Changing Relations between Education Professionals, the State and Citizen Consumers in Europe

Introduction
This article focuses on a broad cross section of research about welfare State restructuring in education and its implications for the teaching profession (e.g. Woods et al., 1997; Dale, 1997; Beck & Young, 2005; Edwards & Usher, 2002; Robertson et al, 2002; Dovemark, 2004; Mahony & Hextall, 2000; Jones, 2005; Bernstein, 2000; Lundahl, 2002a,b; Sundberg, 2003; Roussakis, 1995; Petronikolos, 2003; Moutsios, 2003; Moss, 2004; Grollios, 1999; Zambeta, 2002; Kazamias et al, 2002; Antikeinen, 2006; Rosskam, 2006; Sikes, 2006; Cribb & Gerwitz, 2007). Suggestions and disclosures in three recently produced work package documents from a cross-European project termed ‘Profknow’ are considered in particular: Professional Knowledge - Restructuring work and life between state and citizens in Europe (Author, 2005: Ed; Goodson & Norrie, 2005: Eds; Müller, et al, 2007: Eds). These work packages focus on descriptions of structural changes in the organisation of teaching and nursing since the 1960’s in seven European countries (England, Finland, Greece, Ireland, Portugal, Spain, Sweden), with special attention paid to the recruitment, competence, authority, positions and working experiences of teachers and nurses respectively, and their characteristic structures of professional education and training. Concepts of professional competence and possible relations between the restructuring of education and health and the practices of professional education and training for these professions have also been given attention. In the article teaching and teacher education are in focus not nursing.

Several things are described and discussed in the works mentioned above. However, amongst the most important for teachers and their professional work, self-concepts, needs and working conditions currently, are pan-European developments in the social relations of production in education over the past twenty to thirty years with respect to firstly the socialisation and then the habituation and commercialisation of education labour; particularly that carried out in ancillary dimensions; e.g. school dinners, cleaning, material supply and production, data-support, network support. These developments represent probably the key anthropological junctures within the education sector with strong consequences for the lives and careers of teachers, which are not always lived happily at the present time. For instance, as Müller et al. have reported, literally all teachers speak extensively about the difficulties they face, for which they feel they are ill-prepared by their education, and they are becoming increasingly distressed with an experienced loss of prestige and respect for their profession. Loss of class barriers, a consumerist attitude towards education and public blaming of teachers (in mass media) for the failures of the younger generation all contribute to low moral and a sense of status-loss. These issues have also been considered by other researchers (see e.g. Dale, 1997; Edwards & Usher, 2002; Robertson et al, 2002; Dovemark, 2004; Mahony & Hextall, 2000; Jones, 2005; Bernstein, 2000; Lundahl, 2002a,b; Sundberg, 2003; Roussakis, 1995; Petronikolos, 2003; Moutsios, 2003; Grollios, 1999; Zambeta, 2002; Kazamias et al, 2002; Rosskam, 2006).

The question of in whose interests the current changes in education supply are currently working is an important one (also Author, 2004, 2006). Because, as most research also conclusively suggests, although the current processes of change are presented from the right and centre of the European political and economic playing field as a natural solution to
recent crises in the public sector, there are some good reasons to question this position (Author, 2005a, b; Goodson & Norrie, 2005: Eds, Müller et al., 2007: Eds). One of these reasons is that the purported crisis in education is far from natural. It is cultural, economic and political not natural (Hill, 2006). And a second is that an examination of developments in education in countries where privatisation and corporate involvement have become commonplace; such as the USA, Australia, New Zealand and the UK; indicates that the more the private sector becomes involved in delivering education services, the worse the general level of (particularly comprehensive) education becomes in terms of broad availability and class differences in the use of education services by citizens (Author, 2004, 2005a)\(^2\), where what is pointed out is a suggested lowering of general standards of public education and increasing class differences in the amount and quality of education consumed by citizens.

