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TEACHERS, CURRICULUM AND THE NEOLIBERAL IMAGINARY OF EDUCATION

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For Giroux (2004, p. 44) neoliberalism is 'the defining ideology of the current historical moment'. Neoliberalism is a family of economic, political and administration theories that share assumptions including the self-interested nature of individual motivation, the naturally curbing and coordinating influence of markets on self-interest, and the vital role of government in the promotion of a pro-market citizenry (Olssen and Peters 2005). Education policy shaped by these principles has entrenched and exacerbated social inequality on an unprecedented, global scale (Rizvi and Lingard 2010). Neoliberal education policy is associated with reduction of public expenditure on education, erosion of educator autonomy, centralisation of curriculum and a focus on high-stakes testing and league tables (Giroux 2004). For many education researcher , neoliberalism is a fundamental threat to the educational project.

Rizvi and Lingard (2010) coined the term 'neoliberal imaginary' to capture the broad acceptance and facility in neoliberal ideas and norms evident in the practices of contemporary society.[1] They argue (in contrast with Giroux) that neoliberalism is more than an ideology, that the grip of neoliberalism is facilitated and manifested in ways that do not refer to ideas. Discussing the globalisation of neoliberal education policy, they explain that

> If many of the recent claims about globalisation and its implications for practice are ideological, the question remains as to how it is that people internalize them. How do these claims become part of their world view, shaping the ways in which they think about their social relations and forge conceptions of their future? In short, how is ideology translated into actual material practices steering

[1] Marginson (1997, p. 65) used the phrase 'market liberal imaginary' to refer to the utopian visions of economists Hayek and Friedman. This usage of imaginary contrasts with the concept of social imaginary in that it retains the sense of the productions of individual genius.

> our sense of possibilities and conceptions of the future? (Rizvi and Lingard 2010, p. 33)

In Rizvi and Lingard's view, the theory of social imaginaries offers a way to understand the translation of ideas - in this case neoliberal theory - into the bases of action: imagery, narrative and reflection in society. They draw on an emerging strand m social theory that has taken imagination out of its romantic, individualist framing to analyse collective thought and action (Appadurai 1996). The theory of social magmar1es has been elaborated by Canadian philosopher Charles Taylor, who used it to analyse the widely held sense of legitimacy surrounding modem democratic practices and acceptance of 'the economy' as an objective way of conceptualizing social relations (Hodge and Parker 2017). Taylor says that by 'social imaginary',

> …I mean something broader and deeper than the intellectual schemes people may entertain when they think about social reality in a disengaged mode. I am thinking, rather, of the ways people imagine their social existence, how they fit together with others, how things go on between them and their fellows, the expectations that are normally met, and the deeper normative notions and images that underlie these expectations. (Taylor 2004, p. 23).

Drawing on the theory of social imaginaries, Rizvi and Lingard (2010) seek to account for the infiltration of neoliberal ideas into educational practices. In this chapter I tackle an aspect of this broader phenomenon, employing Taylor's account of social imaginaries to analyse the impact of neoliberal theory on the curriculum work of teachers. In doing so I adapt Taylor's explanation of the process by which ideas are supposed to mesh with practices to analyse the extension of Public Choice Theory (a member of the neoliberal family) to authorise restriction of teacher control of curriculum. There is a history of controversy over educator control of curriculum (Apple and Teitelbaum 1986; Timmins 1996). What neoliberal theory - and Public Choice Theory in particular - offers is a new and potent rationale for limiting teacher autonomy. The neoliberal concept of the knowledge economy raises the stakes considerably in relation to curriculum. As knowledge becomes a new kind of commodity (Olssen and Peters 2005), curriculum stands out as a significant factor in economic calculation and form of investment. I go on to highlight implications of the transformation of the educational imaginary for teachers and curriculum, including the embedding of a 'moral image' of educators as self-interested, the obfuscation of the role of neoliberal theory in education, and the formation of a 'horizon' that stymies imagination and thought about alternatives to neoliberal educational practices.

