

Neoliberal Globalisation, Managerialism And Higher Education In England: Challenging The Imposed ‘Order Of Things’

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Abstract

This article critically explores the consequences of the imposition of neoliberal ideology on a transnational scale on the higher education system. Its particular focus is England where the context of the ‘new managerialism’ continues to dominate the ‘lifeworlds’ of educators and the educated, despite strong concerns about its efficacy. It will argue that practices introduced in the name of ‘quality assurance’ are having profoundly detrimental impacts for students, academia and, ultimately, society. In particular, the last 30 years in the educational realm of the UK have been characterised by the continuing displacement of critical understanding by managerial ‘information’. This has consequences in terms of leading to a ‘normalisation’ of a broad adaptation of people’s subjectivities to so-called ‘market requirements’. The article concludes with the need to reclaim the purpose of education as a process for facilitating critical thinking, respect and empathy - bare essentials for a democratic, socially-just and socially-inclusive society – and that this challenge requires the development of strategies of resistance to neoliberalism’s ‘forced normality’ at both the local and global level.

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Introduction

In identifying important sources of determination of the core disciplinary network shaping higher education (HE) into the 21st century, this article critically explores the consequences of the imposition of neoliberal ideology on a transnational scale (frequently referred to as ‘neoliberal globalisation’) on Britain, although the focus will be on England in the context of the destructive reign of the ‘new managerialism’¹. Practices associated with managerialism in HE continue to dominate the ‘lifeworlds’ of educators and the educated, despite a profound lack of demonstrable evidence of its own success (Taylor 2002). Constant shape-shifting processes under the guise of ‘restructuring’ ensure managerialism’s continued dominance. As Fisher describes:

... the school has been restructured on several occasions, pervaded by the language of ‘enterprise’, ‘customer focus’ and the ‘needs of industry’ and, in common with other British HE institutions, characterised by new forms of surveillance and control, exemplified by the teaching quality assessment (QAA) and the research assessment exercise (RAE) [now the even cruder Research Excellence Framework (REF)]. This regime of new managerialism with its emphasis upon costs, budgets and targets, its links to ideas of ‘hard’ Human Resource Management and its unitarist perspective on the employment relationship has been embraced by the most senior managers of the Business School and the university. (Fisher 2007: 505)

Practices introduced in the name of ‘quality assurance’ are having profoundly detrimental impacts for students, academia and, ultimately, society.

While having the air of ‘objectivity’ the origins of discourses of ‘quality assurance’ can, according to Shore and Wright (1999), be traced back to American endeavours to destroy the power of Japanese organized labour after the Second World War and to generate a flexible and compliant workforce via changes in the workplace culture.

It therefore should come as no surprise that university ‘quality’ audit exercises do not evaluate genuine quality of educational processes but generate an enforced, highly demotivating, time-consuming and manipulated proliferation of meaningless documentations that are then constructed as indicators of ‘academic excellence’ in accordance with degrees of conformity with centrally-imposed subject statements. This disciplinary complex in HE ‘create[s] understandings grounded not in what actually occurs ... but on how this all is *represented*’ (Vinson and Ross 2007: 71 – emphasis in original).

The last 30 years in the educational realm of the UK have been characterised by the continuing displacement of critical understanding by managerial ‘information’. Moore observed that the British government is aiming for the ‘complete internationalization of its labour market’ and deploys:

¹ The ‘new managerialism’ refers to organisational and cultural reforms to the British public sector from the 1980s, reforms that sought to replace bureaucratic procedures with styles of management imported from the business sector. These new styles were to emphasise ‘economy, efficiency and effectiveness’, ‘value for money’ and market discipline. New managerialism is an ideology that serves to legitimate the wholesale restructuring of the public sector along neoliberal lines – leading to a shift in power relations from bureaucrats and professionals to management (Beckmann and Cooper 2004).

... higher education to create an army of employable subjects/citizens who are proselytised as having the skills [to] be able to participate effectively in the increasingly privatised global chains of commodity production and services. (Moore 2009: 243)

This, of course, has consequences in terms of leading to a ‘normalisation’ of a broad adaptation of people’s subjectivities to so-called ‘market requirements’. While of course not absolute and deterministic, one bio-political implication, in the case of students, is the increasing production of uncritical thinkers, compliant to the needs of the mantra of the ‘market’. In the case of academia, we are witnessing the increasing erosion of professional autonomy as well as a decrease of disciplinary diversity. Schmidt, writing in the context of the US, warns against the destructive implications of such regimes for wider society:

A system that turns potentially independent thinkers into politically subordinate clones is as bad for society as it is for the stunted. It bolsters the power of the corporations and other hierarchical organisations, undermining democracy. (Schmidt 2000: 4)

Similarly, writing in the context of New Zealand, Roberts and Peters question the logic behind the Performance Based Research Fund (PBRF), introduced in 2003 by a Labour-Alliance government influenced by the so-called ‘Third Way’ politics of New Labour in the UK, for evaluating ‘research excellence’. They argue that a significant wider consequence of the PBRF has been ‘the narrowing of our sense of what counts as worthwhile inquiry’ (Roberts and Peters 2008: 7).