All recent empirical sociological and socio-economic education policy research on education restructuring as a global phenomenon testifies clearly to the transformation of services with the help of government reforms and other interventions in these senses (see also e.g. Roussakis, 1995; Lawn, 1996; Woods et al, 1997; Woods & Jeffrey, 2002; Lundahl, 2002a,b; Mahony & Hextall, 2000; Petronikolos, 2003; Moutsios, 2003; Grollios, 1999; Zambeta, 2002; Kazamias et al, 2002; Edwards & Usher, 2002; Robertson et al, 2002; Woods, et al, 2007; Sikes, 2006; Beck & Young, 2005; Author 2005: Ed; Müller et al, 2007: Eds). Sometimes this has occurred from national contexts with low levels of de-commoditised general service provision in Mediterranean versions of the ESM described by Diamond (2006), such as Greece, Spain and Portugal (Author, 2005: Ed). In others it has occurred in the context of a mature welfare State with fairly high preceding levels of de-commoditisation, such as in the Nordic Model (Diamond, op cit; Author et al, 2003) in countries like Finland and Sweden (also Antikainen, 2006; Foss et al, 2005). But this doesn’t really seem to matter all that much. Outcomes have still tended to be similar! Where rather than contributing to the development of a comprehensive system of supply and professional development in relation to this supply, neo-liberal restructuring is leading to the creation of apparatuses through which education is objectified for economic accumulation by corporations and corporate stock holders at the expense of, and off the backs of, others (Hill, 2006). These issues are perhaps seen most clearly in the UK, but they are also suggested by research from Greece, Ireland, Portugal, Sweden and Spain as being equally apparent there. They imply that the neo-liberal restructuring of education is resulting in the creation of economically exploitable and objectified practices, workers and knowledge in an alienated service society through an outsourcing of functions that were formerly carried out within first domestic and voluntary and then State arrangements to capitalist enterprises as part of a successive privatisation of education services for processes of capitalisation (Mentor, et al, 2004; Mahony & Hextall, 2000; Lawn, 1996; Author, 2004, 2005a, b, 2006; Hill, 2006).

This is a very different set of descriptions of the formal aims of restructuring to those expressed in national and international policy texts. These policies describe extended professionalism, increased flexibility, autonomy and responsibility and greater degrees of professional freedom as the aims and anticipated outcomes of restructuring. But the expected outcomes are significantly absent in the research discussed in this article and the research some of that research is quoting. More consistently reported there has been how a discourse of extended professionalism with its plastic concepts of freedom and autonomy has worked as a kind of bait in the form of a rationally communicated ideology that uses these specific

\(^2\) Put bluntly, whilst changes are often said to be the common interest, as Harris (1994) has described things, restructuring and commercialisation have had negative consequences for job satisfaction, including a loss of autonomy, worsening of work conditions, destruction of health, increased anxiety and depression, lowering of morale and, despite a continued proliferation of policy rhetoric to the contrary, subjugation to increasing external controls through the development of a market-capitalist ideology and (perhaps above all) its profitability interest.
boundary objects to help accrue general support from both professional and consumer groups (Wass, 2004 and Author & Carlson, 2004; McMurty, 1998; Sennet, 1998; Willis, 1999, 2000; Author, 2005: Ed; Cribb & Gerwitz, 2007). In this process the plastic boundary objects of professionalism and autonomy are used in two ways. Firstly to encourage broad support for otherwise aggressive managerial polices and secondly to displace discourses highlighting the negative impact of commercialisation and managerial modes of regulation on the nature of education labour in Europe’s schools. This redefinition is part of the processes of habituation: an infusion of the fundamental ideas of a market economy into professional discourses and fields through the introduction of the ‘new-speak of voluntarism in which there is an idealisation of the concept of free transactions and the notion that education is best left unregulated by anything but self-interest with regard to education choices.

