20

Five generations of NGOs in education

From humanitarianism to global capitalism

Will Brehm and Iveta Silova

Introduction

Non-governmental organizations (NGOs) in education are as diverse in their activities as they are wide in their geographic reach. Some NGOs deliver educational content within their own non-formal school settings, similar to mainstream schools but typically outside the authority of ministries of education. Others operate inside public schools, providing additional teaching and learning services, scholarships, and/or infrastructure improvement. Still other NGOs focus on capacity development in and out of schools for teachers, administrators, policymakers, and families. Teacher labour unions or federations can also be considered NGOs especially when part of transnational advocacy networks. Found in nearly every country worldwide, NGOs in education are, collectively, a non-organized, diverse, and, at times, influential group, ranging in size, type, and political orientation. They can impact the practices of non-formal, formal, and technical education as well as education policymaking locally, nationally, and globally.

Meliorism is the general metaphysical predisposition of many NGOs in education. The logic of meliorism is, at least since the 1990s, typically situated within a human rights discourse, advancing Western liberal ideals – including an emphasis on individual rights – as the universal goal. While meliorism emanated through the educational work of Christian missionaries during colonial times, today – in the more secular era – NGOs in education purport that not only is human progress possible but also there exist universal rights that transcend any and all legal rights of nation-states. In this context, many NGOs in education aim to advance, promote, and protect education as a human right. The belief that NGOs must act to protect human rights, especially if/when nation-states do not, has been called an "interventionist approach" to humanitarianism that "is increasingly understood to be nonpolitical and ethically driven" (Chandler, 2001, pp. 678–678). At an extreme, it may be interpreted as colonialism by another name.

Historically, the merging of education NGOs and human rights occurred during the 1993 United Nations World Conference of Human Rights where over 800 NGOs attended (UNHCR, n.d.). The conference, held in Vienna, aimed to develop monitoring mechanisms to ensure all member states worked towards the Universal Declaration of Human Rights (UDHR), which was first ratified by the General Assembly of the United Nations in 1948 in response to World War II. By the 1990s, human rights were believed to be the international normative

and legal framework that would advance a tolerant global society, even acting as the rationale for military intervention (e.g., in the Federal Republic of Yugoslavia to end human right abuses against Kosovo Albanians in 1999). By the 1990s, human rights were a common global discourse; "you couldn't escape it" (Cmiel, 2004). The Vienna conference was a "key driver" bringing "non-liberal states into the human rights regime" (Dunne & Hanson, 2009, p. 67). It also provided NGOs in education a *raison d'être*.

Despite their ameliorative intentions, NGOs are not without controversy. Controversy can come through the way in which NGOs are funded. Does money from philanthropic donors, grants, or the state influence what NGOs do? Do short-term funding cycles create a precarious financial environment for NGOs providing essential services such as education in low-income countries? Other controversy emerges through the way in which NGOs are staffed. How are local staff members treated compared to international staff members? To what extent does an NGO rely on international volunteers? Still other controversy can be found in the organizational structure. Is the NGO registered and in compliance with state laws? Perhaps the main controversy of NGOs in education revolves around their implication in the decline of state-provided schooling. By offering services typically organized by the state, are NGOs undermining the notion of a public education or are they providing essential services that the state cannot provide?

Cutting through both the activities of NGOs and their controversy is the power of neoliberal capitalism in contemporary education. Neoliberalism is a

> political project carried out by the corporate capitalist class as they felt intensely threatened both politically and economically towards the end of the 1960s into the 1970s. They desperately wanted to launch a political project that would curb the power of labour.
>
> *(Harvey, 2016)*

Over the following decades, the national and global capitalist classes have slowly retooled societies as capitalism became dominant. In education, this has resulted in a political economic restructuring that has promoted, to list but a few outcomes, individualism, self-realization, competitiveness, decentralization, managerialism, and student-centred learning (Carney, 2009). Teacher unions were slowly undermined and new ways of deskilling teachers were found with every technological innovation (Apple, 1982, 2003). Public education, as a result, was undermined by various privatization practices, to which NGOs contributed, perhaps unknowingly (Silova & Steiner-Khamsi, 2008). Today, despite their do-gooder intentions, many NGOs are both the product and producer of neoliberalism (Bernal & Grewal, 2014; Wallace, 2009). Many in the transnational capitalist class have subsequently become the patrons of NGOs or have started their own, including Bill Gates' Bill and Melinda Gates Foundation, George Soros' Open Society Foundations, and Mark Zuckerberg's Chan Zuckerberg Initiative, to name a few.

Despite promises of responding to local needs, some education NGOs have, in fact, been co-opted, to various degrees, by powers that are actively undermining education as a public good. This occurs by reducing and changing the role of the state in education, furthering privatization, and bestowing legitimacy on actors advancing global capitalism, such as the Organisation for Economic Co-operation and Development (OECD) and the World Bank. The most egregious examples of such co-opting are some (supposed) grassroots and local movements that claim to speak for the powerless but in fact further the interests of the powerful. They are not grassroots social movements at all, but rather a form of astro-turf – manufactured movements that support the neoliberal global education agenda (Cave, 2015).

This is not to say that every NGO furthers neoliberal capitalism; in fact, there are some that actively lobby against it (see Ismail & Kamat, 2018 who detail the complexity of NGOs vis-à-vis the neoliberal state). NGOs that actively mobilize labour movements (in education, that is primarily teachers) are usually a counterforce to the spread of neoliberalism. Although their numbers are small, these types of NGOs do exist and have had notable outcomes. However, such NGOs have had difficulty within some nation-states where labour unions have been brutally repressed in the era of neoliberal capitalism and within a global discourse that blames teachers for low student achievement measured on standardized examinations. The rise of an authoritarian neoliberalism in the post-global financial crisis era has further changed the political landscape in which NGOs on the political left operate (Ismail & Kamat, 2018).

