

ON THE MORALITY OF
NEOLIBERAL EDUCATIONAL POLICIES

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ta' Malta

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Abstract

Carlos Grima

On the Morality of Neoliberal Education Policies

This thesis consists of a philosophical inquiry into the morality of neoliberal education policies. The first section comprises a definition of neoliberalism, both as an instance of political rationality, and as a specific form of governance. This is followed by an identification of the core principles that underpin neoliberalism as a political rationality, in an effort to construct a deep understanding of the priorities it sets and the trade-offs it endorses. Subsequently, I outline the aims of a neoliberal agenda for compulsory education, while claiming that this entails three priorities that I categorise as efficiency, consumer sovereignty, and employability. Once the neoliberal priorities for compulsory education are identified, I move on to classify the array of policies that need to be institutionalised in order to achieve the set aims. I argue that these can be divided into three categories, namely, policies for educational accountability, policies to enable parental choice, and policies for human capital development. In light of this, I engage with the effects of the neoliberalisation of compulsory education on teachers and students, especially in relation to the issues of impoverished education, segregation, inequality of educational provision, and other repercussions. I conclude that, for those who adhere to a conception of justice where individual negative freedom is prioritised over social equality and manifest the readiness to pay the high moral cost of increased inequality, neoliberal policies are the preferable option, despite their disadvantages. At the same time, I sustain that compensatory measures would need to be implemented concurrently to counteract such policies' tendency to weaken social cohesion. Unless precautionary measures are put in place, neoliberal education policies may potentially become counterproductive and therefore, not only immoral from egalitarian perspectives, which would demand further distributional efforts, but also from a neoliberal standpoint, through their potential hindrance of economic growth.

Keywords: Neoliberalism, Hyper-Accountability, Parental Choice, Entrepreneurial Self, Compulsory Education, Education Policy

Declaration of Authenticity

I, the undersigned, declare that this thesis is my original work, and has not been presented in fulfilment of other course requirements at the University of Malta or any other university.

Signature _____

Date _____

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Dedication

To Saint Rita of Cascia

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Chapter One: Introduction

1.1 Purpose of the Thesis

This thesis consists of a philosophical inquiry into the morality of neoliberal education policies related to compulsory education. The aim is to explore some of the moral implications of the neoliberalisation of compulsory education by answering the following five questions:

1. What is neoliberalism?
2. What are the aims of the neoliberal agenda for compulsory education?
3. How is it possible to reach these aims according to neoliberalism?
4. Are the policies coherent with their underpinning principles?
5. What are the moral implications of neoliberal education policies?

1.2 Significance of the Inquiry

Many reasons make answering the chosen questions a worthwhile philosophical endeavour. Firstly, due to the complexity of the issues, there is still an incomplete understanding of the effects of neoliberalism on compulsory education. The philosophical explorations within this thesis contribute to the enrichment of this understanding by spelling out the implications that neoliberalism has on education and by filling in some gaps in the literature. This contributes to our ability to move beyond an interpretation of neoliberalism that often seems “to be used to mean anything ‘large-scale, out there, impacting upon me, that I don’t really understand and don’t much like’” (Tight, 2018, p. 4). Reading this thesis should enable the reader to acquire a deeper understanding of the neoliberalisation of compulsory education and related moral implications.

This thesis is also significant because it can potentially be used productively by policymakers at different levels. By taking into consideration the arguments within this thesis, decision-makers can have a more complete picture of the moral dimension of such policies. Thirdly, answering the chosen research questions enriches the discipline of philosophy of education by providing a more detailed understanding of contemporary education policies and reforms. This thesis provides evidence that education policy making “...is saturated with assumptions, concepts, beliefs, values and commitments which, if not themselves of a philosophical kind, are apt for philosophical attention” (McLaughlin, 2000, p. 4521). Specifically, this thesis aims at contributing to the ongoing philosophical debate related to areas of educational accountability, parental choice, entrepreneurial selfhood, teacher identity and social cohesion.

Fourthly, this thesis is significant because it provides answers to five important questions that deserve a detailed answer. The identification of the core principles, the identification of the neoliberal aims for education and the categorisation of the resulting policies shed important light on the topic. In this sense, the thesis is also significant because these may serve as a basis for further debate that could help to get the discipline closer to a fuller understanding of the neoliberalisation of compulsory education. If, as Rorty claims, it is the case that “philosophical progress is...not a matter of problems being solved, but of descriptions being improved” (Rorty, 2004, p. 36), then this thesis provides a valid contribution, because it contributes to a richer understanding of the neoliberalisation process of compulsory education.

1.3 Clarifications on Positionality

My interest in the topic of this thesis began 20 years ago when I graduated and started to work as a teacher in diverse educational settings including primary education and family literacy programmes. At the same time, I pursued my interests as an academic and read for a master’s degree in philosophy of education, followed by a master’s degree in educational management and then other professional qualifications related to education. While actively involved in both theory and practice, I could not help but notice a mismatch between the two: the neoliberalisation of educational practice and the overall anti-neoliberal stance of educational theory. This mismatch triggered my interest in the neoliberal reforms of education and urged me to write this thesis. As regards what I was reading in educational theory texts, there seemed to be a unanimous agreement that “we know who the bad guys are (the neoliberals); we know who the good guys are (those who suffer at the hands of neoliberal reforms or resist these reforms); and we know what the right political commitments are (more social welfare, more solidarity, more equalisation, more justice)” (Collier, 2011, p. 250). On the contrary, when seeing what was taking place internationally, I often noted, more surveillance, less trust in teachers, increased marketisation, and heightened attention on employability.

Considering my intimate relationship with the subject, it would be best to commence with clarifications related to my positionality and then with an engagement with the issues. Bearing in mind that there is no “view from nowhere” (Nagel, 1989), no value-free educational research and no value-free educational philosophy, declaring my positionality in relation to the matters at hand is a way to enable the reader to filter out some of the

inevitable bias. Such disclosure is part of my effort to be transparent about how my background, including “social location, personal experience, and theoretical viewpoint” (Suffla et al., 2015, p. 16), may be affecting my views. No matter how reflexive I try to be, I have accumulated lived experiences and inevitably internalised beliefs, norms, values, interests, and attitudes of which I may not even be fully aware. Other elements of my identity, such as my political stance, culture, class, religion, race, gender, sexuality, and age also potentially extend or limit my ability to comprehend others’ points of view. Therefore, my identity and my assumptions affect this thesis profoundly, starting from the specific questions I chose to address and ending with the conclusions made. Consequently, the least that can be done is to be explicit about one’s identities, and the lenses through which one sees the world.

Some elements of my identity provide me with inherent privileges of which I have to make a conscious effort to become aware. Being Caucasian, I may not be sensitive enough towards the racial dimensions of social segregation. Being male, I may not be sufficiently sensitive to the negative effects that austerity policies have on women. Having had positive experiences at school, I may not be fully aware of the effects that the neoliberalisation of compulsory education has on those whose experience may not have been positive. This means that throughout this thesis I need to make an extra effort to ensure that I keep in mind the effects that the policies that I am exploring might have on “the other”. Three aspects of my identity that may impinge on my interpretations and final judgments, are my employment as a school inspector (for the last 10 years), my status as a taxpayer and my political views. This short section provides some information to enable the reader to take my own positionality into account and enable them to put my views and my conclusions into perspective.

One of the aspects of my identity that may have influenced my views is the fact that for the last decade, I have been employed as a school inspector. As a result, I have met with the best of teachers and with the least effective ones. I dealt with the most able of head teachers and with others who fared less well. Considering this, it is not inconceivable that my membership in the inspectorate influences my views about such matters as hyper-accountability, local management of schools, performance-related pay, teacher professionalism and other related issues. Informing the reader of this element of my identity is a way to mitigate such bias. A second aspect of my identity that may affect my views as expressed in this thesis may originate from the fact that for the last almost 20 years, as a

taxpayer, I have been paying about 30% of my income in Income Tax while also paying about 20% of Value Added Tax on most of my purchases. This means that I have been in a situation where the state takes about half of my income. This element of my identity may undermine my ability to view issues related to social benefits without prejudice. A third aspect of my identity that impacts my writings originates from my political beliefs. Even though I agree with Hayek that “the pursuit of the ideal of justice (like the pursuit of the ideal of truth) does not presuppose that it is known what justice (or truth) is” (Hayek, 1976, p. 54), I hold specific views on social practices that I consider to be unjust. These views influence my judgments, which in turn impact my positionality, hence the reason for this section where I clarify my political views in order to allow the reader to contextualise my judgments.

I believe that all individuals are free to follow their chosen ends in the ways they see fit, as long as they allow others to do the same, and as long as they cause no harm to others. No one is entitled to impose their conception of the good life on others, and no coercion is justifiable to address anyone’s conduct as long as such behaviour has no repercussions on others’ freedom. Coercion is wrong because it shows no consideration for individuals’ ability to think for themselves and live the life they see fit. In relation to this belief, I also think that unlimited state power is wrong even in cases where there is a strong democratic majority rule. Therefore, enacting safeguards to protect individuals from the rule of the majority, and limit what the state is allowed to do, is legitimate. In fact, coercion should only be employed by the state, and only to halt coercion by persons on others or in cases to address issues of absolute poverty.

While I believe that coercion is wrong because it is a violation of individual freedom, I recognise only intentional coercion where one person is at the arbitrary will of another (or others) to be morally objectionable, so that for example, the law, when understood as general rules indiscriminately applicable to everyone, does not fall within such a category. Intentional constraints on individual freedom by other persons are wrong, except when intended to prevent harm to others, but other general life restrictions due to, for example, limited intellect, physical strength, limited economic resources, cannot be considered to be an attack on one’s freedom, even if these limit the range of choices available. These are limitations on one’s capability to choose, but not an act of coercion, because in such cases, no one is interfering with one’s decisions to follow a specific way forward or another. I believe that freedom is best defined as “...the absence of constraints on the individual’s

choice among options” (Buchanan & Lomasky, 1984, p. 12) and that the notion of freedom cannot be stretched to mean “freedom for fulfilment” (Cotterrell, 1988, p. 10) or freedom from want, except in situations of absolute poverty where this would constitute disregard to human dignity. I do not believe that it is the case such negative conception of freedom is problematic due to the fact that it permits that some citizens live without what some regard as meaningful freedoms. I think that the alternative, that is, forced redistribution to ensure that more citizens achieve ‘meaningful’ freedom, is an overall moral regression: it increases coercion while it enables people in power to play god when implementing their preferred conception of justice. This is especially dangerous because it occurs in a context where those in power can inevitably only command very limited knowledge about individuals’ wishes. While I realise that this may be a legitimate view to hold for those who conceptualise freedom positively, I do not believe that it can justifiably be said that workers are unfree because their only option is to sell their labour, or that those able-bodied adults who do not hold marketable assets such as cultural capital, intellect, wealth or the will to work hard, somehow have a natural claim on others to be compensated. I also think so because I disagree with the view that freedom “is only one among many good things, and that it should be balanced against other values, such as equality, or the common good” (Brighthouse & Swift, 2003, p. 365). I am more inclined to agree with the view that “freedom can be preserved only if it is treated as a supreme principle which must not be sacrificed for particular advantages” (Hayek, 1973, p. 57), not even for the admittedly noble aim of an egalitarian social arrangement.

In spite of my views in relation to the importance of negative freedom, I do not regard individual negative freedom to be an absolute, inviolable value. I believe that not caring for the weak is morally wrong, and that everyone’s duty of humanitarian assistance towards people living in absolute poverty can supersede the principle of personal freedom in cases where poverty threatens human dignity. Therefore, I see it as a moral commitment of every individual to contribute to those who require support, being poor, sick, old or in some way victims of unfortunate circumstance, in the name of “our equal human dignity” (Nozick, 1989, p. 286) that demands that no human is allowed to suffer in cases where others can assist, such as when ensuring a minimum income for sustenance to those who require assistance and are genuinely trying (even when their efforts prove unsuccessful) to support themselves. Apart from the basic moral duty to assist those in need, there is a second reason why I believe that a system of a minimum income needs to be guaranteed. That is the fact that the prioritisation of individual freedom leads to a free-market economic system that

cannot preclude failure, not even to those who work very hard. Therefore, the very choice of opting for free markets entails a commitment to an assured minimum income to everyone even though market outcomes cannot be classified as unjust as long as all participants adhere to the law, yet they are unable to guarantee success, not even to those who work the hardest, and therefore require the institutionalisation of a safety-net.

Two final beliefs that I must declare to properly elucidate my political positionality as a neoliberal, is my belief in the importance of individual responsibility, without in any way denigrating the importance of collective responsibility which remains important for the functioning of any social order. The principle of individual responsibility is at the basis of my preference for means tested support and a host of other neoliberal policies which are aimed at responsabilising individuals. A final belief that I must disclose is my belief in political equality, equality before the law, and formal equality of opportunity (careers open to talents). As a neoliberal, I take it for granted that others are viewed as “moral equals and thereby deserving of equal respect, consideration and ultimately equal treatment” (Buchanan, 2005, p. 101). I also take it for granted that “no arbitrary obstacles should prevent people from achieving those positions for which their talents fit them and which their values lead them to seek. Not birth, nationality, colour, religion, sex, nor any other irrelevant characteristic should determine the opportunities that are open to a person” (Freidman, 1980, p. 132). Nonetheless, I acknowledge that inequality is part of life and trying to eliminate it does not lead to a less unjust social arrangement. I disagree that our aim should be to reach equality of outcomes or even ‘fair’ equality of opportunity whereby for example, private schools should be prohibited. Children born in well-to-do families have the right to enjoy their luck and parents within well-to-do families have the right (and the duty) to do the best they can for their children just as any other parent. Society does not stop good-looking parents passing on their good looks, talented parents their talents, or healthy parents their good genes to children. Likewise citizens have no authority to stop the rich from passing on to their children what they can, including extravagantly expensive educational experiences when that is what they wish to do with their money. Society has even less right to coerce them into sending their children to specific schools in the name of the general well-being of the community.

I can see the nobility of the intention in Rawls’ view that “society must also establish, among other things, equal opportunities of education for all regardless of family income” (Rawls, 2001, p. 44), but I realise that providing everyone with truly equal opportunities

would lead to unacceptable levels of redistribution and therefore, I conclude that the least unjust social arrangement is the one where everyone is assured of an adequately good education. Beyond that, those who have more to spend must be free to spend as much as they like. Again, I realise that inequality leads to the situations where the rich can buy “political influence, good medical care, a home in a safe neighbourhood rather than a crime-ridden one, access to elite schools rather than failing ones” (Sandel, 2012, p. 4) and that in such situations the importance of redistribution is increasingly evident. Nevertheless, the fundamental problem in such cases too often consists in, corrupt politicians, inadequate medical and educational provision, and unsafe neighbourhoods, not the fact that rich citizens can buy their way out of such issues or the fact of material inequality in itself. Once such issues are addressed, through everyone’s contribution, with the rich forking out more than the rest through proportional taxation (as opposed to progressive ones), inequality is then rendered morally inconsequential. In my view, the moral issue in such cases is the inadequacy of public provision not social inequality per se.

My commitment to upholding each individual’s equality before the law, the importance I give to everyone’s (negative) freedom, prevents me from adhering to notions of equality of conditions or equality of outcomes, because the effort to remove admittedly unfair advantages, requires an amount of government action and coercion on citizens that my conscience does not allow me to support and that I regard as unjust. It is one thing to endorse formal equality of opportunity/non-discrimination, but it is a different thing to endorse a thicker conception of equality, because to provide even equivalent opportunities for every citizen, governments would need to control all those circumstances that affect any person’s opportunity to be successful. This would lead to an unjust state that has to interfere in most aspects of life to ensure equality. In my view, that would not be in line with the notion of everyone deserving equal respect, which is why, unlike more expansive egalitarians, I limit myself to supporting only formal equality of opportunity and the assurance of a universal safety-net to ensure the eradication of absolute poverty.

This disclosure related to my professional and philosophical positionality is an important part of this philosophical inquiry because it enhances the necessary level of transparency that aids the readers to navigate their ways through the text, by enabling the identification of inevitable lack of objectivity and unintentional bias. Reflecting on my positionality is essential because it pushes me to make an extra effort to ensure that I do not end up marginalising some perspectives and thereby providing an incomplete deliberation

of the topic. Such marginalisation would not be conducive to good quality evaluations and would damage any philosophical inquiry. Being transparent about my positionality makes it clear why, to mention a recent example, I cannot agree with the UK Labour Party proposal in the 2019 electoral manifesto to tax everyone who earns more than £80,000 a year (i.e. the top 5% - some doctors, dentists, financial planners, CEOs) with an income tax rate of 45%. When one adds a 20% VAT on most purchases that these citizens must pay, such taxation leads to a situation where nearly 2/3 of one's wealth generated each year is taken away by the state, while only 1/3 is kept by the individual. To me, that would be closer to being treated like a serf than a free citizen and does not lead to a less unjust social arrangement, even if it were to contribute to a more socially just society. Evidently, I also disagree with Piketty's proposal put forward in his bestseller, *Capital in the Twenty-First Century* (2014), where he suggests that governments should add a tax on wealth (for the very rich) over and above the taxation regime referred to above. In my view that would violate the principle of equality before the law to such levels that would be equivalent to state sanctioned social injustice, an "illegitimate form of repression, [and] domination" (Azmanova, 2012, p. 449) over citizens. I realise that it is more difficult to feel for the rich than for people living in poverty, since no matter the level of taxation, they enjoy a life of better quality than the rest. Yet, there is such a thing as an immoral level of taxation, even when this is applied to the very rich. Some might judge such views as having a classist hidden agenda, but in my experience, all political perspectives benefit some members of society over others, therefore such accusations do not hold much water. If anything, neoliberalism is arguably the least classist of perspectives because the free competitive market order, on which neoliberalism depends for the distribution of wealth, cannot guarantee anything to anyone with absolute certainty, in fact it is not unusual for market outcomes to be surprising to many. On the contrary, distributive justice must follow some form of patterned conception of justice that inevitably works to the advantage of some and the disadvantage of others.

One a final note I would like to add that while planning and writing this thesis, I kept in mind some points mentioned by Ruth Jonathan 20 years ago, in a book that engaged with the same educational phenomena with which I am engaging in this thesis. Jonathan referred to the fact that: "the main thesis of my argument is not that this mechanism of distribution is a good or bad thing in terms of particular chosen criteria, but, more fatally, that its practice is inherently contradictory, and its theoretical rationale is incoherent" (Jonathan, 1997, p. 11). In the event, I do not think that she managed to effectively highlight any valid contradictions. Yet, I think that she makes a very valid point in relation to the view that in

some contexts, the identification of inherently contradictory practices can result in more persuasive criticism about a practice, than the defence of an alternative view, while such endeavours have their uses as well. These views are similar to Wrenn's argument, when she proposes that "by holding a given society to its own principles and demonstrating where exactly that society falls short, immanent critique frames more convincing arguments than criticism which holds that society to an external standard" (Wrenn, 2016, p. 452). I also think that in some cases, identifying contradiction and incoherence in one's approach may be a better way to frame convincing arguments. I find that criticism that highlights embedded inconsistencies, hidden contradictions, internal incoherence, as well as counterproductive, conflicting and self-contradictory relationships between actually-existing practices and avowed aspirations and ideals in line with core moral principles, may have a better opportunity to be useful in leading to overall social improvement. Exposing incongruence between final outcomes, policy aims, proposed means and founding principles, is an effective way to criticise policies, it reveals the way in which such policies conflict with the proposed aims they are supposedly meant to bring about, thereby revealing their inadequacy. The greater the discrepancies, the greater the inadequacy of the policies under review.

I am convinced that it would be less difficult to persuade neoliberal policymakers that their policies are inadequate by showing that these are counterproductive and incoherent with the purported aims than by trying to convince them of their inadequacy by presenting a wholly different moral criterion that is alien to them. I believe that this is especially the case in jurisdictions where policy-wise neoliberalism, in possibly diverse hybrid forms, enjoys hegemonic status. For instance, if I wanted to convince a neoliberal policymaker, that a restrictive conception of teachers as craft workers is an inadequate conception of the teaching profession, I would have a greater chance by arguing that such a conception of teachers is inadequate because incoherent with the aim of preparing students for the enterprise culture, rather than by arguing that a reductive conception of teaching does little to promote social justice and a thick conception of democracy. The same counts for other cases, it may be easier to bring about positive change, in a system where the market rationality has taken hold, by arguing that the provision of impoverished education inadequately prepares students for employment, than by arguing that impoverished education is socially unjust. Arguing in favour of social justice and the idea of education as a public good may not get one very far with policymakers who are convinced that social justice is a mirage and that education is a private good.

The fact that I focus on internal coherence is not meant to imply that it would be wise to leave forms of transcendental critique out of the equation. Indeed, the focus on internal coherence and identification of possible contradictions on its own would risk resulting in an incomplete picture of the issues at hand. The use of transcendental critique, which is criticism that results from a separate, independent, ‘outside’ point of reference from which different criteria of justice can be employed, can enrich one’s understanding and thereby sustaining deeper engagement. While such critique may not be able to refine the neoliberalisation of compulsory education by better attuning practices with aims and principles, it can provide the unique opportunity to consider different aims altogether and also the opportunity to examine different aspects creatively by enabling the consideration of other aspects that are alien to the theory that one is evaluating. For instance, in exploring the issue of the restrictive conception of teaching in neoliberal jurisdictions, unless one also employs egalitarian criteria of justice, one would not be able to reveal the effects that such a restrictive conception has on schools’ role in contributing to a more egalitarian society. One may then decide to agree or disagree, but the fact remains that transcendental critique, through its extrinsic standards, results in a richer understanding, which leads to a more complete evaluation.

1.4 Scope of the Inquiry

In order to stay adequately focused, and to respect the word limit, the scope of this inquiry had to be limited in different ways. Firstly, it primarily aims at engaging with the morality of neoliberal *education* policies rather than neoliberalism in all its policy dimensions. While it explores neoliberalism as a political rationality and as a form of governance, it specifically focuses on the field of education policy. The realms of housing policy, employment policy, energy policy, health care policy, welfare policy, environmental policy, foreign policy, and other areas of public policy are out of the scope of this thesis.

Secondly, this thesis deals exclusively with policies related to compulsory education, that is, concerning primary and secondary schooling. Hence, non-formal education, further education, higher education, professional education, adult education, and on-the-job training are not considered.

Thirdly, the study is substantiated with practical examples that originate from within England, Wales, the United States of America, New Zealand, Canada, and Australia. The

choice to select sources of evidence from this restricted list of countries has been made because it is generally acknowledged that it is in these countries that neoliberal governance is in its more mature stages. The fact that these countries are characterised by particularly high levels of income inequality (Piketty, 2014) can be considered as an indication of the maturity of the neoliberalisation process in such countries. In fact, it is generally agreed that neoliberal education policies “have so far been most marked in the Anglophone world, especially Britain, the USA, New Zealand and parts of Australia” (Whitty, 2002, p. 48). For example, there is the fact that “governments in Britain, United States, Australia, and New Zealand have marketized their school systems” (Hill, 2006, p. 115), a clear indication of the neoliberalisation process within these education systems. In fact, it is generally acknowledged that such policies appear to lead to reforms that are characterised by a “somewhat common trajectory... most evident in the English-speaking countries of England, USA, Australia, and New Zealand” (Angus, 2012, p. 233). Furthermore, it is also generally recognised that amongst these countries, England is considered to be at the forefront of the neoliberalisation process. To this end, Ball remarks that England is “the social laboratory of neoliberal education reforms” (Ball, 2016, p. 1047) while Stevenson and Wood contend that England is “a ‘world leader’ in driving forward the neoliberal reform agenda” (Stevenson & Wood, 2013, p. 43) in education. Considering the strategic choice to focus on these countries, the final evaluations done on the morality of neoliberal education policies will be mostly valid in relation to these countries. This does not exclude the possibility that lessons can be learnt by policymakers within jurisdictions outside of these countries as well.

1.5 Outline of the Thesis

Chapters Two and Three answer the question, *What is neoliberalism?* by providing detailed descriptions of neoliberalism both as a political rationality and as a type of governance. In Chapter Two, I claim that there are eight basic principles at the roots of neoliberalism: individual negative freedom, private property, the rule of law, individualism, equality before the law, individual responsibility, the duty of humanitarian assistance and market justice. These principles inform the social arrangements that result from the application of neoliberal political rationality. Chapter Three completes the clarification exercise of what is meant by neoliberalism through the delineation of broad-brush characteristics of neoliberal governance along with examples from the Anglosphere. It ascertains the proposed measures that neoliberals deem to be necessary for the realisation of the neoliberal vision of a just society. It was deemed to be necessary to go into much detail in defining neoliberalism

because we live in a time where, “neoliberalism is everywhere, literally and analytically – policy is neoliberal, schools and universities are neoliberal, discourses and texts are neoliberal. The use of the term is often so promiscuous that it is in danger of becoming less than useful” (Exley & Ball, 2014, p. 13). Chapters Two and Three try to make the term useful again by elucidating its meaning and addressing criticism throughout, both criticism of the core principles and criticism of the overarching policies that characterise neoliberal governance.

Chapter Four identifies the aims of a neoliberalised education system, thereby answering the second question, *What are the aims of the neoliberal agenda for compulsory education?* Answering this question is important because, neoliberalism is often hailed as the root of all social evil, however, few are the inquiries about the intentions of so many allegedly evil policymakers. I claim that the main objectives of neoliberal education policies are, improving efficiency by mitigating producer capture through hyper-accountability policies, expanding parental choice policies, which is both an end in itself and a means to enhance efficiency, and thirdly, preparing students for the enterprise culture. All measures enacted as part of a neoliberalisation process are designed to target one or more of these three major objectives.

Chapters Five, Six and Seven identify the specific measures that form the three categories of policies that need to be enacted to enable the neoliberalisation of a compulsory education system. The identification process helps answering the question, *How is it possible to reach these aims according to neoliberalism?* The internal coherence of the policies is discussed, with relevant moral concerns and criticisms highlighted. Chapters Five, Six and Seven are important because they offer a wide-ranging overview of what exactly does the neoliberalisation process of compulsory education constitute of comprehensively. Chapters Eight and Nine focus on answering the fifth question, *What are the moral implications of neoliberal education policies?* Chapter Eight offers an analysis of their impact on teachers, especially in relation to their consequences on changing teachers’ working environments and professional identity. Chapter Nine explores the moral dimensions of the neoliberal education policies by analysing the effects on students. Chapter Ten provides a conclusion.

Chapter Two: Neoliberalism as a Political Rationality

2.1 Introduction

Different engagements with neoliberalism have generated diverse understandings of this term. Some of the definitions proposed in academic literature include: an institutional framework, a dominant ideology; a form of governance, and policy discourse (Flew, 2014). Other definitions describe neoliberalism as a programme of government, others as a development model and an academic paradigm (Boas & Gans-Morse, 2009). It has also been defined as a political-economic philosophy (Peck & Tickell, 2007), a set of austerity policies and as a thought collective (Mirowski, 2009). Neoliberalism is also often defined as a form of contemporary hegemonic political common sense that “has been woven into the basic fabric of our society, polity, and economy” (Stein, 2012, p. 421). In fact, it can be argued that it has infiltrated the social fabric so deeply that it has become part of our “social imaginary,” (Rizvi & Lingard, 2010, p. 34) that is, a taken for granted rationale for why things are the way they are. Some even affirm that specific jurisdictions have entered the post-neoliberal phase (Sekler, 2009; Marston, 2015; Ruckert et al., 2017).

The diversity amongst these definitions is an indication why many conclude that “defining neoliberalism is no straightforward task” (McCarthy & Prudham, 2004, p. 276). Judging from the wide-ranging definitions, it is to be expected that some consider it “an oft-invoked but ill-defined concept” (Mudge, 2008, p. 703), which furthermore, alters meaning depending on context (Castree, 2006). This situation has made it essential to establish a definition of what is meant by the term neoliberalism before any inquiry can move forward to any productive endeavour. In spite of the many misunderstandings and inadequate interpretations, I disagree with the view which contends that neoliberalism is a “conceptual trash heap capable of accommodating multiple distasteful phenomena” (Boas & Gans-Morse, 2009, p. 156). On the contrary, I think that neoliberalism reveals a very specific vision of what an ideal society should look like.

This chapter contributes to clarifying the meaning of the term neoliberalism by analysing its features as a political rationality. Clarity is further sustained by the contrasts identified between neoliberalism and other political views and through the identification of its underpinning principles.

2.2 Neoliberalism: A Political Rationality

Neoliberalism would be best referred to as a political rationality that provides a normative account of the ideal social order, an account of the underlying justification for the reason why political institutions should be organised in a certain manner to ensure that every individual is treated as free and equal. As an ideal, neoliberalism advocates a state that is structured in a specific manner. It also acts as “a kind of operating framework or ‘ideological software’ ...inspiring and imposing far-reaching programmes of state restructuring and rescaling” (Peck & Tickell, 2002, p. 380) that profoundly affects areas of public policy including education in an effort to transform them in line with neoliberal demands. Neoliberalism, should be conceptualised as a political rationality especially because it “is not simply an ideology but a worked-out discourse containing theories and ideas that emerge in response to concrete problems within a determinate historical period” (Olssen & Peters, 2005, p. 315). In fact, neoliberalism manifests itself most clearly as the application of theories and ideas drafted by Nobel Prize winners including Hayek, Friedman, Schultz, Stigler, Buchanan, Becker, and Mundell.

As a political rationality, neoliberalism takes the shape of “normative political reason” (Brown, 2006, p. 639), demonstrating how the political sphere should be organised. In fact, “neoliberal rationality, while foregrounding the market, is not only or even primarily focused on the economy” (Brown, 2003, p. 40) it is rather the expansion of market rationality throughout the political, economic and social spheres (Brown, 2003, 2006; Davies, 2014; Gane, 2015; Mirowski, 2014). This is an important aspect of neoliberalism because it is easier to comprehend the logic behind neoliberal political rationality once it is realised that neoliberalism is less concerned with expanding markets, than in expanding the reach of market principles (Undurraga, 2015) throughout the political and social spheres, while not in the private sphere. By building on principles such as negative freedom, equality before the law, and individual responsibility, neoliberal policymakers spread their specific conception of the ideal social arrangement and aim to reform social institutions accordingly.

In relation to the state, neoliberal rationality leads to a limited but strong state in charge of, national security, compensating for market failures, and sustaining markets by keeping inflation stable and preventing monopolies. When applied to economic policy, “neoliberalism claims that society as a whole is best served by maximum market freedom and minimum intervention by the state, claiming that...such a situation will enable

individual entrepreneurial freedoms and skills to be maximally developed” (Undurraga, 2015, p. 17). Consequently, neoliberalism always leads to supply-side economic policies and therefore the incentivisation of private investment through lower taxation and deregulation, rather than the use of demand-side economic policies such as increased government spending to boost consumer spending power and obtain economic growth through the expected ripple effect. When applied to public policy, neoliberalism leads to the privatisation of state services including the areas of health and correctional facilities. It tends to favour workfare in the area of unemployment provision so that welfare recipients registering for unemployment benefits are obliged to improve their employability prospects through additional training, if they want to remain entitled to social benefits. When applied to education policy, neoliberalism advocates the marketisation of schools, grounded in the belief that competition between schools will bring about school improvement in the same way it leads to economic improvement when applied to markets. Neoliberalism is also in favour of hyper-accountability, because schools are financed by funds that must be safeguarded since, as neoliberal politicians like to remind, “there is no such thing as public money” (Thatcher, 1983; Cameron, 2015), there is only taxpayers’ money. This concern results in the prioritisation of efficiency wherever possible, including in education systems in order to lower state expenditure and thereby better safeguard individual negative freedom through the possibility to minimise taxation.

A key feature of neoliberalism is that it is a political project aimed at producing particular behaviour (Giroux, 2008) where compulsory education can potentially play a major role. This feature is reflected in neoliberal education policies that aim at transforming all citizens into entrepreneurial selves. Due to the fact that it is “firstly and fundamentally a rationality, [it] tends to structure and organise not only the action of rulers, but also the conduct of the ruled,” (Dardot & Laval, 2013, p. 4) in relation to standards of behaviour to which they are expected to adhere to in the political/social/economic spheres, such as individual responsibility and entrepreneurial behaviour. This occurs because political rationalities have a moral form that is meant to guide the distribution of tasks between different social institutions in line with a specific conception of a just social arrangement (Rose, 1996).

Neoliberalism also acts as an ideology in the sense referred to by Weinstein, when he argues that in the United States, Republicans are proud to think of themselves as ideological because “to have an ideology is, for them, to stand for principle, acknowledging that there

is a right way and a wrong way of doing things” (1997, p. 412). Neoliberalism offers one such set of convictions, those convictions that Margaret Thatcher (UK Prime Minister 1979-1990) referred to as the “stars to steer by, a fixed point in the heavens and a compass to guide you” (Castle, 1993). These are the moral convictions that enable politicians and policymakers to choose between what they consider to be just or unjust and that enable the defence of specific policies at the level of principle.

As an ideology, neoliberalism acts as “an action-orientated set of beliefs” (Žižek, 1994, p. 13) that simultaneously indicates a correct way to do things and by extension, an incorrect way of doing them. In this manner, neoliberalism serves as an expression of shared meanings (Wuthnow, 1981) that inspire those who believe in such principles and encourages change. Going through the texts written by neoliberal academics, mostly those originating from the field of Austrian Economics, the Chicago School of Economics, and German Ordoliberal academic literature (Freiburg University), it becomes evident that the intention is to promote a distinct set of beliefs, a set of ideas around which to construct political action (Epstein, 1983) in the conviction that these actions are the best alternative to guide society towards an arrangement that best safeguards individual negative freedom. Academics from these institutions have contributed much to provide the theoretical underpinnings of neoliberalism as a political ideology.

Having classified neoliberalism as a political rationality that also fulfils the role of an ideology, the next section contributes to clarifying the notion of neoliberalism by portraying what neoliberalism is not. This should alleviate some of the confusion about neoliberalism that currently reigns in both popular media and academic circles.