The use of boundary objects to help generate a bandwagon of support through an habituating discourse of education prepares for a second level of habituation, which involves material economic decisions regarding the transfer of goods and services from local authorities to independent private and quasi-private units. This level is about the infusion of the practices and doctrines of corporatism in education supply, not just its languages. Habituation thus leads first toward a familiarity, through language use and concepts, and then an acceptance (sometimes harshly enforced) of business ideas through the material practices of a ‘businessification’ of conditions of labour (Author, 2004, 2005: Ed), which together may risk leaving naked self-interest and callous cash payment in the icy water of egotistical calculation over private return and exchange values as the only formal common basis for educational culture (Troman, 2000; Dovemark, 2004).

Cribb and Gerwitz (2007) have commented on these kinds of issues recently. In their work they cite Moss’s (2004) findings about things like league table pressures in primary schools, which it was suggested had demanded a restructuring of the objectives, pace and content of teacher work that had induced deep levels of exhaustion (also Troman, 2000). They added a comment on higher education too, pointing out that Sikes’ (2006) review of the literature on increased state control of academic work, pointed to problems related to conflict, contestation, intensification, work overload, and widespread unhappiness. Sikes cited Beck & Young’s (2005) depiction of HE as a field of practice that is now characterised by alienation and anomie, crisis and loss, as a place where cherished identities and commitments have been undermined in what has been experienced as an assault on professionalism.

The discourses of the Bologna process form a recent example of the two levels of habituation in education in Europe at the present time, but this process has for instance also been described in relation to adult education in Sweden (Wass, 2004; Author, 2004; Author & Carlson, 2004; Fejes, 2006) as well as in relation to teaching and its respective education programmes in England, Ireland, Spain, Greece and Portugal (Author, 2005: Ed; Müller et al, 2007: Eds). As Foss et al (2005) put it, we are not only talking very differently about services today in most countries than we were twenty years ago, we are also talking much more similarly, through the pervasion of a new global education service paradigm that the habituation processes named above have helped bring about. A particular kind of economic rationality (of market capitalism) has become a common fundamental factor and alternative points of view have become suppressed and almost unthinkable.

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3 According to Cribb and Gerwitz (2007), McBeath’s (2005) 40-school study on the role of school leadership in supporting innovative pedagogies paints an equally depressing picture of alienation, where schools take up the same or similar combinations of brain-based theories of learning and multiple intelligences in relatively uncritical ways and rush through the curriculum to meet targets and performance levels in standard three or four part lesson ‘delivery’ formats and teacher-centred methods.
Examples of silenced discourses are ones that express how the habituating discourse and its associated social practices actively support the privatisation of public services in ways that promote direct corporate involvement in service production and delivery in the name of profit and enable these organisations to stealthily enter the public education sector, and how, because of this, the specific ‘locally (re)turned’, local-turned-global form of neo-liberalism doesn’t act equally well in everyone’s best interests, but primarily reconstructs the world in line with the preconceived material interests of capitalist entrepreneurs and shareholders, by promoting the creation and exploitation of commoditised social labour in the education sector (McMurtry, 1998; Harvey, 2003). Also suppressed are discourses about how the successive business takeover of education leads professional fields to begin to metamorphose into units of capital with a concomitant alienation of the people within them.

These points all concern the component substances of a counter discourse about the social universe of capital as something that is maintained and expands through processes that turn all other recognised phenomena into economic forms that, through the generation and exploitation of conditions for surplus-value production, allow for enhanced levels of individual economic accumulation from the labour and consumption of others by super capitalists. In the case of schools and universities, these capitalisation processes are also taking place in specific ways, through public-private partnerships and forms of private and quasi private sponsorship. Habituation thus involves in sum three things. First getting professionals, bureaucrats and consumers (e.g. teachers, pupils, parents and managers), through the media and direct communication, used to talking business language, then encouraging or forcing them to comply to business methods, and then, finally, making them work with businesses and/or business agencies as a forerunner to increasing levels of the invasion of working life for profit by private organisations (Hill, 2006). In education habituation is thus an aspect of a colonisation by capital in the interests of capital.