In this chapter, we detail the emergence of NGOs in education and the main debates around their involvement, and then discuss two extremes: NGOs that have been co-opted by neoliberalism and those that actively fight against it. The point of presenting extremes is to show the broad scope of education NGOs' work and discuss the complexity of the contemporary NGO landscape, suggesting not that all NGOs are one or the other but rather that there is a complex spectrum. More fundamentally, the goal of this chapter is to highlight the contradiction within neoliberal capitalism that, on the one hand, people and institutions can reproduce a system unknowingly, while, on the other hand, fighting against global capitalism often means doing so from within the system. We conclude the chapter by questioning the meaning of the public good of education vis-à-vis NGOs and whether it can exist, in new forms, not only within global capitalism but also within the contemporary moment of reactionary nationalism.

Five generations of NGOs

The emergence of NGOs in education is difficult, if not impossible, to pinpoint universally. In South Africa, NGOs provided educational services to black and indigenous people who faced severe discrimination after the 1909 South Africa Act passed the British Parliament, which presaged apartheid in 1948 with the election of the National Party (Mazibuko, 2000). In Latin America, NGOs in education began to appear in the 1950s, first spreading the then-popular Liberation Theology through Catholic churches, and later supported by the United States and its affiliated philanthropic organizations, such as the Rockefeller and Ford Foundations, in efforts to advance its national interests through soft power (Pineda, 2013). The US involvement in Latin America was under the guise of supporting citizens repressed by national leaders who opposed various US policies and practices. In China, although "social organizations" have been found since the Sui (581–618), Tang (618–907), and Song (960–1279) Dynasties and missionary NGOs have been present throughout European colonialism (e.g., Harrison, 2008), it was only since the 1990s, when the country began to integrate into the global market economy, that education NGOs promoting human rights emerged (Zhang, 2003).

Given the complex history, it is helpful to think of the background of NGOs in education through a heuristic rather than in specific detail in one context. David Korten's (1987, 1990) work on the "generations of NGOs" offers a valuable starting point, since it spans the 1950s through the 1980s when what we might call "modern" NGOs emerged (Degnbol-Martinussen & Engberg-Pedersen, 2003). He identifies four generations of NGOs. The first generation is focused on relief and welfare. These are NGOs that provide support to people in acute need, such as indigenous groups in South Africa aforementioned or populations recovering from natural or human disasters. Such humanitarian support, delivered through NGOs, may include education, but usually focuses on immediate needs such as food and shelter, the basics for sustaining life in emergencies. First-generation NGOs include large numbers of religious charities,

usually Christian missionaries (which have historical legacies dating back to the colonial era). Today, many Christian-affiliated NGOs provide educational services to populations believed to be in need or poor (e.g. Caritas Internationalis, Hope International, World Vision, and others).

Second-generation NGOs are what Cardelle (2003), reading Korten, labelled "technocratic and developmentalist." These NGOs aim to build the capacity of target communities through so-called proven solutions so they do not, in the long run, require humanitarian assistance from outsiders. Education plays a particularly important role in second-generation NGOs because it is the educational process that will, it is believed, lead to sustainable human and social development. It is precisely here where the ameliorative tendencies of NGOs in education clearly emerge. It is also where the challenge to the state arises: either the state cannot provide or provides inadequate schooling. NGOs step in to help. This help manifests typically by NGOs from the Global North (or organized by people from the Global North) that perceive the education of a targeted group of people from the Global South as inadequate or absent for the desired development. A new technical solution provided by the NGO is believed to be the remedy to the identified social ill, but it is rarely scaled to the whole national population. An NGO may open its own school to provide specific training on some desirable skills (e.g., computers, English language, etc.) or may partner with an existing public school to undertake "capacity development" (e.g., teacher training, classroom construction, etc.).

It is within the second generation of NGOs where the "development expert" was born (Parpart, 1995). This expert is believed to be able to provide the right technical solution to a given development problem. Although these experts rarely work for small-scale NGOs such as those found in the second generation, the logic behind their perceived need derives from second-generation thinking – that there is a technocratic solution, absent politics, to any problem of development that only a qualified expert can ascertain, similar to the ability of a medical doctor to diagnose an illness. As we will see below, the role of the development expert expands in future generations.

The third generation of NGOs that Korten (1987, 1990) identifies looks beyond small-scale, local solutions to problems, aiming their effort instead on large-scale, national, and international structures. These NGOs try to change policy and governance of the education sector, both nationally and internationally. This generation of NGOs emerged most prominently in the 1990s alongside the human rights discourse. In the 1990s, it was a common refrain that states were unable to meet the international norm of attaining universal basic education, which emerged inside the United Nations in the 1960s and became a keystone of global education governance after the 1990 Jomtien World Conference on Education for All (Rose, 2007, p. 1; see also Mundy & Murphy, 2001). NGOs working at the level of policy and governance were legitimated by the United Nations, thus spurring the growth of third-generation NGOs. Soon, some NGOs found a seat at the national decision-making table of education policy (Edwards & Brehm, 2016), while others began to influence large donors, such as the Open Society Foundations (Silova & Steiner-Khamsi, 2008). Development experts quickly found lucrative consultancy work worldwide, creating a perceived world devoid of context where evidence-based research could provide supposed universal solutions (Brehm & Silova, 2011).

