

# **‘Globalisation’, the New Managerialism and Education: Rethinking the Purpose of Education in Britain**

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## **Abstract**

*‘Globalisation’ arguably represents the imposition of neo-liberal ideology on a transnational scale, a consequence of which has been ‘liberalisation’ and the rise of the ‘new managerialism’ in British welfare. This article focuses on the particular implications of these changes on the British education system. It argues that practices introduced in the name of ‘quality assurance’ are having profoundly detrimental impacts for pupils, students, educationalists and society. In the case of pupils and students, we are seeing the increasing production of uncritical thinkers, compliant to the needs of the market. In the case of teachers and lecturers, we are seeing the increasing deprofessionalisation of the education system. This article argues the need to reclaim the purpose of education in Britain as a process for facilitating critical thinking, respect and empathy - bare essentials for a democratic, socially-just and socially-inclusive society.*

**Keywords:** Globalisation, Managerialism, Liberalisation, Performativity, Social Justice, Resistance, Discourse, Democracy

## **Background - ‘globalisation’ and the new managerialism**

According to the neo-liberal globalisation thesis, nation-states must liberalise all areas of welfare organising in the interests of global capitalism. Since the 1980s, British governments have consistently complied with this notion by opening up essential services like education and health to market liberalism. As Hatcher and Hirtt argue, education policy, like other aspects of public policy, is no longer devised principally

at the level of the nation state. It has become an integral part of globalisation: “The increasingly transnational nature of capital means that capital develops its education agenda on a transnational basis”. (Hatcher and Hirtt 1999, cited in Rikowski 2001: 23)

Educational institutions and processes have become inextricably linked to the global social structure (Whitty 2003). Through the General Agreement on Trade in Services (GATS), which came into force on 1 January 1995, the World Trade Organisation aims to liberalise trade in services. GATS’ purpose is to help trade flow as freely as possible by removing obstacles and, where trading conflicts arise, settling disputes. The WTO claim to promote the interests of all participants on a mutually advantageous basis (WTO 2003a: 1). In reality, it is one of the most untransparent and undemocratic global institutions (Sardar and Davies 2002: 72), largely due to the green room syndrome - effectively, the tendency for decisions to be made in mini-ministerial gatherings of a select group of rich OECD (Organisation of Economic Cooperation and Development) member countries dominated by the US and the European Union (Rady 2002). Additionally, the WTO is part of a powerful global network that includes the World Bank (WB), the International Monetary Fund (IMF) and multi-national corporations (MNCs). In cooperation with the WB and IMF, the WTO seeks to exert its cultural, political and economic influences across the globe. The liberalisation of education services has clear advantages for this purpose. As the International Chamber of Commerce (ICC) observe: “Services are coming to dominate the economic activities of countries at virtually every stage of development, making services trade liberalisation a necessity for the integration of the world economy”. (ICC 1999: 1)

The pressure on nations to liberalise services at the national level can be seen, therefore, as a response to the declining profitability of manufacture. While ‘a whole set of political-economic variables will affect the ways in which different education systems respond to processes of globalisation’ (Whitty 2002: 95), Britain has been keen to embrace the marketisation of its education system. In a 1998 background note on education services, the WTO and its Council for Trade in Services (CTS) expressed praise for the British government for having promoted ‘greater market responsiveness’ and an ‘increasing openness to alternative financing mechanisms’ - particularly in higher education (cited in Rikowski 2001: 28). Initially, ‘the key areas

yielding substantial private sector investment were in distance learning, computer-based learning systems [and] educational media products' (Rikowski 2001: 27). Additionally, 'there has been a proliferation of commercially sponsored curriculum materials' (Whitty 2002: 96) with concomitant fears about the emergence of a hidden curriculum of the marketplace and the promotion of uncritical thinking. At the time of writing, the New Labour government is preparing the way for private businesses to establish universities in Britain by removing one pre-requisite for university recognition – having a minimum 4000 students. This measure is supported by the Standing Conference of Principals (SCOP):

SCOP's hopes rest with this government's consultation paper on rules governing university status, which proposes to make it easier for 'organisations outside the traditional university and college sector' to gain degree-awarding powers, and for those bodies to gain full university status ... [M]ore relaxed university title rules are likely to lead to the creation of private single-subject commercial universities such as a Microsoft University or a Ford Motor Company University. (Tysome 2003: 1)

In addition to offering an opportunity for profitable investment, education is also significant for the reproduction of labour power and the generation of surplus value:

The centrality of labour-power to the maintenance and expansion of the social universe of capital fixes the significance of education and training in contemporary capitalist society. These are intimately involved in the *social production of labour-power*; that unique, living commodity that has the capacity to generate more value (*surplus* value) than is required to maintain its social existence *as* labour-power. (Rikowski 2001: 34)

With the increasing influence of globalisation since the 1970s/1980s, the economic imperative came to dominate the political and educational agenda (Tomlinson 2001: 155). In Britain, government policies on education and training have increasingly focused on education's role in human capital development - effectively, the production of docile bodies (Cooper 2002), willing to adapt to whatever pathway flexible labour markets follow:

