Chapter 2
Learning from a Deceptively Spacious Policy Discourse

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Introduction

Networked learning, *e-learning* and *Technology Enhanced Learning* (TEL) are all terms that might further a critical theoretical debate about how people make connections with technology, and with each other, for learning in higher education (HE). Yet in policy documents such terms have mostly served as static markers, within a rational discourse about improved performance, that maintains a particular, dominant, economically-based world view of educational technology. By a *rational* discourse, I refer to a 'common sense' (Gramsci, 1971), but also 'de-humanising' form of writing of policy, that effectively separates people and their labour from the assumed achievements of technology, in a higher education context. This discourse is deceptively spacious, because it offers much promise for enhancement of people's performance via technology. Yet, in a curious way, that I will explain later through Critical Discourse Analysis (CDA, hereafter) it also removes any human presence from the very territory where we might learn more about our networked practices with technology. Given that 'academic workload' is a 'silent barrier' to the implementation of TEL strategies (Gregory & Lodge, 2015), this analysis further exposes, through empirical examples, that the academic labour of both staff and students also appears to be unacknowledged.

In this chapter I will firstly explain *networked learning* as one way to understand educational technology as relational in people's lives. This approach is distinctly different politically and organisationally from either bureaucratic hierarchies or the anarchy of the market (Thompson, 1991). As such it offers an alternative to a more commonly found deterministic approach in higher education policy that repeatedly frames technology as providing a form of 'exchange value' (Marx, 1867) for learning. I then proceed to discuss policy continuities in the UK that have helped to

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maintain one dominant view despite regular changes in terminology. CDA provides us with a form of resistance to such universal logic. We can notice instead how simplistic arguments about value for students and staff in policy discourse, separate technology from its human social and political implications. In a trans-disciplinary approach I therefore link critical social theory about technology, language and learning with examples from a corpus-based Critical Discourse Analysis (CDA) of UK policy texts for educational technology between 1997 and 2012. Perceptions of 'value' are essentially a function of language (Graham, 2001: 764) and language is a systematic resource for exchanging meaning in context (Halliday, 1994). Unfortunately, as language is enacted as discourse, it can spread powerful viewpoints, which appear to be legitimate, yet may also limit human practice.

I draw later on theory from Weber, Ritzer and Marx to explain how examples drawn from my corpus display a *rationality*, based only on a predicted exchange value from educational technology. This reduces human choices, ultimately leading to an *irrationality* that becomes self-defeating, if it is to support university aspirations in a global knowledge-based economy (Jessop, 2008). This is a logic therefore that distorts the idea of networked learning communities (Greener & Perriton, 2005: 67). I suggest instead that we acknowledge a *technology-language-learning* nexus, as a broader basis for networked learning. In this model technology, language and learning are relational and mutually constitutive networked elements in the lives of those who are learning. Global neoliberal capitalist values have strongly territorialised the contemporary university (Hayes & Jandrić, 2014), utilising existing naïve, utopian arguments about what technology achieves. At the same time, the very spaces in which we might critically debate these 'promises' have diminished. The chapter reveals how humans are easily 'evicted', even from discourse about their own learning (Hayes, 2015). It is time then to re-occupy this important territory. We can use the very political discourse that disguised our material and verbal practices, in new explicit ways, to begin to restore our human visibility.

Networked Learning as a Way to Understand Educational Technology

Networked Learning, applied to the use of digital technologies in higher education, is understood 'to promote connections: between one learner and other learners, between learners and tutors; between a learning community and its learning resources' (Goodyear, Hodgson, & McConnell, 2004: 1). As just one choice of terminology we might use to discuss educational technology, it is considered to be 'relational' between all of these things (Jones, 2012: 3). In a networked learning approach, technology is not simply a neutral object that in modern life dictates the pace of human development, nor is it just a subject that we write about, expecting to be able to use it for automatic economic gain through increased performance.

Instead, technology is 'a dialectical process of material and linguistic negotiation between competing social forces' across networks (Hayes & Jandrić, 2014: 194).

In contrast to this broad understanding of networked learning, in policy for educational technology, in recent decades, we still find a rarely critiqued, rational underlying assumption that implementing new technologies, in themselves, determines learning. A single argument that technology might be applied to learning, to guarantee something additional and useful in return, suggests there is a presupposed exchange value (Marx, 1867). Though hardly a new argument, this deterministic approach is framed and re-framed across governments, and within both hierarchical and broader neoliberal (Campbell & Pedersen, 2001; Harvey, 2005) policies for higher education. In recent decades neoliberalism has dominated Western and increasingly global economic life (Campbell & Pedersen, 2001; Harvey, 2005), but it is the practical implementation of this complex economic and political ideology, through discourse and other elements including technology, that is the focus of my analysis in this chapter.

