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School-Family Relationships
An Argument for the Parallel Process Model

Abstract:

In this paper, I argue for a specific model of the relationship schools can have with families and vice-versa. This model is called the “parallel process model” and involves families in the learning of the school in a fashion parallel to student work. Contrasting this model with three others—the competitive state model, the special needs model and the community participation model—I argue that the parallel process model: (a) outperforms the other models on their own terms and (b) has numerous benefits of its own. I also make the point that the parallel process model may be especially well-suited to the M.E.N.A. region, due to the importance of family structure in this region and the risks associated with state institutions perceived as abstract from communal life. Finally, the parallel process model promises to allow more organic educational development than institutional forms grafted onto cultures discontinuous with them.

ملخص بحث

العلاقة بين المدرسة والأسرة، رأي نموذج العملية المتوازية

ناقش في هذه الورقة نموذج محددًا للمواطنة التي يمكن أن تبنيها المدارس مع الأسرة والمجتمع. واسم النموذج “نموذج العملية المتوازية” وهو يشترك الأسرة في التعليم بالمدرسة بأسلوب يراعى عملها المماثل. وبمقارنة هذا النموذج بالتسعينات الثلاثة الأخرى: نموذج الحالة التناسبية ونموذج الاحتياجات الخاصة ونموذج مشاركة المجتمع، اقتضى هذا أن نموذج العملية المتوازية:

1- يوفر النماذج الأخرى في الآداء.

ب- له فوائد عديدة خاصة به.

كما واضح أن نموذج العملية المتوازية يمكن أن يلائم خصوصاً أغلب الشرق الأوسط وشرق أوروبا نظراً لأهمية التكوين الأسري في هذا الإقليم، والمخاطر ذات الصلة بموضوعات الدولة والتي ينظر إليها بمعزل عن حياة المجتمع. أخرىًا فإن نموذج العملية المتوازية يبشر بالمزيد من التنمية التعليمية الفاعلية، وأكثر من الأشكال المؤسساتية التي أتفقها في ثقافات لا تتوافق معها.

Introduction

Tonight, as usual, our students’ parents came to school to study a lesson in geography and society. Their children are learning about the globe, and so the parents have decided to learn something too. That way, everyone can talk together and the learning can be larger than the schoolhouse. These parents come at night, after work hours and evening prayer. If only one parent can come, the parents take turns. They get to discuss questions about the world’s many societies. Parents have questions too, and
learning doesn’t stop with a diploma or a job. The questions turn to unknown parts of the globe and to strange and disturbing societies. We help parents voice their reservations in ways that ask questions and try to adhere to the value of tolerance. The parents are learning about the globe in a parallel process with their children. School and family are aligned, and life itself takes on an educational glow.

Now step back from the example. Consider this general form: Families repeat, in their own way, what kids are doing at school. Families and schools are in crucial respects continuous.

For instance:

1. The content of school exercises includes families. Provided it is culturally acceptable and not a breach of privacy, a school exercise might ask children to study with their family what tradition is. Can the family share one way in which they keep alive family traditions?

2. Families explicitly help shape the questions their children discuss at school. In one possible arrangement, teachers from school meet with family members to discuss the questions family members have for their children and how these might relate to school curricula.

3. Schools go to learn from families and learn that families have much to teach. For instance, what can the families tell the teachers about their children currently in school? Do any family members have real life experiences that deepen lessons given in school?

4. Families become excited about learning with the schools. In places where parallel process has been successful—such as Reggio Emilia, Italy and Chicago, Illinois—families express a great deal of satisfaction with the schooling their children receive because the family members themselves learn while their children do. Working parents find the process of being able to continue their education refreshing in the midst of often difficult work life.

In a sense:

5. Schools do double duty as family centers. They provide a space of community for families that inevitably allows some family needs and desires to be met, and they often involve some low-level family counseling, including health referrals.

6. Parents do double duty as lead students—models for the younger—and have greater opportunities to see their children maturing. Once parents share in some of what their children are learning, they can also model learning for their children—sometimes with knowledge, but also with the maturity to ask honest questions (the most valuable of educational examples). On the other hand, children can show their parents what they have learned and can appear as powerful sources of learning.

7. Schools and families form a learning community. The wall potentially alienating school from life is bridged, while families are let into state institutional structure in a fulfilling way. The state—family intersection takes on an educational quality too—no longer simply economic or regulatory.

At these crucial public points of the state, then, families feel they have a role in the formation of the state. The state’s institutions are felt to meet direct needs of families, for instance, the questions they have about their worlds. In shaping schools around their own needs to some extent, families perceive the state as partially shaped by them.

At the same time:

9. The state is not intrusive in family life and does not abuse the trust generated by greater interaction with families, because the entire process depends on the trust never being undermined. Thus, for instance, the state should not use the schools as surveillance tools, because any cause for distrust from families will undermine the possibility of a genuine parallel process.1
These nine points are meant to help illustrate some of the potentials of parallel process school to family relationships. In this paper, I want to define and analyze several forms of school-family relationship. When you read "school-family", you should hear a dash between the two words, as in school to family and family to school. The dash indicates the relationship between schools and families, and in this paper - most generally - I want us to consider what form is best for that relationship. In doing so, I will recommend the benefits communities can gain from parallel process between schools and families.

Parallel process: I have sketched some possibilities - but what is the definition of this expression? Parallel processing is most commonly known as a technical term in computer programming – especially with UNIX systems. But it has another life in the world of education. Here, it concerns not a programming form, but a way to organize institutions. Accordingly, as I will use the expression, parallel process is an organizational form whereby different parts of a complex institutional endeavor parallel each other in the same process. In terms of school - (dash) - family relationships, that means families do some of what schools do, and schools do some of what families do - working isomorphically in some respects. The point of this paper is to say more about what that isomorphism could be, and why it is good.

