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Private schools for the poor as a disruptive educational innovation. An interview with Professor James Tooley.

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Abstract

Professor James Tooley (born in 1959 in Southampton, England) is the Vice Chancellor of the University of Buckingham since 1 October, 2020. Prior to that appointment, he was professor of educational entrepreneurship and policy at the University of Buckingham, with previous academic appointments at the Universities of Oxford, Manchester and Newcastle. His ground-breaking research on low-cost private education in developing countries has won numerous awards, including a gold prize in the first International Finance Corporation/*Financial Times* Private Sector Development Competition, the Templeton Prize for Free Market Solutions to Poverty, and the IEA's National Free Enterprise Award. His book based on this research, *The beautiful tree* (Penguin and Cato Institute), was a best-seller in India and won the Sir Antony Fisher Memorial Prize. He has also authored many other books. Building on his research, Prof Tooley has pioneered models of innovation in low-cost private education. He has co-founded chains of low-cost schools in Ghana, India, Honduras and, most recently, in England. In this extensive interview, we focus on James Tooley's fascinating research on private education for the poor, but also, touch on a wide range of other topics, such as his unjust imprisonment in India, his own private school ventures in four continents, and the question of whether higher education is largely signaling or it truly builds human capital.

^C We dedicate this text to our friend Dr. Stefan Melnik, a brilliant intellectual and adult educator who was closely associated with the Friedrich Naumann Foundation in Germany and worldwide. Stefan provided a first draft of guiding interview questions and we were planning to do the interview together with him. Unfortunately, he fell ill shortly before the interview and passed away on 25 September, 2020.



Figure 1: Prof James Tooley. Source: James Tooley.

Jürgen Rudolph [JR]: Thank you so much, Professor Tooley for agreeing to this interview, and our heartiest congratulations on being appointed Vice-Chancellor of Buckingham University! We very much appreciate your taking the time, as this must be an incredibly busy time for you, given the new appointment and also the pandemic. You're the foremost expert on private schools for the poor, and you've been described as a 21st century Indiana Jones, travelling to, and doing research on, some of the most remote and dangerous parts of the world. And we hope that you don't mind that we start off with a bit of a biographical question. What was your experience like going to school in Kingsfield School, Kingswood (Bristol)? And what made you go to Mugabe's Zimbabwe in the early 1980s to teach mathematics?

James Tooley [JT]: I think it's quite an important point about where I went to school because a lot of people assume that someone who is talking about private education came from a privileged background and went to a private school themselves. So absolutely not. I came from a very ordinary working class family. Kingswood is in East Bristol. It's a sort of a working class suburb of Bristol. And Kingsfield was a state comprehensive school. So there was no sense of privilege there at all, so that's worth noting. A lot of people in education, their own schooling does influence what they're doing.



Figure 2: In memoriam Dr Stefan Melnik. Source: <https://www.facebook.com/St.Melnik>

I suppose I was quite a bright boy in a comprehensive school, quite early on in the comprehensive sort of revolution in England. It was very much an experience that I wouldn't want other children to have to go through – where you weren't encouraged to learn. There was a sort of social conditioning aspect to what you're doing, an egalitarian philosophy that just didn't encourage people to excel in their learning. And in the end, I quite often played truant from lessons, to go to the library. That was the only place I could work, study and learn, because classrooms were often not conducive to that.

So then, after some time, I went to university and studied mathematics and philosophy. And I went to Zimbabwe as a young man straight from college. It was really just a sense of adventure and identifying with a young country. Zimbabwe had just become independent in 1980, I went in 1983. I wanted to be part of building this new country there, and contributing as a mathematics teacher seemed like a good way of doing it. I should say at that time, I would have called myself a socialist. I would absolutely not be in favour of any of the ideas that I talk about now in terms of private education. I think I joined two *Das Kapital* reading groups while I was in Zimbabwe, and would have been very supportive of this idea that, yes, we are building a socialist regime here. I worked weekends in cooperative schools and cooperative farms. So that was definitely adventure. But of course, that then gave me a taste of Africa and of travel and so on. And that helped then in my later transition to the work I was doing. But at that time, nothing to do with low-cost private schools.

Zimbabwe had just become independent in 1980, I went in 1983. I wanted to be part of building this new country there, and contributing as a mathematics teacher seemed like a good way of doing it.

JR: You've published many books and articles, amongst them *The beautiful tree* (2009), a book that celebrates private schools of the poor in emerging economies such as India, Nigeria, Ghana, and Kenya. The book offers surprising insights for the vast majority of experts and readers that expect education to be organised and run by the state and regard alternative models of education to be unsustainable. What were the things that surprised you the most as a result of the field research you and your colleagues were engaged in? And more recently, you co-authored another fascinating book, *Education, war and peace. The surprising success of private schools in war-torn countries* (2017), which reinforces your argument that you can rely on the private sector to supply education services that the state does not, and that at a very low cost. What is it that drives entrepreneurs to provide services in the most desolate of conditions, and drives parents to pay and send their children to school even when war is raging?

JR: The first question was about *The beautiful tree* and then the second was about *Education, war and peace*. Everything was surprising about the research that led up to *The beautiful tree*. So we left my biography where I was a socialist and whatever. And I then did a PhD at what's now UCL Institute of Education, in Political Philosophy of Education, prompted by the question – I don't know why it was bothering me: Why is government involved in education? That was really the philosophical question that bothered me. And during the course of the PhD, I read amongst others Professor E.G. West who changed my life. And I read his book *Education and the state* (West, 1965).

To my surprise, the thesis then came round to actually saying, 'I don't believe there is a philosophical justification for the state to be involved in education'. So I was then, as it were, in favour of private education by default and, because of my background, I managed to secure quite a large grant in those days from International Finance Corporation, the private arm of the World Bank that wanted to look at private education in developing countries. And that led to my publication *The global education industry* (1999), but private education as understood by everyone then was for the elite, for the upper middle classes, at least no one thought about the poor.

And I then did a PhD at what's now UCL Institute of Education, in Political Philosophy of Education, prompted by the question: Why is government involved in education? To my surprise, the thesis then came round to actually saying, 'I don't believe there is a philosophical justification for the state to be involved in education'.

