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Scott Davies

Linda Quirke

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## ARTICLES

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# INNOVATION IN EDUCATIONAL MARKETS: AN ORGANIZATIONAL ANALYSIS OF PRIVATE SCHOOLS IN TORONTO

SCOTT DAVIES

LINDA QUIRKE

*McMaster University*

*This study examines whether new private schools are innovative, drawing on theories of markets and institutions. Choice advocates claim that markets spark innovation, while institutional theory suggests that isomorphic forces will limit novel school forms. Using qualitative data from third sector private schools in Toronto, three hypotheses about the impact of markets on educational organizations are examined: (a) they reverse tendencies toward isomorphism as schools develop client niches; (b) they allow schools to weaken their formal structures; and (c) they force schools to more closely monitor their effectiveness. Substantial evidence exists for the first hypothesis, partial evidence for the second hypothesis, but little evidence for the third. Overall, new private schools are characterized by: small classes, unique pedagogical themes, personalized treatment of clients, and some pragmatic responses to limited resources. Their operators sometimes feel restricted by parental demand, but are able to retain a loosely coupled structure by embracing consumerist understandings of accountability. This essay concludes with a discussion of implications for market theory.*

## INTRODUCTION: THIRD SECTOR PRIVATE SCHOOLS

**T**his study offers an organizational analysis of *third sector* private schools in Toronto, Ontario, Canada. Third sector schools are private schools that are neither religious nor elite. Private schools have long served religious and elite communities in Canada, but they are becoming increasingly differentiated. One in five Ontario private school students attends third sector schools. These schools are typically small, with enrollments of less than 50, and are located in humble locales, such as office buildings, old houses, or shopping plazas. They distinguish themselves with specialized

pedagogy that attracts clients who do not seek prestigious name-brand education or religious orientations.

Do markets encourage schools to be innovative? Today, many market advocates decry the paucity of invention in public schools and celebrate the entrepreneurial dynamism of the private sector. Yet, such claims are rarely empirically grounded and often ignore the diversity of private schools. Established elite schools, as an example, embrace longstanding school forms and derive their prestige on the basis of tradition, not innovation. Likewise, religious private schools have historically mimicked mainstream public schools in order to secure legitimacy (Baker, 1992). Private schools are most likely to be innovative in relatively new markets. In the United States, charter schools would meet this requirement. However, in Ontario, where there is no charter school legislation, third sector private schools best exemplify such a market.

This sector offers a strategic vantage point for studying educational markets. While elite schools conform to historic images of patrician education, and while religious schools mix standard school forms with the doctrines of their respective communities, third sector schools are free to build their own identity and mandate. Lacking an established legacy, they are arguably the most likely to embrace innovations. Attracting parents who seek neither religion nor entrée into elite networks, these schools may be motivated to embrace novel pedagogies. Moreover, they are closer to the market than are charter schools or magnet schools, since they are not organized through a public bureaucracy. Needing to comply only with bare-boned health and safety and curricular guidelines and the most minimal of inspections, these schools can innovate as they choose. Bound by few regulations, they represent a purer expression of market forces than do charter, voucher, or magnet schools.

## **STATING THE PROBLEM: EDUCATIONAL MARKETS AND ORGANIZATIONAL INNOVATION**

Advocates of educational markets claim that private schools are more innovative and responsive than are public schools (Chubb & Moe, 1990; Clinchy, 2000; Hepburn, 2001; Lawton, 1995). They trace these traits to private schools' freedom from central controls. Relying on public funding pushes schools to conform to legal conventions rather than provide effective service. Unions demand the hiring of certified teachers, boards force compliance to curricular guidelines, and governments leverage teaching with standardized tests. These bureaucratic shackles make public schools unresponsive to their clients, according to private school advocates, who cite choice, small size, and self-governance as magic traits for successful

schools (Meier, 2000). Since private schools evade most hierarchical regulations, they are said to “bust bureaucracy” and devise ingenious forms of pedagogy. Further, markets are seen to encourage schools to adopt a different organizational character. Since private schools charge fees to survive, they must be more responsive to their clients; otherwise those dollars will go elsewhere. Markets thus reward pedagogical success and punish failure, and thereby motivate schools to have well-defined missions, to demonstrate their effectiveness, and to satisfy customers. These hypothesized effects beg a question, however: In organizational terms, how do schools adapt to market forces? Institutional theory is applied to this question in order to better understand the relation between school organizations and their environments.

### **THEORETICAL FRAMEWORK: UPDATING THE NEW INSTITUTIONALISM**

The *new institutionalism* developed by John Meyer and colleagues over 25 years ago (Meyer, 1977; Meyer & Rowan, 1977, 1978) sets the tone for organizational analyses of modern school systems. They described two pervasive trends. First was the institutionalization of the *schooling rule*, the ever-widening use of certified teachers, standardized curricular topics, registered students, and other accreditation procedures. They noted how this school form has become increasingly legitimate in modern society, due to the use of educational credentials in labor markets, and to the spread of norms of individual rights, citizenship, and economic goals. According to the institutionalists, isomorphism across different types of schools is a stark fact, and one of the most noteworthy aspects of educational organizations. Subsequent work in this tradition has documented the diffusion of this standard school form throughout the world (Meyer & Ramirez, 2000).

Second, Meyer and associates highlighted the peculiar nature of this school form. Distinguishing between organizations operating in institutional (i.e., governmental and nonprofit) sectors versus for-profit sectors, they traced schools' legitimacy to their compliance with accepted rules and structures, not to their efficiency. The result, according to the new institutionalists, is *loose coupling*, the hallmark trait of school organization. Public schools adapt to their environments by elaborating their formal structures (categories of students, grades, courses, credentials, and certification), while leaving their technical core (actual classroom instruction and learning) relatively unmonitored. Instead of continually ensuring that they maximize instruction by inspecting teaching or measuring learning, schools expend more energy conforming to the evolving school form. This practice is justified by schools' *logic of confidence* that delegates instruc-

tion to the professional prerogatives of teachers in secluded classrooms. Instruction is guided only by broad theories that resemble vaguely specified platitudes more than detailed rules, and is not backed by tight inspection, agreed-upon measures of performance, or consequent sanctions. The irony is that this loose coupling is actually adaptive for schools, simultaneously bringing legitimacy while avoiding exposure of problems.

Since the advent of this theory, some important trends have emerged in North American education. The major reform initiatives in education since 1980 – standardized curricula, measurable goals, and testing – have placed schools under more centralized control in the name of quality and accountability. These initiatives serve to recouple schools' formal and technical structures by indirectly controlling classroom content and holding schools accountable for minimal outcomes (Rowan, 2002). Further, more control of public schools is accompanied by a movement for school choice. This choice movement is creating a market environment for different types of schools. School choice in varying guises – charter schools, vouchers, home schooling, magnet schools, and tax credits for private schools – is being touted as a lever to challenge the one best way model of organizing schools and to create grounds for innovation.

These changed conditions have at least two implications for institutional theory. Whereas that theory presumed schools governed by public bodies and stressed their need to comply with rationalized myths, schools of choice are freer of regulations. Relying on paying customers rather than government funds, they ought to be concerned less with conforming to legalistic categories than with pleasing clients. Moreover, the bottom line emphasis of the private sector ought to make those schools more *tightly coupled* like technical organizations, presuming parents choose schools based on their performance. In the language of institutional theory, since private schools need not comply with a regulatory environment but are instead subject to market imperatives, they should exhibit less collective isomorphism, have thinner formal structures, and be more tightly coupled than public schools.