Education is crucial for capital if it wants to rely on a strategy of continuous displacement of the class composition. An educated worker in today's paradigm is a worker who is able to adapt – who is able to take one job one day and another job the next day – who is engaged in life-long learning on a continuous process, which means updating their skills to suit the market. That is essential to maintain social cohesion in a context in which there is continuous displacement

of the class composition, of what kind of work is done. (de Angelis 2000, cited in Rikowski 2001: 35)

Education policy in Britain has become increasingly focused on its economic function, with broader social (empathy for others) and political (engaging in democratic processes) objectives simultaneously marginalised. This article argues that this liberalisation and marketisation of education has had, and continues to have, profoundly damaging consequences for the British education system and society more generally. In particular, the expansion of the ‘new managerialism’ in schools and universities - a corresponding element of market restructuring - has led to new forms of organisational control within welfare institutions privileging the ‘freedom to manage’ over other welfare discourses (Clarke 1998: 176), leading to what Ball refers to as ‘the terrors of performance and efficiency - performativity’ (Ball 1998: 190):

Performativity ‘works’ in at least three ways. First, it works as a disciplinary system of judgements, classifications and targets towards which schools and teachers must strive and against and through which they are evaluated ... Second, as part of the transformation of education and schooling and the expansion of the power of capital, performativity provides sign systems which ‘represent’ education in a self-referential and reified form for consumption ... Both of these aspects of educational performativity are linked to and ‘valorised’ within the market form in education. Teachers are inscribed in these exercises in performativity, through the diligence with which they attempt to fulfil competing imperatives and inhabit irreconcilable subjectivities. Third, performativity also resides in the pragmatics of language ... For example, the utterances of educational management and the effective schools movement ... exemplify the instrumental rational orientation to institutional life. The use of assessment ‘statements’, the language of inspection and the discourse of ‘unsatisfactory teachers’ all have enunciative effects. (Ball 1998: 190-191)

Performativity has required ‘a number of significant shifts and transformations in identity and purpose for many schools and individual teachers’ (Ball 1998: 191). Perhaps most significantly, the role of schooling in facilitating such societal values as inclusivity and social justice in a society of politically engaged ‘critical citizens’ is being eroded. Because of this, we argue, as Gatswatch<sup>1</sup> contend: “Education is of such critical importance to the social, cultural and economic development of society that it should not be subjected to the binding rules of an international treaty that prioritizes trade liberalisation over other goals.” (Gatswatch 2003: 1)

This article concludes with a few thoughts on how we might reclaim the purpose of education as preparation for a more caring, productive and democratic society. Before this, however, we offer a brief overview of the contextual changes that occurred in British welfare organising from the post-war years to the present time, and then go on to examine the damaging effects of these changes on both secondary schools and higher education.

### **Post-war welfare organising**

Welfare institutions established after the Second World War were largely organised on the basis of two elements. Firstly, *bureaucratic administration*, where organisations were governed by sets of rules, regulations and procedures that, theoretically at least, aimed to achieve conformity and impartiality in the delivery of welfare services. Secondly, this administration of welfare depended to some degree on *professionalism* or expert judgement - particularly in the case of health care (Clarke and Newman 1997). By the 1960s, this system of organising had come under attack from both sides of the political spectrum. On the left, persistent inequalities in welfare led to demands for more democratic forms of provision. Marxists in particular highlighted the role of social policy in reinforcing class privilege (Burden 1998). On the right, the emergence of the neo-liberal perspective within the Conservative Party led to an attack on the 'vested interests' of welfare bureaucrats - particularly in campaigning for the expansion of public spending. Moreover, the monopoly status of state welfare institutions was said to isolate them from pressure to achieve cost efficiencies and to become more responsive to the needs of their 'customers'.

Bureaucrats were identified as actively hostile to the public - hiding behind the impersonality of regulations and 'red tape' to deny choice, building bureaucratic empires at the expense of providing service, and insulated from the 'real world' pressures of competition by their monopolistic position. Professionals were arraigned as motivated by self-interest, exercising power over would be consumers, denying choice through the dubious claim that 'professionals know best'. (Clarke and Newman 1997: 15).

The neo-liberal critique of welfare dominated the market-based reforms of the 1980s. Alongside welfare restructuring emerged new arrangements for the delivery of

services. Welfare institutions were subjected to privatisation (such as council house sales) or opened up to competition and new forms of regulation (such as self-managing schools). These changes were justified in the name of ‘economic efficiency and effectiveness’, ‘value for money’ and the extension of ‘freedom of choice’ (to buy your council house or to select the appropriate school for your child).

