Globalization in the Classroom
Students, Citizenship and Consumerism

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DURING MY MORE THAN THIRTY YEARS as parent, teacher, consultant, and professor spent in the halls of schools and school board offices, I have often been impressed by the quality of teaching and learning that I have witnessed. Not only is this true of the classrooms dedicated to the exploration of science and math, English and history, but it is also true of the more "practical" aspects of schooling. Take for example, the machine shop where I often took my car to be serviced or the teaching cafeteria where the meals were nutritious and delicious, as well as beautifully presented.

Over the years, however, changes have occurred. In the school districts presented in this study, the machine shop has become interested in not just servicing automobiles, but aircraft. The school cafeteria is no longer a teaching cafeteria but is now run by a company external to the school. The chef has gone to work in a commercial restaurant and the students who want to learn culinary arts must travel to the only school in the district that still provides a culinary arts program. In other schools, the only available nutrition, to use the word loosely to connote the notion of "food," is frequently dispensed from vending machines. It is this personal observation which became the impetus for this research project.

As I traveled from school to school, district to district, and ultimately, province to province over the past quarter century, I began to notice similar kinds of transformations occurring. Not only were recognizable market forces becoming more clearly integrated with schools and school districts, it appeared to be the same major corporations that were recognizable time and time again. This led to the idea that this was a progression—not a random occurrence or a coincidence but a pattern.

It was simply more efficient to have a teaching cafeteria in a central location where students were expected to transport themselves than to have such cafeterias in every school where there was a significant proportion of students who aspire to a culinary arts background. The social, educational, and nutritional benefits of such programs, although costly, were overlooked in an attempt to become more efficient and, in a sense, more global. The hidden costs, in terms of students not having access to centralized programs as a result of transportation or other issues, the social costs of students identifying vending machine wares with actual meals, and the long

term health costs of such misguidance were largely ignored in a rush to greater efficiency and "effective" schooling.

But what about the "big picture"? After numerous attempts to identify a conspiracy in all of this marketization and commodification of schooling, I began to feel that it was a trend rather than a plot. It soon became clear to me that these patterns emerging in our schools were caused by a "trickle down effect" of the world-wide trend towards globalization. What I was looking at seemed to be a pattern, part of the trend towards a more globalized economy, one that stressed effectiveness and efficiency over individual needs, wants, and desires. As Jonathan Hale (1994) suggests:

> People do have innate standards, but most do not know how to get at them. It is hard for people to separate the important from the unimportant, the primary geometry from the secondary applied symbol, if they do not know about pattern. (Hale, 1994, p. 25)

Why is this quotation important? Simply put, it is important to be aware of cultural and intercultural patterns such as the trend towards globalization and its links to the process of schooling.

From Capitalism to Globalization

The debate over what globalization means has not yet been resolved as the term means many things to many people (Castells, 1998). Because globalization is a process, as is schooling, there is evidence to suggest that these two processes have become inextricably intertwined and that the dominance of global re-culturing is having an adverse effect on the process of schooling. This pattern of commercialization on a global scale represents a revolution of an economic nature, having as its base a culturally entrenched capitalistic society, one of the foremost constructs in the global society which has proven more energetic and robust than communism and other social systems for the ordering of societies worldwide.

Although capitalism has taken many different forms temporally and spatially, the main objective of this economic paradigm continues to be to build greater and larger profit margins. In order for capitalism to survive and prosper, corporations dedicate themselves to gaining larger and larger shares of their particular markets, to eventually gain monopolies in those markets, and to expand to other markets through diversification, merger, or corporate take-over. When a market in one area is saturated, the corporation has only three choices: to move to another area that remains unsaturated, to move to another product, or to do both. In this way, like any economic paradigm, capitalism can be seen as analogous to any life form, the main objective of which is survival, often at the expense of other life forms.

But this metaphor also represents the essence of globalization. Globalization is born of the need for markets to expand beyond their traditional boundaries in order to remain vital, viable, and prosperous. But in order for these corporations to develop and expand, just like any life form, they must continuously be fed. However, what corporations feed on is comprised mostly of raw materials and human physical labour. In a world that is seeing its resources dwindle and in a time when corporations are competing fiercely for survival, the prize becomes somewhat pyhrric—a restricted sense of global domination. The important issue that successful corporations must bear in mind is the need for "the edge," the advantage that will allow a secure place in history and to expand to global stature. In this way, corporations, poised, waiting in the wings of

the world stage to make their global debut, span both the present and the past while looking forward to the future.

