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## ABSTRACT

A study examined the design, imagery, and language of the Web sites of six major Education Management Organizations (EMOs), companies that manage schools for profit. The six companies are Advantage Schools, Inc.; Beacon Education Management, Inc.; Edison Schools; The Leona Group; L.L.C.; Mosaica Education; and National Heritage Academies. The educational benefits promised by these companies and the strategies they use to attract students are compared with one another and with those of public schools. The primary conclusion is that the EMOs promise competitiveness, efficiency, and consumer choice, but may also ignore the concerns of equity, citizenship, and solidarity. The results also suggest that the actual difference between public and corporate education may be a difference in parental perception related to better corporate marketing, with advertising strategies based on misleading generalizations, evidence that may be absent or simplistic, and evocative rhetoric. Other concerns include: the need for continued corporate expansion to remain profitable, the tendency to have younger, and less experienced teachers or ones who do not belong to unions, and the reliance on parental volunteer work. EMO claims for having smaller classes and schools, longer school days, and more use of technology may be accurate. (Contains 42 references and 13 tables.) (RJK)

Moving Public Schools toward For-Profit Management: Privatizing the Public Sphere.  
Presentation at AERA Annual Meeting 2001, Seattle, Washington

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Introduction

Corporatization of the economy is a phenomenon that characterizes globalization. The increase of corporate management in the USA marks a world trend. Essentially, corporations avoid regulations and taxes that governments remove to attract their business. A major consequence is the primacy of corporate interests over public needs and values. My focus in this study is the increasing for-profit management of public schools and its discursive context. I examine which companies are involved, their educational discourses, and the strategies they use to attract students. Through this analysis, I provide a critique of the movement toward corporate management of public education, and the discourses and policies that support it in the United States. Theoretical analysis can unpack those discourse-practices "naturalized" by hegemonic ideologies. As a part of a larger study that is in progress, the specific discourse-practice I analyze here is the construction of "public" that Education Management Organizations (EMOs) make in their marketing strategies. In this paper I will argue that EMOs build a concept of "public" that diminishes traditional public schools, makes corporate public schools appear as the best, and veils their true nature as private enterprises. Corporate discourses are persuasive because they impact the common sense<sup>i</sup> of people. Private companies appear as able to offer something that education--and politicians-- seem to have lost: in managerial language, quality and efficiency, in political language, credibility and

legitimacy.

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The ideological context of this phenomenon is that political and social sciences, including education, are dominated by economic discourses. As such, economic techniques, meanings, perspectives, and recommendations are usually presented as universal and neutral (Fairclough, 1995). Not surprisingly, neoliberal theories dominate economic discourse with significant support of neoconservatives in the political arena<sup>ii</sup> (Apple, 1996). The attack against the welfare state and the reduction of state intervention and regulation characterize these movements. Decreasing social spending has been their principal goal, and privatization of public services has become their major strategy (Gamarra, 1994; Kenway, 1997). Privatization of educational systems during the last few years fits into this larger ideological shift. These policies are presented as successful in the educational discourse in different countries; thus the "common sense" of school privatization is reinforced (Apple, 2000; Burbules & Torres, 2000). Some of the arguments that justify those initiatives are the "crisis" of public education, the demand for parent school choice, the loss of legitimacy of public institutions, and the attack against bureaucracy and politicians (Chubb & Moe, 1990; Spring, 1997, 1998).

### Corporate public schools

Corporate involvement in schools is not new. For many years several corporations were present in education managing auxiliary services, providing textbooks, tests, job training, program assessment, custodial services, and even instructional programs (Molnar, 1996; Boyles, 2000). What is more recent is the advance of for-profit corporations entering the administration of education, managing schools and districts. According to Furtwengler (1998), the investment community coined the acronym

Educational Management Organizations (EMO's) to name these for-profit, private companies, that manage schools. An increasing number of businessmen and investors are viewing education as an open field to expand their opportunities. "They think that the technological and political problems confronting education today are similar to those faced by the health care industry 20 years ago" (p. 45), and are proposing a similar solution: privatization. With 53 million students (K-12), and a reported \$300 billion a year in revenues (1999), education is big business in the United States. That is why business magazines and newspapers publish more information concerning the increased interest in this phenomenon than educational journals.

Business Week, for example, dedicated the cover of the February 10, 2000, issue to "For-Profit Schools", with reports from Massachusetts, Michigan, Philadelphia, and Arizona (Symonds, Palmer, Lindorff, & McCann, 2000). In a previous issue, an article affirmed that "The advent of the knowledge economy, combined with mounting dissatisfaction with the dismal state of many public schools, is creating vast openings for for-profit companies." For those companies, education is just like any other industry, and to make profit they have to attract consumers and lower costs.

In many states, charter schools offer one of the easy ways to access public money. They are politically more palatable to the public than vouchers and give schools waivers from the district rules. Given the flexibility and/or ambiguity of state laws (Pini, 2000), several states charter regulations are favorable to for-profit schools. According to Business Week, "The charter school movement has fueled for-profits," and even if most charters are non-profit, the for-profit operators are gaining market and growing rapidly (Symonds, 2000). In 1998, a study found that for-profits controlled about 10% of the

charter schools in the United States (Furtwengler, 1998). Just in one state, Michigan, the percent of charter schools operated by management companies has increased from 16.7% in 1995/96 to 72.4% in 1999/2000 (Miron, 2000).

### The struggle for meaning

Public school systems have been one of the pillars of democracy in many countries, allowing an increasing number of people to have a better opportunity to exercise their civil rights. Critics have called for improvement and democratization, but in these times the question seems to be whether public school systems still make sense to the market society. Proponents of market forces do not have a monolithic position with respect to this issue. Even though I am aware of the differences among market advocates, I will take them as a totality, since they place their private interests before social ones. From the perspective I adopt, public school systems, despite room for improvement, make a lot of sense to the millions of children for whom school is almost the only opportunity to increase their "cultural capital" in an increasingly unjust world (Bourdieu, 1997).

The phenomenon of corporate involvement in public schools has had an impressive growth in the last decade. Its intellectual support has also developed, including the ideas that private management is better than public, that school choice is going to fix educational problems, that the market can do everything better and more efficiently than government, and that educational bureaucracy and unions are hampering reform. The "manufactured crisis" of public education (Berliner & Biddle, 1995) is

representative of the broader neoliberal attack on a variety of public institutions, for which privatization is the “quick fix.”

Powerful interest groups and corporations have benefited from these changes. They have fewer regulations to their for-profit activities, and the extension of their goals to every social activity appears totally legitimate. Conservative ideology has redefined traditional liberal and progressive values, such as freedom and participation, to serve its particular interests.

