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Neoliberal education? Confronting the slouching beast

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Abstract
A major aim of this paper is to draw attention to the insidious manner in which the deficit discourse and practices associated with neoliberal reform are de- or re-professionalising educationists through an acculturation process. In the context of Ireland, as elsewhere, the author identifies how the three 'technologies' of Market, Management and Performance have inconspicuously but harmfully changed the subjective experience of education at all levels. It is argued that the power of privatisation in service delivery gives rise to change in education as part of a slow burn; how management is altering social connections and power relations to less democratic and caring forms, and how performativity and accountability agendas are radically undermining the professionalism of teachers in the hunt for measures, targets, benchmarks, tests, tables, audits to feed the system in the name of improvement. The paper adopts a personal tenor exhorting all educationists to become increasingly critically reflexive, politically aware and urging them to reawaken to their real educational work – the ethical and moral project that most signed up to but which has since become lost.

Keywords
Neoliberalism, market, management, performativity, politics of subjectivity, reflexivity

Introduction

There is a set of changes occurring in education policy across the globe – a process of education reform that is at work in countries in all continents, with very different cultural and political histories, with very few exceptions. I have identified these changes, this process of reform, in the title as neoliberalism, but I am aware that this is an over-used and a loosely-used word. As I proceed I shall endeavour to specify what I mean by it.

I will consider neoliberalism mainly with a lower-case *n* rather than a capital *N*. That is, rather than the economy and economic policy, I will discuss interpersonal relations, identity

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and subjectivity, how we value ourselves and value others, how we think about what we do, and why we do it.

That is, I want to address neoliberalism 'in here' – in the head, the heart and the soul – rather than 'out there' in politics and the economy, although many of the things I address are also part of the general reworking of the relationship of education, in fundamental and intimate ways, to the needs of the economy: that is, the economisation of education in a variety of forms.

I also need to make one other thing very clear. All of the things I am about to refer to are as much about me as about you. They are things that are part of my everyday practice, part of my transformation into a neoliberal subject, part of my own ambivalence and frustration and distress. All too often I find myself implicated in the processes of reform I describe. I could also say that I do not necessarily expect you to like what I have to say.

Neoliberalism in Ireland – to what degree?

While there are differences from place to place in the speed of neoliberal education reform, and in its intensity, there are few opportunities to opt out entirely. Nonetheless, I am very aware that I am speaking about Ireland here, and I need, therefore, to make it clear that I will be speaking about aspects of what is, what is happening now and what might be, things yet to come; and in both respects I will draw upon my experiences as a researcher and teacher of education policy analysis in England, the social laboratory of neoliberal education reforms; but not too much.

Kathleen Lynch and her colleagues wrote recently that,

> Ireland operates within the Anglo-American zone of influence for reasons of history, culture, language, colonization and trade. It is not surprising therefore that Ireland also displays many of the features of its powerful neo-liberal neighbours in terms of its social, health and education policies. (Lynch et al., 2012: 5)

They go on to say that, 'despite all the changes occurring through the endorsement of neo-liberal principles at management levels, evidence from schools suggest that not much may have changed at the classroom level' (Lynch et al., 2012: 15). However, they conclude by saying that 'While neo-liberal policies have been systematically challenged in primary and secondary education, due to the power of the teacher unions in particular, there have been profound changes in educational management and organization nonetheless' (Lynch et al., 2012: 22).

Despite the very appropriate equivocations here, *profound* is a significant word. I want to address that profoundness; that is what I'm interested in. But, perhaps now an attempt at a definition is in order. What I mean by neoliberalism is:

> A complex, often incoherent, unstable and even contradictory set of practices that are organized around a certain imagination of the 'market' as a basis for the universalization of social relations, with the corresponding incursion of such relations into almost every single aspect of our lives. (Shamir, 2008: 3)

And it is with these incursions that I will be particularly concerned. It is also important to underline the point that the processes of neoliberal reform are legitimated, disseminated, sometimes enforced and indeed sometimes 'sold', by a set of very powerful and very persuasive agents and organisations, including the Organisation for Economic

Cooperation and Development and World Bank, the World Trade Organisation, International Finance Corporation, European Union (EU) (e.g. EU benchmarks are subtle sets of key effective levels for change and standardization), and a plethora of market-leaning Think-Tanks (e.g. Freedom Institute – now defunct), consultancies and policy entrepreneurs.