1. Neoliberal Theory

Crucial to the analytic framework used in this chapter is the translation of what Rizvi and Lingard (2010) call 'ideology' and Taylor (2004) calls 'ideas' and 'idealisations', into the social imaginary. By taking this approach, the theory of social imaginaries departs from influential treatments of the formation of widespread ways of thinking and acting, such as that of Foucault. In Taylor's account, analysis of high theory authored by big-name intellectuals in history sheds light on contemporary modes of thought, whereas post-structural accounts eschew this strategy - as an example of idealism - the view that ideas have independent force to shape history and society. But Taylor is at pains to forestall the charge of idealism. He makes the point that social

imaginaries historically precede the emergence of any given theory, and offers an account of the 'infiltration' or 'penetration' of ideas into the social imaginary as an alternative to the binary of theory and practice. Taylor's account derives from detailed analysis of practices in the context of what he sees as the historically unique pervasiveness of theory in modernity. His analysis, then, can be seen as an attempt to explain the influence of theory on practices in a highly theoretical society while avoiding idealism (Hodge and Parker 2017). The process of penetration of ideas into the social imaginary is considered in more detail in the next section. In this section, neoliberalism as a set of ideas or ideology is summarised with a view to clarifying the theory that has shaped contemporary curriculum practice.

Sociological and social-theoretical accounts of neoliberalism highlight the fact that the term's reference is actually to a cluster or family of theories about economics and government. Olssen and Peters (2005) identify a set of theories including theories of human behaviour, markets and the role of government that have developed within the discipline of economics, as well as contemporary theories that reflect and articulate the neoliberal turn in contemporary economic and policy theory. What makes them a family rather than a mere bundle of theories is that they share certain assumptions and have overlapping foci. There are three basic assumptions evident in neoliberal theories.

A cardinal assumption of neoliberal theory is centuries old. This understanding of human nature was articulated by philosophers and political theorists in Britain and Europe in the 1600s. In an era of social upheaval, these theorists were concerned to bring an analysis of humans and their society to bear on the problem of political organisation. A key theorist of the early modem era, Adam Smith, analysed our individual nature and how we act in society. Smith's analysis produces one of the key assumptions of neoliberalism: the fundamentally self-

interested nature of individual humans. He illustrates his thesis about humans with the example of some everyday occupations:

> It is not from the benevolence of the butcher, the brewer or the baker that we expect our dinner but their regard to their own interest. We address ourselves not to their humanity but to their self-love, and never talk to them of our own necessities but of their advantages. (Smith 1981, pp. 26-27)

This oft-quoted excerpt captures Smith's understanding of individual behaviour, which has been appropriated by economists and made into the cornerstone of neoliberal theory. Smith articulated another important assumption of liberal and neoliberal economics: the beneficent nature of markets. For Smith, it is the market that naturally curbs, coordinates and renders socially beneficial the sum of individual self-interested activity. The market stops individuals from pursuing their self-interest to the neglect or destruction of others, for the market will punish extremes of self-interest by engendering competition. Such is the responsive, almost intelligent effect of the market mechanism on self-interest that Smith called it 'the invisible hand'. Together, self-interested activity of individuals and the coordinating effect of markets comprise the engine of the 'wealth of nations'. Smith's understanding of the benevolence of the market mechanism has also come down to us as a fundamental assumption of neoliberalism.

Olssen and Peters (2005) emphasise the importance of another idea to the constitution of neoliberalism: that of government as a promoter of markets market behaviours. They note that the liberal economic theory of Hayek, for example, argued for minimal government on the premise that any attempt to regulate or augment the free operation of markets can only be disabling to the natural engine of wealth and ultimately a threat to individual prosperity and freedom. However, other economists such as James Buchanan believed government could play a role in constructing and promoting markets, particularly where the mark mechanism did not naturally take root such as public services. Buchanan's (1984) Public Choice Theory (PCT) is one of the distinctively neoliberal economic theories, and its object was to extend the reach of the market mechanism into the public sphere.

