STUDIES IN PROFESSIONAL LIFE AND WORK

Negotiating Neoliberalism

Developing Alternative Educational Visions

Tim Rudd and Ivor F. Goodson (Eds.)

SensePublishers

Negotiating Neoliberalism

STUDIES IN PROFESSIONAL LIFE AND WORK
Volume 11

Scope
The series will commission books in the broad area of professional life and work. This is a burgeoning area of study now in educational research with more and more books coming out on teachers' lives and work, on nurses' life and work, and on the whole interface between professional knowledge and professional lives.

The focus on life and work has been growing rapidly in the last two decades. There are a number of rationales for this. Firstly, there is a methodological impulse: many new studies are adopting a life history approach. The life history tradition aims to understand the interface between people's life and work and to explore the historical context and the socio-political circumstances in which people's professional life and work is located. The growth in life history studies demands a series of books which allow people to explore this methodological focus within the context of professional settings.

The second rationale for growth in this area is a huge range of restructuring initiatives taking place throughout the world. There is in fact a world movement to restructure education and health. In most forms this takes the introduction of more targets, tests and tables and increasing accountability and performativity regimes. These initiatives have been introduced at governmental level – in most cases without detailed consultation with the teaching and nursing workforces. As a result there is growing evidence of a clash between people's professional life and work missions and the restructuring initiatives which aim to transform these missions. One way of exploring this increasingly acute clash of values is through studies of professional life and work. Hence the European Commission, for instance, have begun to commission quite large studies of professional life and work focussing on teachers and nurses. One of these projects – the Professional Knowledge Network project has studied teachers' and nurses' life and work in seven countries. There will be a range of books coming out from this project and it is intended to commission the main books on nurses and on teachers for this series.

The series will begin with a number of works which aim to define and delineate the field of professional life and work. One of the first books 'Investigating the Teacher's Life and Work' by Ivor Goodson will attempt to bring together the methodological and substantive approaches in one book. This is something of a 'how to do' book in that it looks at how such studies can be undertaken as well as what kind of generic findings might be anticipated.

Future books in the series might expect to look at either the methodological approach of studying professional life and work or provide substantive findings from research projects which aim to investigate professional life and work particularly in education and health settings.

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Developing Alternative Educational Visions

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PREFACE

This book highlights the central features of neoliberal education policies, their origins, recent developments and also their inherent weaknesses and flaws. It provides insights into the day to day realities and negative impacts of recent neoliberal policies on the professional lives and work of educators, demonstrating how changing conditions have led to de-professionalisation, alienation and a loss of professional autonomy and identity. It also provides a set of accounts that detail the new realities emerging as a result of 'austerity' policies in what might be termed the *reconstituted neoliberal period* following the financial crisis in 2007, and questions the degree to which austerity has been developed as a 'cover story' for the further monetisation and privatisation of public services.

In considering these issues, the book explores the wider purpose and ideological intent underpinning recent reforms, and questions whether recent rapid changes reflect a desperate attempt to create new avenues for private profit in an ailing system. Rather than having weathered the recent crisis, it is postulated that we may be witnessing the long tail of decline for the neoliberal project.

With this in mind, the book attempts to challenge the common assumption that there is no viable alternative to the neoliberal logic, and does so by presenting a range of different examples, theoretical perspectives, discourses and alternative practices. Such alternatives serve not only to remind us that there are a range of different choices and possibilities but also provide a basis for a reimagined educational future. The book presents a range of individual and collective responses, forms of resistance and re-imaginings that may help us negotiate neoliberal education and which may act as a seedbed for reimagined and reorganised educational futures and viable alternative educational approaches.

TIM RUDD AND IVOR F. GOODSON

1. NEGOTIATING NEOLIBERAL EDUCATION

A Positional Issue and an Oppositional Stance

INTRODUCTION

The significant and rapid changes in policies that have occurred since the financial crisis in 2007/8 have, perhaps irrevocably, altered the educational landscape in the UK, and elsewhere. In what we term the *reconstituted neo-liberal period*, we have seen clear attempts to restore and enhance prior marketisation and privatisation strategies into an intelligible whole. This has occurred through a strategic reorganisation that has ultimately resulted in further systemic alignment to the principles and values underpinning neo liberalism.

Whilst the oversimplified links between education and the economy have been consistently utilised to support an increasingly financialised educational discourse and related policy developments, the financial crisis might equally have led us toward a more critical examination of the interrelationships between the two. Educational investment on any scale would have had little impact on the ability to foresee or halt the ensuing crisis. Moreover, the reasons for the crisis and the behaviours and the practices of individuals, companies and markets responsible, might also have warranted a thorough re-examination of the core purpose of education, its principles and the social, moral and ethical values that should be central to it. Conversely however, the financial crisis led to a series of 'austerity' policies that ultimately reinforce and 'enshrine' neoliberal values at the heart of education.

This book seeks to explore the origins, realities and consequences of recent neoliberal policy developments, and to also highlight the refraction and reinterpretation that has, or may happen in different contexts and at various levels, thereby providing insights into viable alternatives.

THE PRINCIPLES AND FEATURES OF NEOLIBERAL EDUCATIONAL REFORM

The key principles of neoliberal reforms are clearly visible in recent UK policy developments. They differ from the preceding developments however, in that rather than being focussed on the development of quasi markets, peripheral service provision and in applying market principles to reform aspects of the existing state system (see for example, Ball, 2007), they are instead intended to transform core educational provision, enabling private sector interests to overtly run and manage

T. Rudd & I. F. Goodson (Eds.), Negotiating Neoliberalism, 1–12.

institutions and core aspects of provision. Whilst we cannot undertake a detailed analysis of all recent developments, it is worth briefly considering some of the key policies that have emerged. These clearly illustrate how the central tenets of neo liberalism are this time positioned as central, systemic organising principles.

Academies and Free Schools

In the schools sector, the central tenets of neo liberalism are no more evident than in the development of the Free Schools and Academies Programmes. These see: *decentralisation and a move away from local authority control*; *the development of an emphatic discourse of privatisation and marketisation (habituation)*; and *the conversion of public services to private*. Despite lacking both widespread sectoral support and a distinct lack of clear supporting evidence, the Free Schools and Academies Programmes have continued apace. Unfortunately however, we have already seen poorly performing academies with clear question marks over their claimed potential to raise attainment. As can be seen from similar developments elsewhere, there is little evidence to substantiate claims for improved standards (Böhlmark *&* Lindahl, 2008), with emerging evidence of impending crises (Green et al., 2016), impropriety by vested interests, surreptitious profit making, and even potentially fraudulent activity (see also Burns, 2016 & Philips in this collection).

Whilst we are currently witnessing a hiatus in terms of the conversion of all schools, there is a commitment from the current Government that this will occur in due course.

Interestingly, whilst academisation was deemed necessary in order to 'raise standards' and to provide alternative funding and organisational models following the financial crisis, the conversion of tax payer funded state schools requires specialist (often private) educational expertise and advice. This incurs huge, often unnoticed, costs to tax payer, belying the austerity mantra used to justify such policies. Greater freedom over their curriculum and the autonomy granted to schools could have been achieved through amendments to existing legislation, hence reducing costs significantly. So it is clear that the real driver was the transfer of tax payer funded state schools into the hands of private entities

Grammar Schools

At the time of writing, the British Prime Minister, Theresa May, has recently announced an end to the ban on the formation of new grammar schools – previously state secondary schools that 'select' pupils by means of examination at the age of 11. Opponents of grammar schools suggest this marks a return to a selective system that reinforces class divisions, social privilege and disadvantage. Additionally, as new academies remain state funded but privately run enterprises, it is quite conceivable that we will shortly see privately run selective schools, choosing 'better' students,

resulting in higher results and rankings than their non-selective state counterparts, thereby justifying further calls for privatisation.

HE Student Fees

The significant rise in student fees (up to £9000 per year) in Higher Education (HE) in the UK has arguably resulted in fundamental shifts in perceptions of what HE is for, and the types of practices that should occur within it. It is clear that this significant and fundamental change has re-positioned students as 'customers' or 'consumers', and Universities as producers and service providers in a more fiercely financialised and marketised landscape. Notions of democracy and participation have been clearly redefined in terms of consumer choice, with the propagation of the view that students (and their parents) are knowledgeable, fully and equally informed consumers. It is assumed that students and parents are equally capable of individual and economically rational decisions, reflecting the 'logic' and 'rules' of the reformulated HE educational marketplace. Yet, this has occurred with scant debate about potential increase in class or cultural differences and inequalities of access, supply and consumption of education. Little consideration has been given to who the real winners and losers may be in a system increasingly geared toward servicing the economy, with future employees (students) accruing significant debts to provide industry with more highly skilled workforce.

As a result of these consumerist values, we are also witnessing the increased technicist objectification of teachers, students, curricula, and so forth. Highly qualified professional educators are increasingly being viewed as 'factors of production', resulting in de-professionalisation and less autonomy as they become cajoled into servicing and delivering learning to suit the newly imposed conditions. Since this development, we have also seen the growth of decontextualized and proxy measures to assess 'teaching excellence' and 'value for money', such as those found in the National Student Survey (NSS). The survey is made up of just 22 questions requiring attitudinal responses from students based on somewhat dubious criteria for measuring the effectiveness of teaching and 'innovative' pedagogy. As a result, many Universities have not only spent significant time and additional resources on specialist departments, concomitant processes and extensive marketing in order to achieve higher rankings, often without critically questioning the real purpose and wider values in education that may be at stake. One must question whether such processes are conversely actually undermining the type(s), and quality, of pedagogy, professional autonomy and also the ability to innovate. The significant time and energy spent servicing such measures may lead to practices and processes that actually result in dehumanisation, commodification, institutionalisation, and ultimately, 'counter-productivity' (Illich, 1971, 1971a, 1973), which are clearly counter to proclaimed intentions. The extent to which this may happen however, remains to be seen, although tangible examples are already arising.

However, whilst such developments and questions need greater empirical research and analysis, explicit funding for such critical research appears to have been increasingly sacrificed in the name of austerity, in favour of evaluations of 'what works' within the existing system. What works however, is also rooted firmly within new financially motivated reinterpretations of educational 'impact'.

The intensified financialisation of Higher Education, and the orientation toward a marketised system, also places students in a unique and compromising position. For students constantly bombarded with messages that a University education is essential, and with Universities becoming ever more effective in marketing to students due to fear of loss of income and profits, it may seem that there is no alternative but to go into extensive debt fund their Higher Education. Clearly positioned as customers, it may be that they will accept the somewhat dubious measures of satisfaction and quality and, in effect, become inadvertent gate keepers of the new model. However, as Edmond (in this collection) suggests, we need to consider, and empirically investigate, what it actually means to be a student in the neoliberal University, and indeed what shifts in student practice are occurring as a result. Whilst it might seem logical that recent history has been constitutive of the 'neoliberal student', resulting in entrenched inequalities that markets dependent on ownership of economic capitals require, the reality is far more complex. As Edmond argues, whilst there have been clear changes in student practices toward the narrative presentation of a more 'entrepreneurial self', there is also a need to r*e-conceptualise* students as more than 'neoliberal entrepreneurial subjects'. This can help us make sense of the '*refraction*' (Rudd & Goodson, 2016, 2012; Goodson & Rudd, 2016) of policy that can and does occur, and exemplify the varied forms of reinterpretation and resistance that arise.

At the time of writing, significant and interrelated pieces of legislation outlining Government plans for the future of HE in England and Wales are being hurriedly passed through policy making mechanisms. The Government's HE Bill and the Teaching Excellence Framework (TEF), are together likely to transform the character of HE in England and Wales, recasting again what is practiced.

The HE White Paper

The Higher Education and Research Bill (DBIS, 2016), sets out the Government's position on reforming the HE sector. The Bill has the central tenets of neoliberalism at its heart. It will make it easier and quicker for 'innovative and specialist providers' to set up, award degrees and secure University status to compete alongside existing institutions. It will provide students (consumers) with more information by placing a duty on institutions to publish application, offer, acceptance and progression rates amongst different groups in order to promote greater transparency. And it will also create a single regulator, the Office for Students (OfS), and give them power to operate a new Teaching Excellence Framework.

From a more critical perspective, it may be viewed as: placing performativity and standardisation measurements at the heart of its mission; bringing about the

establishment of a new agency(s) for contracting out services and full provision to private suppliers; *threatening the job and employment security of public University employees; increases the objectification of academic labour and indicating increases and shifts in a particular value form of labour;* and *increasing administration costs associated with new performativity metrics and compliance*.

Rather than reforms leading to better standards and system diversity, we suggest that we are equally as likely to witness a significant degree of institutional isomorphism (DiMaggio & Powell, 1983), especially amongst the group of institutions lacking the capitals required to place them in an elite position within the HE landscape. To some degree, this may occur as a result of the 'rules of efficiency' that might ordinarily regulate a marketplace and condition practice within it. Yet it may also arise due to the new institutional constraints and measures of performativity imposed by neo liberal state regulations and the plethora of organisations set up and empowered to administer and police the new regulatory 'technologies'. Moreover, in a rapidly changing landscape characterised by new constraints and uncertainty, many Universities faced with similar environmental circumstances are likely to reproduce the conditions for practice implied within the policy discourse in order to establish a sense of rationality. As a result, we are just as likely to see greater homogeneity and conservatism rather than a more heterogeneous and evolving landscape, at least in the short to mid-term. This may be most likely amongst the 'rank and file' institutions seeking system legitimacy and responding and reacting to externally imposed coercive pressures and the normative pressures within the field and profession, resulting in a tendency to mimic and imitate other institutions, or listen to the advice of 'experts' within the field. The extent of isomorphic responses in the field will be dependent on a range of variables and issues, such as: institutional inter-dependence; levels of uncertainty; ambiguity over goals and purpose; the efficiency and acceptance of imposed regulatory frameworks and monitoring mechanisms; and so forth. However, the ensuing isomorphism and somewhat unexpected homogeneity, may also provide the ammunition for advocates of private enterprise to illustrate the inefficiency and ineffectiveness of existing 'public' institutions. In other words, those institutions offering the most compliant and faithful responses to the externally imposed principals of neo liberalism may conversely be those most at risk in the new environmental conditions.

Teaching 'Excellence' Framework

One aspect of the HE Bill worthy of further consideration is the Teaching Excellence Framework (TEF), due to its potential to bring about significant changes in relationships, practice and pedagogy. It is argued the TEF will raise standards so that students and employers get the skills they need. It is also argued that it will place reputational and financial incentives to drive up the standard of teaching in all universities, placing clear information regarding quality and outcomes, including levels of employability, in the hands of students.

All of which brings with it a clear set of standardised and rigid metrics for instruction and performance, which will likely be in related forms of assessment. It also suggests an increase in judgement of performances according to consumer 'values' and proxy measures, with the likelihood of inequalities and degradation in the working conditions of staff. This in turn suggests a loss of critical mission of professionalism and professional autonomy in favour of practical and technical training for largely assumed economic interests with criteria for reaching 'standards' increasingly focussed on student employability. The TEF, whilst externally imposed without sectoral and professional support, will no doubt result in a swathe of training programmes, committees, working groups, monitoring processes and functions, as institutions seek to maximise potential economic gains. However, ultimately resource will shift away from research and teaching in order to fund the growth of new managerial and administrative classes positions deemed necessary to service framework requirements. Of course, as with any market or performance table, there will be winners and losers. As the White Paper clearly states, it is seeking to bring in new providers into the marketplace and it is likely that the TEF will be used as a tool for implying poor(er) performance, justifying the business acquisition of HE and the creation of new markets for consolidating the processes of privatisation and accumulation.

What is often left out of wider debates about the TEF is that it is voluntary. Universities will enter into the TEF because theoretically, good performance ratings will allow them to charge fees higher than the current cap of £9000. This means Universities will be willingly accepting the new externally imposed conditions as a result of a perceived financial 'necessity' or desire. It also means that students will be asked to rate their 'satisfaction' – a key aspect of which will no doubt relate to perceived value for money – in order to enable their institutions to charge the next cohort of students even higher fees, if the response is favourable. However, they may also be required to reduce fees is performance is deemed unsatisfactory. In other words, (most) Universities have accepted the neo-liberal tenets and have internalised these at the very core, meaning that the critical mission underpinning Higher Education may have irrevocably changed, as demonstrated by their willingness to gamble on a voluntary process that sits uncomfortably and counter to the professional beliefs of huge swathes of professional educators.

To push through such radical policies, as those outlined above, required a concomitant manufacturing of consent based around the seemingly perpetual 'crisis' in education, leaving many viable alternative unexplored. Whether this is quite the level of shock doctrine Klein (2008) and others (cf. Mirowski, 2014) suggest are central to unpopular neoliberal reform, is open to debate. The growth of numerous key performance indicators at the institutional, local, national and international levels that have arisen due to infection from global education reform movement (GERM) and their associated characteristics (Sahlberg, 2012), result in 'paradoxes of improvement' (Sahlberg, 2011). In turn, the tendency toward uniformity in education also ensures we are seldom far from the next manufactured crisis, as there

are a plethora of potential comparisons that can be drawn and taken to imply success and failure.

However, one of the 'elephants in the room' is that after almost three decades of educational 'crises' , subsequent neo liberal reforms, a huge growth in metrics and measurements, performance tables, monitoring agencies, managerialist policies, private involvement, and so forth, there is little evidence to suggest that educational standards have actually improved, even utilising the limited measures imposed on the system. Pring et al. (2016) suggest that despite the recent period of intense policy developments purportedly aimed at driving up standards in the schools sector, there is little evidence that English pupils are performing better in international comparisons. Moreover, on the basis of evidence from practitioners, they conclude that education has suffered from far too many policies, which are often short term and partisan in nature, whilst professional opinion and serious research has been brushed aside in favour of measurable, yet flawed, outcomes and simplistic Ofsted judgements. Moreover, there is evidence to suggest we are seeing questionable outcomes, de-professionalisation amongst the workforce (Beckman & Cooper, 2004), low morale, the devaluing of teaching as desirable profession, and teacher recruitment and retention crises (National Audit Office, 2016) that are likely to bring greater challenges still.

Now similar developments are being introduced into Higher Education to raise standards, with the omission of any acknowledgement of how highly regarded the UK HE sector is, being recently ranked 4th out of 50 overall in the 2016 Universitas 21 annual ranking of national systems.

However, the intensified financialisation, competition and performativity is significant and is likely to result in 'misrecognition' (Bourdieu, 1980, 2000), whereby social processes reflect taken for granted assumptions implied by the neoliberal model, resulting in new forms of knowledge and capital unwittingly normalised by the practice of social actors. This in turn, reproduces and reinforces the particular ideological world view and ultimately provides it with its legitimacy.

Whilst on the one hand this may be seen to imply a deterministic inevitability, it also highlights how important it is for research and researchers to focus upon individual and collective interpretation, mediation, challenge and resistance. Moreover, it conversely also demonstrates the active agency and power individuals and collectives hold and which they may bring to bear, offering hope for reconceptualization and for coming to know and to 'recognise again' (Bourdieu, 1989) alternative visions and possibilities.

THE SIX 'R's' OF EDUCATIONAL RESEARCH

The five R's of educational research (Goodson, 2015) have been proposed as a set of ideas to guide future educational research, and also as a partial antidote to the dubious and damaging educational rhetoric associated with the promotion and normalisation of the neoliberal order. *Remembering*, *regression*, *reconceptualisation*, *refraction*,

and *renewal* (briefly outlined below), all provide a set of conceptual lenses that allow us to draw out points of reinterpretation and *resistance* (the sixth 'R') across varied cases, contexts and writings. Throughout this volume, the authors consider how the seemingly unrepentant and unstoppable advance of neo-liberal policies, and its underlying logic, might be challenged and reconsidered, as well as highlighting some of the alternatives that already exist in order to help us reimagine education otherwise.

Refraction (Goodson & Rudd, 2016; Rudd & Goodson, 2016) is a conceptual and theoretical lens whereby the field is analysed in relation to historical periodisation, wider movements and ideology, and waves of reform, against which national and local policies and practice emerge. However, in mobilising 'refraction', there is an acute awareness that ideology, and related policies do not occur and play out 'unopposed'. Instead, they are mediated through a plethora of cultural, institutional and individual identities, pre-figurative practices, beliefs, values and cultures. In exploring refraction, we are thus better placed to both elucidate alternatives and see the ways in which the symbolic violence exerted may be mediated and subverted through individual and collective action.

Remembering enables an historical analysis and location of accounts in national (and personal) trajectories and ongoing continuities, as well as the occasional episodes of change and transformation.

Regression analyses can enable explorations of transformations in the political landscape and the positionality of 'change forces'. How individuals (and systems) perceive themselves in relation to others and other historical contexts, and the effect this may have on perceived need for either conservation or change.

Reconceptualisation, highlighting the value in the reconceptualisation of both the meaning of politics and also the nature of social inquiry. It can help to keep alive and reinvigorate the social imagination against ideological attack by considering and conceptualising pre-figurative practices and alternative worlds. It promotes the analysis of the variety of responses to the promotion of 'world movements' and of change restructuring, highlighting the wealth of complexity that can generate an ongoing social imagination of alternatives.

Renewal prompts consideration of historical responses and memories not only as reflective and possibly coloured interpretations of the past but also as potential sources through which to reimagine and reconceptualise alternative futures.

In utilising the above concepts, we are better placed to consider a greater range of alternative practices, discourse and systems, which may highlight ways of challenging the prevailing neoliberal orthodoxy and logic, ultimately demonstrating pathways to *reinterpretation and resistance*.

REINTERPRETATION AND RESISTANCE

Reinterpretation and resistance can, and do, take many forms, from calls for complete revolution, to smaller acts of disobedience, through to the identification of viable

and better alternative approaches. Highlighting all forms and potential routes may be valuable in documenting the realities and negative consequences of the current logic, fending off the tendency toward normalisation, and also in providing accounts of alternative systems, discourse and action. Such alternatives might include larger and established movements, such as co-operatives and their different forms, positions and roles they might occupy with in educational landscape, as highlighted by both Schostak and Woodin (this collection), through to a range of other alternative accounts. As Humphreys (this collection) argues, the solutions for resisting and reconceptualising neoliberal education may already be found in the ongoing history of alternatives and educational practice at the margins. Identifying and sharing contrasting stories and experience of education requires accessible communication and the development of a common, if not shared, language in order to present viable alternatives. As we explore and debate these, a whole range of experiences and examples of learners being active agents and co-constructors of their own dialogical learning experiences become apparent, which sit in stark contrast with the predominant prescriptive and rigid curricula, forms of assessment and 'banking' models of education (Freire, 1972).

As Edmond points out, alternatives to the bio-financialised 'student as consumer' model have also arisen in the form of the growth of voluntary 'free universities', challenging the taken predominate assumptions of what it actually means to be a student and what the purpose of (Higher) education might be. Indeed, resistance can also occur within the 'neo-liberal University' through sensitive reflection and informed action that demonstrates alternative ways of viewing and creating knowledge and demonstrating how learning and professional practice can be emancipatory, critical and challenge the status quo. Moreover, as Downs (this collection) suggests, we also need to be careful not to present a binary between completely financialised visions of the future of (Higher) education and a counter 'nostalgic view'. Instead we should focus on the realities for individuals, paying particular attention to those groups who are refracting the neoliberal worldview and logic, so that we might develop new ways forward.

Furthermore, as Stray and Eikeland (this collection) also point out, we also need to be aware how global education reform movements are being played out differently across different nation states, the potential effects that this may have on embedding new forms of inequality, but also on how these are refracted and lead to different outcomes in various locations.

Hayler also notes (this collection) that collective professional action has been hamstrung but it has not disappeared. Pockets of resistance still exist through Unions and other campaigning networks. Moreover, he argues that as well as these collectives, routes to resistance and reinterpretation always have their starting points in the 'site of subjectivity', in demonstrating and presenting ourselves, developing narratives about what we are and in what we believe, and then putting the theory into action.

Some groups form specifically to address and redress some of negative consequences of neo liberalism through awareness raising, collective action and

developing watching briefs. For example O'Brien (this collection) highlights the development of the Third Level Workplace Watch, a collective of precariously employed staff seeking to raise awareness of and challenge unequal labour conditions. He also points to the possibilities and potential of *bricolage* (Kincheloe, 2001) in bringing about new movements transformative possibilities arising from collaborations between different actors from within and across different scholarly (and sectoral) traditions.

All of these examples provide insights, knowledge and values on which critiques and alternatives might be built. There are of course significant questions regarding whether, and how, seemingly disparate groups might come to work together to bring about change. As Hall (this collection) points out, what is at issue is how to connect, and indeed, with whom. One way might be to reconceptualise and reimagine a more critical pedagogy that looks at aspects of inequality and injustice in a range of different fields and contexts and considers how these all relate to one another. Moreover, how we might form alliances across different areas, sectors and with various groups facing similar day to day challenges arising as a result of neoliberalism. Sugrue (this collection) further argues that it is necessary to highlight what more may be done to create and amplify a collective (professional) voice that also connects with the wider public, in order to re-present education as a 'common good' and rescue it from the lie(s) at the heart of neoliberalism.

HORIZONTAL RESISTANCE

Finally, we must also consider the regulating effects of the system itself and what it means for individuals within educational and academic institutions. With power being exerted 'top down' through austerity policies and prescribed practices, the opportunities for collective professional resistance are constantly being undermined. Therefore opportunities for vertical resistance within institutions may become severely limited and stifled. Thus, we need to consider opportunities offered for *horizontal allegiances* and the formation and development of organic networks of like-minded intellectuals and actors across different institutions and fields. Such horizontal networks are not bounded by the same institutional restraints, yet carry the collective weight of combined intellectual capital and endorsements, somewhat ironically, of multiple institutions. Such horizontal networks are likely to have greater influence than isolated individuals and atomised groups working in isolation and provide a fertile ground for reimagining possibilities, disseminating alternative perspectives and sharing strategies for resistance. In working together in this way, professionals may also seek out new directions and opportunities to reassert their professional autonomy and intellectual capacity through meaningful individual and collective action and free will.

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MIKE HAYLER

2. HERE, THERE AND EVERYWHERE

Measurement, Assessment and Attainment

INTRODUCTION

Some of the most contentious stories in education are the stories of assessment. Here the debate about educational values and purpose is brought into sharp relief as what seem like ever-more narrow forms of 'credentialism' are pitched against the role of education in social progress. 'Assessment' in all its various guises and interpretations is central to this debate.

In this chapter I utilise elements of the '5Rs' framework as suggested by our editors, in order to: (1) highlight the ways in which the practice and uses of assessment have been applied through policy in recent years; (2) consider the effect this has had on teaching, learning and the culture of schools; (3) suggest ways in which this dominant, regressive narrative is refracted in practice and ways in which it can be questioned and resisted. I argue for a continuing renewal of assessment as a formative and interactive aspect of teaching and learning where more critical and empowering pedagogies and learning identities can develop. My experience as a primary school teacher, a university-based teacher educator and a researcher of education leads me to conclude that while the negative aspects of assessment systems for accountability are clear enough, assessment itself does not need to have a stifling effect on schools if teachers and learners focus their efforts on formative assessment which supports learning through enquiry. I believe that genuine formative assessment involving teachers and learners themselves can contribute towards a critical pedagogy that empowers learners and offers resistance and counter-balance to the dominance of a data-driven, outcome-led sensibility.

This consideration of policy, culture and renewal of assessment is necessary for a number of reasons, and not least because as Fisher argues, an ideological position such as that represented in the accountability culture 'can never be really successful until it is naturalised, and it cannot be naturalised while it is still thought of as a value rather than a fact' (2009, p. 16). While my narrative analysis is located within the education system in England, this discussion is keenly relevant in a range of international contexts as assessment becomes an evermore central tool of control within neoliberal education policy throughout the world (Hill & Kumar, 2009; Smith, 2016). One of the defining features of neoliberal education seems to be that while its policies and character are mediated to a certain extent by governments

T. Rudd & I. F. Goodson (Eds.), Negotiating Neoliberalism, 13–26.

and party politics, it has tended to transcend them through a range of international bodies, associations and fiscal alliances that promote it as part of their own agenda (Harvey, 2005; Meyer & Benavot, 2013; Giroux, 2015).

The editors of the current collection propose the 5Rs of 'remembering', 'regression', 'reconceptualisation', 'refraction' and 'renewal' as a way of rethinking educational possibilities and offering a partial antidote to the rhetoric, promotion and 'normalisation' of the neoliberal reshaping of education that has occurred over the last 30 years or so. Through this process of, identification, characterisation and analysis within my theme of assessment, I seek the 6th 'R' of 'resistance' because, without underestimating the threat they are under, I do not accept that schools can no longer be a site of educational growth and social progress. I do not suggest that shifting the way that we think about and engage with assessment will bring down the wall of neoliberal education policy but assessment is a key brick in that wall which is worth trying to loosen if change is going to come. Teachers can be the central actors in such a task as they engage with, interpret and respond to policy at the micro-political level of the classroom through their interaction with the children and young people that they work with (Kelchtermans & Ballet, 2002).

To tell the story, I draw upon a bricolage of literature, policy and commentary, and include examples from my own experience alongside some narrative accounts from teachers gathered through a series of interviews conducted in 2013 and 2014. The extracts of narrative illustrate the ways in which policy change is 'refracted' individually and collectively. This draws upon the autoethnographic and life-history approach I have previously taken in shaping a theoretically developed understanding of how the professional identity of teachers and teacher educators are both formed and represented by narratives of experience (Hayler, 2011; Hayler & Edmond, 2013; Williams & Hayler, 2016). Centrally, the individual stories of experience need to be culturally located to avoid de-contextualisation and individualisation in this analysis. The aim, as Goodson (2013) makes clear, is to 'provide a story of individual action within a theory of context' (p. 31). The concept of 'refraction' as explained by Goodson and Rudd (2012) offers the opportunity to consider these glimpses of narrative as examples of how individuals and groups respond in different ways to policies on assessment in schools. They offer some illumination of how practitioners make meaning of their own lives and work in the face of imposed reform. This challenges the deterministic analysis of totalising power and ideology where learners and teachers can be framed as merely passive and conforming subjects caught within the waves of imposed change. As Bullough and Knowles contend in their study of becoming a teacher: 'Individuals are never passive receptors of social norms or presented content; they always remake them in some fashion' (1991, p. 138). Sociological studies of schools and the socialisation of teachers demonstrate that teachers remake policy, old and new, in a range of fashions (Lacey, 1977; Blase, 1988; Nias, 1989; Zeichner & Gore, 1990; Goodson, 1992; Kelchtermans & Ballett, 2002; Achinstein, 2002; Kelchtermans, 2005).

Lacey's (1977) concept of a 'sociology of the possible' as a lens through which the collective and individual 'strategic compliance' of teachers can be understood is most useful here as it implies a 'purposive, guiding, autonomous, element within individual and group behaviour' (p. 67), where policy/reform meets pedagogy within the classroom:

> The individual actor, who is at the intersection of 'biography' and the 'social situation', has some freedom to manipulate and change the situation while at the same time being constrained to adjust to it. (p. 95)

REMEMBERING: ASSESSMENT AS A TOOL OF CONTROL

One way that we can begin to find our bearings in the 'blizzard of change' and gain some sort of sense of where we are going is to look back at where we have been (Goodson, 2015, p. 2). Analysis of the historical context of educational assessment in England, can clarify the current position and the direction of travel. The period from 1960 to the mid – 1980s can be regarded as an era of 'relative autonomy' in schools, where teachers were accountable mainly to themselves and their peers and worked with curricula developed by head teachers and local authority advisors. Teachers 'performance' was informally assessed with an emphasis on ethical autonomy (Gleeson & Gunter, 2001). My own experience of formal educational assessment as a child was fleeting and failing at school in the 1960s and 70s although I did meet some teachers who got to know me well and had a lasting influence on my thinking and, eventually, my attitude to learning. The eleven plus examination, leading to streamed selection at age eleven, may have been what we would now call a 'high stakes' test but I do not remember failing it as being especially traumatic for me or my family. I did not take any CSE or GCSE national tests which are usually taken at age 16, until I was in my late 20s. Those teachers who demonstrated an interest and engagement with me as a person as well as a pupil were unlikely to have been driven by policies of assessment or surveillance but rather by the personal and sociological commitments that brought them into teaching in the first place (Butcher, 1965; Hoyle, 1969). Hargreaves argues that the growth of a competitive knowledge economy across the world has diverted schools and teachers from 'ambitious missions of compassion and community' towards the 'tunnel vision of test scores, achievement targets and league tables of accountability' (2003, p. xvii).

The political and educational landscape has shifted considerably and there is no doubt that state education and the profession of teaching is under a kind of siege with a shortfall in recruitment and large numbers of teachers planning to leave the profession (NUT, 2016; Lightfoot, 2016). Nevertheless, some people still become teachers because they want to make the world a better place (Priyadharshini & Robinson-Pant, 2003; Kelchtermans, 2005; Troman & Raggl, 2008; Marsh, 2015). Many of the teachers and students of teaching that I work with now continue to resist the standardised curriculum scripts and reach beyond the technical tasks of teaching

in forming and building communities of learning. Further, it would be as wrong to present the three post-war decades as only a 'golden age' of teaching and learning in school as it would be to label the whole of the current generation of teachers as neoliberal clones with little interest in pedagogy or community. The situation was and is more nuanced and complex. Teachers may currently be swimming against the tide more often than their predecessors and needing to engage in different sorts of discourse to maintain agency, but creative and cooperative teaching and learning still goes on in schools. As elsewhere, collective professional action has been hamstrung, but it has not disappeared. Pockets of resistance continue to emerge within trade unions (NUT, 2015) and through campaigning networks such as Reclaiming Schools,[1] the Teacher Solidarity Research Collaborative[2] and the Campaign for State Education.[3]

Perryman (2006) highlights how the series of education acts that were passed in England between 1988 and 1994 reveal an intent to steer schools and teachers towards becoming a 'technical workforce to be managed and controlled' (p. 148), rather than respected as autonomous professionals. The structural shift has continued to be from teachers' accountability to themselves, their colleagues and their students towards accountability to external bodies such as the Teacher Training Agency and the Office for Standards in Education, Children's Services and Skills (OFSTED). Individual and collegiate pedagogic creativity are styled as a problem rather than an asset in this scenario with assessment as the dominant tool of control.

Many teachers, like David, who became a primary school teacher in 1985 and is now a deputy head teacher, did not notice the shift happening at the time:

> David: When the National Curriculum came in (from 1988) I thought 'OK'. I can work with that, do it my way within the system and the children will benefit and get the good results they need. I couldn't really see any tension between the curriculum and how I wanted to teach. But over the years we have had to do more and more prep for the tests. First at the end of year 6 and then pretty much all of year 6, and now it feels that the whole school experience from year 3 on is all about SATs in year 6. At some point, (which) I cannot place for the life of me, we slipped over and now it's all we talk about – and we do OK in SATs, always have done. Oh we still have the odd moment but the thrust is always towards the tests. It seems as though we sink or swim by them. (Interview, Oct, 2013)

I became a teacher in 1991, at the age of 32, working in a primary school on a council estate near where I grew up. As a new teacher, the appraisal of teachers through a particular framework, which became compulsory in my first year, seemed like a continuation of the PGCE course that I had just completed. Discussions in those days were never based on Standard Attainment Task (SAT) results or projected SATs results for my class. Judy, who started teaching in 2004, tells a different story from 2006, by which time things had changed:

> She (the head teacher) went straight to the SATs results from the previous year and asked me why I thought my class had done less well than the other two classes in Year 6. She knew, of course, that the class had a lot of children who had difficulties but when I raised this she said that we couldn't use that sort of excuse anymore. It was funny because I had heard a politician on the radio use exactly those words a few days earlier. She said I should have raised this earlier if I needed extra help to bring them up to the required level and that we would need to look at things more closely in future and set some targets for improvement. (Interview, May, 2014)

In fact the children in Judy's class did make significant progress in a number of ways during the year she taught them. Even in the narrow terms of the tests they achieved higher levels overall than in the end of year tests given by the school the previous year. More importantly, as Judy says:

> They had made real progress in being able to take things on in their learning - signs of growing confidence, motivation and enthusiasm. I had three children who had been identified as having emotional and behavioural difficulties and two of them had really moved on according to the support service and educational psychologist reports – and their parents. But they didn't do well enough in SATs so she (the head teacher) saw them as part of the failure rather than the success of the school.

From the year 2000, systems described as 'productive autonomy' by Gleeson and Gunter (2001) were implemented, with teachers like Judy being held accountable through increasingly formal audits of outcomes and test scores that attempted to control and monitor teaching through the National Curriculum and management systems such as performance-related pay. The need to reform and monitor and micro-manage the teaching profession at every level of education represents a central shift in the governmental and cultural discourse of education. Avis suggested that these systems of accountability were now so pervasive (in 2005) that they could be seen as a 'regime of truth that refuses other conceptualisations of good practice, which therefore become silenced and are denied legitimacy' (2005, p. 211).

While teachers can and do become practised in minimising the effect that 'regimes of truth' have upon their work by being strategically compliant (Lacey, 1977) or creatively subversive (Myhill, 2008), accountability-based, data-driven assessment has contributed increasingly to a culture of 'performativity'. Lyotard's (1984) critique of the post-modern obsession with efficiency has been developed by Ball (e.g. 2003, 2012, 2015) to examine, define and challenge the technology culture and modes of regulation that have come to dominate the discourse and practice of education. As Carr puts it:

> Under this regime of governance, teachers are increasingly required to set aside personal values and commitment to education in order to fabricate a veneer of professional competence for which they are held accountable. (Carr, 2016, p. 28)

The main concern is that the regressive discourse of accountability changes the way that we all think about our lives and work and that teachers come to internalise and accept the situation 'as it is'. This is not a new concern in education. Lacey characterised this sort of 'internalised adjustment' as a social strategy in which the teacher believes or comes to believe that 'the constraints are for the best': he or she is 'really good', whereas 'strategic compliance' involves a strategy in which he or she is 'merely seen to be good' (Lacey, 1977, p. 72). Related and more recent constructs of subjectivity may also be sites of refraction, resistance, or as Ball puts it, 'refusal' (2015). In extending his previous discussion of neoliberal policy and its effect on education, Ball (2015) considers the notion of subjectivity as a site of struggle, resistance and 'refusal' through three modalities of truth: the truths 'told about us', 'the truths we tell about ourselves' and 'the truths we tell to others'(p. 2). If as Foucault (1981) argued, the construction of the 'subject' is a central aspect of governance and control, Ball (2015) argues that it is also where we may begin to think about ourselves differently in refusing the 'script' of neoliberalism:

> The starting point for a politics of refusal is the site of subjectivity. It is a struggle over and against what it is we have become, what it is we do not want to be. (p. 15)

At the centre of such an engagement with the self as 'subject' is the need to recognise and understand the 'internal adjustments' that we are all forced towards through the defining neoliberal process of 'normalisation'. Assessment and testing in education provides an illuminating example of this process in action.

In the accountability culture, high stakes tests are considered as a means to raise standards and increase public confidence in schools (Herbert & Hauser, 1999). While high stakes testing has a long history in UK schools, it reached unprecedented levels in terms of frequency, scope and uniformity in England at the end of the 20th Century. The periodic national Statutory Attainment Tasks (SATs) at ages 7, 11 and 14 years old were introduced as a central part of the scheme of examination and the programme of what Allen calls 'pupil tracking technologies' (2012). The said-to-be important and originally equal element of teacher-led assessment was quickly abandoned to make way for nationally, and increasingly internationally, comparable, externally marked tests in defining the levels of attainment assigned to each child.

High stakes testing has some powerful advocates such as the Organisation for Economic Co-operation and Development (OECD) and the World Bank where a range of arguments have become prominent concerning the contribution of education towards economic productivity, as a priority in the face of an ever-growing, yet uncertain, market economy. Others have argued that high stakes testing can reduce educational inequality through the 'objectivity' of external marking which holds teachers, schools and national systems of education to account for the academic standards of their students (Hursh, 2005; Carr, 2016). This position holds that increased objectification and standardisation of high stakes testing makes it a superior form of assessment to teacher-led evaluation which is seen as inconsistent

and unreliable. This lack of trust in professional teachers and schools to make and act upon their own methods of fair assessment has become a central feature of many education systems throughout the world and at all levels of education. Corno's (2000) metaphor of the 'Trojan Horse' of the national curriculum 'that was welcomed into our schools without knowing what harm was hidden inside' (Merchant, 2004, p. 6) seems even more appropriate when considered alongside these forms of assessment wherever they appear.

Critics view the proliferation of standardised high stakes testing as damaging in promoting outcome-led educational achievement as a means to an end in itself (Lipman & Hursh, 2007; McLaren & Jaromillo, 2007). A major weakness of standardised testing, conversely seen as one of its strengths by advocates, is that such tests ignore all social-economic and cultural factors when making judgements about educational progress which is then connected solely and deterministically to judgements about the quality of educational provision. Teachers often feel that tests are unfair to minorities, that they are too fragmented, misunderstood, and that they encourage scaremongering in parents and the public. Furthermore what Carr (2016) calls the 'myopic' focus upon high-stakes testing puts teachers under pressure to 'teach to the test' where the focus of teaching becomes the skills and knowledge that are required to gain 'good' test results rather than the more complex and abstract aspects of learning. In the push to improve 'results' in certain subjects, others may be ignored altogether. As Ciaran Segue argues in this volume while examining the 'hidden injuries' inflicted upon education in Ireland, while such a 'narrow focus brings 'results', the reductionism inflicted on important aspects of the curriculum, immediately and longer term lead to impoverishment—of staff, students, and ultimately—citizenry' (p. 177).

The distinct conflict between teachers feeling able to help pupils to learn and develop knowledge and skills that equip them for life, and the narrow focus on knowledge and skills that equip them for tests which are imposed upon them is a central site of debate over testing and the purposes of education more generally. The narrow reliance on testing can be seen as dehumanising students of all ages in reducing them to a numerical value. As explained by Peter Humphreys in the current volume, the process colours and shapes everything that goes on within schools and is at the heart of de-humanising the experience. For McNeil (2005), high stakes testing 'fakes' equity in rendering the inspiring diversities of children into the single indicator of a test score. Smith (2016a) argues that the testing culture has become synonymous with educational quality internationally through the growing influence of the Programme for International Student Assessments (PISA) audit. Somewhat paradoxically, given the primacy of standardised testing in the PISA framework, Finland regularly comes top of the list and has often been highlighted as the global leader in education. Silander and Valijarvi (2013) note that Finland has not followed the 'Anglo-Saxon' accountability movement of making schools accountable for learning outcomes, which does not seem to dissuade policy makers in England and elsewhere from pursuing higher 'status' through increased testing. In fact as Meyer

and Benavot (2013a) put it: '… Finland is the one country in the world that most distinctly deviates from the OECD standard reform package' which informs the PISA framework (p. 15). At its core the Finnish education model includes respect for teachers, valuing education as central in society and, ironically, limiting national standardised testing.

RENEWING ASSESSMENT AS PART OF A CRITICAL PEDAGOGY

The way in which learners perceive assessment is one of the key factors that can either strengthen or break their belief and confidence in their own capability and agency (Harrison, 2013). As schools in England have become more data-driven, for the reasons previously discussed, too much of classroom practice has become dominated by the need to produce summative performance data for evaluating school effectiveness, target setting and monitoring of 'performance' (Tiznak & Sutton, 2006). In their insecurity and anxiety to meet the summative outcomes schools often incorporate data collection systems that go beyond the statutory requirements where teachers are asked to record levels and sub-levels of attainment at several points in each school year. This leads to a situation where negative messages are amplified and where a perceived lack of success leads to feelings of helplessness and decreased motivation. Reay and Wiliam's (1999) example of the 11 year old who told them that 'you are nothing' if you do not attain level 4 at SATs, illuminates the anxiety and learner despair that such a system can foster (Dweck, 2000). Assessment itself does not need to have this effect on learners. When teachers focus their efforts through formative assessment it can support learning and contribute towards the development of positive learning sensibilities.

Clearly, as Allen (2012) warns, it should not be assumed that 'low-stakes testing' techniques which sit under the formative assessment umbrella will automatically counter-act the systems of accountability and power enacted through high stakes testing. Restricted interpretations and applications of assessment for learning as 'top and tailed' by 'learning objectives' and 'success criteria' in some ways replicate the narrow outcome-led thinking for which formative assessment is said to be an alternative. I do however argue that genuine formative assessment involving teachers and students themselves presents possibilities for the development of critical pedagogy that empowers learners. Freire conceived learning as an act of knowing that required the presence of 'authentic dialogue between learners and educators as equally knowing subjects' (1989, p. 49). If, as Freire argued 'knowledge involves a constant unity between action and reflection upon reality' which is the kernel of critical consciousness, the educator's role is to empower students to reflect upon their own worlds: to assess and self-assess. In doing so, teachers need to facilitate processes that help students in building their ability to 'become' (Freire, 1989, p. 52). For Freire, dialogic assessment is at the heart of pedagogy that is itself central to a formative culture that makes critical

consciousness and social action possible (Giroux, 2015). Therefore the challenge is to develop a framework that situates assessment alongside concepts of both critical inquiry and achievement. We do not need to look far to find some of the components of such a framework.

Black and Wiliam's (1998) review of formative assessment was a key influence in beginning a process of change in classroom assessment in the UK and other parts of the world. I use the term 'formative assessment' here in reference, not to a particular, exact protocol or system but to a range of principles, approaches and activities that build upon assessment that is about teachers getting to know the people they work with and those people getting to know themselves. Central to these approaches is the active involvement of students in their own learning and the recognition of the effect that this has upon motivation and critical engagement. Sadler (1998) provided a model for teaching-learning-assessment that shows how learning develops when students are empowered with assessment knowledge and expertise. In this way, it provides an opportunity for dialogue with critical pedagogy about student empowerment and learning. Assessment in this context takes place alongside and as an integral part of teaching and learning. In order to contribute to the agency of learners, it is essential that formative assessment involves practices that help both learners and teachers to focus on the current state of understanding and make decisions about which steps to take next (Black & Harrison, 2004). These practices include the development of enquiry-based learning through the development of questioning, self and peer assessment, and dialogic feedback (Black et al., 2003). When assessment is developed collaboratively within a classroom community, students can come to consider learning as a journey where notions of quality and experience can be understood and identities as capable learners developed (Shepard, 2000).

Swann (2013) proposes a problem-based alternative to the formulation and use of aims, objectives and targets that has become the default and all-pervasive starting point for planning and assessment in schools. She points out that the use of objectives is consistent with maintaining the systems of accountability for both learners and teachers, and further identifies that this is a model that undermines the 'open-ended nature of human endeavour' in general and the personal and social change involved with learning in particular (p. 44). Students become dependent on teachers to tell them what to learn and how to learn it, while teachers themselves become dependent on policy makers to tell them what to teach and how to teach it. Teachers' professional judgements and pedagogic preferences are supplanted by political decree. (See Swann, 2012 for detailed discussion on the corrosive effect of objectives and targets more broadly). In the present volume O'Brien argues that learning outcomes represent a particular conception of knowledge as commodity and that by adopting these as a default approach, 'teachers (unwittingly or otherwise) uphold the right to manage education in *that* way' (p. 157).

Learning itself, however, is always an active process and it needs to build upon the skills, knowledge, values and attitudes that the learner already possesses and

brings to any given situation. Based on Popper's (1999) conception that all life is a 'problem', the problem-based approach personalises learning by asking students to generate a range of 'How can I …?' or 'How can we …?' questions from where a course of action can be planned and a range of 'trial' solutions tested and examined. Development of knowledge and understanding can then be assessed by both student and teacher through asking 'What happened?' or 'What is happening?' The central feature of the model is the empowerment of the learner and the teacher within the process of teaching and learning that runs counter to the dominance of the top-down approach. I would argue that such an approach adopted as part of formative assessment can empower teachers' creative agency and therefore itself offers one site of resistance to the culture of accountability in that it is a means of encouraging professional teachers to formulate their own meaningful problems and questions and then to encourage the learners they work with to do the same. This does not make teachers 'un-accountable' for the teaching and learning within their classrooms but it does mean taking teachers seriously in recognising their abilities to act independently and responsibly.

By encouraging students to focus on their own learning trajectory rather than continually comparing themselves with others, formative assessment encourages a learning-orientated rather than performance-orientated sensibility (Dweck, 2000). When assessment is formative it has the potential to contribute to a student learning identity which moves away from the fixed mind-set and a view of learning as being about tests alone. This offers a potential way out of the downward spiral for many learners as something that can re-focus attitudes to assessment, education and school. Assessment can become something that can help one learn rather than a process that highlights difficulties. Perhaps inevitably, given the dominance of the data-driven thinking, while teachers, schools and students seem to like the idea of formative assessment, they have often found it difficult to implement meaningfully. It requires schools to make this approach to assessment a priority. The complex nature of the practical implementation of formative pedagogic approaches can make it seem like a mountain to climb for schools and teachers. But it does seem like a mountain worth climbing. Teachers themselves can be reinvigorated in their teaching (Harrison, 2013). The most fundamental barrier to implementation is likely to be that teachers find it difficult to fully conceptualise the approach before they begin to develop it in their classrooms. They are therefore unable to perceive the changes needed in their day to day practice where developing a more 'strategic' compliance would be fruitful (Lacey, 1977).

