

BOOK REVIEW/COMPTE RENDU

Kathleen Lynch, Bernie Grummell, and Dympna Devine, *New Managerialism in Education: Commercialization, Carelessness and Gender*. New York: Palgrave Macmillan, 2012, 265 pp., \$85.00 hardcover (978-0-230-27511-9).

In *New Managerialism in Education*, education scholars Lynch, Grummell, and Devine provide an illuminating empirical account of the effects of new managerial (NM) practices on Ireland's educational sectors and the impact that neoliberal reforms have had on gender relations in senior management circles. The authors are decidedly critical of the influence of NM in Ireland and Irish education in particular. This is not surprising given the authors' prior collective work in the areas of equality studies, critical social justice, and education.

The book is divided into four parts. The first section provides a general overview of the development of neoliberalism in Ireland, culminating in the Celtic Tiger period of rapid economic growth in Ireland, followed by its economic collapse in 2008. The authors speak to the unique historical and sociopolitical culture of Ireland that led to the contemporary governance structures that exist within Irish educational sectors. This book offers its most significant contributions through the second and third sections. Here the authors provide rich qualitative data to demonstrate how neoliberal projects and policies are actually accomplished, managed, and interpreted by people through everyday social practices in primary, secondary, and higher education fields. The final section provides critical discourse analysis of various Irish media sources and some interview data of media correspondents and media personnel to consider how national educational agendas get framed.

One of the issues motivating the authors' research is the continued prevalence of employment barriers for women in achieving senior management positions within all sectors of education — primary, secondary, vocational, and higher education. The authors speak to the gender imbalances in senior management, with men holding a disproportionate number of positions. One of the stated objectives for this research is to effect policy changes within educational management circles, to create more genuinely inclusive practices and procedures for women and people with care responsibilities (p. 41).

In order to investigate the prevalence of NM values within Irish education, the authors focus on the appointment process of 23 senior managers that took place within three different levels of education — primary, secondary, and higher education. Through their investigation, they conducted over 50 in-depth interviews with both the hiring assessors of educational managers as well as successful candidates. Through interviews, textual and critical discourse analysis, the authors focus on the values encoded in the recruitment process and the values directing management at all levels of education.

The qualitative data gathered by Lynch, Grummell, and Devine demonstrates that the implementation of NM values within Irish educational circles has been uneven. In primary and secondary education sectors, Irish schools are often small, acting as community hubs particularly within rural Ireland. Principals are deeply integrated into the fabric of these smaller communities and many still have teaching duties. As a result, many principals “manage” new regulatory responsibilities while attempting to minimize the impact on school staff, students, and families. With primary and secondary schooling more closely associated with care work, school principals, alongside communities, have mounted successful challenges to the competitive pressures placed on schools through various neoliberal policy agendas. The authors speak in detail to the significant role that primary and secondary teacher unions (of which principals are members) have played in challenging neoliberal discourses on educational policy, including the idea that greater accountability measures will improve the quality of Irish education.

Within higher education, the implementation of new managerial processes has been more successful. The authors demonstrate that post secondary unions are less prevalent and less influential compared to their primary and secondary educational sector counterparts in Ireland. The Irish government has also tied higher education funding to more market driven reforms, including administrative streamlining, reorganization of faculties and departments and new resource allocation processes (p. 32).

As the authors show through their case studies, the new accountability measures and regulatory controls that accompany the imposition of NM values within schools, lead to more time-intensive managerial work. As a result, senior management positions are much less desirable for individuals with more care responsibilities in the private sphere. Of course, as research provided by the authors demonstrate, those with greater caretaking responsibilities, in both Irish society and globally, are primarily women.

The authors also demonstrate the predominance of traditional gender roles in Irish society. The data collected from this study suggests that

both women and men assume that women are more likely to leave the workforce periodically to engage in childcare. Also those interviewed acknowledged that senior management positions might be more difficult for women than men, given that women were assumed to have more care responsibilities at home.

Through their research, the authors challenge traditional organizational studies literature, which primarily explores the barriers to women that exist *within* set organizational structures. Instead the authors' work clearly demonstrates that social norms related to gender as well as economic structures that exist outside of specific organizational settings, negatively affect women's opportunities for advancement in management positions.

One problem with the book was the rather purist notion of gender that the authors employed in their analysis; that is to say, the authors spoke of women and men in monolithic terms that seemed to suggest rather binary and uncomplicated understandings of gender. In chapters seven and eight of the book, the authors do acknowledge the complexity of gendered identities by noting that "[not] all men are positioned as dominant within organizations or conversely that women are always subordinate" (p. 136). Lynch, Grummell, and Devine also recognize the failure of much organizational studies literature to account for the ways in which race, class, disability, and nationality (among other social categories) also intersect with gender to complicate understandings of care work and management. However, this important recognition did not seem to translate into the authors' actual analyses. By providing more demographic information on senior management circles in Ireland more generally and study participants in particular, the authors' exploration of gender would have been that much more complex and robust.

Curiously, the book did not include a conclusion. Instead the final chapter of the book examines the significance of the Irish media and public relations in shaping educational discourses, which seemed rather out of place. A summary of the research would have provided the authors with an opportunity to better fulfill their stated objective of contributing to the conversation about policy changes within educational sectors that are more inclusionary and just. Without such a summation, I was left wondering how the authors envision social transformation of neoliberal economic projects and normative gender relations within the educational sectors of Irish society.

The form that neoliberal policies have taken in Ireland will resonate with Canadian educators, educational leaders, and policy analysts. OECD rankings, PISA scores and standardized testing have become subjects of concern for provincial educational departments throughout this

country. Moreover, like the Irish case, great pressure has been placed on the governing bodies of all levels of education to provide “measureable” and “results oriented” goals directing the learning needs of students. In both Ireland and Canada, we have seen the increased casualization of university faculty, and government directives to create educational experiences that launch students into the workforce rather than encouraging students to pursue academic interests. Despite some important contextual differences (including the role that the Catholic church has played in Irish education), the similarities between Irish and Canadian contexts demonstrate the homogenizing influence of global capitalism in standardizing educational experiences and creating a “consumptive good” out of a “human right” (p. 14).

New Managerialism in Education demonstrates that the process of commodifying education through neoliberal policy initiatives in Ireland is neither uncontested nor complete. The power of this study is in its presentation of rich qualitative data, which demonstrates the uneven integration of neoliberal reforms within the Irish education sector. In this way, this research provides important contributions to a growing body of research that evaluates specific neoliberal projects, with a focus on gender. This work is exactly the kind of research that governance scholars Wendy Larner and Pat O’Malley, have argued is needed to enrich the areas of governmentality studies, political economy approaches, and sociological work on neoliberalism. This book will also be of benefit to scholars who study comparative education, educational leadership, and gender.

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