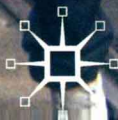


# SCHOOLING IN WESTERN EUROPE

The New Order and Its Adversaries



Ken Jones, Chomin Cunchillos,  
Richard Hatcher, Nico Hirtt, Rosalind Innes,  
Samuel Johsua, Jürgen Klausenitzer



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Rosalind Innes, Samuel Johsua and Jürgen Klausenitzer on behalf of the  
Colectivo Baltasar Gracián 2008

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First published 2008 by  
PALGRAVE MACMILLAN

Houndmills, Basingstoke, Hampshire RG21 6XS and  
175 Fifth Avenue, New York, N.Y. 10010

Companies and representatives throughout the world

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ISBN-13: 978-0-230-55143-5      hardback

ISBN-10: 0-230-55143-2          hardback

This book is printed on paper suitable for recycling and made from fully  
managed and sustained forest sources. Logging, pulping and manufacturing  
processes are expected to conform to the environmental regulations of the  
country of origin.

A catalogue record for this book is available from the British Library.

A catalog record for this book is available from the Library of Congress.

10	9	8	7	6	5	4	3	2	1
17	16	15	14	13	12	11	10	09	08

Printed and bound in Great Britain by  
CPI Antony Rowe, Chippenham and Eastbourne

## Schooling in Western Europe

# Notes on the Contributors

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Jürgen Klausenitzer is an activist and education consultant. His work is frequently published in the German e-journal *Widersprüche* ([www.widersprueche-zeitschrift.de](http://www.widersprueche-zeitschrift.de)).

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# Abbreviations

ATTAC	Association pour la taxation des transactions pour l'aide aux citoyens
BERA	British Educational Research Association
BFS	Building Schools for the Future
CBI	Confederation of British Industry
CDU	German Christian Democratic Party
CERI	Centre for Educational Research and Innovation (OECD)
CGIL	General Confederation of Italian Labour
CISL	Italian Federation of Workers' Unions
COBAS	Committees at the Base (Italian workers' movement)
COBAS-Scuola	Committees at the Base, Education
CPE	First Employment Contract (France)
DES	Department for Education and Science
DfEE	Department for Education and Employment
DfES	Department for Education and Skills
EAZ	Education Action Zone
ERT	European Round Table
ETUC	European Trade Union Confederation
FEN	National Education Federation (trade union – France)
FSU	Common Federation of (Education) Unions (France)
GATS	General Agreement on Trade and Services
GEW	Education and Knowledge Union (Germany)
LGE	General Law on Education (Spain)
LOCE	Law on the Quality of Education (Spain)

LODE	Law on the Right to Education (Spain)
LOE	Organic Law on Education (Spain)
LOGSE	Law on the General Organisation of the Education System (Spain)
MEDEF	Movement of French Business
OECD	Organisation for Economic Co-operation and Development
OMC	Open Method of Co-ordination (EU)
NPM	New Public Management
NUT	National Union of Teachers
PCI	Italian Communist Party
PDS	Party of the Democratic Left (Germany)
PFI	Private Finance Initiative
PISA	Programme for International Student Assessment
PP	People's Party (Spain)
PRP	Performance-Related Pay
PSI	Italian Socialist Party
PSOE	Spanish Socialist Party
QAA	Qualifications and Assessment Authority
QCA	Qualifications and Curriculum Authority
SPD	German Social Democratic Party
STES-I	Confederation of Education Workers' Unions (Spain)
UIL	Italian Union of Labour
UNICE	Union of Industrial and Employers' Confederations of Europe
ZEP	Education Priority Zone (France)

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# 1

## An Emerging Order

We write in this book about the remaking of schooling in Western Europe, and the policy orthodoxy – promoted by supranational organisations, shared across frontiers – that is so powerful an influence upon it. We draw much from others who have worked in this field before us – from theorists who have analysed the scalar shift in policymaking from national to supranational level; from sociologists who have traced both the classic patterns of schooling's regulation and their new forms; and from those who have delineated the repertoire and discursive nuances of the new world order in education.<sup>1</sup> To this now-abundant literature, we bring something of our own. Our particular interest is in the contestation that attends supranational policy orthodoxy – how its arrival within the major countries of Western Europe has been the occasion for widespread criticism, discontent and mobilisation. This terrain, on which are fought out disputes central to the ways in which Europe's present is understood and its future imagined, has not been so well explored by researchers, even when their sympathies have been engaged by those who challenge the new order.