### **The ‘new managerialism’**

An important feature of the welfare reforms of the 1980s was the emergence of new forms of welfare organising involving an enhanced role for management (Burden 1998), conceptualised as the rise of the New Public Management (NPM) or ‘new managerialism’ (Clarke and Newman 1997). This largely involved the introduction of private-sector techniques to public sector management in the name of economy, efficiency and effectiveness. Social progress here is seen to lie in achieving continual increases in ‘productivity’ and management must have the freedom to plan, implement and measure its resources in any way it feels appropriate (Bottery 2000). Acting in a business-like way by constantly striving for greater and greater cost efficiencies has replaced management principles based on bureaucratic-professionalism. Professionals cannot be allowed to subvert the management aims of their leaders. Effectively, new managerialism is a hegemonic project that relegates the importance of other ethical values – autonomy, criticality, care, equality, respect and trust – in favour of narrowly-defined economic priorities (Bottery 2000). There is no place for reflectivity, just ‘pragmatism’ and the enforcement of whatever technical fix will turn the government’s latest mission into reality.

Advocates of the new managerialism can make a number of claims in its defence – the need to improve the economic efficiency of organisations, avoid wastage and be responsive to the needs of a flexible ‘global market’. Here, the ‘global market’ is presented as given – a universal truth – even though, as Apple argues, the ‘market’ itself: “... acts as a metaphor rather than an explicit guide for action. It is not denotative, but connotative. Thus, it must itself be ‘marketed’ to those who will exist in it and live with its effects.” (Apple 1999: 3)

The markets that have emerged from welfare reforms are essentially ‘quasi-markets’, administratively-manufactured artificial markets subject to intense central government

control. They effectively focus on a narrow view of efficiency based on cost savings as opposed to quality service provision (Rouse 1999). Consequently, they have the potential to be deeply damaging instruments of control. We illustrate this position by analysing the effects of marketisation on both the secondary and higher education sectors in Britain.

### **The new managerialism and secondary education**

The application of the new managerialism throughout all areas of the secondary education system has been justified as a means of cutting costs whilst simultaneously raising standards. At the same time, managerialist reforms in education have sought to give greater emphasis to meeting the needs of industry (to the detriment of education's contribution to broader societal needs):

[I]n the last 25 years education has increasingly been defined by policy makers along the lines of its economic functions, with a reduced emphasis on its cultural, social and political contributions, and these apply to organisational forms, processes and curricula. (Ozga and Deem 2000, cited in Alexiadou 2001: 414)

Education managers have been urged by the central state to adopt practices characterised by a 'more directive and assertive management' (Bottery 2000: 12). Since the mid-1980s in particular, education professionals have faced a plethora of centrally-prescribed directives designed to 'classify, monitor, inspect and judge' their activities (Bottery 2000: 58). Under Conservative reforms between 1979 and 1997, school governing bodies were instructed to administer central targets on what and how to teach – even though, as Professor Ted Wragg argues, there is no exact science to teaching. Consequently, such directives can be seen as:

... simply a crude means of control, the ultimate conservatism, an attempt to persuade the public that 'traditional methods' are being enforced because 'research' supports them ... Instead of false certainties there are interesting insights from systematic inquiry that teachers can explore in their own classroom, about the many strategies they might adopt, how children think, different ways they can explain concepts. At least this engages their imagination and wit, instead of treating them like programmable robots. Classrooms should be creative and dynamic places, not graveyards of dry prescription. (Wragg 2002, cited in *Guardian Education* 16 April, p.7)

At the same time, the Conservatives encouraged schools to opt out of local authority control and compete in a ‘quasi-market’ framed by ‘parental choice’, league tables and OFSTED inspections (Burden et al. 2000) – measures that aimed to improve efficiency and raise standards:

... by encouraging schools to compete for pupils, introducing new funding arrangements, providing opportunities for open enrolment, opting out, requiring the publication of league tables and establishing new forms of inspection, schools ... will become more effective, efficient and generally improve their educational performance. (Barton 1998: 81)

Since the late 1970s there has been a shift in the dominant discourse through which ‘commonsense’ understandings of the role of education have been fashioned:

Teachers are seen as production workers, ‘raw material’, or part of the ‘machinery’ of the institution, and their contribution is evaluated along these terms. The expectations on teachers does not exceed that of a mechanical production of a routine type of work, it is more a question of ‘reliance’. There is a clear separation between designing a strategy and the execution of the mechanistic aspects of its delivery. This ‘industrial’ metaphor also reflects a perception of students that is built around production. Students are the ‘products’ of teacher’s work, or the customers that the products have to be sold to. (Alexiadou 2001: 427)

The everyday language of the business world has come to permeate all areas of education policy and practice:

In this context education is increasingly viewed as a private as opposed to a public good. Schools need to be more business-like and by investing them with more decision-making powers, the pressure is towards forcing them to become more marketable and seriously concerned with their reputations. (Barton 1998: 81)

This ideological drive towards performance improvement is placing enormous pressures on teachers and pupils. In the case of the former, teacher disaffection, stress-related illness and early retirements have led to a recruitment crisis (Chitty and Dunford 1999, Bottery 2000). This, in part, reflects the deprofessionalisation of a vocation that has lost its autonomy and collegiality, and become burdened by the fear of failure. At the same time, school principals have become ‘distracted from the core purposes of improving the quality of learning and the lives of the pupils because of the unfamiliar and overwhelming demands placed on them’ (Walker and Stott 2000:



