

## The Work of Desire: Elite Schools’ Multi-scalar Markets

*Jane Kenway*

*Founders in Melbourne, Australia, is an elegant school. It has stately buildings, luxurious well-tended gardens and is set in a wealthy suburb. It is holding an event for prospective school clients and about 60 parents have come along. On arrival they are pleasantly greeted by well-groomed students and taken to the school hall. I join them.*

*While we wait we are treated to a musical performance by a senior boys’ ensemble. It’s impressive. The Deputy and other senior staff address us. They explain what the school stands for educationally and morally. We are told it has strong links to the local community, that it is proudly multi-cultural and has a global vision. I look around to try to assess how “multi-cultural” the assembled parents might be. About a third appear “Asian” and the rest are white. But beyond this I can’t tell what multiple cultures might exist amongst them.*

*After the addresses we break into groups and are taken on a guided tour. I join one group consisting mainly of Asians. We are led around by one of the school’s marketing staff and taken to its most impressive areas: the well-stocked library, the modern science labs, the art and sculpture studios showing students’ ambitious artworks, the high-tech media labs, the full-sized swimming pool and the well-equipped*

---

J. Kenway (✉)

Melbourne University, Melbourne, VIC, Australia

Monash University, Melbourne, VIC, Australia

*gymnasium. As we move through these various spaces, specialist teachers informally address us. Few questions are asked and we don't talk to each other. The tour lasts about an hour before we are dismissed, sent off with promotional materials in hand. Subsequently parents may seek to enrol their child, but ultimately, the school will choose whom it will accept.*

*I find out later that some of the prospective parents are from China and that an education agent has suggested that they visit this school and other specific schools. The education agent will probably receive a fee from whichever school finally admits their client. If the parents live overseas, the school will charge them a great deal more than it charges local parents.*

Variations of this scenario, and related activities and representations, are an everyday part of the globalising elite school market. Other activities include open days, individualised visits, parent/child interviews and virtual and material promotions. Such offerings have traditionally been directed towards national residents but now they speak to international parents and students as well. Thus we now see such things as international networking and promotional “tours” and events. The latter include alumnus reunions attended by school senior staff. These encourage graduates to promote the school to friends and families. Such word of mouth is regarded as vital, particularly, we are told, in China.

Whatever the case, these activities are designed to incite and direct the desires of various members and potential members of the school. But what does the work of producing such desire involve? Who does it and how is it conducted?

There is an established literature on markets in all education sectors, including a wealth of research on university markets and internationalisation. However, studies of elite secondary school markets, and their links to internationalisation, are just emerging. To my knowledge there are no studies of how the work of teachers in elite schools contributes to an elite school's market position and how teachers are conscripted to undertake such work.

In this chapter I begin to address such matters. I offer a distinctive way of theorising them which helps explain how elite schools harness desire as a market resource and how teachers' desires are implicated. Specifically, I focus on teachers and, to a lesser extent, external agents. The latter are paid by the school, and by international parents, to assist them to navigate

and negotiate the global elite school market. And I also consider the work of another group of professionals whom I label the “emotion engineers”. They are employed to market the market. Many tensions are involved in such work as I will show.

## RESEARCH BASE

The event above and my subsequent analysis here arise from the five-year project *Elite schools in globalising circumstances*.<sup>1</sup> This research focuses on elite schools in countries that were part of the former British Empire. Through *multi-sited global ethnography*<sup>2</sup> our international research team studied seven elite schools, one in England (*Highbury*) and one school each in the former British colonies—Australia (*Founders*), Barbados (*Old Cloisters*), Hong Kong (*Cathedral*), India (*Ripon*), Singapore (*Straights*) and South Africa (*Greystone*).<sup>3</sup> In this chapter I draw general insights from all these schools, but offer illustrative instances from Founders and Ripon.

We have explained, elsewhere, why we characterise these schools as elite and also the various ways in which all are globalising their practices (Kenway et al. 2016). It is apt, here, that I mention the national origins of their student populations. These schools mostly cater for parents who live in the vicinity but those with boarding houses or “homestay” arrangements also cater for those who live further afield in subnational and international locations. Regionalism also features in the international student intake of three schools. The largest percentage of international students, at Founders, comes from mainland China. Straights mainly draws its international students from other parts of Southeast Asia, including China, Vietnam, Malaysia, India and Indonesia. At Greystone, international students are mainly from other parts of Africa. Highbury has a more global catchment attracting students, for example, from Hong Kong, Nigeria, Ghana and Russia. Cathedral, Old Cloisters and Ripon have few full-time international students.