Sophisticated and powerful strategies are used to transform business discourses into collective ideas, making corporate interests appear as the political expression of the entire society (Popkewitz, 1997). One example is the idea that the future of the nation depends on public education, but that it is not responding to the challenge. Also, these strategies are used to make biased interpretations become expert knowledge for scholars or “common sense” for common people (Fairclough, 1995; Torfing, 1999).

Economic values such as competitiveness, efficiency, and consumer choice have replaced democratic values such as equity, citizenship, and solidarity. Building human capital<sup>iii</sup> is the major goal of this new educational thinking. In this efficientist perspective, all of those who cannot achieve high standards will be taught just the “basics.” Two different conceptions of education and society are at the core of the struggle concerning schools: Education, as either public or private good; and society, as either citizens in a political system, or producers and consumers in a market system (Anderson, 1998; Labaree, 1997).

The consequences are that these discourse-practices lead to more inequality and segregation. For example, research on reform in other developed countries (Gewirtz, Ball,

& Bowe, 1995; Lauder & Hughes, and Watson, Waslander, Thupp, Strathdee, Simiyu, Dupuis, McGlenn, & Hamlin, 1999; Patrinos & Ariasingam, 1998; Whitty, Power, & Halpin, 1998) suggests that those who benefit are the same as those who already had privileges and choices. In this context, the fast growth of for-profit school management in some states represents the greatest threat to education for all, not only in terms of equity, but also in terms of viewing education as a much broader democratic practice that is impossible to reduce to skills training, standards, and the narrow goals of economic interests.

### The Public Sphere

What happens to the public sphere with regard to democracy as “the collective and conscious decision on the process of material production of life, . . . the constitution of society in persons who decide their destiny?” (Lechner, 1986, quoted by Pini, 1993, p. 7, translated by author). Although the frontier between public and private is not always clearly delimited (Buenfil Burgos, 1997; Fraser, 1998), I mean by “public” the common terrain that constitutes society in spite of social antagonisms. Attributes of “public” are universal access to institutions or services without discrimination and the administrative regulations that entails protecting public interest from particular and more powerful interests. Part of the social struggle for the appropriation of meanings is directed at strengthening or weakening this notion of “public.” The reduction or redefinition of the public -in this case public education- by particular power groups serves to erode democracy, which only appears to be democracy, since it maintains its formal institutions while its real nature is increasingly elitist.

## Methodology

Here, I analyze the EMOs webpages' texts applying critical discourse analysis (Fairclough, 1989) within the broader context of the current hegemonic ideologies (Gramsci, 1977). Fairclough (1989) distinguishes three stages of critical discourse analysis: description of the text, interpretation of the relationship between text and interaction, and explanation of the relationship between interaction and social context. As part of this discourse analysis, I will describe and analyze the visual and verbal features of the companies' websites. Therefore I will divide the analysis into two large levels. The first level is related to the appearance and the communicational techniques used as the first elements of attraction. I will examine the design, images, language, number of pages, and sections. The use of the vocabulary and the imagery conform familiar advertising strategies that are usually used by companies to build relations, images, and consumers.

Building relations means to personalize the communication, but because the conditions of the advertising discourse, companies use "synthetic personalization." Fairclough (1989) defines it as a "compensatory tendency to give the impression of treating each of the people 'handled' en masse as an individual" (p. 62). Companies build image as an ideological construct through visual and verbal cues, the frame it evokes, and the association to a lifestyle. Allusions such as "world-class" education and "new era in public education" are closely related to positive values related to success and competency. Building consumer is related to "naturalized common sense. The ideal occupier of this subject position belongs to a community whose needs and values and tastes are those embedded in this frame" (p. 207). In this case it is a community that is preoccupied with



their children education and future. EMOs provide coherent and attractive models for consumer needs, values, and behavior.

The second and deeper level involves the interpretation and explanation of their discourses in the social context. The interpretation of the intertextual context is one of the tools to establish the presuppositions or the assumptions taken for granted as common for all the audiences. There are also significant “silences” that can be interpreted through the intertextuality. According to the same author: "Textual analysis can often give excellent insights about what is 'in' a text, but what is absent from a text is often just as significant from the perspective of sociocultural analysis" (p. 5).

#### What and Where are They?

The EMOs I chose to analyze are six of the most important companies in size and growth in public education. They are Advantage Schools, Inc., Beacon Education Management, Inc., Edison Schools, The Leona Group, L. L. C., Mosaica Education, and National Heritage Academies. The information I present here comes from the respective webpages of the companies (Advantage Schools, 2000; Beacon Education Management, 2000; Edison Schools, 2000, 2001; Leona Group, 2000,2001; National Heritage Academies, 2000). The largest, Edison, manages 113 schools in 22 states, and the smallest, Mosaica, 12 schools in 5 states (updated Jan. 2001). EMOs' central offices are in Massachussets, New York, Michigan, and California, far from many of the schools or districts where they operate. This detail is interesting from both the administrative and the political points of view.

From the point of view of the administration, the location of the headquarters shows a corporate centralized organization and scale operations, that are considered more efficient and cost effective. But it also generates large parallel school systems that create and augment private and public bureaucracies that cost a lot of money paid for by the taxpayers. Charter school reform, by itself, creates a number of new bureaucratic positions in order to authorize and evaluate each individual charter. If one thinks about adding more layers of private bureaucracy, it is difficult to imagine that staff duplication could increase efficiency. From a political perspective, the increased central bureaucracies appear in contradiction to what advocates of private management and the same EMOs say: that they address community needs while bureaucracies keep people away from decisions about their own problems.

The following table summarizes the information that the companies give about themselves on their websites. It shows the different sizes, expansion through the states, and location of the Corporate Offices:

Number of Schools, Distribution in the Country, and Corporate Sites of the Selected Companies (Jan. 2001)

	<b>Advantage Schools, Inc.</b>	<b>Beacon Education Management, Inc.</b>	<b>Edison Schools</b>	<b>The Leona Group, L. L. C.</b>	<b>Mosaica Education</b>	<b>National Heritage Academies</b>
Number of schools	15	27 full service*	113 ** 89	34	12	18
States where they operate	AZ (1), DC (1), GA (1), MA (1), MI (3), NC (1), NJ (2), PA (1), TX(4)	MA (6), MI (16), MO (4), NC (2), NY (2),	CA (9-8), CO (6-5), CT (2-1), DC (4), DE (2-1), FL (1), GA (3), IL (7-5), IA (1), KS (4), MD (3), MA (4-2), MI (27-18), MN (5-4), MO (5-4), NJ (4-3), NY (3-2), NC (3), OH (3-2), PA (3-2), TX (12), WI (2-1)	AZ (13), MI (22)	CO (1), DE (1), MI (5), NJ (1), PA (4)	MI (13), NC (4), NY (1)
Corporate Office	Boston, MA	Westborough, MA	New York, NY	East Lansing, MI	San Rafael, CA & New York, NY	Grand Rapids, MI

Source: websites of each company.