Buchanan and his colleagues had to take on an established way of thinking about public sector workers that positioned them as capable of serving the interests of others. For Buchanan (1984), part of the mission of PCT was dispelling what he called the 'romance' of this image of public sector workers. To do this, he called on that foundational premise of liberal economics, the self-interested individual, and argued that it makes more sense to view public servants as individuals who will take every opportunity to pursue their own interests, even at the expense of those they are paid to serve. With the assistance of analysis by his colleagues of

the inevitable ‘rent seeking behaviour’ of these professionals, Buchanan demonstrated that in the absence of natural market mechanisms the public was at the mercy of that fundamental drive that public sector workers must exercise in virtue of being human.

2. Neoliberal Theory into Practice

Taylor (2004) describes the mechanisms by which early modernist theory was conveyed into the practices and imaginary of contemporary society. For Taylor, social imaginaries are transformed by ideas when theory is bundled with new or modified social practices. He is at pains to avoid the charge of idealism in his account. Idealism is the tradition that ideas have separate force in history to shape practices. For Taylor, however, practices always have ideas that are ‘internal’ to them that can be abstracted and elaborated in the form of theory. At the same time it is possible to repackage ideas with practices. Taylor’s account of theory and practice, then, is modular-practices always contain ideas, but the connection between practices and ideas is not fixed and new permutations of theory-practice bundles are always possible. In his account of the ‘penetration’ of the political theories of Grotius and Locke into the social imaginary, Taylor describes historical changes that initially involved these and other theorists engaged in ‘discursive practices’ in which ‘idealisations’ of political order were formulated. Elite groups that were struggling to maintain control in conditions of upheaval used their power to modify and create institutions and practices to shore up their position. To make sense of these changes - to themselves and to those they wanted to convince - governing classes who were close to discursive practices drew on new outlooks provided by the theorists. According to Taylor, dissemination of these ideas valved simplification or ‘glossing’ to produce widely accessible ‘outlooks’ that could provide compelling reasons for new or modified practices. In the process, practices served to ‘schematise’ or refract and disseminate theory. In what Taylor 2004, p. 30) calls ‘the dense sphere of common practice’, theories take on localised forms with a life of their own, becoming tied more closely with practices, and articulated in the forms characteristic of a social imaginary, that is, as stories, images, proverbs and norms. It is possible for newly internalised ideas to be extracted and elaborated later on, producing new theories potentially consistent but not identical with the penetrating theory. In this way, through the process of first becoming associated with practices through the machinations of elite groups, then by being glossed and schematised, theories can come to infiltrate the social imaginary.

The previous section acquainted us with products of the discursive practices of neoliberal theorists. The conditions that spurred the theory-making of these economists was the

breakdown of ‘welfare state’ that had been guided by so-called ‘welfare economics’ (Timmins 1996). The same conditions provided impetus for elite groups to refashion and initiate practices and institutions. Globalisation provided a stage for introducing new practices, and neoliberal theory, glossed and disseminated through the action of academic, pedagogic, policy and mass-media mechanisms, furnished the new outlook needed to make sense of the changes. The passage of key elements of neoliberal theory into educational practice has been analysed by education researchers including Marginson (1997), who drew attention to the process and outcomes of the implementation of market mechanisms. He explained how practices of dezoning, parental choice and new funding models were all strategies to implement educational markets. Marginson’s analysis of New Zealand and Australian education systems suggests the process served to reduce government funding of schooling and entrench privilege. Another education researcher, Giroux (2004), described the inequitable results of the withdrawal of government funding and public influence on education. His arguments focus attention on the corporatisation of education in the US and some of the more severe consequences of neoliberal policy such as the criminalisation of young people from less privileged schools.