The elite school market is often thought of as either national or international. But our research indicates that it operates on four scales: global, regional, national and subnational. I thus call it multi-scalar.

## PASSIONATE WORKPLACES

Karl Marx (1867: 1990) talks about “the noisy sphere of circulation” (the market). This is the highly visible sphere of seductions, distractions and mystifications. It is the sphere where “Capital” accumulates further capitals. He contrasts this with “the hidden abode of production”—the

workplaces in the factories of industrial capitalism. This is the abode where workers produce commodities for the market. Such workplaces can be considered “the night time” of the commodity.

Commodities mystify labour. They show only a fraction of the physical, emotional and creative labour involved in their production. Certainly they give no indication of the power relationships that exist in the workplaces where they are produced. Indeed, “the *noisy* sphere of circulation” is usually *very quiet* about the processes of production involved in the commodities that it advertises, distributes and sells.

The “night time” of the elite school market involves the production of desire and the work of those who produce such desire. My argument is that this work includes, but also involves, much more than the promotional activities already alluded to.

Frédéric Lordon provides an evocative way of theorising such work in his book *The Willing Slaves of Capital: Spinoza and Marx on Desire* (2014). Lordon is a French economist whose *oeuvre* brings together economics and philosophy. In this text he concentrates on contemporary neo-liberal work and workplaces—the “the hidden abode” of contemporary production. He brings together Marxist theories of the social relations of production, or what he calls Marx’s “structuralism of relations”, with Spinoza’s “anthropology of passions” (Lordon 2014: x).

Lordon observes that, in the industrial capitalism of Marx’s time, the basic needs of “bare life” (2014: 63) kept workers labouring on, despite their appalling conditions and treatment and the “sad affects” (Lordon 2014: 52) they generated. He also observes that in the factories of Fordism, workers worked, not just to survive, but in order to gain the “joyful affects” of consumption (Lordon 2014: 52). In contrast, he argues that the neo-liberal workplaces of contemporary capitalism involve a richer “landscape of passions” (Lordon 2014: xi) and more complex worker hierarchies.

Lordon reexamines the employment question “through the passions” and asks how capital’s *few* succeed in making labour’s *many* work for them. He grapples with the paradox of the “happily dominated”. “Making the dominated happy so that they forget their domination is one of the oldest and most effective ruses of the art of ruling,” he proclaims (Lordon 2014: xii).

Rather than drawing Marx’s conceptual toolkit of exploited, alienated and dominated labour, he asks about the *enlistment* of workers. He asks “how is it possible for some to involve others in the realisation of their

own enterprise” (Lordon 2014: xi). In other words, he wonders why workers willingly help to fulfil others’ desires when these desires are not actually their own? Indeed, how are they persuaded that others’ desires are their own? He answers this question via the idea of the “passionate temperament” of employment (Lordon 2014: 51).

Lordon’s reading of Spinoza is central to his analysis, but here I can only mention those most pertinent aspects. The notion of the “conatus” is at the core of Spinoza’s thinking. Lordon explains it as “the fundamental energy that inhabits bodies and sets them in motion” in the pursuit of some “object” (Lordon 2014: 1–2). In ontological terms this energy, he suggests

is the energy of *desire*. To be is to be a being of desire. To exist is to desire, and therefore to be active in pursuit of one’s objects of desire. Indeed, the link between desire and the effectuation of effort for the sake of persevering in being, and the setting in motion of the body, is expressed synthetically by the very term *conatus* (Lordon 2014: 3–4 his italics).

This view of desire reverses the way of thinking that “understands desire as the pull of a, preexisting, desirable object” (Lordon 2014: 15). Objects *have to be produced* as desirable.