\* Beacon offers full or partial services to schools.

\*\* Edison counts as two or three different schools some schools that have the same principal, address, and phone number. I considered those schools as one.

### The Means is the Message<sup>1</sup>

In this section I will describe the website of each company focusing on their featured aspects. Communicational characteristics are key aspects of every message. Before and beyond the content, visual and textual stimuli are strong tools to attract and convince people. Internet means are constantly applying and recreating the huge amount of strategies borrowed from the tried and true advertising business. Edison website, for example, shows the biggest number of files and the most sophisticated design. The quality and quantity of its pages, sections, links, drawings, and pictures are outstanding among the companies I studied. National Heritage Academies has a more traditional style, Mosaica Education more classic, and Advantage Schools a more modern one. These three follow Edison in appeal and beauty. Beacon focuses more on content: quality services and prestigious members and visitors (Lamar Alexander and a Bush nephew). The Leona Group cancelled its text-only webpage and is developing a more appealing one.

### Description of Each Site

The table presents a synthesis the features I took to examine: design, images, language, number of pages, and sections.

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<sup>1</sup> Title borrowed from Marshall McLuhan's well-known book

Features	Advantage Schools	Beacon Education Management	Edison Schools	Leona Group	Mosaica	National Heritage Academies
<b>Design</b>	stylized drawing, modern design, nice colors	Nice and simple; scarce distracting elements	Beautiful and careful design; artistic details; soft colors, nice drawing on nature; made by "experts"	Serious business design, just text no drawing	classic, academic style; nice colors and big icon in the first page and then just one small one in the following	traditional brochure of prestigious school style
<b>Sections</b>	About Advantage; The Advantage School Design; School Locations; Submit Request to Attend; Press Room; Contact Us; Careers; Home; What's New	Beacon News; Services; Schools; Educational Links; History; Careers at Beacon; Contact Us	Edison Schools; overview; design; schools; tours; news; feature; contact us. Amazing quantity of links	Welcome; Services; School Sites; Employment Opportunities; Management Staff; Frequent Asked Questions about charter schools; Guest Book; Other sites of interest (under construction)	Home; What we do; Paradox; Paradigm; Where to go; Program; Job openings; Charter Schools Founders and partnership school Questionnaires	Welcome; Why National Heritage Academies?; Academies; Careers; News & Events; Q&A; Contact Us
<b>Number of Pages</b>	50 counted	25 counted	200 counted	25 counted 8 counted	50 counted	31 counted
<b>Language</b>	compelling	managerial	clear and repetitive; colloquial; short texts	formal, legal, serious (changing)	cult, trustworthy to middle-upper class	rhetoric style, solid values, short texts
<b>Pictures</b>	8	3	39	none in the old one 4 in the new one	none	23 with the text and many w/titles

Advantage. Advantage's site has a modern design, stylized drawings, and attractive colors. The language is compelling and persuasive. The information is presented through the following sections, with links from the front page: About Advantage, The Advantage School Design, School Locations, Submit Request to Attend, Press Room, Contact Us, Careers, Home, and What's New. In the second page, "About Advantage," a picture of a cute African American smiling child grabs one's attention. Above this picture, a quotation of a teacher from an Advantage charter school presents the effectiveness of Advantage's method very expressive words:

"I have parents coming up to me. . . thanking me, after only two and half months (in the new school), with tears in their eyes... And I say... it's the curriculum. I have the tools. Advantage has given me the tools... (This curriculum) works with children all across the board... It just seems to be the answer. I'm just glad to be a part of it." --Arlene Burke, Teacher Mystic Valley Advantage Regional Charter School.<sup>1</sup>

The other text close to the child's picture is the statement of Advantage's mission, that implies the wish to rescue disadvantaged children and at the same time the decision to push them to the top: "To create a new generation of world-class urban public schools that will enable all children--regardless of socioeconomic background or prior academic performance--to reach the heights of academic achievement." The picture in the center, together with the text on the left about Advantage's mission, and the teacher's speech above the picture, clearly shape the face of the audience (minorities and inner city parents) and also the message: parents and teachers support Advantage because they have seen that the curriculum works. The use of the expressions "all across the board" and

“enable all children” gives us the idea of the universal effectiveness of the private solution, contrasting to the lack of answers of public schools were these children attend.

In the following screen, “Advantage School Design,” another picture shows some girls working in a classroom, with a quote from Aristotle above: “It makes no small difference... whether we form habits of one kind or of another from our very youth; it makes... all the difference.” Actually, the name of Aristotle is no small support for an educational enterprise. The kinds of habits youth form are closely related to ethical values, that were Aristotle’s concerns then as they are for us now. The difference between us is that he advocated a democracy for free citizens who could think of and enjoy metaphysics because their slaves did all the work. However, Advantage searched for its roots there.

Back to the format, in addition to the links to each section, the webpage has links to each piece of News, to Schools and Parent Newsletters, to Contact Persons, to the company Departments, to Corporate Opportunities, and to Apply for a Position. I could count at least fifty pages with eight pictures. Besides the pictures I described above, there are five multiethnic group pictures with all the names of the teachers and staff who received CEO awards, in Advantage News, July 14, 2000. The title is “Advantage Honors Outstanding Teachers and Staff. School and Corporate Stars Receive CEO Awards to Rousing Applause.” The ceremony was in Boston and the text makes a personal description of each one emphasizing the high qualities of the personnel: “dedication,” “positive energy,” “innovation,” “passion about directed instruction,” “outstanding skills”, “volunteer extra duties,” and “customer service.” One more picture of an African American cute child is in the page “Advantage Careers,” with the following quote above:

“My son and my nephew have made dramatic improvements in all subjects, particularly with their reading. Keep up the good work!”--Edgar Zambrano, Parent.” The text that the picture accompanies, destined to attract teachers and staff, tells us that:

At Advantage Schools, our commitment to world-class standards is reflected in our diverse, highly motivated, and talented team of professionals. We select our staff from among the very best in education, finance, business and the public sector. Each member of our team is passionate about helping children succeed and relentless in the pursuit of excellence.

All of that is confirmed for the awards they proudly give to them.

