitler araştırmaların daha az eleştirel olmasına ihtiyaç duymaktadır. Küreselleşme yerel düzeyde makul bir yaşam tanımamaktadır. "Dünya standartların" ifadesi karşımıza o kadar sıklıkla çıkmaktadır ki, dünyadaki her okul ve eğitim sisteminin Batı'da örneklendiği düşünülen en iyi ve en mükemmel ulaşması gerektiği düşünülmektedir. Oysa, yerel gerçeklikleri ve yerel

yaşamın geliştirilmesini bir tarafa bırakarak “dünyanın en iyisi”inin peşinde koşmak hiç de sağlıklı bir yaklaşım değildir. Çünkü insanlar farklı yerlerde ve koşullarda yaşamaktadır ve bu koşullar çoğu zaman başka yerlerle ve koşullarla uyumlu değildir. Bu nedenle, eğitimin ve eğitim araştırmalarının yerel ve ulusal koşullara uygun bir biçimde gerçekleştirilmesi gerekir.

Alternatifler

Eğer Batı’lı eğitim modelleri ve araştırmaları kendilerinin iddia ettikleri gibi kamunun ve “sıradan insanların” yararını gözetmiyorsa, eğitim araştırmaları için alternatifler nelerdir? Yüzyıllar boyunca kolonileşme ve emperyalizm Batı’lı modelleri o kadar yaygınlaştırmıştır ki, bu sorunun tekrar tekrar sorulması gerekir. Piyasa ile okul arasındaki talihsiz denge konusunda önereceğimiz alternatifler şunlardır: (1) Okulaşmaya gücü elinde tutan elitler ve okul çalışanları açısından değil, sokaktaki insanların bakış açısından yaklaşmak; (2) Araştırma sonuçları üzerinde düşünüp tartışirken eğitimin asli amacını tanımlamada başka eylem ve yazarlardan yararlanma; (3) Araştırmalarda yerel yöntemler geliştirmek ve Batılı yöntemleri sorunsal hale getirmek; (4) Okul hakkında düşünürken, dikkati eğitimin asli görevine yoğunlaştırmaktır.

Eğitim araştırmaları şüphe ve objektiflik üzerine kurgulanmamaktadır. Eğitim araştırmaları araştırma olarak değil uygulama olarak görülmektedir ki, çoğu zaman bu uygulama bir araştırma tabanından yoksundur. Araştırmanın mutlaka bir uygulamayı desteklemesi gibi acemice bir yaklaşım sergilenmektedir. Örneğin, doktora öğrencileri “matematik başarısını nasıl artırabiliriz?” gibi sorular sormaktadır. Bu araştırma değil, eylemdir ve bu tür sorular hem araştırmacının hem de eylemin yozlaşmasına neden olmaktadır.

Bu makale, Batı’lı eğitim araştırmalarının, -kitle eğitimi amaçlarını geliştirme konusundaki araştırma,- sonuçlarını eğitim sistemleriyle bütünleştirme ve paylaşmada büyük ölçüde yetersiz kaldığını göstermiştir. Böylece, diğer kültürler de Batı’lı araştırmalardan yola çıkarak firmalar aracılığıyla kendi yerel kültürlerini firma amaçlarına hizmet etme yolunda dönüştürmeye çalışmaktadır. Okul hakkındaki bu yanlış düşünceler sorgulanmaksızın piyasada da rağbet görmekte, küreselleşme aracılığıyla diğer milletlerin de sosyal yapısını bozmaktadır.