### AFFECTING TEACHERS

It might readily be argued that producing the elite school, as a desirable object, is an ongoing whole-of-school project. Leaving employees aside for the moment, this project involves students, ex-students, parents, and management teams, governing bodies, patrons and donors. In one way or another, all work to convince each other of the success, popularity and reputation of their school. Through their efforts they seek to ensure that it is recognised as a place of educational enchantment and altruism. All have financial, moral, symbolic and psychological interests in undertaking such work. In other words, from Lordon’s Spinozist perspective, the elite school is produced as desirable by those who most desire it and whose interests are best served by it. Collectively, no matter what their differences, these sets of people carry out work on themselves for themselves, on the institution for the institution.

They share another common desire. This is to enlist outsiders to their imaginary of desire so that their own desires can be more widely

affirmed and their interests more widely confirmed. Overall, their collective actions produce the elite school as a “great amorous” (Lordon 2014: 73) institution.

For the rest of the chapter I ask how teachers are *enlisted* by the school and how are they *re-enlisted* when the school intensifies its marketisation and internationalises its clients and practices. I also ask how the school enlists agents and how agents enlist international parents. What “affections, affects and actions” are involved?

Lordon explains that, in Spinoza’s thought, “affections, affects and actions” entail “a fundamental sequence” (2014: 56). The “conatus”, mentioned earlier, involves a free-floating desire to act. This desire has no particular direction of its own and is thus available to be steered by external forces. It is steered, externally, by an “affection” (an encounter with something). This encounter incites the residues of previous “affections”. Together, the immediate affection and previous affections bring about “affects” (e.g. sadness, joy). These, then, provoke actions.

Lordon deploys the term “willing slaves” in his book’s title. Obviously, he is not discussing slaves in the conventional sense but rather “passionate servitude” (2014: 22) and the manner in which certain contemporary workers are enlisted, ideologically, in the service of employers’ desires.

On the basis of our research, I can readily argue that elite schools seek to steer the desires of their teaching staff. They seek to incite, in them, an affective attachment to the school’s ethic of success and social supremacy. They attempt to harness teachers’ conatus and to produce affects that lead teachers to expend their energies cultivating accomplished and high-achieving students who also recognise their class collectivity and superiority.

If teachers are to carry responsibility for such class imaginaries of desire the school requires their ceaseless effort. And indeed, teachers’ work is conducted in the harsh light of hyper-vigilant and demanding parents with elevated expectations of their children and the school. Insistent, and sometimes anxious, students require teachers to be available on demand. The schools oblige teachers to undertake intense intellectual and emotional labour, to put in long hours, to offer much one-on-one teaching, caring and counselling. Overall, they seek to extract maximum value from their teaching staff.

Why are teachers willing to fulfil the desires of the school and its clientele? In terms of social class analysis, teachers in elite schools occupy a contradictory position. They may be recruited to identify with their

school's class values and purposes. But economically they usually have little in common with their clients; their salaries are invariably meagre in comparison—although some teachers we met had monied families. Teachers' working conditions might thus be regarded as ripe for alienation not contentment. So why is it that they “make common cause” (Lordon 2014: 33) with their employers? Or do they? What affections and affects set teachers' working lives in motion?

Many imperatives are involved. Teachers must be thoroughly enlisted, by the school, to fulfil its desires. A process of co-linearisation must take place (Lordon 2014: 52). If this is to happen, the desires of the school must be turned into teachers' own “authentic desires”. Lorden argues that “gladdening the hearts of the subjected” is a “strategy of power”. It activates employees to move in “suitable directions”. He says,

The subjects rejoice when they are offered desires they mistake for their own. It is then that they set themselves in motion ...and enter the sweetened universe of consent, whose real name is happy obedience. (Lordon 2014: 61)

In these terms, teachers must come to love the school—to see it as very desirable. And, I suggest, that it is this love that provokes them to play their part in ensuring that the school remains lovable. The teaching staff is provoked to take pleasure in their work at the school, for, after all, this allows them to be part of a superior institution. In turn, this permits them to feel superior; a cut above teachers in “lesser” schools. Their institution is of a higher order and so, therefore, are they—at least amongst the teaching profession. Indeed, elite school parents and students in our research schools regularly remind us that they have the best teachers—teachers who “care”. Such apparent professional elevation is another form of enlistment.

Further, the school's abundant resources, and its “superior” families and students, also mean that the work of teaching, although demanding, can be less complex and arduous than in most other schools with less resources and a more socially diverse clientele. Students' academic, sporting and artistic success tends to come more easily in such resource-rich circumstances and, thus, so too do pleasurable affects for teachers.

