Introduction

Since the mid- to late 1980s, educational policy has increasingly been incorporated around the world within the broader discourses about the changing nature of the global economy. It is argued that since the global economy is characterized as “knowledge-based,” it requires greater levels of education and training than ever before. Educational systems are asked to produce a workforce more adequately prepared to meet the challenges of globalization. At the same time, it has been suggested that economic development is not possible without policies that encourage greater participation in education, especially by those who have traditionally been marginalized. Indeed, greater access to education is considered essential for success in the knowledge economy. In this way, a new rhetoric of access and equity in education seems to be emerging, inextricably tied to the assumptions about globalization’s policy imperatives for education.

In this chapter, we want to argue that this construction of access and equity is fundamentally ideological because it assumes a minimalist understanding of the principles of social justice, is concerned only with formal access to educational institutions, and not with the broader issues of structural inequalities. Such an understanding of justice is predicted upon an overriding concern with capital accumulation. Furthermore, we want to suggest that this construction of access and equity is framed within a particular hegemonic characterization of globalization, which is not only reshaping economic and political relations around the world but is also transforming the discursive terrain within which educational policies are now developed and enacted. This terrain is informed by a range of neoliberal precepts, constituting a set of policy pressures which, increasingly, national systems of education now have to negotiate, and often embrace. These pressures emanate from a wide variety of sources, most notably intergovernmental organizations (IGOs), which now steer nation-states in various complex ways toward conceptions of educational governance and, more fundamentally, education’s basic purposes in neoliberal terms.

We begin this chapter by arguing that while it is possible to imagine a range of different interpretations of globalization, it is the neo-liberal conception that has, in recent decades, become hegemonic. We then explore the role that IGOs have played in promoting the neo-liberal conception of globalization, and steering national systems towards embracing its prescriptions for educational reform. We suggest that it is a mistake to assume that neo-liberalism is not interested in issues of justice; but argue instead that its conception is based on a very “weak” and narrow notion of justice viewed largely as access to the existing institutions of education. Its focus on increasing levels of educational participation is based on capitalism’s need for greater number of workers adequately prepared to work in the evolving knowledge economy. In this way, the idea of social justice
is enveloped by the concerns of market efficiency, most notably through a predominantly economic framing of education. While we do not, of course, wish to deny the importance of providing marginalized populations institutional access, and indeed of preparing them for the world of work, we want to argue that the struggle for education and social justice needs to address the broader issues of structural inequalities, both pre-existing and those produced by neo-liberal globalization. Within this context, we want to suggest that mere access to education defined solely in terms of market efficiency is incapable of producing social justice, which, in our view, requires a more broadly based struggle against the disastrous consequences of neo-liberal globalization and corporate capitalism.

Interpreting Globalization

The concept of globalization has been widely used in recent years to characterize the imperatives driving educational changes, even if globalization remains poorly understood and highly contested. While there is little consensus or consistency over its meaning and implications, globalization does appear to name some of the social and economic changes that are currently taking place around the world. Most of these changes are driven by recent revolutions in information and communication technologies (ICT) and the rapid transnational flows of people, capital, ideas, and information, which have resulted in a world that is more interconnected and interdependent than ever before.

Paradoxically, these global processes have themselves created some of the conditions by which the idea of globalization has seemingly become ubiquitous, used widely in both policy and popular discourses to explain the nature of recent changes. As such, globalization has become what Anthony Nóvoa (2002) calls “planet speak.” In general, it typically has been used to refer to a set of social processes that imply “inexorable integration of markets, nation-states and technologies to a degree never witnessed before—in a way that is enabling individuals, corporations and nation-states to reach round the world farther, faster, deeper and cheaper than ever before” (Friedman, 2000, p. 7). Such integration, however, is far from complete; and its nature can be understood in a variety of ways. Its impact is different from one place to another, clearly benefiting some communities more than others. While referring to a whole range of political, social, economic, and cultural processes, there are thus many different perspectives that can be used to interpret globalization. But what is beyond doubt is that these processes have transformed the nature of economic activity, changing the modes of production and consumption.

