Marketizing Higher Education: Neoliberal Strategies and Counter-Strategies

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> Underlying the market orientation of tertiary education is the ascendance, almost worldwide, of market capitalism and the principles of neo-liberal economics.
>
> -- World Bank report (Johnstone et al., 1998)

1. Introduction: marketization agendas

Higher education has special stakes for capitalist rule. Universities define the skills of professional workers for labour markets, reinforce ruling ideologies, and represent the needs of the state and industry as those of society. Despite that prevalent role, students and staff often succeed in creating spaces for critical citizenship, even for overt challenges to capitalist agendas.

That tension has been played out on several fronts. Student numbers have increased, while teaching has been under-resourced and so appears as an 'inefficiency' problem, to be solved by standardizing curricula. Knowledge has been packaged in textbook-type formats, so that students become customers for products. Moreover, higher education has become more synonymous with training for employability, e.g. skills to solve problems which are set by one's superiors. As a US critic once remarked, 'the various universities are competitors for the traffic in merchantable instruction' (Veblen, 1918: 65).

Recent tendencies have been called 'academic capitalism'. Although university staff are still largely state-funded, they are increasingly driven into entrepreneurial competition for external funds. Under such pressure, staff devise 'institutional and professorial market or market-like efforts to secure external monies' (Slaughter and Leslie, 1997).

Beyond simply generating more income, higher education has become a target for marketization agendas since the 1980s. Universities are urged to adopt commercial models of knowledge, skills, curriculum, finance, accounting, and management organization. They must do so in order to deserve state funding and to protect themselves from competitive threats, we are told. These measures threaten what many people value in universities, e.g. the scope for critical analysis and broad social access, and thus provoke new forms of resistance. An extreme case was the 1999-2000 student occupation of UNAM, the Autonomous National University of Mexico, which became a test case for potential privatization of all public services.

Recent conflicts over educational values have been amplified by the emergence of Information and Communication Technology. ICT is designed and used in ways which can favour some agendas rather than others, though the precise link remains open to struggle. In the ruling ideology, marketization is attributed to the socio-economic imperatives of ICT.

Those developments can be analysed within wider neoliberal strategies for reshaping society in the image of a marketplace. The neoliberal project seeks to undo past collective gains which limited labour exploitation and maintained public goods, instead fragmenting people into vendors and consumers. As this article will argue, neoliberal strategies for higher education have the following features:

- marketization is justified as self-defence by dealing with all relevant constituencies as business relationships;
- educational efficiency, accountability and quality are redefined in market terms;
- courses are recast as instructional commodities;
- student-teacher relations are mediated by the consumption and production of things, e.g. software.

Neoliberal strategies have been devised for marketizing higher education on a global scale. Each region provides an extreme case and component of more general tendencies. These must be analysed globally in order to develop effective counter-strategies and alternatives. Towards that aim, this article has the following structure:

- the 'information society' as a paradigm for ICT;
- the World Bank 'reform agenda' for the self-financing of higher education;
- Africa, where higher education is being forcibly marketized and standardized through financial dependence;
- North America, where some universities attempt to become global vendors of instructional commodities;
- Europe, where state bodies adopt industry agendas of labour flexibilisation under the guise of technological progress;
- UK, where ICT design becomes a terrain for contending educational agendas; and
- implications for global counter-marketization strategies.

2. 'Information society' paradigm

Central to the neoliberal project is the 'information society'. According to this paradigm, the management, quality and speed of information become essential for economic competitiveness. Dependent upon highly skilled labour, ICT will be used in order to increase productivity and to provide new services, we are told.

A related concept is the 'knowledge economy'. This suggests that greater 'human capital' will be necessary to enhance worker creativity, to use information productively, to raise the efficiency of the service economy, to achieve economic competitiveness and thus to maintain employment. The 'human capital' concept individualizes skills that can exist only in a social collectivity or network (for a critique, see Fine, 2000).