While widespread radical change in formative assessment has been difficult to develop, especially where a commitment from leadership is lacking, it still happens: The Wroxham School in Hampshire has established an environment where 'assessment of progress takes place at the school within a culture where dialogue about learning is key.'[4] The school has abolished ability grouping, not reported

national curriculum levels to children or to parents for over a decade, and has established an extensive 'Transformative Learning Alliance' of local schools with a focus on creating 'learning without limits' (Swann et al., 2012).

> I leave the children to choose their own level of challenge, that's working really well and it's good for their self-esteem … and they are ready to celebrate their successes and their risk-taking. (Leonardo, teacher. Choice & Challenge project)[5]

As Harrison says 'the emphasis needs to be placed on helping all learners develop and sustain a capacity to learn that not only lasts through the years of compulsory schooling but benefits them throughout their lives' (2013, p. 76).

Back at my old school, Sally and her colleagues have maintained close links with the community and made connections with teachers in local schools:

> Getting the parents on board was the turning point for us. It turned out that they are much more interested in learning and the positive experience of learning than they are in the SATs scores. The overwhelming message here and in the other local schools is that they do not want us to teach to the tests. They told OFSTED that as well. And, of course, we've done better in the tests since we stopped worrying about them anyway. (Interview, May, 2014)

In teacher education where I now work we have choices to make. We have problems of our own of course, with the sector under pressure, if not erasure, through the same waves of reform, but we need to decide where we stand and what we believe in (Lunnenberg & Hamilton, 2008; McNamara et al., 2014). I challenge myself and others to address the issues raised here within our own contexts. As Keesing-Styles (2003) argues, our intention must be to generate a dialogic approach to assessment that promotes critical reflection. Such an environment will encourage our students of teaching to examine their own contexts and to make progress in developing their own critical pedagogy. We need to promote assessment as learning that is consistent with democracy in fostering a more integrated approach to theory and practice, or what Freire termed as praxis: theory in action. The approach must value and validate the experience of learners. Such an approach creates challenges and discomfort but opens up creative possibilities for the renewal of assessment.

NOTES

1 https://reclaimingschools.org/
2 www.teachersolidarity.com
3 www.campaignforstateeducation.org.uk
4 http://thewroxham.org.uk/
5 http://wroxhamtla.org.uk/wp-content/uploads/2014/12/-BeyondLevels-----Assessment-Research-Projects-2014.pdf

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3. AGAINST ACADEMIC LABOUR AND THE DEHUMANISATION OF EDUCATIONAL POSSIBILITY

INTRODUCTION

Increasingly, higher education (HE) policy in the global North has stressed the importance of human capital theory, and developing the productivity or intensity of academic labour (Hall & Bowles, 2016; Marginson, 2012; McGettigan, 2015). This is a key theme that underpins the United Kingdom Government's recent *HE Green Paper* (Department for Business, Innovation and Skills (DBIS), 2015) and that Government's *Productivity Plan* (HM Treasury, 2015). Inside English HE, these policy mechanisms form a new stage in the reshaping of education for the production of value, which are themselves responses to the ongoing long recession, or secular crisis of capitalism that has framed the global economy since 2008 (Bellamy Foster & Yates, 2014).

This crisis is secular in the sense that it is not confined to cyclical fluctuations in the way that capitalism sustains itself. In spite of countermeasures rooted in the politics of austerity, the crisis reproduces itself through weak aggregate consumer demand, persistent low interest rates, low rates of growth in GDP, and declining profitability in formerly productive sectors. This has resulted in reduced investment in capital and people, with high rates of underemployment, unemployment and precarious employment, and a rise in credit-fuelled consumption, like student debt (Carchedi & Roberts, 2013). This secular crisis emerges from hyper-financialisation, which ties both the institutional and individual debt held in the education sector to the associations of capitals that operate trans-nationally and across sectors.

Thus, the crisis opens-out possibilities for demonstrating how the processes of marketisation and financialisation are reshaping the academic labour of both academics and students, by reconceptualising the governance, regulation and funding of HE (Hall, 2015; McGettigan, 2014). Academics and students increasingly work under the structural domination of finance capital, disciplined by the idea of student-as-purchaser or entrepreneur (DBIS, 2015), and with their labour enclosed by institutions that are themselves driven towards competitive positioning in increasingly volatile markets for educational services.

This has been developed through a conceptual return to the analysis of the categories of academic labour, in both its abstract and concrete forms (Hall, 2014; Winn, 2014). As a result, it becomes possible to ground an analysis of this

T. Rudd & I. F. Goodson (Eds.), Negotiating Neoliberalism, 27–40.

revolutionising of the landscape of HE in terms of *systemic regression* (Goodson, 2015), through which academic labour is related to wider transformations in political economy. This then situates academic labour against the politics of austerity, and in turn enables a *reconceptualisation* of the academic imagination that is under ideological attack.

This chapter addresses these processes of *reconceptualisation* and *resistance* with a focus on productivity in the neoliberal university. It reveals the ways in which academic labour is being valorised through processes of intensification that are grounded in human capital theory (McGettigan, 2015). This is tied to the concomitant hyper-alienation of those whose labour is increasingly abstracted inside HE, including precariously-employed academics (CASA, 2016), precariously-indentured students (CUPE3903, 2016), and those professional services staff with poor labour rights whom nonetheless contribute to the reproduction of academic labour (3Cosas, 2016). It is argued that the solidarity of these groups forms sites of potential resistance because their exploitation and alienation reproduces a crisis of sociability or of social reproduction (Hall & Smyth, 2016). One possible space for reconceptualisation is the broadening out of academic resistance into social strikes, which then might centre forms of resistance that describe and realise pre-figurative practices.

A NOTE ON ACADEMIC PRODUCTIVITY

Marx (2004) saw important interrelationships between the production of surplus-value and the length of the working day, the intensity of labour, and productivity (the productiveness of labour).

> [W]e have seen that the relative magnitudes of surplus-value and of price of labour-power are determined by three circumstances; (1) the length of the working-day, or the extensive magnitude of labour; (2) the normal intensity of labour, its intensive magnitude, whereby a given quantity of labour is expended in a given time; (3) the productiveness of labour, whereby the same quantum of labour yields, in a given time, a greater or less quantum of product, dependent on the degree of development in the conditions of production. (Marx, 2004, p. 655)

The management and intensity of work-time and free-time are a key terrain of struggle between Capital and Labour that are amplified at times of crisis when a loss of profitability for businesses, sectors and States becomes acute. The struggle over the control of time enables a form of regression analysis, which then reveals the ways in which *both* competition *and* the stimulation of new, tradable needs and desires, push the forces of production and the relations of production into tension. For Marx (1859):

> At a certain stage of development, the material productive forces of society come into conflict with the existing relations of production or—this merely

> expresses the same thing in legal terms—with the property relations within the framework of which they have operated hitherto. From forms of development of the productive forces these relations turn into their fetters.

Elsewhere Marx (2004, p. 667) described these tensions in terms of: first, 'enforcing economy in each individual business'; and second

> by its anarchical system of competition, the most outrageous squandering of labour-power and of the social means of production, not to mention the creation of a vast number of employments, at present indispensable, but in themselves superfluous.

Inside an increasingly globalised HE, academics are compelled to generate an ever-expanding range of educational services or products, and to chase these into new markets, for instance through internationalisation strategies. Thus, academic time is dominated and restructured though new public management practices such as: the management of research through excellence frameworks; the domination of big data and learning analytics over student outcomes; new workload models that aim to reproduce specific forms of learning environments; and teaching enhancement schemes that enable performative teaching quality agendas (Hall & Bowles, 2016). The focus on the control and intensity of time is critical in enabling academic labour to become more productive of value, and so that it becomes explicitly folded into the circuits of capitalist social relations (see also Downs in this collection). This affects *both* the abstracted and quantified labour of academics (Crawford, 2014), *and* the debt-structured labour of students, which internalises entrepreneurial, systemic demands for productivity inside the individual (The Wages for Students Students, 1975; see also Edmond in this collection). The system increasingly colonises and co-opts all free time, and enforces yet more productivity through monitoring and audit.

Thus, academics and students are subjected to increasing levels of intensity of labour, framed as excellence or entrepreneurialism, across their working lives. This intensity of labour underscores the desperate search for surplus-value and its materialisation as profit. As a result, Marx (2004, p. 667) argued that we witness how 'In capitalist society spare time is acquired for one class by converting the whole life-time of the masses into labour time.' As Meyerhoff et al. (2011) highlight, this recomposes radical forms of solidarity inside the University as performance management.

> Even radical faculty who seek to enact transformations *outside* the university find themselves performing *within* the university as managers not only of their own labor, but of that of their students and their colleagues, designing curriculum and imposing regulations that require students be physically present and adopt a certain performative attitude during class time through the coercive metrics of attendance and participation grades. (Meyerhoff et al., 2011, p. 493)

HUMAN CAPITAL THEORY AND ACADEMIC PRODUCTIVITY

Increasingly, governments in the Global North have re-territorialised education as a space for the production, circulation and accumulation of value (Australian Government, 2015; World Bank, 2011; also see O'Brien in this collection). In English HE, the policy space for this has been set by the HM Treasury (2015) productivity plan (*Fixing the foundations: Creating a more prosperous nation*). The plan centres productivity and intensified work on an ideological terrain that situates our means of reproducing society or our social relationships, solely through capitalist work.

> Productivity is the challenge of our time. It is what makes nations stronger, and families richer. The drivers of productivity are well understood: a dynamic, open enterprising economy supported by long-term public and private investment in infrastructure, skills and science. A nation flourishes when it uses the full skills of all its people in all parts of that nation. (HM Treasury, 2015, p. 1)

The productivity plan is central to an analysis of HE policy as set out in the recent HE Green Paper (DBIS, 2015), with higher learning related to human capital theory. This is a critical insight that flows from McGettigan's (2015) recent work on *The Treasury View of HE: Variable Human Capital Investment*. McGettigan (2015, p. 8) argues that 'undergraduate study [is] a stratified, unequal, positional good dominating future opportunities and outcomes', and rooted in the competitive, entrepreneurial development of human capital. Thus, HM Treasury (2015, p. 8) argue that 'hard choices about funding' are required 'to sharpen incentives for providing an outstanding education to students', and also to 'deliver better value for money'. These hard choices pivot around the control of time and the intensification of work, and they shape the landscape of HE through a reconceptualisation of its purpose.

> Investment is an essential part of raising productivity. In today's economy that is not simply a matter of increasing the stock of machines, equipment and essential physical infrastructure but also, crucially, the development of human and intellectual capital. (HM Treasury, 2015, p. 15)

This reconceptualisation of the purpose of HE is therefore a critical moment in the real subsumption of academic labour that intensifies its activities, for instance in how the curriculum is structured and delivered, and how it is monitored (Hall & Bowles, 2016). Thus, the focus on productivity enables a regressive analysis of the mechanics of the capitalist restructuring of HE, predicated on overcoming crises of profitability and investment. Such an analysis reveals the importance of State-sponsored de-regulation for the market (Newfield, 2012), which reproduces academic practices through performance management and big data. The contexts for this project are now the financialisation of both teaching and research.

The disruption of educational norms that have been negotiated historically and materially sits at the centre of a desire to catalyse sector-wide transformation. In part this is achieved by breaking established labour relations, through new workload

agreements. In part it is situated through transnational engagements between service providers like universities, and service innovators like communications and infrastructure corporations, or financiers like venture capitalists (see for example Philips in this collection for the impact on State schools). These new transnational associations or joint ventures (Ball, 2012; Hall, 2014), pivoting around enterprise, are 'driving productivity by ensuring that firms continually strive to improve their efficiency and better meet customers' needs' (HM Treasury, 2015, p. 61). The transnational imperatives of such State-sponsored innovations enable further trade liberalisation, including The Transatlantic Trade and Investment Partnership (TTIP) with its attrition of the idea of education as a public good (Marginson, 2012; Mountford-Zimdars et al., 2013).

Crucially, the State carves out a space for the reconceptualisation of HE through the regulation of competitive markets, by effective resource allocation across the economy (for alternate State-based policy perspectives see *both* Stray and Eikelund, *and* Sugrue, in this collection). This is one response to low levels of capital investment since the global financial crisis (Bellamy Foster & Yates, 2014; McGettigan, 2015). As a result, universities are squarely in the frontline of this restructuring through service redesign, workforce monitoring, and technological innovation. Here productivity emerges from a freeing up of the market, so that capital and labour can flow between sectors or within sectors, and so that new associations of capitals, joint ventures or enterprises emerge. These flows are increasingly important where capital intensity has diminished, because productivity emerges from the reallocation of capital in 'an open economy with flexible and competitive markets, where expanding firms can access the labour, land and finance they need' (HM Treasury, 2015, p. 81).

ON TEACHING INTENSITY

The refocusing of policy on producing and circulating surplus value through productivity and in-line with human capital theory, has been further distilled in academic contexts through teaching excellence frameworks that drive teaching intensity. The UK Government's recent HE Green Paper (*Fulfilling our Potential: Teaching Excellence, Social Mobility and Student Choice*), seeks to enact the idea of academic productivity inside English HE. As a result, it collapses the contexts of historical struggles over: teaching and pedagogy; the idea that students are purchasers, consumers and/or producers; and determinants of value for money held by families, taxpayers, and employers. These contexts are described and reconceptualised inside one ideological terrain that seeks to de-legitimise alternative conceptualisations of HE.

Such forms of de-legitimisation amplify the roll-out of specific neoliberal agendas (Ball, 2012), and ground HE in: active consumer choice about educational services, supported by access to normalised data; the production of career-ready human capital; and global competition. Therefore, policy demands that students and academics internalise self-surveillance, in the name of 'the development of a

positive work ethic, so that they can contribute more effectively to our efforts to boost the productivity of the UK economy' (DBIS, 2015, p. 11). *Pace* Marx (2004), this is academic productivity that is increasingly shaped by:

> (1) the length of the [academic] working-day, or the extensive magnitude of [academic] labour; (2) the normal intensity of [academic] labour, its intensive magnitude, whereby a given quantity of [academic] labour is expended in a given time; (3) the productiveness of [academic] labour, whereby the same quantum of [academic] labour yields, in a given time, a greater or less quantum of product, dependent on the degree of development in the conditions of [academic] production.

In order to develop the forces of academic production, active consumer choice is central, and this emerges against data about, for instance, future earnings, course quality and teaching intensity, including contact hours. The entrepreneurial intensity of academic work, in creating new educational services, is central to this prescription for academic productivity. A regression analysis might offer-up a counter-narrative of teaching as an inclusive, collegial endeavour, enriched through peer-review, and which depends upon the co-operative labour conditions of both teachers and students. Such a regression analysis is important because the reality of teaching intensity is grafted onto a fractured idea of academic labour.

> Temporary contract working is endemic across UK higher education, with 69,000 (43%) out of a total of 161,000 contracted academic staff on non-permanent contracts. Among 40,000 teaching only staff, 29,435 (73%) have non-permanent contracts. These figures do not include the 75,000 so called 'atypical' academic staff who are also largely engaged in teaching but who are usually employed only on an as and when basis and have little access to CPD, career development or other scholarship opportunities. (Universities and Colleges Union (UCU), 2015)

Such a counter-narrative forms a reconceptualisation of HE practice, which enables conversations about: the precarious, indentured reality of HE (CASA, 2016); the labour costs of the work of students as well as staff, connected to historical debates about wages for schoolwork (The Wages for Students Students, *op cit*); the idea that HE has a publically- or socially-useful value rather than simply a tradable exchange-value; changes to behaviour that are grounded in projections about future earnings (McGettigan, 2015); pedagogic relationships and the curriculum; and the quantified curriculum (Clough et al., 2015).

Forms of re-conceptualisation that might enable resistance are critical because policy increasingly defines the reproduction of academic labour through disciplinary normalisation and performance management. Hence, the proposed Teaching Excellence Framework (TEF) in English HE:

> will increase students' understanding of what they are getting for their money and improve the value they derive from their investment, protecting the interest of the taxpayer who supports the system through provision of student loans. It should also provide better signalling for employers as to which providers they can trust to produce highly skilled graduates. (DBIS, 2015, pp. 12–13)

This is a proposed structural adjustment of HE to meet the needs of productivity plans.

> Information about the quality of teaching is also vital to UK productivity. In an increasingly globalised world, the highest returns go to the individuals and economies with the highest skills. However, the absence of information about the quality of courses, subjects covered and skills gained makes it difficult for employers to identify and recruit graduates with the right level of skills and harder for providers to know how to develop and improve their courses. (DBIS, 2015, p. 19)

Excellence then stands as a cipher for the intensification of academic labour rooted in a restructuring of academic relations of production, which then ensures that the HE terrain is opened-up for trade liberalisation. As Datta (2015) has argued, the TTIP is pivotal here because it protects access to the market for corporations operating across borders.

> The last leaked draft of TTIP is expressed as applying to services which are performed commercially. In an education market which is characterised by a mixed economy of both privately and publicly funded, profit-making and non-profit making institutions, education services are likely to be treated as within the scope of the TTIP treaty. (Datta, 2015)

Through mechanisms that are focused on regimes for measuring excellence, academic labour is re-territorialised in terms of: teaching quality; learning environment; and student outcomes or learning gain. This is academic labour as a globalised, big data project, amplified by human capital intensity (McGettigan, 2015), and the "quantified Self" (Crawford, 2014). This is not simply the intensity of work, but the intensity of motivation to work.

In order to financialise positive outputs/outcomes through data, competition compels universities to drive down on staff working conditions, including new workload arrangements and to increase the surveillance of teaching, research and administration. This is not re-imagining the university through critical pedagogy, but instead stands as an unmaking of the university in the name of service redesign, workforce restructuring/efficiency and global, high-tech enterprise. This is HE de-territorialised for productivity, so that only those academics, students and institutions 'that innovate and present a more compelling value proposition to students will be able to increase their share' (DBIS, 2015, p. 54). As a result what emerges from the

policy space is an assault on the idea of collective, academic work. Instead academics and students are forced into asymmetrical relationships with the reality of their fetishized and alienated individualism in the market (see for example Humphreys in this collection in terms of de-humanization).

ACADEMIC LABOUR AND THE SOCIAL STRIKE

> [I]s there any voice today that has the political credibility and intellectual capacity to offer an alternative vision for universities in England? Will one emerge from within the sector? [...] As custodians of our universities [leaders] need to think about what is best for higher education in England. Is it really the end of the post-war dispensation of public institutions and public service and the opening up of those institutions to global equity capital? There is a choice to be made here and it is a more profound one than our next mobile phone provider. (McQuillan, 2015)

From inside HE, sector-wide associations or university leaders are generally unable to reconcile student work as a form of academic labour that might have points of solidarity with the work of academics. This means that representative groups from outside the labour movement are unable to confront the crisis of social reproduction that is the enclosure and marketization of HE. Moreover, policy *either* targets managers in the performance management of staff through the data-driven normalisation of practice, *or* enforces structural adjustment inside institutions so that more students can be recruited and taught more efficiently. Hence HE witnesses an abundance of technological innovations designed to reproduce the learning environment as a precursor for the restructuring that will be required in order to deliver excellence through intensification.

In a terrain that is described fiscally, where money is the critical and universal reference point for academic value that is itself immanent to future earnings, the most meaningful questions emerge from the labour movement, specific student groups, or academic associations that attempt to make concrete the lived reality of Government reforms. In particular, this relates to student debt or academic precarity.

> We believe people should not go into debt for basic necessities like education, healthcare and housing. Strike Debt initiatives like the Debt Resistors' Operations Manual offer advice to all kinds of debtors about how to escape debt and how to join a growing collective resistance to the debt system. Our network has the goal of building a broad movement, with more effective ways of resisting debt, and with the ultimate goal of creating an alternative economy that benefits us all and not just the 1%. (Rolling Jubilee, 2016)

The focus here on building a broad movement as a way of reconceptualising academic practice inside new forms of social reproduction is important, given the increasingly atomised, precariously employed, efficiency-scarred, technologized

and redesigned academic labour force (see also Sugrue in this collection). Explicitly connecting struggles inside HE, and across education sectors, is a crucial starting point for resistance. However, there is increasing emphasis being placed on the global crisis of sociability that is Capital's inability to re-establish stable forms of accumulation (Bellamy Foster & Yates, 2015; Cleaver, 2000). This crisis is one of social reproduction that amplifies and exacerbates the worst excesses of the market, and it connects academic labour into wider struggles. It is witnessed as follows.

- Through the frame of care-based work that enables individuals to be reproduced or to get some of their physical needs met (childcare, housework, and so on), but which is outsourced to family members or employees, so that wage-earners can return to the market each day to sell their labour. This work of care is gendered and racialized.
- Through increasingly precarious employment, the assault on social security, State repression of marginalised groups, unaffordable rents and student rent strikes, mental health crises, lack of access to basic amenities including water and healthcare, and disciplinary policing, for instance on campus.
- In the rise of companies purportedly involved in the sharing economy, which enable a digital transformation of sectors of the economy whilst failing to provide any form of social security or employment rights.
- In the inability of indebted individuals and States to lift externally-imposed capital controls, and in the profusion of anti-labour trades union legislation.
- In the increasing failure of the curriculum across the globe to respond to its racialized nature, leading to academic struggles like #rhodesmustfall and #whyismycurriculumwhite. These struggles are fuelled by the indignation of students of colour against the on-going colonial condition of the university as an export strategy for specific hegemonies.

Such struggles demonstrate the separation of workers from their means of subsistence or reproduction, or indeed the increasingly precarious nature of that separation, which legitimises particular voices, such as those promoting intensity, productivity and excellence. As Sacchetto (2015) argues, this applies trans-nationally because 'The geography of production is now organized in different areas depending on the kind of commodities that are produced and on the lead and sub-contracting firms'. Thus, it applies across HE because the university is being reconstituted as the producer of educational services that can be commodified and then governed through changes to corporate form that usher in new joint ventures.

In response to this generalised crisis of sociability, there has been a call for the social strike, as a means of generating alternative political actions rooted in solidarity across economic sectors and social relations of production. Such actions connect society and the factory through the critique of social conditions that tend to immiserate.

> Overcoming the limits of present forms of organization means to cut across the artificial division between labour and social struggles, and to bring

> organization on a transnational level, coming to terms once for all with the fact that the national level of action is by now clearly insufficient to build an effective power. Labor and social struggles must find a common political ground of connection. (The Transnational Social Strike Platform, 2015)

This is increasingly important because, as Del Re (2015) notes:

> In Europe the reproduction of individuals is subject to a continuous fluctuation between "social" and "private." The social is the space of direct manipulation, organized by laws, public expenditures, customs, and moral rules that crush the individual's ability to desire. The private is coarsely idealized as the space of freedom, but in most cases it reveals itself as the dominion of neglect, misery, frustration, powerlessness, and loneliness.

Thus it becomes essential to ask how we might 'organize vulnerability and turn it into political action' (Del Re, 2015) on a scale large enough to enable new relations of social reproduction that respond less to the market and trans-national prescriptions of what market freedom entails. Such a reimagining would focus upon social reproduction rooted in equality between different human bodies, rather than being rooted in the equality of data flows. Such a reimagining has to find spaces to flourish inside the university, but increasingly it has to hear and propagate those alternatives that emerge beyond, in social centres or on the Commons, or in responses to austerity. As Milburn (2015) argues, this involves

> making the new conditions visible, disrupting the circulation of capital and directly socialising, collectivising and communising our social relations, reproduction and struggles… Most obviously this involves striking (or otherwise acting) in ways that maximise feelings of collectivity and enhance general levels of sociability.

The idea of striking at the level of society, rather than simply in one industry, amplifies resistance across multiple, complex terrains and spaces, by a range of different subjects. This matters because it offers the potential to re-imagine and reconceptualise social determination and reproduction. This is obscured by the crisis of sociability that enforces the structural adjustment of everyday life by value and the economisation of that life through abstract labour. A social strike aims to offer prefigurative responses to this alienation by encouraging new ways of organising social life. Crucially, this occurs at the intersection of work and social life, and identity formation.

> It isn't defined by the singular identity of worker, a worker that is always a worker regardless of the multiple other demands from other 'roles'. After all work is omnipresent, it continues long after we leave our official places of work, we work as producers but also we work on the other side of the relationship, as consumers, as clients and service providers. The social strike offers the possibility of building up relationships of solidarity, communication,

> knowledge, and shared culture, and in doing so recognising their importance in twenty-first century class formation. To be able to strike today means we cannot strike on only one terrain. To disrupt the flow of capital we need to block all of its avenues– both metaphorically and literally. (Long, 2015)

Thus, working to situate the restructuring of HE against broader social strikes and directional demands forms one means of pushing-back against the ideas of teaching intensification and of staff/students reduced to human capital. Such moments of solidarity are intentionally counter-hegemonic and would highlight how so much of social (and therefore academic) reproduction is predicated on voluntary, unwaged labour, such as that enacted in the home or by students, or by precariously employed labour. Such moments of solidarity would be rooted in specific, social and directional demands potentially grounded in: the liberation of free time beyond teaching or study intensity; the idea of debt-free education or a debt jubilee; a re-focusing of education on collective well-being; and in harnessing education to global emergencies like climate change. They would need to connect, in Hansen's (2015) terms, academics and students to '[a] constitutive heterogeneity of the exploited and expropriated populations of the world', which recognises 'the self-organization and composition of differences and particularly of different strategies of life and survival.'

Critically, this is predicated upon collective work and new forms of working class composition that look beyond utopias or competitive, abstract labour. Here academics and students have a central role because of the vital interplay between theory and practice that plays out through prefigurative academic politics, militant research, and open forms of praxis centred on radical pedagogy (Amsler, 2015; Thorburn, 2012).

> [This] proceeds through practices of collectively mapping of the possibilities of composition, and reflections on how to connect and extend networks of trust and solidarity. It implies sharing tools of organizing and tactics of struggle, taking measure of the rumors and whispers, and engaging in small struggles in ways that can help them transform fear and mistrust into courage and solidarity. (Hansen, 2015)

As Marx (1866) argued, this implies academic labour aiding 'every social and political movement tending in that [same] direction', in order to overcome its own alienation through self-abolition (Hall, 2014).

CONCLUSION

It is impossible to reconcile the central conditions of policy grounded in productivity to non-marketised or non-financialised pedagogic relationships. Inside formalised HE, the prescribed policy direction frames the classroom economically though relations of production that subjugate people as human capital that can be made productive through discipline.

> Discipline is basically the mechanism of power by which we come to exert control in the social body right down to the finest elements, by which we succeed in grabbing hold of the social atoms themselves, which is to say individuals. Techniques for the individualization of power. How to supervise [*surveiller*] someone, how to control his conduct, his behavior, his aptitudes, how to intensify his performance, multiply his capacities, how to put him in a place where he will be most useful: this is what I mean by discipline. (Foucault, 2012)

Revealing the increased disciplinary nature of social reproduction reveals the crisis of sociability that infects HE. Yet such a regression also offers directions for re-conceptualisation and resistance. This re-conceptualisation highlights the asymmetrical power relations that exist in this struggle over *both* the shape *and* the soul of higher education. Those who work within the sector are faced down by global networks of policy-makers, finance capital, the purveyors of educational services, alongside those working inside the sector who believe that there is no alternative. Moreover, this is framed by national/trans-national regulation, for instance through the competition and markets authority and the impending TTIP.

Finding the energy to push-back is then constricted because academic labour increasingly faces struggles on a local level as university bureaucracies recalibrate institutions as competing businesses. This includes disciplining the workforce through new workload agreements, absence management policies, and the use of technologies that increase the consumerisation of the student experience and that reduce academic-agency. It also includes performance-management through increased metric-stress and the devolved responsibility for league table positions that internalises innovation-overload. One of the results is increased anxiety and an inability to respond to the myriad harms that are inflicted on the sector (Hall & Bowles, 2016).

How can higher education respond to crises of social reproduction or sociability, or socio-environmental crises, when the only frame of reference we have is competitive rather than co-operative? (see also Schostak in this collection.) At issue is how to connect: opposition to neoliberal management techniques related to teaching intensity and learning gain; struggles over labour relations and rights inside the University, including those of students; resistance to corporate and individual debt, including rent strikes; the fight for living wages and pension rights for professional services staff; and beyond to the complex and heterogeneous, intersectional, global struggles for liberation and socio-environmental justice. This means that ‘a lot of things need to be changed on the ground in order for a massive economic and political transformation to be possible’ (Shaviro, 2015).

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4. NEOLIBERAL SCHOOLING, DEHUMANISATION AND AN EDUCATION

NEOLIBERAL SCHOOLING – THE NEW NORMAL – THE STANDARDISED PACKAGE

The regressive nature of *neoliberal hegemony* (Giroux, 2012) and the impact on different educational sectors is well rehearsed in this volume. As regards schooling, neoliberalism is arguably at its most visible and its impact on learners, teachers, families most felt. Choice is restricted by statutes, historical, cultural expectations and assumptions. The imposed curriculum and assessment frameworks; the direction, intensity and policing of teacher's labour and the implications for learners, parents and family life bring dehumanisation into strong relief.

Neoliberal schooling brings to the table a sharper alignment with the wider capitalist endeavour, a *new normalisation*, a *set of financial exchanges* (Ball, 2012) and the dogged pursuit of performativity measures (Goodson, 2015). The global comparisons enabled by PISA (Programme for International Student Assessment) cascade down into national curricula, inspection regimes, and teacher standards, impacting teacher performance management and targets for learners.

Underpinning the neoliberal narrative is *market orientated* economics. With the Global Education Reform Movement (GERM) and its monetising of education (a global market estimated at $4.2 trillion dollars)[1] it's hard not to conclude that GERM is systematic global infection (Blower, 2015). The implications of this can be see most graphically in English schools with Private Finance Initiatives (PFI – in the building and maintaining of schools) and the accelerating Academisation programme (taking schools out of public and local authority control into private groups and chains. See also Philips in this volume for a discussion of the implications of this).

In recent years, recession and austerity policies appear to have conveniently created the context and justification for acceleration of these alignments ('Shock Doctrine' Klein, 2007).

So whilst the free market and choice are on one hand promulgated as goals of the neoliberal educational narrative this chapter exposes it as an illusion barely disguising its uniform prescription, remodelling learners as a *compliant proto workforce* and implicitly and overtly de-humanising and impersonal. Jenson and Walker (2008) go further and maintain that ultimately democracy is the casualty here.

Nonetheless, neoliberalism isn't the whole story. The cultural expectations and behaviours surrounding schooling have a long history thoroughly uncovered in

T. Rudd & I. F. Goodson (Eds.), Negotiating Neoliberalism, 41–57.

the critical perspectives.[2] A point in question here and of fundamental significance to this chapter is the way neoliberalism perpetuates and amplifies a conflation of *schooling* and *education.* They can overlap but are not synonymous (Meighan & Harber, 2007; Harber, 2009). Schooling can be characterised as something of a *'done to'* mechanism, more about instruction, preparation, drill, guidance and training. Typically, in neoliberal schooling this is a *high stakes*, one chance, rigid, impersonal model linked to an externally imposed curriculum and assessment framework. An education is a much broader concept, borne from critical pedagogy, holistic in nature and flexible in terms meeting the needs and aspirations of the learner. The paradox is recognised by Abbott and MacTaggart when they use the phrase 'O*verschooled but Under Educated'* (Abbott & MacTaggart, 2010).

Neoliberal dehumanisation essentially involves the *loss of self-determination, the forfeit of choice, the restriction on voice and agency*. At best it offers *tailoring* toward a *standardised prescription,* far removed from more critical and transformational perspectives. As a consequence, it struggles to respond to non-standard learners or promote a vibrant, participatory democracy and, is the very antithesis of *deeper personalisation* agendas.

Principally, learners are the focus of dehumanising neoliberal educational contexts but teachers and parents and the wider family are similarly victims. Despite this, many unwittingly or tacitly sustain the neoliberal hegemony through *compliance* having been sucked into the '*hegemonic newspeak*' (Bourdieu & Wacquant, 2001). They have few tools to re-imagine or reconstruct education or an effective avenue in which to resist (or at least if they have, they have yet to do so). Giroux points out the *neoliberal war on schools* puts teachers not only on the *defensive* but increasingly they assume more *instrumental and mercenary roles* Giroux (2012). Much the same could be said about many learners and parents.

Goodson (2015) posed the question, 'How do we find our bearings in this blizzard of change?' The argument here is that the solutions for resisting and reconceptualising neoliberal education are most likely to be found in the ongoing history of *alternatives and educational practice at the margins*. They provide a resource in educational capital, a renewal lens which can ignite a wider renaissance of an educational and social imagination.

This chapter aims to illustrate dehumanisation of mainstream schooling by briefly exploring the character of educational alternatives focusing on home-based education and flexischooling.

In the effective vacuum beyond schools, teachers, learners and families troubled by the values, practices and rigidity neoliberal schooling have had the classic option of '*damage limitation*' (Meighan, 2004) – a strategy of obtaining an *education despite of school*. Understanding what the '*game*' of school is about ultimately permits families and learners to take back some agency and *get by*. Teachers have similarly deployed '*damage limitation*' and other survival strategies, drawing on good experiences and occasional forays into resistance. However, whilst accepting there is always a measure of agency for those in mainstream settings, reality falls

short of that available to those who take more control of their own learning and learning pathways. An excursion into education at the margins illuminates some such themes and once again brings the dehumanisation arising from neoliberal schooling into sharp focus.

This is not to suggest any of these alternatives are *the* answers. Rather, they are indicative of flourishing (if small) transformative spaces that can signpost pathways to a re-imagined, diverse and resilient *educational landscape* challenging neoliberalism and its narratives.

In the process, the discussion will inevitably touch base with Goodson's five 'R's' (Goodson, 2015) and in particular *reconceptualisation, renewal* and the sixth 'R' *resistance.* The focus will be broadly on the English perspective, although readers will be able to make links to the wider United Kingdom and global experience. Inevitably, the picture is far more complex and nuanced than can be characterised in the space here but it is a fertile starting point.

EDUCATIONAL ALTERNATIVES – TOWARDS A BESPOKE EDUCATION

Within the definition of alternative used here are schools resting on different principles, values and practices than the mainstream offer. In England alternative settings can be found in the better known democratic schools like *Summerhill*[3] and *Sands*[4] deriving from the informal, autonomous and libertarian education traditions. There are the *Steiner* Schools,[5] *Montessori* Schools[6] and others with their specific philosophies. However, there are a myriad of settings which operate sometimes like schools, sometimes like open learning centres, and some organised with a series of community and work placements augmented by traditional or personalised programmes. Other settings include a range of personalised education centres which run with particular emphases like the *Self-Managed Learning College*[7] specialising in helping young people to discover goals, find what and how they would like to learn. There are additionally those dimensions which straddle alternative and mainstream schooling in design and degree. Flexischooling, co-operative and human scale education and small school movements are examples here. Some are fee paying, some are parent co-operatives. Some are full-time and others part-time. Some are face to face; some are online whilst others are blended experiences.

The legal position in England and Wales on education goes further in offering some potential to exercise choice and flexibility in stating that it is the *duty and responsibility* of every parent to provide an education *suitable*[8] to a child's age, aptitude and ability and any special needs. This may occur in a *school or otherwise (The Education Act 1996 s.7)*. In addition, the law maintains that pupils should be educated in accordance with the *wishes of their parents where possible (The Education Act 1996 s.9).* The '*otherwise*' commonly includes forms of elective home-based education and flexischooling. At the deschooled end of the field there is elective *home-based education*[9] – a continuum in itself. This can range from '*school at home*' (actually rare in the UK) to more informal, self-directed and autonomous

approaches. The available counter narratives and practice of any of these alternatives deserve attention if only to consider what light can be brought to Goodson's 6 R's (2016), Approaches tend towards *personalisation* and emphasise *experiential life-based learning*. Whilst outcomes of an education can include standardised UK curriculum/assessment metrics, they are inclined to be underpinned by *broader evaluation and assessment* strategies. Significant degrees of choice can feature alongside *invited teaching and assessment* within *convivial settings*. They are mindful of and place at the core *critical approaches, democratic and co-operative behaviours*. They highly value *wider goals* of gainful employment, good physical and mental health and contributions to family, community, society, active citizenship and so on. Curricula are less siloed and more *integrated* or *self-designed/natural curricula* (that which interest the learner irrespective of pre-ordained progressions or assumptions of age-stage learning and assessment… see also Meighan, 2001). They may also draw from the wider *catalogue curriculum* (programmes from other groups/bodies not confined to schooling curricula… see Meighan & Harber, 2007). Often learning experiences will be *co-created* between learner and mentors. For the most part alternatives remain guardians of more human values and critical pedagogy.

Home-Based Education – '*Anybody, Any Age; Any Time, Any Place; Any Pathway, Any Pace*'[10]

Home-based education stands as the total antithesis of the neoliberal endeavour.[11] Learning is stripped bare of its institutional, curricular, assessment norms and situational constraints of lessons, bells, terms and so on. It is conceived pretty much as the actors see it, a *process of self-design*. From the neoliberal perspective it is anarchically '*bespoke*', and '*free-range*' rather than the '*off the peg*' or '*factory-farm model*' of schooling. Learning draws more easily upon, authentic life experiences and resources as opposed to the limited, filtered substitutions and opportunities offered in schools. In contrast to mainstream schools, learners, parents, families and, where invited, mentors, coaches and teachers operate in climate of flexibility, choice and negotiation. Whilst schools appear aligned with institutional convenience, custom and practice and its own agendas, home-based education is focused on the learner and the here and now. It works consciously with the context of family life, sourcing experiences and solutions as the learner moves on.

The usual tired stereotypes of home-based educating families (middle-class, kitchen table school etc.) are plain misrepresentations. The situation is far more complex (see Fortune-Wood, 2005, 2006, 2007). Fortune-Wood's research uncovered that the *rigidity of schooling* was the main reason why home-based education was chosen (ibid, 2005, 29). Most respondents indicated that their educational approach ranged between flexible/structured and flexible/autonomous, and only 2.5% indicated they fully followed the national curriculum (Ibid, 2005, 57). Thomas (2006) identified how much of the *learning is informal* and how this works. Intensive, standardised schooling is pretty much abandoned.

Commonly, home-based educating families also attend home education groups. These are usually informal co-operative networks established for support, friendship and learning, although, they may also offer specific invitational programmes (like the *Home Education Centre (Somerset)*[12] and the *Otherwise Club (London)*).[13] Such groups are increasingly supplemented by online support networks and social media forums. Unlike mainstream schools they are freed from rigid, standardised age-staging – part of the '*tyranny of the peer group*' identified by Meighan (1993). Mixed-age and intergenerational learning is commonplace.

Flexibility, adaptability and serendipity are at the heart of the personalised, human and holistic approach adopted. Research suggests it works across all extremes of the ability spectrum. It is particularly effective for many otherwise identified as special needs, the school phobic, bullied and vulnerable. It seems to be successful using standardised school system measures as it does in the broader outcomes of education. Youngsters go on to live useful, happy and productive lives.[14] Its importance is not that this is an option or answer for everyone. However, it is for some and further key characteristics could have application more generally in how learning settings and learning systems might develop.

Meighan (1992, 1997, 2006; Meighan & Harber, 2007) realised this when he began to look at learning systems and recognised that home educators were trailblazers. Many had already found a learning system truly fit for a democracy. This was developed into thinking about a learning system that could ultimately provide a landscape of '*alternatives for everybody all of the time*'. He identified why home-based education is successful.

> Natural learning and 'dovetailing' ('just in time' – associated with informal learning… as and when it's needed); Direct access to an information-rich society; Adaptation to a wide variety of learning styles; Efficient use of time; A non-hostile learning environment; Learner Managed Learning – plan, do, review; Use of the catalogue curriculum approach; Matching of the logic of multiple intelligence theory; Adults as learning agents, learning coaches and learning site-managers; Plenty of first-hand experience; The application of various forms of discipline (authoritarian, autonomous, democratic); Social skills obtained from the real world; Congruency with current knowledge about how the brain works (from Meighan, 2005).[15]

Flexischooling / Flexitime – Making Choices, Finding Voice and Agency

The idea of *flexischooling* came to Dr Roland Meighan in the 1970s when he found home educating families were not necessarily opposed to schools. Many wanted a flexible relationship with schools, in their eyes *'getting the best of both worlds'*. At the same time Meighan came across experiments in the United States of America with flexible learning arrangements called *Independent Study Programmes* or *ISPs*. Meighan explored the logistics of flexischooling, later discussing the idea with John

Holt. This culminated in a book, *Flexischooling – education for tomorrow starting yesterday* (Meighan, 1988).

Philip Toogood and his wife Annabel were then asked in 1987 by parents to re-open the *Dame Catherine's School* at Ticknall, Derbyshire, as an independent, parent co-operative learning centre and all-ages, flexischool. The secondary section of Dame Catherine's split off to become the *East Midlands Flexicollege,* a base for the development of flexi-schooling (the UK's earliest example of a full flexischool).[16]

Flexischooling (like personalisation and home-based education) is a continuum. At its shallow and simplest end, it is a basic *flexitime* arrangement where the school-based and home-based learning are discrete and continue as 'normal'.[17] The mainstream system has traditionally accommodated this to some extent in nursery/early years provision. There are also examples of some secondary phase schools who offer flexitime contracts with various students who earn the right to study away from school for periods. So, even at this superficial end of the continuum the concept begins to question some basic assumptions of schooling, accepting:

- a single location is not essential
- parents can have an active role
- children/young people can learn without teachers being present
- facilitating learning is as much part of teaching as formal instruction
- resources at home/elsewhere both physical and virtual can be utilised
- uniqueness of individuals/individual learning

At the radical and more transformational end of the spectrum flexischooling goes further. As such, it has very strong links to deep personalisation and critical perspectives. Deep flexischooling acknowledges the rapidly changing world, the ubiquitous availability and ease of knowledge access, the complexities of life and behaviour. It recognises rigid people do not cope; flexible people have a better chance. Complex behaviours of the modern world sometimes necessitate authoritarian behaviours (knowing when to take instructions/give them), sometimes times self-managing skills of autonomous behaviours and at yet at other times the co-operative skills of democratic behaviours. For particular groups like autistic spectrum learners' flexischooling can be the very best option for them, their families and schools (Lawrence, 2012). Flexischooling accepts the world is multidimensional contrasting with schools who are for the most part are one-dimensional, predominantly authoritarian experiences.

Radical/deep flexischooling can take advantage much broader notions of curriculum rather than sole reliance on current 4–19 Pathways. Learners can identify flexible learning episodes and journeys at a pace dictated by their own needs and aspirations. Flexischooling families like their full-time home-based educating counterparts open up choices, time and opportunities to be much more flexible in their own *life patterns*.

NEOLIBERAL SCHOOLING – DEHUMANSATION FOR ALL

Inevitably alternative paradigms conflict with the certainties sought by the neoliberal educational approach. The 'supply chain' of a *standardised, compliant proto workforce* is somewhat challenged. As a result, home-based learning and flexischooling are not only an antidote to neoliberalism but a resource for damage limitation, refraction, renewal, resistance and reconceptualisation. They signpost the ways in which it is possible to create learning systems capable of developing highly effective, creative, independent and co-operative, entrepreneurial and democratic critically disposed learners and citizens.

Neoliberal education can be presented in the most damning fashion *Day Prison* (Meighan, 1995; Gray, 2013), *Compulsory Schooling Disease* (Shute, 1993), Weapons *of Mass Instruction* (Taylor Gatto, 2009), *Toxic Schooling* (Harber, 2009), *Battery Hens* (Abbott, 1999) and has been consistently described in terms of an *industrialised production line* – most recently by Robinson (2015). In contrast home-based educated, flexischoolers and their families have been able to refract and work with a range of freedoms. Their experience suggests responsibility, maturity and learning do not have to reside with schooling. Neoliberal schooling is but a choice, they need not accept *school time (lessons, days, weeks, terms, years)* and can arrange learning experiences to suit the learner. Families and learners can work with an extended range of people (not just teachers), negotiating and agreeing learning plans. Learning and accreditations can be undertaken and altered as and when desired.

John Taylor Gatto maintained schooling in the United States of America promoted *intellectual dependency* and minimal, but easily measurable competencies (Taylor Gatto, 1992). Edmond Holmes had described the national curriculum and a similar situation in England 100 years ago. He lamented how shallow learning took precedence of anything worthwhile and deep (Holmes, 1911). Contemporary schooling does little to contradict these assessments. Research, investigations, critical pedagogy, creativity, imagination and physical activity have all taken a 'back seat' in favour of a narrow focus on teaching dominated by a *'back to basics'* curriculum. Lessons are frequently cut short denying the children the chance to complete their activities. The necessity to '*move on'*, '*the next lesson',* '*make progress',* '*deliver the curriculum'* override all. Compared to this the home-based and flexischool educated take back all or some of this control over time permitting sustained interest, depth of learning, enquiry, and plentiful opportunities for dialogue.

The latter point is significant. Critical, intellectual perspectives can only flourish within an environment of plentiful exchange of ideas with a range of people and sources. In schools learner conversation is subject to major limitations and time is restricted for reading research. The home-based educated and flexischooled have that time and space tending to immerse themselves in questioning and freethinking in the more informal settings.

Neoliberal schooling falls prey to enormous '*own goals*'. Placing so much currency on age-staged standardised progress defines a whole range of young people won't make the norm benchmarks. Many will be 'special needs' – *square pegs in round holes.* Some will always be on *different time-lines*, some will strain to *'catch up'* others, too deeply challenged will find school learning a step too far, unaligned with their own needs and lives. Rather than reconfiguring the '*one-size fits all'* systems the result is a whole '*special needs industry*'. For those with real barriers to learning, compliance and conformity with the expected norms are unreasonable, *repressive* expectations.

Age-staging also brings with it a uniquely damaging *tyranny of the peer group* (Meighan, 1993). Stereotypically, the home-based educated are portrayed as having issues with socialisation but, the reality is, they are often more secure and familiar working and communicating across age-ranges and generations than their schooled counterparts. The latter, while attending settings with a range of children and young people are more likely to be confined to age-based year groups and classes. Those youngsters who have special aptitudes and passions in their learning are also freed from the limitations of restricted, standardised curriculum and assessment progressions.

Taylor Gatto additionally identified an *emotional dependency* in schools (Taylor Gatto, 1992). One contemporary element of this is evidenced in the shift from the more overtly physical maintenance of power relations in classroom to the subtler but systematic behaviourist approaches. Whilst superficially bringing calmer, less volatile learning environments (particularly in younger classrooms), the continuously applied rewards and sanctions have a de-humanising impact. The learner is *groomed* to comply and continuously look for approval. In contrast, alternatives like home-based education adopt more humanistic, emotionally mature resilient approaches helping and enskilling youngsters to manage themselves.

Cunningham (2011) discusses the widespread characterisation of young people as *provisional human beings* – a kind of sub-person until arbitrarily reassigned at eighteen. Neoliberalism's *high stakes* schooling is full of this *provisionality* with telling phrases expressing the urgency and significance of this '*preparation for life*', '*one chance*' journey to '*achieve potential*'. The language is predicated on a range of suppositions failing to acknowledge their capacities until some pre-defined age and stage. Once more the home-based and flexischool educated are afforded both more control and agency over their own lives in a mature context of *subsidiarity – where they assume responsibilities and take on learning when they are ready for it.*

Failing to meet standardised norms of behaviours, learning and progress is damaging, life-long and life-changing. The *medicated generation* reported in *The Telegraph* in 2011 gave the shocking statistic of 650,000 children between the ages 8 and 13 being prescribed powerful mind altering drugs.[18] Other painful data is available for the bullies and the bullied, the anxious, school phobic, the persistent truants, the children with special needs – ASD,[19] ADHD,[20] Dyslexia, self-harming[21] etc. It's too simplistic to apportion all the blame on schools but they clearly play a

significant part in undermining young people's sense of control, agency and voice over their own learning and lives. References to these types of statistics, the dramas of school classrooms and behaviours, the physical and sexual abuse of children remind us that schools do not always live up to the safeguarding standards they claim to hold dear (see Charles-Warner, 2015; Harber, 2004; Harber & Sakade, 2009). Whilst *collateral damage* hits the news regularly the appetite to change is depressingly muted. Little wonder that despite the challenges both home-based education and flexischooling are enjoying an upsurge of interest as families and learners seek other pathways or at least a greater degree of damage limitation.

Dehumanisation is no less kind to teachers or parents. There has always been resistance to acknowledge teaching as a full profession. The language of *teacher training* does little to help this. The '*modernization and remodelling*' of the workforce, the new managerialism and latterly the shift to academies and privatization has provided a potent de-humanising context for teacher's work. Jensen and Walker (2008) elaborately describe the neoliberal educational landscape and argue the associated educational discourses have successfully appropriated both the purpose and processes of schooling and teachers labour. Alienation is developed through discourses of competition, standards and the '*tyranny of the manual*' (directing the routines and activities of teachers). This is now entrenched into the requirement to meet specific teacher (neoliberal) standards effectively excluding broader notions of the role. It's soon apparent to new teachers as it is to their experienced colleagues that alienation and de-humanisation are core to their chosen work, as restrictive for them as it is to pupils.

The classroom characterises the *intensification* of teacher's role and labour. Teaching programmes and individual lessons are more and more likely to be rigidly fixed. The impact of setting ability groups adds to this issue. Though charged with tailoring these to their own learner's needs teachers are often working to a plan with little stake in it and limited time to customise. What used to be an area of relative creativity and flexibility is now very much a *fait accompli – programme instruction.*

In recent decades the significant progress has been made in the science of learning yet there is scant evidence that pedagogy and settings are shifting to accommodate these understandings (Abbott, 1999; Abbott & MacTaggart, 2010 rehearse this well). Limited choices and engagement can lead learners to boredom and disaffection. Teachers pragmatically and exhaustingly apply behaviourist management approaches to keep the learning climate workable. This *emotional enslavement* diminishes teacher's opportunities to engage in more emotionally mature approaches underpinned by values of self-management favoured by the home-based educators.

