From Competition to Collaboration in Education: A Shift away from the Neoliberal Agenda?

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Introduction

In the present world globalization is the major force influencing every country and almost every area of our social life. In this sense globalization is an idea which represents the 21st century. It is argued that also in the field of education globalization has been a powerful factor and that it is no exaggeration to say that we cannot design or plan education policies and reforms without considering influences of globalization. Moreover, it has been recognized that among these influences the neoliberal ideology has been most influential in formulating and implementing of education reforms in many countries. The neoliberal ideology gained particularly strong momentum since the 1980s in countries such as England, the United States and New Zealand and it spread to other countries including Asian countries. Through strong influence of the neoliberal ideology the neoliberal agenda of education reforms have been dominant in many countries and have been the foundation for restructuring of education systems in those countries. As a result of these reforms education systems of those countries were converted to ones in which competition in the education market has been posited as the principal engine of the system.

However, there have also been very strong criticisms on the neoliberal agenda and problems connected with the market principle and detrimental effects caused by it have been indicated by many commentators, particularly researchers in England where education reforms based on the neoliberal agenda have been most thoroughly implemented by the Conservative Government during the 1980s and the first half of the 1990s. The regaining of the power by the Labour Party in May 1997 offered the possibility of a shift from the neoliberal agenda since the new Labour Government advocated the ‘Third Way’ and stated that education should become the first priority in the domestic policies. Nevertheless, it has been pointed out that the Labour Government succeeded fundamental structures constructed by the former Conservative Government and retained basic elements of the education market. However, in recent years the Labour Government has been emphasizing collaboration rather than competition which can be
seen as a shift away from the neoliberal agenda. Therefore, it can be argued that although it seems that the neoliberal ideology still holds a very strong position in education of the world today, signs of its reconsideration have been indicated in England. This paper examines, as a case of a possible shift from the neoliberal agenda, recent changes of education policy in England where transformation of the culture of education from competition to collaboration is being encouraged by the Labour Government.

Globalization, Globality and Globalism

Before examining recent education reforms in England in detail, it may be desirable to consider natures of globalization and also of the neoliberal ideology in the context of globalization. Today discussions about globalization are flourishing and plenty of books and papers have been written on the subject. But it has been pointed out there is no established definitions of globalization. Many writers offer their own definitions. For example, Gibson-Graham defines globalization as 'a set of processes by which the world is rapidly being integrated into one economic space via increased international trade, the internationalization of production and financial markets, the internationalization of a commodity culture promoted by an increasingly networked global telecommunication system'.

This definition stresses an economic dimension of globalization. But it has been recognized that globalization certainly goes beyond the economic dimension and reaches almost every area of our social lives. Thus, in an often cited book, Anthony Giddens defines globalization as 'the intensification of worldwide social relations which link distant localities in such a way that local happenings are shaped by events occurring many miles away and vice versa'.

Moreover, David Held et al. define globalization as a 'process (or set of processes) which embodies a transformation in the spatial organization of social relations and transactions - assessed in terms of their extensity, intensity, velocity and impact - generating transcontinental or inter-regional flows and networks of activity'.

In this way globalization means many things depending on various definitions. However, when we try to examine the position of neoliberal ideology in the context of globalization distinctions drawn by Ulrich Beck can be very useful.

Beck draws distinctions between globalization, globality and globalism in order to understand the nature of globalization in depth. According to Beck, first, globalization denotes:

the processes through which sovereign national actors are criss-crossed and undermined by transnational actors with varying prospects for power, orientations,
identities, and networks.⁴

Second, globality describes the unique situation into which today's world has been thrown. Beck argues that:

_We have been living for a long time in a world society_, in the sense that the notion of closed spaces has become illusory. No country or group can shut itself off from others. Various economic, cultural and political forms therefore collide with one another, and things that used to be taken for granted (including in the Western model) will have to be justified anew. 'World society', then denotes the totality of social relationships which are not integrated into or determined (or determinable) by national-state politics.⁵

Thus, a world society can be conceived as 'multiplicity without unity.' The world society presupposes 'transnational forms of production and labour market competition, global reporting in the media, transnational consumer boycotts, transnational ways of life, as well as globally perceived crises and wars, military and peaceful use of atomic energy, destruction of nature, and so on.'