Rethinking restructuring as the capitalisation of services

Current global neo-liberalism in education in Western Europe is possible to characterise in relation to two main denominators and a common technology according to the discussions thus far in the present article (see also Mentor, et al, 2004; Mahony & Hextall, 2000; Lawn, 1996; Wass, 2004; Author, 2004; Roussakis, 1995; Woods et al, 1997; Woods & Jeffrey, 2002; Lundahl, 2002a,b; Petronikolos, 2003; Moutsios, 2003; Grollios, 1999; Zambeta, 2002; Kazamias et al, 2002; Jessop, 2000; Edwards & Usher, 2002; Robertson et al, 2002; Jones, 2005; Müller, et al, 2007: Eds). These denominators are (i) the use of a monetarist language and policy to stimulate the economy ‘individually’ and (ii) the talk and practice of successive waves of privatisation of State-owned industries to ‘shrink’ and weaken State involvement as a deliverer in the new markets. The common technology involves manipulating money supply in line with these denominators. This is needed and provided as a motor of development by lowering taxation to stimulate individual economic transactions in the interests of the private purchasing of goods and services and is common in education in Europe today, where it is also combined with a strong political opposition; usually directly culled or coerced by business representatives; to anything antithetical to individuation and privatisation such as trade (and student) unions and any expansion of State expenditure in the welfare State and local government in common interests (McMurtry, 1998; Harvey, 2003; Hill, 2006).

All current forms for restructuring public education noted in critical research in Europe express the above characteristics in clearly stated ways (Edwards & Usher, 2002; Robertson et al, 2002; Dovemark, 2004; Mahony & Hextall, 2000; Jones, 2005; Bernstein, 2000; Lundahl, 2002a,b; Sundberg, 2003; Roussakis, 1995; Petronikolos, 2003; Moutsios, 2003; Grollios, 1999; Zambeta, 2002; Kazamias et al, 2002; Author, 2005: Ed). Sometimes all of them are expressed (as in Greece, Portugal, Spain and the UK), sometimes some of them in
combination, sometimes more in relation to ‘discoursing service supply’ (as in Finland and Sweden), sometimes in terms (also) of practical organisation, as in the most recent education (specifically) and welfare (generally) reforms reported in Spain, Greece, Portugal and the UK and expressed also in the Lisbon Declaration. So in this sense it seems clear therefore that in its present form (empirically as well as theoretically), although it is expressed as something that has been developed in general interests, the neo-liberal restructuring of education is and aspect of ‘new capitalism’ in education (Gee, et al, 1996; Author, 2005: Ed, 2006) that is ‘driven’ primarily in the interests of creating new sites for processes of economic accumulation following some important transitions in the economic base of capitalism in recent years. Understanding these transitions helps make the capitalisation of the service economy not only realistic, but also obviously logical within the ‘evolution’ of a post-modern, post-industrial block in (particularly Western) Europe, where the need capitalism has of finding new sources of investment in these ‘advanced’ economic regions is paramount, now that conventional sources of production have been transferred.

The neo-liberal restructuring of the service sector is connectable here to the collapse of the Bretton Woods agreement and the boom in commodity prices which followed, as it is at exactly this point that the dominant capitalist powers began to turn from being net exporters of capital and producers of goods towards importing capital for State investment, and it is here that national corporations began relocating manufacturing to countries and regions offering cheap labour (through low salaries or other benefits), forcing in this way conventional production increasingly into low GDP countries, and thus developing a global division of labour between mental and manual labour on an international scale. New sources of accumulation of capital in advanced economies had to be sought (Thorpe & Brady, 2003) and as McMurty (1998), Harvey (2003) and Jessop (2000) note, these sources are the speculation, information, knowledge and service economies (also Hill, 2006). So it is perhaps conceptually more than anywhere else here, that the current restructuring processes may also perhaps most appropriately obtain a scientific explanation, as an example of the creation of new sites for financial accumulation when ‘national’ investments change as rates of profit fall in conventional production. The concepts of autonomy, flexibility and freedom of choice that are banded about in conjunction to restructuring thus need to be unpacked (Cribb & Gerwitz, 2007), as boundary objects that are intended to (and do) seduce consumers and professionals to believe in the common need and value of current policy (Wass, 2004; Dovemark, 2004; Author, 2005: Ed, 2006; Cribb & Gerwitz, 2007).