2.3 Neoliberalism: Neither Modern Liberalism, nor Libertarian nor Classical Liberal.

In political philosophy, “many different versions of liberalism exist” (Halstead, 1996, p. 17), all of which agree that individuals have rights to basic liberties (Brighouse, 2000). The differences amongst the diverse strands of liberalisms can be identified by the trade-offs amongst basic liberties and their prioritisation. In fact, “one can categorise different liberal theories according to what is placed at the top of the order” (Talisso, 2010, p. 307) with the most common candidates for the podium being equality, freedom, dignity, and others. Neoliberalism places equality before the law and individual negative freedom at the top of the rank. Other political theories may look similar to neoliberalism at a first glance, to the extent that these are sometimes conflated, but once one examines distinct strands more

thoroughly, differences become evident. As separate normative theories principally concerned with 'what ought to be', disparate strands of liberalism, such as, modern-liberalism, classical liberalism, and neoliberalism, prioritise a different mix of core principles that are meant to underpin social reforms thereby leading to different social arrangements.

Modern liberalism is also referred to as Welfare-Liberalism, New-Liberalism, Left-Liberalism, Egalitarian-Liberalism, Social-Liberalism, High-Liberalism, Progressive Liberalism, or simply as liberalism in the U.S. . Modern liberalism is very different from neoliberalism. For modern-liberals, excessive levels of material inequality are unacceptable, amongst other things, because these can translate into unequal political power thereby endangering the democratic process. For modern liberalism, economic freedoms should be curtailed, for example through rent control laws, so that these do not lead to inequality of power. Due to their abhorrence of inequality, modern-liberals distrust free markets and are comfortable with a mixed-economy and major nationalisation of the means of production where the state has a major role in steering the economy towards a socially just arrangement. For modern-liberals, issues of material equality, fair equality of opportunity, collective responsibility, and social justice are core considerations in their conception of a just social arrangement. Differences exist amongst various modern liberals in relation to what it is that needs to be equalised and in which manner, but in principle, such equality should be given priority over the negative freedom of those who have more than enough to live by.

Modern liberals deem, high levels of redistribution, state interventionism in the economy and limitations on economic rights, as morally acceptable ways to increase the positive freedom of the many. This contrasts with neoliberal views whose concern towards individual freedom prioritises the view that no "distributional patterned principle of justice can be continuously realized without continuous interference with people's lives" (Nozick, 1974, p. 163). Indeed, the risk that the quest for social justice can result in such interference leads neoliberals to state that "the prevailing belief in 'social justice' is at the present probably the gravest threat to most other values of free civilisation" (Hayek, 1976, p. 66). The chasm between modern liberalism and neoliberalism is, in my view, insurmountable. The positions are very distant because while on the one side modern liberal theory and practice is aimed at getting as close as possible to a socially just society marked by fairness

and emancipation, neoliberals only see such efforts as serious threats to individual (negative) freedom, and as a result deem them unacceptable.

While it may be easy to distinguish neoliberalism from modern liberalism, what may be less evident is that neoliberalism should not be confused with libertarianism even though they both consider economic rights to form part of each individual's basic rights. For both views, economic freedom such as freedom to be enterprising and create wealth through dealing with others; to make contracts and the right to use, hold, and transfer private property, are at the top of the list of rights to be safeguarded. Differences exist between the libertarian stance that contend that safeguarding these negative rights merely necessitates governments to get out of the way, while neoliberals would argue in favour of the states' duties to maintain a framework of laws, in the form of general rules equally applicable to everyone, within which such negative rights can be safeguarded and thereby used to protect individual negative freedom (Hayek, 1960, 1976; Eucken, 1952).

For libertarians, individual negative freedom must be adhered to very closely, despite the possible resulting inegalitarian consequences. This is not the case for neoliberals who compromise on individual freedom in cases where taxation is required to address specific issues such as absolute poverty. Additionally, libertarians advocate a night-watchman state that would be exclusively in charge of some basics such as national defence (Nozick, 1974; Rand, 1966), conversely, neoliberalism demands a more active state. Libertarianism advocates "individual liberty, free markets, and limited government rooted in a commitment to self-ownership, imprescriptible rights, and the moral autonomy of the individual" (Boaz, 1997, p. xiv). Libertarians view personal rights as an absolute entitlement resulting from self-ownership and sustain that, "so strong and far-reaching are these rights that they raise the question of what, if anything, the state and its officials may do" (Nozick, 1974, p. ix). As a result, in libertarian order, the state focuses on securing individual rights, without getting into matters of wealth redistribution (Ryan, 2012).

As Rothbard concludes, libertarianism is about such principles as self-ownership, private property, and economic rights (Rothbard, 1978). In truth, neoliberal theorists take such libertarian views very seriously, but they disagree with its moral feasibility. Neoliberals take on the point that Nozick chose not to explore and to relegate to a footnote in his seminal book *Anarchy, State and Utopia* (1974). This crucial point constitutes "the question of whether these side constraints are absolute, or whether they may be violated in

order to avoid catastrophic moral horror” (Nozick, 1974, p. 30). Neoliberals address this fundamental question and conclude that in case of “catastrophic moral horror” (such as homelessness, hunger, undignified life conditions), individual basic liberties such as private property may be violated and the state is morally bound to intervene to guarantee that no one suffers and to finance such interventions through taxation. For defending this stance, libertarians see neoliberals as spineless compromisers, people who genuinely understand the importance of freedom and the significance of the individual, but who step back and compromise due to the consequences of prioritising freedom. This feeling led Rothbard (2009) to judge a neoliberal core text, Hayek’s (1960) *Constitution of Liberty* as “surprisingly and distressingly, an extremely bad, and, I would even say, evil book” (Rothbard, 1958, p. 61) because of the promotion of what he interprets as left-wing positions. This comment goes a long way to sum up the relationship between libertarianism and neoliberalism and clarifies why neoliberalism should not be mistaken for libertarianism.

Furthermore, neoliberalism should also not be mistaken for classical liberalism even though classical liberalism is the political perspective that is closest to neoliberalism. Like neoliberalism, classical liberalism prioritises ideas such as limited government, the rule of law, avoidance of discretionary power, private property, economic rights and individual responsibility (Ryan, 2012) along with a negative conception of freedom, the notion of self-interest, the distinction between the public and the private sphere, and the idea of ‘society’ as aggregated individual ends rather than a separate entity able and willing to cure all social ills. Clearly, the similarities are many. Nonetheless, classical liberals and neoliberals part ways in their interpretation of the limited state. Both agree that a state “is necessary in that, at the very least, it lays down the conditions for orderly existence” (Heywood, 1992, p. 40) in relation to matters such as contracts, defence of the realm and public order. Yet, neoliberals assign an additional duty to the state, that of actively supporting market forces and competition. In fact, neoliberals support out-of-market state interventionism so long as this occurs in a way that does not interfere with the price mechanism. To this end, neoliberals reinterpret the classical liberal notion of *laissez-faire*. Neoliberals mostly agree with the view that “the best way of promoting economic development and general welfare is to remove fetters from the private enterprise economy and to leave it alone,” (Schumpeter, 1954, p. 395) but rather than leaving the market alone they would regulate tactfully in favour of competition. To this end, neoliberals reject classical liberalism’s *laissez-faire* approach and would, for example, actively follow policies such as protecting

the state from rent-seeking lobbyists and eliminating market inefficiency in the form of cartels and monopolies (Eucken, 1940).

Essentially, neoliberals alter the laissez-faire approach in favour of a policy which contends that the state should “intervene to ensure that ‘real’ markets can flourish in as many areas as possible, without monopolies, oligopolies or unregulated trade unions, and without state intervention in the activities of firms or restriction of entrepreneurial activity” (Hull, 2006, p. 141). The replacement of a free-market system based on laissez faire with one based on competition is a signature policy that has marked neoliberalism from its inception to the present day. In fact, within neoliberal theory, it is made clear that rather than simple laissez faire, it would be preferable to opt for “a policy which deliberately adopts competition, the market, and prices as its ordering principle and uses the legal framework enforced by the state in order to make competition as effective and beneficial as possible” (Hayek, 1948, p. 109). On considering the divergent views that neoliberals and classical liberals have on laissez-faire, it can decidedly be stated that while classical liberalism represents a negative conception of state action, neoliberals see it as essential to enable markets to flourish. In the specific case of education, the abandonment of the principle of laissez-fair is evident in neoliberalism’s acceptance of extensive government role in an education system. This becomes evident in the hyper-accountability policies that are implemented as part of the neoliberalisation of compulsory education. While classical liberals would argue that there is “no need to set a National Curriculum, or control examinations or testing, or in any other way control content; the market of parents, children, employers and universities will do that better, more flexibly and more effectively” (Sexton, 1999, p. 170), neoliberals counter-argue that governments have a duty to guide and support, through appropriate regulation, competition between schools and quality of curricular content to ensure adequate preparation of children to sustain national competitiveness, which is vital for economic growth.

The final task within this section dedicated to understanding neoliberalism as a political rationality is the identification of the core principles to which it adheres. Knowing which principles underpin neoliberalism helps one understand why it results in specific social arrangements instead of others.

2.4 The Principles of Neoliberalism

As a liberal political theory, neoliberalism can be recognised through its core principles since “one can categorise different liberal theories according to what is placed at the top of the order [of core principles]” (Talisso, 2010, p. 307). In the case of neoliberalism, at the top of the order there is, equality before the law, a negative conception of freedom, private property, the Rule of Law, individualism, individual responsibility, the duty of humanitarian assistance, and market justice. These eight principles underpin neoliberal political rationality and influence all policies that result from neoliberal governance.

2.4.1 Equality before the Law

Equality before the law is the only absolute principle out of the eight core ones, in the sense that there can be no level of compromise. Neoliberals consider equality before the law as “the basic postulate of a free society, namely, the limitation of all coercion by equal law” (Hayek, 1960, p. 151), which is deemed to be so crucial that it cannot be compromised, not even “to produce substantive equality” (Hayek, 1960, p. 151). Most importantly, while many refer to the idea that everyone is born equal (Patton, 2007), neoliberals differentiate between the notion that every individual should be equal before the law, and the idea that everyone is born equal, a concept to which neoliberals do not subscribe. Neoliberalism champions the idea of non-discrimination, and the idea of formal equality of opportunity, which for neoliberals “simply spells out in more detail the meaning of personal equality, or equality before the law” (Friedman & Friedman, 1980, p. 131), while they are less concerned about material inequality.

In truth, notions of equality of opportunity and non-discrimination are common to all strands of liberalism where it is generally agreed that discrimination is wrong. These ideas related to non-discrimination are particularly important within neoliberalism because of the importance given to individual freedom and economic basic rights. Equality before the law is considered as a constitutive element of freedom by neoliberals because hindering people due to arbitrary reasons such as ethnicity, race, or religion is “an interference with their right to ‘life, liberty, and the pursuit of happiness’” (Friedman & Friedman, 1980, p. 131). Essentially discrimination is a form of coercion and an illegitimate intrusion into individual freedom. Equality before the law, non-discrimination and formal equality of opportunity are seen by neoliberals as a way to maximise freedom through the removal of illegitimate obstacles (Barry, 1995). This is especially the case because when applying rules of non-discrimination, no one is asked to surrender any aspect of their own liberty in the process.

This is in sync with the view that neoliberalism, as an individualist political theory, is “profoundly opposed to all prescriptive privilege, to all protection, by law or force, of any rights not based on rules equally applicable to all persons” (Hayek, 1948, p. 30).

Equality before the law holds a special place within neoliberalism because it “is the only kind of equality conducive to liberty and the only equality which we can secure without destroying liberty” (Hayek, 1960, p. 85). Neoliberals justify such a view on the grounds that substantive conceptions of equality, can only come about through redistributive policies that risk leading to political inequality, such as when specific citizens are made to pay unreasonable amounts of taxes, and are therefore unjust. For the sake of clarity, it should be mentioned that the neoliberal endorsement of formal equality of opportunity and non-discrimination should not be confused with concepts such as substantive equality of opportunity. The two ideas are not the same. Neoliberals insist that in a just society, equality of opportunity can refer to “no more than the removal of all of the legal impediments of privilege, that inhibit access to given positions in society” (Steel, 2001, p. 24) while making sure that this does not lead to situations of inequality before the law. As a result of the importance given to equality before the law, neoliberals prioritise the fact that unless carefully implemented, ideas related to equality of opportunity may become unfair. Examples of such situations occur when citizens with different levels of income are made to pay different percentages of income tax, such as for example, the recent proposal in the UK that sees the top 5% of earners paying 45% income tax (Labour Party Manifesto, 2019). For egalitarians such as Piketty (2014) such arrangements would lead to a more just society. Yet, from a neoliberal perspective, this results in an immoral social arrangement because it would breach the principle of equality before the law, even if it would in fact manage to improve the lives of many while technically no one gets to suffer since earners in the top 5% have more than enough to live by. Yet, for neoliberals, such levels of taxation are unacceptably high because they sanction interfere in some people’s lives that is too extensive, even though this applies to a very small minority.

2.4.2 Individual Negative Freedom

Another core principle that underpins neoliberal political rationality is freedom, understood negatively, as absence of intentional coercion from others (Hayek, 1960; Friedman, 1962). Neoliberals are very passionate about the view that “in the great chess-board of human society, every single piece has a principle of motion of its own, altogether different from that which the legislature might choose to impress upon it” (Smith, 1759/2002, p.275) and

are ready to make extensive efforts to ensure that the state conducts its activities in a manner where individuals are coerced as little as possible. Indeed, the neoliberal strict emphasis on increasing efficiency and decreasing taxation is a direct outcome of this specific conception of freedom, which in turn has deep repercussions on a plethora of policy realms, including the economic, social, and educational ones. All of which are framed by the belief that “coercion is evil precisely because it thus eliminates an individual as a thinking and valuing person” (Hayek, 1960, p. 21) along with the belief “that each individual has values of his [sic] own which he [sic] is entitled to follow” (Hayek, 1960, p.70). Both these concerns demand a limitation on the extent to which individuals can be coerced to sustain the wellbeing of others. Furthermore, from a neoliberal perspective, freedom is also valued for instrumental reasons, because it is regarded as “the opportunity of realising our aims” (Hayek, 1960, p. 29). In this sense, it is seen to function as an occasion to maximise each individual’s self-realisation by providing “both the opportunity and the inducement to ensure the maximum use of knowledge that an individual can acquire” (Hayek, 1960, p. 71). In fact, without negative freedom, there would be, neither the opportunity to be creative in one’s endeavours for the improvement of oneself and others, and most crucially, nor would there be the encouragement to engage in such a process, since one would not be able to enjoy possible benefits or would be able to enjoy only a small proportion of them.

The neoliberal conception of freedom is compliant with Locke’s view that citizens should be free “to order their actions ... as they think fit ... without asking leave, or depending on the will of any other man” (Locke, 1689, p. 287), but incompatible with a more expansive notion of ‘positive’ freedom, understood in terms of “freedom for fulfilment” (Cotterrell, 1988, p. 10) or freedom from want, which for neoliberals is only a “demagogic misuse of the word freedom” (Röpke, 1958, p. 172). According to neoliberal theory, the notion of freedom for fulfilment cannot be legitimate, because it would mean coercing others to finance that fulfilment, thereby negatively impacting on their freedom. This can lead to an undesirable situation where some end up having to pay to maintain the freedom of others, and in the process, compromising their own. Lack of freedom do not originate from unintentional circumstances such as the inability to join the army due to one’s height or the inability to find employment, unless the reason is related to discrimination. For neoliberals, one does not lack freedom when one simply lacks the means that would enable them to follow their desired choices, because the unintentionality of that situation means that they are not being coerced. Understandably, this is a point of

contention that many hold against the neoliberal perspective since poverty clearly restricts what individuals can do (Hindess, 1987). Neoliberals acknowledge such situations but sustain that these do not justify redistribution from some to others, except in situations of absolute poverty. In such case, the needy are to be supported in the name of the duty of humanitarian assistance, but not for the reason of a right to freedom understood positively.

For neoliberals, individuals are deprived of their freedom only when they are forced to surrender it to the needs of a central direction which usually occurs when centralised state powers try to make society conform to someone's conception of social justice. Such circumstances pose a threat to freedom because they lead to a situation where a centralised effort "more and more places the duties of justice on authorities with power to command people what to do" (Hayek, 1976, p. 66) and how exactly to contribute to the collective endeavour for social justice, thereby eroding freedoms of some and enhancing the freedom of others. Such resulting pattern constitutes the reason why neoliberals do away with any conception of social justice and replace it with a free competitive market order whose outcomes are neither just nor unjust and which induces, without coercing, individuals to contribute to collective prosperity. In fact, this leads neoliberals to aim for "a set of institutions by which man [sic] could be induced, by his [sic] own choice and from the motives which determined his [sic] ordinary conduct, to contribute as much as possible to the needs of all others" (Hayek, 1948, p. 13) thereby eliminating, as much as possible, coercion by other persons and replacing it with the "impersonal coercion" (Hayek, 1968/2002, p. 19) of competition, which "will cause many individuals to change their behaviour in a way that could not be brought about by any kind of instructions or commands" (Hayek, 1968/2002, p. 19) and in a manner that is preferable to direct coercion by government directives on what job to take, or what precise entitlement one has been allotted, or how much one should be allowed to buy or sell an item or a service, or which school one should be allowed to send one's children to maintain a socio-economic balance demanded by social justice. This kind of coercion is objectionable for neoliberals.

2.4.3 Private Property

Another core principle to include to understand neoliberalism is private property, that is, "the right to gain, to keep, to use and to dispose of material values" (Rand, 1964, p. 90). For neoliberals, private property is simply "the name we usually give to the material part of [the] protected individual domain" (Hayek, 1966, p. 165). While neoliberals, unlike libertarians, do not view private property as an absolute value, they still give it due

importance within the neoliberal pantheon of core principles. So much so that according to Mises (1927/1985) “the programmes of liberalism ... if condensed into a single word, would have to read: *property*, that is, private ownership of the means of production ... all the other demands of liberalism result from this fundamental demand” (p. 44). There are various reasons why academics within the libertarian tradition consider private property to be of fundamental importance to the extent of stating that, “liberty is property” (Narveson, 1988, p. 66).

In the first instance, private property is considered as an integral part of the respect owed to each individual. As Mack and Gaus affirm, for neoliberals, libertarians and classical liberals, respect for individuals demands respect for their property (Mack & Gaus, 2004). Neoliberals uphold that “nothing is so important for freedom as recognising in the law each individual’s natural right to property, and giving individuals a sense that they own something that they’re responsible for, that they have control over, and that they can dispose of” (Friedman, 2006, p. 4). Hayek shares the same view and advocates strongly the strong link between private property and freedom. In his words: “the recognition of property is clearly the first step in the delimitation of the private sphere which protects us against coercion” (Hayek, 1960, p. 140) thereby linking private property directly to the neoliberal conception of freedom.

For neoliberals, private property ensures a sphere of autonomy where one is free from state power (Machan, 2007; Mises, 1927). This is deemed to be essential for individuals to exercise their freedom, because as individuals, we are morally required to live by our values and therefore we require control on our means to be able to do so (Machan, 2007). Neoliberals sustain that, without the freedom to control the material elements that sustain their life, individuals would not be able to choose freely what they believe is best for them. This is why within neoliberal theory it is understood that rights to private property are a requirement to exercise all other liberties (Freeman, 2001) and why private property holds such a central place in neoliberal theory.

As expected, criticism levelled against the importance given to private property within neoliberalism is as extensive as with the other core principles. To begin with, private property is more conducive to promote concerns of efficiency and productivity over issues of caring for those in need. Additionally, a society where private property is exalted, puts those who own nothing at a relative disadvantage in several ways, including economically,

in terms of social status and possibly even democratically in cases of acute poverty where people's daily efforts are spent on survival and therefore unable to fulfil any of the democratic duties to which they have a formal right, not to mention the possible political power commanded by the very rich. Nevertheless, I cannot agree with Green that in a capitalist society, private property rights might as well be denied for those who own nothing (Green, 1895/1941). Even the situation of the poor improves due to private property, through the innovations (including technological ones) spurred by a free economic market order which improves everyone's lives and the prosperity generated through such a system which enables improved social services for the poorest despite increased relative poverty.

2.4.4 The Rule of Law

A fourth principle that underpins neoliberalism is the rule of law, as opposed to the rule of persons. This does not come as a surprise, considering the consensus there is about its importance in democracies (Vilhena Vieira, 2007; O'Donnell, 2004; Rose, 2004). For neoliberals, the rule of law is fundamental. In fact, it is often contended that "nothing distinguishes more clearly the conditions in a free country from those in a country under arbitrary government, than the observance in the former of the great principles known as the rule of law" (Hayek, 1944, p. 80). Within neoliberalism, this is conceptualised in terms of "general abstract rules laid down irrespective of their application" (Hayek, 1960, p. 154), which can therefore "constitute a true common interest of the members of a Great Society, who do not pursue any particular common purpose" (Hayek, 1973, p. 121). It would not be an exaggeration to claim that within neoliberal political theory, the notion of the rule of law is seen as the principal common good out of which everyone benefits. Hence why, the principle of the rule of law is deemed to be a "condition which all will want to preserve" (1973, p. 104) and a feature which assists individuals in pursuit of their as yet unknown aims, hence its fundamental importance in enabling freedom (Hayek, 1976).

Apart from being an effective way of addressing arbitrary state power and support non-discrimination, neoliberals concur that "the rule of law is the greatest single condition of our freedom" (Oakeshott, 1949/1962, p. 43) because "it is the order of the law which enables freedom to work" (Thatcher, 1988a, p. 4) and which enables individuals to pursue their ambitions. It is argued that this occurs because "when we obey laws, in the sense of general abstract rules laid down irrespective of their application to us, we are not subject to another man's will and are, therefore, free" (Hayek, 1960, p. 153). This is why the rule of

law is perceived as essential for freedom. To this end, it is argued that one cannot claim to being coerced, in situations where one is following one's own objectives, even though laws (that are equally applicable to everyone) may indeed affect one's decisions.

While it may not be as evident as in the case of the other core principles, the rule of law is equally criticised for its lack of concern towards people living in poverty. The argument goes along the lines that the rule of law may not adequately protect the interests of the weak because equal rules affect unequal people in very different ways (Lustgarten, 1998). For example, a rule along with the attached contravention for illegal parking affects a person of poor means negatively, because she may not be able to park at all, while the same contravention may affect a rich person positively, as it would enable her to find a free space, being able and ready to pay the attached penalty. Considering a different case, regardless of the level of dissemination, the uneducated person can never be as able to comprehend legal requirements as much as the educated, and as a result, may face problems more often. Laws on the use of public resources also affect people differently because "people who lack adequate private facilities for socialising rightly make [possibly illegal] use of the streets" (Lustgarten, 1998, p.38). Furthermore, on the basis of the logic of the rule of law, powerful multi-national companies are treated as "presumptively 'equal', in general terms, with the individual citizens who confront them" (Cotterrell, 1988, p.17), ignoring the fact that in real life, often employees and consumers do not have equal abilities to defend their cases. Neoliberals are aware of this negative side-effect of the rule of law but they emphasise that aspect that in order to be useful in terms of individual freedom, laws must enable citizens to predict other people's actions which necessarily means that all laws "should apply in all cases – even if in a particular instance we feel it to be unjust" (Hayek, 1944, p.60). Considering its effects on the weakest members of society, on balance, it can be concluded that the rule of law "turns out not to be a neutral concept at all" (Barry, 1995, p.58), but equally contestable in terms of its disregard for the weakest members of society. In fact, the rule of law exhibits the same trade-off that is present in the other principles, that is, the acceptance of being able to secure the negative freedom of all, while perhaps not giving enough consideration to the fact that secured negative freedom means very little to those who live in situations where poverty constrains their ability to take advantage of their freedoms.

2.4.5 Individualism

Another core principle that lies at the basis of neoliberal political theory is individualism, that is, the primacy given to the individual over the community. A cursory reading of classical liberal, libertarian and neoliberal academic texts confirms that “within the liberal tradition, from classical writers through to the neoliberal voices of today, the moral primacy of the individual has been consistently defended” (Eagleton-Pierce, 2016, p. 117). The argument put forward is based on the view that the well-being of the community can only come about through the promotion of individual good because different people have very different life intentions.

Neoliberals support the notion of individualism because they believe in the uniqueness of every individual (Buchanan, 1999; Machan, 1998; Mack, 1999) a uniqueness that merits non-interference (Mack & Gaus, 2004). A fundamental reason for putting the principle of individualism at the centre of neoliberal political theory derives “from the awareness of the limitations of individual knowledge and from the fact that no person or small group of persons can know all that is known to somebody” (Hayek, 1948, p. 17), and therefore, even if it could be guaranteed that those in charge to decide for others have the best of intentions, it would still be more reasonable to shape public institutions in such a manner that allows individuals to decide what is best for them.

Individualism has deep consequences on neoliberal theory. The primacy of the individual leads to a profound respect for each individual, a respect that “...consists in letting them live their lives as they see fit” (Narveson, 1991, p. 343) and in making sure that coercion from the state that would hinder them from doing so is kept to an absolute minimum. This respect is the result of the realisation that “no man is qualified to declare what would make another man happier or less discontented” (Mises, 1949, p. 19). Neoliberals are strong believers in the respect that is owed to each individual, and the forms that this respect is to take in a just society. To this end, it is claimed that “the essence of the individualist position” (Hayek, 1944, p. 63) in practice is translated into “the recognition of the individual as the ultimate judge of his [sic] ends” (p. 63) so that “as far as possible his [sic] own views ought to govern his [sic] actions” (p. 63). The importance given to such concerns explain why neoliberals are so protective of individual negative freedom and get very concerned when the state is assigned additional powers which can potentially impact people’s lives deeply.

It is, in fact, often maintained that redistribution should be implemented with caution because it tends to push social arrangements increasingly in the direction where from a state of the “subordination of the state to the free forces of society to a demand for the subordination of society to the state” (Hayek, 1961, p. 247) most often as a result of “the hungry hordes of vested interests” (Röpke, 1942, p. 181) who end up corrupting the system through undue influence on central planners. Results of such influence are often incompatible with the respect that is due to the individual and can lead “to a system in which all members of society become merely instruments of the single directing mind” (Hayek, 1952, p. 92) to the detriment of everyone’s negative freedom. Neoliberals are also convinced that “when the common good of a society is regarded as something apart from and superior to the individual good of its members, it means that the good of some men takes precedence over the good of others, with those others consigned to the status of sacrificial animals” (Rand, 1966, p. 156). This leads to disregard towards individual rights and the abandonment of the effort to treat everyone as free and equal. Consequently, neoliberals affirm that respect towards individuals must lead to the refusal “to subordinate them for the sake of the greater good” (Zwolinski, 2008, p. 149), because the view that “balancing benefits and harms in one life with benefits and harms in another” (Zwolinski, 2008, p. 148) is morally unacceptable, except in those cases where redistribution is necessary to address issues of absolute poverty.

The importance given to the principle of individualism is the reason why neoliberals get frustrated with remarks such as those which say: “neoliberal policies ...seek to burden individuals with tasks that used to be the responsibility of governments” (Biesta, 2015, p. 76), as if neoliberalism means to stop some separate entity from helping the needy as a result of spite. Neoliberals profoundly disagree with such views because these are prone to abuse some citizens (admittedly often the wealthier) in favour of others to an extent that becomes morally illegitimate because it shows no regard to the fact that some individuals are forced to contribute disproportionately to the wellbeing of others. Such statements are also false because it is never the responsibility of governments, as if these are some form of independent entity, but rather collective responsibility. Those views that consider the state as the ultimate problem solver do not take into consideration that this can only result in situations where some people are used for the benefit of other since the state is not some separate social entity. This means that valid reasons need to be given for restricting the personal liberty of some, and to implement policies that redistribute wealth. Situations of defence of the realm, and pandemics (such as COVID-19) constitute a valid reason, since

they constitute a clear common goal, the defeat of the enemy or of a disease, which is evidently in everyone's interest. Other situations legitimised by enlightened egoism, such as, for example, the simple fact that some redistribution is necessary for a free competitive market order to function, also constitute a valid reason for the establishment of minimal redistributive policies (Hayek 1960, 1976, 1979). Interestingly, as shown in section 2.4.7. within neoliberal governance, situations of absolute poverty also constitute a valid reason to limit the freedoms of some through increased taxation for the benefit of others, for purely moral reasons. On the contrary, other reasons, which would be seen as legitimate under other political rationalities, such as, fair equality of opportunity, relative poverty, or social equality, are not considered as legitimate reasons to increase coercion and limit individual freedoms.

2.4.6 Individual Responsibility

Another core principle that underpins neoliberal political rationality and that has deep repercussions on it, is individual responsibility, understood as “a conception which underlies our view of a person's moral duties” (Hayek, 1960, p.68) towards oneself and others. It is in fact argued that individual responsibility is a moral view without which a free society cannot survive (Hayek, 1962, Erhard, 1958) because the freedom to choose entails the duty to bear the consequences of one's choices (Hayek, 1960). The awareness of having to bear the outcomes of one's actions generates important advantages. These include, discouraging the dependency culture, increasing the likelihood of becoming an entrepreneur (Bauernschuster et al., 2012), and most importantly, inducing citizens to use their talents to the full (Hayek, 1960) by “making them act more rationally than they would otherwise” (Hayek, 1960, p. 68). Indeed, it would not be an exaggeration to conclude that individual responsibility ends up transforming work and the ongoing process of making oneself employable, including schooling and lifelong learning, into a moral obligation.

For neoliberals, individual responsibility is considered to be a form of altruism, a way of safeguarding the interests of others by making an effort to avoid becoming a social burden. It is in fact argued that “it is our duty to look after ourselves and then also to help look after our neighbour” (Thatcher, 1987b, p. 4). The idea that some have to compensate for others forms the crux of the neoliberal argument in favour of individual responsibility because neoliberals consider abuse of collective support as unacceptable, while collective responsibility cannot be taken out of the picture. Neoliberal policymakers often point out that “there is no such thing as an entitlement unless someone has first met an obligation”

(Thatcher, 1987b, p. 4). This reasoning is evident through policies where obligatory redistribution is reduced to the minimum required to address absolute poverty, and the neoliberal comfort with austerity measures.

As with other core principles, the principle of individual responsibility has a number of unpleasant consequences. Firstly, it tends to generate anxiety towards situations of “welfare dependency” (Murray, 1984; Mead, 1986), where it is felt that social security provision can damage the much needed enterprise culture and turn it into a dependency culture where people simply expect too much from their fellow citizens. This may mean moving towards an over-stringent approach to social policy due to the fear that generous welfare will encourage indolence.

Secondly, in a social context where, “independence, self-reliance, and the willingness to bear risks” (Hayek 1944, p. 233) become exalted as essential virtues, where entrepreneurs are heroes, where it is claimed that “those who do well by their own efforts are the actual bricks of the community” (Thatcher, 1988b), and where economic autonomy is considered as the highest form of active citizenship (Lister, 2001), it becomes very easy to judge state dependency as a “morally lesser form of being” (Davies & Bansel, 2007, p.247), thereby generating prejudice towards those who are unable to maintain their economic independence. Consequently, those who mismanage their life are not only looked down upon, but may also be considered as selfish citizens who not only choose not to contribute to the collective good, but even worse, they irresponsibly allow themselves to become a public burden, thereby effecting everyone’s freedom and the general prosperity negatively. Indeed, the belief in individual responsibility is at the basis why a “mismanaged life” (Brown, 2005, p.42), understood as “the neoliberal appellation for failure to navigate impediments to prosperity” (Brown, 2005, p.42), is looked down upon by neoliberals. Such categories may include the unemployed, the homeless, single mothers, drug addicts and even the working poor who do not have enough to maintain their families. In spite of the many differences between such individuals, and despite of the fact that they may deserve their status or not, their inability to maintain themselves singles them out as almost second-class citizens.

Individual responsibility is a noble principle that contributes much to making society just (from a neoliberal viewpoint), but, like other neoliberal core principles, it may be insensitive towards the disadvantaged realities which some individuals face to achieve

economic independence. Indeed, this is yet another principle that works well to safeguard individual negative freedom of the majority, but it may also leave some individuals behind. A concern that would need to be addressed, mainly through the application of the principle of humanitarian assistance.

2.4.7 The Principle of Humanitarian Assistance

Another principle at the basis of neoliberal political rationality is that of acknowledging the moral commitment to provide humanitarian assistance to those who are in need (Friedman, 1951/2012; Hayek, 1960, 1979; Thatcher, 1977). Neoliberal backing for social security has a strong element of enlightened egoism and is supported because it simply benefits everyone to have it (Hayek, 1960, 1976, 1979), but that is not the only reason why neoliberals are in favour of social security. The duty of humanitarian assistance plays a role as well, in fact, to this end, Friedman argues that “our humanitarian sentiments demand that some provision should be made for those who ‘draw blanks in the lottery of life’” (Friedman, 1951/2012, p.7). On a similar vein, Thatcher often argued in support of “a basic safety-net ... a basic moral commitment ... that jointly we do try to guarantee some basic standard of life” (Thatcher, 1977). Hayek also shared this view, and while providing a list of instrumental reasons while it benefits everyone to establish a centralised social security system, he also often contended that “we shall again take for granted the availability of a system of public relief which provides a uniform minimum for all instances of proved need, so that no member of the community need be in want of food or shelter” (Hayek, 1960, p. 424), where not being in a condition of acute need is considered to be an end in itself. Another prominent neoliberal, Röpke, also takes it for granted that we collectively have a duty to care for the weak, and contends that there are many who “cannot be left helplessly exposed to events that may plunge them into wholly undeserved distress, and that this is not simply a matter of political calculation, but a human reality *with a moral justification* [emphasis added]” (Röpke, 1957, p.51). Clearly, the duty to assist those in need demands that “where individuals or groups are unable to shoulder the burden of providing for themselves, society must provide for them” (Röpke, 1957, p.51). Not only because it convenes everyone, but also because it is the morally just course to follow.