Within the framework of common sense created by these agents of dissemination, neoliberal policy ideas also move between locations through what is often naively called 'policy borrowing'. Increasingly, governments want to 'learn' from 'what works' or what is claimed to work elsewhere: there are a number of recent examples of this in Ireland.

One powerful incentive for such borrowing is created by what Pat Thomson and her colleagues have called 'PISA envy' (Thomson et al., 2014: xiii). PISA performance is a powerful lever for change, and poor comparative performance creates a 'policy window' through which ideas, which previously seemed extreme or outlandish, can enter national policy discourses and attract attention and support. In turn these new policy ideas can legitimate new policy voices. I came across this example in a post on the Education Matters website (an education-related news platform in Ireland) on 14 December 2010.

> The disappointing results of the PISA study released on December 7 were like salt on the wounds of an already smarting nation.
> The research, which measures maths and literacy performance of students worldwide, found Ireland below the OECD average for maths and marginally above the OECD average for science and reading.
> Tony Donohoe, head of education policy at IBEC – [the] Irish Business and Employers Confederation – said: 'Employers have raised concerns about literacy . . . the fall in Ireland's ranking in this survey is particularly dramatic and is a wake-up call . . . The mathematical results are particularly disappointing because Ireland's aspiration to be a knowledge economy depends on a strong supply of engineers and technologists . . .

However, despite such borrowings and various forms of advocacy, I want to be clear that the changes in policy and the reforms to which I refer do not normally take place with grand flourishes or in single major *volte face* pieces of legislation. Neither do they totally displace existing policy commitments – schools and teachers are often left to resolve the resulting contradictions between the old and the new within their situated practice.

Rather, reform is made up of small, incremental moves and tactics, a ratchet of initiatives and programmes that introduce new possibilities and innovations into policy and practice which, once established, make further moves thinkable and doable, and ultimately make them obvious and indeed necessary. Things that at one time seemed unthinkable become over time the common sense and the obvious of policy, as 'what works' and as 'best practice'; they become embedded in a 'necessarian logic', most commonly in relation to the necessities of international economic competitiveness.

Therefore it is not when we look at individual moves or initiatives, at one point in time, that we see the more general significance of change. It is when we stand back and look at the combination and accumulation of the effects of many changes over a period of time that reform begins to look like transformation, that the policy present becomes a place that we no longer recognise. In thinking about Ireland now in these terms, I would suggest, the question is not whether the education system is neoliberal or not. The question is how neoliberal it is, and what lies in the future, what comes next in the processes of neoliberalisation.

Neoliberal technologies

Globally, the neoliberal reform process has three major, highly interrelated and interdependent components or technologies – multifaceted mechanisms of change that bear upon and reinvent public sector services. They are: Market, Management and Performance.

The market consists of arrangements of competition and choice, and various forms of privatisation which take two forms; what we can call endogenous and exogenous modes of privatisation. Both are embedded in what O'Sullivan (2005) calls the 'mercantile world view', and the two may happen simultaneously.

Endogenous privatization introduces the market relation into the public sector, through choice and competition, creating a direct relationship between consumer preferences and institutional well being. As Keith Joseph, Margaret Thatcher's supposed intellectual guru and Secretary of State for Education in the 1980s in England, stated it, this introduces the possibility of bankruptcy into education (Ball, 1990). The aim here is to make public service organizations more business-like and more like businesses.

Exogenous privatization, as is now underway on a large scale in England, brings new providers into education service delivery. In England the debate is now not who shall provide state schooling, but whether they should be able to profit directly from such provision. Indeed, there are already massive profits being made from indirect service provision, e.g. back-office services, CPD, consultancy, teacher supply, inspection, and policy programme management. In England, charities, philanthropic foundations, community groups, parent groups, social enterprises and, on a small scale, businesses are now running state schools.

The consequences of these forms of privatization are not merely structural and relational: they are also ethical and discursive. They work, together with other changes, to shift the meaning of education, from a public to a private good, from a service to a commodity.

These privatisations, large and small, together with the other policy technologies (management and performance) are also part of the neoliberal 'modernisation' of the state, a process of 'destatalisation' as Bob Jessop (2002: 93) calls it – the steady withdrawal of the state from direct service provision and the increasing use of contracting-out. The state becomes a contractor, funder, target-setter, benchmarker and monitor. The state becomes more technocratic and less democratic. I will return to the subject of contracts below.