The result is that teachers have a declining concept of working for public service (Lynch, 2014). This is now replaced by the goal of developing the neoliberal citizen. The influence of private and corporate academy chains, free schools and the like have eroded any shared professionalism teachers had, fragmenting the once more secure and systematic employment terms and conditions. The shift from university to school-based training routes has further reduced time for wider reflections on

education and focused more on *job-based competences.* Trainess may have high aspirations for their pupils and society in terms of social justice, for example, but they are insufficiently supported by narratives that recognise democratic goals, critical pedagogy and self-determination. Stronger social and moral values that once pervaded teaching have been damaged and collective loyalty and mission has been replaced with careerism and self-interest.

Research, the media and blogosphere echo and amplify the unhappiness and despair of teachers. With the declining influence of collective resistance (teacher unions) the pain is most felt on the at the individual level. Cracks in workforce supply and sustainability have deepened beginning with problematic drop out rates during training and then in the first five years of the job.[22] The climate is one of a general crisis in teaching recruitment and retention further deepened by specific issues in some subject areas. Teacher's labour and self-worth are continuously defined and annually exposed in school league tables ultimately putting their own physical and mental welfare under pressure.[23] High rates of illness and absence have ensued.[24]

Nothing could be further removed from the experience of the families, friends, peers, mentors and teachers *invited* to work with the home-based educated. Likewise, flexischoolers have been able secure some time to function in this way.

The experience of parents has followed a similar pattern to learners and teachers. For a short window most primary schools appeared to welcome parents (and others in the community) as helpers and para-professional aides. There were *family learning programmes* and a semblance of a joint enterprise and mutual understanding and growth. Nevertheless, under neoliberal education policies the majority of parents have been positioned once more within the *deficit paradigm, removed from within schools* and consigned the school gate. Parental '*shortcomings*' are soon internalised. Not only do they have to deal with the peer competition and comparisons at the school entrance but their child's 'deficiencies' (and by implication and association theirs) are consistently communicated in the raft of assessments, daily conversations through early nursery and school lives. Parents are quickly inducted onto the ladder of pre-programmed expectations and norms and *guilt.*

Neoliberalism has also rescripted *parents as a threat*. High profile safeguarding cases have led to a climate of mistrust and fear. Beyond the physical defences and controls surrounding and within schools there are contradictory messages about parents. Whilst they are not considered a danger for the pre-school years, for evenings, weekends and holidays when they are around children of school-age in term times they are evidently a risk (Charles-Warner, 2015).

However, parents are not totally painted out of the picture. They have vital roles as *enforcers* with issues like homework, uniform and attendance. The law itself has increasingly been used to penalise parents for unauthorised absence and holidays taken in school time. Again, the erosion of the relationship that could exist between home and school has been replaced by workplace-like responsibilities and expectations backed up where required, by punitive and sometimes legal sanctions.

RESISTANCE, REVISISTING SUBVERSION, MAKING COMMON CAUSE

Resistance against neoliberal education sits within the wider battle for hearts, minds and change. The *Crisis of the Capitalist System: Where Do We Go from Here?* (Wallerstein, 2009) discusses lines of emphasis applicable to all areas of life and work. Hall (2016) in this volume rehearses related issues and the problems of the asymmetrical power relations in the struggle. The danger remains that at every turn, across all sectors, neoliberalism defaults to monetising everything, derailing vocational commitment. Giroux (2012) explores how educators might resist and enhance democracy. The title *educator* predisposes that a critical pedagogy at the heart of their labour. It is essential that this is reclaimed from the instrumentalism and instruction straightjacket. Ultimately, as Meighan (2005) pointed out, educators need to *shift their roles predominantly to focus on learning, co-construction and to act as pedagogues and guides.* For the current professionals this requires a whole new range of dispositions, skills and capacities beyond those for which they were prepared. Postman and Weingartner's (1969) *Teaching as a Subversive Activity* still resonates here reminding educators of their subversive role… '*to help all students develop built-in, shock-proof crap detectors as basic equipment in their survival kits*'. That is still eminently possible – mainstream agendas in these troubling times and the era of austerity can be explored without falling uncritically into the neoliberal message. Home-based educators and flexischoolers already point the way for parents, families and the wider community to take up common purpose here.

The focus on the learner's agenda and their principle right to determine their own lives and learning are powerfully moral, practical and defensible propositions for resistance and advocacy. Resistance and reconceptualisation requires cultivation at all levels and on all fronts with all sorts of individuals and groups, essentially an activism from all quarters of society.

For too long educational professionals have failed to engage with the alternatives at the margins. They have also ignored or problematised parents and paid lip service to the experience of young people themselves. Accordingly, debates need unswerving commitment to voice and agency for the learners and the revision of what is perceived as childhood and adolescence. The long and ongoing battles over gender, race, sexuality and so on reminds us of the scale of such a task. Whilst failure is partly indicative of the pressures bearing down on teachers it's also about rigid mindsets, inertia and prejudice. It reflects an underestimation of the knowledge, skills and histories of those beyond their own territory and a consequent reluctance to engage, to learn from and with these constituencies.

A pre-requisite is shared platforms and the airing of contrasting stories about learning, family and life. These can be incorporated into conventional academic and professional arenas but importantly conversations and exchanges need to enter every level and corner of society via all media. In this respect impact can be just as important, if not more so, on social media as it might be in a learned journal or book. This multi-levelled dialogue requires accessible communication and the

development of a common language in the spaces that lie between the current silos. In the process, alternatives should *legitimised* and *normalised*, brought in from the margins as *credible choices*.

In the context of considerably weakened unions, other sources of resistance and activism have to step up to the mark. Drawing in a range of democratically educated, self-managed learners and parents, home-based educating families and flexischoolers amongst others could realise a significant, capable and underused asset. Historically, the home-based education community has been impressive in its ability to organise, self-help, support and to resist.[25] Web forums and increasingly social media groups link large networks of families. They are sustained by experienced volunteers acting as *knowledge bases, advocates, networkers, mobilisers and campaigners*. They involve themselves with families in their dealings with authorities and even undertake legal support and often establish excellent political links. Mainstream educators would do well to work with and learn from them in resisting and reconceptualising the neoliberal juggernaut.

Flexischooling is particularly well placed for further attention as it is situated at the boundary of alternative – mainstream notions of education. It stands by its very nature at a place where questions will be asked, assumptions challenged and understandings developed. It has the potential to be an exciting space, a catalyst for reconceptualisation. The journey from simple flexitime arrangements into deeper pedagogical and working relations between school and home can be a powerfully transformational. *Hollinsclough C of E Primary School* went from the smallest school in England with 5 pupils to 55 and oversubscribed (*Mountford-Lees, 2012*) by taking in flexischoolers. Whilst acknowledging it still exists at the shallower end of the flexischooling continuum it's thriving, successful and innovative and already re-shaping its approaches to pedagogy and curriculum.

BEYOND NEOLIBERAL SCHOOLING: PERSONALISING THE EDUCATIONAL LANDSCAPE – A WAY FORWARD

Change more often than not comes from the margins and not from within (Leadbeater, 2004, 2005, 2012; Goodson, 2015). The *otherwise* and *alternative* spheres indicate all the eggs don't have to go in the same neoliberal basket. They additionally provide the lens, principles, tools, and examples to reconsider education in terms of more human, personalised, flexible narratives and pathways.

As it stands the neoliberal landscape lacks sufficient imaginative educational capital to embrace difference or learn with and from it. The paucity of a vibrant and healthy educational *gene pool*, a lack of '*edversity*' (Humphreys, 2007) ultimately risks catastrophic failure and ultimately extinction. Though arguably desirable, the high price inflicted by such an episode might be unacceptable and drawn out. On the other hand, *diversity with democracy* could be the *genome of sustainable evolutionary development, successful change and resilience in the educational landscape.*

At one level this is about a simple acceptance that building a fully active and mature democracy requires *democratic educational settings steeped in critical pedagogy where ultimately learning and assessment must be fundamentally invitational.*

The task of reconceptualisation can draw upon the alternative narratives for some guiding principles that assist the discourse, envisioning and the evolution of a personalised educational landscape. The ability to self-determine one's own life and learning underpins this. Important elements might include:

- Learner-managed and co-constructed learning
- Invitational teaching and assessment based on principles of subsidiarity
- Learning from the catalogue and natural versions of curriculum
- Settings with democratic values, organisation and practice at their heart
- Personalised learning journeys and experiences.

The starting point is with the learner and useful tools already exist here. *The Declaration of Learner's Rights and Responsibilities* and a further extension (The Wondertree Foundation, 1995) address the re-humanisation of education in full. *The Learner's Charter for a Personalised Learning Environment* (Green, Facer, Rudd, Dillon, & Humphreys, 2005) is even more accessible to the current mainstream. The Cambridge Primary Review Trust Research Survey 2 (Robinson, 2014) encouragingly echoes these putting learners centre stage underpinning school ethos with *The United Nations Convention on the Rights of the Child (UNCRC)*. Such documents provide powerful *learner agendas* to guide alternative discourse and resistance. Commensurate shifts would also be required to be the educator's role. Simply, the emphasis moves from being predominantly '*the sage on the stage*' to mostly the '*guide on the side*' (*Meighan & Harber, 2007* – a co-construction model).

Such a landscape would be established within a regulatory and financial framework capable of maintaining existing alternatives whilst embracing the new. Abbott and Ryan (2000) remind us that schools are only one component of a learning society. Schools don't need to disappear but they would need to *evolve.* They could be *recycled* into *All-age, Invitational Community Learning Centres* (Meighan, 2005; Humphreys, 2007). These would be 365/24/7 community resources – physical and virtual hubs and a base for *pedagogues*. Together with other mentors, teachers, families and peers they would help co-create learning pathways and support self–managed, self-paced learners. They would act as a resource to help learners devise their own personal learning plans, their own *episodes and journeys* constructed from the *natural curriculum* and available *catalogue curricula* (including the national curriculum for as long as anyone called for it) (Meighan, 2005; Humphreys, 2014).

What this re-imagining involves is replacing the ever reductionist, inertia ridden, standardised factory model of schooling with a *personalised ecosystem*. Here *edversity* ensures resilience and sustainability with a predisposition in the landscape for agility, flexibility, adaptability and responsiveness. Unlike the limitations of schooling this would have the potential to be *an education.*

Meighan's (2001) strap lines simply, yet perfectly encapsulate the opportunities afforded by such a human, personalised and educational landscape.

I did it my way – though often in co-operation with others.

Alternatives for everybody, all the time.

Anybody, any age; any time, any place; any pathway, any pace.

NOTES

[1] The UK's support of the growth of private education through its development aid: questioning its responsibilities as regards its human rights extraterritorial obligations Alternative report presented to the Committee on Economic, Social and Cultural Rights (CESCR) on the occasion of the consideration of list of issues related to the sixth periodic report of the United Kingdom of Great Britain and Northern Ireland (UK) during the Committee 55th session (Report submitted to the pre-sessional working group) https://www.teachers.org.uk/files/rte_alternative_report_cescr_eto_uk_final_09_2015_updated.pdf

[2] Although the neoliberal hegemony is a relatively recent phenomena these contemporary symptoms echo and amplify those rehearsed in the critiques of Edmond Holmes, A.S Neil, Rudolph Steiner, Margaret McMillan and Charlotte Mason in the late nineteenth and early twentieth centuries and those from the 1960s like James Hemming, Carl Rogers, Neil Postman, Charles Weingartner, Everret Reimer, Ivan Illich, John Holt, Roland Meighan, John Taylor Gatto, John Abbott and huge range of writers consistently describing the inhumanity, alienation and corrupted views of young people within education and particularly schooling. (Professor Clive Harber revisits some of these earlier critiques and argues cogently 'Toxic Schooling: How Schools Became Worse' (Harber, 2009))

[3] A.S Neill's Summerhill School, a co-educational boarding school in Suffolk, England, is the original alternative 'free' school http://www.summerhillschool.co.uk/

[4] Sands School Ashburton, Democratic School Devon, England Sands School is an Alternative Democratically run school for 10 to 17 Year-olds School http://www.sands-school.co.uk/

[5] Steiner Schools run according to the philosophy of their founder Rudolph Steiner. Originating in Germany in 1919, Steiner schools form the largest group of independent non-denominational private schools in the world. http://www.steinerwaldorf.org/steiner-education/

[6] Montessori Schools run according to the philosophy of their founder Maria Montessori. Montessori saw that children learn best by doing and that happy self-motivated learners form positive images of themselves as confident, successful people. http://www.montessori.org.uk/what_is_montessori

[7] The Self-managed Learning College is a unique setting for 9-16 year olds in Brighton, England. The Self Managed learner determines what, where when, how and why they will learn. Learning is structured and supported but there is no predefined syllabus or curriculum. http://college.selfmanagedlearning.org/

[8] See Davies, R. (2015) for a discussion of 'suitable'.

[9] There are a range of terms used in relation to home education all with important connotations (home education, home schooling, elective home education, unschooling, home ed etc. I use the phrase home-based education as it emphasises that although home may be the base the education takes place with and within the wider world.

[10] See Meighan, R. (2001)

[11] See Rothermel, P. (Ed) (2015) International Perspectives on Home Education. Palgrave Macmillan. Data is not collected on the home-educated but the best estimates made by Fortune-Wood (2006) were approximately 45,000 plus or minus 10,000 – roughly one half percent of the school age population.

[12] Home Education Centre, Somerset, England: http://www.homeeducationcentre.org.uk/

[13] The Otherwise Club, London, England http://www.theotherwiseclub.org.uk/

[14] For introductions to research see Kunzman, R. Gaither, M. (2013) Homeschooling: A Comprehensive Survey of the Research. Other Education: The Journal of Educational Alternatives. Volume 2, Issue 1. pp. 4–59.
Fortune-Wood, M. (2005), Fortune-Wood, M. (2006) Fortune-Wood, M. (2007) Safran-Barson, L. (Ed) (2006), Rothermel, P. (Ed) (2015). Mike Wood on his Home Ed UK website http://www.home-education.org.uk/articles/research/research-literature-review.pdf

[15] Many powerful expositions of the philosophies of this approach can be found in the likes of Life (Prieznitz, W. (Ed) 2008) Fortune-Wood, J. (2001) (2002a) (2002b) Safran-Barson, L. (Ed) (2006).

[16] Philip Toogood was working at the *Hartland Small School* in Devon. He was invited by the *Schumacher Society* to co-ordinate a movement to become known as the *Human Scale Education Association* in 1985. This group explored the ideas of *Minischooling* and *Flexischooling* in a variety of settings including the '*New York City as School*' and the need to protect small schools and the right to home education.

[17] The responsibilities of schools and families are more complex (and confused) in reality but individual agreements are established around the absence of meaningful guidance attached to this provision. It is clear that flexischooling is a decision to be made by the headteacher and not a local authority.

[18] The Telegraph Newspaper (14th September, 2011) 650,000 British Children on Drug to Control Behaviour www.telegraph.co.uk/…/Shy-children-at-risk-of-being-diagnosed-wit... Pre-8 and post-13 children were additionally medicated.

[19] ASD – Autistic spectrum disorder.

[20] ADHD – Attention deficit hyperactivity disorder.

[21] One of the latest reports concerned the increase of 10% in self-harming English 7 year olds. Penny Marshall (2015) ITV News. http://www.itv.com/news/2015-10-13/seven-year-olds-treated-for-self-harming-as-number-of-cases-among-primary-school-children-rises-10/

[22] Four in 10 new teachers quit within a year. Sally Weale, Guardian Education Correspondent. Tuesday 31 March 2015 14.57 BST http://www.theguardian.com/education/2015/mar/31/four-in-10-new-teachers-quit-within-a-year

[23] The NASUWT, 2015 annual well-being survey of 3,500 members reported: – 83% had reported workplace stress, – 67% said their job has adversely impacted their mental or physical health, – 50% had seen a doctor because of work-related mental or physical health problems – 5% had been hospitalised, – 2% said they had self-harmed.

[24] http://www.bbc.co.uk/news/education-31921457 Teacher stress levels in England 'soaring', data shows BBC News. By Matt Precey Producer, File on 4–17 March 2015.

[25] The Elective home education community have a range of national, groups and networks that share information and mobilise extremely quickly. Although differing groups and individuals do not always see eye to eye they still manage to effectively rise to any challenges.

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5. NEOLIBERALISM AND THE VALUE OF HIGHER EDUCATION[1]

INTRODUCTION

In this chapter I reflect on the influence of neoliberalism on the meanings and recognition of value in respect of higher education. The term neoliberalism is somewhat vague and conceptually overburdened and it is worth stating that I am defining it here as 'a project for institutional change grounded in particular ideas about the social" and not simply as "an expression of the *zeitgeist* of global capitalism or as a conspiracy of ruling elites' (Flew, 2014, p. 64). I am doing so precisely because my chosen definition explicitly links neo-liberalism to the institutional (higher education) and the social (the broader context in which the practice of higher education is located). Furthermore, I am locating the points I make on the higher education landscape of England (higher education provision in the UK is not uniform) to foreground the need for specificity. Paradoxically, this might serve to support understanding of the global implications of both cultures of valuation and their refraction.

Hall focuses his attention in this volume on the production of value in higher education, arguing for a reconceptualisation of the latter. I start from the premise that little is known about the value of higher education at all, although much is assumed, such is the conflation of higher education (as a particular form of education) with education (as a public good). Whilst it may be permissible to disagree about the nature of its value, it is problematic to suggest higher education may have little or no value at all, in general or to particular constituencies (Wolf, 2002). To suggest that higher education might not serve the interests of particular constituencies can too easily be construed as a 'backlash' (University Alliance, 2014), or as an attempt to place higher education beyond their reach (Watts, 2009). This state of affairs in turn hinders effective responses to the influence of neoliberal ideologies on the meanings and perceptions of its value. The situation is further complicated by the temporal aspects of value and the necessity for sensitivity to both the changing and enduring meanings of value over time, which is highlighted in Edmonds' chapter in this volume. This kind of sensitivity is, however, often absent in respect of analyses of higher education, which in turn may overlook the influence of regressive processes on value attribution and recognition.

For example, critiques of the current over-emphasis on the mercantile or instrumental value of higher education may unwittingly evoke nostalgia for a bygone

T. Rudd & I. F. Goodson (Eds.), Negotiating Neoliberalism, 59–70.

era which is (erroneously) cast as superior to present arrangements. Moreover, accounts which attempt to counter or provide an alternative to neo-liberal discourses on higher education often attend to what higher education might or ought to be (*inter alia* Barnett, 1990; Blake, Smith, & Standish, 1998; Boni & Walker, 2013; George, 2014; McMahon, 2009; Newman, 1852/2014) rather than what it is (Boni & Gasper, 2012). On the one hand visions for an imagined future are essential, but if they remain unsupported by contextually differentiated and nuanced accounts about its value in the here and now, they can also be summarily dismissed as idealised or ideological. On the other hand, concentrating on the value of higher education in the here and now erases antecedent influences on the formation of what is understood by value.

My purpose in this chapter is therefore to consider how to interrogate prevalent ideas about the value of higher education without becoming embroiled in these predicaments. I do so in two steps. First, rather than the *value* of higher education itself, I focus instead on *cultures of valuation* (Haiven, 2014; Lilley & Papadopoulos, 2014). Cultures of valuation do not offer the metrics for evaluation. They furnish instead the contexts for judgements about value, act as mechanisms through which value is attributed and lenses through which it might be recognised. Here I specifically highlight two cultures of valuation in which higher education is embedded. I have chosen the first, the culture of financialisation, because it is currently pervasive and dominant. I have called the second 'privileged intrinsicality' because it epitomises the tendency to nostalgia and idealisation in attempts to counter financialised narratives of value. Second I discuss how the apparent rejection of higher education by white working class young people in England, which is often interpreted as a lack of aspiration (Milburn, 2009), can be seen instead as a refraction of neo-liberal cultures of valuation. The resultant insights from an analysis of this refraction have the potential to provide accounts of higher education that resonate with what matters to these young people and why (Sayer, 2011).

(BIO)FINANCIALISATION AS A CULTURE OF VALUATION

The value of higher education is often expressed in economic terms such as 'the returns to higher education' (Bukodi & Goldthorpe, 2011) and is reduced to its 'contribution to more general economic and social redistribution' (Preston & Green, 2003, p. 4, cited in Department for Business, Innovation and Skills [BIS], 2013). I maintain that this trend reflects embeddedness in a particular culture of valuation that might be described as financialisation (Dowling & Harvie, 2014; Haiven, 2014; Martin, 2002). Lilley and Papadopoulos (2014) go further, designating this phenomenon as 'biofinancialisation' because

> the worth of goods, things, activities and spaces can be *essentially* translated into financial evaluations... Financial value is here used to express the primacy of investment value over other values (aesthetic, use, moral, ecological,

> material, cultural) that predominantly assess the future monetary profit to be gained from potentially any field of life or the environment. (p. 974, original emphasis)

In short it is not only that financialisation *pervades* everyday life (Martin, 2002) but that 'the very ontology of our everyday lives', (Lilley & Papadopoulos, 2014, p. 972) is transformed into transactions only calculable in financial terms. Biofinancialisation thus articulates the penetration of finance into the very recesses of subjectivity. This argument echoes through Bradford and Hey's (2007) discussion of the contemporary landscape of subjectivity, that these days 'it seems impermissible for the citizen to be anything other than successful' (p. 596). The measure of success is calculated in financial terms such as the value of assets or the size of income. What is more, 'although different scales of evaluation are by definition incommensurable… the worth of almost everything… is in principle transferable into one single logic of financial value that is potentially tradable in the market' (Lilley & Papadopoulos, 2014, p. 974). Hence, the 'wider benefits' of higher education such as 'improved health outcomes' are framed as 'the reduced likelihood of requiring public sector assistance in relation to healthcare' (Department of Business, Innovation and Skills [BIS], 2011, p. 11) with the concomitant savings in spending thereon.

Such evaluations in themselves may be said to be simple expressions of the political economy of higher education rather than the manifestation of a culture of value attribution. However, it is pertinent for analyses in this arena that (bio) financialisation itself also relies on 'privileged access to education and socio–cultural capital' (Lilley & Papadopoulos 2014, p. 977). In other words there is a dynamic between the criteria for evaluation, the methods of evaluation and the object of evaluation. Hence it is not simply that economic evaluations of higher education reflect the financialisation of everyday life; they 'perform and reproduce' it (Lilley & Papadopoulos, 2014, p. 980). Pronouncements about the social and personal value ('realising one's potential') of higher education that feature heavily in political rhetoric thus constitute an 'ideological displacement' (Hall, Critcher, Jefferson, Clarke, & Roberts, 1978) in which the influence of (bio)financialisation as a culture of valuation is apparent. (Bio)financialisation therefore has a theoretical function inasmuch as it explains the origins and use of economic and mercantile measures in evaluations of higher education.

PRIVILIGED INTRINSICALITY – A RESPONSE TO (BIO)FINACIALISATION

The idea, fear even, that the value of higher education is being reduced to the economic and the mercantile finds expression in a culture of valuation which I have elsewhere described as 'privileged intrinsicality' (Downs, 2015). Privileged intrinsicality is salient precisely because the value of higher education is being seen as reduced in this way. Privileged intrinsicality is also delineated through opposition to the instrumentalisation of higher education and through nostalgia for the days

when higher education was an elite pursuit (Scott, 1995). This is the case even when, paradoxically, the intention is to make it more inclusive. Looking back to a supposed 'golden age' seems to be part of more general trend that signifies confusion in an age where the pace of change is outrunning comprehension (Elliott & Turner, 2015). Although Eichhorn (2015) argues that nostalgia might be both harmful and helpful depending on context, in the current higher education context, Scott's (1995) warning – that what is being longed for here is a time when higher education was 'rooted in subtle and stealthy socialization and acculturation rather than explicit intellectual formation' (p. 2) – is still apposite. Privileged intrinsicality assumes that higher education, like education, is valuable in and of itself and assumes common understanding of the concept 'higher education', even though higher education actually remains under-theorised (Scott, 1995; Walker & Boni, 2013). It is significant for example that the dominant model of higher education is usually equated with three years' (or more) study for a Bachelor's degree awarded by a university. Stevens (2004) maintains that this idea was perpetuated almost absent–mindedly in policy, but it also reflects the vested interest of those universities whose elite status is intertwined with the continuation of this model.

This is not to imply that higher education never is or should be an end in itself. But it is one thing to say that say that higher education has intrinsic value; it is another to transform this claim into an entire culture of value attribution. This transformation serves to regulate the depth and reach of analysis and commentary in (at least) three significant ways.

First, this transformation disavows the ways in which higher education always and already has instrumental value and a purpose, whether that be the satisfaction of an individual thirst for knowledge or a love of study; the provision of policy solutions to concerns about social mobility, social justice and the needs of the knowledge economy (Bowes, Thomas, Peck, & Nathwani, 2013); the maintenance of class privilege; or some other noble purpose (Robbins, 1963). An instrumental purpose may be more or less quantifiable, but that does not legitimise discounting certain forms of instrumentality while criticising others. Moreover, the contemporary foregrounding of one instrumental purpose of higher education, namely its value to the economy, can be seen as a mere shift in emphasis rather than a rupture with the past (McNicol, 2004). And yet instead of tracing undulations in the meaning of value, arguments tend to proceed on the assumption that conceptualising higher education as a tool for the achievement of personal or political goals is something novel, representing a break with the past. (Blake, Smith, & Standish, 1998; Bradford & Hey, 2007; Stevens, 2004).

Second, transforming the claim for the intrinsic value of higher education into a culture of value attribution privileges a particular form of higher education, often labelled a 'liberal' higher education. This is a broad term which on its most basic interpretation foregrounds the study of subjects which have no explicit vocational

or technical focus. A liberal higher education is not without instrumental value inasmuch as it serves the formation of the 'well–rounded citizen', a term which is not only value but class laden (Bradford & Hey, 2007). Within a culture of privileged intrinsicality, this kind of education is positioned as more valuable than others. In conjunction with a perceived shift to the instrumental purposes of higher education, the tenor of the critiques becomes one of 'grief for lost intimacy' (Scott, 1995, p. 7). This is evident for example in Barnett's (1990) work, in which he states that the 'historical conception of higher education as standing for intrinsically worthwhile ends – essentially the idea of liberal higher education – is being *lost from sight*' (p. x, my emphasis). Missing from such accounts is the possibility that a 'liberal education' is not a value neutral concept (Scott, 1995, p. 2).

Third, eliding the specific meaning of the value of higher education within a more expansive and general notion of value ignores the experience of some groups of students, erasing the role and mediating influence of gender, class, dis/ability and ethnicity, and pre–empting what might actually matter to people (Sayer, 2011; Watts & Bridges, 2006). For some students, study for instrumental reasons – because it leads directly to a job for example (Bhatti, 2003) or because it is necessary for entry to a particular profession (Milburn, 2012) – might be more valuable than study for knowledge acquisition per se. The benefits of a liberal education cannot be assumed to apply evenly. I must stress here that my critique is not of the specific types of knowledge, often located in the areas of the arts and humanities, that might constitute a liberal education. Indeed the arts and humanities are themselves required now to produce justificatory narratives that fit into financialised cultures of valuation (Belfiore, 2015; Benneworth, 2015; O'Brien, 2015). But I do maintain that responding to financialised cultures of valuation by repurposing the arts and humanities as a portal to a lost age is insufficient at best and at worst it is counterproductive because it ignores contextual specificity (Eichhorn, 2015).

Failure to focus on the contextualising culture of valuation here does a disservice to the agency of individual actors, and it isolates those actors from the forces that are brought to bear on the processes of individual and collective value attribution. For example, criticising the emphasis on employability in higher education fails to address how being ill-equipped to deal with the stratifying effects of a globalised labour market impacts more negatively on some people than on others. Privileging the instrinsic worth of higher education therefore omits, or at the very least truncates, questions about who is doing the valuing, from which vantage point, for what reason and at which point in time. It assumes instead a set of universal, inviolable and often invisible criteria for judgements about value that are largely impervious to both historicity and to the multiplicity of social conditions and human life.

The rest of the chapter aims to address these omissions by attending to the refraction of those cultures of valuation by white working class young people in England.

REFRACTING NEOLIBERAL CULTURES OF VALUATION

Responding effectively to narratives about the value of higher education in a culture of (bio)financialisation is hampered by a number of factors, not least that 'our semiotic-ontological access to the world is organised through cultures of valuation to such an extent that one cannot simply withdraw from these cultures without dismantling one's own existence' (Lilley & Papadopoulos, 2014, p. 980). Therefore accounts which attend to what higher education might or ought to be and that fail to attend sufficiently to their location in the current and prevailing culture of (bio) financialisation can be dismissed as idealised or ideological. Neither is critique alone sufficient, even when it transcends mere scepticism, because it will always and already exist in relation, or as 'other', to the prevailing narratives of the dominant culture.

I suggest that we might sidestep these dilemmas by using the concept of refraction (Goodson, 2012; Goodson & Lindblad, 2010; Rudd & Goodson, 2012) to re-interpret the apparent *rejection* of higher education by white working class young people in England (National Audit Office [NAO], 2008; Sammons, Toth & Sylva, 2015; Stahl, 2015), which is most often seen as *reflecting* a lack of aspiration (Milburn, 2009). We could, however, see it as a *refraction* of neo-liberal cultures of valuation as they collide with what matters to these young people. Following refracted trajectories leads to analytical ground that may otherwise have remained unexplored, such as the extent to which dominant narratives about value are able to rise above material reality (Goodson, 2013, p. 13; Smith quoted in Salmon 2010, p. 5) and how individual notions of 'value' are always and already embedded in dominant cultures of valuation. For example Stahl's (2015) study of white working class boys' aspirations sets out how the views expressed by these groups (on social class and on the importance of higher education) do echo to some extent the dominant aspiration discourses. But their views are also reconfigured when they pass through the lens of pre-existing values (such as a particular kind of loyalty to kith and kin) and identities (as members of a community). This means the boys valorise higher education whilst still eschewing it in favour of other (sometimes more lucrative) careers. Therefore the concept of refraction serves to signpost the way, theoretically and methodologically, to analyses of the value of higher education which start with what matters to the actors concerned, which are sensitive to historicity and to the multiplicity of social conditions and human life. This undertaking can be considerably supported and complemented by the concept of lay normativity (Sayer, 2011).

Lay Normativity

The concept of lay normativity expresses the idea that people 'regularly engage in reasoning about how to value things' (Sayer, 2011, p. 23) and are able to theorise about social phenomena and events on this basis. It runs counter to premises of divisions

between fact/value, reason/emotion and subjectivity/objectivity and proceeds on the conviction that arguments about valuations in everyday life are not 'merely arbitrary, a matter of assertion or power' (p. 23). In short people are able to theorise or explain social events and phenomena precisely because they are able to make value judgements about them. I have therefore argued (Downs, 2015), that lay normativity can act as a culture of valuation because it foregrounds an evaluative relationship to the world rooted in 'everyday thought, practice and social arrangements in order to reveal what everyday thought fails to register' (Sayer, 2011, p. 216). This does not mean that we all care in the same or mutually supportive ways or that we care about the same things. Some people may care deeply about that which others may find abhorrent. But most people 'are sentient, *evaluative beings*: we don't just think and interact but evaluate things including the past and the future' (Sayer, 2011, p. 1, original emphasis). Lay normativity is therefore particularly useful as a concept here because it recognises the importance of temporality.

A normative standpoint does not in itself create conditions capable of 'dangerously naturalizing and homogenizing contingent social forms' (Sayer, 2011, p. 243), although care must be taken not to fall into this trap. Indeed arguing for lay normativity makes little sense if one ignores the fact that people have their own susceptibilities, as well as manifesting those of the particular society in which they happen to live. It is the situated, dynamic relationship between the individual and their circumstances that is of paramount importance here. Therefore analysing the absence of white working class young people from higher education as refraction of neo-liberal values in no way proscribes inclusion of structural factors.

LAY NORMATIVITY AS A CULTURE OF VALUATION IN PRACTICE

What needs to happen if the absence of white working class young people in higher education is to be interpreted as the refraction of a neo-liberal, financialised culture of valuation or an idealised, nostalgic culture of privileged intrinsicality through a culture of lay normativity? I suggest we need first to understand what matters to these young people in practice. This task is rendered more complex by the dominance of financialised cultures of valuation. Archer (2003) for example noted that the working class respondents in her research 'seemed to value higher education in primarily economic and instrumental terms' (p. 123), '(e)choing, *to some extent*, dominant government rhetoric' (p. 23, my emphasis). But she also points out that many of these respondents did differentiate between the personal, the familial and the state in their assessments of economic value, confirming Sayer's (2011) contention that people 'regularly engage in reasoning about how to value things' (p. 23). Archer's respondents were clear about this (value equates to the potential to support family). But, having scant idea about the experience of higher education prior to entering a higher education institution, and with no experience of being a graduate or of having a degree (Jenkins, Jones, & Ward, 2001), they had to avail themselves of prevailing

and dominant discourse *to some extent* to fill the gaps left by their lack of actual experience or knowledge.

Second, thinking about analysis under the influence of lay normativity entails an interrogation of some a priori ideas that make up notions of value, such as advantage and disadvantage (Hattam & Smyth, 2014), participation, aspiration (Hart, 2013; Stahl, 2015) and success (Bradford & Hay 2007). It also involves the exercise of practical reason which Nussbaum (2000, p. 79; 2011, p. 34) describes as 'being able to form a conception of the good and to engage in critical reflection about the planning of one's life'. This in turn requires a degree of reflexivity that is largely absent from current evaluations of higher education (Walker, 2006). On these terms the value of higher education is not measured on criteria external to the individual, such as how long it takes a graduate to find a job, nor by average earnings, nor by how graduates contribute to the economy, nor whether someone conforms to a pre-determined idea of a 'cultivated' or 'successful' citizen.

Goodson (2014), echoing Wright Mills (1959), also indicates a methodological strand to this point when he insists that 'we have to understand the personal and biographical if we are to understand the social and political' (p. 1). Research often proceeds 'in ignorance or denial of personal missions and biographical mandates', but Goodson argues that these are 'a good place to locate our studies (and indeed our policies), not reluctantly at the end of a process, but enthusiastically at the beginning' (p. 1). Their inclusion implicitly foregrounds the primacy of 'what matters to people', which also implies a greater role for narrative approaches, which are a vehicle for first person expressions of what is to count as valuable. There is a cautionary note to be sounded here because when we ask someone what matters to them there is the danger that '(w)hat we capture, in fact, is a mediation between the personal voice and wider cultural imperatives' (Goodson, 2005, p. 215) and constraints. For example, Bridges (2006); Elster (1983); Nussbaum (2000); and Watts (2009, 2013) have all offered treatments of the concept of adaptive or adapted preference. This is a complex concept, to which it is not possible to do justice here, but it alludes to the way in which 'choice' can be unconsciously and unwittingly influenced by social, structural, psychological, environmental and institutional constraints. A simple but clear indication of the influence of adapted preference can be heard for example in the expression that 'university is not for the likes of me'.

Third, taking lay normativity as a starting point would entail expanding the reach and depth of analysis to include that which is currently excluded. For example, in social scientific educational research there is currently a greater focus on working class 'non–participation' in higher education in both policy and research than on middle class 'self-exclusion'. It would also mean re-orientating a long tradition in the field of social scientific study of focusing on the 'underdog' (Becker, 1970). This concentration on working class non-participation and its framing as a sign of disadvantage has tended to perpetuate rather than counter a deficit model of the working classes, particularly the white working classes (Skeggs, 2004), not only in terms of the rhetoric of aspiration (Milburn, 2012) but also as reflecting (lack of)

working class moral worth (Sayer, 2005). Middle class 'non-participation' in higher education meanwhile tends to be treated in qualitatively different ways in both policy rhetoric and in research, and is positioned discursively as 'self-exclusion' for example (Whitty, 2001). When systems and processes of valuation that emanate from sources external to personal values and evaluative relationships are applied in research, working class practices thus can be, and are, construed as 'other', to those of their middle class counterparts (Bourdieu, 1986; Skeggs, 2004). Situating analyses in a culture of lay normativity offers the potential to avoid these binaries.

CONCLUSION

In this chapter I argued that little is known about the value of higher education, although much is assumed and I suggested two steps that might offer a way of 'thinking against the grain of orthodoxies' on the subject while simultaneously mitigating potentially 'damaging effects of foreclosure' (Hattam & Smyth, 2014, p. 271). The first step entails focusing on cultures of valuation rather than on value itself in order to highlight the influences that are brought to bear on processes of value attribution and recognition. The second involves tracing the refracted trajectories of dominant discourses when they collide with particular cultures of valuation. I suggested that Sayer's concept of lay normativity might serve as a particularly useful culture of valuation here because it is expressive of that which already and actually matters to people. Unlike (bio)financialised cultures of valuation, lay normativity eschews essentialising discourse. In contrast to privileged intrinsicality, which is rooted in the past, it also allows for the dynamic between the present and the past, for what has changed and what endures.

In this way the absence of young white working class young men and women from higher education spaces can be read along a refracted trajectory as the exercise of agency, which in turn arises out of evaluations that are rooted in current lived realities *and* imagined futures. The story is thus transformed from one of deficiency, or free-market notions of choice, to a story of enacting personal life missions in the context of reasoned evaluations of the available options.

NOTE

[1] This chapter is a reworking of Downs (2015). Furthering alternative cultures of valuation in higher education research. *Cambridge Journal of Education*. doi:10.1080/0305764X.2015.1102865

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6. BEYOND 'ENTREPRENEURIALISM OF THE SELF'

What it Means to be a Student in the Neoliberal University

INTRODUCTION

The community of teachers and scholars from which the university derives its name (Bass Mullinger, 1911) is a venerable institution, its meanings and practices characterised by significant shifts as well as continuities over its thousand year history (Scott, 2006). From its early European roots as an institution concerned with the development of a tiny cadre of clerics, medics and lawyers, the 'Humboldtian' University, marked by a striving for the 'advancement of science' through the principle of the 'union of teaching and research', came to support the advancement of capitalism and was one of imperialism's worldwide exports. From the late nineteenth century the institution has had a key role in the development and legitimation of the 'professionalisation' of occupations and in supporting industrial development, military strength, and social welfare in modern economies (Anderson, 2010). Throughout this long history, collegiality and relative independence from the economic sphere have been core, if not defining features.

Drawing on Goodson's (2015) '5 Rs of educational research', this chapter *remembers* the emergence of what might be called the 'neoliberal university' shaped by that political programme (in its various forms) since the late 1970s but gathering pace and ferocity since the financial crash of 2007/8 and the replacing of a narrative of progress with one of *regression* in which the younger generation face a future more difficult and less affluent than currently or experienced by previous generations. The focus is on the shifts in practices of students discernible in this recent history which can be seen both as constitutive of the 'neoliberal student' and as entrenching inequality. However, a *re-conceptualisation* of the student as more than 'neoliberal entrepreneurial subject' is necessary to make sense of *refraction* or the particular range and distribution of practices in academic relationships and the examples of, and potential for *resistance* to which this gives rise. Whilst the story is told from the perspective of Higher Education in the UK, its themes are illustrative of the impact of neoliberalism on education recognisable in other phases and other national contexts.

T. Rudd & I. F. Goodson (Eds.), Negotiating Neoliberalism, 71–85.

HE IN THE UK

In the UK, the post-second world war period was marked by the introduction of the welfare state and growing levels of income and social equality. In this progressive context the expansion of the university sector was part of a meritocratic discourse of the role of education in equalising life chances. There is evidence that in the decade following the 1944 Education Act which introduced universal free secondary education to the age of 15, there was movement towards greater social class equality in attendance at selective ('grammar') schools (Blackburn & Marsh, 1991). Though this was followed by increasing inequality in following decades, it gives some substance to the idea that, for a limited period, there were increased opportunities for the working class (though overwhelmingly male) beneficiaries of grammar school education to benefit from HE and contribute to the increasing proportion of professional 'graduate' employment in a growing economy.

The expansion of HE in the 60s and 70s in the UK suggested by Robbins (1963) sought to democratise the elite practices of universities so that increased numbers of students had access to the same type and quality of education as their predecessors (Anderson, 2010). This democratic impulse was checked by the 'binary' policy (Crosland, 1965) which introduced a separate public sector of higher education in England and Wales, the polytechnics, based on existing technical and other colleges. The aim was institutions more responsive to the demand for full and part-time vocational, professional and industrial-based HE. Thus even in the relatively egalitarian social context of the 60s and 70s, the expansion of HE resulted in differentiation and stratification.

Whilst both types of institution were nominally providers of HE, being a student at either meant different things as polytechnics introduced new practices, expanding access to new kinds of students, increasing the numbers of women and other 'non-traditional' entrants whilst also showing that it was possible to offer higher education at much lower cost than the traditional university model.

> Although the two halves were defined by government as 'different, but of equal status' […] the way they were funded clearly differentiated between research-led institutions and teaching-led institutions. (Bathmaker, 2003)

This formulation of 'equal but different' has served to obscure and/or legitimate inequalities in HE ever since.

THE EMERGENCE OF THE 'NEOLIBERAL UNIVERSITY'

A defining characteristic of a neoliberal state is its use of sovereign power to defend competitive processes (Davies, 2014) and the fundamental transformation of the university's meanings and practices in recent decades can be seen as the result of two interrelated neoliberal injunctions on the university, market competition and

financialisation, which have created the conditions for certain practices to thrive and others to atrophy.

Market Competition – Entrepreneurialism and Diversification

The Further and Higher Education Act of 1992 which abolished the 'binary line' enabling polytechnics to become 'new universities' ensured expansion at reduced cost (Bathmaker, 2003) and increased competition. In the context of the 'mass' higher education (HE) system emerging in the 1990s, simply accessing HE was no longer a meaningful marker of social distinction and it became important for the older institutions to distinguish themselves from recent 'parvenus'. In 1993 the first UK university league table was published, closely followed by the formation of the 'Russell Group' of self-proclaimed 'leading universities' the following year. The introduction of fees in1998 and successive hikes in subsequent years (up to £9,000 in 2012) and the lifting of the cap on total student numbers from 2015 have all intensified competition and marketization leading to increased institutional spend on marketing (Chapleo, 2013) as well as increased institutional debt to fund capital projects aimed at making institutions more attractive to prospective students (McGettigan, 2013).

The result has been increasing diversification and stratification of the sector evident in the clustering of institutions (Boliver, 2015). The cluster of 'Old' universities is characterised by higher levels of research activity, greater wealth, more academically successful and socioeconomically advantaged student intakes. Amongst new universities around a quarter forms a distinctive lower tier. In addition, and emerging as a yet lower tier, is the small proportion of the HE sector (10%) which is provided in further education colleges characterised by even lower average teaching costs and greater staff productivity, combined with more limited expenditure on learning infrastructure and social facilities (Orr, 2014). In the logic of the market, this inequality is presented as 'choice' of offer for students and of 'product' (graduates) for employers.

As Hall argues in this volume, the financialised entrepreneurial university stresses the development of productivity or intensity of academic labour. The value of lecturers, students and researchers is reduced to their contribution to revenue streams alongside alternative 'third stream' activities (neither teaching nor research). Allusion to 'wider social and economic impact' has proved a useful rhetorical cover for institutions seeking to justify a wide range of revenue generating incursions into the local economy. In the UK, cuts in Local Authority funding and their withdrawal from the provision of services has opened up opportunities for a 'municipalisation of Higher Education' (McGettigan, 2014). As the agenda of privatisation has impacted on the school sector for example (see Deborah Phillips, this volume), universities have taken on the sponsorship of academies, free schools and university technology colleges (all state funded but privately run institutions). Such sponsorship is

symptomatic of HE institutions' increasing diversification of activities in the pursuit of revenue, running parallel with their increasing stratification in terms of status and resources (Shore & McLauchlan, 2012).

Economic Instrumentalism and Financialization

The view of education as primarily concerned with the production of human capital outlined by Hall (this volume) is linked to a concern to render knowledge as a commodity.

"knowledge is now recognised as a key factor of economic production alongside land, labour and capital, [and] it cannot be quantified in the same terms as physical objects such as land or industrial capital" (OECD, 1999, p. 1), the term 'academic capitalism' (Rhoades & Slaughter, 1997) is more than a metaphor. Knowledge may be commodified through arrangements to comply with the Trade Related Aspects of Intellectual Property Rights (TRIPs) agreement, and the HE terrain opened up for trade liberalisation via the TTIP treaty (Hall, this volume), both predicated on the commercial interests of powerful multinational corporations and a transnational capitalist class.

As Hall argues, "the processes of marketisation and financialisation are reshaping academic labour" and "academics and students are subjected to increasing levels of intensity of labour, framed as excellence or entrepreneurialism". This is evident in the varied attempts to measure learning and teaching and in the way waged labour within the university has been transformed through practices of quantification, standardisation and surveillance (De Angelis & Harvie, 2009) and what Diane Reay (2004) has termed 'the 5Cs': "corporatisation, casualisation, commodification, contractualism and compliance".

The effect of marketisation and financialisation on universities has given rise to various critiques of the 'neoliberal university'; the emergence of 'academic capitalism' (Rhoades & Slaughter, 1997) the 'proletarianisation' of academic work (Ellis, McNicholl, Blake, & McNally, 2014; Wilson, 1991), the undermining of academic freedom (Holmwood, 2011), the impact on pedagogy and learning of student consumerism (Williams, 2013); the devaluation of the idea of the university as a 'public good' (Collini, 2010; Holmwood, 2011; Kauppinen, 2014).

Within these critiques, a unifying theme is the distortion of the purpose and values of education resulting in the prioritising of economistic, at the expense of humanistic, conceptions. But as Yvonne Downes argues in another chapter in this volume, conceptualising the value of HE either in terms of neoliberalism's culture of financialisation or what Downes calls 'privileged intrinsicality', presents a false dichotomy which we attempt to avoid here by focusing on the ways in which HE study reframed by entrepreneurialism increases the intensity of students' labour and exacerbates inequality.

THE STUDENT IN THE NEOLIBERAL UNIVERSITY: PRACTICES OF CONSUMPTION, PRODUCTION, ENTREPRENEURSHIP?

The neo-liberal theory of human capital has at its core a shift of perspective. Labour seen not as a homogeneous input to production but instead, treating the person as a form of wealth, the worker's wage not the price paid in the market but an income based on an underlying capacity to produce a 'future income' (Dilts, 2011). This perspective rejects the distinction between "workers", "consumers" and "producers" and all activities, even seemingly non-productive ones become forms of 'capital investment' with individuals seen as investing in themselves through their consumption choices. But the returns on the 'consumption' of HE are increasingly uncertain (and as we have seen differentiated by type of institution and graduate).

> ... the graduate earnings gap is in decline, and [...] significant numbers of graduates are going into non-graduate jobs. (Johnson, 2015)

and

> The new age of austerity inaugurates the primacy of a 'regress narrative' where younger generations face a future world that is more difficult and less affluent than being experienced currently, or was experienced by older generations. Goodson (2014)

The increase in income and social inequality since the late 1970s which is the inevitable result of the logic of competition also forms part of this 'regress narrative' in which opportunities are curtailed by risk and the greater cost of failure. As Mirowski (2014, p. 127) argues, student loans are an example of the

> neoliberal exhortation to joyfully embrace risk through assumption of loans in order to transform the self in a more (job)market friendly direction.

But neither the risk nor the desire to take it is equally distributed. In the neoliberal vision of the university, students are recruited to practices of 'entrepreneurialism of the self' in which study (and achieving qualifications) is only one component in a process of 'CV building' for the future job market. This reframing renders undergraduate study as introduction to what Boltanski and Chiapello have termed 'project capitalism' in which life is conceived as the extension of projects and individual self-developments based on values of flexibility, adaptability and employability and a morality of personal development and self-control (Boltanski & Chiapello, 2007).

Neoliberalism's individualism requires the denial of social categories according to which "the neoliberal self is regarded as so exquisitely supple, mobile and plastic that imposition of any categorization is deemed imperious and elitist" (Mirowski, 2014, p. 116). This conveniently ignores the fact that whether and how individuals come to be recruited to and defect from social practices is the result of a complex

coming together of prior, existing and emerging individual and collective identities in socio-material contexts. The increasing proportion of women in the student population from 28% in 1920 to 56% in 2011 (Bolton, 2012) for example, is the accumulation of individual choices but choices shaped by the changing role and position of women, the 'feminisation of schooling' (Skelton, 2002) amongst other factors which have impacted differently on men and women.

Across the increasingly stratified HE sector, we see applications and graduations differentiated according to social categories. Recent research by Vignoles (2008) demonstrates for example that poorer students who do go to university are more likely to attend lower status institutions, where status is measured in terms of research quality and institutional prestige. On average, Black-Caribbean, Bangladeshi and Other Black ethnic minority students tend to access lower-status institutions than similarly-achieving White British counterparts (Vignoles, 2008).