Research methods

My understanding of parallel process grew out of exceptional research currently being done in Chicago. A study of this process will be contained in a forthcoming book about a network of preschool centers operating in low-income neighborhoods in Chicago. The study was carried out by Daniel and Sandra Scheinfeld at the Erikson Institute for Child Development in Chicago. I had the pleasure of being a research assistant to this project during the early phases of the book writing.

In their study, the Scheinfelds use the methods of observational anthropology, as they were trained in anthropology and urban studies at the University of Chicago. Collaborating with the organizers of the preschool centers in the South and West sides of Chicago (low-income, multi-ethnic and multi-lingual neighborhoods), the Scheinfelds and their research team took extensive video footage, gave many interviews and performed curricular studies of how the schools function in the context of their communities. While I am not at liberty to discuss this research until it is published, it is important to know that the inspiration for the philosophy of this paper comes from concrete empirical research on existing preschools in urban, poor neighborhoods.

That said, my method of exploring parallel process in this talk is philosophical. I will sketch several forms of school-family relationship and elaborate on just a few of the normative implications of those concepts. I will be doing low-key philosophy, not pressing for utterly rigorous criteria or examining objections or underlying notions in detail. We simply do not have the space here to do so. My hope is that I can paint a big picture argument sparking our interest in parallel process, and that such interest may call for more detailed work in the future.

Now ideas, of course, alter with implementation. And this isn’t a study of implementation, although I have confidence in the practicality of the ideas because of what will come out in the Scheinfeld’s book about existing schools in Chicago. This talk is a signpost, pointing to a good idea. The ideas point to empirical consequences. But as hypotheses, the ideas should be tested. Thus, what consequences follow from my philosophical study here are hypothetical and should be tested. I assume that, being tested, all that is ideal will alter in light of contexts and compromises. And I welcome such improvisation, because it is real and practical.

Four models of school to family and family to school relationship

To begin, consider four forms of school-family relationship. These are (1) the competitive state model, (2) the special needs model, (3) the community participation model and (4) the parallel process model. I will now sketch each.
1. The competitive state model. This model is the default model in American public education and is likely to become so globally. The expression "the competitive state" comes from new work in critical geography and social theory by Neil Brenner at New York University's Department of Sociology. In his *New State Spaces*, he describes the competitive state as any state that uses governance to fix capital promote beneficial strategies of capital accumulation within national boundaries - and does so as one of the primary goals of governance. This criterion selects every state that is currently understood as "developed". Thus to be "developed" in today's global economic and geopolitical order is to become a competitive state. Competitive states are the state-forms of the contemporary global economy. We can legitimately infer that the economic strategies of the competitive state affect public education. Schools are among the most important institutions of the state and are means by which a state can prepare a technically efficient and socialized workforce for global capitalism within the nation-state's borders or exported as a taxable resource of the nation. The competitive state model of school-family relationship maintains this major economic function of the state in the way it shapes how schools and families see each other.

The basic idea is that the school is the institution where students become prepared and socialized for the global market - and do so while maintaining national ties. The family is meant to support, but not interfere with, this task. Accordingly, families should see school as a place to send their kids so that their children can begin the long climb upward into competitive capitalism. At home, families should reinforce the expectations of the competitive state - drilling the children to succeed on standardized tests, reinforcing the realistic ethic that not winning in school may have serious consequences for future employment. And so on. School does not otherwise intrude in family life.

On this model, families do not participate in the governance of the school, and schools do not involve the family in curricular formation either. The norms of the institution and its curricular content are federal. Looking, then, at school content and structure, there is a sharp divide between school and family, with families providing "material" to schools for the state-economic function. The material, of course, is the raw resource of human labor: their children.

2. The special needs model. There is a variant of the competitive state model which deserves some attention, because it incorporates families to a larger extent. This is the special needs model of school-family relationships. It is most popular in American liberal arts colleges, private schools and to a certain extent in post-1970's American public education, although it has undergone serious decline since the rise of new Republican power in the 1980's. Nonetheless, there are concessions to special needs in all of American public education.

The special needs model sees schools as fulfilling both (a) the competitive function of our previous model and (b) the particular needs of individual children with disabilities, emotional idiosyncrasies and immigration or ethnic histories that may present specific obstacles to education. On the one hand, the school's goal is to provide technically proficient and socialized workers for the national economy. On the other hand, such schools recognize that students have individual needs and have them most dramatically when specific conditions disable them from accomplishing tasks standard to their educational level. Thus these schools tailor education to individualized needs, at least to some extent. Special education, English as a second language, psychiatric counseling, learning disability assessment and learning style centers make up some of the specific initiatives of this kind of school.

The relation to families changes once the competitive state model of schooling takes on special needs. Schools must be more interactive with families, because schools need to know about the background conditions of any students with obstacles to learning. Inversely, families should come to see schools as safe-havens for students who demand special attention, and should conceive of the school as meeting some of the most urgent familial
needs. Thus the special needs model is more participatory and reciprocal in practice than the previous model, even though the goals are the same. Participation is a practical necessity required for meeting the special needs of students.

3 The community participation model. Here, the goal of education and the reason for family participation changes. The extent of family participation does too. The community participation model signals, as its name suggests, more than a purely economic main goal to education. It is also a fairly rare school - family form in American public education and is a product of post-1960s progressive education.

