

Schools, Power, and Community

The degree of parental and community involvement in school education varies from country to country.

However, it is fairly commonly assumed that it should be *bigger* than it is. This paper will attempt at examining the phenomenon of the *will* of education professionals to have “lay persons” engaged in schooling.

The critical moment in the construction of the modern school was the XVIII-century Enlightenment. The school – to some extent – was meant to act *against* the locally embedded traditions and worldviews, hence a separation of the roles ascribed to teachers and parents, with a clearly dominant role ascribed to the school. The projects of school-community connections that emerged in the following years bore signs of the “rational colonisation of life-worlds” by the school.

The questions I am trying to take up in the paper refer to the contemporary discourse of partnership as a *modified discourse of power*. Its emergence is, then, thought to mark not only the liberation from the “old” notions of rational control over reality, but also the construction of “new” regimes of political management. In particular, I will try to address the following issues:

- What conditions lie behind the contemporary stress on community and parental involvement in schooling, i.e. what forces make it *possible* for the teachers to “step back” from their traditional claims to fully control the child?
- What rationalities are thus implied, evoked, or constructed?

Theoretically speaking, the questions refer to the Foucauldian notion of power/knowledge, that is to the idea of a discursive construction of political control. They also speak to the modern / postmodern distinction in the theory of culture and politics. Finally, they have to address the “crisis of postmodernity” in the time of neo-colonial rearrangement of global politics. This latter issue will make grounds for the concluding question of the prospects of the contemporary ‘localism’ in education in the light of present political challenges.