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A descriptive analysis of teacher attitudes towards the privatization of public education

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A DESCRIPTIVE ANALYSIS
OF TEACHER ATTITUDES
TOWARDS THE
PRIVATIZATION OF PUBLIC EDUCATION

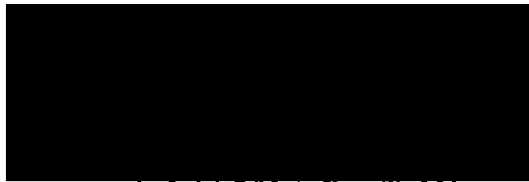
MASTER'S PROJECT

Submitted to the Department of Secondary Education,
University of Dayton, in Partial Fulfillment
of the Requirements for the Degree
Master of Science in Education

by

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April 17, 1995

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CHAPTER I

INTRODUCTION

Purpose for the Study

According to Albert Shanker, head of the American Federation of Teachers, "If one quarter of the products on an assembly line don't work when they reach the end of the line, and another quarter fall off the line before the end, the solution is not to run the line faster or longer. Other, different production processes must be created" (Doyle, 1994, p. 12).

In the last two decades, public school enrollment has gone down five percent. The number of teachers has gone up nineteen percent and the number of non-teaching staff and administration --bureaucracy-- has gone up forty-eight percent (Will, 1994).

Estimates put spending on public education at triple the level spent in 1960 ("Educational Reform," 1994).

America's public schools were founded on the principle of offering the best education to the widest range of children. According to many critics, they are clearly failing ("World Politics," 1994). Considering Shanker's manufacturing scenario (above), educators are not "speeding up the line"; they are going about failing differently, by throwing more and more money at the schools, without giving them guidance on how to improve. For example, the state of Maryland designated \$14 million and infused it directly into schools with performance problems. Maryland found that just giving more funds to schools does not work (Harrington-Lueker, 1993).

According to the former Secretary of Education, William Bennett (This Week With David Brinkley, 1994), "If you serve up a rotten hamburger in this country, you will have state, local and federal authorities closing you down. You'll be out of business. But you serve up a rotten education in this country year after year after year, nothing happens. Actually, what happens is you get more money because the argument is that you haven't gotten enough."

Communities spend an average of nearly \$5,500 per student for public education. The total amount received by schools is a higher percentage of the Gross National Product than is received by schools in any other industrialized country. Yet, in comparison to other industrialized societies, American students test near the bottom in academic achievement, particularly in math and science (Marchini, 1995).

According to McLaughlin (1992), "After more than a decade of renewed attempts to reform public education, things look much the same as they did in 1980" (p. 24). This researcher believes that American school systems are in need of large scale change or re-engineering. In industry, re-engineering refers to examining all processes — everything that is done — questioning why it is done and how it can be done better. Reengineering is a means of continual improvement and is increasingly necessary for long-term survival in the global, competitive marketplace. Improvement measures are necessary for improvement and success in education also.

In education, there are many elements which can be addressed for change, such as student attendance, the school's curriculum, the instructional delivery methods, and student security. School reform is ongoing, capturing widespread attention and dollars. "In a desperate attempt to force a measure of accountability into the system, cities are turning to private companies for solutions. This hardly spells the end for America's 85,000 public schools, but it may be the beginning of competition for the public school monopoly" ("Education Reform," 1994, p. 28). This paper will focus upon the privatization factor and its potential for instituting change in education.

Chris Whittle, founder of one of the two main education privatization companies, Whittle Communications, likens the education reform movement to Thomas Edison's creation of the

light bulb. When Thomas Edison invented the light bulb, he did not simply hot-wire a candle; he created a new product (and process). Now, a light bulb is cheaper (and more efficient) than a candle (Brodinsky, 1993). Whittle's light bulb analogy suggests what he and others think might be possible with education, through privatization.

Every industry has its paradigm pioneers. The computer industry had IBM, overnight mail had Federal Express, and the fast food industry had McDonalds (Blackshear, 1993). The world as we know it would not be the same without the advances made by these entrepreneurial, visionary companies. Pioneers are needed in education to prepare today's children for the 21st century.

According to Doyle (1994), a senior fellow at the Hudson Institute, "When asked, most educators assert that they would like to use technology but cannot afford it. Yet technology has one purpose: to increase productivity. That is why the rest of the economy cannot afford to do without it" (p. 15).

This researcher recognizes the importance of technology, progress, and continual improvement. Having worked in industry for several years where process improvement, reengineering, and empowerment were more than just innocuous terms, this researcher is interested in the potential for acceptance of such a "radical" idea as privatization in education.

According to McLaughlin (1992), for-profit schooling is virtually unstudied. With education largely provided by public institutions, the focus of researchers, professors, and legislators is consumed by public education and its problems.

One purpose for this research is that though there is ample press regarding privatization issues and events, there is very little that probes "uninvolved" peoples' thoughts on the matter.

Specifically, this researcher found no existing literature addressing teachers' attitudes. Very little literature was found regarding students and families of students in privatized schools.

Another purpose for completing this research is to explore the variations of privatization and its presence in the educational marketplace. According to McLaughlin (as cited in Zlatos, 1995), there are over one hundred privatized schools serving 75,000 students across the United States.

A final purpose for this research is to identify the major players in the education privatization industry. There are several privatization companies whom this researcher has found described in the literature, with two clear leaders. The potential for growth and profitability is enormous. With the education industry worth \$266 billion annually, if a company captured only half of one percent, it would become a billion dollar business (Harrington-Lueker, 1993).

Problem Statement

The purpose of this study is to analyze the attitudes of public school educators toward the privatization of education.

Assumptions

Because privatization is a concept that is not known to all teachers, an abbreviated transcript will be provided which is from a television talk show where proponents and opponents expressed their opinions and views on privatization. The researcher assumes this transcript is not biased and will inform teachers about the privatization issue. The researcher also assumes that the teachers selected are receptive to completing the instrument and will answer in a manner consistent with their personal attitudes. The writer also assumes that the instrument is reliable.

Limitations

There may be several limitations to this study. One of the limitations is the limited sample size of teachers. The results, therefore, cannot be generalized to a broader population. Another limitation is one that would be relevant only for teachers who do not read the transcript: a teacher may perceive himself/herself as understanding the concept, and therefore, not read the transcript (i.e., the teacher may be confusing privatization with a different topic such as private schooling). A third limitation is that the respondents may not be representative of the general population, in that primarily teachers working on advanced degrees will be included.

Definition of Terms

Administration. This term includes all personnel maintained by a school system who are not directly involved with providing instruction or teaching. This would include building personnel, as well as central office staff.

Chapter 1 Program. This term identifies a remedial education program targeted to assist disadvantaged students.

Individual Education Plan. This is a student-specific program documenting the students learning program. It references content, method of delivery, and evaluation criteria. These plans are largely used in the educating of students with special needs.

Magnet School. This is a public school that offers a distinctive curriculum emphasizing a vocation such as Business, Engineering, Art, Music, etc.