This article argues the need to reclaim the purpose of education in England and other neoliberal contexts as a process for facilitating critical thinking, respect and empathy – essential for a democratic, socially-just and socially-inclusive society. Before concluding with a proposal on resisting neoliberalisation in HE in England – a necessary prerequisite for reasserting its social purpose - we offer a brief overview of the contextual tendencies that occurred in British social policy after the 1980s and the damaging effects of changes – changes driven by neoliberal globalisation - on education and, particularly, HE.

Setting the context: neoliberal globalisation and ‘education’

Within the social sciences and philosophy, ‘globalisation’ remains a contested concept. Whilst the term is generally used to signify a worldwide scale of commonality and interconnectedness (Hutchings 2010), the idea of globalisation cannot be conceptualised as something distinct but rather needs to be understood as something constituted through discursive practice – with significant implications for human wellbeing. Moreover, it is crucial to note that neoliberal globalisation is not an inevitability or inescapable, and that organising resistance against its incursions is a real possibility (as global resistance movements testify - e.g. the Occupy movement and the edufactory movement). As Bourdieu argues, ‘Globalisation is not a fate, but a politics. For this reason, a politics of opposition to its concentration of power is possible’ (Bourdieu 2002:1).

At the same time, the value of education in Britain for exploitative relations under global capitalism has been understood for some time. The need for state intervention in education to further the interests of corporate capitalism has been recognised since the late 19th century. As Jones and Novak (2000) observe, state education in Britain was established to subvert the radical threat posed by working-class self-education (provided in miners’ schools,

night classes and Chartist schools) by inculcating young people with the ‘right’ social values and preparing them to become the workforce of the future. Whilst schooling and HE around the mid 20th century did offer more sites for greater critical understanding to be nurtured – in Britain, under the influence of Keynesian welfarism and meritocracy during the immediate post-war period – since the 1980s, following the ascendancy of Thatcherism and Reaganomics, education policy in Britain and the US has been increasingly shaped by influences aimed at meeting the imperatives of neoliberal globalisation and corporatism.

According to the neoliberal globalisation thesis, nation-states must liberalise all areas of welfare organising in the interests of global capitalism. This hypothesis reflects a ‘globophile’ perspective which believes that globalisation can have positive effects on human wellbeing by restoring markets as the primary form of social relationship throughout society. From this perspective, markets are inherently more efficient and equitable than state-planned bureaucratic arrangements because they are more responsive to needs and desires. This argument was used in the 2002 No Child Left Behind Act to define the US education problem – i.e. that state schools were particularly failing African-American pupils and that this required tough measures in the interests of greater equality, accountability and choice. These measures included standardised test-driven teaching and severe sanctions for ‘failure’ such as replacing teachers and restructuring (privatising) schools (Hursh 2007, Lipman 2007). Since the 1980s, British governments have consistently complied with this notion of globalisation and wellbeing by opening up essential services like education, health and housing to market liberalism. As Hatcher and Hirtt argue, education policy, like other aspects of social policy, is no longer devised principally at the level of the nation state. It has become an integral part of neoliberal 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 (WTO) aims to liberalise trade in services. The purpose of GATS 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 2003: 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 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 2003: 95), successive governments in Britain have been keen to embrace marketisation. In a 1998 background note on education services, the WTO and its Council for Trade in Services expressed praise for the British government for having promoted 'greater market responsiveness' and an 'increasing openness to alternative financing mechanisms' (cited in Rikowski 2001: 28) - particularly in HE. Initially, 'the key areas yielding substantial private sector investment were in distance learning, computer-based learning systems [and] educational media products' (Rikowski 2001: 27). This development is further legitimated by education policies under New Labour and the new Conservative-led Con-Lib coalition that continue the trend in the UK towards the business incursion into education established under Conservative administrations during the 1980s. Effectively, these changes persist with supply-sided measures aimed at setting education free from state control (Exley and Ball 2010) and paving the way for private companies to make further inroads into education provision.

At the same time, the Con-Lib coalition government is implementing most of the recommendations of the 2010 Browne Review, *Securing a Sustainable Future for Higher Education*, which paves the way for 'an end to public funding for all subjects except "priority" areas such as science and technology' (Baker 2010: 6) – threatening the sustainability of the arts, humanities and social sciences. Browne used to head the company BP and unsurprisingly his review effectively embeds HE in a free market ethos of fees and student numbers where universities compete with each other for paying customers.