This is not to say that there are no benefits to globalization or that individuals in developed countries do not benefit from globalization. Without globalization, individuals would not have the benefits that state-of-the-art technology provides for us. In other words, developed countries and, to a greater or lesser extent, developing countries may gain from being a global power or from being allied with a global power. The purpose of this paper is to attempt to reconfigure some of the more negative constructs of globalization upon the process of schooling.

While corporate resources are generally thought of in terms of raw materials and human physical labour, corporate strategies and processes are often thought of in terms of education (Barlow & Robertson, 1994). Therefore, both governments and corporations have a vested interest in education as a way to become more economically competitive and prosperous. Unfortunately, this interest in education is not entirely altruistic. As at least one populist proposes:

> An inadequately educated labor force will be unable to utilize the complex technology of the twenty-first century, whereupon our nation will be unable to compete effectively in the global marketplace. (Chavkin, 1993, p. 2)

However one observes the forces of globalization, one of the major points of definition is in the economic nature of this process. In this way, there are patterns that one can identify. These patterns are all too-often limiting if one wants to view education in a more democratic frame. For example, marketization, devolution, choice, and privatization of education has become the dominant paradigm of global education policy during the 1990s (Henry, Lingard, Rizvi, & Taylor, 2001). Education has become viewed less as a public investment for the common good and cultural conservation and more frequently as a commodity allowing competitive advantage to select individuals (Gewirtz, 2002) and groups of individuals. Thus, there is a need to understand globalization as it impacts schooling, particularly within the past decade. As Blackmore (2004) suggests:

> The 1990s was a period of considerable structural reform in school education in many Anglophone nation states, marked by trends towards school based, site based, self managing and self governing schools. School, as other education, reforms have to be understood in the context of the changing role of the state in globalized economies as the nation state has sought to mediate democratic demands from local populations and global market pressures. (p. 268)

Something seems wrong with the current process of education, but people are not sure what it is. There is no shortage of recommendations. Some call for greater standardization (Osborne, 2001) in the belief that standardization will create equality of opportunity (Tooley, 2000). Others feel that this very standardization is a threat to equity; the commercial process of globalization is a destructive force that fragments societies, cultures, and, ultimately, identities (Ignatieff, 1993). Some call for more authentic assessment (Martin-Kniep, 1998), while others feel there is value in having the market control the process of schooling (Tooley, 2000). There is a perceived need for academic rigour (Levin, 1998), while in other places people want more flexibility (Lodge & Reed, 2003). Accountability and professional autonomy are debated at length (Lortie, 1998; Skilbeck, 1998). Besides educating students for gainful employment, another major objective of

education has been to instil in students those values required to become good citizens and productive members of society. Extrapolating this pattern to its logical and ridiculous extreme, the process of schooling can be seen not only as a way to develop an army of workers (Taylor, 2001) who will ensure that productivity remains high but also to ensure that there is an elite group capable of managing this army. There is a need for creative problem-solvers (Winner, 1997) to guide the corporations to their goals.

Furthermore, to complete this pattern of incorporation, business paradigms have become institutionalized within the process of schooling (Winner, 1997). Administrators with Master's degrees in Business Administration are being promoted over those with Master's of Education degrees. Educators, and the public, now typically speak of programs rather than courses, and "CEOs" (Chief Educational Officers) are replacing senior administrators. Parents are the clients of the business of schooling while the students have become the consumers. There is much more corporate jargon available than can or need be presented here. It suffices to note that, as Hale (1994) suggests, this represents a pattern that many people do not seem to see, that people are largely ignorant of, although they admit that something seems wrong. Ultimately, the paradigm of liberal education may become fully reconstituted as a business paradigm as schooling becomes simply a way to prepare students for the job market and as citizenship becomes redefined as consumership (White, 1999).

Another pattern that people seem to not often be aware of is that corporations have made themselves available to schools at the behest of the schools themselves. Schools are complicit in their own inability to be critical of the corporate agenda if the schools themselves invite corporations in through the front door. A common result of this is the school's agenda often becomes realigned to serve the corporate agenda. Consequently, there is a great and urgent need for schools and school districts to take a clear and close look at inviting corporations to be "partners" in the schooling of their students. This author proposes a need for a greater degree of critical thinking in order to promote only those policies, corporate or not, which are truly in the best interests of all students.