Private Schooling. This is an alternate source of education whereby children attend non-public school, usually at personal cost. This would include parochial and remedial schools, and can include grades kindergarten through high school.

Privatized Education. This refers to the outsourcing of school-related functions to a for-profit entity. This can be as simple as contracting out the operation of the school cafeteria to the contracting out all school system functions, including teaching, administration, etc. For purposes of this paper, privatized education will refer to the higher level outsourcing of teaching, administration, or both.

Privatized School. This would be any school which is open to all students, such as a public school, but that operates on a for-profit basis with a company realizing the profits. This could range from a single privatized school within a public district (therefore, primarily non-privatized) to an entirely privatized district.

Public School. This includes schools open to all students according to geographic boundaries and operated on a non-profit basis.

CHAPTER II

REVIEW OF THE RELATED LITERATURE

Kinds of Privatization and the Privatization Marketplace

Before the widespread existence of public schools in the mid-nineteenth century, proprietary and denominational schools, along with private tutors, were the only means of formal education (McLaughlin, 1992). These early means of education were for-profit in nature.

With public schools currently dominant in education, there is an increasing trend toward subcontracting services. Many schools contract out their cafeteria services, transportation, and security. A number of school districts are currently talking with private management companies investigating the feasibility of having an outside company assume responsibility for the larger administrative responsibilities (McLaughlin, 1994).

Private management of public schools reflects a growing interest of the corporate world in school-related products and services. This includes not only selling class rings, textbooks, videos, and computers, but also providing services such as specialized foreign languages, financial management, and security. Public education is seen as a promising growth industry. Companies that offer services that improve learning and productivity in public schools are receiving serious attention (McLaughlin, 1994).

Since the mid 1970s, the education of tens of thousands of students identified as disabled has largely been contracted out with for-profit and nonprofit organizations. The education of "problem" and "exceptional" students is sometimes contracted out to for-profit entities as well. Some schools subcontract out their foreign language instruction; other schools contract their Chapter 1 programs to for-profit entities. Also, there are at least six hundred for-profit Montessori schools across the country.

Increasingly, outsourcing contracts are moving from single-focus contractual agreements, where the vendor is responsible for the delivery of a specific service, to where a vendor is responsible for the delivery of all services of the school system (Blackshear, 1993). Schools are contracting out services with increasing frequency for the same reason: savings (Doyle, 1994).

The early trend in privatization is for districts to contract out the management of those schools that manifest the most severe, chronic problems. In these schools, the need is greatest and potential results can be the most dramatic. Considering the range of full-service privatization companies, there are two major companies that appear to dominate the privatization market, Education Alternatives, Inc. (EAI), and Chris Whittle's Edison Project (Edison).

In Dade County, Florida, a new elementary school was needed. From its inception, the school was managed by a for-profit entity, Education Alternatives Inc., with EAI training the teachers; providing the curriculum; sourcing materials; and, assuming all administrative and maintenance responsibilities for the school. This same company took over management of nine schools on a five-year contract in Baltimore, Maryland, under a similar agreement to the one in Dade County. EAI was eventually rewarded a contract for the full administration of an entire school district in Hartford, Connecticut.

Getting a late start on EAI, the Edison Project took over full control of four schools in four separate cities across the United States in 1995. For each of these schools, Edison assumed full responsibility.

Although EAI and Edison have received the most attention, they are not the only private organizations managing or hoping to manage public schools. Other companies include: Alternative Public Schools, Inc.; Performing Schools Corporation; and Public Strategies Group.

Moving to privatization is not necessarily an all or nothing endeavor. Some districts are pursuing privatization in one or a few schools; they believe that the move will strengthen all of their schools and allow for the sharing of best practices. Other districts see it as temporary; they bring in an outside company to help get the district over the educational reform hump. Ironically, what the for-profit companies are doing is not especially innovative; indeed, many districts believe that they will be able to continue the best practices that the privatization companies initiate. Some privatization contracts involve merely teacher training or using the for-profit company's educational model.

To date, private companies manage about one hundred schools serving nearly 75,000 students (Zlatos, 1995). There is an association for for-profit schools called the National Independent Private School Association (McLaughlin, 1992).

The idea of private management of public schools is not new. It is a continuation of more than forty years of interest in the idea and, more importantly, it is also an expression of a changing American society and a changing relationship between private industry and government (Clark, 1995).

Characteristics of Privatization

With the contracts to date, companies have agreed to manage the school district at the district's current per-pupil spending levels ("Education Reform," 1994). Some of the privatization companies seek control on teacher appointments and salaries; others do not. All seem to agree on modifying the school schedule, allowing for a longer school day and a longer school year.

Doyle (as cited in Harrington-Lueker, 1993) predicts that privatization companies will have to find ways to cut costs in order to generate a profit. Privatization companies are largely

looking to enhance their earnings by obtaining corporate support and by developing partnerships for the provision of finances and maintenance. In some districts, they actually outsource this back to the district which is already providing the service for their other schools.

Many districts have centers of excellence...a particularly outstanding school, principal, or teacher. What differentiates a privatized school from public schools is that it offers a systematic approach to ensure continuous quality. EAI and Edison have each spent considerable time and money developing an extensive curriculum that is a core part of their program direction. Even opponents to the privatization movement have strongly credited the for-profit companies' educational models.

A feature common to all privatization contracts is the extensive use of technology. Computers are actively used as additional instructional mediums. The privatized schools also make considerable use of tutors to supplement the classroom learning.

Another curricular attribute of privatization is the emphasis on child-centered instruction (Blackshear, 1993). Many of the privatized schools have seen the benefit of Individual Education Plans used for students with special needs. They have expanded their use to create similar personal education plans for all students, with active involvement of the teacher, student, and parents in determining each student's learning objectives.

Some privatized schools tout education without walls, an open learning space. Grade levels are also something which some for-profit companies are discontinuing; the students would remain with the same group of students and teachers for several years. EAI has even established morning meetings where students establish their day's learning agenda. These and other innovations are part of how the private companies are responding to the challenges confronting educators.

Reasons for Privatization

In the early nineteenth century, the French economist Jean-Baptiste Say coined the expression "entrepreneur." By it he meant the innovative combination of labor and capital to produce new ways of creating and bringing goods and services to market. Xerography, personal computers, faxes, cellular phones, automatic teller machines, and credit cards have all created their own demand. In each example, a visionary had the imagination and foresight to see that there were new, different, and better ways to do things. These talents can and should be applied to schools. Entrepreneurial activity must be at the top of any school reformer's list (Doyle, 1994). Public school administrators should question whether it is in their school districts' best interests to own and operate the means of production or to see if this service can be provided elsewhere on an equal basis.

Interest in privatized public schools is growing, with school boards in Arkansas, California, Colorado, Connecticut, Florida, Hawaii, Indiana, Kansas, Maryland, Michigan, Ohio, South Carolina, Texas, and Wisconsin investigating the privatization alternatives (Education Reform, 1994). According to the Venture Capital Journal, schooling will be the major growth industry of the 1990's (McLaughlin, 1992).