We are witnessing the greatest assault on the arts and humanities in the history of modern Britain. Lord Browne's review paves the way to the privatisation of higher education. With cuts in funding of up to 80%, university courses have been thrown open to market forces. Government can 'withdraw public investment ... from many courses' in favour of 'priority courses and the wider benefits they create'. With students expected to pay huge fees and thousands priced out of university altogether, subjects without a 'market value' face extinction. (Gopal 2010: 32)

Literature, history, modern languages and most social sciences are likely to be amongst the hardest hit in favour of subjects like business administration and law (Gopal 2010).

Browne's proposals open up the HE market to new private-sector providers, 'opening the door to fierce competition' (Baker 2010: 7). HE as a public good with a greater social purpose is sacrificed at the altar of the 'free market'. A corollary of this may be short-term fiscal savings but, as Callender speculates, these are potentially 'at the expense of the longer-term effects on quality, social equity and universities as public, civic and cultural institutions' (Callender 2012: 92).

In the next section we explore further the damaging consequences which neoliberalisation and marketisation in England have had, and continue to have, for both education and society. In particular, we examine the expansion of the new managerialism, a corresponding element of market restructuring, and the way it has led to new forms of organisational control within education institutions - privileging the 'freedom to manage' (Clarke 1998: 176) over other discourses and leading to what Ball refers to as 'the terrors of performance and efficiency - performativity' (Ball 1998: 190).

Neoliberalisation, marketisation and the new managerialism in education

Under neoliberal managerialism, creativity, reflection and ethical concerns are degraded to diminishing status in favour of performance targets and constructed performance indicators. These tools of macro-and micro-management control subjugate alternative visions, understandings and practices of HE, and to varying but increasing degrees impact on the pedagogical process in a destructive fashion. Performativity has required ‘a number of significant shifts and transformations in identity and purpose’ (Ball 1998: 191) for education providers. Perhaps most significantly, the role of education in facilitating such societal values as inclusivity and social justice in a society of politically engaged ‘critical citizens’ has been eroded.

Advocates of the new managerialism make a number of claims in its defence – i.e. 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 neoliberal marketisation on the HE sector in England.

Throughout the last 30 years, education managers have been urged by the central state to adopt practices characterised by a more directive style of management designed to ‘classify, monitor, inspect and judge’ (Bottery 2000: 58) their activities. In this context, it is important to refer to Burchell’s Foucauldian analysis of neoliberalism in which he suggests that an ‘enterprise form’ is generalised as a mode of conduct applicable in all socio-political contexts and which shapes their style of governance (Burchell 1996). One can observe shifts in the dominant discourses through which ‘commonsense’ understandings of the role of education have been fashioned - shifts which represent an important starting point for our analysis as they changed understandings of education and the educated subject, and ‘mould the subjectivities of those within’ (Usher and Edwards 1994: 125). Centrally important for this transformation is the language of managerialism, which colonises the ‘life-worlds’ of educational spaces. Language, as Lucas argues, serves not only to express one’s thoughts and transmit information, but also defines ‘one’s identity, group loyalty, relationship to interlocutors, and understanding of the speech event’ (Lucas 2001: 1). Lock and Lorenz comment on the importance of managerialist language specifically in the context of the ‘life-world’ of HE. ‘The language might itself be laughable, but it is now the shared language of those who command - and is imposed on those whom they command’ (Lock and Lorenz 2007: 4). And it is the everyday language of the business world that has come to permeate all areas of education policy and practice, causing education to be increasingly perceived as a private rather than a public good (Barton 1998).

Another important aspect of the transformation of HE is the impact of the Quality Assurance Agency (QAA) for Higher Education which has increasingly sought to intervene in the delivery of HE through the introduction of programme specifications, benchmarking and quality audits - 'testimony to the emergence of a distinct managerial rationality centred in the notion that institutional behaviour can be shaped if the right kind of reinforcement is combined with the appropriate information' (Tsoukas, cited in Strathern 2000: 313). Programme specifications are centrally-defined statements describing the 'knowledge and understanding' and 'skills and other attributes' a 'threshold' graduate in a particular subject area will possess and how this will be achieved. Benchmarking is a standard point of reference for demonstrating that measurable outcomes have been achieved. These measures introduce prescription, uniformity and compliance with nationally determined standards of attainment. Moreover, university league tables are considered to indicate the degree of academic excellence ensured by the different institutions in this competitive and market-driven order of things. However, it is important to understand that

... the number of First Class degrees awarded by universities is used as a performance measurement in university league tables, yet politicians disingenuously express indignation if anyone has the temerity to highlight the subsequently perfectly logical market-driven tendency of universities to increase their number of Firsts to improve their marketability. As A-Level students have recently found out to their cost, 'quality' becomes an actuarial category to be manipulated rather than actually achieved. (Taylor 2002: 32)

The seemingly only important outcomes of what were once creative and engaging processes of pedagogy in HE are now the 'delivery' of predetermined results via 'the implementation of outcome-based curricula in which the educational goals are specified in advance - "the student will be able to..."' (Fendler, cited in Popkewitz and Brennan 1998: 57). This limits the individual's development as it limits the unexpected possibilities of pedagogy. Compelling teachers and students to follow the script ensures their compliance in a project designed to meet the needs of global capitalism – the production of culturally, socially and economically valuable commodities (literate workers). The human essence of education is lost (Shannon 2007).