Their school thus provides them with multiple opportunities for professional fulfilment. Their employment relationship of dependence on the school (and indirectly the parents) is diffracted through their gratitude.

Even though the teachers are usually aware that the students' and the school's success are indexed by their own excessively hard work, they take great satisfaction in such success. Indeed, to have taught powerful and famous school alumni is often a source of pride. This feeds into subsequent teaching "affections" in Spinoza's terms. The joys of proximity to various elites appear to outweigh the burden of any "distressing affects" (Lordon 2014: 101). And certainly for some teachers the school invokes stress and anxiety and their work becomes an affective burden.

But teachers' apparently willing, even joyful, servitude may arise from other "affections". One is the opportunity for their own children to attend the school for low or no fees. This holds out the possibility of intergenerational social mobility. Their children might, perchance, join the social class that their parents currently serve. Without such subsidies the schools are out of financial reach for most teachers, unless their children win scholarships.

Let me develop these points further through the example of Ripon in India. In so doing I also offer an instance of what happens when a school seeks to internationalise certain of its practices.

### *The Interplay of Affects in an Indian Elite School*

In Ripon many of the teaching staff, and their families, are housed on campus. They are thus always available—their working life has become, essentially, their whole life, especially if they live in the boarding house or are involved in school sports. But their children attend the school, free of charge, from their earliest to their final years. This means that these teachers are highly privileged in comparison with teachers in the vast majority of other schools in India. It also means that their children will probably join India's expanding middle class (Varma 2007). Further, inside the school campus their living conditions are in sharp contrast to those beyond the school walls. As illustrated visually in Fahey et al. (2015) inside Ripon is a world of plenty, serenity, expansive space and order. Outside is village life of bare necessity—crowded, messy, noisy. In the village, material life appears to be reproduced without much, if any, surplus. This juxtaposition of wealth and poverty no doubt helps Ripon to enlist its teachers.

Ripon's history is entangled with the local aristocracy (the ruling Rajput caste) whose collaboration with, and to some extent imitation of, British colonial powers assisted the school to survive and thrive during colonisation. Its history is also entangled with the development of Indian



nationalism and, more recently, with those local aristocracy who are developing globally oriented capitalist enterprises and who are now part of India's capitalist class—they are the ruling caste/ruling class.

As a whole, Ripon College subscribes to hierarchical caste, class and gender relations, and to a large extent, these are reflected in staff hierarchies. Most teachers have been in the school a long time and such hierarchies seem normalised to those we talked with. The school's approach to curriculum and pedagogy is also conservative. One reason for this is its history of preparing certain students to join the Indian civil service. It has adopted the Indian national curriculum, which is developed by India's Central Board of Secondary Education (CBSE). Largely, classes are teacher-centred, teachers teach to the text, and the test, and if students can faithfully regurgitate the text, this is regarded as success. Quiet compliance has long provided many teachers, and students, with affective and other rewards. These have then led to further quiet compliance.

But Ripon involves diverse affections and affects. Its order of things, and the stability and predictability this offers has activated, in some of the teachers we spoke with, affective reassurance and comfort. The school is indeed a beloved object for them. Other, often more progressive, teachers experience the anguish of contradictory affects. They are less comfortable with the school's conservatism than many of their peers. However, some are more affectively invested in their family's security and their children's futures than in the professional disquiet that the school provokes in them. So they too conform. The burden of this servitude is relieved by their ambitions for their children. Yet other progressive teachers adopt innovative approaches to their teaching despite experiencing the uncomfortable pressure to conform. And they are particularly encouraged by the reforms that the Principal has been introducing over recent years.

The Principal is intent on internationalising and modernising Ripon. He is seeking to do so in two main ways—first via its membership of various trans-national organisations, including “Round Square” and the “G20”, and, second, by adopting an international curriculum.

Round Square and the G20 consist, mainly, of elite schools from around the globe. The G20 is a highly selective group of school principals. It meets to audit elite education globally so that its member schools can remain ahead of the game. As the Principal explained to us, all members regard internationalisation as one form of competitive advantage that they can readily mobilise in the elite school market.