Therefore, globality means that 'from now on nothing which happens on our planet is only a limited local event, ...and we must reorient and reorganize our lives and actions, our organizations and institutions, along a local-global axis.' Thus, for Beck the concept of globality differs from that of globalization. Whilst globality is the unique existential conditions of a world society, globalization is a process which 'creates transnational social links and spaces, revalues local cultures and promotes third cultures'.⁶

Third, globalism means:

_the view that the world market eliminates or supplants political action - that is, the ideology of rule by the world market, the ideology of neoliberalism. It proceeds monocausally and economistically, reducing the multidimensionality of globalization to a single, economic dimension that is itself conceived in a linear fashion. If it mentions at all the other dimensions of globalization - ecology, culture, politics, civil society- it does so only by placing them under the sway of the world market system'.⁷

According to Beck, globalism implies that all states, societies and economies 'can be run in the way that a company run. But this would lead 'a veritable imperialism of economics, where
companies demand the basic conditions under which they can optimize their goals.\(^8\)

Therefore, if we take into account of Beck's distinctions, it can be stated that the neoliberal ideology is globalism which has dominated the world and established fundamental frameworks for education reforms in the world. In this sense the neoliberal ideology seemed to gain the status as the global ideology.

**Globalization as Deteritorialization**

When we try to clarify our understandings on globalization in connection with the above-mentioned Beck's distinctions definitions offered by Jan Aart Scholte also prove to be useful. Scholte presents the following five definitions of globalization:

1. **Globalization as internationalization**: In this view globalization is defined as simply another adjective to describe cross-border relations between countries, and globalization designates a growth of international exchange and interdependence.

2. **Globalization as liberalization**: Here globalization refers to a process of removing government-imposed restrictions on movements between countries in order to create an open, borderless world economy.

3. **Globalization as universalization**: In this use, global means worldwide and globalization is the process of spreading various objects and experiences to people at all corners of the earth.

4. **Globalization as westernization or modernization (especially in an Americanized form)**: In this definition globalization is a dynamic whereby the social structures of modernity (capitalism, rationalism, industrialism, bureaucratism, etc.) are spread the world over, normally destroying pre-existent cultures and local self-determination in the process.

5. **Globalization as deteritorialization (or as a spread of suprateritoriality)**: Here globalization entails a reconfiguration of geography, so that social space is no longer wholly mapped in terms of territorial places, territorial distances and territorial borders.\(^9\)

Sholte claims that of these five definitions only the last offers the possibility of clear and specific definitions of globalization. Here globalization is identified as deteritorialization, or the growth of suprateritorial relations between people. Globalization in this sense will bring an end to territorialism in which social geography is entirely territorial.\(^{10}\) The first four
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definitions are reconcilable with territorialism but the last one is not compatible with it. Thus, Sholte’s definition of globalization as dettitorialization or rather as suprateriritoriality has some common elements with Beck’s definition of globality.

Therefore, by incorporating these definitions into our understanding on globalization, we will be able to picture an image of the world in which globalism as the neoliberal ideology is spreading in the deterritorialized world and is changing both contours and contents of our social life including education.

The Neoliberal Agenda

The neoliberal agenda in which market forces are placed at the core have been dominant in education reforms in many countries during the last two decades of the 20th century. As is argued by Xavier, ‘the 1990s have been a decade of growing hegemonic neoliberalism and it has been pushed by multilateral agencies and most powerful states as the major global project for economic growth and development’.(11) In this situation both developed and developing countries have ‘voluntarily or compulsory embraced neoliberalism ...as the best economic and political strategy to keep up with the challenges of the global economy’. (12) Thus, in education reforms strategies and programmes based on the neoliberal ideology have been proposed as the most effective measures for reforms. Then, what are key characteristics of neoliberalism? Some commentators try to grasp them by comparing neoliberalism with classical liberalism. For example, Mark Olssen and Michael Peters clearly compare the differences between them as the following:

Whereas classical liberalism represents a negative conception of state power in that the individual was taken as an object to be freed from the interventions of the state, neoliberalism has come to represent a positive conception of the state’s role in creating the appropriate market by providing the conditions, laws and institutions necessary for its operation. In classical liberalism the individual is characterized as having an autonomous human nature and can practice freedom. In neoliberalism the state seeks to create an individual that is an enterprising and competitive entrepreneur. ...This means that for neoliberal perspectives, the end goals of freedom, choice, consumer sovereignty, competition and individual initiative, as well as those of compliance and obedience, must be constructions of the state acting now in its positive role through the development of the techniques of auditing, accounting and management. (13)
Thus, in neoliberalism the relationship of the individual to the state occupies an important position. According to Olssen and Peters, in neoliberalism the individual would be forced to compete each other within a framework established by the state. They maintain that whilst there are central presuppositions that are common to classical liberalism and neoliberalism; that is, the self-interested individual, free market economics, a commitment to laissez-faire and a commitment to free trade, they differ in some critical points concerning the relationship between the individual and the state.