67). They have become focused on short-term, economic objectives, failing to acknowledge the role of education in promoting a caring, cohesive, democratic society, built on notions of 'citizenship' where 'critical participation and dissent' are viewed as desirable (Bottery 2000: 79). Meanwhile, the education system assists in perpetuating social disadvantage:

The league tables have a clear, built-in bias against schools in disadvantaged areas, where educational performance is lower because socioeconomic circumstances are worse. This bias is likely to increase inequality if schools adopt certain policies designed to try to push them up the league table. One way of doing this at the secondary level is for schools to concentrate their resources on pupils most likely to achieve exam success ... The pressures on school managers created by the league tables are not likely to be in the best interests of ... pupils in most need of extra attention. (Plewis 2000: 91)

Apple shares this concern, arguing that the profound shift of focus in UK education policy has seen schools:

... increasingly looking for ways to attract 'motivated' parents with 'able' children. In this way, schools are able to enhance their relative position in local systems of competition. This represents a subtle, but crucial shift in emphasis ... from student needs to student performance and from what the school does for the student to what the student does for the school. This is also accompanied too uncomfortably often by a shift of resources away from students who are labelled as having special needs or learning difficulties, with some of these needed resources now being shifted to marketing and public relations. 'Special needs' students are not only expensive, but deflate test scores on those all important league tables. (Apple 1999: 5)

Instead of the education system fostering 'the educability of *all* children ... regardless of their circumstances' (Chitty 1999: 31) it erects barriers to inclusive learning. For instance, as Chitty and Dunford observe: "As the external pressures on schools have grown ... the number of pupils excluded from schools ... has grown by several hundred per cent." (Chitty and Dunford 1999: 7)

Rising exclusions can be seen as a response by schools to the need 'to protect their reputations for discipline and good order locally' (Trowler 1998: 19). A consequence of this is that other values - based on notions of equality, 'citizenship' and social inclusion - are eroded (Cooper 2002). As Tomlinson argues:

Markets did not encourage social balance in schools, equalize opportunities or help the socially excluded, and social segregation in education worked against the possibility of preparing good citizens who care about each other. (Tomlinson 2001: 169)

At the same time, there is no clear evidence that educational reform since the 1980s has produced sustainable improvements in standards. Walker and Stott, drawing on a parallel between performance-enhancing drugs in sport and performance-enhancing initiatives in education, argue:

Schools have been both offered and ‘prescribed’ performance stimulants. These substances have promised short-term success, but rarely produced any lasting, positive change in the classroom. They too have caused harmful side effects, and have contributed to a feeling of unease about the future of education. (Walker and Stott 2000: 63)

In assessing the impact of recent education reforms on standards, Walker and Stott go on to suggest: “From a long-term perspective, neither the quality of student learning nor the capacity of teachers to improve their classroom skills had been affected. Indeed, reforms aimed at standards alone have been judged as largely unsuccessful”. (Walker and Stott 2000: 66)

If claims to raising standards are questionable then so too are claims that the current education system is contributing to the needs of industry. Some commentators argue that the rigid curriculum and system of assessment presently imposed on schools ‘actually closes off the kinds of investigative avenues which are the seedcorn of economic creativity’ (Bottery 2000: 78) and which a flexible and productive high-tech labour market might need. Consequently, even on its own terms, the new managerialism appears flawed.

Despite these flaws, New Labour has retained and extended the managerial reforms implemented under the Conservatives throughout all areas of welfare provision. As Stuart Hall suggests: “The framing strategy of New Labour’s economic repertoire remains essentially the neo-liberal one ... [including] the wholesale refashioning of the public sector by the New Managerialism. (Hall 1998, cited in Burden et al. 2000: 290).”

At the same time, New Labour has pledged to tackle social exclusion in the name of 'social justice'. As the Deputy Prime Minister John Prescott put it, in a speech to the Fabian Society/New Policy Institute Conference on Building Partnerships for Social Inclusion held at Congress House on 15 January 2002:

Something at the very heart of this Government's ambitions ... something I've fought for throughout my political career and still believe in passionately today ... is to combat poverty and social exclusion, and create a society of security and opportunity for all. Where social justice prevails ...

New Labour's 'commitment' to promote social opportunity through education was highlighted during the 1997 election campaign when Tony Blair was keen to stress: "To those who say where is Labour's passion for social justice, I say education *is* social justice." (Tony Blair 1997, *Times Educational Supplement*, 18 April, cited in Trowler 1998: 93).

There is a clear tension here between New Labour's neo-liberal economic orthodoxy, including the maintenance of market-led welfare, and their Old Labour espousal of 'social justice'. As argued above, education markets polarise rather than equalise opportunities. In particular, schools retain an incentive to sift out the 'brighter' children during the selection process in order to boost their chances of attaining a higher position in the league tables (Cooper 2002). The next section considers similar contradictions in New Labour's policies on higher education (HE).

### **The new managerialism and higher education**

Despite accepting, in his foreword to the 1997 Dearing Report on the future of HE, the need to widen access for people traditionally under-represented in universities, David Blunkett (then Secretary of State for education) went on to abolish student maintenance grants and introduce tuition fees under the 1998 Teaching and Higher Education Act.