In the 'knowledge economy', moreover, jobs will have a greater requirement for 'transferable skills' and cognitive capacities, we are told. Labour markets will face a skills shortage, and workers will need reskilling so that they remain flexibly employable in a labour market beset by insecurity. Therefore societies must invest more in 'human capital'.

Yet there is evidence that jobs are following contrary trends. 'Knowledge' workers face an overload of information to evaluate, spend more time dealing with it, and thus may have even lower efficiency than before. An information overload may even reduce capacity for new ideas. In any case, it is difficult to demonstrate such input-output correlations in practice (Garnham, 2000).

Moreover, job specifications have generally not increased the requirement for cognitive capacities. Nevertheless many employers have required workers to have qualifications beyond those needed to carry out the job. As a UK student lamented, 'You have to work harder to get a worse and worse job' (quoted in Ainley and Bailey, 1997).

This 'qualification inflation' is due to excess supply rather than any inherent demands of the job. In the USA, for example, skill levels have risen while wage levels have fallen for comparable jobs (Gottschalk, 1998). Indeed, job structures often reduce 'knowledge' to information-processing, rather than require the skill of evaluating information, much less producing new knowledge.

Further to neoliberal ideology, universities must raise their own productivity in order to survive, we are told. They must package knowledge, deliver flexible education through ICT, provide adequate training for 'knowledge workers', and produce more of them at lower unit cost. While this scenario portrays universities as presciently guiding social change, there is evidence of a reverse tendency: that they are becoming subordinate to corporate-style managerialism and income-maximization. For neoliberal strategies, the real task is not to enhance skills but rather to control labour costs in the labour-intensive service sector, e.g. education (Garnham, 2000).

ICT usage can define skills and restructure education in various ways. It can help to democratize educational access, e.g. by helping students to learn at their own pace, or by creating 'virtual communities' of interest in particular issues. Alternatively, it can help to commodify and standardize learning, e.g. by extending the authoritative approach of textbook-based knowledge (Johnston, 1999).

According to some educators who design internet-based courses, their use can lower personal contact and thus reduce student motivation: 'Many students need the personal interaction'. Thanks to ICT, moreover, 'We have cleverer ways in which we can search for information, but it still needs to be filtered, sifted', i.e. interpreted (interviews quoted in Newman and Johnson, 1999). This illustrates a long-standing issue, though rarely debated as such: how to define the societal problems for which information should be sought and evaluated, and therefore how to design technology.

Indeed, computer systems are designed by selecting a metaphor (rather than others) and translating it into hardware or software: 'And this is where technology can become ideological: if you believe that information technology as such inevitably brings markets, or hierarchies, or freedom, or modularity, or conflict, or God-like control over human affairs, then you may not even recognize that you have choices' (Agre, 1999).

In such a way, the 'information society' paradigm plays an ideological role. Some current tendencies are projected into an inevitable future, to which we must adapt -- or else suffer. That future is represented as an inherent property of technology. Relations between people take the form of relations between 'transferable skills' and ICT, for example.

In that vein, the 'information society' has similarities with capitalist ideology in general. Through commodity exchange, social relations are actively reified as relations between things. 'To the producers, the social relations between their private labours *appear as what they are*, i.e. they do not appear as direct social relations between persons in their work, but rather as material relations between persons and social relations between things' (Marx, 1976). This appearance may seem natural in capitalist society, yet it is always an unstable result of attempts at extending commodity exchange to more areas of social activity.

As another pervasive feature of capitalist society, people's knowledge is codified and embedded in technologies. As human qualities take the fetishized form of properties of things, those things acquire human-like qualities -- e.g., smart weapons, environmentally clean products, precise techniques, efficient technologies, etc. This fetishism is not merely a false appearance; it is a real material process of investing qualities in things.