## **CONTEXT: TRENDS IN ONTARIO EDUCATION**

Ontario has recently witnessed both of these educational trends toward more centralized control and standardization of public schools alongside a flourishing private school sector. Since taking power in 1995, its Conservative government has introduced a series of regulations that have brought much turmoil. To boost quality, accountability, and public trust, the province has established standardized tests in several grades, forced re-accreditation for teachers every 5 years, reported school test scores in

league tables, tightened budgets, and toughened curricula. These initiatives have strengthened provincial control of public schools, centralizing much power in the process. However, the government has simultaneously left private schools largely unregulated, and does not require that they comply with these initiatives.

During this time, private schools have enjoyed a growing popularity. Over the past decade, the number of Ontario students in private schools has grown by 40%, while the number of private schools rose by 44% (Davies, Aurini, & Quirke, 2002). Currently, about 5% of Ontario school children are in private schools. Catholic schools are fully funded by the province and are not deemed to be private. Even though only few have direct contact with private schools, most parents appear to hold them in esteem. In a 1997 survey, 46% of Canadian parents said they would "prefer to send their child to a private school if they could afford it," an increase from 39% only 4 years earlier (Environics, 1997). In 1999, 61% of Canadians agreed that "Private school students receive much better education than public school students," while in 2000, 66% of Ontarians agreed with the same statement (Angus Reid, 1999, 2000). Clearly, private schools do not suffer from an image problem. Perhaps capitalizing on this popularity, the provincial government recently introduced a small tax credit to assist the burgeoning number of families who desire but cannot afford private school tuition.

This situation has created a key paradox (Aurini, 2002). Ontario private schools are gaining popularity even though they can evade the very initiatives (i.e., standardized tests, curricular standards, teacher accreditation) that have been imposed on public schools in the name of public confidence. Further, the province is allowing public funds to go to private schools without any corresponding accountability measures, a move that critics have seized upon. Ontario's private schools are thus largely unregulated, and have an opportunity to become an even starker alternative to public schools. As such, they offer a strategic setting for examining processes in educational markets.

## **RESEARCH QUESTIONS**

This paper tests claims about educational markets, using new institutional theory to identify key features of school organization. The literature suggests three possible effects of markets on school organization.

The first research question is whether markets reverse pressures for isomorphism. Market advocates see parental wants for more personalized treatment and higher quality as fueling the demand for private schools, and thus would expect new private schools to offer smaller scale instruction, and to diversify their curricula into special themes, creating a series of market niches. Hence, market theorists would envision the third sector as com-

prised of small schools that offer personalized treatment in a diverse, multi-niche market.

New institutional theory offers a very different prediction. One of its major tenets is that organizations become more similar to one another as a result of coercive, normative, and mimetic forces (DiMaggio & Powell, 1991). But are such forces strong among private schools? Institutional theory has rarely examined isomorphism in private education. Importantly, the third sector schools in Ontario face only weak coercive pressures because they are largely untouched by provincial policies. Partly because their lobbying organizations have successfully fended off attempts at interference, they are not required to hire certified teachers. Elementary private schools must simply enroll five students and pass a health and safety inspection. Private high schools meet these requirements and must also use mandated curriculum, but otherwise are free to operate as they wish. Given this lack of regulation, the existence of normative and mimetic pressures for isomorphism is an open question. Institutional theory predicts that new schools will face a strong normative environment set by established public and elite private schools, and that they will be compelled to mimic successful organizations. Recently, Rowan (2002) has noted that deregulation and choice has led to some differentiation among religious, magnet, and charter schools, though such differences are deemed to be marginal, reasoning that these schools emulate their public counterparts when facing similar consumer pressures.

The second question addressed in this research is whether private schools have weaker formal structures. Market theory suggests that since private schools are in weak regulatory environments, they will place less emphasis on external legitimacy, and will dilute formal structures such as standard physical plant and formal teacher qualifications if needed. However, new institutional theory suggests that any such innovations will be limited, reasoning that the standard image of school has diffused so deeply through society that even private schools now conform to it to secure legitimacy. As a consequence, standard school forms shape the demand for private education, informing the criteria, reasoning, and rationale by which parents choose schools. Formal structures, in this view, generate trust in markets as well as in public bureaucracies, and hence remain good for business.

The third question is whether markets encourage schools to regulate their instruction and learning. If parents seek instructional excellence, and choose schools accordingly, then it is reasonable to expect private schools to closely monitor their teaching effectiveness. According to market logic, private schools should eschew the logic of confidence that prevails in public schools, and develop some systematic practice to demonstrate their

effectiveness to parents. This line of thinking has produced a research tradition that has compared standardized test scores between public and private schools (Bryk, Lee, & Holland, 1993; Coleman, 1990; McEwan, 2000; Witte, 2000), with an implicit assumption that parents make choices at least partly on the basis of such scores (Schneider, Teske, & Marschall, 2000).

Again, new institutional theory offers a contrasting expectation. The theory holds that any close monitoring of instruction and learning only exposes problems and causes disruption, with the effect of undermining public trust (Meyer, 1977; Meyer & Ramirez, 2000; Meyer & Rowan, 1977, 1978). This is a key issue for private schools, which depend on consumer confidence for survival. Hence, a reasonable counter-prediction is that private schools will evade direct monitoring by evolving new, nonmeasurable goals, distinct mandates, consumer-satisfaction measures, or will borrow norms of teacher professionalism from the public sector. In other words, they will retain a loose coupling between instruction and assessment.

## DATA AND METHODS

Over the past 2 years, data have been collected through site visits and interviews at private schools in Toronto. A sample of schools was drawn from a government registry of private schools in the Greater Toronto Area. Third sector schools are defined as neither religious, nor listed on the elite independent registry, nor to be language or reform schools. According to this definition, the city has 64 third sector schools. To witness market forces at work, it was reasoned that young schools are less established and hence subject to more market pressures. As such, the sample of schools was limited to schools that were less than 15 years old. Among third sector schools, 47 have been established between 1988 and 2003. Of these schools, 22 have been surveyed thus far. Because this sample has not been randomly drawn, statements about predominant patterns are speculative. Nonetheless, the range and diversity of school types and practices within these schools are very suggestive. What these data may lack in representativeness is compensated by their richness gained from lengthy interviews and site visits.

These schools were contacted by phone, and an interview with the principal was requested. Representatives from only 1 school declined to be interviewed. The researchers visited 21 of the 22 schools, toured their premises, and conducted interviews with their principals that lasted between 45 and 120 minutes. Principals were asked about their school's history, practices and goals, and their perceptions of parental demands and preferences. Responses were coded regarding each school's niche, gover-



nance, physical plant, use of certified teachers, and methods of demonstrating effectiveness. This information is found in the appendix (note that each school has been given a pseudonym). In addition, several other informants were interviewed, including the head of a private school organization, an educational consultant, and a representative of an independent regulatory organization.