This stratified and competitive HE sector gives rise to highly differentiated outcomes and the evidence is that, notwithstanding a rhetoric of widening participation, social class inequalities have been maintained (Boliver, 2011; Croxford & Raffe, 2013) and the disadvantaged remain so. Students who have graduated from institutions which scored highly in the Research Assessment Exercise and from institutions with higher staff to student ratios, higher retention rates and higher expenditure per student, earn significantly more than their fellow graduates (Vignoles, 2008). Graduates of HE in Further Education (FE) are more likely to be unemployed six months after graduation and will on average have starting salaries 16% lower than graduates from HEIs (Orr, 2014) and only 8% of graduates from FE colleges in 2010–2011 were employed full-time in professional occupations, compared with 23% of graduates from HEIs (Higher Education Funding Council for England, 2013)

The neoliberal apologist's defence in terms of poverty of aspiration or lack of information (either way disadvantage is the result of poor choices) fails to acknowledge the ways in which choice is constrained. A wide range of studies suggest multiple factors operating in a complex multi-stage process that begins long before the age of 18 and application to university. These factors include; the impact of disadvantage on school attainment, the UK performs poorly on equity measures compared to other OECD countries (OECD, 2010), the 'habitus of schools' makes a difference to higher education choices (Reay, David, & Ball, 2001), the fear of debt influences the choice of university for students from low income families (Callender & Jackson, 2008), the availability of a high-status institution in the locality increase probability of attendance (Mangan, Hughes, Davies, & Slack, 2010) and, for working class students, the type of higher education institution attended exerts a powerful influence on whether they 'fit in' or 'stand out' (Reay, Crozier, & Clayton, 2010). These factors combine to make choice "a new social device through which social class differences are rendered into educational inequality" (Reay & Ball, 1997).

The neoliberal fiction of the 'level playing field' and 'fair competition' discounts the differential probabilities and practices which must form part of any calculus of

investment and risk and uses the language of 'choice' and 'opportunity' to entrench inequality. It is to illustrations of this mechanism and of the role of the 'economy of experience' in the practices and competences of the 'neoliberal student' that we now turn.

The Economy of Experience in Applications: Personal Statements and the 'Gap Year'

> The value of an individual to an employer is no longer represented by the denomination of academic currency but the economy of experience. (Brown, Hesketh, & Wiliams, 2003, p. 120)

As "entrepreneurs of the self", students are in competition with others and the pressure to communicate their distinctiveness (their 'brand') is expressed in the concept of "narrative capital" (Goodson, 2012) whereby the stories the individual can tell about him/herself are a resource in marketing of the self.

Experience and how that experience can be told has been growing in importance in the recruitment and selection processes and practices of universities. Academic achievement is necessary but not sufficient to "Ensure you stand out from the crowd" as the advice of the Universities and Colleges Admissions Service on personal statements exhorts applicants to do. Jones (2012) suggests that even among applicants with identical A-level results, some have much better stories to tell and are better able to tell them.

Whilst non-academic indicators, such as the personal statement, are often assumed to bring greater fairness to university admissions processes, Jones (2012) found that independent school applicants are more likely to submit statements that are not only carefully crafted and written in an academically appropriate way but filled with high status, relevant activities. By contrast, state school applicants appear to receive less help composing their statement, often struggling to draw on suitable work and life experience. Independent school applicants not only list the highest number of work-related activities, they also draw on the most prestigious experiences, often involving high-level placements and professionalised work-shadowing.

An important opportunity for building 'narrative capital' for the personal statement is the 'gap year'. In 1994, 5.4% of all applicants to the Universities and Colleges Admissions Service deferred entry until autumn 1995 (Heath, 2006). Ten years later, this proportion had more than doubled with 12.2% deferring in the 2004 cycle.

Seizing a market opportunity, a niche gap-year 'industry' has emerged with many companies offering travel/experience packages for this group. Prospective students are thereby positioned as 'consumers of experience', with UK-based organisations offering overseas paid and volunteering opportunities (A. Jones, 2004). In Heath's (2006) research, the gap year emerged as an important means of 'gaining the edge' over for entry to elite institutions. More recent UCAS data (UCAS, 2013) suggests that students from the top socio-economic group are 2.5 times more likely to enter

university at 19 (rather than 18) than students in the lowest socio-economic group. They are also most able to purchase the kind of gap year experiences which will contribute to their 'narrative capital' such as the £500 hospital work experience those wanting to study medicine can now purchase to help their university applications (Coughlan, 2015).

The Economy of Experience in Study: The Co-option of Experiential Learning in Practices of Undergraduate Study

The discourse and practices associated with the employability agenda in HE are aspects of what has been termed 'new vocationalism' in HE (Symes, 2000) including the introduction of new types of work-based and work-related provision ranging from Foundation Degrees and Work-Based Learning degree programmes to Professional Doctorates which emphasize experiential learning.

This promotion of experiential learning in HE is an example of what Biesta (2015) has called the "learnification" of educational discourse and practice. Students are conceptualised as engaged in a learning project via which they can learn from the wide range of experiences incorporated into the explicit (and implicit) curriculum of HE. The practices associated with learning extend beyond being taught and practices previously associated with study can be seen as competing with new 'experiential learning' practices.

The QAA (2008) for example, has reported widespread engagement by the sector with work-based and placement learning and the introduction of employability skills into the curriculum. In this context *any* student experiences can contribute learning of value if it enhances labour power and/or can be presented as indication of enhanced labour power. In response, HEIs are developing a range of practices to support and valorise these activities. The recent introduction of a 'Higher Education Achievement Record' (HEA, 2014) seeks to provide a mechanism by which HE institutions can validate students' engagement in both curricular and extra-curricular activities.

Students speak of needing to go beyond their degree to gain the skills and experience needed for employment, highlighting the importance of extra-curricular activities (ECA), internships and work placement opportunities (Kandiko & Mawer, 2013). ECA and volunteering have long been an important part of student life but neoliberalism explicitly co-opts them as contribution to employability (Edmond & Berry, 2014). As Clegg et al. (2009) have shown, this serves to perpetuate inequality, with certain forms of ECA better at enhancing the individual's 'brand' than others.

The practice of combining (full-time) undergraduate study with part-time employment is also not new. But now undergraduate employment is no longer 'incidental and confined to vacation work' (Ford, Bosworth, & Wilson, 1995, 187), but is undertaken alongside studies during term-time. Callender and Wilkinson (2003) have shown that the most rapid growth in term-time employment was after the 1998 Teaching and Higher Education Act, which introduced tuition fees and

abolished student grants. Just before these reforms came into effect, under a half (47%) of students had term-time jobs compared with 58% a couple of years after introduction of the reforms. Not only are more students engaging in term-time work, but many are more reliant on their earnings. By 2004/05, earnings from part-time employment constituted 22% of students' total income compared with 14% in 1998/99 (Callender & Kemp, 2000; Finch et al., 2006). Clegg's research into extra-curricular activities included paid employment and demonstrated that not all paid employment has equal value in the 'economy of experience' with those students supplementing their loan with retail or low grade clerical employment having difficulty in converting that to 'narrative capital'.

Furthermore, regular term time employment may not only fail to improve employability, it can have a negative impact on study and study outcomes. Irrespective of the university attended, term-time working has been shown to have a detrimental effect on both students' final year marks and their degree results and the more hours students work, the greater the negative effect with some of the least qualified and poorest students most adversely affected, thereby exacerbating existing inequalities (Callender, 2008).

Perhaps the biggest change in the professional labour market over recent years has been the growth in internships (Child Poverty and Social Mobility Commission, 2014). Internships are now a vital part of getting a 'good job' and in a 2014 UK survey of 18,000 final year students at 30 leading universities, 41% of finalists had done an internship or other vacation work with a graduate employer whilst at university (up from 26% in 2010) and 37% were recruited by the employer for whom they had previously worked (High Flyers, 2014). In 2016, graduate recruiters expected a third of full-time graduate positions to be filled by graduates who have already worked for their organisations, either through paid internships, industrial placements or vacation work (High Flyers, 2016). The Child Poverty and Social Mobility Commission (2014) reports that some professions remain dominated by unpaid internships, 83% of new entrants to journalism, for example do an internship, lasting around 7 weeks and the majority (92%) are unpaid.

Universities are themselves employers and, as well as increased opportunities for paid employment in the student's own institution, recent years have been characterised by the proliferation of volunteering roles often related to peer mentoring and buddying schemes. An example is the Peer Assisted Study Sessions (PASS) mentoring scheme based on a model developed at the University of Missouri, and adapted for HEIs across the globe (PASS National Centre UK, n.d.). PASS involves facilitated group learning opportunities in which higher year students support the learning of lower year peers. The UK Centre was established in 2009 in Manchester.

The PASS guidance stresses that the opportunities provided are supplemental and do not replace teaching but nevertheless raise the question of who benefits from the students' voluntary labour and the meaning of such facilitated student 'self-help' in a context in which workload intensification has left many tutors less able to respond to students' individual needs. Alongside the commodification of education

the university becomes the site of the commodification of experience as students pay twice for their higher education, firstly through fees and secondly through the voluntary contribution of their labour with payment in both cases justified as investment in the future 'employable' self.

CONCLUSION: BEYOND THE NEOLIBERAL STUDENT, RESISTANCE AS A PRACTICE

Neoliberalism is transforming education by creating the conditions for the proliferation of some practices and the decline of others with both institutions and students entered into a competition where there are necessarily winners and losers.

For institutions, the rise of practices of marketing and competition and the resulting increased stratification and inequality evident in the HE sector is reflected in schooling where, in a nominally comprehensive sector in the UK, the creation of different types of schools is associated with competition and social segregation between institutions (Gorard, 2014; Whittaker, 2016). Across all education phases, the context of austerity and financialisation promotes income generation as a key purpose eroding commitment to institutions' educational purpose and reducing that educational purpose to human capital development.

For students, it is possible, as we have done here, to trace the evolution of student practices and present these as consistent with notions of the self as 'investment project'. The associated 'economy of experience' is evident not just in HE but in the growth of work-based learning opportunities in school curricula. It can be tempting to read this as the disciplining effects of Neoliberalism normalising a kind of 'commodification of the self'.

However, the current conditions also include challenges to neoliberalism's legitimating narratives of progress and 'fairness'. In these legitimating narratives, competition is justified in terms of raising outcomes for all – there might be losers but even the losers will be better off – and competition is justified if it is fair. But the '99%' are increasingly aware that they are on the losing side in a rigged game and on a downward trajectory with young people facing (even) less favourable opportunities and mobility prospects than their parents or grand-parents (Equality and Human Rights Commission, 2015). In the account of changing practices given above, the dream of 'meritocracy' or a 'level playing field' so important in the neoliberal imaginary is challenged by evidence and experience resulting in a "failure of legitimation" (Davies, 2014).

In such conditions, models which present the student as homo economicus disciplined to focus not just on how much academic effort to invest, but also on how to invest effort in pursuit of 'employability' and how to signal such acquisition in the context of a highly competitive graduate job market (see for example (Pemberton, Jewell, Faggian, & King, 2013) miss the point. The point is that education is not a simple mechanism for social mobility, and any 'return on investment' may have little to do with effort or merit.

What it is possible or probable an individual can 'make of themselves', or chooses to make of themselves, is highly constrained by a complex interplay of structure and agency emerging from socio-material contexts and calculations of investment and 'risk' which extend beyond notions of 'entrepreneurialism' (Noden, 2016). 'Refraction of policy through practices emerges from these interplays and calculations.

As Yvonne Downes, in this volume, and Stahl (2015) illustrate, refraction can take the form of refusing to play the 'rigged game'. The account of emerging student practices given here also illustrates how options, choices made, and their outcomes, are necessarily different depending on dis/advantage and also shows how patterns of 'refraction' may serve to compound inequality. But refraction can also be evidenced in the combination of practices and whilst we have shown here evidence of some students practices shifting in ways consistent with neoliberalism's construction of student as 'entrepreneurial self', these practices co-exist with emerging and/or renewed practices of resistance.

This can be seen in the rise of student protests worldwide in which "resistance to neoliberal 'common sense' is a common denominator" (Čulum & Doolan, 2015). As Bailey (2015) has demonstrated, the frequency of reported protest events in the UK rose in 2015 to its highest level since the end of the 1970s and student protests have been a significantly bigger proportion of these since 2010 than in the previous two decades mirroring the waves of student protests seen internationally since 2008 often linked with broader movements such as Occupy. Many of the students participating in demonstrations, occupations and other protests will be the same students concerned with 'building their CV'.

Refraction can be seen in the practices through which students attend to their individual CV and future employability but also participate in collective practices of resistance. These are not mutually exclusive practices and this testifies to a need for a more nuanced understanding of student identity in the neoliberal university. Student protests, for example, construct a collective student identity as alternative to the individual self-interested student and have included practices such as occupations and 'teach-ins' explicitly concerned with alternative and critical perspectives, representations and imagery.

Beyond practices of explicit resistance (and perhaps supporting/supported by such practices), refraction is also apparent in the various attempts within the university to re-conceptualize the role of the student and provide alternatives to the 'student as consumer' model. These range from formalized initiatives such as "Student as Producer: 2010–2013" at the University of Lincoln to the myriad informal ways in which lecturers and students subvert the reduction of their relationship to a financial transaction. In the UK, the creation of alternatives to the 'student as consumer' model has also led to the emergence and growth of 'free universities', voluntary organisations via which university staff and students offer teaching at no or little cost (Swain, 2013).

It can be argued that these attempts, inevitably checked or distorted by the neoliberal context in which they operate, can never be more than marginal but they nevertheless provide models of practices which resist neoliberalism's imposition of market logic on Higher Education.

Students may indeed behave as 'entrepreneurs of the self' but such practices do not define what it means to be a student. Being a student can be and is also defined by practices of collective engagement. Students are not just economic subjects but also ethical subjects, making choices and engaging in practices that are not simply accountable as investments with an expected future return but expressed in the Foucauldian notion of 'care of the self' in which practices are concerned with developing knowledge and a self-consciousness of the rules of the game one is playing.

> One cannot care for the self without knowledge. The care for self is of course knowledge of self …but it is also the knowledge of a certain number of rules of conduct or of principles which are at the same time truths and regulations. (Foucault, 1987, p. 116)

The neoliberal project in the university and in education more broadly is inevitably refracted by social practices arising from the socio-material context. Here we have focussed on HE in the UK to illustrate the associated 'rules of the game', how the game is rigged and how it entrenches inequality. But we have also illustrated how, in response to neoliberalism's disciplining of social practices in particular ways, refraction can be understood as the emergent collective practices of staff and students which give rise to alternatives and the potential for resistance.

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7. REFRACTIONS OF THE GLOBAL EDUCATIONAL AGENDA

Educational Possibilities in an Ambiguous Policy Terrain

INTRODUCTION

In this chapter, we present what we interpret as ambiguities in the Education for All (EFA) policy agenda (outlined below), and explore how neoliberal substructures influence the opportunity to embrace the negotiative spaces that ambiguous policies might offer. To investigate these dynamics, we have chosen to examine cultural and historical refractions of the EFA agenda in two very different cultural contexts – Norway, located in the Global North, and Nepal, located in the Global South. Recognizing that what we seek to understand implies a study of highly complex interrelations and processes, we apply the concept of refraction, developed with the intention of exploring such complexities.

THE CONCEPT OF REFRACTION

To enable a richer and contextual understanding of educational practices, Rudd and Goodson (2015, 2012) have developed the concept of refraction. They argue that 'refraction', as a concept, provides a lens for theoretical development, informing methodological approaches and empirical investigation that allows for cross-national and contextual analysis and comparisons. In our study, the concept of refraction helped us discern and locate how the global educational architecture, represented by the Education for All movement (EFA), has been negotiated in different cultural contexts. The cultural, contextual and historical sensitivity of 'refraction', creates an awareness of local responses and oppositions to policies and ideologies. It also illuminates how these responses will differ depending on the cultures, institutions and individuals through which the policies and ideologies are mediated. According to Goodson (2015, p. 36):

> [R]efraction in education may be seen as a change in direction arising from individuals and groups own beliefs, practices and trajectories that are at odds with dominant waves of reform and policies introduced into the field.

T. Rudd & I. F. Goodson (Eds.), Negotiating Neoliberalism, 87–99.

In the following, we shall present what we interpret as ambiguities in the Education for All agenda, and discuss how these might be outlined by administrative and marketised logics. In order to contextualize this paper, a brief history of the EFA movement is presented.

THE EDUCATION FOR ALL MOVEMENT – A SHORT HISTORY

The right to education for all is incorporated in several conventions and declarations. The two most influential frameworks fronting these rights have been the eight Millennium Development Goals (MDGs) and the six goals for EFA, shaping the priorities of UNESCO and the framework for EFA's global educational architecture (cf. UN, 2014).

In 1990, at the World Conference on Education for All, UNESCO, UNDP, UNICEF and the World Bank initiated the EFA movement, leading to a global commitment to reduce illiteracy and universalize primary education. By the year 2000, the international community met again in Dakar and the World Declaration on Education for All was adopted, committing nations to a series of time-bound targets, with a 2015 deadline (UN, 2006a, 2006b, 2014).

In close collaboration with the UN agencies, UNESCO organized the World Education Forum 2015, in the city of Incheon in the Republic of Korea. The aim was to achieve consensus on a single education agenda for 2015–2030 and to ensure that the final targets for education post-2015 were "transformative, achievable and measurable" (UNESCO, 2015c).

CONCEALED AMBIGUITIES IN THE EFA PROMOTION

The presence of ambiguities of the EFA policy can be hard to discern in policy-makers' advancement of the global agenda, and are ignored, or at least not commented upon, in the rhetoric used to advertise the EFA programmes and initiatives. For example, at a conference held in Oslo in 2014, on the topic "Education for Development", we were presented with research and bilateral projects related to the progress and results of the EFA agenda for 2015. The presentations mostly revolved around how the EFA goals had been successfully implemented in the Global South, and the important role that the Global North played in this process. Implementation barriers were unilaterally explained by a local "bleak situation" in the Global South countries, or the stakeholder's inability to change. Whether the global educational discourses were recognisable and transferable to the local level was somehow not an issue. It appeared that teachers in the Global South were expected to set their professional identities as curriculum makers aside, and become curriculum implementers. Additionally, what were also striking were the keynote speakers' outspoken beliefs in the incorporation of diversity through the means of standardization and accountability mechanisms. The lack of openness to critical positions and views,

discursively restrained the audience from fronting other perspectives, without seemingly being against the provision of sustainable, equitable and inclusive education for all. Consequently, a nuanced discussion of the EFA implementation process was inhibited by the speakers, like the accuracy and trustworthiness of the terminology, methods and measures used, approaching complexity in simplistic manners. While we certainly shared the aims of equity, inclusion and embracing diversity in the EFA goals, the epistemological and methodological considerations in the EFA agenda seemed to reduce and decontextualize the complexity of teaching into the objective truth of "what works". The New Public Management rhetoric (Beck, 2009; Tranøy, 2014) used in the presentation of the global policy, was somehow also protected from criticism by a "wall of good intentions" – concealing ambiguities created when fusing global and local agendas, as well as administrative and professional posistions. Recognising the underlying and silenced ambiguities in the EFA agenda, we began to explore whether these ambiguities could entail constructive features worthy of investigation in order to get a more nuanced picture of possible barriers which might inhibit the international ambitions of reaching the EFA goals for 2030.

APPROACHING AMBIGUITIES IN THE EFA POLICY AGENDA

It might be argued that several contradictions or ambiguities can be traced in the EFA policy agenda, exemplified by the tension between:

- Decontextualized versus contextualized understandings and approaches
- Product orientation versus process orientation
- Empirical/measurable versus theoretical/philosophical emphasis
- Teachers as curriculum implementers versus teachers as curriculum makers

The use of lists consisting of adversarial terms, as in the example above, is a well-known rhetorical method of presenting complex ideas in educational debates. Robin Alexander (2001, p. 548) suggests replacing 'versus' by 'and', to open up for new ways to approach such dichotomies. In the case of the ambiguities of the EFA, replacing 'versus' with 'and', and thereby approaching opposites in a dialectical manner, might create a space for negotiations between the global and local, and the administrative and professional positions. In this sense, the presence of ambiguities in the EFA might be seen as a positive feature of the policy agenda, since a policy cannot be fully unilateral where ambiguities are present. The way in which the EFA policy is promoted, operationalised and monitored, might, however, represent a barrier for such negotiative positions. It may be argued, the problem with the EFA agenda is not only in its inconsistencies and contradictions, but rather the commercialised promotion of the policy agenda, revolving around funding and aid for projects, that subsequently invites policy-makers and bilateral agencies to promote the EFA progress and initiative in "non-ambiguous" ways, which does

not promote a negotiative climate. As a consequence of this, a dubious educational rhetoric is adopted, closely associated with the normalization of neoliberal administration (Goodson, 2015), and evidenced by the consensus of applying NPM (Verger & Curran, 2014; Apple, 2000) mechanisms to regulate educational processes. In the case of EFA, were the conflict between the overarching aims and the neoliberal ambitions is not addressed in the policy promotion, one risks concealing the structural processes that NPM is meant to generate, e.g. elements of competition, cost-effectiveness, accountability and output-orientation, where everything is transformed into countable sizes and figures (Tranøy, 2001, 2014).

In the following we will explore how the ambiguities of the EFA policy are refracted at national and individual levels, and distinguish when and where the neoliberal influence prohibits ambiguities to generate a space for cultural interpretations and solutions to the global agenda. We will start by presenting refraction of the global policy in the case of Norway, followed by the case of Nepal.

HISTORICAL AND CULTURAL REFRACTIONS OF THE AMBIGUITIES IN THE EFA POLICY

The Case of Norway

In the post-war period, Norwegian educational policy has been renowned for its social democratic ambitions (the Nordic model). In the 1970's and 1980's there are also traces of a reform-pedagogical influence. Teaching was to be child-friendly and "child-centred", emphasizing that the uniqueness of every child should be nurtured through education. Assessment and grades were seen as something that would interfere or even harm the children's self-image and learning processes, and teachers had to be careful not to put pressure on performance as it might undermine the children's intrinsic learning motivation (Telhaug & Mediås, 2003; Tønnessen, 2011; Lysne, 2004). Pedagogical methods derived from this teaching philosophy would emphasise self-initiated activities over passive receptivity. Former virtues like discipline, compliance, order, endurance and effort were replaced by the promotion of emancipation, equity, autonomy, creativity and self-realization (c.f. Telhaug & Mediås, 2003, p. 281). The curriculum reforms in the 1970's and the 1980's also reflected a stress on the value of local autonomy and the importance of a cultural and contextual base in the teaching content. The national curriculum was viewed as an ideal framework to guide the development of locally based curricula (Tønnessen, 2011). Moving towards the 1990's, growing demand for pupil and parent participation and influence on school affairs emerged, which resulted in the establishments of pupil and parent school councils (Tønnessen, 2011). The weight put on involvement and parental influence can be tied to the established progressive ideals in education, but it could also indicate a new tendency and a change in discourse, from perceiving education as a nation-building project, to dealing with education increasingly as a market commodity, framing pupils and parents more in the role of educational

consumers. Bearing in mind that the UN's Convention on the Rights of the Child was adopted in 1989, the integration of children with disabilities, and emphasis on pupil/parent influence and rights, might also be interpreted as national refractions of the international right-based conventions. The growing influence of globalization during the 1990's, through the international conventions and declarations, might support this point of view. Like the Jomtien agreement on the World Declaration on Education for All in 1990 and the Salamanca Statement of 1994, the Norwegian education policy shared the emphasis on school access and inclusion (Nes, 2004). Entering the new millennium, or the "PISA-decade", the international influence is visible in the introduction of quality assurance systems and curriculum reforms in Norway (Tveit, 2014; Hopmann, 2008). However, confronted with the Norwegian culture and educational heritage, the global educational agenda was transformed into a peculiar fusion of social-democratic, reform-pedagogical and market liberal ideologies – a fusion that possibly emerged in the aftermath of the reform processes, where former discourses entangled with the new. Nevertheless, the neoliberal influence on the Norwegian education system can't be said to have happened all by default. Right-wing think-tanks, like Civita, deliberately lobbied the public opinion, through active use of media, by manufacturing a "crisis in education" where neoliberal reforms were to be seen as the most reasonable response to the crisis (Jensen, 2010, p. 77; Beck, 2009). In 2003, Norway's EFA national plan of action, authored by the Minister of Education and Research Kristin Clemet, referred to the mediocre scores of Norwegian pupils in PISA 2000 when arguing for a higher emphasis on quality assurance systems and changes in law that would provide school leaders with a greater mandate to locally regulate teacher hours and tasks. Responding to the agreements in the Dakar convention, Clemet argued that Norway already had an inclusive school system, and that the main challenge was monitoring and raising school achievement, especially literacy skills in language and mathematics (Clemet, 2003). This line of argument legitimized conservation of the formative and inclusive tradition coupled with a neoliberal agenda. An example of this is how a part of the old school curriculum of the 1990's, "The core curriculum", which promotes a holistic view of education, upholding the vision of education as a means to prepare new generations of children for their future role as participating citizens (Bildung), was kept fully intact in the new curriculum of 2006 (K06, 2006; Udir.no, 2011). The discursive remainders of previous reforms might just have made the transition between an old and new educational discourse a little less threatening and unfamiliar to the Norwegian teachers.

In close parallel to the implementation of neoliberal reforms in Norway, one can trace an increasing international promotion of the Nordic education model (see CapEFA). This is also evident in the Norwegian EFA plan of action (2003), which made clear that the main task for Norway, in relation to the EFA agenda, was the country's role as an aid-provider. As Norway is ranged as one of the top contributing donors to the United Nations Development Programme, there is reason to believe that Norwegian educational policies have had a major influence on the EFA agenda.

EFA might have represented an opening for Norwegian policy makers, not only as a way to legitimize national neoliberal reforms, but as an investment opportunity to market the "Nordic model" in developing countries. At the same time as this market-expansion opportunity seems to have a positive ring to national policymakers, there is, on the other hand, a growing concern in teachers unions about how the global educational industry's (GEI) influences the *Norwegian* education system. An issue brief from the Union of Education Norway (2014), discussing shifts in governance and power in education, addresses these issues explicitly:

> International organisations, agreements and programmes influence Norwegian education policy in several ways. Particularly OECD's involvement in PISA and other international tests, as well as the rationale behind adjusting education to the labor market through *Skills strategy*, has been a subject of debate (OECD, 2012a, 2014a). Establishing the trade agreements TISA and TTIP is other examples of international processes that might have a major impact on the content and design of Norwegian Education. (Our translation, Union of Education Norway, 2014, p. 8)

The concern outlined by the Union of Education Norway, implying a growing global market influence on the educational system, indicates that neoliberal ideologies are winning ground, at the expense of national and professional autonomy.

In Stray's Ph.D. study (ongoing) of teachers life and work narratives in Norway, one can see how the negotiative space created by the ambiguities in the Norwegian education policy is adopted by school leaders in districts where there is a high political emphasis on neoliberal and NPM ideals. An example of this is how they use "the core curriculum" as a way of avoiding testing regimes, and to shield the staff and pupils from the pressures of measurement and performance. In one particular teacher narrative, 'Kristian', a teacher in secondary school, gives an account of how the school leaders aims to remove all grades until the final graduation exam in 10th grade in his school. He applauds how his school leaders have fought the battle for the teachers in order to protect their professional autonomy to teach in accordance with their beliefs and the pedagogical mandate of "The core curriculum". He states that: "They say [his leaders]: The core curriculum is our "Bible". And..yes..They have pointed it clear for us. You should not be afraid of any of this [test-regime and accountability]. It is us [the leaders] that shall take the brunt". It also seems as if this protection of the teachers' autonomy and professional mandate, allowed by the ambiguity of the curriculum, opens the possibility of adopting the new discourse of quality, literacy and evidence-based practice, without being held accountable for the pupils' achievements.

What is described above might be seen as an example of particular episodes of refraction on a local and individual level. These special adoptions of the neoliberal school reforms may not be regarded as an example of resistance to the reforms, but maybe more as an illustration of alternative ways of realizing the aims of the curriculum. In the mandatory national tests, this particular school actually achieves

on the upper level, compared to other Norwegian schools. This is also in line with Rudd and Goodson's (2014) findings of how countries, with low presence of neoliberal policies in education, achieve well in international comparative tests.

In Stray's study of Norwegian teachers' life-histories it is evident that the ambiguities in the Norwegian national curriculum and current educational design encompass a space for negotiations between the global influences and the local heritage. In this sense the ambiguities prevents the professional discourses to be divided into oppositional dichotomies, having to position oneself pro or against a global or local emphasis in educational development. It is questionable, however, if these ambiguities are about to fade, due to the increased impact of global educational industry (GEI).

The Case of Nepal

The modern school system in Nepal was created within an already existing set of cultural values and ideas about schooling and education. Two major forms of indigenous education were practiced prior to the introduction of English-based education in the 19th century, namely Buddhist monastic training and Hindu education (cf. Bista, 1991, p. 117). However, as Hindu education gained ground, the Buddhist tradition gradually weakened. The Hindu Gurukul education system, founded within the framework of the Vedic tradition, was characterized by the absolute authority of the guru (teacher) over the shisya (pupil), who in return was obedient and loyal (cf. Acharya, 1996, p. 104). The Gurukul pedagogy has a lot in common with the virtues upheld in Norway up until the 1970's, emphasising discipline, compliance, order, endurance and effort. Gurukul education replicated the hierarchical model of Hindu society, and traditionally only the Brahmins, high caste, were entitled to take up teaching as a profession (Bista, 1991). Gradually the British education system practiced in India began to have an influence on the education system in Nepal (Whelpton, 2005, p. 165). The British educational model was in some ways not in conflict with the Gurukul tradition, sharing some of the same pedagogical virtues. The hierarchical system in Nepal complied with the British test orientation, favouring pupils with academic skills (Bista, 1991). After the initiation of democracy in the 1950s an increasing influence from the West can be traced, changing the traditional education system. The expanding of schools was inspired by a nationalistic model of nation building (Pfaff-Czarnecka, 1997). The reinstatement of democracy in 1991 opened up possibilities for massive educational reforms, in line with the EFA targets. At this time education was promoted as a means to alleviate poverty and promote democratic culture. In Nepal the EFA represented as something far more foreign than the British system, promoting virtues, like emancipation, equity, inclusion, creativity and self-realization, which were highly in conflict with the traditional values.

The failure of the democratic revolutions to deliver visible improvement resulted in the Maoist uprising (cf. Shields & Rappleye, 2008, p. 92). Nevertheless, a peace treaty in 2006, between the Maoist and the seven party alliances, undermined the

Maoists aims of establishing an equitable society and education. If their vison had gained higher grounds in society, there is reason to believe that the Nepalese teachers would have perceived the EFA agenda as less foreign, sharing some of the aims of equity and emancipation.

Confronted with the Nepalese heritage and Gurukul tradition the EFA movement seems to be refracted as something alien to the local teachers. A tacit agreement appears to exist between teachers and the community for the continuation of the Hindu (Gurukul) tradition of education (Awasthi, 2004). Awasthi (2004) describes how the teachers' role appears to be divided into two typologies of selves: a traditional Gurukul self and a western school culture self. There are visible tensions between teachers' Gurukul roles and "Western" school roles. Although teachers appeared to accept the concepts of the modern school culture, due to the external pressure from central school authorities and forces of globalization, they still seem to have faith in their traditional Gurukul values (Awasthi, 2004). However, to be eligible for financial support, Nepal has had to prepare documents in line with EFA-targets under substantial aid agency influence and monitoring. School leaders and teachers are simply informed of the new policies and expected to comply (cf. Bhatta, 2011, p. 22). Committing to the international conventions was in this sense not based on a resonance between the EFA policy and the Nepalese heritage, but by Nepalese policy maker's awareness of the potential benefits of establishing connections with the global educational industry, a desire that might have originated in "a fatal attraction towards the supposed superiority of 'The Other'" (Carney & Rappleye, 2011, p. 4).

In Voreland's study (ongoing) of Nepalese teachers' life and work narratives, Damodar, a Brahmin teacher, expresses his frustration with the EFA program's lack of grounding in the Nepalese school reality. In his view, the EFA agenda reduces Nepalese children's opportunity to succeed in life, with its narrow focus on child-friendliness. The realities of poverty are so extreme in his context that he finds it necessary to teach the children codes of proper conduct and appearance, in order for them to participate in a highly competitive and hierarchical environment. In relation to EFA's promotion of child-friendly teaching, he reflects on the way in which this agenda has transformed the role of the teachers, from curriculum makers to curriculum implementers: "Look here. Is there no need for a home-friendly environment? It cannot only be school friendly. Is a teacher a contract worker? No. He is not... Is the teacher occupation up for sale? What is the teacher occupation?... [In Nepal] A teacher is like a second god [guru]. He brings someone in darkness into the light [enlightenment]".

This episode of refraction may illustrate the lack of a negotiative position on a local and professional level. In Voreland's study of Nepalese teacher' life histories it is evident that the teachers experience little or no room for practicing according to their professional beliefs and cultural heritage, leaving no space for negotiation between the local and the global perspectives. Voreland's findings resonate with Bhatta's observations of how the national autonomy to develop a school system

that suited a Nepalese context diminished when committed to the Jomtien and Dakar agreements making the global targets as the central reference point for all educational development and national policies (Bhatta, 2011, p. 2). This might be the reason why one sees such a clear divide in how teachers position themselves either as promotors of the Gurukhul *or* the western school culture, leaving no room to place an *and* between the two positions.

THE POTENTIAL OF NEGOTIATIVE SPACES IN THE AMBIGUITIES OF EFA – A QUESTION OF POWER RELATIONS

Having explored the refractions of the EFA policy in Norway and Nepal, the possibility of using ambiguities in the global policy to generate negotiative spaces seems to rely on the question of power relations. When juxtaposing the Norwegian case to the Nepalese, it is evident that the position to negotiate is far more obtainable in Norway than in Nepal. The reason for this might be that the influence of EFA in Norway is not connected to aid-funding, but rather to the interest of doing well in international comparisons. While Norway only risks achieving on a mediocre level in the PISA tests and hold a prominent position within the EFA as a donor country, the country of Nepal is under far more pressure, having to abide by the prescriptions given by multilateral and bilateral agencies – risking future aid for education. There is, however, a possible danger that the similarities between the EFA and Norwegian educational discourse, regarding equity and inclusion, will work like a Trojan horse, allowing the neoliberal influence to pass through unnoticed in the case of Norway.

In the case of Nepal, the EFA policy is hard to recognize from a local point of view. It does not seem to have a cultural reference point to the local educational heritage like it has in Norway. Reading the EFA's policy documents, traditional education, like the Gurukul tradition, is portrayed as a barrier to quality education, resulting in a lack of local ownership to the educational concepts and discourses (see ILFE Toolkit, Booklet 1, UNESCO, 2005, p. 7). In this sense, the EFA policy loses its negotiable space, and room for local diversity in interpretation and implementation of the EFA goals. Refracted in the Nepalese context, the EFA policy thus becomes offensive, indoctrinating and imperialistic. When prohibited from taking a real negotiative position, the Nepalese teachers respond to the EFA policy either through "pockets of resistance" or strategic compliance, creating a pseudo-participation and not real committed involvement in the reform processes (Freire, 2008).

Because the EFA movement represents a decontextualized and universalized educational policy, one needs to understand how the aim and use of neoliberal frameworks and accountability mechanisms, like NPM, work in different ways, depending on the context and cultures *on* which it is imposed, and on the particular local power relations (Hopmann, 2008). Even OECD's report "Education Policy Outlook 2015: Making Reforms Happen", makes a similar point in relation to policy reform implementations, stating that:

> [M]uch evidence highlights the importance of contextual factors in policy development and implementation. Policy reforms differ according to social, cultural and economic contexts and in different political structures. (OECD, 2015, p. 6)

When applied by marginalized groups, NPM is likely to be positively refracted as a tool to hold policymakers accountable for corrupt or inefficient practices, but when used by people in power it is refracted as an instrument that restrains people's possibilities to act and react according to their beliefs. The paradox of relying on neoliberal mechanisms as a means to implement the EFA agenda is that one intends to use it as a tool to empower marginalized groups in the Global South, but since it seems to be the Global North that sets the agenda, it actually may refract disempowerment. Instead of leading to empowerment, EFA becomes just another symbol of "Western power" enforced upon the Global South – sustaining the power structures instead of reducing inequalities. If this represents an imposition by design and/or default is however an open question, that will require further investigation. Goldstein (2004) argues that the EFA's aims of achieving specific learning targets, even within the rhetoric of diversity and local decision-making, the outcome of pursuing EFA targets will most likely increase control of developing countries' national systems by aid agencies and the World Bank, supported by global testing corporations. The unlikeliness of developing countries to reach the targets will most likely lead to demoralization and "also allow the imposition from outside of systemic reforms under the heading of 'remedies' to put those countries 'on track'" (Goldstein, 2004, p. 13).

The EFA's use of NPM as a neoliberal "top-down" policy tool, actually seems to rely on an asymmetric power relation between the implementers and recipients. This is not only a problem seen in the North-South perspective, but also has become a challenge for teachers in the Nordic countries, evidenced by the media reactions and coverage of the first PISA results (Elstad, 2009). A subsequent undermining of the teachers' professional status and dignity as "experts" in the field of education, has paved the way for increased bureaucratic control of the teacher's autonomy and mandate to govern their own practice. This "manufactured uncertainty" as Beck (2009) calls it, or the sudden distrust in the teacher profession, has legitimized the promotion of NPM in educational administration in several "PISA" countries, generating a powerful discourse or belief in evidence-based methods, quality standards and accountability mechanisms as the most reasonable and adequate solution to the crisis (Beck, 2009). However, the refracted resistance to accountability mechanism and testing regimes, which undermines the significance of cultural and historical understandings and upbringing (Bildung) and which standardize education into the mere training of skills, is highly apparent in the life narratives from both Nepal and Norway.

CONCLUSION

Judging by the cultural refractions, the ambiguities of the global educational agenda might entail a constructive element. However, this seems deeply to depend on the economic independence, self-image (the superiority of the 'Other') and global position of the country involved. For ambiguous policies to generate negotiative space and positions for varied interpretations and solutions, the issue of symbolic power and even political violence has to be addressed. Ricoeur (Ritivoi, 2010) talks about political violence as something more than revolutions and concrete actions. From his point of view, political violence occurs when private language is harmonized into a common "fable of glory". In the case of EFA, this might be what the critics have termed 'recolonising of minds' (Biraimah, 2005). Following Ricoeur, political violence occurs whenever a political organization creates a compliance of the joint will which restrains the options of the individual. In line with Emmanuel Levinas, Ricoeur holds that the imposition of sameness upon otherness is the ultimate manifestation of violence (cf. Ritivoi, 2010, p. 123). Our many life narratives collected from teachers in Norway and in Nepal has lead us to the conclusion that EFA's universal and NPM based strategies, on a local and individual level, is in imminent danger of being refracted as an exercise of political violence by the UN, the World Bank agencies and donor countries like Norway, especially in the Global South. To counteract such a development, policy changes within the EFA seem inevitable. A prerequisite for such changes is the acknowledgment of the obvious contradictions inherent in the use of global implementation strategies as measures to develop strong and sustainable educational environments based on local, cultural and contextual diversity.

If the global educational agenda for 2030 is to reach its goals, there is a need to create a public sphere that recognizes the plurality of voices and the importance of an equal, committed participation in educational development processes. This would mean giving up some of the control over local educational development, letting go of the current pressure on time and results by regarding "trial and error" as an important part of these processes. For EFA, this would involve accepting to live with a notion of risk and uncertainty about future outcomes of the EFA initiatives.

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8. EDUCATION FREE FOR ALL

Outsourcing, Contracts and Conflicts of Interest in the UK

In November 2015, *Investors Chronicle* carried a front page which declared: 'CARVE UP: Tap into Britain's outsourcing boom' (*Investors Chronicle,* 20–26 November, 2015). The editorial goes on to state: '…recent history has taught us that when government money is tight, the level of services outsourced to private providers often rises' (Powell & Liberton, 2015, p. 27). Education is now among the many public services which readers of *Investors Chronicle* can consider as an investment opportunity. In 2014, the *Times Education Supplement* reported a speech which Lord Nash, Parliamentary Under Secretary of State for Schools, gave to the Independent Academies Association's conference. Lord Nash, who is the chair of the Future Academies chain of schools, argued that as schools were facing budget cuts in the recession, 'efficiency savings' could be made through the outsourcing of a range of services:

> "…a new generation of school leaders is going to have to emerge to cut their cloth to drive efficiencies …This is one of the biggest challenges facing the school system: schools will increasingly have to do more with the same money." Savings could come through more effective purchasing, economies of scale, a more efficient use of teachers and teaching assistants and a better use of IT, he said.[1]

Schools are in a position to award a lucrative range of contracts – from stationery, catering and cleaning through to learning materials, management training, financial and IT services, and it is across all these services that they are now required to 'cut their cloth'. The education market was estimated at over £100 billion in 2011, according to the Association for Teachers and Lecturers (Benn, 2011, p. 118). As Stephen Ball noted in 2007: 'Education is big business …not only are the privatisations which the E (ducation) S (ervices) I (ndustry) represents very diverse, but so too are the companies and groups which participate' (Ball, 2007, p. 39). While once these services would have been under Local Authority control, for Academy Trusts and Free schools there is very little oversight over how such contracts are awarded, or which companies and groups are involved. In his study of the incursion of private finance into British public services, George Monbiot pointed to '…the corporate takeover of schools' (Monbiot, 2001, p. 331). Since Monbiot and Ball identified

T. Rudd & I. F. Goodson (Eds.), Negotiating Neoliberalism, 101–115.

this 'takeover' it has accelerated rapidly and efficiently under the Conservative government elected in 2015. That take-over is not obvious, neither is it transparent, but it is ruthless and ferociously complicated.

Free schools were central to the coalition[2] flagship policy for education and continued to be under the 2015 Conservative government. The second Conservative Minister for Education, Nicky Morgan, described Free schools as 'modern engines of social justice'.[3] Since Kenneth Baker (Education Minister under the Thatcher government) advocated City Technology Colleges there has been a dizzying array of apparently new initiatives in education policies; Academies, Beacon Schools and Education Action Zones under the New Labour government of Tony Blair, Free schools under the coalition between the Conservatives and Liberal Democrats. What each of these share is a shifting away of control from Local Education Authorities (whose control over schools was a principle established in the 1944 Education Act), towards an encouragement of the involvement of private companies and individuals. Academy Trusts are independent, overseen only by the Department of Education; as Ball put it in 2007: 'It is a side-stepping of established procedures and methods, in particular local authority democracy and civil service bureaucracy and their replacement with different set of relationships and a different ethos … ' (Ball, 2007, p. 830). In a speech to the Conservative Party conference in 2015, the then Prime Minister David Cameron said that his next ambition was to make 'local authorities running schools a thing of the past'.[4]

In 2016, the Government published a White Paper on education, *Educational Excellence Everywhere,* which promised an educational policy for: 'Empowering pupils, parents and communities, with a clearly defined role for local government' (HMSO, 2016, p. 1). This 'role' is spelt out in the paper: 'Local authorities will step back from running schools', instead it was proposed that local authorities would be required to oversee the transfer of all state schools into academies, and the expansion of 'sponsor capacity' (HMSO, p. 65).

Over successive administrations, private providers have taken over more and more aspects of education, while each government maintains that education remains in the public domain. A little noticed clause in the 2011 Education Act[5] also allowed private companies to run Further Education colleges for profit. The Conservative think tank, Policy Exchange, has argued that this model should be extended into schools. Policy Exchange is an educational charity and has an Education and Arts Unit which states on its website: 'We encourage a market orientated approach to education, accepting that public, private and voluntary all have a role to play and that they be regulated – rather than controlled – by government'.[6] Michael Gove, education minister under the coalition government, replaced in 2014 by Nicky Morgan, is a former chair of Policy Exchange and Morgan has herself presented policy papers to Policy Exchange. Both have publically endorsed a 'market orientated approach to education'. Morgan, current Minister for Education, gave a speech at the Floreat School in 2016, in which she said: 'We have sought, like no government before us, to bring business people into the education system'.[7]

Once in place as Minister of Education in 2010, Gove advocated his own variation of the City Academies, 'Free schools'. These differed from academies in that while academies were to some degree accountable to local authorities, Free schools are state funded independent schools, approved only by the Secretary of State for Education. The Education Act of 2011 allowed only for the setting up of new schools as Free schools or Academies; by March 2012, over half of state secondary schools were Academies, or in the process of becoming an Academy.[8] Under the coalition government, the number of Academy schools rose enormously; according to Department of Education figures, by 2015, 64 per cent of secondary schools and 16 per cent of primary schools were in the hands of private sponsors.[9] Government guidelines sternly require that that school should become an academy if it has been designated as 'failing'; Department of Education guidelines state: '…the warning notice should make clear that an academy solution is expected'.[10]

David Cameron and Michael Gove were determined to abolish what they consistently referred to as 'red tape' in the schools system, and what they meant by this was made clear in the 2011 Education Act, which abolished a number of bodies, including the General Teaching Council, the Development Agency for Schools and the Qualifications and Curriculum Development Agency, all concerned with the maintaining of consistency and standards in teacher training and education. The authority of these bodies was transferred to the Secretary of State for Education, and the Department of Education established instead a 'framework' of companies pre-authorised to offer management and educational services for a fee.

Legislation introduced under the coalition government had removed the provision of some schools' services from local authority control and forced the hand of schools to offer contracts to private providers. This was a surreptitious encroachment of the free market into schools that was ratcheted up still further under the majority Conservative government from 2015. All schools are responsible for a wide range of contracts, and Academy chains have particularly large numbers of contracts to award, but for Free schools and Academies, there is little oversight as to how such contracts are conferred. These contracts allowed for-profit companies to enter into education provision (companies which, in many cases, had no previous knowledge of schools). Government advice on setting up a Free school advises: 'Free schools can be set up by parents, teachers or voluntary groups. The founders who set up free schools are not able to make a profit from running them but they are allowed to commission private companies to provide services to the schools'.[11] It is however precisely in those services that real profits can be made.

While Cameron and Gove's rhetoric purported to give control to parents and to teachers, commercial providers were being lined up to take over schools services, in much the same way that reforms in the Health Service claimed to hand power to doctors and to patients, while paving the way for medical corporations. The 'red tape' that the Conservatives so decried had once provided protections for pupils, parents, teachers, school staff and the taxpayer, without local authority oversight, there was little regulation. In 2015, figures produced by the Department for Education showed

that there were 11 allegations of fraud relating to Academy and Free schools in 2013, 21 in 2013–14, and 19 in 2014–15.[12]

Ball has developed a typology of 'players' in the education services sector which gives some indication of the range and diversity of commercial sector involvement that have joined the public sector and NGOs in providing services to state funded education.[13]

- Engineering/management services companies
- Specialist management services provider
- Public service start-ups
- Niche start-ups
- Primitive capitalists
- Accountancy and consultancy services providers
- Public sector and NGOs
- Partnerships (Ball, 2007, p. 69).

Individually, these may seem relatively insignificant incursions, but cumulatively they demonstrate an ever growing involvement of for-profit companies in schools. And since that list was compiled it has grown, companies whose primary interest is not in education have increasingly become involved in producing commercial learning materials and management training for schools. Many of the CEOs of those companies are directly involved in the management and running of schools as members and chairs of the board of governors of Academy chains or Free schools. In 2007, Kenway et al. wrote about the galloping incursion into classrooms from commercial sponsors in the Australian context and argued:

> … it is now the case that commercial enterprises without any educational dimensions (and indeed charitable organizations) are 'targeting' schools … the main imperative … is to commercialize the classroom (and other aspects of the school such as the canteen, the sports field, the front office) to establish schools as legitimate sites for profit and savings. (Kenway et al., p. 8)

Schools in the UK have experienced much the same 'targeting', as commercial providers have been welcomed into schools; the canteen, the sports field, the front office are worth more attention than the parentheses given here – these are the sources of significant profit.

Outsourcing in the education sector is where the stealthy privatisation of education began; it had initially been in back room activities, such as payroll, personnel, and property management, and has since moved steadily into consultancies and the provision of learning materials. Where once local authorities would have been responsible for supplying or contracting such services, the Department of Education is now setting out to recruit private providers. The Department's home page has a dedicated section for companies seeking contracts awarded by schools under the aegis of the Department of Education, which is clearly pitched at commercial 'suppliers'.

There is enormous potential within this system for conflicts of interest; corporate suppliers and sponsors inevitably have commercial interests. And those conflicts of interest seem to be flourishing in Free schools and Academy chains. There is a lengthy catalogue of Academy Trusts, among them the largest chains in Britain, which have been demonstrably involved in financial mismanagement, vested interests and poor performance,[14] and which have been the subjects of investigations by the Charities Commission, Ofsted and the Education Funding Agency (EFA).[15]

The Academies Enterprise Trust (AET) is the largest multi-sponsor of academies in the UK and is a charitable trust. Established in 2008, it now runs 67 schools, and has been prevented from taking on more because of concerns from the Department of Education of over-expansion.[16] According to AET, their chain has grown 'organically';[17] however, after a rapid expansion under Michael Gove between 2011 and 2012, Ofsted found that 5 of their schools were found to require improvement, one was rated 'inadequate' and the chain was censured.[18] AET responded in 2014 by saying that the inspectors' findings were 'unfairly negative'.[19] Sir Michael Wilshaw, Chief Inspector of Schools and then head of Ofsted, called for the need to inspect chains rather than individual schools, but was rebuffed by Gove and later by Gove's successor, Nicky Morgan.[20] According to a report in *The Observer,* AET had 'paid nearly £500,000 into the private business interests of its trustees and executives over three years for services ranging from project management to HR consultancy'.[21] A spokesman for AET responded 'that while services provided by trustees and staff had not been put out to competitive tender, AET had followed all the correct procedures' (Greany & Scott, 2014, p. 30).

