

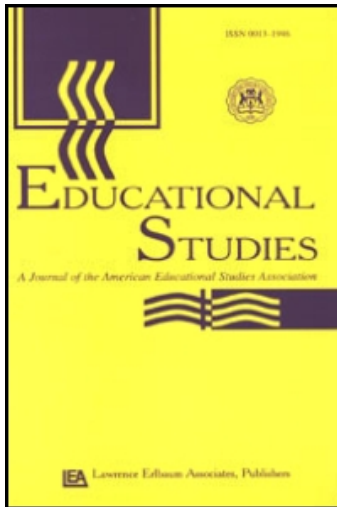
This article was downloaded by: [Beach, J. M.]

On: 30 November 2008

Access details: Access Details: [subscription number 906051920]

Publisher Routledge

Informa Ltd Registered in England and Wales Registered Number: 1072954 Registered office: Mortimer House, 37-41 Mortimer Street, London W1T 3JH, UK



## Educational Studies

Publication details, including instructions for authors and subscription information:

<http://www.informaworld.com/smpp/title-content=t775653643>

## Globalization & Vocational Education: Liberation, Liability, or Both?

J. M. Beach <sup>a</sup>

<sup>a</sup> University of California at Riverside,

Online Publication Date: 01 November 2008

**To cite this Article** Beach, J. M.(2008)'Globalization & Vocational Education: Liberation, Liability, or Both?', Educational Studies,44:3,270 — 281

**To link to this Article:** DOI: 10.1080/00131940802511559

**URL:** <http://dx.doi.org/10.1080/00131940802511559>

## PLEASE SCROLL DOWN FOR ARTICLE

Full terms and conditions of use: <http://www.informaworld.com/terms-and-conditions-of-access.pdf>

This article may be used for research, teaching and private study purposes. Any substantial or systematic reproduction, re-distribution, re-selling, loan or sub-licensing, systematic supply or distribution in any form to anyone is expressly forbidden.

The publisher does not give any warranty express or implied or make any representation that the contents will be complete or accurate or up to date. The accuracy of any instructions, formulae and drug doses should be independently verified with primary sources. The publisher shall not be liable for any loss, actions, claims, proceedings, demand or costs or damages whatsoever or howsoever caused arising directly or indirectly in connection with or arising out of the use of this material.

## Globalization & Vocational Education: Liberation, Liability, or Both?

**Reclaiming Class: Women, Poverty, and the Promise of Higher Education in America.** Vivyan C. Adair and Sandra L. Dahlberg, eds. Philadelphia: Temple University Press, 2003. 269 pp. \$69.50 (Hardcover), \$22.95 (Paperback).

**Globalizing Education for Work: Comparative Perspectives on Gender and the New Economy.** Richard D. Lakes and Patricia A. Carter, eds. Mahwah, New Jersey: Lawrence Erlbaum Associates, 2004. 221 pp. \$49.95 (Hardcover).

**Building Skills for Black Workers: Preparing for the Future Labor Market.** Cecilia A. Conrad, ed. Lanham: University Press of America, 2004. 176 pp. \$58 (Hardcover), \$27 (Paperback).

**The Education Gospel: The Economic Power of Schooling.** W. Norton Grubb and Marvin Lazerson. Cambridge: Harvard University Press, 2004. 334 pp. \$47 (Hardcover).

Reviewed by J. M. Beach, University of California at Riverside

The advanced industrial world has been moving from an industrial society to what social scientists have variously called a postindustrial, post-Fordist, or globalized society. Shelia Slaughter and Larry L. Leslie (1997), in *Academic Capitalism: Politics, Policies, and the Entrepreneurial University*, have described the characteristics of this shift and its implications for educational institutions, specifically for higher education. Postindustrial societies are dependent upon multinational corporations. These corporate entities have moved to flexible production lines that require higher levels of automation and technology, more educated, smaller, and independently contracted (“outsourced”) labor forces (often international in scope), and they also have a greater reliance on global communication and transportation networks. Many Post-industrial societies, particularly the United States, England, and Australia, have dismantled liberal welfare state policies in favor of neo-liberal “privatization” policies, whereby markets are deregulated, denationalized, and globalized. In developed countries, this often has translated into policies promoting decreased wages, decreased work-related benefits, decreased social welfare programs, decreased taxes, and increased market-related freedoms. The transition in developed countries from industrial to postindustrial

production has caused great displacement of traditionally trained industrial workers, and also disrupted the employment stability and financial viability of non-skilled and semiskilled workers. Because postindustrial societies are reliant on technological innovation, they require a more highly educated (yet numerically small) workforce, and a great deal of investment in technological research and development to produce, facilitate, and manage “high technology goods and services.” This need for educated workers and technological research has deepened connections with and dependence on higher education, specifically top-tier research universities (Slaughter and Leslie 1997).