Privatization is part of the school choice movement based on the philosophy that competition will improve schools (Weele, 1994). Many people believe that competition and choice will generate greater accountability and, therefore, enhanced excellence in the schools. Many people just want to see the accountability, such that if goals are not met, the contract will be terminated. According to The Economist, even President Clinton and the Department of Education have had "nice things" to say about the private management of public schools (Education Reform, 1994).

In communities where there is a privatized school, some parents are expressing disenchantment with the public schools, feeling that they waste money and do not challenge the students (Sanchez, 1995). With parents feeling that the privatization efforts are a positive move, many privatized schools are experiencing waiting lists of students who want to attend them. According to Deborah McGriff, an Edison Vice President (as cited in Sanchez, 1995), parents want the kind of change that privatization brings; they do not want to keep putting money into a "monopoly" that is not producing results.

Everything that is supplied to schools today is supplied to them by a company or organization that has to make a profit. This includes book companies, computer companies, sports equipment companies, food service companies, etc. So much is already contracted out with public school districts today that contracting out the management of the schools is just another step, provided an equivalent product or service can be delivered at a comparable cost, with no additional expense to taxpayers.

Perhaps most important, profit-making firms have history in their favor. Firms such as Edison and EAI might not have chalked up a track record of success yet, but they are not saddled by a history of failure either (Harrington-Lueker, 1993). Whether public schools have failed is debatable. But the fact that they are in need of tremendous positive reform and restructuring is without question by all but the most ardent defenders of public education.

Opposition to Privatization

Most troublesome to some education critics is the notion that education is no longer based on a set of democratic principles dedicated to the common good. Instead, education is seen by entrepreneurs as a function of the marketplace - and schools, students, and curricula are to be used for generating a profit (Brodinsky, 1993). Many feel that not having the

governmental tie-in will mean lower standards...a lower quality product. People fear that classrooms will be large and that children will not receive an acceptable education; schools will be directed by absentee stockholders who seek profits off the children.

Albert Shanker of the American Federation of Teachers says the lack of clearly defined and institutionalized goals pushes schools toward fashionable ideas and public promises (Henry, 1995). School reform is hot and everyone is in a hurry to improve their educational systems. When results are not immediate, schools keep trying to improve by attempting different solutions.

Many people feel that public schools are doing fine on their own. They credit the for-profit education companies as having copied elements of the best in public schools into their curriculums. Many school districts across the country have succeeded in their reform efforts. For example, the Key School in Indiana has utilized Howard Gardner's (see Armstrong, 1994) theory of multiple intelligences and applied this to their curricula. Their success has been widely studied and imitated (Bolanos, 1994). Another successful reform example includes the Lake Frost Magnet School in Minnesota, where measured benefits include student motivation and the use of higher order thinking skills (Kadmas, 1994).

The concern that for-profit corporations are in business to make money, not to educate students, is a major source of opposition for privatization (Weele, 1994). According to Heidi Steffens, a specialist on school privatization for the National Education Association, the bottom line when dealing with a privatization company will always be money, not learning (Sanchez, 1995). The teacher unions feel that a profit incentive will threaten the character of American schools. However, they do support the outsourcing of ancillary services.

A key opposition to the privatization movement comes in the old notion that to ask for help is to admit that one is not doing something right. The schools fear that a move to privatization is an admission that what they have been doing is completely wrong (Hill, 1993). When Patricia Parham, the principal of South Pointe elementary in Dade County, Florida, was asked if they could have done on their own what EAI did, she answered, "Well, we didn't" (Harrington-Lueker, 1993).

With the existing privatization contracts, the for-profit company has been given current spending levels with which to work -- somewhere in the range of \$6,000 per pupil. Some feel that if school management should be outsourced, it should be bid upon like other outsourcing contracts. Without companies having to bid, school districts may not be getting their best possible value.

There is also concern regarding provisions for students with special needs and educating the hard-to-educate (Katz, 1994). Many feel that privatized schools will not be required to adhere to the same regulations of public schools. Or, more importantly, that they will seek methods of excluding "special" students from the population they serve.

Others express concern with business executives' lack of training and experience in education and school management. Also, in regard to the privatization companies, there is concern for the repercussions should the company declare bankruptcy and walk away from their intended responsibilities. Such concerns are not unfounded. The Baltimore experience with EAI suggests that privatization is not the answer and that much work remains for all those who seek to reform education. Baltimore City Schools canceled their contract in its third year.

CHAPTER III

PROCEDURE

Problem Statement

This study analyzes public school educators' attitudes toward the privatization of education.

Subjects

The subjects chosen for this study will be teachers in public schools in the southwestern Ohio area. Some of these subjects will already be familiar with the privatization concept; others will not. Teachers from private and privatized schools will be excluded. Both primary and secondary teachers from public schools will be included. Long-term substitute teachers in public schools will also be included.

Setting

School. The public schools in which these teachers teach vary in size (enrollment) and student racial mix.

Community. The public schools are located primarily in urban and suburban areas in southwestern Ohio.

Data Collection

Construction of the Data Collecting Instrument. The instrument was constructed by the writer using information gathered from a review of the extant literature. This procedure establishes a certain measure of instrument validity. The instrument is intended to assess teacher attitudes regarding the privatization of public education. The instrument is a modified Semantic

Differential questionnaire, which contains fifteen items, with five possible responses to each item (see Appendix A).

The instrument begins with an assessment of demographic information, to include information on each respondent's gender, age, teaching experience, and years in current district (see Appendix B). The instrument concludes with one open-ended question for comments from each respondent.

Along with the questionnaire, respondents received an informational transcript (see Appendix C) on the privatization issue. The transcript is derived from a television talk show where both proponents and opponents of privatization expressed their opinions and views. The demographics sheet includes a question to determine if the respondent read the transcript.

The instrument was reviewed by two teachers, a market researcher, and two professors. The purpose of their reviews was to ensure the clarity of each item and the content validity of the instrument.

Administration of the Data Collecting Instrument. The instrument was reviewed and restructured in early January, 1996. Necessary changes were made, and the instrument was given to graduate students, who were currently teaching in schools, to complete. The researcher also asked University of Dayton graduate students (again, those who were currently teaching) to complete the survey. The date for returning the completed surveys was February, 1996.

CHAPTER IV

RESULTS

Purpose of Study

One purpose for this research was to probe “uninvolved” peoples’ thoughts on the matter of privatization. Another purpose for completing this research was to explore the variations of privatization and its presence in the educational marketplace. A final purpose of this research was to identify the major players in the education privatization industry.

Presentation of the Results

The results of this study are presented in three tables with several supporting graphs. Data results for the questionnaire items are included in Table I. Specifically, Table I presents the number of responses for each Semantic Differential scale interval and the representative share of the total responses. Graph I plots this information across each question (see Appendix D).