Like commodity exchange, efficiency too can be analysed as a class relation. According to Herbert Marcuse (1978), '. . . rational, "value-free" technology is the separation of man from the means of production and his subordination to technical efficiency and necessity -- all this within the framework of private enterprise'. Modern bureaucracy homogenizes diverse, heterogenous qualities into universally comparable

ones, thus allowing social qualities to be quantified. This process is 'the precondition of calculable *efficiency* -- of universal efficiency. . . .'

As Marcuse further argues, technology is specially designed for such purposes: 'Specific purposes and interests . . . enter the very construction of the technical apparatus'. Through a pretence of neutral technical efficiency, social values are both embedded and concealed in technology. As various critics have argued, technologies have been specially designed for managing, disciplining, exploiting and/or expelling human labour.

We can ask: efficiency for what kind of society? 'information' for whose interests and control? With such questions in mind, key terms can be analysed as both ideological and material. They provide weapons to naturalize, impose and legitimize a future scenario of marketizing social relations.

3. World Bank 'Reform Agenda'

In the neoliberal worldview, trade liberalisation generates a virtuous circle of market access, technology, efficiency, etc. For example:

> Markets promote efficiency through competition and the division of labour -- the specialisation that allows people and economies to do what they do best. Global markets offer greater opportunity for people to tap into more and larger markets around the world. It means that they can have access to more capital flows, technology, cheaper imports, and export markets (IMF, 2000).

On the contrary, as many critics have argued, trade liberalisation is generally designed to serve capitalist profitability. It throws people into more intense competition with each other on a global scale, thus preventing people from deciding collectively 'what they do best' and what kind of economic relations to develop with each other. Prime agents are the IMF and World Bank, which elaborate the strategies of their paymasters in the dominant OECD countries. In the neoliberal project, US capital serves both as a prime driving force and as a model for its imitators or partners elsewhere.

For several years the World Bank has been promoting a 'reform agenda' on higher education. Its key features are privatization, deregulation and marketization. According to a World Bank report,

> The reform agenda . . . is oriented to the market rather than to public ownership or to governmental planning and regulation. Underlying the market orientation of tertiary education is the ascendance, almost worldwide, of market capitalism and the principles of neo-liberal economics (Johnstone et al., 1998; quoted in CAUT, 1998a).

From a neoliberal standpoint, what is the problem -- and opportunity? As a private good, higher education is in limited supply, not demanded by all, and is available for a price.

Consumers (business and industry) are 'reasonably well informed', while the providers (administrators and faculty) are 'often ill informed -- conditions which are ideal for market forces to operate'. Fulfilling the demand therefore requires measures to make higher education completely self-financing.

Having defined the problem in this way, the report identifies the traditional university and its faculty members as the main obstacles to a solution:

> Radical change, or restructuring, of an institution of higher education means either fewer and/or different faculty, professional staff, and support workers. This means lay-offs, forced early retirements, or major retraining and reassignment, as in: the closure of inefficient or ineffective institutions; the merger of quality institutions that merely lack a critical mass of operations to make them cost-effective; and the radical alteration of the mission and production function of an institution -- which means radically altering who the faculty are, how they behave, the way they are organized, and the way they work and are compensated (Johnstone et al., 1998).

This diagnosis identifies teachers and their traditional protections as the obstacle to market-based efficiencies. In its future scenario, higher education would become less dependent upon teachers' skills. Students would become customers or clients. As the implicit aim, private investors would have greater opportunities to profit from state expenditure, while influencing the form and content of education. Business and university administrators would become the main partnership, redefining student-teacher relations.

The World Bank report soon become a political weapon for recasting academic freedom as a commitment to neoliberal futures. University administrations have sought to characterize academic freedom as a duty 'to uphold the balance' between 'the spiraling demand for higher education on the one hand, and the globalization of economic, financial and technical change on the other'. At a UNESCO conference in October 1998, this conflict was ultimately fudged by declaring that faculty members should enjoy 'academic freedom and autonomy conceived as a set of rights and duties, while being fully responsible and accountable to society' (quoted in CAUT, 1998b).