Policy Continuities That Support a Dominant Discourse

Greener and Perriton (2005) draw attention to a meeting of political economy with e-learning. Distinguishing between hierarchical 'Keynesian' forms of educational delivery and a 'Schumpeterian' entrepreneurial market-driven model, they draw analogies with economic models suggesting utopian rhetoric can mask other societal issues in networked learning (Greener & Perriton, 2005: 69). I refer to extremes of policy for educational provision as either hierarchical or neoliberal, though neither economic theory will be discussed in detail here, as the focus is on a critical approach to how these play out in the discourse. I demonstrate later through CDA how UK 'policy continuities' (Ball, 1999) continue to affect how people identify the role of technology economically in learning.

Some would argue that recent global economic crisis transcends the limitations of conventional economic thinking anyway. The consequent need for a radical rethinking means no longer a continuation of 'existing assumptions under a different name' (Hall, Massey, & Rustin, 2013). It is from this point of departure that I discuss how a rational vocabulary in policy texts, that tends to reflect consumer culture and self-interest (Massey, 2013), has moulded narrow conceptions of educational technology for too long. This is a discourse that positions technology (by any name), as the main driver of social change, and ultimately as the driver of how people learn. What this viewpoint often omits however are the complex political, social and economic factors that bring technologies into being and that serve to support a particular power and culture. Of more concern still is a trend towards omitting people altogether. This is an argument I pick up later through Ritzer (1998). If a simple and basic logic: that 'use of technology' might be applied to guarantee improved learning, is what underpins government policy and university strategies, then any changes in the terminology we use every few years will make very little difference.

In 2002 Chris Jones raised the question: 'is there a policy for networked learning?' This same question might have been asked repeatedly since then about e-learning or Technology Enhanced Learning, and similar conclusions could be drawn:

> Choices about how to use new technologies need to be infused with a more sharply critical edge. One that begins by asking what social interests are driving the agenda that hides behind the technology and that begins to map out alternative visions of technological possibilities more centred in the needs of education and learning (Jones, 2002)

In over a decade since, much has happened to further ideas for open education, as new technological platforms and human social networks have developed. Yet, in another sense, little has changed to provide us with a coherent and fertile theoretical space for educational technology policy development. There has, for example, been a new name provided for our practice every few years that is said to have 'subsumed' the previous one:

> E-learning is starting to subsume and replace a number of previously used terms such as communications and information technologies (C&IT or ICT), information and learning technologies (ILT), networked learning, telelearning or telematics and instructional technology (Edgehill Strategy, 2005)

> The concept of e-learning is thus becoming subsumed into a wider discussion of how learning can be enhanced by more effective and far-reaching uses of digital technologies (JISC, 2009)

> The move from 'e-learning' to 'enhancing learning through the use of technology' is now well embedded and recognised (JISC, 2012)

One might argue that in simply changing the terminology it is rather like papering over the cracks in a sub standard property. To do a thorough job we would consider the structure and base (Marx, 1867), and work from there to change the whole space to become more habitable to accommodate a diversity of theory and practice. In a fertile discursive environment there is room for all of these terms to be explored, defined and developed, rather than to assume one concept must 'subsume' the others. We can then critically acknowledge the complexities of discourse, as a social practice that connects technology, language and learning. From here we might seek a more critical, theoretical and 'fertile trans-disciplinary ground' (Parchoma & Keefer, 2012). There is though a tendency in government policy language to tidy and order ways of building knowledge into linear processes, detached chunks of learning and neat parcels of practice. The real human labour actions can get pushed aside in a quest to tell people positive-sounding outcomes from certain approaches towards technologies. People may not believe these 'operational' concepts, but they can be justified in 'getting the job done' (Marcuse, 1964). I propose then a closer examination of some constraints in policy language that can hinder development of a 'sharply critical edge' (Jones, 2002) to debates about educational technology.