The leading theoretical framework that has been used to derive policy for postindustrial globalization has been neo-liberalism, or Chicago school economics, Milton Friedman and F. A. Hayek. This conception focuses on rational individuals who are engaged in market activities, whereby products and services are bought and sold, and (through the neo-classical presumption of a “hidden hand” mechanism) all individual needs are satisfied (and to a certain degree determined by individual initiative and ability), and the market is efficiently organized for the greater good of society. Neo-liberalism was a reaction against Keynesian liberalism and state directed communism, which both placed the nation–state at the center of market activity where the state regulated, stimulated, and buffered (or in the case of state-communist economies, monopolized) market activity to provide for the social welfare of a national community. Neo-liberals believed that to increase economic growth, promote innovation, and to allow the market to operate efficiently, nation states needed to deregulate market activities, raw materials, and labor so that the market could reach an unfettered state of equilibrium. In policy terms, this amounted to unregulated capital and market activity, low taxation, and little (if any) social welfare services.

The London based *Economist* is perhaps the best known and most widely influential promoter of the neo-liberal policies. To take one important example, in 2007 *The Economist* reported on the effects of globalization on U.S. workers whose jobs had been exported overseas. They also compared the difference between CEOs and common workers when it came to unemployment compensation. *The Economist* noted that typical worker pay has remained stagnant over the last 20 years, yet the top American managers have seen pay increases from 40 times the average worker (1945–1985) to over 110 times the average worker (1985–2005). When it comes to unemployment, the typical worker is often left without much compensation (sometimes none) and the loss of medical insurance, but top executives, like Robert Nardelli of Home Depot, get \$210 million in severance pay. Due to globalization and expanding industrial economies like China, several hundred million people have joined the global labor force since the 1970s and these cheaper sources of labor have drawn off industrial and manufacturing jobs from richer developed countries. This has caused labor’s share of Gross Domestic Product (GDP) in rich countries to fall to “historic lows,” while at the same time

corporate profits are “soaring” and top-level management are “seizing the lion’s share of globalization’s gains.” But *The Economist* argued that executives are the key to sustaining economic growth and any restrictions on executive pay would “harm companies” (and this would harm economic growth and overall prosperity) and so no real economic adjustments need to be made on the management or corporate side. *The Economist* focused instead on the “losers” or “victims” who, although difficult to help, represent the easiest part to fix of the globalization equation (“In the Money,” “In the Shadow,” and “Rich Man”).

*The Economist* argued that “a mobile society is better than an equal one” if disparities are tempered by “meritocracy and general economic advance,” and they remind the readers, this still leaves room for progressive taxation and public services. *The Economist* claimed that a “dynamic” economy, like the American economy, leads to “overall prosperity,” but they did not define what “overall prosperity” means, nor how it’s measured. They also pointed out that American welfare policies are “hardly generous,” but they did not discuss the seeming incompatibility between, on the one hand, “dynamic economies” and, on the other, generous welfare states, although they did point out that “equality-driven” societies sacrifice “overall prosperity,” which seems to imply automatic lower economic growth and higher unemployment for generous welfare states. *The Economist* simply recommended that America take some of its \$1 trillion in gains from free trade in a globalized market and invest more than its current \$1 billion a year on helping displaced workers through short-term assistance programs like TAA or wage insurance (America currently spends about 0.16% of GDP on the unemployed). Although this solution does offer more adequate compensation for displaced workers, it does not address the “popular nervousness about globalization” nor comfort low-paid workers whose jobs are “at risk.”