But what are those best interests? Throughout the ages, education has been conscripted to serve many purposes, depending on whose agenda, what civilization, and the perceived needs of the public and private sector which constitute the dominant culture. The purpose of education has often been viewed to educate for citizenship, as well as to educate for gainful employment. According to Carr and Kemmis (1989), a *technical* approach to schooling treats educational provision as a means to an end. In this view, the role of the teacher is to evaluate student effectiveness and efficiency. Teaching and education is viewed as a craft. The *practical* view sees education as a process or activity. Events of school and class life will always have an open, undetermined quality. The *strategic* view of educational activities is historically based, taking place against a social-historic background. In this view, it is a social activity with social consequences and therefore is intrinsically political. This view problematizes relations between educational acts and their results (Carr & Kemmis, 1989). Thus competing purposes, generally viewed as liberal and vocational education, represent often-opposing ends of the educational spectrum. Both a liberal and a vocational education represent not merely a duality but delimit potentially opposite poles of a continuum, and both are equally important and necessary to a vital and viable educational system and hence a stable and economic growth. While few would dispute the fact that one of the most important purposes of education is to train and educate students to take their places in the business world and as citizens within the society of their choosing, this may not be the sole purpose of education. An education that values liberal arts as

well as vocational education provides greater degrees of choice and, therefore, greater degrees of freedom for its students. And what is choice and freedom, if not a cornerstone of social justice, liberty, and democracy?

The Need for a Critical Pedagogy

But how can educators begin to question policies, practices, and procedures in order to ensure that choice and freedom, and concomitantly, social justice, liberty, and democracy, are preserved in our educational institutions and hence, in the larger society? The impetus for a critical pedagogy, developed through the "Frankfurt School," which relocated after World War II to the United States, culminated in the works of Habermas (1990). Friere's (1970/2000) work with marginalized itinerant farm workers helped define a process for the development of a critical pedagogy. Critical pedagogy is interested in exploring issues of social justice and examining hierarchies of power that contribute to voices of individuals being silenced (Freire, 1970/2000; Giroux, 1983; McLaren, 2000; Zeichner & Noffke, 2001). A critical pedagogy is therefore helpful in asking questions about who benefits from corporate involvement in schooling.

Critical pedagogy is a useful tool in the examination of issues relating to globalization because the linkages between capitalism and globalization are reasonably transparent. Both have frequently been decried as being patently undemocratic (Brosio, 2005; Comber, 2005; Edelsky & Cherland, 2005). Because of this lack of democratic process, it seems logical to bring into focus an instrument capable of examining specific examples of globalization within classroom settings. This is done in order to examine policies, practices, and procedures that may not be entirely democratic and which, in fact, may not be in the best interests of our students, and ultimately, not in our own best interests as members of a democratic society. Six examples follow in which transactions occurring at the local, district, and national levels of education are discussed. The first four examples are briefly explored while the final two examples are examined in greater detail through the use of Habermas' (1990) ideal speech situation.

The Transactions: A Background to the Case Studies

Two case studies were conducted, one in each of two school boards in two different Canadian provinces, British Columbia and Ontario. These two provinces were chosen because the educational systems in both provinces represent exemplars of the Canadian educational system. In addition, the study focused on urban centres because there are more corporations in urban settings and therefore the opportunity for proportionately more schools and school districts to develop relationships with corporations, thus fostering a greater number of corporate transactions in school settings. Suburban and rural settings were not considered, as there appeared to be less opportunity to develop such relationships.

Both school districts are Kindergarten to Grade Twelve systems, and both districts, like most urban Canadian school districts, are ethnically and culturally very diverse. The Mountain Pacific School district in British Columbia is the smaller of the two urban school districts, containing 50 schools, ten secondary schools and forty elementary schools. The entire school district enrols 24,500 students, 5,000 of whom are secondary students. With 1,300 staff members, the school

district employs 120 administrators. By way of contrast, the Lakeshore School District, in an urban Ontario centre, is almost four times as large and contains almost 200 schools, 26 secondary schools and 164 elementary schools. The school district is home to 106,000 students, 38,000 of whom are secondary students. Lakeshore School District employs 10,000 staff members.

For purposes of discussion, three types of transactions were apparent. These are transactions taking place locally at either elementary or secondary public schools, district level transactions, and national transactions. Two of the following six transactions were highlighted, one at the elementary school level and one at the school district level. Both of these transactions existed in both of the school districts under scrutiny. While on the surface all six of these transactions appeared to be beneficial to student learning, there was a dark side that became apparent as the initial findings were analyzed.

Canada Airways developed a program in a secondary school in the Mountain Pacific School District, one of the districts chosen for this study. This "program" was instituted because the airline industry is in dire need of technicians, ground crew, and pilots to fill retirement quotas. This was presented as a recruitment tool to the school district, which chose to view this as an opportunity to provide expensive training to high school students who chose this option.