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 for the health of the social, cultural and political life of society. Given the inherent flaws and contradictions within neoliberal managerialist education systems, there is urgent need to explore possibilities for building alternative education practices capable of generating more just, caring, democratic societies.

Generating resistance to the neoliberalisation of HE in England

Since the 1970s there has been an 'intensification and stretching of economic interrelations across the globe' (Steger 2009: 38) - most significantly 'transnational corporations [TNCs], powerful international economic institutions, and large regional trading systems have emerged as the major building blocks of the twenty-first century's global economic order' (Steger 2009: 38) – aided by the advance of liberalisation (Held and McGrew 2007). This development has coincided with the 'systematic exploitation of dirt-cheap labour' (Bello 2002: 7) under extremely harsh working conditions (Pilger 2001).

Essentially, globalisation is exacerbating poverty and inequality – making a mockery of World Bank claims about prioritising poverty reduction (Bello 2002). At the same time, it is increasingly recognised that existing levels of economic development are unsustainable – particularly in respect of the finiteness of

... non-renewable resources (such as coal and oil), the finiteness of the capacity of the planet to absorb the effects of development (global warming) and the finiteness of areas of the world producing renewable resources (food, timber). (Hutchings 2010: 99)

Possibilities for resisting environmental destruction are constrained by an increasingly delimited cultural context powered by the Westernised/Americanised global corporate media empire. In contrast to Judith Butler's (2004) inclusionary vision of a cosmopolitan global culture, 'the dominant symbolic systems of meaning of our age – such as individualism, consumerism, and various religious discourse – circulate more freely and widely than ever before' (Steger 2009: 72). Rather than moving in the direction of a globalisation reflective of a diverse range of cultures it can be argued that we are heading toward 'an increasingly homogenized popular culture underwritten by a Western "culture industry"' (Steger 2009: 72). Amongst the evidence for this is Ritzer's thesis on the McDonaldisation of Society which succinctly conceptualises the advancement of a bland, dehumanised uniformity in Westernised societal relations (Ritzer 1998). This transnational expansion of Westernised/Americanised global images has been described by Ritzer as 'globalization' – a concept that emphasises the way powerful forces behind this expansion, serving the 'imperialistic ambitions of nations, corporations, [and] organisations' (Ritzer 2007: 15), are overpowering the ability of individuals and communities to take control of their own localities and life-worlds. This development, Ritzer argues, not only threatens people's capacity to make choices but also their competence to act as a 'crucial source of innovation in the world' (Ritzer 2007: 210).

The homogenisation of global culture is largely driven by developments in telecommunications combined with their exploitation by the mass-media. The recent expansion of the electronic media under the control of powerful media corporations has allowed that message 'to project images and ideas that work to their own interests rather than the national or international interest' (Cohen and Kennedy 2007: 340).

The oligopolistic control of the media by such corporations as News Corporation, AOL Time Warner and Disney is seen by some commentators as a threat to 'democracy, diversity and freedom of expression' (Cohen and Kennedy 2007: 341) due to the disproportionate influence they hold over 'business, international agencies and national governments' (Cohen and Kennedy 2007: 341). The current stage of capitalism is less reliant on the ownership of capital and more dependent on controlling global flows of information (Castells 1996). As Cohen and Kennedy observe, this development has had profound economic and social effects. Inflows and outflows of capital have moved beyond the control of national governments, whilst socially, there is growing concern about the generation of an increasingly homogenised global culture and the rise of a destructive consumerism. Arguably too, due to the oligopolistic control of the few over media technology, there is the potential for the exercise of:

... undue influence that is distorting the democratic political order Are they acting as the shock troops and missionaries for global capitalism, destroying other ideologies

and ways of life other than those amenable to the “free market” ... ?. (Cohen and Kennedy 2007: 357)

Since the 1970s the political sovereignty of nation states has been eroded. This demise is largely a consequence of capital flows and technological developments the trajectory of globalisation has taken – leading some to argue that ‘politics has been rendered almost powerless by an unstoppable techno-economic juggernaut that will crush all governmental attempts to reintroduce restrictive policies and regulations’ (Steger 2009: 63). According to such positions, the main role of future governments is to serve ‘as a superconductor for global capitalism’ (Steger 2009: 63).

