

Institution: Institute of Education
Unit of Assessment: 25
Title of case study: Education plc: new philanthropy and old inequalities
1. Summary of the impact (indicative maximum 100 words)

Professor Stephen Ball has produced a series of highly provocative analyses of English education policy and the neo-liberal education concepts and practices that have taken root in an increasing number of countries. He has also raised awareness of the growing significance of international edu-businesses and philanthropists. His work has proved valuable not only to national and global teachers' organisations but to pressure groups and think tanks seeking to protect the state education system. Teachers have also derived comfort and insight from Ball's research as it allows them to gain a better understanding of the mundane but powerful managerial and market forces that influence how they work and relate to themselves.

2. Underpinning research (indicative maximum 500 words)

Context: Stephen Ball is Karl Mannheim Professor in the Sociology of Education at the IOE. His research reflects his deep concern for social justice and covers three linked areas: the effects of 'markets' and market-orientated thinking on educational policy and provision; the influence of within-school processes on life-chances; and the enduring effects of social class on education choices and experiences. Much of Ball's work entails exploring and analysing contemporary changes in education policy and in the forms of the state. His analyses often adopt a historical perspective and employ sociological concepts, theories and methods – particularly those of Michel Foucault and Pierre Bourdieu. For many years, Ball has been concerned with how the middle classes utilise policy for their benefit, effectively to the detriment of the less privileged. In more recent times, he has written also about the new policy participants – edu-businesses and philanthropists – and on privatisation, contracting and marketisation. He has sought to trace the effects of these changes on democracy, classrooms, teachers and individual families.

New philanthropy: Ball argues that we now have something akin to a global educational policy, based on neo-liberal tenets (see reference **R1**). His research also demonstrates that philanthropy, business and governments are coming together in new networks and policy sites outside the framework of the nation state. The network maps that Ball and his IOE colleagues have produced have identified the key corporations, think tanks and private and voluntary sector bodies that inhabit this new world. These maps have also highlighted the almost complete absence of universities, unions and academics from these influential networks. As Ball points out, the 'new' philanthropists, such as Microsoft's Bill Gates, operate transnationally and have the power to 'partner' with governments in solving problems and to enact policy, often beyond any sort of democratic oversight. Ball's ESRC-funded work (2008-10) on the new forms of philanthropy builds on his earlier audit and mapping (2004-7) of education businesses in the UK (**R2**), which was also funded by the ESRC. Though he raises critical questions about the roles of philanthropy and multi-national education companies, Ball argues that blanket defence of the public sector as it was – against the inroads of privatisation – is untenable. There is no going back to a past in which state schools worked fairly in the interests of all learners, he says, because there was no such past.

Methods: For their 2008-10 study, Ball and IOE research officer Dr Carolina Junemann, interviewed philanthropists and philanthropic foundations and used network, document and social media analysis – a combination that they call 'network ethnography'. Ball began to develop this approach in his 2004-7 study of senior executives from leading education services companies.

Old inequalities: Since joining the IOE in 2001, Ball has produced a series of analyses of New Labour and Conservative education policies. He has, for example, drawn attention to what he sees as the many contradictions in Conservative education policy (**R3**) – between the party's modernising rhetoric of giving children 'the chance to test themselves outside their comfort zone' and their prescriptions of traditional forms of discipline and curriculum. He has concluded that this apparent incoherence reflects the diverse challenges faced by the state and the different core constituencies of Conservative support. Ball has also argued that New Labour's policy interventions actually provided even more opportunities for middle-class parents to seek social advantage (**R4**). Issues relating to race and class inequalities have been marginalised by the drive to economic competitiveness. **Methods:** These conclusions were derived from three ESRC-funded studies that Ball undertook with Professor Carol Vincent of the IOE: 'A Market in Love' (2001-3),

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'Local Childcare Cultures' (2005-7) and 'The Educational Strategies of the Black Middle Class' (2009-11). Professor David Gillborn and Dr Nicola Rollock, who both moved to the University of Birmingham in 2012, were co-researchers on the third of these studies. In each of these projects, Ball and his colleagues employed a form of policy analysis using post-structural theory and methods – a combination of discourse analysis, social network analysis and genealogy.

