

What isn't for sale?

<http://www.theatlantic.com/magazine/archive/2012/04/what-isn-8217-t-for-sale/8902/>

By the way when you see what is for sale, it could turn you into a regular cynic or at least a skeptic!

The writer describes how markets (in 20th Century language, it was called the free market) have been seen as a valuable and effective economic tool. What we had not realised is that market tools have now become market values. As we put a value on everything, the writer says "Putting a price on the good things in life can corrupt them. That's because markets don't only allocate goods; they express and promote certain attitudes toward the goods being exchanged. Paying kids to read books might get them to read more, but might also teach them to regard reading as a chore rather than a source of intrinsic satisfaction."

You remember my earlier mail on Post Modernism? Here's the connection with market values :

"In its own way, market reasoning also empties public life of moral argument. Part of the appeal of markets is that they don't pass judgment on the preferences they satisfy. They don't ask whether some ways of valuing goods are higher, or worthier, than others. If someone is willing to pay for sex, or a kidney, and a consenting adult is willing to sell, the only question the economist asks is "How much?" Markets don't wag fingers. They don't discriminate between worthy preferences and unworthy ones. Each party to a deal decides for him- or herself what value to place on the things being exchanged.

This non-judgmental stance toward values lies at the heart of market reasoning, and explains much of its appeal. But our reluctance to engage in moral and spiritual argument, together with our embrace of markets, has exacted a heavy price: it has drained public discourse of moral and civic energy, and contributed to the technocratic, managerial politics afflicting many societies today."

What's the take for busy school leaders? Lead your school to do whatever worthy thing they do because they believe in it, not for the award at the end of it, not even for the better grades. Grades and recognition are a natural by-product of what should surely have been a great experience learning and working together. Remember, teachers entered the profession believing in it.