A Trans-disciplinary Methodology in Corpus-Based CDA

In a trans-disciplinary approach I link critical social theory about technology, language and learning with a corpus-based Critical Discourse Analysis (CDA) of UK policy texts for educational technology between 1997 and 2012. A 'corpus' is the

models of good e-learning practice Develop the effective use of technology to enable and support work-based learning Explore and support t
rity of the data held to support service delivery. Effective use of technology can help deliver more secure and more joined-up public services
nd staff development, helping institutions make effective use of technology for teaching and learning, research, administration, marketing an
e resources that were identified confirm that the effective use of technology to enhance assessment for learning as well as the assessment
earners in a cohesive way, making efficient and effective use of technology to support academic, social and pastoral activity. Using open so
IISC has had an important role in promoting the effective use of technology in the area of staff development and the role ICT has affecting sta
resources to provide a valuable insight into the effective use of technology in curriculum design and delivery processes. An unrivalled sourc

Fig. 2.1 An example of how lines of text in the corpus are searched

name given to a collection, or bank of texts gathered for analysis. Understanding a corpus of words as 'net-like' (Hoey, 1991) and reflective of the 'concerns of the society which produces the texts' (Hunston, 2002: 13) is helpful in order to visualise a fluid interplay of the elements of technology and learning, within the language of policy. In a quantitative analysis of patterns of discourse, I examined through corpus linguistics (Baker, 2006; Scott, 1997), 2.5 million words of UK policy.

'Use' was one of the top word count frequencies, appearing 8131 times in the whole corpus. I chose to focus on these 8131 instances of 'use' to examine more closely the way that 'technology' and other words cluster around 'use'. 'Technology' appeared 6079 times, 'the use of' 1770 times and 'use of technology' 350 times. Below in Fig. 2.1 a few lines of text show a small section of a pattern that was often repeated, with 'effective use of' actually appearing 185 times.

The 'effective use of technology' in Fig. 2.1 is repeatedly followed by the assumption of a positive learning or assessment outcome through phrases like 'to enable and support', 'help deliver', and 'to enhance'. This was a common pattern replicated around 'use of technology' or 'the use of technology', where an exchange value for improving learning would then follow. The inference is that each gain for learning is universal and the same for everyone. However examining lines of text is really just a first step towards looking more closely at how meaning is determined by readers.

Much has been written on detailed forms of linguistic analysis. Persistent, dominant discourses in education policy have already been extensively critiqued through Critical Discourse Analysis (Fairclough, 2007; Mautner, 2005; Mulderrig, 2011), though less so, in terms of educational technology policy. Studies have revealed how ideology can communicate one particular meaning in the service of power (Foucault, 1984) and marginalise others. Gramsci's ideas on hegemony (1971) show humans internalise values from powerful prevailing social discourses. CDA can reveal how students, teachers, technologists and technology are positioned in a relationship of production and consumption by 'anonymous forces' (Ross, 2004: 456). To further investigate findings in my 'use' corpus, I undertook a more qualitative CDA to examine 'Transitivity' (Halliday, 1994), which I explain below, with regard to Halliday's Systemic Functional Linguistics (SFL). There is not scope here to describe this form of analysis in detail, but it considers the grammatical processes taking place in statements to locate the Participants (whom), the verbal Processes (what happened) and the Circumstances (how, where, when). As a generic example, taking the statement: 'a student is learning at university' the constituent grammatical elements can be located, and named in this way:

In Table 2.1 a reader can be quite clear about whom, the Participant (a student) is undertaking the Process (is learning) and in what Circumstance (at university).

Table 2.1 A generic example to show how grammatical elements are located

A student	is learning	at university
Participant (a noun)	Process (a verb)	Circumstances (an adverb)

Table 2.2 A second generic example to show how the grammatical elements located are different

Universities	are	places of learning (for students)
Participant (a noun)	Process (a verb)	Participant (a noun)

Table 2.3 Halliday's process types

Process type	Meaning—some examples	Participants
Material	creating, changing, doing (to), and acting	Actor, Goal, Scope
Mental	feeling, thinking, sensing	Senser, Phenomenon
Verbal	saying, commanding, asking, offering	Sayer, Receiver, Verbiage, Target
Existential	existing or happening	Existent
Relational	having attributes, identity, and symbolizing	Carrier /Attribute Token/Value
Behavioural	behaving, smiling, yawning, laughing	Behaver/Behaviour

Each of these elements is labelled with their grammatical names to show if they are a noun, verb or an adverb. A key point is that this is not the only way such a statement might be written. Similar words may appear in a slightly different order of grammatical elements to reveal quite a different meaning, and conceal who exactly is involved. Taking another statement: 'universities are places of learning', when this is labelled in Table 2.2, the elements are not so apparent:

The Participants (universities) and (places of learning) are both names of things (nouns). They are connected in a relationship (are), which is the process (verb). To reveal any presence of a human subject, further information is required because this has not been supplied. By adding 'for students', currently in brackets, this restores a human presence. To break down the structure of educational technology discourse, to better understand the meaning through a transitivity analysis, some new terminology needs to be introduced.

In Table 2.3 below six broad categories of Process type (Halliday, 1994: 109–143) are identified along with examples of their meanings and their related Participants.