References

- Adams, H. (1918). *The education of Henry Adams* (1931 ed.). New York: Random House (Retrieved May 31, 2006, from <http://www.bartleby.com/159/5.html>)
- Arendt, H. (1959). *The Human Condition*. Chicago: University of Chicago Press.
- Bauman, Z. (1998). *Globalization: The human consequences*. New York: Columbia University Press.
- Callahan, R. (1962). *Education and the cult of efficiency*. Chicago: University of Chicago Press.
- Cohen, D. (1988). *Teaching Practice: Plus ça Change*. East Lansing, MI: National Center for Research on Teacher Education. (ERIC Document Reproduction Service No. ED 299257)
- Cremin, L. A. (1980). *American education, the national experience, 1783-1876*. New York: Harper and Row.
- Foster, W. P. (2004). The decline of the local. *Educational Administration Quarterly*, 40(2), 176-191.
- Giroux, H. A. (2000). *Stealing innocence: Youth, corporate power, and the politics of culture*. New York: St. Martin's Press.
- Hobsbawm, E. (1992). *Nations and nationalism since 1780: Programme, myth, reality* (2nd ed.). New York: Cambridge University Press.
- Howley, A., & Howley, C. (2006). *Thinking about school administration: New theories and innovative practice*. Mahwah, NJ: Lawrence Erlbaum Associates.
- Howley, C., & Howley, A. (2004). School Size and the Influence of Socioeconomic Status on Student Achievement: Confronting the Threat of Size Bias in National Data Sets. *Education Policy Analysis Archives*, 12(52). Retrieved June 7, 2006, from <http://epaa.asu.edu/epaa/v12n52/>)
- Louisiana Department of Education. (2003). *Small school districts and economies of scale*. Baton Rouge, LA: Author. (Retrieved June 2, 2006, from <http://www.doe.state.la.us/lde/uploads/3475.pdf>)
- Mills, C. W. (1956). *The power elite*. New York: Oxford University Press. (Retrieved May 31, 2006, from http://www.thirdworldtraveler.com/Book_Excerpts/HigherCircles_PE.html)

Craig B. Howley

- Phillips, D. C. (2006). Muddying the waters: The many purposes of educational inquiry. In C. F. Conrad & R. Serlin, C. (Eds.), *The Sage handbook for research in education: Engaging ideas and enriching inquiry* (pp. 7-22). Thousand Oaks, CA: Sage Publications.
- Prakash, M. S., & Stuchul, D. (2004). McEducation marginalized: Multiverse of learning-living in grassroots commons. *Educational Studies*, 36(1), 58-73.
- Sassen, S. (1996). *Losing control? Sovereignty in an age of globalization*. New York: Columbia University Press.
- Schoenfeld, A. H. (2006). What doesn't work: The challenge and failure of the What Works Clearinghouse to conduct Meaningful reviews of studies of mathematics curricula. *Educational Researcher*, 35(2), 13-21. (Retrieved June 11, 2006, from http://www.era.net/uploadedFiles/Publications/Journals/Educational_Researcher/3502/2003ERv2035n2002_Schoenfeld.pdf)
- Scott, J. (1998). *Seeing like a state: How certain schemes to improve the human condition have failed*. New Haven: Yale University Press.
- Scriven, M. (1999). *The nature of evaluation: Part I, relation to psychology*. Washington, DC: ERIC Clearinghouse on Evaluation and Assessment (ERIC Document Service Reproduction Service No. ED435710; Retrieved Jun 7, 2006, from http://eric.ed.gov/ERICDocs/data/ericdocs2/content_storage_01/0000000b/80/2a/2f/33.pdf)
- Spring, J. (1998). *Education and the rise of the global economy*. Mahwah, NJ: Lawrence Erlbaum Associates.
- Wilde, O. (1992). The soul of man under socialism In J. Bristow (Ed.), *The importance of being earnest and related writings* (pp. 164-196). London: Routledge. (Original work published 1891; Retrieved June 7, 2006, from <http://praxeology.net/OW-SMS.htm>)
- Wills, G. (2003). *The negro president: Jefferson and the slave power*. Boston: Houghton Mifflin.
- Williams, R. (1973). *The country and the city*. New York: Oxford University Press.

İletişim/Address:

Craig B. Howley
Ohio University Athens, Ohio
United States howleyc@ohio.edu