In 2014, AET announced plans to outsource all non-teaching roles in their schools, including librarians, speech therapists and curriculum development to private contractors, in partnership with PriceWaterhouseCoopers, in a deal worth £400 million. Although the Department of Education's initial response to the proposal was that outsourcing was a matter for AET and their board of trustees, the deal was finally derailed because the Education Funding Agency was called in front of the Public Accounts Committee (chaired by Margaret Hodge), where, when challenged, the EFA expressed their 'wider concerns'.[22] AET responded with a statement: 'we have decided that we should not continue with the proposals for the joint venture arrangement with PWC at this current time'.[23] The proposal did not go through the Department of Education that time, but AET and PriceWaterhouseCoopers are clearly waiting.

In 2016, a letter from Ofsted sent to the CEO of AET reported on the outcome of the 2015 inspection of the schools in the trust: 'Since June 2014, … inspectors judged that the academy was not improving fast enough…. It compares poorly with the national average of 75% good or better secondary schools'.[24] AET responded with a posting on their own website, which regretted that Ofsted had not sufficiently recognised the Trust's achievements: 'We are… disappointed that the significant achievements of the Trust and our schools have not been sufficiently recognised …'.[25]

E-Act Trust is another chain that has been the subject of criticism by Ofsted, which ruled that its educational 'mission' and commercial interests were not easily distinguishable. In March 2013 an audit by the Department for Education concluded that: 'The boundaries between E-ACT and its subsidiary, E-ACT Enterprises Ltd (EEL) are blurred. A number of activities undertaken by the subsidiary have been paid for with public funds and so appear irregular'.[26] E-Act Trust was initially registered as a charitable trust, but was removed from the register in 2011.[27] The Director General, Sir Bruce Liddington, resigned after an official warning from the government in 2013[28] and E-Act Enterprises Ltd was apparently dissolved, but at the time of writing is still listed on the Government website 'Companies in the UK' list as 'Active – Proposal to Strike Off'.[29] E-Act was issued with a financial notice to improve, which was lifted by the Education Finance Agency in July 2015. E-Act continues be active and to run schools; its logo promises that it is 'Delivering Educational Excellence'.[30] Sir Bruce Liddington is currently the company director of Transtatus Associates, a management consultancy, and continues as a management and training consultant for schools. In 2014 E-Act lost control of 10 of its schools after serious concerns were raised by Ofsted Inspectors, and Ofsted warned the E-Act Trust that it was failing to improve standards in many of its schools.[31]

Durand Academy Trust (DAT) was a trust singled out for praise by Michael Gove when he was Education Secretary;[32] in 2014 the Trust controversially set up a state boarding school in Sussex which was roundly supported by Gove. In 2015 the Trust was subject to a financial notice warning from the Education Funding Agency and The Charity Commission set up an inquiry into the Durand Education Trust, another organisation which owns the land that the school is built on, and expressed 'significant concerns' about the 'potential lack of separation' between the two trusts.[33]

The public accounts committee also investigated the Durand Education Trust's relationship with GMG Educational Support (UK) Limited, which is part of the private company Horizons London Ltd, which runs the leisure centre facilities at the Trust's schools. Sir Greg Martin the headmaster, who was knighted for services to education in 2013, was questioned by the Public Accounts Committee. It emerged that his salary was over £400,000, while he also had a financial interest in a dating agency which was run from the school site. Martin was removed from office due to conflicts of interest. He retired as head, but remained as a school governor[34] and continues to be listed as a Director of the Trust.[35]

The Griffin Schools Trust was another Academy chain reviewed by the Education Funding Agency in 2013, which found 11 breaches of the *Academies Financial Handbook*.[36] Contracts had been awarded with no evidence of either competitive tendering or any register of business interests and it was found that three out of six trustees had connections with companies providing services to the trust.[37] Over two years, the Griffin Trust paid over £800,000 to 'consulting companies' in which its founders or trustees had financial interests. It was reported in December 2015[38] that the Trust had diverted 5 per cent of its pupil premium fund for what was described

as ‘GST management support’ and ‘trust strategy’. While Local Authorities were required to pass on all the pupil premium to the schools that they run, it would seem there is no such requirement for Academy chains.

The Aurora Academies Trust runs a chain of academies and holds ‘lead sponsor’ status with the Department of Education, it is a ‘preferred’ provider of Academy schools and advises the Department of Education on policy decisions. In 2014, An Institute of Education Report found that the Trust was paying ‘about £100,000 a year for the use of a patented global curriculum’ (Greany & Scott, 2014, p. 29); this curriculum is ‘Paragon’, which sets out to replace the social studies, history, and geography provision at primary and secondary school levels. The Aurora Trust was set up by Mosaica Education UK, a subsidiary of the American company, Mosaica Education Inc. Mosaica is a for-profit management company which runs a network of 90 charter schools in America.[39] The arm responsible for schools in Britain is Mosaica Education UK, which ‘provides school management, professional development and education consulting services to schools and governments within the United Kingdom’.[40] The general secretary of the National Union of Teachers, Christine Blower, responded to *The Observer* newspaper: ‘What is most shocking is that no accountability mechanism exists to prevent this, nor is there any form of quality assurance’ (*The Observer*, 19 May, 2013).

The founder and President of Mosaica Inc. is Gene Eidelman, currently the chair of the Aurora Trust in Britain. Mosaica began when Eidelman, with his wife Dawn, launched Prodigy Consulting, a chain of corporate sponsored child development centres in 1988. Mosaica Inc. involves a number of for-profit companies involved in educational services including: Mosaica Online, a ‘virtual education program’, Mosaica Turnaround Partners, a management consultancy, Mosaica International Schools, which plans to operate private international schools.[41] Mosaica also provides the Paragon curriculum (designed by Dawn Eidelman) in its schools, despite criticism by Ofsted (as in America) for its lack of ‘local focus’ (Greany & Scott, 2014, p. 29). It was the licensing of Paragon to the Aurora Academies Trust that prompted concerns from the Institute of Education report, which found that three of the Directors of the Aurora Trust had interests in Mosaica (Greany & Scott, 2014, p. 29). There have been a series of scandals associated with Mosaica’s operations in America; a study by Arizona State University made a list of 36 schools operated by Mosaica from 1997 and found that:

> Twenty seven of those schools have since been shut down by local authorizers or have extricated themselves from Mosaica’s management. Of the nine which survived, eight can be classified as categorical failures …[42]

The Parliamentary Under Secretary for Schools, with responsibilities for ‘Academies, Free schools, UTCs, Studio schools, independent schools; School organisation; Education Funding Agency’[43] is Lord John Nash, who has a background in venture capitalism and is a significant donor to the Conservative Party. He is a co-founder and Partner in Sovereign Capital, a private equity company

that specialises in investing in support services in health and education,[44] and also the Chair of Future, an educational charity that runs a chain of academies.[45] Ball includes Sovereign Capital among the group of 'primitive capitalists' who 'operate across the public/private divide …in the private sector they 'sell' directly to the public (or to L(ocal) A(uthorities) through ownership of private schools, care homes and nurseries' (Ball, 2007, p. 61).

The Daily Telegraph, a newspaper generally sympathetic to Conservative ministers and policies, was moved to question whether Lord Nash's appointment as Under Secretary in the Department of Education involved a conflict of interests.[46] Nash can be understood as one among the 'new players, individual and corporate, who sit at the tables of policy, seek influence and favour and 'do ' policy by contact and in relation to outcome measures and performance payments' (Ball, 2007, p. 190). In April 2014 Nash produced a document for the Department of Education, which was leaked. The document, 'Future Academy System Session,' admitted the numerous failings of Free schools, and proposed that the government bring in private advisers to turn round failing schools. He warned of approaching cuts to education and recommended the use of standardised lesson plans (which could include Mosaica's Paragon) in order to save money. Lord Nash is personally in a position to provide both standardised lesson plans and educational management training, as the chair of the Future Academies Trust. While the Trust itself is a registered charity, under its arm is The Curriculum Centre, which offers commercial training events and conferences, and offers its own curriculum packages of standardised lessons which can be used by unqualified teachers.[47] While The Curriculum Centre's website[48] claimed in 2014: 'We are a charitable organisation, founded to share the benefits of deep curriculum change', the Curriculum Centre does not currently appear on the government list of registered charities. It is The Curriculum Centre's curricula and training programmes which Lord Nash recommended to school leaders and to the Department of Education.[49] Lord Nash and his wife Lady Caroline Nash have some experience in setting up commercial consultancies with particular interests in public services, while simultaneously donating large sums to the Conservative Party and moving into government and policy making circles. Lord Nash was a CEO of Care UK, and his wife funded Andrew Lansley's office while he was shadow secretary of Health.

The Curriculum Centre's Advisory group includes a number of members who also run consultancies and who are embedded in Conservative party politics. One member is James O'Shaugnessy, now Lord O'Shaugnessy, who was Director of Policy for David Cameron and Director of Policy and Research for the Conservative Party; O'Shaugnessy was also once a Director of and is now a visiting fellow at Policy Exchange. He founded Floreat Education, which now runs a chain of five schools.[50] Lord O'Shaughnessy also advises for Portland Communications, a 'political consultancy'[51] and is a Director and owner of Mayforth Consulting, 'a strategy and research consultancy with a primary focus on education'.[52] O'Shaugnessy is also chair of IPEN (International Positive Education Network), a global organisation

that promotes the 'character + academics' approach to education'. This is a group with international interests, close to government, whose members chair Academy chains, and who have commercial interests in educational management and learning materials.

Stephen J. Ball argued in 2003 that: 'We are seeing …with different degrees of intensity in different locations, the establishment of new generic modes of organization, governance and delivery of state education …' (Ball, 2003, p. 30). John and Caroline Nash's Future Academies is one of these locations and they are spreading it across the nation as governors of schools, between them they hold at least 7 chairs or co-chairs on school boards.[53]

Among Lord Nash's many business interests were his shareholdings (according to the Register of Lords' interests his 'interest ceased' in July 2015[54] in Longshot Kids Ltd, which brought the globalised Mexican chain[55] KidZania to Britain in May 2015. KidZania was struck off and dissolved from the UK Companies register in 2012, but there is no information as to why this was the case.[56] In 2001, Kenway and Bullen argued that 'we are entering another stage in the construction of the young as the demarcations between education, entertainment and advertising collapse' (Kenway & Bullen, p. 3). The blurring of those demarcations can be seen to have reached its apotheosis in KidZania, where the alliance of educational and commercial interests is vividly apparent. The *Daily Telegraph* dubbed the experience as a 'schooling in capitalism',[57] while KidZania's own online journal declared 'The UK gets its first Capitalist Theme Park'.[58] KidZania styles itself as 'educational entertainment brand'; and while it appears to be an entertainment business, its broader educational ambitions in the UK are evident in the further reaches of its website.

The London branch is run by Longshot Ltd., a leisure company and was set up in partnership with British Airways. The parent company boasts that its 'selected partners' include Coca-Cola, Baskin Robbins, Dunkin Donuts, Domino's Pizza, McDonald's and Mars[59] and states: 'A key component of the KidZania experience is the integration of real world brands …an immersive and interactive brand experience'.[60] KidZania is keen to brandish its educational credentials on its publicity materials; its website has a dedicated 'Learning with KidZania' section which claims: 'Learning is at the very heart of KidZania's values, our cross-curricular educational experience will challenge and inspire children from ages 4 to 14 … We will be developing a network of KidZania Ambassador Schools'.[61] It is not yet clear where in their global franchise those 'Ambassador Schools' would be located, nor what an Ambassador School might be, but under current regulations for the founding of a school there is nothing to prevent KidZania from opening up a chain of schools in the UK. From Department of Education information on the setting up of Free schools;[62] the only criteria appear to be that there is a strong narrative, that the Board of Directors has expertise and that there is a proven need for a school in the designated area. KidZania clearly has that strong narrative, and the UK branch has an educational advisory group in place, which boasts an impressive array of educational and financial expertise. KidZania's 'Think Tank' includes Professor Maggie Atkinson,

former children's commissioner for England, Sir William Atkinson, the 'superhead' of Phoenix School who was knighted for his services to education, Baron Jim Night, Managing Director of Online Learning at TES Global, and, Claudia Harris, CEO of The Careers and Enterprise Company. The Careers and Enterprise Company was set up with public funding to improve careers advice in schools, and Harris was appointed by Nicky Morgan, then Secretary of State for Education.

These are only some among the many Academy Trusts and educational charities whose activities and boards of trustees merit some serious scrutiny. Sir Michael Wilshaw, then head of Ofsted, wrote a letter to then Education Minister Nicky Morgan expressing his concerns following the inspections of seven academy chains which included AET, E-Act, Oasis, The Education Fellowship and School Partnership Trusts; he wrote: 'some of these trusts are spending money on expensive consultants or advisers to compensate for deficits in leadership. Put together, these seven trusts spent at least £8.5 million on education consultancy in 2014/15 alone'.[63]

In 2015, the House of Commons Education Committee published a report which raised concerns about conflicts of interest in Academy Trusts, based on the 2014 Institute of Education report. The response from Nicky Morgan for the Department of Education was to reassure that the Education Funding Agency and the Department of Education were monitoring such trusts:

> Oversight of academies' governance is the responsibility of the EFA, which scrutinises academy trusts' annual governance statements … The EFA has strengthened its monitoring of governance changes in academies, and the department has taken clear new powers to bar those involved in academy governance found to be unsuitable. The roles and responsibilities of governors and trustees are clearly set out in the AFH, and if there is a breach, the EFA will consider whether intervention is necessary.[64]

However, the Institute of Education report had stated that previous reports had 'questioned whether the Education Funding Agency (EFA) has the skills or capacity required to fulfil its role as the funder and financial regulator of academies'; the current report concluded that 'the capacity and skills of the EFA and Ofsted are insufficient to deal with the sheer number of academies in place' (Greany & Scott, 2014, p. 36). The research found that 'Several interviewees argued that neither the EFA nor Ofsted is fit for purpose with respect to guarding against conflicts of interest' (Greany & Scott, 2014, p. 4).

There has been a pattern emerging under the coalition and Conservative governments of (mainly) men, often associated with Policy Exchange, who come from a background in venture capitalism or hedge fund management, who are only too willing to sponsor chains of Academies and Free schools and to set up charitable trusts (with the tax privileges that come with charitable status). These are the 'best leaders … of the school system', according to a repeated phrase in the 2016 White Paper (HMSO, p. 8). The boards of these trusts use public funding to commission goods and services from for-profit organisations, and there are numerous cases in

which board members have a direct link or financial interest in those companies.[65] Among the few educational theorists cited in the 2016 White Paper on Education is Sir Michael Barber. Barber is the Chief Education Advisor to Pearson, a corporation which provides educational publishing and assessment services to schools.[66]

Boards of governors of Academy Trusts are regularly made up of CEOs of commercial 'consultancies' such as Pearson, which are then contracted by schools, so funnelling large amounts of state funding into corporate interests. Many of the Chairs of Academy Trust chains are also close to government, often moving into advisory roles, and some, like Lord Nash, into the Ministry of Education. Under current education policy, there is little check on corporate interests in state schools. The White Paper initially proposed that parent governors, who represented the interests of local communities and children on governing bodies, would no longer be able to sit on school boards, their presence dismissed as 'a symbolic representation' (HMSO, p. 65). Instead, parents were offered a virtual 'new Parent Portal', as 'Many parents find it difficult to understand the school system' (HMSO, p. 66). It was clear in the White Paper that parent governors were not welcome in the overseeing of school governance. Under the proposals, the only final arbiters of an Academy chain were to be the Ministers of Education. And, as in the case of Lord Nash, those ministers may themselves well have vested interests in decisions that are made. There is a regularity in the constituency of the boards of Trustees across a number of Academy chains under the Conservative government; an unholy alliance of hedge fund managers, venture capitalists, and CEOs of organisations with significant business interests in the outsourcing of public services.

The Institute of Education report concluded: 'it is clear that very large sums of public money are being paid to trust Board members and their companies as well as the trading arms of academy chains…' (Greany & Scott, 2014, p. 23). The membership of these boards and their financial decisions remain largely unchallenged by the Department of Education. In many cases there are close alliances between the Department of Education and these 'players'; many are associated with Policy Exchange and many have been decorated for their 'services to education'. A number, not only Lord Nash, have moved directly into government advisory roles and have set up consultancies which are used by government.[67] Behind the rhetoric of 'inspiring' and 'strong' leadership' of the white paper, lies a shadowy group of (unnamed) for-profit companies.

In 2012, the Conservative think tank, the Institute of Economic Affairs, published a report *The Profit Motive in Education: Continuing the Revolution,* which argued that the Conservative reforms to education would not be complete until for-profit companies had been wholeheartedly welcomed into schools.[68] Stephen J. Ball could write in 2007: 'There is no simple uni-directional move to privatise, although the scope of privatisation is 'expanding as the obvious 'solution' to public sector difficulties…' (Ball, 2007, p. 121). That may have been true under the New Labour of Tony Blair, but under the coalition government from 2010, the 'scope of privatisation' expanded even further as more schools were forced down the Academy route and

were no longer answerable to anyone but the Secretary of State for Education. Under the Conservative majority government, from 2015, a 'simple uni-directional move' towards privatisation seems well within the bounds of possibility.

In 2013, *The Independent* reported a leak from the Department of Education which demonstrated how close Michael Gove came to privatising British school system in his term as Education Minister:

> Academies and free schools should become profit-making businesses using hedge funds and venture capitalists to raise money, according to private plans being drawn up by the Education Secretary, Michael Gove. Details of discussions on the proposed redesign of academy regulations were leaked to The Independent by Department for Education insiders who are concerned that Mr. Gove is going too fast and too far in his ambition to convert all 30,000 schools in England to academies.[69]

Nicky Morgan, Gove's successor, did say in 2015 that she was 'very uncomfortable' with the idea of for-profit schools in 2015 (www. telegraph.co.uk, 9 March 2015). Nonetheless, the 2016 White Paper did propose that all schools would be required to become Academies. In the event, the ambitions of the Secretary of State for Education to remove parent and council involvement from local schools and to hand them over to multi academy chains was stymied by a chorus of disapproval. Local councillors, school governors, educationalists, teachers and teaching unions (of all political persuasions) united in their opposition to the proposals of the White Paper. Nicky Morgan was roundly booed when she told the NASUWT conference (the less radical of the teachers' unions) that there was 'no reverse gear' to the government's plans.[70] On the day after the local and mayoral elections in May, 2016, when there was much to distract the news agenda from a humiliating climbdown for the government, Nicky Morgan announced that she was a 'listening secretary of state' and that well performing local authority schools would not now be required to convert to academy status.[71] She was replaced in July 2016 as minister by Justine Greening.

Nonetheless, academy schools seem to remain as the preferred option for the Department of Education. In a strange reversal, where once commercial sponsorship was called upon to plug the gaps in state funding for schools, public funding is now being directed to an under-investigated set of corporate 'consultancies' whose directors sit on the boards of Academy and Free schools. In the drive to push state schools further and further into the arms of academy chains, there has a blurring of any distinction between private and the public interest, between commerce and charity, between education and enterprise; this obscuring of commercial interests and a lack of oversight into the allocation of public funding has been a feature of the relationship between the state and the private sector under successive administrations but has intensified under the current Conservative government. Mosaica, the Curriculum Centre, KidZania and many other 'private providers' are all, meanwhile, circling their wagons.

NOTES

1 www.tes.com/news/school-news/breaking-news/schools-face-post-election-funding-squeeze-warns-minister,11 October 2014.
2 In the election of 2010, no single party won an overall majority, and a coalition was formed between the Social Democrats and the Conservatives, under the leadership of then Conservative Prime Minister, David Cameron.
3 www.gov.uk/government/news/free-schools-drive-social-justice-nicky-morgan, 22 May, 2015.
4 www.gov.uk/government/speeches/pm-speech-this-is-a-government-that-delivers, 7 December 2015.
5 This Education Act also repealed the duties of governing bodies and local authorities in relation to admissions and school meals. In 2013, the School Food Trust reported that 9 out of 10 Academies were selling junk food to students in dinner halls and vending machines; no longer bound by the Labour ruling that academies had to abide by required standards of nutrition, the schools were making between £3000 and £15,000 a year from the sales of fizzy drinks, crisps and chocolate (www.childrensfoodtrust.org.uk., 25 June 2013).
6 www.policyexchange policyexchange.org.uk, July, 2016.
7 www.gov.uk/government/speeches/nicky-morgan-opens-character-symposium-at-floreat-school…, 21 January 2016.
8 Www.gov.uk/government/uploads/system/uploads/attachment_data/file/328436/Academies_Annual_Report_2012-13.pdf, 9 July 2014.
9 www.suttontrust.com, July, 2016.
10 www.gov.uk/government/organisations/department…education/…/complaints-procedures… January, 2016.
11 www.gov.uk/set-up-free-school, July, 2016.
12 www.gov.uk/government/collections/academies-investigation-reports. See also, *The Observer,* 6 September 2015, p. 12.
13 This listing does not include construction companies, banking or IT services.
14 See, for example, Greany and Scott, 2014, Philips and Whannel, 2013.
15 See Benn and Downs, 2015.
16 http://schoolsweek.co.uk/largest-academy-chain-offloads-eight-schools 24 April 2015.
17 www.academiesenterprisetrust.org, 10 July 2016.
18 https://www.tes.com/news/school-news/breaking-news/ofsted-englands-biggest-academy-chain-failing-too-many-pupils, 4 February 2016.
19 www.bbc.co.uk/news/education-29011548, 1 September 2014.
20 https://www.gov.uk/government/uploads/system/uploads/attachment_data/file/506718/HMCI__advice__note_MAT_inspections____10_March_2016.pdf, 10 March, 2016.
21 *The Observer,* 6 September 2015.
22 www.schoolsweek.co.uk/academy-chain-drops-plan-to-outsource-non-teaching-staff, 20 November, 2014.
23 www.academiesenterprisetrust.org/about-us/news/jointventure, 21 August, 2015.
24 www.gov.uk/…/focused-inspection-of-academies-enterprise-trust, 4 February, 2016.
25 www.academiesenterprisetrust.org/about-us/news/statementinresponsetoofstedletter, 4 February 2016.
26 www.gov.uk/government/…/Financial_management_and_governance_review, 11 March 2013.
27 www.gov.uk/government/organisations/charity-commission, July, 2010.
28 www.tes.com/news/tes…/extravagant-expenses-and-pound393k-irregularities, 17 May 2013.
29 www.companiesintheuk.co.uk, 10 July, 2016.
30 www.e-act.org.uk, 10 July, 2016.
31 www.bbc.co.uk/news/education-26735154, 25 March, 2014.
32 www.localschoolsnetwork.org.uk/2013/…/gove-shines-beam-of-approval 9 January, 2013.
33 www.gov.uk/government/news/new-charity-investigation-durand-education-trust, 18 February, 2015.
34 www.localschoolsnetwork.org.uk/2013, 9 January, 2013.
35 www.gov.uk/government/organisations/companies-house, 10 July, 2016.

[36] www.kentadvice.co.uk/peters-blog/item/851-the-griffin-academies-trust, 7 November 2015.
[37] See *The Observer*, 25th October, 2015
[38] www.theguardian.com › Education › Academies, 1 December, 2015.
[39] Mosaica generates more than $125M in annual revenue; *Inc. Magazine* has ranked Mosaica as one of the fastest growing companies in America.
[40] www.mosaicaeducation.com 10 July, 2016.
[41] Mosaica currently operates one school in Hyderabad, India.
[42] www.repository.asu.edu/attachments/78989, 10 July, 2016.
[43] https://www.gov.uk/government/people/lord-nash 10 July, 2016.
[44] In 2013 it was reported that Sovereign Capital owned companies with more than £70m worth of government contracts (*The Guardian,* 18 October, 2013).
[45] In 2013, two head teachers from the Future Academy in Pimlico resigned within the space of less than a month, one with no teaching qualifications resigned after three weeks, the other citied 'bullying by the academy management' (*The Guardian,* 18 October, 2013).
[46] www.telegraph.co.uk, 11 January, 2013.
[47] In 2016 it was reported that Lord and Lady Nash's daughter was teaching and advising on the curriculum at the Pimlico Academy, one of the Future Trust's schools, although unqualified (*The Independent*, 13 May, 2016).
[48] The Curriculum Centre's website has been unavailable since 27th October, 2014.
[49] See Benn and Downs, 2015.
[50] Nicky Morgan officially opened and gave a speech at the Wandsworth Floreat school in 2016, www.floreatwandsworth.org.uk
[51] www.portland-communications.com, July 10, 2016.
[52] wwwmayforthconsulting.wordpress.com, 24 July, 2013.
[53] See *The Guardian*, 29 July, 2014.
[54] http://www.parliament.uk/mps-lords-and-offices/standards-and-interests/register-of-lords-interests/, 10 July, 2016.
[55] KidZania first opened a theme park in Mexico City in 1999. By 2014 it had 18 sites in five continents.
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[57] http://www.telegraph.co.uk/travel/destinations/europe/united-kingdom/england/london/articles/KidZania-the-educational-theme-park-where-kids-play-at-being-adults/, 25 June 2015.
[58] https://kzjournal.kidzania.com, 18 May, 2015.
[59] It is worth noting that these are all brands of fast food and confectionary, which many parents would prefer to avoid.
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[61] http://london.kidzania.com/en-uk/, 10 July, 2016.
[62] www.gov.uk/set-up-free-school, 12 Nov, 2014.
[63] https://www.gov.uk/government/uploads/system/uploads/attachment_data/file/506718/HMCI__advice__note_MAT_inspections____10_March_2016.pdf
[64] www.publications.parliament.uk/pa/cm201415/cmselect/cmeduc/258/258.pdf, 27 January 2015.
[65] see Greany and Scott, 2014 and Benn and Downs, 2015.
[66] Pearson were responsible for two instances of leaks in advance of SATS tests in 2016. www.bbc.co.uk/news/uk-36253697, 10 May 2016.
[67] This is a process which does not only apply to education, it has also been seen in the Department of Health, where Lord Nash's path as chair of Care UK followed much the same trajectory (see Philips & Whannel, 2013).
[68] www.iea.org.uk, 19 July, 2012.
[69] www.independent.co.uk › News › Education › Education News, 10 February 2013.
[70] https://www.gov.uk/government/speeches/nicky-morgan-educational-excellence-everywhere 17 March, 2016.
[71] www.bbc.co.uk/news/education-36227570, 6 May 2016.
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9. CO-OPERATIVE EDUCATION, NEOLIBERALISM AND HISTORICAL PERSPECTIVES

The Dilemmas of Building Alternatives

In the early twenty first century, co-operative schools have become a significant presence in the English educational landscape. Following experiments with a number of specialist, business and enterprise colleges, the first co-operative trust was established in 2008, enabled by the 2006 Education and Inspections Act. Since then numbers have grown rapidly to over 800 by 2015, although numbers subsequently reduced to about 650 by mid 2016. The legal models for co-operative schools are based upon loyalty to co-operative values and principles which have been codified by the International Co-operative Alliance (1995). These values are self-help, self-responsibility, democracy, equality, equity and solidarity. The principles relate to the democratic and transparent organisation of a co-operative which connect to the needs of members and the communities in which they are located. In addition, co-operative schools should make provision for the representation of stakeholder groups in governance structures – staff, pupils, parents, communities and, in some cases, alumni. In adapting these models, educators have fashioned a range of structures to suit their needs, mainly comprising co-operative trusts and academies. The movement has been hailed as one which offers the kernel of an alternative to neoliberal education although less ambitious visions have also been apparent (Thorpe, 2011; Woodin, 2012; Facer, Shaw, & Thorpe, 2012; Woodin & Fielding, 2013; Woodin, 2015; Davies, 2015; Mills, 2015).

The sense in which this movement of co-operative schools represents an alternative is a complex issue. Accounts of neoliberalism are centred upon the major historical transformations in political, economic and social spheres which have been clearly perceptible over recent decades. The corporatism of the post war years was to be dismantled in the 1970s and 1980s with the rise of the new right and market based reforms which nurtured intensive capitalist processes. It represented a tectonic movement in global politics, from Cold War to neoliberalism and from post war partnership to an era characterised by the dominance of transnational corporations. Competition, privatisation and financialisation have been keywords in the new settlement. Indeed, market reforms have helped to weed out oppositional forces across society – the idea, simply, that There Is No Alternative (TINA). They have simplified a complex range of business models, not least co-operative businesses, the largest 300 of which have a combined turnover of almost $2.4 trillion,

T. Rudd & I. F. Goodson (Eds.), Negotiating Neoliberalism, 117–128.

the size of the Brazilian economy (Meek, 2014; ICA/Eurisce, 2015). In other words, a new common sense has emerged, in Gramscian terms, and has been imposed upon diverse historical, national and regional cultures, demanding devotion to a new planetary discourse (Bourdieu & Wacquant, 2001). Yet, despite the convergence of societies around a common language and set of measures, significant national, regional and cultural specificities cannot be wiped from the slate so easily (Hirst & Thompson, 1999). Theoretically the state's role has been limited to defending the rule of law, individual liberty, private property and efficient markets (Hayek, 1944; Nozick, 1974) but, in reality, active state regulation has been necessary to maintain market 'efficiency'. The significant role of the state is often cited as a distinctive feature of the modern world, putting the 'neo' into neoliberalism although this perspective tends to underestimate the role of the state in maintaining markets in the past.

There has been no shortage of commentators eager to map the pernicious educational implications of these changes. An educational discourse based upon the implementation of strategies 'that work' has paid only limited attention to national diversity. State provision of welfare and other services was challenged in favour of a mixed economy in which business, charitable and state agencies compete to provide a narrowing range of services with specified targets. In England, the growth of market reforms in education has seen the creation of new school types and structures creating a choice for parents, in theory at least. In place of accountability to the electorate through local authorities, central government has appealed directly to parents, informed by league tables so that schools could be easily compared. The disciplinary power of categorising schools as 'failing' has been immense. As a whole, the school system has become more available to ultimate privatisation (see Stevenson, 2011; Ball, 2013). The gradual weakening of local education authorities, leading to proposals in 2016 that all schools should become academies, may result in their ultimate eclipse although the Conservative Government subsequently prevaricated over their initially draconian proposals.

Yet the results have not always been uniform and multiple patterns of practice continue to be played out in different places. Education has been an area where conflicting tendencies were in play, a site of struggle (Simon, 1994). Some accounts of neoliberalism only make a passing reference to the topic. Commentators such as David Harvey and Philip Mirowski have touched upon education but its importance to the overall picture depends upon broad brushstrokes rather than detailed histories (Harvey, 2007; Mirowski, 2013). In addition, continuities in the 'grammar of schooling' (Tyack & Cuban, 1995) have ensured that reforms have been reinterpreted on the ground contrary to prevailing ideas. Remembering the recent past demonstrates how change has been partial (Goodson, 2015). Like other areas of welfare, education has housed entrenched opposition to the initial hopes that it might simply be fed to the market as part of the privatisation agenda (Harvey, 2007, p. 61). Alongside these stubborn continuities, the long-term upheaval in schools for almost three decades has led to a number of unpredictable results. The 1988 Education Reform Act illustrated

well the tension between marketisation via devolution and parental choice while centralising power and introducing a national curriculum. Those in sympathy with market based reforms nevertheless often retain a sense of tradition and hierarchy. For example, some Conservative politicians find it hard to argue that all successful schools, especially in their own constituencies, should be forced into academies, thus highlighting the contradiction inherent in a centrally directed market system (Hansard, 2016). These trends can also be understood historically.

HISTORIES OF EDUCATION

Part of the problem in discerning the significant areas of conflict and diversity within neoliberalism has been the purposeful neglect of historical understanding which is crucial to exploring the recent past in a meaningful way (Harvey, 2007). It is unsurprising that the spread of 'year zero thinking' in education, conspicuous in policy documents, has been coterminous with the wider assault upon historical understanding. To some extent, the very innovation and rapid propagation of co-operative schools has obscured historical connections that need to be made. In fact, continuities and changes in education help us to understand the complex role of co-operative schools in relation to neoliberal ideas and assumptions. Venturing into educational history can illuminate how seemingly fixed contemporary practices may be of recent origin and might actually have a truncated future. Exploring the fluidity of the past enables us to capture potential for times to come; using history to gain access to 'almost every kind of imaginable future' (Williams, 1983; Simon, 1966).

A long view helps us to capture tensions running through neoliberalism. Critical thresholds, such as the introduction of university fees certainly provide important evidence for the neoliberal revolution. But it has taken place on the back of an expansion of mass higher education which cannot be so simply categorised in these terms. Indeed, we have witnessed a fascinating transmutation around the idea of who should be educated and why. In the process, similar language used across historical periods has masked subtle yet substantial contrasts. For example, the idea of human capital became popular in the early 1960s as part of modernisation theories where education helped to explain economic growth, a contention which fuelled increasing educational expenditure, not least on common forms of schooling. By contrast, in the early 2000s, it was clear that the same concept of human capital had been reworked as the key to economic growth and competitiveness, and as a vital means of attracting inward investment. Learning was being disaggregated into discrete 'skills' that individuals were expected to acquire in order to ensure personal and economic success in an inherently competitive economy.

The conceptual shift was matched by the changing fortunes of the little discussed notion of 'educability', in other words who can be educated. During the twentieth century, the gradual raising of the school leaving age (ROSLA) involved the growing acceptance that pupils could be educated although the 'non-examination child', reportedly comprising 40% of the population in the 1960s, remained a significant

figure on the educational landscape for many years (Woodin, McCulloch, & Cowan, 2013). In the 1940s and 1950s, equal educability, the idea that there were potentially no barriers to what could be learnt by everyone, represented a radical force in educational thinking. Rather than 'exceptional' working class children being plucked out of their surroundings (Hoggart, 1957), all were to be educated in comprehensive schools. It was a position championed by Brian Simon who campaigned vigorously against the grammar school system and selection through IQ tests. His educational vision placed teachers at the heart of the learning process and viewed the individual child as part of a social setting where a number of avenues remained open

> The teacher who sets out to *educate* the children under his care, meets them as human beings. He first searches for ways of welding his class together into a group, knowing that learning is not a purely individual affair which takes place in a vacuum, but rather a *social activity*; and that the progress of each child will be conditioned largely by the progress of the group as a whole… As the work of the class takes shape, however, individual children will make varying contributions; some may draw well, others may be good readers, others may be quick with figures. The teacher's task is not, of course, to see that the children who are good at some particular activity shine to the detriment of their companions, but rather to see that each child contributes to and enlivens the work of the class as a whole, and that all encompass the necessary basic skills…
>
> The teacher who approaches his task in this way starts from a point of view diametrically opposed to that of mental testing. His attitude is essentially humanist. He recognises that learning is a process of human change, not merely the formal acquisition of knowledge. Above all he starts out with the conviction that all the children under his care are *educable.* (Simon, 1954: 90)

Simon followed Marx in blending political sympathies with a humanistic understanding of education as a force for social change. The concept of educability would be gradually adopted as a realistic option for increasing numbers of pupils as part of the spread of comprehensive schools and ROSLA. For instance, in tune with the times, a 1967 Labour Party political broadcast featured the head teacher of the David Lister School in Hull, Mr. Rowe, arguing that all children deserved the chance to flourish and find themselves. He celebrated the fact that so-called 11+ 'failures' were picking up handfuls of 'O' and 'A' levels and progressing to higher education (Labour Party, 1967).

The rejection of the vision of common schooling involved a re-formulation of educability. The demise of most grammar schools and the onset of comprehensive schemes would invigorate critics who claimed a decline in standards was taking place. The position was popularised by C. B. Cox and A. E. Dyson's *Black Papers on Education* which appeared from 1969. Through the debate on standards, detractors were able to tarnish comprehensive schools with claims about a poverty of

expectation and poor organisation that seemed to be creeping into the wider society. The 'non-examination child' would gradually disappear from educational discourse as standards became the crucial debating ground and the perceived economic need for skilled labour increased. As more children were seen as capable of achieving, so more were being failed if they did not meet rising expectations. By the turn of the millennium, the progressive and radical lexicon was being ransacked in the name of raising standards. The assertion that everyone could be educated had appeared revolutionary in the 1950s and 1960s; once the labour movement had been weakened and a competitive set of individualistic economic assumptions held sway, it became commonplace. The likes of Michael Gove, secretary of state for education under most of the Coalition Government of 2010–2015, came to speak of constant improvement in education as a struggle for civil rights, and presented academy schools 'as the great progressive cause of our times' (Gove, 2012a), strongly rebuking those who claimed that 'poorer children are destined to do worse than others' (Gove, 2012b). We were all now expected to ape the 'restless achievers' he claimed to have found in Hong Kong and Singapore. But in comparison with earlier incarnations of equal educability, the concept had become a procrustean bed in which all children were to be measured and fitted according to a single standard. The resulting pressures of performativity placed upon teachers has been considerable, so much so that schools are beginning to face a recruitment 'crisis' which has even attracted some official recognition (STRB, 2016).

However, the insistence on equal educability and standards created a set of contradictions that had to be carefully managed. The danger was, and is, that such ideas could be connected to democratic claims about equal worth and, ultimately, more equal outcomes. Instead, equality in contemporary educational policy has been contained within limited frameworks. The insistence upon equality of opportunity, despite rising examination results, has a diminishing impact in a society which is becoming more unequal (Wilkinson & Pickett, 2010; Dorling, 2014; Marginson, 2016). For example, the belief that pupil premium grants for 'disadvantaged' pupils levelled the playing field, had a hollow ring to it from the start and there are clearly limits to the technicist applications of school improvement (Mortimore, 2000). Contemporary policy debates on social mobility tend to restrict their focus to the number of students from 'disadvantaged' backgrounds who attend elite institutions. Concerns about a democratic deficit are only likely to increase with the proposal to replace parent governors with people who have the correct skill-set (DfE, 2016). It is these inconsistencies which have created a fertile ground for co-operative ideas in education.

CO-OPERATION AS AN ALTERNATIVE

Co-operative schools have provided one means of engaging with this changing educational ecology. The birth of the co-operative movement was located in the midst of nineteenth century laissez-faire liberalism and many co-operators would

later remain ambivalent about statist strategies of social redemption. Consumer co-operatives expanded throughout the nineteenth century to the acclamation of economists and commentators from J. S. Mill to Alfred Marshall who welcomed the dual emphasis on business and education. Indeed, the attempt to moralise business for collective well-being would eventually find expression in a set of co-operative values and principles. Values were pervasive across the movement and were evident in films, meetings, publications and even products such as 'equity boots'. In 1937, the values and principles were first codified and have been updated regularly since that time, most recently in 1995 (ICA, 2016). This co-operative history provides a basis for useable pasts which have begun to attract more attention with the resurgence of liberal economics (Yeo, 2002; Woodin et al., 2010; Woodin, 2011).

After a long period of decline, by the turn of the Millennium, a sense of renewal infused the co-operative and mutual sector. The Co-operative Commission of 2001 emphasised the relevance of 'successful, co-operative businesses' with an equal emphasis on all three words. There were attempts to apply co-operative values and principles to a range of settings including sport, leisure, health care and housing among others and the term 'new mutualism' was coined. Some of these experiments have been stronger than others and perhaps the most significant development of recent years has been that of 'co-operative schools'. The accumulated knowledge and material resources of the movement were harnessed in developing workable legal models. Co-operative schools have benefitted from the support provided by a wider movement but subsequently suffered as that movement itself went through significant setbacks (Woodin, 2014).

Co-operative schools have responded creatively to the historical and policy contexts described above, partly by 'refracting' official policy (Goodson & Rudd, 2014; Goodson, 2015). Although they represent a hybrid or incipient form of co-operative (Woodin, 2014), they are accepted as part of the co-operative movement and the model allows schools to shape their own destiny, albeit within the prescribed policy limits. It assumes that schools are community institutions in which democracy and participation are central (Glatter, 2015; Tinker, 2015). They harness the resources of external partners as well as stakeholder groups in order to deal with the continuing stream of policy initiatives and to raise standards. However, in the current context, the democratic impulse to involve communities, parents, pupils and staff in the educational process inevitably nurtures an intensification of working practices and increases the expectations placed upon the shoulders of these groups, potentially redefining their sense of identity and educational purpose. Distinguishing between these entangled motivations is not straightforward. The successes of the co-operative schools movement, necessarily limited, are partly built upon this lower level work where co-operative education can be seen to be probing and re-working dominant meanings and practices – taking hold of current assumptions and allowing new learning communities to adapt and meet new purposes.

The very specific case of a 'peer tutoring' co-operative, taken from a school that is not a co-operative school, illustrates one way in which co-operative values are

being used to question current educational discourses. It exemplifies the relationship between enhancing an intensification of learning on the one hand and fostering solidarity and common understanding on the other. It also works with the enduring historical concern about standards and educability. The Tuition and Education Co-operative (TECH) was introduced at a south London school by a teacher who had previously worked at a co-operative school where peer tutoring had already been practised. It demonstrates how co-operative ideas are spreading informally and through the movement of teachers between schools. This scheme has similarities to other in-school co-operatives that may be based upon dance, music, fair trade and supplying stationery needs of students, among other examples of Young Co-operatives. In this case, it addressed head on the challenge of raising standards. In its first year, sixth form students, via TECH, delivered 1,225 hours of one-to-one tuition to 106 students from years 7–11. An initial meeting of 70 sixth-formers appointed an organising committee who put together a co-operative structure. One Saturday, over 80 students elected representative officers of the co-operative. From the beginning, it was based upon co-operative values which were openly stated. The project received funding from an educational charity, SHINE which enabled 'disadvantaged' students to take advantage of the tuition. Indicative of the diverse educational landscape, this charity is bankrolled by CAPITA Sims a company which, among other interests, markets its data management systems to schools (SHINE, 2016; CAPITA Sims, 2016).

The results for 2013–2014 were, on the whole, successful in terms of academic performance. It was estimated that over 75% of participating students in years 10 and 11 progressed one or more grades following tuition. Across key stage 3, 63% progressed by 2 sub-levels, well above expectations although slightly below the target of 75%. External recognition and validation has followed, especially for those who have had contact with outside organisations. For instance, students gave presentations to delegations of Chinese teachers, a local Business Partnership, as well as a seminar at the UCL Institute of Education (TECH, 2014).

The success of the project has not simply been measured in terms of crude data but also reveals how pupils have negotiated the institutional demands they face. The personal reflections of pupils show how they themselves have taken responsibility for achieving results. For instance, 'Serena' had just joined the school and enjoyed the tuition because her tutors understood the position of the learner: 'I like the tuition because we do the same thing as in class but it's better with a 6th former as they can explain things better!' (TECH, 2014). Similarly, 'Adam' spoke about the benefits, as central to success in life, in relation to the continuing discourse of raising standards:

> I personally was struggling four months prior to my GCSEs, I had just come out of my mocks with a D grade in maths and D grades in English language and literature. I struggled to comprehend the work as there were so many students in a class and a teacher can only be capable of so much. I was eventually funded to attend TECH by SHINE and this has helped me shape the rest of

> my life. After four months of attending TECH I sat my GCSEs and got an A in English language, a B in English literature and a B in mathematics. (TECH, 2014)

Achieving exam results enabled this student to see his life as potentially successful within a long term perspective. The personal attention given by his peers contrasted with the impersonality of the classroom where only limited teacher time could be devoted to individuals. The connections between the quote above and the comprehensive reformers of the 1960s and 1970s are explicit and both are justified in terms of increased results. It represents active engagement with neoliberal and conservative educational reforms which have managed to associate 'progressive' and comprehensive educational ideas with low standards and a levelling down (Lowe, 1997).

Progression for pupils was constructed upon a sense of solidarity and tied to a collective purpose. A student organiser claimed that working with the co-op, 'changed everything for all of us' (UCL IoE, 2015). A parent felt that it had been a 'wonderful experience' for her daughter:

> It has really developed her as a person and helped with her confidence. She has made new friends and learning how to teach younger students has inspired her to become a teacher. She has also deepened her own understanding of mathematics through this work. (TECH, 2014)

Giving responsibility to pupils enabled them to see the world differently and even to find a purpose in life. The process of improving results paradoxically unlocked a wider sense of humanity, perhaps reflecting the power of policy-driven discourses and examinations in pupils' lives. As they learnt about each other, friendships formed, across year groups, around a collective purpose: 'that community thing that the stats don't show you, but you feel it' (UCL IoE, 2015). The impulse for mutuality and sharing as part of a common purpose led to increased learning and an awareness of the situation of others. The first 'CEO' of the co-operative viewed raising standards as a form of social justice but with a different emphasis to Gove, quoted earlier: 'For me, the most appealing factor of the concept was that it would help to level the playing field, as it offered free tuition to those who needed it most and couldn't afford it otherwise' (TECH, 2014). Here, the student recognises the widespread practice of private tuition as vital to academic success. To some pupils, inequalities in school are highly visible and this scheme presented a means to address their concerns. A 16-year old finance officer brought together other practical skills with the social aspects of learning:

> Being the finance officer has taught me how to organise other people and chase people. It has really taught me how to get things done. It has taught me how to work with the adults in the school finance department to make sure everyone's details are up to date and accurate so that all the tutors will get paid on time. These are skills that someone of my age doesn't normally get taught at school.

> I have also learned about being part of a co-operative. I like the way that this project empowers students to help themselves earn some extra pocket money while at the same time giving something back to younger students – particularly those who find school a struggle. (TECH, 2014)

The precise focus upon learning employment related 'skills' is here married with the purpose not of simply making a profit but of helping others and supporting people to help themselves. Yet, these reflections point to a number of issues. Its initial success had to be managed in practical terms. Unexpected administrative tasks immediately became visible. Overnight a 'workforce' of 60 was created and each of them had to be paid monthly and trained in tutoring by qualified teachers. The co-operative had to deal with the significant human resource issues which this created, for instance, pupils could not contact parents directly without supervision. The 'co-operative' model was weakened by its dependence upon charitable funding in order to benefit pupils who could not afford tuition and work was being done to look into ways of sustaining it in the longer run. Moreover, in upsetting the boundary between learner and teacher, the co-operative created work for some teachers while perhaps challenging their sense of professionalism, which has already been under considerable threat, not least from neoliberal forces. The language of standards, skills and outcomes has been utilised in an attempt to redefine the educational process. The need to monitor and support this initiative, on a Saturday morning, represents an example of intensification in which more and better results are being demanded and delivered by encroaching upon the 'free' time not only of teachers but also students, perhaps imitating the high achievers of South East Asia where the proliferation of night schools constitute the hidden underside of their high position in PISA league tables.

CONCLUSIONS

Enforcing a binary opposition between neoliberalism and co-operation has value in keeping alive the necessity for an alternative vision that, on a broad social level, has been lacking. The recession following the financial crisis of 2007–2008, witnessed a brief reconsideration of Keynesian economic ideas although they continued to be seen as outmoded and, in the absence of clear alternatives, neoliberal ideas continued to predominate. However, viewing neoliberalism and progressive alternatives as polar opposites risks missing the overlaps and interconnections between the two, in particular how neoliberalism has re-articulated a long disputed inheritance of progressive ideas. Imposing new labels on partially transformed practices – education is a business, learners are customers and so on – reveals inconsistencies that can be contested.

It is easy to overlook how co-operative values have been used to nurture new learning communities. Small and prosaic steps may be taken while acting on broader values and envisaging a very different democratic future. Such pre-figurative

tendencies, to envision a better future from the specifics of any given situation, lie at the heart of the co-operative project. A brief account of the school-based peer tuition co-operative exposes the complex refraction of neoliberal ideas in education. The example represents one way in which co-operative ideas are enabling educators to reclaim educational ideals in a school setting, albeit not on terms of their own making. Small scale co-operative action shows how central policy is being channelled creatively, and that a commitment to principles can indeed go hand in hand with workable examples on the ground. Co-operative values are being deployed 'in and against' policy formations (LERG, 1980; Woodin, 2014).

While co-operation as a movement tends to work from the bottom up, it is capable of expanding beyond immediate circles of learning. The structural innovation and proliferation of co-operative movements mean they are capable of moving beyond the small scale. The co-operative schools movement as a whole has spread much wider than the specific example shown above and, besides the legal models for schools, regional and national structures have emerged as well as partnerships with teacher unions and other bodies. Trust schools and co-operative academies have developed new business models and international partnerships. These experiences represent a potential starting point to re-work dominant ideas on much more equitable terms.

Equally, one can see how such examples can be potentially integrated into forces less sympathetic to the co-operative movement. At one level, neoliberalism requires weaker forms of co-operation in order for markets to function effectively. The ascendancy of neoliberalism means that co-operative values and practices are themselves continually being deflected and integrated into a hostile world. In theory, markets can feed from the beneficial humanising effects of co-operation although this is a fragile balance which carries unintended consequences. In some respects, co-operative schools have had to respond creatively and positively to contemporary policy in order to build an alternative. Indeed, taking over the agenda for school improvement has raised a number of problematic issues. For example, individual students regularly emphasise the advantages of learning discrete vocational and 'people' skills for the labour market. There are ambiguities around professional practices and identities which may give the false impression that it is possible to flourish in contemporary educational settings. In reality, teachers have faced serious challenges to their professional identity and autonomy across the education system. While co-operative values have helped schools to retain an element of autonomy and to forge and alternative identities, the danger is that using values as a navigational tool in this way may represent a new form of discourse in which the influence of government policy continues to prevail over the needs of stakeholders. It is in this sense that critics present co-operative values as a thin veneer on the surface of essentially reactionary practices. In fact, co-operative schools have occupied a significant space within compulsory education and allowed alternative ideas to gain a foothold.

