

Negotiating Neoliberalism

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Scope

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

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

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

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

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

Negotiating Neoliberalism

Developing Alternative Educational Visions

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NADIA EDMOND

6. BEYOND ‘ENTREPRENEURIALISM OF THE SELF’

What it Means to be a Student in the Neoliberal University

INTRODUCTION

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

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

HE IN THE UK

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

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

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

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

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

THE EMERGENCE OF THE 'NEOLIBERAL UNIVERSITY'

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

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

Market Competition – Entrepreneurialism and Diversification

The Further and Higher Education Act of 1992 which abolished the 'binary line' enabling polytechnics to become 'new universities' ensured expansion at reduced cost (Bathmaker, 2003) and increased competition. In the context of the 'mass' higher education (HE) system emerging in the 1990s, simply accessing HE was no longer a meaningful marker of social distinction and it became important for the older institutions to distinguish themselves from recent 'parvenus'. In 1993 the first UK university league table was published, closely followed by the formation of the 'Russell Group' of self-proclaimed 'leading universities' the following year. The introduction of fees in 1998 and successive hikes in subsequent years (up to £9,000 in 2012) and the lifting of the cap on total student numbers from 2015 have all intensified competition and marketization leading to increased institutional spend on marketing (Chapleo, 2013) as well as increased institutional debt to fund capital projects aimed at making institutions more attractive to prospective students (McGettigan, 2013).

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

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

N. EDMOND

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

Economic Instrumentalism and Financialization

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

and

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

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

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

But neither the risk not the desire to take it is equally distributed. In the neoliberal vision of the university, students are recruited to practices of 'entrepreneurialism of the self' in which study (and achieving qualifications) is only one component in a process of 'CV building' for the future job market. This reframing renders undergraduate study as introduction to what Boltanski and Chiapello have termed 'project capitalism' in which life is conceived as the extension of projects and individual self-developments based on values of flexibility, adaptability and employability and a morality of personal development and self-control (Boltanski & Chiapello, 2007).

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

N. EDMOND

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

N. EDMOND

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

CONCLUSION: BEYOND THE NEOLIBERAL STUDENT, RESISTANCE AS A PRACTICE

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

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