Beacon. Beacon Education’s site is nice and simple, with scarce graphics (small icons) besides the information. The language is managerial and informative. The sections are Beacon News, Services, Schools, Educational Links, History, Careers at Beacon, and Contact Us. Two news were emphasized in the first page (oct./00) which titles were linked to their respective texts in “Beacon News:” The first title was “Lamar Alexander, former United States Secretary of Education, has joined the Board of Directors of Beacon Education Management, Inc.” The second was “Careers with Beacon - New listing for Director of Education.” The first one is far away the most important and Beacon dedicates a lot of space to explain why.

The webpage has links to each section, to its e-mail, to Legal Information and Copyright Policy, to each piece of News, to Beacon Human Resources Information System -Secure Site (User ID and Password Required), to current Schools and Services, to each Educational link (15), to Positions’ Description, to School Openings, and to the

Consulting Firm that receives the applications. I counted twenty five pages with three pictures. Two of the pictures are of Mr. Bush (a President nephew), under the title “George Bush Visit New Beacon School. Nephew Tours Thurgood Marshall Academy.” They show him visiting a school with staff members, talking with an African American member of the Board in each of them. The other, very small, picture shows one meeting when the school was visited by Selectmen. All of the pictures are under Beacon News.

Edison. Edison Schools’ site has a beautiful and careful design with artistic details, soft colors, and images elements of nature. The language of the first part is colloquial, clear and repetitive to the redundancy, formatted in short texts. It becomes more managerial and informative in the section for investors. The design and the language suggest that the webpage was made by multidisciplinary experts. The sections, that have amazing quantity and variety of links, are: Edison Schools, Overview, Design, Schools, Tours, News, Feature, and Contact Us. From the top of the front page, a picture of an African American kid smiling and raising his hand leads the presentation [Edison Schools, 2001 #64]. Last year the picture of a blonde little girl used to be on that same place, what could indicate a switch in the prioritized audience [Edison Schools, 2000 #60].

Some of the links to each section take different names and journeys. This is not just the most complex, but also the longest company’s website I found. I have counted around two hundred pages with twenty nine pictures. One of its first pages is “Edison team.” The title of the text is “People Behind Edison” and the praising text as well as some remarkable members of the twelve staff list show great consistency. The text tells as that they represent many years of education and management experience. What some of



them such as Chris Whittle, Benno C. Schmidt, Jr., and John Chubb also represent is related to privatization of public education. The list is on the right with links for each name, and it omits the name of Chester Finn Jr., of the conservative Hudson Institute, who was one of the consultants on the project. He has a long career as scholar backed by a network of foundations to advocate right-wing causes (Spring, 1997).

One of Edison principles, diversity, is stressed through the many pictures that accompany the texts. The pictures are beautiful and many, some of them repeated in different pages. For example, we can see the picture of three smiling kids, two African American and one White kid, two girls and one boy, once in Philosophical Groundings and once in Research behind School Design, both under Company Profile, under Overview. The picture of a cute non-White child trying to reach something is there five times: one in Edison's Research, one in Primary Research behind the School Design, one in Secondary Research, one in Inspiration, and the last in A Set of Guiding Principles, all of them under Research, under Design. The picture of a blond girl smiling and raising her hand (the same that use to be in the front page, replaced by the African American kid) is eighteen times, on the top of each page/slot of the Edison's day timeline. Besides the goal of making the site appealing and showing diversity, the pictures also accompany and emphasize the texts presenting technological resources and everybody smiling and working.

Leona. The Leona Group last year site (now changing) had a formal business design, with text only and not any drawing. The language was very formal and legal. Its sections were: Welcome, Services, School Sites, Employment Opportunities, Management Staff,

Frequent Asked Questions about charter schools, Guest Book, and Other sites of interest. It had links to each section and pages inside each section, to page top, to e-mail, to each school in Michigan and Arizona, and to Detroit schools map. The section "Welcome" includes three parts that summarize the main information. These are: Introduction, Additional Information, and Philosophy. From the beginning they say that their schools are free, and explicitly advocate choice and competition to get quality.

The old site did not have any pictures in its twenty five pages, but the new one (in construction) has already four pictures in its eight pages. Three pictures on the new front page show: a group of diverse students in class, an African American kid working in his desk, and some girls working on computers. Under "Michigan Employment Information" there is a picture of an African American teacher with a student looking at a U.S. map.

Mosaica. Mosaica's site design has a classic, academic style, with nice colors and a big icon and some small ones on the front page. The following pages just have the small icons/links. The language is cult, familiar and trustworthy to middle-upper class. Its sections are: Home, What we do, Paradox, Paradigm, Where to go, Program, Job openings, and Charter Schools Founders and Partnership School Questionnaires. Small icons link to each section, to the top of each page, to schools operating, to news, to schools opening Fall 2001, and to educational links. I could count fifty pages with no pictures. The text is one of the most overtly ideological from the beginning, talking about the need of educational reform to revitalize public education with the paradigm of a world-class education. One of the important sections that links to the from page is PARADOX, where they explain why EMOs are necessary, in spite of "private

management of public schools might seem like a PARADOX.” The other very important section that also links to the front page is the curriculum: “Our PARAGON™ Curriculum brings to life a world of ideas that will make a world of difference for our children.”

Mosaica Educational Model includes a common schedule for every school: “Morning Session: Traditional Core Subjects and Essential Skills”, and “Afternoon Session: The Paragon Curriculum, A World of Ideas That Make a World of Difference.”

Difference is one of the favorite concepts companies use and “make a difference” seems to be obviously associated to enhanced and works as a guaranty that the different (private management of public schools) is better.

National Heritage. National Heritage Academies’ website style reminds me a classic colorful brochure of a prestigious school. Its rhetorical language emphasizes traditional values through short texts and a lot of pictures. The sections are: Welcome, Why National Heritage Academies?, Academies, Careers, News & Events, Q&A, and Contact Us. It has links to each section and pages inside each section, and to each question and answer. The pictures all together show diversity, a rich learning environment, and proud order. On the Welcome page, for example, a picture shows a classroom with a White teacher smiling to an African American Student, the US flag on the wall, and many posters and maps. This is the only EMO’s website where the US flag appears frequently on the pictures. One can see it as a common symbol of American heritage, public institution, and world competency, in agreement with its discourse.

The section “Why National Heritage Academies?” has seven different pages as answers: Charter Schools, Culture of Learning, Academic Excellence, Lasting Moral

Guidance, Parents & Teachers, Pulling it All Together, and Parent Testimonials.

Basically, all of them remark the main features the company emphasizes all along the website: academic excellence, moral guidance, safety, choice, and parents support. The first of these pages, for example, reads:

National Heritage Academies is a nurturing educational community. Founded on academic excellence and sound moral guidance, it is a safe and welcoming environment. Here, students can discover talents, gather knowledge and learn responsibility. It is a training ground for the next generation of enlightened, ethical adults.