So returning once more to the first example from Table 2.1, when labelled in a transitivity analysis using Halliday's categories from Table 2.3, it would look like this:

In Table 2.4, it is the Process 'is learning' that defines what kind of process type is taking place. In this case it is a Mental process, to do with thinking, therefore 'a student', as the participant, is labelled as 'Senser'. If the statement had said 'a student is talking' the labels would have been Sayer for 'a student' and the process type would have been Verbal.

Table 2.4 A mental process type

A student	is learning	at university
Senser	Process: Mental	Circumstances

Table 2.5 A verbal process about 'the effective use of technology' conceals other labour actions

The resources that were identified	confirm that	the effective use of technology	to enhance
Sayer	Process: Verbal	Receiver	Process: Material
assessment for learning as well as the assessment of learning	can improve		
Goal	Process: Material		
the effectiveness of teaching approaches	and	enhance	the student learning experience
Goal		Process: Material	Goal

Discussion and Analysis

To demonstrate how this aids discussion in the educational technology community, I will now provide a series of examples from policy statements in my corpus and comment on ways these conceal human labour, attributing processes instead to statements about resources, technology, assessment or policy.

In Table 2.5 above, *nominalisation* occurs. Nominalisation can be noticed where nouns stand in for verbal processes (Jørgensen & Phillips , 2002: 83). A common effect is a reduction in human agency. It becomes hard to detect who a proposition refers to, or who has declared it to be so. In Table 2.5 'the resources that were identi-fied' take the place of the labour actions of a person, as they 'confirm' the rest of the statement. 'The resources that were identified' is labelled as Sayer because a Verbal process follows this in: 'confirm that'. It is: 'the effective use of technology' that the wording suggests is: 'to enhance' assessment and: 'can improve' 'the effectiveness of teaching approaches'. There are two instances of the Material process: 'to enhance'. After the first of these, 'assessment for learning as well as the assessment of learning' is the Goal. After the second 'enhance' the final Goal is 'the student learning experience'. The preceding 'the' earmarks students as if they all experi-ence assessment in the same way, not in diverse contexts as individuals. It also places students at the very end of a long statement that begins with 'the resources' determining what follows. So we cannot identify any of the decision makers, teach-ing or support staff in this statement that, at the end, claims to enhance 'the student learning experience'. In summary, liberal sounding policy when broken down in this way can help reveal the hidden agendas of economic improvement, but these quickly become detached from the social and political choices—and indeed the human beings, who made these.

Table 2.6 Material processes suggest 'innovative use of technology' can 'enhance', and 'improve' 'the student experience'

Innovative use of technology	can enhance	learning	and improve	the student experience
Actor	Process: Material	Goal	Process: Material	Goal

Table 2.7 Material processes suggest 'the use of technology' can 'increase', 'support' and 'foster' learning

The use of technology	can increase	accessibility and flexibility of learning		
Actor	Process: Material	Goal		
and	support	resources,	address	equality and diversity issues,
	Process: Material	Goal	Process: Verbal	Verbiage
and	foster	lifelong learning		
	Process: Material	Goal		

In Table 2.6 above, once more, it is a textual construction: 'innovative use of technology' and not a human being, that through Material processes: 'can enhance' 'learning', 'and improve' 'the student experience'. As in Table 2.5, 'the student experience' appears again at the end, students are treated as if they share a common identity and are acted upon by technology.

In Table 2.7 'the use of technology' appears to take responsibility for an extraordinary number of labour actions that we would usually attribute to people. We are to understand through a Material process that it 'can increase' 'accessibility and flexibility of learning' and 'support' 'resources'. In a Verbal process it 'can address' 'equality and diversity issues' and in another Material process, it can 'foster' 'lifelong learning'.

In Table 2.8 some similar claims about what 'the use of technology' achieves on our behalf are illustrated, but this time there is a curious circular outcome where, 'the use of technology' undertakes a series of Material processes 'to create' and 'to improve' areas that would normally involve the labour of university staff, but then these actions seem ultimately 'to support' 'more effective use of technology'. It should be emphasised that examples discussed here all originate from different strategies and not the same document, revealing interesting repetition across many writers of policy. There seems to be a shared impression of guaranteed positive results from 'the use of technology', regardless of the context.