Teachers as subjects: Ball has also helped education professionals to develop a better understanding of the social, economic and cultural context in which they work. He uses and develops the concept of 'performativity'¹ to describe the new mode of regulation that enables the state to govern in an 'advanced' liberal way (R5). Teachers are required to organise themselves in response to targets, indicators and evaluations and to set aside personal views as to what constitutes high quality teaching. For some, this presents a chance to be excellent, for others it creates profound personal misgivings. Perversely, 'performativity' produces opacity rather than transparency, he says, because individuals and organisations take ever-greater care over the construction and maintenance of fabrications, through 'gaming' and selective representation.

Methods: Ball has conducted two projects on 'performativity' since joining the IOE -- each based on school case studies and interviews with school workers. The first (2000-4; funded by the EU) with Professor Christian Maroy, then of the University of Louvain, Belgium, and the second (2008-10: ESRC) with Professor Meg Maguire (King's College London) and Dr Annette Braun (IOE).

3. References to the research (indicative maximum of six references)

R1: Ball, S. J. (2012) *Global Education Inc.: new policy networks and the neo-liberal imaginary*. London, Routledge.

R2: Ball, S. J. (2007) *Education Plc: understanding private sector participation in public sector education*, Routledge.

R3: Ball, S. J. (2008) 'Staggering backwards to the future: Conservative Party education policy' in J. Cruddas and J. Rutherford (eds) *Is the future Conservative?*, London: Soundings, 23-30.

R4: Ball, S. J. (2008) *The Education Debate: policy and politics in the 21st century*. Bristol: Policy Press.

R5: Ball, S.J. (2003) The teacher's soul and the terrors of performativity, *Journal of Education Policy*, 18(2), 215-228.

Indicative grants: 1) 'New' Philanthropy, Education Policy and the State (May 2008 to April 2010), ESRC: £91,489 (grant-holder: Ball). 2) Choice, Ethics and Professional Change in Education Markets (October 2004 to September 2007), ESRC: £284,674 (grant-holder: Ball)

Quality indicators: Ball insists that the ultimate relevance of his research is not based on citations or recognition. What matters most to him are the engagements with teachers, unions and educational movements that result from his research. Nevertheless, others do judge Ball on conventional criteria, and they judge him highly. He is placed 18th in the Microsoft Academic ranking for social science, with 153 listed publications and 3,315 citations. Only one other British academic is in the top 20 in this field.

<http://academic.research.microsoft.com/RankList?entitytype=2&topDomainID=22&subDomainID=0&last=0&start=1&end=100>

4. Details of the impact (indicative maximum 750 words)

Beneficiaries and dates of impact: Ball also feels uncomfortable about the idea that his research has 'beneficiaries', at least in the traditional sense. He seeks to be 'useful' by helping people, particularly teachers, to "think about what they do", and to think too about what policy-makers, education businesses and the new breed of philanthropists are doing – and how the UK education system continues to help reproduce the class system. Teachers, trade unions and pressure groups campaigning on behalf of state education have gained most from his research – throughout the REF period. But the public has also benefited from his important contributions to general debate on issues relating to education policy and social justice.

Reach and significance: Ball's research has been discussed by teachers, union representatives and education commentators as far apart as Alaska and Australia. The distance his thoughts have travelled helps to underscore their importance for those who care about education and social equity. Websites based in North and South America, Australia and Europe carry discussions on his work, and teacher unions throughout the English-speaking world, particularly Australia and the UK,

¹ Term coined by Jean Francois Lyotard: "The Postmodern Condition: A Report on Knowledge" (1984)

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use his research to help them make sense of – and argue against – education policy developments such as inter-school competition and performance benchmarking (**S1**). Ball does not claim that his work has had an instrumental² impact (influencing policy and practice), although he gave evidence to the House of Commons Education Select Committee inquiry into the 15-19 examinations system in 2012 and was quoted twice in the Committee's report (**S2**). But he has certainly had widespread conceptual impact (enhancing general understanding and informing debate).