Secondly, in the Lakeshore School District, a "Flexography" program, serving to train high school students in a modern print medium, was also designed to recruit students into the printing business. At the same time that these transactions were lauded by the local schools and the communities, and while these programs were seen to provide students with employment upon leaving secondary school, they also represent a pattern of devolution of post secondary apprenticeship programs to the secondary school level. The valorization of such "programs" over regular school subjects serves to promote the goals of a globalized economy, valuing skills training for employment over capacity-building for a critical education.

In another example, one school in the Mountain Pacific School District developed what they baldly termed an "entrepreneurial program" to train secondary students to become business persons. Marketization and competitive acquisition were seen as the sole purpose of education. This perspective contributes to the institutionalization of negative patterns of globalization and, specifically, consumerism within systems of education. These initial findings demonstrate how devolution of apprenticeship programs to the public school system and distortion of the purpose of schooling, often by educators themselves, serve to provide opportunities for corporations to create and conscript numerous facets of schooling for ultimately global purposes to ensure a competitive economy.

As a fourth example, a national endeavour, styled as the *Youth One Network!*, has sought to restructure the delivery model of education by utilizing computer technology and closed circuit television. This model was developed independently of schools for use by schools. While its aim purportedly was to provide up-to-date technologically enhanced information to students, *Youth One Network!* was sponsored by numerous corporate interests. In conjunction with businesses in order to develop brand name recognition, it promoted consumer values by providing opportunities for corporations to advertise their businesses during programming while school was in session. While this technological delivery model of teaching may not in and of itself be a misguided approach to schooling, it is problematic that corporations are able to exploit educational institutions, in agreement with the educators themselves, as a forum to troll for future customers and consumers.

In sum, corporate transactions within educational settings, such as these four examples, have occurred across North America and are becoming endemic on a world scale. Such examples serve to flag the notion that globalization is encroaching on curriculum and programs provided by Canadian schools, and potentially, in schools world-wide. At issue is the problem of "recognizing the pattern" in order to develop a critical awareness to recognize what is truly important in our schools and to develop standards around such critical ideas as what it is we are doing, why we are doing it, and who the major benefactors of these transactions are. There is, therefore, a need for a pedagogy capable of recognizing such patterns and asking questions about innate standards, about what is important to schooling, and about how globalization serves to pattern schooling after its own image. A key concern involves the circumvention of some of these more negative aspects of globalization.

This pattern of encroaching global and corporate agendas in our schools may be an arena for a critical pedagogy; one that considers the voice of students above the voice of industry or the central board office. A critical pedagogy can also help in deconstructing power differentials and helping to establish more meaningful and perhaps more cost-effective methods of education. In other words, education has become fraught with political issues. These issues are subject to the political temperament of the society at large, to the business influences operating in the marketplace, to those same business influences which attempt to critique education and the schooling of students, right through to the willing compliance of school districts that agree that the corporate voice is a legitimate voice.

One of the loudest of these corporate voices calls for improved technological offerings within the school curriculum. As school boards attempt to upgrade outdated computers, budgets from other sources in the school often become sacrificed. In desperation, school districts invite the very corporations who have criticized schools to form unequal and inequitable partnerships. This resembles a dance between the corporate interests and the school districts, each professing and often agreeing that their views of student needs are the only valid views. Under the hegemony of corporate interests, school districts appear to be unsure of how to refute corporate critiques of schooling and, as a result, invite these "partnerships" to "show the schools how to do their jobs better." A closer and more critical view of the final two transactions in this study may help to clarify the need for a higher level of critical thinking from school district personnel—from senior school district administrators to the teachers themselves.

Equality and Equity: Towards an Ideal Speech Situation

It is the notion of the difference between equality and equity that has as its major tenet the concept of fairness. For some, fairness is achieved when all people are treated the same, but for others this is inequitable because fairness is achieved when people are treated according to their needs. For this reason, Habermas' (1990) *ideal speech situation* can be used as a lens through which corporate transactions in educational settings can be observed in order to discern the educational landscape upon which the larger patterns of globalization are overlaid.

Issues of equity and equality have, at their core, the consideration of power and privilege. If all students were equally funded and had equal amounts of intellectual, social, cultural (Bourdieu, 1977), educational, and physical capital, individuals in society would have not only equality but equity as well. Sadly, this is not the case. In schools, as in the "real" world, inequal-

ity is maintained through the power and privilege of some while others become more and more marginalized. Globalization is simply a large-scale version of this microcosm.