In Table 2.9 though it is a document, 'The Strategy', labelled Sayer, which 'proposes'. Once more, nominalisation prevents the establishment of human agency. 'The Strategy' surely cannot determine these things for us, can it? Looking carefully at the Receiver (or goal) that the Strategy proposes to enhance, it is all encompassing, suggesting positive change to 'the learning opportunities for all learners'. This

Table 2.8 Material processes suggest 'the use of technology' can 'create' and 'improve' as well as 'support' an even more 'effective use of technology'

The use of technology	to create	digital archives
Actor	Proc: Material	Goal
to improve	documentation of practice	and
Proc: Material	Goal	
to support	curricular developments	as well as more effective use of technology
Proc: Material	Goal	Circ

Table 2.9 'The Strategy' undertakes this verbal process

The Strategy	proposes	to enhance	the learning opportunities of all learners
Sayer	Process: Verbal	Process: Material	Receiver
through the appropriate use of elearning			
Circumstances			

cannot be the case for *all*, and indeed how would we know, but there is also a context, which defines this expectation within what is described as 'the appropriate use of elearning'. Whilst sounding common sense, readers have no further information to know the confines of 'the appropriate use'. This is a phrase that appears often in my corpus, but remains ambiguous. It may hold fast instrumental economic values, or perhaps we might understand 'appropriate use of elearning' as a critical space we might re-occupy, in order to bring a more diverse account from the educational community. To do so, people would need to reconsider the tendency in policy discourse to place 'the' before 'appropriate use' and instead promote more explicit accounts of *who* it is that really proposes something, rather than hide behind a strategy. If we do not, we simply reinforce a deterministic approach that allows one universal blueprint for educational technology to persist.

In the final example above in Table 2.10, a Relational Identifying process is shown. 'The key aims of the TEL Strategy' are labelled as the Value. Through the Relational process 'are' this is identified by the Token, 'to ensure that technology is used appropriately, effectively and efficiently'. The Token refers to the participant in the clause that embodies the other concept, or represents it. The other concept may be something more general and is labelled as Value. A Relational/identifying process is also reversible and as such is rather like placing an equals sign between two concepts. It might look like this:

'The key aims of the TEL Strategy' = 'to ensure that technology is used appropriately, effectively and efficiently'

In a sense this statement could be said to be complete if it stopped here. The main agenda has been stated. Yet the text continues on, and slowly reveals the many labour actions (Material processes) that are overshadowed by this first part of the Relational clause. The full term of Technology Enhanced Learning is not mentioned. Instead a

Table 2.10 a relational process about technology conceals other labour actions

The key aims of the TEL Strategy	are	to ensure that technology is used	
Value	Process: Relational/Identifying	Token	
appropriately, effectively and efficiently	to support	student learning and development;	
	Process: Material	Goal	
support	staff in the delivery of the curriculum;	prepare	students
Process: Material	Goal	Process: Material	Goal
to function	in a technologically-rich and changing world;	enhance	
Proc: Material	Goale	Proc: Material	
existing provision;	exploit	new market opportunities.	
Goal	Proc: Material	Goal	

TEL Strategy condenses this meaning. However, the key aims are clearly linked to a belief by policy makers that this is what a Strategy for TEL represents. The strategy should 'ensure' it, but who decides what this use of technology looks like and feels like in the multiplicity of practice? Reading further along, there are human labour actions that are intended to 'support' and 'prepare' students and staff, but ultimately the agenda is to exploit 'new market opportunities'. Whilst universities need to remain viable what is deemed 'appropriate use of technology' for student and staff learning should not be confined within 'new market opportunities'.

Rationalisation and Performativity Enact the Student Experience

Considering the examples above, a deceptively spacious language promises much. Yet in Table 2.5, in terms of flexibility and tailoring for individual students (Greener & Perriton, 2005: 72), we find reference to 'the student experience' appears right at the end of a long paragraph. Student subjective diversity is contained in a singular, universal representation: 'the student experience', as shown in examples below, whether discussing e-learning, or Technology Enhanced Learning (TEL):

> Raise the profile of examples of TEL for enhancement of **the student experience**
>   (University of Westminster TEL Strategy 2008–2011)

> Provide a valid mechanism for the recognition of excellence in the use and implementation of e-learning to enhance **the student experience**
>   (University of Huddersfield E-Learning Strategy 2008–2013)

Choices made in language, to express ideas about technology in education, frequently remain unquestioned because they are framed in a simplified notion of

'common sense' (Gramsci, 1971) Confronting these structures draws attention to the fact that the language of competitive economic markets is not the only way to discuss educational technology, it has simply been the dominant voice, and this can be changed by a networked learning community. To strengthen and re-build a structural base for networked learning, it is necessary firstly, for the 'hidden humans', to confront a dominant rationalisation in policy discourse which focuses *only* on economically useful knowledge. Secondly, we can learn from an application of theory to these examples, to notice where the very principles of modernity that social theorists have warned us about, are enacted before our eyes.