The vantage point from which we interpret these disputes, and make sense of the changes that are reshaping the school, does not stand outside the territory of contestation. Our own formation as teachers and researchers has been affected by participation in movements that have sought change at the level of the classroom and the school, as part of a much wider political and economic transformation. We are thus aware that educational change is better seen not as the simple realisation of a policy design but as an outcome of purposive activity (and conflict) at many levels, from the local to the international. More specifically, our book is influenced by the positions and actions of the social forces that have been mobilised against what we think oppositional social

movements justly call the neo-liberal project. We take neo-liberalism – whose general features and educational impact we sketch in the pages that follow – to be best understood as an aggressive programme, that self-consciously sets for itself the goal of achieving change of an epochal kind; it aims to defeat the movements associated with an earlier phase of state-focused, welfare-orientated reform and to install a new systemic logic by means of which societies respond at every level – from individual to governmental – to free-market imperatives. Our book is organised around various instances of this process of combative transformation, in which policy redesign is always accompanied by a concern for political tactics, and in which the forcefulness of opposition is a significant variable in the success or failure of educational programmes.

We are protagonists as well as commentators, then, but protagonists on the part of movements that are now, despite occasional spectacular victories – France 2005 – primarily defensive ones. And since the neo-liberal programme has been the dominant agenda-setting force in the post-1990 educational landscape, to focus on its achievements is also to recognise the strategic and intellectual problems of those traditions against which it has been directed. The educational systems that it is seeking to transform were created, in part, by popular aspirations for increased equality and social citizenship; and to a significant, though never determining, extent, schools in Western Europe were for a period home to values and practices embodying solidarities of a sort resistant to the logic of the market, and strong enough even now to mobilise enduring protest. We owe our cultural and political formation to just such solidarities, and to this extent our book is grounded on the historic achievements of the last half-century. But we do not intend merely to celebrate a movement which in so many respects now finds itself on the defensive, an altermondialist optimism heavily qualified by a long succession of defeats. At the end of his book on social change in Western Europe the sociologist Colin Crouch acknowledged that ‘the most energetic point of social power emerging in late twentieth century society was that of a globalising capitalism’. Surveying the opposition to capitalism’s transforming energies, he noted ‘the assembly of non-capitalist interests’ embodied in the movements and institutions of the post-war era, and asked what is for us an essential question. Is this assembly ‘simply a dead weight carried over from the past, or does it contain a potentiality for new action?’<sup>2</sup> It is with the exploration of this open question that our book is concerned, and our analysis and critique cut two ways: against a neo-liberalism whose programme promotes social and educational division while at the same time it narrows drastically the potential

scope of education; and against a left that has not yet made sense of new conditions, nor created (in most instances) a credible basis for counter-mobilisation. It is from this double perspective—returned to in our concluding chapter – that we interpret policy shifts and political conflicts.

## **Then and now**

For six decades, education in Western Europe has experienced continuous and accelerating expansion. In most of pre-war Europe, the elementary school – connected to no system of qualification – marked for most students the limits of their education; universities were in effect closed to all but a tiny minority. Since 1945, secondary education has developed, even in Southern Italy and rural Spain, to become universal – the countries where secondary education was poorly developed have caught up. Levels of certification are rising – with spectacular increases in the numbers of students taking public examinations. Access to higher education has been broadened to the point where it is possible to speak in some countries of the ‘mass’ university. And beyond the limits of a school and university system in which students pass an increasing part of their lives, governments project for their populations a future of ‘lifelong learning’.<sup>3</sup>

In many respects, the pace of these developments has quickened over the last 15 years – it is in this period that the proportion of French students taking the baccalauréat has exceeded 60%, and in which the British government has set a target of 50% participation in higher education by 2010. At the same time, the requirements that policymakers place upon education are multiplying. Schools, colleges and universities are expected to take over many of the functions of the workplace as places where skills are developed and where the dispositions necessary for productive employment are formed. In societies that have become ethnically more diverse and economically more polarised, they are thought central to the management of cultural difference and the promotion of social inclusion. For students and for parents, they have taken on a new centrality, as providers of the credentials without which careers in the ‘knowledge society’ become hard to construct. In short, education – its demographic spread, its length and complexity, its importance to the lives of students – is more central to Western European societies than at any previous time.