The aim of critical pedagogy is to not only question one's own assumptions but to examine issues of power. Differentials in power tend to involve inequities, and it is the purpose of critical pedagogy to question policies, processes, and practices that perpetuate these power differentials. Through this, a critical pedagogy may be capable of reducing inequalities in power in order to allow all stakeholders, including students, a voice. As a result, those students at risk in school and in society may cease to be marginalized further and may also be able to develop capacities for social justice and thus create positive social change.

What can be achieved is the establishment of communities of critical action-researchers committed to working with individuals and groups outside the immediate learning communities. There is a need for the learning organization to support and protect its professional work. At the system levels, advisors, organizers, and curriculum developers must devolve the responsibility for learning about programs and associated policies relating to teachers and others in the field. If the central aim of education is the critical transmission, interpretation, and development of the cultural traditions of our society, there is the need for a form of research that focuses its energies and resources on the policies, processes, and practices by which this aim is pursued (Carr & Kemmis, 1989). These voices, in order to be heard, must respect Habermas's (1990) ideal speech situation in that they must be intelligible, truthful, sincere, and justified.

For schools districts to seek solutions to educational problems by engaging with the very sources of that criticism, which on the surface may appear to be reasonable, may result in allowing self-interest on the part of the corporations to influence the entire educational system. Corporate involvement in education may well help to not only promote the vocationalization of education but may also help to reconfigure our definition of citizenship. White (1999) suggests that citizenship is in danger of becoming redefined as consumerism. Clearly the stakes are high and could influence the very nature of democracy (Burbules & Torres, 2000). These warnings sound an alert to the current compromising of the entire system of schooling, constituting a subversion of not only our educational system to corporate interests but of the very nature of citizenship and democracy as well.

Habermas's Ideal Speech Situation: A Framework for Transactions

A critical pedagogy capable of questioning the impact of globalization in school settings mayprovide students, parents, and educators an opportunity to examine how globalization impacts schooling. How can an ideal speech situation be employed to develop equity? According to Habermas (1990), ideally, any communication must be:

- Intelligible—communications must make sense.
- Truthful—communications respect the limits of reality, fact and interpretation.
- Sincere—the intent of the communication must be transparent and honest.
- Justified—there is a need for the communication.

These elements will be elaborated upon later through the discussion of the two final transactions in this study. The *Nash Computers* transaction was implemented at several elementary school sites where differentiation between a liberal arts and a vocational curriculum was not yet

an educational issue. As for *Kik-Kola*, this transaction was carried out at the school district level and affected all schools, elementary and secondary, and all programs, liberal arts and vocational programs, alike.

While the previous four examples of corporate investment in schooling could be viewed through this same lens, the following two transactions were chosen over the other transactions for two major reasons. First, these transactions were current in both school districts studied at the time this research was undertaken, and second, there is a clearly defined difference between the expectations that the educators and parents had and those expectations held by the corporations involved. In the analysis that follows this section, these two transactions are viewed through the Habermasian lens of the ideal speech situation.

Nash Computers: An Elementary School Transaction

This transaction was born of a school district consultant's interest in why girls appeared to fare less well in mathematics and science courses at the elementary level. This consultant, who will be referred to as Ms. Allen, embarked on a Master of Education degree in an attempt to establish a program of studies that would help to remedy this situation. Such a program was eventually established with the help of the University of British Columbia and a number of graduate assistants. However, it was felt that computers were a necessary part of this formula, so Nash Computers was contacted to provide a computer lab for the pilot school for this program, entitled "Edison Over Easy."

The major developers of this program have all been extremely supportive of the perceived need that girls need more help in math and science than boys do. Consequently, Nash Computers was happy to donate computers to the school because they would gain brand name recognition for this benevolence:

> Absolutely! In the long term there is brand awareness motive there to say that if we can get them working on our platform soon enough, then perhaps they will remember that as they graduate. (Maureen Cahill, Nash Computers Corporate Representative)

It was hoped that the Nash trademark would be recognized and purchased by students and their parents on a national scale. This project was very transportable to other schools in other districts and even in other provinces. Subsequently, Nash Computers assisted the Lakeshore School District to establish a similar program to help girls improve their abilities in math and science.