Weber discussed the dehumanising effect of bureaucratic decision-making (Weber, 1930), based on a rationality that transcends other forms of human action, in an impersonal application of the systemic principles of modernity: 'Rational domination suppresses individual freedom and spontaneity, and threatens to enclose society within an iron cage' (Edgar and Sedgwick, 2007: 224). In Tables 2.5 and 2.6, and also in the two university strategies above diverse learning experiences of individual students is rationally contained within: 'the student experience'. Nominalisation freezes and encloses the 'becoming' of all students. This phrase hides the human challenges, risks, commitment and resistance involved in learning (Dall'Alba, 2009: 43). Taking forward the ideas of Weber, Ritzer has since described a continuation and even acceleration of this process, termed the 'McDonaldisation' of society (Ritzer, 1998: 42). Citing the fast food restaurant as an example, it represents the components of rationalisation such as efficiency, predicatabilty, quantification and control, via the substitution of non-human for human technology (Ritzer, 1998: 46). Yet, despite economies achieved, ultimately a form of irrationality emerges from such rationalisation (Ritzer, 1998: 54). We can confront this in linguistic examples, where as shown in Table 2.8, we encountered a curious circular outcome: 'the use of technology' is ultimately expected 'to support' 'more effective use of technology'. In this process though, the human creation of digital archives, the people who work to improve documentation, and indeed those who support curricular developments, are enclosed within a linguistic cage. In Table 2.10 staff and student labour is trapped between the 'key aims of the TEL strategy' and an exploitation of 'new market opportunities'. Would Weber, I wonder, be surprised at such visible enactments of his theory, even now?

The division of society from technology, and a severing of human labour from tools, does though become a major obstacle for future advancement. In the context of higher education, extreme rationality within policy discourse starts to create a restricted context of practice where lecturers and students eventually become less able to innovate. Given that the aspirations of a globalised society, which requires individuals to adopt values such as entrepreneurism and innovation, this form of discourse is ultimately self defeating. A political emphasis on economic gain, as 'performativity', has encouraged professionals to compete to 'realise their potential', but this approach also marginalises less instrumental routes to knowledge in higher education. Barnett discusses 'supercomplexity' and the problem of universities losing their way, as enormous amounts of data on performance are generated, but much of the language of 'excellence' has little real *content* (Barnett, 2000: 2).

Small wonder perhaps, when as in Table 2.5, it is 'the resources that were identified' that confirm (on our behalf) all of the other factors, and the human content has been emptied from this discourse.

In UK policy (despite changes in government) educational technology has continually been a significant part of narratives of, for example: modernisation, standards, effectiveness, enhancement of the public sector to improve UK competitiveness in the global economy. Value has been focused though on *only* the aspects of education (and educational technology) believed to support these aspirations, missing out others. This links with points from Ritzer that this form of rationalising eventually moves humans towards irrationality, serving to limit and compromise their actions (Ritzer, 1998: 55). Policy that is aiming for actively engaged, high performing staff who utilise technology to innovate, omits those who might actually make it happen. Theses texts sever our conscious human activities from the performance of technology, in a discourse that seeks only economic gain.

Economically Useful Knowledge Omits Human Material Practices

If economically-based values are attributed to technology in language to extract a maximum quantitative return, this colonises other more developmental discourses about technological learning and human material practices that rely on debate. Furthermore, this creates a detachment from policy, where lecturers and students can fail to recognise themselves in it, and thus they fail to engage with it. If there are apparently only positive outcomes from a use of technology, as a means to an end, then it would seem there is little left *for* people to write about, or debate. Yet debate is crucial if educational technology is to be engaged with research agendas in academic subjects and not become detached from people, as only a simple external fix to improve learning. To contribute to a more networked approach, where humans are at the centre of debates about learning, I draw on a constant from Marxist theory. This is the solid point of reference, through political economy, where real people and their social relations and productive labour in specific historic periods are the focus. I acknowledge a constant need to 'examine the relationship between the capitalist mode of production and the specific problem' (Greener & Perriton, 2005: 69) to uncover underlying power dynamics.