Presumably the university administrations meant responsibility to a neoliberal globalization agenda, not to the forces resisting it. Indeed, academic 'accountability' often means subordination to accountancy techniques. In response to these attacks, professional societies have defended academic freedom as a right of free expression, as if it could mean autonomy from all political-economic pressures. When academics pose research questions or set curricula, however, these cannot be entirely autonomous from the wider struggle over public resources, ruling ideologies and class interests.

Although the World Bank agenda have little support among educators, some aspects may be implemented. Indeed, it may describe proposals which are being driven by wider

political-economic forces and already implemented around the world. We need to analyse their various practical forms, how they may complement each other, and how they appropriate ICTs. Let us survey Africa, North America and Europe as different examples and components of a neoliberal globalization project.

4. Africa: SAPs for recolonization

Higher education has become a casualty of the overall neoliberal policies imposed on highly indebted countries of the South. By the late 1970s these countries faced a 'balance of payments' deficit for many reasons -- e.g. because their main exports suffered a world decline in prices, while oil imports became more expensive. As these countries could no longer repay even the interest on their national debt, their currency lost value, and they were denied credit for further imports.

The IMF and World Bank turned these national debts into an opportunity to impose Structural Adjustment Programmes (SAPs) in the 1980s. Indebted governments were required to reduce spending, to privatize industry and services, to cheapen labour, to open up markets to multinational companies, to relax controls on capital movements, to weaken environmental and labour protection laws, to devalue their currencies, etc.

'Growth-oriented loans' were granted to countries which accepted those 'conditionalities'. According to the World Bank, such measures would help governments to reduce budget deficits, reduce the balance-of-payments deficit, control inflation, and thus create conditions for resumed growth. In practice, local industries were driven out of business, many jobs were lost, rural people lost their access to cultivable land, and fees were imposed for health and education services. The main 'growth' has come from people working more in order to pay more than before for goods or services -- apart from the 'growth' of MNCs buying up local assets on the cheap (see examples in FGS, 2000).

Consequently, higher education has suffered in all Southern countries, especially in Africa, which was singled out for special treatment. According to World Bank reports on African countries, investment in higher education was benefiting mainly the social elites there, and it had a lower social return than investment in primary education. As yet another conditionality, therefore, they were told to reduce funding of higher education, in the name of both egalitarian and efficiency criteria. Thanks to SAPs, governments would have an opportunity to 'increase the efficiency of resource use', declared World Bank consultants.

That attack had different motivations than the publicly stated ones. African governments were regarded as too weak to discipline labour for foreign investors and thus as inadequate managers of public services. More importantly, university faculty and students there were foremost critics of SAPs, often catalysing wider political opposition. In many cases universities were invaded by repressive forces or simply shut down (Federici et al., 2000).

Given the great resistance, the neoliberal strategy was to create means by which

African universities could be intellectually recolonized, in at least two senses. The general effect of SAPs, combined with tuition fees, effectively limited university access to an elite -- far more so than beforehand. Eventually the World Bank acknowledged the worsening quality of African higher education, though not its own responsibility for this outcome. As a remedy, the World Bank promoted 'capacity building' there through direct funding. Through this financial dependence, African universities could be pressurized to change their educational content along lines acceptable to the World Bank (ibid.).

Under neoliberal constraints, then, universities substitute new staff, standardize pedagogical materials, and marginalize local knowledges. Meanwhile governments repress any resistance such 'reforms'. Moreover, these changes potentially create customers for global educational commodities -- hardly the sort of 'growth' which was promised. Within Africa and elsewhere, resistance has been publicized by solidarity activists through the Campaign for Academic Freedom in Africa (CAFA).