While Nash Computers believed that they could simply drop off a number of computers to the schools:

> I don't think the school board was quite ready for us. We wanted to give them some hardware and walk away.... They were saying ,"Well, no, you've got to come back and keep doing this." and we said, "No!...We're not coming back".... [I]f you think someone can just give you hardware and walk away, it's not as easy as that. (Maureen Cahill, Nash Computers Corporate Representative)

The schools had neither the expertise nor the financial infrastructure needed to service and upgrade the computers. A debate followed over just what the schools could expect of the computer company. After many rounds of negotiations, the Nash computers agreed to service the

computers and provide upgrading as necessary. This was much more involvement than they had either wanted or expected. After several years, Nash Computers ended their association with the elementary schools and went on to other projects. From the point of view of the teachers, this was disastrous, as the schools now had to not only maintain this additional equipment but also were responsible for upgrading it as well. As one of the teachers commented:

> We have retained all the equipment even though the project finished two years ago…. Currently we are frustrated with all of our computer equipment throughout the school. We have had major 'upgrades' which seem to leave everything not compatible with everything else…. Therefore to even mention 'computers/technology/lab/Nash' around here is a trigger for venting.

How could this transaction have been reconstructed through the use of an ideal speech situation? First of all, the school's needs were not communicated *intelligibly* to Nash Computers. The initial transaction called only for computers, not for continued assistance and service. Secondly, Nash Computers was interested in brand name recognition rather than in promoting educational excellence. If this had been made clear to the school district at the inception of the program, negotiations may have proceeded on a very different footing. The *truthfulness* of this position is in question, as is the *sincerity* concerning the manner in which the transaction was carried out. Surely, Nash Computers knew that a new computer lab would require servicing, upgrading, and an educational or, at least, an in-service component. Finally, whether it is *justified* to dedicate computer labs for Mathematics and Science instruction at the elementary school level remains contested terrain.

As an additional consideration, students were not consulted with regard to what they felt their needs were, and this has created a void that may result in faddism (Fielding, 2001) rather than sustained critical democratic educational change (Brosio, 2000). In this way, both school district and corporate representatives alike are culpable in promoting marketplace values within their school districts (Robertson, 1998; Winner, 1997). When people in positions of authority have presumed to know what is in the students' best interests, power differentials have been established or preserved, resulting in the exclusion of some students—in this case the boys who found Maths and Science difficult—by valuing the development of an elite cadre of girls proficient in maths and science.

In the case of Nash Computers, this transaction could have been made far more equitable for all parties if an ideal speech situation had been developed on both sides of the bargaining table. First of all, while the computer corporation mentioned to the researcher of this study that it was interested in brand name recognition by putting its computers into schools, perhaps a greater degree of commitment from the company could have been negotiated rather than simply being expected. Conversely, the schools involved appeared to use the "so far, so good" approach to engaging corporate transactions. A much stronger transaction, using the tenets of Habermas' (1990) ideal speech situation—that the communication be just, meaningful, truthful and sincere—may have helped clarify some of the more murky assumptions that caused this transaction to be interpreted as it was.

Kik-Kola: A Transaction at the District Level

The following transaction represents a monumental lapse in critical thinking from the point of view of school district officials and principals alike. As an example of corporate manipulation of school systems, the Kik-Kola transaction serves as one of the less subtle endeavours. In this case, school districts were responsible for shepherding this transaction to its completion. Kik-Kola now maintains a virtual monopoly within a number of school districts in several provinces.

This transaction sought to provide funds for schools to improve programs for students. For each bottle of soft drink sold, a percentage of the profit would go to the school. In this way, administrators could spend funds from pop machine sales in their schools on anything that directly enhanced student learning. While this is an admirable sentiment, it really does not hide a more commercial truth; simply, that because these funds came about as residuals from the sale of soft drinks within the school district, the more soft drinks the students buy, the more funds that would accrue to the school. Unfortunately, students were not only being encouraged to drink pop to promote school spirit but were subsidizing themselves. Why should students in a publicly funded school system subsidize their own learning?

Why does a corporation need to be involved in a transaction of this nature at all? This may represent self-interest masquerading as altruism. It is represented as a win-win situation, where the more profit the company makes, the more profit accrues to the schools. However, the schools could do much better on their own. Reframing this transaction through the lens of Habermas' (1990) ideal speech situation shows that both the corporation and the school districts involved are willing to make a profit at the expense of their students and future citizens. If justice is to be served, the initial transaction would need to include a frank discussion of the justice of this notion of profit motive. It is interesting to note that students were again not included in the discussion—but this inclusion might represent an "ideal speech situation" that schools would need to redress and reframe in order to come to grips with the fossilized notion that children should be seen and not heard.

