



What Is a Public Education and Why We Need It: A Philosophical Inquiry into Self-Development, Cultural Commitment, and Public Engagement (Philosophy and Cultural Identity)

Walter Feinberg

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The unique mission of a public education is to reproduce a civic public. For the most part this will not happen in a vacuum and requires specific institutions—the most prominent of which are the *public* schools. Publicly supported schools have other functions as well. They socialize; train, produce a workforce and, hopefully, promote individual growth and autonomy. True, all of these functions may be carried on by private or religious schools as well. However, public schools should have the additional responsibility of reproducing a civic public for a diverse pluralistic society. The problem is that in the context of neoliberal ideology, where all the other educational functions are reduced to economic ones within a market context where competition (nation to nation, state to state, community to community, school to school, teacher to teacher, student to student) rules, the public function becomes less and less central and more and more difficult to carry out. This book suggests ways to change this by bring to idea of a true public education back into focus.

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