The relationship depicted here could be compared to that between individual schools and the state in the neoliberal reforms. In countries where the neoliberal reforms have been implemented, individual schools were thrown into the similar situation described here. For example, in England schools had to compete each other for attracting pupils by achieving high performance that was evaluated according to the criteria established by the government through national tests set within the framework of the National Curriculum. This situation has been described as the education market or more precisely the education quasi-market in which competition between schools is considered as the most important factor in raising education standards. As Beck points out, since neoliberalism has become the strongest ideology as globalism in the process of globalization, the neoliberal educational agenda spread across the world as the most effective measures for reforming education.

Criticisms on the Neoliberal Agenda

However, there have been strong criticisms on the neoliberal agenda and some researches point out serious problems which they claim caused by emergence and operation of the education market. Their criticisms mainly focus on the problematic situation that could arise due to the penetration of market mechanisms. First, they are primarily concerned about inequality related to social class that could be exacerbated by actual competitive conditions in the market. In this criticism it is argued that middle class parents are more advantaged than working class counterparts in exercising school choices in the education market and as a result, while middle class children tend to be enrolled to better schools, working class children are compelled to be sent to 'sink schools' which nobody wants to attend. Thus, through the education market that is allegedly equally open and fair to everyone regardless of social class, the middle class will be able to use the market to reproduce their advantageous status in the 'theoretically fair and equal' market.

Another strand of criticism is on a shift of the culture of education modeled after the corporate culture which emphasizes value of competition in the market. In this culture
catchphrases like efficiency, effectiveness, performance and productivity are emphasized to constrain schools and teachers whilst increasing central control over the school system. For example, in line with the argument by Olssen above, Sharon Gewirtz delineates that paradoxically the mechanisms of the market worked to increase the level of state control and to reduce autonomy of school and teachers:

Most crucially, the policies have effected a shift from a situation in which schools and teachers had a licensed autonomy from the state and the economy to one of regulated autonomy in which the state controls the work of schools and teachers through the mechanisms of a highly regulated market and new managerial modes of control, and by creating systems of accountability, inspection and performance monitoring which steer actions and decisions towards targets and set goals. Whilst these mechanisms have effectively produced a tightening of control of teachers work by the central state, they are somewhat paradoxically anchored in discourses of devolution and decentralization.\(^{15}\)

In this situation, according to Gewirtz, schools are forced to respond to demands from the market. Thus, new managerial regimes of regulation are brought into schools in which a new managerial discourse of headship is constructed. In this circumstance headteachers have become more conscious of their school’s competitive edge, of their role to make decisions about personnel, purchase and physical resources.\(^{16}\) Another feature that Gewirtz points out is the penetration into schooling of commercial or capitalist values and a capitalist mode of rationality. Here, people, practices and forms of relationship which contribute most to commercial success and the maximization of income are highly valued.\(^{17}\) In addition, Geoff Whitty claims that by the marketization of education ‘old values of community, cooperation, individual need and equal worth, ...are being replaced by marketplace values that celebrate individualism, competition, performativity and differentiation.’\(^{18}\) Whitty also comments that ‘these values and dispositions are not made visible and explicit, but emanate from the changing social context and permeate the education system in myriad ways, so that they can be seen to constitute the hidden curriculum of marketised relations.’\(^{19}\)