The Universities and Colleges Admissions Service promptly reported a decrease in the numbers of under-represented groups applying to universities – mature students, ethnic minorities and working class applicants. (Tomlinson 2001: 122).

At the time of writing, Tony Blair is keen to push through proposals in the White Paper on the future of higher education that would see the introduction of variable fees – effectively, a move towards a free market in HE. Such a move will place further barriers in the way of under-represented groups entering HE - particularly to the élite institutions, the Russell Group, and to subjects with expectant significant economic benefits, like law and medicine - thereby exacerbating existing inequalities, in contradiction to New Labour claims on social justice.

In addition, similar practices to those espoused in the name of ‘quality assurance’ for secondary education are now appearing in HE in the guise of programme specifications, benchmarking and unfettered managerialism. The Quality Assurance Agency for HE, following OFSTED, has increasingly sought to interfere in HE through the introduction of programme specifications and benchmarking. Under proposals contained in the 2003 White Paper on the future of HE, New Labour aim to enhance the role of business in HE programmes in a determined effort to harness knowledge to wealth creation. The review of universities’ collaboration with business, the Lambert Review, proposes combining financial incentives and a lighter regulatory inspection framework with a more business-like approach to governance to encourage universities to boost their links with business. This echoes Tony Blair’s ideology on higher education:

One of the most important things happening in the British economy is an increasing link between universities and business. The university sector is no longer simply a focus of educational opportunity, it is also a very, very important part of the future of the British economy. (Tony Blair, cited in *Times Higher Education Supplement*, 5 December 2003, p.1)

The Lambert Review proposes increasing higher education innovation funding, designed to encourage university partnerships with business, from £90m. per year to £150m; a multimillion pound funding stream to promote university research with local businesses (administered by Regional Development Agencies); and reforming the Research Assessment Exercise (RAE) to ensure that research with business is rewarded (*Times Higher Education Supplement*, 5 December 2003, p.1).

These centrally-defined statements introduce prescription, instrumentalism, uniformity and compliance with nationally determined objectives and standards of attainment.

This intensified central regulation of HE is in danger of standardizing the curriculum in accord with established normative values. This is inherently suffocating and authoritarian, and a threat to more liberating, dialogical education processes. (Cooper, cited in Jackson and Cooper 2001: 7)

These developments correspond with Ritzer's notions on 'calculability' as a basic element of 'rationalisation':

Rationalization involves an emphasis on things that can be calculated, counted, quantified. It often results in an emphasis on quantity rather than quality. This leads to a sense that quality is equal to certain, usually (but not always) large, quantities of things. (Ritzer 1999: 82)

This reductionist understanding and rating is explicit in the context of university quality audit exercises, and the increasingly meaningless amount of documentation that is 'evaluated' and rated as a marker of 'academic excellence' in accordance with its degree of conformity with centrally-imposed subject statements. Additionally, universities face the externally imposed managerial control of the RAE, a hierarchical and exclusive (yet vague) approach to research assessment. In particular, definitions of 'ranking' 'limit and confine participation and response' (Broadhead and Howard 1998: 3). As a consequence, 'academic knowledge and academic institutions maintain their essential conservatism, preserving the status quo by limited concessions to innovation' (Bird 2001: 464).

For British academics, one very clear answer to the question of what is a discipline is those subjects defined in the Research Assessment Exercise (RAE) as Units of Assessment. For many British women that I interviewed, the RAE had marked the end of any separate involvement in Women's Studies, and an end to interdisciplinary work. If your research was not published in a journal regarded as mainstream to your discipline then it did not count. (Bird 2001: 473)

In Foucaudian terms, the RAE creates 'conditions of domination' (Foucault 1990, cited in Lotringer 1996: 434) within the 'life-worlds' of HE through a funding

mechanism that serves to ensure compliance in the guise of ‘assessment’. This disciplinary logic is profoundly worrying for it ritualises ‘normalisation’ within the education system and obstructs the development of alternative perspectives, practices and possibilities.

The fatal mixture of increased surveillance and control of education, combined with the pressure to conform to the demands of the market, generate bleak prospects for the development of diverse curricula and research-projects, as well as for critical models of teaching and learning. Some of the more worrying consequences of this development have been addressed by Christie, who suggests that the way HE has developed over recent decades has served to block insight by subjecting students to a process of ‘infantilisation’. Students are effectively ‘socialized in an educational machinery rewarding receptivity and the ability to reproduce other people’s experience’ (Christie 1997: 14). As a consequence, their own experiences are devalued as only authorized perceptions are given respect and room within the educational process. Adult learners are treated like schoolchildren in terms of the continuation of the hierarchical teacher-student relationship that exists in schools, reducing the student to a receptor of knowledge. There is little or no room for innovation. ‘[B]y organizing universities as if they were schools, we inhibit the innovatory elements of the universities. We make students into pupils’ (Christie 1997: 17). Similarly, the tendency to infantilise is increasingly directed at academic staff. The current ‘micro-physics of power’ (Foucault 1976) - as represented by the RAE and quality audits - intensify the relevance of Christie’s observation as they reduce academic staff to ‘puppets’ within the emerging realm of ‘academic capitalism’. ‘Deviant’ research findings and designs – those that do not correspond with established theories - struggle to survive. This structurally re-enforced trend is especially problematic given the socio-historical context of increasingly diversified ‘glocal’ societies. Increasingly, British universities appear to strive for efficiencies for the institution through income regeneration, at the cost of both staff and students.