In some senses, the developments of the last 15 years are a continuation of much earlier tendencies towards educational expansion and towards the inclusion of ever-larger sections of the population within formal education systems. But they have taken place in a new economic, social

and political context, marked by a profound economic and financial restructuring, whose coherence can be grasped through the term 'neo-liberalism'. Economically, neo-liberalism involves the internationalisation of production systems, the free movement of capital across national frontiers, the centrality of financial interests, deindustrialisation and the growth of the service sector and privatisation; at the social level, it involves increasing polarisation of wealth and poverty – often of a racialised kind – and a growing mobility and precariousness among large sections of the workforce. Politically, there has been both a contraction of the state and an intensification of its focus. David Harvey's lucid presentation suggests the coherence of these processes:

Neo-liberalism is in the first instance a theory of political economic practices that proposes that human well-being can best be advanced by liberating individual entrepreneurial freedom and skills within an institutional framework characterised by strong private property rights, free markets and free trade. The role of the state is to create and preserve an institutional framework appropriate to such practices ... If markets do not exist (in areas such as land, water, education, health care, social security, or environmental pollution) then they must be created, by state action if necessary. But beyond these tasks the state should not venture.<sup>4</sup>

In practice, Harvey makes clear, the state's role is far from the minimal one that pristine neo-liberalism suggests:

The process of neo-liberalisation has ... entailed much 'creative destruction', not only of prior institutional frameworks and powers (even challenging traditional forms of state sovereignty) but also of divisions of labour, social relations, welfare provisions, technological mixes, ways of life and thought, reproductive activities, attachments to the land and habits of the heart.<sup>5</sup>

In this work of 'bringing all human action into the domain of the market', the role of the state – in destroying previous social arrangements and in creating the legal, social and political framework for the expansion of neo-liberalism – is crucial. Yet the capacities of the state are often disavowed by governments. It has become a policymaking orthodoxy to claim that governments have little power to halt or differently inflect the economic forces which shape contemporary societies – they must submit to free market globalisation and to the agenda of the institutions which further its projects. But at the same time, though acquiescent in

relation to market trends, governments know they must in other ways be ceaselessly active, reshaping their social systems to respond to new exigencies – creating, in Tony Blair's words, 'a competitive basis of physical infrastructure and human skill' and managing the social conflicts attendant upon neo-liberal change.<sup>6</sup> The transformation of education is central to this reshaping, and has accordingly been placed at the centre of the agenda of national governments, and, increasingly, of the European Union itself. No aspect of education systems – from financing to forms of selection, from pedagogy to questions of management – is spared the critical scrutiny of governments committed to market-driven change.

In this book, we trace the impact of these processes on the school systems of England,<sup>7</sup> France, Germany, Italy and Spain. In each case, the effects are significant and continuing: it is possible to speak of a policy orthodoxy that affects all countries, and owes much to the interaction of the programmes of national governments with the work of international organisations – the European Union and the OECD, in particular – whose policy repertoire is growing in influence. But this orthodoxy is not, as it were, inscribed on blank and receptive surfaces. Its policies interact with national systems which bear the multiple marks of other social interests, and whose histories vary considerably. It combines in varying ways with already established conservative interests – business, the churches, educational hierarchies and philosophies. It confronts more (France) or less (England) organised opposition that draws from national traditions of educational reform and contestation. It has at its disposal state apparatuses whose competence and effectivity differ markedly from country to country. Thus, while it is possible to speak of a globalised policy agenda, this agenda – *pace* the influence of EU and OECD – takes different forms in different places – differences that we try to register throughout the chapters that follow. But in all cases, across very different national situations, there is one connecting thread: the new agenda has to work to defeat or assimilate the institutions, practices, values and social agents that were formed within an earlier educational order, and were shaped by reforming impulses of a markedly different kind. To make sense of contemporary educational conflicts, and of the difficulties that policy orthodoxy encounters, we need to sketch this earlier history.