JT: It was when in 2000, by this time I was a professor at Newcastle University, I was in India doing some consultancy work for the IFC (the International Finance Corporation), all elite private colleges doing some educational due diligence. And it was then that I took a day off, on Republic Day, January 26. I went into the slums of the Old City, and I found my first low-cost private school down in one alleyway. I found another one and another, and soon realised that something extraordinary was going on. And for me, it was a personal epiphany. Because for whatever reason, I felt my life should be about serving the poor or dedicated to the poor – the 'less blessed' people as they were then called in India. And I was an expert on private education which is about the rich or the elite. And suddenly, I found these low-cost private schools for the poor, in the slums of the Old City of Hyderabad. And my life felt complete: I could be an expert in private education and be concerned with serving the poor at the same time. It was, as I said, a genuine epiphany. It was one of those moments when sitting in my hotel room I felt: I understand how the bits of my life can fit together.



Figure 3: James Tooley in a Tuk Tuk taxi in India. Source: James Tooley.

So what I'm saying is: *Everything* was surprising. It surprised me to find low-cost private schools in the year 2000. It surprised me to find so many of them. The research found the majority of urban kids were in low-cost private schools. It surprised me to find that they were better than the alternative because when people started hearing about this phenomenon, they said: 'Oh, it's just a few business people ripping off the poor and the parents are being hoodwinked'. The parents are being 'stupid' sending their children there because they're wanting a fake status symbol.

One government person told me that 'our research, and all the research since, show the schools were better than the government alternative'. It surprised me to find that they weren't all charities. Because initially, when you find a low-cost school you assume, it must be a charity. Then to realise that actually they were not charities, but typically (not always) small businesses that were making a modest income for their owners. But nonetheless, run in that sort of businesslike way rather than a charity dependent on outside funding. They were businesses dependent only on school fees and so on

and so forth. So many surprises and obviously, I catalogue those in *The beautiful tree*, but it was almost: Nothing was expected! Now once you start finding these schools in India, in different parts of India, rural and urban India, and then you find them in urban and rural Nigeria, Lagos State, and then you start assuming, okay, I will find them wherever I go.

In a sense, what was not surprising then, I described in the book [*The beautiful tree*]. I arrived in Kenya, met with someone in Nairobi, who should know about this sort of thing. But he said 'no, private schools are for the elite in our country, you may have found this phenomenon in Nigeria, it won't be true here'. And every single time, it was the same story: That private schools were very much in the slums, in the poor areas. They were there, the same in every country. And that's quite a nice segue into the second part of your question then, *Education, war and peace*. Because when I published *The beautiful tree* and when I was doing talks, one of the criticisms was: 'Okay, private schools are good for the poor, the most deprived, but you've looked at India, Ghana, Nigeria, Kenya, China, these are not the poorest of countries. You're over-egging the pudding. What you're saying is 'private schools are for the most underprivileged' but you're only looking at these countries. What does happen for the most underprivileged has clearly nothing to do with private education'.



Figure 4: A girl named Victoria in a village called Bortianor, Ghana, whose father is a fisherman and who goes to a private school. Source: James Tooley.

So I did take that seriously and it's part of my mission. I would like to go to more and more difficult places – I don't know why. So then I did the same studies we did for *The beautiful tree*, I did them in Sierra Leone, Liberia and South Sudan. And I had some other forays into Somaliland as well. And the extraordinary thing was: The slums of Monrovia in Liberia were identical to the slums of Lagos in Nigeria, in terms of the private schools we found. The poor parts of Juba in South Sudan were incredibly similar to the poor suburbs of Accra in Ghana. The same principles apply. So far from being a phenomenon that didn't serve the poorest of the poor, it actually was there. And just some figures from Monrovia: 61% of the schools we found in certain slums were proprietor schools, these were the sort of ownership

schools rather than mission schools or church schools or whatever. And 71% of the kids in the slums went to these private schools, it was more or less the same figure as we found in Lagos, Nigeria, and Accra.



Figure 5: Ken Ade Primary School, Makoko shantytown, Nigeria. Source: James Tooley (2015).



Figure 6: Prof Tooley in Christian Hill, Ghana. Source: James Tooley.

So what was interesting and what the *Education, war and peace* tries to do is say: One of the reasons why parents are sending their children to these private schools has to do with the indifference of those in the government schools – they don't teach very much, they abuse the kids and the rest of it. So that's one of the reasons, but another reason is this mistrust of the State and this recognition that when the State gets hold of education – it's not my comment, but other people have pointed it out – it can actually start causing the wars and the civil unrest in these countries!

Actually, having a private alternative is seen as desirable by many people, many communities, because it separates the State from education, which is seen as harmful and not seen as the major reason. But nonetheless, that is certainly a reason it was given to me. That's why people are in low-cost

private schools. So *The beautiful tree* was just a huge surprise journey. *Education, war and peace* is actually saying, finding the same phenomenon exists even in the most difficult countries and I've been to northern Nigeria since then. I was hoping to do a study on northern Nigeria one day, the same phenomena exist there. I've got people looking for me in Burma (or Myanmar), the same phenomena exist in the world's most difficult places. In India, we've done some preliminary visits to Kashmir – obviously troubled Kashmir – the same phenomenon exists. Low-cost private schools are well-nigh universal in poor countries. That's my experience.

Low-cost private schools are well-nigh universal in poor countries.

JR: That's really an amazing finding. I heard about your research many years ago. But when I recently read your book, *The beautiful tree*, and also some of your other work, it hit me how sensational and how important these findings are. So, following up on the summary that you just gave of those two books: This low-cost education is obviously *extremely* low cost. When I was reading about this, it also struck me: Would you describe this as 'disruptive innovation'? I mean, Clayton Christensen has come up with this term some time ago, but I think it has been much abused. But when I was reading your work I thought that this is actually *real* disruptive innovation. Because these are the kind of *bricoleurs*, people who make do with whatever they have, and it has to be ultra-low cost in order to be ultra-low price. And it's an innovation that obviously suits the bottom of the economic pyramid.

JT: Yes. In fact, I met Clayton Christensen; he sadly passed away. But I met him a couple of times. And he actually wrote a blurb on the cover of *The beautiful tree*.

JR: [citing Clayton Christensen's quote on the cover of *The beautiful tree*]: "This is an insightful, empathetic testament to the motivation and the ability of the most underprivileged people on Earth to lift each other and a condemning chronicle of the wrong-headed, wasteful ways that many governments and aid agencies have used to 'help' them".