In this model, one of the main aims of school is to express the community's life. Yes, schools are to help students achieve a vocation, but schools are also to express the community's major concerns, interests and ideals. Schools are as much community centers as educational institutions. And families are seen as having a significant role in the governance of the school and its curriculum.

Although there may be a serious role for federal directives, there is a counter-balancing role for family authority. This is seen in the decision processes by which these schools operate. Going far beyond parent-teacher association (P.T.A.s), community participation schools have extensive community meetings to sort out the issues with which the school is concerned. A significant amount of local autonomy is granted in the face of state educational aims, and how the schools reach those aims is a task for the community to work out.

The way families view both the school and the state is a novel feature of the community participation model, but only if the school is public. Because the school is seen as highly responsive to family concerns and is seen even as an expression of the community's life, families should view the school and the state in much more participatory terms than they do with the competitive state model of schools. Remember, the school is a major institution of the state. With the community participation model, you don't just drop your child off at school to get ready for the national economy, you are to be actively involved in the school. And you should be involved both to prepare your child for the future and to express your community's life. Correspondingly, it is rational to view the state as including your community's life in its own plans. This inclusion is meant to generate participation within the actual direction of the state, not necessarily by democratic means, but by having one's concerns included in the ongoing life of one of the state's major institutions. Again, this applies only to public community participation school, not private ones.

4 The parallel process model. Parallel process schools are a form of community participation school, but with a form of indirection. Parallel process schools bring schooling out to families and bring family questions into the curriculum of the school. In this way, they are less concerned with a communitarian ideal of schools expressing a community's identity than they are concerned with having schools function as sites of community education. In effect, parallel process schools extend their education beyond the walls of the school and involve families in the learning community of the school. The community participation occurs in the context of parallel learning. Later, I will explain why this feature is desirable given some potential excesses of the community participation model.

Parallel process occurs in the following way. First, schools create parallel classes for the parents. These classes meet less regularly than the children's classes, of course, but they take the parents through the same kinds of study, with which the children are engaged from day to day. Are students learning about the world's cultures? Then the parents do too, and often using the same kinds of lessons the students use, but at a level and in a delivery that is more challenging to the parents. The point is to interest the parents in learning about what the children are learning. The classes are not meant to create a second (or a third or fourth) job for the parents, but to give them the opportunity to grow and participate in their children's lives even more.
Second, teachers and students both go into the acceptable and non-invasive spaces of families to discuss with them in their own neighborhoods, madjasses or living quarters what makes their lives tick and what questions and topics of study truly interest them. Students do projects on their families, provided acceptable limits on privacy. Teachers go to interview family members in respectable, non-invasive ways about curricular development and the concerns of everyday life. Family members are called on to directly tutor their children on joint student-family projects that flow back into the school space. In many respects, the point is to form a strong, reciprocal relationship of trust, mutual functioning, and cooperation between schools and families at the level of learning itself.

These two dimensions of parallel process have the effect of creating community participation in the school, but do so indirectly. Participation becomes simply a feature of the reciprocal, functional relationship of the learning community. The schools do not have an ideological mandate to make the schools express the communities. Rather, because schools and families form a genuine and exciting learning community, the schools just do express the community and involve it in a participatory way. This creates all the benefits of community participation with less of the dangers.

This model works best when architects transform school space into a dual use technology. Schools should function as family centers as well. This is because they should accommodate families in the learning process. But families tend to want answers to questions that include basic services such as medical referrals, legal advice, literacy education, vocational training and so on. Thus, because parallel process schools genuinely try to incorporate the learning of families, these schools function best when they are porous to other social services, at least at the level of referrals. We should then expect to see families mingling more freely in school spaces and coming to school as a trusted and not intimidating site.

Different visions of school and community

Each of the four models corresponds to a different vision of what a school is for, and each projects a different idea of community. I want to touch just briefly on these, because when we decide on a school-family form, we also decide indirectly on what a school is for and what a community should be. Some of what I will say is just underlining what was said before, but I want us to underline it.

1. Different visions of the school’s vocation. As I said, the competitive state model assumes schools are for preparing technically proficient labor for a competitive global economy, an economy partially fixed in national space. Accordingly, schools are to socialize people to global capitalism and to create the appropriate form of nationalism for creating a workforce that will benefit the nation state on the competitive global scene.

The special needs model sees the purpose of school differently only in that it thinks school should be responsive to individual needs, especially to learning disabilities. In this way, the special needs model sees the school as more responsive to the community, but the point of school is still to mainstream students into the national workforce as best as possible.

By contrast, the community participation model assumes school should express the life of the community even while preparing students for economic success. The two goals don’t have to be incompatible, but there is a definite communitarian goal alongside the economic one. Schools should directly reflect the concerns and ideals of the community, be they religious, nationalistic, materialistic or otherwise. Accordingly, schools should be sites of extensive community involvement and self-governance, allowing communities to feel their own life is consummated in part through the school.

The parallel process model modifies this vision of the school’s vocation by achieving participation indirectly through reciprocal school and family learning. Thus the school does
not need to reflect the ideological concerns of the community directly, but can deal with them as they come up in the learning process. In this way, the school is not meant to be ideologically expressive of the community as an end in itself, but is meant to interweave school and family in a learning community.

2. Different visions of community. The competitive state model shapes a particular idea of community. Communities provide resources of new labor for educational systems that outfit labor for a technical and competitive economy. Communities should support the competitive goals of the state on the world market and do so by being suitably patriotic. They should also promote competitive standards at home - for instance, in urging children on to excel on state standardized tests.