5. North America: instructional commodities

In North America many universities have adopted entrepreneurial practices. They act not only as business partners, but also as businesses in themselves. They develop profit-making activities through university resources, faculty and student labour (Ovetz, 1996).

Within an entrepreneurial agenda, universities have developed on-line educational technology, i.e. electronic forms of course materials. Of course, this medium could be used to enhance access to quality education, and to supplement face-to-face contact, as some European universities have been doing for a long time. In North America, however, the aims were clearly different -- namely, to commodify and standardize education.

Those aims have been resisted by students and teachers. For example, in 1997 UCLA established an 'Instructional Enhancement Initiative', which required computer web sites for all its arts and sciences courses. Its aims were linked with a for-profit business for online courses, in partnership with high-tech companies. Similar initiatives at York University led to a strike by staff, backed by the students. They raised the slogan, 'the classroom versus the boardroom' (Noble, 1998).

What problem was the new technology supposed to solve? After university rules were changed to permit profit-making activities, their research role was commodified. Substantial resources were shifted from teaching to research activities which were expected to result in patents and royalties. With less staff time devoted to teaching, student-teacher ratios increased, thus increasing the burden on them both. This result of profit-seeking was represented as an inherent problem of educational inefficiency.

From that standpoint, the logical solution is to increase efficiency by standardizing course materials. Once lectures are submitted to administrators and posted on webpages, these materials can be merchandised to other universities. Better yet, the course-writing can be outsourced on contract to non-university staff. By transferring control to

administrators, the technology can be designed to discipline, deskill and/or displace teachers' labour.

This approach changes the role of students, who become consumers of instructional commodities. Student-teacher relationships are reified as relationships between consumers and providers of things. This marginalizes any learning partnership between them as people.

Students readily become objects of market research. In Canada, for example, universities have been given royalty-free licenses to Virtual U software in return for providing data on its use to the vendors. When students enrol in courses using this software, they are officially designated as 'experimental subjects', who grant permission for the vendor to receive all their 'computer-generated usage data' (Noble, 1998).

A marketization model can be extended to sell courses, potentially to anyone in the world. Even third parties can sell new commodities which redefine educational skills. For example, by 1998 IBM's Lotus Corporation had already sold its Total Campus Option software to more than a million students. The company hoped that these future workers would thereby acquire 'a Lotus brand preference and relevant skills: the campus is the starting point of the sales cycle to the corporate world with whom we conduct business'.

6. Europe: ICT for flexible learning

The European education debate has been ideologically framed by the supposed imperatives of an 'information society'. This is conceptualized differently by 'market' models versus 'social' models of Europe (de Miranda and Kristiansen, 2000). So far dominant has been a neoliberal agenda of individual flexibilized learning for labour-market needs.

ERT agenda

A neoliberal agenda has been promoted effectively by the European Round Table (ERT) of Industrialists since the 1980s (Balanyá et al., 2000). Its problem-definitions have been adopted by leading politicians and European Union officials. In particular the ERT has sought to change the form and content of education.

The ERT has regarded education and training as 'strategic investments vital for the future success of industry'. European business 'clearly requires an accelerated reform' of educational programmes. Unfortunately, however, 'industry has only a very weak influence over the programmes taught', and teachers 'have an insufficient understanding of the economic environment, business and the notion of profit' (ERT, 1989; cf. ERT, 1998).

They further argued: 'As industrialists, we believe that educators themselves should be free to conduct the same kind of internal searches for efficiency without interference or undue pressures exerted on them'. European industry has responded to globalisation, but

'the world of education has been slow to respond', the authors lamented. As a remedy, 'partnerships should be formed between schools and local business' (ERT, 1995). More recently they have promoted Information and Communication Technology as an essential learning tool -- in schools today and for work tomorrow. As the key virtues cited, ICT opens up the world of knowledge, allows individual enquiry, and powerfully motivates learning (ERT, 1997).