TABLE I
TALLY OF TEACHER ATTITUDES TOWARD PRIVATIZED EDUCATION

Survey Question	n	Least Favorable				Most Favorable					
		1		2		3		4		5	
		n	%	n	%	n	%	n	%	n	%
<i>Good/Bad</i>	28	7	25.0	14	50.0	5	17.9	2	7.1	0	0.0
<i>Boring/Interesting</i>	28	1	3.6	0	0.0	7	25.0	14	50.0	6	21.4
<i>Wise/Foolish</i>	28	4	14.3	11	39.3	13	46.4	0	0.0	0	0.0
<i>Unimportant/Important</i>	28	4	14.3	7	25.0	7	25.0	4	14.3	6	21.4
<i>Complicated/Simple</i>	28	16	57.1	9	32.1	3	10.7	0	0.0	0	0.0
<i>Approach/Avoid</i>	28	7	25.0	11	39.3	5	17.9	4	14.3	1	3.6
<i>Unsuccessful/Successful</i>	28	7	25.0	8	28.6	11	39.3	2	7.1	0	0.0
<i>Genuine/False</i>	28	7	25.0	12	42.9	6	21.4	3	10.7	0	0.0
<i>Incomplete/Complete</i>	28	7	25.0	14	50.0	6	21.4	1	3.6	0	0.0
<i>Fair/Unfair</i>	28	6	21.4	10	35.7	10	35.7	2	7.1	0	0.0
<i>Unaccountable/Accountable</i>	28	4	14.3	4	14.3	10	35.7	7	25.0	3	10.7
<i>Flexible/Rigid</i>	28	8	28.6	5	17.9	8	28.6	7	25.0	0	0.0
<i>Positive/Negative</i>	28	9	32.1	8	28.6	9	32.1	2	7.1	0	0.0

Table II identifies the number of responses and averages for each questionnaire item. Data for all respondents are combined and also disaggregated by gender. Pie charts are included for each questionnaire item; those charts identify the share of the total that each Semantic Differential scale interval represents (see Appendix E).

TABLE II
AVERAGE TEACHER ATTITUDES TOWARD PRIVATIZED EDUCATION

Survey Question	Combined		Female		Male	
	n	avg.	n	avg.	n	avg.
<i>Good/Bad</i>	28	2.07	20	2.20	8	1.75
<i>Boring/Interesting</i>	28	3.86	20	3.85	8	3.88
<i>Wise/Foolish</i>	28	2.32	20	2.35	8	2.25
<i>Unimportant/Important</i>	28	3.04	20	3.05	8	3.00
<i>Complicated/Simple</i>	28	1.54	20	1.55	8	1.50
<i>Approach/Avoid</i>	28	2.32	20	2.35	8	2.25
<i>Unsuccessful/Successful</i>	28	2.29	20	2.50	8	1.75
<i>Genuine/False</i>	28	2.18	20	2.45	8	1.50
<i>Incomplete/Complete</i>	28	2.04	20	2.10	8	1.88
<i>Fair/Unfair</i>	28	2.29	20	2.30	8	2.25
<i>Unaccountable/Accountable</i>	28	3.04	20	3.10	8	2.88
<i>Flexible/Rigid</i>	28	2.50	20	2.60	8	2.25
<i>Positive/Negative</i>	28	2.14	20	2.30	8	1.75

(1 = Least favorable toward privatization; 5= Most favorable toward privatization)

Table III identifies the number of responses for the demographic question that addresses respondents' familiarity with the privatization topic. This information is provided for all respondents combined and disaggregated by gender.

TABLE III
TALLY OF TEACHER FAMILIARITY WITH PRIVATIZED EDUCATION

Familiarity Scale	Combined	Female	Male
Very Unfamiliar	4	3	1
Unfamiliar	10	10	0
Neutral	6	4	2
Familiar	6	3	3
Very Familiar	2	0	2

Discussion of the Results

Thirty questionnaires were returned. Two of the returned questionnaires were excluded from calculation due to their demographic information having been omitted. Of the completed questionnaires, all Semantic Differential items were answered for each respondent. Eight respondents included personal comments.

Half of the respondents identified themselves as either "very unfamiliar" or "unfamiliar" with the concept of privatization before completing the questionnaire. Over seventy percent of the respondents identified themselves as less than "familiar." Twenty-four of the respondents read the transcript to increase their familiarity with privatization before completing the questionnaire.

The respondent group was composed of twenty females and ten males. Of these teachers, ten were from city districts, seventeen were from suburban districts, and one was from a rural district. All respondents teach in the Southwestern Ohio area and work in public schools. The age range was diverse with seven respondents in the age category "20-29," nine respondents in the age category "30-39," nine respondents in the age category "40-49," and three respondents in the "50-59+" category. The small sample made it impossible to do any sophisticated statistical analyses.

Of the fifteen items on the modified Semantic Differential questionnaire, two items were omitted from these results because of possible ambiguous data interpretation. The researcher decided each could be interpreted both positively and negatively toward privatization and, therefore, did not provide true insight into teachers' attitudes towards the study subject. Scores were converted and calculated in order to assess a true ranking, with one being the least favorable to privatization and five being the most favorable to privatization.

Teachers in the Southwestern Ohio area are relatively unfamiliar with the privatization issue. One factor that contributes to the limited awareness of the concept is the limited educational research conducted on privatization. Another factor might be because there are currently no privatized schools in Southwestern Ohio.

The novelty of the subject may contribute to teachers' low favorability towards privatization as was evident in their responses to the questionnaire. The combined average of all questionnaire items was 2.4 with 1 being the least favorable towards privatization and 5 being the most favorable. The item showing the strongest unfavorable response focused on the complexity and complication of privatization. Specifically, 57.2% of the respondents indicated that they held unfavorable reactions to privatization because they viewed it as complicated. The strongest favorable response was the questionnaire assessing whether privatization was boring or interesting. Specifically, 71.4% of the respondents evaluated the privatization concept at least relatively interesting, with 21.4% indicating that it was very interesting.

Discussion of the Comments

Eight teachers included comments regarding privatization. These could primarily be classified as comments opposing privatization. There were no comments made in favor of the concept, though some "comments" were questions seeking additional information about privatization.

Some of the comments relate to teachers' questions about the whole privatization issue. Teachers are clearly concerned about whether the needs of their students are being met, especially for those students who have special needs. One teacher expressed grave concern that class sizes (in privatized schools) would be made too large and that this would be a great disservice to the students. She felt that a for-profit company would trim costs through larger

classes and that the result would be that students would not receive an appropriate education. Another concern dealt with the methods of evaluating a for-profit company and the potential effects of a company's failure.

Concern with greed and profitability was expressed by more than one respondent. Accountability was also addressed in regard to being accountable to the students and to regulatory requirements.

One respondent observed that the "Institution of Education should not be a cost effective service by corporate business standards." And, two teachers commented on education being a people business that cannot be measured by a financial bottom line. Clearly, those who are part of the educational establishment see problems with privatization. The rather lukewarm responses of the teachers on the semantic differential and the rather negative comments of the respondents suggest that many classroom educators do not see privatization as offering the public a better means of educating young people.