## FINDINGS

### REVERSING ISOMORPHIC PRESSURES

**Niches.** Decades ago, private education in Ontario largely consisted of religious schools and elite institutions, but today an entrepreneurial third sector of private schools is expanding the range of choice. Each year, many new private schools emerge, making the third sector a diverse assortment of organizations (see Appendix A). Through this research, three types of niches are identified.

The first type of niche is based on curricular focus. Third sector schools offer a variety of unique pedagogical themes. Schools specialize in academic intensive studies; woman-centered studies; liberal arts, social justice, and environmental issues; museum-based studies; Russian-based multiple language studies, an accelerated learning concentration, and core knowledge studies, modeled after the ideas of professor and author Hirsch (1987). These varied approaches differ markedly from most local public or elite private schools. For instance, one school uses local museums to guide its problem-based learning. Another supplements standard curriculum with several foreign languages, including French, Spanish, Russian, and Hebrew. One high school re-creates a classical liberal arts experience, requiring students to study ancient languages, art, and drama. Other schools focus on intensive academics, attracting parents in search of advantages that may boost their children's odds of attending university.

A few distinguish themselves as alternative schools. Several principals openly reject the "frenzied" drive for advantage, and opt for a more supportive, nurturing, and compassionate educational environment. One elementary school bills itself as building self-esteem by not issuing grades or homework until the seventh grade. This principal categorizes her clients as "People that are more on a spiritual path. Alternative, you know, that kind of group....We're not New Age per se. But that market certainly would be attracted to us" (Wilson Academy). Similarly, one principal explains that her well-educated and artistic clients give priority to enhancing their children's creativity (Sheppard Academy). Likewise, a classical liberal arts principal explains that his clients are not "uptight" about university and value a classical education for itself (Christie High).

A second type of niche is distinguished not by the content of its curricula, but by its special services. Some schools offer alternate hours, such as a high school that operates from 10 a.m. until 5 p.m., because, as its principal explains, “there are so many studies that say that the teenage body doesn’t start functioning until 10 in the morning” (Bay High). This school also boasts 3-hour classes, reasoning that they allow students more time to focus:

Half the problem with the 75-minute class is by the time you get the class settled, do a lesson, the class is done. Kids have to shift gears, go somewhere else, whereas we’d rather just give them a 3-hour block of time, so you can get into something, and focus. And that’s what a lot of these kids are lacking, too, the ability to concentrate and focus for long periods of time. (Bay High)

Other schools offer pragmatic services. Eight schools offer high school courses on a per-credit basis. Catering to part-time students who are preparing for university entrance, these schools extend daily classes so students can complete required instructional hours more quickly. In contrast, one elementary principal, a former day care owner with no teaching experience, makes a name for herself by “making it easy for parents.” Her school offers free hot lunches, snacks, and before- and after-school day care, even on holidays and school breaks. The principal explains that working parents are willing to spend private tuition fees for the convenience of dropping off their children at 7 a.m., and picking them up at 6:30 p.m. Such schools are examples of innovative niches that emerge through special services.

A third type of niche is generated by diverse student populations. Several schools cater to gifted students, athletes, dancers, or students with learning disabilities or special needs. One school grew out of a nearby dance studio, offering a flexible schedule that accommodates practice hours. Other schools clearly express a desire to enroll enriched and gifted children, which one principal identified as “ignored” in public schools (Christie High). And because most established private schools will not admit students with learning or behavioral problems, several schools have emerged that cater specifically to attention deficit disorder or related disabilities.

**Class size: The personal touch.** All principals report that private schools are growing in appeal because parents are looking for personalized treatment for their children. Consistent with market theory, third sector schools provide keen customer service. Evidence for this is found in their structure: third sector schools are small. Only 7 of 22 schools enroll more than 50 students, while 8 enroll fewer than 30 students. Class sizes range from 3 to 20, with an average of 9 students. Site visits confirm that their limited physical

space simply cannot accommodate large classes. Most so-called classrooms are the size of offices, with a large table surrounded by chairs. Only those few schools that rent school buildings have conventional classrooms large enough for more than 10 students.

Respondents emphasize that these classes are markedly smaller than the public school norm of 25 to 30 students, and thereby offer a more attentive, individualized education. Principals claim to know each student by name, to answer the phone themselves, and to meet personally with all parents. One principal contrasts her availability from the bureaucracy of public schools, and cites it as a business advantage:

If I ran this school like the [public] board runs their schools, we would be out of business. I spend a lot of time with people who come into the school. I had two sets of parents in this morning for instance. Parents could hardly get into a public school to observe and get an hour with the principal. (Private school leader)

Another principal equates such attention with providing superior service, and notes its appeal to parents, who want “the best possible service for their kids” (City Academy).

Third sector principals link their individualized attention to parental demands, and claim to be better equipped than beleaguered public schools. Their websites and brochures proclaim how they recognize students as unique individuals. According to one principal, parents

want their kids to be treated as individuals....Kids today are very micro-managed. They have their whole days planned for them. And when they come to a school they expect their kid to be micro-managed as well. (Dundas Academy)

Almost all interviewees, regardless of their history or circumstance, see customized attention as the backbone of their school, hailing intimate class sizes as a major selling point, because as one principal put it, students “can’t just slip through the cracks....There’s no hiding. It’s pretty personal and interactive” (Christie High). Since most of these schools lack established reputations and celebrated alumni, they assure parents by providing superior customer service. Rather than being governed with an air of bureaucracy or adhering to convention, they espouse an informal touch, strive to be responsive to parents, and champion their small classes as the trait that distinguishes them from overcrowded public schools.

However, since third sector schools occupy a variety of market positions, they generate a variety of consumer ethics. Establishing oneself in the educational marketplace takes time. A consequence is that the age of the

school shapes its willingness to readily respond to parental demands. Young schools in precarious market positions are most likely to focus on satisfying customers. Early in their life span, schools must make good on claims to be responsive. For one principal, when her school opened initially, parents could expect to meet with her any time. But since her school has gained a reputation, she limits visits to certain days and hours, without exceptions. Similarly, the operator of a successful private school for 20 years now caters less to parents' demands:

I can say with confidence, "Too bad, I'm sorry, if you want to withdraw, fine, because I have a very healthy waiting list." But a younger private school will not be able to do the same thing because they're in survival mode. And they have to...when the family will take the child and their money and go elsewhere, if they're operating close to the mark. (Private school leader)

Similarly, another principal of a 5-year-old school describes new private schools as "very vulnerable...because when parents pay, they feel the right to demand." She recalls:

The first 2 years we had to sell the school to attract parents, to give discounts, to promise this and that. Sometimes I didn't even make people pay because we needed students. But in the fourth year we had graduates, and everyone got into university, and got scholarships, not only entrance scholarships, but second year scholarships....That's what shows that it works. (Union Academy)

Thus, third sector schools claim to be more accommodating of parents relative to public schools, but the degree of this responsiveness is mediated by their market position. New schools that lack standing in the community must be responsive or risk losing students. But as they gain reputation and waiting lists, principals can then rest on their laurels, and ease their strong consumer-oriented push.