The dominance of the discursive regimes in HE constituted by neo-liberal market ideology is having similarly profoundly disturbing effects to those in secondary education. University staff face increasing surveillance, whilst both their workload and its meaninglessness increases:

The consequences in terms of lowered morale of schoolteachers and university lecturers between 1992 and today are clearly measurable. In 1992 only 10 per cent of teachers and lecturers thought that they had to 'work at high speed all or most of the time', compared with 18 per cent for other occupations. By the end of the decade this position was reversed (33 per cent vs. 25 per cent), with teachers and lecturers experiencing a hefty rise in stress. Over the same period, the proportion of teachers who were 'dissatisfied with their job' more than doubled from 6 to 13 per cent ... . (Green 2002, *Times Higher Education Supplement*, 12 April, p.16)

We would suggest that the rising level of stress amongst teachers and lecturers is not accounted for by increased involvement in academic or educational activities, or contributing to raising standards, but by the expansion of governance by management bodies on the basis of mistrust. Teachers and lecturers are increasingly distracted by bureaucratic means of regulation and control. In the face of the new 'entrepreneurial management', teachers and lecturers face a "“tougher” managerial discourse' with direct implications for their work.

Professor Boden notes that the power-shift that has taken place in HE is a phenomenon applicable to both 'new' and 'old' universities:

New universities tend to look enviously at the governance structures of old universities ... . But the truth is that across the sector, managers have moved in to control academics. As a result of the research assessment exercise and Quality Assurance Agency, I now have to fill in endless forms and account to managers for my activities. The managers are no longer there to facilitate my work - they are there to control it. (Boden, cited in Sanders 2002, *Times Higher Education Supplement*, 12 April, p.7)

Apart from the obvious effects of staff demotivation, stress and deterioration in health and well-being these changes are having, the creative and meaningful aspects of the educational process are increasingly restrained and structurally abolished. The problems and counter-productiveness of this are illustrated by Strehle, with specific reference to UK humanities degrees. Strehle notes a 'disjunctive relationship' between undergraduate and postgraduate studies: "... undergraduate and postgraduate studies are out of tune. The former is based on acquiring managerial and representational skills, the latter on sustained and complex thought." (Strehle 2002, *Times Higher Education Supplement*, 19 April, p.16)

For undergraduate studies, Strehle observes that:

... the emphasis has moved from providing a necessary tool-kit for academic thought to furnishing students with the representational and managerial skills needed outside academia ... . [I]n the UK undergraduate degrees in the humanities prepare for all kinds of professional careers but academic ones. (Strehle 2002, *Times Higher Education Supplement*, 19 April, p.16)

The continuous bureaucratisation and marketisation of HE comes at a high price – the undermining of education’s ability to facilitate the development of the intellectual and creative potential of the student, crucial not only for flexible labour markets but also the health of social, cultural and political life in society.

### **Rethinking the purpose of education**

The critical theorist David Purpel once stated, ‘I continue to have . . . faith that schools . . . can actually contribute to the creation of a more loving, more just, saner world’ (Purpel 1989: x). However, prospects for change solely from within educational establishments appear to be slim, given their external and internal regimes of control. In the case of HE, as Wall notes:

... how realistic is it to suppose that universities can be autonomous institutions when they also regard themselves as businesses? The primary ‘business’ of universities is higher education (rather than just teaching) and research. An essential feature of both is the fostering of the spirit of questioning and criticism - especially of otherwise unnoticed orthodoxies - and the capacity to examine important issues from different perspectives. This applies particularly to universities themselves ... [A] university in an affluent country does not deserve its name if it refuses to support its own critical self-examination openly and is frightened to facilitate the questioning, by its own staff, of the wider regime under which it operates lest this be commercially (or politically) damaging. A self-confident university, committed to a genuinely educational vision of itself, should sponsor and actively encourage these things as part of sustaining its own educational and cultural life. (Wall 2002, *Times Higher Education Supplement*, 19 April, p.16)

Achieving this vision is difficult to imagine given the present political and economic context within which HE operates:

[P]olitical regimes under the influence of neo-liberalism do not need secret police to contain serious dissent: they can do it much more efficiently, effectively and unobtrusively through ‘market discipline’. In this way, the critical



function of universities is tamed. And it all seems so natural. (Wall 2002, *Times Higher Education Supplement*, 19 April, p.16)

This coincides with the historico-philosophical process of the 'dialectic of enlightenment', analysed by Horkheimer and Adorno, and described as a development where: "... the liberation from irrationality becomes a new form of domination - domination that reproduces itself, but, in the late phase of industrial civilization, also undermines itself." (Horkheimer and Adorno 1944/2000, cited in Katz 1982: 146)