CHAPTER V

SUMMARY, CONCLUSIONS AND RECOMMENDATIONS

Summary

School reform has been and will continue to be an education topic widely studied and discussed. Along with many other methods of school reform, privatization has become one viable alternative.

Many districts across the United States are already subcontracting out services such as transportation, food service, security, and remedial programs. Several for-profit companies are taking the "farming-out" concept one large step further with the outsourcing of instruction, administration, and operations. When school boards are addressing the successes and needs of their schools, a new topic may be whether to allow a for-profit company to assume administrative responsibility for school restructuring.

Though privatization is not an entirely new option, it is still in its infancy. With no privatized public schools in the Southwestern Ohio area and the topic not widely researched, teachers in this region are not especially aware of the subject. This "ignorance" was determined via the demographics information sheet (see Appendix B). Specifically, 50% of the teachers rated themselves as unfamiliar or very unfamiliar with the topic of privatization.

With the purpose of the study to assess teacher attitudes toward privatization, a modified Semantic Differential questionnaire was prepared and administered (see Appendix A). The questionnaire assessed teacher attitudes toward fifteen pairs of adjectives. Also, comments were captured through an open-ended question that was included at the end of the semantic differential.

Conclusions

Though teachers generally felt that the privatization issue was interesting, they were generally not in favor of it. Most of the questionnaire items yielded an average score around two, where one is the least favorable toward privatization and five is the most favorable toward privatization. When averaging all of the questionnaire items together, the average questionnaire score was 2.43. Significantly, all the respondents are public school teachers, so it should not be surprising that their response to privatization was less than positive. Still, what positive response was evidenced suggests that changes are needed -- dissatisfaction with the current system is clearly evident.

The survey results also indicated that teachers did not consider themselves very familiar with the topic, especially prior to completing this questionnaire. Though privatization has expanded considerably and is considered an area for rapid growth and expansion, there has been very little research done on these schools and companies.

Recommendations

For a school district which is considering privatization as an option, I recommend including teachers in the process of making the change. This would begin by communicating extensively with all of the faculty about what privatization entails, how the district would use a for-profit company, and what the reasons are for considering it.

Districts would also benefit by including teachers in the process of selecting, evaluating, and implementing privatization. Because teacher attitudes appear to be unfavorable to privatization, involving and educating the teachers should help. The teachers will need to be

involved in the process so that they understand the potential impact of privatization on them personally, their students, their classes, and their procedures.

The researcher believes that privatization can be a very successful alternative and can result in a Win-Win situation for the district, the teachers, the students, the community, and the for-profit company. Privatization is an option that can be implemented in a "test" method, one school at a time. Privatization offers the accountability of offering the public another alternative. Because the contracts incorporate the district's option for dissolution, this researcher feels that going with privatization could only make things better.

With educational reform so widespread and important, the researcher sees privatization as a low-risk alternative. Due to the nature of the contracts, the "control" remains with the school board and the public. The ability to implement privatization on a limited basis (as few as one school) also contributes to its favorableness to the researcher.

Despite the indication of teachers' unfavorableness towards privatization, the researcher still believes that privatization can be a successful alternative. Including the people (teachers, aides, principals, and administrators) who would be impacted by changes due to privatization in the change process itself would increase the individuals' buy-in and commitment to the overall success of the venture. In education, as in industry, change is a concept not liked by all. Nonetheless, change has proven itself necessary for continued improvement and ultimate success.

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Appendix: A

Please read the following sets of polarized adjectives describing privatized education, and clearly mark the one space which best describes your attitude. Please complete all sets. Thank you.

PRIVATIZED EDUCATION

GOOD	_____ : _____ : _____ : _____ : _____	BAD
BORING	_____ : _____ : _____ : _____ : _____	INTERESTING
WISE	_____ : _____ : _____ : _____ : _____	FOOLISH
UNIMPORTANT	_____ : _____ : _____ : _____ : _____	IMPORTANT
COMPLICATED	_____ : _____ : _____ : _____ : _____	SIMPLE
APPROACH	_____ : _____ : _____ : _____ : _____	AVOID
COMPLEX	_____ : _____ : _____ : _____ : _____	SIMPLE
UNSUCCESSFUL	_____ : _____ : _____ : _____ : _____	SUCCESSFUL
GENUINE	_____ : _____ : _____ : _____ : _____	FALSE
INCOMPLETE	_____ : _____ : _____ : _____ : _____	COMPLETE
FAIR	_____ : _____ : _____ : _____ : _____	UNFAIR
STRUCTURED	_____ : _____ : _____ : _____ : _____	UNSTRUCTURED
UNACCOUNTABLE	_____ : _____ : _____ : _____ : _____	ACCOUNTABLE
FLEXIBLE	_____ : _____ : _____ : _____ : _____	RIGID
POSITIVE	_____ : _____ : _____ : _____ : _____	NEGATIVE

Please feel free to make any comments below.

Please return survey & questionnaire to Mina P. Busch (181 Arisa Dr.; W. Carrollton, OH 45449). Addressed, stamped envelope provided.

Appendix: B

TEACHER ATTITUDES TOWARDS THE PRIVATIZATION OF PUBLIC EDUCATION

Mina Psihountas Busch, University of Dayton

Privatization: The outsourcing of school-related functions to a for-profit entity. This can be as simple as contracting out the operation of the school cafeteria to the contracting out of all school system functions, including teaching, administration, etc. For purposes here, privatized education will refer to the outsourcing of teaching and/or administration.

On the following scale, please indicate how familiar you are with the privatization concept.

Very Familiar _____ : _____ : _____ : _____ : _____ Very Unfamiliar

If you are unfamiliar with the concept mentioned above, please read the attached transcript. It is from a news show and includes the views of representatives who both propose and oppose privatization.

**Please check here if you read the transcript to become familiar
with Privatized Education. ☐**

Please answer the following demographic questions. For statistical purposes only.

Are you currently teaching full-time? Y / N

Number of years' experience in teaching (circle the most appropriate response)

0-9 10-19 20-29 30-39 +

Number of years' experience in current district (circle the most appropriate response)

0-9 10-19 20-29 30-39 +

How would you describe your employing school district:

Suburban City Rural Other _____

Grade level currently teaching _____

Gender: M / F

Age: 20-29 30-39 40-49 50-59 60 +

Please complete the questions on the back of this paper. Thank you for your participation.

Appendix: C

Edited Transcript from INSIDE BUSINESS (CNN) 4/2/95 6:30 p.m.

Deborah Marchini, CNN Business News: Is it possible to boost test scores and the bottom line as well? Education is a serious business, especially when there are investors and shareholders to worry about. Several companies are trying to turn a profit by teaching. They're offering an alternative to traditional schools. They're also betting that innovation and competition will add to reading, writing and arithmetic a fourth R - revenue.

American taxpayers spend close to \$300 million a year on public schooling, from kindergarten through high school. In fact, the U.S. spends a higher percentage of its gross national product on public education than just about any other industrialized nation. The problem is American grade school students test near the bottom of the industrialized world, particularly in math and science. Critics blame what they say is a bloated and inefficient public bureaucracy. With communities spending an average of nearly \$5,500 per student each year, entrepreneurs are jumping into the academic arena. What they are promising is a radical deal: smarter students at the same cost to taxpayers and a profit to boot.