In essence, *The Economist* argued that extreme wealth inequality is part of the system of dynamic capitalism and that stagnant wages and low job security is the price to be paid by lower end workers who represent the unfortunately fated “victims” of globalization and economic growth. The system is supposedly justified because it is meritocratic, but this claim is demonstrably false, even by *The Economist*’s own logic, as it has documented on repeated occasions over the last 2 years. The world economic system is a class-based system where the rich use globalization and technology to drastically increase their wealth, but the poor are displaced, and relatively few manage to increase their social mobility. Simply increasing unemployment insurance or providing short-term vocational training is a band-aid on the roughly severed leg of economic justice. Although *The Economist* recognized the problem of class and inequality, this particular publication was misguided in its evaluations and solutions. *The Economist* justified social inequality as a necessary condition of economic growth. Thus, the problem is not the rich and their extreme accumulation of wealth, but rather the stagnating system of meritocracy by which the exceptional talent of any class, race, or gender should

be able to rise to the top. *The Economist* presented a standard neo-liberal agenda of “adjustments” (increased educational standards, school vouchers and increased competitiveness in public education, increased “safety net” policies, while lowering taxes and the regulation of the rich). These adjustments supposedly will increase meritocracy and, thereby, give the *appearance* of fairness, which thus justifies social inequality and a permanent proletariat that cannot be (or should not be) tampered with. But neo-liberal policies do not to address the unfairness of either the economic or the sociopolitical systems that keep the majority of Americans from participating in the supposed “overall prosperity.” Instead, inequality is legitimized and individuals, especially disadvantaged individuals, are told to “adjust” to the dictates of the market. (“Inequality & the American Dream,” “Minding about the Gap,” “The Missing Rungs in the Ladder,” “Special Report: Meritocracy in America”).

Cecilia A. Conrad’s edited volume, *Building Skills for Black Workers* (2004), used a neo-liberal framework to address the “racial gap” in employment and unemployment in the United States, with a specific focus on African Americans. Conrad and others in the volume pointed out that, despite the favorable state of the American economy, African Americans are unemployed at more than twice the rate of White workers and, on the whole, an African American makes 72 cents for every dollar made by a White American. However, instead of looking into the systemic social and economic factors that influence these statistics, the book’s neo-liberal framework analyzes the racial gap primarily in terms of employee problems. The various chapters of the book focus on the employee side of the equation to argue that African Americans have an “education and training gap” that needs to be ameliorated through “higher levels of education and technical skill.”

To focus on how this gap can be treated, Timothy Bartik and Kevin Hollenbeck used the established model of “first” and “second” chance educational systems. The first chance system is composed of the public, secondary, and postsecondary schools. The second chance system is composed of public agencies like federal job training programs, public assistance programs, and state and local training programs. The book’s overall argument is that minority workers, especially African Americans, need better “skills” and an “ability to acquire new skills” to bring to the “rapidly changing” marketplace. Because minority students do not have equal access to, or succeed well in, the “first chance” system, this book argues that more concerted effort should be placed on developing better second chance programs that work effectively for African Americans. The policy changes offered in the book are very bland neo-liberal prescriptions (caring mentors, adequate financial and institutional support, vocational guidance, good leadership, and accountability). Bartik and Hollenbeck argued that successful public policy depends on two key factors: giving “reliable information” and “training opportunities” to individual minority “clients” who can use these resources to make informed “choices;” seeing

if “work situations” in which clients are placed “will allow them to make progress in their skills and careers.” It is obvious that the book places the burden of the “racial gap” on individuals while ignoring how structural factors (race, class, and gender) impede marked progress for minority populations. In the absence of any analysis on the structural determinants of the “racial gap” this book seems to offer the same bland neo-liberal prescriptions that policy makers have made for decades (127–128).

The edited volume *Globalizing Education for Work: Comparative Perspectives on Gender and the New Economy* (Lakes and Carter 2004) challenges the current dogma of neo-liberalism. This book is a substantial volume that focuses on labor, the gendering of labor, globalization, and how vocational education and training plays a role in educating laborers for work. The book focuses especially on women and their important role in the global economy as a cheap and exploited source of labor, both within and outside of the paid labor force, as household labor and childcare is a primary and unpaid responsibility that, due to patriarchic socialization, falls to women to perform. *Globalizing Education for Work* explores the connections between globalization, gender, work, and education in various national contexts: Brazil, South Korea, Ethiopia, Norway, Canada, Australia, German, and the United States. It also offers a couple of chapters on more theoretical matters like working-class masculinity, feminism, and human rights for women.