The examples from my corpus take as their point of departure a single argument, that technology as an external solution might be applied to learning, to guarantee additional performance. An 'exchange value' gained may be the promise of a competitive edge or additional skills, as a form of 'capital' (Marx, 1867). However, to choose other routes, where 'economically useful knowledge' (Jessop, 2008: 4) is not the primary concern, is almost not considered a choice at all (Dahlberg, 2004). Whether technology can improve efficiency is not called into question in this study. Instead the more pressing problem is raised that this economical feature alone should not be considered representative of the diverse possibilities for human learn-

ing, via connections with technology and other people, across multiple networks of human and non-human actors (Latour, 1992). There is a danger that a base structure of economic policy supports a compressed version of how students might experience *technology*, *language* and *learning*. Deceptively spacious language marginalises dialectical realities and material connections (Sørensen, 2009: 193). In short, the political discourse seems to disjoin and displace people, from their material practices of learning with technology. New technological practice now takes place in universities, but to assume a direct link with learning misses out the question of how technology actually yields an increase in knowledge, as a process of inquiry and critique. Understanding enhancement too, only in terms of additional value, is restrictive, if technologies can extend us (McLuhan, 2005) to overcome endless limitations. We might consider that 'everything is technology' (Braudel, 1985), when all around us, it shapes our history, knowledge and individual lives. We in turn shape it, in multiple ways (Wajcman, 2002). 'Things' of all types form repositories of, and for, our learning, construct our social worlds (Sezneva, 2007) and contain 'traces' of us (Lash, 2002). Given these broader understandings, human pedagogical interactions with technologies across space and time are far from simply enhanced, or easily categorised as: 'the student experience', irrespective of the claims of government policies. Closely linked to both technology and learning, is the language people use to describe their interactions with knowledge. How people talk and write about technology, more specifically, educational technology reveals the values they apply to it (Fairclough, 2007; Feenberg, 2003). Yet, for understanding language, humans have developed terms that distinguish different aspects. Discourse is the 'in use' element of language and, as such, is a broad concept, because it co-evolves with all other elements it touches in society. For technology, there are less adequate terms for its heterogeneous and temporal qualities and our own levels of understanding. It presents a problem for learning though, if in policy language, the cultural and political elements of technological knowledge cease to exist, and technology means only constant improvement.

The Technology-Language-Learning Nexus

CDA has sometimes been criticised for putting forward only negative representations of texts and ideologies (Breeze, 2013). However such analysis is not only an empowering approach to reveal ways that language may restrict conceptual space, it also provides a discursive opportunity for new possibilities to learn and move on from a deceptive space. If educational technology has been 'enframed' (Heidegger, 1977) in rational policy texts, through a hegemony of 'common sense' (Gramsci, 1971) then, through CDA, we might demonstrate these restrictions. This can lead to a point where it is hard to move forward beyond having identified what seems to be 'going on'. We have exposed an ideology, now what can be done? Here I suggest that thinking of educational technology as a *technology–language-learning* nexus can contribute to a more diverse participatory culture.

Connections between technology, language and learning are dialectical (Fairclough, 2007) and mutually constitutive (Wajcman, 2002) in shaping how learners experience new media across personal networks, in relationships of power and ideology, but also of possibility. A technology-language-learning nexus is a broader critical base to theoretically differentiate educational technology and resist simplistic, linear determinism in language. If perceptions of technology for learning have become distorted through 'the logics of profit and domination' (Matthewman, 2011: 38; Jessop, 2008; Sennett, 2006), more critical pedagogies (Freire, 1969) provides 'counterlogics' (McLaren, 1994) to linear approaches. For this to work though, humans need to make a conscious choice to be present in a higher education policy discourse that has currently replaced them with technologies or strategies. Rather like the situation described by Ritzer, where non-human technology replaces humans in a fast food context, rational policy language places all of the emphasis on the acts of non human resources. This has implications for academic identity, recognition and credit, and 'hidden' academic workloads (Gregory & Lodge, 2015). Human labour is taken for granted and not even credited in statements about learning and teaching. A critical awareness of belonging in a *technology–language-learning* nexus can help people avoid such alienation from closed relationships in policy discourse and offers conceptual space in an individual context for a broader personal perception of educational technology.

Territory and University Responsibility

Global capitalism has strongly territorialised the contemporary university (Hayes & Jandrić, 2014). Yet, there are also oppositional cultures in tension and therefore this 'territory' is always subject to dispute. Some discuss an 'anthropology of policy', where policy documents are not simply external forces, or confined to texts, but rather they are 'productive, performative and continually contested' domains of meaning (Shore, Wright, & Però, 2011: 1). Yet if academics and students ignore the wider political and social context of information and communication technologies, then the discourse of only positive gain, from external instruments, remains dominant. A cautionary note, as Hayes and Jandrić (2014) point out, is that even if academics fail to question this logic, 'information and communication technologies will never ignore academics' (Hayes & Jandrić, 2014). Recalling the ideas of Barnett, we can place this observation, and my analysis, in the wider context of examining the role and values of contemporary universities. Changes in modern capitalism have altered our very ideas of what the values of the University are. Barnett however, provides us with the notion of 'supercomplexity', which refers to multiple frames of understanding, of action and of self-identity (Barnett, 2000: 77). Barnett suggests a triple role for the university where firstly, it actually generates supercomplexity in part, secondly this disturbs the whole person, and therefore finally, the university has a responsibility to help us cope with this situation and make reflexive interventions in the world (Barnett, 2000: 79). Yet Gregory and