This support is provided under diverse restrictive conditions, but the baseline fact remains that within a neoliberal social arrangement, in spite of the abandonment of the principles of social justice, no person should have to live in a state of absolute poverty. Nonetheless, it is argued that there is a vital distinction that must be kept in mind at all

times when dealing with such matter. Specifically it is emphasised that there is an important:

“line that separates a state of affairs in which the community accepts the duty of preventing destitution and of providing a minimum level of welfare [the neoliberal approach] from that in which it assumes the power to determine the just position of everybody and allocates to each what it thinks he deserves [the social justice approach]” (Hayek, 1960, p. 262).

That is, the difference between the neoliberal efforts to eradicate absolute poverty while maintaining a just society where individual negative freedom is safeguarded, and the collective efforts made to implement a specific pattern of social justice (egalitarian, sufficientarian and others) with the aim of achieving a just society. Neoliberalism stands for the moral duty to assist those in need, but it is against the power of the state to distribute rewards according to any specific pattern of social justice. It is sustained that it is up to every society to decide democratically where to set the cut-off point of well-being below which no individual should be permitted to live and what to consider as a morally unacceptable standard of living. What neoliberals demand in relation to such a cut-off point is that it should be proportional to the general wealth of that particular society.

A criticism levelled at the duty of humanitarian assistance is the fact that this does not contribute to generating a more egalitarian society. Yet, this is to be expected since no aspect of the neoliberalisation process aims at developing a more socially just social arrangement, especially considering that “the neoliberal ... is concerned only with the absolute position of the worst off, not their relative position, nor with the degree of inequality” (Plant, 2010, p. 119). Consequently, “unlike an egalitarian principle, a principle of humanitarian assistance has no comparative commitment” (Tan, 2012, p. 9). For those who perceive the ideal society to be a socially just one, clearly the duty of humanitarian assistance does not even begin to fulfil the perceived obligation of what they believe that citizens owe each other. On the contrary, for the neoliberal whose ideal society can only be a free one, the eradication of absolute poverty is the only legitimate concern that a society can have. Focusing on absolute poverty is preferable because this eliminates the unfairness and threats to individual negative freedom that expansive redistributive policies can generate. Neoliberals realise that this trade-off of safeguarding individual liberty over supporting social equality has extensive negative repercussions, but accept these as the inevitable price of freedom.

In truth, it has to be acknowledged that the price of individual freedom, while worth it, is astronomically high, especially when one takes into consideration that, for example, “health and social problems are indeed more common in countries with bigger income inequalities” (Wilkinson & Pickett, 2009, p. 20) and that “the vast majority of the population is harmed by greater inequality” (Wilkinson & Pickett, 2009, p. 181) because “the benefits of greater equality are widely spread” (Wilkinson & Pickett, 2009, p. 187) and not only confined to people living in poverty. Criticism also points out the wide-ranging problems that result from inequality, which include social problems as diverse as: mental illness, life expectancy, obesity, children’s educational performance, teenage births, homicides, and imprisonment rates (Wilkinson & Pickett, 2009). Notwithstanding these negative consequences, neoliberals judge that the inequality burden, that is, the redistribution of wealth required to bring about a socially just society remains an immoral burden, while the “poverty burden” (Quiggin & Mahadevan, 2015, p. 168), which is incurred when financing a minimal safety-net that protects against absolute poverty, is a morally legitimate one.

2.4.8 Market Justice.

A final principle at the core of neoliberal political rationality is a concept that, can be referred to as market justice, or even individual justice or mutual advantage justice. This arises from the understanding that in interacting with others (outside the private sphere), “what determines our responsibility is the advantage we derive from what others offer us, not their merit in providing it” (Hayek, 1960, p. 161). In such interactions, each individual “takes no account of personal or subjective circumstances, of needs or good intentions, but solely how the results of man’s activities are valued by those who make use of them” (Hayek, 1967, p. 257). This principle is deemed to be fundamental to a neoliberal framework, so much so that it is maintained that without it, a free society simply cannot function (Erhard, 1958; Hayek, 1962). It is, in fact, affirmed that everyone must adhere to such a conception of justice where rewards correspond to value provided irrespective of effort incurred in creating it, for a free-market order to function successfully. Therefore, in dealing with others, we are being just when “we recompense value rendered with equal value” (Hayek, 1960, p. 161) and we should not go into “what it might have cost the particular individual to supply us with these services” (p. 161) since that is a different matter (moral merit) that need not concern us, because “it is the value of a person’s performance and not his merit that determines our obligation to him” (p. 161), in a free market order.

To avoid any misunderstandings, it should be clarified that this particular conception of justice is distinct from the idea of justice in transfer, or ideas related to property rights justice, transactional or procedural justice, or legal regulations on relations of exchanges among individuals. Market justice has to do with the nature of the exchange, while transactional justice has to do with the process of exchange itself. While both market justice and transactional justice refer to situations where both parties are identifiable (unlike social justice), transactional justice has to do with conditions of justice that need to be fulfilled for a transfer to be transactionally just, that is, issues of ownership, voluntariness (absence of coercion), and non-deception. Considering these differences, an exchange dealing in stolen goods, may be considered to be in line with market justice (both parties get exactly what they bargained for), but not in line with the conditions required for justice in transfer, because the items were obtained illegitimately in the first place.

This conception of justice is preferred by neoliberals because it is the only conception that truly safeguards individual negative freedom. In a social arrangement where “it is the value of a person’s performance and not his merit that determines our obligation” (Hayek, 1960, p. 161), each individual is enabled to decide what best to do with their own time, thus enabled to be free. This becomes the case because such a conception of justice enables individual to “decide whether the material reward others are prepared to pay for ...[their] services makes it worthwhile for ...[them] to render” (Hayek, 1962, p. 232) such services, thereby offering individuals the choice to provide such a service or not. On the contrary, “if the remuneration did not correspond to the value that the product of a man’s efforts has for his fellows, he would have no basis for deciding whether the pursuit of a given object is worth the effort and risk” (Hayek, 1960, p. 158) and therefore less able to decide about the best way forward, and less free. The reason for this would be that individuals would have no way of ascertaining how others measure the worth of their services, (effort made, moral merit, etc.) Consequently, it is argued that “we are free because the success of our daily efforts does not depend on whether particular people like us [as persons], or our principles, or our religion, or our manners” (Hayek, 1962, p. 232), but our efforts are exclusively rewarded depending on our ability to satisfy people’s wants irrespective of any other possibly discriminatory consideration. Most importantly, this also counts in cases where the other party of the transaction dislikes our conception of the good life. The fact that such considerations are kept out of one-to-one transactions enhances the options of both parties and enables cooperation between parties that would otherwise not have been possible.

Within neoliberalism, the ability to cooperate with everyone is considered to be important because “a society in which the position of the individuals was made to correspond to human ideas of moral merit would ... be the exact opposite of a free society” (Hayek, 1960, p. 161). In such cases, individuals would end up having to depend on what others think they morally deserve according to some imposed criteria of subjective merit used to assess the outcomes of their decisions. By contrast, a free society cannot be a society “in which every move of every individual was guided by what other people thought he ought to do” (Hayek, 1960, p. 161). In such societies guided by master narratives of any possible conception of social justice, it would be true that all individuals would be pleasantly “relieved of the responsibility and the risk of decision” (Hayek, 1960, p. 161) but in the process, they would also be relieved of their freedom to choose the best way to spend their time and effort.

Considering that “the mark of the free man” (Hayek, 1960, p. 161) consists in *not* being dependent for his livelihood “on other people’s views of his [sic] merit” (Hayek, 1960, p. 161), it becomes understandable why such a conception of justice gains such high status in a political rationality that prioritises individual negative freedom over other moral concerns. It can even be said that conceptions of justice that are more substantive than market justice would risk generating a collective effort to implement a pattern of social justice (possibly based on rights or merit), with the lack of freedom that this would entail because this arrangement would necessitate an authority to be in charge of deciding how much to take from some to give to others so that society is kept within the guiding parameters permitted by the chosen pattern of social justice.

On the contrary, the advantage of adopting market justice consists in the fact that “distribution according to benefits to others is a major patterned strand in a free capitalist society, ... but it is only a strand and does not constitute the whole pattern of a system of entitlements” (Nozick, 1974, p. 272). It is a pattern specifically limited to be applied within the economic sphere and does not include “inheritance, gifts for arbitrary reasons, charity, and so on” (Nozick, 1974, p. 272), thereby maintaining the necessary space for individual freedom to flourish within the private sphere, free of any form of overarching moral pattern that would be required to maintain any conception of a just society (egalitarian or otherwise).

The belief that “it is the value of a person’s performance and not his merit that determines our obligation to him” (Hayek, 1960, p. 161) is also relevant because it is in line with the view that a free competitive market order is not morally defensible due to the fact that it leads to a meritocratic social arrangement. It is true that a just society must at every point act against any discrimination, but this does not mean that it can be said that those who are successful, morally deserve their success. Indeed, “the value that the performance or capacity of a person has to his fellows has no necessary connection with its ascertainable merit” (Hayek, 1960, p. 158). This point is relevant to those who care a great deal about maintaining a free society, that is a just society from a neoliberal perspective, because “any attempt to found the case for freedom on this argument [meritocracy] is very damaging to it, since it concedes that material rewards ought to be made to correspond to recognisable merit” (Hayek, 1960, p. 157), an assertion that cannot be true because it is often the case that successful individuals do not morally deserve their success any more than they deserve their natural gifts. This becomes clear when one realises that “the inborn as well as the acquired gifts of a person clearly have a value to his fellows which does not depend on any credit due to him [sic] for possessing them” (Hayek, 1960, p. 158). No individual has any say about the talents, intellect, good looks, resilience, or other gifts with which they are born or into which they are trained from very early in their life. This is the reason why adhering to a conception of market justice is preferable to a conception of justice understood as “proportionality of reward to moral merit” (Hayek, 1960, p. 156). In relation to this point, it should be added that even if a community were to decide to adhere to such a conception of justice, it would be impossible to implement for the simple reason that “moral desert cannot be determined objectively” (Hayek, 1988, p. 118) since it cannot be ascertained what part of one’s success results from the decision to make a conscious effort which eventually led to their contribution.

Most importantly, even that part of one’s success that originates from one’s purposeful efforts cannot be said to be entirely meritorious since it depends on one’s genetic makeup and personality. Furthermore, considering the irrelevance of moral merit to the conception of market justice, one must consider the view that in situations where “the results for the individuals depend partly on chance and partly on their skill, there is evidently no sense in calling the outcome either just or unjust” (Hayek, 1976, p. 126). In fact, it cannot be said that an economic system based on market justice, that is, the free-competitive market order, is just. Nonetheless, considering the irrelevance of moral merit to people’s ability to provide others with what they want, and the fact that justice is only applicable to intentional

exchanges and therefore cannot be applied to the unintentional outcomes of a free market, which is essentially the “result of human action but not of human design” (Hayek, 1967, p. 96), such an order cannot be considered as a just order or an order that gives everyone what is morally due to them. What may be concluded is that the principle of justice does not apply to market outcomes, but not that market outcomes are just, at best it could be argued that these are not unjust.

A free-market economic order cannot flourish without individuals’ “readiness...to participate in honest and free competition” (Erhard, 1958, p. 186) and there can be no such readiness unless individuals embrace the idea of market justice, that is, “the approval as just of an arrangement by which material rewards are made to correspond to the value which a person’s particular services have to his [sic] fellows” (Hayek, 1962, p. 232) as opposed to moral merit, as the only valid conception of justice that can adequately underpin a free society. In fact, it should come as no surprise that such a conception of justice is considered to be a vital element of a what neoliberals judge to be a just society, and an element “without which ... [a free society] cannot survive” (Hayek, 1962, p. 232). It is the only conception that respects individual negative freedom and is in line with the fact that economic success cannot be expected to be directly proportional to one’s efforts even if “effort of course will improve individual chances” (Hayek, 1988, p. 118) yet, on its own it “cannot secure results” (Hayek, 1988, p. 118), or at least, it cannot do so in a free-market order where outcomes cannot be known. This unpatterned conception of justice is preferred over any patterned conception of justice in neoliberal social arrangements, to the advantage of safeguarding individual negative freedom, but the detriment of having a more materially unequal society. A consequence which neoliberals are ready to accept.

2.5 Neoliberalism and Alternative Visions of the Good Society.

In the quest to comprehend the meaning of neoliberalism it is productive to become familiar with the academic texts of the intellectuals who promote it. It is also a useful exercise to compare it with political rationalities that are not entirely dissimilar to understand different nuances, while it is also helpful to identify the underpinning principles on which it is set. As shown above, such principles shed light on why specific policies are preferred over others. Additionally, it is also helpful to contrast neoliberalism with views that share very little with it. Consequently, this section aims to contrast some egalitarian perspectives with neoliberalism. Such exercise can potentially enrich the understanding of the neoliberal political rationality.

On the one hand, the neoliberal is content to accept that “as a statement of fact, it just is not true that ‘all men are born equal’” (Hayek, 1960, p. 150). Neoliberals also content that we have to accept that “life is not fair. It is tempting to believe that government can rectify what nature has spawned” (Friedman, 1980, p. 17) but it cannot, and when trying, it makes matters even worse. Many do not accept this attitude. Rawls, for one, emphasises that such attitudes are, “offered as an excuse for ignoring injustice, as if the refusal to acquiesce in injustice is on a par with being unable to accept death” (Rawls, 1999, p.86). Yet, one should make a distinction about the neoliberal attitude about life being unfair, because such comments are only limited to circumstances that do not result from purposeful human action. For the rest, the neoliberal view is in line with Rawls’ conclusions that “the natural distribution is neither just nor unjust; nor is it unjust that persons are born into society at some particular position. These are simply natural facts. What is just and unjust is the way that institutions deal with these facts” (Rawls, 1999, p.86). Differences between neoliberals and believers in social justice lead to differences in the institutions designed to deal with these facts. Rawls, along with others (albeit in different ways), proposes principles of justice specifically designed to develop just social structures aimed at compensating for the many unfair natural facts. On the contrary, neoliberals distrust such solutions because they are weary of the fact that the construction of such mechanisms can end up impacting negatively on the private sphere of many, making the situation worse. Yet, unconvinced of the fact that nothing can be done to improve the situation, those who adhere to ideas of social justice press on with their efforts to find better alternatives than simply accepting such fate, and contend that there must be better ways of being in the world. In fact, many claim that just alternatives to the neoliberal ideas of competition and individual responsibility are provided by egalitarian perspectives, where it is sustained that ‘we are all in it together’ and where a vision of the good society is built on collective responsibility and cooperation instead of the benefits that accrue from individual self-interest and competition.

Unlike neoliberals, egalitarians believe: in the ability of members of a community to agree on a common road that can lead towards a shared understanding of the common good to everyone’s benefit, they believe in the importance to maintain an expansive democratic political sphere where collective deliberation can flourish; in centralised redistribution that not only eradicates poverty but which also creates a less unequal society; in the overcoming of structural inequalities; and in the possibility of a socially just society. Unlike neoliberals,

adherents to such perspectives, are in favour of an active government, not in the neoliberal sense of actively promoting competition and overseeing free markets, but active in the sense of directly creating wealth and employment, and distributing the resulting prosperity in a manner that reduces material inequality. This vision includes social institutions and public services submitted to the directions provided by public deliberation rather than the input/output objectives of performativity. A conception of freedom that is not limited to the negative aspect of intentional coercion by others, but that sees all externally imposed limitations on individuals' capability to act, irrespective of intentionality, as an illegitimate limitation on freedom, and which deserves collective redress.

Once one takes into consideration the assumptions in the above paragraph, one understands why neoliberalism and egalitarian political rationalities lead to very divergent attitudes to specific political phenomena. The divergent attitude towards democracy is one such example. Egalitarian perspectives put much faith in the democratic process and collective deliberation, while, under neoliberal governance, democracy is viewed as a necessary evil, to be circumscribed as much as possible, because of its likelihood to be abused by the many different kinds of free-riders in society. Hence the resulting neoliberal policies of economisation and depoliticisation aimed at restricting the political sphere. Egalitarians consider such dismantling of democracy as an immoral way to weaken popular sovereignty, collective efforts of social justice, the welfare state, and social rights. All of these are considered to exclusively belong to the realm of democratic deliberation and are considered as unquestionably matters of normative political choice instead of matters of economic efficiency where collective deliberation is transformed into individual choice to the detriment of the democratic process.

This attitude towards democracy has repercussions on all areas of public policy, not least education. Egalitarians prioritise the potential that schooling has as a means to reduce social inequality by making sure that schools do not act as a means of social reproduction. Most importantly, schools are seen as having central roles to fulfil in relation to creating individuals who are able to realise their extensive duties as democratic citizens, particularly through their participation in collective deliberation on matters of just redistribution and the collective effort towards a more just society. Schools are expected to prioritise the creation of active democratic citizens, and teachers have extensive contributions to make in such matters. Teachers should encourage reflection through appropriate critical pedagogy; raise awareness about the struggle for emancipation, social equality, the common good and social

justice; and especially foster students' ability to question structural inequalities instead of accepting them as natural. This egalitarian conception of compulsory education leads to a very different notion of both schooling and teachers, neither of which is expected to focus predominantly on improving academic attainment. In fact, once these views are taken into consideration, one begins to understand why the neoliberal conception of teachers' roles and compulsory schooling look so reductive from a social justice perspective.

2.6 Conclusion

This chapter attempted to define neoliberalism by elucidating its main theoretical aspects. Comprehending core neoliberal tenets is particularly important because as I will argue, once these are applied, neoliberalism manifests itself necessarily as a hybridised political phenomenon, fused with other ideologies, in contexts where it need not even be the dominant political theory. Therefore, being able to identify its major characteristics becomes especially important for any valid engagement. In this chapter, I affirm that neoliberalism is underpinned by distinctive principles that lead to a particular conception of what a just society looks like, a society that focuses on safeguarding individual negative freedom and which side-lines issues of positive liberty and social equality. This conception of a just society is already indicative of the fundamental differences between the aims of neoliberalism and other political theories, particularly those that aim for less unequal societies. In clarifying the rationale behind neoliberalisation processes, one enables better comprehension of different forms of neoliberal governance through the clearer understanding of elements which can be identified as neoliberal, as opposed to contextual contingent ones.

In this chapter, I argued that neoliberalism is best understood as a political rationality characterised by specific core principles to which it adheres. All principles contribute, in some way or another, to safeguarding individual negative freedom – where freedom is only conceptualised negatively, as freedom from coercion, not as freedom to access personal fulfilment. Neoliberalism encapsulates a vision through which society's institutions are seen to be “necessary mechanisms for harmonising individual desires” (Barry, 1995, p. 137) where the ideas of equality before the law and individual negative freedom are granted the status of the number one common good. This vision of the ideal society is demonstrated by the belief in individualism and individual responsibility but is also manifested in the other principles, including a conception of market justice wholly purged from any element of moral merit. The implication of this commitment to the different conceptions of the good

life and the awareness of the inability of decision-makers to know what everyone wants for themselves, explains why the neoliberal policymaker objects strongly to “the imposition of plans, redistributive patterns and rational schemes on society” (Barry, 1995, p. 138) all of which are seen as threats to individual negative freedom and dangerous opportunities for state coercion that need to be avoided. Those who find themselves in agreement with such a view, regard the high importance given to ideas of negative freedom and individual responsibility as a noble aspect of neoliberalism. Understandably, many, especially those who equate social equality with justice, are morally repulsed by the exacerbation of economic inequality that results from such ideas.

The institutionalisation of a social safety-net contributes somehow to the mitigation of egalitarian effects and ensures that neoliberal political rationality results in social arrangements that while accepting inequality, it does a great deal to eliminate absolute poverty. From an egalitarian perspective, this may be judged to be morally unacceptable, particularly due to the resulting exacerbation of social inequalities. On the contrary, from a neoliberal standpoint, this arrangement is preferable to any possible patterned conception of social justice that can potentially severely limit individual negative freedom in morally intolerable ways. Such patterns may include: fair equality of opportunity (Rawls, 1971), sufficientarianism (Frankfurt, 1987), prioritarianism (Parfit, 1991), luck-egalitarianism/equality of fortune (Arneson, 2000), starting-gate egalitarianism (Ackerman, 1980), resource egalitarianism (Dworkin, 1981), desertism (Miller, 1989) and several others. For the neoliberal policymaker, all are inadequate because their implementation necessarily entail the coercion of citizens to contribute to a ‘just’ social arrangement in a manner that illegitimately impacts negatively on individuals’ negative freedom.

The next chapter continues the analysis of neoliberalism by identifying the policy trends that these principles lead to in the countries considered in this thesis (U.S., UK, Australia, Canada, and New Zealand). Clearly, “principles are no use, unless you make them as policy, and then act upon them” (Thatcher, 1995) and in fact, the implementation of the principles identified in this chapter have led to various types of actually-existing neoliberalisms. Even though neoliberalism manifests itself always and everywhere as a politically hybridised phenomenon, patterns of neoliberalisation are still discernible. They can be identified in specific approaches to national governance and are also evident with regards to education policy. Under neoliberal governance, policies are justified in terms of

the aforementioned principles, and the level of success is usually assessed by their promoters in terms of their ability to safeguard individual negative freedom.

Chapter Three – Neoliberal Governance

3.1 Introduction

The term neoliberalism is used to refer to the political rationality portrayed in Chapter Two, but at the same time, it also refers to a specific form of governance. As a method of governance, neoliberalism is referred to as what is sometimes called “actually-existing neoliberalism” (Brenner & Theodore, 2002, p. 349). Actually existing neoliberalisms are forms of governance that result when applying the principles identified in Chapter Two as the basis on which to structure society. While actually existing neoliberalisms cannot occur in pure form and only materialise once adapted to suit local political circumstances, they are still distinguishable through specific overarching trends that on the whole cohere with the core principles and lead to specific targets.

3.2 Neoliberalism as a Form of Governance

As a political rationality, neoliberalism provides a specific normative vision of the ideal state, while as a form of governance, it indicates the processes that are to be undertaken for a social arrangement to move closer towards resembling the neoliberal vision of a just society. Neoliberalism is conducive to an indirect method of governance that aims at establishing harmonious relations between individuals while impacting as little as possible on individual negative freedom, even at the price of having to accept material inequality. As a form of governance, neoliberalism seeks “to translate thought into the domain of reality” (Miller & Rose, 1990, p. 8), with the aim of bringing about an order that is in line with the core principles. Neoliberal governance implements neoliberal political rationality in practice. It manifests itself through specific administrative and financial techniques that end up shaping individual decisions usually through the impersonal coercion of competition. This is meant to bring about a social arrangement that reflects the spirit of the core principles on which the founding rationality is built. Hence, neoliberal governance can be defined as a way in which the exercise of government power manifests itself as a specific “approach to institutional reform” (Peters, 2001b, p. 118). It is characterised by a particular set of strategies by which neoliberal political rationality is institutionalised. Furthermore, it indicates the roles that are expected to be fulfilled by specific social actors, including bureaucrats, policymakers, employers, employees, trade unions, citizens, students, and customers.

Considering the wide-ranging consequences of neoliberal governance, it inevitably results in deep political, economic, and social implications with extensive repercussions on social structures and individuals' daily lives. This chapter identifies how neoliberal political rationality proliferates and results in different actually existing neoliberalisms in different countries and points out which of the elements comprising neoliberal governance enable this proliferation. Issues of resistance to the diverse types of actually existing neoliberalisms that develop in diverse settings are also outlined. Once the hybridity and flexibility of neoliberalism have been acknowledged, the chapter continues by portraying an identikit of a prototypical neoliberal form of governance. This completes the effort to elucidate the meaning of the term neoliberalism. This clarifying effort enables this philosophical exploration to move on to identifying the specific aims within the neoliberal agenda for education, and the policies that enable the achievement of such aims.

This extensive effort to construct a definition of neoliberalism had to be undertaken to help ensure that the critical analyses developed in the later chapters is a valid one. Current philosophical engagement with neoliberalism is replete with high quality analysis that in my view is sometimes inaccurate because not enough effort goes into making sure that what is being analysed is actually 'neoliberal.' This is an error I wanted to avoid, hence the extensive effort in understanding neoliberalism as political rationality (Chapter Two) and as a form of governance (this chapter). This effort in clarifying what is meant by neoliberalism paves the way to the analysis that ensues. A 'surface' understanding of neoliberalism would have led to unsatisfactory answers of the chosen research questions especially because the term neoliberalism is mostly used as a derogatory term that seems to define all kinds of social ills.

3.3 The Proliferation of Actually Existing Neoliberalisms

Various institutions contributed to the proliferation of neoliberal governance. Collectively they supported the spread of neoliberalisation as a form of governance, which changed from being an experimental set of policy initiatives, into the go-to policy in all areas of public policy. One factor that may have contributed to how neoliberalism changed from being a policy experiment in Pinochet's Chile and then in Thatcher's Britain, into a preferred policy approach, was the support that this approach received from supranational organisations. Such organisations acted as hubs that actively promoted neoliberal policy approaches (Dale, 2000; Mundy, 2007). In fact, it is a generally uncontested fact that the so-called neoliberal Washington Consensus has been supported by the International Monetary Fund, the World

Bank and the World Trade Organisation by being provided support on the condition of adopting competitive free-market policy setups (Babb & Kentikelenis, 2017; Brenner et al., 2010; Harmes, 2006; Holman, 2004; Lee 2003; Peet, 2003). It is also sustained that the Organisation for Economic and Cooperative Development and the General Agreement on Trade and Services have also contributed to the promotion of neoliberal policies (Daun, 2018; Olssen, 2004; Zajda, 2018), as has the European Union (Simmons et al, 2008). Other supranational entities, such as the Bank for International Settlements (Gill, 2003) and the International Labour Organisation have also favoured the proliferation of neoliberal policies. Pressures exerted by these organisations, often in conjunction, were not limited to economic, political, social, and cultural policies. They also directly targeted education policies (Rikowski, 2002). For example, the Organisation for Economic and Cooperative Development uses the PISA assessment to promote the idea that education can contribute much to national economic competitiveness (Giannone, 2016). To the extent that over time, PISA has come to be recognised as a type of global education governance (Rizvi & Lingard, 2010), contributing to the hyper-accountability measures that are institutionalised as part of the neoliberalisation of compulsory education, and even affecting school curricula in different countries (Berliner, 2011; Delaune, 2019). When considering the evidence generated through the vast literature on the matter, there can be little doubt that assumptions operating supra-nationally affect national policy (Olssen, 2004) and actively contribute to the proliferation of neoliberal policies in a wide range of public policies.

Apart from the external pressure to adopt neoliberal policies, neoliberal governance has also proliferated due to the effort of different states to become more economically competitive. Enhanced competitiveness makes one's country increasingly attractive to much desirable foreign direct investment while improving one's ability to outperform the competition in international markets, thereby increasing economic growth. Neoliberal policies are conducive to increasing performance through policies such as deregulation, liberalisation, and reduced levels of taxation. This allows a country to become more attractive to investors while also becoming more efficient, thus more competitive. In turn, other countries that note the means behind such enhanced competitiveness often follow suit. Indeed, once one opts for a free economic market order, there is usually little alternative but to creatively find new ways to foster competition. Thus, it can be concluded that once a competing country institutionalises policies that give it a competitive edge, others promptly follow suit. This iterative process contributes to the expansion of neoliberalism.

External pressures from supranational entities and the aim to enhance competitive advantage are not the only two factors instigating the proliferation of neoliberal governance. Another reason is the simple fact that countries can learn from each other through cooperation so that the more a policy seems to be successful in one jurisdiction, the more other jurisdictions are likely to follow suit. This was the case, for example, are regards the widespread adoption of the policy of privatisation, once such policies seemed to be successful in improving the productivity of nationalised industries in the UK, the policy became increasingly popular in other countries as well (Simmons et al., 2008). This is particularly the case for those policies that can support political stability while also managing to sustain economic growth. Another source for the proliferation of neoliberalism comes from the promotion that such policies get from believers, most prominently, academic experts in philosophy, economics, and experts in hyper-accountability measures. Contributing academics include “F. A. Hayek and Ludwig von Mises, representing the Austrian tradition; Lionel Robbins from the London School of Economics; Walter Eucken, Alexander Rüstow and Franz Böhm, from the Freiburg group; the German ordoliberals, Wilhelm Röpke and Alfred Müller-Armack; Milton Friedman and Alan Walters, leaders of the monetarist camp; and James Buchanan and Gordon Tullock from the Virginia school of public choice theory” (Turner, 2008, p. 6). Bourdieu and Wacquant include “the London School of Economics in England, [and] Harvard’s Kennedy School of Government in America” (Bourdieu & Wacquant, 2001, p. 3) as hubs that sustained the spread of neoliberal ideas. Other higher education centres that contributed to the spread of neoliberal principles include, “L’Institut Universitaire des Hautes Etudes Internationales at Geneva, St. Andrews in Scotland, [and] George Mason University” (Mirowski, 2014, p. 9). Collectively such educational hubs constitute an intellectual movement that sustains the proliferation of neoliberalism.

The neoliberal intellectual movement also comprises a number of foundations and think-tanks established in different countries whose sole purpose is to provide a basis of neoliberal ideas (Turner, 2008). Foundations established with such intent include, the Earhart Foundation, the Bradley Foundation, the Charles Koch Foundation, the Heritage Foundation, the Hoover Institution, and the Margaret Thatcher Foundation. Think tanks are present in many countries. These include, the Institute of Economic Affairs, the Fraser Institute, the Manhattan Institute, the Acton Institute, the Adam Smith Institute, and various others. These institutions collectively sustain a process of refining policies (Peck & Tickell, 2007) and use the media extensively to promote neoliberal ideas.

Another contribution to neoliberal proliferation originates from middle-class professionals whose social mobility depends on the employment of their expertise (Apple, 2016); that is, those who have a background in administration and management and who “provide the technical and ‘professional’ support for accountability, measurement, ‘product control’, and assessment that is required by the proponents of neoliberal policies” (Apple, 2016, p. 130). One such example may include the educational accountability experts who, according to Allais, may have a “... vested interest in maintaining their own survival” (Allais, 2014, p. 229) and consequently, promote hyper-accountability solutions like national qualification frameworks, in spite of their disadvantages. According to Bourdieu and Wacquant, such professionals contribute much to the spread of neoliberalism, by preparing highly technical documents within ministries, company headquarters or think-tanks that are then used to justify neoliberal policies in favour of free-market policy options (Bourdieu & Wacquant, 2001).

When acting in collaboration with each other, supranational organisations, government officials, political parties, civil servants, policymakers, businesspersons, academics in various fields, universities, think tanks, foundations, institutes, and rogue experts collectively contribute to “the creation of transnational networks for knowledge and policy transfer” (Brenner et al., 2010, p. 327), which consolidate and advance neoliberalisation processes. These actors sustain a wide-ranging discourse, in practice, anything “pronounced or written” (Foucault, 1970, p. 51) that feeds the media with a myriad of notions in favour of neoliberal political rationality, such as flexibility, employability, competitiveness, productivity, innovation and other ideas that form a coherent discourse in favour of a specific vision for a particular social arrangement. This discourse informs government action with neoliberal principles resulting in the expansion of neoliberalisation processes. In fact, these institutions can have disciplinary effects on governments, agencies, and even citizens steering them in line with neoliberal guidelines (Barnett, 2010). In practice, the most manifest forms that make this proliferation process visible is the extensive use of any possible kind of media including newspapers, television and the internet, but also more subtle means such as “libraries, schools, associations and clubs of various kinds, even architecture, the layout of streets and their names” (Gramsci, 1975, p. 53). All these means can be used to influence the general public’ conceptions of the actual state of affairs and thereby propagating the neoliberal vision. This promulgation of neoliberal ideas is most successful when it manages to provide rationalised justifications that eventually manage to

influence the ways in which policymakers conceptualise social problems and solutions. From a neoliberal perspective, this is a positive process as it is seen as a way to spread the message in favour of freedom, limited government, and non-coercion. Alternatively, egalitarians point out that neoliberal discourse excludes notions such as “class, exploitation, domination and inequality [which become] conspicuous by their absence” (Bourdieu & Wacquant, 2001, p. 3) having been deemed as irrelevant. This exclusion affects the weaker members of society most.

3.4 The Anti-Neoliberal Movements

The pressures from supranational organisations, local governments, and think tanks are only part of the story when it comes to understanding the spread of neoliberal governance, or rather, the different types of actually existing neoliberalisation processes occurring in diverse jurisdictions. Certainly, no picture would be complete without including the forces that have been actively opposing it since it was “a gleam in Friedrich Hayek’s eye” (Leitner et al., 2007, p. 4) and even before. Currently, this charge is led by academics like Noam Chomsky, Henry Giroux, Michael A. Peters, and Michael Apple, who dedicate much academic effort to highlighting the dangers of the spread of neoliberalism. To them, we must also add the vast majority of academics from the post-modern tradition, to modern liberals, social democrats, or Marxists, who in some way or another contribute to the anti-neoliberal academic resistance movement. Many have devoted their energy to demonstrating how neoliberal practices foster inequality and exploitation by ignoring the possibilities for redistribution and recognition that might lead to a socially just social arrangement. What may be ironic in relation to this effort is that the academics mentioned in this paragraph, along with Foucault and Foucauldian scholars such as Nicholas Rose and Wendy Brown, and others, have done such a good job at elucidating some of the aspects of neoliberalism that in practice, they ended up unintentionally enriching the neoliberal tradition. Without their academic efforts, the current understanding of the very conception of neoliberalism would not have reached the level of development it did.

Anti-neoliberal academics also contributed a great deal to another source of anti-neoliberalism, that is, social movements that strive to promote their vision of a just society, such as Syriza in Greece, Podemos in Spain, Degrowth, Climate Justice and several others. As a matter of fact, “even prior to the most recent global financial crisis [2009], there had been plenty of organized opposition to neoliberal policies by workers’ movements, peasant movements, urban movements, [and] various strands of the anti-globalisation movement”

(Brenner et al. 2010, p. 327), to which one should add the support they receive mostly from indebted higher education students, the working poor, and some middle-class families, who increasingly join the more obvious detractors of free-markets, that is, Marxists, environmentalists, feminists, socialists and modern liberals. It is when considering the nature of such opposition that it becomes especially clearer why such opposition often results in street demonstrations (Jetto-Gillies, 2003). These grass-roots movements have become more powerful since the internet has enabled the global spread of their message (Olssen et al., 2004). Such social movements, including trade unions, have manifested repeatedly against neoliberal reforms and have been doing so for a very long time. Such manifestations have included protests against structural adjustment policies, international debt, and even free trade agreements which threatened jobs (Kiely, 2005).