On a broader historical scale, we need to consider the continuities with the earlier 'comprehensive revolution' that brought to an end, in most areas, structured forms of selection across schools even if, in reality, this was achieved by implementing sharp differentiation within the schools themselves. Today, the spread of the 'growth mind-set' (Dweck, 2006), the expectation that everyone is capable of learning virtually everything, can easily be misinterpreted as the idea that everyone can achieve everything if they simply have the right disposition and character. The application of co-operative values has connected these ideas with democratic models of education and ideas about collective benefit. Co-operative education thus contains multiple strands of possibility and will continue to be a site of struggle.

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10. CO-OPERATIVE EDUCATION AGAINST NEOLIBERALISM

INTRODUCTION

Many argue that it is futile to see schools as agents of social reform, much less revolution, rather they are agents of class division in the service of elites (e.g., Marsh, 2011; Blacker, 2013). Resistance to class oppression is merely a defensive strategy where the question is, as Willis (1977) might put it, not so much why elites appropriate so much power and wealth but why the rest let them. It is this question that a re-imagination of the strategic power of co-operation addresses because it directly challenges both competition and inequality by returning to the ambivalent role of education and the discourses of freedom, democracy, commerce and work that liberalism and neoliberalism have misappropriated.

The argument will take place in 4 steps. First, education as a practice of liberation has to be separated from the process of governing the masses through the discourses, mechanisms and practices of schooling. Second, this separation enables exploring and challenging the hierarchies through which elites dominate and thus opens the possibility for what may be called the society of equals. Thirdly, if the idea of a society of equals can be accepted as grounding democratic freedoms, then the way is cleared for co-operative forms of social organisation in general and education in particular. Finally, generating democratic, co-operative forms of curricular action provides the basis for a public able to critique all social forms – such as political, governmental, economic, cultural – in order to organise and undertake action for mutual benefit.

SCHOOLING OR EDUCATION?

Education in its broadest most challenging sense explores the potential and powers of individuals in all their differences thus creating a play of alternatives where courses of action can be explored as in Dewey's idea of the school as a democratic social laboratory (Mayhew & Edwards, 1936). In its place is the schooling of minds and bodies to be disciplined parts of the machineries that serve the interests of elites. This distinction is necessary to keep in mind for what follows. For schooling, there is no alternative, only parts in a whole dedicated to the preservation of social order. This recalls Rancière's (2004) description of 'the police', where police here refers

T. Rudd & I. F. Goodson (Eds.), Negotiating Neoliberalism, 129–147.

not to officers with their guns, shields, body armour, pepper sprays and truncheons but the generalised social processes through which order is maintained by everyone as a part of the whole. It is a situation where some part (human, machine or some other artefact) has value only to the extent it maintains a barely noticeable discipline that underwrites 'reality'. To believe an alternative is possible would break the eggshell-like fragility of the universe of belief. Yet, there is the part that is no-part as Rancère calls it. That is to say, as individuals stripped of our functions for the system, the machine, the organisation, we essentially have no part – subjectively we are the 'no-parts'. Being a part that has no-part, opens a possibility. Either we return fearful for our loss of identity under the whole to be disciplined members of our ascribed forms of social organisation, status and category (home, gangs, places of employment, church, social class…..); or, we look around and see that everyone, stripped of subjection, are just people like me, just equals. There in that moment, the possibility of alternatives that can be realised 'if only' this moment lasted a bit longer, arise. That moment of the possibility of the crumbling of the status quo and its replacement by some other form of order, Rancière calls the political. It is a moment that is neither the past, nor the future but is the condition of possibility for innovation.

Schooling exists to ensure this possibility never arises. It saturates the present with 'realities', with impossibilities, with hard choices and with goals that can be won only through disciplined work. The disciplining of the population in the UK as Simon (1977) described it up to the 1870 Education Act, could be told as the history of the formation of "two nations". The advent of increased voting rights for working class men in 1868 – or members of the other nation – meant that mass schooling was required to ensure that they were educated to support the purposes and the decisions of the elites. Or as Robert Lowe remarked: *"I believe it will be absolutely necessary that you should prevail on our future masters to learn their letters"* (cited by Sylvester, 1974). He campaigned to institute national education both for the masses and the elites, since:

> I confess, for myself, that, whenever I talk with an intelligent workman, so far from being able to assert … superiority, I am always tormented with the conception, "What a fool the man must think me when he finds me, upon whose education thousands of pounds have been spent, utterly ignorant of the matters which experience teaches him, and which he naturally thinks every educated man ought to know." I think this ought easily to be managed. The lower classes ought to be educated to discharge the duties cast upon them. They should also be educated that they may appreciate and defer to a higher cultivation when they meet it; and the higher classes ought to be educated in a very different manner, in order that they may exhibit to the lower classes that higher education to which, if it were shown to them, they would bow down and defer. (Lowe, 1867: 31–32)

Simon's two nations continued as an education – or rather schooling – of deference for the one and of cultivation for the other. This sly rationale has been – and still is, albeit more slyly presented – key for the maintenance of schools as a tool in taming the democratic powers of individuals. Perhaps the only systematic and substantial challenge to this sly rationale for the USA began with Roosevelt's post Great Depression New Deal and the second world war settlement in the UK that saw the rise and embedding of a degree of egalitarian impact through social security, redistributive taxation towards the poor, increased opportunities through education and of course, in the UK, the National Health Service. Not only, to be sure, in the UK and the USA but across continental Europe, Canada, New Zealand and Australia such moves towards a democracy focused on increasing the benefits for all opened possibilities for alternatives as the so called Western world, symbolised by the youth movements of the 1960s threw off the effects of the austerity of the previous Great Depression and world war generations. Indeed, one year and one city – Paris 1968 – has come to symbolise the revolutionary potential of youth and most particularly, the part of no-part. Youth as a 'movement' is not a part of the capitalist, state or hierarchical ordering of social classes, nor are the feminist, anti-racist and anti-discriminatory movements that sought expanded notions of freedom and humanity. Was it possible that the post war boom – in France known as Les Trente Glorieuses, 1945–1975 – could lead to a new age?

Of course not. Lacan saw in the revolutionary confrontations of youth that May 1968 the inevitability of the return of a new master, a new framework of dominance. Something, or someone *has to* fill the empty space left open by the fall of previous masters. Has to? Maybe.

For a while some could dream that there was another way where a choice could be made: either subjugation under capitalist, state dominance – the military industrial complex as Eisenhower called it in his farewell Presidential address in 1961; or, some more egalitarian, creative, free living cultural and social form of life where the 'true' potential of human beings could be expressed and explored under conditions of generosity rather than of greed. This choice played out in discourses of education that slid from schooling the masses to fit the needs of the military industrial complex, to the emancipatory, democratic education that focused on the child as a whole human being whose powers were – as for all of us at whatever age – in the process of development as they got to grips with their circumstances (Fielding & Moss, 2010). For some, this either/or was only temporary until a new stability arose that could claim to be the real to which there was no alternative. For some others there would always be an alternative. For Arendt this was expressed as 'natality', that is, the new eyes of the newborn creating ever new horizons for the expression of difference. For Mouffe (1993) it is summed up in the aphoristic: democracy is the unfinishable revolution. That is, it is the revolution that can have no master. Addressing the sort of education required for such a society and its interminable revolutions passes first through a discussion of the elimination of the possibility of revolution.

ELITES AND THE ELIMINATION OF THE SOCIETY OF EQUALS

The counter welfare state and state socialism debates of the new generation of conservatives that gathered pace from the mid 1970s to their realisation of power from the 1980s (Harvey, 2005) have their counterparts in the eighteenth century debates and revolutionary events in the USA and France along with upheavals of the industrial revolution in the UK. In each case, what is at stake is the distribution of freedoms and the allocations of opportunities for wealth appropriation. Rosenvallon (2013) explored the histories of the articulation and realisation of freedom and equality in political, legislative, economic and social forms of organisation and practice from its Enlightenment to contemporary periods. A key focus in these discourses is reciprocity as expressed in economic exchange because:

> "When individuals exchanged the fruits of their labour, they affirmed both their status as *independent equals* and their relationship as *interdependent equals*" such that "The eighteenth century thus theorised the *liberalism of reciprocity.*" (Rosanvallon, 2013: 26–27)

But how far can this principle of reciprocity go? Certainly Bouton's (2007) account of the American War of Independence provides evidence both of the power of the political moment that enabled the initial flowering of democracy as a society of equals in Pennsylvania in particular and its 'taming' through the activities of the wealthy. Just as equality can take root by demands for equal opportunities, equal voice, equality of conditions and equality of outcomes, so each of these can be attacked and their possibility eliminated.

Work has a privileged place within these debates and struggles for what is at stake in people's lives by adopting one discourse rather than another about freedom and the benefits of living together as equals in a community of mutual concern for the other. Braverman (1974) saw a contradiction at the heart of what passed for work in his exploration of occupational change in the mid 1970s that is just as critical to contemporary contexts, circumstances and struggles. On the one hand, it was and still is argued by policy makers, business people and academics alike that new technologies demanded "ever higher levels of education, training, the greater exercise of intelligence and mental effort in general" (p. 3); while on the other, "that work has become increasingly subdivided into petty operations that fail to sustain the interest or engage the capacities of humans with current levels of education; that the modern trend of work by its "mindlessness" and "bureaucratisation" is "alienating" ever larger sections of the working population." (p. 3) thus less education and training is required. In formal logic, both cannot be true but as argued by Harvey (2014) such contradictions are dialectically essential to capitalism in creating the kinds of crises through which it is able to engage in strategies of dispossession. By proposing the need for education to increase employment opportunities, money can be made by offering courses in those occupations that are supposedly required to sustain a knowledge economy. Since there are increasing numbers of people being displaced

by automation, then there is always a willing section of the population available to take part in courses that hold out the hope for employment in the knowledge industries crying out for labour. Nevertheless, this option seemed available under conditions of the white heat of technology as Wilson, UK Labour Prime Minister called it in his speech of 1963 right up to the technology revolutions of the 1980s and its silicon valleys. However, as Collins (in Wallerstein et al., 2013) argues although at first new technologies created new jobs and new needs for training – and indeed, education in a broader sense as a means to underpin invention rather than mere routine processes of production – it is recently the case that:

> New jobs are created, but they do not match the number of jobs eliminated, nor do they replace lost income. This is the reason why job-retraining programs for displaced workers have failed to affect the rate of structural unemployment. (Collins in Wallerstein et al., 2013: 41)

Advances in drone technology for commercial – not just military – purposes are being trialled by Google and Amazon for the delivery of parcels as well as trialling automated cars, planes and trains as well as waiters, carers and legal researchers (Jivanda, 2013; Milmo, 2015; Wong, 2016; Rodionova, 2016). Add to this the use of expert systems in medicine, robots for household purposes or on-line increasingly automated distance learning whether at an in-house level for schools, universities and corporations or on a global scale. As crypto-currencies – like bitcoin – take hold there is a rush by banks to control a technology that is essentially peer-to-peer and has no need for a bank of any kind, even central banks (Matonis, 2013). The potential loss of once middleclass jobs is staggering. Is all this scaremongering? Where's the evidence? The evidence, of course is easy to find. Just google it. No need for a library or indeed to buy a book or heaven forbid, ask a professor! Algorithms will find that information for you in a flash for free with a few well chosen search terms. The voices vary from soothing to outright panic (see for example Economist, 2014; Rundle, 2014; Aeppel, 2015).

Blacker's (2013) view of contemporary trends in technology is much worse than mere panic: "Neoliberalism triumphant presents us with the more frightening specter of what I am calling *educational eliminationism*, by which I mean a state of affairs in which elites no longer find it necessary to *utilize* mass schooling as a first link in the long chain of the process of the extraction of workers' surplus labour value." To avoid misinterpretation because of the deliberate link he makes with Nazi Germany he argued that:

> *the two situations share a similar moral structure:* both involve persons who have been ideologically constructed as surplus humanity vis-à-vis the reigning power structure. The range of eliminationist possibilities open to someone in such a predicament is not inviting. It is, however, still a wide range, one whose spectrum encompasses wholesale neglect (e.g. disabled children a few generations ago, the street kids of the sprawling favelas of the global south)

> through to mass incarceration (e.g. young African-American males in the US, 1 in 10 of whom are actually *in* jail and in the major US cities an estimated 80% have criminal records and so are subject to various forms of legal discrimination, including disenfranchisement, an internal form of statelessness) all the way through to the extreme endpoint of programmed mass genocide. The point is that even though the *quantitative* difference between two states of affairs can be decisive, just as too much medicine can make it poison, a special vigilance must be maintained where the phenomena in question are qualitatively homogeneous. So while the ideational stance of eliminationism admits of a wide spectrum of responses, once people are consigned to social categories such as "useless," "disposable," "parasitic," and the like, history demonstrates all-too clearly that this is a slope that can become slippery very fast. (Blacker, 2013: 104)

If the language and imagery here still seems overblown or farfetched, consider it alongside the social and political impacts of the conjunction between the lingering effects of the financial crash of 2007/8, the continuing war on terror, the terrorist attack in Paris 2015 and the immigration crisis of 2015. The precarity of jobs, incomes and the austerity measures that the UK and Europe generally adopted had already accustomed people to high levels of unemployment, zero hours contracts and minimum rates of pay. Where jobs were 'created' they were increasingly at the most precarious levels where immigrant labour was also most competitive. Standing (2014) sees in this a new 'class', the precariat that is not just a national, but a global phenomenon. Just as global become more mobile and capitalists more detached from any given national allegiance, so the flows of immigrants became more of a threat to the precarious nationals, fixed in their 'homelands'. At the same time as regulations for finance were relaxed, so immigration controls in the UK were increased to 'protect' jobs for citizens and along with other European countries there was a rise in support for right wing political parties against precarity and against immigration. The immigration crisis, despite boat loads of asylum seekers drowning in the Mediterranean the UK right wing media campaigns grew vicious – the most infamous comments were from ex-candidate on The Apprentice UK TV series and then Sun columnist Katie Hopkins (The Sun, April 17, 2015) who exclaimed "Rescue boats? I'd use gunships to stop migrants. You may as well set up a Libya to Italy P&O ferry". And indeed, a few days later, the Independent reported: "The government still opposes rescue missions in the Mediterranean despite 950 migrants drowning in one day" (Independent, April 20, 2015).

Perhaps, this was not what was meant by Blacker when he wrote of an eliminationist strategy but it does indicate how quickly the slippery slope emerges. And when immigrants in the UK were forced to wear armbands and their doors painted red and when Switzerland and Denmark passed legislation to confiscate the valuables of immigrants, commentators were quick to notice comparisons with Nazi Germany (Tomlinson, 2016; Fraser, 2016). Following the international impact of the

terrorist attack in Paris 2015, the passport free zone of the 26 country strong Schengen Agreement has been severely weakened, perhaps mortally, as nations following France close borders. If the immigration crisis and the nationalistic responses can be traced back to the Western strategies of regime change in the middle east (Cockburn, 2015), the war on terror and the failed democratic aspirations of the Arab Spring (Neep, 2004; Roberts & Schostak, 2012; Schostak & Schostak, 2013; Soueif, 2013), then there is a moral, an ethical, a political case to be made concerning international responsibility for the millions of displaced people seeking work, security and a home.

Yet, any appeal to common humanity and universal human rights that the Arab Spring seemed to call upon in its early days, or any belief in the equality of workers in the global struggle against austerity imposed by political elites has been eliminated by an absence of any effective countervailing organisation of workers whether at national, international or global levels on the one hand, nor an effective public within nations or transnationally on the other capable of bringing politicians, financiers, corporations and political machineries to account (Bleiker, 2000). The strategy of deregulation under the name of the free market has essentially deregulated the labour market at every level to render it helpless but reinforced the monopoly practices of capitalists and their impunity everywhere (Wallerstein et al., 2013; Klein, 2007; Harvey, 2014).

What is being systematically eliminated in this context is not so much the need for workers, nor the need for work but people who if they are not rich in capital and are not required for the remaining work that cannot be automated are thus expendable. Even if Capitalism as a practice continually finds new ways to re-appropriate through its generation of crises as Harvey (2014) and others suggest, as an idea it is dead. Its death was fated in its need to consume the fruits of the labour of others and was sealed as soon as it began replacing labour with automated, intelligent machines. If austerity necessarily limits resources for the survival of all, then cruel austerity is when there is plenty to go around but it is prevented from doing so by elites and their managerial servants at every level in the system. What happens when elites no longer need people to produce the fruits, nor get any residual pleasure from cruelty? What then, is the meaning of being human, being alive?

Education – The Co-operative Turn?

Scientific management and its various incarnations since the days of Taylor (1919) have split the holistic nature of work into its programmable sub-components rendering either, in Taylor's terms, an intelligent gorilla, able to undertake the simple activities, or giving the process over entirely to 'intelligent' machines. If machines can do the work, then there is no need – except for professionals, if any, still required to make, programme and repair the machines – for education for the masses only some kind of education that enhances the pleasure or at least reduces the boredom of the rich. The machineries that have been established and remain more strongly than ever in place in the aftermaths of the crash of 2007/8, Paris 2015 and the immigration

crisis of 2015 have succeeded in dividing, fragmenting, terrifying. Fearing for their personal futures is there any recourse for an alternative course of action than to retrench and raise the defensive walls?

When ideas of work and its relation to education has reached this zero point, it is time to rethink their meanings and readdress the significance of being human. For Arendt (1998) there are three key human activities: labour, work and action. Where labour is the basic activity that feeds and sustains the body in the natural world, work provides the truly human activities of making tools and building the artificial environment of everyday social life, and action is the highest form of activity dedicated to the kinds of discussion, decision making required to create the 'good society' of political action. Dejours (1998), as a practicing psychoanalyst dealing with the mental impacts – stress, depression, nervous breakdowns, self harm, violence, suicidal tendencies – of contemporary employment practices on those turning up at his clinic, drew upon this categorisation to rethink their relation and the possibility of a 'cure'. For him, both labour and action are implicit or embryonic in work itself. Rather than work being stripped down in Tayloristic or its 'new managerialist' performance and target driven versions, it is the more Romantic holistic notion of individuals employing their powers of thinking, imagining, deciding, acting being involved in the totality of a process and having common ownership of the final product or outcome. Such work implies the labour to sustain the body whether at the level of just picking fruit off a nearby tree or the work involved in cultivating to put food on the table in the warmth of the home. For such outcomes of work to be realised in practice, there will have been a degree of debate about who does what and gets what benefit, when, how and why. In short, there is, at least embryonically in the organisation of work a sense of the social, the communal and the best ways to achieve these in order to achieve mutually desired outcomes; that is to say, it is political through and through. In any complex activity, such as building a house, cultivating land, or defending a community to prevent natural disasters or the attacks of marauders an interdependence, a reciprocity, a mutuality of dependence. How any of this is done demands learning the skills, the values, the opinions, the knowledge of others in order to be able to distinguish between what is of value, what is harmful and what is false, illusion, useless. It is thus in the interests of people to engage educationally as a mutual activity supporting, growing and enhancing the powers of each for the common good as well as the personal benefit. If this sounds essentially Spinozan, it is.

Rather than the essential Cartesian split between mind and body that has been the key condition of possibility for the domination of the body and all things natural by the artifices of reason, Spinoza saw a democracy of bodily powers where the 'mind' was an effect, a product that is an idea of the body rather than an entity separate from the body. This democracy of powers – for example, thinking, imagining, standing, running, reaching out, feeling, acting – is enhanced, directed towards and educated – that is drawn out – as one locus of powers amongst others. Each power may associate with others to increase power. In any given situation,

circumstance and context in order to gain the best possible benefits that each power can contribute then it is essential that no power should be privileged above any other power. The loss of contribution by a suppressed power would then inevitably diminish the benefit obtainable. Drawing on the then contemporary discourses of what it means to be human engaged in economic and political activity with others the Rochdale Pioneers drew up what they considered to be the operating principles and values of a co-operative venture. The contemporary seven principles published on the Co-operative Archive Website concern: 1, Voluntary and open membership, 2, Democratic member control, 3, member economic participation, 4, autonomy and independence, 5, education, training and information, 6, co-operation among co-operatives, 7, concern for community. The stated values are: self-help, self-responsibility, democracy, equality, equity, solidarity. In the words of the title of the first historical account of co-operativism by George Jacob Holyoake in 1858 the core purpose of co-operation was "Self-Help by the People".

This self help is not the individualism of market liberalism and its extreme incarnation as neoliberalism. But it is about individuals as individuals, that is, as heterogeneous and concerned with their own self preservation in a way that evokes Spinoza's notion of 'conatus'. This conatus can be interpreted politically in very different ways. For one, it is the greed that motivates neoliberal capitalism – a greed fictionalised by Ayn Rand (1957) in *Atlas Shrugged* and politicised by Thatcher in her assertion that there is no such thing as society, only people following their own self interests (Thatcher, 1987). Ayn Rand collected around her several of the leading advocates to come of the neoliberal revolution – Hayek, Friedman and perhaps most critically President of the Federal Reserve, the central bank of the USA between 1987–2006, Alan Greenspan. Each were influenced by the underpinning belief that it was due to the great entrepreneur as Atlas that the wealth of the world was created and sustained. All would benefit from this colossus through trickle down employment and largesse. All that was needed was that big government in terms of socialism and welfarism would get out of the way. For Friedman it was clear that such change would come during periods of crisis

> Only a crisis – actual or perceived – produces real change. When that crisis occurs, the actions that are taken depend on the ideas that are lying around. That, I believe, is our basic function: to develop alternatives to existing policies, to keep them alive and available until the politically impossible becomes the politically inevitable. (Friedman 1982: xiv)

And there have certainly been plenty of crises to work as sites of plunder – as in the case of Greece following the financial crisis and the demands of the European Central Bank for draconian austerity measures as the price for help (Varoufakis, 2015). Klein (2007) called this deliberate use of real or imagined crises, the 'shock doctrine' of capitalist, neoliberal strategy.

Conatus can alternatively be interpreted as creating the conditions for mutual dependency and for learning as a continuous process of curiosity driven exploration

about the world. Tucker (2013), discussing the notion for its contribution to feminist thought and practice, interestingly sets the Hobbesian view alongside that of Spinoza's development of it:

> Although Spinoza developed Hobbes' notion of the conatus more fully, both understand the conatus as the source of individual motivation to explore the world, as connected to the individuals' appetites and aversions, and as capable of becoming more coherently organized, and thus more powerful. The power of an individual is increased through experience of the world. Experience of the world is affective; one learns from interactions with the world what yields pain and pleasure, which desires are frustrated and which are not. (Tucker, 2013: 20)

Rather than deriving from this Hobbesian disciplinary structures under the dominance of an awesome Leviathan for the mastery of the people we have the possibility and potential of Hollyoake's "self-help by the people". Stressing 'by the people' provides a political counterpoint to the significantly alone Atlas who in dominating shoulders the world – and should he shrug – what then for the safety of the world? There is an essential 'couldn't care less' in that imagery of the shrug that contrasts with the 'by the people'. But what if the people should shrug? In a sense it was a question asked by the young law student Etienne La Boetie in 1552 when he wondered how tyrants could possibly exist when they were so few and the people were so many.

It was, he suggested, only through the voluntary servitude of the many to the few whose privileges and wealth are ultimately provided by the tyrant, that the social order is maintained. Similarly, the many vote for political parties that, in the 'Western Democracies', are significantly financed by the wealthy elites (e.g., Spillius, 2010; Abeshouse, 2011; Sabin, 2014; Chu, 2015). And, as advocated and pioneered by Lippmann (1922) and Bernays (1928) the consent of the 'public' to the policies of the 'invisible government' (Bernays, 1928: 27) of the elites is manufactured or engineered, or in the contemporary parlance of the Behavioural Insight Team of the UK Cabinet office – nudged in the direction required by elites. But again, what if the people shrug, or indeed, push back, or walk away?

When the British public voted in the 2016 referendum to leave the European Union (popularly called BREXIT), those in favour of leaving articulated this as a rejection by the working classes of elite privilege – or as Arron Banks who bank rolled the BREXIT campaign called it "the peasants' revolt all over again" (Booth, 2016). The British voters shrugged, as it were, and the stock markets crashed. However, it was an engineered shrug, orchestrated in large part by the right wing press where 'truth' was misrepresented (Wishart, 2016), promises broken (Norton, 2016) and 'expertise' scorned (Gore, 2016).

La Boetie's simple idea – refuse to obey and the whole edifice supporting the tyrant would fall – has to be rethought since 'rebellion' can be manipulated to serve the interests of competing elites. If the media channels by which people are

'informed' are open to abuse by those who control it, then bringing down the walls, smashing the machines, undoing the little obediencies, procedures and rules upon which the bureaucracies of the elites depend is not enough (Bleiker, 2000; Roberts & Schostak, 2012). There has to be an alternative 'building up' from the activities of the people as they debate, disagree and formulate creative ways in which they can co-operatively address their common issues – all the people, in every activity of their everyday lives. If the tyrant, the leviathan, has truly fallen then what else other than another 'great leader' (Zizek, 2013) or the activities of the people as activists in democratic and co-operative organization can fill the gap (Schostak, 2016)? Then perhaps there can be a renewed notion of co-operation able to take the place of the discourses, machineries and instruments of competition. Consider the global impact that has been achieved by the cooperative movement that claims "The Co-operative Movement brings together over 1 billion people around the world. The United Nations estimated in 1994 that the livelihood of nearly 3 billion people, or half of the world's population, was made secure by co-operative enterprise" (website, Co-op International Alliance, undated). Indeed, as Woodin describes:

> cooperative strongholds and clusters can be located around the world, including Mondragon in Spain, Trentino in Italy, Davis in California, USA and the network of Desjardins credit unions in French Canada (Briscoe & Ward, 2005; Restakis, 2010; Williams, 2007; Bajo & Roelants, 2011). While the largest 300 co-operatives have an economic power equivalent to the Canadian economy, it has been estimated by the UN that co-operatives have supported at least half the world's population and this fact helped to justify designating 2012 as the International Year of Co-operatives. (Woodin, 2014: 2)

It is clear from this that co-operative organisation is able to provide for economic self preservation by the people (see also Gibson-Graham, 2003). Even though both democratic and educational principles grounded in conceptions of equality are claimed it is not so clear that co-operative movements have provided countervailing forms of organisation for educational self-help by the people or for a political democracy radically grounded in a people defined through the systematic inclusion of the individual voices of all.

It is not enough to build a movement of co-operative schools, for example, if they are significantly compromised by the prevailing forms of schooling. In the UK since the first Co-operative Trust school – Reddish Vale, Manchester in March 2008 – there has been an explosion of co-operative schools supported by the Co-operative College. It is now a significant sector in the 'education system' with soon to be 1000 schools and growing all the time. But as a framework for the articulation of discourses, debates, philosophies their enactment in practice, and the productions of ways of living, working, playing that is much less obvious.

Since Owen's silent monitor – each differently coloured face of a wooden cube (that is, the silent monitor) signified whether a worker was on task, working well or working poorly – was used to motivate workers, surveillance has been an integral

part of the working experience even in democratic co-operatives. How freely democratic and egalitarian is it to use behavioural 'nudge' techniques to shape behaviour? The use of digital technologies both to extend the powers of people and to subjugate them to surveillance is all pervasive. Schools are no exception and nor are co-operative schools (Schostak, 2014). Schostak, Davidge, Facer (2014) argue that there are two logics that co-operative forms of organisation need to embed: " the logic of freedom with equality (égaliberté); and a democratic logic of association." What this means in practice is a focus on the routines through which inequality and the anti-democratic practices of managerialist controls and 'nudging' of behaviour take root in the very thought processes and bodies of people. This is not easy, nor are the differences obvious to identify. In an early work Mauss (1973) indicated how subtly cultural difference was embodied. It is inscribed in the tiniest of details that he called body techniques. Eating, coughing, walking – each are culturally inscribed, even to the extent, Mauss observed, that British soldiers during World War 1 were not able to use French shovels to dig trenches as fast and efficiently as they could with British ones. What then are the practices, the tiny cultural differences as well as the more obvious uses of coercion that distinguish capitalist forms of 'free competition' from co-operative forms of freedom? If people claiming to engage in co-operative forms of organisation do not subject their everyday practices to a systematic critique, then there is the ever present danger of simply reproducing the anti-democratic outcomes associated with the dominant corporate forms of monopoly capitalism and the performance and league table driven management of mainstream schooling. If co-operativism, and in particular co-operative education, is to become more than cosmetic to disguise business as normal, then new forms of curriculum development and action are required that critically explore all aspects of learning and producing together.

The Co-operative Course

In earlier works I variously described an educational curriculum as a course of reflection upon experience in order to explore possibilities for expression, voice, decision and action (Schostak, 2012, 1988) as a challenge to the official curricula of schooling. In the context of a society of equals, an educational curriculum becomes a mutually constructed work where the voice and the powers of each are taken into account when developing educational projects in common as well as individually since all actions in the world engage others. A curriculum for democratic, cooperative practice therefore is co-constructed under principles of freedom with equality where discourses of inclusion rather than exclusion prevail. This is then a curriculum where people develop their expertise in relation to their own purposes and values in the context of mutual benefit rather than elite privilege, exploitation and the imposition of hierarchical relations. To that extent education and democratic forms of co-operation are antithetical to organisation through leaders and leadership (Schostak, 2016). A co-operative curricular course thus proceeds through the play of powers

– thinking, feeling, imagining, bodily engagement with the world about as play and work to bring about a realisation of ideas (cf Schostak, 1989). As people engage as equals in conversation, debate and playful exploration, their ideas, values, beliefs, knowledge and skills become open to challenge, development and transformation. What seemed perhaps to be clear, distinct and singular becomes diffracted like light into its spectrum of colours; or causes ripples of resistance and discontent; or indeed, opens up previously unsuspected opportunities for difference. This means that a curriculum cannot be prescribed in advance because it is subject to the input of all. In a broadly Deweyan sense, then the cooperative curriculum is geared for discovery and emergence rather than the disciplined memorisation and application of official or otherwise elite sanctioned forms of knowing and knowledge. Although the curriculum cannot be pre-ordained, what emerges is a practice through which the powers of each can only be fully expressed and developed – or educated – for personal benefit if all are equally free to associate, commune, discuss and debate with one another. In short, it is a cooperative practice where whatever is produced is the outcome of a democracy of powers in the Spinozan sense. Whatever forms of knowledge and learning that composes this kind of curriculum is thus grounded in the ways people are able to use their powers singly or in aggregation to develop the principles, procedures, and organisational mechanisms to support activities and projects of personal and mutual benefit. As Fielding and Moss (2010) have shown, there are significant legacies to draw upon in order design democratic and co-operative curricula and schools. One socially important consequence of developing such curricula based upon principles of democratic co-operation would be that their forms of negotiation and debate result in the emergence of a 'public' – in this case, young people, their families and their teachers – able to decide on the allocation of resources and the organisational forms appropriate for their personal, mutual and collective education.

To engage in a co-operative course of education is essentially to become one's own expert (cf. Richmond, 1982) engaged with others in mutual acts of reflection upon experience in order to enhance one's powers of voice, expression, and action. Being able to imagine alternatives, understand how to do things and create the conditions is essential for the building of socially just ways of living, working and sharing. As a radical re-envisaging of both co-operation and educational curricular practice, it shares with radical democratic political discourses the need to develop spaces for debates between people who disagree (Mouffe, 2005) under principles of being 'faithful to the disagreement' (Rancière, 1999) – that is, spaces of debate and decision where differences of viewpoint, disagreements of judgement and pluralities of demands are not overruled by the majority or by the elites – as in the case of BREXIT – leaving a frustrated, divided population. Rather, where each voice is both free and equal as in Balibar's (1994) principle of égaliberté (equaliberty) the differences in agreement require creative solutions if voices are not to be suppressed and divisions reinforced. Thus a co-operative course requires the development of intelligence in its broadest sense if decisions and courses of action

are to be undertaken where differences of view, belief and judgement are included in an educational project. In that sense, there can be no 'master' whose expertise is decisive – all, in Rancière's sense are 'ignorant' (Rancière, 1987) to the extent that no one has knowledge of everything. Learning to engage with others by identifying where each can contribute knowledge and skills and where they cannot provides a basis for mutual education and co-operation. Rather than curricula imposed by authorities over the needs and interests of young people and adults, they develop through the motivations, curiosities and interests aroused by exploring together. The forms of social organisation to do this are shaped through the debates and negotiations that arise in the course of reflection undertaken by each in conjunction with others. Who does what, when, why, where and how, and with what resources, is as much a matter for curriculum development as it is about management. Both curriculum and organisational management are dimensions of the educational process. By engaging in this freely and equally, each individual is a full member of an 'effective public', that is, one where each voice is built into the decision making processes (Schostak & Schostak, 2013). And where does this building start? Where other than in our classrooms, our forms of school organisation, our homes, our communities, our places of work – face to face, in debate, decision and action together? Such processes of education employing democratic forms of co-operation can provide a legacy of experiences about how to organise for common purposes that can be drawn upon in all aspects of social living throughout ones life. In short, such experiences can provide the experiences, the intelligence, the knowledge, the values for individuals to critique, resist and undo the structures of all forms of organisation based on monopolies and positions of power to secure the interests of the few against the needs of the rest.

Will it happen?

UNFINISHED CONCLUSIONS

As István Mészáros puts it in an interview with Cazes (2015) "change calls for the radical transformation of the social reproductive metabolism in its entirety and in all of its deeply interconnected constituent parts." If the metabolism of socialism is radically different from that of Capitalism then democratic co-operation is different from both. As a process through which the world is produced in order to sustain human activity, the metabolism of co-operation that takes seriously democracy, equality, equity and the mutuality of self motivated individuals has to be discovered – following Dewey – in what might be called the social laboratories of mutually educational everyday forms of organisation through which people work, learn, find friendship and sustain themselves at home and in community. In Gramsci's terms this brings about a 'war of position' where co-operative forms of organisation do not just provide marginal economic employment or a haven from neoliberal forms of schooling, but becomes a widespread approach to economic, community and

cultural forms of empowerment that are able to engage politically and thus tip the balance of state power from the society of elite control to the society of equals. As Bleiker (2000) argues, 'a movement has a chance of exerting agency only when its ideological alternative to the established order has infiltrated most societal levels and is considered moral and legitimate by a substantial part of the population'. Echoing Mouffe (1993), like democracy itself, the education of a co-operative form of society is a continuous process, an unfinished and unfinishable revolution.

Democracy, as a radical project, requires an essentially borderless world where what is legitimate rests always with the voices of a mutually educated public capable of legitimizing their decisions to work cooperatively on mutually beneficial projects in all aspects of their everyday lives.

The key trans-border organisations that impact on everyday life in western liberal market democracies mask their hierarchies of authority with a rhetoric of freedom, choice and opportunity. It is not enough to label an organization co-operative, nor a country democratic and think it is finished – job done. If children go to schools that are founded upon discipline, obedience, national identity and competitive individualism where are they going to experience the alternatives in order to explore their powers under conditions of freedom and equality? If capitalism routinely generates crises, where are the ideas, the people well placed to draw upon the ideas and the organisations able to implement the ideas that are radically democratic, co-operative and creative? Rather than elites positioned at the top of organisational hierarchies with power, privilege and obedient, disciplined employees, subjects and citizens doing their bidding, there needs to be individuals able to exercise their powers of association to build the organisations and the structures between organisations that serve the needs, interests and demands of all, equally, freely and without prejudice. For there to be such people, there need to be the institutions that provide the young with the necessary experiences that they can draw upon throughout their lives of living and working with others to create ever new horizons of possibility. As yet, they can barely be glimpsed. There is much work to be done by educationists to bring the new into existence. If a world is made by the decisions and actions of people, then curricula can be created that explore, experiment and create the conditions for people to know how to develop forms of organization that are open to social justice for all and that resist inequalities. If there is to be a democratic revolution it cannot just be a revolution of the mind but a revolution in everyday organizational practice. For that to happen educationists of every age must first learn to say no to those who seek to be their masters. Then by engaging in the creative work needed to produce the democratic forms of co-operation and organisation to remove and guard against the ever present possibilities for exploitative elites creating the conditions for crisis driven capitalism, change for social justice for all can be made real. Without a view about what is possible, nothing can be done. Without encouraging all to join debate, make decisions and undertake action through education there can be neither universal freedom nor democracy.

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11. RESISTING NEOLIBERAL EDUCATION

For Freedom's Sake

INTRODUCTION

Education is an 'interested' discipline with diverse 'interest' groups constantly seeking to exercise productive power by means of its representation. What is of particular 'interest' is the representation of education's image and status[1] (e.g. Bourdieu, 1984). Over four decades in Britain and America, and from the late 1980s in the particular case of Ireland (Lynch, 2012), education's image and status has become rooted in neoliberal meanings, standings and practices. Ideological, structural and cultural endorsement has since been ever-more secured via loose connectivity at various supra-national, nation state, political interest, business/enterprise, academic, media and wider societal levels (see O'Brien, 2013). These levels habitually cohere to cast education's dominant image and status and enunciate new (neoliberal) ways to 'innovate' teaching and learning (ibid.). This chapter concerns itself with this neoliberal 'interest' in education. With particular focus on the US context, a context that now resonates strongly in Ireland (Lynch, 2012), it begins by *remembering* (the first of 5 'Rs' as outlined in this volume) originary influences. Some central features of neoliberal education are identified, particularly its promotion of 'economic' value, 'technologies' of governance and (paradoxically) 'freedom'. In the second section of the chapter, neoliberal continuities, idiosyncrasies and episodic changes are briefly mapped on to a post-Celtic Tiger Irish context.[2] This reveals the very real effects/affects of neoliberal versions of 'freedom'.

The third section of the chapter briefly examines some key educational 'technologies' that structurally *and* culturally embed neoliberal re-forms. From the seemingly banal (learning outcomes) to the spectacular (performative 'success'), greater educational and social 'freedom' is advanced. But how are these relations so conceived? Whose 'freedom' is advanced and whose is not? How can progressive ideals – hard-fought for freedom's cause ('civil rights', 'democracy', 'public education', etc.) – become co-opted by socially *regressive* (the second R) forces? Critical analysis centres on 'distancing' neoliberal relations in order to re-imagine an 'other' education – one that values social, democratic, cultural and civic values. A *reconceptualization* (the third R) of 'freedom' is fundamental to this 'other' education. This re-vision is not easy of course, especially since the commodity form permeates 'virtually' every fabric of society. Educators may not easily see beyond

T. Rudd & I. F. Goodson (Eds.), Negotiating Neoliberalism, 149–166.

it, caught up as we all are in our own 'facticity' (Heidegger, 1927/1996); inundated by, and associated with, postmodern signs of 'reform', 'success' and tolerated 'protest'; as well as being ever-more subjected to alienating work practices. But hope is anchored to protest; as it is to change. This is how the chapter concludes. Notwithstanding cumulative cautionary tales, there may still be the possibility for some hope and *resistance* (the sixth R).

NEOLIBERAL 'INTEREST' IN EDUCATION

Schools and universities are increasingly situated, whilst situating themselves, in the global advance of neoliberalism; for example the entrepreneurial university model (O'Brien, 2012). Accordingly, they 'progressively' promote knowledge as utilitarian and performative that, in turn, informs new organising principles that pervade mission statements, policy choices and inter-related cultural practices. Public institutions, increasingly under pressure to self-fund their teaching and learning programmes, are intensively responding to the laws of 'academic capitalism' (Deem, 2001). Institutions now 'reflexively' compete with each other, either singularly or in alliance, as they play out market positioning across local, regional, national and global boundaries. Symbolic and real links between education and the economy lie at the very heart of this neoliberal paradigm. *Remembering* (the first R) originary neoliberal influences is key to understanding and critiquing the dominant educational way. Here I focus briefly on the US context.[3]

Democracy, human rights and new opportunities are long cherished in America, for example de Tocqueville (1835, 1840). And while individualism and materialism always threaten (ibid.), there are many that testify to this 'freedom' she bestows. But 'freedom' too is construed by other means. For example, The Second Amendment to the United States Constitution protects the right of the people 'to bear arms'. This particular 'freedom' is highly contested of course. Another 'freedom' attends to the 'pursuit of happiness'. As it appears in the Declaration of Independence,[4] an individual is 'free' to choose his/her own life course direction (including, for example, his/her own path to 'success'). The only proviso is that he/she respects the equal rights of others to do the same. This freedom principle (which derives from classical liberalism) allies subjective values with objective rights. Accordingly, one is 'free' to pursue happiness (such as that which may accrue in education, health, income, wealth or fame), provided that others have equal rights to those same pursuits. Surely this freedom cannot be contested? There appear, after all, libertarian and constitutional bases for its animation. What's more, economic arguments appear to bolster its cause. Of central influence here is Milton Friedman's (1912–2006) advocacy of a type of economic freedom known as monetarism. As early as 1955, his ideas reflected and later shaped a powerful *neoliberal* agenda.[5] This philosophy originates with the assumption that society "takes freedom of the individual, or more realistically the family, as its ultimate objective", with government's primary role being the preservation of a "free private enterprise exchange economy" (Friedman,

1955, 1). Under this economic system, the 'enterprising' individual is 'free' to prosper and accrue wealth. And in America, where this system excels, (economic) 'success' is routinely prized and culturally celebrated.

This Union of *economic freedom* and 'success' produces unambiguous educational effects. Friedman advocates that parents "meet the cost [of 'training'] directly" and that, as 'consumers', they use school 'vouchers' to 'purchase' educational 'services' (Friedman, 1955, 3). It is envisaged that these services, which "could be rendered by private enterprises operated for profit, or by non-profit institutions", would impose 'minimum standards' (ibid.). The role of government, therefore, "would be limited to assuring [these] standards", in the same way as restaurants are quality inspected (ibid.).[6] Here, education is valued for its 'exchange' or 'gain' measure. It 'makes sense', therefore, to 'invest' in one's 'human capital' in order to reap 'rewards' in the market place.[7] A system that 'denationalizes' or 'privatizes' education is favoured and is assumed to 'free' up competition and deliver greater investment 'choice'.[8] Accordingly, low trust is attributed to public schooling, high trust to private schooling.[9] Under a private system, it is assumed that competition will enhance 'performativity' – even making "the salaries of school teachers responsive to market forces" (Friedman, 1955, 6).[10] Schools are also deemed to become more 'accountable' – though Friedman, *unlike* his successors, does not detail 'benchmark measurements'. Perhaps most controversially, Friedman claims that all of this educational 'innovation' makes for a more inclusive society. Here, he affiliates notions of 'competition' and 'incentives' with "eliminating the causes of inequality"; and he dismisses the alternative – "outright distribution of income" – as 'impeding competition', 'destroying incentive' and "dealing [only] with symptoms"[11] (Friedman, 1955, 14). In making this stark (and as yet untried) political 'choice',[12] Friedman sponsored a specific form of educational 'freedom'. Rooted in a neoliberal agenda, this 'freedom' represents a *politicised* worldview on education; one that speaks to a certain way of being in the world and acting upon it. In Friedman's political vision the real role of government, and specifically its role in education, is to promote a *workfare* state (i.e. one that encourages *individual* 'net contributions' to society via 'human capital' investments and obligations); over-and-above a *welfare* state (i.e. one that supports *public* responsibility for education and other facilities and provides social assistance therein). While the latter (albeit now, a much diluted version) is generally associated with 'the European project'; the former more fully encapsulates 'the American way'.

As policy advisor to Ronald Reagan's administration (1981–1988), Friedman was a powerful influence in the expansive roll-out of a neo-liberal agenda. This effected: reduced taxes; reduced government spend; increased privatisation; and deregulation of the economy and other state activities (the latter was accompanied, paradoxically, by augmented bureaucratic controls). Political right movements in the US (the Republican Party and, later, its Tea Party affiliation), and in Britain (The Conservative Party), were buoyed by the reign of Reaganomics and Thatcherism. And their merger of *economic freedom* and *political freedom* was evermore instituted.[13]

To these, Friedman (1991, 332) proposed a third – *human freedom* – arguing that the market's place lay at its core:

> The essence of human freedom, as of a free private market, is freedom of people to make their own decisions so long as they do not prevent anybody else from doing the same thing.[14] That makes clear, I think, why free private markets are so closely related to human freedom. It is the only mechanism that permits a complex, inter-related society to be organised from the bottom up rather than the top down.

Friedman had made direct connections between 'free market' principles and the values of 'democratic freedom'. Accordingly, to argue against the 'market' was to argue against human freedom itself. Why can't parents have the freedom to 'choose' their schools? Why can't students invest in their own 'upskilling'? Why can't they take up voucher or loan 'facilities'? Why can't they evaluate their institution's 'success' against others? Why can't they measure their teachers'/lecturers' 'performances' and reward them accordingly? In a bid for such 'freedom', Friedman sought to 'revolutionize' education via "the drive, imagination and energy of competitive free enterprise" (Friedman, 1997, 341). The message was compelling. In a country that nourishes on restless energy and creative ideas, who would argue with this 'innovation'? In a country where nationhood *rights* are durable, who would argue with this 'increased' liberty? And in America where economic success is treasured, who would argue with this newly fashioned 'freedom'?

A new market morality had not only materialized (see also Chubb & Moe, 1990), it had been naturalized. And it was accompanied by an unlikely relation – conservative religious conscience. This is best exemplified by Ronald Reagan's (1983) and Margaret Thatcher's (1988) speeches in which they both reference Christian-based literature (C. S. Lewis), selective Biblical sources (e.g. Thessalonians, Matthew) and nationhood (e.g. Abraham Lincoln's Gettysburg address). Ultimately, conservative religious 'interests' would ally with key political (economic) lobbyists to shape new 'social' reforms. What emerges is broad *educational* support for: state school prayer; educational choice (e.g. vouchers, private/religious schools, home-schooling 'options'); 'accountability'/'performativity' measures; Creationism (or 'intelligent design') in opposition to evolution teaching; conservative (heterosexual and abstinence-based) sexual education programs; and traditional perspectives on bio-ethics (e.g. anti-abortion, anti-stem cell research). This moral force would not just *effect* education, that is, produce structural and cultural transformations in schooling. It would also *affect* education i.e. petition, persuade and provoke particular sensibility and 'interest' in schooling. Neo-conservatives – an umbrella term often used to describe critics of modern liberalism – demonstrate a particular moral 'interest' in education. This 'interest' ranges from endorsing: conservative religious agendas (as above); traditional-based pedagogy (e.g. 'core' cultural knowledge); widespread testing (due to an alleged crisis of 'standards'); authoritative systems of professional accountability; and nationhood ethics, for example the focus on STEM subjects

(Science, Technology, Engineering and Mathematics) and their role in advancing America's standing in the 'global order'.[15] 'Neocons' would not only support the new corporate reform movement in America, they would rationalise its ethical enterprise. And they would institute a wide range of governance 'technologies' to embed social *and* cultural re-forms (see the third section). Somewhat surprisingly, this reform movement enlisted bipartisan political support.[16] Under Reagan's, George H. W. Bush's, Clinton's, George W. Bush's and Obama's Presidential administrations, numerous standards frameworks emerged focusing on outcomes-based measures of education, with attendant student improvement targets (see O'Brien, 2016). Over these years, the corporate reform movement has animated a hodgepodge of educational 'interests'. These include: private school advocates (e.g. Dave Levin/ Mike Feinberg, Sarah Usdin); celebrated school leaders (e.g. Wendy Kopp, Geoffrey Canada); hard-line educational reformers (e.g. Michelle Rhee, Arne Duncan); curriculum crusaders (e.g. Eric Donald Hirsch, David Coleman); individual/group consultants (e.g. Michael Barber, McKinsey); publishers and testing agencies (e.g. Pearson, Harcourt Educational Measurement); and philanthropic authorities (e.g. the Bill and Melinda Gates Foundation, Walton Family Foundation). This coalescent[17] may yet prove fragile and flawed.[18] The reformers have their detractors, including a growing number of educationalists (e.g. Diane Ravitch, Linda Darling-Hammond), teacher representatives (e.g. Randi Weingarten; Denis Van Roekel) and protest movements (e.g. *Growing National Movement Against 'High Stakes' Testing*; *Urban Youth Collaborative*; *the Dignity in Schools Campaign*; and *the Respect for All Coalition*). Still, corporate reformers play *the* leading role in casting education's image and enunciating new ways to 'innovate'. And they appear to verify the very meaning of *learning success*.