While marketisation and abrogation of Government responsibility for public education associated with neoliberal education policy produce shifts in the contexts of teaching, the infiltration of PCT into educational practice directly affects teacher work. The latter process can be considered in the light of Taylor’s concepts of glossing and schematisation. In his sociology of school effectiveness, Angus (1993) cites examples of the application of PCT to school reform. For instance, Scheerens (l992) articulates the value of PCT for identifying problems in schools and improving their ‘effectiveness’. He joined other educational administration researchers in advocating the value of PCT’s analysis of public sector organisations for improving schools. According to this gloss, teachers can be viewed as members of a ‘professional bureaucracy’, which explains some of the difficulties encountered by administrators seeking efficiencies in schools. Scheerens asserts that,

> There is little room for interference of the leadership with the work of the professionals [i.e. teachers], nor is work-related interaction among the professionals common; they operate autonomously and resist rationalisation of their skills. Consequently it is hard for educational administrators to control the work of the professionals even when cases of dysfunction are clear. Professionals opposed strict planning and external evaluation of their work. (1992 p. 22)

Considering the challenge posed by teachers operating as professionals to school effectiveness, Scheerens presents a solution:

> The image of schools as professional bureaucracies explains the general resistance to change on the part of these organizations. Leadership technological innovation and adaptation to environmental changes are not likely channels to make professionals alter their routines. The best approach to change, according to this organizational image, would be long-term alteration of the training programmes of teachers, with respect to teaching technologies and educational ideologies (for instance, when changing an orientation towards personal development into a more achievement-oriented mode). (1992, p. 22)

A different analysis in prescription is offered by Finegold and Soskice (1988) in relation to post-compulsory education and training (ET) in Britain. They elaborate the relevance of PCT in this context, as well as 'Agency Theory', a neoliberal administrative theory that advocates limiting the autonomy of 'agents' through prescriptive contractual arrangements that bind them to the interest of the paying 'principal'. Finegold and Soskice's analysis illustrates the glossing process, channelling the precepts of both PCT and Agency Theory to produce a succinct account of how to deal with the one-side interest of educators:

> Running a complex ET system is a principal-agent problem. However clear the ideas of the government (the principal) and however effective its own research and development activities, the co-operation of teachers and trainers as agents is essential to efficient course development, assessment, etc. But educators will have their own interests (Japan is a case in point where educationalists dominate the development of sixteen-eighteen education, business has no influence, and where rote learning still plays are major role.) A more effective solution is to balance the interests of educators against the interests of employers and those of employees. Hence the case for involving their representatives as additional agents, to bring about more balance objectives. (1988, p. 47)

While Scheerens suggest that reforming initial training of educators will eventually bring 'achievement-oriented' professionals into the system, Finegold and Soskice advocated a more direct, structural 'solution' that involves balancing the interests of educators with those of the other parties in effect they propose a mechanism that mimics the dynamics of a market, which, since Adam Smith, has been considered the natural means of curbing and coordinating diverse interests.

Post-compulsory vocational education has been a traditional target for government reform efforts due to perceptions of a direct link with national economic performance. The analysis of Finegold and Soskice is a contribution to a neoliberal conceptualisation of reform in this area, and numerous policy measures have been put in place in countries like New Zealand, Australia and Britain to engineer clearer alignment between vocational education and economic goals. One of these policies involves the use of 'competency-based training' (CBT) to limit educator autonomy in relation to curriculum (Hodge 2016). The CBT approach hails from the US and

Canada where it played a role in reforming teacher education (in the US) and served to sideline educators from the development of youth training programs (in Canada). CBT possess a unique structure that allows a sharp division of labour between representatives of employers and educators. This division of labour characterises implementations of CBT in countries, where it was a component of neoliberal reform. The division of labour here is striking because all responsibility for curriculum is transferred to employer representatives and responsibility for 'delivery' (a new instrumentalist term for teaching) is left with educators. CBT thus presents a mechanism for structurally limiting educator influence on curriculum.