The global economy is now characterized as informational, networked, knowledge-based, postindustrial and service oriented (Castells, 2000). In his highly influential book, The Condition of Postmodernity, David Harvey (1989) provided perhaps one of the best descriptions of economic globalization. He argued that globalization describes “an intense period of time-space compression that has had a disorientating and disruptive impact on political-economic practices, the balance of class power, as well as upon cultural and social life” (p. 8). Improved systems of communication and information flows and rationalization in the techniques of distribution, he suggested, enabled capital and commodities to be moved through the global market with greater speed. The new post-Fordist organizational ideology, promoting flexibility and instantaneity, replaced the rigid structure and organization of the Fordist economy. This is expressed most explicitly in ideas of subcontracting, outsourcing, vertical disintegration, just-in-time delivery system, and the like.

Such economic globalization also has led to a new conception of governance, requiring a radically revised view of the roles and responsibilities of national governments, minimizing the need for their policy intervention, with greater reliance on the market
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(Strange, 1996). Yeatman (1998) argued that this view suggested that the old centralized bureaucratic state structures had become too slow, sclerotic, and “out of sync” with the emergent needs of transnational capital, and that new devolved forms of governance were more compatible with the demands of the global economy. Indeed, theorists began to speak of the “retreat and erosion” (Strange, 1996), “the hollowing out” (Jessop, 1999), and the “changing architecture” (Cerny, 1990) of the state. This perspective of the state and global processes was rooted in the argument that “national boundaries no longer act as ‘watertight’ containers of the production process” (Dicken, 2003, p. 9). This interpretation of the declining state dislodged one of the central tenets of the modern nation-state system—the claim to distinctive symmetry and correspondence between territory and legitimacy.

It is now clear, however, that especially in the post-September 11 era, many of the claims about the demise of the state were overstated (Rizvi, 2004). We can now see how nation-states fiercely protect their sovereignty, even if it is equally true that the exclusive link between territory and political power has been broken, as a result not only of the globalizing economies and the operations of the transnational corporations but also of the changing political configurations that have made most arenas of public policy subject to global considerations. As Held and McGrew (2003) have argued, “the state has become a fragmented policy-making arena, permeated by transnational networks (governmental and non-governmental) as well as by domestic agencies and forces” (p. 11). So, while the modern state retains some of its authority, and indeed needs to perform some key functions, such as ensuring conditions necessary for capital accumulation, it now also needs to negotiate forces beyond its control—not only of transnational capital but also of policy ideologies emanating from IGOs. This applies to educational policy as much as it does to economic policy, as educational priorities have become thoroughly implicated within the global power configurations.

We are only beginning to appreciate how the accelerating political dynamics of globalization affect educational policy development at the national level in a range of complicated ways, most notably through the circulation of a particular set of educational ideas and ideologies, resulting in global educational policy networks, which have arguably become highly influential (Rizvi & Lingard, 2006). While these networks do not dictate or prescribe policy as such, they do constitute an informational terrain that steers national systems of education in a particular ideological direction. They have been enormously successful in creating a discursive framework within which a particular conception of globalization is now promoted, and within which its implications for education are now debated. Indeed, a discourse of “globalization’s policy imperatives” appears to have become hegemonic.

In the constitution of global educational policy networks, the role of IGOs such as the Asia-Pacific Economic Cooperation (APEC), the European Union (EU), the Organization for Economic Cooperation and Development (OECD), the United Nations Educational, Scientific and Cultural Organization (UNESCO), the International Monetary Fund (IMF), and the World Bank has become highly significant (Dale & Robertson, 2002). They play an important role in the processes of educational policy formation and evaluation. This role is diverse, and may involve negotiating consensus and conventions, such as the Washington Consensus or the Bologna Declaration, to ensure coordinated policy action across national systems, or supporting international cooperation in education through the development of global indicators of performance and quality, such as Trends in International Mathematics and Science Study (TIMSS) and the Program for International Student Assessment (PISA). While the ultimate authority for policy development still remains with the national systems, participation in these international conventions
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and programs nonetheless ensures that nations are incorporated within the dominant ideological discourses that are promoted by IGOs, and circulate within the media and a global class of policy experts. These efforts lead to policy borrowing, modeling transfer, appropriation, and copying of ideas across national boundaries (Steiner-Khamsi, 2004). It is important to note, however, that the dominant ideological policy discourse promoted by IGOs does not affect every national system in the same way. While some “borrow” policies, others, developing countries, in particular, are often economically coerced into accepting its terms by IGOs that provide them with loans, grants, and aid, while others are able to resist some of their “advice.”