As discussed above, the education system constructed by the neoliberal agenda in which the culture of education is structured around the central theme of competition has been criticized from viewpoints that are apprehensive of problems of equality related to social class and of deterioration of true educational values caused by the penetration of the competitive culture.
In England the Labour Party took office in 1997 after eighteen years of the Conservative administra­tion under Margaret Thatcher and John Major during which ‘radical’ conservative education reforms based on the New Right ideologies were carried out. The New Labour under Tony Blair advocated the ‘Third Way’ and set out new education reforms. However, it has been pointed out that the Labour Government, as the New Labour, did not drastically change the basic structure of the education system constructed under the former government. Rather, it ‘embraced the quasi-market with a similar enthusiasm to that of its Conservative predecessors although it has tended to emphasize social inclusion as opposed to competition’.(20) Thus, it is argued that the main structures of the education market, that is, parental choice, open enrolment, local management of schools, diversification of schools and league tables, have remained. Nevertheless, whilst the Labour Government did not embark on major structural changes in the direction of abolishing the education market, one of the significant differences from the former Conservative Government is its emphasis on social inclusion that aims to improve conditions of the disadvantaged groups. Therefore, it can be argued that in the educational ideologies of the Labour Party there are several components which may be contradictory each other when actual policy measures are implemented.

For example, according to Paterson there are three strands in the educational ideologies of the Labour Party. (21) The first is new Labourism. This is a renovated version of social liberalism and has common themes within it with the New Right flourished in the 1980s under Thatcher. It is argued that Blair believes in this ideology which emphasizes meritocracy, competitive individualism, partnership between public and private. The second is developmentalism to promote the competitiveness of the nation in the globalized economy. The aim is to make the UK more competitive economically. To achieve this aim more, rather than less, state intervention to strengthen weakness of education compared to other countries is encouraged. And the third is new social democracy. It is ‘an ideological position that is best described as a renewal of social democracy, not its replacement by an unprecedented third way that transcends both it and the New Right.’ Thus, in educational ideologies of the Labour Party there has been a possibility of introducing elements which could be instrumental to mitigate detrimental effects caused by competition in the education market. It can be argued that emphasis on social inclusion and on collaboration reducing competitive elements has this kind of ideological background and that because of this ideological strand, the Labour Government could embark on encouraging a shift of the culture of education from competition to collaboration.
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The Labour Government, particularly since 2000, has increasingly emphasized collaboration in education and encouraged a shift of the culture of education from competition to collaboration in order to raise educational standards of the whole education system. Among several measures promoting collaboration and cooperation, strongly recommended one is setting up federations. Since federations are the most formal and solid framework for schools to collaborate, they can be seen as representing the shift of the culture of education.

Idea of Federations

In 2001 the Department for Education and Employment issued a Green Paper entitled *Schools building on Success*. It touched upon the theme of collaboration and partnership referring to the Education Action Zones policy which intended to raise educational standards of a cluster of secondary and primary schools in disadvantaged areas through collaboration between schools:

"Already we have...piloted in Education Action Zones a number of ideas for improved collaboration between primary and secondary schools. Schools in many zones share both staff and premises, run peer mentoring programmes across the phases and link up more closely to plan and try out new ideas." (22)

It also suggested that a type of collaboration by paring 'weak' schools with 'strong' ones for the purpose of improving those schools:

"Some of the lowest attaining schools in the country are secondary modern schools in areas where a selective system still exists. We want to encourage more partnerships between grammar schools and secondary moderns in the future so that they can share experiences and learn from each other...We will provide additional funding to encourage this collaboration and in due course to extend it to all selective areas." (23)

Federations as solid framework for partnership and collaboration were advanced further in a White Paper *Schools achieving Success* published in 2001. In this document partnership and collaboration were clearly proposed as effective measures to raise standards:

"We also want to encourage schools to choose to establish new partnerships with other successful schools, the voluntary sector, faith groups or the private sector, where they believe this will contribute to raising standards. ...For example, successful schools
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might share the benefits of particularly strong subject departments, FE colleges with
a vocational specialism might work with schools in that area, faith groups might help
to build a school’s ethos and the private sector could provide strong management sup­
port for schools. (24)

This emphasis on partnership and collaboration was a clear indication of the Labour Govern­
ment’s policy of encouraging collaboration. The document suggested that culture of collabora­
tion between schools could be cultivated in the education system:

Over the last four years we have moved a long way from a system in which each school
was left to fend for itself to one in which networks of schools to open to all, constantly
learn from each other. (25)

As for federations, the document did not explicitly mention them, but it referred to the possi­
bility of providing for ‘governing bodies to group and work together where they wish to , for
example bringing small schools together or enabling a successful school to ally with a weaker
one.’ (26)