JT: Yes, so he doesn't mention the term 'disruptive innovation', but I think he would have seen it as such. I think you want to talk about the work we're doing in the north of England as well. That's an example of me taking what I've seen elsewhere in the world, bringing it to England, where it's clearly a very disruptive innovation. It's disruptive of what we all think education should be, we think education should be provided by the state, provided free at the point of delivery. And that's the best way of serving everyone, including the poor. It completely throws that on its head, isn't it? Because it shows that actually, the majority provision in urban areas is provided by the private sector. It's not free at the point of delivery, yet it is the preferred choice of parents. And it does better than what we all think of the state's solution. So definitely, I think it's a disruptive technology, and it's very commendable for that reason.

JR: I was also really quite shocked – although it was not the first time that I read about that, too – about some of your descriptions about public schools, where the teachers are sleeping, sprawled all over the desk, even during audits. The

whole incentivisation system is obviously completely wrong because it allows such incredible phenomena. There has been a backlash by some governments and, for instance in India, quite a few of the private schools have been closed. The Punjab is an example, if I remember correctly. So how do you see these developments? Do you think that a rollback is inevitable because of the threat of these low-cost private schools that they provide to the educational establishment, and how do you characterise the key differences between the private and the public schools?

JT: Yes, this issue of backlash is an important one. When I was writing *The beautiful tree* and thinking about publishing it, it was one of the things that really bothered me: Would writing about it bring to the attention of a much wider public this phenomenon, and lead to governments trying to close them down? Because I've seen that happening and it was a real dilemma in my mind. I even had to anonymise some of the people and places in *The beautiful tree* in one of the chapters just to sort of get around my fear.

I think it depends on the government. I think all governments are likely to err on the side of wanting to control this sector. This was the argument of the Lagos government at one time: If all the children in the private schools come to the state sector, we will have a bill of a billion dollars to pay for teachers and places. The figure was very high, I forget the exact figure, but nonetheless, it was a huge amount of money that was required, to pay for the children's education. And that's not taking into account the marginal costs: You fill up some of the classrooms, but then you've got the need for extra classrooms and extra schools and so on. So, once people start realising that, they might think: Maybe this private sector is not so bad after all, and we can go along with it, provided that it is delivering quality – which it clearly is – and we can go along with it for a bit.

Some governments have been quite pragmatic like that, and other governments in my experience have been pretty laissez-faire about the whole thing, as far as I can see. The Ghana government, for instance, has been always pretty relaxed about low-cost private education. You would see a range of attitudes, some completely relaxed like Ghana, some like Lagos state and other states in Nigeria who were initially antagonistic, but realised it's probably in their interest to support the sector. And then you got India, which is the most extreme example: The Right to Education Act. It sounds like a great idea, doesn't it? The Right to Education Act, who can be against the right to education? Actually, I knew some of the architects of the Act, and they told me it was specifically designed in places to get rid of low-cost private schools. That was part of this aim, and the regulatory environment was made more challenging and had to be met by all schools. There was no discretion. It did lead to thousands of schools being closed in the Punjab, in particular, but also in Andhra Pradesh, across India.



Figure 7: An event by the Punjab Private Schools Organisation with James Tooley. Photo: James Tooley.

The question I have – and I don't know the answer, so this is a genuine question; and I would like to know the answer to this, and if I had more time for research, it would be one of my research topics – is: The Punjab government closed more than 2,000 schools, what happened to those children afterwards? And is it possible that as those children were probably out of school for quite some time, they may have gone into government schools? Is it possible that they then drifted back to newly-opened private schools? And actually, the 2,000 schools that were closed, probably led to a net closing of none, or only a few? I don't know, but that's my assumption. Because those kids, they've got to go somewhere, haven't they? Their parents clearly have demonstrated that they want to pay, they're happy paying a small amount for education. That's why they're in the low-cost private schools and low-cost private school entrepreneurs have demonstrated that they want to open these schools. So the entrepreneurial spirit is still alive. As I said, I don't know. Maybe the authorities would not let this happen, in which case you have lots of kids out of school. My guess is that some of those schools reopened.

Now at the moment, the specifics of 2020 of course is: Government are closing down schools in all the countries I'm working in. And it's a terrible plight, I do get calls from people in Liberia, India, Nigeria, their livelihoods are gone. The schools have been closed by government lockdowns, and schools are not reopening very quickly. In India, they might reopen at the end of the month [September], or they might not. These schools and small businesses have all closed, like many other businesses: What will happen when lockdown is ended? Hopefully some will reemerge, but it's a really difficult time for local private school entrepreneurs the world over.

Government are closing down schools in all the countries I'm working in. And it's a terrible plight, I do get calls from people in Liberia, India, Nigeria, their livelihoods are gone. It's a really difficult time for local private school entrepreneurs the world over.

JR: Certainly. For some of the African countries, I guess it's kind of a repeat of the Ebola virus.

JT: Yes, except, it's probably worse than that. This is not a part of this discussion. But for whatever reason, governments have locked down more severely around COVID than they've ever done in any way, shape or form before, and this is an absolutely existential threat to low-cost private schools for now.

JR: Absolutely.

JT: You also asked me about the difference between public and private schools. Very briefly, if you're going to focus on one difference, it is the accountability of the proprietor to the parents. They pay fees and they *demand* better. In the parent meetings in the low-cost private school communities, the parents are very concerned about the standards and whether the teachers are actually turning up and teaching. Because in some cases, teachers may not turn up. The parents may not be able to speak English themselves, but they can tell if their kids are speaking better than the neighbours or vice versa. They can recognise the differences, and see whether the books have been marked or not. They are very demanding, the private school proprietor is accountable to them, and of course, the teachers are accountable to the proprietors. If they don't turn up and don't teach, eventually they get fired. It's very simple. Whereas in these government schools, they can *not* turn up for years and years on end.

JR: It's incredible. My next question goes further than your research. Because quite unusually, you have not been satisfied by merely writing about private schools for the poor in slums, shantytowns, peri-urban areas, rural areas and so on. You have also co-founded chains of private schools in three continents (Ghana, Sierra Leone, Nigeria, Honduras and India) that you have humbly described as a 'mixed success'. Could you please tell us more about some of these remarkable ventures?

JT: You're kind for saying I'm being humble. I think I'm being honest about these ventures, they were a mixed success. For me, I was always a reluctant businessman, a reluctant entrepreneur. In a sense, I was always wearing really that educator / researcher / philosopher's hat, and perhaps that's why they weren't as successful as they could have been. Because, for me, I was really more interested in proving or exploring the point: Private schools are better for the poor. Can we raise investment? Can we improve them further still? Can we invest in teacher training and all that sort of thing? And because I couldn't quite shake off that academic hat, I wasn't as effective as a businessman as I could have been. Now, the good news was I always partnered with a local entrepreneur in those areas, better businesspeople than myself. But I think if you're going into the business of education, I would say as a conclusion to that sort of time in my life: It's far better to be focused as a businessman, as an entrepreneur, rather than trying to wear these multiple hats and still wanting to explore the philosophical questions. There is an aspect of focus.