These developments are eloquently elaborated by Bourdieu (2003), who has suggested that globalization represents a deliberate, ideological project of economic liberalization that subjects states and individuals to more intense market forces. This project, often referred to as neoliberal, is thus based on a politics of meaning that seeks to accommodate people and nations to a certain taken-for-grantedness about the ways the global economy operates and the manner in which culture, crises, resources, and power formations are filtered through its universal logic. It thus creates a global market mentality and global subjects who in turn view the world and the policy options they have through its conceptual prism. From this perspective, the term globalization designates certain power relations, practices, and technologies, playing a “hegemonic role in organizing and decoding the meaning of the world” (Scharito & Webb, 2003, p. 1). In this way, neoliberalism is highly normative, and directs us toward a particular view of the collective consciousness of the world as a single space.

As a range of loosely connected ideas, neoliberal globalization specifies new forms of political–economic governance based on the extension of market relationships through which it suggests people and communities are becoming interconnected. In contrast to the earlier assumption that the state provision of goods and services was a way of ensuing social well-being of a national population, and as a way of forming communities, neoliberal globalization prescribes a new conception of social relations. It advocates a minimalist state, based on a “lean” government concerned to promote the instrumental values of competition, economic efficiency and choice, to deregulate and privatize state functions. As Peck and Tickell (2002) have argued, neo-liberalism promotes and normalizes a “growth-first approach” to policy, making social welfare concerns secondary (p. 394). It promotes market logics as natural, justifying them on the grounds of efficiency and even “fairness.” It also preaches the principle of global “free trade,” applying it to both goods and services, even to services such as health and education that were traditionally marked by their highly national character. Neo-liberal globalization thus represents a social imaginary that has become hegemonic (Rizvi, 2006).

**Neo-Liberal Globalization and Shifts in Educational Policy**

In recent years, educational policies have been deeply affected by this imaginary as national systems seek to realign their priorities to what they assume to be globalization’s imperatives for education. As we have already noted, neo-liberal globalization demands a system-wide understanding of the global processes, not only of shifting economic processes but also of the changing nature of politics and cultural relations. In educational terms, such a context demands a new conception of education tied more closely to economic consideration but also the development of a range of cross-cultural skills and what is referred to as “global competence.” These sentiments constitute a new discourse of education.
A part of this discourse is the concept of knowledge economy. In education, perhaps no other document has been more influential in promoting the idea of knowledge economy than the OECD’s report, *The Knowledge Based Economy* (1996a). In this report, the economic goals of education are clearly given priority over its social and cultural purposes. In the knowledge economy, it is suggested, knowing about facts and theories is less important than an understanding of the world of social relations and the networks through which knowledge is converted into innovation and commercially viable products. In a flexible and dynamic economy, knowing how to find out relevant information and how to use it commercially is considered more important than formal, codified, structured, and explicit knowledge; as is the ability to work in culturally diverse contexts and possess generic skills of communication and problem solving. The idea of lifelong learning is linked to this objective. Its focus is on the dynamics of change—the changing nature of technologies, of work and the labor market, of the global markets, and of the demographic composition of organizations.

The idea of lifelong education was a major term of reference for UNESCO in 1994, and the OECD (1996b) adopted *Making Lifelong Learning a Reality for All* as a theme of its mandate for 1997 to 2001. However, the OECD attached a different meaning to the concept of lifelong learning. It was no longer linked to a humanistic conception of education, but to a neoliberalism that stressed the creation of the individualistic, self-capitalizing individual (Rose, 1999). Increasingly, the neo-liberal construction of the purposes of lifelong learning has become more dominant. It rearticulates the goals of education, placing a greater emphasis on preparing people for the world of work and a life of self-capitalization. In most of OECD’s subsequent reports, the need to develop certain dispositions amongst all citizens toward ongoing learning across the life cycle is emphasized repeatedly. What are now required, it is suggested, are flexible, mobile, lifelong learners who are able to deal effectively with cultural diversity, endemic change, and innovation.