Management, or leadership as it is now called in education, is a delivery system for change, a method for reculturing educational organisations, and is the fulcrum of changing relations between teachers and head teachers and thus teachers and the state, and citizens and the state. It is the view of Collins et al. (2007: 52) that 'it is possible that the [Department of Finance] SMI (Strategic Management Initiative) might enhance efficiencies, as defined by managerial criteria, while weakening democracy'. A new language is deployed to rewrite relationships.

> The Strategic Management Initiative deals with the modernisation of the civil service and affects all Departments and Offices. It aims to make improvements in such areas as customer support, computer-based service delivery and expenditure management. (Department of Finance, Ireland, 2011)

In addition, closely related to and centrally implicated in these processes of management is that what I term performativity, which I will explain more fully later. Again, the crucial

aspect of these technologies and the reform process generally is that these are not simply changes in the way we do things or get things done. They change what it means to be educated, what it means to teach and learn, what it means to be a teacher. They do not just change what we do; they also change who we are, how we think about what we do, how we relate to one another, how we decide what is important and what is acceptable, what is tolerable. As I have said already – these changes are both out there, in the system, the institution; and 'in here', in our heads and in our souls.

In other words, these policies of reform produce new kinds of policy subjects, and, to a great extent, they do not make us do things, they do not oppress or constrain us; they enable us to do things differently, they create new roles and opportunities, the possibility of excellence, of improvement, of choice, of autonomy, of innovation. They recruit us as enthusiasts, but if we hesitate or demur then they quickly position us as unprofessional or irrational or archaic. They rework the meaning of professionalism, making it into a different thing. Professionalism becomes defined in terms of skills and competences, which have the potential for being measured, and rewarded, rather than a form of reflection, a relationship between principles and judgment. The 'new' professional is flexible and adept in the languages of reform.

Further extracts from the IBEC response to Ireland's PISA ranking are perhaps appropriate,

> ...International research confirms that the quality of teachers is the single most important element in improving students' performance.
> A professional development framework for secondary teachers, adapting good practice from business and the best performing education systems, should be developed and implemented by The Teaching Council and the Department of Education and Skills. (Education Matters, 2010)

Finally, it is very important to emphasise that these technologies of reform typically do not confront us in the form of grand strategies but, rather, as mundane and practical changes in our everyday practices. They are embedded in new vocabularies of practice, new roles with new titles, and in grids, templates, mentoring relationships, annual reviews, evaluations and output indicators. It is these very practical and ordinary words and artefacts that present us with new ways of thinking about what we do, about our colleagues, and about ourselves. The grids and checklists and reviews also compare us, classify us and divide us; they value and reward and discipline and sanction.

Moreover, increasingly, to see the beginnings of change, the entry of the new, the tracks and markers of the lumbering beast, we have to look at the edges of the system, to new actors and new sites of articulation.

If we look across education policy in Ireland it seems to me that much of the language of neoliberal reform is already in place. This is not an unequivocal or uniform presence, and other discourses are also very much in evidence. But, as we have seen in England, neoliberalism is very effective in colonising and co-opting concepts from other traditions – partnership, reflection, lifelong learning, and research-informed practice. Indeed, neoliberal government rests on a dialectical form of power relations that is both harsh and supportive, public and personal, technocratic and emotional, that is both the hard disciplines of measurement and visibility, and the softer entreaties of mentoring, coaching, self-management and self-improvement.

Currently in Ireland we can see various techniques of measurement and comparison being explored and expanded in various forms. A new discourse of good practice is being

articulated. ‘Good’ ideas are being borrowed from elsewhere. Standards and standardisation are being put in place as forms of quality assurance, or reinstated perhaps – the ‘Vere Foster copy-books’ come to mind. In all of this, new sensibilities are being developed, and new subject positions created, a new framework of accountability related to performance is being constructed. A discourse of quality is being articulated.

Some examples I have gathered, with a little help, include the following.