**For-profit status, the instability of markets, and innovation.** In addition to their niche character and small sizes, another organizational trait that distinguishes third sector schools is their governance structure. Fully 17 of 22 third sector schools surveyed operate as for-profit organizations. All are independently owned; none are educational management organizations (EMOs). Most of their principals opt for for-profit status, pointing to the greater latitude gained from not having a board of directors, as charitable organizations are required to have. By adopting this governance form, third sector schools claim greater freedom and flexibility. A principal explains this advantage:

If I have a class that should be kept smaller, or we have a child who needs help, we don't have to go through a lot of red tape, we're able to provide it....My feelings from talking to principals from public schools around this neighborhood is that they're constantly juggling their needs....There's a slowness to the process. Their system is more encumbered...and you can't independently make these decisions. So I think cutting through the red tape is an advantage of the private sector. In the public sector they may be more encumbered by union restrictions and things like that. (Wellesley Academy)

For instance, one for-profit high school principal avoids provincial regulations by simply cutting a grade from his school. In Ontario, ninth grade students are required to take a comprehensive selection of courses, including physical education, computers, and French. This principal explains:

When we had Grade 9s, you have to have music, art, and phys. ed. in Grade 9. You must. So we set up an art room and a music room. We taught phys. ed. off-site. But it honestly just wasn't worth it. I had to hire specialists. (Pape High)

Lacking such resources, this principal simply excluded Grade 9 from his school the next year. Being unencumbered by local school boards or boards of directors, for-profit schools can sidestep such constraints rather easily.

While for-profit status offers flexibility, it makes schools wholly dependent on the fees paid by parents. A consequence is that private schools often go out of business. Amidst net growth is substantial instability. While 461 private schools were opened in Ontario between 1990 and 2000, 258 schools shut down during that same period (Ontario Ministry of Education, 2001). Local experts trace this instability to management problems. One claims that "most of the schools close because of poor management, poor promotion – all administrative type of things. It's not necessarily that there are bad things happening in the classroom" (Private school leader). Similarly, another argues that while these schools may have intriguing pedagogies, they suffer from inexperienced operators and limited client markets:

It's nice to have a sparkling thing to offer, and there are some kids like that, but are there enough to fill a school? So you get these people with an idealistic notion, but without any experience. And finally, the bottom line for any of these schools is financial balance. You want to charge enough that you can pay your teachers enough....At the same time you don't want to charge so much that you put yourself out of business. The feeling I have is that the private schools are just at the edge of putting themselves out of business. (Private education consultant)

Third sector principals are acutely aware of their precarious position. At

least 2 schools, both established in the late 1990s, may soon need to shut their doors. Several discuss the difficulty of attracting parents in their first few years of operation. One principal describes the situation:

There is that hesitancy when you're new. Our first year, we only had 5 kids in our first year. Because parents said, "Oh, we'll wait until next year." They want to see if you're still going to be around next year. (Dundas Academy)

A challenge schools face is to provide an education that is sufficiently unique to draw students from the mainstream, but that is not overly offbeat. One consequence of a volatile marketplace is that parental demand can be a conservative force on schools. For instance, some alternative school personnel admit that they dilute their aspirations to attract parents. Though their teachers had "totally torn down the walls" in their own minds, aiming to "revolutionize" students, they soon found they were "beating their heads against the wall," encountering reluctant parents:

[We] wanted this mandate, this alternative philosophy, to really educate, culturally and socially. But we didn't have the kids....It took a year for us to go out there and find 5 students who wanted to be revolutionized. (Bay High)

Other schools also want to try more de-schooling initiatives such as banning grades or not seeking provincial accreditation, but admit that their market would probably not bear such alternatives (Dundas Academy; Wilson Academy; York Mills Academy). Most principals doubt that parents want something that is necessarily innovative. A private school leader notes:

I would say "Why do they need to be truly innovative"? The answer is probably not....My sense is that parents are not very interested in the innovative, offbeat thing. They are looking for a guarantee of good academics...to be sure their kids know how to read and write and do math, the basics. And they don't get a sense that this is happening for their child in the public schools. (Private school leader)

Another principal notes of her school:

No. I think not, I think the only innovative thing is how to put it together, the curriculum, the pedagogy. I don't think I teach any differently than the way I taught in [a local public school]. I don't teach any differently....I'm very fortunate to have a solid background in terms of pedagogy. But I don't think there's anything innovative. (Davisville Academy)

In summary, third sector schools are in a near-perfect market situation,

subject to little governmental regulation, and run mostly as for-profit enterprises. These conditions produce multiple niches, a norm of small classes, a varying ethos to provide personalized treatment, and a substantial amount of instability. In some cases, market vulnerability limits the innovations that some educators wish to provide. To address issues of innovation further, how these schools deviate from standard organizational forms is explored in the following section.

## WEAKER FORMAL STRUCTURES

In this section three aspects of schools' formal structures are examined: their physical plant, their extracurricular structures, and their use of credentialed teachers.

**Physical plant and use of resources.** The most immediate way in which third sector schools deviate from both public and elite private schools is in their physical plant (see Appendix B). Only 6 of 22 enterprises rent standard floor space from public schools; none owns a school. The remainder is typically located in humble locales, such as office buildings, store space in shopping plazas, old houses, or former churches, fire stations, and banks. Because of their sensitivity to the cost of rent, many third sector schools are located in commercial space, and rarely in prime residential real estate.

Their unorthodox locations force most schools to either improvise their extracurricular activities, or to forgo them altogether. With enrollments of less than 50, most of these schools lack resources for playing fields, gyms, pools, or music rooms. To provide physical education, several make use of local facilities, such as nearby YMCAs, private health clubs, public parks, or tennis courts (Castle Frank High; Chester High; Christie High; Davisville Academy; Dundas Academy; Lawrence Academy). A principal of a school located in an old house exemplifies this entrepreneurship:

The city gave me that field over there, so I use that field. I use a lot of the neighbourhood facilities. I use the Jewish Community Centre over here. There's the Tai Kwon Do centre down a little bit further, and a yoga studio. So they do little modules in each of those places. I use the Gardiner Museum for ceramics and of course the Royal Ontario Museum. (Davisville Academy)

As these schools are competing against public and elite schools that enjoy superior resources, do they lose some legitimacy? A private school assessor articulates this issue clearly:

Public education is cyclical, funding will go up again, and all of the sudden people will start asking "Why am I spending all of this money for this church

basement school when I have a nice public school right here with great facilities, computers, library, all qualified staff, a gym?...Why am I paying?" (Private school assessor)

Many interviewees admit that students are initially hesitant because an office or renovated house "doesn't look like a school" (Sherbourne High). Some principals are frank about their lack of extracurricula:

There's some disadvantages to coming here, social disadvantages. Have you seen the pool? The gym? The badminton court? Have you watched our rowing club? We face that head-on, because we do not make any claims to be a school that has a total balanced program, all the arts, phys. ed. and so on. It's an academic high school. (Pape High)

Another says

"School" is more than just delivering credits. School is a whole socialization procedure. This is for kids who have been through that and are willing to walk away from it and are old enough to say I just want to get my credits. (Spadina High)

One principal notes that his students, being dependent on a nearby park for physical education classes are out of luck if it rains or snows on a given day (Dundas Academy).