A similar neoliberal approach to education can also be found in documents produced by the EU, which in 2000 established a “strategic objective of becoming the most competitive and dynamic knowledge-based economy in the world.” The European Commission (2001) has established a working group of experts to create a set of common indicators and benchmarks, in a strategy that has now become known as the Open Method of Coordination (OMC). As a new framework for comparison and consolidation of particular educational performance standards, the OMC gathers the “best” national education practices to design a set of common objectives for national education systems. Based on the objectives, represented European member states then compile and agree on a set of targeted yardsticks (statistics, indicators) for reaching the set objectives. Larsson (2002) has argued, “the dynamics of this [the OMC] have significant implications for national agenda setting. By identifying and making public best practice and by issuing recommendations to individual Member States the Commission and the Council can exert considerable pressure” (p. 13). Like the EU, most IGOs often insist that they are only providing forums for open and free exploration of educational ideas, but it has now become increasingly clear that they play a major hegemonic role in promoting neoliberal ideologies.

These ideologies are largely based on human capital theory (Becker, 1964), which postulates that expenditure on training and education should be considered as an investment undertaken with a view to increasing personal incomes. In the global economy, this investment is considered essential for individuals, corporations, and nations if they wish to secure competitive advantage. In its popular form, neo-liberalism thus assumes economic growth and competitive advantage to be a direct outcome of the levels of investment in developing human capital. This is clearly evident in an OECD (1998a) report, *Human Capital Investment: An International Comparison*:
The level of skills, knowledge and competencies held at any one time by individuals can be taken to represent the “stock” of human capital. The total stock within a country can influence its prosperity and international competitiveness. The distribution of knowledge and skills has an important bearing on social participation and access to employment and income. So, governments are interested in both the overall human capital stock and ways in which specific skills and competencies are distributed within the population. (p. 15)

The report goes on to suggest that, in a global economy, performance is increasingly linked to people’s knowledge stock, skills level, learning capabilities, and cultural adaptability. It therefore demands policy frameworks that enhance labor flexibility not only through the deregulation of the market but also through reform to systems of education and training, better aligned to the changing nature of economic activity.

This does not mean that ethical and cultural issues are no longer relevant to education, but that they are now interpreted within the broader framework of education’s economic ends. In this way, neoliberalism rests on what George Soros (1998) has called “economic fundamentalism,” a kind of conceptual prism through which even notions like diversity and equity are rearticulated in economic terms.

In the process, a new discourse of educational purposes has emerged, not only side-lining education’s traditional concerns with the development of individuals and communities but also rearticulating them. In educational systems, there has been a tension between its competing goals linked to social equity on the one hand and education’s role in market efficiency on the other. In the next section, we want to argue that in the context of neoliberal globalization, the always-tenuous balance between equity and efficiency has been pushed firmly towards the latter. Education is now increasingly focused on the production of the self-capitalizing, flexible neoliberal subject. Perhaps even more significantly, we want to suggest that the very notion of equity has been rearticulated, becoming tied to the instrumentalist concepts of social capital and social cohesion, rather than to the stronger concerns about social justice.

Competing Conceptions of Equity in Education

Over the past two decades, much of what is now regarded as educational reform is based on an ideological belief that social and economic “progress” can only be achieved through systems of education geared more toward fulfilling the needs of the market. It also is assumed that educational systems have for far too long been inefficient and ineffective in ways that prevent them from meeting economic goals. Popular media and corporations have in particular propagated this view, and have called on governments to pursue reforms that are not only more socially and economically efficient but are also cognizant of the new “realities” of the knowledge economy in an increasingly globalized world. This has required the purposes of education to be more instrumentally defined, in terms of its capacity to produce workers who have grounding in basic literacy and numeracy, who are flexible, creative, and multiskilled, have good knowledge of new technologies, and are able to work in culturally diverse environments.

These aims of education are regarded as important for not only societies but also the individual. Indeed, societies are defined largely as a sum of individuals. Their economic well-being, health, employment, and productive citizenship are considered indicators of national success. A notion of access to education by individuals is therefore central to the neo-liberal ideology because it is argued that without access, chances of achieving social and economic mobility are negligible for individuals and detrimental to societies.
However, simple formal access to schools has never been sufficient to realize the potential of education, because unless families have an adequate economic base at home to support students attending schools, students are unlikely to be able to take advantage of formal access. This, of course, complicates the relationship between access to education and equity outcomes. While a commitment to formal access is entirely consistent with the idea of market efficiency, it is not enough to achieve social justice. For this to become a reality, attention needs be paid also to issues of the social conditions necessary for learning, of instructional quality, and of the resources that are necessary to support effective programs. Formal access to schooling does not always translate into effective equity outcomes.