In order for schools to be admitted to membership, Round Square requires them to undertake certain whole-of-school reforms. These are tied to its acronym IDEALS (Internationalism, Democracy, Environment, Adventure, Leadership and Service). Various types of international student exchange are linked to each of these notions. The Principal has deployed these IDEALS as a way of instigating whole school reform. And it wasn't until some such reforms were achieved that it was able to gain membership of Round Square.

Alongside the CBSE, the principal has also introduced the Cambridge International General Certificate of Education (IGCE). He hopes that the innovative pedagogies that are required for the IGCE will flow through to the rest of the school.

Despite the school's history of adaptation to national and international political forces, these programmes of reform encountered obstacles from many parents and teachers. Lordon makes the point that there is a

profound heteronomy of desire and affects caught up in the vagaries of past and present encounters and the dispositions of recollecting, linking and imitating formed over the long course of biography (2014: 16)

This was evident in various ways. For example, some parents felt that IGCE called into question the school's affective attachment to India's national identity. Others were worried about the disunity that might arise within the school due to two coexisting curricula—one international, one national. Yet others heard some colonial echoes in the adoption of a British curriculum.

Reorienting parental desires was required and eventually, the principal achieved this, in part, by invoking the fear that the school would be left behind if it did not adapt to global economic and cultural imperatives. The school's market value was at stake if parents did not align their desires with the principal's. The parental order of desire was eventually shifted and new collective affects opened the way for a different regime of desire in the school.

But teachers' desires were more difficult to redirect, particularly those that fought further internationalisation of the school. This speaks to Lordon's comments about the importance of the traces of the past.

The life of desire ... unfolds most often though the interplay of memory and associations, for the affections and the affects that result from them leave traces that are more or less deep, more or less amenable to being mobilized. Old joys and sorrows contaminate new objects that are related to them, which then become new objects of desire. (2014: 15)

The Principal's interventions, or "affections" in Spinoza's terms, provoked resentful affects in those whose comfort was in conforming to existing norms. The emphasis on innovative pedagogies, for instance, caused them to feel professionally invalidated. These long-standing teachers had been validated, by the school, precisely for being set in the long-standing conservative ways of the school. And, ironically, if the Principal had coerced them to change, this would have gone against the Round Square IDEAL of school-based democracy. But also, the principal's "affection" did not involve the type of knowledge-building professional development likely to produce joyful affects, and thus, it did not invoke a desire to change in accordance with his new programmes. Neither suitable knowledge nor suitable affects were sufficiently mobilised and thus these teachers did not want to move. They clung to the current order of desire via various affective refusals. One such refusal involved some of the teachers in the Round Square inter-cultural programmes for student visitors invoking a highly reductionist form of Indian nationalism (Kenway et al. 2016).

But there were other interplays of affects. The more progressive teachers (liberal-humanist) experienced more pleasant affects. Having worked in a situation where their curriculum and pedagogical desires often came up against the frowning disapproval of some of their teacher peers, they saw, in these reforms, new opportunities for professional expression and fulfilment. Indeed, in many ways, their desires preceded those of the Principal and thus their realignment was not necessary.

Further, the Principal did not regard internationalising the school as an end in itself. After gaining membership of Round Square, he swiftly organised a Round Square international conference at the school. This was a highly strategic promotional move. The Director of Internationalism said that:

the press, the people and Mr Acharya left no stone unturned to popularize it. And parents, teachers, students, the whole—I mean it was just like a big festival happening in [this city]. And LNP, no organisation ever had such a big conference. So that gave a big boost to our internationalism. (Interview 2012)

Internationalisation is designed to enhance Ripon's national and global presence as well as its reputation as a leading school in the highly competitive elite school market in India. Clearly, the internationalisation of Ripon unleashed a plethora of desires, many in tension with each other. The Principal's task was to shepherd these in such a way as to ensure they were in tandem with his ambitions for the school.

## THE WORK OF REDIRECTING DESIRE

Archetypal elite schools have a history of competing with each other at the national and subnational levels. However, in today's hyper-competitive multi-scalar education market, elite schools are intensifying their direct and indirect marketing activities. More and more institutional energy is expended on attempts to direct the desires of possible clients. This has altered conventional institutional power structures.

Traditionally elite schools have had sternly hierarchical chains of command. A school's governing body ultimately ruled over the Principal (through appointment) and the Principal ruled the teachers, through the mediation of senior staff. The promise of promotion, and slightly higher wages, acted to ideologically cohere staff. Other, non-teaching, staff largely serviced them and maintained the school's buildings and grounds. The "hierarchical structure of servitude" (Lordon 2014: 21) was well understood.

