

Excerpts from **Hidden Privatisation in Public Education** by Education International, 5<sup>th</sup> World Congress, July 2007. NOTE: This is a very brief summary of the views expressed in this paper. The real issue, as this preliminary report so clearly shows, is about the very ethos of education. <http://download.ei-ie.org/docs/IRISDocuments/Research%20on%20Education/Privatisation%20and%20Commercialisation/2007-00242-01-E.pdf>

Around the world, forms of privatization are being introduced into our public education systems - the result of deliberate policy, often under the banner of “educational reform” - other changes may be introduced unannounced.

The trend towards privatization of public education is hidden. It is camouflaged by the language of “educational reform,” or introduced stealthily as “modernization.”

The stance of Education International is that *education is not a commodity and should not be privatized*. This does not mean that education unions are opposed to reform.

To put it in the starkest possible way: is education about giving each child, each young person, the opportunity to develop his or her full potential as a person and as a member of society? Or is education to be a service sold to clients, who are considered from a young age to be consumers and targets for marketing?

It is not simply education and education services that are subject to forms of privatisation: education policy itself – through advice, consultation, research, evaluations and forms of influence – is being privatised.

Forms of hidden privatisation -- market forms, competition, choice and a focus on performance management – carry ethical dangers and many examples of opportunistic and tactical behaviours are already apparent in schools and among parents within such systems.

**Conclusions:** Privatisation works as a policy tool in a number of ways, with a variety of ends and purposes.

Indeed, in some contexts the **education market place is now so self-evident** that it is barely commented on – it is in the lack of attention that comes from normalisation that these privatisations can be said to be hidden.

Privatisation tendencies have profound implications for the future of teachers’ careers, pay and status, and the nature of their work and their degree of control over the educational process.

For the teacher, competitive relations often produce ethical dilemmas between the interests of the institution and those of students. All of this is indicative of a general moral pauperisation.

These market forms can also have a significant impact on equity in education, not just in widening gaps between the privileged and the disadvantaged, but also in changing how equity and social justice in education are understood.