

### **Privatization in Education Research Initiative (PERI)**

#### Organizers:

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The workshop will showcase research, learning, and multi-media developed over the last twelve months under the Privatization in Education Research Initiative (PERI) and debate key questions arising from various forms of inquiry under the initiative.

Over the past two decades, there have been major challenges to, and changes in, education systems around the world arising from processes broadly associated with the dynamics of globalization. A key change has been in the governance of education systems, so that not only is the sector challenged to work in more efficient ways, but there is a view that more hybrid forms of arrangements between the public and private will open up more opportunities through choice, realize increased accountability, and expand the capacity of the sector by bring in new revenue streams. In most countries however, these changing dynamics of education obscures an understanding of how the requirements of human rights and economic and social justice are to be met under the new and increasingly pervasive conditions of public, private, and public-private provision in education.

However, studying the changing form, scope and outcomes of the ‘governance’ of education systems (variously referred to as privatization, marketization, Public Private Partnerships, or stakeholder-driven models), is simultaneously important, difficult and controversial. It is important as an area of research, and research-based policy and advocacy for a variety of reasons. These hybrid forms of governance of education systems, involve a range of new actors other than the state (such as for-profits, civil society organizations, community groups) bringing into the education sector a range of actors with different interests and different logics of intervention. Key issues to be considered here include the effect of these arrangements on the form, pattern and scope of the sector, on the nature and distribution of education entitlements, and the overall accountability of the actors in the sector, given the public good nature of education. Of concern here in the education sector is that education is not only an entitlement both in citizenship and human rights terms, but an important means of producing workers, as a means of social mobility as well as mechanism of stratification. In other words, education plays a complex role in modern societies – culturally, socially, economically and politically. For this reason, education as a sector must be viewed in all of its complexity if we are to understand the implications of these changes

on societies.

It is difficult in conceptual and therefore operational terms. This is because much of the research (empirical and policy analysis work) on these new hybrid models of governance of the public sector is characterized by highly ideological or normatively-driven rather than more analytical accounts; there are very different understandings of the purposes, benefits and outcomes of these new governance arrangements arising from different value systems; and there are different logics of intervention, depending on the actors involved. Finally, it is controversial in that, given the widely shared and deeply felt view that education is a public and not a private good, we can appreciate that fundamental changes in the governance of education that open the space for new actors with different values and objectives has been, and continues to be, highly contested.

In 2010 the Privatization in Education Research Initiative (PERI) was established as a multi-annual global research initiative that sought to contribute to a better understanding the education justice outcomes of the increasing adoption of alternative educational service regulation and delivery mechanisms. The initiative set out to:

- Raise concerns – by contributing to the better understanding of the fundamental change in the nature of public education under conditions of de-regulation, de-centralization, de-nationalization, privatization and competitive tendering of public functions in education.
- To support new research – by funding in-depth analysis and collection of new empirical data providing insights into the ways in which the interplay among different local, national and international educational agents acting in multi-level, often interdependent institutional structures, with different and sometimes conflicting interests, shape the quality of compulsory educational service regulation and delivery.
- To enhance knowledge – by undertaking critical case-based and comparative empirical analysis of distributed educational service delivery in the case of compulsory schooling, especially focusing on the desirability of state provision under conditions of market failure, complex agency problems, and the challenges faced by input-based policy.
- To develop research capacity – by providing opportunity for educational researchers to conduct and learn about educational policy analysis and by creating sustained networking opportunities among themselves internationally.

Twenty research grants were awarded at the start of 2011 to explore one or more aspects of the coordination (or governance) of education services in the formal (schooling) and/or the informal (shadow schooling, home tutoring) sector. PERI views the governance of education as involving the aspects of: (i) funding; (ii) provision; (iii) infrastructure and ownership; and, (iv) regulation. The research grants were also awarded to interrogate the underlying dynamics in the privatizing of education, including the range of new and old actors and their motivations. Emphasis was additionally given to consideration of the social justice implications of privatized education provision. For instance, which groups are included (and who are excluded and with what consequences) in these privatizing initiatives (female, male, ethnicity, caste, religion etc)? What are the social conditions for learning or teaching, and

do they prioritize and address social equity? What are the wider social consequences of these privatizing initiatives; do they build or reduce social cohesion? Are these initiatives critical components of building a democratic and accountable community with the potential to enhance the idea of an open society? The research projects, all of which will be completed by CIES 2012, examine these aspects in the following contexts: Bangladesh, Cambodia, China, India, Liberia, Ghana, Mali, Nepal, Nigeria, Pakistan, Philippines, Sierra Leone, Uganda, Tanzania and Vietnam.

Additionally, in collaboration with the Central European University in Budapest, Hungary, a PERI summer school was held from 25-29 July 2010 that examined the following dimensions of privatisation on education: placing Education and Governance in the Social Contract; Globalizing Education and Governance: Actors and Projects; Trade in Education Services/Creating Services Sectors; Locating PPPs in Education: theory, concepts, evidence, issues; Multistakeholder Partnerships; Charter Schools; Low-Fee Schooling; Shadow Schooling.

Furthermore, under PERI, four short documentaries have been produced that highlight some key questions regarding the equity effects and social justice implications of low-fee private schools in Pakistan, for-profit private schools in South Africa, public-private partnerships in the UK (academies) and an overarching piece on globalization and education. These are being showcased on the PERI website.

The objectives of the workshop are therefore:

- To present some of the key issues arising from the international PERI research
- To share some of the key questions and learnings from the PERI summer school
- To air and share some of PERI documentaries
- To sketch some of the key debates taking place on the PERI website

Together, this range of knowledge, data and resources challenge much of the existing understandings and beliefs of privatized education services and as such the workshop will contribute to the animating an informed public debate on privatization of education.