In general, *Globalizing Education for Work* (Lakes and Carter 2004) describes how women are circumscribed by traditional patriarchic practices, how they have not been well educated in traditional societies, and how they work longer hours and for less pay than do men. To some women, neo-liberal globalization promises not only increased economic development, but also social development and increased education, and thereby, freedom for women. Education has been proven to be linked to increased market skills, increased personal income, and greater freedom, which holds the promise better living standards. Some neoliberal economists like Amartya Sen have called this promise “development as freedom” (Sen 1999). From a more radical perspective, education also offers “empowerment” for women that can be used to challenge oppressive social orders, like patriarchy. Lakes and Carter’s volume, *Globalizing Education for Work*, focuses on vocational education and training in an international context to highlight the oppressive economic practices of both traditional and neo-liberal economic orders, the contradictions inherent in these societies, and the potential of education to liberate women for socioeconomic oppression.

The research offered in this collection reinforces two broad trends: vocational education does seem to offer women increased opportunities to compete in labor markets, however, vocational education often does not challenge the status quo of social and economic relations and, thus, it often does not prepare women for sexist, male-dominated and class-based economies where women, especially minority

women, earn significantly less than men and face a host of sexual discriminations and assaults. Pae and Lakes noted, "Globalization does not automatically guarantee meaningful work or democratic employment practices," nor do vocational education programs. Most authors in the collection point out both "gendered inequity" in access to and experiences in vocational education institutions on top of the "gender inequity and White male privilege embedded in the division of labor and the politics of organizational workplaces." Thus, as Tara Fenwick pointed out in relation to Canadian vocational education, many women are taught skills with the assumption that "equal opportunity exists," but when discrimination and prejudice is faced in job markets, these women internalize their failure and discrimination as "personal issues" instead of larger "structural inequalities." Lakes and Carter (2004) highlight these ambivalent trends, but also speak to and include contributors that speak to a host of "gender equity policies" for Vocational Education and Training and market economies that have been or could be developed to create more just and equitable labor practices. As Lakes and Carter (37) points out, "Educational institutions are strategically placed to help women consider the dimensions of social justice, but few do." The implications and conclusions of this book argue for more sustained governmental and educational policies to address both vocational training and gender discrimination to train women with the skills they need to compete in a global marketplace, but also to educate women to recognize and challenge sex-based discrimination so as to promote long term societal changes.

Vivyan C. Adair and Sandra L. Dahlberg's anthology *Reclaiming Class: Women, Poverty, and the Promise of Higher Education in America* (2003) discusses how class, gender, and racial barriers prevent many women from achieving higher levels of education. The editors explain

Although we recognize that education is not a unilateral solution to poverty, we also know that we have survived and positively changed our lives and those of our families through the process and products of post-secondary education. . . . Education does . . . provide the means for many women to secure economic solvency and intellectual fulfillment. It offers hope, even as that hope is complicated by pedagogies and policies that are ultimately detrimental to poor women. (2, 5, see also 240–241)

*Reclaiming Class* not only argues for the ultimate individual, social, and economic good of higher education and postsecondary degrees, but the book also highlights the disproportional physical and emotional costs that poor women pay to attain individual success in a class-based society.

Adair's chapter (Adair and Dahlberg 2003) "Disciplined and Punished" recounts (via Foucault) how the body is the site of ideological and political struggle, and she describes how growing up in poverty had been "written onto and into my being" (29). Adair had to struggle very hard, as a single mother living in poverty, to put herself through college and graduate school. Earning her PhD did not erase the

trauma of poverty or struggle, but it has “transformed the ways in which I am able to address class stratification and inequality” (47). Her transformation via post-secondary education has empowered her to voice her own experiences, help other women do the same (this book is a testament to that commitment), and to direct an outreach project to support low-income parents escape from intergenerational poverty through access to higher education.