ICT has a more specific role in the neoliberal business agenda, as critics have argued (Hatcher and Hirtt, 1999). First, it facilitates the individualized and flexibilized learning which is required for the modern worker, who must become individually responsible for managing his/her own human capital in the workplace. Second, ICT diminishes the role of the teacher -- a desireable change, e.g. because teachers have 'an insufficient understanding' of business needs, and because their present role hinders 'internal searches for efficiency'.

European Commission: industry needs

As President of the European Commission, Jacques Delors basically accepted a neoliberal diagnosis in his 1993 White Paper on 'Growth, Competitiveness, Employment'. Identifying the future as an 'information society', it counselled adaptation to inexorable competitive pressures: 'The pressure of the market-place is spreading and growing, obliging businesses to exploit every opportunity available to increase productivity and efficiency. Structural adaptability is becoming a major prerequisite for economic success', e.g. by disseminating the skills essential for ICTs (CEC, 1993: 92-93).

Moreover, the Paper mandated the public authorities 'to remove the remaining regulatory obstacles to the development of new markets'. Although not specifically mentioning education, it welcomed marketization of public services:

The ordinary citizen can have access to 'public services' on an individual basis, and these will be invoiced on the basis of the use made of them. Transferring such services to the market-place will lead to new private-sector offers of services and numerous job-creation opportunities (ibid.: 94).

Within that framework, European Commission documents and official speeches put forward arguments similar to the ERT's. According to the chief of the Directorate-General which funds research, the ICT market is 'too weak and penalises our industry'. Therefore support is necessary to 'give our market the dimension which our industry needs' (Cresson, 1995). With such language, society's needs are either ignored or else are equated with industry's needs.

Soon the supposed threat was made more explicit: 'It is doubtful if our continent will keep hold of the industrial place it has achieved in this new market of multimedia if our systems of education and training do not rapidly keep pace' (CEC, 1996). For the solution, government must subsidize the European ICT industry.

Moreover, official documents foresee and welcome a decline in the dominant role of educational institutions:

> Even within the schools and colleges, the greater degree of individualisation of modes of learning -- which are flexible and demand-led -- can be considered as supplanting the formulas that are too heavy and dominated by the provider. It announces the consequent decline in the role of the teacher, which is also demonstrated by the development of new sources of learning, notably by the role of ICT and of human resources other than teachers (CEC, 1998).

Through such language, the empowerment of vendors and business partners is represented as greater freedom for students. A student-teacher learning relationship is potentially replaced by an individual consumer-producer relationship.

7. UK: university as a borderless business?

As the vanguard of the neoliberal project in Europe, the UK epitomizes pressure towards marketizing higher education. As academics there have found since the 1980s, many developments have 'eroded the protection from pressures to render their work more commensurable with the commodity form of value' (Wilmott, 1995: 995).

The government has pressed for a substantial increase in student numbers, while providing little increase in funds. Under pressure from the Research Assessment Exercise, many university departments have shifted resources from teaching to research, while seeking more research funds from industry. For both those reasons, there have been less resources for student-teacher contact, and thus greater pressure to standardize curricula and assessment criteria. Similar pressures come from formal assessment exercises which require teachers to produce explicit 'learning aims and outcomes'.

Students have become more subject to accountancy versions of educational values. In the late 1990s the government abolished maintenance grants for most students and introduced tuition fees. As these changes led students into greater debt than before, they felt under pressure to choose academic programmes which would lead to more highly-paid jobs, rather than arts or humanities programmes, for example. Student protests have opposed tuition fees, while linking this burden to more general dependence upon private finance. For example:

> In providing this funding, business is assuming more direct and indirect control of our education system. . . . Students should not be forced to choose on the basis of what [courses] businesses are prepared to make available (CFE, 2000).

UK marketization agendas link two business meanings of flexibility. First, student-customers (or their business sponsors) seek learning for flexible adaptation to labour-market needs, e.g. through 'transferable skills' for employability. Second, universities face

threats from global competitors which flexibly design and sell courses according to consumer demand.