THE SOCIO-CULTURAL EFFECTS/AFFECTS OF NEOLIBERAL 'INTEREST' IN EDUCATION

What are the real socio-cultural effects/affects of, what has now become, a *Global* Educational Re-form Movement (or GERM, as Pasi Sahlberg labels it)? In brief – a deeper response lies beyond this paper – I look to Ireland's case where neoliberal continuities, as well as idiosyncrasies and episodic changes, can be mapped on to a post-Celtic Tiger Irish context (see also Ciaran Sugrue's chapter in this collection). Even in (one might argue, *especially* in) recessionary times, neoliberal influences remain powerful. Power et al. (2013) make this point clearly. In the wake of the economic collapse in Ireland, private banking and property developer debts were socialised (ibid.) and the Irish people were subjected to (new) higher tax burdens – much of which is still being used to pay off international investor losses. In 2014, debt interest alone was close to 20% of all tax revenue. Between 2008 and 2014 tax increases and public spending cuts amounted to a staggering 30 billion euros. In the immediate three years post-Celtic Tiger (2008–2011), some 250,000 jobs were lost (ibid.), mass emigration returned (close to 90,000 per annum) and public investment/

spending in housing, health, policing, welfare and education was significantly reduced. Whilst many clamoured that 'austerity was not working', especially those on the margins (long-term unemployed, young trainees/graduates, emigrants, lone parents, disability carers and groups, the homeless, distressed mortgage holders, working class communities, etc.), the opposite re-action emerged; that is, austerity was working (again) for private capital interests (ibid.). Neoliberalism, it seems, would function both in and out of crisis (e.g. Klein, 2008). During this 'rationalisation phase' of neoliberalism, social inequality increased. The social effects/affects of austerity remain hard-felt, as Rory Hearne (2015) encapsulates: health spending has been cut by 27% since 2008, resulting in an 81% increase in 'trolley' patients; the numbers of public service staff were reduced by 10% (37,500 persons); local authority housing was cut from 1.3 billion euros to just 83 million; some 37,000 homeowners remain approximately 2 years in arrears;1,000 children are now living in emergency accommodation in Dublin alone; funding for community, youth, mental health and family support organisations was effectively halved; the child-poverty rate rose from 18% in 2008 to 29.1% in 2013; and in 21st Century Ireland, food poverty has become a stark reality (affecting some 600,000 people). What these figures clearly demonstrate – Hearne further cites the assessment of the Irish Human Rights and Equality Commission – is that austerity has disproportionately affected the most vulnerable and marginalised in Irish society. Thus, while extreme inequality exists globally – a recent Oxfam Report for Davos (Hardoon, 2015) shows that the richest 1% of people in the world own 48% of global wealth – rich 'developed' nations are also experiencing upward trends in social inequality. In Ireland the richest 1% account for close to 5% (an EU 15 average) of national income; and the lowest 20% of income earners have an 8.3% share of national income, compared to 39.1% for the top 20% of earners (Taft, 2016). But there's much more to inequality than just income (ibid.). Educational disadvantage is an outcome of wider social inequality. Moreover, social inequality is the strongest determinant of educational underachievement. Free public education, therefore, is crucial to the goals of social equality. But how 'free' is education? The Irish League of Credit Unions (ILCU, 2015), for example, estimate that the average cost of sending a child to a public primary school is in the region of 800 euros; while the equivalent cost for a post-primary pupil is approximately 1300 euros. *Back to School Allowance* grants have been drastically cut back, while training supports for community employment (CE) schemes have been effectively stripped. Irish childcare provisions – essential for higher educational participation rates – remain in a hapless state. And a recently leaked (government-commissioned) draft report, entitled *Funding Irish Higher Education: A virtuous circle of investment, quality and verification*, reveals new plans for a graduate loan scheme. The message is clear – investing in one's 'human capital' makes good (market) sense. Friedman's (1955) speculation,[19] it seems, has come to pass.

How 'free' are our public educational institutions? Ciaran Sugrue (in this collection) fittingly details the impact of public sector austerity policies on

teachers and schools. Take also the case of universities. Garret Fitzgerald, former Taoiseach and National University of Ireland Chancellor, had always pointed to the deleterious effects of moving towards an entrepreneurial university structure premised (unrealistically and inequitably) on the US research model. He noted, for example, that despite the endless propaganda about creating a 'knowledge economy' through the development of 'world-class Irish universities', the share of current public spending on higher education reduced by almost two-thirds between 2001 and 2005 (Fitzgerald, 2010, 1). He also asserted that despite universities' autonomy status guaranteed in the Universities Act 1997, their financial dependence on the exchequer had given politicians and civil servants "the power to bend them to their own purpose" (ibid.). This power has become even more pronounced in times of 'rationalisation'. State funding for universities has fallen by almost a half since the economic crisis (O'Brien, 2016). Significantly reduced resources, sizeable staff reductions (up to a 10% cut in numbers from 2008–2015) and increased student 'demand' (from 2013–2015 there have been more than 3,000 extra applicants) mean that universities are buckling under the weight of austerity. Universities now go in chase of non-exchequer funding (e.g. research commercialisation opportunities and sponsorship grants) and more student numbers (e.g. increased 'international' cohorts, a new 'supply' of 'relevant' courses and, unwittingly or otherwise, support for new student loans/fees). Mergers (officially to avoid 'duplication') are being proposed for Institutes of Technology in preparation for (as a precondition of) 'university' status. The Hunt Report (National Strategy for Higher Education to 2030) establishes that the Higher Education Authority (HEA) can withhold up to 10% of state funding if certain targets are not met. Academic labour is valued in accordance with new career targets.[20] Newer entrants are subject to precarious labour conditions – lower pay, casualized work, increased status anxiety, ever weaker points of collectivity[21] (Courtois & O'Keefe, 2015). Third Level Workplace Watch, established in Ireland in 2013 by a collective of precariously employed staff (see https://3lww.wordpress.com/), seeks to raise awareness of, and ultimately change, unequal labour conditions. They point to worrying global trends in academic employment, for example in Australia over 50% of the teaching workload is taught by casual workers (Ryan et al., 2013); British Higher Education Institutions use more zero-hour contracts than any other sector (Butler, 2013); in Ireland the proportion of researchers on temporary contracts stands at 80% (Loxley, 2014); and there are more non-academic than academic staff in Irish higher education institutions (Courtois & O'Keefe, 2015).

Undoubtedly, then, the 'rationalisation' phase of neoliberalism – in concert with politico-ideological ideals – has reshaped higher education across international and national boundaries. Beyond fiscal considerations, 'free' market principles are ever-more *structured* into academic work (O'Brien, 2012). And they are increasingly embedded in teachers' and students' *cultural practices* (ibid.). The next section briefly examines how 'ordinary' practices (learning outcomes) and 'spectacular' practices (performative 'success') transplant principles of neoliberalism – together with its version of 'freedom' – into everyday academic life. There is a pressing need, it is

argued, to distance neoliberal relations in order to: 'free' our public institutions from this newly fashioned 'freedom'; 'free' our teachers and students; and, ultimately, 'free' education itself.

DISTANCING NEOLIBERAL RELATIONS TO 'FREEDOM': FROM THE BANAL (LEARNING OUTCOMES) TO THE SPECTACULAR (PERFORMATIVE SUCCESS)

Learning outcomes,[22] as defined by the April 2009 Bologna Process Report, are: "statements of what the learner will know, understand and be able to demonstrate after completion of a programme of learning (or individual subject/course)" (Rauhvargers, Deane, & Pauwel, 2009, 81). They are 'officially' thought to benefit both students and teachers alike, signalling to students what is expected of them, while supporting the successful completion of their studies; and aiding teachers focus on what they require students to achieve, in terms of knowledge and skills. In addition, learning outcomes are said to benefit employers, offering a skills profile of the general knowledge and understanding that future graduates attain. The Bergen Conference of 2005 expressed the will to develop a European framework of qualifications for the European Higher Education Area and a commitment to elaborate national frameworks of qualifications compatible with a European framework by 2010. Central to this vision was the facilitation of student and worker mobility across Europe (*exclusively* for Europeans), to be achieved by agreeing criteria for awarding graduate and postgraduate qualifications and simplifying the presentation of information about degree programmes. Learning outcomes were highlighted as central to the objectives of National Qualifications Frameworks, systems for credit transfer and accumulation, recognition of prior learning and the establishment of quality assurance measures. Learning outcomes serve an administrative (managerialist) function: they quantify knowledge; define accreditation and 'credit' pathways; provide 'clear', fixed learning guidelines and expectations; as well as mechanisms/measures of external accountability. Surely, learning outcomes offer us greater transparency and, ultimately, 'freedom'?

While learning outcomes may not be the most stirring of educational topics they do offer us a window into the rational ('reason-able'), though ultimately reductive, enterprise of neoliberal governance. They are 'officially' endorsed as being learner-centred. Yet learning outcomes are written in advance of any meeting with students. They take no account too of the learning site, where more and more diverse learners are crammed into large classes; where they are increasingly focused on skills-based work over short (modular) periods of time. The assumption too that all learning outcomes should be 'assessable' (Moon, 2002, 75) enables evaluation, specifically student and teacher evaluation, to take root. This form of (contractual) accountability is highly problematical. The messy (postmodern) 'reality' is that knowledge cannot readily be 'captured' and is in a state of constant construction/reconstruction. Experiential learning also reminds of the deeply personal, co-constructed, mutable, undecided and situated nature of knowledge. For sensitively informed educators,

bodies of knowledge are contestable, not transferable. These educators give much thought to methodology (how to engage knowledge) alongside appropriate knowledge and skill selection (what knowledge to engage). And they focus on, what Wells and Claxton (2002) call, 'epistemic mentality' (how to think like a learner) as well as 'epistemic identity' (how to act like one). For sensitively informed educators, a holistic (real learner-centred) approach is valued, in concert with students' diverse ways of 'coming to know' and 'coming into being'. For sensitively informed educators it is important to overcome narrow, technical definitions of learning precisely by challenging the (banal) cultural acceptance of learning outcomes. And while learning outcomes attempt to make the 'student experience' 'teacher proof' (to use neoliberal parlance), sensitively informed educators hold that the profession needs to be confidently equipped ('re-skilled', to pervert another neoliberal idiom) in order to realize its critical capacity. Thus, belying consumerist pressures, it may *not* be appropriate to: 'teach as expected'; 'follow predefined objectives'; and 'give students what they want'. Resistance here is based on sensitively informed action; the ability to reflect and act upon *other flexible ways* of viewing knowledge, learning, professional identity and accountability. But how complicit (unconsciously or otherwise) are educators and learners in mirroring and transmitting instrumental forms of knowledge? How 'free' are our teachers and students? While technologies like learning outcomes are but one (banal) expression of neoliberal governance, they can certainly impact on learning attitudes and behaviours. If presented in a sufficiently inflexible (positivist) manner, learning outcomes can limit serious question or challenge. More subtly, learning outcomes represent a particular knowledge type – how we exploit it, measure it, claim ownership over it, test it for inadequacies (as if it were ever adequate); in short, in terms of means production, by conceiving it primarily as a product of exchange value. When teachers write learning outcomes into culture, they (unwittingly or otherwise) uphold the right to manage education in *that* way.

How 'free' is education itself, as a practice? Taking a critical (neo-Marxian) perspective, learning outcomes exemplify educational commodification (O'Brien & Brancaleone, 2011; Brancaleone & O'Brien, 2011). Thus, when education 'steps forth' as a commodity it becomes packaged for exchange; and its 'product' becomes not only concreted (in that it holds 'real' exchange value), it becomes transcendent (it holds immaterial value, is 'desired', 'fetishized'). Moreover in exchange, the educational commodity produces new social relations; new consumption patterns; even new means of imprinting market consciousness (e.g. Lukács, 1971). Take school data as a 'productive' example. The Programme for International Student Assessment (PISA) is managed by the Organisation for Economic Cooperation and Development (OECD) and is an international standardised assessment administered to a random sample of (between 4,500 and 10,000) 15 year-olds in schools within each of the 30 member countries and their 30-plus 'partner economies' (OECD, 2010). Financed exclusively through direct contributions from participating countries (via each country's education ministry), the programme focuses primarily on measuring

student performance in reading, mathematics and science literacy. This facilitates a comparative (country-by-country) policy culture. PISA fits within a coordinated OECD system of 'education indicators'; it fits within, what Pasi Sahlberg calls, the Global Educational Re-form Movement (GERM); and it fits with the cultural advance of performative measures of 'success' (league tables, exam 'scores', benchmark targets). The use of 'evidence' or 'big data' is particularly instructive as a means of aligning education with 'product' values. Online providers in higher education, for example, are currently constructing volumes of data about students' learning and, in so doing, are challenging traditional (public) perceptions of the campus-based academy (Swain, 2016). Increasingly, public institutions are being encouraged to use 'learning analytics' – collecting, measuring, analysing reports about learning patterns/needs – in order to improve the 'student experience' (ibid.). But there's little questioning of the ethics, indeed accountability, of data production. And there's little questioning of whether it is right and responsible to assess lecturers' work/performances in new technological ways; or whether students' democratic rights are compromised by new monitoring methods. There's little questioning too of whether education itself is relegated in value. Thus, while neoliberal 'interests' sublimate the (economic) sign value of education, the intrinsic value of education (specifically its *practice*) becomes ever more lost (O'Brien & Brancaleone, 2011; Brancaleone & O'Brien, 2011). This necessitates a 'freeing' of education from its own (mis-) representation (O'Brien, 2013).

This is not easy of course. In postmodernity 'freedom' means something else. Progressive language and ideas (like those advanced during civil rights movements) are being perversely appropriated by socially regressive movements (like neoliberalism). To illustrate, take the concept of learning 'success'. The intense focus on a meritocratic skills-based agenda (allied with the neoliberal promise of social mobility) renders social equality (and its cultural, class, gender and racial dimensions) as 'virtually' invisible. Educational 'choice' is dislocated from an agent's social position. Even the school/university that is eventually chosen is *itself* disconnected as an act of social positioning. 'Freedom to choose' legitimates social *indifference*. Consequently, little attention is paid to how 'advantage' is *habitually* reproduced by some individuals. Like 'others', their personal expectations of 'success' are measured against their objective social conditions (Bourdieu, 1977). Unlike 'others', however, their 'choice' is not as conditional: having to work much harder; prove oneself; invest limited time and money; forgo leisurely/creative pursuits; identify with the dominant culture; risk alienation from one's community; be the first to go to college, etc. While the 'freedom' of 'others' is constrained (to put it mildly), they are (additionally) 'subjected' to an authoritative positioning on success (e.g. Tough, 2008; Rhee, 2013). The media plays its part in spectacularly re-presenting this message via its broadcast of league tables, surface educational news and dramatic stories of triumph/failure. Privileged institutions (some charter schools and Ivy League universities, for example) take the plaudits and become idolised; while simulation offers hope to 'other' places. Instead of real critical engagement

with class, poverty, race, testing, learning theory, school culture, transformative pedagogy, learners are repeatedly served up a *conservative cognitive upskilling agenda* (O'Brien, 2016). Can this model really 'flip the script' of educational disadvantage? Do poor students have any real 'choice'? Perhaps the greatest irony of this newly fashioned 'freedom' is that the subjugated often end up co-writing the model script: 'I agree, this is a better school'; 'every child should be able to achieve at this level'; 'we need more tests'; 'performance ought to be measured that way', 'school lotteries are fair', etc. All of this Bourdieu refers to as *symbolic violence*, since 'good choice', 'good taste' and 'good education' are not only self-evident and desirable, they must be (oft unconsciously) replicated. But what is ultimately replicated is the social structure of distinction (Bourdieu, 1977, 1984, 1996).

For whom then is 'success'? How can we come to critique *this* form of 'success'? These are very challenging questions, especially in perplexing postmodern times. 'Success' is bound up with 'freedom'. Even in incredibly unequal conditions of labour, wealth and power, happiness shadows the ideals of success (Ahmed, 2010). And the 'pursuit of happiness' is worth the struggle.

RESISTANCE: FOR FREEDOM'S SAKE

This chapter began by remembering originary neoliberal influences in education. The narrative challenges us to re-view how 'freedom' is framed, to ask specifically: how 'free' are our public educational institutions from this newly fashioned 'freedom'?; how 'free' are our teachers and students?; how 'free' is education itself as a practice? Critical analysis centres on 'distancing' neoliberal relations to 'freedom' in order to re-imagine an 'other' education – one that embraces social, democratic, cultural and civic values; one that doesn't, for example, take 'learning outcomes' or performative 'success' as scripted. Re-vision is not easy of course, especially since the commodity form permeates 'virtually' every fabric of society. Educators may not easily see beyond it, caught up as we all are in our own 'facticity' (Heidegger, 1927/1996); inundated by, and associated with, postmodern signs of 'reform', 'success' and tolerated 'protest'; as well as being ever-more subjected to alienating work practices. Yet, while 'free' market principles have become ever-more structured into academic work and embedded in teachers' and students' cultural practices, they cannot (and could never) determine authentic educational practice. Notwithstanding the creeping power of the (economic) sign/simulacrum (Baudrillard, 1994) or the increasing prevalence of 'productive' forms of 'data'/'evidence', there is always the possibility of some hope and resistance.

From critique comes some freedom. In particular, imaginative, socio-symbolic spaces (Willis, 2000) for resistance may still present for teachers and academics. Transformative possibilities may emerge, for example, via commitment to the arts, film, cultural studies, sociology, anthropology, development education, critical pedagogy, critical ethnography, narratives, life history work and more. These possibilities cannot ignore material conditions of work; indeed they have the power

to reveal them. Thus, a meeting of different actors from within and across different scholarly traditions – what Joe Kincheloe (2001) refers to as *bricolage* – can provide some sustenance for teachers and academics. Specifically, this coalescent can validate how educators' work *is* being seriously undermined by an all-consuming capitalism. It can reveal how educators' relative autonomy is becoming ever-more relative. It can support educators to at least cope with new work demands, to determine a new reflexive positioning (Butler, 1997). And in working together, educators may come to better articulate a loss of 'freedom' and seek out new personal/professional directions. Educators' own 'sense' of a slip in 'freedom' needs to be firstly felt and acknowledged, however, before it can be critiqued and resisted.

It's not easy for teachers/academics to imagine how collective resistance may finally emerge. Where is there this hope? I do not foresee, for example, that this – nor does the evidence suggest it – will stem from traditional 'educational leadership' positions either inside or outside universities. Organized labour movements are increasingly marginalized by the (ironically) 'ideological' brand. Moreover, in an age of advanced consumerism, it's increasingly difficult for the public to imagine themselves as the partners of educators, not of their managers. Yet, for all of this, there is I believe an implicit understanding that good teaching/learning is an art; that inauthentic forms of representation and accountability cannot sustain. More than ever before, there's a swell of (precariously employed) educators, many of whom may not readily self-describe as 'radical', who 'feel' it more *necessary* to resist (Arendt, 1963/2006). For caring, experienced, sensitively informed educators, too, change is overdue. They (not all educators *feel* as they do) have a significant (oft solitary) role to play in cultivating a new 'sense and sensibility'; in imagining an 'other' era of educational change. In order to advance this possibility, their primary and *critical* purpose must be to resist these neoliberal times. Even if they, alongside 'mainstream' teachers and academics, can't directly change their circumstances, they may still derive benefit from collective 'problematization' (Foucault, 1978). Those that speak with, and behalf of sensitively informed educators, offer hope (however fragile), idealism (however motivated) and change (however elusive). The *bricolage* can provide a (more) common cultural platform from which to garner sustenance and tell their and their students' ordinary stories. Beyond this, too, a counter-cultural *political* movement can be inspired – one that creates its own (postmodern) 'noise', that clamours against: private school advocates; celebrated leaders of 'success'; hard-line educational reformers; core curriculum crusaders; individual/group consultants; private publishers and testing agencies; and select philanthropic authorities. Sooner or later, this may lead to the formation of a new 'integrity of practice'– to an education that is free from the undue interference of neoliberalism (Hogan, 2010). For now, educational practice continues to be overlooked by capricious *outside* 'interests'. The discipline is, and with it its scholars (e.g. Graeber, 2015), becoming ever-more compliant; diluted of will and power. 'Human capital investment', the focus on 'reading, writing and arithmetic' and 'STEM subjects', 'financial incentives' and 'earned autonomy' for the Third Level exemplify our

educational times (A Programme for a Partnership Government, May 2016). New knowledge and commitment is needed to resist this paradigm. The social sciences, principally the foundations subjects in education, have a critical role to play here. It's timely once more to look *inside* education; to rediscover its hidden stories, its art, its more authentic soul.

NOTES

[1] Image here concerns itself with both semiotics (e.g. how one imagines education; attaches meaning to it) *and* modus operandi (e.g. how one practises teaching and learning). Status concerns itself with distinction (e.g. Bourdieu, 1984), particularly the prominence afforded to certain educational positions (e.g. dominant perspectives on educational 'effectiveness'). While image and status do not *directly* form practice, they can be hugely effective *and* affective – particularly if they garner structural support and cultural endorsement.

[2] The so-called 'Celtic Tiger' years refer to Ireland's economic 'boom' period from the mid-1990s to 2007. The spirit of the age was marked by corporate profits and optimism, government budget surpluses, high consumer spending (and credit), low unemployment and net immigration. This zeitgeist is encapsulated in the opening sentence of a popular (populist) book at the time – "Ireland has arrived" (McWilliams, 2006, 3).

[3] See O'Brien (2016, 71–125) for a more comprehensive analysis (including 'success' effects/affects) of neoliberal 'interest' in US education. The following treatise is extracted from this work.

[4] In 1776 Thomas Jefferson pronounced The Declaration of Independence:

> We hold these truths to be self-evident, that all men are created equal, that they are endowed by their Creator with certain unalienable Rights, that among these are Life, Liberty and the pursuit of Happiness. That to secure these rights, Governments are instituted among Men, deriving their just powers from the consent of the governed.

This declaration represents democracy; appealing as it does to an independent judiciary and a government and military that are responsive to civil power. And it represents human rights; reasoning these to be 'self-evident' amongst a 'free people' in 'free and independent states'. Such freedom is enshrined in The First Amendment (1791) to the United States Constitution (1787). Whilst its provisions are constantly subject to scrutiny and Supreme Court challenges, The First Amendment sets forth the principles of free religious choice and exercise (with no favours in law for any religious group), as well as freedom of speech (with implications for a free press, school speech, political critiques, etc.).

[5] Friedrich von Hayek (1899–1992) is probably the most influential economist/political philosopher of neo-liberalism and a supposed favourite of Margaret Thatcher. Post World War II (1947), he assembled and worked alongside American economists: Rose and Milton Friedman (of 'The Chicago School' fame); James Buchanan and Gordon Tullock (of 'public choice theory' fame); and Gary Becker (of 'human capital theory' fame). These economists formed the US vanguard of neoliberalism. In 1955, Friedman wrote an article entitled 'The role of government in education'. The quotes that follow are directly taken from this text.

[6] However crude the analogy is between schools and restaurants, this type of comparative 'analysis' is typical of certain *economic* commentary. It may also appear in homogenised *political* discourse (perhaps via mimetic or policy-borrowing practices, or more deliberate ideological positioning). Consider the following words, rooted in the neo-liberal zeitgeist, uttered by an Irish (*Labour* party) Education Minister. Here, he exhorts university students to be "critical consumers" of the education they receive: "A bad restaurant doesn't get repeat business. I think there has to be some response from the user of the service provided in an open market economy like ours. People can exercise their choice by moving to another supplier of the service." (former Minister for Education and Skills Ruairí Quinn, in Duggan, *Sunday Independent* 2012, Feb 5, p. 6).

[7] Friedman (1955, 11) imagines comparisons between human capital investments (e.g. investing in one's 'training') and physical capital investments (e.g. investing in machinery). He even imagines a type of venture capitalism, centred on human 'training', where a financial loan is measured against the security of return and eventual productivity of this investment: "The counterpart for education would be to 'buy' a share in an individual's earning prospects: to advance him [sic.] the funds needed to finance his [sic.] training on condition that he [sic.] agree to pay the lender a specified fraction of his [sic.] future earnings. In this way, a lender would get back more than his [sic.] initial investment from relatively successful individuals, which would compensate for the failure to recoup his [sic.] original investment from the unsuccessful." Does all of this seem farfetched? Consider how higher education loans/fees are imagined/effected. From a critical perspective, one must ask if giving students the 'freedom' to bear such costs represents, at the very least, a system of 'control' or, more strongly, if it represents (using Friedman's own words) 'partial slavery'. One may also ask how all of this squares with Friedman's 'voluntary' exchange ideal.

[8] "… as in other fields, competitive private enterprise is likely to be far more efficient in meeting consumer demands than either nationalized enterprises or enterprises run to serve other purposes" (Friedman, 1955, 5, 6). While this argument appears fashionable (even after all these years), it is of course highly contestable. Besides the problematic comparison of schools with 'other' organisation types, one must consider the *contrary evidence* in relation to numerous private: railway operators; banks; prisons; probation services; early school providers (e.g. crèches); hospitals; voucher systems; and charter schools. In the case of the latter, for example, a Center for Research on Education Outcomes (CREDO, 2009) report at Stanford University analysed 70% of America's charter schools and found that: 17% of charter schools perform better than their public school counterparts; 37% perform worse; and 46% are approximately comparable in standard. In light of these findings, one must question the supposed delivery of greater 'choice' in a competitive school system. The vast majority of US students attend their neighbourhood school. In so far as they actively choose their local school, and not others (even those deemed to be more competitively 'successful'), they exercise *local* choice. It is important to also recognise that some children have more 'choice' than others, a point that highlights the strong (social) *classed* nature of education.

[9] The title of Friedman's 1997 opinion piece says it all: 'Public schools: Make them private'.

[10] Performance-based rewards for group or individual teachers have been experimented upon in the US, for example Kentucky and Charlotte-Mecklenburg Group-Based Performance Reward Programmes; South Carolina Individual and Group-Based Reward Programmes; The Texas Education Agency Study; and the Dallas Group-Based Performance Reward Programme. In a review of the literature in this area, Harvey-Beavis (2003) concluded that there is limited research in the US and that there are a number of concerns regarding research methodology – particularly around merit-pay *systems* and *findings* that claim that teacher rewards lead to better student 'outcomes' (Harvey-Beavis, 2003). To be clear, there is *no* relationship between average student performance in a country and the use of performance-based pay (PISA In Focus, 2012).

[11] With the obvious caveats 'if this were even possible' and 'if economics alone was the issue', who would argue with "eliminating the causes of inequality"? The question is: will the alliance of 'competition' and 'incentives' further this cause? Further, 'outright' distribution of income (as Friedman terms it) infers a 'giving away' of income (consistent with critiques of socialism and the so called 'hand-out' welfare state). There is of course a purposeful social (as well as economic) role for degrees of income (re)distribution e.g. it may be used as a means of: regulating against the excesses of 'free market' income differentials; establishing and maintaining appropriate social, community and economic services; and contributing to a fairer, more inclusive society.

[12] In 1955, the 'choice' is as yet untried since a 'free [education] market' had yet to be partly realised, let alone imagined. All of which points to Friedman's remarkable *inventiveness* and resolute *foresight*. Of course, Friedman *tees up* (to use golfing parlance) the 'choice' – free market or its (polemical) alternative? A type of dualistic thinking is therefore in evidence. No doubt influenced by (and influencing) US anti-communist sentiment, the 'choice' also *appears* stark – this *or* that.

[13] Friedman (1991) emphasises their inter-connection, believing that *economic freedom* (more accurately, a neoliberal take on capitalism) is a necessary, but not sufficient, condition for *political freedom*.

Friedman (1991, 330) also highlights their paradoxical relationship and suggests that "while economic freedom facilitates political freedom, political freedom, once established, has a tendency to destroy economic freedom."

[14] Note how these words resonate with a classical liberal (*democratic*) stance on 'freedom', as it appears in the Declaration of Independence (see endnote 4). Friedman's later words (in this quotation) resonate with *economic* (or market) versions of 'freedom' and are of course highly contestable. To illustrate, Friedman's reference to how the market enables society "to be organised from the bottom up rather than the top down" fails to recognise the highly authoritative (and oft undemocratic) features of the market, including those that emerge via managerialist/bureaucratic controls/'technologies' (see later discussions in this and the next section).

[15] The phrase 'global order' is borrowed from Stefan Halper and Jonathan Clarke's (2005) book – *America alone: The neo-conservatives and the global order* - which details how US foreign policy was dominated by radical neoconservative voices during George W. Bush's administration (2001–2009), for example Dick Cheney, Paul Wolfowitz, Jeane Kirkpatrick (who also served in President Reagan's cabinet), Donald Rumsfeld, etc. The advance of STEM subjects is particularly linked to America's 'global order' status, since it aims to secure (via education) technological, military and economic gains.

[16] It is ironic that the Conservatives would preside over "the largest expansion of federal control in the history of American education"; and it is "likewise ironic that Democrats embraced market reforms and other initiatives that traditionally had been favoured by Republicans" (Ravitch, 2011, 21). Internationally, too, there is a surprising political consensus around new corporate reforms e.g. the education policies of coalition governments in Ireland [Fine Gael (centre right) and Labour (centre left)] and England and Wales [Conservatives (right of centre) and Liberal Democrats (social democratic centre)]. In America, a broader political consensus on *educational reform* contrasts strongly with *other partisan policies*. To illustrate, at the time of writing (October, 2013), a US partial government shutdown was effected as a result of Republican and Democrat disagreements on new health care and budget provisions.

[17] More accurately, it presents as a coalescing of *entwined* interests – interests that are strategically inter-related, but not always coherent. To illustrate briefly: Michael Barber, a leading proponent of Individual Learning Accounts (e.g. Barber, 1997), was chief adviser to the Secretary of State for Education on School Standards in the UK under Tony Blair's administration; he then served as partner and head of McKinsey's Global Education Practice; was a close advisor to Joel Klein who introduced new accountability and market reforms in New York; and is currently chief education advisor for Pearson, a consultancy that provides educational services (publishing and testing products) to American states. David Coleman is the chief architect of the Common Core States Standards Initiative and former consultant with McKinsey and joint CEO of an education start-up *Grow Network*. Since, this company has been sold to McGraw-Hill (another educational consultancy) and Coleman has established a not-for-profit agency (*Student Achievement Partners*) which supports (with new data systems and tests) the implementation of the Common Core Standards that, in turn, are aided by the Gates Foundation, etc. (see Resmovits, 2013).

[18] *Fragile* because there are those that see the benefits of ('high-stake') tests but not a role for federal government in their administration i.e. there is an uneasy marriage between neoconservatives who want high levels of accountability and performativity and neoliberals (as well as various 'neocon' religious and political right interest groups) who do not want federal government to interfere with local schools. *Flawed* because educational 'privatisation', 'choice', 'standards', 'tests' and 'performativity' are all conceptually and practically problematical (as Chapters in this collection present).

[19] Friedman (1955) had imagined (over 60 years ago) a type of venture capitalism, centred on 'human training', where a financial loan would be measured against the security of return and eventual productivity of this investment. In the current Irish plans, graduates would pay back 25 euros a week over 15-years. The market logic of 'freedom' applies: Why can't students invest in their own 'upskilling'? Why can't they take up voucher or loan 'facilities'?

[20] Recently in Queen's University Belfast, the management has retroactively altered the criteria for confirmation in post for all probationary staff. Incredibly, probationary staff are expected to have not

only attained grant income but to have done so as Principal Investigator (PI) – a task which many experienced practitioners may find difficult to achieve. A petition of protest, signed by numerous academics across the island of Ireland, has since been presented to management. Since then another petition has been established to stop a decision made by senior management in Queen's University Belfast to close the BA Sociology and BA Anthropology degree pathways.

[21] Section 27 (2) of the Technological University Bill, for example, does not guarantee lecturers' rights to continued collective bargaining on pay agreements (O'Connor, 2016). The Bill itself was recently passed just before the dissolution of the 31st Dáil Éireann (the Irish Parliament) – only 28% of TDs (Irish Parliament members) were in attendance to vote it through (O'Toole, 2016).

[22] For an in-depth critical treatise of learning outcomes, see O'Brien and Brancaleone (2011) and Brancaleone and O'Brien (2011). Many of the ideas that follow closely align with the arguments presented in those 2 papers.

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12. THERE IS AN-(NO)-OTHER WAY: SURFACING THE HIDDEN INJURIES OF 'AUSTERITY' – RESISTANCE, RESILIENCE AND PROFESSIONAL RESPONSIBILITY

The Irish Case

INTRODUCTION

At a critical juncture on Ireland's recent journey on the 'road to serfdom' (Hayek, 1945),[1] a former minister for finance remarked that 'we all partied' during the 'Celtic Tiger' years, thus there was now a collective onus to reap what we had sown![2] Much more recently (12/12/'15) Ireland's former Taoiseach (Prime Minister) provoked the ire of the Irish citizenry when he remarked on a BBC Radio 4 Today programme that the cause of Ireland's travails were because:

> … Joe Soap and Mary Soap, who never had a lot, got the loans for the second house and leveraged the third house off the second house and the fourth on the third, and you know, what are you having yourself.

These comments, however unintentional, tend to confirm the public perception that the 'establishment' just does not get the reality that for many of the populous, there was no party, and even if there was for some, the considerable remainder were not invited. Or, as Jones describes this phenomenon in the UK context:

> Politicians and media worked almost hand in glove to promote the myth that people who should be held responsible for the nation's multiple social and economic ills are those at the bottom of the pecking order rather than those at the top. (Jones, 2015, p. xi)

In both jurisdictions, such comments uttered by powerful influential establishment figures are indicative of a mindset that is bolstered by the "mantra of 'There Is No Alternative'" (p. xiii). And, since this implies that this is self-evidently the only reality, austerity is the only possible response to financial Armageddon. As Coulter (2015) correctly points out, such utterances should not be misunderstood as a 'slip of the tongue' or a 'spur of the moment' comment. Rather:

> Since the onset of the current crisis, powerful figures in the political and cultural establishment in Ireland have incanted a series of mantras that are intended

T. Rudd & I. F. Goodson (Eds.), Negotiating Neoliberalism, 167–181.

> to mollify ordinary citizens and guide them towards a specific destination. (Coulter, 2015, p. 10)

That terminus is acceptance of and acquiescence when faced with the 'reality' of austerity, and the message embedded in the everyday language of the powerful is repeated sufficiently to gain "hegemonic" control over the will of the people (p. 10). In my childhood, in stories told and retold, incantations were magical words uttered by witches to weave their spells on the unsuspecting, naïve, gormless, and (often) 'the good'. The more contemporary version of such spell-binding behaviour is 'spin' but without the presence of the 'good fairy' to loose the encumbered from their financial incarceration. In politics and attendant policy arenas, good Samaritans appear to be in scarce supply; fairy godmothers have been made redundant! Teachers, often cast in the role of caring good Samaritans, are obliged to continue to make ends meet in times of Austerity. This chapter is about how Irish teachers have coped, endured and continued to care since the collapse of the Irish banking system in 2008. It is at once a tribute to their professionalism, while seeking simultaneously to identify how resistance and resilience when judiciously combined, have potential to be professionally enhancing, enriching and generative of professional responsibility, even when confronted by increasing demands for accountability and attendant performativity. This is what the evidence presented testifies to—acts of 'transformative resistance' while leaving open the possibility that such agency is not sustainable should current policy prescriptions be perpetuated and intensified in the immediate and longer term future. Thus, it is necessary also to indicate what more may be done, to create and amplify a collective (professional) voice that also connects with the wider public, to rescue the public sphere and education as a 'common good' from the lie(s) at the heart of Neoliberalism.

This chapter is in four parts. First, the briefest summation of core features of neoliberalism are indicated, and these will be threaded through subsequent policy analysis, while drawing on the idea of Discursive Institutionalism (Schmidt, 2010, 2008). Second, a succinct account of the realities of austerity in Ireland are summarised, particularly as it impacted on the public sector in general and teachers, principals and schools in particular. Third, this analytical lens is applied to key policy texts that contributed to the austerity. Selected vignettes provided by practitioners are similarly analysed indicating how austerity from a professional perspective expresses a degree of indignation and coping, of resilience tinged with resignation and resistance, while taking professional responsibility to new levels that transcend existing constraints while transforming elements of practice. Fourth, discussion and tentative conclusions indicate that when resistance and resilience are combined in a collective manner they can be professionally enhancing even in the teeth of austerity, while caution too is suggested since longer term sustainability may not be attainable should the public sector continue to be pilloried by large sections of the media, some of whom are in thrall to 'the establishment'.

THE CHAMELEON THAT IS NEO LIBERALISM

Neoliberalism has many forms, fanned by a "coalescence of globalisation and new technologies, the mantra of deregulation, of leaving matters to the market has increasingly dominated western politics since the mid-1970s" (Harvey, 2011, p. 6). Suffice to say that accumulation of these ideological pursuits over the intervening decades has resulted in:

> The education system …being globalised. It is brashly depicted as an industry, as a source of profits and export earnings, a zone of competitiveness, with countries, universities and schools ranked by performance indicators. (Standing, 2011/2014, p. 117)

The precise flavour in which neo-liberal reforms are packaged vary according to national context, tradition and trajectory and 'refraction' (Goodson, 2004; Rudd & Goodson, 2012), but there is growing realisation of its hegemonic influence on policy even if its precise ideological and inspirational roots remain obscure to many (Mirowski, 2014). Its more recent manifestation and impact has been a "turning from seeking profits via productive efficiency to seeking profits via financial manipulation, more correctly called speculation" but with a plethora of consequences for secure, sustainable employment and social cohesion (Wallerstein, Collins, Mann, Derlugian, & Calhoun, 2013, p. 29). While a significant purpose of this chapter is to surface the less obvious or hidden consequences of such policy pursuits, their structural manifestations are more immediately apparent in privatisation of schools, frequently dressed up as choice, and the outsourcing of many services traditionally provided by the State, while education as a commodity is instrumentalised, available to those who can purchase its claimed benefits.

Discursive Institutionalism seeks to capture the dynamics of this ongoing process, and is described in the following terms by one of its chief proponents. She states:

> Discursive institutionalism is an umbrella concept for the vast range of works in political science that take account of the substantive content of ideas and the interactive processes by which ideas are conveyed and exchanged through discourse. (Schmidt, 2010, p. 3)

Combining this dynamic interplay, with elements borrowed from Critical Discourse Analysis, thus paying particular attention to the language of neoliberalism as it plays out in key policy documents, becomes an important means of interrogating reforms as well as surfacing their less visible injuries as they impact on teachers and learners (Fairclough, 1995/2010).

AUSTERITY: IRISH EXPERIENCES

Although use of the term austerity since 2008 has become ubiquitous, its description and its presence in peoples' lives continues to vary enormously in national and

local context, since how it has been 'refracted' in national policies has had its own particular dynamic. My Chambers dictionary informs me that the adjective 'austere' means to be 'sour and astringent; severe, stern, grave, severely simple, without luxury' while 'austerity' as applied to the individual encompasses 'severity of manners or life, harshness, asceticism, severe simplicity of style, dress or habits'. There is a world of difference however between an asceticism and simplicity that is freely chosen, and one that is imposed by powerful forces, whether in the form of national governments, their agencies, international bodies such as the 'troika'(IMF, ECB, EC) or state funded private companies paid from the public purse, such as Atos in England, whose raison d'etre seemed mostly to deny 'entitlements' to claimants, as part of a general mindset that decried 'scrounging off the state' (see Jones, 2015, pp. 167–201). In this regard, Dicken's *A Christmas Carol* serves as a metaphor, as well as a moral tale, for the asceticism chosen by Scrooge and his partner Marley, while imposing austerity on their employee Cratchit, as well as inflicting misery on the Cratchit family. Dicken's novel is of significance since there is a redemptive element to the story, namely that the austere Scrooge through imaginative cognitive behaviour therapy, is capable of developing empathy, initially imagining a future, sufficient to cultivate an alternative to the regime of poverty he has been inflicting on others; the latter positive in its contagion, the former corrosive in its influence. It should be noted however that this redemptive transformation required intervention, and while teachers are well placed to enact a curriculum that very deliberately sets out to cultivate empathy in their students, as will be made clear later, this effort in order to over-turn the ravages of austerity, must act in consort with parents—the members of the 'precariat,[3] in order to stem the tide of neoliberalism.

The Irish experience of recent austerity is well documented and will not be dwelt on here. Such texts have been pre-occupied largely with aspects of the crisis, and particularly the infamous Government 'bank guarantee'—namely that the Irish taxpayer, essentially, under pressure from key members of the Troika, insisted that in the event of the bondholders in the failed bank (Anglo Irish Bank) not being repaid, 'a bomb would go off' in Dublin (Author, 2012). In September of 2008, the Government succumbed to the external pressure, and effectively nationalised bank debt. Much of this literature searched in vain for scapegoats- politicians, bankers, builders and developers (Cooper, 2009, 2011; O' Brien, 2008; O' Toole, 2009, 2010), whereas more critically and reflexively others recognised that "the golden age of neoliberal capitalism … [found] an unlikely 'poster child' in the guise of the Irish Republic" (Coulter, 2015, p. 5) (see also Kinsella, 2011, p. 223). This is a variation on the general neoliberal theme playing out internationally, whereby "it would be working people who picked up the tab for the crisis, not those responsible for it" (Jones, 2015, p. 240).

One of the most significant consequences of the Bank guarantee was the subsequent necessity to swallow loss of sovereignty while simultaneously accepting "financial assistance" courtesy of the Troika, a financial package that was nothing short of 'a structural adjustment programme' (Coulter, 2015, p. 9). As a consequence of this

financial arrangement, "some 30,000 state employees have lost their jobs while their former colleagues have faced pay cuts in excess of 20 per cent" (p. 9), many of them teachers. This 'bailout' was followed by a series of budgets that resulted in the "erosion of many essential forms of public provision" (p. 9). To rub salt into the wounds inflicted by austerity, I witnessed the then minister for education and skills (Ruairi Quinn—March 2011-July 2014) hectoring and lecturing those teachers who had the audacity to question his pronouncements that since we have 'lost our sovereignty … there is no alternative', with the implication that to contemplate otherwise was to be entirely deluded. This critical juncture in the national fall from grace, from the heady days of 'Celtic Tiger' celebrity status, described by none other than *The Economist* as "Europe's shining light" (Donovan & Murphy, 2013, p. 15), suffered additional humiliation when the 'bailout' was rather quickly followed by Moody's pronouncement that Irish banks were rated as having 'junk status' (Murray Brown, 2011). However, the purpose here is not to get lost in economic detail, or seek to apportion responsibility but to acknowledge that it is Ireland's "position within the global capital system" that is the primary culprit (Coulter, 2015, p. 28).

Such macro-economic generalities, however, indicate very little of the 'hidden injuries' of austerity (Sennett, 1993). It is important to acknowledge that for teachers, who remained in employment, the impact of austerity has not been as catastrophic as it has been for those who lost their jobs, thus unable to make mortgage repayments on a house that was now, post the property bubble, in serious negative equity, less than 50% in most instances of the purchase price. It is necessary therefore to examine more closely the education policies pursued in the name of austerity before the negative consequences can be identified, their consequences addressed.

Public Sector Austerity Policies

While it is the case here as elsewhere that the devil is in the detail, this sequence of 'agreements' to which teachers unions signed up, in many instances with varying degrees of misgivings and rejections in an effort to renegotiate terms and conditions, – the most recent of the three (Landsdowne Road, see below) has been rejected by two of the three unions -strongly suggests that resistance has come to the fore as a consequence of an unrelenting sense of being under siege, perpetually on the back foot, while the consensus message from media and government, with very few exceptions, continues to suggest there is no alternative. Additionally, for public service workers, there was an appeal to patriotic duty, to 'don the green jersey'. The reader should note the persistence and pervasiveness of the language of neoliberalism. Each is labelled a public service (stability) agreement, and has become known by the specific context in which they were negotiated – very identifiable landmarks in Dublin. They each follow a similar pattern of general agreement with appendices that apply to different employees in the public sector, including education. Detail has been stripped out to focus on language and the unrelenting nature of perpetuating fear and insecurity.

Table 1. Perpetuating austerity

Croke Park 2010–2014	*Haddington Road 2013–2016*	*Landsdowne Road 2013–2018*
... public servants will have to increase their flexibility and mobility ... A general *moratorium on recruitment and promotion* was applied … and incentivised early retirement and career break schemes introduced; A pension related *deduction of an average of nearly 7% was applied to all the earnings of all public servants*; and most recently- … A reduction in rates of pay and allowances took effect on 1 January, 2010. … Public Service numbers to reduce substantially … progressive *reduction in staff numbers* across the Public Service by end-2012 and will be implemented by *Employment Control Frameworks*. … efficiencies will need to be maximised and *productivity in the use of resources greatly increased* through revised work practices and other initiatives. … the *moratorium on recruitment to and promotion* in the Public Service … will continue to apply …	*... further measures are required to underpin the delivery of a more integrated, efficient and effective public service.* … Redeployment Performance management Flexible working arrangements Work-sharing arrangements Workforce restructuring. [Due acknowledgement of sacrifices already provided by public servants, including:] • *Pay reductions averaging 14% ...* • An ongoing pay freeze; and • Deductions from public service pensioners. The gross working week, inclusive of breaks, *will increase* as appropriate *... total reduction of annual leave* entitlement over the period of the Agreement of *6 days*; [or less in some instances] … a reduction in pay for those on salaries of €65,000 and greater (inclusive of allowances in the nature of pay) …. … the provision of *additional working hours and related productivity measures …* … further *reduce management* numbers by increasing the span of control (ratio of staff to management) ….	… delivery *of continued productivity improvements* through working smarter, innovation in business and workplace practices, improving analysis of data to shape public service delivery, changing the *speed, flexibility* and tailoring of service delivery, … *more open, transparent and accountable* Public Service …. … making *better use of data analysis,* will be taken to planning and delivering services, to support improved outcomes in health and education, …. Efficiencies need to be maximised and *productivity in the use of resources increased* through revised work practices …make maximum use of *innovative models of service delivery* that focus more on outcomes. … higher standards of performance through *more effective resource management* and through maximising the potential of our workforce. … there will be *no cost-increasing claims for improvements in pay or conditions … strikes* or other forms of industrial action by trade unions, employees or employers *are preclude*….

Table 1. (Continued)

Croke Park 2010–2014	*Haddington Road 2013–2016*	*Landsdowne Road 2013–2018*
… a substantial commitment to the *redesign of work processes* will be necessary. *More risk-based approaches* in inspection and… *higher penalties for non-compliance*.	… further steps need to be taken urgently *to strengthen performance management* systems and procedures…. … the *moratorium on recruitment ... will continue*	… *emergency legislation will continue* to be the context for pay determination during the lifetime of this Agreement.

Clearly, the language of New Public Management (NPM) abounds, it continues across agreements to demand more for less and with less, perpetuating destabilisation, fear, anxiety and insecurity, thus sapping energy, morale and motivation, while insisting that yet more must be given.

For a typical teacher, the introduction of a Universal Social Charge (USC) (from 2–7%),[4] in addition to pay cuts of 14%, resulted in a general loss of income of 20%. However, austerity did not end there. In addition, allowances payable for supervision (yard and break-time) duties and for substitution in the event of a colleague's absence were effectively abolished. For newly qualified teachers, their starting salaries were reduced by insisting they begin on the first point of the salary scale (rather than the 3rd as had been the norm), while abolition of allowances for qualifications further reduced their starting salaries by 30%.[5] Additionally, at school level, where the employment control framework effectively froze recruitment and promotion, as more senior teachers availed of early retirement offers to reduce numbers in the public service, many were holders of assistant principal posts (€8,520) or Special Duties positions (€3,769). Under emergency legislation, principals were prohibited from promoting other staff to assume these managerial responsibilities. Consequently, they became more reliant than ever on colleagues' good will at a time when morale was generally being eroded (see C. Sugrue, 2015). In a context where unemployment rose to in excess of 15% and emigration returned on a massive scale with something in the order of 400,000 mainly young people having left Ireland since 2008 (see Heap, 2012; Walsh, 2014) there was little sympathy for the 'cosseted' public sector, thus teachers were largely silenced, intimidated into compliance, while sharing in the sense of insecurity being promulgated, perhaps privately counting their blessings while hoping to weather the fiscal storm. However, if as Mirowski (2014) suggests, the very essence of neoliberalism is its 'creative destruction' (see Schumpter, n1943/2010, pp. 93–98), teachers in general were left to contemplate just how innovative and/ or entrepreneurial they would need to be to work 'smarter' with less resources and increase 'effectiveness and efficiency' in the process, while continuing to endure the slings and arrows aimed in their direction

inspired by a Hayek doctrine that "the best people to clear up the crisis were the same bankers and financiers who created it in the first place, since they clearly embodied the best understanding of the shaper of the crisis" (Mirowski, 2014, p. 65). Now that the austerity ball was rolling, its momentum was hastened further by an additional raft of policy changes, many of which echo the neo-liberal sentiments expressed programmatically—reform, increased efficiency, focus on outcomes, and so forth.

NEOLIBERAL REFORM RHETORICS: POLICY PRESCRIPTIONS

Consistent with an ongoing policy of destabilisation, while seeking to 'stabilise' the fiscal landscape, there is often too an issue of timing—as Schmidt (2008, p. 307) indicates; "the element of timing is a factor in policy success" while also explaining why timing too applies to the introduction of a policy shift. Iconic in this regard has been the introduction of a national literacy and numeracy strategy (DES, 2011). In the wake of a decline in performance of Irish 15 year olds in the PISA tests (OECD, 2010), additional 'moral panic' ensued in an already insecure and generally fearful socio-economic context, thus strengthening the hand of national policy makers and politicians to be decisive. According to the 'establishment' there was widespread recognition that: "falling standards demanded immediate and decisive action by the Government" (DES, 2011, p. 8). In the UK context, more recently, this neoliberal tendency towards greater centralisation of power has been criticised since "a Secretary of State … is not even accountable to Parliament for many of the decisions made"; a criticism that is even more apposite in the Irish context (Pring & Roberts, 2016, p. 210). Here, it is the concerns of "business, industry and enterprise" that are referred to specifically in the policy document when it states that they "pointed to the increasing demands for high levels of literacy and numeracy in all sectors of employment. They emphasised the importance of raising standards to the levels achieved in the highest performing countries in order to continue to grow our indigenous knowledge economy and continue to attract high-value jobs through inward investment" (DES, 2011, p. 8).