The fourth and last generation of NGOs that Korten (1987, 1990) briefly describes are those NGOs that coordinate activities through local, national, and global networks. This can include very large NGOs such as Education International, the federation of teacher unions that began in 1993, as well as smaller NGOs that serve as umbrella organizations in one country. The NGO Education Partnership in Cambodia is an example of a smaller NGO that is part of the fourth generation, since it coordinates a network of many education NGOs within Cambodia, is connected to international groups such as the Global Campaign for Education, and actively seeks

to influence national policy making (Edwards, Brehm, & Storen, 2018). The main difference between third- and fourth-generation NGOs is the leveraging of a network to influence action, connecting to social network theories that gained popularity in the 1980s and 1990s (Castells, 1996; Deleuze & Parnet, 1987). Important in these networks are certain development experts who act as central nodes of power by transmitting various ideas (known as "best practices"), or what Nambissan and Ball (2010) call a "policy entrepreneur" (see also Ball, 2012).

After three decades, Korten's theorization is still relevant to a certain extent. In education, there are still NGOs that provide humanitarian assistance; those that aim to build the capacity of schools and teachers; others that want to influence policy; and, most recently, growing networks of NGOs (and experts) that coordinate action globally. Nevertheless, the four generations miss much of the last 30 years, namely the rise and dominance of neoliberal capitalism. It is therefore important to update Korten's heuristic with a fifth generation of NGOs. These are NGOs that have fully embraced or actively fight against neoliberalism, working through public–private partnerships, multi-stakeholder partnerships for education, and/or anti-capitalist social movements. Some embrace new trends in capitalism, from "Big Data" and e-learning to platforms, and help construct modern childhood and schooling (Wells, 2015). Teach For America and its global network, Teach For All, for instance, have created alternative teacher certification courses, supposedly deregulating teacher education but, in fact, requiring the state to issue emergency certifications in order to profit (Lahann & Reagan, 2011; Friedrich, 2016). Similarly, Bridge International Academies is a for-profit school network operating in many low-income countries that relies on standardized curriculum delivered by untrained teachers who use tablets (Riep & Machacek, 2016).

Another feature of fifth-generation NGOs beyond the focus on profit and/or re-defining public space (Popkewitz, 1998) is the embrace of philanthrocapitalism – the marriage of philanthropic organizations with corporate business practices (Klonsky, 2011). Such endeavours have resulted in spectacular failures, such as the US$100 million donation by the founder of Facebook, Mark Zuckerberg, to Newark, New Jersey public schools (Russakoff, 2015). On a smaller scale, the combination of philanthropy and capitalism has created, in the Global North at least, the mistaken belief that one's conspicuous consumption can actually help those who are impoverished. Case in point: Bono's Product (Red), launched at the 2006 World Economic Forum in Davos, which was embraced by companies like Apple, American Express, and Motorola, encouraged companies to sell various products using the discourse of humanitarianism. Product (Red) is the epitome of neoliberalism: "a lean network solution to aid financing, takes funds from consumption – not taxation. It is an individual effort, the result of consumer power – not of collective/public will" (Richey & Ponte, 2008, p. 724). Beyond consumption, the neoliberal logic has also altered the concept of volunteering in this fifth generation, turning it into a profitable enterprise for NGOs in education and a site where neoliberal subjects are made (Vrasti, 2013).

The five generations outlined above are a heuristic device to help understand NGOs in education. The demarcations between generations are not firm; any one NGO can simultaneously exhibit elements of the various generations described. Additionally, demarcations are not static. An NGO can change its approach at various times and in different contexts. Reading across the generations, however, it is possible to distil some of the main debates when it comes to NGOs in education. The first is the issue of the state. Is the role of the state in education being subverted by NGOs? Clearly, first-generation NGOs are not usurping the state outright. Emergencies show the limits of state assistance, opening space for NGOs to provide humanitarian support, including educational services. However, as the generations progress, subversion becomes increasingly likely even if not the intent of the NGO. In the most extreme cases, such

as Bridge International Academies, profit motives in education *require* fifth-generation NGOs to dispossess the state from providing certain social services, such as education. Although payment can still – and likely must – come from the state, the role of the state in education is changed because of fifth-generation NGOs.

It is also possible to locate issues around grassroots mobilization. To what extent do NGOs represent the needs and desires of local populations? Such mobilization is, by definition, political, making some NGOs uncomfortable (because such mobilization could undermine relationships with ruling powers/parties) and others susceptible to unknown agendas, such the global education reform movement's focus on choice and competition (Sahlberg, 2016), by large donors. In an environment where education is perceived as a universal and transhistorical human right, discussions over NGOs and politics are marginalized (Ferguson, 1994) but not completely absent (Bailey, 2015). Overall, the five generations provide a way to differentiate which NGOs are furthering global education governance as a neoliberal project and, if so, how. In order to examine this last point in more detail, the next section of the chapter explores two extreme cases – an NGO that furthers the neoliberal project and one that actively fights against it.