The development of economic interests in and through the restructuring of education services as (i) sites of the inscription and investment of capital and (ii) sites for the extraction of surplus value is sometimes masked by other activities and discourses, including those of political democratisation (as reported from both Greece, Spain, Portugal and the UK), modernisation (including also the discourses, concepts and descriptions of modernisation: as reported from Ireland, Portugal, Greece and Spain), the changing characteristics of the ‘(post-)modern’ labour market (as suggested in Sweden and Finland), the changing labour processes in Western societies and the need to ‘effectivise services’ (as again suggested in Sweden, but also the UK and Ireland). This recognition is also very important, because to be any where near fully understood, the present restructuring of education in the public service economy has to be set into this context of policy change in economic production, the transmutations of profit cycles these policies develop for and influence and the global exploitation of labour power which they then facilitate.

Various degrees of political determination and the infusion of private economic interests through State intervention, rather than extended individual control through direct market mechanisms, are thus the main characteristics of education services after neo-liberal restructuring in Europe (also Jessop, 2000; Lindblad et al, 2001; Author, 2004, Roussakis,
and in this sense maybe we could talk about services with some degree of maintained social responsibility but a reduced economic liability, at least ‘on paper’: a notion of service society perhaps (Dale, 1997). But, processes of conversion such as the ones implied also have effects that go beyond the transfer of risks and they impinge upon both professional identities and values. Because when a public service is transferred to a private (for-profit) organisation that competes for the rights to deliver services with other (potential) service deliverers on a services market, these services become privatised items with a commodity value and workers, instead of being public employees involved in providing guidance, care or education according to a professionally defined need, become alienated workers who take on the characteristics of the value form of labour of capitalist production (Beach, 2004).

This development is part of the logic of the capitalist labour process that enables surplus value to be accumulated through the capitalisation of both humanity (e.g. the emotions of care) and labour power, in situations where professional labour and its products are (materially and discursively, objectively) reconfigured as economic capital (Hill, 2006). This process is independent of human consciousness, common across Europe in respect of public service professions like teaching and can be recognised in the restructuring of professions and professional services in each and every partner country in the EU at the present time.

Changes in education services are thus not just aspects of the transformational discourses relating to and ideologically describing reformed labour practices in the European education sector. They also involve actual changes to material practices, social relations of production and the working professional identities of teachers and other workers in the education sector. Some common ‘effects’ are shown in table 1.

Table 1 in about here

Developments such as these suggest several things. They include the predominance of discourses and practices that emphasise the need and value of the (further) commoditisation of education and new ways of talking and thinking about education services (Foss et al, 2005). And they also present material effects, such as an increase in public financing of private interests in education, a transformation of education governance through the furtherance of corporate management regimes in education and the introduction of new accountability agendas and significant changes in the labour process for education workers (Hill, 2006). But what is also interesting is that the welfare States in countries like Finland and Sweden (which have, particularly concerning Sweden, developed over a long period of political control by the social democratic labour party, where an emphatic infrastructure of de-commoditised services was established), display developments and produce education services currently not dissimilar from those apparent in countries like Britain; which have had long periods of conservative office and longer periods of neo-liberalism in the service sector; and Ireland, Portugal, Spain or Greece, where neither stable ideologies of welfare nor materially established welfare State education practices ever became fully secured. Eastern Europe is also interesting. In Eastern Europe massive infrastructures of public education supply at all levels were established as part of the common-wealth of socialist nations. These are now first being medially belittled in preparation to be sold off to ‘better’ private buyers and interests, to suggest that regardless of aspects of history, the neo-liberal economic restructuring of education currently shares some fundamental elements in common and may possess a global characteristic, in which education services are increasingly mediated and then finally provided as goods that should be subject to market demands (Author, 2005a, b; Hill, 2006).
Education and training
According to the preceding sections the main characteristics of education restructuring in the present era concern a common movement across Europe toward increasing levels of commercialisation in social discourses and practices. However, this issue is also prevalent even with respect to education and training, in relation for instance to how university education (and research) is being increasingly challenged by alternative knowledge sources and organisations and how, in broader (economic) perspectives, most international research now takes place inside private organisations (as does most education), making the ‘European’ university just one among several alternative purveyors of knowledge and research competing for clients on a European education and skills market (Sikes, 2006; Beck & Young, 2005). This has led to a significant change with respect to professional learning and even status for teachers and students alike (also Author, 2005: Ed; Müller et al, 2007: Eds).