The adjacent picture shows a classroom where a White teacher is helping a White student, both of them females. Next, under the title “Charter Schools: a new era in public education,” the second page is dedicated to advocate choice and define charter schools. School choice is affirmed as an established and universal fact, while assigned public school appears as a very old story. NHA places itself in the role of “independent” instead of a *private-managed* schools, and responsible while public schools are not. The text omits to mention the profit involved in the operations of the private managed charters and at the same time presents private management as intrinsically more reliable:

There was a day when parents simply did not have the kinds of educational choices available today. That day is past. Charter schools are independently-operated public schools. There is no charge to parents because funding comes from state tax dollars. Charter schools must meet the same requirements as traditional public schools, but also answer directly to parents. Partnering with

community-based school boards and parents results in a responsiveness rarely seen in traditional public schools.

This text is accompanied by two pictures: one shows children who arrive school by car talking to a suited man at the front of the school, the other presents a group of young children--Black and White-- at work on a table with many elements to manipulate.

I counted thirty pages with twenty three pictures accompanying the texts and many more smaller on the titles of each page. The quality of the pictures is remarkable. The scenes of the pictures were carefully selected by Heritage to reinforce the text content in every case: diversity (except no African American teachers), single parent families, motivated kids, satisfied parents, order, patriotic values, personalized attention and teaching, rich, gentle, and comfortable learning environment, ample facilities, parents involvement.

The following tables synthesize the use of the verbal elements of advertising in order to build relations, image, and consumers, in the texts examined:

#### Building Relations

Relations	Words
personalization	my son and my nephew thanking me with tears in their eyes I'm just glad to be part of it Keep up the good work! (parent) letters and testimonials of parents

## Building Image

Image	Words
Solution, answer, good education	Advantage has given me the tools it just seems to be the answer dramatic improvements improve public schools
New, different, competitive, leader	brings to life a world of ideas that will make a world of difference a world of ideas that make a world of difference open portals of opportunity new generation of world-class urban public schools no small difference it makes all the difference
Outstanding teachers	*caring, enthusiasm, talented, experienced, responsiveness, ongoing professional development **professional, relationship with parents, passion, motivated, committed, classroom management skills, communication *** creative, high expectations, role model, energy, teamwork, certified, accountable, effective, problem-solving abilities **** positive attitude, flexibility, citizenship, dedication, eagerness to improve, superior, morale, qualified, challenging, high academic standards, excellence, technology, satisfaction *****outstanding, devoted, exceptional, extraordinary kindness, ability to motivate, art of teaching, unflagging optimism, extraordinary listening skills, initiative, model of efficiency and dependability, never late, bastion of encouragement, practical suggestions, successful strategies, outstanding respect, enthusiasm, top-notch, highly skilled, dynamic, success, diverse, innovative, proven, free, licensed, excitement, nurturing, star teachers, purpose, life-long learners, collaboration, vision and integrity, professional track, highest quality, aware, encouraging, knowledge, leaders

\*Words repeated at least five times in the webpages in relation to teachers

\*\* Words repeated at least four times in the webpages in relation to teachers

\*\*\* Words repeated at least three times in the webpages in relation to teachers

\*\*\*\* Words repeated at least twice in the webpages in relation to teachers

\*\*\*\*\* Just once

## Building Consumers

Consumer	Words
Wills and concerns	nurturing educational community safe and welcoming environment students can discover talents, gather knowledge, and learn responsibility it is a training ground for the next generation of enlightened, ethical adults
Needs	works with children all across the board will enable all children--regardless of socioeconomic background or prior academic performance
Provided Model	In the tradition of the classical liberal arts education envisioned by the ancient Greeks. broaden their minds expand their horizons the result of a comprehensive and development effort together they represent many years of education and management experience

### The School of Your Dreams

The central idea the largest for-profit companies that manage public education transmit through the evocative images and rhetoric of their webpages' presentations, is that they are different, new, enhanced, and great. Advantage Schools presents itself as "Transforming urban public education," and Beacon Education Management, Inc., as "Lighting the way" . Edison Schools asks "Where can one get a World Class Education?" The answer you read is "Edison Schools" The Leona Group, L.L.C. defines itself as "a private management organization that works with communities to operate schools in a new way" . Mosaica Education says: "We've designed this web site to show you how Mosaica is actualizing the new PARADIGM in education" . National Heritage Academies President, Peter G. Ruppert, is quoted in their welcome page: "When

the very first National Heritage Academies campus opened in 1995, it ushered in a new era in public education” .

Different from what? New in reference to what? Enhanced in what way? Great for whom? One can find the answers on the same websites, through what they say or through what they suggest: different from traditional public schools; new in respect to the traditional curriculum; enhanced way of managing and teaching compared to public schools; great for children, parents, community, teachers, and the country damaged by *failing* public education. Advertising shows that they compete with common public schools for the *clientele* presenting the best image to parents and students. One also can think that companies want to show that they are different and better from the other EMOs that compete for public money.

On the other hand, since charter schools usually have waiting lists for students, one could say that the virtual image's competition has two other targets. The first one is the struggle for social legitimacy accomplished through advocating choice and through showing excellence and commitment, which fight against the suspicions and critiques awakened in people because of the idea of private profit made from public money. The second is the race for investors, that in the companies that went public, Edison Schools, for example, is more explicit than in the others. Last year Edison included the question, “Looking for investor information?,” in one of the first pages of its website, under “Company Profile” (Edison Schools, 2000). In 2001 the question was moved to the last section, under “Contact us,” linking it to a very long section called Investor Relations (Edison Schools, 2001) .



### Introducing Themselves: The Ideal Virtual Image

With particularities that show differences in each company identity, audience, and focus, the general message remains the same within a range of classic, scientific, managerial, traditional, efficient, or childcentered visions. On the very first pages, one can see the similarities and variations. Some of them, like Advantage Schools, choose to point out first their commitment to children. Their emotional welfare, their needs, their motivation, their academic learning, their safety, their knowledge, and character integration and balance are addressed in a very expressive way. The words “imagine,” “conceive of,” “envision” give us the idea of something that has not been experienced yet, like a dream. Later in the text, they confirm that this is a dream that they can make real and extend its benefits to the entire community:

Imagine a place children love to go... a place where they are challenged... a place where their extraordinary potential is recognized and their accomplishments are rewarded. Conceive of a place where five-year-olds are reading, eight-year-olds are conversing in a second language, and ten-year-olds are solving algebraic equations. Envision a safe place... a place where strong minds and strong character are equally valued, and each is nurtured. Advantage Schools is creating such places in cities nationwide through the development of high-performance charter public schools. Imagine what we could do for your child and your community. Then stop imagining and make your dream a reality (Advantage, 2000).