Co-opted by global, platform capital: the PAL Network

Education NGOs have become, to various degrees, conduits through which neoliberalism spreads. Roy and Cusack (2016) called NGOs "missionaries of the 'new economy'" (p. 55) and Ismail and Kamat (2018) called NGOs "a pillar of the neoliberal state" (p. 4). By embracing tenets of competition, choice, standardization, and using corporate business models, "the public sphere [has been] reclaimed by the private sector" (Kamat, 2004, p. 167). Instead of working for systemic change,

> the proliferation of NGOs has not reduced structural unemployment or massive displacements of peasants, nor provided livable wage levels for the growing army of informal workers. What NGOs have done is to provide a thin stratum of professionals with income in hard currency who are able to escape the ravages of the neoliberal economy that affects their country and people and to climb within the existing social class structure.
>
> *(Petras & Veltmeyer, 2001, p. 129)*

On top of the class conflict identified by Petras and Veltmeyer, NGOs have also embraced new features of global capitalism. One such feature is the rise of platforms, wherein new business models provide the software and hardware on which other businesses can operate (Srnicek, 2017). Data, extracted from increasingly surveilled users, become the raw material on which labour is done (e.g., data analytics for advertising on Facebook), providing ways to profit especially as networks grow: "the more numerous the users who use a platform, the more valuable that platform becomes for everyone else" (Srnicek, 2017, p. 45). In education, data can take many forms, the most common being assessments to measure learning outcomes. Although educational data companies have been controversial (see the case of InBloom; Bulger, McCormick, & Pitcan, 2017), NGOs have begun to embrace platform capitalism while using the discourse of earlier generations of welfare, humanitarianism, empowerment, and liberation. An exemplar of this type of NGO in education is the People's Action for Learning (PAL) Network.

The PAL Network consists of NGOs that assess the learning outcomes of over one million children in literacy and numeracy. Begun by a Pratham NGO in India in 2005, the PAL Network has expanded to NGOs in 14 countries across three continents. The Network provides

what it calls "citizen-led assessment," meaning a group of volunteers administer literacy and numeracy assessments in the homes of children. These one-on-one assessments, the Network claims, measure outputs rather than the inputs of education, potentially providing governments with useful information on quality (or lack thereof). Target interventions could then be made based on the evidence of the assessments.

The PAL Network has turned what is effectively a household survey into a product perceived by many to be essential for education policymaking. It does this through a carefully constructed discourse that combines accountability and transparency with empowerment and progress. It advocates its assessments as a way to hold governments accountable for the education it delivers. By assessing the outcomes of learning (e.g., the ability to read or write), it offers a simple way to judge the quality of education. By making the results public, it gives information to citizens who can hold their government accountable for the social service provided. On top of these neoliberal discourses of accountability and transparency, the Network embraces meliorism by emphasizing the power of community involvement in education. The use of community members as data collectors supposedly empowers individuals to take part in education development in their local environment. The discourse of empowerment is reminiscent of second-generation NGOs.

Although the Network comprises a group of NGOs from the Global South, something it champions on its website using the term "South–South cooperation," institutions from the Global North at the heart of global capitalism provide support and legitimacy. The Network, for instance, partners with the World Bank and UNESCO, displaying their logos prominently on its website. Many of the national NGOs that are part of the Network receive funding from the World Bank too. The US-based think tank, Brookings, meanwhile, champions the NGOs that are part of the PAL Network: "even in the face of daunting challenges and an uncertain future, ambitious goal setting, collaboration and *the effective use of evidence* can deliver impressive results in a relatively short amount of time" (Winthrop, Matsui, & Jamil, 2013, emphasis added).

Why would the World Bank, UNESCO, and Brookings champion a network of Global South NGOs? The answer can only be because the Network shares the same goals, vision, and practices of these Global North institutions. The neoliberal rhetoric of the Global North has been fully internalized by NGOs of the Global South. As such, the Network converges with Global North discourses of "schooling without learning" (World Bank, 2018) and of a "global learning crisis" (UNESCO, 2013; WDR 2018) – the rhetorical devices that turn the Global South into the Other of the Global North (Silova, 2018). The Network is seen as providing the evidence to prove these discourses correct; hence, the Network is crucial for Global North organizations advancing neoliberalism. More importantly, by providing a quantifiable diagnosis of the "global learning crisis," the World Bank, UNESCO, and Brookings will have an easier time selling solutions to Global South governments. Interestingly, the PAL Network also proposes solutions based on the analysis of its own reports, suggesting its ambition to inform national and global policymaking.

Notwithstanding the potential benefits of a network of Global South NGOs, the PAL Network has not only been co-opted by neoliberalism but also operates like a platform, a new feature of global capitalism. It produces raw assessment data that then can be used by large financial institutions such as the World Bank to justify additional loans to governments and offer particular (neoliberal) education solutions. The Network relies on volunteer work that is piece-wage just like an Uber-driver: hired (or not?) for only the time it takes to conduct the assessment. As Marx (1990) wrote, "piece-wage is the form of wages most in harmony with the capitalist mode of production" (pp. 697–698) because the capitalist has no other social or economic obligations (e.g., health care or retirement benefits) to the labourer other than

the wage paid for hours worked. Once harvested, the data undergoes a process of intellectual labour – that is, analysis – by full-time employees of the Network (as well as others such as World Bank staffers, since the data is made public) who then present findings and solutions to government agencies and international donors. Here there is a clear class division between the survey collectors and the data analysts. The PAL Network gains in market share as governments adopt its proposed recommendations to the supposed learning crisis. Monopolistic tendencies increase as the network grows internationally, similar to the OECD's PISA test. All of these neoliberal tendencies, however, are glossed over by their emphasis on grassroots assessments, using rhetoric such as citizen-led and empowerment.