For many years, such a competitive threat has been linked with ICTs. 'In due course, just-in-time electronic education, delivered to your living room by commercial companies, will undermine the most hallowed names in higher education' (Michael Prowse, *Financial Times*, 20.11.95). As an Australian vice-chancellor warned his UK counterparts, non-universities will provide electronic courses, offer degrees and not bother with being accredited, 'thus competing with universities in the education market' (quoted in McLeod, 2000). To protect themselves, they must further commodify educational goods as individual learning packages.

Taking that logic further, one neoliberal militant has declared: 'Higher education is now a no-value commodity unrelated to real costs and no basis whatsoever for an effective and efficient business . . . the future is always best left in the hands of discerning customers close to the marketplace' (Hills, 1999). Again, university corporatization is represented as greater freedom for the student as customer.

According to the UK's committee of university executives, the solution is to abolish borders between the university and business, as well as those between domestic and international 'markets' for educational goods. The executives promote internet-based delivery as a key means to become a 'borderless business'. Going further than the ERT diagnosis, they describe the university as already a business, albeit a deficient one which must be fixed according to corporate principles:

> [Universities must create] new systems of operation which disaggregate function, increase specialisation and where outsourcing is a strong feature. It follows that universities need to give priority to identifying their core business, niche opportunities and specialist functions. . . . (e.g.) consistent delivery through a customer-focused approach to education and training; a widening of educational values to include company certification, learning outcomes relevant to the workplace, personal development and flexibility (CVCP&HEFCE, 2000).

According to the executives' chief, Prof. Howard Newby, universities 'are an integral part of the knowledge-based economy', thus echoing a neoliberal paradigm. 'At present we seem to be rather like the British motor industry in the 1960s -- on the brink of participating in a global market, but poorly organised to take advantage of the opportunities available'. He identifies changes in undergraduate delivery: from a 'just-in-case' general intellectual training, to a more flexible 'just-in-time' ethos, and then to 'just-for-you' forms of learning (Newby, 1999).

Newby emphasizes opportunities as much as threats. In his account, critical analytical skills are to be supplanted by life-long adjustment to the needs of a flexibilized labour market. Extending the business logic, he advocates government investment in higher education as 'a sector which is absolutely central to the development of the UK as a

prosperous and competitive knowledge-based economy'. He also advocates performance-related pay in order to modernise 'our human resources management'.

Thus educational dividends are to be quantified as human capital. Once the 'investment' metaphor is reified, it can become literal. Universities may be held accountable for delivering the goods in measurable terms (Demeritt, 2000: 309).

In planning an electronic-University, some educators emphasize that high quality cannot be achieved at low cost. Partly for this reason, many UK universities have formed a consortia for jointly providing and evaluating prospective course material, so that they do not compete among themselves for students. At the same time, a private-sector partner will handle 'the commercial aspects of content procurement to match demand', among other aspects (McLeod, 2000). Companies may play a role in defining students as 'market demand' for some types of content rather than others. Such arrangements readily conflate the needs of business and society, e.g. through 'flexible learning' for the labour market.

Electronic media have a double-edged potential. They can broaden access to quality material and social networks which enhance critical citizenship, provided that the design includes resources for creative student-teacher and student-student interaction. Given the political will, argues one academic, scholarly values 'may survive in the multi-media environment. But the tension between digitized means and these values may sharpen as learning becomes more commodified' (Harris, 2000). The effect on education depends on social design of electronic media.

8. Conclusion: what global counter-strategies?

In order to develop effective counter-strategies, it is necessary to analyse the various forms of marketization.

Marketization strategies

Marketization strategies should be understood as both ideological and material at the same time. As analysed above, here are some key features.