Michael Moe, Education Business Analyst, Lehman Brothers: The education business is a classic situation where you've an industry with tremendous problems - it's huge, eight percent of GNP; companies that can come up with solutions to that problem, we think represent significant investment opportunities.

Deborah Marchini: The real test for privatized schools, however, is not how well the investors do, but how well the students do. Turning schools over to private management has both risks and rewards for the students and the investors.

My next two guests are two educational professionals engaged in very different ways with the business of for-profit schools.

Heidi Steffens, Senior Policy Analyst, National Education Association: Over the past 10 to 15 years, I think we've really developed a new mantra in this country that government is the problem and the private sector the solution, and the fact is that there are some issues and enterprises that just don't belong in the public. Market competition creates winners and losers, and we cannot afford losers in schools. It's okay if a business fails and a business owner or some shareholders lose some money - that's one thing - but when schools fail, we are really at risk of losing a large part of our future citizens and our future workforce.

Deborah Marchini: But some would argue that schools are already failing, given the high dropout rates and the poor educational accomplishments of many American students. Now, John, I'd like to ask you what can a company such as yours provide in the way of education that you feel the government can't?

John Chubb, Partner, Edison Project: Well, the Edison Project is not in any sense trying to take over public education, we're trying to help public education. Public school boards around the country are looking for ways to provide better services to families, better education for kids, and we're there to help do that. We bring in technology into schools that many schools can't afford. We provide a tremendous amount of professional development for teachers. We bring new educational resources. We bring innovations in instruction and curriculum design.

Deborah Marchini: You're spending the taxpayers' money, aren't you?

John Chubb: We are spending the taxpayers' money, but of course, we're accountable to boards of education. If they don't like the services provided, they can pull the plugs on us just as they can any other business. In some school districts, we feel that we may be able to help them make significant progress. What we're able to do is make an up-front investment in the school in the form of technology - computers in the school, networks in the school, computers in the home, new educational resources. We can make that investment because we can raise the capital privately and then be repaid over time.

Our basic model is to put more resources into the school and save money from the central office budgets, which in some districts are a little bloated with bureaucracy. We economize on costs that are now spent by the district office, such as reporting services, accounting services, maintenance services and so forth.

Heidi Steffens: The model that the Edison Project has put together takes from the best practices from public schools all across this country. Fact is... there are excellent schools operating under public management. The issue in education today is not how do we create one or two or even a hundred excellent schools, but how do we restructure the systems so that all schools are excellent, so that there are no losers?

Public education is a public enterprise, it's for a social and public good. It's not for private enrichment. And if money is to be saved from administration or whatever, that money needs to be either reinvested in student learning or it needs to be returned to taxpayers. It should not go to executives and shareholders.

John Chubb: Well, the amount of profit that any business makes in a competitive environment is basically just part of the cost of doing business. Schools buy computers from computer companies, they buy textbooks from textbook companies, and they pay for professional development services for teachers. Profit is simply an element in the cost of doing business. What any school district has to ask itself if they want to deal with IBM or Apple or the Edison Project or anybody else is 'Are they better off using taxpayer money in this way than they are using the taxpayers' money as they were in the past'. And, that's for each district to evaluate.

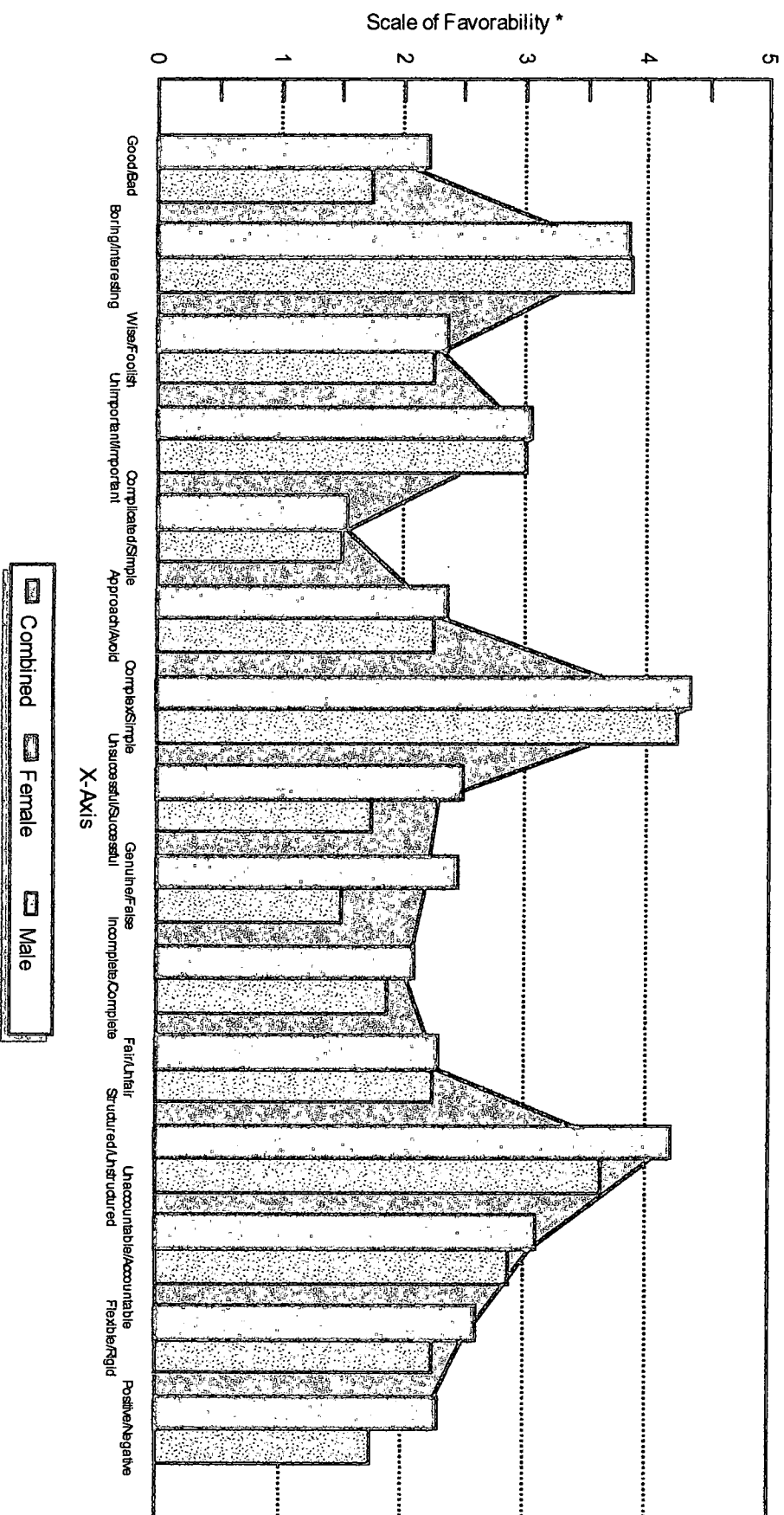
Heidi Steffens: The issue is that you're cutting corners or cutting something to make money. Education Alternatives, Incorporated (EAI) has been running nine schools in Baltimore, Maryland, for the past three years and one school in Miami, Florida. What has happened is that EAI is putting less money into the classroom than those schools would have had if they were still being run by the system. Classes are larger. The teaching force has been reduced by about 60 teachers. The special education students have been mainstreamed without any preparation for the teachers.