How do these schools then survive despite lacking many of the physical trappings of a school? Many schools seek to regain legitimacy by channeling their resources to their specialized pedagogy. A resounding theme is that strong academics compensate for humble settings. One principal notes:

[At first] I said, "Who's going to want to come to a shopping plaza to put their Grade 6 kid in school?" Well, that class was soon full. It goes to show that if you provide a quality education, people will come, even if it's in a hole in the wall like this. For most parents that are coming here, it's the academics that's "A" number one for them. Extracurriculars? They take care of the extracurriculars, Brownies, Scouts, whatever. But we take care of the academics, so they don't have to worry about that. That's the "A" prime number one. (Dundas Academy)

Asked if parents are willing to forgo music or gym classes, a leader of a private school association argues: "Yes. They will make due....Parents are prepared to forgo the frills" (Private school leader).

One principal believes that because many children take preschool in similar locations, parents are increasingly used to informal settings: "So as long as their child is learning, they don't need all the accessories, or the accompanying hoopla" (Wellesley Academy). In comparing her school to



elite private schools, a principal of a pay-by-the-credit school elaborates:

We don't even pretend to do the same thing. They offer the full gamut of a school. I do one thing. I offer credits. All of those other extra things that high schools have historically offered, I can't offer. I've taken education down to the most common denominator, and that is delivering credits. (Spadina High)

Another principal says of his students:

They've made a decision to come here, which means they're motivated for academics. That's basically all we offer. We don't have any sports. At the end of the day, students don't care about that stuff. They want the best possible academic education. We know there are shortcomings. There's not a scholastic community, there's not this rah-rah-rah. If they want it, they can go somewhere else. (Bay High)

Importantly, many schools draw from affluent populations that are already highly involved in extra activities, epitomizing a child-rearing culture described by Lareau (2002). As one teacher puts it: "They all have their outside lives. A lot of them do so many extra lessons, competitive stuff, that it's not a big deal. A lot of them realize that when they're here, they're not here to be social. They're here for school" (Bay High). Another principal reasons:

I guess we're a niche, not for people who want the art program, the dance, the drama, the rest of it. That's why we tell the parents for 1 year, keep that socializing on hold, put them in an after school club, put them in baseball, softball, whatever your child is interested, swimming. They can get their socializing from there. (Osgoode Academy)

By restricting their resources, markets force these schools to improvise their extracurricula, or define them as a "frill" and trade them off for intensive academics. While there may be some loss of legitimacy, this trade-off is accepted because so many clients are engaged in private extracurricular activities, and have the resources to get frills elsewhere.

**Teacher credentials.** Running small enterprises in competitive markets, third sector principals speak of their tight budgets relative to elite or public schools. This reality is most keenly felt in the area of staffing. Teacher salaries are a large expense for schools. As businesses, third sector schools often need to be flexible to deal with costs, such as hiring instructors on a temporary or part-time basis. However, their hiring is embedded in a larger context. Public schools and elite private schools generally hire certified teachers and pay them a fairly high rate. New graduates from teachers' colleges use public school wages as a benchmark.

In this context, most third sector schools are relaxing their hiring requirements (see Appendix B). However, the new tax credit is highlighting issues of teacher certification, with the provincial government facing criticism for placing so few regulations on private schools. Less than half (10 of 22) of the principals interviewed are accredited Ontario teachers (members of the Ontario College of Teachers or OCT) themselves, and 2 have no teaching background at all. Only 3 schools are staffed entirely with OCT teachers. Most schools mixed accredited with nonaccredited instructors.

Hiring decisions are thus very pragmatic. Almost all principals want to pay teachers well, but find it difficult to pay competitive wages to credentialed teachers (Dundas Academy; Pape High; Private school leader; Spadina High). As one puts it, "This is a very small place. Usually the certified teachers are asking for more money....At the moment I cannot afford all of them to be certified" (Sherbourne High). One principal utilizes recent university graduates who have not yet found jobs: "They're lucky to get \$10 an hour here. If they are qualified, maybe \$15, \$18. You can't compete with \$30 an hour [the rate of a certified teacher]. Everybody wants to get in the public school system, but they can't" (Chester High). Another principal reports: "I feel more comfortable knowing that the teachers are qualified, but then again, the flexibility it gives when it's hard to find a qualified person...staffing is a big issue" (Castle Frank High).

How then do third sector schools attract quality instructors? Almost all principals view themselves as offering prospective teachers a trade-off: lower wages for better working conditions, particularly smaller classes, and lesser discipline challenges. As one accentuates:

Obviously we don't have a lot of the things that the public system has – the benefits, the same wages – and we work a little more. But our teachers love it. All the teachers are here, working through the summer. (Christie High)

Another principal emphasizes that his staff get "tremendous exposure" from his small classes (Broadview High).

Given these trade-offs, most third sector principals staff their schools in creative ways. Many hire uncertified teachers among the ranks of graduate students or recent M.A. graduates without jobs (Chester High; Sherbourne High). Others assemble ad hoc staff by utilizing talented yet uncertified people in their social networks, such as local musicians and actors. One principal hires an "actor slash teacher" to conduct drama classes consisting of Monty Python comedy skits for struggling Grade 8 students, with music curricula comprising "some good Gershwin tunes" (Davisville Academy). One school brings in dancers, martial arts experts, and performance artists to offer phys. ed. and art (Sheppard Academy).

While creative, this practice raises a key issue: If legitimacy stems

from hiring formally certified teachers, how do third sector schools regain that legitimacy? The answer comes from the personalized relationships between teachers and clients. A recurring theme is that for teaching, personal characteristics matter more than credentials. One (uncertified) principal elaborates on the loose relation between teaching skills and credentials:

There are people that can teach, and there are people that can't teach. I think that there are a lot of great teachers that have gone to teachers' college, and there are a lot of great teachers who haven't gone to teachers' college. There are a lot of poor teachers who have gone to teachers' college, and a lot of poor teachers that haven't gone to teachers' college. I'm not sure if that process makes a significant difference in the end result. If they're not a good teacher they'll always struggle, regardless of whether they went to teachers' college or not. (Christie High)

Another (certified) principal says, "I've taught next door to many teachers that were certified that I personally wouldn't want if I had children. So I really look at the individual more than the accreditation" (Wilson Academy).

Many emphasize personal characteristics as paramount. A (certified) principal describes her relationship with parents: "They want me. They send their kids here so that I will teach them" (Davisville Academy). One principal describes an uncertified teacher: "The parents love him, the kids love him, that's what really counts. The kids let you know whether there's a good teacher in there or not" (Wilson Academy). Another teacher emphasizes, "When parents find someone who's willing to listen to their problems and who connects with them...they feel that bond, that you're able to help them. That counts for more than the formal credential" (York Mills Academy). A teacher in a museum-based school reasons:

My teaching background is entirely informal. I think that despite all our attempts, pedagogy is more art than science at this point. A lot of teaching is a matter of personality....People who've been through OCT, they might not have a great view of us, but I think it's a cultural difference....Teaching is like a vocation. (Sheppard Academy)

Another principal worries:

I'm so afraid that they're going to make a law that private schools are going to have certified teachers only. That will be a catastrophe....There are so many good teachers not certified....Personal qualities are very important, as long as they have at least B.A., or B.Sc....A lot depends on his desire, and on his passion, and on his devotion. You know, I prefer not to hire teachers from public school, because they are used to a very uncaring approach. (Union Academy)

This emphasis on personal characteristics is linked to the nature of parental demand. Far from fretting about their legitimacy, most school operators state that few parents seek information about credentials. Asked if parents care about teacher certification, a representative of a private school association sharply replies:

No. They don't. It's all in the product, okay? They [uncertified teachers] are gaining parents' respect through other means. Is a person a good teacher or not? The parents, when they go into the school, they can tell whether that teacher is doing a good job or not – they can get into the classroom. (Private school leader)

According to another principal: “Never...It's much more important to them how professional is the teacher than if he has some paper from OCT. Not all the parents are aware of Ontario College of Teachers” (Union Academy). Likewise, another administrator claims that parents do not care if all teachers are certified (York Mills Academy), while others say that parents are more interested in teaching experience than credentials (Sherbourne High). Even those who prefer certified teachers emphasize results: “What I'm really looking for is performance, because productivity is what we produce with youngsters' skill sets” (Pape High). A few operators are overtly hostile to certified teachers, faulting their training as stifling creativity, imposing a “transmissive” style of pedagogy, and encouraging students to merely regurgitate material rather than think independently (Chester High; Sheppard Academy; York Mills Academy).