Apart from these manifestations, protests at international summits should also be considered as part of anti-neoliberal campaign, especially major protests at G20, International Monetary Fund, World Economic Forum and World Bank meetings. Moreover, one must not forget the contestations that originate from political parties, notably by some “social democratic, communist, and populist political parties” (Brenner et al. 2010, p. 327), normally depending on the visions of their respective leaders. An example of active anti-neoliberalism was shown by the UK Labour Party under Jeremy Corbyn. The anti-neoliberal spirit was discernible in all proposed policies, especially through the preference for cooperation over competition, evident throughout the 2019 electoral manifesto, which argued in favour of rolling back depoliticisation and bringing “back into public ownership” (p. 20) services such as electricity and water supply, bus networks, railways, postal services and broadband, thus demonstrating a clear anti-neoliberal approach.

Anti-neoliberal sentiment could be so strong that there may be some merit in the view that we are in an age of post-neoliberalism. However, this claim may require some clarification since post-neoliberalism does not refer to a coherent alternative political rationality that is preferable to neoliberalism (Bayer, 2009) but to an array of possibilities where ad hoc alternative solutions can be implemented. To this end, it is generally agreed that “the concept [of post-neoliberalism] remains useful ...only if we understand it as a tendency to break with neoliberal policy prescriptions leading to a variety of distinct post-neoliberalisms” (Ruckert et al., 2017, p. 1583). In some cases, this may refer to a complete rupture, while in others, it may not necessarily indicate a wholesale break with neoliberal

governance (Marston, 2015). Just as neoliberalism is not a monolithic block, postneoliberalism is equally context specific (Sekler, 2009), while in every case aiming at halting some aspects of a neoliberalisation process. Additionally, it is often argued that, at least for the time being, postneoliberalism cannot entail a complete rapture from neoliberalism because current institutional conditions prevent it (Yates & Bakker, 2014, p. 65). This is essentially the case because even if neoliberalism is continuously being challenged, state-imposed market discipline remains intact and neoliberal policies such as competitiveness, free trade, privatisation, and flexible employment often remain the go-to policy options.

When considering such occurrence, many quote Gramsci's arguments when he referred to those specific situations of crisis that are identifiable from "the fact that the old dies and the new cannot be born: in this interregnum the most varied of morbid phenomena occur" (Gramsci, 1975, p. 311 my translation). When to this consideration one adds two further points, which are "the Brexit referendum result, and the Trump election [which] came as further signs of trouble in the supposed 'heartlands'" (Peck et al., 2018, p. 9), the view that neoliberalism is at some type of juncture may hold some substance. In truth, the fact that in the same heartlands, uncompromisingly anti-neoliberal politicians such as Bernie Sanders and Jeremy Corbyn held such prominence, and how the UK Labour Party fought an election, in December 2019, with the "It's time for a real change" slogan, while supporting anti-neoliberal policies like the nationalisation of key sectors and generous social security, may also be an indication of the healthy state of the resistance and that it is not just a minor deviation from the standard neoliberal policy approach (Challies & Murray, 2008).

However, it is unlikely that the Anglosphere is at a post-neoliberal stage; the difference between Obama's rhetoric and Obama's practice is one indication that pushes me to agree with Bond's view in relation to the "illusory postneoliberal hubris" (Bond, 2009, p. 194). While it seems improbable, Corbyn and Sanders might have also changed their tunes had they been elected. When all elements are considered, one may even conclude that "it would be a mistake to underestimate its remnant power ... neoliberalism, however dead, remains dominant" (Smith, 2008, p. 2). In relation to this, I believe that it would be more accurate to judge neoliberalism as neither dead, nor dominant. When considering the developments of actually existing neoliberalisms in different jurisdictions, and its ability to coexist with other dominant ideologies, it may be the case that neoliberals may be able to achieve their objectives without needing to be dominant. Possibly, all that is required is maintaining the

necessary support to hold strategic institutions that enable the neoliberalisation process to develop at an adequate pace.

3.5 The Flexibility of Neoliberal Governance

As a political rationality, neoliberalism provides a specific normative vision of the ideal social arrangement. As a type of governance, it indicates the process that is undertaken so that what 'is', resembles more closely what 'should be'. Neoliberal governance leads social arrangements to increasingly reflect the neoliberal theoretical ideals indicated in the theoretical blueprints presented in seminal books, such as Hayek's *The Constitution of Liberty* (1960), Friedman's *Capitalism and Freedom* (1962) and Kirzner's *Competition and Entrepreneurship* (1973). As a process, neoliberalisation can only exist in hybrid form, which is often "simultaneously patterned, interconnected, locally specific, contested and unstable" (Brenner et al., 2010, p. 184). Yet, despite its hybrid structure (Peck & Tickell, 2002), neoliberal governance can be identified through specific policy trends (price stability, deregulation, privatisation) and an evident overall adherence to the principles presented in the previous chapter (including individual responsibility, equality before the law and others). These principles are adapted creatively by policymakers to suit different economic, political, social, and institutional social arrangements. This adaptation process generates the incomplete and changing nature of neoliberalisation processes (Brenner et al., 2010), leading to different types of neoliberal governance (Peck & Tickell, 2002), which then eventually spread world-wide (Gledhill, 2004).

The ability of neoliberalism to exist in hybrid forms and adapt to diverse situations enabled it to move from a state of being a marginalised ideology (Springer, 2015) into an arguably hegemonic ideology that has taken over most people's political imagination. Consequently, it has become difficult to think outside of it. The resilience shown over the years is sustained by the fact that neoliberalism is specifically designed to exist in a hybrid form. The fact that neoliberalism does not endorse any grand narrative and holds no specific conception of justice enables it to flourish in the most politically hostile situation. The underlying belief in the view which holds that "the pursuit of the ideal of justice ... does not presuppose that it is known what justice ... is" (Hayek, 1976, p. 54) provides neoliberal governance with the necessary leeway that enables it to survive the most difficult of cohabitations with the most diverse ideologies. An element within neoliberalism that makes it flexible by design is the fact that none of the core principles that underpin neoliberalism are deemed to be absolute except for the principle of equality before the law.

Nevertheless, even in relation to this principle there is some leeway in its implementations since a degree of progressive taxation can be permitted when it can be shown that this respects the principle of equality before the law. In the libertarian blueprint, *Anarchy, State and Utopia* (Nozick, 1974) Nozick chose not to answer the question whether “side-constraints [moral principles] are absolute, or whether they may be violated in order to avoid catastrophic moral horror” (Nozick, 1974, p. 30). Yet, while this is an option when writing a theoretical book, in real life, such situations, cannot be avoided. In the cases of catastrophic moral horror, which may include absolute poverty, while libertarians usually opt for stricter adherence to the core principles, neoliberals tend to take a more flexible approach. From a neoliberal perspective, while individual freedom is to be safeguarded at all times, in cases of absolute poverty, the core principles may not be adhered to as strictly. Thus, a neoliberal government may generate funding, through taxation, in order to raise the incomes of all people living in poverty (Quiggin & Mahadevan, 2015); that is, upholding the collective responsibility that all citizens have in carrying the “poverty burden” (Quiggin & Mahadevan, 2015, p. 168) and supporting those who are in real need. This compromise is still far removed from the egalitarian vision of the moral duty for everyone to carry the equality burden; however, it provides neoliberalism with the necessary flexibility to adapt to diverse political realities and successfully face some contestations. Further evidence of the fact that neoliberalism is flexible, lies in the fact that neoliberal political rationality advises that “there is no reason why the volume of these pure service activities should not increase with the general growth of wealth” (Hayek, 1960, p. 257) in order to minimise material inequality where possible. These approaches make neoliberalism seem like a practical social order that is sufficiently flexible to accommodate within it a wide spectrum of views on the appropriate morally just social arrangement one must adhere to.

This consideration of the elements within neoliberalism that enable its flexible implementation leads me to question the common view that neoliberal governance entails a contradiction between its principles and policy implementation (Birch & Mykhnenko, 2009) because it is evident that even before the implementation phase, neoliberalism is a malleable political rationality that is meant to be applied flexibly, providing that the overall arrangement is aimed towards a social arrangement that above everything else, protects individual negative freedom, while the implementation pace may vary. With the above-mentioned features in mind, it can be sustained that the flexibility of neoliberal governance is a constitutive feature (Brenner et al., 2010, p. 329) so that not only is it the case that

“neoliberalisation is never manifested in a pure form” (Brenner et al., 2010, p. 330) and that it “can only exist in messy hybrids” (Peck, 2010, p. 7), but also that there is no such thing as a pure form, except within theoretical books. Even in the most favourable of conditions, neoliberalism must always be applied flexibly. The resulting form will inevitably be affected by what is politically acceptable and by many other local features. This is not to say that neoliberalism, both as a political rationality and in its applied form as governance, is not a homogeneous political theory underpinned by a specific view of an ideal society, which moves towards the same objectives in line with specific core values, thus, also reflecting the same trade-offs; that is, similar advantages (usually enhanced individual negative freedom) and disadvantages (usually economic inequality and social fragmentation). The flexible modes of its implementation still do not affect the final destination, which remains more or less in line with the underpinning principles.

Neoliberal governance must adapt to contextual political circumstances in order to be able to function, in fact it is often argued that neoliberalism is always defined by the social worlds it seeks to transform (Peck et al., 2018). Different manifestations of neoliberal governments in different jurisdictions are informed by the institutional, political, social, and economic peculiarities that have a strong impact on the momentum of that specific neoliberalisation process. As a case in point, when criticised by Hayek on the fact that the neoliberalisation process was progressing slowly in the UK when compared with Chile, Thatcher answered that

“in Britain with our democratic institutions and the need for a high degree of consent, some of the measures adopted in Chile are quite unacceptable. Our reform must be in line with our traditions and our Constitution. At times, the process may seem painfully slow. But I am certain we shall achieve our reforms in our own way and in our own time. Then they will endure” (Thatcher, 1982).

As Prime Minister, she had to take into consideration the contestations that neoliberal policies faced, and was aware that there was a limit to what could be done, considering local institutional features, even though if it were up to her, things moved more promptly in line with neoliberal demands. Such situations demonstrate why it is generally maintained that neoliberal governance “needs to be seen as plural. It is not one thing, nor does it have the exact same effects in every site. Much depends on the nature of the state, on the history

of social movements, on the balance of social forces over time and similar things” (Apple, 2018, p. 82). These local features result in a situation where neoliberal governance is characterised by its uneven development and contextual peculiarities (Brenner et al., 2010) that result from adaptations to local circumstances.

3.6 The Capacity of Neoliberalism to Coexist with other Political Rationalities

A further crucial element that increases the ability of neoliberalism to proliferate, and which contributes to its resilience, is the fact that it can exist in a parasitical relationship with its social formations, which may vary between neoconservative authoritarianism, social democracy, or even state socialism (Peck et al., 2010). The resulting policies are invariably informed by the neoliberal assumptions and commitments as required by the core neoliberal principles (Peck et al., 2018). However, the outcomes may reveal the diversification of any neoliberalisation process that results from the struggles with other reigning dominant political views. Such struggles and the resulting compromises are evident wherever neoliberal governance is employed. In her autobiography, for example, Thatcher refers to the fact that it is not always the right time to “embark on politically difficult new initiatives” (Thatcher, 1993, p. 117). She recounts, for instance, how she wanted to introduce a system of education vouchers to sustain parental choice; however, she had come to accept the fact that politically, “we could not bring in a straightforward education voucher scheme” (Thatcher, 1993, p. 117), and therefore had to be creative and try to achieve the same aim, through different means. The adaptation process meant that a series of policies had to be implemented instead of school vouchers for the same objective to be achieved. In the event, the policy alternatives included open-enrolment systems, per capita funding, an assisted places scheme and the promotion of parents’ rights through a parents’ charter. Collectively, these policies brought about a situation where it could be said that, “in effect, we had gone as far as we could towards a ‘public sector voucher’” (Thatcher, 1993, p. 117) even though the actual policy could not be implemented because it was politically unfeasible. Nevertheless, the desired objectives were still reached as a result of some policy creativity.

Another typical neoliberal policy in the field of education, the local management of schools, can also serve as an exemplar of the flexibility that characterises neoliberal governance. When the Government of Western Australia implemented this policy, it took into consideration the “previously fraught attempts at decentralisation” (Wilkins et al., 2019, p. 8), that had been hampered by schools that proved to be unable to handle the added

responsibilities along with the collateral teacher opposition (Wilkins et al., 2019). Once again, political feasibility demanded that instead of implementing full decentralisation and deregulation of student enrolment (Wilkins et al., 2019) to encourage more efficient school management, as neoliberal theory demands, policymakers chose to limit themselves to the implementation of “flexibilities that appealed to headteachers, namely recruitment and budgets” (Wilkins et al., 2019. p. 8), rather than implementing a fully-fledged system of decentralised local management. Once again, the neoliberalisation process was carried forward through adaptations, contextualisation, and compromise.

Such differences are most evident in the pace with which neoliberal policies are implemented since flexibility and compromise inevitably result in a different momentum of change that may characterise different neoliberalisation processes. Interestingly, when considering the need to compromise and adapt, some may conclude that “the circumstances of neoliberalism’s (co)existence comprise an array of troubled and turbulent marriages with its decidedly unloved others” (Peck et al., 2018, p. 9). Nevertheless, while it is true that neoliberal governance may only come about as a result of arranged marriages, this does not necessarily mean that “neoliberalism exists as a series of unhappy marriages” (Peck et al., 2018, p. 10). On the contrary, such unions may be quite successful, in the sense that they enable both partners to achieve their aims. Furthermore, neoliberalism can absorb ideas stemming from very different ideologies (Olsen, 2019), meaning that such collaborations have also been productive through policy cross-fertilisation of ideas from other traditions that may vary from conservatism to social democracy and possibly even more leftist political views.

When considering that, “neoliberalism is very effective in colonising and co-opting concepts from other traditions - partnership, reflection, lifelong learning, and research-informed practice” (Ball, 2016, p. 1050), it becomes particularly useful that in an effort to analyse specific neoliberal policies one keeps such characteristics in mind since any resulting policy will necessarily be a balance between principled commitments and contextual constraints, hence the reason why understanding neoliberal governance must include special attention to its “contingent nature” (Peck & Tickell, 2002, p. 384). Effective policy analysis focuses on the relationship between the parameters of action allowed by the core principles and the contextual constraints where these are applied (Ball, 1998). One final point I should make about analysing neoliberal political policies in relation to their hybrid nature is the fact that, as argued by Brenner et al. “empirical evidence underscoring

the stalled, incomplete, discontinuous, or differentiated character of projects to impose market rule, or their coexistence alongside potentially antagonistic projects (for instance, social democracy) does not provide a sufficient basis for questioning their neoliberalised, neoliberalising dimensions” (Brenner et al., 2010, p. 330). As long as the overall reform, as much as allowed by the contingent circumstances, leads towards a social arrangement that overall reflects most of the core neoliberal principles, such an arrangement may still be labelled neoliberal.

Historically, the flexibility of neoliberal governance has led to a series of relatively long-lasting arranged marriages that proved overall to be successful from a neoliberal perspective. They have been so successful in sustaining the resilience of neoliberalism that this is sometimes hailed as the defining paradigm of current times by both supporters and detractors. One such type of long-lasting neoliberal formation is hard neoliberalism. The type of neoliberalism that was employed in Britain by Margaret Thatcher; in the US by Ronald Reagan, President Bush Senior, and President Bush Junior; and in New Zealand, where the Labour government (1983) and the succeeding National Party government (1990 to 1999) “embraced hard neoliberalism in a particularly doctrinaire form” (Hazeldine & Quiggin, 2006). In the UK, this kind of neoliberalism is known as Thatcherism, while Fraser refers to this type of neoliberal governance as “reactionary neoliberalism” (Fraser, 2019, p. 1), which is a very apt designation, since it essentially was a form of a counter-revolution against Keynesian demand-side economics.

A second type of neoliberal governance consisted in “progressive neoliberalism” (Fraser, 2019, p. 1). While to most this may seem like an oxymoron, it simply represents the alliance between modern liberals or social democratic who are in favour of the caring state, with free-marketeers, sometimes referred to as ‘the third way’ or as cosmopolitan neoliberalism. In essence, this resulted in a soft version of neoliberalism (Callinicos, 2001) especially because “soft neoliberalism involved acceptance of most of the core elements of the neoliberal programme, including privatisation, attacks on trade unions, uncritical acceptance of the dominant role of the financial sector, and attempts to halt or reverse the growth of the public sector” (Quiggin, 2018, p. 148). This kind of neoliberalism materialised under the Hawke–Keating governments in Australia (1983- 1990), the Blair-Brown governments in the UK (1997-2010) and the Clinton (1993-2001) as well as Obama (2009-2017) administrations in the U.S. . These governments abandoned nationalisation

policies and generally supported free-market policies including financialisation (Fraser, 2019), marketisation and deregulation (Quiggin, 2018).

This second kind of neoliberalism is also characterised by accommodations to globalisation, financialisation and compromise in relation to social policy (Peck et al., 2018). In fact, in the UK and the U.S., these progressive-neoliberal governments tried to address the issues of negative social consequences (Peck & Tickell, 2002) of previously dominating hard neoliberalism, such as Thatcher's and Reagan's, which they replaced. In fact, they even demonstrated an effort to limit the growing inequality that resulted from years before (Quiggin, 2018). The Hawke–Keating government in Australia is also credited with improving the progressive redistributive effects of the taxation system (Gruen & Grattan, 1993). Indeed, it is generally agreed that this governance showed more humane forms of restructuring (Peck et al., 2018) as a result of the openness that such neoliberal government had towards non-discriminatory approaches, which were enabled to flourish under third-way politics.

A third discernible kind of neoliberal governance, which is historically the most recent one, is the one referred to as “hyper-reactionary neoliberalism” (Fraser, 2019, p. 1) or closed borders neoliberalism. This constitutes an alliance between neoliberal free marketeers and those with right-wing views who demand a level of protectionism to compensate for unfair competition from abroad. In the U.S., both hard neoliberalism and soft neoliberalism implemented open-border economic policies, in line with neoliberal economic theories. These were eventually detrimental to communities that relied on the manufacturing industry because these became less profitable due to competition from abroad (Fraser, 2019). For hard neoliberals, such economic sectors and their communities were uncompetitive and as per the laws of the market, they had to take responsibility for the results and change according to the demands of the economy. Conversely, “to the progressives, their cultures were stuck in the past, tied to obsolete, parochial values that would soon disappear in a new cosmopolitan dispensation” (Fraser, 2019, p. 14). In practice, this meant that there was no alternative for open-border competition and the resulting deindustrialisation process. The protectionist policies of the closed borders neoliberalism of Donald Trump addressed this void and led to the strengthening of borders to reduce competition from cheaper labour in geographically close nations, for instance Mexico, and from distant cheaper products from China. This action partially addressed the consequences of corporate globalisation, which had particularly acute negative

consequences on some dominant groups that were increasingly becoming politically and economically irrelevant (Quiggin, 2018) and generated sufficient support, to keep closed-borders neoliberalism in power. Arguably, considering the new electoral base that kept the Conservative Party in power in the December 2019 election in the UK, and the role played by constituencies in the deindustrialised north-east, there may be some parallels between the type of neoliberalism promoted by Trump's party and the one held by Boris Johnson. Getting the UK out of the single market of the European Union may be the first indication of such a reformed approach.

The diversity among these three forms of neoliberalism demonstrates the ability of neoliberal governance to adapt to changing political circumstances. It also shows why neoliberal governance cannot be the blind implementation of some grand design (Peck et al., 2018) that can be similarly applied anywhere. This diversity also highlights how, in spite of the many compromises and the ongoing changes that prove to be necessary, in diverse contexts, neoliberalism repeatedly managed to enact deep restructuring that is discernible from alternative polities that could have otherwise been employed in similar circumstances. The next section aims at identifying these distinctive trends that characterise neoliberal governance.

3.7 The Discernible Overarching Trends of Neoliberal Governance

Neoliberal governance can proliferate because of the pressures exerted by international organisations, academics (usually economists), large businesses and think tanks, who use various means, including the media, to spread the free-market message. This effort can be so effective that neoliberal arguments, especially when promoted over a long period, can arguably be made to look as if they were common sense. As a result of these efforts, the neoliberalisation process has been implemented in very diverse political jurisdictions, despite the strong opposition of political parties of different views, academics, and most notably, of social movements whose protests have verified the existence of strong discontent with the neoliberalisation process. In spite of the absence of any movement that can be called a neoliberal party, through the sheer efforts of neoliberal policymakers who uphold the core principles, neoliberal governance proved to be resilient, largely due to its capacity to be implemented flexibly and to coexist with other ideologies. Universally, such practices depend upon the context in which they are implemented and can take very different forms while they can still be identified through the very specific “overarching trends” (Peck et al., 2018, p. 12) that they exhibit despite the irregular developments.

Neoliberal governance applies the core principles and assumptions that underpin it in a context-specific way, exhibiting a clear effort to sustain “the independence of the governed” (Foucault, 2008, p. 42), in line with the conviction that the duty of a government is “to create a framework for freedom” (Thatcher, 1996, p. 1) where individuals can flourish to the best of their circumstances, not “to right social wrongs” (Thatcher, 1996, p. 1) in line with some universally applied conception of justice. Neoliberal governance, therefore, strives to transform public institutions into forms that adhere closely to neoliberal political rationality, where the public good is understood to consist “solely in the preservation of that abstract and end-independent order which is secured by obedience to abstract rules of just conduct” (Hayek, 1978a, p. 89), rather than in collective endeavour towards a socially just society. This leads neoliberal governments to aim to secure the conditions for the autonomous functioning of the market forces (Burchell, 1991), and allow free markets to take their course while compensating for cases where markets fail to deliver. The exact form of the policies and practices unavoidably varies from context to context leading to different kinds of neoliberal governance. In fact, policies may differ so much as to become almost unrecognisable. Nevertheless, while such formations do not lead to identical policies (Mudge, 2008) they are coherent in the sense that they adhere to the same core principles, and also in their aim of creating a social arrangement that prioritises individual negative freedom over other concerns.

3.7.1 Depoliticisation

A major characteristic of neoliberal governance is the belief in the progressive reduction of government power in an effort to ‘do more with less’. While a great deal is expected from governments in relation to regulation and the expansion of competition, neoliberals generally have a negative opinion of expansive governments, usually pointing out that it tends to become “an organisation run by self-seeking politicians and bureaucrats who are limited in their ability to collect information and execute policies but are also under pressures from interest groups” (Chang, 2002, p. 540). However, neoliberals are not anarchists, often pointing out that governments are necessary to enable markets to function and to maintain the rule of law. Yet, convinced of the fact that “all government tends to expand” (Thatcher, 1996, p.4), neoliberal governance is characterised by the ongoing effort to find new ways by which government powers can be reduced.

There are various reasons why neoliberals favour practices that “roll back the frontiers of the state” (Thatcher, 1988c). The most important of these is the issue of the capability of central planners to acquire the necessary information that would enable them to plan accurately. The issue of the absence of knowledge is central to neoliberalism, because the expansive state is seen as an unacceptable danger to individual negative freedom, due to the fact that collective planning presupposes agreement on life choices that simply cannot exist. It is argued that as a result of this, planning leads to the imposition of unwanted aims on individuals, hence the resulting interference on individual negative freedom, and the general effort to reduce government power where possible.

According to neoliberal political rationality, governments should realise that they cannot know what everyone wishes, needs or deserves and should acknowledge that a “government - only underpins the conditions for a prosperous and fulfilling life. It does not generate them” (Thatcher, 1996, p.4). While egalitarians argue that a democratic government is meant primarily to improve the well-being of the oppressed (Dewey, 1916), neoliberals counter-argue that the dangerous presumption that the state is the ultimate solution will lead to continuous state expansion because, once it is presumed that governments are meant to create a socially just social arrangement, rather than maintaining the rule of law and promote competition, public expenditure will rise so much, that it results in an illegitimate burden on everyone. The concerns regarding the issue of state power lead neoliberals to implement measures that enable the avoidance of such state powers; an effective way is seen to be the depoliticisation of the social, political, and economic spheres. In practice, this means taking away entire matters from the state where it previously might have enjoyed discretionary decision-making powers, with such decisions being replaced by economic judgements (Davies, 2014) so that “in essence, the state withdraws” (Apple, 1998, p. 188) and relinquishes authority to other institutions that are less susceptible to being manipulated by vested interests.

In an interview on politics, Bourdieu commented that “for the most part European governments—even social democratic ones—have internalised neoliberalism and thus depoliticised politics” (Bourdieu, 2001). One interesting aspect to emerge from this remark is that neoliberalism is considered as synonymous with the process of depoliticisation. Bourdieu is not the only one to remark on this aspect of the neoliberal governance, many arguing that this tends to result in a different kind of approach to politics which “denies political motivations: the politics of no politics” (Jabbar, 2015, p. 767), resulting in the

reclassification of many political decisions into technocratic or economic decisions. To this end, it is often remarked that before the neoliberal reforms took root, politicians held a more significant role in managing the economic and social spheres through policies such as incomes policies (wage and price controls), rent controls, and capital controls. This does not occur under neoliberal governance due to the fact that such directions are seen as counterproductive because they distort the price mechanism thereby sabotaging free-markets' ability to function efficiently. The absence of such political actions is one way in which neoliberal governance promotes depoliticisation. Another way to do so is to transfer decision-making powers to entities over which politicians have little authority, such as independent central banks, supranational institutions, multinational companies or by blaming globalisation. Such approach to decision making processes reflects the neoliberal "absolute identification of politics with the management of capital" (Rancière, 1999, p. 113) so that the basic rules of economics, such as, competition, demand and supply, and market justice, replace any possible attempt "to impress upon society a deliberately chosen pattern of distribution, whether it be an order of equality or of inequality" (Hayek, 1960, p. 87) that may put individual negative freedom in peril. Through the depoliticising approach, it is assumed that "decisions make themselves" (Rancière, 1999, p. 113), because under neoliberalism, politics shrinks to administration (Habermas, 1987) especially in terms of supporting the needs of the economy.

It is precisely this attitude, which implies that "there isn't much to deliberate" (Rancière, 1999, p.viii), that forms the basis of much criticism levelled against the process of depoliticisation. To this end, it is often argued that moving decision-making processes, from the realm of politics, to the realm of economics, is a mistake, because unlike what neoliberals assume, there is much to deliberate upon. This is why it is contended that depoliticisation relegates "axiological considerations and social need" (Whitehead & Crawshaw, 2014, p.29) to matters of secondary importance, while these should be on the forefront. The problem with depoliticisation is mainly the fact that it interprets democratic citizens as service clients and taxpayers rather than democratic agents. This change is seen to denigrate both citizens and society because political relationships get "replaced by economic relationships" (Biesta, 2010, p.57). Consequently, once depoliticisation minimises the role of citizens, and market rationality replaces democratic deliberation, the very notion of the existence of a common good is seen to be questioned. Such doubting of the common good is in fact to be expected, especially when considering that for neoliberals, "negative freedom is the quintessential public good" (Machan, 2008, p.49), which is why

neoliberals promote the process of depoliticisation and actively make an effort to restrict the political sphere to the very essential tasks, such as, for example, deciding on what constitutes absolute poverty and agree on where to set the level beyond which no one should be allowed to fall. In this manner, depoliticisation is seen as one way to protect individual freedom from the collective strive towards a chosen conception of the common good by reducing the breath of this collective strive and as a result, its negative impacts on individual negative freedom. On the contrary, critics argue that in a democracy, it is the collective deliberation in favour of our common concern for the public good that should determine which policies should be promoted not the needs of the market (Apple, 2001; Biesta, 2017; Carr & Hartnett, 1996). Critics argue that a society that is deprived of such a collaborative exercise of “collective needs definition” (Biesta, 2017, p.326), despoils people of their roles as democratic citizens, and deprives societies of their ability to properly address social issues. I take such criticism to be a correct interpretation of neoliberal intentions who would argue that safeguarding individual freedom requires such a trade-off which produces the effects often pointed out by critics, but which on the other hand lead to an overall situation that is conducive to “the requirement that each person be left free” (Machan, 2008, p.49).

3.7.2 Responsibilisation of Individuals

Groups that consider neoliberalism as an immoral political rationality condemn it for the fact that it moves responsibility from the state over to the individuals (Peters, 2016). Conversely, neoliberals argue that the state owns nothing and that these transfers are essentially acts of coercive redistribution from some citizens to other citizens, which is why they are legitimate to address issues of genuine need such as cases of absolute poverty, but not legitimate when employed in the process of attaining an ideal state that some deem to be socially just. Under neoliberal governance, transfers of wealth cannot be taken lightly and while the institutionalisation of a social security safety net is to be taken for granted (Hayek, 1960), nonetheless, emphasis is placed on individual responsibility, making responsibilisation a major strategy of neoliberal governance and even giving a new meaning to what is understood when referring to the good citizen. In fact, this is why it is generally emphasised that “it is not from the dole. It is your neighbour who is supplying it [financial support] and if you can earn your own living then really you have a duty to do it...” (Thatcher, 1987) in order to safeguard other people’s negative freedom.

Under neoliberalism, it is emphasised that individuals are responsible for themselves even in areas like healthcare or employment, in which some may not even consider having responsibilities at all due to the understanding that such areas are supposedly state duties. Under neoliberal governance, there are no such state duties because in the end there cannot be anything other than situations where some are obliged to compensate for others. In such a context, it becomes increasingly important for every individual to make choices about their lifestyles, education, and health to ensure that they avoid, as much as possible, becoming a burden on others. In such circumstances, investing in one's education and health becomes nothing less than a moral duty, an act of altruism aimed at safeguarding everyone's freedom.

Consequently, under neoliberal governance, individuals are expected to ensure that they are economically autonomous and everyone is expected to behave as an "entrepreneur of himself" (Foucault, 2008, p. 226), because "in discovering the best use of our abilities" (Hayek, 1960, p. 71), which is what everyone should be doing, everyone becomes an entrepreneur (Hayek, 1960) with himself/herself as their own miniature firm (Nozick, 1974), focusing on their own improvement, and enhancing their ability to contribute to the market, and simultaneously, the betterment of society at large. From within such a political view, there is no such thing as a rights based egalitarian welfare system, only citizen-customers responsible for maintaining their economic autonomy by making sure to cater for risks and investments, including educational ones, along the way. Within such a social arrangement, policymakers would be unable to follow Dworkin's suggestion that "if economic policy contemplates an increase in unemployment, it must also contemplate generous public provision for retraining or public employment" (Dworkin, 1985, p.211). Under neoliberalism, in line with the principle of individual responsibility and the overarching policy of responsabilisation of individuals, as regards unemployment, the taxpayer is neither duty bound to finance retraining (unless this clearly serves everyone's interest), nor is the taxpayer morally obliged to create fake unproductive employment within state entities, as suggested by Dworkin, throwing all considerations of productivity and competitiveness to the wind, to the detriment of economic growth and everyone's interests.

While neoliberals can see no alternative to the responsabilisation of individuals, many disagree, and contend that this policy approach generates unacceptable consequences, one of which being, the resulting restrictive conception of democratic citizenship where active

participative citizenship becomes more akin to carefully managed human capital development (Brown, 2016; Clarke, 2005; Neoh, 2017). Furthermore, there is concern about those who do not manage to do so, because these may end up being looked upon as second class citizens. In a social arrangement underpinned by the principle of individual responsibility, as opposed to one which adheres to collective responsibility, it becomes easier to assign blame to individuals “. . .for their lack of ‘investment’ in human capital, for their not attending school, for their dropping out of school, for their not studying the ‘right’ fields, for their lack of entrepreneurship” (Klees, 2016, p. 259), for becoming parents too early, for living a lifestyle they cannot afford, and so on. Not only is individual responsibility not conducive to empathising for other people’s needs, especially considering how busy everyone is in caring for themselves, but in such a context, unproductive citizens, such as, inflexible workers or recipients of social benefits come to be identified as bad citizens, because their actions damage societies’ ability to safeguard the common good (i.e. negative freedom) through the hinderance of economic growth. This becomes especially the case where “poverty is associated with individual irresponsibility or the failure to manage risk” (MacLeavy, 2016, p.258), which leads to situations where those who do not manage to maintain their economic independence risk being looked down upon. This is unjust in cases where the causes of such inability are mostly due to structural disadvantages on which individuals have very little control.

Furthermore, the central importance given to responsabilising individuals may not only endanger respect from fellow citizens but also negatively affect self-respect. In a social arrangement where it is openly stated that “those who do well by their own efforts are the actual bricks of the community” (Thatcher, 1988b) and lauded as such by their political leaders, those who do not manage to do well enough by their own efforts and require assistance may lose self-respect, since no self-respecting persons would want to think about themselves as losers. Such reasoning is problematic because it paves the way to the erroneous conviction that those who do not manage to do well by their own efforts somehow deserve less respect. For example, people who live in council houses may be casualties of such an attitude because others may perceive them as individuals who failed to care for themselves and their families. Another example may be the attitude towards the unemployed and the ‘working poor’. In fact, as regards the working poor, it has been shown that “the combined effect of low pay and poor working conditions affected workers psychologically, with several believing that their pay and working conditions reflected their value in society” (Pattison, 2008, p.103). These attitudes are likely to become more

pronounced under neoliberalism, where all social arrangements are deeply influenced by the principle of individual responsibility.

