Policy and Evidence of Marketisation of Education in Singapore Schools

Abstract

The Singapore government introduced education policy initiatives under the Thinking Schools, Learning Nation vision in 1997 to promote greater diversity, autonomy and innovation among schools. The first part of the paper provides a review of educational policies launched since 1997, and highlights how these reforms manifest salient features of marketing orientation in the Singapore educational system. The second part of the paper illustrates the marketisation of education through one recent nation-wide initiative – the niche area scheme. We argue that schools should instead identify parents’ and students’ needs, and then develop their ‘products’ based on competences.

Keywords: marketisation of education, educational marketing, differentiation, niche area scheme, and educational reform.

Introduction

In the 1980s we witnessed the emergence of a remarkable phenomenon – the globalization of ‘markets’ through the convergence of cultures into a ‘commonality’ of shared goals and values. As technology advances rapidly through intense communication, standardization and similar decision technology, world markets and cultures are drawn closer together (Levitt, 1983; Tse et al., 1988). Today, we continue to live in an epoch of rapid social change where capital, goods, technology, people, ideas, and information move inexorably across political borders and cultural boundaries (Green, 2007; Holton, 2000). Clearly, the advancement of