Indeed, simple access can be counterproductive, setting up expectations which, if not realized, have the potential to create considerable social alienation among those who have invested time and effort in education, but without receiving the promised rewards. Without good teachers, who have adequate training and professional attitudes, access can undermine equity, even if it meets some of the standards of efficiency. Access can also be counterproductive if the curriculum and instruction is not linked to local cultures and traditions, and is inappropriate to the community in which it is offered. This requires a more complex view of equity than is suggested by the weak market efficiency view. Education has a whole range of purposes, and it is not simply about producing efficient workers for the changing global economy. If this is so, then efficiency has to be reconciled with the broader cultural concerns of education, linked to issues of class, gender, and ethnicity.

That simple access is not sufficient for achieving equity in education can be further demonstrated by addressing issues relating to the education of girls. In particular educational contexts, such as those of the developing countries, girls have had limited access to primary education. This has led to greater international attention on issues of educational access and opportunities for girls. In recent years, IGOs such as the OECD, the World Bank, UNESCO, and UNICEF have repeatedly emphasized the importance of gender equity in education. For example, UNICEF is the acting Secretariat and leading agency for the United Nations Girls’ Education Initiative (UNGEI), which was launched in 2000 to focus on providing greater access to education, and to shrink the achievement gap between boys and girls in both primary and secondary education. Indeed much has been done to provide girls with greater access to education; and the number of girls attending school has never been greater. For example, as illustrated by the United Nations Statistical Division (2005), in most regions of the world, the ratio of girls to boys in primary education demonstrates that participation of girls is increasing, with large gains in Northern Africa, Eastern and Southern Asia, and least developed countries.

However, the neoliberal arguments for greater educational access of girls reveal a weak conception of equity, cast largely in terms of market efficiency, and the requirements of the global economy (Rizvi et al., 2005). According to the World Bank (2006), for example, “research has also shown that women and girls work harder than men, are more likely to invest their earning in their children, and are major producers as well as consumers.” UNESCO (2003) has stated, “Educating girls yields the highest return in economic terms.” Finally, the OECD (1998b) has urged that “Investing in women (with respect to education, health, family planning, access to land, etc.) not only directly reduces poverty, but also leads to higher productivity and a more efficient use of resources.” Each of these views link gender equity to economic consumerism and efficiency, and views women as means to certain economic ends, rather than as people who participate in education for a wide variety of reasons, some economic, others social and cultural.
A stronger claim to gender equity in education, on the other hand, must address issues not only of their access to education but also of economic and social consequences of globalization for their lives. Here the picture is decidedly mixed. Recent data show that while girls are participating in education in larger numbers than ever before, the outcomes of their education are not socially and economically proportional to their efforts. For example, in recent years, there have been many more opportunities for women to utilize their education in paid work. However, this work has been predominantly in the service economy of global information, global communication, global retailing, and global finance (Scholte, 2000). Each of these areas has been characterized by “flexible” labor conditions and poorer career prospects, perpetuating and sometimes deepening gender hierarchies. Even the growing level of access of women to higher education indicates that their participation in the fields of the natural sciences and engineering is far from gender parity. With growing importance attached to these fields within the global economy, associated with technological innovation and technical expertise, this inequality is more significant than might first appear, because it suggests that the growing access of women to tertiary education is in areas that do not enjoy the same high economic rewards, social status, and prestige.

What this analysis indicates is that gender equity beyond access requires a more systematic focus on the social processes that perpetuate gender inequalities. This aspiration is clearly informed by a different view of the purposes of education. While the market efficiency view demands better utilization of the human resources that women represent, a stronger view of equity seeks a social transformation through which gender relations are reconfigured. This latter view highlights the importance of not only access and social inclusion, but also the need to rethink the terms of that inclusion. It envisages societies that have potentially been economically, politically, and socially transformed in gender terms. This requires changes not only to the ways in which education is administered but changes also to curriculum and pedagogy, especially in the context of globalization, with its potential to reshape patterns of both economic and social relations.

We have noted that the neoliberal emphasis on market efficiency has not entirely displaced concerns for social and educational equity. In fact, equity is readily incorporated within the broader discourse of market efficiency. For example, it has been argued by the OECD that a focus on market efficiency can in fact lead to greater equality and opportunities for social mobility. It is suggested that without workers who are able to perform effectively in the global labor market, the potential for social mobility is severely reduced; and that since the global economy requires appropriate social conditions for capital accumulation and economic growth, equity concerns cannot be overlooked by policymakers committed to market efficiency. As the OECD (1996b, p. 15) suggested:

A new focus for education and training policies is needed now, to develop capacities to realize the potential of the “global information economy” and to contribute to employment, culture, democracy and, above all, social cohesion. Such policies will need to support the transition to “learning societies” in which equal opportunities are available to all, access is open, and all individuals are encouraged and motivated to learn, in formal education as well as throughout life.