(1) In her introduction to the 2005/2007 statement, the Secretary General of the Department of Education and Science (DES) stated that ‘this Strategy Statement sets out the key objectives and related strategies of the Department of Education and Science . . . [and its] commitment to delivering quality services that address the needs of our customers, clients and learners at all levels’ (DES, not dated: 6).
(2) We might also note the change from ‘Department of Education and Science’ (1997–2010) to ‘Department of Education and Skills’ (2010 to present) of the ministry of education in the Republic of Ireland.
(3) Individual secondary school records on Schooldays.ie were updated in the week of 21 November 2012 to include details of the numbers of students from each school admitted to the different Universities and Institutes of Technology around Ireland in September 2012. By visiting any individual school profile on Schooldays.ie, data on college progression for the last seven years was accessible. This is the introductory text taken from the schooldays.ie website:

> In March 2012 the Sunday Times published its annual School League Tables for 2012. School league tables remain a sensitive issue for schools which understandably have reservations about having so much judged by a single criterion; one which can never fully reflect the extraordinary lengths that schools and individual teachers go to in order to get disadvantaged students past the exam line. We understand the concern felt by many that school league tables only paint part of the picture. However, we believe that if parents choose to be informed about progression rates to college from individual schools either as one of the criteria for selecting a school for their child or simply being interested in the information in respect of the school their child is attending, then the information should be available to them. (Available at: http://www.schooldays.ie/articles/about-school-league-tables)

The schooldays.ie website also provides details for 3,300 Primary schools in Ireland and links to the Assessments from the Department of Education. They are further split up into local council areas. (See: SchoolDays.ie: Find Primary Schools in Ireland by county.)

(4) The points system has led to the further development of what Mark Bray (2007) calls the ‘shadow education’ system – the rapid growth in numbers of tutors and full and part time ‘grind schools’– (private and generally high-cost) focused solely on helping students to increase their points score in the Leaving Certificate. Walshe and Donnelly (2006) were moved to claim that ‘“education by chequebook” pays off as parents who fork out heavily for second-level education increase their children’s chances of getting into university’.
(5) The establishment of the Teaching Council in 2006 arguably brought increased levels of regulation and bureaucracy, and some degree of de-professionalisation of the teacher. That is, a set of small moves towards a more functionalist/technicist version of the teacher, as the ‘implementer of structured guidelines’, and the introduction of

checklists of skills and competencies which are being used to define and redefine the teacher and the practice of teaching, including the following.

- A Newly Qualified Teacher (NQT) monitoring system is being set up – broadly following the English model although the language is that of 'mentoring'.
- Initial Teacher Education (ITE) – is undergoing new Teaching Council accreditation processes – leaning towards much more standardization, more 'outcomes' and 'evidence'. Some ITE institutions were to be closed in 2013 following the international review in 2012. The impetus was to have a small number of regional 'centers of excellence' (Salberg Report, 2012).
- 'Incidental' inspections of teachers announced in the last year or so – i.e. unannounced – moving away from previous partnership, collaborative and professionalism-based approach (Whole School Evaluations).
- Redrafting of Teaching Council Codes of Professional Conduct – increasing the emphasis on regulation, prescription – although alongside an explicit emphasis on diversity and social justice (Teaching Council of Ireland, 2012).

(6) New National Literacy and Numeracy strategy (DES, 2011), introduced in relation to economic necessities with a focus on skills and targets.

These are, as I have indicated, small, separate, often double-edged moves and initiatives, but they are joined up, or beginning to be joined up, within a unifying discourse of standards, quality, skills, competences and improvement. Ultimately, they are linked to a set of economic necessities. They contribute to a steady overall increase in visibility, measurement and standardization, and they represent a change in the relations of power between teachers and the state. And they make further changes thinkable!

I want now to return to and expand on the notion of 'performativity' that is embedded in all of this. Performativity is a term I use in a particular way – not just to refer to systems of performance management or the deployment of performance indicators but rather to the complex and powerful relationships between such indicators and management systems and teacher identity and professionalism (Ball, 2003, 2008, 2012).

In one simple sense professionalism is the enemy of performance. While professionalism, as I see it, rests upon judgment related to principles, set within the context of practice, systems of performativity seek to pre-empt and displace judgment and de-contextualize practice with a form of responsiveness to external drivers: this is what Gleeson and Ó Donnabháin (2009) term 'Contractual and responsive accountability'.