The specific vocational goals of post-compulsory education perhaps make it appear that such control of curriculum by employers is justifiable, and that schooling presents a qualitatively different case. But control of curriculum has been a fraught issue for the whole educational project since the birth of humanism in ancient Greece and Rome. At stake is the reproduction of society itself. As early as Plato, intellectuals have articulated curriculum visions, with powerful institutions dictating their preferred interpretation of what is important to teach in different periods. Apple and Teitelbaum (1986) explain that teacher control of curriculum is a relatively recent practice, although powerful interests continue to attack this role. Their argument for teachers continuing to play a role in determining curriculum is that like other workers, to be effective teachers need to have a holistic grasp of the process in which they play a central part. This means actively contributing to the determination of curriculum that they are required to teach as well as facility in the more 'technical' activities of conveying curriculum and promoting and measuring learning with respect to it. In the West, mandated education levels for teachers are high meaning that teachers should be well equipped to contribute to the complex task of deciding what, of all that could be taught, should be taught at a particular time and place to particular students. Any attempt to separate conception and execution in the case of curriculum undermines and wastes this special form of expertise with demoralising consequences.

In the neoliberal era, control of curriculum is as contested as ever. Given the goal of neoliberal policy to foster a market-oriented, entrepreneurial citizenry (Olssen and Peters 2005), what educators teach is of utmost importance. Neoliberal reform has seen the strengthened resolve of governments to take control of school curriculum. Timmins (1996) traced the struggle over school curriculum in Britain, from a situation where politicians were assumed to have no authority to interfere with teacher control of curriculum to neoliberal reforms by the Thatcher government that resulted in strong centralisation of school curriculum. The general rationale of PCT applied in this instance, of the need to find ways to limit educator

autonomy, while national economic and social imperatives underwrote the need for government influence in what had been described by politicians as 'the secret garden' of curriculum into which only teachers were allowed (Timmins 1996, p. 322). In the years since the first waves of neoliberal reform to education curriculum has been centralised in states across the world and teacher influence reduced or curtailed. A contemporary example of this practice is the so-called 'C2C' ('Curriculum to Classroom') initiative in Queensland. Under this curriculum model, not only is curriculum centralised, but detailed programs and lesson plans are offered to teachers to spare them the effort of interpretation. Such 'teacher proof' curriculum models are common in nations that have embraced the neoliberal agenda.

3. Teachers, Curriculum and the Neoliberal Imaginary

Rizvi and Lingard's (2010) analysis of the spread of neoliberal policy uses the concept of social imaginaries to articulate a widespread acceptance of neoliberal ideas and norms that are not necessarily conveyed or located conceptually. Like Taylor (2004), Rizvi and Lingard (2010) distinguish between ideology and imaginaries. Ideology literally concerns the ideas and idealisations associated with practices, while a social imaginary, especially as it is defined by Taylor, embraces more. A distinctive sense of moral order is associated with an imaginary, a sense of how things should go on between people. An imaginary also forms the background of understanding that enables particular practices and self-interpretations. A social imaginary exhibits both moral and explanatory features. In the context of particular practices, the imaginary furnishes the broad sense of what is legitimate and why things are done in certain ways. Specific norms and understandings consistent with the imaginary form the immediate background of engagement in particular practices. It is at this latter level that 'ideas' feature. In the context of the present analysis of teachers and curriculum, the formation of a neoliberal imaginary related to practices is problematic at a number of levels.

A major problem with a neoliberal imaginary of education foregrounded by analysis in terms of the theory of social imaginaries is the wide acceptance of the neoliberal image of the educator. Taylor (2004) argued that for a theory to penetrate the social imaginary it must possess both explanatory and normative power. PCT clearly associates public sector professionals with a moral evaluation. It tells us that when people employed to serve others are given autonomy without market mechanisms to curb their interests, inefficiency and neglect inevitably result. Translated into educational practice PCT authorises an unmistakably moral interpretation of teachers' work. Curriculum practice in the neoliberal era implements and affirms the moral image of the educator as a kind of worker whose autonomy is suspect. In the

context of these practices any attempt to exert professional autonomy can be interpreted morally, as can be measures to balance educator interests. Restricted teacher autonomy eventually seems to be the right thing to do to protect the interests of learners, parents, government and society.