The special needs model modifies this kind of community only by seeing it as more individualized; with pockets of disability (physical, social, historical, etc.), pockets which should be reached so as to bring out the potential of students to the utmost. Because, then, the special need model is more sensitive to community variety and specific disabilities, it does project a more humane vision of community than a non-disability sensitive competitive state model. The community is still envisioned as a resource of competitive labor and appropriate nationalism, but fewer children are left behind. The range of human experience is also broadened to handle the variety of specific disabilities to the standardized state education.

The community participation model of school-family relationship projects a very different view of community than the previous two. First of all, the community is seen as what schools are meant to serve. Communities are not for schools, but schools are for communities. Secondly, schools are for communities in order to express the life of the community, part of which may be the vocations of the community's children and the continued economic prosperity of the community. Part, however, is not whole. Expressing the life of the community as the primary goal of schooling goes much farther than outfitting children for economic success. Accordingly, the third point about the community projected is that it has ideological concerns which should be represented in the content and form of the school. The upshot of this representation is that, fourth, the community is seen as participating in the actual ideological formation of the state, and that as a discrete source of authority semi-autonomous from the state.

What the parallel process model adds to this way of conceiving community is the idea of a learning community. Schools are communities by developing learning in the communities themselves all the way to continuing education in the families. What parallel process subtracts from the community participation model is the focus on ideological representation. Schools should not be communitarian sites, but should function as sites of communal questioning.

The parallel process model sees community as a site of education, and sees families as schools in their own right. It sees the potential for reciprocal reinforcement of learning between families and schools as one of the richest ways to form a community around learning. It slyly realizes that communities can participate in school indirectly, through a dialogue about learning between schools and families. Given parallel explorations between schools and families about what people are genuinely questioning, these schools do not need to chase after specific ideological answers, but promote a learning form.

The risks of community participation, and what we can gain

The parallel process model is the best model we can adopt for school-family relationships, even more so in the M.E.N.A. region. To show why this is so, we should first consider some risks associated with the community participation model when it does not take the route of parallel process.
The community participation model may seem more humane than the competitive state model. But it has serious risks. The most significant among these is that it can lead to significant strains within a national educational program by being open to extreme swings in local ideology. Here’s why. Because the community participation model assumes school should express a community’s most important ideological commitments – at least partially-school districts or schools in particular neighborhoods can fall easily under the sway of ideology that runs counter to the overall goals of the state or to what is either tolerant of or prudent for people in the long run. For example, a community in a constitutional state such as the U.S. might decide that a particular religion is problematic and demand that the school system promulgate this view, even though the U.S. constitution separates church and state for the sake, in part, of tolerance. Having the community participation model in place aggravates such constitutional opposition. We can imagine more cases like this.

On the other hand as I’ve already noted, community participation should help create a strong sense within a community that the state is responsive to community concerns and is partially self-governed by the community. Furthermore, whereas there is an increased risk of local whims undermining sound curricular goals, there is also the educational and curricular advantage of having more intimate and responsive feedback to how well the school is doing for the members of a particular community. States are not fool-proof. Community participation has its benefits. What we then need is a form of a community participation model that is not so vulnerable to momentary ideological revolution, but which still maintains inclusiveness and responsiveness to a high degree. My claim is that the parallel process model can do these things.

Why we should take the route of parallel process?

Of our four models, the parallel process model is the most desirable. It can accomplish the aims of the other three models, and yet it decreases the likelihood of momentary ideological revolution. Let me explain.

The competitive state model seeks technically proficient workers who are loyal to their homeland. Parallel process widens the learning community to create a richer culture of understanding and common questions. A wider community of learners reinforces learning and so should increase the effectiveness of schooling as well as the continuity between school and life. Furthermore, when one experiences development in both one’s school and one’s family as a result of a state institution, one should become more grateful for the state, which in turn should increase loyalty. Thus parallel process should augment competitive state education.

Second, parallel process can handle special needs. Special needs education requires smooth interaction between schools and families so as to coordinate addressing needs. But when schools include families in the way parallel process does, schools have more opportunity to learn about the student’s background learning situation and condition, and families have more opportunities to see what challenges the education may deliver to their children. Families may thus easily communicate these back to the school and/or help their children deal with them. Parallel process augments special needs education too.

Finally, it accomplishes the goal of community participation better than that model does. That model seeks to have schools express the life of the community. But what part of its life? Schools are for education. It would then make sense for them to express the educational life of the community. How could it best do that? The educational life of anything is found in the questions and actual learning it undergoes. Thus we should expect schools with community participation to express the educational life of the community by expressing the community’s questions and actual learning. But the best way to do that is to find out what questions the community has and to engage the community in actual learning. This is precisely what parallel process does. Hence, once we focus in on the goal of community participation and are clear about the kind of
institution any school is by definition, we see that to a certain extent what we were calling "community participation" was not focused enough on education and that parallel process provides that focus.

And there is more. Parallel process decreases the likelihood of momentary ideological revolution while maintaining community inclusion and school responsiveness. The central idea in parallel process is dialogue - between state educational goals and communities, between schools and families, between students and other family members. Moreover, the medium for such a dialogue is exploring the world through the questions people have. What one does in parallel process is learn together, and the way one learns is through joint - both collective and isomorphic - questioning. Because of this double emphasis on dialogue - moving between parties and moving through questions - parallel process decreases the conceptual possibility for ideological domination of any particular sort, and this in turn entails a diminished conceptual possibility for momentary ideological revolution. After all, in dialogue, one has to hear every side of the story available, and in questioning, one has to seek good reasons for what claims to be an answer. But seeking for good reasons when moving through the many perspectives on an issue greatly broadens and deepens the convincing reasons to multiple positions, and it should soften positions in light of a more inclusive outlook. In this way, parallel process schools are not narrowly ideological, being formally open to different viewpoints and learning about them.