> In the wake of the Education Act (Government of Ireland 1998) the growing demand for accountability has led to an increased emphasis on school inspection, school planning and evaluation, as reflected in the publication of A guide to subject inspection at second level. One of the proposed HLG4 strategies is the 'monitoring and evaluation of particular aspects of provision' through 'regular inspection, evaluation and planning'. There is an underlying belief that quality must be controlled from outside the school, as reflected in the emphasis on the number and nature of inspections and whole school evaluations in the DES Annual Report for 2006 (DES 2007). The stated objective to improve 'the standard and quality of education and promote best practice in classrooms, schools, colleges and other centers for education [through] the development and implementation of a national framework of qualifications' reflects a similar mentality. (Gleeson and Ó Donnabháin, 2009: 38)

They ask: 'To what extent will this approach promote quality?' (Gleeson and Ó Donnabháin, 2009: 39). Within systems of performativity, quality is all too often expressed as productivity. There is a symbolic relationship between quality and productivity. Within systems of performativity, we are required to make ourselves calculable and visible rather than memorable. This is 'the re-invention of professionals themselves as units of resource whose performance and productivity must constantly be audited so that it can be enhanced' (Shore and Wright, 1999: 559).

In education there is a proliferation of new spaces of such calculation and new visibilities within which we relate to one another, and in relation to which we must seek our place and our worth and to fulfil our needs. More and more in education, and other parts of the public sector, our days are numbered – literally – and those numbers are collated and monitored ever more closely and carefully. Performativity is a technology that relates effort, values, purposes and self-understanding directly to measures and comparisons of output.

Indeed, within the rigours and disciplines of performativity we are required to spend increasing amounts of our time in making ourselves accountable, reporting on what we do, rather than doing it. Forms, grids, databases, reviews and audits are daily more a part of our practice. Furthermore, they do not simply report our practice: they inform, construct and drive our practice. Our sense of what is right is challenged by what is necessary or, more precisely, what is measured. There is unsettledness in all of this in terms of what is 'right' and in whose interests we act, alongside a sense of constant change and concomitant anxiety, insecurity and precarity – what Lazzarato calls the 'micro-politics of little fears' (Lazzarato, 2009: 120).

Let me introduce some illustrations and sources from the school front in relation to this.

Nigel is a head teacher, and Walter a primary teacher.[1] They are two of a small group of teachers with whom I have maintained a regular email correspondence about their experiences of performativity over the past 2–3 years. Nigel contrasts what he calls 'specificatory garbage' with 'real work'.

> The effects are dire – harming the real job to an extreme degree, and undermining confidence in the service so that parents are at our throats. They are confused by a mismatch of rhetoric, reality and expectation and here it is descending into a mire of confusion and despondency. The work overload of drowning in specificatory garbage to irrelevant notions, which ever-change and for which you are damned for the impossibility of keeping up, dealing with damage and somehow trying to find the space for real work which 'they' are not in the slightest bit interested in, is exhausting. How to break out? (Nigel, private conversations)

Walter expresses a sense of being oppressed by unaccountable accountabilities.

> Feedback must be a dialogue . . . From a top-down perspective the requirement of termly judgments and re-judgments makes sense and is helpful as it produces reassuring spread sheets of data and hard evidence of 'Teacher X' moving from a 4 to a 3, a 1 to a 2 and so on. From the ground up however it looks and feels quite different. It is, for a number of teachers, demoralising, depressing, frustrating and very stressful. The judgment is made and without any dialogue there is no way to state your case; to draw attention to the shortcomings of the observations themselves, that is to shine a light on the limited perspective of the observer. (Walter, private conversations)

In regimes of performativity, it is indeed now possible that the teacher in all of their complexity and individuality becomes a '3' – the ultimate reductionism of humanity to quantity. More generally, Jenny Ozga describes regimes of audit, inspection, evaluation and testing, and the use of measurement and comparison, as 'governing by numbers', and as forms of 'governing knowledge' (Ozga, 2008: 264), a resource for and a general method of government.

In relation to all of this there are new sets of skills to be acquired – the skills of presentation and of inflation, making the most of ourselves, making a spectacle of ourselves, in response to audit, inspection and review, and for promotion. As a consequence the danger is that we become transparent but empty, unrecognisable to ourselves – 'I am other to myself precisely at the place where I expect to be myself' (Butler, 2004: 15). Part of this is what Devine et al. (2011: 631) refer to as 'crafting the elastic self'.