The PAL Network offers a window into the complexities of fifth-generation NGOs. The Network gains power by producing ever more educational data – relying on cheap labour and (re)producing class divisions among labourers – that can effectively be used by large international development agencies lobbying governments to reform education systems in particular ways. Data collected, moreover, is described in ways that conjure a particular form of citizen – one who knows about the social services in his or her community, but who leaves change to others – and defines education in particularly narrow terms through the outputs of a standardized test. The PAL Network, in effect, mirrors the paradox of neoliberal democracy: "while symbolically expanding opportunities for democratic participation, it produces antidemocratic effects" (Nygreen, 2017, p. 57).

Resisting neoliberalism in education: Education International

This is not to say that every NGO furthers neoliberal capitalism; in fact, there are some that actively lobby against it. For example, Ismail and Kamat (2018) theorize NGOs as "part of the balance of class forces that impact oppositional politics at national and international levels," directing attention to how NGOs in different contexts become a part of the project of resistance to neoliberalism (p. 5). This has become more evident in the era after the global financial crisis of 2007–2008 where austerity policies and reactionary nationalism have mobilized anti-capitalist resistance coalitions trying to articulate a post-neoliberal vision. In the area of education, such resistance is clearly visible in the work of NGOs that actively attempt to mobilize labour movements – teachers and teacher unions – as a powerful counterforce to the spread of neoliberalism aiming to address the rapidly worsening conditions of teachers' work, promote their professional status, and support the professional freedoms of teachers and education employees.

One of the most active international networks operating against the neoliberal political project is Education International – a global federation of teacher unions that represents more than 32 million trade union members in about 400 organizations in 175 countries and territories worldwide (Education International, 2016). Education International was formed in 1993 as a result of a merger of the International Federation of Free Teachers Unions and the World Confederation of Organizations of the Teaching Profession.[1] By merging forces, Education International set out to strategically promote "both the expansion of trade unionism among teachers and the development of a unified, professional vision of global educational issues" (Mundy & Murphy, 2001, p. 108). Although the central concern of teacher unions historically has been the establishment of international standards on the status of teachers, Education International has shifted its priorities to address issues related to "the threat to teachers, and to public education more generally, posed by austerity and the new policy agenda" (Mundy & Murphy, 2001, p. 108). At Education International's founding congress in 1993, its then-general secretary, Fred Van Leeuwen, explicitly articulated Education International's work as a "battle with neoliberalism," promising to mobilize forces in order to target the "international

education crisis . . . [as marked] by austerity measures in the South and by neoliberal schemes in the North, put forth to destroy free compulsory education and replace it with some form of fragmented semi-public or private system" (quoted in Mundy & Murphy, 2001, p. 108).

Similar to other third-generation NGOs working in the area of education, Education International frames its work within the human rights discourse, assuming universality of Western liberalism (for a critique see Hopgood, 2013). In fact, the adoption of the human rights discourse – and the universal and expansionist logic associated with it – has enabled Education International to build its transnational advocacy networks, justifying its global reach. For example, Education International's *Barometer of Human and Trade Union Rights* report (2018) states that "education as a right is interrelated with other human rights whose fulfilment depends on it." It further argues that access to education, as well as quality of learning, depend on "the political will of those who have the power to provide or deny this fundamental human right." In contrast to many NGOs that attempt to substitute or supplement government's efforts in ensuring the right to education, Education International's strategy is thus oriented more towards advocacy, holding accountable those individuals and institutions whose actions hinder the right to education guaranteed by national and international law. In other words, Education International's work is geared towards explicitly challenging the (neoliberal) status quo in the area of education – building on human rights discourse – and holding the powerful to account.

However, non-governmental networks such as Education International have had difficulty within some nation-states where labour unions have been brutally repressed, where freedom of speech and press are limited, and where the overall economic conditions undermine the right of children to receive free, quality education. As Education International (2018) describes: "some governments still deny education to the majority of their citizens; some deny education to certain groups; while others demand a single accepted interpretation of information and call it education." In such contexts, challenging the status quo is much more difficult, requiring teachers and their unions to mobilize in strategic and innovative ways. In 2016, Education International's activities ranged from capacity building for teacher union members, to monitoring major international trade and investment negotiations and agreements (such as Trans-Pacific Partnership and Trade in Services Agreement), and to commissioning research on priority issues (such as privatization of public education), exposing and holding accountable market actors who seek to transform public schools into profit-making business enterprises (see Education International's annual report, 2016). In 2016, for example, Education International joined forces with the Uganda National Teachers' Union (UNATU) to produce a report entitled *Schooling the Poor Profitably* (Riep & Machacek, 2016), documenting the impact of the commercialization and privatization of education in Uganda, where Bridge International Academies established 63 private for-profit schools, since February 2015, with an estimated 12,000 fee-paying students. The report revealed that Bridge International Academies in Uganda are actually undermining the accessibility of *quality* education for all, as well as infringing upon the sovereignty of the Ugandan state. Following the release of the report, Uganda's High Court ordered the immediate closure of Bridge facilities, claiming that these schools provided unsanitary learning conditions, used unqualified teachers, and were not properly licensed. Similarly, Education International worked with the Kenya National Union of Teachers, East African Centre for Human Rights, and Global Initiative for Economic, Social, and Cultural Rights to produce a report on the Bridge International Academies in Kenya, leading to the closure of 10 Bridge schools in Busia County for failing to meet education standards (for more, see the Global Initiative for Economic, Social, and Cultural Rights, 2017).