Privatisation: Ball's 2004-7 research (**R2**) resulted in an invitation to produce a major report, *Hidden Privatisation in Public Education* (2008), for Education International (**S3**). This Brussels-based body is the world's largest federation of unions, representing 30 million education employees in about 400 organisations in 170 countries and territories. The EI report, co-written with Dr Deborah Youdell while she was at the IOE³, maps and examines the spread and consequences of the reconfiguration of education in the market form around the world. The report was translated into Japanese, German and Polish by EI's affiliates and has since been used extensively in the advocacy work of many unions. Teacher unions (e.g. the Canadian Teachers' Federation and the Australian Education Union) also shared the findings with their members. EI says that the concepts of 'endogenous' and 'exogenous' privatisation⁴, which Ball and Youdell conceived and explored in their report, are now "firmly embedded in global unions' conceptual framework about privatisation ... [the report] played a catalyst role in teacher unions' policies worldwide" (**S4**). Fred van Leeuwen, EI's general secretary, explains that one of the study's key purposes was "to get the trend towards privatisation out into the light of day. We need to get greater transparency ... so that we can engage in an open debate about the future of education in our societies". Websites and newspapers around the world, including the *Manila Times* and the *South China Morning Post*, helped to ensure that this goal was achieved by reporting the study's findings. Organisations such as the Global Campaign for Education also publicised the study.

Pressure groups: Ball lends his support to a number of pressure groups that promote state education, such as the Anti Academies Alliance (AAA), Local Schools Network and the Campaign for State Education. These organisations have invited him to speak at their events (e.g. a major AAA conference in TUC headquarters for parents, governors and school staff on June 11, 2011). They have also promoted and discussed his research on their websites. Margaret Tulloch, chair of Comprehensive Future, commented: "Education research is often of little relevance to education non-professionals such as parents and governors who nonetheless have a serious interest in education policy and, in particular, want to campaign for change. Professor Ball's research and his ability to bring its findings to a non-professional audience are very important in this area. We are undergoing a very serious shift in how education is managed, so research in this area is vital. His impact has been to raise awareness and provide evidence for campaigners, for example in mapping the extent of edu-business and the profound changes in how schools are governed" (**S5**).

Performativity: Ball's analyses of the consequences of managerialism and its methods and values (performativity) have also helped to shape the University and College Union's (UCU) thinking on professionalism. A recent UCU policy paper states: "Any explanation of the kind of professionalism that is now required will need to take account of the external forces and circumstances facing education and educationalists. It also must take account of the very insidious ways that the culture across education has become infected by managerialism, commodification and marketisation, and how these processes become internalised and then eat away at the professional soul of UCU members. This process has been referred to as 'performativity'." The paper also quotes Ball as saying: "Performativity invites and incites us to make ourselves more effective ... to improve ourselves and to feel guilty or inadequate, if we do not" (**S6**). Dan Taubman, UCU's senior education officer (**S7**), said that Ball gave a brilliant presentation to a UCU seminar in March 2013. "His presentation based on his extensive writing on this subject was clear and cogent. His analysis of professionalism in education in an age of managerialism engendered a great deal of discussion and interest. Professor Ball spoke about the underlying trends that impacted on educational professionalism and was able to illustrate his central thesis with current examples from education."

² Using Evidence: How Research Can Inform Public Services (Nutley, S., Walter, I., Davis, H. 2007)

³ Youdell joined the University of Birmingham in 2012.

⁴ Endogenous: the import of ideas and practices from the private sector. Exogenous: opening up public education services to private-sector for-profit participation.