## Post-war reform

Difference and commonality: we will attempt to attend to both. Across the five countries, there are certainly common tendencies of development. 'Modernisation' – albeit belated in Spain and Southern Italy – has been

their shared experience. Likewise, all have been affected to a greater or lesser degree by movements whose scope has been international: anti-fascism, 1968 – the *sessantotto* – and, in a different key, the complex of ideas and practices which has been called ‘progressive education’ or *Reformpädagogik*. But the tempo and extent of these influences differ widely from one country to another. The most important line of difference here separates those states where workers’ movements were strengthened in the course of the conflict with fascism, from those where these movements suffered defeats on a scale which left them for a long period disorganised to the point where they could not play a significant role in the shaping of post-war settlements. France, Italy and England stand on one side of this line, the Germany of Adenauer and the Spain of Franco on the other. In all countries, the characteristic demands of the post-war period for expansion and greater equality were felt, but the pace at which they were answered, and the forms which the answers took, varied according to the relative capacities of popular and conservative interests. The resulting pattern of unevenness retains its force today.

We can nonetheless attempt to summarise the elements of a common history. Eric Hobsbawm calls the 1950s the start of capitalism’s golden age, ‘when even weak economies like the British flourished and grew’.<sup>8</sup> Production increased rapidly, and industrialisation brought about an epochal shift of population from rural to urban areas. Rising wages allowed higher levels of consumption, sustaining the long boom of the post-war period. State spending – military and social – was likewise both an effect of economic expansion and a means of supporting it. Education was part of this general movement. As Papadopoulos puts it, in his insider’s history of the OECD, governments throughout Western Europe worked in the belief that ‘more and better education (was) an end in itself and at the same time one of the most important factors in economic growth’. Between 1960 and 1980, education spending grew at an unprecedented speed: in France from 2.4% of GDP to 5%; in West Germany from 2.9% to 4.7%; in Italy from 3.6% to 4.4%; and in Britain from 4.3% to 5.6%. Even in Francoist Spain, the 1970 Ley General de Educación prompted a doubling of expenditure in this period to 2.6%.<sup>9</sup> Human capital theory – premised on the belief that educational investment increased productivity and stimulated economic growth – provided a rationale for this expansion,<sup>10</sup> but as Papadopoulos notes, there were other motivations too. The inclusive and progressivist rhetoric of these decades owed something to the terms of the post-war settlement, in which notions of democracy and social citizenship were prominent.

The Education Act passed by the British parliament in 1944 was the culmination of a long campaign by the labour movement for 'secondary education for all'. In the aftermath of fascism, the post-war constitution of the Italian Republic declared that education was a universal right, and guaranteed the intellectual freedom of teachers. In France, the 1946 constitution spoke of 'equal access' to education, training and culture; and the Langevin-Wallon report of 1947 had insisted that the task of education was a broad one – to construct 'the man, the citizen, the worker'.<sup>11</sup> Schooling was thus at the heart of 'a political project concerning the social tie' and became a means by which an educator-state could construct 'a public, national space'.<sup>12</sup>

This was the climate in which secondary education was expanded to involve groups new to secondary levels of education. In England, the school-leaving age was raised to 15 in 1947. In France the Berthoin reforms undertaken by the Fifth Republic in 1959 extended compulsory education to the age of 16. In Italy, where both industrialisation and mass scholarisation occurred at a relatively late point, the proportion of 14-year olds attending school rose from 20% in 1945 to 59% in 1962.<sup>13</sup> Accompanying these changes, which brought a new population into the secondary school, was a promise of equal opportunity, defined primarily in terms of access to schooling for working-class groups.

## **A second wave of reform**

Almost from the beginning the legitimacy of the new educational systems was called into question by precisely those groups which had been addressed by the rhetoric of inclusive change. Expansion was to an important extent driven by demand – the demand of new sections of students and parents for higher levels of qualification. But from their view point, the systems of universal secondary education established after 1945 were restrictive, and the notion of equal opportunity on which they were based seemed largely of a formal character. 'Secondary education for all' meant no more than access for students of different social classes to types of school that differed widely and systematically in the type of progression to which they led. In the Italy of the 1960s, the numbers attending secondary school almost doubled, but – as Lumley argues – 'under the rhetoric of egalitarianism that proclaimed education as "a right for all" there was a strong current of meritocratic and technocratic thinking that clouded any perception of the emergence of new forms of discrimination and selection within the reformed secondary school'.<sup>14</sup> The English experience was similar: most secondary school