3.7.3 Supply-Side Economics

Demand-side economics considers that economic growth is most effectively created by boosting demand for products and services, and therefore, by boosting consumer spending, business expansion and economic growth even if this leads to spending deficits. In this type of economics, demand is regarded to be so important that governments need to stimulate it artificially by increasing government spending through loans to compensate for low demand in times of low-growth, and through fiscal and monetary policies (Buller & Flinders, 2005). Demand-side economics are antithetical to neoliberalism, because neoliberal governance demands economic management that does not interfere in the price mechanism. In fact, neoliberal economists argue that government spending aimed at boosting demand is harmful in the long run because it creates inflation, which may inhibit investment and therefore hinder economic growth resulting in increased unemployment (Bartlett, 2004, 2007, 2009; Craig Roberts, 2003; Laffer, 1981; Wanniski, 1989). To this end, neoliberalism prioritises macro-stabilisation, over a system that would utilise government spending to sustain aggregate demand, by “reducing trade deficits, constraining monetary growth and cutting government spending” (Stein, 2012, p. 422). Neoliberals propose that economic prosperity is enhanced through incentivisation for private investment (Cheshire & Lawrence, 2005) generated by the removal of a series of constraints through processes of deregulation, reduced taxation and low inflation. Parallel to this, there is the fundamental belief in “the fact that much more knowledge contributes to form the order of a market economy than can be known to any one mind or used by any one organisation” (Hayek, 1963, p. 262) which is held to be at the basis of the reason why “a market economy is more effective than any other known type of economic order” (Hayek, 1963, p. 262). This belief also pushes neoliberals to favour supply-side over Keynesian demand-side approaches to economic growth. In practice, it results in the avoidance of interventionist policies, such as, rent controls, interest rates regulations, price fixing, wage controls, trade restrictions, subsidies, levies, licensing, import quotas, quantity restrictions, and other interventionist measures that may distort the information given by price signals as economic indicators, thus disabling the economic actors’ ability to act in an informed manner, thereby hindering the effectiveness of free markets.

Deregulation is a major trend within neoliberalisation processes which is even considered as one of the most easily discernible characteristics of neoliberal governance (Aalbers, 2016). Deregulation, which is understood as greater freedom from regulatory control (Aalbers, 2016; Jessop, 2003; Venugopal, 2015) manages to do so through such policies as “eliminating price controls, deregulating capital markets, and lowering trade barriers” (Boas & Gans-Morse, 2009, p. 137). It primarily aims to incentivise and stimulate entrepreneurship to the benefit of economic growth and innovation (Kirzner, 1973). Consequently, neoliberals try to simplify the lives of entrepreneurs, and where possible, remove all regulations that may act as restrictions on the mobility of goods, capital, services, and labour (Mhone, 2005). Additionally, neoliberal governance makes sure to promote high levels of competition amongst market players, to maintain the necessary efficiency needed to ensure solid foundations for a strong economy (Karpin, 1995). Consequently, neoliberals propose that it is the state’s duty to stimulate competition by making sure that an adequate legal-framework is in place to promote it (Friedman, 1962; Hayek, 1944, 1967). This approach results in situations characterised by a free competitive market order and by the effort to infuse competition wherever possible. Neoliberal policy makers promote competition because they believe that it boosts productivity, and consequently, economic growth (Janger & Schmidt-Dengler, 2010). These positive effects of competition encourage a more active role on the part of neoliberal governance to foresee how competition is expanded and supported. Efforts that favour competition constitute an important part of “a decisive fight against both private and public power over the market” (Böhm, 1950 as cited in Friedrich, 1955, p. 511) hence the effort to reduce both government interference and monopolies both of which hinder productivity (Röpke, 1942).

Privatisation is another important supply-side policy that assists in boosting competition and efficiency thereby enhancing competitiveness and economic growth (Turner, 2008). In fact, privatisation is a major characteristic of neoliberal governance, through which “institutions, structures, issues, and problems that used to constitute the public” (Read, 2009, p. 26) are re-categorised as belonging to the private sphere so that, for example, not only state industries are privatised, but even issues of unemployment come to be seen as private problems of poor employability skills. Hence the effort to reduce state power by privatising as many of its functions as politically feasible and remodel state entities along the commercial logic (Peters, 2001b) with the ultimate aim of being able to reduce taxation and better safeguard individual freedom. In areas where privatisation is politically

unfeasible, marketisation initiatives are implemented instead. These are thought to be able to achieve the same objectives.

In the effort to boost competition and encourage entrepreneurship, supply-side economics promote market rationality in domains where the state used be completely in charge such as, health and education (Mudge, 2008), justice and welfare (Whitehead & Crawshaw, 2014), water, telecommunications, transportation, and housing (Harvey, 2007). Many share the view that applying market rationality in these specific areas does not result in favouring the weakest members of society. It is also contended that supply-side economic policies are more likely to favour the rich. The rich have relatively more to gain from tax cuts than the poor, furthermore, policies for reduced wealth redistribution may encourage entrepreneurship, but they also exacerbate wealth inequality thereby generating a series of disadvantages. Finally, economic growth, at best, affects the rich and the poor “equiproportionately” (Dollar & Kraay, 2002, p.196), which means that while everyone’s economic situation is bound to improve, the rich end up relatively richer. Considering the policies it promotes, and the outcomes it generates, the supply-side approach to economic management favours the poor less, which is why it criticised for being anti-egalitarian in nature, to the extent that it is even deemed to contribute to envy between social classes and damage social cohesion (Scanlon, 2000, Wrenn, 2015).

3.7.4 The Exploitation of Globalisation

Neoliberal governance uses globalisation extensively in support of reaching neoliberal aims in all areas of public policy, including education. Globalisation, or rather, a particular use of the processes and activities collectively known as globalisation (Mittelman, 2000), which increasingly interconnects people who are far apart (Pan, 2010), results in increased cross-border flows of “materials, ideas, labour, services, information, values, technologies, people, and capital” (Pan, 2010, p. 317). This intensification of relations leads to increased interdependence and a situation where local activities are shaped by events occurring in distant countries (Giddens, 1990; McGrew, 2000). Contemporary globalisation is not just the result of technological innovations, it is deeply affected, especially within the anglosphere, by neoliberal governance which shapes it in the ways required by the neoliberal political rationality in its quest to promote competition and to use it to justify specific policies (Kielly, 2005; Quiggin, 1999; Olssen, 2004; Simmons, 2010). Indeed, it is often the case that policies, certainly education policies, are framed within a context of

intensified global competition to create a sense of urgency on the reforms that must be taken in order to become ever more competitive and efficient.

The neoliberal use of globalisation is criticised for several reasons. Firstly, it results in the establishment of large multinational corporations who hold very substantial economic power that gives them extensive leverage on political decisions within individual nation-states (Olssen et al, 2004). This power is seen to be excessive and above all undemocratic (Zajda, 2018). In fact, because multinational corporations are an essential source of employment, they even influence compulsory education through their ability to dictate which skills are most desirable for the world of work (Pan, 2010). Most dangerously, globalisation enables powerful corporations to create “a ‘race to the bottom’ around the globe, enhancing profits and political power” (Epstein, 2003, p.421) for themselves while “eroding wages, tax bases, [and] social protections” (Epstein, 2003, p.421) for workers around the globe. Furthermore, globalisation contributes to widening the socio-economic differences between the rich and people living in poverty (Zajda, 2018) along with the many disadvantages that such inequality generates.

Additionally, globalisation contributes to increase economic volatility, through the expansion of financialisation, that is, “the dominance of finance capital reaching unprecedented levels in terms of intensity of financial activities in relation to the size of economies” (Ietto-Gillies, 2003, p.144). This phenomenon is a direct result of neoliberal policies in favour of deregulation and the liberalisation of international financial markets, interest rates, currency exchange rates, stocks, bonds, equities, and derivatives markets (Kiely, 2005). Such amplified leeway provides entrepreneurs with increased opportunities for profit, thereby generating economic growth, but it may also encourage dishonest management of “hedge funds, subprime mortgage-debt bundles and other kinds of ‘fictitious capital’” (Roberts, 1995) along with other speculative actions which can result in financial crises and worsened effects of boom and bust cycles (Gabel, 1996; Kiely, 2005) to the detriment of many, especially those who have nothing to rely on in case of a crisis.

Considering the above, it becomes understandable why, from a social justice standpoint, neoliberalism abuses globalisation for governmentality purposes to boost the ongoing neoliberalisation of society, while the preferred way forward would be to contain globalisation and manage it in such a way as to make sure that it does not increase the gap

between the rich and the poor. Curiously, from a conservative political view, globalisation is also looked upon with suspicion, because it can potentially bring about deep cultural changes, while it can also be seen as a way to restrict government authority by the evermore powerful multinational companies. None of these changes are in line with a conservative political philosophy. On the other hand, neoliberal political theory neither prioritises the reduction of the gap between the rich and the poor, nor does it prioritise national 'sovereignism', making neoliberal political theory more at ease with the changes brought about by globalisation than other political rationalities.

3.7.5 An Active Government

Neoliberal governance can be identified through the active support that governments provide to the markets. Under neoliberal governance, the primary purpose is not merely to deregulate and leave markets alone, but to make the economy more competitive (Thatcher, 1975b; Friedman, 1951, 1962; Hayek, 1960; Møller Stahl, 2018). This is why neoliberalism should not "be identified with laissez faire, but rather with permanent vigilance, activity, and intervention" (Foucault, 2008, p. 132). There are various key roles that a government must fulfil to become an instrument of freedom (Friedman, 1962), for example, they are essential to maintain the legal order which free markets require to function (Hayek, 1944; Popper, 1999). Consequently, neoliberals of whichever type, tend to agree that "limited government doesn't mean weak government, only less government" (Thatcher, 1996).

The point made by neoliberals is that there is a difference between a laissez faire approach and the neoliberal aim of reforming government institutions in line with free market values (McGowan, 2005). In practice, this means that under neoliberal governance, price-interfering policies become out of question. These include policies such as, intentional deficits, increasing the supply of money, state subsidies, incomes policies, rent ceilings, restrictive import laws and "paralysing taxation" (Hayek, 1960, p. 429). While these policies are abandoned, others take their place, which is why it would be a mistake to link neoliberalism with the attitude that "it abhors, in principle, all activity on the part of the state in relation to economic life" (Mises, 1927/1985, p. 27). While it is often reminded that neoliberals are not anarchists because they endorse important roles for the state (Friedman, 1962), a set of provisos is equally emphasised. In fact, it is made clear that all state action, must be "capable of being exercised by general rules applying to all" (Friedman, 1951, p. 9), while it is also stressed that it must not interfere in the price-mechanism (Hayek, 1979).

To this end, it is argued that state actions should support market forces in the same manner in which gardeners care for their gardens (Hayek, 1974).

This specific type of active government is heavily criticised by many especially in the way in which it does not put the needs of the weakest members of society at the forefront but merely focuses on supporting economic concerns. Arguably, focusing on distributive powers that governments have, can do much to support people living in poverty and should be a priority of any government. Critics who believe in the egalitarian distributive powers of the state are critical of the very objectives that neoliberal governance sets itself to achieve, judging them as narrow and inadequate. Other criticism is related to some of the outcomes of such active governance. In infusing competition wherever possible and aiming at increased productivity and competitiveness neoliberal governance leads to increased stress and anxiety. In making sure that state institutions are “cost-effective and [that they follow a] result-oriented model” (Carlquist & Phelps, 2014, p.117), neoliberal governance results in the promotion of auditing, standards, rankings of very diverse economic indicators, public rating systems, identification of performance gaps, target setting, inspections, monitoring outcomes, performance indicators and several other “informational devices that grease the wheels of commerce” (Fourcade & Healy 2007, 304) which concurrently function as disciplining measures (Fourcade & Healy, 2007; Gledhill, 2004) which may eventually lead to reduced expenditure and increased productivity and competitiveness, but at the price of concomitant negative effects on individual wellbeing as regards matters of work-life balance, mental health, stress, self-doubt and feelings of distrust that result from such a network of surveillance.

3.7.6 The Discernible Overarching Trends of Neoliberal Governance

It is not difficult to identify neoliberal governance, the peculiarities are many and the adherence to the core principles is evident even though on the surface some policies may seem to be contradictory, such as the discourse on freedom with that of arguably tight regulatory frameworks. A deeper examination reveals that all the implemented measures aim at a single goal, that of safeguarding individual negative freedom, even if this exacerbates material inequality. All five overarching trends of neoliberal governance are intended to safeguard individual negative freedom. Depoliticisation is meant to do so by rolling back the frontiers of the state. The responsabilisation of individuals is meant to limit abuse of social security measures. Supply-side economics is meant to incentivise entrepreneurship and minimise direct state involvement in the economic sphere. The use of

globalisation and pro-market government actions are meant to encourage productivity and enhance competitiveness which are presumed to create economic growth.

Neoliberalism clearly favours a type of governance based on the expansion of competition and the positive outcomes of free markets especially efficiency and entrepreneurial inventiveness, while side-lining the motivations for democratic deliberation as a collective effort towards an agreed-upon socially just society. This approach results from the neoliberal belief in the assumption that “where effective competition can be created, it is a better way of guiding individual efforts than any other” (Hayek, 1944, p. 36), along with the conviction that “there is no other possibility than either the order governed by impersonal discipline of the market or that directed by the will of a few individuals; and those who are out to destroy the first are wittingly or unwittingly helping to create the second” (Hayek, 1944, p. 199) where the implementation of some form of patterned conception of social justice can have a negative impact on individual negative freedom. When considering the alternative forms of governance, neoliberals conclude that a neoliberal social arrangement is the best alternative because it is the most efficient way to run an economy, to stimulate creativity and innovation, and the most effective way to safeguard individual freedom, making these characteristics typical of neoliberal governance wherever this manifests itself, even if such manifestations occur in different ways. Nonetheless, Thatcher’s kind of neoliberalism in Britain of the 1980s, Blairs’ neoliberalism in the 2000s and even the current neoliberalism of Donald Trump in the U.S., are characterised by policies that contribute to depoliticisation and the responsabilisation of individuals, the use of supply-side economic policies (deregulation, privatisation, marketisation, public-private partnerships), the exploitation of globalisation to encourage productivity, and overall pro-market government actions.

3.8 Conclusion

After the exploration of the neoliberal political rationality portrayed in Chapter Two, along with a description of those principles that act like the Northern Star for policymakers, this chapter concluded the effort within this thesis to clarify what is meant by the term neoliberalism. Considering the extensive current academic engagement with neoliberalism, and the claim that neoliberalism has become “so baggy and unclear that it means almost nothing” (Laidlaw, 2015, p. 914), these chapters have helped shed light on the main issues, including the shortcomings of neoliberal solutions.

Specifically, this chapter showed that neoliberal governance leads to the prioritisation of economic concerns, even when such decisions face strong oppositions from an array of social movements and political parties. This chapter also showed that neoliberal governance is far from being the direct application of political theories. A great deal of adaptation goes on, which then results in specific local formations of neoliberal governance marked by flexibility, compromise, and the coexistence with other political views. This contributes to the ability of neoliberal governance to remain resilient in face of the many contestations.

While only able to exist in impure and hybrid forms, neoliberal governance remains recognisable through a series of distinct overarching trends. These generally include, the effort to depoliticise the political sphere, the implementation of supply-side economic policies, the adoption of an approach that curtails collective responsibility and expands individual responsibility, the employment of globalisation to legitimise diverse forms of government action, the employment of hyper-accountability policies along with pro-market regulatory frameworks. While these characteristics are useful in identifying neoliberal governance, irrespective of the shape it takes, there still is no such thing as prototypical neoliberal governance. Labelling specific policies as ‘neoliberal’ entails a laborious exercise of policy analysis that would require one to ascertain the balance between the neoliberal theories and the contextual political feasibility that sustains or hinders their implementation. An analysis of the respective policy documents, along with a wide range of sources, can usually shed light on the neoliberal nature of a policy, but such a task cannot be straightforward.

Overarching neoliberal trends can be identified in discourse promulgated by political parties that employ neoliberal policies. Knowing the neoliberal ethos that reigns within the current UK Conservative Party, for example, one cannot be surprised that in their political manifesto for the 2019 general election, it states that “we will continue to do everything we can to ensure every school is a great school” (Conservative Party Manifesto, 2019, p. 13), while at the same time omitting any reference to notions of educational equality. In my view, there could not have been a more neoliberal way to put it. Another listed promise is: “We will continue to ensure that parents can choose the schools that best suit their children and best prepare them for the future” (Conservative Party Manifesto, 2019, p. 13). This is yet another very typical neoliberal view on schooling. I do not want to imply that this manifesto does not also contain ideas of conservative origin, such as shown by the

prominence given to the promotion of good behaviour in schools. Nevertheless, the neoliberal element within this political document is clearly discernible.

What is most fascinating about neoliberal governance is that it exhibits the same characteristic weaknesses irrespective of the domain within which it is applied. The importance to safeguard everyone's private sphere and negative freedom is by far prioritised over the objective to reduce social and material inequality. The pursuit of profit and the quest for efficiency are allowed to endanger employee rights and possibly lead to work intensification, precarity and to make unionisation difficult. The decrease in wealth redistribution, austerity policies and globalisation tend to enhance social inequality to the extent that it can even weaken social cohesion. These policies are also likely to contribute to anxiety due to economic insecurity and constant concerns about human capital development and job security all of which are more prone to result from a neoliberalised economy due to its increased volatility. Furthermore, the need to focus on one's ability to compete, may generate anti-social attitudes, a reduced interest in contributing to collective responsibility, or possibly even blatant egoism, which may result from the enhanced consciousness of being responsible for oneself and one's family. Additionally, neoliberal governance, and its propensity to exacerbate material inequality enable some to accumulate extensive economic power which can too easily be transformed into political power to the detriment of the democratic decision-making process. These specific characteristics are a direct consequence of neoliberal governance when applied to the state in general, and as it shall become increasingly evident by the end of these thesis, they are also typical consequences of the neoliberalisation process of compulsory education.

In the next chapter, I delineate the neoliberal agenda for compulsory education, taking into consideration the overarching policy trends of neoliberal governance. The identification of the neoliberal aims for education enables the recognition of the specific policies that are institutionalised to achieve the targets that enable adherence to the agenda. Without the groundwork built in these two chapters, in terms of defining neoliberalism, the development of the next set of chapters would not have been possible as the principles of neoliberalism and the resulting form of governance have very deep repercussions on the ways in which compulsory education is conceptualised by neoliberal governments, both on the aims set as well as the means chosen to reach them.

Chapter Four: The Aims of the Neoliberal Agenda for Compulsory Education

4.1 Introduction

Neoliberal governance requires the achievement of specific aims in the domain of compulsory education. The internal compromise that characterises neoliberalism, that is, the aim of safeguarding individual negative freedom while at the same time making sure that those in need are cared for, is reflected in the aims of a neoliberalised education system. In fact, state-funding of education is deemed to be an acceptable practice by neoliberals. The neoliberal policymaker is particularly concerned with the form of the actual provision in order for this to be aligned with the principles that underpin neoliberalism, particularly individual negative freedom, individual responsibility, and private property. This alignment entails deep changes in the general governance of an education system and in the ways in which this is financed. It also entails changes in content and processes, in order to bring the education system in line with the social changes taking place in other policy areas. Under neoliberal governance, the education system becomes an important means to secure varied neoliberal objectives.

4.2 Neoliberal Justification for State-funded Compulsory Education

Neoliberals endorse the view that there is “much to be said in favour of government providing on an equal basis the means for the schooling of minors” (Hayek, 1976, p. 84). The reason lies in the importance that education has for the neoliberal project: without the preparation of citizens for the enterprise culture, and without giving the economy the workers it needs to boost competitiveness, the entire neoliberal project would collapse. Hence the importance of education under neoliberal governments, particularly within advanced economies, which increasingly have to compete on grounds of innovation.

Neoliberal scholarship lists various reasons why the state should fund compulsory education. Friedman refers to the fact that there is “the paternalistic concern for children” (Friedman, 1962, p.86) to consider. Additionally, it is argued that there are several reasons of an instrumental nature for which it benefits everyone to collectively finance compulsory education (Friedman, 1962; Hayek,1960). In such a context, it is argued that “children are not yet responsible citizens and cannot be assumed to know what they need, and do not control resources which they can devote to the acquisition of knowledge” (Hayek, 1979, p. 60). Therefore, children must be supported accordingly because “the complementarity of liberty and responsibility means that the argument for liberty can apply only to those who

can be held responsible” (Hayek, 1960, p. 70) and school-age children do not fit into this category (Friedman, 1955). Furthermore, there is the concern that not all parents can or are willing to invest in their children’s schooling (Hayek, 1979; Buchanan & Tullock, 1965), either because they are unaware of the importance of educational investment or because they do not have the material means to do so. Nonetheless, the risk of not providing support in such circumstances is simply too great, especially when one considers that “only if the individual is assisted during the first stages will he [sic] be able to develop his potentialities further” (Hayek, 1979, p. 60). These concerns lead neoliberals to assign compulsory education the status of a basic collective duty towards which everyone must contribute.

Neoliberalism mainly champions public financing of compulsory education for the reasons that society as a whole benefits from children’s education (Friedman, 1955, Adam Smith Institute, 1984). This is especially the case because “the economic impact of improved educational outcomes remains enormous” (Hanushek & Woessmann, 2010, p. ii). Consequently, bearing in mind that a more skilled population leads to better economic performance (Hanushek & Woessmann, 2007), and that countries that sustain high growth put substantial investments in human capital (CGD, 2008, p. 37), financing public education becomes a legitimate way to contribute to the neoliberalisation process of society.

Furthermore, it is also acknowledged that “all of us will be exposed to fewer risks and will receive more benefits from our fellows if they share with us certain basic knowledge and beliefs” (Hayek, 1960, p. 500) thereby making the enhancement of social capital a further justificatory reason that encourages state financing of compulsory education. Additionally, neoliberalism recognises the need for a publicly funded education due to the fact that “democracy is not likely to work, except on the smallest local scale, with a partly illiterate people” (Hayek, 1960, p. 500). Indeed, it is clearly acknowledged that, in a democratic state, literacy and specific civic know-how is required if citizens are to follow the law and take part in an effective and stable democratic process (Hayek, 1979; Friedman, 1955). This consideration also indicates why citizenship education still holds a role within the economy-focused curriculum of a neoliberalised education system.

Remarkably, while under neoliberal governance state financing of *compulsory* education is deemed acceptable, the view that the state should also directly cater for the actual provision of education services, is not. Friedman even contends that the role of

government should “be limited to ensuring that the schools met certain minimum standards” (Friedman, 1962, p. 89), so that an education system can reap the full benefits of a competitive system, at least where this can be applied.

4.3 The Neoliberal Aims for Compulsory Education

The ultimate aim of neoliberal education policies is that of safeguarding individual freedom in a way that is compatible with core neoliberal principles. In neoliberal terms, such action implies an effort towards minimal invasion of one’s private life that is aimed to be achieved by trying to keep taxation as low as possible and by providing each individual with, as much as possible, the possibility to choose. A neoliberalised education system shares some objectives with other education systems, such as, instilling an appreciation for past and present civilisation and enabling children to become able to function in a democracy. Apart from these general aims, a neoliberalised education system is characterised by three objectives that are deemed to be essential for a just society that adequately safeguards individual freedom, which are, enhancing efficiency and effectiveness through accountability, enhancing customer sovereignty through marketisation, and preparing students well for a neoliberalised economic system. Together, these three objectives are seen to be able to contribute to a society where individual negative freedom is better protected.

The objective of establishing a more efficient and effective education system is justified by the aim of enabling lower levels of state-expenditure, which in turn enables lower taxation and thereby enhancing individual freedom, plus the fact that a more effective education system contributes better to competitiveness and economic growth to everyone’s advantage. The objective of enhancing customer sovereignty is in itself seen as an expression of individual freedom, because it gives voice to parents and provides them with the possibility to choose while it also contributes to achieving the first aim because parental choice is considered by neoliberals as a way to sustain accountability, and therefore, also effectiveness and efficiency. The third objective enhances individual freedom by improving the employability of students so that they are fully prepared for economic autonomy within an enterprise culture. It is theorised that by applying entrepreneurial skills, each individual would be sustaining national competitiveness and thereby enabling the creation of wealth that sustains the individual freedom of all citizens, including the poorest ones, because growth ensures the availability of more resources to support them.

While the overarching aims of a neoliberalised system of compulsory education may be similar irrespective of where these are being implemented, local political and social constraints will inevitably affect the ways in which such aims are achieved. Policies are influenced by specific social contexts (Falabella, 2014) and as regards education policy in particular, much depends on local traditions regarding educational control (Sjoerd, 1999). While neoliberal theory is clear about the expectations in terms of education policy, it does not imply that this process will always involve identical administrative solutions. Yet, it does mean that it would be “possible to identify shared trends” (Falabella, 2014, p. 4) in education policy that result from the political rationality which underpins such a system. As a case in point, both the English and the American education systems prioritise efficiency and the establishment of specific standards-based accountability policies. Yet, this target is reached through different measures. In England, educational accountability is mostly ensured through national examinations at specific key stages, through league tables (DES, 1988) and school inspections (DfE, 1992) amongst other policies. In the United States, accountability measures take the form of annual standardised tests and easily accessible and detailed School Report Cards. Despite different measures, standards-based and outcomes-focused accountability systems are favoured in both education systems.

4.4 The Aim of Improving Efficiency and Effectiveness

The objective of establishing a more efficient and effective education system reflects the demands of the principles of private property, individual freedom and even equality before the law by decreasing the need for progressive taxation. Efficiency is justified by the aim of enabling lower levels of state-expenditure, which in turn enables lower taxation, thereby reducing coercion on individuals that results from high levels of taxation. Both efficiency and effectiveness sustain a competitiveness and are therefore conducive to economic growth to everyone’s advantage (albeit at unequal levels). Absolutely convinced of the fact that a “government is going to spend whatever the tax system will raise plus a little more” (Friedman, 1967, p. 68), neoliberals try to infuse all public services, including education, with measures that support economic efficiency. For example, in 1970 Britain, when newly elected Secretary of State for Education and Science Margaret Thatcher decided to go ahead with the financing of the Open University, she did not do so in the name of social justice, which was the original justification that encouraged the establishment of the Open University by offering a second chance at getting a university degree (Weinbren, 2014). Thatcher supported the Open University for the sake of what she considered to be just, that is, a more efficient use of public resources. To this end, in a cabinet meeting, where it was

being discussed if the new government should go ahead with financing an initiative of the previous government, she argued that “the unit cost per graduate produced in this new institution [the Open University] could well be substantially less than in the orthodox university system. Its successful development could offer significant off-setting savings in higher education costs in later years” (Thatcher, 1970). Such rationale is a typical indication of the importance given to efficiency, and the effects that the prioritisation of the notion of efficiency has on all aspects of neoliberal education policy.

Neoliberals suspect that producer capture hinders both efficiency and effectiveness. As can be expected from staunch believers in the power of self-interest, neoliberals are concerned with the effects of producer capture, that is, situations where a specific service is organised more to suit producers than consumers (Adam Smith Institute, 1984; Baker, 1993). Neoliberals advocate that the elimination of the effects of producer capture result in greater efficiency and even improved consumer sovereignty. Neoliberals distrust state-owned services that function without the discipline that results from competition and claim that state-owned institutions are likely to be affected by producer capture (Adam Smith Institute, 1984; Hirschman, 1970; Niskanen, 1973), unlike business, where managers operate under constant examination of owners, shareholders and creditors (Corrales, 2012). However, there is no such scrutiny in the public sector, except perhaps through the media and investigative journalism, because taxpayers cannot monitor the use of their funds in the same manner that shareholders directly monitor their interests. Consequently, neoliberals are concerned that state agents can too easily act in their own interests and against those of their clients (Gordon & Whitty, 1997). It is emphasised that this phenomenon does not occur because bureaucrats (or teachers) are egoistic individuals. In fact, it is claimed that this “happens because they are normal people, people whose interests do not line up perfectly with the goals of their superiors” (Moe, 2003, p. 83) and therefore they end up putting their own needs before those of their clients. Neoliberals claim that state-run schools are more in danger of being affected by producer capture because they have little scope to be responsive to parents knowing that these cannot go anywhere else (Leithwood & Earl, 2000).

The neoliberalisation process of compulsory education is also prone to include systems that enable the employment of market forces to improve efficiency. To this end, a neoliberal policymaker would promote the establishment of market forces wherever possible, because lack of competition is judged to be the source of many problems. The

absence of competition is conducive to resistance towards necessary change instead of promoting innovation because “an assured income leads to complacency about existing practices and a failure to innovate” (Adam Smith Institute, 1984, p. 1) and thus a failure to compete successfully. On the contrary, competition is seen to produce the necessary discipline that is required to boost efficiency, which in turn boosts competitiveness. Competition also encourages and stimulates innovation, which also contributes much to efficiency, competitiveness and even eventually to the greater good in general. In a book that may be considered as the textbook for neoliberal education policy, Chubb and Moe contend that, “the most important prerequisite for the emergence of effective school characteristics is school autonomy, especially from external bureaucratic influence” (Chubb & Moe, 1990, p. 23). The point that Chubb and Moe put forward is that a privatised education system is more efficient than one that is managed by the state. This is because within a privatised system, parents have the power of exit (Hirschman, 1970), that is, the power to leave and choose a different supplier, which is a more powerful alternative than merely having the power of voice, that is, one’s ability to influence the provision being supplied. While taking one’s children out of a specific school is a more complex process than changing one’s grocery store, because of the repercussions that such change may have on the child, the very fact that the service provider knows that ‘exit’ is a real option, is of potential benefit to parents as clients. It should encourage schools to keep making an effort to improve their provision.

While the emphasis on effectiveness and efficiency is taken for granted by neoliberals, this is not the case for everyone. Many opine that since education is a public good, efficiency should not even be considered a priority because the possible benefits of schooling in terms of reducing social inequality are so many, that education is certainly worth the money required to sustain it. Additionally, many are of the view that the problems raised with producer capture are overstated. Teachers’ sense of professionalism and their membership in the professional community of educators should be more than enough to ensure effectiveness. Furthermore, considering that teaching is a vocation, teachers’ commitment to their duties should be taken as a given. In fact, many argue that considering these facts, vast arrays of standards-based accountability mechanisms established by neoliberal governance of education may end up doing more harm than good. Such criticism is especially valid in relation to a social justice conception of schooling and education, but it loses its edge when considering what neoliberals mean by the term ‘school effectiveness’ and their expectations from compulsory schooling.

4.5 The Aim of Enhancing Customer Sovereignty through informed parental choice.

The objective of enhancing customer sovereignty is an expression of individual freedom. This objective is aimed to be reached by giving voice to stakeholders. Consequently, parents are provided with the necessary information and the possibility to choose among different schools. Additionally, these policies enable taxpayers, who form another important stakeholder, to sound their voice because they are given the necessary information that enables them to do so. Enhancing customer-sovereignty is a desirable target because it is assumed that “providing credible information can allow parents and other stakeholders to lobby governments more effectively for improved policies, ...[and] pressure governments and hold them to account” (Bruns, et al., 2011, p. 15). There is also the belief that, as a matter of principle, since taxpayers finance public schools, they should be informed of their performance (Evers & Walberg, 2004).

As noted by Whitty, *for neoliberals*, “social affairs are best organised according to the general principle of consumer sovereignty, which holds that each individual is the best judge of his or her needs and wants” (Whitty, 2002, p. 48). As staunch believers in the positive economic effects of self-interest, neoliberals try to exploit the power of self-interest in the realm of education. Hence, parents are provided with the necessary information so that they can exercise their right to choose. Such a system benefits students’ whose parents are skilful choosers very much, while it is less favourable towards those who require additional support (Ball, 2003b). In spite of such a disadvantage, neoliberals still prioritise the belief that the key to school improvement is for parents to be given more power (Adam Smith Institute, 1984). Where necessary, ways can be found to provide those parents who require assistance with the help they need, such as would be the case where social workers or individual school information services implement community outreach programmes to support parents who for different reasons may not be capable to choose. The aim to provide parents with more say stems from the conviction that “parents and not political parties should determine the nature of education children receive” (Lawton, 1992, p. 142), an assumption influenced by the principle of the primacy of the individual over society. This aim to provide parents with more say, while admittedly unusable for those who are unable to exercise such choice, can be achieved by increasing the amount of information available, possibly through the use of School Report Cards (U.S. Congress, 2002), national standardised examinations (DES, 1988; U.S. Congress, 2002), and inspection reports (DfE, 1992).

In practice, parental choice is also supported through measures taken by neoliberal standards-based accountability policies because the process of setting national standards to enable the measurement of school performance, is also meant to facilitate “the development of an institutional diversity that allows different groups to realise their own aspirations through the schooling system” (Lawton, 1992, p. 142), thereby nurturing opportunities for a wider choice. The aim is that of expanding educational options from which parents can choose, including, for example, faith schools, charter schools and specialised schools. A varied school provision can only come about once a framework of standards, assessments, and accountability is established (Levinson, 2011), hence the reason why policies establishing common standards, standardised tests, and educational accountability are one of the most evident characteristics of a neoliberalised education system.

Neoliberals claim that various benefits result from enabling wider parental choice and diversified educational provision. It is posited that parental choice generates stakeholder engagement because “parents who are more satisfied with their child’s school provide greater support to that school and to their child’s learning” (Leithwood & Earl, 2000, p. 10). Most importantly, it is claimed that the selection process creates a relationship and a commitment between parents and schools that incentivises schools to focus on parent requests and deliver accordingly (Chubb & Moe, 1988), thereby giving a stronger voice to each individual parent. This is beneficial both in itself and because it makes schools more responsive to parental wishes. As I will argue extensively, unfortunately there is the disadvantage that parental choice policies widen educational inequality, exacerbating inequality of educational outcomes and even enhancing the probability of the weaker members of society to end up receiving an inadequate educational provision in sink schools where the conglomeration of children with disadvantaged backgrounds ends up hindering the learning processes.

A most evident effect of the aim to strengthen consumer power is evident in the changing nature of the parent-school relationship, which transforms to resemble more closely the relationship between a customer and a service provider, with schools making a visible effort to offer their clients evidence-based proof of their performance as compared to national standards. Other measures that offer evidence of an effort to achieve customer sovereignty include the widening fragmentation of provision which may include diverse

school setups, such as, voucher systems, charter schools, private schools, grammar schools, independent state schools, specialised schools, and other alternatives.