Furthermore, since the main dialogue structured in place by parallel process is that between the state school institution and families, the main threat to momentary ideological revolution is lessened: local communities have to give good reasons to a state perspective they clearly understand just as the state has to give good reasons to a local perspective it clearly understands, and where no clear agreement is evident, both have to go back to questions to learn together. Thus out of parallel process, inclusion is a logical consequence.

Inclusion is a dimension of parallel process in many ways, and a feature of this inclusion is a great deal of school responsiveness to familial and community needs and interests. The idea behind parallel process is that learning is best achieved when done as a community where families are included in the learning their children undergo. Learning cannot go far without responsiveness to the needs and interests of learners. But even more so, parallel process methods set up the curricular structure and school spatial environment and facilities to include dialogical interaction with both students and their families.

Parallel process schools are made of an architecture of inclusion and responsiveness to community. This architecture is not metaphorical, but real. Schools with a focus on parallel process develop ways to be inviting to families - from more communal spaces throughout the schools, to flexible height desks for nights when families come to school, to project boards showing not only student work in progress but family work in progress. When we add course content involving media which examine the non-invasively open spaces of the home - as in photographic studies of objects in the public part of the home, or in research projects involving the open parts of home life - the very spaces of the home become spaces of the school, always subject to what is considered appropriately public and not invasive to families.

Imagine how you would feel about both education and the state that funds it if they were organized to include you and your families in the learning community. At the very least, provided the organization succeeds in its intent, you should feel that the state and its schools are not deaf to your long-term development.

Why parallel process is suited to the M.E.N.A. region?

I have just argued that the parallel process model is the most desirable model of school-family relationship, and that it far exceeds the default model for relationship in the dominant form of contemporary American education - i.e. the competitive state model. But we can go further. The parallel process model is especially desirable in the M.E.N.A. region. This is because family
structure has great importance in this region when it comes to enabling or disabling shifts in education. For cultures that are strongly family centered and organized, a parallel process model is not only most desirable, but is perhaps the only fully rational way to proceed with educational development.

Let me first begin with the last claim, about what is fully rational. The aim of an educational system should be to educate its members, and the aim of a state educational system should be to educate the citizenry in an even way. Given these ends, parallel process is perhaps the only fully rational way to proceed, because it should eliminate great sources of disruption, tension and unhappiness as state educational systems grow. It should do this by including families in the learning community and making the state responsive to familial needs and interests. A competitive state model, by contrast, risks alienating families as the pressure of global competition funnels through state educational standards. On the other hand, a community participation model without parallel process may leave the state open to sudden ideological backlashes from local communities or may endanger minorities in communities to ideologically volatile and non-dialogical majorities of the moment. Parallel process brings the state system and its members into dialogue and is structured so as to undo uneven educational development between those in the system and those outside it in the community.

But if there are other fully rational ways to proceed with developing educational systems, parallel process is still most desirable, and doubly so in our M.E.N.A. region. Individualistic societies like the U.S. have relatively weak family ties and could use parallel process if for no other reason than to give families more opportunities for a genuine collective life. But given the immense importance family structure has in this region, conceptualizing education in terms of familial inclusion and a broader learning community is extremely worthwhile. Educational systems thereby stand to gain the most powerful supporters in the community. And they stand to reduce tension that may arise from new standards and ideas introduced through the educational system. They also position themselves to help their students learn maximally, by opening the learning community to the richest social and experiential scene of the students.

Finally, in cases where the state is seen with suspicion, parallel process schools are very well positioned to establish a harmonious relationship between states and citizens. This is because they make such a relationship part of the mandate and organization of the schools and do so concretely, through the way curricula and facilities should be structured.

Thus for a number of reasons, parallel process seems the route to take in the M.E.N.A. region. As school systems here develop, I hope people explore the benefits of parallel process.

A final reason to adopt the parallel process model: organic development

Before concluding this paper with priorities for future research, I would like to augment the preceding argument with one last reason for preferring parallel process schools to the competitive state model especially. This reason concerns large trends in educational development found within the M.E.N.A. region and in many other developing educational contexts globally. Simply put, it is this: parallel process schools are formally structured so as to develop more organically than especially the competitive state alternative. Let me explain.

One of the common expressions of the competitive state model in developing educational contexts is what I call "grafting." Grafting occurs when an educational form is "bought" in from another culture and placed wholesale onto the existing educational culture. The result is an educational system with sharp discontinuities in it as well as a tendency to miss out on the greatest local potential for a genuinely original cultural synthesis between the local culture and that sought abroad. Specifically, one tendency today globally is to bring in the latest methods from "Western" education and make other cultures accept them in a managerial way". Students caught in these developments often receive mixed educational messages and do not have a number of background assumptions needed for the imported method - for instance, the
assumption that autonomous thought is a result of, not an obstacle to, learning. Moreover, these mixed messages are often most heightened by the discontinuity between family expectations and those of their newly imported schools - for instance, expectations about becoming pre-professional when the schools need to foster the genuine liberal arts. Direct grafting makes it hard to ease these discontinuities at the level of curricular and institutional form.

By contrast, parallel process schooling - while it is a development of "Western" education - is formally structured so as to necessarily develop from some of the most potent springs of local culture/families. Because this model structures in a role for families in shaping the curricular development and institutional arrangement of the school there is a continual formal pathway for having the school evolve with large continuities between local culture and imported ideals. I suggest that these formal pathways are highly promising and could promote the kind of genuine fusion of traditions that cultural specialists advocating for a more "indigenous" system of knowledge for this region desire. In a word, parallel process leaves room for organic curricular growth.