Deborah Marchini: Do you, by being a private company, find yourself able to buck the union system?

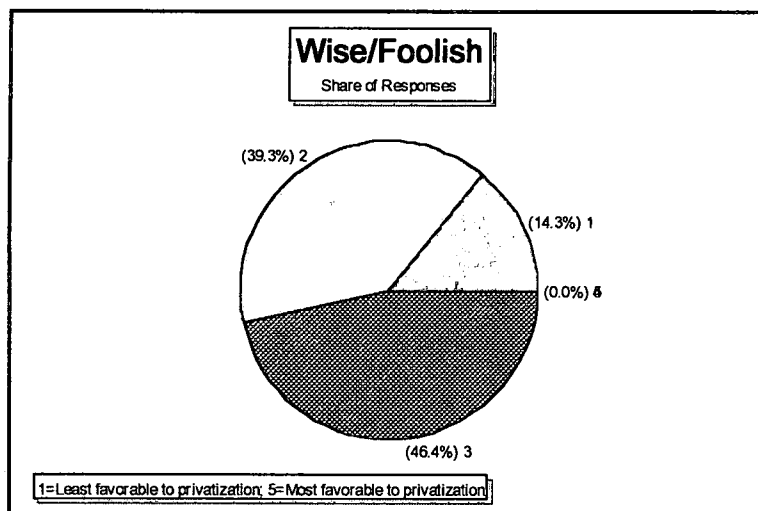
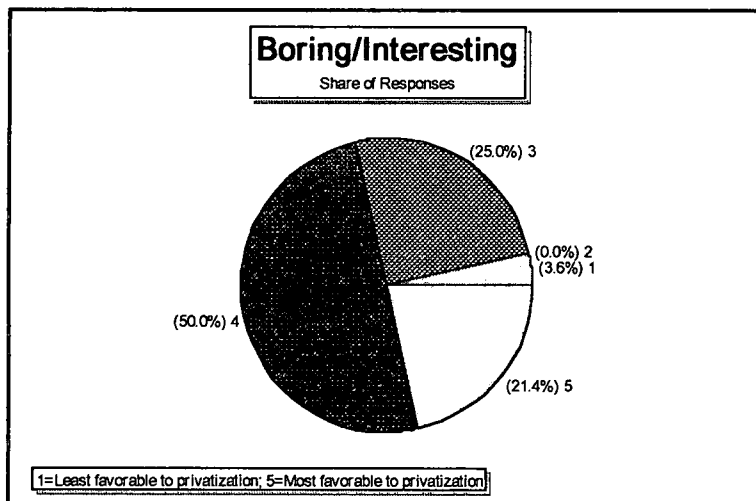
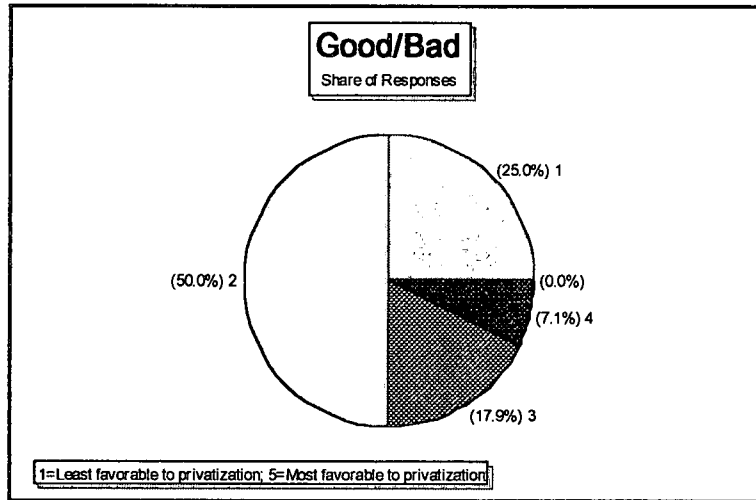
John Chubb: The observations that are made about EAI are made about that company. They are not observations about us and our model. We have actually more teachers in the building than is the case currently, so judgments about the Edison Project will have to wait. We are working cooperatively with the unions, with their existing contracts.

Heidi Steffens: We believe that schools need to change and that school districts need to be restructured, but it's critically important that in our democracy where the bottom line of schooling is educating students to be citizens and to be productive members of the economy, that the control of schooling, the responsibility of schooling, and any kinds of profits from schooling be returned to the taxpayers or put into the future of the society.

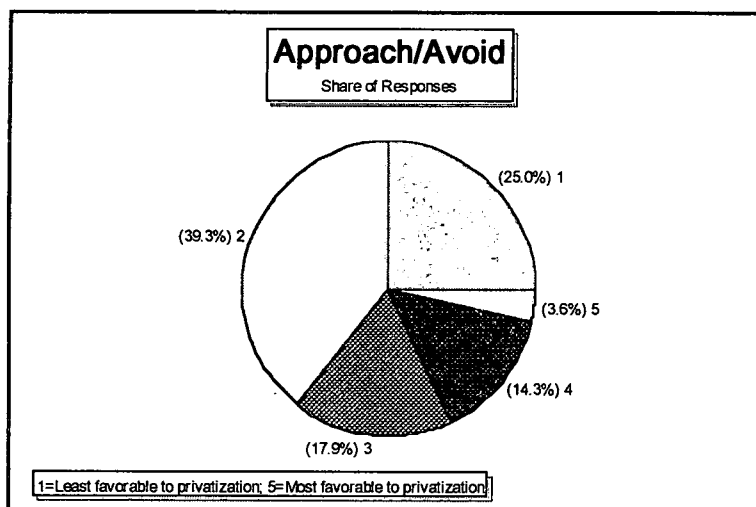
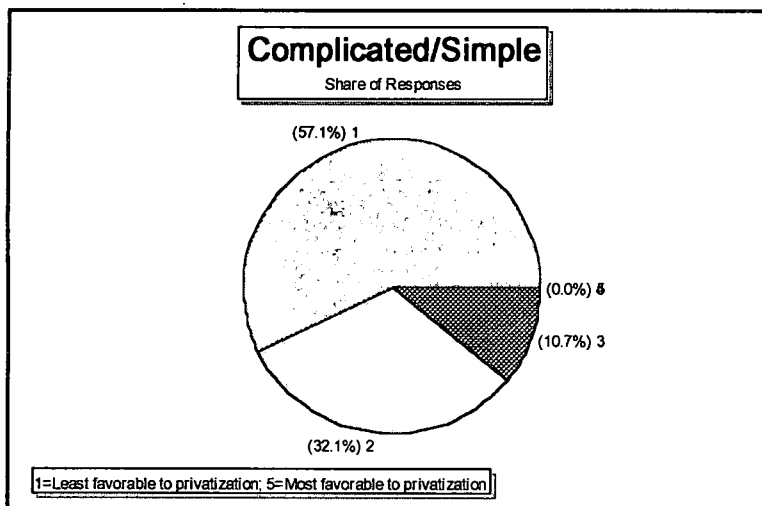
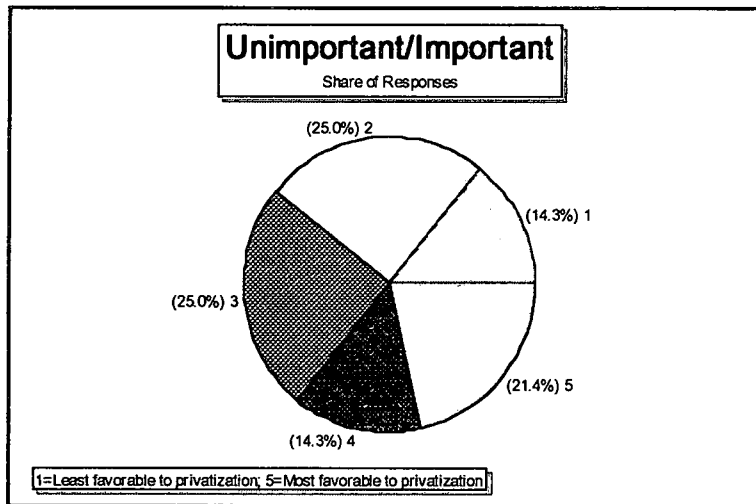
Average Questionnaire Responses