Basing on these basic lines the Department for Education and Skills (DfES) made more de­
tailed proposals for collaboration between schools in a consultative document The Way
Forward - A Modernised Framework for School Governance. Under the heading of ‘Collabora­
tion between Schools’, four types for schools to work together were suggested:

1. Bringing a weaker school or schools into a cluster with better schools under a
   single management structure, perhaps (but not necessarily) involving a single
   very good head;
2. Grouping small primary schools to exploit economies of scale in management
   (including governor support), staffing and curriculum provision;
3. Pairing grammar with non-selective schools;
4. Pyramid arrangements, involving secondary schools and their feeder primaries,
   to improve the transition from key stage 2 to key stage 3. (27)

Moreover, the document proposed administrative frameworks for federations:

Therefore the Government proposed to introduce a provision to enable schools to fed­
erate under a single governing body. The minimum number of schools that could
federate is naturally two, and we would welcome views on whether we should set a maximum for the number of schools that could federate under a single governing body. ...In addition to federation under a single governing body, the Government proposes to introduce a range of other measures to support collaboration between schools, short of full federation. These would include providing for two or more governing bodies to meet jointly and to form joint committees, for example where schools share the same site.\(^{(28)}\)

Basing on proposals and suggestions provisions on federations were included in the Education Act 2002 which was enacted in July 2002. Section 24 of the Act gives effect to the proposal that two or more schools may federate under a single governing body and that the decision to federate should rest with the governing bodies concerned once they have complied with certain conditions and procedures, including consultation with interested parties. According to the Section schools within a federation will continue to be treated as individual schools (i.e. in excercising their duties governing bodies must do so for each school within a federation individually) except in prescribed circumstances. It is particularly prescribed that parents of registered pupils at a school should be involved when the school would leave a federation.\(^{(29)}\)

**Collaboration in a New Specialist System**

The focus of education reforms of the second term of Blair administration was on secondary education. At the core of the secondary education reform quantitative and qualitative expansion of specialist schools was placed and collaboration was incorporated into the new specialist system as a major element for developing the new system. In order to disseminate this intention the DfES held a series of seminars on fundamental ideas of secondary education reform in several parts of the country. In the seminars a theme of ‘Collaboration and Specialism: Challenge and Opportunity’ was specifically included and topics of ‘Incentives and Barriers to Collaboration’ and ‘Expansion of Pupils’ Learning Opportunity by Collaboration’ were discussed. Through these measures the DfES tried to spread the idea of collaboration among teachers and education administrators.\(^{(30)}\)

In addition to this kind of effort, David Miliband, Minister of State for School Standards, who had been playing a major role in the implementation of educational policies in the Labour Government, also encouraged ideas of collaboration and of federation in particular, in several speeches. For example, in a speech delivered at the Conference of Independent/State School Partnership he emphasized the importance of collaboration:
For too long schools have been isolated - within the state sector and between the state and independent sectors. Developing curricula, training teachers, stretching pupils has been done separately rather than together. Sometimes governments have made collaboration difficult. We want to make it easier. After all, education is all about collaboration. The question now isn’t 'whether', but 'when'; not about 'who', but 'how'...

First, we will in the next few weeks publish proposals for the development of 'federations' of schools. Joint activity can extend directly to what happens in the classroom, or can relate to administrative support and some common governance. We now want to develop a harder edge to collaboration between schools and to put in place arrangements which focus more clearly on raising standards in schools. Departments might plan together. Successful and effective teachers might work with colleagues in partner schools to develop their practice. A formal agreement between schools would tie them into the federation to enable improved performance in all schools and in particular to enable weaker schools to improve their performance more quickly.\(^{(31)}\)

After these campaigns the DfES published *A New Specialist System: Transforming Secondary Education* in February 2003 which presented basic ideas of secondary education reform. In the document a chapter of 'Collaborating and Innovating' was specifically included. In the introduction for the chapter it stressed benefits of collaboration:

> The individual ethos and specialism of a school is vital but the benefits of specialising are multiplied when schools collaborate and share their expertise and experience. The potential to build capacity for improvement in all schools is immense when schools collaborate to extend good practice, share specialist resources and expertise, and take collective responsibility for tackling poor performance.\(^{(32)}\)

In the chapter federations were referred as an effective arrangement for collaboration. The document enumerated several benefits of federations and Government’s intention to encourage federations by providing some pump-priming funding.