I co-founded chains in India, in Hyderabad, and in Gujarat, they are doing fine, they're doing well, they're successful.

In part, that's because I've got out of them [JT laughs], I've got them going. The local entrepreneurs are running them really well and they're very successful. This is of course pre-lockdown. Nothing is successful at the moment. So those are doing fine. The same with the one in Honduras and again, a brilliant entrepreneur that I partnered with, so it's doing fine. But I'm not really very involved in that. And in Ghana – forget the other ones in West Africa, but Ghana was the most significant one – Omega Schools, a brilliant local entrepreneur, I got involved with, created a fantastic chain very quickly.

For the reasons we've discussed or other reasons, I wasn't as focused on it as I should have been. And anyway, it [Omega Schools] has now been merged with another chain of schools called Rising Academies. I'm slightly involved with them, I'm definitely not being humble and being honest, a mixed bag. But nonetheless, *for me*, it was certainly incredibly important *running schools*. Because as an academic, one can write very easily about the business of education, but it is very different actually doing it. It is *much harder* than as an academic, writing that stuff you can think of. Perhaps I had the idea, the spark of creativity and got things going, and they are certainly better for the kids than the alternatives of the state schools. And I showed that you could raise investment.



Figure 8: Omega School marketing collateral. Photo: James Tooley.

Most importantly, actually, others have followed in this way now. So, they say the Rising Academies which started in Sierra Leone, they were clearly absolutely inspired by my work. And now they're partnering, they merged with Omega Schools in Ghana. And Bridge International Academies, the most famous of these chains, they were inspired by my work. The co-founder of them came to visit me in Newcastle after I published *The beautiful tree* – I won a prize, the last chapter of *The beautiful tree* is actually a prize-winning essay in 2006. The co-founder came to visit me in Newcastle and discussed the idea of creating chains of schools. So, I've certainly inspired a lot of these very successful projects around the world. And I'm happy to have done that.



Figure 9: Omega primary students doing mathematics. Source: James Tooley



Figure 10: Association for Formidable Educational Development with James Tooley. Source: James Tooley.

JR: That's a fantastic legacy and much more than most academics ever experience. My next question relates to a bit of a dark chapter that you have nonetheless decided to write a book about. So as a result of your passionate engagement for private schools, you were unjustly detained in Hyderabad. This showed you the terrible underbelly of corruption of the judicial and prison system in India, or in Hyderabad, to be more precise. In your book *Imprisoned in India. Corruption and extortion in the world's largest democracy* (2016), you described the jailers as typically cruel and violent, but the other prisoners as extraordinarily kind. Would it be fair to say that you emerged undeterred from this horrifying ordeal?

JT: Yes, and you're right, I wrote a book about it. It was pure catharsis, it was a horrible experience. And writing the book, getting it out of my system as it were. It's a very frank book, I am rather embarrassed about the way I discussed my personal life in there, but it was, at the time, just getting stuff out of my system. It's an experience I would not have missed, because in a way, I saw the worst of humanity, and also the best of humanity. The basic story is a simple story:

A foreigner involved in education trusts in India is a low-hanging fruit because you can arrest them, you can ask them for a bribe or even threaten to throw them in jail. Because the police system is such. I described it in the book, it was inherited from the British. There was a great deal of discretion at the local police level, so they can throw you in jail for *no reason*, just under some pretext, something that would have been the equivalent of a speeding fine, to do with regulations about trusts and societies. And typically, I was told, I got to know this corrupt policewoman very well, foreigners pay up because they've got to get home, they got to get to their jobs and families.

And I just didn't feel like paying up this bribe. It was a significant bribe, it started off with \$5,000 or \$10,000. And later it went up to about 20 to \$25,000, I just refused to pay this and I didn't want to. But that experience of seeing the worst of humanity, the jailers, the prison, that police superintendent and so on. And then there was also this most beautiful thing, the Shawshank Redemption it was *not*. I mean, the prisoners looked after me beautifully. They cared for me and I for them. And I described several things in the book. I won't go into them too much now. But it was this experience that I was pleased I had, in a funny sort of way, because it did let me see the beauty of humanity. And it didn't put me off going to these countries, although perhaps it should.

JR: You are remarkably brave, much braver than I could dream of being. So then, after you were back in the UK from the unjust imprisonment, your insurance company was apparently not too thrilled with your travelling. You used some of your time to start a private school in Durham (after it took 485 days for it to be registered). How is this experiment that you started 'for philosophical reasons' (as a free-marketeer and libertarian) coming along?

JT: It is very interesting, actually. You are right, there's the university insurers, because finally when I got back from this prison experience, the University insurers said 'Tooley is not travelling' [both laugh]. And, to be honest, for about a year, I was pretty shaken up. I didn't particularly want to travel. But I'm a one trick pony, I couldn't lose my interest in low-cost private schools. So I did go out and got one of my students to come and go up on the streets of Newcastle in the northeast of England, just getting a sense: Was there a demand for low-cost education? And I followed up when I was giving talks in England and America, Germany, wherever. A common question for people is: 'You've seen it in Nigeria, Liberia, India, blah blah blah, but why is it not here in England or America or Germany? Why isn't it here? And I tend to think there were good reasons why it's not there. Probably because the state system is not so bad. You can at least do something like free schools or charter schools or academies. Charter schools, they let off steam by doing something. It's still within the state sector.

But then it occurred to me that after talking to parents, maybe one of the reasons why it's not here in England, it's because there's a lack of entrepreneurs who've had the idea. It sort of made me think. In Nigeria, in India, there must have been one first entrepreneur, or maybe simultaneously invented in several cities, but nonetheless, there must have

been an entrepreneur who started the first low-cost private school and found that it worked and others came in and did the same. And it must have been that, so I thought, why don't we do it in England and just try it?