By mobilizing education stakeholders at national and international levels in the struggle against neoliberalism, Education International uses its networks to give national teacher unions greater

leverage in pursuing their goals (reminiscent of a fourth-generation NGO). As Keck and Sikkink (1998) explain, belonging to such a transnational advocacy network creates "a boomerang effect," whereby diverse groups of stakeholders – within and across national settings – communicate, share information, and exchange resources as they work together to influence policy through common networks. As illustrated in the examples above, these transnational advocacy networks function by employing information politics (e.g., commissioning research on Bridge International Academies), symbolic politics (e.g., framing privatization of public education as a threat to education rights), leverage politics (e.g., calling on a stronger actor such as Education International to leverage the work of national teacher unions), and accountability politics (e.g., holding Bridge International Academies accountable through court action). As Mundy and Murphy (2001) argue, such transnational advocacy networks link domestic and international groups in *collective* protests against neoliberal education policies, situating Education International's current formation within the fifth generation of NGOs.

Yet, Education International's ambitious agenda and extensive geographical reach – while undeniably contributing to its political legitimacy – also contain an inherent risk of assuming a universalist stance that leaves no space for alternatives beyond Western modernity and its Left-leaning variations (Silova, Rappleye, & Auld, forthcoming). As Hopgood (2013) convincingly argues, the global discourse of human rights is "intimately tied to the export of neoliberal democracy" (p. xii), highlighting its ameliorative nature and historical predisposition to pursuing "a civilizing mission" across the world. Indeed, the discourses on human rights and democracy regularly intersect in Education International's publications. For example, Education International's website concludes the description of the organization's history with the following paragraph:

> As never before, the defense of the right to education has been joined with the defense and exercise of trade union rights to give EI and its member organisations the capacity to better represent all workers in the education sector and a seat at the global education policy table. Bringing together those enabling rights has also boosted the effective promotion by education unions of the culture, process and practice of democracy.
>
> *(Education International, 2017)*

Clearly, Education International is interested in securing its own "seat at the global education policy table," even if this means participating in and therefore maintaining the neoliberal status quo against which Education International claims to protect teachers and teacher unions. In this context, "to speak in the name of Human Rights is to put the neutral, objective, and universal ahead of the partial and subjective. It is to become *The Authority*" (Hopgood, 2013, p. 6, emphasis in the original). Education policies based on such abstract universalisms – whether stemming from the political Left or Right – tend to run the risk of focusing on their own (narrow) versions of "best policies and practices," while marginalizing other, non-Western alternatives that aim to foster greater equality.

Conclusion

While political scientists have viewed transnational non-governmental actors as marginal to state-based power politics until about 1990s (Mundy & Murphy, 2001), this is certainly no longer the case. As this chapter has illustrated, in addition to grassroots initiatives some NGOs are now forming powerful transnational networks to directly engage in education policy and practice within and across different national contexts. While raising questions about the long-term

capacities and representativeness of these new advocacy movements, many scholars have gone so far as to describe them as "the harbingers of 'global civil society'" in education, pointing to "a redemptive, semiautonomous political space in which popular organizations come together to create and participate in institutions of global governance" (Mundy & Murphy, 2001, p. 90). Worldwide, NGOs have been increasingly seen as playing an instrumental role in the collective effort of ensuring access to quality education for all, whether complementing, correcting, or substituting governmental efforts in the provision of public education. In this context, their work has been generally geared towards technical aspects of education reforms – providing assistance in the development of education standards, implementing new learning assessments, or transferring "best practices" – thus depoliticizing education.

Yet, NGOs are far from apolitical organizations. Using two examples of current fifth-generation NGOs, operating on extremes of the political spectrum, this chapter has illustrated that NGOs can act as both the conduit and obstruction to neoliberal education policy and practice. On the one hand, the PAL Network appears to contribute to advancing neoliberalism through its interdependency and alignment with the Global North logic of a "learning crisis" and its embrace of "big data" as the main mechanism for education reform. The Network has even adopted new features of platform capitalism, suggesting a new area of future research. On the other hand, Education International was a fourth-generation NGO that morphed into a fifth generation. It uses its growing network of teacher unions and federations worldwide to resist neoliberal policies and practices. Despite its successes, Education International has had to resist neoliberalism from within a system of universal ideals using a discourse closely aligned to that of "best practices." For Education International, the struggle against neoliberalism must come from within the global capitalist system. While effectively mobilizing Left-leaning education stakeholders against neoliberal education reforms, such a universalist approach simultaneously neglects other alternatives to neoliberalism.

In an era marked by both Right and Left political dissent in many countries worldwide, "serious prospects of an alternative to neoliberalism herald the possibilities of systemic change" (Ismail & Kamat, 2018, p. 7). This could mean a sixth generation of NGOs is upon us that would have serious consequences for the meaning of the public good of education. Education in this nascent post-neoliberal era will need to be re-politicized. No longer will narrow understandings of quality based on standardized assessments of outputs be enough for citizen empowerment. Similarly, no longer will unquestioned assumptions of Western ideals as universal and transhistorical be enough to advance the complexity of everyday life in communities worldwide. NGOs will continue to play an important role in education for the foreseeable future. Just like previous generations, however, the work of future NGOs in education will be marked by diversity and complexity. Embracing the politics of NGOs in education is arguably the most pressing issue going forward.

Note

1 International teacher unions have a longer history, dating back to the World Federation of Techers Unions founded in 1946 (Coldrick & Jones, 1979).

References

Apple, M. W. (1982). *Education and power*. London: Routledge & Kegan Paul.
Apple, M. W. (2003). *The state and the politics of knowledge*. New York: Routledge Falmer.
Bailey, D. (2015). Resistance is futile? The impact of disruptive protest in the 'silver age of permanent austerity'. *Socio-Economic Review*, 13(1), 5–32.