4.6 The Aim of Preparing Students for the Enterprise Culture.

The third objective of a neoliberalised education system comprises the aim of enhancing individual freedom by improving students' employability. This is meant to be beneficial because it prepares students for independent living within an enterprise culture and because investing in human capital boosts national competitiveness that leads to economic growth, making more wealth available to finance social security services. Considering the importance that one's education and employment have in sustaining one's own and even society's flourishing, society has both a legitimate duty and a responsibility to enhance every single student's employability skills in the widest possible sense. Future economic well-being is considered by neoliberals as the basis for more general social well-being, which is why a neoliberalised education system tends to prioritise economic concerns over democratic ones. This is evident from the choice of educational content that is taught at school. The aim to prepare students well for the enterprise society does not imply that this should be the only thing that schooling is about. The aim to fulfil Spellings' (U.S. Secretary of Education 2005 – 2009) suggestion that “our job is to give them [students] the knowledge and skills to compete” (Spellings, 2006) on its own, cannot be considered to be adequate education, even in the most neoliberalised of education systems. There is more to being educated than literacy, numeracy, and job skills and an education that exclusively focuses on these elements would be inadequate even in neoliberal terms. A richer education is required for entrepreneurial selfhood and to be able to flourish in the enterprise culture.

While initially this objective might seem out of sync with neoliberalism, especially since neoliberalism emphasises the dangers of government omnipresence, neoliberal education theory cannot but champion sufficient control of education to enable the implementation of the ongoing changes that are needed to make education responsive to the needs of the economy. Government control needs to be strong because changes in a highly competitive economic system may be deep and abrupt. Consequently, an education system that is meant to support the economy, needs to be able to respond to such changes in a relatively short period. Examples of the need to quickly learn new skills may include, the importance of digital literacy or coding, or the learning of a specific modern language that has become important for business possibly over a relatively short time. Neoliberals argue that the aim of enabling control over schooling is legitimate because such control is

required to alter education provision according to economic needs. According to neoliberals, the fact that everyone thrives from a successful economy, albeit at very different levels, morally justifies governments control of schools.

Preparing students for the enterprise culture is also vital to ensure that education supports national competitiveness. When setting this aim in the context of neoliberal governance, where the “uncompromising goals of economic competitiveness are represented as serving the common good” (Ayers & Carlone, 2007, p. 475), it becomes clear why neoliberals prioritise this aim over others. This aim, in fact, leads to the prioritisation of policies that ensure that students meet the economic expectations intended for them. In order to achieve this objective, specific policies are designed and implemented to ensure that educational provision is aligned with the requirements of the economy. Prioritising the link between educational and economic needs is particularly important in a dynamic, and often volatile, neoliberalised economic system, marked by high levels of competition that makes change a constant. Ensuring that the economy has the necessary workers is essential for a nation’s ability to compete successfully with other countries. What is distinctively neoliberal in this aim is not the belief that in today’s world, every citizen requires a higher level of education or linking educational outcomes with the requirements of the labour market. Most people would not object to aligning schooling with the needs of the economy. In fact, most would still acknowledge, as UK Prime Minister Callaghan did forty years ago, that “in today's world, higher standards are demanded than were required yesterday and there are simply fewer jobs for those without skill. Therefore, we demand more from our schools than did our grandparents” (Callaghan, 1976). The statement is truer today than it was forty years ago and will most likely remain true for many years to come. What distinguishes the neoliberal approach is that preparing students to face the highly competitive enterprise culture is more demanding than simply preparing students for specific employment.

Neoliberals contend that the economic and social realities brought about by a competitive market economy, necessitate specific provisions from the education system. An education system within a state managed through neoliberal governance needs to prepare students for their future social and economic realities, which are bound to be increasingly challenging corresponding to a fast-changing economy, a freer and therefore more volatile economy, with higher levels of competition and thus the need for employee flexibility. Preparing for participation in the enterprise culture entails adapting the way people “look at

things, to create a wholly new attitude of mind” (Thatcher, 1979). This is why neoliberals emphasise that “economics are the method, but the object [the objective of neoliberal governance] is to change the soul” (Thatcher, 1981). Judging from Thatcher’s speeches and interviews given at the time, the expression ‘changing the soul,’ refers to the need to change citizens’ attitudes towards the notion of individual responsibility and an understanding of political justice that moves away from the idea of the nanny state. This is important for neoliberals because within neoliberalism, it is believed that market rationality should replace any possible form of ‘patterned’ justice in relation to the management of the political and the economic spheres.

As is often remarked, neoliberal governance actively tries to change mindsets and attitudes of citizens (Garland, 1996). This can be seen in the promotion of the value of individual responsibility since for neoliberals, this is regarded as “an essential condition of a free society...without which it cannot survive” (Hayek, 1962, p. 234). It is because of the importance given to the value of individual responsibility, besides other principles including the duty of assistance, that neoliberals hold very specific expectations from an education system. Hence the need to implement policies that produce citizens who act as individual entrepreneurs and who are able to provide for themselves (Brown, 2006) and thereby safeguarding the freedom of others.

In the realm of education, this leads neoliberals to issue specific policies aimed at moulding citizens as entrepreneurs of themselves, possibly through a national curriculum that instructs schools to teach children to “be enterprising in life and work” (PSHE Association, 2017, p. 38) and to understand the importance of “economic well-being” (PSHE Association, 2017, p. 17) along with aims of extending entrepreneurship education, transferable learning skills and the ability to learn independently. To this end, it is argued that an education that prepares children well for their future as active participants in an enterprise culture should prepare them to become responsible for their own education and to behaving prudently instead of depending on others (Leitner et al., 2007). Hence the neoliberal educational aim to ensure that an education system is capable of equipping learners with the skills to do so.

As regards the main criticism with the idea of conceptualising compulsory education as human capital development, the disagreements are generally not related to the idea of preparing young adults for employment, even Marx and Engels in the Communist

Manifesto indicated that socialist education should aim for a “combination of education with industrial production” (1848/1977, p. 28). The issues mostly arise when compulsory education becomes just literacy and numeracy, while omitting aspects of democratic education, critical thinking, awareness of collective responsibility and the importance of social inclusion and other knowledge which might not have immediate economic relevance, but which is part of human heritage and worth learning none the less. Rawls, for example, finds the role of education in terms of, “enabling a person to enjoy the culture of his society and to take part in its affairs,” and “to provide for each individual a secure sense of his own worth” (Rawls, 1999, p.86) as important, if not more important, than economic aims. From a neoliberal perspective, an education that prioritises knowledge, skills and values needed for the enterprise culture does not contrast with the aims mentioned by Rawls, since such education is a more secure road towards economic autonomy, and such autonomy sustains individual’s ability to enjoy the culture of their society and to secure a sense of self-worth. Clearly an element of citizenship education remains mandatory to prepare students to take part in democratic affairs. Understandably, criticism against impoverished educational experience intensifies, if the quest to prepare children/young adults for employment is allowed to result in a thin conception of education marked by credentialism, where school life becomes dominated overwhelmingly by test preparation and drilling. Arguably, there are grounds to debate if such schooling even deserves to be considered as a truly educational experience.

4.7 Conclusion

This chapter identified the neoliberal aims for education and the intended ways in which these aims are meant to be reached. Revealing aims, and the means to achieve them, made it clear why it is contended that “questions about the aims and content of education are intimately connected with views about the kind of society we wish to live in” (White, 1990, p. 16). In fact, all of these aims are specifically designed to bring about what for neoliberals constitutes the ideal social arrangement, that is, a government that holds “a lighter hand on the tiller of the ship of state, with the auto-pilot powered by the forces of the market” (Jonathan, 1997b, p. 16). The market rationality that underpins the vision of a neoliberalised education system aligns education itself with the neoliberal conception of what an adequate social arrangement should look like, while it simultaneously recruits such a transformed education system to assist in the neoliberalisation of society. Hence, it can be said that the neoliberalisation of education is an important step for the neoliberalisation of society at large.

Identifying the aims of an education system is an important part of the process of understanding it because this sheds light on what such an education system can be held to account for. In fact, for neoliberals, an education system where parents have no voice, where accountability is not standards-based and where students are not fully prepared to face the enterprise culture would be considered inadequate. The neoliberal agenda for compulsory education aims at transforming education into an institution that is informed by market rationality. In consequence, the neoliberal agenda prioritises consumer-sovereignty, efficiency, and the alignment of education with economic needs. As shall be discussed in the following three chapters on the education policies that need to be implemented for these aims to be achieved, this approach to education “emphasises market arrangements, centralised testing regimes, publication of results, strict school and teacher accountability procedures, centralised curriculum and standards and a managerial approach to school governance” (Angus, 2012, p. 233). Each one of these education policies listed by Angus is a way to neoliberalise an education system and align it with the broader neoliberalisation process within a political jurisdiction.

What is evident, even from the sole consideration of the specific aims that neoliberalism has for education, is that neoliberal theory necessitates an active state for its education system as much as it does in its economic system since, neoliberal governance requires the authorities to “sort, circulate, and manage, reward and punish students, staff, and schools” (Pignatelli, 2002, p. 172). These practices are not synonymous with an effort towards ‘limited government’. They originate from the neoliberal’s reinterpretation of the principle of laissez-faire (Friedman, 1951; Foucault, 2008) and the belief that governments are duty-bound to actively support economic growth. In this way, the effects of neoliberal political rationality on an education system are a further example of the differences between neoliberalism and classical liberalism and the reinterpretation of the principle of laissez-faire and its replacement with the principle of competition (Friedman, 1951; Foucault 2008). The neoliberalisation of education serves as a further reason why Gamble defines the politics of Thatcherism as “the free economy and the strong state” (Gamble, 1988). In the same manner that a free economy requires a strong state to support it, a marketised education system requires the support of standards and accountability systems to be able to function.

The contribution of this chapter was felt to be important because benefits accrue from the identification of the purposes that an education system is designed to address. Knowing which goals are meant to be achieved, can be beneficial in analysing a system and also in evaluating specific practices so that those that are not aligned with the chosen targets can be identified. It would be pointless to try to analyse and evaluate policies, and to understand how effective they are, unless first, one understands what they are supposed to be effective for. Additionally, the identification of the chosen objectives is also beneficial because it contributes much to the understanding of what constitutes ‘good’ education for a specific system. Evidently, under neoliberal governance, a good system of compulsory education entails, efficiently run schools; parents who are provided with real choice; and the provision of knowledge, skills and values that enable learners to thrive in an enterprise culture. Identifying aims also provides a richer understanding of what a political rationality deems that is morally owed to students. In the case of neoliberalised education systems, in spite of the general repudiation of any conception of equality except for political equality, it is held that all students are owed at least an education of adequately good quality, for paternalistic reasons, and even more importantly, for instrumental ones, since it benefits everyone that students are prepared well for the enterprise culture.

Chapter Five: Neoliberal Hyper-Accountability Policies

5.1 Introduction

Three categories of policies bring about the neoliberalisation of a system of compulsory education. One comprises accountability policies, mostly aimed at addressing the principal-agent problem that is considered to be at the basis of the issues with teacher accountability. New Public Management strategies form part of this major category of policies. A second category is comprised of marketisation policies, principally targeted to ensure that parents have a stronger say in their children's education. The third category encapsulates policies that ensure that students learn what they need to learn to become economically independent adults. This chapter engages with the first set of policies, namely: standards-based, outcomes-focused accountability policies.

5.2 The Rise of Neoliberal Hyper-Accountability

Neoliberalised systems of compulsory education are characterised by systems of hyper-accountability as a result of the fact that the economic aims of effectiveness and efficiency become of utmost importance (Ballet et al., 2006) and accountability is considered to be crucial in order to achieve such aims. Consequently, neoliberalised education systems employ extensive accountability measures because these facilitate the achievement of increasing efficiency, through the surveillance measures that they establish and by ensuring that services are designed to suit the needs of the clients (parents and students), not of providers (school personnel).

Accountability policies proliferate under a neoliberal order because they are essential to reach the target of increasing transparency. Transparency is a priority for neoliberals because information is essential for parental choice policies to function effectively and because it is felt that an account must be given to taxpayers since they are the ones funding the system. Accountability policies also contribute to achieving the target of enhancing economic competitiveness because they enable governments to have a sufficiently strong hold on their education system that enables them to alter education fast enough to respond effectively to everchanging economic needs. Most importantly, the array of accountability measures enacted as part of the neoliberalisation process are deemed to be necessary to maintain high levels of school effectiveness, conceptualised as success in providing learners with the necessary knowledge, skills and values required for economic autonomy, that is

believed to be vital for a country's economic competitiveness, and therefore, also economic growth.

The importance given to accountability within a neoliberalised system leads to a situation where professional accountability based on trusting teachers' judgment that was in place before the neoliberalisation process started to take root, comes to be considered unreliable. This tendency develops from the realisation that while most teachers can be trusted, others cannot be trusted to the same degree, and the risk factors in a competitive economic order become unacceptably high. Consequently, the neoliberal policymaker will opt for an approach characterised by "active mistrust" (Hargreaves & Shirley, 2009, p. 44). A professional interpretation of accountability includes the principles of duty, honesty, rigour and objectivity, self-regulation, as well as personal responsibility towards one's profession, and colleagues. It has to do with "adherence to principles of practice" (Sockett, 1976, p. 42) and involves high levels of professional trust. Under neoliberalism, such a form of accountability, conceptualised as "a system of (mutual) responsibility" (Biesta, 2004, p. 236) is abandoned in favour of the "demand for an evidence-based approach" (Biesta, 2017, p. 322).

Neoliberals prefer an evidence-based approach, usually involving the use of standards, over a trust-based professional accountability approach both because of the risks of producer capture, but also due to the principal-agent problem that characterises teachers' jobs, particularly because teachers work in an unsupervised environment (classrooms), where they provide a service to clients (children) who are generally unable to evaluate its quality, creates a situation that can easily be taken advantage of by the employee who is providing the service (teachers). Consequently, it is maintained that inside schools, information asymmetries disadvantage the school management (Moe, 2003), because teachers can potentially abuse their position and choose to make their own professional life easy rather than work hard to support their students' progress or as Moe contends, teachers may choose to relax in pursuit of the management's goals and follow their intentions "while giving the appearance of being a good agent" (Moe, 2003, p. 82) to the detriment of students. Consequently, the neoliberal standards-based, outcomes-focused accountability systems are designed to address issues related to "the likelihood of violations resulting from opportunism on the[teachers'] part ... (e.g. due to shirking, deception, cheating and collusion)" (Boston et al., 1996, p. 18). It is contended that this can especially be the case in compulsory education, since those receiving the service (children, young people), are often

in no position to realise that they are receiving an inadequate service, and therefore producers (teachers) may be more tempted to abuse their position. In order to reduce such eventuality, standards-based, outcomes-focused accountability measures are institutionalised to restrict the discretionary powers of teachers and minimise the opportunity for abuse.

5.3 Neoliberal Accountability Policies

One way in which neoliberal education policies try to reach the set targets for education is through the establishment of an array of accountability policies that collectively may be referred to as administrative accountability policies. These measures are employed in response to a key question, “Are educators fulfilling the expectations for which they are paid?” (Taylor Webb, 2005, p.17). A question that acquires a completely new dimension under a political rationality that views taxation as a necessary evil that must be limited as much as possible. Such a method of accountability holds those responsible for education to account by checking that they are being effective (Davis & White, 2001). On these grounds, a series of education policies are implemented to ensure that schools meet the set targets (Rothman, 1995). Such a process necessitates setting standards and procedures for assessment (Levinson, 2011). As expected, for the distrusting neoliberals, the only way to address this question is through the provision of standards-based administrative accountability policies that render educational services measurable and therefore verifiable.

5.3.1 System-Wide Compliance Regulations

Firstly, the approach of a standards-based, outcomes-focused accountability entails the use of a common curriculum at national level. This is seen to be beneficial because it can act as a regulation at system level that indicates what students should know and be able to do at given levels. To this end it is contended that standardised curricula offer “all pupils a common entitlement which schools are required to teach and on which parents have the right to insist” (DfE, 1992b). This is meant to enhance accountability in so far as it provides a framework within which teachers can exercise their discretion inside the classroom. It is meant to render the teaching process more transparent and ensure that teachers are in line with the country’s economic priorities in relation to their teaching. It is also meant to address issues of producer capture, as in the case of situations where curriculum models “sometimes seemed to reflect the teaching interests and strengths of the staff as much as they did the interests and needs of the pupils (West & Muijs, 2009), a situation which a country that aims at linking schooling with economic needs cannot afford. Furthermore, it

is also believed that standardised curricula can potentially be effective because it enables nationwide testing that makes comparisons of school performance possible (West & Muijs, 2009), thereby supporting both market-based accountability policies as well as the administrative ones listed in this chapter. Interestingly, such centralised curricula manage to fulfil most of their intended functions even in the case of independent state schools, such as Academies and Free Schools in England, which are not legally obliged to follow the national curriculum. Nevertheless, these schools are set up through a funding agreement with the state that imposes the requirement of a broad and balanced curriculum. Additionally, such schools are held more strictly to account by parents who choose them over others and who are more likely to scrutinise the school's provision more attentively. In fact a national curriculum, even one from which a school is free, may still assist parents to evaluate their schools' performance. Furthermore, there would still be inspectorate visits that, while respecting such school's autonomy, still inform their judgments in light of the national curricular requirements about what is to be expected at specific stages of development. Therefore it could be said that jointly, funding agreements, parents' scrutiny and inspectorates fulfil the aims of a centrally imposed national curriculum even in the case of schools where this is not mandatory.

Another policy employed to reach neoliberal aims consists in the use of regulations that act as a framework within which schools are expected to operate. Such regulations are generally meant to ensure that schools are in line with specific standards (Darling-Hammond, 2004) and in effect end up specifying schools' and teachers' work (Stecher & Kirby, 2004). Such policies are meant to create accountability pressure on schools by obliging them to make certain information publicly available. Examples of these policies in the United States are the *No Child Left behind Act* (U.S. Congress, 2002) and *Every Student Succeeds Act* (U.S. Congress, 2015) both of which demand the development of school report cards with information on test performance (Deming & Figlio, 2016). Such published information may include information related to student achievement in standardised examinations, attendance rates, dropout rates, class sizes, teacher qualifications, student demographics, school resources, school curricula and co-curricular offerings, internal and external evaluations, information related to the school ethos and other pertinent information. In England, for example, regulations require secondary schools to publish information on the proportion of students obtaining five or more GCSEs at grade C or above (Burgess et al., 2005), together with other information aimed at supporting the process of parental choice. Such publicly available information is meant to ensure that

parents, at least those who are able to, can compare schools and use this information to make informed decisions (Huckman & Hill, 1994). In various countries, similar objectives are reached through other means, such as, school profiles, performance reports, accountability reports and inspection reports (Johnson, 2012).

Accountability may also be strengthened through the use of funding systems through the creation of grants linked to compliance with specific guidelines. In the U.S., the *Race to the Top Grant* (2009) provided grants to states that follow specific guidelines aimed at supporting the development of standards to evaluate student performance and the implementation of a common curriculum. Apart from grants, regulation may also institutionalise sanctions that are attached to specific benchmarks “such as the percentage of students meeting the proficiency standard on a mathematics test, or the rate of return on investment in a college degree” (Deming & Figlio, 2016, p. 38). Regulations may also demand corrective action in case performance is not satisfactory. In the U.S., under the *No Child Left Behind Act* (U.S. Congress, 2002) failure to achieve “adequate yearly progress” targets could result in sanctions that varied from the requirement to develop a school development plan, to the provision of additional tuition, or free transport to an alternative school or reconstitution of management and teaching staff (Deming & Figlio, 2016, p. 38).

Another accountability measure is the establishment of a parents’ charter that ensures parents the rights of voice, rights to be informed about children’s progress and of being involved in the decision-making process of the school, and possibly also rights of exit from one school in order to choose a different school. Yet another measure consists of “adherence to externally accredited programmes” (Adams, 2006, p. 8) in relation to teacher qualifications. Controlling the contents of teacher qualification programmes is an important part of controlling the education system. Such a policy is enacted under the assumption that changes in initial teacher training can lead to a new generation of teachers, specifically ones who are in line with the neoliberal conception of schooling and the prioritisation of improving students’ academic attainment (Furlong et al., 2000).

5.3.2 Standardised Examinations and School Performance Rankings

National standardised examinations are a favoured standards-based accountability tool that is considered to be “pivotal to securing the neoliberal restructuring of schools” (Stevenson & Wood, 2013, p. 42). In fact, it is generally agreed that “manifestations of neoliberalism in education include ...the introduction of centralised high-stakes testing regimes to

continually evaluate the output of teaching by rendering it visible, calculable, and comparable” (Clarke, 2013, p. 230). In fact, in a neoliberalised education system such mechanisms are likely to expand exponentially. In the UK, for example, the *Education Reform Act* (1988) divided compulsory education into Key Stages with designated examinations at the end of each Key Stage. In the U.S., the *No Child Left Behind Act* (U.S. Congress, 2002) required annual standardised examinations in literacy and numeracy from grade three to grade eight (McGuinn, 2016). Moreover, “in Australia, the National Assessment Program- Literacy and Numeracy (NAPLAN) was introduced in 2008 for Years 3, 5, 7 and 9” (Bourke et al., 2015, p. 88). Examinations become a favoured accountability tool under a neoliberalised system because they are seen as both an effective and efficient way of sustaining educational accountability.

Not everyone shares the neoliberal enthusiasm for examination, for example, in the UK 2019 Labour Party electoral manifesto it is promised that “labour will end the ‘high stakes’ testing culture of schools by scrapping Key Stage 1 and 2 SATs and baseline assessments” (Labour Party Manifesto, 2019, p. 39). There are clear advantages from the removal of high-stakes examinations. Such removal provides teachers with more leeway on what to do in class which may benefit students and eliminate the inevitable stress caused by testing, as well as the collateral feeling of failure for those who do not perform well. Removing high stakes examinations would also do away with the need to highlight, perhaps too conspicuously, the differences between higher and lower ability learners. This would be respectful towards lower performing learners.

In spite of these advantages, there is little possibility that such views may convince a neoliberal policymaker to change tactics. Neoliberals tend to prioritise the beliefs: (1) that we have to accept that life is unfair, (2) that making sacrifices now, in order to obtain better results later on, is an acceptable life coping strategy, (3) and crucially, that fact that some cannot succeed does not mean that we should stopping those who can from moving ahead. Considering these assumptions, it becomes evident why standards-based accountability measures are of no moral concern when viewed from a neoliberal perspective, and why they become of moral concern from a social justice perspective. Their disregard towards inequality makes them incompatible with any collective endeavour towards a less unequal social arrangement.

Standardised examinations are seen as a way to further enhance education accountability by enabling the construction of league tables, by which schools are ranked publicly based on student attainment levels (Leithwood & Earl, 2000). Furthermore, with the help of the OECD's PISA (Programme for International Student Assessment), such ranking becomes also available to compare country performance, so that each jurisdiction can better understand its strengths and weaknesses. This practice may be considered as a way that enables supranational organisations to support the proliferation of neoliberalism in so far as it encourages neoliberal processes. From a neoliberal perspective there are no issues with having schools declare their performance publicly. As the U.S. Secretary for Education (2001-2005) remarked, "every publicly traded company in this country reports results to its investors every quarter. Is it asking too much for our schools to report annually on their results?" (Paige, 2001). The answer to that question, for the neoliberal policymaker, is 'no'. Additionally, those in favour of the use of league tables claim that "stopping their publication will affect both market-based and administrative accountability systems" (Burgess et al., 2010, p. 2) since performance tables sustain accountability through parental choice (Leckie & Goldstein, 2017). Hence, it is argued that "performance tables provide an invaluable source of information for parents on the achievements of pupils in their local secondary schools and how they compare with other schools" (DfEE, 2000b) making the process of parental choice more effective. As regards the administrative accountability policies identified in this chapter, the absence of league tables may weaken, while not preclude, an inspectorate system's ability to produce judgments supported by regulated standards. The absence of school performance tables can also hinder administrative accountability by making compliance to regulation more difficult to implement due to the resulting lack of transparency. This may, for example, result in less accurate formula funding mechanisms and less accurate teacher performance-related pay mechanisms.

The key principle at work in the use of standardised tests is the reduction of learning to a score (De Lissovoy & McLaren, 2003) that enables more transparent comparability between schools. The resulting information is meant to assist most stakeholders to make informed decisions, while admittedly not all would be capable to do so. Nonetheless, school performance tables generate comparable information on school quality that enables capable parents to take action (Bruns et al., 2011) especially when the information indicates that performance is unsatisfactory.

Accountability mechanisms such as standardised examinations and school performance tables, while not as accurate as one would wish them to be, are useful because they enable comparisons for the purpose of accountability. Additionally, they are also useful for neoliberal purposes because they constitute a process through which the values of market rationality are instilled in students where “the test is less an agent of discipline (correcting students and schools toward the norm) and more a tethering of students to neoliberalism’s truth for society, a truth that must be their truth: that we can and must be set free from all values not set against all others and that we come to be only as we are priced— by others and by ourselves— in competition” (De Lissovoy, 2015, p. 19). In this manner, standardised examinations and league tables contribute to the process of transforming students into entrepreneurial selves, a key neoliberal aim for compulsory education, by instilling in learners, the importance of: making sacrifices in the present for the purpose of future rewards, making strategic decisions on how much effort to invest in different areas depending on the reward, planning to build portfolios of marketable certificates and by preparing students to face the anxiety of competition within the entrepreneurial culture by making them experience competitive stress from an early age (Hutchings, 2015; Howell, 2015).

5.3.3 Standards-Based School Inspections

A second procedure aimed at enhancing accountability is the establishment of standards-based school inspections. School inspections are meant to involve the process of diagnosing schools’ strengths and weaknesses and issuing recommendations (Aviles & Simons, 2013). One example of this approach would be Ofsted (Office for Standards in Education, Children’s Services and Skills), the school inspectorate in England, where from the beginning the ultimate aim was “to assess the impact of the school’s decisions: the way the available funding is used in relation to its educational priorities and to effect improvement” (Ofsted, 1995a, p. 115). Remarkably, the most important concern was not that of ensuring that children are provided with a broad educational experience, but “the way the available funding is used” i.e. efficiency and effectiveness. School inspections have great potential to generate information about school performance that can in turn be used for accountability purposes. Such information may cover “every aspect of school life – curriculum, lessons, assessment, communication, quality” (Gunter & Fitzgerald, 2008, p. 261) and every aspect can be meticulously evaluated, leading to reports aimed at informing stakeholders’ decisions in relation to school choice.

Within a neoliberalised education system, the publication of the outcomes of inspection visits is meant to enable stakeholders to make informed decisions, at least to those parents who are capable to do so. Inspection reports can be used by policymakers to inform policy, by school managers to improve their schools, and by some parents to assist in the process of choosing the right school for their children. Furthermore, school inspections can generate objective evidence on the level of effectiveness of government actions and thereby holding politicians responsible (Ladd, 2010), a major objective of accountability policies.

In relation to school inspections being used as accountability measures by neoliberal policymakers, one important clarification is necessary. It is not school inspections that are the fruit of neoliberal thought. It is specifically the standards-based element that makes school inspections a neoliberal accountability tool. As far as neoliberalism is concerned, inspectors are officers that may equally be driven by their own self-interest, which is why, under neoliberal governance, only accounts based on measurable outcomes are valid. Inspectorates as such, are not the result of the neoliberalisation process of education. The first school inspector in the UK, Mr Hugh Seymour Tremenheere, “was duly appointed 'Her Majesty's Inspector of Schools' by Order-in-Council as notified in the London Gazette, 9 December 1839” (Edmonds & Edmonds, 1963, p. 68). This nomination pre-dates the birth of neoliberal political rationality by about 100 years, if one were to take the Walter Lippmann Colloquium held in Paris in 1938 as the birth of the neoliberal intellectual movement (Hartwich, 2009; Jackson, 2010). What makes specific school inspections a neoliberal tool is their standards-based approach, which can be identified through the use of performance indicators as a means to assess performance (Pring, 2012).

5.3.4 New Public Management Strategies implemented at School Level

Just like the public service goes through a New Public Management revolution under neoliberal governance, the same occurs to educational institutions. Teachers’ professional status does not shield them from the requirements of the neoliberalisation process. New Public Management strategies are implemented in an effort to make public institutions increasingly accountable and efficient. It is applied to an education system for the same reasons. Extensive literature is available on this process of applying business management principles in schools, the process is often referred to as New Public Management, but it is also sometimes referred to as, new accountability (Fuhrman, 1999), new managerialism (Peters, 1992; Lynch et al., 2012) and diverse definitions related to school autonomy

(Bullock & Thomas, 1997) and though the use of similar terminology. Each time, it refers to the use of private enterprise management approaches in the public service.

These approaches reconceptualise public service institutions in the same manner they treat private companies, striving for survival in the free competitive market order, underpinned by similar principles including, decentralisation, responsibility, measurability, and evidence-based decision-making. In fact, as remarked by Biesta, such trends are “characterised by a customer-oriented ethos, decisions driven by efficiency and cost-effectiveness, and an emphasis on competition” (Biesta, 2004, p. 237) all of which are neoliberal characteristics. In fact, it can be said that the world of business not only dominates the objectives of a neoliberalised education system, in the sense that it defines what good education is, it also “supplies the model of how it is to be provided and managed” (Hill, 2007, p. 206). Such management approaches serve as a way to transform schools in line with the logic of the market (Ball, 2016). A transformation that occurs by copying the modes of private sector management (Nairna & Higgins, 2007) that leads schools towards a situation of ongoing restructuring (Lock & Lorenz, 2007) meant to bring about school improvement.

A New Public Management ethos in managing educational institutions is easily identifiable because it entails a transfer of the discourse that used to be associated exclusively with commercial endeavours, but which now is present throughout education policy documentation. Common elements within this discourse include terms such as, target-setting, raising standards, performance management systems, performance-related pay, continuous professional development, quality assurance, continuous improvement, benchmarking, performance indicators, priority development targets and many other concepts. These, and similar notions, are common in education policy documents within neoliberalised education systems.

Another initiative meant to boost effectiveness and efficiency is the idea known as local management of schools, or school-based management. This involves the setting up of “structures that support site-based decision-making so that school-based administrators and teachers have greater control over the decisions” (Watson & Supovitz, 2001, p. 3). As affirmed in the UK Education Reform Act (DES, 1988), one way in which this can be done is through the “delegation to governing body of management of school’s budget share,” (DES, 1988, section 36), that is, by providing schools with bulk funding and allowing

schools themselves to decide how to spend it. It is assumed that such practices lead to more efficient use of funds (Dixon, 1991), since spending decisions are taken at the lowest possible level where more accurate information is available. Neoliberals are convinced that “the very fact of having all the important decisions taken at the level closest to parents and teachers, not by a distant and insensitive bureaucracy, would make for better education” (Thatcher, 1993, p. 481). The objective of implementing such measures is “both to put governing bodies and head teachers under the greater pressure of public accountability for better standards and to increase freedom to respond to that pressure” (DfE, 1992b, para2.8). The basic assumption is that the additional pressure along with the allowed flexibility in responding to changing circumstances will generate the necessary innovation that improves both school effectiveness and efficiency. This flexibility is intended to lead to better management and “to enhance the quality of education by enabling more informed and effective use to be made of the resources available for teaching and learning” (DfE, 1994, p. 7). In so far as it leads towards decentralisation, it contributes to the overarching policy of depoliticising the political sphere.

Other school-level accountability measures include more specific working parameters by which professionals are meant to abide. Such measures lead Gewirtz to conclude that, “increased competitiveness, target setting and performance monitoring, and the narrowing of definitions of performance can be seen to represent aspects of a qualitatively different regime of control in schools” (Gewirtz, 1997, p. 222), a regime that functions on performance agreements instead of democratic professional responsibility. Such a regime is usually characterised by detailed specification of thorough formal competencies, standards, and targets (Clarke, 2013; Ranson, 2003). It is also characterised by the importance given to measuring student performance. Another policy within this set of administrative accountability measures is the duty to engage in a formal process of internal school auditing. This refers to the requirement for institutions “to construct a variety of formal textual accounts of themselves in the form of development plans, strategic documents, sets of objectives, etc.” (Ball, 2003a, p. 226). With regard to schools, this translates into formal development plans with performance targets and mission statements (Aviles & Simons, 2013; Ranson, 2003; Tolofari, 2005). It is assumed that “an effective process of school development planning will focus on improving educational outcomes and relate expenditure to this” (Ofsted, 1995b, p. 122), by involving teachers in the decision-making process and thereby increasing their ownership of the targeted school objectives.

Another element of administrative accountability comprises diverse performance appraisal systems. This is often evident through an emphasis on ongoing assessment of staff (Adams, 2006), performance management systems related to staff appraisal (Clarke, 2013; Green, 2011; Tolofari, 2005) and continuous professional development (Green, 2011). These measures are employed in the context of a conviction that unless properly supervised, teachers would not give their one hundred per cent commitment. Consequently, it is suggested that compensation schemes based on pay for performance should be employed so that these can bring teachers' interests in line with the managements' vision (Moe, 2003). In fact, these policies often lead to performance-related pay structures (Lock & Lorenz, 2007) where "teachers get a salary increase based on increases in student output, almost always measured by scores on achievement tests" (Klees, 2008, p. 327) – hence their propensity to lead to teaching-to-the-test approaches. This process can be seen at work in England in Academies and Free Schools where "performance-related pay progression is based on teachers meeting their annual appraisal targets, most of which relate to the academic performance of their pupils" (McGowan, 2019, p. 9).

This is considered to be an inadequate measure for those who hold an expansive interpretation for compulsory schooling, but neoliberals, who prioritise academic success over other school purposes, can be satisfied with such outcomes. In fact, it comes as no surprise that the current U.S. President, Donald Trump, who employs neoliberal policies where possible, stated that "I will also support merit pay for teachers. So that we reward our best teachers instead of the failed tenure system that rewards bad teachers and punishes the good ones, and the bad ones are making the same money and sometimes more than the good ones" (Trump, 2016). As is evident, this rationality is in line with market justice, which is at the basis of neoliberal public policy.