This presentation includes some very attractive elements for caring parents, especially worried parents of children who attend urban schools: motivation, student needs,

incentive, excellence, safety, integration of character and knowledge, and community. Parents concern about children's welfare achievement and security are the implicit presuppositions.

Similarly, in a more austere tone but with deeper symbolic implications for other kinds of audiences, the National Heritage Academies President's welcome emphasizes commitment to children's academic learning, excellence, and moral values:

Right from the start, our mission has been to challenge students to achieve their greatest potential and deliver on the promise of higher standards, academic excellence and sound moral guidance. National Heritage Academies seek to raise the standards by which all academic institutions are judged. It's a new day. The world will demand more from your child. It's time to expect more from their education (National, 2000).

The comparative "more from," without any object, brings up the question, *More of what?* And the implicit answer read in intertextual context refers to results, quality, return, anything that at NHA is at a higher level than at the regular "academic institutions." The dramatic phrase, "It's a new day," implies that children have the possibility of waking up from the nightmare of *mediocre* education, and "The world will demand more from your child" has a strong resonance with both patriotic feelings and competition related to the role of this country leading the world, and individual competition for career, job, and money. This is another presupposition of the connection between nation and competition, very common in many American politician discourses.

Other companies, like Beacon and Edison Schools, using a more business style, prefer to start showing their background, expansion, and coverage as a proof of their trustworthiness:

Beacon Education Management is a K-12, education services company based in Westborough, Massachusetts. Beacon offers contracted management services to charter school boards. Beacon and its subsidiaries currently operate 27 charter schools with approximately 4,700 students in Massachusetts, Michigan, North Carolina and Missouri and are finalizing projects in other states, including New York and Pennsylvania .

These 27 schools have full management services, and some others have partial services. Beacon does not just offer schools management, but one of the largest range of services of any company I studied, from which the boards can choose a “tailored package.”

Edison Schools, the biggest and oldest of the EMOs I looked at, and the most covered by the media, used to be Edison Project, a large pilot experiment of for-profit schools founded by Christopher Wittle. Targeting charters was the great solution to Wittle’s money problems when school vouchers left the federal agenda after 1992 (Spring, 1997)

Edison Schools, founded in 1992 as The Edison Project, is the country's leading private manager of public schools. Edison has now implemented its school design in 113 public schools, including many charter schools, which it operates under management contracts with local school districts and charter boards. More than 57,000 students currently attend Edison partnership schools (Edison, 2000).

Meanwhile, The Leona Group just asserts its superiority: “The Leona Group is a national leader among school management organizations, with greater background in operating independent public schools than any other company operating today” (Leona, 2000). Mosaica builds an image of excellence through the design: an enormous, classic Greek building with small people *entering knowledge* together. And the text reads: “Our PARAGON™ curriculum brings to life a world of ideas that will make a world of difference for our children (linked to Paragon page).“ From the very beginning its appeal is “opportunity,” which implies *do not miss it*: “Please take this opportunity.” Opportunity for what? The answer follows: “Mosaica Education’s purpose is to open portals of opportunity for children and adults through excellence in education” (Mosaica, 2000). That presupposes also that you do not get opportunity for having excellence elsewhere, like traditional public schools.

All of the companies mention the “public” character of those schools that they manage or aspire to manage, and all of them advertise that they operate charter schools. Two of them emphasize that there is no tuition for parents. The Leona Group announced on the first page of its old webpage, in capitalized large print: “Schools managed by The Leona Group are FREE” . National Heritage Academies mentions it on the third page, as part of the charter schools description: “There is no charge to parents because funding comes from state tax dollars” . The follow tables show the advertising use of the words to build , relations, image, and customers, in the presentation of the EMOs webpages:

### Building Relations

Relations	Words
synthetic personalization	your child and your community make your dream a reality your child for children and adults

### Building Image

Image	Words
New, different, light, revolutionary	transforming urban public education lighting the way works with communities to operate schools in a new way the new PARADIGM in education new era in public education it's a new day
Nation, world leader, competition	world-class education country's leading national leader the world will demand more from your child it's time to expect more from their education
Excellence	challenge students greatest potential higher standards/ raise the standards academic excellence /excellence in education sound moral guidance reach the heights of academic achievement services and expansion: number of schools and students

## Building Consumers

Consumer	Words
Wills and concerns	imagine conceive of envision imagine what we could do for your child and your community stop imagining and make your dream a reality the world will demand more from your child opportunity
Needs	tailored package customized program independent public schools free/no charge

In the next section I will explore the construction of “public” in the EMOs discourses and the ways companies legitimize their own definitions.

### Definitions of “Public”

The concepts of “public” that educational corporations utilize are nothing new, but the appropriation of the definitions by the neoconservative and market philosophy that considers public bad and private inherently good. However, their tactic goes deeper than just that. The main discursive strategy that EMOs use is the exploitation of what Berliner and Biddle (1995) called the “manufactured crisis” of public schools to support (corporate) school choice arguments . The discourse involves a classification scheme where traditional public schools are diminished and EMOs-managed ones are abundantly praised to support the presupposition that public education is in a hopeless crisis and that private management of schools is the solution.

## Successful Corporate Public Schools vs. Unsuccessful Traditional Public Schools

Sometimes the allusion to public schools fails are explicitly mentioned. For example, “The Leona Group believes that public education is a cornerstone of our nation’s success. Not all public schools, however, are successful, and many children become marginal students or drop out. Our society cannot afford to sustain schools which are not successful, which fail students” (Leona Group, 2000). The claim about the nation’s success is a familiar rhetoric easily translated into blaming public education for social and economic problems. What is the definition of success that they use to judge schools that have failing students and cannot (should not?) be supported by society? Could not the conditions under which these schools work be improved instead of transferring their funds to private companies?

One of the most ideologically explicit in that matter is Mosaica. Under the section Paradox, Private Management of Public Education, it explains all of the reasons Mosaica has to operate public schools, except profit. The title of the text is “Galvanizing Public Education,” and it is worthwhile to reproduce some parts of it:

Mosaica Education, a privately-sponsored Education Management Organization, was conceived to address the following concerns driving education reform. These include: Growing dissatisfaction among voters and employers with the quality of public education. . . . Existing educational resources inadequate to address future needs. . . . Declining quality of education despite escalating costs. . . . Significant increases in enrollment anticipated. . . . Addressing the need for Increased Efficiency. . . . By reallocating funds to enhancements in teacher training,

technology and curriculum materials, Mosaica directs more dollars to the classroom where they are needed most (Mosaica Education, 2000).