Ball, S. J. (2012). *Global Education Inc: New policy networks and the neo-liberal imaginary*. London: Routledge.

Bernal, V. and Grewal, I. (Eds.). (2014). *Theorising NGOs: States, feminisms and neoliberalism*. Durham, NC: Duke University Press.

Brehm, W. C. & Silova, I. (2011). The ignorant donor: A radical reimagination of international aid, development, and education. *Current Issues in Comparative Education*, 13(1), 29–36.

Bulger, M., McCormick, P., & Pitcan, M. (2017). *The legacy of inbloom*. Data&Society Working Paper.

Cardelle, Alberto José Frick (2003). *Health care reform in Central America: NGO–government collaboration in Guatemala and El Salvador*. Miami, FL: University of Miami North South Center.

Carney, S. (2009). Negotiating policy in an age of globalisation: Exploring educational 'policyscapes' in Denmark, Nepal, and China. *Comparative Education Review*, 53(1), 63–88.

Castells, M. (1996). *The information age: Economy, society and culture, vol. 1 of The rise of the network society*. Cambridge: Blackwell.

Cave, T. (2015). *A quiet word: Lobbying, crony capitalism and broken politics in Britain*. London: Random House UK.

Chandler, D. (2001). The road to military humanitarianism: How the human rights NGOs shaped a new humanitarian agenda. *Human Rights Quarterly*, 23(3), 678–700.

Cmiel, K. (2004). Review essay: The recent history of human rights. *American Historical Review*, 109(1), 117–135.

Coldrick, A. P. & Jones, P. (1979). *International directory of the trade union movement*. New York: Facts on File.

Degnbol-Martinussen, John & Engberg-Pedersen, Poul (2003). *Aid: Understanding international development cooperation* (Marie Bille, Trans.). London: Zed Books and Copenhagen: Mellemfolkeligt Samvirke, Danish Association for International Cooperation.

Deleuze, G. & Parnet, C. (1987). *Dialogues*, trans. Hugh Tomlinson and Barbara Habberjam. London: The Athlone Press.

Dunne, T. & Hanson, M. (2009). Human rights in international relations. In Michael Goodhart Human (Ed.), *Rights: Politics and Practice* (pp. 61–76). Oxford: OUP.

Education International (2016). Annual report [Online]. https://pages.ei-ie.org/annualreport/2016/en.

Education International (2017). Origins and history [Online]. https://ei-ie.org/en/detail_page/15179/origins-and-history.

Education International (2018). Introduction. *[Online]*. www.ei-ie.org/barometer/en/introduction.

Edwards, D. B. & Klees, S. (2012). Participation in development and education governance. In A. Verger, M. Novelli, and U. Kosar-Altinyelken (Eds.), *Global education policy and international development: New agendas, issues and programmes* (pp. 55–76). New York: Continuum.

Edwards, D. B. & Brehm, W. C. (2016). "Getting to the decision-making table in educational governance: The emergence of Cambodian civil society within the 'new global geometry of power.'" In Y. Kitamura, D. B. Edwards Jr., S. Chhinn, & J. Williams (Eds.) *The political economy of schooling in Cambodia: Issues of equity and quality* (pp. 35–53). New York: Palgrave Macmillan.

Edwards, D. B. Jr., Brehm, W., & Storen, I. (2018). The national politics of educational advocacy in the context of global governance: international funding and support for civil society engagement in Cambodia. *Compare: A Journal of Comparative and International Education*, 48(2), 171–188.

Ferguson, J. (1994). *The anti-politics machine: "Development," depoliticization, and bureaucratic power in Lesotho*. New York: Cambridge University Press.

Friedrich, D. (2016). "Teach For All, public–private partnerships, and the erosion of the public in education." In A. Verger, C. Lubienski, & G. Steiner-Khamsi (Eds.) *World yearbook of education: The Global Education Industry* (Chapter 10). London: Routledge.

Global Initiative for Economic, Social, and Cultural Rights (2017, February 17). Kenyan court upholds the closure of Bridge International Academies over failure to respect standards [Online]. http://globalinitiative-escr.org/kenyan-court-upholds-the-closure-of-bridge-international-academies-over-failure-to-respect-standards.

Harrison, H. (2008). "A penny for the little Chinese": The French Holy Childhood Association in China, 1843–1951. *The American Historical Review*, 113(1), 72–92.

Harvey, D. (2016). Neoliberalism is a political project: An interview with David Harvey [Online]. www.jacobinmag.com/2016/07/david-harvey-neoliberalism-capitalism-labor-crisis-resistance.

Hopgood, S. (2013). *The endtimes of human rights*. Ithaca, NY: Cornell University Press.

Ismail, F. & Kamat, S. (Eds.) (2018). NGOs, social movements and the neoliberal state: Incorporation, reinvention, Critique. *Critical Sociology*, online first. DOI: 10.1177/08969205177498041.

Kamat, S. (2004). The privatization of public interest: Theorizing NGO discourse in a neoliberal era. *Review of International Political Economy*, 11(1), 155–176.

Keck, M. & Sikkink, K. (1998). *Activists beyond borders*. Ithaca, NY: Cornell University Press.

Klonsky, M. (2011). Power philanthropy. In P. E. Kovacs (Ed.) *The Gates Foundation and the future of public schools* (pp. 22–38). New York: Routledge.

Korten, D. (1987). Third generation NGO strategies: A key to people centered development. *World Development*, 15(1), 145–159.

