

Respect for Teachers: The Rhetoric Gap and How Research on Schools is Laying the Ground for New Business Models in Education (Michael A Peter Series Critical Issues in Education and Politics (RLE))

Brian Ford

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For over 30 years we have been in the midst of a paradox. Following a questionable logic that sees education as a means to economic ends, efforts to reform education have focused on keeping the US from slipping in international economic competition. Relying on testing as a standard, in the end we may have decreased our human potential and become less competitive.

Our system has gotten worse at its core, in its philosophical tenets and in its ultimate effects, by placing unwonted pressure on our youth and in stifling their creativity. While this goes back decades, Respect for Teachers takes its title from a phrase --perhaps a codeword-- in President's 2011 State of the Union address and sits down to consider its implications. Connecting attacks on teachers, unions and schools and the misrepresentation of research to the promotion of new economic models in education, it suggests that the Obama administration may be, without quite realizing it, setting the stage for rapid privatization of the public system. As this endangers the egalitarian basis of democracy, it also reminds us that schooling is big business – many trillions of dollars world-wide. Joseph Schumpeter once said, "No bourgeoisie ever disliked war profits." Respect operates under the premise that no bourgeoisie ever disliked the spoils of school reform, either.



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