As Ritzer argues, contemporary times are now characterized by 'several dimensions of ... rationalization of the new means of consumption' (Ritzer 1999: 77), one of which has become the 'irrationality of rationality' (Ritzer 1999: 78). We need to liberate ourselves from this 'irrationality' – the 'irrationality' of blind faith in spurious neo-liberal orthodoxies and their brutal consequences – and reverse its damaging tendencies. This will require a process of continual dialogue and interaction between a broader constituency of 'interested' parties, responsive to changing local, national and international contexts. 'Quality' education – one that is economically, politically and socially effective – needs to encourage critical innovation and thinking through a diversity of academic programmes. Modern 'rational' educational institutions should offer 'learners' the possibility to fulfil their (however defined) 'potential', and encourage innovation and experimentation.

Transformations within western capitalist societies that represent a shift towards 'informational' capitalism (Castells 1998) impacted profoundly on the educational sector and, as illustrated above, led to a situation in which the creative and meaningful aspects of the educational process become increasingly negated:

In order for societies really to evolve ... modernization must become *reflexive* ... [S]tructural change forces social actors to become progressively more free from structure. And for modernization successfully to advance, these agents must release themselves from structural constraint and actively shape the modernization process. The historical passage from tradition to modernity was supposed to uncover a social world free of choice, individualism and liberal democracy, based on rational 'enlightened' self-interest. (Lash and Wynne, cited in Beck 1994: 2 - original emphasis)

Yet the contrary to this development emerged around the modern and quasi-religious icon of 'science', and the sanctified directions of the 'free market'. As a consequence, the struggle over the 'control of meaning' is the 'medium and outcome of power

relations' (Knights and Willmott 1999: 94) – here, between the pedagogic discourse and the discourse of business. The control over the definition of reality serves as a control over the educationalist's commitment, compliance or resistance to the 'new culture'. Teachers are evaluated on the basis of their acceptance of such rules for re-defining themselves, colleagues and students. This 'new culture' also entails a complementary and increasing governance of management bodies on the basis of mistrust targeted at both students and staff, resulting in an overkill of bureaucratic regimes of control and regulation. With regards to the conception of 'entrepreneurial management', Alexiadou argues this 'tougher' managerial discourse has direct implications for the work of educators: "There is no attempt here to balance issues of professional autonomy with issues of control. 'Trust' on teacher's professionalism is totally displaced by performativity." (Alexiadou 2001: 429).

If our aim is to promote the existential, substantive possibilities of making diverse choices and different ways of 'being in the world' – in contrast to the agenda offered by the contemporary, hegemonic structures of western 'global corporate capitalism' - we have to aim for a 'politics of difference' (Sawicki 1991) and practices of resistance. We have to aim to transform the present education system from one that disempowers and silences system-critical academics and students. This is not a new project, however. As Apple points out, referring to Kliebard's (1986) history of curriculum debates: "... educational issues have consistently involved major conflicts and compromises among groups with competing visions of 'legitimate' knowledge, what counts as 'good' teaching and learning, and what is a 'just' society." (Apple 1999:1)

Within the current context of neo-liberalism and its mythically 'natural' regulator - the 'free market' - the vision of what constitutes a good society and a good student appears to have changed profoundly towards competitiveness and entrepreneurship. At the same time, however, New Labour continues to engage in public discourses that claim to foster active 'citizenship' in a democratic society. Here is the core contradiction in New Labour's 'Third Way' thinking around which to foster a campaign for resistance. As Snauwaert points out:

We have known for a long time that there exists a fundamental interconnection between the polity and its educational system. This is especially true for a

democracy. Education and democracy are symbiotically interrelated. However, democracy demands a specific kind of education. (Snauwaert 2001:10)

Referring to Ignatieff (2001), and under the premise that the processes of 'globalization' need to be accompanied by an ethical dimension in order to counter both an unfettered global market as well as re-emerging ethnic tribalisms, Snauwaert goes on to suggest that democratic education 'should be devoted primarily to the cultivation of empathetic, respectful, and wide-awake cosmopolitan citizens' (Snauwaert 2001: 10). This alternative vision of the purpose of education counters the present-day dominant obsession with performance and content standards in schools and universities that completely violate the goals of a democratic education. Here, we share Bottery's concern to see education as a site for building the 'civil society':

... a discursive public 'space' in which people can formulate, consider and debate the issues of the day ... a space for 'public discourse', the function of which is other than the promotion of governmental aims, the pursuit of private interests or consumption; ... the site for the nurturance of a critical language, a prime function of which is to make clear the assumptions, agency and power bases of other discourses; ... an ideal site for the celebration of the diversity of opinions; ... it can help people develop a 'public good' perspective, and help them interrogate issues transcending their own parochial concerns; ... it can help people to recognize a necessary interdependency between responsibilities and liberties ... . (Bottery 2000: 211)