Korten, D. (1990). *Getting to the 21st century: Voluntary action and the global agenda*. West Hartford, CT: Kumarian Press.

Lahann, R. & Reagan, E. M. (2011). Teach for America and the politics of progressive neoliberalism. *Teacher Education Quarterly*, Winter, 7–27.

Marx, K. (1990). *Capital: A critique of political economy*, Vol. 1. Trans. Ben Fowkes. London: Penguin.

Mazibuko, D. M. (2000). The role of non-governmental organisations (NGOs) in educational advancement in developing countries: The South African experience. *Journal of International Cooperation in Education*, 3(1).

McPhearson, I. (2016). An analysis of power in transnational advocacy networks in education. In K. Mundy, A. Green, B. Lingard, & T. Verger (Eds.) *The handbook of global education policy* (pp. 401–418). New York: Wiley-Blackwell.

Mundy, K. & Murphy, L. (2001). Transnational advocacy, global civil society? Emerging evidence from the field of education. *Comparative Education Review*, 45(1), 85–126.

Nambissan, G. B. & Ball, S. J. (2010) Advocacy networks, choice and private schooling of the poor in India. *Global Networks*, 10(3), 1–20.

Nygreen, K. (2017). Negotiating tensions: Grassroots organizing, school reform, and the paradox of neoliberal democracy. *Anthropology & Education Quarterly*, 48(1), 42–60.

Parpart, J. L. (1995). Deconstructing the development 'expert'. In M. H. Marchand and J. L. Parpart (Eds.) *Feminism, postmodernism, development* (pp. 221–243). London and New York: Routledge.

Petras, J. & Veltmeyer, H. (2001). *Globalization unmasked: Imperialism in 21st century*. New York: Zed Books.

Pineda, A. M. W. (2013). *NGOs and development in Latin America and the Caribbean: A case study of Haiti*. Unpublished dissertation University of New Orleans. https://scholarworks.uno.edu/cgi/viewcontent.cgi?referer=https://www.google.co.jp/&httpsredir=1&article=1047&context=honors_theses.

Popkewitz, T. S. (1998). *Struggling for the soul: The politics of education and the construction of the teacher*. New York: Teachers' College Press.

Richey, L. A. & Ponte, S. (2008). Better (red) than dead? Celebrities, consumption and international aid. *Third World Quarterly*, 29(4), 711–729.

Riep, C. & Machacek, M. (2016). *Schooling the poor profitably: The innovation and deprivations of Bridge International Academies in Uganda*. Education International. https://download.ei-ie.org/Docs/WebDepot/DOC_Final_28sept.pdf.

Rose, P. (2007). *Supporting non-state providers in basic education service delivery*. Create: Consortium for Research on Educational Access, Transitions and Equity [Research Monograph No 4]. http://sro.sussex.ac.uk/1832/1/PTA4.pdf.

Roy, A. & Cusack, J. (2016). *Things that can and cannot be said: Essays and conversations*. Chicago, IL: Haymarket Books.

Russakoff, D. (2015). *The Prize: Who's in Charge of America's schools?* New York: Houghton Mifflin Harcourt.

Sahlberg, P. (2016). The global education reform movement and its impact on schooling. In K. Mundy, A. Green, B. Lingard & A. Verger (Eds.), *The handbook of global education policy* (pp. 128–144). Oxford: Wiley Blackwell.

Silova, I. (2018). It's not a learning crisis, it's an international development crisis! A decolonial critique. *Worlds of Education Blog* [Online]. https://worldsofeducation.org/en/woe_homepage/woe_detail/15683/wdr2018-reality-check-13-"it's-not-a-learning-crisis-it's-an-international-development-crisis-a-decolonial-critique"-by-iveta-silova.

Silova, I. & Steiner-Khamsi, G. (Eds.) (2008). *How NGOs react: Globalization and education reform in the Caucasus, Central Asia, and Mongolia*. Bloomfield, CT: Kumarian Press.

Silova, I., Rappleye, J., & Auld, E. (forthcoming). Beyond the Western horizon: Rethinking education, values, and policy transfer. In G. Fan & T. Popkewitz (Eds.) *International handbook on educational policy studies*. New York: Springer and Shanghai Education Press.
Srnicek, N. (2017). *Platform capitalism*. Cambridge: Polity Press.
UNESCO. (2013). *The global learning crisis: Why every child deserves a quality education*. Paris: UNESCO.
UNHCR. (n.d.). World Conference on Human Rights, June 14–25, 1993, Vienna, Austria. www.ohchr.org/EN/ABOUTUS/Pages/ViennaWC.aspx.
Vrasti, W. (2013). *Volunteer tourism in the Global South: Giving back in neoliberal times*. New York: Routledge.
Wallace, T. (2009). NGO dilemmas: Trojan horses for global neoliberalism? *Socialist Register*.
Wells, K. (2015). Violent lives and peaceful schools: NGO constructions of modern childhood and the role of the state. In J. Parkes (Ed.) *Gender violence in poverty contexts: The educational challenge* (pp. 168–182). Education, Poverty and International Development. Abingdon, UK: Routledge.
Winthrop, R., Matsui, E., & Jamil, B. R. (2013). Quiet progress for education in Pakistan. Brookings. www.brookings.edu/blog/up-front/2013/04/08/quiet-progress-for-education-in-pakistan.
World Bank. (2018). *The World Development Report 2018: Learning to realize education's promise*. Washington, DC: World Bank.
Zhang, Y. (2003). *China's emerging civil society*. Washington, DC: Brookings.