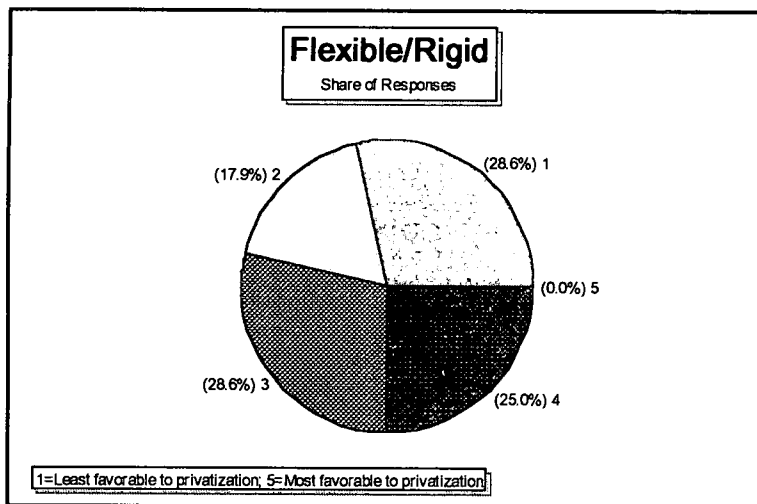
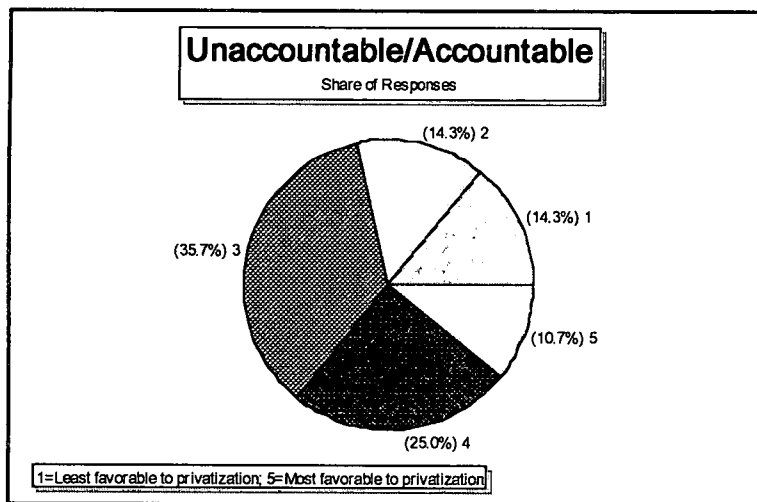
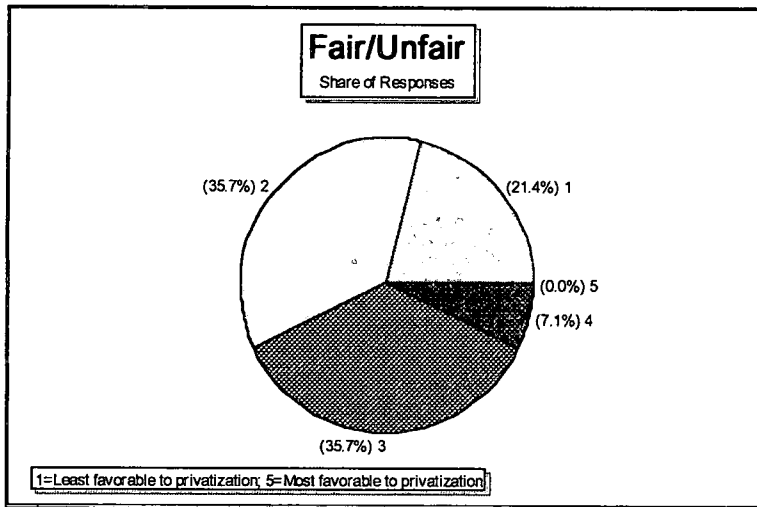
Appendix E



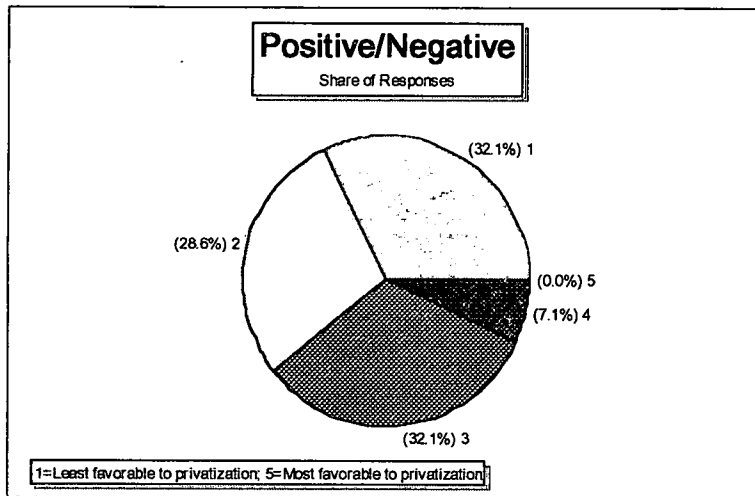
Appendix E



Appendix E



Appendix E



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