Several claim to be upfront with parents on this issue. One principal remarks, “I don't hide the fact that one of our teachers is uncertified. And I tell them to just ask the parents. They love him. The proof is in the pudding so to speak” (Wilson Academy). Similarly, a special education principal discusses her own lack of formal teaching credentials:

I'm upfront about that with every one of my parents. It's one of the first things I tell them. It's never been an issue for anybody. I think after I've spent an hour and a half with a parent, and I can get into the issues and I'll ask them a question, and they'll say how did you know my child was like that? (Finch Academy)

Overall, uncertified teachers are a common feature of the third sector landscape. Most have some higher educational background, but many lack teaching credentials. Principals like the flexibility of hiring whomever they choose, regardless of credentials, and emphasize personal qualities and results over formal qualifications. They rationalize this practice by proclaiming qualifications to be irrelevant to most parents. The implication is

that markets create both pressures and freedoms that weaken formal structures. Intense competition restricts budgets and creates the need for flexible hiring, making it difficult to attract fully certified teachers. Yet principals can hire whom they please, since their schools are largely unregulated. Small size and personal relationships allow consumer preferences to nullify some of the legitimacy lost from weaker formal structures.

## TIGHTER COUPLING

If the third sector is about anything, it is about variety. Recent provincial reforms that tighten curricula, impose tests, and report scores in league tables, all promote standardization. Private schools are not compelled to participate in these initiatives, but market logic suggests that parent demand will compel them to do so. This section focuses on whether the emerging testing culture, which has sent a shock wave through the public system over the past 8 years, has spilled over into the third sector. To the contrary, few schools are participating in this culture, and their operators emphasize customer satisfaction as their method of establishing their accountability (see Appendix B).

Weak participation is found among schools in terms of the new standardized testing initiatives. Only 3 schools actually write the provincial tests. The rest do not, even those who boast of lofty academic standards. Some principals are favorable to the testing, but they are in the minority. One of the three principals notes that no parents have inquired about her school's test score standing (Glencairn Academy). Only a few principals want the government to regulate the private sector more closely, and this is mainly because they worry that bad private schools would sully their own image. Half of the principals are critical of those reforms, indicating that the testing culture is hardly the unifying ethos of this sector. A representative of non-elite private schools flatly told the government that her schools "would have nothing to do with those tests." Like most interviewees, she opposes the tests for practical reasons:

I don't think they're good tests to begin with. I don't put a lot of value in them. I don't think province-wide testing helps improve the standards at all. In fact, it almost distracts from the standards, because teachers start teaching to the test. And they also have to spend so much time doing the darn testing.  
(Private school leader)

Similarly, another principal faults those tests for measuring "what we're not teaching, what we're not doing," noting that if private schools had to pay for their own testing, "a lot of us would go bankrupt. It would be financially devastating" (Wilson Academy). One school tried the tests, but has since stopped:

We don't like the testing. We did [it] the first year. It was a nightmare! They're [being tested] in May and they refer back to something you've done in September, October. This is ridiculous! Because of the amount of time I said, "No, we are not devoting an entire year to this." (Wellesley Academy)

Another school principal criticizes the testing culture, depicting it as "a tail that's wagging the whole pedagogical dog," reasoning that many parents are afraid that their children will only know content, rote work, and memorization (Sheppard Academy).

This reluctance toward standardized tests echoes concerns that have been voiced by educators for several decades. Interviewees worry that standardized tests would narrow the scope of education, that they are unfair to some types of students, and that they promote a rigid teaching to the test. However, what is perhaps unanticipated is that these complaints are being aired in the market-driven private sector, since commentators usually associate them with progressive pedagogues and a public sector ethos.

These views highlight a key characteristic of the niche-driven third sector market: a tension between its emerging specialties, particularly alternative and special education, and the uniformity promoted by standardized testing. As a result, the testing culture is not yet shaping market demand in the third sector. Few principals feel compelled to participate in standardized testing because they consider that parents do not use test scores when they choose schools, nor do they care about such formalisms. Many parents, particularly those with children in younger grades, reportedly have a more holistic approach to judging schools. Asked if parents inquire about her school's average test scores, one principal hints:

No, I think parents are really very realistic, more realistic than we give them credit for, more than society gives them credit for....They're seeing it more holistically than how many kids met the provincial guidelines. They're savvy. (Davisville Academy)

In fact, the testing culture may be creating a reaction. The principals of 3 alternative schools believe that their market is being fueled by the testing culture, which is seen as creating too much stress and pressure for many students and parents who want a more nurturing environment (Sheppard Academy; Wilson Academy; York Mills Academy). Some report that they now issue grades only reluctantly, and would like to move away from letter or number grading altogether (Dundas Academy).

If most third sector schools eschew testing, how do they demonstrate their effectiveness to parents? Third sector schools have access to three methods, none of which are accentuated in the literature on educational

markets, all of which embody the niche-like character of these schools. First, some organizations are leading a movement toward collective self-assessment. Some private school organizations, along with an independent, nonprofit organization, are encouraging schools to be assessed voluntarily. However, leaders of these organizations emphasize that their assessments allow for flexible, multiple goals, and avoid test scores or any type of league table comparison:

All we're interested in is reflective self-practice. Are they able to justify why they're not doing this or that. We're not trying to tell them what to do. We're just trying to make sure that there's a certain level of expectation for parents when they send their child they'll get an appropriate education, and money is not being squandered. (Private school assessor)

A private school organization leader adds:

There is a desire on the part of schools to be well run. But they're very, very nervous about any kind of evaluation process that could be perceived to interfere with their philosophical position in the classroom....And that's why we're setting up administrative type of criteria. Those are things that are still broad enough that they are non-threatening to schools. (Private school leader)

In other words, this form of monitoring allows schools to retain a loosely coupled structure within a market niche.

While this type of assessment is being pitched to third sector schools, only older and elite schools are participating thus far (Private school assessor). None of the third sector schools visited participates in these evaluations. A few third sector schools have a second type of monitoring. Two elite feeder schools explicitly point to their graduates' high acceptance rates into elite schools, and thus deem themselves successful (Dupont Day School; Eglinton Day School).

Mostly, however, a third method is common. All schools, particularly newer ones exposed to intense market competition, are developing a consumer-oriented form of accountability. They claim to demonstrate their effectiveness not with test scores, but by offering detailed and/or open reporting to parents. The overwhelming theme is that these schools satisfy consumers by their open availability to parents, and offer students close contact with teachers and immediate feedback.