So I got together with two other colleagues. We put in our own money, as indeed with all the projects I worked on and that I've described. I put in my own money just to get started,. And it's going to be a really low-cost model. Now, obviously, not low-cost like the schools I've described, but low-cost enough so that people on the second lowest quintile could afford the schools. Private schools at the moment in England are only affordable by the top quintile, probably by the top decile. But this was actually coming down to the middle and the second lowest quintile. We have got a model together, we were charging £2,700 initially, now £3,000 a year, that's *a year*. But when I say that figure, people assume I meant a term, no, that was *per year*, £3,000 per year. It took 485 days to get registered, it really was a difficult task.

We opened and the teacher unions were all protesting about us, they would picket all our parent evenings, they picketed our first couple of days of school, putting parents off. The first day, I think, we had two paying parents. I thought this is impossible. Anyway, it's a very small school. It's been running two years now. The government has to send inspectors even to private schools. We got a "good" which is as high as you can get for a new school. We have now got 40 kids after two years, and breakeven is only 44 kids roughly.

So in other words, we've proven the model. We have proven that this sort of school, you can start off very low-cost. I mean, many people think that when starting a school, you probably need £5-10 million. Actually, to start a school, you need £100,000.

JR: Wow!

JT: That's to cover most of your working capital costs, a few improvements to a building, rent the building. And, you know, you can create a school that will eventually give a small return. But it's providing something that parents want. How do I know parents want it? Because 40 parents have paid for it, and it's only a very small school. But again, I would like to see more of these opening. Because I've taken on this role as Vice Chancellor here, I can't be involved in it very much, at least for a year or two, but my business partners up there are doing well. And I think we will see perhaps three or four of those schools emerging. Interestingly enough, again, lots of people contacted me when I got quite a lot of publicity about that and said: 'This is brilliant. We want to do the same thing in another town, in another country'. And I haven't followed up lately, but my guess is a few more of these things will emerge in due course.

JR: That's really a fascinating experiment, and thanks also for sharing the numbers! £100,000 doesn't seem like a huge investment for this kind of experiment. I also find it amazing how difficult it is to even start it, it is also very counter-intuitive, with all the red tape that you have encountered.

JT: Exactly. I thought that it would be so much easier in Britain than in India or Nigeria. And it was partly our naivety.

So we were naive about opening schools but not stupid, as a professor of education and the people that I was working with in private education. As we were normal people coming into this area, we weren't specialists and we weren't stupid – it was much more difficult to jump through the bureaucratic hoops than we realised. Now we know that and it will never take that long again to do it. So it'll be easier in the future. But of course, that led to problems. I think when we first announced it, we had 100 parents expressing an interest, but then we had to postpone twice our opening. And most parents, sensitively enough, were saying: 'These guys keep postponing, they're clearly not serious. How can we trust them?' And so that was probably why we started off so small with only two willing paying customers, two paying students, as well as taking the time to build up.

JR: But you persevered and now you're already very close to breakeven. Most of your work, to the best of our knowledge, deals with school education, especially of course with private schools, as you explained, this is your life's work. And after a long career as a Professor of Education at Newcastle University, you were recently appointed as Professor of Educational Entrepreneurship and Policy at Buckingham University, which we believe is the first Chair of its kind in the UK. And then you were appointed as PVC. And now as Vice Chancellor. Again, congratulations! And I think, the University of Buckingham is very interesting and very unique in the sense that it does not accept government subsidies, if I understand that correctly. And as a result, you're so much more independent than all the other British universities. So, could you share your experience at Buckingham University a little and what's your vision for Buckingham University?

JT: The move here was deliberate. I've written a bit about higher education, and it's always again the same question – why is the state involved in higher education? – that has bothered me. The University of Buckingham was set up as this independent University nearly 50 years. And it is a sort of unique example of independence. Now, governments regulate the universities to a very large extent in Britain, and what you normally call a state university or public university, they have to satisfy 24 regulations. We have to satisfy 21 of those regulations even as a private, independent University. So we have to satisfy 21 of those regulations that are significant enough to satisfy. But part of my interest in taking on this role was to see eventually how we can start rolling back the state in higher education. But your question sort of said: 'There seems to be discontinuity in your life here'. I suppose for me, it's still all about private independent education. I told you about the epiphany I had when I discovered that private education and the poor fit together. I'm hoping in some way I can fit together those parts of my life here. I'm not absolutely sure how.

The University of Buckingham was set up as this independent University nearly 50 years... I told you about the epiphany I had when I discovered that private education and the poor fit together. I'm hoping in some way I can fit together those parts of my life here.



Figure 10: Nobel Peace Prize laureate Dr Muhammed Yunus and James Tooley. Source: James Tooley

The original intention was to set up the Centre for Educational Entrepreneurship, that's what my original intention was. And actually, I've got a couple of PhD students and one or two grants for that. So that's sort of going on. And maybe, once I've got over this sort of working in the role I'm working now – the stresses and strains because of the lockdown, all universities are in a very difficult position, and I'm having to focus on stuff that I didn't want to be focusing on at all at this time – the Centre for Educational Entrepreneurship can grow. Maybe I can pursue my interest in difficult parts of the world, maybe we can do Buckingham-validated degrees in South Sudan and Somalia and northern Nigeria.

JR: Wow!

JT: Maybe I can, either with this university or by creating a new sort of low-cost brand, I can have a low-cost higher education University brand. There's lots of possibilities. I'm not quite sure at the moment, but all I can tell you is that Buckingham is staunchly and proudly independent. It is sort of quite a unique model in England. And I want to really be shouting from the rooftops: 'We're here. We're going to do great things and sort of watch this space really'.

JR: Around 20 years ago, you published an article, radically arguing that the private sector should be allowed and encouraged to provide education for profits. Your arguments here, incidentally, did not make a distinction between basic and tertiary education. Earlier, you have already clarified that you don't see the need for any differentiation, and we were

also looking at the example of the University of Buckingham, which is very special.

You also indicated that you would actually be quite keen to use your new position to consider some very low-cost education at the tertiary level. This is still a hotly debated issue. Even though you frequently pointed out during your career and in publications on the subject that there are many such institutions throughout the world, and they're successful, amongst the reasons for subjecting education to market forces, you emphasise the innate entrepreneurial desire to expand and the necessity of quality control. If a company is to be successful in obtaining customers. What is your view on the subject today? Has it changed? Are the arguments in favour of the current dominant model – state-organised and provided education – that you find compelling? What other models would you favour, if any? Is it realistic to expect that all education can be successfully privatised? Sorry about the barrage of questions!

JT: We're talking about any level of education here, aren't we? Or are we primarily focusing on non-tertiary education?

JR: Including tertiary education.