The alternative is to choose one of these schools whose “proven” superiority is demonstrated by their alleged parent involvement and satisfaction, safety and order, and unquestionable excellence. “‘I’m thrilled to be a part of this exciting alternative to the traditional public schools,’ added Dr. [Frank] Sebastian” (Kalamazoo Advantage Academy Principal, 06/02/99)(Advantage Schools, 2000) . The (corporate) choice solution is portrayed as the *natural* consequence of the *pitiful* situation of traditional public schools. “The Leona Group assists communities in starting and operating schools, providing an array of services that ensure a quality education. . . . The Leona Group promotes choice and competition, opening new avenues for children to pursue academic excellence” (Leona Group, 2000).

Companies show their proud satisfaction as the “evidence” that they are on the right road. “Dawn D. Eidelman, Ph.D., Co-founder of Mosaica Education and Director of Curriculum Design, remarked, ‘Our mission is to provide excellence in public education for all students. It is genuinely gratifying to see student mastery in both urban and suburban Mosaica schools.’” Some state officers also seem excited about EMOs: “Tim Daniels, director of the office of educational initiatives within the Pennsylvania Department of Education, said ‘Mosaica Academy’s educational curriculum is unique. I think it’s a very definitive program’”(Mosaica Education, 2000). Main proofs of their excellence are their expansion, emphasized almost on every page of each website, the “remarkable gains in students’ academic performance, conduct, and self-confidence,” parent surveys made by the same company, and re-enrollment rates that “reflect a high



level of parent satisfaction” . Some companies use “Parent testimonials” such as moving letters and declarations (National Heritage Academies, 2000).

The companies claim that they are also committed to student and community needs, particularly those of inner-cities. EMOs present themselves as a “hope” and “opportunity” for children, parents, and teachers: “As educators across the country seek improvements to America's public education system, a source of new opportunity has emerged: Beacon Education Management.” Also their administrators are committed to the enterprise: “We give them opportunities like this that they simply wouldn't be exposed to in public schools” (Billiette Walter, Great Lakes Academy Principal, 10/18/00)[Beacon Education Management, 2000 #59] .

Are the EMOs ready to provide the resources to overcome the social problems that keep these children away from a good education? Mosaica's answer appears clear on this point: “By providing all of its students, regardless of economic or social status with a world-class education, Mosaica intends to bridge the gaps between socioeconomic disparities, as well as academics and real-world pragmatism” . One could wonder if this is a proof of social concern, or the best way to assure the largest number of customers among those who have the poorest schools and do not have any other options. Given the profitable character of the companies, I am inclined to think that the latter is more accurate. None recognizes that the opportunity is for him/herself, but Chris Whittle, Edison's founder and president, whose company went public last year (sold stock on the public market), said: “Our mission is to help communities create and run great public schools for their children, and this is a tremendous opportunity to do that.” He is also the founder of the well-known Channel One (Edison Schools, 2000)

Some comparisons avoid to refer to public schools. National Heritage Academies uses these kinds comparisons on its presentation page, which I have already examined. Mosaica characterize its mission and design in relation to other schools and their features that are omitted in the text. The intertextual context allows us to think again of that they refers to public schools. The table synthesize how EMOs' discourses characterize both kinds of "public" schools through their word use and what intertextual analysis suggests:

Corporate Public schools	Traditional Public Schools
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• "efficient"</li> <li>• "committed, motivated teachers"</li> <li>• "responsiveness"</li> <li>• "flexible"</li> <li>• "care"</li> <li>• "safe and secure environment"</li> <li>• "high expectations"</li> <li>• "academic excellence"</li> <li>• "integrate technology"</li> <li>• "high parental involvement"</li> <li>• "high level of satisfaction"</li> <li>• "no unions, greater morale"</li> <li>• "high performance"</li> <li>• "new"</li> <li>• "small"</li> <li>• "challenging"</li> <li>• "hope and opportunity"</li> <li>• "passion, beliefs, future"</li> <li>• "every child can learn despite conditions"</li> <li>• "state-of-the-art-facilities"</li> <li>• "accountability"</li> <li>• "world-class education"</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• not efficient</li> <li>• uncommitted, unmotivated</li> <li>• irresponsible</li> <li>• rigid</li> <li>• careless</li> <li>• dangerous and unsafe</li> <li>• low expectations</li> <li>• academically poor</li> <li>• lack of adequate technology</li> <li>• no parental involvement</li> <li>• no satisfaction</li> <li>• backward because of unions</li> <li>• low-performance</li> <li>• old</li> <li>• big</li> <li>• unchallenging</li> <li>• hopeless</li> <li>• no passion, no beliefs, no future</li> <li>• "making students anonymous and marginalized, drop outs"</li> <li>• "neglected and unattractive"</li> <li>• no accountable</li> <li>• no competitive</li> </ul>

### More Time: Whose Time?

Beyond its rhetoric, National and other companies offer something that looks more real: more learning time. But teachers are hardly compensated for this additional time, and some studies have found that at the same time they enjoy smaller classes and teamwork, teachers who work in charter schools have a lot of extrawork, lower average salaries, and less experience than in traditional public schools (Henig, 1999; Horn & Miron, 1999; Miron, 2000; Stuart Wells, 2000; WestEd, 1999) . Just one of the EMOs talks about other issues that affect teacher' work, such as tenure or collective bargains, benefits which teachers in most of new charter schools do not have. There is a difference related to unionization. Charter schools' teachers from converted public schools and in those charter schools granted by school districts usually stay in the union. New created charter school' teachers usually have salaries tied to performance. Operating outside of existing negotiated contracts allows EMOs more flexibility in decisions related to salaries, time use, and teacher activities. This is another way of saving costs, along with hiring younger teachers. This also allows a "new working environment centered on the needs of the community," free of the pressures from the union, which is indirectly blamed here because traditional public schools are not successful, which lowers the morale of teachers.

### EMOs Expressions related to teachers' overwork

- exceptional contributions
- invaluable service, above and beyond the scope of assigned duties
- help accomplish whatever needs to be done, no matter the task
- extra duties
- volunteers to tutor students three nights a week
- actively recruits Hispanic students during the weekends
- volunteers to help his colleagues and to take extra activities
- teachers can plan a learning program for each [student]
- goal setting conferences with individual children and their parents, contracts
- tutorial assistance from the primary teacher
- school committees. . . active participants
- curriculum committees
- teacher-developed instructional materials and project-based learning

### Discussion and Conclusions

Through the statements and the virtual imagery included, through the allusion to universal values, through the vocabulary and omissions in the texts, EMOs construct a definition of public schools that, in agreement with Berliner & Biddle (1995), and Saltman (2000) exploits the “manufactured crisis” of public schools to support corporate school choice. It also exploits parents concerns using symbols that evoke certain dangers for their children: to fail, to be marginalized, to be excluded from the competition, etc., in contrast with symbols of success, excellence, and safety. Duncan explains clearly the effects of these kinds of symbolic uses:

Through symbols we intensify or enlarge the impression of the personality, because we are able to identify with the self those symbols which have been given power by community use. . . . The resonance of symbols, the sensuous as well as

intellectual attention evoked, supplies the individual with means by which he can enlarge or intensify his sphere of power (quoted by Edelman, 1985).