A second problem with neoliberal education practice anticipated by the theory of social imaginaries is theoretical disjunction. When theories infiltrate the imaginary they do so via practices. Theories are glossed or simplified for learning and application. Generalisations, keyword vocabularies and fragments of arguments circulate and are on hand to give sense to new and modified practices. Teachers, students, parents and employers become acquainted with reasons for changes. Central concepts of neoliberalism such as global competition, knowledge economy, high skills equilibrium, small government, parental choice and industry leadership infiltrate the language of education and help to rat10nahse new practices. In addition, schematisation of theory into practice has the effect of translating between orders, from ideas to actions and arrangements. But schematisation also means the localisation and naturalisation of theory in the context of practice. Taylor (2004) explains that from such a setting ideas can be abstracted and formalised as people engaged in these practices seek better understanding or are invited or challenged to explain their actions. Prompted to theorise, those engaged in practices tap into the ideas Taylor believes are internal to practice. Through glossing and schematisation, changed education practices such as curriculum work are understood and explained in new ways that restate, diversify and reinforce neoliberal categories. Glossing and schematisation disconnect practices and thinking in relation to them from the infiltrating theory. The theoretical disjunction produced by the transformation of imaginaries entrenches the inaccessibility of first principles, making it difficult or impossible for those engaged in practices to directly interrogate and critique the infiltrating theory. Teachers and others close to neoliberal curriculum practice only have access to the theory that defines their practice in the form of glosses that do not expose the details and assumptions of the theory, or local interpretations of practice that has already been structured in accordance with the theory through schematisation. The theoretical disjunction produced by glossing and schematisation in curriculum practice effectively insulates the principles and assumptions of PCT from scrutiny by those most affected by the new arrangements.

A third problem of the penetration of neoliberal theory into the social imaginary is that imaginaries form a ‘horizon’ of possibility that limits as much as it enables thought and imagination. Social imaginaries are the background against which particular practices are engaged and understood. As the basis for understanding, actions and norms, the imaginary

powerfully constrains generation of alternatives. With reference to the infiltration of theories of moral order into the imaginary of modernity, Taylor (2004, p. 17) explains that 'once we are well installed in the modem social imaginary, it seems the only possible one, the only one that makes sense'. The profound grip exercised by the imaginary on our everyday consciousness is such that imagining alternatives to the practices we engage in is difficult. According to Taylor, the social imaginary 'constitutes a horizon we are virtually incapable of thinking beyond' (2004, p. 185). In the context of education, the horizon-setting effect of the imaginary militates against coherent thinking about alternative curriculum practices while fostering a sense of resignation in the face of reforms such as we see in an instructional design manual for teachers:

> We will analyze our learners, and their context, but we aren't really going to analyze their needs. This is, in general, because within the classroom, there are requirements and those needs are often determined at a much higher, even a community or political, level. We all realize that there are some standards, for example, that we don't necessarily think make sense for a given developmental level, but they're there, and pretty immutable. (Carr-Chellman 2010, p. 3)

The horizon-setting feature of the neoliberal educational imaginary suggests that even if educators object to limitations on their autonomy, they may eventually be hard-pressed to articulate other possibilities since current practices are considered 'immutable'. The horizon-setting character claimed for social imaginaries suggests that Apple and Teitelbaum's (1986) critique of restrictions on educator control of curriculum needs to be amended. They argued that when teachers are removed from the curriculum making process their curriculum skills 'atrophy'. The theory of social imaginaries suggests that in addition to loosing a sense of the whole process and the skills to contribute to curriculum construction, educators can loose the ability to even conceive of an education practice in which they actively contribute to curriculum. In an era where centrally designed curriculum packages are implemented by technician teachers who work in an environment where such limited roles make sense and seem legitimate, it may be near impossible to think through to new ways of practicing curriculum.

4. Critiquing and Reimagining Curriculum in Neoliberal Times

The analysis presented here suggests that contemporary curriculum practice is a site for the glossing and schematisation of neoliberal theory, and a vector for embed- ding PCT's moral image of the educator. It also suggests that while neoliberal theory can inform change to practices and the imaginary, the theory itself is screened off from scrutiny by people engaged in those practices. A problematic implication of the theory of social imaginaries for the influence of neoliberal theory on education is that whatever transformations are brought about,

the result may be the formation of a 'horizon' upon thinking and imagination that forestalls alternatives. In this final section, three research needs are sketched that are prompted by the foregoing explorations.