Regarding this transaction, if the students were encouraged to drink water and donate money they would ordinarily spend on soft drinks to be democratically distributed among schools according to need, this would have a number of positive effects. First, the benefits of not drinking soft drinks would provide a health benefit. Second, a democratic redistribution of relative wealth would allow less privileged schools to enhance school programs on a district-wide basis. Finally, and more importantly, the middleman, Kik-Kola Enterprises, simply would be bypassed.

Recently, however, parents, school boards, and the Kik-Kola company have met to reconsider some of the obvious conflicts of interest in the vending of soft drinks in schools. There has been a move to develop more positive dietary options by providing fruit juice in the vending machines and removing soft drinks from the schools entirely. An article, "The Uncola," in the Toronto Globe and Mail (2004) notes that:

> Soft-drink purveyors say they will remove colas and other carbonated drinks from vending machines in Canadian elementary and middle schools by the start of the next school year….While insisting that all its products are suitable for kids—a dubious claim at best—the industry acknowledges that it is responding to increasing health concerns. (p. A12)

The article talks about the policy reversal as being related to "soaring rates of childhood obesity" and other serious weight related health problems such as diabetes, and that, "young

children often need parents or guardians to help them make the appropriate food and beverage choices" (p. A12) This article concludes by stating that these machines should be removed from schools entirely or stocked solely with water, milk, or other, more healthy beverages but notes that currently there are no plans to remove soft drinks from high schools.

In terms of the Kik-Cola transaction, the parents were exercising their right to freedom of speech, and the result was that the soft drink company listened. This suggests that there is room for Habermas's ideal speech situation to be invoked. However, the parent's are not the individuals who are directly influenced by the choices, or lack thereof, presented to students buying these products.

But what is wrong with soft drinks anyway? As long as students know they are placing themselves at risk for higher dental bills and poorer teeth, ingesting empty calories with little or no nutritional value, and other health concerns, perhaps it can be assumed that students buying these beverages are acting in the light of informed consent. However, due to the nature of advertising and that consumers tend to choose from what is immediately available (Vibert, Portelli, Shields, & LaRocque, 2002), students are unlikely to leave campus to seek out beverages that are less damaging to their systems and which do not require them to subsidize their own education. The point to note here is that children, even those who will soon be voting members of society, are given no voice and few adult members of society question this.

Habermas' ideal speech situation can help to deconstruct some of the policies around such transactions. First of all, the transaction must move from the boardroom into the public arena and must be communicated clearly (Intelligibility). Second, the transaction in all its intricacies must be laid bare and explained in terms that are understandable and with full disclosure (Truthfulness). Students and their parents must be apprised of the health risks of such ventures. Those who are influenced by such school board decisions as the soft drink initiative must be able to voice their opinions (Sincerity). This includes both parents and students. Finally, those influenced by this transaction must also be made aware that the transactions is of benefit primarily to the soft drink company, not primarily of benefit to the students themselves, even if the accrued funds are to be spend directly on student programs (Justice). To not do so is to perpetrate a hierarchy of power that serves to disadvantage some and to promote a form of elitism in others. Simply put, in order to improve the schools of the future, it is essential that current policies, procedures, and practices are scrutinized in order to allow all interested parties, students notwithstanding, to have the power required to enact "democracy-in-the-making."

Conclusion

Schools represent a political terrain that is not ideologically innocent. While applying Habermas' ideal speech situation to procedures, practices, and policies does not necessarily constitute a critical pedagogy, as it does not always raise these concerns to the level of social justice issues, it can be viewed as a beginning. Through this lens, if students do not gain from mandated policies directly or over the long term, these policies may not be useful educational policies. It is incumbent upon all educators to be able and willing to develop, identify, and implement policies that are inclusive, for the benefit of all students. Educators in particular must acknowledge both the force of these trends and the implications of these trends for shaping and constraining choices available to educational policies, practices, and procedures while resisting the attendant consumer corporatist rhetoric (Burbules & Torres, 2000). Teacher educators may

also work towards these goals as well, resulting in a sort of spiralled curriculum of schooling where school improvement may occur through a "bottom-up" process of pre-service and in-service teacher education.

Public schools are places where democratic skills can be practised. What is clearly emerging is the lack of a process for the engagement of corporate transactions in the process of schooling. In this study, educators involved in developing "partnerships" relied to a great extent on their intuitive ability to identify detrimental relationships and counted upon the goodwill of corporations. A general absence of democratic skills, lack of a process for the engagement of corporate transactions, and over-reliance on intuitive ability and goodwill indicate why notions, such as Habermas' ideal speech situation, are a necessary step in uncovering assumptions implicit in the establishment of any partnership or transaction.