In other words, education offers a potential site for developing a 'civil society' with principles based on critical consciousness, active political engagement and respect for difference. For this to be achieved, Bottery suggests changes at both the societal level and within the education system itself. In the case of the latter, he calls for a more critical and self-reflective curriculum alongside changes in the development of the teaching profession. In the case of the former, he argues the need to counter the neo-liberal discourse on markets and managerialism in favour of re-embracing the idea of the 'public good'. Bottery's vision for the school curriculum is one designed for 'citizenship' - not the interdisciplinary version of citizenship prescribed in the schemes of work produced by the Qualifications and Curriculum Authority, which *defines* its meaning, but one that allows pupils and teachers to critically *debate* its meaning (Bottery 2000). What duties and rights should citizenship protect? How do existing power relationships shape the world? How can people effectively engage in public life? As McGregor states:

The ultimate educational objective of citizenship education is an increased rate and higher quality of social participation. The main task for democratic citizens is to deliberate with other citizens about the nature of the public or common, collective good and how to achieve it. Other tasks of citizens in a strong democracy should include debate, deliberation, agenda setting, making public judgements, performing community service by serving in civic and political offices, supporting and working for public interest groups and political parties, and least of all, voting. (McGregor 1999: 208)

Revitalising a sense of ‘public good’ requires appealing to particular values – social cohesion, empathy and respect - absent from the dominant neo-liberal discourse. It requires a counter discourse to the ‘self-interested consumer’ that actively discounts any sense of social or environmental responsibility. The seeds of this counter discourse must be found in conditions that permit open and continued dialogue between different interests within society. In the context of educational institutions themselves, generating critically reflective and engaged human beings requires a clear and explicit fostering of open dialogues and exchanges between staff and students - a more communicative and democratic framework for the development of different ideas and practices of teaching, learning and research.

In many ways, schools and HE institutions could learn much from traditional youth work practice and informal education, particularly in relation to reflexive and dialogical learning. In highlighting the main purpose of youth work, Josephine Brew argued that ‘a youth leader must try not to be too concerned about results’ (Brew 1957: 183). Traditional youth work rather focuses on the purpose of enhancing young people’s understanding of well-being and enabling young people to pursue their own well-being autonomously. Informal education, therefore, is based on an understanding of how young people learn to be autonomous. Here, greater attention is given to the ‘process’ of learning and ensuring that this is client-centred and non-directive (Carl Rogers, cited in Smith 2001a). Achieving this requires certain qualities and attitudes: being genuine; caring for the learner and accepting their feelings; empathetic and understanding; a sensitive awareness of the way the process of learning is understood from the student’s point of view; a focus on the interpersonal relationship (Smith 2001a). There is also an eye on building ‘social capital’ through building connections between individuals (social networks) and encouraging sharing, reciprocity and trust (civic virtues). Learning occurs collectively, organised around shared enthusiasms and interests. Informal educators, therefore, need to develop programmes that are

attractive to young people and address their lived experiences. This requires adults to make some accommodation with young people's culture. Informal educators also adopt a 'dialogical' approach to learning with the emphasis on free conversation and voluntary participation, and where young people are free to engage/disengage with their teachers if and when they want. Such an approach requires negotiation between facilitator and learners in order to reach agreement about specific topics of interest, which may include offering young people the opportunity to organise events for themselves or encouraging them to critically engage with the wider political system. Such 'non-directive' approaches need to be held, expressed and demonstrated as a value of informal education by the facilitator (Smith 2001b). Secondary and higher education could be organised in similar ways to traditional youth work practice, with a curriculum and approaches to learning based on dialogue involving a broad constituency of interest groups (educators, parents, students, employers, youth workers, trade unions, government departments and so forth) and reflective practice. Whitty (2002) envisages similar possibilities for 'democratic professionalism' in education, built through an alliance between teachers and wider interest communities. Including education under GATS does not allow for such democratic possibilities because liberalisation undermines 'domestic dialogues between education stakeholders and their governments' (Gatswatch 2003: 1) by prioritising 'economic performance' (WTO 2003b: 1). Such prioritising means 'the public possibilities for metaphysical discourses around social justice and equality are dramatically closed down' (Ball 1998: 191). As Tomlinson argues, education must 'move beyond a tawdry subservience to market forces' if it is to become a: "... humanizing, liberalizing, democratising force, directed, as the UN (1948) Universal Declaration of Human Rights put it, to 'the full development of the human personality and a strengthening of respect for human rights and fundamental freedoms'." (Tomlinson 2001: 171)

A central task in preparing the way for rehumanising the purpose of education is to expose new managerialism's destruction tendencies and to challenge the basic tenets of the new managerialist discourse. Do societies benefit from the destruction of social solidarities in favour of competitive individualisation and forms of affiliation based on allegiance to some institution's gaudy corporate culture? Do education systems improve from the imposition of a performance framework that encourages

‘fabrication, ... “satisficing” ... , “impression management” ... , [and the] “glossification” of school imagery ... ’ (Ball 1998: 196)? And should a publicly subsidised state education system continue to be allowed to consolidate existing social inequalities and privileges in a so-called ‘democratic’ society? These are some of the questions that should play a role in opening up the debate between those with a direct interest and involvement in the education process on what should be its purpose for society, and how should it be financed and provided.

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