Whilst Naomi Klein rightly warns against any attempt to hold ideologies to account for the crimes of their followers, she argues the case that ‘certain ideologies are a danger to the public and need to be identified as such’ (Klein 2007: 19). Crimes committed in the names of Stalinism and National Socialism have already been brought to account. But what, asks Klein,

... of the contemporary crusade to liberate world markets? The coups, wars and slaughters to install and maintain pro-corporate regimes have never been treated as capitalist crimes If the most committed opponents of the corporatist economic model are systematically eliminated, whether in Argentina in the seventies or in Iraq today, that suppression is explained as part of the dirty fight against Communism or terrorism – almost never as the fight for the advancement of capitalism. (Klein 2007: 20)

This crusade has *inter alia* witnessed forceful alliances between powerful corporations and neoliberal governments profiting from dubious incursions into sovereign territories. From the chaos of the war in Iraq, the US-based company Halliburton had, by October 2006, made \$20b in revenues (Klein 2007). It is on the basis of such complicities with capitalist crimes – in addition to the persistence of worldwide poverty and inequality, environmental and cultural degradation, and the erosion of democratic decision making – that the challenge to the current dominant global order needs to be forged. As Hardt and Negri (2005) observe, the infrastructure for such a challenge is already emerging. By colonising and interconnecting more and more areas of people’s lives ever more deeply, neoliberal globalisation is unwittingly generating the sites from which democratic alternatives to the present world order might be created.

You might say, simplifying a great deal, that there are two faces to globalization. On one face, Empire spreads globally its network of hierarchies and divisions that maintain order through new mechanisms of control and constant conflict. Globalization, however, is also the creation of new circuits of cooperation that stretch across nations and continents and allow an unlimited number of encounters. This second face of globalisation is not a matter of everyone in the world becoming the same; rather it provides the possibility that, while remaining different, we discover the commonality that enables us to communicate and act together. (Hardt and Negri 2005: xiii)

Monbiot identifies similar contradictions within the neoliberal globalisation discourse. As he suggests,

Corporate and financial globalization, designed and executed by a minority seeking to enhance its wealth and power, is compelling the people it oppresses to acknowledge their commonality. Globalization is establishing a single, planetary class interest, as the same forces and the same institutions threaten the welfare of the people of all nations. ... Simultaneously, it has placed within our hands the weapons we require to overthrow the people who have engineered it and assert our common interest. By crushing the grand ideologies which divided the world, it has evacuated the political space in which a new, global politics can grow. ... The global dictatorship of vested interests has created the means of its own destruction. (Monbiot 2003: 8-9)

Neoliberal globalisation is not an inevitability nor inescapable, and organising resistance against its incursions is a possibility. As Steger reminds us, a “global civil society” ... populated by thousands of voluntary, non-governmental associations of worldwide reach ... [who] represent millions of ordinary citizens who are prepared to challenge political and economic decisions made by nation-states and intergovernmental organizations’ (Steger 2009: 69) already exists. The task is to bring these movements together as a broad global-justice coalition with a manifesto for an alternative world order – one offering prospects for greater social justice and human wellbeing (Kingsnorth 2004). This is similar to Giroux’s call for a global-justice campaign built on ‘new modes of solidarity, new political organizations, and a powerful, expansive social movement capable of uniting diverse political interest groups’ (Giroux 2012: 8). There is a need to unite the diverse struggles that already exist into a coherent and effective collective campaign of resistance against the tyranny of neoliberalism. Developments towards this kind of organising are already evident in England. For example, the University and College Lecturers Union (UCU) Congress, 2012, carried an amended composite motion on defending public education declaring:

Congress opposes the privatisation and marketisation of the education system at all levels. Congress asserts the belief that the purpose of education should be to educate people as human beings and as critical, thinking citizens for a democratic society. This means educational services must be run as a public service, not as private businesses. ... Congress calls on UCU to work with other trade unions, students’ organisations and appropriate campaign groups to defend and restore public education, including a broad campaigning strategy behind a manifesto in defence of education as a universal public good, free at the point of delivery at all levels, where the benefits of the relationship between education and society in terms of the economy, critical citizenship, democracy and social wellbeing are clearly named. ... Building on the success of the Defend Public Education conference² on 10 March [2012], Congress instructs the Education Committee to organise a broad-based conference in spring 2013 to launch the manifesto.

This effectively commits UCU to engage in the kind of broad-based struggle envisaged by Giroux and others. It is a specific mandate to develop a strategy of resistance to the neoliberal managerialist ‘order of things’, and to reconstitute education as a public good and source of democratic possibility. The next section develops this theme further.