An important point mentioned here was that in response to concerns expressed by head-teachers in conferences the Government has decided to 'publish test and exam results for federations of schools alongside the results of individual schools'.\(^{(33)}\) League tables ranking performance of individual schools have been regarded as 'symbols' of the culture of education geared to competition. It is expected that the Government’s decision to publish joint results for groups of schools collaborating could be a strong lever for promoting the culture of ...
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collaboration further.

Collaboration and Personalised Learning

Recently the DfES is trying to disseminate the idea of personalised learning in which the idea of collaboration and partnership is given an important position. The DfES regards personalised learning as the final goal of schooling and is trying to put this idea at the core of education reforms and policies.

Needless to say that in the past individualized learning was advocated and practiced in many parts of the world. Therefore, the DfES has been very keen on clearly explaining the difference of personalised learning from other ideas of individualized learning. For example, in a pamphlet entitled *A National Conversation about Personlaised Learning* the DfES tries to explain the difference. According to this document, personalised learning is 'the drive to tailor education to individual need, interest and aptitude so as to fulfil every young person's potential.'(34) It defines personalised learning basing on the definition given by David Miliband:

> High expectations of every child, given practical form by high quality teaching based on a sound knowledge and understanding of each child’s needs. It is not individualized learning where pupils sit alone. Nor is it pupils left to their own devices - which too often reinforces low aspirations. It means shaping teaching around the way different youngsters learn; it means taking the care to nurture the unique talents of every pupil.(35)

However, education suited to individual need is not new. For this point the document describes its newness:

> What is new is our drive to make the best practices universal. We want to help all schools and teachers establish their own approaches to personalised learning, so that across the education system the learning needs and talents of young people are used to guide decision making.(36)

Thus, what is new is that attention to every child’s need should become major driving force in the running of the education system. Moreover, it claims that often incompatible ideas of excellence and equity can be reconciled by stating that 'a system that responds to individual pupils, by creating an education path that takes account of their needs, interests and aspirations,
will not only generate excellence, it will also make a strong contribution to equity and social justice.\(^{[27]}\)

What are main elements of personalised learning? There are five key components in personalized learning.\(^{[36]}\) First, 'assessment for learning': a key means of knowing the strengths and weaknesses of individual children and young people is assessment for learning and the use of evidence and dialogue to identify every pupil's learning needs. Second, 'effective teaching and learning strategies': personalised learning demands teaching and learning strategies that develop the competence and confidence of every learner, thus requires a range of whole class, group and individual teaching, learning and ICT strategies to transmit knowledge, to instill key learning skills and to accommodate different paces of learning. Third, 'curriculum entitlement and choice': personalised learning demands a curriculum entitlement and choice that offers a breadth of study, personal relevance and flexible learning pathways through the education system. Fourth, 'school organisation': personalised learning requires school organisation that best supports high quality teaching and learning and ensures that pupil performance and pupil welfare are mutually supportive. Fifth, 'strong partnership beyond the school: personalised learning demands strong partnership beyond the school to drive forward progress in the classroom, to remove barriers to learning and to support pupil well-being.

Personalised learning is a part of 'personalisation' that is being promoted by the Labour Government as the fundamental principle on which every public service, including education, should base. For example, a pamphlet by DEMOS, a think-tank actively making proposals concerning education for the government, *Personalisation through Participation*, depicts characteristic features of personalization by comparing them with those of traditional public sector and new public management as shown in Table 1. As indicated here personalisation seems to aim for materializing delicate and sensitive responses to needs of users. In this sense personalised system has a purpose to deliver more flexible and diversified services by involving users in decision makings.

According to authors of DEMOS personalised learning is not simply re-branding but should be seen as a fundamental idea to change radically the present education system. A working paper by DEMOS, *Schools United: the significance of collaboration in the next phase of education reform*, claims that:

Personalisation represents a radical challenge to the way in which our current education system is configured. ...The shift it entails means that we can only understand personalisation as a characteristic of the whole system rather than an individual policy objective. It challenges of much of the 'hidden wiring' - the accountability
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frameworks, assessment regimes, role of the parents, role of the teachers and other adults, nature of the buildings and indeed the way each of these components interact. ...This means that we need to start thinking of personalisation as a reform that re-shapes the system, rather than a reform that can necessarily take place within the current system. (39)

As the title of the paper shows it specifically considers collaboration and diversification as important measures to accomplish personalisation. Moreover collaboration is connected with specialisation which is another basic idea of secondary education reform in England. It argues that 'By working collaboratively, schools can create economies of scale at the same time as developing specialist support, which together will enable further personalisation of individual learning experiences'. (40) Thus collaboration and specialisation are seen as prerequisites to achieve personalisation. Collaboration between schools which have their own specialties can promote delivering curriculum suited to individual pupil’s personal needs. Therefore, in pursuing personalised learning collaboration is regarded as the key concept to realize the education system based on the idea of personalisation.