But within the contemporary market regime, institutional relations of servitude in the "night time" of the elite school market have shifted. Fresh priorities have come to the fore and disrupted conventional employment hierarchies. Institutions have been reordered: new organisational units have arisen. These include marketing, internationalisation, technology and networking units. They add extra organisational layers and further the performance imperatives and pressures on other staff.

A feature of these new units of desire is that more and more resources are directed towards them and to the people who staff them. These units have been increasingly elevated in importance and power compared to others. In other words resources are being redirected from the work of educating to the work of marketing. The market has become a "master desire" (Lordon 2014: 21).

Along with these new institutional forms, new forms of work and workers have emerged. Some teachers have taken up different roles, but, also, workers without educational expertise have been appointed. They include, for example, "communications" (marketing and media) experts—"emotion engineers". These people are experts in "desire-producing work" (Lordon 2014: 51). Their precise purpose is to nourish an acquisitive appetite for what the school currently offers and for the future it tries to affect.

Interestingly, the work of the emotion engineers is informed by the decidedly Spinozan premise that "value is produced by desire" (Lordon 2014: 65) not the other way around. Lordon explains that "Value and meaning do not reside in things but are *produced* by the desiring forces that seize them" (Lordon 2014: 64 his italics). He quotes Spinoza.

We neither strive, nor will, nor want, nor desire anything because we judge it to be good; on the contrary, we judge something to be good because we strive for it, will it, want it, and desire it. (*Ethics* 111, 9, Sholium quoted in Lordon 2014: 65)

Obviously, such institutional shifts and the associated desire-directing work are not unique to elite schools. But the level of resources that can be directed towards inciting desire, and the resources that can be put on display to try to stimulate desire, are unique to most of them. Take the case of their websites.

Elite schools energetically participate in the virtual market place of educational desire deploying school websites to try to activate affective flows. Most such sites involve high production value and, presumably, high cost. They include such things as “virtual tours” and “get-to-know-us videos”. These often foreground delighted and delightful students expounding on their enjoyable and interesting range of experiences at the school and on their wonderful teachers and friendships. These sites also display “world class” and “state of the art” facilities, the school’s traditional symbols and rituals and images of powerful and famous alumnus. These affect-imbued images seek to incite parents and students to yearn for the multiple opportunities for fulfilment that the school offers.

Virtual advertising potentially speaks to audiences on multiple scales and at any time. But local print media still figures prominently in promotional campaigns. For example, in Melbourne, at strategic enrolment times each year, school advertisements flood community print media. The following slogans, included in many such advertisements in 2015, are typical.

*Turn dreams into reality She will amaze herself*  
*Be immersed Creative minds are forever learning*  
*Preparing for a life of leadership*  
*Creating tomorrow*  
*Inspiring exceptional futures*  
*The challenges she needs First Class A chance to excel*  
*MLC girls become world-ready women*  
*Entrepreneurs start early here*  
*A rewarding education journey*  
*With a great education anything is possible*  
*We believe there is strength and talent in every girl*  
*Acclaimed Express yourself Best of both worlds*  
*Be part of something great Shaping the future*

The related schools are clearly trying to find a slogan that might focus the desires of potential clients. When mobilised in local print media, such slogans are directed towards the local market. But they are clearly intended to have wider appeal. They tap into rich rhetorical reservoirs of meaning associated with educational “magnificence”. At the same time their banality is transparent. Such slogans appeal and repel simultaneously.

A related development is the promotion of international curriculum. The International Baccalaureate and the Cambridge International General Certificate of Education are examples of qualifications that are recognised as providing a global passport to success. Internationally mobile parents value highly the reassurance provided by globally recognised and respected curricula. Such curricula are regularly promoted in various media. For example, in various advertisements circulated by a collective of elite private schools in Melbourne that offer the IB, the following terms are regularly used: “Recognised everywhere”, “A global education for a global generation”, “World class Australian schools”. Usually, framing this vocabulary of global enticement are pictures of students. Most are smiling, implicitly pointing to the joyful affects of this particular curriculum. Some are concentrating on science equipment, pointing to its cognitive benefits. Most pictures have a mixture of ethnicities on display, pointing to its cosmopolitan benefits. All students are wearing their school uniform, thus reassuring parents that those undertaking this curriculum will be well disciplined. All the schools’ crests are on display. The crests have potential affective resonance symbolising links with prestigious traditions.