*Reclaiming Class* (Adair and Dalhberg 2003) is filled with stories of lower class women, many single mothers, who had to “fight to obtain an education” (82). However, not all the stories are ones of success. Tonya Mitchell was a single mother of twins who was largely an “A” student, and well on her way to earning her Bachelors degree with the help of public welfare, but the Clinton-signed Personal Responsibility and Work Opportunity Reconciliation Act of 1996 gave Mitchell a stark choice: stay in school, keep up hope for a better life, but lose her welfare benefits; or leave school, get a full time job for \$6.35 an hour, keep only some of her welfare benefits, and give up “hope” (117). She had to choose the second option to survive, as did tens of thousands of other poor women. Mitchell was a “poor black woman who tried to exit poverty through education,” but because of government policy and American distrust of social welfare she is now “stuck” in a dead-end job with little hope for a better future: “I guess it is where the state thought I belonged all along. I should have known better than to think that I could help myself and my kids to a better life” (118). Although Adair argues forcefully that higher education is a “route out of poverty,” (240) Lisa K. Waldner and the other contributors to this book make clear that systemic barriers still prevent poor, minority, and nontraditional students from full access to the American dream: “The cruel irony of rugged individualism is that it fails to acknowledge existing systemic barriers such as poverty, racism, or sexism or deficiencies in the educational system that frustrate the ascendance of the working class and poverty class” (103).

W. Norton Grubb and Marvin Lazerson’s *The Education Gospel: The Economic Power of Schooling* (2004) is perhaps the finest scholarly treatment of vocational education to date. The policy prescriptions of Grubb and Lazerson are comprehensive in scope, complex in articulation, fully supported by empirical research, and strong in terms of strategically and systematically pointed recommendations. This book should be taken very seriously by educators, educational administrators, and government policy makers. Grubb and Lazerson first coined the term “vocationalism” in 1974 and it signifies the broader turn towards economic gain as the overarching economic purpose for all forms of schooling in the United States. Schooling has become conceptualized and justified solely as preparation for the “external demands” of gaining the “essential skills employers want,” although this ideal has not been total and as other normative ideals and practices persist (Grubb and Lazerson 2004, 14). It is commonly assumed that the end purpose of all forms of schooling is to get a job, career/vocation, and/or profession. The

ideal of vocationalism focuses on a higher form of employment, a “vocation” or “career,” which brings not only economic rewards but also personal meaning, social status, social connections, and life-course development (3). By promising opportunity, social mobility, and personal happiness, Grubb and Lazerson claim that vocationalism has become “a new version of the American dream” (4).

Vocationalism is the central ideological component of a larger social vision called the Education Gospel. In its simplest form, the Education Gospel is the progressive “faith” that education can lead to “economic and individual salvation” (Grubb and Lazerson 2004, 1). The Education Gospel is a neo-liberal “vision” of economic and social change by which education, guided by the ideals of vocationalism, provides individuals with economic and personal fulfillment, which, in turn (through a hidden-hand mechanism), naturally spurs economic growth and social goals (Grubb and Lazerson 2004, 2–4). Grubb and Lazerson critique the Education Gospel as “humane,” but “impossible” because schooling by itself is very limited in what it can achieve in relation to deeper social and economic conditions. The Education Gospel is ultimately empty rhetoric because it puts forth education as a “substitute for other forms of social and economic policy,” rather than an important supporting player in a broader effort at socio-political reform (Grubb and Lazerson 2004, 22–23).

But Grubb and Lazerson (2004) do point out many overall achievements of vocationalism and the Education Gospel: [1] it has made education socially important by placing “faith” in it as the “salvation of society” instead of more traditional goals like expansionism or military conquest; [2] it highlights both the “public and private consequences” of schooling; [3] it has justified increased public expenditures, which have expanded the system of schooling in the United States; [4] it has promoted “occupational preparation” as a key goal of education; [5] it has increased the diversity of teaching practices; [6] it has laid the foundation for professionalism and a knowledge based culture; [7] it has expanded the “potential” for equity by offering a means for social mobility; and [8] it has expanded the range of options in formal schooling so that individuals can choose a more appropriate life course (248–250, 253–258). They also point out five “failings:” [1] the Education Gospel “constantly exaggerates the pace of change,” which leads to superficial and wrongheaded policy prescriptions; [2] it neglects history and the past successes and failures of school reforms; [3] it tends to make simplistic formulations that are often reduced to mere slogans; [4] it focus solely on education and ignores larger social, economic, and political issues; and [5] the ideal of vocationalism is used in competing and contradictory ways (248–253).

With this broad critical framework in mind, the authors (Grubb and Lazerson 2004) made several pointed policy prescriptions. Five are highlighted here and will be explained in more detail in the following: [1] expanding the breadth of vocationalism in curriculum and programs, [2] smoothing the connections between levels in the educational system and between the educational system and the

workplace, [3] training students to be informed consumers of vocational programs, [4] further evaluating the real effects and values of schooling and communicating that information to potential vocational consumers, and [5] reconfiguring the apparatus and mission of the state through a conception of the “Foundational State.”