Priorities for youth education.

This talk is meant to spark discussion and to provide a good idea. I want to end by enumerating a few priorities for youth education in the M.E.N.A. region given the normative hypothesis in this talk. What I have to say is broad, on the simplistic side, and programmatic. It is a call for further research on the main area of this talk - the area of positive reciprocity between schools and families. At the beginning of the talk, I spoke of the isomorphism between schools and families in the parallel process model. By "isomorphism", I meant that the form of education is in some sense the same for students as it is for parents and other family members, relative to their positions in life. But there is a bigger dimension to this isomorphism as well. These schools parallel the development of schools with the development of communities, by way of family concerns, interests and questions. These are large and visionary possibilities. The number one priority for youth education is to specify and articulate how such isomorphism might be developed through current state educational systems in this region.

What are the specific modifications that can best create such a process and what in the current system and culture already lends itself to such a process? Studying the findings of the Scheinfields in Chicago is one way to enrich our ideas on this matter, as is studying the Reggio Emilia schools in Northern Italy. But the process of discovery really should start where we are, making the most out of existing institutions and rethinking parallel process from the ground up, by way of the specific challenges and strengths of our region. Knowing actual possibilities is a pragmatic condition of any concrete experiment.

A second priority is to create a laboratory school that experiments in the concrete curricular development of parallel process modeling. Most interesting would be to create several of these schools in different regions - urban, rural - and for different socio-economic backgrounds - poor, middle class, mono-ethnic, multi-ethnic. On first exposure, it may seem utopian to imagine families and schools collaborating so closely and to witness older family members opening their minds to questions along with their children. After all, many may think it is the teacher's job to teach and the parents' jobs to do other things. But there are schools that have convinced skeptical communities parallel process is the way to go, and these schools have led by example, working out the details as they go along. The families have been happy with the results and the students have thrived.

Finally, much more work needs to be done in exploring the limits of the competitive state model and presenting them convincingly. There is a genuine risk that the competitive state model will become the default model of education worldwide, if it is not already the default. But both the major geniuses of Western philosophy of education and the teachings of every major world educational tradition outside the industrial modern tradition conceive of education as much, much more than just preparation for economic competition.
It will be hard to see the richness of parallel process until the limits of the competitive state model of education are more perspicuous. For just as it is simplest in the short term for a corporation to invest in monoculture and unsustainable environmental practices for the sake of an increased profit margin, so too is it simplest in the short term for a state to invest in monoculture and one-dimensional educational practices that treat communities as resources. But just as it is highly imprudent in the long run to destroy the world’s biodiversity, pollute the Earth’s sinks and destroy economic diversity, so it is highly imprudent - if not inhumane- for states to destroy the diversity of community life and educational experience, to close down the dialogues waiting to happen and to reduce souls to resources when they are capable of learning wisdom in rich communities of life.

(1) The worry that states may abuse greater access to families is a historically well-founded one, especially if one follows the path of administrative modernisation that follows 19th and 20th century American-European state development. Perhaps the most infamous history of this path is found in Foucault’s ‘Surveillance and Punishment’ (1975), but its concern with the growing micro-management of everyday life is a predominant theme of 20th century social theory and is currently a canonical part of sociological studies of the state.

(2) The term “parallel process” has wide use. In this paper, I adopt a usage deriving from the Chicago Commons Reggio Emilia Model Start schools. The usage is my interpretation of the process, but evolved out of being fortunate enough to think about the possibilities this school system provides its members. The usage is in this paper is not an official usage of that school system, however. The system will shortly be publishing a book on itself and that book will have the official explanation of their interpretation of school-family relationships.

(3) See http://www.erikson.edu. This Institute is Chicago’s foremost innovative school of education and provides both training and degrees up through the Ph.D. As with its analog in New York City - the Bank Street College of Education - the Erikson Institute has a strong social justice component. It was formed by a group of important Chicago educators and philanthropists, including Anna Freud. Irving Harris - known for the University of Chicago Harris School of Public Policy - was the major benefactor of the Erikson Institute. It is named, of course, after Erik Erikson.

(4) Such improvisation is also central to the tradition of progressive education of which this paper is a part. John Dewey, founder of this tradition, was a pragmatist.

(5) Neil Brenner, New State Spaces - Urban Governance and the Recasting of Statehood, Oxford and New York: Oxford University Press, 2004. Without overstating, this is a major new work in the sociology of global restructuring since the fall of Fordism. Brenner combines clearly explicated social theory with critical geography and an in-depth case study of the Frankfurt to Holland Euroregion to develop a new interpretation of the state’s modification in this era of increased global finance and production/consumption flows. Brenner’s core thesis is that the state does not either under “globalization” (a term he refuses to use for well grounded reasons), but rather rescales its administrative, legal and territorial arrangements to compete in more effective ways globally. Within this thesis, one can see the changes currently affecting - for instance - American public education as reflections of the increased demand to produce globally competitive labor for the competitive American state.

(6) “Developed” is in scare-quotes, because one can legitimately raise the question of whether the normative notion of development is best captured by the competitive state form. For reasons of human rights and ecological destruction, the state-centric competitive state form is clearly not “developed”, but it is not the only option of state forms a humane political order might adopt. One might begin, for example, with the question of whether contemporary neo-liberal competitive state plans promote human capability equality as well as possible. The notion of human capability comes from the United Nations Human Development Reports, theorized by Amartya Sen, whose work is also developed by Martha Nussbaum. See Amartya Sen, Development as Freedom, Oxford: Oxford University Press, 1999; Martha Nussbaum, Women and Human Development – The Capabilities Approach, Cambridge University Press, 2001.