The first concerns the moral image of the educator that is circulated and potentially embedded in the social imaginary in the process of its transformation by neoliberal theory. Specifically, PCT - a key element of neoliberalism - harbours the valuation of public sector professionals, including educators, as given to the neglect of the interests of those they are paid to serve. In the case of educators, PCT implies that they will tend to neglect the interests of learners, parents, employers and governments. The theory of social imaginaries suggests that the moral charge that attaches to this understanding of educators can promote an image of educators as self-interested and whose professional autonomy needs to be circumscribed. This notion will come to seem normal, and efforts to curb the seemingly natural neglect and excesses of educators will seem legitimate. The moral image of the educator embedded by a neoliberal transformation of the imaginary demands research and critique. The analysis of PCT needs to be inspected closely to determine the interest structure of educators. What is to be noted is that the work of Buchanan and colleagues focussed primarily on bureaucracies. Potentially, teachers are not homogenous with this group. It may well be that a complex interest structure is at play in the formation of educator identities in which it becomes possible to conceive of a convergence of educator interests and those of learners and related groups. This can be both theoretical and empirical work, to interrogate and re-theorise the premises of PCT and to understand the reality of educator interests.

A second need for research is more generic. Strategically, it addresses the problem of theoretical disjuncture created by processes of glossing, schematisation and practice re-theorisation that accompany the transformation of imaginaries. In the case of the penetration of neoliberal theory into educational imaginary, the threat is that the guiding theory becomes cut off from consideration by people engaged in educational practices. Those most affected by neoliberal reforms may be unable to apprehend and challenge the assumptions and arguments of neoliberal theory because of the convoluted and segmented process of theoretical transformation. The process hides neoliberal theory behind glosses, and as the theory is schematised in social practices and infiltrates the social imaginary, those engaged in educational practices draw on the resources of the imaginary to understand their actions. Thus when they conceptualise their own practices it is a contextualised and normalised version of the penetrating theory they recreate. Research into this process is required to test the value of the theory of social imaginaries for analysing theory-led reforms, but also to promote collective

remembrance of the aetiology of reform. By interrogating the process of the neoliberal transformation of the educational imaginary, educators and other affected groups have a chance of understanding and critiquing curriculum reform.

Perhaps the most stubborn effect to be anticipated from a transformed social imaginary is the construction of horizons on thought and imagination. If a neoliberal imaginary of education has indeed formed, then it will be difficult to imagine alternatives to the practices that have been affected by neoliberalism. With respect to curriculum practices it will seem legitimate to limit teacher control - given the moral image of educators that goes with the new imaginary - but if teachers object or feel alienated then responding by framing different ways of doing curriculum may not be an accessible option. Because educators have one foot in the area they teach and the other in the world of education, they have the perspective from which to understand and appraise what is important to teach and make the relevant decisions that lead to learner experience of curriculum. While it is no doubt true, as Apple and Teitelbaum (1986) argue, that curriculum skills atrophy when scope to contribute to this part of the educational process is denied teachers, another issue is imagining that this kind of contribution is possible and modes by which it can be exercised. Centralised and often commercial production of curriculum packages is only one way of constructing curriculum, but in the neoliberal era it may seem to teachers that there is no other way. To challenge the infiltration of neoliberal theory into education, then, it may be valuable for researchers to directly engage with the question of alternative ways of making curriculum. In particular, it may be worthwhile to examine ways to draw upon the dual expertise of educators- understanding fields of knowledge and understanding education-which is currently wasted by neoliberal models of curriculum. Imagining curriculum alternatives therefore stands to not only disturb the horizons set on thought and imagination by a neoliberal imaginary, but to realise the potential squandered in neoliberalism's drive to efficiency.

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