Collaboration and Partnership for Education Improvements

The policy of emphasizing collaboration of the DfES was exemplified more clearly in recent policy documents. For example, *Five Year Strategy for Children and Learners* delineates strategies for the next five years to build ‘a new sort system’ whose central characteristic is personalization, so that ‘the system fits to the individual rather than the individual having to fit to the system.’ (41) It also emphasizes that in order to manage the increasingly diverse and personalised system collaboration and partnership are needed in addition to good leadership and high professional standards at all levels. It encourages that there should be ‘networks of primary schools’ to help raise standards in which schools support each other by learning and improving together. (42) It also proposes to create ‘foundation partnerships’ of schools which will ‘enable groups of independent specialist schools to take on wider responsibilities on a collective basis, serving their students better, with funding devolved directly to the partnerships from local authorities.’ (43) Thus, as Evans et al. comment, the Government policy has moved from ‘a position where competition based on diversity was a key driver for reform, to one where diversity and an education system tailored to individual needs is expected to be delivered through forms of collaboration and partnership.’ (44)

These policies were also confirmed by another recent policy document by the DfES,
### Table 1 A New Organising Ideal for Public Services: Comparison between Traditional Public Sector, New Public Management and Personalisation

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th></th>
<th>Traditional public sector</th>
<th>New public management</th>
<th>Personalisation</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td><strong>Public interest</strong></td>
<td>Defined by politicians and experts</td>
<td>Aggregate customer preference/customer surveys</td>
<td>Dialogue between providers, funders and users at all levels</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td><strong>Performance objective</strong></td>
<td>Manage inputs Good administration</td>
<td>Inputs and outputs managed for efficiency</td>
<td>Multiple agreed with stakeholders, users including experience and social value</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td><strong>Accountability</strong></td>
<td>Upwards through departments to politicians</td>
<td>To politicians and users through market comparisons and contracts</td>
<td>To users directly as well as taxpayers, stakeholders and politicians</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td><strong>Delivery model</strong></td>
<td>Public institutions Professional self-regulation Hierarchical departments</td>
<td>Contracted services</td>
<td>Mixed market of providers. Solutions assembled from a variety of sources around user needs</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td><strong>Ethos</strong></td>
<td>Patrician public service Technocratic</td>
<td>Market-based</td>
<td>Democratic, personalised, user-centric</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td><strong>Users</strong></td>
<td>Deferential</td>
<td>Consumers, some self-service</td>
<td>Co-producers, creating solutions with professionals</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td><strong>Manager’s goals</strong></td>
<td>Satisfy political masters, professional self-regulation</td>
<td>Meet contracted performance targets</td>
<td>User satisfaction, wider social benefits</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td><strong>Private role</strong></td>
<td>Minor, kept separate</td>
<td>Major role in service delivery</td>
<td>Public good comes from combination of public and individual initiatives</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td><strong>Professional role</strong></td>
<td>Decide and allocate resources</td>
<td>Commission and monitor</td>
<td>Advise, broker, advocate, solutions assembler</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

(Source: Modified from Leadbeater, C. (2004), pp.64-65.)
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*Education Improvement Partnerships.* It expresses that high quality collaboration is ‘a key complement to the working of strong autonomous institutions’ and that the concept of Education Improvement Partnerships introduced by this document is designed to ‘give some unity and shaper purpose to the idea of collaboration in the education service.’

**Conclusions**

As far as the expressed policies in recent documents by the DfES are concerned, it appears that in England a shift from the culture of education based on competition by isolated schools from that built on collaboration and partnership between schools is taking place. However, a question remains whether this move for more collaboration and partnership could conflict with structural features which are still built on competition in the education market. In this aspect it has been argued that the Labour Government under Tony Blair has basically adopted market mechanisms developed by the New Right during the former Conservative Government under Thatcher and Major. But as mentioned earlier the Labour Government has also emphasized social inclusion for the purpose of improving the situation of the disadvantaged to achieve greater equity. Nevertheless, as long as the main structure of the system is constructed around market forces, the conflict between competition and collaboration could easily be expected.