Most schools champion their personalized, detailed, and sometimes informal reports to parents. Only 3 of 22 schools use the standard one-per-term Ontario report card; most use more intensive methods. One school issues report cards every half term. That principal adds "If the parents ever need to see anybody, they can just come on in and we're right here"

(Christie High). Another school issues 10 report cards and parent-teacher interviews annually. As its principal explains “Lots of communication. Is it mandatory? No. But if you’re paying \$11,000 or \$12,000 for your kid to come here, you’ll consider it pretty mandatory” (Pape High).

This principal, like several others, emphasizes that parents could directly observe her classrooms, and sees this openness as a product of market competition:

[Parents] know what’s happening in the school, and we make sure they know. We’re very much under a microscope. And we want to be under a microscope. It’s a microscope of our own making. We’re competing with some pretty high-powered schools. Parents look at what they’re getting for their money, and they should. They’re aware because we’ve made them aware. (Pape High)

Another principal reasons:

They can always come in. I spent an hour with a parent this morning. They don’t get that kind of attention from a public school principal. One of the reasons people select independent schools is because of the attention that they and their child will get. (Private school leader)

As another principal recalls:

The first month the school was open, I spoke to every single parent, every week. They feel so close to us that they can call. They come here or they talk to us because they feel that we have some kind of relationship with their students. It’s very demanding. But it’s a good indication that what we’re doing is working. (Bay High)

One special education principal describes her methods:

My parent-teacher interviews are 50 minutes long. Ten-minute interviews [as in the public system] are useless. We close the school for 2 days and we run interviews Thursday after school, all day Friday, all day Monday, and Tuesday after school, and I’ll probably have to extend that next year. But parents have to know. Our report cards are very comprehensive. If I showed you a template, you wouldn’t believe it. (Finch Academy)

One school even offers parents free 1-week trials to observe their child in the school before paying tuition. The principal explains:

They’ll get to meet the teacher, they watch them right in the classroom, and can stay as long as they want. I had one parent who had her son here for the 1-week trial, and she stayed for the whole week. I just carried on. We want



them to stay as long as they need to feel comfortable about their choice. Pick up a chair and enjoy yourself. So then they can see everything that goes on. (Wilson Academy)

This consumerist form of accountability allows some schools to develop alternate goals and thus other criteria to gauge their success. Some cite their ability to bolster involvement and enthusiasm among students who were formerly disgruntled in public schools. One teacher of boys with behavioral problems claims success if “Parents are saying hey, he wants to come to school, he’s happy, he’s not hanging out with his druggie friends anymore, he actually finished the book last night!” (Davisville Academy). Similarly, the principal of an alternative pedagogy school reports:

A lot of kids that come [from the public system] missed 40 classes. And they had 5% in a course....They don’t skip [class] here. They never skip. Because we’re so small. One way of evaluating ourselves is this instant feedback. (Bay High)

A major conclusion, then, is that market forces do not necessarily create pressures for tighter coupling, at least in the form of the testing culture. Few third sector schools participate in Ontario’s test initiatives. Instead, most develop alternate goals, which vary by niche, use qualitative assessments, or understand accountability and effectiveness in consumerist terms, using individualized interactions with parents and students. Principals claim that parents want open, personal communication, not test scores. Indeed, some third sector niches are buoyed by progressive philosophies that do not sit well with the testing culture. By emphasizing their openness to parents, these schools are weakening the logic of confidence in teacher professionalism that prevails in public schools. Reflecting their need to attract consumers, these schools instead adopt a more consumer-friendly logic.

## **CONCLUSION: IMPLICATIONS FOR MARKET THEORY**

Are third sector schools innovative? Most are for-profit ventures in an unregulated market, and depend on a customer base to survive. Market advocates presume that such pressures will spark innovative responses. Some such innovations are indeed present. The third sector is characterized by a variety of niches, individualized care via small classes, unorthodox physical locales, and some deviation from public school norms, such as hiring uncertified teachers.

In organizational terms, market competition encourages these schools

to resist many isomorphic pressures via a series of trade-offs. They can weaken their formal structures by emphasizing an ethos of customer service. While some of these practices may have questionable legitimacy within the larger institutional environment, these schools compensate by appealing to alternative sources of legitimacy derived from market values and movements for parent choice. By catering to their constituencies, schools sidestep some isomorphic pressures. Niches also nullified pressures for mimetic isomorphism. Only 3 of 22 schools are fashioning themselves as feeder schools for the elite. The rest avoid competition with those schools, conceding to be not in their league. Instead of adopting tried and true elite practices, they are reducing their class sizes and are developing unique themes and services. The result is a heterogeneous collection of schools that serves needs not met by existing schools. No single school offers an educational experience to appeal to all, but instead caters to particular clientele.

In other ways, however, markets are a brake on innovation. Several schools want to provide more experimental pedagogy, but are constrained by parental demand, whose trust is premised on the standard school form. Most parents have a threshold for innovation, and are generally conservative. Schools can deviate only so far until parents balk and look elsewhere for something more familiar with recognized credentials. The most upscale markets for private education, the elite schools, tend to prize the most traditional of school forms. These pressures constrain educational providers who are more receptive to innovative ideas.

More importantly, third sector schools do little to directly monitor their effectiveness.

Only the most established elite schools are embracing the test culture and related forms of regulation. Their willingness is likely a product of their secure, semi-monopoly position, aided by long waiting lists, selective student bodies, and resourceful alumni networks. Being in weaker market positions, third sector schools instead provide accountability through their customer relations, not by measuring learning. Schools that are vulnerable to market competition are most hesitant of testing and most welcoming of consumer satisfaction norms. Loose coupling is therefore reinforced in segmented and unstable educational markets.

Markets thus encourage some forms of innovation but not others. They promote consumer friendly innovations like small classes and tailored curricula that have a high market value because they are not matched by mainstream public schools which cannot select students or offer small classes. But direct competition also encourages new schools to be averse to tight coupling and to develop consumerist forms of accountability.

These findings offer several contributions to the sociology of educa-

tion. The detailed studies of educational organizations complement existing research on public and private school comparisons that tend to focus only on tracking and achievement. The diversity of private education is highlighted by the third sector, a population of schools that differs from those most often researched, such as Catholic schools (which are fully funded in Ontario, and very similar to their public counterparts), and charter, magnet, and voucher-receiving schools (none of which exist in Ontario). As an empirically grounded qualitative study, it helps further develop institutional theory, which has been built on large-scale surveys or theoretical thought-pieces, not site visits or in-depth interviews. Further, it responds to calls to update institutional theory in light of emerging realities over the past 2 decades (Rowan, 2002).

This research also has implications for market theory. It suggests that parental demand does not necessarily push schools toward the test score maximization style of demonstrable effectiveness if the test culture does not inform parent choice. That presumption may be a product of a particular institutional context, namely the deep diffusion of standardized test scores in American K-12 public education. But as Rowan (2002) points out, this culture has not diffused into other sectors of American education, such as preschools and postsecondary levels, which have developed other norms for evaluation. Similarly, Canadian education lacks a strongly institutionalized test score culture; though growing, it is new and relatively weak in Ontario. Consequently, consumer demand assumes a different shape and adopts other, more informal methods of accountability. Market theory errs if it equates consumer demand with test score maximization, and fails to recognize how markets can instead accentuate the multi-dimensional nature of educational goals.