(7) Although one may balk at the political prescriptions of his work, the relationship between school form and state economic aims was well developed by Louis Althusser in his “Ideology and Ideological State Apparatuses” (in Lenin and Philosophy and Other Essays, Trans. Ben Brewster. New York: Monthly Review Press, 2001). Families are considered “ideological state apparatuses”, (T.S.A.S) as well. The account I offer in this paper focuses more on the material “base” goal of school form within the competitive state than on the ideological “superstructure” dimensions of the school. But an in-depth analysis of the competitive state school would have to focus on the way classroom form, accountability structures, curricula and lesson content reinforces the primary goals of the competitive state through ideological structuring.

(8) Currently, the American private liberal arts college and the American private boarding school are the most pronounced examples of special needs schools. This is because they have found a powerful niche in the American educational market by providing environments where “special needs” students can thrive with more individualized attention. Liberal arts colleges are not common outside of the United States, and so a word on them should be given here. Liberal arts colleges are four year undergraduate institutions with few (very few) graduate or professional degrees. The colleges emphasize the modern liberal arts and sciences and put teaching ahead of research, although many - e.g. Reed, Swarthmore, Williams, Oberlin - house some of the best scholars in the English speaking world and produce higher percentages of graduates who go on to obtain Ph.D.s than their Ivy league and major research university competitors. Class size is very small - usually between 12 and 20 - and student-faculty ratios are usually under 15:1. These colleges are almost always private and highly expensive, with elaborate student life support structures providing individualized attention to students seeking it. Students emerging from these schools do not have pre-professional degrees, but do know how to think creatively and broadly. Hence, they are in high demand in a fluctuating economy.

(9) For instance, when I taught at the Colorado College - the foremost liberal arts college of the American Southwest- we had a very active and developed teaching and learning center that provided in-depth assessment and tutoring for students on a one-to-one basis,
beginning with a diagnosis of a student’s learning style and continuing with an elaborate counseling and mentoring structure working out from one-on-one tutoring to series of seminars aimed at specific development areas. This center also produced a large amount of faculty in-service training as well as serious internal research on the effectiveness of existing programs and possible development areas within the school’s densely woven learning community.

(10) At its extreme, this model could be found in “commune-style” schools for radical communities, especially in the late 60’s and throughout the 70’s. Today, some of these “intentional community schools” - as they are called - still exist, both in public and private forms. But the most recent growth of community participation schools is to be found in evangelical schools which are serving the rising tide of evangelical Christianity in the U.S. These schools are considered “right” wing, whereas the earlier schools were considered “left” wing. These schools are also private - hence as we will see, they do not have the same relationship to the state as their public analogs.

(11) This formulation harbors more toward the early social democratic models of these schools from the 60’s. But even in contemporary evangelical schools, the community does have a larger say in the governance of the school - usually by way of the church structure and its internal governance.

(12) Evangelical private schools, for instance, do not represent the state’s educational system. As a result, such community participation schools as fall within this religious category risk promoting alienation from the state, rather than a sense of inclusion. The schools promote - even more through their messianic ideology - a sense of being an enclave against a bad world and a secular, unbelieving state.

(13) This trust cannot be broken or the parallel process form will fail. As a result, strong measures must be taken institutionally and through the community’s governance of the school to ensure that the state does not use the increased permeability of family life to introduce invasive state surveillance.

(14) Again, although the language of this paragraph sounds social democratic, it can just as easily apply to conservative religious communities who send their children to evangelical schools, as is currently happening in the United States.

(15) All school forms reflect the ideological assumptions of their societies in some way - no less the competitive state form. One aspect of what makes the community participation model specific is that the local community’s major ideological concerns should be expressed in the schools. This is an anti-federal moment in their structure and a potentially anti-liberal one as well. There is also another way to specify how community participation schools are ideological more so than the others. See footnote 16.

(16) In revising this paper, I realized there is a significant conceptual problem with my use of “ideology” in this paper. However, I cannot address it adequately given my time constraints. It would require a significant reworking of aspects of this paper.

The problem is: this ideology is simply the idea-system that makes up a social institution. On this most general definition, all schools have an ideology and can be said to promote specific ideological aspects of their society or at least local community. This is no less true of parallel process schools, which promote an ideology of inclusion, dialogue and so on. It then becomes hard to see what the community-participation model - which I said promotes specific communal ideology - does differently than the other models, since they all promote some ideology.

My initial and place-holder answer to this worry is: that when I speak of parallel process schools not promoting a specific ideological answer, I mean to emphasize that they are formally structured so as to promote learning rather than identity formation. Take an example. An evangelical religious school in the United States has as its primary aim the formation of evangelical children. This is a rich and substantive identity, and so the school becomes invested in determining the specific ends and values of its students. The competitive state school, by contrast, does promote a specific identity - good capitalist worker - but such an identity does not determine one’s specific ends and values to anything near the extent of the religious school. And indeed, it cannot: one aim of the competitive state is to fashion people whose values are left open to their desires for the run of the free market and its consumption choices.

Parallel process schools have this kind of formal quality as well. They do promote an identity - that of the open-minded questioner who learns from her community and family. But that identity is quite open: specific goals and values are not determined and the aim of it is to promote the “autonomy within community” of the learner.