Previously there was a temporary university monopoly on professional knowledge and training to a high degree. But this monopoly is now being challenged and broken, as knowledge and training are increasingly packaged and merchandised as commodity products. This has significant consequences for professional knowledge and educators, who risk no-longer being (partially) autonomous agents working in a public interest but become part of the living flame of labour power inside ‘education-for-profit’ organisations (Beach & Young, 2005). This is clear inside universities and training agencies in Spain, Ireland, Portugal and the UK in particular, where professionals are already beginning to ‘improve’ their knowledge and skills primarily by consuming commodity knowledge packages that are chosen from a broadened market of supply as a means to improve employability rather than professional (particularly ‘soft’, critical, reflexive) capabilities (Author, 2005: Ed). Moreover, a student as consumer ideology is increasingly structuring and restructuring professional education and features such as the hiring and firing of faculty members based on conceptualised market needs, the recruitment of students for profits and the ‘production’ of quick programmes aimed at making economic gains are increasingly common (Sikes, 2006). These aspects of educational life gain legitimacy through processes like Bologna and are now all commonly reported facets of university life (Beck & Young, 2005). Consumer choice and the use of instruction and assessment for economic efficiency have begun to contribute to an erosion of the critical mission of professional education in the interests of more practical and technical training (Author, 2005: Ed).

Quite simply the new economic ideology talked about as a conditioning feature of education and care supply is being normalised on a broad scale within professional education arenas, as market principles and commercial criteria are openly invited through political decisions at the highest level to steer the organisation, delivery, monitoring, evaluation and control of education activities. As suggested earlier, Bologna is the current highlight of this with its ‘new’ capitalist competitive ideology of an education market and new steering mentalities of education as business. This mentality has been created in the USA but it is now being appropriated in Europe, as universities begin to talk about and describe, if not already openly tailor pedagogy, to meet so called market demand (Beck & Young, 2005)s. Original notions of professionalism are being transformed in these processes.

Summing up
According to the present article three processes have shaped educational restructuring in Europe in recent years. They are in line with the corporate rationales of neo-liberalism and are, firstly, the socialisation of labour, secondly processes of habituation in professional (and professional education) institutions that introduce and ‘naturalise’ business talk, business processes and business thinking inside public organisations, and thirdly, the full-scale
commercialisation of socialised labour and its ‘performance’ infrastructures on a service market. Commercialisation and habituation, which taken together can be described as the twin processes of the (re-) commodification of services, have been described as the predominant contemporary processes and have also been said to be increasing in pace and scope in recent years, with visible negative effects on the professional experiences, commitments, careers and identities of teachers (Moss, 2004; Sikes, 2006; Müller et al, 2007: Eds).