JT: First of all, the last point you made was about privatisation, and do we want privatisation of education? In my later work, I tended to draw a distinction between what I called *grassroots privatisation* and sort of *top-down privatisation*, government-motivated privatisation. I want to just come to that distinction in a second. The second point I want to mention is that when we are talking about privatisation of either of these sorts, the private sector can be non-profit and for-profit. And I favour both being involved. It's not like I'm saying that we can only have for-profit at the expense of non-profit, or vice versa, I think both can have a very good role, and contribute to that non-state provision, as it were, of education.

So there are two points I want to cover in my answer. On the first point, maybe when I was writing 20 years ago, I wasn't really thinking of that distinction, and I thought governments will have to privatise. And now I'm of the opinion – having seen what's going on around the world – that we don't have to go down that route of saying 'governments need to privatise education'. What we've seen around the world is *grassroots* – you could call it privatisation, or you can call it whatever you like – *rejection* of government education, state education and acceptance and creation of a private sector alternative.

What we've seen around the world is grassroots rejection of government education, state education and acceptance and creation of a private sector alternative.

This has happened in developing countries. I particularly focused on Sub-Saharan Africa and South Asia, and certainly within those places, it's pretty uniform what's going on. You maybe can exclude South Africa from this discussion because South Africa is slightly different. But basically Sub-Saharan Africa – North of South Africa – and South Asia –

including India, Bangladesh, Pakistan, probably Nepal as well. These are the countries that I know best. I'm not saying this is not true in other countries, these are the countries that I know best.

It's always worth remembering that in urban areas, the figure is: 70 - 80% of children are in private schools, including the figures from Kampala [Uganda's capital], 80% of *poor* children are in private schools. The figures I've come up with similarly show that 70% of *poor* children are in private schools in other countries, in Nigeria, in Liberia, and so on. So that is privatisation, isn't it? I mean, if a government was trying to privatise something and removed 70% of provision from state provision, you say, 'well, it's pretty successfully privatised'. That's what happened. But governments never decided they wanted to privatise, grassroots people did privatise.

I've seen that in those countries and continents I've studied best. I sincerely believe that this will happen in countries such as our own, such as my own at least. But it will take a long time. And I've written about that in my latest book – the publication date has just been pushed back from November [2020] to February [2021] because of the American elections, it's been published in America. I argue that there. Now that's a prediction, but who cares about my predictions? Fine. So that's my prediction. But the reality is privatisation around the world has happened on the grassroots level. And notice one advantage of this is that, if you're going to get privatisation from the top down, then first of all, you've got to get this past the vested interests – in particular, teacher unions – and governments will find that very difficult to do, and it's unlikely to happen.

Secondly, because of all the vested interests impinging, you're likely to get a heavily regulated, constrained privatisation, if it comes from the top down. And third, in many of the countries I worked, you're likely to get corruption emerging. When Russia privatised its various industries and so on, there was crony capitalism emerging, and I fear the same sort of thing happening when you privatise education from the top down – you get a whole lot of negative things happening, which is why I suggest privatisation from the grassroots up. And then in terms of the question non-profit and for-profit, as I say, I'm involved in both around the world, I see the virtues of both. And I see, where one is better than another. I have done a lot of work on this, and comparing, and one thing that's quite surprising to many people is the simple fact that in our research in Liberia, Sierra Leone, and Nigeria, and so on, we found that typically, on average, for-profit schools, the proprietor-owned schools, on average, tend to be lower-fee than the non-profit schools.

JR: That's very surprising.

JT: Yeah, it's really surprising, but this is not an unusual finding. And why it is, there can be many reasons. Anyway, that's a long answer to your question. Another finding that we had from our research is that the for-profit schools (which are proprietor-owned) would also tend to have higher teacher salaries than the non-profits. Not always, but that's quite a robust finding as well. So, they're not exploiting the teachers more, they have a very lean margin. But it must be

that the non-profits, which have their place, of course, in their important role, must have a much bigger margin or they must be less efficient with their use of resources.

One thing that's quite surprising to many people is the simple fact that in our research in Liberia, Sierra Leone, and Nigeria, we found that typically, for-profit schools tend to be lower-fee than the non-profit schools... Another finding that we had from our research is that the for-profit schools (which are proprietor-owned) would also tend to have higher teacher salaries than the non-profits.

JR: I remember reading about this in the two books that we discussed, in *Education, War & Peace* and *The beautiful tree*. Now for another interesting topic, and I think this is also something where Britain has actually dabbled in quite a bit: the voucher system. So, are you in favour of a voucher system in education that would transfer influence and power from educational bureaucracies to pupils and their parents? Namely, the consumers of education. Do you favour voucher systems for universities? Or how would you want to assist students in paying for university-level education? Or do you favour loans to students, given the fact that higher education is usually rewarded by higher income later on in life?

JT: So the voucher system and then loans for higher education. I mean again, 20 years ago, I probably was speaking and writing in favour of a voucher system. I changed my mind. And I've written about this in my book *E.G. West*, and I've written about it again in the book that will come out in February next year. So Milton Friedman changed his mind, as the key proponent, in modern days at least, of vouchers. He wrote his 1955 paper, *The role of government in education*, which was then part of his book, *Capitalism and freedom* (1962). And then in the 1955 paper, he made out the case for vouchers. And then he read the work of E.G. West. And he and his wife then said that they changed their mind in a later book, *Free to choose* [first published in 1980], as a footnote, if I recall correctly. And he wrote in a couple of papers that the argument for the voucher is based on the fact that without the State, you won't get the schooling, so therefore, you need it. There's just a basic issue we obviously need the State to do.

How do you provide state education better? Well, it's obviously through a voucher system. And I would agree that, if you have to have state education, then a voucher system is the best way to do it. But what he [Friedman] realised was that the work of E.G. West suggests that schooling will emerge as a spontaneous order. And therefore, the basic underlying premise of his argument for vouchers just didn't hold really. Because actually, the private sector can provide and parents are willing to pay and so on. And had Milton Friedman heard about my work and my team's work in developing countries about low-cost private schools, it would have been, again, real extra ammunition to his argument. Because he was just talking about the historical evidence. Now we've got

contemporary evidence which shows that the poor will do exactly what they did in Victorian England, and the United States of America in the 19th century.