Lodge (2015) argue that the lack of functional university policy to address excessive academic workloads now raise questions of risk to institutions and long term sustainability. Cultural change is needed to provide university-wide transparency and well-communicated expectations (Gregory & Lodge, 2015: 11). Academia therefore plays an important role in either reproducing or challenging power relationships through policy. Barnett suggests that whilst supercomplexity deprives us of a 'value anchorage', the values of rational critical dialogue that helped to generate supercomplexity can also help to keep it in its place (Barnett, 2000: 83). This provides us with a new space of possibility where we might even use the very political discourse that disguises our material practices, in new ways to begin to restore our human visibility.

A dominant ideology need not remain 'fixed'. To avoid closure through terminology and keep plural routes for networked human relationships open involves conscious decisions in how we each speak and write about technology, in language about learning. The choices people make and what they write holds the key to re-establishing their place to acknowledge their labour within the policy discourse used to discuss technology. Ideologies that are general and abstract maintain a dominant discourse therefore I suggest people might actively choose to write more specific representations about their material encounters into higher education policy. Below I provide an example of how the statement in Table 2.8 might be rewritten, urging others also to further this research by seeking concrete textual imaginaries of alternative discourses, where people are explicitly present:

> The people who have written this university strategy to support students in their learning and staff in their teaching are listed below with their contact details. As a group we present some aims within this document for ongoing discussions about support of our students in their learning and our colleagues in allocating time to their development of the curriculum. We each hope that you will find the recommendations we have shared to be relevant in a changing world that provides us all with opportunities to support our collaborative and individual engagement with technologies for learning.

This is one suggested approach to begin to write humans back into the script of higher education policy. It is simply irrational for us not to be there.

Conclusion

In conclusion, whilst *Networked Learning*, *e-learning* and *Technology Enhanced Learning* are all terms that might further critical theoretical debate about how people make connections with technology, and with each other, for learning in higher education, they often act as static markers within discourse. Yet curiously, these terms are also often attributed, in common sense policy statements, with enacting human labour processes to improve or enhance learning. When academic workload is already a 'silent barrier' to the implementation of TEL strategies (Gregory & Lodge, 2015), such logic seems to be institutionally self-defeating. Dehumanising forms of written policy effectively separate people and their labour from the assumed

achievements of technology, in a higher education context where a lack of functional university policy further contributes to 'hidden workloads' (Gregory & Lodge, 2015: 10). The discourse promises much but is in fact deceptively spacious, because both staff and students are missing from it. Repeated, simplified statements may reinforce a message that this domain of meaning is inevitable, but we need to reoccupy this territory.

> If part of the 'work of policy' is to classify and organise people and ideas in new ways, then it becomes easy to understand why policies can become such powerful vehicles for social change. Policies can serve as instruments for consolidating the legitimacy of an existing social order or they can provide the rationale for 'regime change' and the subversion of an established order (Shore et al., 2011: 3).

In examining the anthropology of policy, texts can provide windows on political processes to observe how actors, agents and technologies interact in regimes of power. Policy is an organising principle, aligning these relations in particular ways that can appear to be permanent. Yet if staff and students do intervene to actively re-write a human presence back into TEL policy, this offers a powerful route for subversion.

Whilst networked learning, like the other terminologies has also been the victim of ambiguities in policy, discussed often in terms of efficiency and technical issues, less as a political choice (Jones, 2002), networks are relational. They are distinctly different politically and organisationally from either bureaucratic hierarchies or the anarchy of the market (Thompson, 1991). As such, networked learning offers an alternative to a more commonly found deterministic approach in higher education policy that repeatedly frames technology as providing a form of 'exchange value' (Marx, 1867). If the last decade of policy continuities has too easily dispensed with the tentacles of history, in a tireless series of 'makeovers' to improve and transform terminology to meet economic demands, now is a good time to transcend the limitations of conventional thinking. Radical rethinking means addressing the language we use as a network of relations, to avoid a continuation of 'existing assumptions under a different name' (Hall et al., 2013). One idea need not subsume another. Instead each may support the other, within a critical awareness of a technology-language-learning nexus. This informs a broader theoretical underpinning for educational technology, as part of a cooperative and trans-disciplinary endeavour, in our networked learning community.

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