Creating a policy in a hurry, since there is a 'crisis', requires schools too to act, thus planning, preparation, strategies have to be devised for all classrooms so that literacy and numeracy become integral to each and every lesson—requiring constant monitoring; a considerable demand in all schools regardless of literacy and numeracy levels, even if there is awareness too that in other jurisdictions where such policies have been pursued for considerably longer, as in England, there is scant evidence that PISA performance has improved (see Pring & Roberts, 2016). Nevertheless, in order for this to happen, the strategy recognises that leadership capacity is critical. It states:

> It is critically important that principals are engaged continually in leading, supporting and monitoring improvements in literacy and numeracy from

> junior infants to sixth class in primary schools and from first to sixth year in post-primary schools. (DES, 2011, p. 39).

This genuflection to the necessity for 'capacity building' however is quickly parked in the following:

> A detailed discussion of how school principals and deputy principals can best be enabled to develop the broad range of skills and abilities that they need to carry out their role as leaders of learning is beyond the scope of this strategy document. Instead, this chapter focuses on the supports and professional development opportunities that principals and deputy principals will need in order to lead improvement in literacy and numeracy in their schools. (p. 39)

While some professional support has been provided, the above is more a testimony to austerity and the general neo-liberal requirement to do more with less, depleting capacity rather than building and sustaining it.

But policies, like sorrows, increasingly "come not single spies But in battalions", an approach entirely consistent with ongoing 'destablisation' if not quite 'creative destruction'. Thus, hot on the heels of this literacy strategy, further centralised prescription came in a form remarkably similar to policies adopted elsewhere-in this instance-School Self Evaluation (DES, 2012a, 2012b). In a climate and context where 'evidence-based practice' has become a policy mantra, it is instructive to note that the brief bibliography in this policy statement containing 8 references, three refer to documentation compiled either by the DES or its inspectorate, two by the National Council for Curriculum and Assessment (NCCA), while of the remaining 3 references, two of the three have publication dates in the early 1990s (1992, 1994); hardly the most recent evidence to inform policy-making. There follows immediately a list of 'useful reports'—and out of 14 entries 12 refer to inspectors' reports, another by the DES, with one published by the Educational Research Centre (ERC) (Shiel, Perkins, Close, & Oldham, 2007). Such evidentiary warrants are rather reminiscent of de Valera's (former revolutionary, Minister for Education, Taoiseach- Prime Minister—and President) approach to policy making—he reputedly stated when "I wish to know what the Irish people want, I look into my own heart"—centralised 'paternalism' consistent with policy elites prescribing for others (Standing, 2011/2014). Nevertheless, the policy document claims that:

> These Guidelines bring best national and international practice into Irish schools. Experience and research in Ireland and in many countries show us that some of the most beneficial changes in schools occur when the principal and teachers collaborate in a focussed way to improve how they teach and assess students' learning. (DES, 2012, foreword)

While in general terms it is difficult to find exhortations to professional collaboration objectionable, as an antidote to 'individualism' and 'privatism' (Lortie, 1975), there is little recognition nevertheless of the demands such imposed

responsibilities place on teachers. Existing timetabling arrangements in Irish schools do not lend themselves to creating spaces and opportunities for teachers to engage in collaborative planning, and this is particularly the case since, as indicated above, in many schools, middle and senior management positions have been frozen and hollowed out (Hargreaves, Boyle, & Harris, 2014). And, while the rhetoric of such policy prescriptions hails such initiatives as important professional opportunities that "empowers schools to tell their own story", the predominant story reported to me in my teaching by both primary and post-primary teachers is that the notion that their autonomy "enables schools to affirm and celebrate what they are doing well" rings entirely hollow. This is the case, since these teachers' experience is that their SSE evaluations can be ignored or set aside if members of the inspectorate insist on other priorities. What these teachers report is that no matter how 'good the story' their SSE presents, it never seems to be good enough, thus there is perpetual demand for more—regardless of resources, capacity or existing effort being expended. In many instances, therefore, SSE, far from being affirming, and reassuring, tends towards generating further anxiety, insecurity – where the panoptic gaze of the accountability police creates a less than optimum working environment for either students or teachers. But this is entirely consistent with tenets of neo-liberalism. However, rather than my reporting their experiences of working in such a policy climate, it is important to hear the voices of teachers.

Policy Prescriptions: 'Stories from the Field'

During the past semester, I've had the pleasure of teaching and learning with approximately 30 primary and post-primary teachers currently employed in a wide variety of schools—from private to deprived contexts—while they complete a Masters programme in school leadership. Fifteen of these students responded to my request to provide a 'critical incident' in the form of a recent policy initiative, how it had impacted on them, and whether or not their experience of dealing with it was professionally rewarding and life enhancing or bureaucratic and further evidence of performativity. Although my respondents were invited to choose any policy initiative they wished, without exception, there was mention of Literacy and Numeracy or the latest language initiative (see DES, Circular 61/2015), Whole School Evaluation (WSE), its more recent metamorphosis into MLL (Management, Leadership and Learning) and its now closely associated policy of SSE, also devised by the inspectorate. Space does not permit a detailed analysis of all vignettes. Rather, I've opted to focus on the most optimistic 'story' provided.

'Light Years Ahead': Counting the Cost?

There is a combination of exhilaration, vindication, relief and considerable satisfaction shared by this teacher and her colleagues in the wake of their recent WSE report when "all inspectors commented that our school 'is light years' ahead of

the majority of others". Nevertheless, in that moment of temporary triumph, the very next sentence indicates just how much time, effort and energy has been invested, while it may be suggested too that there is now the additional pressure of retaining the stellar accolade of leaving the competition in their wake. She states:

> That said, you can imagine the amount of work that is gone into it. We have successfully implemented both literacy and numeracy strategies and are now on our third subject of science. Currently, there are 3 committees formed in the school since the arrival of this initiative. Each committee meets very regularly, reports their actions at staff meetings etc. … There have been surveys of staff, students and parents. Action plans have been implemented into every classroom and assessments are carried out 3 times a year to monitor the progress of children / effectiveness of the plan. As a result, there are several 'extra' lessons to be taught.

Given the Herculean effort and 'success' of this school community, she is torn while seeking to provide a balanced scorecard regarding the benefits of SSE. This tension is expressed thus, for every 'benefit', there is a 'but':

> There are several benefits attached to these ['extra' lessons] and I do believe it is beneficial to focus on a particular area but it is very difficult to fit everything in. For the amount that has to be done, to do it effectively, the time is simply not there. The curriculum is severely overloaded.

The 'benefit-but' score card is fleshed out further in the following:

> The SSE initiative is an additional imposition foisted on us by external forces but within that does lie professional opportunity. As a staff, I feel we rose to the occasion and implemented it very well. … However, one has to ask, is this to the detriment of something else. Personally, I rarely do a poem with my class – even though this is a huge area of English – but I simply do not have the time. As a class teacher, things like that sometimes worry me e.g. I'm not doing enough / I should do this instead of that etc.

This conscientious, committed teacher, has struggled to construct the scorecard indicated above, finding it "quite challenging", yet her final assessment strongly asserts that the effort expended by her and her colleagues is not sustainable, and though a narrow focus brings 'results', the reductionism inflicted on important aspects of the curriculum, immediately and longer term lead to impoverishment—of staff, students, and ultimately—citizenry. She states: "The pros of SSE do outweigh the cons but on occasion, it can seem like external forces have a completely distorted concept of reality and the teaching time that primary school teachers have." Acquiescence when faced with external prescriptions requires a degree of compliance on the part of teachers, while the price of that conformity as evidenced here is less or no time for poetry, while all aspects of the curriculum that are not tested and measured with the rigour and attention of Literacy and Numeracy (Music,

Physical Education, SPHE etc.) are vulnerable to competing time constraints, inimical to teacher morale, as well as the aims of education. Such 'tales from the field' in the UK context have led Pring and Roberts (2016, p. 212) to advocate the need to "trust the teachers more", while recognising that accountability measures that appear to be "punitive" rather than "supportive" have actually "created a climate of fear" where "teaching to the test and failure to do justice to the wider range of educational aims and achievements" are all the more likely.

There is Another Way: Intellectual Dissent, Transformative Resistance, Curriculum Sub-Version

The hidden injuries of austerity are many and varied as they get under the skin of teachers and learners where they sap vital energy, commitment, motivation and morale.; even on a good day, there are feelings of guilt, things left unaccomplished, too much to do—unsustainable, impossible. Noticeably absent from this daily grind in teachers' observations is an overt criticism of the underlying ideology that has inspired the policies that yoke them to externally prescribed agendas. Professional leadership, from teacher unions and others requires a new kind of 'activism' (Sachs, 2004) that embraces a sense of 'public intellectual'—this has to be a mid-to-long terms strategy, whereby the profession as a whole stands up for the values once taken for granted—education as a 'public good', high quality and accessible. While critical of particular policies, as indicated above, absent is a more strongly foundational intellectual critique: "of a merciless economic system that feeds the … speculative financial markets with the human flesh of daily suffering" (Castells, 2012/2015, p. 315). Such 'professionally responsible' (Sugrue & Solbrekke, 2011) transformative and resistant activism and intellectual leadership is required at all levels of the profession that is unrelenting in exposing the destructive force that is neoliberalism, while being more selective in how individual policies are resisted and transformed. Of course, teachers cannot do this 'transformative resistance' alone—allies are needed to give the lie to the consequences of competitiveness and the illusion of choice, reliance on market

The more immediate and potentially transformative resistance is under their noses in schools—namely the curriculum. Rather than being overloaded and overwhelmed by policies prescribed externally, the profession as a whole needs to make a collective commitment to use all of the hours recognised as being necessary and appropriate for Art, Music, Physical Education, SPHE, thus using every available opportunity to engage learners in an ongoing discourse about what counts as a 'good education', the kind of society they would like to create for themselves- a sense of empathy and solidarity rather than an avaricious competitiveness of 'winner takes all'. Or as Castells' indicates, school communities have the potential to "raise the possibility of re-learning how to live together" by practising "trust as a foundation for human interactions" (Castells, 2012/2015, p. 316).

Another tool at their disposal is one of ethical redress. Currently, students are being regularly subjected to national testing without parental consent; this should not go unchallenged, and it is in relation to such matters that teachers need to join forces with parents and public. Such sites of struggle are where coalitions of interest can be formed while (re-)building trust between profession and public.

None of these possible initiatives individually or collectively are a panacea—far from it. However, they do provide platforms for building like-minded coalitions. In the longer pendulum swings of reform efforts, the chameleon of neoliberalism has assumed many shapes and forms. Collective agency generates momentum, and while not being naïve regarding the power of capital and unelected elites and their influence on the policy making process, current globalised, technologically facilitated forms of speculation bring their own particular challenges, not to be underestimated. Nevertheless, history also teaches that revolutions happen—teachers have the intellectual potential and numerical capability to foment a better future for all. There is an individual and collective onus to begin to create alternatives to current hegemonic influences now before morale, moral compass and a sense of professionalism is eroded further. Redemption is unlikely to arrive as the good fairy or the ghost of Christmas past. Rather, the intellectual, educational, ethical and curricular challenge needs to be grasped in and through professionally responsible educators-that future is now.

NOTES

[1] Hayek and his seminal contribution is regarded by many as one of the major 20th century proponents of a neo-liberal ideology—the same ideology that turned many Irish citizens into economic migrants or impoverished citizens.

[2] This remark was made by Brian Lenihan, then minister for finance (since deceased) while on a current affairs programme on national television when being interviewed by Miriam O' Callaghan regarding the 'banking crisis'—Prime Time: https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=YK7w6fXoYxo

[3] The 'precariat' combines the words 'precarious' with 'proletariat' and is defined by Standing (2014, pp. 10–22) as *"a class-in-the-making, if not yet a class-for-itself",* an increasingly widening social grouping, a greater proportions of the population have 'zero hour' contracts, are deemed to be self-employed or struggle to find any meaningful work for which they can be adequately remunerated.

[4] The universal social charge (USC) is a tax payable on gross income and before pension deductions are made. The standard rate of 2% was on the first €10,036, 4% on the next €5,900 with the balance being paid at 7%. For many teachers, as indicated above, this meant another 7% reduction on their take home pay.

[5] Prior to the introduction of these reductions in 2011, starting on the 3rd point of the incremental scale, an NQT would earn €33,041, while normally also there would be additional allowances for a degree as well as a teaching qualification. An honours degree allowance was €4,918 while an honours (postgraduate) teaching qualification attracted an allowance of €1,236. Those appointed on or after January 1st 2011, were offered a starting salary of €28,092 without any additional qualification allowances. In effect therefore a typical NQT's starting salary prior to 2011 would have been €39,195, almost 30% better than what new entrants to the profession were being offered. (For further details see: http://www.asti.ie/pay-and-conditions/pay/salary-scales/salary-scale-for-teachers--after-january-2011/).

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13. THE LIMITS OF NEOLIBERAL EDUCATION

Refraction, Reinterpretation and Reimagination

PREAMBLE

There has been widespread debate about the effects and impacts of globalisation and the predominant waves of reform that have arisen as a result. Many educational theorists have argued that there is strong empirical evidence indicating that educational reform initiatives resemble similar 'world movements' (see for example, Meyer et al., 1997; Meyer, 2000), which have their origins in international financial institutions and serve to change the global rhetoric and discourse about education. The convergence of such global rhetoric has been particularly discernible following the financial crisis of 2007 with the emergence of austerity discourse(s) and its translation into clear, market driven policies. Nonetheless, whilst these seemingly unstoppable world movements reflect a significant degree of convergence at the supra level of global policy, they clearly play out differently across national and local contexts and through individual responses. Indeed, comparator data has revealed such widespread national variations (Green, 2016), with other studies also highlighting significant divergence in responses at the level of practice across different European contexts (see Goodson & Lindblad, 2010). However, the reasons underpinning variations at the national and local level, and especially at the level of practice, remain woefully under-researched and under-theorised. This is crucial to further our understanding of the operation and outcomes arising from neoliberal reforms. Of particular interest are the 'unintended consequences', as there are few insights into how these variations arise, or the variables and factors that influence such refractions. It is quite plausible that reforms intended to achieve a particular aim, in reality, may operate to fulfil an entirely different objective. Analysis of such 'phenomena' may help us understand areas where and how attempts to introduce reforms may be stifled or rejected. Similarly, they can also provide insights into models of resistance and reinterpretation, which in turn, help us to reimagine future possibilities. Moreover, it is amongst these variations and contradictions embedded in structural and personal refractions, where we believe the seedbed for a range of alternatives and reinterpretations exist.

Our recent work has sought to study and conceptualise the process of variation, which we have termed 'refraction', by focussing on work across Europe, South America, the USA and Canada, and evidenced at national, provincial, local and

T. Rudd & I. F. Goodson (Eds.), Negotiating Neoliberalism, 183–200.

classroom levels (see Goodson & Lindblad, *op. cit.*; Goodson, 2014). Here we suggest that the concept of refraction (Goodson & Rudd, 2016, 2014; Rudd & Goodson, 2016), may be used as both a methodological and conceptual tool for exploration and research, helping us to better understand how and why dominant (and global) waves of reform are mediated, and can result in a range of varied responses. We highlight why now, more than ever, it is vital to explore these refractions and reinterpretations and to consider alternatives that might replace a historically precarious neoliberal model.

REFRACTION AS A TOOL TO ORIENTATE EXPLORATION

The concept of 'refraction' is conceived of as a conceptual tool intended to support complex and rich methodological and theoretical explorations of educational discourse, systems, policies and practice. Whilst each case will be unique, there are four key interrelated and constituent elements to refraction that orientate investigations and require a little more consideration here. These are: analysis of the current 'waves' of reform and the predominant ideology and power; a simultaneous emphasis on both structure and agency (vertical axis) and their interrelationships; a focus on individual and professional narratives; and consideration of historical periodisation (horizontal axis).

Analysis of the Current Waves of Reform, Ideology and Power

Social scientific research must explore the socially constructed nature of action including the effects of power, ideology and discourse and the influence these have on policies, debate and day to day practice. This collection clearly highlights the dominant ideology and power at work, and its far reaching influences in this current historical period. The predominant discourse forcibly promotes 'austerity' policies aimed at promoting a new form of neo liberalism, supporting sizable reductions and redistributions of central Government spending in the public sector and promoting private involvement. It is also clear that recent policies and shifts have fundamentally changed the educational landscape and have reformulated education around principles quite distinct from those underpinning the earlier development of comprehensive state education for all.

Simultaneous Emphasis on Structure and Agency (Vertical Axis)

In identifying ideology and power and the influence it may have, we are not putting forward a structural determinist argument. Rather we acknowledge that supra level global trends are interpreted differently, resulting in varied national policies, and similarly, that national policies are open to reinterpretation at the institutional and individual levels. This 'refraction' results in global trends being mediated by wider national histories, traditions and dominant ideologies and politics, and national

policies being translated through institutional cultures and practice and individual and group beliefs, values and trajectories. In short, a dual focus on both structure and agency and their interrelationships are central to explorations and address a key dialectical challenge for the social sciences (Berger & Luckmann, 1966). The individual agency that can be exerted leaves room for mediation, contestation and reinterpretation through a range of actions and strategies. The resulting translation occurs in range of different ways and for various reasons and the outcomes are the result of the rich complexity of interactions between ideology, structures and institutional responses and individual agency. This is a crucial focus for investigation and analysis, not least because the individual and collective responses also provide examples of alternative possibilities and potential routes to resistance.

In a sense, we suggest that structure and agency are both competing and complementary forces, with power, structure, and fields (Bourdieu, 1984) having significant generating and regulating effects on action. Ultimately, we argue that conceptual and theoretical tools, such as refraction, may direct empirical investigation at the macro, meso and micro levels simultaneously, thus supporting richer and contextualised understandings of practice.

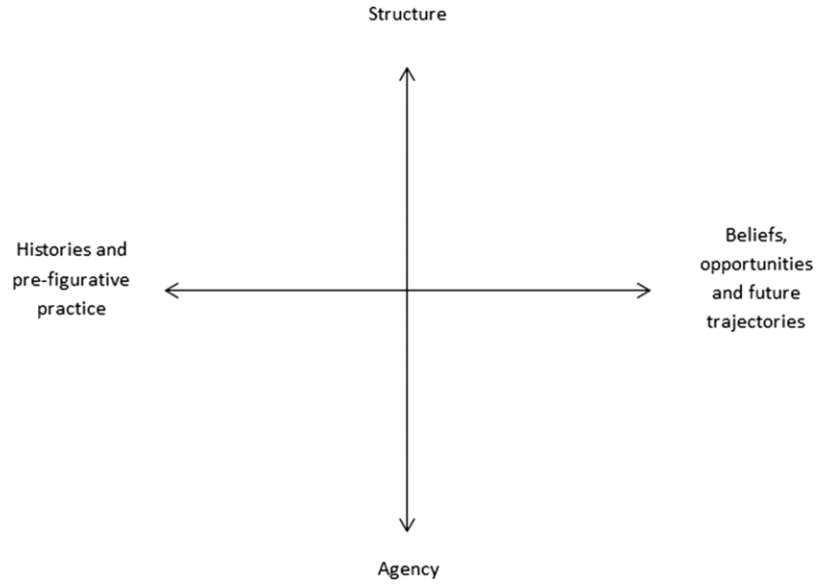

Figure 1. Interrelationships: Structure and agency and histories and trajectories

The opportunity for reinterpretation of policies emanating from structure and discourse is also dependent on prior experience, pre-figurative practice and beliefs, and subjective expectations of objective possibilities (Bourdieu, 1977, 1990). New and alternative courses of action will also be dependent on the level of possession

of various individual and collective capitals that have value in any given context, or field. This dynamic interplay between structure and agency, capitals and context, gives rise to the dynamism inherent within social practices. This is particularly pertinent in relation to educational practice and research, with its complexity and rich diversity. Educational research that fails to account for such complexity may remain limited in scope and will be likely to produce truncated findings. However, there appears to be a worrying trend toward such decontextualized work in the current climate.

The Crisis of Positionality and the Neo Liberal Academic

As has been argued elsewhere (see Goodson, 1999), education has been repositioned and re-stratified through a global work discourse and order, resulting in research on education itself being repositioned. This repositioning can be so significant that the relevance and effect of research (individual or within the field as a whole) may change substantially, or even become inverted, with the roles of educational professionals reconceptualised in relation to how it may support current economic developments (Hursh, 2000, 2000a). The resultant *crisis of positionality* (Goodson & Lindblad *op. cit*.) occurs because of the reconstitution and repositioning of the social relations of production. This is clearly of great importance for educational researchers, as public intellectuals, and is perhaps more important now than ever as funding through research councils and other bodies has decreased following the financial crisis. Moreover, new criteria for awarding funding have been developed which orientate educational research toward evaluations of 'what works' in response to an externally imposed set of 'impact' measures embedded within the existing system, rather than that which may highlight the weaknesses, flaws and internal contradictions within it. Ultimately, this shift in research emphasis is limiting critical empirical evidence and critical voices from the educational research landscape in favour of evaluations and big data that are being increasingly designed, analysed and utilised to support and justify the neoliberal world view (Torrance, 2015; Lipman, 2013).

The attack on educational research, other than that which has an impact on the existing model of education, was highlighted recently in a speech given by Nick Gibb, the current Minister for School Standards, on *The importance of education research.* In the transcript of his speech, delivered at the *ResearchEd* annual conference, he highlights that too often "*research fails to impact on the classroom…*", and further contends that many research papers are written in 'indecipherable language' making the job of translating the research into impact far too difficult. This is clearly a limited and subjective view of both what research is and its purpose but it does denote the current ideological and political position and the likely trajectory of change in the field. He goes further, citing others who suggests University lecturers justify their existence "with all that pointless theory", before misapplying a partial quotation from John Maynard Keynes from *The general theory of employment, interests and money*.

> Practical men, who believe themselves to be quite exempt from any intellectual influences, are usually slaves of some defunct economist.

This is presented with no indication of irony or misdirection, and fails to include or acknowledge the points embedded in the subsequent lines of Keynes text:

> *Practical men, who believe themselves to be quite exempt from any intellectual influence, are usually the slaves of some defunct economist.* Madmen in authority, who hear voices in the air, are distilling their frenzy from some academic scribbler of a few years back. I am sure that the power of vested interests is vastly exaggerated compared with the gradual encroachment of ideas. Not, indeed, immediately, but after a certain interval; for in the field of economic and political philosophy there are not many who are influenced by new theories after they are twenty-five or thirty years of age, so that the ideas which civil servants and politicians and even agitators apply to current events are not likely to be the newest. But, soon or late, it is ideas, not vested interests, which are dangerous for good or evil. (Keynes, 1936, pp. 383–384)

As this logic becomes embedded within, and supported by, Higher Education institutions through subsequent strategies, programmes and new practices, we will likely witness a growth of the *neoliberal academic* and a *new managerialist class* charged with servicing the new conditions. As, Lynch (2014) argues, new managerialism represents the organisational arm of neoliberalism. It ensures the realisation of the neoliberal project through institutionalisation of market principles and through its organizational governance. This results in the prioritising of private sector values relating to efficiency and productivity, thereby '*giving primacy to product and output over process and input'* (*ibid*., p. 1). The recent and rapid repositioning has certainly led to greater emphasis on entrepreneurial values and a reinterpretation of academic labour value against particular types of 'impact' measures, with the imposition of concomitant 'quantified control' metrics imposed to both mimic and induce markets (Burrows, 2012). In many cases, this new landscape and logic appears to have been met by largely uncritical acceptance, representing an 'implementationist myopia' and the de-historicisation of tradition and professionality in favour of technicist forms of market driven delivery and related institutional change patterns.

It is not just the conflict between neoliberalism and the related belief in privatising education and making it a profit making concern cast against that of state provision and state directed and funded education. Underpinning this dichotomous relationships in their purest forms are also the polarised principles on which they are based. A public education system is based on a form of solidarity and collectivism, in that it is funded by the tax payer with the belief that education will be available and accessible to all, serving a broad set of interests and purposes. This is clearly counter, and a threat to, the neoliberal system of individualism and competition. Furthermore, forms of collectivism and solidarity tend to empower people and thus make them

less passive, thereby making it difficult for vested interests, whose power depends on the obedience of individuals, to exert control. However, as the new logic is applied and becomes embedded within the consciousness of politicians, students, parents and educators themselves, it can become normalised and perceived to be the only viable possibility. We are arguably seeing a contradiction and battle between the realities of neoliberal, martketised education that relies on private involvement, competition, league tables and externally imposed and decontextualised measures of market quality, and other wider discourses of educational equality, empowerment and fairness. However, the latter discourse is being subsumed and incorporated into the discourse of the former to such an extent it has resulted in a form of Orwellian (1949) "doublethink" and "doublespeak". This is where mutually contradictory positions are held, or presented simultaneously, resulting in a form of ideological indoctrination, repositioning and de-historicisation. Yet, such contradictions are essential for the construction of 'crises' that lead to strategies for dispossession (Harvey, 2014).

Whilst the above dichotomous educational positions are clearly somewhat oversimplified, they do juxtapose polarised worldviews. In reality, institutional, collective and individual responses to the changing conditions will vary significantly, ranging from compliant integration, contestation and resistance, through to decoupling (Goodson & Lindblad., *op. cit*.), and it is vitally important to capture and highlight this complexity. Methodologically, empirically and conceptually there is a need to focus on both the *moments of refraction* (the historical conditions and changes that present new opportunities for action) and the *episodes of refraction* (the thick descriptions and narrative portrayals of individual counter actions and their origins). Moreover, in (Higher) education, as in other areas where there have been attacks on professional groups, general de-investment and imposed de-professionalisation, we also need to draw from these portrayals to give examples of alternative practice and consider how public intellectual life might be repositioned and rejuvenated. A key to understanding any human action is through 'practice', yet practice should not be considered free from both its individual and structural generative conditions. In other words, practice should not be considered free from human agency and the experiences, pre-figurative practices and beliefs that may contribute to reinterpretation, redefinition and refraction. It is also vital to identify any 'misrecognition' in social practice arising through misattribution of wider generative structures and a failure to recognise the social differentiation these maintain and reproduce (Bourdieu, 2000).

Life Histories and Professional Narratives

In order to thoroughly explore relationships between structure and agency we must examine individual practice and action and explore the motivations and perceptions behind them. In education, this requires us to explore professional narratives and action that leads to the reproduction, re-contextualisation, de-contextualisation or refraction of policies. Narrative analyses of instances of professional practice and 'episodes of

refraction' provide rich insights into the ways in which actors make meaning of their own lives. These rich accounts of subjective realities, will often include detailed examples of varied practices and the generative factors behind them, providing us with 'tales' of orthodoxy and transgression, of innovation and conformity, and of compliance and resistance. In considering these in their wider socio-historical context and in relation to dominant waves of reform, they provide accounts of the ways and extent to which ideology and power may reshape the educational landscape and influence and configure everyday practice.

If educational institutions, as Bourdieu (1977, 1977a) suggests, are sites of social and cultural reproduction, we cannot overlook the effects that power, ideology and related policy making has on the practices within such sites. We must also examine the orthodoxy, 'rules' and 'logic' (Bourdieu, 1993) that may be inferred or transmitted, and the effects these have on subsequent perceptions and practice. This is fundamental to holistic explorations and enables clearer understanding of agency and the ways in which actors may, or indeed may not, actively respond to, or accept, symbolic power being exerted in the field (Bourdieu, 1999).

Historical Periodisation

To obtain a fuller picture of the origins of action and drivers underpinning the formulation of policies, we contend that there is a need to situate research and analysis of social change and practice within their wider socio-historical contexts. This 'historical periodisation' is essential in locating broader movements, cycles and waves of reform, and also in understanding practice and the extent to which it action and practice may mirror or refract dominant waves. Historical periodisation requires analysis of socio-historical trends, which can vary significantly and are refracted in different continents, countries and cultures. For example, the Professional Knowledge Project (see: Goodson & Lindblad *op. cit*.) studied professional life and work in seven European countries and identified distinct variations in historical periods in each. Whilst there was a general trend for more neo-liberal informed restructuring, this was mediated by nation specific foundations and trajectories. At the national level, responses also varied from fairly compliant integration, which was most evident in England, to those characterised by contestation and resistance, most evident in the Southern European countries, through to 'decoupling' responses, interestingly evident in the more 'successful' educational systems of Finland, and to a lesser degree, Sweden. This demonstrates how national systems, structures and histories can lead to political refraction of various guises in response to wider globalising forces and movements. Following national responses to restructuring, it was then possible to identify empirically work-life narratives arising in relation to the new conditions and emerging orthodoxies. When juxtaposing systemic narratives and work life narratives, it must be considered that there are numerous *points of refraction* through which restructuring policies must pass, from national and regional systems, interest groups, boards and committees, through to individual institutions,

each having an 'interpreter effect'[1] (Gazzaniga, 2005), and mediating intended outcomes and practice. Whilst responses may range from faithful compliance and truthful translation through complete rejection and resistance, in many cases the most illuminating insights arise when exploring and trying to understand the motivations behind practice that appears at odds with predominant waves of reform.

Again, this highlights the value of locating investigations in relation to broader socio-historical analysis, as not only can it help identify how historical developments influence, and are influenced by, national systems, cultures and existing professional practices, but it also gives us clues as to how policies might be received by different groups, institutions, individuals and organisations.

In the specific case of the UK, the key historical periods and restructuring reform narratives[2] since the second world war might broadly be described as the: *progressive narrative on welfare state expansion* (1945–1979); *the marketisation narrative* (1979–1997); *the third way narrative* (1997–2007); *and the reconstituted neoliberalism and austerity narrative*[3] (2007–?). These somewhat crude and limited descriptions, at least promote debate and discussion as to whether, or to what extent, each of these periods reflects a wave or cycle of reform, what type of cycle it might correspond with, or whether some of the periods outlined are merely surface re-presentations of their predecessor. Moreover, they also provide a starting point for empirical explorations and a set of reference points against which to situate any policy changes, discourse and practice.

Figure 2 (below) is an attempt to represent the 'axes of refraction' in relation to UK waves of reform. The potential for (vertical) refraction occurs at any point in the interactions between structure and agency at the supra, macro, meso and micro and individual levels and may result in unintended consequences arising from reform.

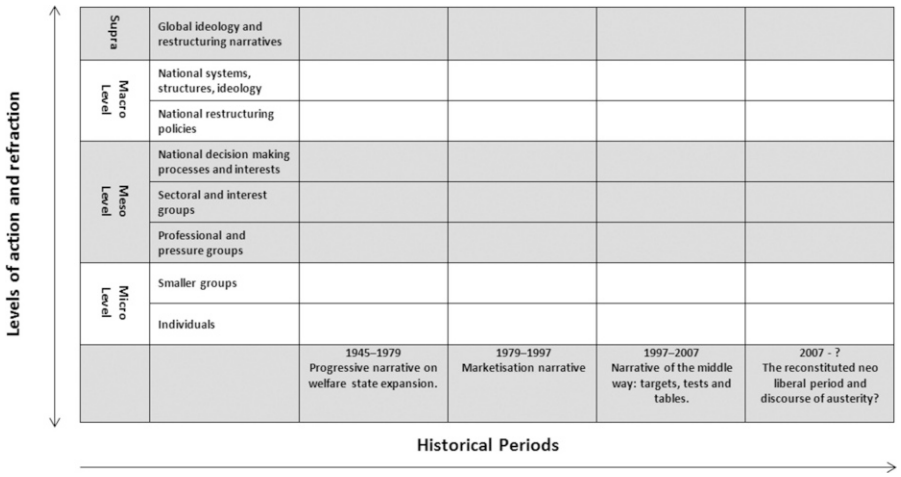

Figure 2. Axes of refraction: Horizontal and vertical refraction

The other site of refraction is the horizontal level of historical periodicity, whereby different 'windows of opportunity' for the delivery, operation, and also possible reinterpretation and rejection, of policies are presented.

Whilst exploring these factors simultaneously may present us with a detailed exploration of both the generative and regulative factors that underpin social practice, they are most profitably explored through 'thick' description and rich narrative portrayals that emphasise and illustrate key empirical focal points, or 'episodes of refraction' (represented by action that might be presented in any single 'cell' within the table).

In exploring education in relation to a historically situated 'longer view' we are far more likely to gain deeper and contextualised insights into the nature and trajectory of change. Sociologist, economists, historians and others have previously sought to conceptualise and locate policy development and changes against the backdrop of longer waves, or cycles, of reform (see for example, Tyack & Cuban, 1995; Tyack & Tobin, 1994; Fontvieille, 1990). Such historical analyses provide a better basis for understanding the past, current policy change and directions, and the factors, ideologies and pre-existing conditions and practices underpinning them. Furthermore, historical analyses may also enable us to postulate longer term outcomes and implications of policies and emergent practice, providing us with insights into both future possibilities and areas of potential contestation. Whilst theories regarding the nature and regularity of waves of reform vary significantly and give rise to much debate (McCulloch, 2011), they at least provide a socio-historical context on which to base discussions and theorisation. Yet, historical periodisation is given scant attention, with emphasis instead increasingly placed on unique, contemporary possibilities and processes. These tend to focus on bringing about change that reflects the prevailing ideology and related logic introduced through a narrowly defined system and tightly bounded institutional outcome measures, resulting in dehistoricised and decontextualized debates and policies. As Howard Zinn (2007) contends, the lack of a historical memory results in the facts of history often being distorted or ignored to support the discourse and interests of the powerful. Moreover, he felt the key to finding creative, alternative futures may well lie in the hidden histories of individual and collective resistance and compassion.

> If history is to be creative, to anticipate a possible future without denying the past, it should, I believe, emphasize new possibilities by disclosing those hidden episodes of the past when, even if in brief flashes, people showed their ability to resist, to join together, and occasionally to win. I am supposing, or perhaps only hoping, that our future may be found in the past's fugitive moments of compassion rather than in its solid centuries of warfare.

Whilst there is a rich history and numerous conceptual models that support analysis of historical epochs and cycles, there is no singular or definitive method or conceptual framework for doing so. Researchers and theorists have studied links between historical cycles of economic growth and educational expenditure (see

for example, Lowe & McCulloch, 1998; Carpentier, 2001) and have developed or applied particular models in doing so. The *Annaliste School* combined history and sociology in attempts to understand change, with perspectives on cycles, or waves of reform, argued to occur on three levels, over longer (based on structural factors and world views), medium (cycles of economic boom and bust) and shorter (discrete periods, politics and policies and individual action) terms. Whilst each may be viewed as competing models, they are often interwoven and interdependent, and indeed, complimentary approaches. Whilst there have been numerous refinements and reinterpretations of these 'waves' of reform, from our own conceptual standpoint, the development of refraction requires consideration of 'waves of reform' and action occurring at all three levels simultaneously.

Following the financial crisis policies do not yet appear to be diverging from the predominant form(s) of neoliberal capitalism. There is much debate as to whether this can be identified as distinct and long enough cycle to constitute being termed as a new wave of reform, or whether it is merely a continuation or refinement of its predecessor. Conversely, there are those who suggest that in the longer view, we may not be seeing a new wave of reform but are in fact are witnessing the end of the previous one. This raises questions as to whether, or at which point, neoliberalism might be replaced by a new wave of reform and what the signals may be that will indicate its demise. Arguably, there are already indications it has already overextended and overreached its limits, resulting in irreparable and irreversible damage to society, social systems, culture, democracy and the environment. Perhaps, it is around the areas where most damage has been done that new opportunities, directions, discourse and action will arise. In education, the need to manufacture 'crises' to justify and underpin neoliberal reforms is perhaps close to becoming self-defeating. Three decades of such reforms have not provided the solutions promised in the schools sector, yet we are now seeing similar developments implemented in Higher Education. The growth of monitoring and metrics, performance tables, monitoring agencies, managerialist policies, private involvement, and so forth, have seemingly failed to improve education, and moreover, consistently undermine teaching and learning processes and professionality. We must therefore ask whether dogged adherence to ideologically informed policies represents a new epoch for reform, or alternatively, whether we are witnessing desperate actions emanating in response to the terminal decline of the neoliberal period. The reality may be any shade of grey in between. However, we might again consider historical developments and the links between historical cycles of economic growth and educational expenditure to inform our views. Many economists have considered historical periods in order to analyse and predict 'business cycles', change and future trends. There are, of course, significant variations in how different models are used. For example, Schumpeter (2014; 2006 [1939]; 1954) drew on pre-existing models to present a composite waveform. Others have also suggested that longer Kondratiev wave models (between 45–60 [54][4] years), consist of three lower level 'Kuznets infrastructural investment waves' (15–25 [18] years). Arguably, each Kuznets wave itself is also made up

of two 'Juglar waves of fixed investment' (7–11 [9] years), and that each Juglar wave comprises of two 'Kitchin inventory cycles' (3–5 [4.5] years).[5] From such a perspective, some commentators suggest that economic 'crashes' and subsequent deep depressions will occur when the downward trajectories of each of the four cycles, or waves, correspond.

Table 1. Business cycles and waves of reform?

Name	*Period*	*Driver*
Kitchin	3–5 [4.5] years	Inventory
Juglar	7–11 [9] years	Fixed investment
Kuznets	15–25 [18] years	Infrastructure
Kondratiev	45–60 [54] years	Technology

THE DECLINE OF NEOLIBERALISM?

Given the above, we need to ask whether neoliberalism has passed its peak, triumphalist period and is now on the downside of the historical cycle. Whatever our views, we cannot deny we are in a specific historical moment, and if Schumpeter was correct, then capitalism should only be truly understood as an evolutionary process of innovation and 'creative destruction'. This process encapsulates both periods of economic growth and also contraction and instability, which will ultimately lead to its collapse as it becomes progressively weaker and self-defeating. This, in turn, will lead to a further stage of evolution, which Schumpeter suggested would result in a new form of socialist corporatism that seeks to reign in capitalisms excesses and inclinations toward damaging boom and bust. It has been argued that the financial crisis of 2007/8 was a coming together of each of the four cycles on a downward trajectory following developments arising after World War II. Others however (see for example, Quigley, 2012), suggest that we are currently entering a period of 'greater depression' (2013–2020), with others also suggesting that a full Kondratiev cycle did not begin until the 1960's, meaning we may not reach conclusion of its downward trajectory until the 2020's.

Other commentators suggest that rather than seeing the rise of a new 'reconstituted' period of harsher neo liberalism, we are in fact witnessing its end. To date, much of the mainstream literature relating to the economic crisis has focused on why it happened and how to return to stability and growth. However, there are those who have highlighted its inherent contradictions (Harvey, 2014), and questioned whether it can continue in its current form (Davies, 2014). The perception that there is no viable alternative prevails, yet there are those who suggest that this is not clearly supported by historical patterns (Wallerstein et al., 2013). Such commentators point to the collapse of prior epochs and modes of production that came to relatively abrupt and largely unforeseen ends. Moreover, it may be argued that various economic,

structural, cultural and environmental issues and related crises of over production, accumulated and hyper-consumption, may all play a role in any future epoch shift. Jacques (2016) also argues that the western economy has stagnated now for almost a decade, with no end in sight. Moreover, he argues that its decline should also be seen in its wider socio-historical context, highlighting that the declines in the real income of the bottom 10% in the US has been falling since the 1970's. The bottom 90% of incomes have also been stagnating, whilst the incomes of those in the top percentiles have been growing disproportionately. A similar picture can be found in the UK and elsewhere, with this division becoming more marked since the financial crisis, resulting in greater inequality in the absence of countervailing pressures, as Piketty (2014) suggests. As returns on capital are also in decline, it is perhaps unsurprising that there are moves to reduce both labour costs and services in order to maintain profits, and also to encroach into areas of welfare state provision that may provide capital with new revenue sources. However, it is argued that this unfettered 'winner takes all' ideology is ultimately unsustainable, and that we are already beginning to see resistance to it, albeit to date, often through somewhat misplaced 'populist' policies and movements. Considered in this way, arguments suggesting we are witnessing the end of neoliberalism may not seem as far-fetched as first it may seem, given it has never brought strong economic growth and outcomes for the majority and is now seemingly in a long period of stagnation and fragility, as uncertainty and fears of another financial crisis abound. As Jacques further contends, the majority are now facing visions of a future where their children will be worse off than they were and dissatisfaction, discontent, anger and unrest appear to be on the rise. To date, this unrest has been widespread but has tended to relate to disparate and atomised issues and groups, with little clear indication as to how, or if, such disparate groups might join forces to conspire through collective action to bring about change.

In the UK, and elsewhere, there are few signs that neoliberalism might be displaced through party political resistance and alternatives. Numerous commentators have questioned the feasibility, role and position(s) of left wing politics in the current context, with some suggesting the left too, is in crisis. For example, Harris (2016) argues that the left is in crisis all across Europe, highlighting significant recent declines in political support in Germany, France, Spain, Greece and Scandinavia, with a seemingly inverse rise in right wing populism feeding off a climate of uncertainty, dissatisfaction and fear related to immigration and strains placed upon welfare states and other resources. Whilst the left has been reinvented in those countries most harshly affected by the Eurozone crisis, with more radical responses potentially offering alternative to neoliberalism, ultimately these have not translated into lasting and connected European wide movements. He further argues that in the UK the reformulated Labour Party is still failing to make notable in-roads because the ideals on which the left traditionally built its strength have either shrunk or disappeared completely. Ideals such as equality, solidarity, protected public services, along with previously sacred notions of collectivism, collective worker rights and power, and compassion for 'outsiders', appear relics, ruptured and severed from the mainstream

political and public discourse in the 21st Century. This raises profound doubts about the left's ability to return to power with a truly alternative mandate. Indeed, many of the voices of resistance amongst left leaning interest and pressure groups, including those focussing on education, largely tend to suggest that neoliberalism can only be replaced with some form of return to 'old left' politics and values which, it might be argued, has little impact on wider political discourse and the perceptions of the majority of voters. Yet, this does not mean any coherent and viable alternative won't appear in time but it may be more likely to arise as a result of the failure of neoliberalism rather than a change of party political consensus on viable alternatives.

So, how might we identify viable alternatives? Where might these arise, and what might educators and researchers do to retain their professional integrity and identities? First of all, perhaps we need to ask whether reforms make sense. We must make this argument and highlight the flaws and contradictions in relation to both current economics, and in terms of other more important aspects of human and social life beyond systemic and institutional economic competitiveness and individual wealth. This will likely require strategic and coordinated analysis of each area of weakness and internal contradiction in order to present the need for change and to take action to make it happen. If such arguments are to have sufficient impact, then it will require a joining of forces between disparate groups suffering from the consequences of neoliberal reforms. There are those who also believe that radical reform cannot happen through the existing 'democratic' systems as they serve to maintain the status quo, and therefore they contend that change can only arise following direct activism, including that which is beyond the boundaries of legality. However, a significant number of those opposing neo liberal reforms may feel powerless or unable to resist reforms, let alone become activists for change.

Furthermore, there are other commentators who suggest that resistance itself is a passive concept in that it ignores the terms of its own engagement in relation to the totalising effects of neoliberalism. From such a perspective, the propagation of the free market across the globe represents a new form of imperialism that now pervades all aspects of our society. This reifying power of late capitalism has become all-encompassing and colonising, meaning that attempts at resistance will become co-opted and ultimately futile (Jameson, 2000). Furthermore, they may even inadvertently lead to a reaffirmation of its viability in the absence of tangible alternatives. This clearly raises a key question about agency and how to engender and embody critique amongst oppressed groups. From such a standpoint the extent of social fragmentation and the atomisation of oppressed groups means that collective and meaningful resistance is doomed to failure unless the specific standpoint of various groups is acknowledged and accounted for, whilst what is common to each of these groups is foregrounded. This potentially may provide the basis for re-imagination and reinterpretation that may underpin new forms of solidarity and cooperation for undertaking active political work. Perhaps, as Bakunin argued, "*the precious seeds for the organisation of the future*", may already exist in existing social relations and practices occurring in opposition to the neoliberal logic.

Moreover, the potential of new horizontal networks and horizontal reimagining may serve to uncover that whilst there appears to be a neoliberal hegemony, it may actually prove to be far more fragile, unsupported and unsustainable than one might be led to believe.

The story of the neo-liberal project that has now been clarified and documented most notably by Mirowski is one of a 'long march' through the institutions of civil society (Mirowski, 2013). Each has been made to conform to the maxims of the 'market society' (Sandel, 2013) which is now close to all pervasive at the level of rhetorical exhortation a least.

We have pointed to the variations and contradictions at the institutional level which we argue still provide seedbeds for alternative thinking and structural modification. But there are other domains where the market mantras and worship of profit and money have not achieved saturation.

One clear area is in the domain of what we might think of as 'the meaning of life'. The purchase of a third superyacht would not replace issues of moral purpose and basic humanity for most people when considering the meaning of our short lives. Only the most brazenly greedy and unreflective would embrace that as constituting a meaningful life. So the question of 'the meaning of life' continues to elude the neo-liberal market society. It is the question that will not go away and, despite its pervasive take-over of our institutions the market society has often failed to win 'heart and minds'.

So our 'life politics' the way we pursue our life, our moral judgements, our human interactions, our ongoing social projects and our purposes remain a precious, indeed, sacred, site for re-interpretation. I found in one of my journals this unattributed quote from Paul Goodman:

> Suppose you had the revolution you are talking and dreaming about. Suppose your side had won and you had the kind of society you wanted. How would you live, you personally in that society? Start living that way now!

Of course in a market society such personal utopias may prove contested and precarious but the effort to live in a way that is respectful of our better instincts for humanity is itself a pre-figurative statement. To live in a way that is consistent with our beliefs and ideals is itself a victory and one that provides avenues of exploration of the 'meaning of life'. Moreover it provides models and modalities for other personal projects and collective actions.

Modelling can be a huge influence as the example of Muhammed Ali shows. Remember his often quoted statement – a statement right against the grain of the existing structure of American society:

> I am America. I am the part you won't recognise. But get used to me – black, confident, cocky; my name, not yours, my religion not yours; my goals, my own. Get used to me.

This was Ali's life politics, intensely contested and precarious. But look at his influence and read in the recent obituaries, the sheer scale of influence of his personal life politics.

The African American playwright August Wilson (1990) has talked about these kind of 'life politics' and especially the process of 'coming to know' they facilitate:

> We found ourselves in a world that did not recognise our language or our customs, did not recognise our gods, and ultimately did not recognise our humanity. Once you understand that you have an intrinsic sense of self-worth from the way your ideas of morality, your concept of justice and beauty, your eating habits, your idea of pleasure and pain all those things go into your mythology, your history. All of these things go into the makeup of a culture and I think that it is crucial that we as Black Americans keep this alive. Now what the society has told us that if you are willing to deny that, if you are willing to deny the fact that you're Africa, if you are willing to give up your culture and adopt the cultural values of the dominant society, which is European. Then you can participate better in American society, go to school and have decent jobs and have decent housing etc. That's at a tremendous cost, that's at the loss of self. I think that the vast majority of the 35 million Americans have rejected that social contact. They want their social contract that will allow them to participate in society as African people with their culture intact.

There is of course a tension at the heart of the argument for 'life politics' as a site of refraction. But as we know our institution are being saturated by market mantras and mentalities. It is hard to find our moral bearings within them – for finding a way through an institution where the management strata is being created and consolidated to facilitate neo-liberal dogma is difficult. It presents us with what we have called 'a crises of positionality' (Goodson, 2014).

This is why in spite of the dangers of individualism the site of personal life politics is so important. When our institutions are market-saturated we have to begin elsewhere. Paul Mason (2016: p. 36) has written cogently about the tensions at the heart of life politics. He says:

> It accepts, in a way our grandfathers would have found hypocritical and intolerable, the self as the centre of the world: it understands work on the self as a contribution to collectivity.

This new collectivity links with our notion of working horizontally not vertically. If the managerial elites are in place to instantiate market mentalities vertical hierarchical action is essentially redundant. Mason says:

> If we all have better, less angry, more educated selves, the society we build will cohere without any need for rigid hierarchies. And its concept of human liberation is based more on freedom than on economic well-being (ibid).

Horizontal refraction and personal refraction then provide the seed-beds for new virtues and visions. They are our 'resources for hope' in resisting the current march towards what Marquand calls 'a kind of seedy barbarism' (Marquand, 2015).

We need to begin a 'long march' in the opposite direction and strategies for refraction, reinterpretation and re-imagination are our starting point.

NOTES

[1] This interpreter effect is debated in the field of neuropsychology whereby the ('left hemisphere') interpreter attempts to generate and construct explanations by reconciling emerging information through reference to the past.

[2] The table presents an overview of key policy discourse in identifiable historical periods in the UK. The original Professional Knowledge research included responses only from English participants, on which this amended table is based.

[3] The term the 'reconstituted neoliberal period' did not arise from the Professional Knowledge project but is our more recent addition to the descriptions of the waves of reform and dominant restructuring narratives.

[4] The broader range in number of years is presented first. The figure in brackets is not a precise figure but is presented for illustrative purposes to demonstrate the possibility for composite and interlinked cycles.

[5] Many commentators suggest a Kitchin cycle lasts around 40 months but there is much debate as to the length of the cycle.

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