Such views are directly in line with basing decision-making processes on performativity, and input/output concerns. This entails market rationality that emphasises the advantages obtained by the outcomes of such policies, rather than the disadvantages pointed out by some, that they might be seen as disrespectful towards teachers. Stiglitz, for example, argues that "teachers are professionals, and incentive pay denigrates their professionalism" (Stiglitz, 2019, p. 117). Neoliberals do not deem such concern as relevant in so far as they uphold a different conceptualisation of teacher professionalism that includes more focus on accountability concerns and on following expectations. In the case, contra Stiglitz, one could argue that performance pay does not denigrate teachers'

professionalism, it gives them a choice to work harder in case they wish to achieve given targets. For instance, a specific pay package may merit, as agreed between employer and employee (the teacher), the equivalence of 40 hours of honest hard work per week. An employer may wish to incentivise 50 hours of hard work per week and pay the difference involved in the attainment of higher targets. Teachers should not feel shame, guilt or concerns of unprofessionalism when refusing to accept the extra hours of work if (for diverse reasons) they do not wish to do so, despite the unfortunate outcomes of possibly having learners attaining lower grades. Neither would it be unprofessional to accept such conditions of work. Respect towards employees (including teachers) demands adherence to the agreed hours-to-remuneration ratio as stipulated in the terms of employment. Alterations of that ratio demand a new agreement. Expecting teachers to do their utmost and work 50+ hours a week, because they are professionals and because of what is owed to students, may not be fair towards them, especially if such expectations are not reflected in adequate remuneration.

5.4 Concerns with Hyper-Accountability Policies

This wide array of measures aimed at holding teachers to account may be successful in reaching the accountability objectives, but they also have undesirable outcomes. Firstly, they may be conducive to triage practices, where teachers “triage assistance (mostly test preparation) to students scoring near grade-level cut-offs” (O’Day, 2002, p. 311), to the detriment of both the high achievers and the low-ability students who are left to fend for themselves. This occurs because in a neoliberalised school context marked by the prioritisation of academic output, students near passing may receive most of the teacher’s attention to the detriment of the rest of the class (Miller & Smith, 2011). This practice of categorising “students as safe, treatable, and hopeless” (Youdell, 2004, p. 428) is documented in diverse studies, for example, Lipman (2003), Burgess et al. (2005) Wilson and Piebalga (2008), Brint and Teele (2008), Miller and Smith (2011), West and Pennell (2000), Wilson et al. (2006), West (2010), Pring (2012) and many others. These studies identify instances where teachers prioritise students who are close to passing a given examination, to the detriment of the educational experience of the others thereby turning them into ‘second-class’ students. This would not be in line with the promise of offering every student at least an adequate educational experience. This would clearly be even more incompatible with thicker conceptions of educational equality, which may demand equality of educational opportunities or equality of educational outcomes by the end of compulsory schooling.

A second disadvantage of the hyper-accountability approach comes about because once assessment for academic progress is given centre stage, it takes over every aspect of classroom life and of school life to the detriment of a rich educational experience, in favour of an education that is mostly focused on improving one's examination marks. Assessment is only meant to generate a picture of student progress; it is meant to be a means that is subordinate to the goal of providing a good quality educational experience. The aim of schooling, even under a neoliberal restrictive conception of schooling as primarily preparation for the enterprise culture, should be a "rich 'connected' understanding essential for citizens using and applying their knowledge intelligently and flexibly in the diverse circumstances of 'real life' and the workplace" (Davis, 2003, p. 273) not just limited to achieving the highest possible examination grades. Yet, policies such as, high-stakes examinations and possibly standards-based school inspections (Sellgren, 2018) can easily be mis-implemented and allowed to degenerate into impoverished learning by encouraging a teaching-to-the-test pedagogy and the narrowing of the curriculum (Archer & Francis, 2007; Davis, 2003). Neither an impoverished education in the sense of restricting the width of academic experience to literacy, numeracy, and science, nor impoverished in the sense of exclusively sustaining academic progress while, for example, omitting democratic education, would be to the benefit of students. Such impoverishment would not be in line with the aim of producing students who are ready to face the enterprise culture, marked by the need to be creative and innovative. It would also breach the principle of individual responsibility because in making students less able to face the enterprise culture, these policies also make them less able to fulfil their own responsibilities towards themselves and their families.

These policies would also breach the acknowledged moral duty of educating children, since an impoverished education is not consonant with providing them with an adequate education that prepares them for a successful future. In light of these consequences, it can be said that when allowed to lead to teaching-to-the-test practices, these policies risk becoming counterproductive. Instead of facilitating the achievement of neoliberal targets for education and prepare children well for an enterprise culture, they themselves become hurdles that make the set targets more difficult to achieve. This is one strong criticism of neoliberal policies, which obliges policymakers to consider address such issues when managing the neoliberalisation process of an education system.

Another problem with neoliberal hyper-accountability measures is that teaching quality cannot be measured accurately because out-of-school factors have a very significant impact on student progress (Baker et al., 2010; Bourke et al., 2015; Corcoran, 2010; Davis, 1998, 2003; Rothstein, 2004; Taubman, 2009; von der Embse et al., 2015). Various variables would need to be taken into consideration because examination performance “is the result of all relevant educational inputs, not simply what the teacher does” (Klees, 2008, p. 328). Some relevant factors include “the education of parents, parent attention and supervision, family wealth, learning opportunities outside of school, student aspirations and attitudes, efforts put into homework, prior achievement levels, use of a home computer, characteristics of peers, availability and use of school, resources like libraries and laboratories, class size, [and] school organisation” (Klees, 2008, p. 328). All of these variables are out of teachers’ control, nonetheless, they determine the outcomes of the learning process for which the teacher may be praised or blamed. Neoliberal policymakers may not be very concerned with such criticism since it can be argued that accountability measures are still useful even if they only yield partial information that can be used only indicatively. That is how free markets work after all, information need not be perfect to enable effective choices. Such circumstances would still be an improvement over a situation where one simply has to trust teachers’ judgments blindly. At best taking such criticism on board could mean avoiding measures such as performance-based bonuses, but examinations and league tables would still be useful in spite of the incompleteness of the information they provide.

Similar criticism of the inaccuracy of the tools intended to measure educational progress is related to the fact that hyper-accountability policies, in spite of the wide array of measures set up, provide neither an accurate picture of teachers’ effectiveness, nor an adequate picture of students’ educational development. This argument may actually be indicative of a limited understanding of neoliberalism since it is usually maintained that hyper-accountability policies do not manage to measure the extent to which students have managed “to achieve good education in the fullest and broadest sense of the term” (Biesta, 2015, p. 82). This criticism may be valid when made in the context of a political rationality that holds an expansive conception of schooling, for example, in line with critical pedagogy and emancipatory concerns, where measuring learners’ educational progress “in the fullest and broadest sense of the term” (Biesta, 2015, p. 82) would be crucial. However, these accountability measures are meant to focus on academic progress and preparation for the enterprise culture, rather than assessing development in citizenship education and critical

thinking skills. Clearly, hyper-accountability policies are inadequate for those who expect schooling to redress injustice and compensate for social inequality. Those holding such rich conceptions of schooling would need to employ “new forms of accountability beyond rankings of achievement ... [that] reflect how education contributes to the quality of life of individuals, communities and the public” (Blackmore, 2019, p. 188). However, for neoliberals, who primarily conceptualise schooling as preparation for the enterprise society and economic autonomy, and tend to classify citizenship and democratic concerns as of secondary importance, hyper-accountability measures may be considered to be good enough.

Considering the drawbacks that a hyper-accountability approach has for education, particularly for those who expect a great deal from a system of compulsory education in terms of students’ ability to contribute to a socially just society, it is to be expected that this strand of neoliberal policies constantly receives much criticism. In England, for example, the current UK parliament (elected December 2019) is constituted of 203 out of 650, that is 30% of parliamentarians who were elected on a manifesto that proposed the dismantlement of most policies mentioned in this chapter. To this end, the UK Labour Party Manifesto (2019) proposed “scrapping Key Stage 1 and 2 SATs and baseline assessments” (2019, p. 39), it also proposed to “replace Ofsted and transfer responsibility for inspections to a new body, designed to drive school improvement” (2019, p. 40), and also to move away from the idea of local management of schools so that “responsibility for delivery of education and support for young people will sit with local authorities” (Labour Party Manifesto, 2019, p. 39).

In spite of the criticism, I do not believe that dismantling standards-based outcomes-focused accountability mechanisms would constitute a prudent decision, either from a neoliberal perspective, or even from an egalitarian standpoint. From a neoliberal perspective, it would be detrimental because it would impede the achievement of neoliberal targets as regards improving students’ academic performance and therefore their probability of success in the labour market. This is especially the case when bearing in mind research that confirmed that standards-based accountability contributes to improved student pass rates. Such research includes, Kelley et al. (2000), Burgess et al. (2010, 2011), Mattei (2012), Wiliam (2010), Dee & Jacob (2011), Carnoy and Loeb, (2002) Lee and Wong, (2004), Hanushek and Raymond (2003, 2005) and others. Research showed how, for example, the decision to remove secondary school performance tables in Wales in 2001, led

to “markedly reduced school effectiveness in Wales relative to England” (Burgess et al., 2013, p. 58). The evidence is convincing because it compared two otherwise very similar education systems, the English and the Welsh one. Undoubtedly, such findings have to be put in the context of the specific conception of “school effectiveness” that informs them. In this case, effectiveness is understood as a schools’ ability to support students in achieving the highest performance possible in relation to academic attainment. This means that admittedly, such findings can at best convince a neoliberal policy maker to support hyper-accountability but would not be able to convince those who holds different conceptions of school effectiveness. Nevertheless, it could be argued that, removing hyper-accountability measures may result in some drawbacks, even when such removal is considered through egalitarian perspectives. It could be argued that the corollary abandonment of the focus on academic attainment that would result from the removal of neoliberal hyper-accountability mechanisms, may be to the greater detriment of the disadvantaged students, since these are the ones for whom it may be more urgent to develop marketable human capital, since they have no other capital at their disposal (either cultural or material) on which they can rely. The only capital on which they can depend is the one that they can construct themselves at school, human capital, by obtaining the necessary qualifications that result from higher academic attainment. It could even be argued that the removal of neoliberal strict accountability would diminish the egalitarian potential of schooling. Furthermore, doing away with mechanisms such as national examinations and league tables, in spite of the possible advantages of relieving students from stress, freeing teachers from strict assessment requirements and possibly enabling a more holistic educational experience, may also impact the weakest students negatively because it would eliminate the potential that the neoliberal accountability regime can have in generating the necessary information that enables policymakers to identify weaker students and their needs, and the benefits that such identification can produce, when put to good use, such as when providing additional support to those children who require it through initiatives such as the Pupil Premium (DfE, 2010).

The information generated by neoliberal hyper-accountability practices can be used to legitimise arguments for additional funding to improve the outcomes of those who fare worst. This need would be taken for granted from an egalitarian point of view, but it should also be upheld by neoliberal policy makers, because their promise of providing at least an adequately good education to everyone may require that special provision is offered to the weaker students, even if only to enable an adequate, while unequal, educational experience.

It would be increasingly difficult to deny such necessity when the evidence of the performance gap between advantaged and disadvantaged students is black on white and substantiated by the different sources of evidence generated through accountability mechanisms such as inspection reports, report cards, league tables and examination results. Under such circumstances, even the neoliberal policymaker who believes that an adequacy approach to the provision of compulsory education suffices, would have to find ways to support those who are more in need, when strong evidence points at the possible inadequacy of the supposedly adequate schools catering for disadvantaged students. Considering the potential to bring about a more just educational arrangement, anti-neoliberal movements may be encouraged to think twice before deciding to remove standards-based accountability systems, despite their many drawbacks.

One may find it curious that a political rationality that prioritises efficiency to such an extent, bothers with supporting weaker students since these may not be deemed as a good investment or as productive use of taxpayers' money. Nonetheless, under neoliberalism, such investment still occurs, partly due to the paternalistic duty towards children (Friedman, 1962), through which it is contended that "there can be no doubt that those [children] who are either wholly deprived of this benefit [the family], or grew up in unfavourable conditions, are gravely handicapped; and few will question that it would be desirable that some public institution so far as possible should assist" (Hayek, 1976, p.87). The underpinning value in such cases is not related to a moral concern with redress, or the belief that because "inequalities of birth and natural endowment are undeserved, these inequalities are to be somehow compensated for" (Rawls, 1999, p.86). For neoliberals, there are many assets which individuals hold, but which they do not morally deserve, including all the wealth generated in a free market economic order, where rewards have no relation to individual moral merit (Hayek, 1960). Investing in the education of the weaker students, within neoliberal governance, is not related to some form of compensatory moral duties. Under neoliberalism, contrary to Rawls' view that "whatever other principles [of justice] we hold, the claims of redress are to be taken into account" (Rawls, 1999, p.86), the justification to help the weaker members is legitimised by notions of, equality before the law, political equality, non-discrimination, and a commitment to our equal human dignity. All of which lead to the duty not to abandon the weak. As expected, under neoliberalism, there are also instrumental reasons of enlightened egoism which legitimise support for the weaker students, including the fact that everyone benefits from enabling even the weakest students to develop necessary skills to be able to participate in the democratic process

(Hayek, 1960). Furthermore, there also is the fact that a neoliberalised economic system requires flexible workers to enhance competitiveness, which means that all students need to be taught the necessary skills and attitudes to sustain such flexibility, irrespective of their academic performance.

5.5 Conclusion

On considering the many policies that fall within the category of administrative accountability, one can appreciate the depth of the transformation that such policies generate and how a hyper-accountability approach leads to fostering an auditing culture, which essentially ends up affecting all aspects of school life. The initiatives that sustain neoliberal hyper-accountability are many. They contribute to reducing producer capture and to confirm that teachers are doing their utmost to sustain student academic attainment. Collectively, these measures transfer the source of accountability from the educators' professional judgments, to standards-based measurements that enables the measurability of education progress, through which education provision is reduced to a common measure that enables comparison and evaluation. To this end, regulatory measures, standards-based examinations, inspections, and league tables can be utilised to generate a process that "transforms qualities into quantities, difference into magnitude" (Espeland & Stevens, 1998, p. 316) and thereby infusing transparency into the system. These quantities and magnitudes are then employed to measure school effectiveness, or at least the conception of school effectiveness endorsed by neoliberal governance, that is, an educational experience that is primarily focused on academic progress and specific knowledge, skills and attitudes which prepare students for their future as full members within the enterprise culture. In a neoliberalised education system this is possible because school effectiveness is predominantly conceptualised in terms of improved student academic attainment. More expansive conceptualisations of schooling would not be measurable in this manner because school effectiveness would refer to wholly different aspects. Nevertheless, if one were to hold the view that one of the principal tasks of compulsory education is to prepare students for economic autonomy, which may clearly include preparation for further education, then the neoliberal approach to educational accountability, including all the arguably asphyxiating measures, may be a good way to ascertain that what teachers teach in class is what students actually need to know.

Accountability policies are specifically designed to achieve these objectives. In fact, performance rankings for schools, standards-based school inspections, specific regulations

and school-based mechanisms are policies that are designed to enhance accountability while conforming to the core values of neoliberalism. This makes neoliberal education policies coherent because they are consistent with the underlying principles of neoliberalism, which they aim to promote. Clearly, it makes them inadequate for those who have broader expectations from schooling and who see compulsory education as primarily a social good meant to bring about a more socially just society. In fact, considering the above, Hill's view that: "there is a Capitalist Plan for Education (what it requires education to do – produce labour-power with the skills and ideologically compliant attitudes to develop a workforce from which surplus value can be extracted)" (Hill, 2007, p. 205), may in fact not be a farfetched view. Neoliberals believe that every single student has much to gain from acquiring the 'skills and ideologically compliant attitudes' that will enable them to flourish in a free-market economic order. As long as this primary objective is not allowed to become the be-all and end-all of schooling, each individual student may potentially be better off attending a school that prioritises his or her ability to become economically autonomous.

Chapter Six: Parental Choice Policies

6.1 Introduction

While the previous chapters delved into the identification of the neoliberal aims for education, and the accountability policies enacted to enable the achievement of such aims, this chapter identifies the second category of policies that the neoliberalisation of compulsory education promotes, that is, parental choice policies. By the end of this chapter, it will become increasingly evident why *for neoliberals* (surely not for Peters himself), “there is nothing distinctive or special about education or health; they are services and products like any other, to be traded in the marketplace” (Peters, 1999, p. 2) and used for self-betterment, in the same manner in which citizens are entitled to use other state services for their benefit.

6.2 Parental Choice Policies

For the neoliberal policymaker, there is nothing within educational services that distinguishes it from any other commercialised service in a way that should prohibit its liberalisation. Furthermore, it is argued that there are principled and consequential reasons why a government should liberalise the provision of educational services despite the disadvantages that such liberalisation may create.

Parental choice is a taken for granted feature by neoliberal policymakers. It adheres to the principle of individual negative freedom by enabling parents to choose. This is why it is not unusual to encounter politicians who believe that “the choice of the best education for any child belongs solely with that child’s parents” (Root, 2009, p. 267) and who maintain that “the availability of school choice for all parents is the number one economic fairness issue in this country [the U.S.] today” (Root, 2009, p. 267). School choice is also based on the principle of individualism by prioritising the good of the individual before the good of society at large, and on individual responsibility by granting parents a more central role in matters of compulsory education. There again, one should take into consideration that, for the neoliberal “the choice of options for action is ...the expression of free will on the basis of a self-determined decision” (Lemke, 2001, p. 201). This view results from the conception of individual citizens as autonomous subjects whose moral quality is based on costs-benefit assessments (Lemke, 2001) with the intention of maintaining their economic autonomy so not to become a burden on others. Many interpret this as an act of egoism that side-lines the notion of collective responsibility. Regardless, for the neoliberal, the effort

not to become a burden on others is seen as an act of altruism and respect towards the freedom of others.

For the politician who employs a neoliberal governance approach, parental choice policies are very much a civil rights issue. Very often, this can be seen in discourses that refer to a government's duty to expand opportunity more widely. It is also evident in rationales that uphold that it is unacceptable for parents to be told by a government "this is the education you are going to get, take it or leave it" (Thatcher, 1987d). This occurs when some parents (especially those living in disadvantaged areas) end up having to make considerable sacrifices to provide their children with schooling that is of better quality than the one provided locally by the state. The point that neoliberals make is that such parents "ought not to have to [make such sacrifices]. The amount they pay in rates and taxes [should lead to a situation where] they should be able to have more choice" (Thatcher, 1987a). This view exemplifies why, for neoliberals, choice is not only about market-based accountability, but a right that is owed to parents as taxpayers and as responsible adults. This argument is based on the belief that "technologies of choice can 'empower' parents, who otherwise feel like they have 'no options,' to solve personal problems that result from the lack of response in district schools" (Convertino, 2017, p. 832). Under neoliberal governance, such entrapment is considered to be a morally unacceptable situation. President Trump's views on the matter of parental choice, quoted hereunder, represent the typical neoliberal view on the matter. In one of his pre-electoral speeches, he insisted that:

"I want every single inner-city child in America, who is today trapped in a failing school, to have the freedom, the civil right, to attend the school of their choice. Their parents will choose the finest school. They will attend that school. This includes private schools, traditional public schools, magnet schools and charter schools, which must be included in any definition of school choice" (Trump, 2016)

This statement summarises what neoliberal theory has to say on the matter of parental choice. This view can, in fact, be classified as a hallmark of neoliberal educational governance.

Parental Choice is another hallmark of neoliberal governance even if it is so for other reasons. These policies are considered to be an effective way to support school improvement and, in fact, fit well with the view that it is the duty of the state to finance

compulsory education but not necessarily to provide it (Friedman, 1955; Wiseman, 1959; Hayek, 1960). This comes as no surprise since neoliberal governance is in essence “a political theory of performativity asserting that an effective public sphere will be one that makes public services answerable to the pressure of competition” (Ranson, 2003, p. 470), a pressure from which, neoliberals have very high expectations.

The accountability policies identified in the previous chapter are not the only way to make schools accountable for managing the extensive resources invested in compulsory education, it is also contended that, “schools can also be held accountable from below through well-designed systems of school choice” (Moe, 2003, p. 101) that give parents the right to exit from a school, apart from the right of voice, which is nonetheless strengthened through administrative accountability policies. The right of exit is deemed to be an effective way of increasing accountability (Hirschman, 1970) because schools would keep in mind that inadequate provision can eventually lead to more serious consequences than mere complaints. In an educational context that resembles a free market, where all schools are expected to compete for students, school effectiveness is expected to improve from the ongoing efforts to please one’s clients. Effectiveness is also expected to increase from the fact that providing parents with choice should involve them more actively in their children’s educational progress thereby encouraging them to support their children more actively while simultaneously watching closer their school’s provision. This is meant to help sustain stronger accountability in schools. This view may provide the rationale why some believe that “the key to raising standards is to enlist the support of parents” (Thatcher, 1987c), who can keep the service provider under constant check and thereby helping to ensure good quality provision.

Parental choice policies are seen as an effective way to sustain school effectiveness. To this end, “competition for pupils is assumed to force schools to improve the quality of their education in order to maintain their enrolments” (McArthur et al., 1995). The infusion of competition is meant to provide “continual inducement to maximum performance” (Röpke, 1958, p. 95) to the benefit of students. The alternative option would be to allow schools to function in a non-competitive environment, where some neoliberals argue that it becomes “hardly surprising that too many state schools, not subject to minimal economic discipline, coast along in complacent mediocrity or worse” (O’Hear, 2013). While this is only speculation, the fact remains that market forces can offer a possible remedy against possible

complacency, hence the perceived need for the use of market rationality in the field of education provision.

While one may identify various benefits of parental choice, it must be clarified that the picture provided in the above two paragraphs is an overall simplistic one. Buying educational services is not like buying any other products or services. Reality is more complex than proponents of parental choice policies make it out to be. Many things can go wrong in the process. Existing social inequalities result in a large difference among parents' ability to choose (Henig, 1999), availability of information also makes the process a challenging one. Nonetheless, in spite of the very extensive range of arguments against parental choice, both principled and practical ones, the faith that free-marketeers have in the power of competition leads them to push in favour of establishing such policies. In fact, parental choice policies are present in New Zealand (Jacobs, 2000), Australia (Gobby, 2014), the United States (Van Dunk & Dickman, 2002) and England (Wilkins, 2016), where, for the past decades, the provision of compulsory education has seen, albeit at different levels, increasing influences that result from processes of marketisation.

6.2.1 Open-enrolment and Per-capita funding systems

Parental Choice policies can take different forms. In an ideal neoliberal social arrangement, all primary and secondary schools are privately owned, most parents pay for their children's educational needs from their own pockets and the state limits its actions to providing quality inspections and support for people living in poverty through a means-tested safety-net by providing free schools of adequate quality. Regardless, in the real world, political feasibility often demands that creative alternatives are found.

One way of doing this is by means of an open-enrolment and per-capita funding systems where schools are neither privatised nor even privately run, but where they are forced to adopt the market rationality in order to thrive because the enrolment of students becomes vital for survival. Such systems are favoured by neoliberal governments, and in fact, "open enrolment systems limited to state schools ...have existed in New Zealand (from 1989 to 1998), England (since 1988), and some district schools in the United States, most notably Cambridge, Massachusetts, and East Harlem" (Mahoney, 2004, p. 14). In each case, it has been sustained that efficiency can be achieved by making schools compete for students, just like private companies compete for customers, by giving parents choice so that they become consumers, through open enrolment, and by devising school funding

systems where funds follow students (Leithwood & Earl, 2000). Per-capita funding formulas can also be adjusted in such a way as to make students with additional needs more attractive for schools to compete for, thereby mitigating the disadvantages that some learners may carry. In theory, per-capita funding is deemed to be effective because “parents would vote with their children’s feet and schools actually gained resources when they gained pupils” (Thatcher, 1993, p. 591) encouraging them to strive to provide what it takes to attract more students. While this may be true, there is also the danger that oversubscription of good schools provides such schools with the ability to choose students who are easier to teach, leading to cream-skimming and in practice, resulting in a textbook case of market failure, effectively hindering the positive effects that result from competition.

6.2.2 Specialist State Schools

Another policy that is meant to enhance parental choice, strengthen links between parents and their schools, reduce the effects of producer capture, and boost competitive forces, while also providing wider opportunities to enhance national economic competitiveness is the setting up of thematic schools, known as magnet schools in the U.S., they used to be known as specialist schools in England until 2011. This policy is considered market-based because it exploits the advantages of competition just like a free market, even though there is no privatisation involved in this process since thematic schools may be both state-financed and state-run.

Thematic schools are considered to be an effective way to improve school effectiveness, as well as a reliable method to improve parent satisfaction (Raywid, 1985). Thematic schools are constituted differently depending on local realities, but it can generally be said that “thematic schools emphasise special subjects such as foreign languages, the arts, math, or science” (Godwin & Kemerer, 2002, p. 6). Some thematic schools enrich education provision with science and technology elements such as the ‘City Technology Colleges’ experiment in England launched in 1986 (Walford, 2014), others teach mainstream qualifications through project-based learning, such as Studio Schools that have been established in England since 2010 (Santry, 2016).

What distinguishes such schools is the fact that they are tuition-free state schools where students choose to attend and whose curriculum is distinguished in some manner (Leyden, 2005). Within neoliberal theory, such schools are preferred because they are seen as a

practical way to provide quality education and choice (Fleming et al., 1982). Higher quality arguably originates from competition for students and from the increased commitment from students and parents (Leyden, 2005), as well as teachers' increased dedication to the schools' specific ethos and improved student behaviour that results from increased interest (Raywid, 1985). As Leyden concludes in his evaluation, these kind of schools may be useful, but they are not enough to address the needs of the most disadvantaged students (Leyden, 2005). While this may be true, such schools remain an important instrument in the toolbox of neoliberal governance for improving the effectiveness of compulsory education. This is especially the case since, research indicates that thematic schools have positive effects on their students (Betts et al. 2006; Cobb et al. 2009; Siegel-Hawley & Frankenberg, 2012), while it has also been shown that such schools can also have beneficial effects on their catchment area as a whole, through cross-contamination of ideas (Porter & Simons, 2015).

6.2.3 Independent State Schools

The establishment of independent state schools within an education system is one of the most evident marks of neoliberal education policy in action. Independent state schools are seen as a beneficial way to support the process of parental choice, to increase efficiency, to mitigate the effects of producer capture and to reap the benefits of competitive market forces, even when in practice, there is no actual privatisation. In England, independent state schools, are a preferred method. Such preference is based on the assumption that such schools “increase choice, encourage innovation and promote competition, and thereby raise educational standards” (House of Commons Committee of Public Accounts, 2017, p. 4).

The two defining characteristics of independent state schools are that “the entity operating the school is ordinarily not a government agency, although it may receive most of its operating revenue from the state” (Howell & Peterson, 2002, p. 11). Additionally, such schools “recruit students from a large catchment area” (Howell & Peterson 2002, p. 11). In England, a variety of current school setups can fit into this category including academies, free schools, studio schools, foundation schools, trust schools, university technical colleges, voluntary controlled schools, and voluntary aided schools. In Western Australia and Queensland, such schools are known as Independent Public Schools (Wilkins et al., 2019). In such schools, the governing body engages the staff directly and is responsible for student admissions. The defining element is the fact that these independent state-schools are funded

by the government but not managed by a government entity. Instead, they are managed by trusts formed by charities, universities, religious orders, or parents.

These trusts have extensive managerial leeway including the possibility to determine their own term schedules. Most importantly, independent state schools are free to employ staff “on their own pay rates and conditions of service” (Hill et al., 2013, p. 63). In the United States, independent state-schools are referred to as charter schools, many of which are run by private organisations (Godwin & Kemerer, 2002). The difference between magnet schools and charter schools in the U.S. lies in the extended freedom that charter schools enjoy over magnet schools to the extent that magnet schools limit parents’ choice of schools to those operated by local authority, while charter schools have expanded the options (Howell and Peterson, 2002). Due to their ability to expand parental choice, charter schools are often hailed as “the epitome of neoliberal school reform because they make a market out of the public-school system itself” (Eastman et al., 2017, p. 67) in line with neoliberal principles.

6.2.4 School Vouchers

While the policies referred to above are an expression of neoliberal principles that underpin neoliberal political rationality because they support the effort towards limited government, individual freedom, and private property by sustaining efficiency, none of them embody the aims of neoliberalism for an education system as much as a school voucher system.

School vouchers are considered to be the best way to establish a system that reaps the full benefits of competitive forces because schools under such a system are privately owned. Furthermore, school vouchers fulfil the duty of assistance towards those in need, since vouchers guarantee everyone the right to an adequately good education. The school voucher policy best conforms with the principle of individual responsibility since parents get to choose themselves what they deem to be best for their children. Consequently, “voucher schemes are a natural partner to neoliberal state systems, as they meet a variety of political objectives in one move: promoting ‘choice’, removing state responsibility for the provision of schooling and reducing the power of providers in favour of consumers” (Gordon & Whitty, 1997, p. 462). Consequently, neoliberals regard school vouchers as an opportunity to reduce direct government activities while increasing educational opportunities (Friedman, 1955). In such a system governments finance education “by giving parents vouchers redeemable for a specified maximum sum per child per year if

spent on ‘approved’ educational services,” (Friedman, 1955, p. 127) thereby enabling parents to choose their preferred school (at least for those who have such preference) and also to choose to top up school vouchers (at least for those who have the means), further enabling their freedom in matters of education.

As O’Hear points out, the moral argument in favour of vouchers from a neoliberal perspective is that they “put control of children’s education where it should belong, in the hands of their parents. They would then be able to fulfil their proper role in relation to the upbringing of their children, a source of both duty and happiness” (O’Hear, 2013, p.17) while keeping state bureaucrats out of areas that should not concern them. Most importantly for the neoliberal policy maker, in this manner, “government would serve its proper function of improving the operation of the invisible hand without substituting the dead hand of bureaucracy” (Friedman, 1955, p. 127), which is a permanent concern for neoliberals. This element renders school vouchers a quintessential neoliberal policy, with its characteristic balance between the need to restrict government action and the concomitant necessity to sustain economic growth. On the contrary, from an egalitarian perspective, a voucher system is considered to be particularly immoral because it not only reflects a general indifference towards matters of structural disadvantages, but it even fosters inequality by establishing a system specifically designed to replicate parental material wealth when allowing, and even encouraging, voucher top-ups.

Nevertheless, neoliberals favour voucher systems because these in theory are meant to shift control over education provision from the providers to the consumers (Gordon & Whitty, 1997) while in turn, parental choice increases parents’ voice over that of service providers through their efforts not to lose clientele. Additionally, “in theory, a voucher system would allow students to enrol in schools outside their home school district and thereby potentially help address the problem of educational inadequacies across different local school districts due to differences in available resources” (Leyden, 2005, p. 190), thus addressing the “take it or leave it” (Thatcher, 1987d, p.1) situation that some parents face. While voucher systems are in line with the neoliberal aim of expanding opportunity more widely, they are naturally far from being able to meet any criteria of social justice. Choice would still be constrained by the parents’ ability to choose, and in cases where parents are in fact able to make such choices, they might not be able to follow up on such decisions, possibly as a result of material disadvantages. This would be judged to be unjust by egalitarians, which is possibly one of the reasons why they would rule out school voucher

systems, but for neoliberals who accept the fact of social inequality, voucher systems are deemed to lead to an overall improvement by expanding opportunity more widely, despite their many limitations.

Considering the many changes brought about by parental choice policies, it is not surprising that some believe that “the single largest change in schooling under the neoliberal project has been the push ... towards the atomisation of the control of schools” (Gordon & Whitty, 1997, p. 457) that results from the diversity of provision referred to above. As I will argue in Chapters Eight and Nine of this thesis, not everyone is convinced that such fragmentation does in fact lead to an overall improvement in compulsory education. The concerns are many and some of them are sustained by evidence of the disadvantages that this plurality of provision generates.

6.3 Concerns with Parental Choice Policies

Criticism against the introduction of market forces in compulsory education is extensive. It includes views which contend that forcing schooling relationships into a market model “degrades the institutions that embody it” (Marquand, 1999, p. 213), a degradation that supposedly occurs when state institutions such as schools are transformed into mere commercial enterprises to compete against others. In relation to this argument, it is also contended that market relationships undermine the public service ethic (Marquand, 1999), which is replaced by the market ethic that many consider inferior.

Additionally, others argue that the very liberalisation of compulsory education itself, which allows diversity of provision, is itself wrong in principle because it allows some to receive an education of inferior quality than others, which should not be allowed to happen, even if a minimum of good quality education could be assured to everyone. Such situations, it is maintained, would essentially be “an offence against fairness if they [the rich] have enjoyed better educational opportunities” (Brighouse & Swift, 2014, p. 36) than people living in poverty, because this would be putting them at an unfair advantage. To a large extent, egalitarians are correct in pointing out about the unfairness of such a situation. Nevertheless, from a neoliberal perspective, impeding wealthy parents from supporting their children in any way they wish would not lead to a morally improved situation even if it would be a less unequal one. This unfairness lead many to judge the neoliberalisation process as unjust, for example, in his book *School Choice and Social Justice* (2000), Brighouse concludes that education policy should aim at “rough equality of educational

opportunity” (Brighouse, 2000, p.163) and argues that this necessitates schools that neither “reflect the level of wealth of the parents” (Brighouse, 2000, p.163) nor “the decision-making ability of the parents” (Brighouse, 2000, p.163). As can be concluded from the policies identified in this chapter, parental choice policies satisfy neither of the two provisions. The granted freedom allows parents to translate their wealth into the schools they like and will even encourage parents to employ their decision-making skills for the benefit of their children. Clearly, from an egalitarian perspective, parental choice policies cannot be considered as a viable way towards what they consider to be a just society.