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Conferences and seminars: Ball has addressed countless other seminars and conferences over the REF period – and many of them have been attended by teachers, governors, trade unionists and members of the public. He has spoken at TUC and NUT conferences as well as teacher union events in Australia and Canada. He has also given public lectures on his work in Britain (for example, in Cambridge, Huddersfield, Southampton, Bath, Chester and Strathclyde), Australia (Sydney), Germany (Halle) and the US (Madison, Wisconsin). In March 2013 he delivered The Vere Forster public lecture in Dublin – to an audience including Ireland’s Chief Inspector of Schools and senior officials in the Irish education department. As a result of this address, an Irish radio station, Dublin City FM, invited Ball to talk for half-an-hour on the educational impact of neo-liberal ideas (**S8**). One listener later contacted the station to say: “So much food for thought here and a wake-up call to those of us who have been seduced by the ‘common sense’ of the market, managerialism and performativity. Stephen explained his way of developing his world view so well by describing the sociological toolbox that he dips into. Long live the teacher as intellectual”.

Media coverage: Some of the most highly-regarded UK education journalists and commentators have taken a close and continuing interest in Ball’s work on privatisation and Conservative and New Labour education policies and have interviewed him many times. They include: Peter Wilby (*Guardian* and *New Statesman*), Richard Garner (*Independent*), Jessica Shepherd (**S9**) and Fiona Millar (both *Guardian*) and Warwick Mansell (*TES* and freelance). *Guardian* columnist Seamus Milne and Matthew Taylor (RSA chief executive and Tony Blair’s former chief political adviser) are among the other prominent commentators who have highlighted his research findings. Ball recognises the value of using the media to get his ideas across to the world beyond academia and adopts a proactive approach. He writes blogs and newspaper articles that invariably generate a big response from readers. One of his *Guardian* comment pieces, pointing out that the shift towards marketised education is combined with an authoritarian and nostalgia-driven approach to the curriculum, drew no fewer than 253 comments from readers (**S10**).

Effect on teachers: Ball is acutely aware of the irony of his work on ‘performativity’ being used in a REF impact case study. He takes comfort in the knowledge that his research is useful to teachers.

“Last year [2012] I gave a talk about performativity in education to a very mixed group of people, including teachers and students. Afterwards a woman came up to me and said: ‘Thank you, thank you very much for that. I resigned as a teacher last year’. She then added: ‘Now I know why I resigned ... emotionally I couldn’t cope anymore. I found what was happening to me abhorrent’. And although, in a sense, that’s a sort of negative example I was very pleased with that because I think she was saying that she now had the tools to make sense of her experience. She hadn’t been able to analyse it intellectually, and she now knew why she had made the right decision from her point of view.”

That is the kind of impact that matters most to Ball.

5. Sources to corroborate the impact⁵ (indicative maximum of 10 references)

- S1:** ‘Putting the public first? Independent public schools’, State School Teachers’ Union of Western Australia <http://www.sstuwa.org.au/news-main/sstuwa-articles/303-independent-public-schools/8411-putting-the-public-first-independent-public-schools>
- S2:** The administration of examinations for 15-19 year olds in England (2012) <http://www.publications.parliament.uk/pa/cm201213/cmselect/cmeduc/141/141.pdf>
- S3:** Ball, S.J. & Youdell, D. (2008) Hidden privatisation in public education. Brussels: Education International <http://download.ei-ie.org/docs/IRISDocuments/Research%20Website%20Documents/2009-00034-01-E.pdf>
- S4:** Impact evidence supplied by Education International (available from IOE on request)
- S5:** Margaret Tulloch, chair of Comprehensive Future
- S6:** ‘Towards a UCU Policy on Professionalism’ http://www.ucu.org.uk/media/pdf/q/i/Towards_a_UCU_Policy_on_Professionalism_Full_Text.pdf
- S7:** Dan Taubman, senior education officer, UCU
- S8:** *Inside Education*, Dublin City FM, March 24, 2013 <http://insideeducation.podbean.com/2013/03/24/programme-168-sociologist-stephen-ball-on-education-policy-24-3-13/>
- S9:** ‘Know your place’, *Guardian*, January 29, 2008
- S10:** ‘Back to the 19th century with Michael Gove’s education bill’, *Guardian*, January 31, 2011

⁵All web links accessed 11/11/13