² Tom Hickey, Chair of UCU’s Recruitment, Organisation and Campaigning Committee, summed up the Defend Public Education struggle in terms of the need to name (in Freirean terms) the relationship between education and society, and to campaign on a manifesto pledging proclaiming the centrality of education not only for the economy, but also critical citizenship, democracy, social wellbeing and cohesion (Hickey 2012). We trust that this campaign commitment will be pursued forcefully by UCU and that it does not prove to be little more than a spurious consultation exercise similar to those that merely conspire to deceive under managerialism.

Contesting the neoliberal managerialist ‘order of things’ and reconstituting HE in England and beyond

As we have demonstrated throughout this article and elsewhere (see Beckmann and Cooper 2004, 2005a and 2005b), the neoliberalisation and managerialisation of HE reinforces inequalities; reduces the quality and diversity of education; destroys the pedagogical process; is detrimental to democracy; decreases the rights and conditions of students and academics; and leads to the deprofessionalisation of HE workers and increased stress and anxiety. Apart from the obvious alienation and dehumanisation of interrelationships in HE that is a consequence of these transformations, as well as the increasing burdens of debt, many students increasingly show signs of anxiety, stress and depression (Baker et al. 2006). However, instead of responding to these clearly destructive symptoms of neoliberal rule by changing the system towards a more humane and less objectifying one, political discourse continues to encourage an increase in dehumanisation ‘to the effect that individuals themselves can be recapitalized – made more employable, have their self-esteem raised, their networks strengthened and their employability enhanced’ (Baker et al. 2006: 50).

At the same time too, there is considerable opposition to the neoliberal managerialist changes in education around the world, as demonstrated by the activities of a range of resistance movements. Ledidow describes the ‘overt challenges to capitalist agendas’ (Ledidow 2007: 238) that emerged in African universities in the 1980s when academics and students united to contest the structural adjustment programmes imposed by the IMF and World Bank. Dave Hill’s (2009) edited work on contesting neoliberal education describes a number of worldwide campaigns against neoliberal organising in education including: trade union and global resistance movements against the WTO and GATS; campaigns for education reform built on a radical Green-Left agenda; the adoption of pedagogical practices that foster collaboration; campaigns in the UK against budget cuts and privatisations; anti-racism and free-speech movements in the US; the use of ‘guerrilla pedagogy’ to give voice and agency to the oppressed and expose the harmful effects of US imperialism in the Dominican Republic; radical education reforms in Brazil; Chávez’s revolutionary reforms in Venezuela; and examples from the history of socialist pedagogy in the Soviet Union, Cuba, Mexico, Nicaragua and Venezuela.

It is important that the dogma and practices of the new managerialism are continuously challenged as the framework of corporationalism is entirely inadequate for processes of pedagogy. As Furedi argues:

... one of the most distinct and significant dimensions of academic and intellectual activity is that it does not often give customers what they want. Academic dialogue and instruction does not provide the customer with a clearly defined product. It does not seek to offer what the customer wants, but attempts to provide what the student needs. That is why forcing universities to prove themselves to their customers fundamentally contradicts the ethos of academic education. (Furedi 2009: 33)

We should not, therefore, become complicit in this attempt, as Furedi (2009) states, to culturally transform the meaning of a university student into a ‘customer’ that merely consumes education as a commodity that represents ‘value for money’.

While universities were transformed into ‘auditable commodities’ (Shore and Wright 1999) and exert intense forms of disciplinary power in order to change the subjectivities of academics, forms of resistance are possible and should be taken up.

Drawing on the work of Thomas and Davis (2005) and Scott (1990), Anderson (2008) explored the variety of ways in which academics themselves engage in resistance within their institutions by contesting managerial power through micro-resistance that operates on a continuum from 'collective hidden transcript' to 'overt resistance'. Similar to Shore and Wright, who suggest, for example, that social scientists should apply their knowledge to 'unmask the way power is disguised and the mechanisms through which it is made effective' (Shore and Wright 1999: 571), and that academics should construct their own criteria of what constitutes 'quality', Anderson states that her research revealed that:

Many academics condemned managerial practices as inefficient, ineffective, and as compromising academic standards of quality and excellence. ... In developing this critique, academics drew on notions of quality - as understood within traditional academic discourses of excellence in scholarly endeavour. (Anderson 2008: 256)

In resistance to the 'imperializing discourses of managerialism and QA mechanisms', many academics refused to take up the new alienating subjectivities constituted for them. Some, for example, replaced and/or substituted managerial student evaluation processes with genuine feed-back operations; others showed their resistance through submissions to public enquiries and/or critical publications; others challenged their Pro-Vice Chancellor during a university forum; some academics gave management initiatives thorough critical and lengthy feedback and/or refused to comply with them; others opposed their surveillance; and others voiced their protest to their students (Anderson 2008). Other forms of resistance, according to Anderson, were the avoidance of managerial requests and/or minimal compliance to these. 'Minimal compliance often effectively subverted the managerial agenda – complying with the letter, but not the spirit, of particular requirements' (Anderson 2008: 265).