Let us return to Founders and consider the work undertaken for international clients by certain school employees and the private agents who are employed by international parents.

Founders has a set of staff whose work includes the recruitment, admission and management of international students, compliance issues and specialist services such as language and student support. For anonymity purposes I call them members of the “international relations team”. Collectively, these responsibilities certainly include helping to engineer affect amongst the school’s potential international clients. But these also include caring for such clients once they have acted on their desires. Like many other elite schools, Founders has direct and indirect relationships (through parents) with various external agents. These include relocation agents, migration agents and as well as human resources (HR) agents in trans-national companies. Such agents both provoke and mediate affects for the school and the parents—although in dissimilar ways.

Agents help Founders to identify suitable clients who can readily afford the fees. As Ken (international relations team) tells us with regard to HR agents in trans-national companies, the school cultivates:

connections with companies like L'Oreal, Mercedes, BMW. ... All the big successful European brands, we've actively marketed to them. ... We've gone to those companies rather than go to those countries, because they are direct pathways in for families that we perceive could have the potential to afford us, or have their fees paid for them by the companies as part of relocation agreements (Interview 2012).

International education agents are also part of the school's strategic approach to recruitment. Founders' website includes the details of selected, and presumably approved, agents in China, Hong Kong, South Korea, Germany, Singapore, Indonesia, Malaysia and Thailand. Suitable agents must be identified and relationships with them nourished. Given their steering role in the direction of students' educational mobility (in terms of school and country) such good relationships are essential. Those who are in charge of Founders' recruitment strategies and activities travel to "meet and engage with the agents that we have overseas", says Bill (international relations team, Interview 2012). Such engagement with agents is crucial for they also help Founders to interpret the educational and cultural requirements of potential clients in specific locations. In turn, this assists Founders to adopt suitable "affections" in Spinoza's terms.

Through our focus groups with international parents we learn about the intense desires that propel parents from China to send their children to a school in Australia. In China access to elite schools and universities is extraordinarily competitive. The associated pressure on families is considerable. Ambition is a fierce driving force and constant worry is in abundance. This is particularly so because of China's one-child policy. Educating children in Western countries provides an escape from such intensities—it is an emotional release valve. Further, education in the "West", and in the English language, are unashamedly coveted.

Some mothers from China shared with us their craving for their precious only child to succeed at the highest level in a Western school and the immense emotional labour they put into ensuring that they do. These mothers appear very class-conscious. It seems that they regard their child's success, as well as the status of their child's school, as a measure of their family's success—thus their emotional investments are high. This hints at why agents are important to them (Kenway 2016).

For parents from overseas, agents perform various functions. As some international mothers explain to us, *education agents* advise them on the most sought-after schools and universities in particular countries and cities. Such advice includes which schools are best connected to which universities. *Relocation agents* provide them with advice on the most prestigious suburbs to buy or rent properties in and the stature of the schools and universities in the vicinity. *Migration agents* assist them with the complexities of Visa and citizenship applications and with any arising difficulties.

Back to my opening story about Founders' Open Day. One role of the "emotion engineers" (discussed earlier) is to recruit teachers, to persuade them that the market should be their master desire. Indeed it might be said they try to engineer teachers to become "emotion engineers" themselves. We see that teachers' educational work is interrupted by directly promotional work. They appear happy to accommodate the master desire and seem proud of what they display. But resentments simmer beneath Founders' smooth surfaces. Some teachers have "reservations" about the reordering of the school's priorities and practices according to the market. This does not "gladden their hearts" (2014: 62) in the manner proposed by Lordon. Further, some are not entirely "comfortable" with internationalisation.