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*Scott Davies is an associate professor in the Department of Sociology, and Linda Quirke is a doctoral candidate at McMaster University. Correspondence concerning this article should be sent to Dr. Scott Davies, McMaster University, 1280 Main St. West, Hamilton, Ontario, L8S 4L8, Canada.*

## Appendix A

*School Characteristics, Pedagogical Themes, or Niche*

School	Year Est.	Status	Class Size	School Size	Pedagogical Niche or Theme
Christie High	1997	Charitable	6-10	45	Classical, broad-based, enriched/gifted liberal arts focus (i.e., ancient languages); academics without competitive edge; students also do volunteer work
Sheppard Academy	2001	For-profit	12	40	Museum-based schooling; grades 7, 8, and 9; museum collections used as base for problem-based learning; want kids with interesting hobbies (i.e., filmmaking, volunteer work, etc.)
York Mills Academy	1989	For-profit	n/a	7	Association for home-schooling parents
Wilson Academy	2001	For-profit	8	16	Focus neither religious nor academic; focus on nurturing whole child, for children that learn differently than mainstream; 60% learning disabled
Eglinton Day School	1998	Charitable	16-20	198	Feeder's school for elite schools; niche is gifted, enriched; core knowledge
Union Academy	1998	For-profit	16	300	European-style schooling, accelerated, focus on core academics, languages
Chester High	2002	For-profit	6-8	50	Accelerated learning; allows by-the-credit
Lawrence Academy	1999	For-profit	7	7	Well-known principal offers individual attention, grade 8 only; small class; takes students on outings, swimming, golf, tennis, etc.; helps prepare students for high school
Dundas Academy	1998	For-profit	n/a	32	Tutoring-style elementary school
Finch Academy	1995	For-profit	10	30	ADHD, ADD learning disabled; "pit-stop" school - students come here for few years for support, then return to larger public or private school
Davisville Academy	2002	For-profit	8	8	Rescue mission's school for grades 7 and 8 students on the cusp of learning disability

Wellesley Academy	1988	For-profit	12	130	Elite school for special education; feeder school to elite schools; early intervention to ward off academic problems; Plan B for students who cannot get in to elite schools
Osgoode Academy	1996	Charitable	5	5	Intense remediation; learning disabled students with language problems
Castle Frank High	1998	Charitable	8	22	Tutorial approach, grades 11 and 12; catering to dancers, athletes; flexible timetabling; allows by-the-credit
DuPont Day School	1995	Charitable	15-16	85	Feeder school for elite schools; located in downtown core
Glencrain Academy	1995	For-profit	14	170	Schooling plus day care, 7 a.m. to 6 p.m.; snacks, hot lunches; accelerates children 1 year ahead of public system
Bathurst High	2000	For-profit	5	50	Caters to ethnic/immigrant community, grades 11 and 12; enriched, university bound; not only providing opportunity for high marks, but good academic foundation necessary for university success; allows by-the-credit
Spadina High	1999	For-profit	8-10	130	Tutorial approach; core academics; grades 10, 11, and 12; by the credit; get credit in 44 days; some students have slight learning disabilities
Bay High	2000	For-profit	3	15	Alternative school to prepare students for university, core academics, flex Fridays (each Friday is spent out on a field trip), schedule accommodates teenage time-clock, 10 a.m. to 5 p.m., two 3-hour classes a day; allows by-the-credit
Shezbourne High	2002	For-profit	8	45	Caters to ethnic/immigrant community, grades 11 and 12; enriched, university-bound; offers core academics, math and sciences; allows by-the-credit
Broadview High	1997	For-profit	12-17	120	English as a Second Language, International high school students, meeting their specific needs to prepare for university; allows by-the-credit
Page High	1991	For-profit	12	55	Tutorial approach, grades 10, 11, and 12, core academics, small classes, safe environment; allows by-the-credit

## Appendix B

*Physical Plant Resources, Teacher Credentials, and Schools' Demonstrated Effectiveness*

School	Physical	Phys. Ed. Resources	Teacher Credentials	Demonstrated Effectiveness
Christie High	Old house	No	One-fourth OCT	Report cards every term and half term; parents can always come in to talk; overall graduation rate
Sheppard Academy	Old house	No	One-eighth OCT	Anecdotal report cards, more standard assessment; transparent curriculum; parental involvement encouraged
York Mills Academy	n/a	No	n/a	Very little demonstrated effectiveness; parents are home schoolers, heavily involved; principal acts largely as consultant
Wilson Academy	Rented school	Yes	Mix	Students are happy to go to school, not stressed with low self-esteem; anecdotal report cards; no grades assigned
Eglinton Day School	Rented school	Yes	Mix	Graduation rates, acceptance rates at other local elite private schools and other private schools in United States
Union Academy	Rented school	Yes	Mix	Students winning external academic awards; graduates' university admissions, university scholarships
Chester High	Office space	No	Mix	Graduation rates, students gaining entry to university, as well as local elite private schools; also drawing students from local public schools; guarantees students will learn 400% faster using accelerated learning strategies
Lawrence Academy	House basement	Pool; tennis	n/a	Parents will see students' progress through homework, progress reports periodically; report cards every 65 days; independent standardized testing at beginning and end of year; shows parents samples of students' work at end of year
Dundas Academy	Office space	Local park	Yes, all OCT	High student retention rate compared to elite private schools; if concerned, parents can come in and talk to principal anytime
Finch Academy	Rented school	Yes	Yes, all OCT	Statistics kept of results of student progress (i.e., skills mastered), students tested at both beginning and end of year; 50-minute parent-teacher interviews; comprehensive report cards

Davisville Academy	Old house	Local park	Mix	Provincial student testing as a benchmark; parents updated with weekly e-mails; parents rarely come in to complain
Wellesley Academy	Rented school	Yes	Mix	Independent test results (not provincial tests); referrals from elite private schools;
Osgoode Academy	Office space	Parking lot	Yes, all OCT	High turnover rate of returning students to mainstream schools
Castle Frank High	Office space	Dance studio	Mix	Graduation rates, students gaining entry to university
Duport Day School	Office space	Local park	No	Students gaining entry to local elite private schools; regular contact between teaching staff and parents; readily available interview times with teachers
Glencairn Academy	Rented school	Yes	Mix	Provincial student testing and SSAT; students winning external academic awards; graduation rates, acceptance rates at local private schools
Bathurst High	Office space	No	Mix	Success measured by growing school enrollment; local public schools refer students, drawing high-achieving students from local public schools
Spadina High	Office space	No	Mix	Graduation rates, students gaining entry to university, principal very accessible to parents
Bay High	Office space	No	One-fifth OCT	Graduation rates, students gaining entry to university, accessibility, instant feedback, accountability for parents, students' commitment measured by attendance rates
Shearbourne High	Office space	No	No	Drawing high-achieving students from local public schools
Broadview High	Office space	No	No	Graduation rates, students gaining entry to university
Paye High	Office space	No	Mix	10 report cards per year; 10 mandatory parent-teacher interviews; graduation rates, students gaining entry to university