To Shore and Wright (1999), the most fundamental aspect of resistance to the continuing attack of neoliberal managerialism is the development of a 'political reflexivity' which, if we can generalise Anderson's research outcomes, appears to be widespread – albeit undertaken in the heart of darkness of Australia's destructive neoliberal university system, an indicator of the 'lived realities' of academics in the realm of the commodified knowledge industrial complex. Whilst resistance can feel daunting given the present political and economic context within which HE operates, Lynch reminds us to refer back to the Gratz Declaration, signed in 2003, in which the European University Association expressed its disagreement with the ways in which GATS operates in relation to HE and made it clear that HE is not a commodity but has to serve public interests which cannot be reduced to the production of *homo economicus* or *homo rationalis*. '[W]e need to build a counter-hegemonic discourse, a discourse that is grounded in the principles of democracy and equality' (Lynch 2006: 11). 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.

Within the current context of neoliberalism and its mythically 'natural', quasi-'automatic' and all-powerful 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, the Con-Lib coalition continues to engage in public discourses that claim to foster democracy, 'community empowerment' and 'people

power' (McSmith 2010). Here is the core contradiction in current government thinking around which to foster a campaign for resistance. This is congruent with Snauwaert's exhortation concerning 'democratic educative' practices:

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 as a public good counters the present-day dominant obsession with performance and content standards in schools and universities that completely violate the goals of a democratic education and society.

Revitalising a sense of public good requires appealing to particular values – social cohesion, empathy and respect - absent from the dominant neoliberal discourse. It requires a counter discourse to the 'self-interested consumer' that actively discounts any sense of social or environmental responsibility. Universities have an important role to play in fostering this counter discourse. Moreover,

Social theory and social research can assist us in changing the way we view the relationship between universities, academic practices and society in order that a more engaged and developmental practice emerges in which mutual learning is a core element. (May 2005: 207)

As we stated elsewhere, education needs to be more consensual and based on dialogue in order to foster values and virtues that are required to engage critically, creatively and constructively, particularly given the ever shifting and uncertain socio-political context of contemporary times (Beckmann and Cooper 2005a). This includes engaging in a 'politics of difference' (Sawicki 1991) and generating counter discourses.

The seeds of these counter discourses 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 an 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. Reflecting on their experiences of academic life in Finland and the US, Suoranta and Moisio argue the idea of 'collective social enterprise' as a core aim of any such framework. Collective social enterprise involves collaborative teaching and learning methods that aim to facilitate the participants' understanding of oppressive practices within both educational establishments and the wider society, and seek to strengthen possibilities for generating collective action in pursuance of social transformation. It draws on Erich Fromm's (1976) distinction between two opposing modes of learning - learning to have and learning to be. In the case of the former, students learn passively and tend to reproduce 'knowledge' for instrumental reasons (fitting in with conventional thinking). In the case of the latter, learning is active and reflective, and can have unpredictable (potentially transformative)

effects. Its goal is to liberate participants from the status quo and enable them to reinvent themselves and their world anew (Suoranta and Moisio 2009) - an approach consistent with the critical pedagogy of Paulo Freire (1976). Suoranta and Moisio suggest a practical way of developing collective social enterprise within the scope of critical pedagogy through the vehicle of study circles - a means of facilitating discussion and critical thinking in addition to developing traditional academic skills. Study circles involve a number of democratic educational principles including a focus on process and collaboration. In addition to reading the relevant literature around the subject, study circles encourage participants to reflect on their own lived experiences - deploying different mediums to do this, including story telling and family biographies - and to relate these critically and reflexively to mainstream societal representations and academic theories. In this way, the learning process allows a sense of collective belonging where the end product represents a fusion of each participant's contribution to understanding - a collective social enterprise of shared learning. Such approaches to learning have been applied beyond academia by critical educators such as Peter McLaren, particularly in Latin America where he has been instrumental in establishing popular social movements such as the Fundación Peter McLaren de Pedagogía Crítica, an organisation of academics and activists in Northern Mexico set up to promote projects in critical pedagogy and praxis (Suoranta and Moisio 2009).