The senior staff at Founders is proud of the school's internationalism. It offers the International Baccalaureate Diploma and its progressive approach to language education stresses the links between language and culture. In the Arts programme Founders has introduced some Asian instruments and music, and the student merit awards include a sports Blue for badminton (accommodating the Chinese students). Senior staff proclaim that Founders has become more "accepting of difference". However, Shannon, who works closely with international students and families, says

I think there are many groups within the school both in the teaching staff and the school body that are still very firmly rooted in an old British model ... there simply isn't an inclusive enough curriculum or methodology. (international relations team, Interview 2012)

Like Ripon, the senior staff is having trouble redirecting teachers' desires away from the enduring traces of the school's history. These traces include earlier trans-national encounters associated with colonialism. As Shannon says:

The colonial heritage ... is still very strongly a part of the school. In the daily functioning and the ideology ... It comes through in ... the structures of the



buildings; the kinds of subjects that are still the dominant part of the curriculum; and it also comes through in things like the assembly, the expectations in terms of uniform ... It can be quite difficult to get things moving away so that structures change sufficiently to be inclusive ... (Interview 2011)

In short, international education requires that elite schools harness multiple flights of desire and direct them and re-design themselves and their staff accordingly

## CONCLUSION

Overall, I have argued that elite schools produce themselves as desirable and that internationalism is currently integral to such desirability. I have identified the work, workers and re-designed workplaces involved in such production. The manner in which such schools enlist teachers to this desirable school project through the mobilisation of affirming affects has been a central feature of my analysis. And I have shown how teachers respond to schools' attempts to enlist them. Second, I have indicated how marketisation and internationalisation have altered elite schools as workplaces and shown what this means for those who work for, and with, such schools. I have offered a distinctive way of theorising all this through an engagement with Frédéric Lordon's evocative ideas about contemporary neo-liberal workplaces as landscapes of passions.

In the multi-scalar elite school market, elite schools cannot rest on their laurels. They have to produce themselves as desirable on different scales and in relation to different populations. This means that elite schools of the type discussed above are becoming more nakedly linked to the commodity form. Always places of passionate attachments, now they are places wherein passion itself has become a commodity.

## NOTES

1. The team involved Jane Kenway, Johannah Fahey, Diana Langmead (Monash), Fazal Rizvi (Melbourne), Cameron McCarthy (Illinois), Debbie Epstein (Roehampton), and Aaron Koh (Chinese University Hong Kong) and PhD students Howard Prosser, Matthew Shaw (Monash), Mousumi Mukherjee (Melbourne). Funded by the Australian Research Council (DP1093778) and our respective universities (2010–2015).
2. For full details on the project's methodology, see Kenway (2015).
3. The schools have all been anonymised.

## REFERENCES

- Fahey, J., Prosser, H., & Shaw, M. (Eds.). (2015). *In the realm of the senses: Social aesthetics and the sensory dynamics of privilege*. Singapore: Springer.
- Kenway, J. (2015). Ethnography “is not what it used to be”: Rethinking space, time, mobility and multiplicity. In S. Bollig, M. Honig, S. Neumann, & C. Seele (Eds.), *MultiPluriTrans: Emerging fields in educational ethnography* (pp. 37–57). Bielefeld, Germany: Transcript Publishers in collaboration with Columbia University Press.
- Kenway, J. (2016). Travelling with Bourdieu: Elite schools and the cultural logics and limits of global mobility. In L. Adkins, C. Brosnan, & S. Threadgold (Eds.), *Bourdieuian prospects*. New York: Routledge.
- Kenway, J., Fahey, J., Epstein, D., Koh, A., McCarthy, C., & Rizvi, F. (2016). *Class choreographies: Elite schools and globalization*. Basingstoke: Palgrave Macmillan.
- Lordon, F. (2014). *Willing slaves of capital, Spinoza and Marx on desire*. London: Verso.
- Marx, K. [1867] (1990). *Capital: Volume I*. New York: Penguin.
- Varma, P. (2007). *The great Indian middle class*. New Delhi: Penguin Books.

**Jane Kenway** is Professorial Fellow (Melbourne University), Emeritus Professor (Monash University), Fellow of the Academy of Social Sciences, Australia. She conducts socio-cultural studies of education in the context of wider social and cultural change, focusing particularly on power and politics. She recently completed a multi-national research project, with an international team, called *Elite Schools in Globalising Circumstances: A Multi-sited Global Ethnography*. Her most recent book is *Class Choreographies: Elite Schools and Globalisation* (2017, Palgrave). Her most recent, jointly edited, books are *Elite Schools: Multiple Geographies of Privilege* (2016) and *Asia as Method in Education Studies: A Defiant Research Imagination* (2015).