Thus, if I were to state simply what distinguishes the identity goal of each of the methods, I would speak as follows: the competitive state school (including the special needs school as a sub-species) aims to promote productivity within capitalism. The parallel process school aims to promote learning autonomy within community. But the community participation school aims to promote membership in the community’s values. Stated simply, one can understand why the latter seems ideological in a way the former two are not. And the way I expressed this was to say that the latter pursues specific ideological answers rather than the promotion of a learning form.

(17) However, it may decrease short-term efficiency. This is because parallel process schooling must give room to local evolution, and that may not fit as efficiently as possible within state capitalist aims. However, in the long term, such evolution is desirable for a number of reasons, including for the long term vitality of the state economy. To name two, it is in the state’s long-term economic interest to have vital communities of life raising whole human beings able to cope as best as possible with the world. Secondly, it is in the state’s long-term economic interest to promote creativity and innovation among its citizens. This parallel process does by keeping minds open within even families. It is a sad irony that one of the United States’s most powerful economic sources - its creativity - has been recently squelched by what used to be one of its greatest social achievements - a universal public education.

(18) This is another way to see the rough distinction between a school promoting specific ideological answers and one promoting an open ideological form. Because parallel process schools stick to the most specific function of schooling in community - namely, to help people learn - they keep open the content of learning to a much larger degree than a school system aimed at promoting membership in a community through value indoctrination.

(19) I place the term “Western” in scare-quotes, because its usage is questionable. For instance, Islam is one of the great sources of the Western tradition, including modern Europe. However, many Islamic people from this region speak as if they are not Western. Yet Islam is deeply Western - as much so as Judaism and Christianity. And due to Islam, Western philosophy was transmitted to European culture in the high Middle Ages.

(20) Liberal arts which "I might add- are in the best long-term interest of professionals. This is a point understand very little outside cultures with a long tradition in the liberal arts. Studies such as history, philosophy, pure physics, literature, pure math, etc create
Innovative, broad minds are best suited for long-term professional depth; creativity and the ability to adapt to a changing economy. Pre-professional degrees lack setting their student minds short for short-term benefits. See Martha Nussbaum, Cultivating Character: A Theory of Virtues (New York: Oxford University Press, 1997), John Dewey, Democracy and Education (New York: New York University Press, 1966), or Galindo et al., "The Hundred Languages of Childhood—The Reggio Emilia Approach to Education," (New York: The Free Press, 1996). This point is well understood among the best professional institutions, too. If one looks at Trenton, N.J.; Axel Publications, 1996. This point is well understood among the best professional institutions, too. If one looks at Trenton, N.J.; Axel Publications, 1996. This point is well understood among the best professional institutions, too. If one looks at Trenton, N.J.; Axel Publications, 1996. This point is well understood among the best professional institutions, too. If one looks at Trenton, N.J.; Axel Publications, 1996. This point is well understood among the best professional institutions, too. If one looks at Trenton, N.J.; Axel Publications, 1996. This point is well understood among the best professional institutions, too. If one looks at Trenton, N.J.; Axel Publications, 1996. This point is well understood among the best professional institutions, too. If one looks at Trenton, N.J.; Axel Publications, 1996. This point is well understood among the best professional institutions, too. If one looks at Trenton, N.J.; Axel Publications, 1996. This point is well understood among the best professional institutions, too. If one looks at Trenton, N.J.; Axel Publications, 1996. This point is well understood among the best professional institutions, too. If one looks at Trenton, N.J.; Axel Publications, 1996. This point is well understood among the best professional institutions, too. If one looks at Trenton, N.J.; Axel Publications, 1996. This point is well understood among the best professional institutions, too. If one looks at Trenton, N.J.; Axel Publications, 1996. This point is well understood among the best professional institutions, too. If one looks at Trenton, N.J.; Axel Publications, 1996. This point is well understood among the best professional institutions, too. If one looks at Trenton, N.J.; Axel Publications, 1996. This point is well understood among the best professional institutions, too.

(21) Determination of what is indigenous is highly problematic. Is it a question of temporal origin? At what time does one begin counting? Is it the most prior still existing culture? The most dominant pre-existing culture? All of these questions invoke problematic answers. Hence the scare quotes.

(22) See, for instance, the work of Hamid Dabashi at Columbia University's Middle East and Asian Languages and Cultures program—e.g., "Interpreting the Gulf" forthcoming in the proceedings of The Social Sciences in the 21st Century: Shifting Boundaries and Paradigms, an International Conference held at the American University of Sharjah, Feb. 6-8, 2005. Or see the 2003 U.N. Arab Human Development Report: Building a Knowledge Society.

(23) To some the great three of canonical philosophy of education courses: Plato argued that education should aim at the formation of a whole human being able to discern eternal truths and lead cities. Rousseau argued that education should bring out the conscience and autonomy of a human fit for any walk of life and psychologically mature enough to live with the moral and physical world. Dewey argued that education should involve people into the many goods of democratic life while promoting creative and innovative problem solving about the various tasks that face a mature human life. None of these thinkers would accept economic mainstreaming as the major aim of education.

As to non-Western educational traditions, consider three based in any of the following major religions: Confucianism, Buddhism and Hinduism. All three conceive of education as promoting the spiritual, moral or social development of the human being, above the economic mainstreaming of the human.

(24) In closing, I want to remind readers that my understanding of parallel process grew out of the exceptional research currently being done in Chicago. This research will be published in a very interesting book. If you wish to find out the publication date of the book, write Daniel and Sandra Scheinfeld, Erikson Institute, 420 N. Wabash, Chicago, Ill. 60611, U.S.A. or dscheinfeld@Erikson.edu.