students attended institutions from which they would enter the labour market with no qualifications; in the early 1960s, only some 20% took public examinations at 16. In France, following Berthoin, the establishment in 1963 of the *carte scolaire* – linking school attendance to place of residence – marked an attempt to promote social mixing. The creation in the same year of *collèges d'enseignement secondaire* for 11- to 15-year olds brought together under one roof three different types of education, from pre-*lycéen* to pre-vocational. There was little possibility of student transfer between these streams, however, and there were vastly different prospects for the different student groups.<sup>15</sup> In West Germany, the numbers attending the *Gymnasium* – the academic secondary school – doubled between 1965 and 1970, without a significant lessening of the institution's social selectivity.<sup>16</sup> The class basis of these separatist arrangements was plainly demonstrated by sociological research in several countries,<sup>17</sup> and was unattractive to parents, whose ambitions were not for secondary education *per se* but for access to particular types of credentials. Nor did it satisfy the social democratic parties and teachers' organisations which, pushed from below, were radicalising their policies to call for a single form of unified secondary education, and in some cases to reinterpret educational opportunity less in terms of formal access than of outcome. 'The average woman or negro [*sic*] or proletarian or rural dweller should have the same level of educational attainment as the average male, white, white-collar suburbanite,' wrote the English sociologist and policy adviser A.H. Halsey; 'if not, there has been injustice'.<sup>18</sup>

Under these pressures, educational reform began to assume in some countries a new character, based on comprehensive (i.e. formally non-selective) secondary schooling, and expanded access to publicly recognised qualifications. This was the tendency of English reform after 1965, and was later embodied in Italy in the form of the *scuola media unificata*; Roberto Moscati suggests that in this period the discourse of education reform in Italy centred 'more or less consciously (on) the social division of labour and the class structure of society'.<sup>19</sup> The aftermath of 1968 stimulated a similar project in France. Such influence was strong enough, in France, Italy and England to inhibit the programmes of the right: Gaullism and Christian Democracy presided over the period of reform, and even English Conservatism abandoned for a while its commitment to selective schooling.

Changes in institutional form were accompanied by a modification of school cultures. Policymakers began to recognise that quantitative expansion was not enough: there needed also to be changes in curriculum and in pedagogy. According to Papadopoulos, 'public authorities were forced

to shift their attention to how, coping beyond numbers, their educational offerings could be made relevant to the diversified needs of their vastly expanded and variegated clientèle.<sup>20</sup> This 'quest for relevance and equality' may often have been fostered by institutions of the central state – in England, the Schools Council, entrusted with curriculum development, was founded in 1963. But in the context of the later 1960s, it was shaped also by other interests, whose force we need to recognise if we are to make full sense of the conflicts that now attend neo-liberal change. Between 1968 and 1974, a series of working-class protests and emerging social movements challenged inequalities, claimed rights of participation, demanded recognition and asserted militant identities. In this context, large numbers of teachers, recruited from the generation of 1968, came to think of the school as an institution where democracy, cultural recognition and equal opportunity could serve as central principles. The ideas of Freire became internationally known, the Bolshevik educators of the early 1920s were rediscovered and the (Tuscan) School of Barbiana's critique of established education was widely emulated.<sup>21</sup> The demands of social movements for children's rights, their acute perceptions of the ways in which education served to perpetuate class inequalities at the same time as it proclaimed education for all and their scathing critique of elite and commodified cultures did not provide the norms of the school system. Nor were they entirely coherent in themselves: in contrast to an earlier generation of reformers, the new left of the 1970s was inclined to see the school as an ideological state apparatus, functional to capitalism – yet this did not prevent its immersion in projects aimed at bettering the education of working-class students.

Despite, or perhaps because of, these difficulties, new movements for educational change exercised nonetheless a diffused and potent influence. In all the five countries in this study – including, at a later point, Spain – teachers sought to develop through localised initiatives an education practice that could transform the ways in which schooling connected to the majority of its students. We discuss the sweeping course – and eventual exhaustion – of these developments in a later chapter. Here it is enough to note how they deepened the project of reform: an agenda for schooling should include questions of ideology as well as institutional form, and be attentive to the content of education as much as to questions of access to its higher levels. It needed to be alert to the identities and tacit knowledges of excluded groups and critical of the vested interests embodied in the official curriculum that had 'emptied education of its potential as a means of realisation', preferring abstract slogans of educational freedom to concrete interest in 'society and its needs'.<sup>22</sup> Such an