Ultimately, what this discourse suggests is that market efficiency must now be regarded as a “meta-value,” subsuming within its scope educational aspirations such as social equity, mobility, and even cohesion.
Equity, Efficiency, and Educational Governance

As a meta-value, the emphasis on market efficiency does not only suggest revisiting the basic purposes of education, which involves rearticulating the concept of equity, it also implies the need to reconfigure educational governance. With its emphasis on a more instrumental approach to education purposes, linked to the requirements of the knowledge economy, neo-liberal globalization demands a vigorous agenda for rethinking state structures and forms of educational governance. Incorporated within this agenda is the view that administrative reform is central to a nation’s capacity to ensure accelerated economic productivity and growth. As a result, educational governance has been at the forefront of a wave of public sector reform that has seen the structures and practices of all public sector departments transformed under the rubric of “corporate managerialism” or “new public management.” This transformation has been based upon private sector management practices, in which a greater emphasis is placed on outcomes achieved at the lowest possible costs.

The twin goals of greater efficiency (doing things at the lowest cost) and greater effectiveness (achieving the goals set) have underpinned the new structures that are less hierarchical and much flatter, with greater management prerogative for policy steering. The old top-down structure has thus been replaced by new governance arrangements, in which relations between the policy producing strategic center of the organization and the practice periphery have also been reset. The center establishes the strategic goals and desired policy outcomes, while the policy-practicing periphery is responsible for achieving these goals. As such, any new autonomy at the periphery is in relation to the means rather than policy ends, which are now set more tightly by the center as part of a new regime of outcomes accountability.

This new regime of governance is perhaps most clearly articulated in a highly influential OECD (1995) report, *Governance in Transition: Public Management Reforms in OECD Countries*. The report notes, in a not too muted criticism of old style state bureaucracies, that “highly centralised, rule-bound, and inflexible organizations that emphasise process rather than results impede good performance” and that the efficiency of the public sector “has a significant impact on total economic efficiency” (p. 7). This broadly ideological sentiment implies a new discourse of educational governance that has been promoted vigorously since the late 1990s. This discourse is constituted by such concepts as strategic planning, cost-efficiency, human resource allocation, competition and choice, optimizing information technology, performance management, and accountability.

Embodying these characteristics is the increasing rhetoric about “good governance,” a phrase that masks an underlying shift in educational ideology. Debated under the rubric of good governance are issues concerning transparency of decision-making processes, forms of devolution, technologies of measuring educational performance, international benchmarking, mechanisms of quality assurance, appropriate accountability regimes, sources of educational funding, effective uses of public resources, and so on. Even this short list shows how most of these concerns relate to market efficiency, defined mostly in terms of the extent to which educational systems are responsive to the labor market needs of the global economy.

What we have thus witnessed in educational systems around the world, as a result of public sector restructuring in the name of good governance, is a centralization of policy setting and devolution of responsibility to achieve the goals set at the center. However, the idea of devolution can be, and has been, used in a number of different ways. In the 1995 report, the OECD itself recognized that it is frequently the case that devolution is used as “catch-all term for the granting of greater decision-making authority and autonomy” (p.
Traditionally, the democratic idea of devolution suggested that there was increased citizen participation, local control, “bringing the government to the people,” and an overall enhancement of democratic principles, and that these principles were embodied within a broader conception of social justice.

Under the regime of neoliberal globalization, however, devolution has acquired a new meaning, and is now considered a strategy of governance, in which it is believed that less central bureaucracy enhances system efficiency (Engel, 2007). In this case, devolution signifies a transfer of central agency responsibilities, managerial tasks, and funding allocations to regional or local agencies. This global ideology of governance usurps any democratic meaning of devolution and promotes instead a more administrative and fiscal form. According to this definition, devolution involves a commitment to a set of corporate management principles and market ideologies. In this way, devolution involves considerations of how expenditure on education is allocated, distributed, and monitored. It is utilized to ease the financial burden of the central state, or to generate greater expenditure on education through the transfer of financial responsibilities to regional or local level agencies, or simply as means of achieving greater efficiency in fiscal matters. Local institutions are permitted to make decisions, but only in ways that are aligned to national goals and standards, which are increasingly linked to a broader technology of public administration.