Grubb and Lazerson (2004) point out how vocationalism has shifted the locus of educational ends from collective and public goals to individual and private goals, although vocationalism still promises public benefits like economic growth and social order. Private ends for education have caused a displacement of public oriented programs and curriculums within the educational system. Many have expressed fear about this trend, especially in terms of the eclipse of citizenship training and debating the common good. Grubb and Lazerson invoke the notion of “HyperVoc” (Hyper Vocationalism) to warn readers of overly narrow conceptions of vocationalism (258–260). Grubb and Lazerson argue for a corrective to overly narrow conception of vocational education, and they want the educational system to support more “broad forms” of vocationalism and “well-rounded” educational programs, which would teach “broad human competencies,” including citizenship, morality, and the public good (pg. 181, 261–263).

Grubb and Lazerson (2004) explain how vocationalism in the public school system has articulated an “egalitarian ethic,” which has displaced the older notion of a liberal education for the training of elite leaders. Vocationalism has also helped create a vocationalized educational system by which students climb from K–12 schooling into the different rungs of the higher education system: college-prep high school courses; community colleges; baccalaureate degrees; professional schools. Grubb and Lazerson argue that all forms of education, including liberal arts programs in elite colleges, are simply forms of “pre-vocational preparation” for professional programs, which lead to careers (132). Due to the nature of this school system, where each level of schooling becomes the prerequisite for advancement to the next level, it is important that students be taught how to “progress” through the system, but Grubb and Lazerson point out that this is not the case, especially for lower class and minority students who predominantly start higher education in community colleges (137–138). This lack of knowledge about mobility within the educational system and connections with the world of work has created “a new form of inequality,” which needs to be addressed. However, the higher education system also lacks a clear and developed connection to the “employment system,” including the teaching of actual competencies needed on the job, and thus, Grubb and Lazerson argue that connecting and articulating an “education and employment system” will be an important institutional mission of the 21st century (139, 163, 184–186).

Grubb and Lazerson (2004) point out that a vocationalized education system justifies itself via “market-based ways of thinking,” which sees educational processes in terms of demanders (employers), suppliers (schools), consumers

(students), and commodities (training and work related skills; 150–152). Educational decisions have now turned into occupational decisions and there is often not a clear “mechanism” to help students “facilitate the choice” among all the vocational and educational options (187). A market is predicated on informed, rational, and sophisticated consumers who know what they are buying and who can appraise a commodity’s worth, but most young people, especially disadvantaged youth, lack basic market skills. Many enter college “by accident or as ill-informed experimenters” and, thus, their choices end up hurting them in the long run (189, 223). Grubb and Lazerson argue that a market-driven educational system does not work well for the majority of unsophisticated youth, especially when the lofty rhetoric of the Education Gospel clouds the purposes, benefits, prerequisite skills, and costs (financial, personal, social) of schooling (152). Students need to be better informed about how the education system works and how and when to make “appropriate choices at crucial junctures” (223). To meet these needs, Grubb and Lazerson recommend that counseling services at all levels be expanded, equalized across educational institutions, become better informed about the various levels of the educational system, and better prepared to facilitate education-to-work connections (187–195).

Vocationalism has equated increased schooling with increased economic benefits, however, this correlation has largely been “*assumed* rather than *demonstrated*” (Grubb and Lazerson 2004, 155). Grubb and Lazerson caution that although higher levels of education “may be necessary” to better employment and although it may increase one’s chances of getting a job, it is not “sufficient” by itself, and a educational degree or certificate is no guarantee of finding good employment or higher earnings (156). Grubb and Lazerson point out that there are many “associated” effects of schooling, but researchers have been trying to establish the “direct” effects, and further, to link the direct effects of schooling with social and personal variations, like gender, race, and class. On average, more schooling does tend to increase the likelihood of better employment and increased earnings, however, the average effects of schooling are very “complex” and depend to a large degree on the type of schooling or training one receives (159, 161). For instance, attaining a Government Equivalency Diploma or small amounts of college do not seem to enhance one’s chances of employment, but attaining a four year or professional degree does. There is also evidence to suggest that only 30% of future jobs will require college degrees, thus, promises of “college for all” found in the Education Gospel are “ambiguous,” naive, and arguably “dishonest” (19, 167). Grubb and Lazerson make clear that “there are simply not enough high-level occupations for everyone who aspires to them,” and thus the educational system needs to be more “transparent” and educational goals need to be more straightforward and differentiated so that students can make more informed and realistic choices about their chances for future employment (18–19, 168, 181,223).