I'm a purist, I believe in a market for education and therefore, I believe that you don't need the state and vouchers. The argument then would be: 'Are vouchers a means to move towards this position that I would like?' And I think they're probably not. It goes back to the same thing about privatisation versus grassroots privatisation. And I use School Choice with capital 'S' and capital 'C', which government imposes, compared with school choice with lowercase 's' and 'c' to be that which spontaneously arises. If you start to introduce a voucher system, you're not going to get them through, there is no universal voucher system in America even after all that great work of Milton Friedman and his Foundation and all the rest that have been promoting it, they're all very minor. Less than one percent of kids use vouchers in America, a lot less. After all these years, 70 years of high-level advocacy of them, and you've just got less than one percent of kids in voucher schools. The teacher unions block them every time.

And the voucher systems have been brought in in Sweden and Chile. Chile was quite particular, under General Pinochet. He had his own ways of persuading the unions, shall we say [JR laughs]. And in Sweden, probably just a strange sort of configuration of political forces allowed it to come through, unlikely to happen ever again. And probably, my Swedish people tell me, unlikely to have ever happened in Sweden again, apart from that one moment.

Again, in England, in the United Kingdom, we tried to push it forward under Margaret Thatcher in the 1980s. And again, all the vested interests came in and killed it. So, I don't believe they will ever happen. So, what's the use of campaigning strongly because I don't believe it will happen? Secondly, the greatest proponent Milton Friedman changed his mind because he saw the private sector can come without it. I think those are the two reasons.

So then on higher education: loans and so on: One of the problems is when the government comes in and brings a voucher or a loan or whatever, then the price is fixed, isn't it? And typically, therefore, providers make sure the costs are up to that level of price fixing. So, in England, they fixed the maximum fee at £9,000. And guess what? All but actually one university put its fees at £9,000, there was no innovation, there was no competition over price, because the government set the fee at £9,000, and that was it. And that's always the problem with these student loans. But I'm very much in favour of student loans for precisely the reason you suggested: that you borrow now in the expectation that your income will be higher.

And there's one sort of loan, is it a loan or is a contract? I like the idea of this, where you contract with a private finance company to pay for your university education. And then you give a proportion of your income after five years or ten years or whatever, which will then add up to a maximum ceiling probably. But then there's a great incentive then for the company that's financing you to make sure you maximise your income. And therefore, it will work with the university

to ensure you're employable and so on. So, I'm certainly in favour of loans for higher education, you probably could have the same principle for lower education. But I like these, whatever they're called, proportion-of-income-maximising-loans that I think they are, very good.

JR: Thank you so much for this really enlightening answer, and bringing us back to E.G. West and Milton Friedman. Moving on to a more contemporary book, I'm not sure whether you've come across it. It has a very intriguing title. That's why I bought it. It's written by Bryan Caplan in 2018, under the title, *The case against education: Why the education system is a waste of time and money*. And the title is programmatic and encapsulates the content of the book. Caplan claims that most if not everything a university course will teach its students very little, that are to do with the needs of university graduates and employers. And the major function of successful completion of a course is not building human capital, it's signalling. So basically, it signals that you have attended, this beautiful University for four years, and that is the main function. Do you agree? What is the function of a university education in your personal opinion, and what should it be?

JT: That Bryan Caplan book is a really interesting one. And the outcome is complex. I certainly think this idea of signalling is a plausible interpretation of what particularly higher education is for – rather than the building of human capital. It's just become that way. Now, this is important. And again, this is a complicated argument, and I just sort of give the bare bones now, but can probably elaborate it. His argument, I think, is about state public funding of education. It's clear to me, it is the case against publicly funded education.

He [Caplan] gives a good analogy of the engagement ring. Do you remember that analogy? The engagement ring signifies that the man giving it to a woman has wealth and is willing to give up, what is it, two monthly salary checks, or whatever it is, that was given to the woman. Now, of course, it's very unfair, not all men can afford to do that. And some men can afford a much bigger ring than another, very unfair. So supposing the government came in and equalised that, and made sure every man could give – or every person could give their partners, to use inclusive language – an engagement ring that they want to. So the government intervenes, and everyone can give – it won't be a two-carat or three-carat – it would be half a carat or one third of a carat diamond ring, everyone can do that. And no one's allowed to give more than that [JR laughs]. But that defeats the whole object of that. And therefore, the person who previously needed to demonstrate with a two- or three-carat or five-carat, whatever you can get, ring, he or she will have to now look to something else in order to demonstrate his or her commitment. So that's the metaphor. And what he's saying is in terms of government involvement in education, there has been this *qualification inflation*, this is a very important point.

Let's just take one example. It's an example that Ronald Dore used in his book, which was a precursor of *The case against education* really. It was called *The diploma disease* [1976]. It's about qualification inflation. In his book – many years ago,

in the '70s – he used the example of a librarian. When he was growing up, a librarian only had to demonstrate love of books to become a librarian. And then once the School Certificate came in, which everyone had to do in England, then to be a librarian required you to have the School Certificate. And then as more and more people got the School Certificate, the actual quality of a person you wanted wasn't then distinguished by the School Certificate. So, they needed then to demonstrate their willingness, their ability to be a librarian, by now getting A levels, then a degree. And he was writing, 'I predict, soon you will probably need a Master's in Information Science', which probably is true now. And so that's all because government is funding everyone up to a higher and a higher level. And so, in order to distinguish yourself at a level where you previously didn't need any qualification, or a very minor one, you need to get an extra. That's his argument. I think it's very plausible. I think it's a critique of government-funded education, not the private sector involvement. That's a long answer. But I think it's a very plausible argument. And it's not a desirable state of affairs.

Now, look at some other areas where you don't have the state, the government, interfering. I use one example, music exams. The government doesn't interfere, you've got a purely private sector examination system that has emerged there to test your ability to play the piano or singing or whatever. And they typically give a series of eight grades in music. And very interesting, you can take the grades, whenever you're ready, you don't have to go through them sequentially, you can jump into grade five, if you're ready for it, you don't have to do it at age 5, you can do it at age 5, 55, 75, whenever you're ready, but also they do demonstrate actual human capital. That is not about signalling. It's about demonstrating human capital. So this argument needs to be fleshed out. And that's my view on Caplan, it's very plausible. And it applies to public education, but you wouldn't use the same argument against a purely private system, you would only go to the private system to get human capital, in my view.

JR: In Western countries, in particular, we often face criticism of funding by private companies, funding of facilities, funding of research, the criticism is often levelled that such funding leads to bias, whereas the university must be 'truly independent'. What are your thoughts on the subject? Is it really the case that private funding devalues the quality of what the university has to offer?