In regimes of performativity, experience is nothing, productivity is everything. Last year's efforts are a benchmark for this year's improvement – better exam and test results, more students going into higher education, more publications, more research grants. We must keep up; strive to achieve the new and ever more diverse targets which we set for ourselves in appraisal meetings; confess and confront our weaknesses; undertake appropriate and value-enhancing professional development; and take up opportunities for making ourselves more productive, ensuring what O'Flynn and Petersen (2007: 469) call a 'targeted self' or what Gee (1999: 46) refers to as the 'shape-shifting portfolio person'.

Increasingly, as we adapt ourselves to the challenges of reporting and recording our practice, sociality and social relations are replaced by informational structures. We all know and value others by their outputs rather than by their individuality and humanity. It is not that performativity gets in the way of 'real' educational work: it is a vehicle for changing what *real* educational work is! This is part of a larger process of 'ethical retooling' in the public sector, which is replacing client 'need' and professional judgment with commercial forms of accountability-driven decision-making. The space for the operation of autonomous ethical codes, based in a moral language shared among practitioners, in a community of practice, is colonised or closed down.

We are burdened with the responsibility to perform and, if we do not, we are in danger of being seen as irresponsible or indeed, as I have noted already, 'unprofessional', as the term is colonized and reworked in relation to performance. We take responsibility for working hard, faster and better as part of our sense of personal worth and in relation to the worth of others. We ensure that we are 'full of passionate intensity'.

Productive individuals, new kinds of social subjects, are the central resource in a reformed, entrepreneurial public sector. Those who 'under-perform' are subject to moral approbation. Systems designed to 'support' or encourage those who are unable to 'keep up' continuously teeter on the brink of moral regulation. As a result there is, for many of us in education, a growing sense of ontological insecurity; both a loss of a sense of meaning in what we do and of what is important in what we do. Are we doing things for the 'right' reasons – and how can we know?

The first-order effect of performativity is to reorient pedagogical and scholarly activities towards those which are likely to have a positive impact on measurable performance outcomes and are a deflection of attention away from aspects of social, emotional or moral development that have no immediate measurable performative value – as Grummell, Lynch and Devine (2007), quoting Cameron (1963: 13), puts it, 'in education not everything that counts can be counted and not everything that can be counted counts'.

The second-order effect of performativity is in the possibilities it creates to replace commitment with contract.

One part of what performativity does, as outlined above, is to re-render practice into measurable outcomes. That is, the processes of education come to be represented and appreciated in terms of products, or calculabilities. Individuals and institutions are required to account for themselves in ways that represent education as a standardised and measurable product, as a basis for judgment and comparison. Insofar as this happens, then a number of other things become possible.

(i) Individuals and institutions can be managed through the use of targets and benchmarks.
(ii) Individuals and institutions can be rewarded, differentially, in relation to their productivity or in response to target achievements. At the individual level this can be translated into systems of performance-related-pay, and bonus or incentive schemes (Mahony et al., 2004) which are being widely tested and introduced (Israel, Italy, USA, England, Hong Kong).
(iii) Also at an individual level, employees can be contracted on the basis of output requirements. This enables a greater use of fixed term contracts and individual contract negotiations and thus provides for greater budgetary flexibility.
(iv) At the institutional level the work of the organisation as a whole can be rendered into performance indicators and again can be translated into the form of a contract for 'service delivery'; which is now happening on a large scale in England.
(v) Once rendered into the form of such a contract the work of organisations can be put out to tender on a fixed cost, performance-related basis, and opened up to new providers – it can be exogenously privatised! We do this with rubbish collection and health services. In Sweden and Spain they already do it with schools.

New struggles

What I have sought to sketch here is a landscape of new dilemmas, challenges and struggles. So, I want to finish by offering something about the politics of neoliberal reform and, in particular, its relationship to teacher professionalism; and I am going to draw on the work of some theorists and researchers to help me.

It seems to me that there are two forms of politics embedded here. On the one hand, there is the collective basis of professionalism –that is, the foundations of principle and judgment within a community of practice, and within a dialogical process of principled debate. This is what Gerard Hanlon (1998: 50) calls 'a struggle for the soul of professionalism' – a contest over the meaning of professionalism which has at its centre the issue of 'trust' – 'who is trusted, and why they are trusted is up for grabs' (Hanlon, 1998: 59). The ethos of 'traditional' professionalism is no longer trusted 'to deliver what is required, increasing profitability and international competitiveness' (Hanlon, 1998: 52) and is being replaced by what Hanlon calls a 'new commercialised professionalism (Hanlon, 1998: 54).