Schools are culpable in reaching out to corporations to provide those educational components, which they have been told by corporations that they need. This may have the effect of reculturing the school and restructuring school districts on a piece-meal basis. A school culture that replicates the culture of the consumer society is also a culture of inequity and, as such, is anti-democratic. In principle there is agreement that social justice is desirable. Educators must scrutinize neo-liberal frameworks that promote market choices in education (Burbules & Torres, 2000). A critical view of corporate values and how these values become part of school culture and ultimately part of schooling itself is necessary. Educators can begin by identifying what characterizes a good citizen, corporate values notwithstanding. There needs to be a realigning of power within education, where teachers can become professional creators of a learning culture rather than have that culture defined for them by external agencies (Mitchell & Sackney, 2000).

Teachers can benefit their students by becoming more enlightened about the ways in which their own self-understandings prevent them from being properly or appropriately aware of social and political mechanisms operating to distort or limit the "proper conduct" of education in society (Carr & Kemmis, 1989, p. 32). Clearly this entails that teachers not only need to be reflective and critical users of research knowledge but need to establish self-critical communities of teacher-researchers, establishing their own critical and self-critical research traditions (Carr & Kemmis, 1989).

Researchers also have responsibilities in this arena and may contribute to school improvement through attempts to bridge perceptual gaps between theory and practice. Educators and researchers are encouraged to develop communities of knowledge (Wenger, McDermott & Snyder, 2002) and to develop a critical perspective regarding the cultures of the schools within which they teach and learn and are responsible for, as well as to examine the rest of the societal culture with a critical eye. This may require a "long-view," but by adopting a critical approach to democratic teaching and learning, educators can transform concepts beneficial to corporate interests into policies and processes beneficial to students.

It appears in this study that the closer to the source of the consumption of goods, the less input was accepted from the clients and consumers. In each of these transactions, the voices of parents and students as well as the voices of corporations and educators can be raised in an attempt to develop transactions that will be equitable and of benefit to everyone. Parents and students using Habermas' (1990) ideal speech situation can make new or existing situations better. The analyses of the examples presented in this paper attempt to show how an ideal speech situation can be envisioned that will benefit all sides of the equations, including the students themselves.

There also needs to be a realigning of power so that all voices, including those of students, can share in a more equitable society that has a strong sense of social justice. One way of doing this is by addressing existing inequities within education and schooling, because education remains a major societal institution. For such a major pillar of the community to be subjugated to the vicissitudes of corporate agendae is therefore not in the best interests of the society in general, although it may serve the purposes of corporate mandates, if only for the time being. Although Capper (1993) suggests that communicative competence within an ideal speech situation effectively eliminates those of diverse cultures, children who have not yet mastered effective speech patterns, or those with limited speech competencies from participating in an ideal speech situation, and while an ideal speech situation is acknowledged to be difficult to obtain, simply because it cannot be mandated, such a positive instructional and equitable framework should not simply be disregarded because it is viewed as being idealistic rather than a practical and practicable application.

Hopeful trends are beginning to emerge. Changes, and dare I suggest improvements, are being made in individual classrooms. A strong example of what this might look like in a classroom centres around a teacher whom we know as "Dianne" who had the courage to refuse to participate in a school reading program sponsored by a major fast food chain. Her next step would have been to identify the hegemony of conscription to cultural and intercultural patterns that many people do not seem to be aware of, although they admit that something seems wrong (Hale, 1994). By detailing her concerns with other staff members and by attempting to create an ideal speech situation, Dianne may have been able to create a chance for change.

In another example, "Candace" refused to give her Grade One students an imported standardized American-based test which contained numerous ideological and contextual biases. This time, the next step was taken and the "ideal speech situation" that occurred resulted in the school, and ultimately the school district, choosing to proceed no further with tests of this nature. Such examples serve to illustrate that such speech situations can be practical and practicable and reinforce the notion that these situations are not "just theory" or "pie in the sky" but are possible and real occurrences along the road to school improvement.

To this end, educators may be advised to continue to provide a critical, democratic, liberal education as well as to continue to support a vocational education so that students can not only take their rightful place as citizens but also so that they can enjoy a better quality of life and understand their place as political, democratic, critical citizens. In short, education needs to be emancipatory rather than simply maintaining the status quo. In order for education to be emancipatory, students must be able to have a voice in their own education and to develop their capacity for learning to its full potential. In keeping with a critical approach to teaching and learning, this means that students are educated to make choices and, by extension, to have choices. It is by having choices that so much becomes possible—for all students.

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