JT: To me, there's a perfect symmetry with my response earlier between private funding and government funding. He who pays the piper calls the tune or can call the tune. And you can't exclude government funding from that, government-funded universities are not independent, they're dependent on the State and the State can push them in certain ways if the State wants to. The same is true of private provision. I am now the Vice-Chancellor of a university and I'm keen on raising money, and I can accept money from private providers who say 'this money is for a particular purpose'. For example, there was one recent case, I had to build an AI lab on that spare piece of land. And so therefore, we were being pushed in a certain direction by private funding. I don't have to accept, I can say 'no'. But equally, some donors

say, 'Here's the money, do what you wish, I believe in your university. I believe in your leadership. I know you will invest this money wisely. Do as you wish'.

The same can be true of state funding, incidentally. It's quite plausible. The state could also do the same. And it probably did in higher education, up until the 1960s or so in this country. Here's your block grant, do what you want with it. And it's equally true now that research funding, for example, is very much tied to in Britain to following the government regulations about what research should and shouldn't be, what areas are important, what impact you need to measure, what diversity indicators you need to have in research. Is this too glib an answer? I think both can be pushed in certain directions, both needn't. I don't see any asymmetry here between public or private funding.

JR: The COVID pandemic has forced many educational institutions, schools and universities to go online, especially during lockdown. Have you observed differences between educational institutions that rely on public funding and those that rely on the income they as edupreneurs generate themselves? Do you think that any of the innovations we have sometimes observed have come to stay?

JT: Very interesting questions. And I would just quibble with your language, but you probably see where I'm coming from. I don't think the COVID pandemic has led to this. I think it's the lockdowns. I think there's been severe overreactions to the so-called pandemic. Lockdowns are the problems. I am not sure whether there is very good research, but I certainly haven't come across it, I've just read this in passing in newspapers and whatever. So, I would have to look it up to check whether it's valid. But certainly, it seems that the private sector in school level education has responded better than the state schools and public schools. I've seen data, I haven't got the figures to hand, but a much larger proportion of private schools have opened quickly. And have responded, before they could open with online tuition, for children to a much greater extent than the state. That's the finding. I've seen it from America and Britain, that finding. And it's not surprising in a way, it's very clear that in this case, private schools are not getting any relief from anywhere, and they need their fees. And so obviously, they're going to be responding to their children better than the teachers who were completely and utterly protected here in both Britain, and I think America, teachers are totally protected, there's bound to be the case that private schools will respond. And I think the research shows that.

At the higher education level, I'm not aware of any research, people are saying my university here at Buckingham is responding much better than some of the other state-funded universities. But we're very small. So it could be. But obviously, the same incentive is there, when the lockdown happened on March, the 23rd, here, I need to get together all my team. And so, we're in an existential crisis, and we were just coming to the end of a term. If students don't come next term, because we're not doing anything, then we'll all lose our jobs. So, we have to do something, and everyone responded and put everything online. And there's a period about two weeks, purely online, we had two terms under lockdown, because we have a term in the summer. I know from my anecdotal experience, colleagues and universities

I've been in before I came to Buckingham had no sense of urgency like that [JR laughs]. They weren't so worried. Because they, in some ways, always thought government would bail them out, which I don't think government is going to do now.

But you're asking a very interesting question: 'Will some of the innovations that were brought in, will they last?' I think this is very fascinating. And again, this is all anecdotal, but at the university level, so this is an anecdote from our law school. The law school famously used to have slots for two-hour lectures. And obviously, when you're doing online lectures, there's no way you can do two hours, let alone one hour. In fact, they realised you have to break it up into chunks, 15-minute chunks, then a quiz or something to check, who's understood and keep engagement high, and so on and so forth. And you could do the 15 minutes when you wanted to, you didn't have to do them in 1-hour chunks. The law school will never, ever do two-hour lectures, again, even if we're back in person, because they suddenly realise no one gets engaged for that long when they're online. Yes, students came into the lecture hall, but were they really engaged? Probably not. And so, teaching has changed forever because of the lockdown. And you can see, the whole idea of personalised online learning, or let's say digital learning, I'm greatly in favour of this. The learning trajectory we typically see is linear. But actually, the way you can have adaptive learning is you start learning together like this [JT gesticulates]. And then there's a quiz or a test or informal thing. And some people might need to go that route. So maybe like that route, some unit might go all the way back [JT gesticulates, drawing lines into the air that go up and down]. And eventually, to arrive at perhaps different destinations, a personalised learning experience is best done through digital means, I think.

This lockdown has provided a way of experimenting and exploring. And also we come out of it, well we're not out of it yet in this country now, yet, we've been brought back slowly. And we're likely to be, for an institution like ours, we're looking for a tech partner, actively as we speak, to see how we can improve our digital offering. Our students tolerated it, we did it very quickly. And it was better than nothing, but it's probably very low quality. And that's just production values. That's fine. But part of it has to do with, perhaps we can use technology better. So yes, this is a plus from the lockdown. I wish we didn't go through lockdown together. But nonetheless, we might not have got there without lockdown.

JR: I think when this whole lockdown around the world and social distancing and so on happened, it is of course asking too much that it's a proper online learning experience. I think the term that I quite like is 'emergency remote teaching'. Because I think that's what it was. You would probably agree there is very sound online pedagogy around since many years. But that's of course different from what was happening, when, as you were describing, universities needed to change their delivery in two weeks' time. So it's obviously not possible to do a perfect job in such a short time. But now that it is taking quite a bit longer, there's of course more time to be more systematic and strategic about it.

JT: Exactly, I agree.

JR: So I'm coming to my final question. Just now, you were saying that you're about to publish a book that was a bit delayed. So of course, I'm very interested to hear about that. And more generally, anything that we've missed out that you found important, any future projects that you would like to share?

JT: The book I've been writing for years. And in a way I keep on writing the same book. A few writers are like me that they just want to refine the argument, but it's basically the argument of all the books I've written, really. It's about moving towards a non-state, purely private system of education. But this sort of uses my later work to show: First of all, the plausibility of the non-state, the private sector in education. So part one is the work you know, *The beautiful tree*, updated, really, and then parts two and three, then move it to America, it's an American publication, this needs to be relevant to America. And I show that by extension, Britain and so on, that actually it can be completely relevant. And that you can liberate education, emancipate education in the same way that you're doing in the developing world in America, too. It's a speculative book. The publisher in their wisdom changed the title to *Really good schools*. I don't know about that title. But anyway, that's the title they've come up with.

JR: Thank you so much.

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