On the other hand, there is in all of this what Bauman (1991: 197) terms 'the privatisation of ambivalence'. At the centre of performativity, and indeed neoliberalism, is the emotional individual who on a daily basis must live up to and manage 'the contradictions of belief and expectation' (Acker and Feuerverger, 1997, cited in Dillabough, 1999: 382) with which they

are confronted often without recourse to others. Performativity individualises and fragments, and leaves us, most of the time, to struggle alone with our doubts and fears. In other words, it produces new arenas of struggle: struggles over practices, struggles over subjectivity and a politics of identity and self-worth. Both forms of politics are important.

> Nowadays, the struggle against the forms of subjection – against the submission of subjectivity – is becoming more and more important, even though the struggles against forms of domination and exploitation have not disappeared. Quite the contrary. (Foucault, 1982: 213)

There is clearly an absolutely vital role for critical analysis and thinking, for critical reflexivity, for dialogue and debate, fostered by trades unions and professional associations and the efforts of collective resistance based on what Michael Apple calls 'decentred unities' (Apple, 2012). But much of the weight of neoliberal reform bears upon individual shoulders and we must also think about political responses that take proper account of this.

The struggles involved here require constant and organised work on the self; that is, the 'establishment of a certain objectivity, the development of a politics and a government of the self, and an elaboration of an ethics and practice in regard to oneself' (Foucault, 1997: 117). These struggles have to do with the right to define ourselves according to our own judgments; or, in other words, to develop a particular technology of the self according to our own principles, an aesthetics of the self (Foucault, 1992: 2010), which is focused on the question of who we are and who we might become, and on 'the labour of becoming' (Venn and Terranova, 2009: 3).

More generally, this involves re-imagining the teacher as an intellectual, rather than as a technician or as a bundle of skills and competences. It puts the teacher back into the sphere of the political, as an actor who takes up a position in relation to new discourses and truths and who looks critically at the meaning and enactment of policy. Two regimes of truth are in opposition here: two systems of value and values. One produces measureable teaching subjects, whose qualities are represented in categories of judgment. The other is vested in a pedagogy of context and experience, intelligible within a set of collegial relations. Let me quote head teacher Nigel again:

> I have known staff to engage with the most challenging and disaffected children, and gain their interest, respect and productive engagement (some of the time). Walk into the room and nothing leaps out as 'excellent'. But get to know those pupils, and those staff, and you will find they have genuinely excelled themselves in what they have achieved, over time. (Nigel, private conversations)

This politics of subjectivity also implies an analysis of the structural conditions of the educational system alongside and in relation to a critical scrutiny of our own practices and beliefs. 'One's idea of what one is struggling against has a direct impact on what one becomes as one struggles' (Blacker, 1998: 357). We must be, more than ever, as Maxine Greene puts it, 'wide awake'. She says:

> Without the ability to think about yourself, to reflect on your life, there's really no awareness, no consciousness. Consciousness doesn't come automatically; it comes through being alive, awake, curious, and often furious. (Greene, 2008)
>
> Human beings define themselves through the projects with which they become involved. By means of engagement with a project, the attitude of wide-awakeness develops and contributes to the choice of actions that lead to self-formation. A project means the intentionalized vision or purpose of making or constructing the self and the world. It is limitless if a person is willing to

> develop an attitude of wide-awakeness, if they are willing to modify what they consciously pay attention to.
> Wide-awakeness is not morally or politically neutral. Social action and intervention are crucial to attaining and sustaining an attitude of wide-awakeness. (http://www.newfoundations.com/GALLERY/Greene.html)

However, there are also costs to be considered here, the costs of constant vigilance, the costs of a commitment to a kind of 'permanent agonism' (Burchell, 1996: 34), and the possibilities of ridicule and precarity or isolation. And over and against these there are also the costs of silence, the costs of not being wide-awake and who bears them.

As we confront the slouching rough beast, it is very important that, according to Andy Hargreaves, teachers serve as courageous counterpoints. Teaching today, in his view, 'must include dedication to building character, community, humanitarianism, and democracy in young people; to help them think and act above and beyond the seductions and demands of the knowledge economy' (Hargreaves, 2003: 60). That is only possible if teachers are able to recognize themselves in the place they expect to be, and are able to express themselves and their practice as public intellectuals, and not just be numbers!

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