As Michael O'Sullivan observes, the contemporary global crisis of neoliberalism, wrought by the meltdown of financial markets after 2008, has generated:

... an opening for popular movements to make, in the words of labor economist Stanford (2008), 'a very fundamental critique' of neo-liberalism's economic project and to 'be thinking very big thoughts indeed, about how to change and ultimately replace it'. (O'Sullivan 2010: 228-229)

We concur with O'Sullivan's argument for the need to quickly take advantage of this opening and to organise around a campaign articulating a more coherent vision of society and its expression within HE, founded on 'democracy, equity, social justice and ecological balance' (O'Sullivan 2010: 229) - values which neoliberal societies appear incapable of delivering.

[I]f higher education is to fulfil a radical, liberating agenda, it does matter what learners learn, which frameworks of analysis and perspectives they adopt. ... The fundamental purpose of a truly *higher* education learning experience must centre on developing an understanding of the values of democracy and equality in social life, as well as personal development that hones critical expertise, the creative faculties and intellectual rigour. (Taylor et al. 2002: 159 - emphasis in original)

Generating these values and expertise requires rethinking how we evaluate research in higher education and, in particular, replacing the notion of performativity with a reading of research that values its contribution and commitment to human fulfilment and wellbeing. Here, we agree with Eryaman's call for a more dialectical and critical theory of evaluating research, based on a critical philosophical hermeneutics that recognises the instrumentalist neoliberal political and ideological agenda, largely interested in predetermined technical concerns about 'what works', driving much of this work in contemporary times. Eryaman argues the need to evaluate research in terms of its politics, including an assessment of what counts as knowledge, whose interest does it serve, and who stands to gain or lose out from its findings (Eryaman 2006).

Fulfilling this agenda will also require, as Hill argues and as McLaren has shown is practicable, critical educators agitating not only within the classroom but also ‘within other sites of cultural reproduction’ (Hill 2007: 131) – connecting with ‘different economic and social sectors, linking different strategies’ (Hill 2007: 134).

At a time when global capitalism appears in crisis due to the collapse of the financial markets, rising personal debt and poverty, the disintegration of the planet’s ecosystem and the permanent ‘war on terror’, Wrigley sees genuine possibilities for developing an active critical understanding of the flaws and contradictions inherent in neoliberal capitalist systems (Wrigley 2009). This is something, as Shannon argues, that will require ‘what Marx meant by praxis, the bond between thinking and doing in which ideas and ideals can only be vindicated and validated by some kind of activity’ (Shannon 2007: 173). This will require following up the exposure of these flaws and contradictions with the creation of strategies of resistance built on alliances between academics, students and other issue-based movements at both the local level (e.g. addressing the need for liveable incomes, health care and affordable decent housing) and the global (e.g. on opposing the GATS) (Shannon 2007). Local social movements – such as the International Association of Qualitative Inquiry, formed in response to neoconservative federal legislation on education in the US – must collaborate with global institutions including:

... nongovernmental organizations (NGOs), unions, liberal and social democratic media, political parties and political associations (such as Socialist International), the UN, and other international organizations and argue for transnational progressivism and postnational organic intellectualism embedded in international politics. (Eryaman 2006: 1214)

In a similar vein, Hill and Boxley propose mobilising support for a re-theorised egalitarian education, one that offers greater equality, comprehensiveness of provision, democratic control and social justice, on the back of the growing global movement for environmental and ecological justice – i.e. a ‘critical ecopedagogy’ that includes radical Left/Green principles such as: increased state funding; a more humanised education system; co-operation between institutions rather than competition; a richer and more varied curriculum that includes the fostering of critical awareness and social cooperation; and academics and administrators acting as role models of integrity and care (Hill and Boxley 2009).

Levidow concurs with the need to forge an international global network in order:

(a) to link all targets of the neoliberal attack worldwide, (b) to circulate analyses of anti-marketisation struggles, (c) to enhance solidarity efforts, and (d) to turn ourselves into collective subjects of resistance and learning for different futures. (Levidow 2007: 252)

In thinking about prospects for such a network of resistance to be forged, we find comfort in the growing support for a re-reading of Foucault’s understanding of the role of the intellectual as a facilitator for the re-establishment of a non-political party space for the public expression of ethically governed politics (Beckmann and Cooper 2005b). This trend resonates with Roberts and Peters’ reflections on the role and responsibility of the intellectual in the 21st

Century – for whom do they speak and to what extent do their activities make a difference? (Roberts and Peters 2008).

Conclusion

As this article has suggested, the impact of managerialism in HE has been damaging not only to the education process but to society in general, both in the UK and beyond. In particular, education's social purpose, for generating a critically aware, empathetic citizenry, freely engaged in democratic participation, has been eroded. However, as has also been shown, opposition to these harmful effects is possible, particularly through the development of a global anticapitalist alliance engaged in strategies of resistance against neoliberalism's 'forced normality' wherever this is exerted. As Fielding and Moss remind us, possibilities do exist for overthrowing 'the dictatorship of no alternatives ... and to pursue real utopias' (Fielding and Moss 2011: 1).

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