For example, it may difficult for headteachers to change their mindsets from competition to collaboration as long as performance of their schools are evaluated by individual schools basis and are compared in the league tables. A headteacher of a boy’s secondary school once mentioned that his school was very keen on collaborating with girls’ schools but not with boys’ schools since girls’ schools did not compete for pupils with his school. Moreover, another headteacher criticized the present evaluation system in which collaborative works were not positively judged but only performance of individual schools was counted most. These comments coincide with a report from the Ofsted which researched effectiveness of specialist schools programmes in which it commented that ‘some staff in specialist schools argued that there was a basic contradiction in asking secondary schools to collaborate in a context in which they were in competition with each other for pupils.’ Thus, how to resolve this contraction is very important to promote and establish the culture of education based on collaboration. As mentioned earlier the Government had the intention of introducing a ‘joint evaluation’ in response to concerns among headteachers. Certainly this kind of move is conducive to shift the culture of education toward collaboration.

However, some commentators point out that as long as present system of school choice and school admission remains, realizing purposes of collaboration and partnership, that is, to
enhance social inclusion and equity, can be inhibited. For example, West and Pennell argue that 'we are not convinced that without regulation of the admission process...that the new diversity will have a positive impact on equality of opportunity in relation to school choice. ... The winner will be the easy to teach, highly motivated, high attaining pupils with supportive home backgrounds.'(48) Moreover, Evans et al. also question that 'how can collaboration and partnership overcome the inequalities in a system based on choice and specialisation, which has the potential of both overt and covert selection of pupils on the basis of aptitude and the underpinning advantages of social class position?'(49)

These comments exemplify the difficulty to reconcile between collaboration and competition in the present situation of the education system in England. However, as discussed in this paper the Labour Government is trying hard to search for more equitable way to operate the education system. The system aimed for is the one based on the idea of personalisation in which collaboration is permeate. These ideas were not among the languages of the neoliberal ideologues. Thus, at the policy level the Labour Government seems to be very serious in transforming the culture of education from competition to collaboration by placing the idea of collaboration at the core of the education system.

Notes


(5) Ibid., p.10.

(6) Ibid., p.10.

(7) Ibid., p.9.

(8) Ibid., p.9.


(10) Ibid., p.46.

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(12) Ibid., p.163.


(16) Ibid., pp.122–123.

(17) Ibid., pp. 128–129.


(19) Ibid., p.97.


(23) Ibid., p.56.


(25) Ibid., p.38.

(26) Ibid., p.65.


(33) Ibid., p.23.
(35) Ibid., p.4.
(36) Ibid., p.5.
(37) Ibid., p.6.
(38) Ibid., pp.8–13.
(40) Ibid., p.8.
(42) Ibid., p.42.
(43) Ibid., p.54.
(45) Department for Education and Skills (2005) *Education Improvement Partnerships: Local collaboration for school improvement and better service delivery*, foreword
(46) Interviews by the author to headteachers carried out in 2003.
(49) Evans, J. et al., op. cit., p. 233.

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From Competition to Collaboration in Education: A Shift away from the Neoliberal Agenda?

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Abstract

This paper examines, as a case of a possible shift from the neoliberal agenda, recent changes of education policy in England where transformation of the culture of education from competition to collaboration is being encouraged by the Labour Government.

After considering the nature of globalization basing on distinctions drawn by Ulrich Beck concerning globalization, globality and globalism, the paper defines that the neoliberal ideology dominating the world today as globalism. It also examines the characteristics of the neoliberal agenda focusing on the relationship between the individual and the state. It points out that, while the neoliberal agenda have strong momentum, there have been strong criticisms on them in terms of problems concerning equality and equity related to social class and of deterioration of true education culture by the penetration of the competitive culture in the education market.

Then, the paper considers of educational policies of the New Labour Government in England in which the idea of collaboration and partnership has been increasingly emphasized in recent years and looks at the advocacy of the idea of personalisation by the Government. It concludes that at the policy level the Labour Government seems to be very serious in transforming the culture of education with collaboration placed at the core of the education system.