In addition, an emphasis on fiscal devolution is linked to political conditions in which privatization is viewed as its logical outcome. In such a context, educational managers at local and district levels struggle to manage their own education programs and implement local priorities, particularly those that cannot be easily accommodated within the broader national frameworks directing performance-based funding regimes. The global trend toward privatization of education, not only at tertiary but also primary and secondary levels, has intensified inequalities in a number of ways. While governments around the world have highlighted the importance of higher levels of education, they have either been unwilling or unable to fund growth in demand for educational participation. The use of the rhetoric of privatization has thus become widespread around the world, along with an emphasis on the notions of quality, efficiency, and productivity. With the scaling back of government funding igniting a rise in privatization, the role of the private sector in education has also grown, blurring the lines between government and private responsibilities over education. These developments have had major implications for educational equity, as private interests have increasingly assumed a greater significance in policy development in education.

What is clear then is that the conception of educational purposes advocated by neoliberal globalization and its preferred model of educational governance are closely aligned. Both are linked to the concerns of market efficiency. Both emphasize the importance of market dynamics in the organization of education around a view of educational purposes concerned with the formation of human capital to meet the requirements of the global economy. With greater policy focus on the knowledge economy, the market efficiency perspective on the aims of education has become hegemonic, undermining those aims that are dedicated to the goals of social justice. While equity remains on the agenda, it has been rearticulated away from a strong definition of social justice towards the concerns of social and cultural formations. Concerns about class, gender, and race inequalities are less evident in this rearticulated equity agenda concerned largely with economic ends for individuals and societies alike.

Of course, efficiency and equity purposes of education need not be viewed as mutually exclusive: it is possible both to promote equity and to ensure that education is efficiently
and effectively organized to serve the changing conditions in which it takes places. The balance, however, as we have argued in this paper, has tilted educational policy toward market efficiency because it has promoted a particular ideological view of educational aims linked to the requirements of a global knowledge economy and a range of ideas about educational governance derived from the new theories of public management, which increasingly promote corporatized and privatized administration of education, outcome measures, and knowledge as commodity. In this way, a fundamental tension between efficiency and equity has been left intact.

It also has given rise to a range of contradictions that can no longer be ignored. For example, the promotion of devolved systems of governance has left many educators and educational systems feeling disenfranchised, especially when they are expected to conform to unrealistic accountability regimes, and deliver outcomes for which they have not been adequately funded or resourced. Their professionalism has been sapped of any real meaning because they are now required to become efficient and effective in contexts that are culturally, economically, and politically complex. At the same time, the policy shift toward privatization, in particular, has compromised the broader goals of social justice and has widened inequalities not only across nations but also within the same communities. It has made the goals of gender and racial equity more difficult to realize.

Conclusion

In this chapter, we have discussed how a particular interpretation of globalization that is neo-liberal in orientation, has, in recent years, reconfigured the discursive terrain within which educational policy is developed and enacted; and how this reconfiguration has undermined, in various ways, the goal of equity and social inclusion in education. Led primarily by IGOs, this neo-liberal conception of globalization has become hegemonic, resulting in the dominance of market efficiency goals of education and the ascendancy of symbolic forms of access and equity. In relation to these goals, we have argued, there has been an emergence of new forms of educational governance that are aligned with the rhetoric of good governance. Consequently, administrative and fiscal forms of devolution have been readily employed in national systems of education around the world, often without an increase in local or regional autonomy, and in some cases, a decrease in educational financial resources.

Throughout our discussion of these developments, we have argued the rhetoric of access and equity couched in terms of market efficiency has often worked against the stronger claims of justice in and through education. It has also left many educators and educational systems feeling disenfranchised, especially when they are expected to conform to unrealistic accountability regimes, and deliver outcomes for which they have not been adequately funded or resourced. The policy shifts driven by neo-liberal globalization have compromised their broader social and political commitment, as they have widened inequalities across gender, class, and nations. Without a stronger notion of equity and access, the excessive emphasis on efficiency has resulted in greater focus on the operational requirements of the systems rather than upon lives of the people and their communities, thus undermining aims of education for social justice.

References