- Efficiency as progress

In neoliberal ideology, employment insecurity is attributed to a deficiency of 'human capital' appropriate for the 'information society'. This problem is cited to justify pedagogical changes for adapting students to labour-market needs. Educational 'reforms' are presented as universal progress on grounds that they enhance efficiency, extend access, flexibly customize the content for individual needs, facilitate learning through ICT, provide accountability to students and society, yield a better return on state investment, etc. These benefits are to be measured according to 'human capital' criteria, or even according to money transactions. Whether they are literal or metaphorical, accountancy methods define the efficiency of educational progress, thus naturalizing marketization.

- Commodification

Prospective students are represented as customers/markets in order to justify commodifying educational services. Knowledge becomes a product for individual students to consume, rather than a collaborative process for students and teachers. Individualized learning both promotes and naturalizes life-long re-skilling for a flexibilized, fragmented, insecure labour market. By standardizing course materials, moreover, administrators can reduce teachers to software-writers or even replace them with subcontractors. Through ICT, neoliberal agendas take the apparently neutral form of greater access and flexible delivery. In all these ways, student-teacher relations are reified as relations between things, e.g. between consumers and providers of software.

- Globalization

A global competitive threat and opportunity is invoked to justify commodifying all institutional arrangements. People are actively linked around the world through new market relations -- as business partners, competitors, patrons, clients, customers, assessor-consultants, etc. This neoliberal internationalism is promoted within and across countries. As SAP conditionalities forcibly marketize and standardize higher education in Third World countries, people there may become more willing customers for instructional commodities elsewhere, e.g. through distance education. Perhaps as a self-fulfilling prophecy, this marketization intensifies (or even creates) the competitive pressures from which universities needed protection in the first place.

Counter-strategies

In response, what counter-strategies are being developed? As a defensive approach, teachers' organizations have re-asserted their professional prerogatives as experts in educational content, and they have defended academic freedom against state interference disguised as societal 'responsibilities'. Students have opposed plans to replace human contact with software products, while demanding educational access as a right rather than a commodity.

More imaginative efforts will be needed to counter the neoliberal agenda. In particular:

- Demonstrating links among various measures

Marketization measures extend far beyond formal requirements of SAPs. The pressures take more subtle forms -- e.g., ideological language, funding priorities, public-private partnerships, tuition fees, cost-benefit analysis, performance indicators, curriculum changes, new technology -- which often conceal the ultimate implications. Critics need to demonstrate how all these aspects are linked, how they change the content of academic work and learning, and how they arise from efforts to discipline labour for capital, as part of a global agenda.

- Linking resistances across constituencies and places

Neoliberal strategies are turning us all into fragments of a business plan, e.g. competitors, partners, customers, etc. In response, we need an international network for several purposes: to link all targets of the neoliberal attack worldwide, to circulate analyses of anti-marketization struggles, to enhance solidarity efforts, and to turn ourselves into collective subjects of resistance and learning for different futures. Such networks need to span all relevant constituencies (teachers, students, NGOs), as well as the geographical regions which are supposedly competing with each other.

- De-reifying Information and Communication Technology (ICT)

ICTs can be designed in ways which either facilitate a marketization agenda, e.g. by reifying student-teacher relations -- or else hinder marketization, e.g. by enhancing critical debate among students and with teachers. In that vein, we need to distinguish between various potential designs for ICT, in order to dereify them as social relations. For example, Computer-Supported Cooperative Learning (CSCL) techniques are being developed to retain the collective aspects of learning at a distance. Although ICTs are widely used for distributing critical analyses, we need to ensure that these are included and used imaginatively in accredited courses.

- Developing alternatives

It is inadequate simply to oppose marketization or to counterpose whatever existed beforehand. Resistance would be strengthened by developing alternative pedagogies which enhance critical citizenship, e.g. debate over the collective problem-definitions of society (e.g. Hill, 1999; McLaren, 2000). If we advocate educational methods and content along those lines, then we can link academic freedom with responsibility to public debate over potential and desirable futures.

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