Through advertising strategies based on absent or simplistic evidence, misleading generalizations, and evocative rhetoric, public schools are denigrated and converted into the dark side, opposite to this shining private alternative.

Usually, corporations try to “exhibit social responsibility” and “give the appearance of being altruistic” to hide their basic rule: the imperative of profit (Mander, 1997). The examples I have analyzed show how the advertising discourse is used to construct an ideal model, in this case of school, where everybody believes in and is committed to the success of children. Rhetorical claims to philosophical beliefs, national success, commitment, student needs, hope, and opportunity play an important role constructing an ideal image for the purpose of attracting clientele. Even the promise of overcoming social disparities and cultural differences collaborates to build this ideal image. Staff and principals’ engagement with these “beliefs” and enthusiasm moved me to believe in it, until I learned that managers are obligated by corporate law to “act primarily in the economic interests of shareholders” (Mander, 1997). Even though not all the EMOs are publicly held companies, it looks like that is the trend. Another example of caring about the appearance is the significant omission of mentioning the character of “for-profit” that the companies managing schools have. In the very few times that it was mentioned through out the extensive pages I read, either it was cancelled later (Leona), or it was placed in the sections for investors (Edison, Advantage) replaced by the euphemistic term “revenues.” Strategies must be multiple and sophisticated, because the

competitor is strong. In fact, the government is the main competitor for the education industry (Symonds, 2000).

According to Mander (1997), “a second basic rule” for corporations is that they “must expand and grow, since growth is the standard by which the stock market judges a company.” That is why repetitive mentioning of expansion and growth are so abundant in the webpages. The imperative of profit and the imperative of expansion feed into each other towards the legitimization of choice. Choosing corporate solutions is the natural consequence of failing public schools. I wonder how these commercial enterprises could educate better than public bureaucracies and what kind of democracy this corporate agenda is advancing? My questions are prompted by some alarming contradictions that emerge from the analysis and from the findings of some studies:

What EMOs say they do:	What EMOs do:
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Addressing students and community needs.</li> <li>• Increasing efficiency and cost effectiveness.</li> <li>• School-based decision making.</li> <li>• Good job environment.</li> <li>• Experienced teachers</li> <li>• Academic excellence and better scores.</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Growing school systems with centralized organizations, uniform school design and curriculum.</li> <li>• Increasing bureaucracy on one hand and voluntary work of parents and teachers on the other.</li> <li>• Corporate office decisions.</li> <li>• Longer work day, no unions.</li> <li>• Research evidence show that many teachers are younger and with less experience, and does not show that students have such better results when compared to public schools in the same district (Henig, 1999; Horn &amp; Miron, 1999; Miron &amp; Applegate, 2000; Stuart Wells, 2000; WestEd, 1999)</li> </ul>

Even though it is too early to have conclusive findings around test scores, we do not have to wait to interpret the information that we already have. What all of this tells us

is that most of the claims that EMOs make are part of a campaign of advertising in order to legitimize themselves, grow, and make profit. Some of the claims may be true, such as, many of the classes and schools are smaller, have a longer school day, have more technology, and good facilities. However, many of the academies are smaller than public schools because do not yet have all the grades in place. The comparison would be valid between schools with the same number of grades. What will happen when they expand? Second, the longer school day is in many cases product of added time during which the students are either with employees who are not teachers, with volunteer parents or tutors, or overloaded teachers. Third, most of the technology is given by the biggest companies, like IBM, to generate more consumers at the same time that they build an altruistic image. Finally, many of the EMOs facilities are a product of agreements with the state, which provide public facilities, that they get and improve, and sometimes even the building remodeling is paid by the same community.

Why do parents and members of the communities work for academies for free? Because they are engaged in their children education and persuaded that they have to take advantage of this “opportunity.” Communities have great potential of energy when they have a good reason. The manipulation of the adequate symbols and the hiding of the real nature and purposes of the EMOs make this potential emerge and feed corporate goals whether or not communities are aware of it. One of the important effects of these kinds of campaigns, is the growing sense that responsibility for schools is centrally a parents issue, weakening in this way the responsibility for public and social support. The logic of privatization says that anybody can sell educational services, as any other good. But education cannot be identified with any other industry, its nature is too rooted in the

meaning of an authentic democracy to treat it as any business. That is why EMOs need and use such dramatic rhetoric.

One can wonder if the ultimate political goal of this ideological and structural process is to stop the slow but constant trend to democratize the American educational system. In spite of the enormous class, gender, race, and sexual orientation disparities it still has, there are huge improvements in comparison to earlier years. For many Americans, then, there are too many Hispanic, Black, Asian, and lower class people being educated, and the *world-class society* will not need so much educated people, exercising their civil rights, especially if it is publicly supported. Those are the Americans who prefer to have surplus money returned rather than increase educational and social spending.

The battle against corporatization of education is the battle against privatization of the public sphere through ideological and structural processes that are taking place in every aspect of social life. Resistance must operate at multiple levels: symbolic, material, and emotional. Active initiatives to defend and improve public institutions must involve the redefinition and reappropriation of their social goals unmasking profit-oriented goals, and emphasizing authentic participation . Common people still have the opportunity to discuss social justice, wealth distribution, and educational policies in the public sphere, this is not the case in shareholders meetings.



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<sup>i</sup> In the Gramscian sense of the term.

<sup>ii</sup> Neoliberalism refers to free market policies inspired by the work of the Austrian economist, Friedrich Von Hayek, whose principal follower in the United States was Milton Friedman. They advocate for a smaller and less regulatory state, an end to the welfare state, choice in a “free” market, and schooling as a means to produce human capital and social mobility. Neoconservatism refers to the link of neoliberal views with the religious right. Thus neoconservatives, besides supporting neoliberal economic policies, support a role for the state as an active regulator of public morality, advocate of greater security, both internal and international, and educational policies aimed at teaching moral values (Spring, 1998).

<sup>iii</sup> Human capital theories consider education as a form of economic investment, and intend to measure the value of education by its contribution to economic growth. “The Organization for Economic Cooperation and Development (OECD) and the World Bank are the two agencies primarily responsible for spreading human capital analysis of education to developed and developing countries” (Spring, 1998).



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