Many teachers are becoming uprooted from the service sector and have lost the possibility to exercise professional control over their work and of working with the jobs they desire in public service employment as opposed to private. They have in this sense suffered a deflation of their professional freedom and capacity as they have been forced to accept and adapt to the requirements of a new-market identity or be excluded from the work they have been (albeit increasingly instrumentally) trained for. This forced adaptation to market requirements can be described as a re-culturalisation of teachers and teaching (Author & Carlson, 2004). It suggests that whilst the current right and right centre idealism of education restructuring in Europe expresses that there is no gaping hole between market logic and good services, and that the two can be ‘run together’ for the benefit of all, the value-practices of education services actually become stifled through processes of liquidation in a conversion of public wealth to private capital (McMurtry, 1998; Harvey, 2003). What has developed is a shift in agency disfavouring previous hybrid forms of professional and bureaucratic control and favouring bureaucratic-market ones (Foss et al, 2005) in ways that are furthering the interests of market capitalists by encouraging the spread of market practices and principles ever deeper into the public domain (Author, 2005: Ed).

The creation of market solutions in public services is generally understood as signalling the victory of (neo-liberal) market capitalism over other social-economic, cultural and political formations. However, in line with Thorpe & Brady (2003) this idea can be strongly contested, and indeed expressed instead as a symptom of the decline of capitalism not its ultimate victory. As Thorpe & Brady (2003) put it, Western capitalism is currently dominated by the material interests of finance capital; an abstract and parasitic form of capital that destroys its host (also McMurtry, 1998) and that requires circuits of accumulation not cost effective practices as such in order to expand. Moreover, finance capital only needs a flexible and sufficiently fit workforce for economic exploitation not a comprehensively educated one (McMurtry, 1998) and is not interested in paying for a general, worthwhile education or health for the majority of individuals because of this (Author, 2004). This idea resonates well with the suggestions of most current research, which are that the interest of finance capital is fetishisations of education (and professional training) so they may be economised and directly profited from (Author, 2005: Ed; Rosskam, 2006: Ed) and is also in line with Harvey’s thoughts (2003) about the expropriations of public assets to the private domain and the alienation of common property and other rights that have been won through collective struggle (even McMurtry, 1998). Harvey and McMurtry also describe how national governments have been complicit in these processes.

Conclusions
The suggestions made here fit well with Marcuse’s (1964) ideas about cultural change being related to the totality of social life and of culture as a historically distinguishable unity with two dimensions: the common sense constructs and cultural categories that articulate experiences within complicated social processes and the existing modes of economic and cultural production. Marcuse used the term affirmative culture with respect to this situation. Within it education restructuring would not as yet be expected to be about the direct takeover of education by corporate enterprise, but would instead be an element of neo-liberalism that, as Hursh and Camile (2003) write, would be expected to emphasise and mobilise resources
for the privatisation of the public supply of education goods and services by working to move their provision from the public sector to the private, by deregulating how private producers behave in the education sector, by giving greater scope to the single-minded pursuit of profit, by paying less regard to the need to limit social costs for redistribution based on non-market criteria and by bringing into question all collective structures capable of obstructing the logic of the market in use in education (Hill, 2006). This is exactly what is suggested to have occurred (prolifically in discourse but also increasingly in practice as well) in Europe recently, regardless of previously dominant forms of service arrangements.

Thus whilst changes to the supply and delivery of education in different European countries may primarily be expressed by dominant national and European political constituencies as a result of emphases on an operating core value, such as the need to calculate and cut costs to save resources in a capital availability crisis or ‘modernise’ according to new international standards, within the new market context this operating value core can always easily turn from savings or modernisation to profit (Author, 2004). And whilst it will be clear then in whose interests such changes operate it may be too late to do very much about it. For this reason perhaps re-culturing is a better descriptor of the outcomes of the processes involved than is public service restructuring. As what the reconstitution of services thus consists of is an updating of aspects of the moral and legal determination of education services by the prevailing standards of market capitalism (using whatever is at hand to accomplish this) and an abdication (sometimes economically enforced) of responsibility for the plight of individuals who, nevertheless, in some intriguing way can (and often do) still come to support the system of transformation in question.

References