Taking a full look at how “inequality begets inequality,” Grubb and Lazerson (2004, 152) criticize the American neo-liberal, laissez-faire state because it lacks coordinated social and economic policies. They argue that governmental deficiencies undermine any large-scale equalizing potential of the vocationalized school system. Grubb and Lazerson point out eight fundamental policy considerations that a new “Foundational State” must address for educational opportunity and equality to become a reality: [1] lack of adequate health policy, [2] lack of adequate housing policies, [3] lack of efficient urban redevelopment policy, [4] lack of serious desegregation policies in a society “highly segregated by income and race,” [5] disorganized and inefficient policies regarding the “family–work–schooling” dilemma that lower-class students face, [6] political hostility to welfare policies, [7] more policies to “confront racist” (and one could also add sexist) practices, and [8] almost no consideration or formalized policies that deal with the quality of work in our society (152–154).

Three of the books under review, those by Grubb and Lazerson (2004), Lakes and Carter (2004), and Adair and Dahlberg (2003), criticize neo-liberal policies, particularly in terms of education and more specifically in terms of vocational education. Grubb and Lazerson, Lakes and Carter, and Vivyan C. Adair argue against the neo-liberalism, and instead call for a strong welfare state that would have the responsibility, in the words of Grubb and Lazerson, to “create the pre-conditions for developing human competencies, not only by supporting the *supply* of the right kinds of education and training but also by stimulating the *demand* for these competencies” (264). This would include reforming the very nature of work in our society by “restructure[ing] jobs so that they are educative,” discouraging the “de-skilling of work,” combating discrimination, “strengthen[ing] the bargaining power of workers,” and proving a “model in public employment” (Grubb and Lazerson 2004, 264–265). Thus, vocational education could have a great deal of equalizing potential, but vocationalism must be directed and regulated by an activist national state or international governing body like the U.N., which would be willing to control the extremes of capital and labor markets to safeguard the well being of both society, underprivileged minority groups, and individual workers. Realizing the full potential of vocational education and training lays beyond the realm of educational policy alone. Educators must join other organized political actors to articulate broader social and economic reform policies that seek to address not only individual displacements, but also the broader, global contours and causes of social and economic inequality.

## REFERENCES

- Adair, Vivyan C. and Sandra L. Dahlberg, eds. 2003. *Reclaiming Class: Women, Poverty, and the Promise of Higher Education in America*. Philadelphia: Temple University Press.

- Conrad, Cecilia A, ed. 2004. *Building Skills for Black Workers: Preparing for the Future Labor Market*. Lanham, MD: University Press of America.
- Grubb, W. Norton and Marvin Lazerson. 2004. *The Education Gospel: The Economic Power of Schooling*. Cambridge, MA: Harvard University Press.
- "Inequality & the American Dream" & "Special Report: Inequality in America." *The Economist*. June 17, 2006: 13–14, 28–32.
- "In the Money: A Special Report on Executive Pay." 2007. *The Economist*. 20 January 2007, 32–34.
- "In the Shadow of Prosperity." 2007. *The Economist*. 20 January 2007, 15–16.
- Lakes, Richard D. and Patricia A. Carter, eds. 2004. *Globalizing Education for Work: Comparative Perspectives on Gender and the New Economy*. Mahwah, NJ: Lawrence Erlbaum Associates.
- "Middle of the Class: Equality of Opportunity is Under Threat." *A Survey of America. The Economist*. July 16, 2005: 9–13.
- "Minding about the Gap." *The Economist*. June 11, 2005: 32.
- "Rich Man, Poor Man." 2007. *The Economist*. 20 January 2007, 15–16.
- Sen, Amartya. 1999. *Development as Freedom*. New York: Anchor Books.
- Slaughter, Shelia and Larry L. Leslie. 1997. *Academic Capitalism: Politics, Policies, and the Entrepreneurial University*. Baltimore: Johns Hopkins University Press.
- "Special Report: Meritocracy in America." *The Economist*. January 1, 2005: 22–24.
- "The Missing Rungs in the Ladder." *The Economist*. July 16, 2005: 17.