Some even doubt the central role that school choice policies give to parents. Walzer, for example, argues that “the community has an interest in the education of children, and so do the children, which neither parents nor entrepreneurs adequately represent” (Walzer, 1983, p.217). Due to such concerns, he concludes that children’s “interest must be publicly debated and given specific form. That is the work of democratic assemblies, parties, movements, clubs, and so on” (Walzer, 1983, p.217). Such argumentation considers the fact that even good parents are busy, and that children’s interest are better defended by state bureaucrats. Clearly, such views do not stand a chance under neoliberal governance where individuals are held fully responsible for themselves and their dependents and where bureaucrats are deeply distrusted.

Many sustain that compulsory education cannot be bought or sold because one cannot trade in the business of preparing for adulthood. I do not share this view because buying a place in a good private school can do much to contribute to a child’s holistic preparation for adulthood. In fact, those parents who can afford to do so, are usually more than ready to buy a place in a good private school for their children, essentially buying the means that enable the development of their children’s knowledge, skills, and values. The same goes with private tuition for children. Parents can essentially buy educational services from educators who offer the most varied of provision. It may be true that one’s education cannot be sold in the same way in which a person might decide to sell his/her car. It is true that education cannot be literally given away, but this does not mean that education services cannot be bought to support individuals in developing their own education. The issue of fairness in such transactions is a separate matter, yet, the point remains that educational services, like most other services, can be bought and sold and that, as Tooley contends, “there is not anything in the nature of education and of business which means that markets are suitable mechanisms for the latter but not for the former” (Tooley, 1998, p. 276). It is

not inconceivable that there can be a situation where education service providers can compete in providing a better service, aimed at satisfying individuals with may hold different educational priorities.

Others point out that customers buying education for their children may not be able to assess the quality of the services provided, thereby making school choice policies pointless. This idea would be valid in a libertarian social arrangement that would have all schools privatised and parental choice the sole means of accountability for education provision, yet neoliberal governance employs parental choice policies along another major category of policies, hyper-accountability policies. This should allay claims that parental choice policies function in total blindness of important factors that enable the choice in the first place. In fact, it could be argued that no parents have as much black on white information about their children's schooling than parents within neoliberalised education systems. To this end, neoliberals point out that parents necessarily have more information about their children than the state ever could acquire, which is another reason why it should be they who make important decisions, rather than state bureaucrats. This would lead to greater effectiveness, especially when one considers that an education market can operate well, even where only some parents hold accurate information (Schneider et al. 1998; Schneider et al., 2000).

From an instrumental purpose, many are concerned that while parental choice policies allow schools to become more similar to students homes' and background, they simultaneously offer less opportunities to students to be prepared for "the full range of their contacts, working relationships, and political alliances in a democratic society" (Walzer, 1983, p.217). Considering this, it has to be admitted that parental choice policies lead to schools that are less able to expose children to the full range of diversity which they shall most likely face as grownups. This may have a negative impact on themselves, and by hindering their ability to understand others because of an educational experience characterised by "less diversity, less tension, [and] less opportunity for personal change" (Walzer, 1983, p.217), it may be detrimental to the democratic process and to society at large.

Finally, the central concern with the marketisation of compulsory education is that it can become a ploy to deceive people into thinking that the system offers them an equal choice, while in fact, parental choice policies are a clever way of ensuring social

reproduction for the sake of maintaining class power, since such policies only expand “the rights of choice of the parents who do manage to get access to them” (Darmanin, 1995, p.116), that is, those who hold the cultural and material capital that enable them to do so. Many emphasise that choice exposes “children to a combination of entrepreneurial ruthlessness and parental indifference” (Walzer, 1983, p.217) and thereby leading to social reproduction, which is particularly unjust towards those children who may have been able to do better, had they been provided with adequate parental support. To this end, it is argued that in doing so, such policies “foster social division rather than social solidarity, fragmentation rather than cohesion” (Swift, 2003, p. 44), to the overall detriment of disadvantaged children. This line of criticism is of the utmost importance and is discussed in detail in Chapter Nine.

6.4 Conclusion

The second category of policies that constitutes the neoliberalisation of compulsory education comprises policies that altogether marketise the provision of compulsory education with the aim of enhancing parental choice. This is done through the setting up of open-enrolment and per-capita funding systems, specialist state schools, independent state schools, and the setting up of school voucher systems (where politically feasible). The links between parental choice policies and neoliberal political theory are evident, particularly through the prioritisation of neoliberal core principles, such as, individualism, individual responsibility and negative freedom, as well as the side-lining of other concerns, such as, equality, collective responsibility, and social justice. Parental choice policies contribute a great deal to transform an education system into one that is in line with the neoliberal conception of the ideal social arrangements. As shall be discussed in Chapters Eight and Nine, the moral concerns with such policies are many, because the impact that such policies have on teachers, students and society at large is extensive.

The next chapter deals with the third and final category of education policies, namely those that address human capital development and the preparation of students for the enterprise culture. This will complete the picture of what is meant when referring to the neoliberalisation of compulsory education. The subsequent chapters of this thesis deal with moral issues generated by such policies, many of which deal with the specific effects of the policies identified in this chapter.

Chapter Seven: Education Policies for Employability

7.1 Introduction

In one sentence, Vassallo encapsulates succinctly the relationship between neoliberalism and education when he remarks that neoliberalism instils the “ethic of efficiency and productivity ... [through which] ... schools seek to optimise choice, support competition, and cultivate the necessary competencies to function within neoliberal environments, which include adaptability, flexibility, initiative, and creativity” (Vassallo, 2013, p. 570). This statement embodies the relationship between neoliberalism and education by representing the three major categories of policies that characterise the neoliberalisation of compulsory education. The first category of policies comprises policies designed to boost efficiency and effectiveness, and deals with hyper-accountability. The second category of policies is designed to optimise parental choice, while enabling competition. This chapter focuses on the third category of neoliberal education policies, whose objective is to cultivate in students the necessary knowledge, skills and values to thrive in the enterprise culture. As such, this category pertains to the process through which “the rights and responsibilities of the individual ... [are] thoroughly revised as part of a re-constitution of the social order” (Jonathan, 1997b, p. 18), where an order based on individual responsibility replaces an order that strives for social justice. Historically, within English-speaking countries, this change has entailed the replacement of the welfare culture of Keynesian economics by the enterprise culture of neoliberal supply-side economics. In the context of this social reconstitution, education is re-conceptualised so that “producing individuals who are economically productive” (Hursh, 2001, p. 34) becomes the main purpose of schooling, to the point of eclipsing other priorities, such as, citizenship education and social inclusion.

7.2 The Neoliberal Vision: Achieving Economic Growth through Competitiveness sustained by an Enterprise Culture

Neoliberalism upholds that the most effective way to safeguard individual freedom is by supporting the generation of more wealth, rather than focusing on its redistribution by enacting policies to advance social justice. It is claimed that, in this way, more resources are available to support those who may be in need, specifically affirming that “the more successful economic policy can be made, the fewer measures of social policy will be necessary” (Erhard, 1958, p. 186), thereby keeping state expenditure down while securing individual freedom. This belief leads many to conclude that, under a neoliberal order, “there

is only one true and fundamental social policy: economic growth” (Foucault, 2008, p. 144), which is regarded as a better way to finance support for those in need than by solely focusing on wealth redistribution.

A neoliberal policymaker would be aware that such an economic approach would jeopardise equality, nonetheless, this inequality vs economic growth trade-off is deemed to be morally acceptable because individual negative freedom is better secured under such circumstances, especially when one considers that no “distributional patterned principle of justice can be continuously realized without continuous interference with people’s lives” (Nozick, 1974, p.163) and that the entire neoliberal project is precisely designed to interfere with peoples’ lives the least possible, to the extent of accepting the resulting increasing material inequality and its many undesirable social consequences.

Additionally, even if extra resources became available to ensure that everyone has fair access to substantive equality of opportunity, neoliberals would not favour the implementation of such egalitarian policies. This would be the case because for neoliberals, social services are only to be provided on proof of need and only to a level of proportional minimal adequacy (Hayek, 1960). Such level of adequacy, that level beneath which no one can be allowed to fall (Hayek, 1979), would need to be agreed upon democratically through collective deliberation, following the principle that markets and economic arrangements are merely means to ends which exist apart (Hayek, 1962) and which can be agreed upon democratically. Indeed, it is not entirely true that neoliberalism results in the “absolute identification of politics with the management of capital” (Rancière, 1999, p. 113), that “decisions make themselves” (Rancière, 1999, p. 113) and that neoliberalism entails “a sort of complete superimposition of market mechanisms, indexed to competition, and governmental policy” (Foucault, 1979/2008, p.121). The agreement on where to set the level to which a community agrees that poverty becomes unacceptable can only result from democratic deliberation. Then, once an arrangement is agreed upon, it sets the limits of redistribution, so that, more extensive measures become an immoral act of redistribution that goes against the principles of private property and individual freedom of those who ultimately have to foot the bill. Neoliberals believe that it is wrong to redistribute from the richer to those who have enough to live a dignifying existence in the name of equality. Therefore, neoliberals focus on economic growth to create wealth so that a lower percentage of taxation needs be taken from citizens thereby impacting on negative freedom to a lesser extent.

One may think that since neoliberals are in favour of tax cuts for the rich, they support trickle-down economics, where wealth is supposed to simply overflow from the rich to the poor; however, this is not the case. What is sustained in neoliberal scholarship is the view that wealth creation is not a zero-sum game, so that everyone's material conditions improve, albeit to different degrees, in an economic system that incentivises initiative and stimulates innovation, rather than they would in an economic system that disincentivises initiative through the high levels of taxation that become inevitably necessary to move towards the direction of social justice. To this end, it is clarified that economic growth does not affect people living in poverty through,

“a ‘trickle-down’ process or sequencing in which the rich get richer first, and eventually benefits trickle-down to the poor. The evidence, to the contrary, is that private property rights, stability [low inflation], and openness [competition] contemporaneously create a good environment for poor households—and everyone else—to increase their production and income” (Dollar & Kraay, 2002, p. 219).

Consequently, it can be concluded that “growth-enhancing policies and institutions tend to benefit the poor—and everyone else in society— equiproportionately” (Dollar & Kraay, 2002, p. 196). This finding was eventually reconfirmed in a World Bank study that employed datasets from 118 different countries, where it was again concluded that there is “a very strong equiproportionate relationship between average incomes in the poorest quintiles, and overall average incomes” (Dollar et al., 2013, p. 2).

Such an approach to economics is the basis of the neoliberal approach to education provision, where it is advocated that, “in the market model all that is guaranteed is that everyone has an adequate education; over and above this there is likely to be inequalities of provision” (Tooley, 1994, p. 144). In the context of both economics and education, neoliberals accept the ensuing inequality, and aim to ensure that everyone has at least an adequate provision. To understand such a stance, one needs to understand that the term ‘equiproportionately’ is used as a kind of ‘politically correct’ term that means ‘in ways that exacerbate inequality’ because, in practice, the rich are much better off, while the situation of the poor is only improved to a smaller extent. In relative terms, the gap between the rich and the poor would be widening. Such outcomes are unacceptable for egalitarians, but acceptable for those who prioritise safeguarding individual negative freedom over equality. The widening gap is essentially the price which neoliberals are ready to pay for negative

freedom, even if, in practice, it concomitantly makes social problems more widespread, as shown by the research conducted by Wilkinson and Pickett (2009).

Neoliberal economists uphold that a policy approach that employs “private property rights, fiscal discipline, macroeconomic stability, and openness to trade [i.e. neoliberal governance] on average increases the income of the poor to the same extent that it increases the income of the other households in society” (Dollar & Kraay, 2002b, p. 219). This argument suggests that everyone is materially better off than they would otherwise be under economic systems that emphasise the welfare state and the high taxation systems required to sustain it, because those high levels of taxation risk economic stagnation. Consequently, under a neoliberal economic system, people living in poverty would be better off in *absolute* terms, while in *relative* terms when compared to more affluent strata of the population, the poor would eventually be relatively worse off than they would be under a system that allows higher levels of redistribution. As I argue in detail in Chapter Nine, this fact is morally significant in different ways. Firstly, decision-makers adhering to neoliberal political rationality, even more than other policy makers, need to make a stronger effort to minimise opportunities where material inequality can enable the rich to unduly influence the democratic process, although this is admittedly a very difficult target to achieve, under any democratic arrangement. Secondly, corrective actions would need to be taken so that the negative effects that inequality of educational provision can have on social fragmentation are minimised, so not to hinder economic growth and make neoliberal policies counterproductive.

Neoliberalism stands for economic growth that is achieved, neither by the system of socialist central planning, nor through modern-liberal/social-democratic/Keynesian/left-wing populist interventionist policies, like those governments which plan to spend their way out of recessions by intentionally going into deficit. Neoliberalism maintains that, sustaining economic growth impinges the least on individual freedom because an economy based on free markets and minimal social security systems enables lower levels of taxation, thus resulting in less coercion on individuals. Neoliberalism also contends that “private enterprise, by reason of its variety and flexibility, has an infinitely better prospect of discovering and developing new means of creating wealth” (Thatcher, 1974, p.1), and is therefore a more effective way to create prosperity than through direct state intervention in the economy. Neoliberalism suggests that governments should “get away from the sterile doctrine that the redistribution of wealth is more urgent than its creation” (Thatcher, 1974,

p.1). They should rather focus on wealth creation, and “place the emphasis on the encouragement of those who can create wealth” (Thatcher, 1974, p.1), in spite of the concomitant higher levels of material inequality that result from this approach. The assumption here is that, since everyone would be materially better off in absolute terms, than they would under a system that demands extensive state interference, then the ensuing material inequality would be a worthwhile trade-off.

Adherence to the idea that economic growth is best achieved through economic competitiveness is characteristic of neoliberal governance. These policies are justified by market rationality, and use such notions as economic growth, national competitiveness, innovation, a strong economy, competition, and low taxation as a source of legitimacy for all education policies. The current *Four-Year Plan 2016-2020* (New Zealand Ministry of Education, 2016), for example, states that, “education is critical to building a strong and successful New Zealand. It underpins our economy and how well we compete in the global market for jobs and innovation” (Parata, 2016, p. iv). In the same document, it is also pointed out that “a great education is one of the strongest foundations for a prosperous life, a flourishing society and a strong economy” (Hughes, 2016, p. vi). These same reasons are used as a justification underpinning many education policies in England, the U.S., Australia, New Zealand, and Canada.

The same assumptions are expressed in education policy discourse in Australia. The *Melbourne Declaration on Educational Goals for Young Australians*, for example, states that, “in the 21st century Australia’s capacity to provide a high quality of life for all will depend on the ability to compete in the global economy on knowledge and innovation” (MCEETYA, 2008, p. 4). Similar views are also found in education policy discourse throughout the Anglophone world, where the link between education and national competitiveness is emphasised. Such arguments in respect of competitiveness, opportunities, and innovation pertain to the idea of the ‘enterprise culture’, that has a fundamental function within a neoliberal order and important repercussions for the role of education. Within neoliberalism, the idea of an enterprise culture functions as a “metanarrative, a totalising and unifying story about the prospect of economic growth” (Peters, 2001a, p. 66) as the basis of innovation and competitive advantage. In the neoliberal metanarrative, each responsible individual is a hero, while unlimited governments are perceived as an illegitimate opportunity for some citizens to do well at the expense of others. Characteristic of this neoliberal metanarrative is the notion that, contrary

to the “social democratic narrative: It does not adopt the language of equality of opportunity and it does not attempt to redress power imbalances or socio-economic inequalities” (Peters, 2001a, p. 66), because it is maintained that an attempt to redress such inequalities breaches the principle of equality before the law (Hayek, 1960).

The enterprise culture is the embodiment of the principles that underpin neoliberal political rationality, where individual initiative spurred by “the greatest freedom of competition” (Hayek, 1978b, p. 189) is considered the most reliable source of wealth. This occurs because, according to neoliberal assumptions, “competition represents a kind of impersonal coercion that will cause many individuals to change their behaviour in a way that could not be brought about by any kind of instructions or commands” (Hayek, 2002, p. 19). It is believed that the positive effects of competition within a neoliberal economic system occur because “competition not only shows how things can be improved, but also forces all those whose income depends on the market to imitate the improvements” (Hayek, 1968/2002, p. 19), or risk “losing some or all of their income” (Hayek, 1978b, p. 189). This is what happens, for example, when one particular service provider starts to sell products online or open on Sundays. If other service providers wish to compete, they would not have much choice, but to follow suit, hence the “impersonal compulsion” (Hayek, 1979b, p. 189) produced by competition.

The neoliberal aim of reaching economic growth through competitiveness creates the need to establish an enterprise culture that requires an education system that furnishes citizens with the necessary proactive attitudes to engage in such a culture. This is why education acquires such a central role for neoliberal political rationality, and why, under neoliberalism, “national economic survival and competition in the world economy ... [become] questions of cultural reconstruction” (Peters, 2001a, p. 61) that involves the eradication of the dependency culture, and an effort to move away from the attitude of collective-responsibility, or a “dependent...give-it-to-me...sit-back-and-wait-for-it attitude” (Thatcher, 1984a) in order to be able to move in the direction of an enterprise culture characterised by a “self-reliant ...do-it-yourself ... get-up-and-go” attitude (Thatcher, 1984a, p. 1). Neoliberal rhetoric problematises the dependency culture by portraying the image that “mass welfare dependency is a waste of the country’s human resources and a huge drain on the taxpayer” (Cameron, 2008a, p. 1), and by pointing out that “governments do not create the wealth. They consume it. It is the people who create the wealth and they need the incentive of tax cuts to do it” (Thatcher, 1988a, p.1), hence the need to create an

enterprise culture that sustains personal initiative. Therefore, neoliberals caution that, “intervention by the state must never become so great that it effectively removes personal responsibility” (Thatcher, 1988b), thus explaining why the motto “no rights without responsibilities” (Fiske & Briskman, 2007, p. 50) plays such a central role in neoliberal rhetoric.

The three categories of neoliberal education policies contribute to the formation of an enterprise culture. Accountability policies mentioned in Chapter Five do this by reforming public institutions along commercial lines (Peters, 2001a). Market-based accountability policies discussed in Chapter Six marketise the provision of compulsory education, thus making it fertile ground for choice and competition. Furthermore, the policies identified in this chapter encourage the acquisition of entrepreneurial skills. All three processes are necessary to bring about the required cultural transformation, which leads to “a wider and deeper enterprise culture that promotes investment and entrepreneurship” (Brown, 2001a, p. 3), thus improving competitiveness, and securing economic growth. Consequently, the need for the enterprise culture, where market rationality reigns supreme, justifies the extensive reforms discussed in the previous chapters, and is also used by its proponents to justify the extensive set of education policies that are identified in the current chapter.

7.3 Education Conceptualised as Investment in Human Capital

Within a neoliberalised political context where, achieving economic competitiveness becomes the priority for the government, the education system becomes part of the economic policy, and is defined both as the problem in failing to provide flexible labour, and the solution by upgrading skills according to market needs (Blackmore, 2000). The central role played by education within neoliberal governance is reflected in education policy discourse that conceptualises “education ... [as] an investment, and an investment with a big return” (Parata, 2016, p. iv). It is envisaged that investing in education is a worthwhile activity due to the belief that “investment in human capital will be the foundation of success in the knowledge-based global economy” (DfEE, 1998b, p. 7), which is highly competitive and fast-changing, thus necessitating the enterprising spirit of citizens.

Many politicians support the idea of education as a preparation for employment. Tony Blair (UK Prime Minister 1997-2007) used to claim that “education is the best economic policy we have” (DfEE, 1998a, p. 1). Additionally, James Callaghan, (UK Prime Minister 1976-1979) claimed to be a “convinced believer in the importance of education ... [because

of the] many doors it could unlock for working-class children who had begun with few other advantages” (Callaghan, 1987, p. 409). For his part, Gordon Brown (UK Prime Minister 2007-2010) also shared the same view that “education is the best anti-poverty and social and economic development strategy ...[because] it provides ...the skills to transform lives and lift their nations” (Brown & George, 2002, p.17). Interestingly, the need for higher standards in education is also not a bone of contention among most political views since most agree with the statement that “in today’s world, higher standards are demanded than were required yesterday and there are simply fewer jobs for those without skill. Therefore, we demand more from our schools than did our grandparents” (Callaghan, 1976, p.1). This statement was uncontroversial in 1976 and is equally uncontroversial today.

While the notion of Human Capital was developed at the University of Chicago by Becker (1964) and Shultz (1960), the concept was not exactly a novel idea. Adam Smith made specific reference to education as an investment back in 1776, when he wrote that:

“When any expensive machine is erected, the extraordinary work to be performed by it before it is worn out, it must be expected, will replace the capital laid out upon it, with at least the ordinary profits. A man [sic] educated at the expense of much labour and time to any of those employments which require extraordinary dexterity and skill, may be compared to one of those expensive machines. The work which he learns to perform, it must be expected, over and above the usual wages of common labour, will replace to him the whole expense of his [sic] education, with at least the ordinary profit of an equally valuable capital” (Smith, 1776/1979, p. 93).

Neoliberal education policies revolve around a concept of human capital that is identical to that found in Adam Smith’s seminal *Inquiry into the Nature and Causes of the Wealth of Nations* (1776), which argues that educational investment makes each individual an ‘expensive machine’ to be employed at an extra charge. The effort spent in educating oneself with knowledge, skills, and attitudes that the market needs (human capital) would in turn bear its fruit in the form of monetary returns, just like investing in an expensive machine. The difference, on this view, lies in the fact that individuals are their own ‘expensive machine’, and it is up to them to try to make the necessary effort to make the required investments, which would be worth the while, not only because new knowledge, skills and attitudes may be inherently valuable, but also because, high levels of human capital tend to lead to better paid jobs (Folbre, 2012; Grossman, 2006; Harmon et al., 2003; Lochner & Moretti, 2004; Palma, 2003). While it is evident that human beings are neither

machines nor capital ready for investment, and that they have an inherent value in themselves as individual human beings, on the other hand, as employees or as entrepreneurs, it is in their own interest that they enhance their value.

Rather than interpreting enhancing human capital as morally degrading because human beings become essentially reduced to machines ready for efficient exploitation and improved input/output ratio, under neoliberal governance, human capital development, is perceived as a moral duty because it benefits oneself, one's dependents, one's employer and society at large. Most importantly, the extent to which one wishes to invest in such a duty is up to the individual. Those adults who wish to spend as little time as possible in developing their own human capital may wish to choose jobs and activities that require minimal development. While some might think that such an approach is wasteful of talent, a pity and possibly even a form of dereliction of duty, this should not degrade society's views of such individuals, the whole point of freedom is that of being able to follow one's plans without interference.

The distinguishing feature in the neoliberal concept of education as a process to generate human capital lies in the fact that it prepares citizens for a more volatile competitive economy, hence the replacement of the term employment with employability. The change in focus is a result of the neoliberal adherence to the principles of individual responsibility, the notion of the limited state, and the belief in the benefits of high levels of competition, despite their negative consequences, such as, more precarious employment. Additionally, in view of the fact that, in a neoliberal system, it is not considered the government's duty to create employment, but the duty of private enterprise by being successful in competing for clients, the duty of compulsory education is to produce citizens who, are in a way, not merely ready to be employed, but equally ready (with know-how and positive attitudes) to face unemployment. Characteristics that are specific to a neoliberalised economy, such as, the avoidance of monopolies, high levels of competition, flexible labour markets, and higher levels of innovation that stem from rapidly changing technologies, mean that schools must equip students with the skill to become flexible employees. Therefore, the better prepared they are, the more they would be able to adapt to changing economic circumstances.

Within contemporary neoliberalised societies, it is acknowledged that an employee "would be wise to think of himself or herself as competing against every young Chinese,

Indian, and Brazilian” (Friedman T., 2006, p. 278), as citizens of fast-growing economies, and to obtain or create employment that “cannot be outsourced, digitised or automated” (Friedman T., 2006, p. 278). In such a context, education has a different task to perform. Apart from preparing students for employment, it needs to focus on preparing students for ongoing retraining (Taubman, 2009). This is especially important since individuals continually face deskilling and reskilling due to technological developments (Harvey, 2000), thus augmenting the need to equip citizens with entrepreneurial and lifelong learning skills that would allow them to survive a scenario that is marked by increasing competition.

The increased job volatility within neoliberal economies makes it even more important that schools focus much of their energies on creating appropriately skilled entrepreneurial workers who would ensure that society remains competitive (Robertson, 2000). Accordingly, education policies are designed specifically to ensure that students are given the skills and attitudes needed to maintain different forms of employment (McCowan, 2015). This is important because citizens within a free competitive market order require an education that enables them to thrive in a fast-changing economic environment, where innovation becomes crucial for economic survival.

In such a context, education acquires central importance because it is understood that “increases in national income are a consequence of additions to the stock of this form of capital [human capital]” (Shultz, 1960, p. 571), which is deemed to be essential for national competitiveness. This view has been substantiated by empirical research, which has repeatedly confirmed the important role that education plays in sustaining economic competitiveness (Bils & Klenow, 2000; Cohen & Soto, 2007; Coulombe & Tremblay, 2005; Crafts, 1996; Hanushek & Kimko, 2000; Hanushek & Woessmann, 2011, 2012, 2015; Hargreaves, 2003; Keeley, 2007; Krueger & Lindahl, 2001; Pissarides, 2000; OECD, 2010, 2011; Sahlberg, 2006; Schweke, 2004; World Bank, 2005; Woessmann, 2016). This research indicates “that the quality of a nation’s education system is a key determinant of the future growth of its economy” (Hanushek & Woessmann, 2011, p.4) because investing in human capital leads to increased labour productivity, thereby sustaining competitiveness which leads to economic growth.

The significance of education as human capital aimed to support economic prosperity has led to a situation where, in those nation-states governed through a neoliberal political rationality, “rarely does a statement come out about teaching or education or schooling that

does not mention global competition” (Green, 2011, p. 56). Indeed, Bailey’s conclusion that “there is an articulation in government statements of a specifically instrumental view of education, revealed as much by the assumptions, implications and omissions as by the more explicit utterances” (Bailey, 1984, p. 129) was valid in 1980s Britain, and is an equally valid view to describe contemporary education policy discourse in the U.S., the UK, Australia, and New Zealand, amongst other countries which, very often, justify decisions taken in the field of education in the light of the positive effects that these are supposed to have on the economy. In fact, this may have been taken to such an extreme that it is currently arguably the case that “any idea of education as a public responsibility and site of democratic and ethical practice is replaced by education as a production process, a site of technical practice and a private commodity governed by a means/end logic” (Fielding & Moss, 2011, p. 24). This is precisely the source of much criticism which is levelled against the neoliberalisation of compulsory education since many are of the view that compulsory education should be considered as primarily a public good, a collective responsibility, and a precious site to cultivate democracy, and that a truly democratic society should not allow the market to take it over and reform it in its image.

In their counterargument, neoliberals claim that “it would be irresponsible to think of education without its economic dimension” (Woessmann, 2016, p. 23), even at the risk of this aspect taking over most of the students’ learning time. In fact, the US optional national curriculum, known as the Common Core (2009), includes typical neoliberal policy discourse in its mission statement, which declares that the standards reflect “knowledge and skills that our young people need for success in college and careers” (Coupland, 2013, p. 9) so that “our communities will be best positioned to compete successfully in the global economy” (Coupland, 2013, p. 9). Additionally, U.S. President George W. Bush specifically referred to the need for economic competitiveness when justifying the extensive measures implemented by the *No Child Left Behind Act* (U.S. Congress, 2002). To this end, he stated that “NCLB is an important way to make sure America remains competitive in the 21st century” (U.S. Department of Education, 2006, p. 2) and of making sure that jobs will go elsewhere. Furthermore, throughout most US education policy discourse, one often finds reference to the view that “quality education is critical to prepare students to be ...competitive workers in a global economy” (Commission on Civil Rights, 2018, p. 105), once again reflecting typical neoliberal assumptions for education.

The same rhetoric can be found in policy documentation in England, where it has long been claimed that the country needs to keep “investing in human capital ...to compete in the global economy, to live in a civilised society and to develop the talents of each and every one of us” (DfEE, 1997, p. 3). The neoliberal rhetoric of economic growth is especially evident in speeches delivered by politicians, who often advocate that “...it is only by radically and fundamentally reforming our education system and learning the lessons of the highest performing nations that we can generate the long-term economic growth on which prosperity depends...” (Gove, 2011, p. 1). Similarly, New Zealand’s education policy documents, particularly the current *Ministry of Education Four Year Plan 2016-2020*, include various neoliberal catchphrases that “education makes a huge difference to the economy by developing tomorrow’s entrepreneurs and employees and by building the capability of our existing workforce – we help ensure New Zealanders have skills and knowledge for work and life” (New Zealand Ministry of Education, 2016, p. 4).

This rhetoric represents the change from the Keynesian welfare state to the neoliberal model of the entrepreneurial self and self-reliance (Peters, 2001a), where competition underpins the relationships of an individual with other individuals, as well as of a nation with other nations, and where the education system assumes a role of increasing importance both for the citizen and the state. Within such social arrangements, the urgency of the view that “the countries that out-teach us today will out-compete us tomorrow” (Obama, 2009, p.1) comes to the fore, thus transforming education by prioritising the preparedness of citizens for the enterprise culture, even by changing individuals’ mind-sets, attitudes, and characters into ones that are compatible with ideas of economic autonomy, at the risk of side-lining other ideas, such as, social justice and collective responsibility.

7.4 Education Policies aimed to Enhance Employability

As an education system that is principally justified through its contribution to a deregulated, highly competitive economy and national competitiveness, a neoliberalised education system is expected to prioritise economically useful knowledge and the need to prepare students “for a future we cannot fully see and for jobs that don’t yet exist” (Parata, 2016, p. iv). Furthermore, considering that precariousness is often an unfortunate corollary of neoliberal economic policies, due to which we live “in the age of insecurity” (Hargreaves, 2003, p. 10), an education system needs to be as fast-changing as the economy, by being able to address its quickly changing needs. Additionally, keeping in mind that education is useful as human capital only “if it renders a productive service of value to the economy”

(Shultz, 1960, p. 571), a neoliberalised education system needs to pay particular attention to make sure to prepare students with precisely what the economy requires so that learners can really benefit from their years at school.

Neoliberal governance prioritises the need to maintain a high-quality education system, whose objective is to transform citizens into a source of competitive advantage by developing a highly skilled labour force. The need for a cutting-edge education system is partly the reason why so much effort is put into accountability policies at all levels of education. In fact, it can be argued that the ongoing effort to improve “quality through enhancing accountability in order to stay ahead of competition” (Wai Ki Lo, 2010, p. 107) is a distinguishing feature of the neoliberalisation of an education system. Along with the prioritisation of accountability, the neoliberalisation of education also gives rise to the prioritisation of standards. Indeed, it is generally acknowledged that the drive for competitiveness has led to standards-based reforms (Zajda, 2015). Unsurprisingly, upon reviewing current education policies within the countries under study in this research, one quickly realises that the same conclusion is valid for all other levels of educational provision. In most cases, it is evident that policymakers believe that the “government must take the primary responsibility for setting standards for the education” (Thatcher, 1987c, p. 1). This effort towards achieving a high-quality education system through the maintenance of high standards and outcomes-focused accountability is particularly relevant in advanced economies since, “for an advanced economy, the path to competitiveness is not to copy what others are doing. It is to do things that others cannot do, or to do things in different and better ways” (HM Government, 2017, p. 25). This further explains why aiming for economic growth entails investing heavily in education, and why education systems are sometimes criticised for their seemingly permanent state of flux that results from the constant trial of new initiatives, many of which are listed below, all of which are intended to better construct students according to the needs of employers, by, for example, equipping them with the *21st Century Skills* or whatever else it may be required to develop their employability.

Policies specifically aimed to improve the quality of the workforce include the increasing importance given to early childhood education. Such policies are based on the assumption that, as argued in the World Bank document, *Linking Education Policy to Labour Market Outcomes* (2008), “the earlier in childhood that investments are made in developing the cognitive skills of children, the better the long-term impacts are for learning,

skills development, and labour market outcomes” (Fasih, 2008, p. 50). Improving the quality of early childhood education is deemed to be a way to improve children’s future educational performance. This increased interest necessitates additional funding invested in early childhood education, and an increased effort to make sure that more children attend early childhood educational settings. Neoliberalism impacts early childhood education by allocating more resources to it, while also influencing the nature of the programmes of activities offered at this level, to the extent that, oftentimes, “pre-school education programmes, just like general education at all levels, are derived from the economic needs of the knowledge society and are an extension of preparation of the entrepreneurial subject from early childhood” (Kaščák & Pupala, 2011, p. 145). Indeed, such discourse related to knowledge-based economy and its importance to national competitiveness permeates much contemporary education policy, and acts as the rationale for all the policy initiatives mentioned in this chapter. Interestingly, the focus on early childhood education is neither a new development, nor unique to a neoliberalised education system. Back in 1972 in the UK, the value of investing in early years education was already acknowledged, and white papers were already proposing that “within the next ten years nursery education should become available without charge, within the limits of demand estimated by Plowden, to those children of three and four whose parents wish them to benefit from it” (DES, 1972, p. 5).

Apart from enabling a stronger start, the neoliberalisation of compulsory education tends to encourage students to lengthen their stay in educational institutions. These policies generally portray the issue of ‘early school leavers’ as a major disadvantage that must be addressed adequately to ensure that a well-educated workforce sustains economic growth in the future. In relation to this issue, it is also often pointed out, for example in England, that “the competitive industries of twenty-first century England will require higher-order academic, personal and vocational skills. A successful education in the sixth form and university will be the norm, not the alternative” (DCSF, 2008, p. 3), hence the effort to reduce the number of early school leavers.

Other education policies that aim at having the education system produce youth with a higher probability of succeeding within an enterprise culture consist of those that emphasise STEM (Science, Technology, Engineering and Mathematics) education. Most interesting, policy reviews often reveal that the rationale for the increased interest of these subjects, rather than being related to the improved understanding of nature, is more often related to

the need to “take advantage of the new opportunities associated with the knowledge economy, and to contribute to the national productivity and innovation agendas” (Rizvi, 2017, p. 7). The supposition that the future will require more technologically skilled employees leads neoliberalised education systems to prioritise technological subjects over other learning areas that are perceived to be less useful to economic growth. A current example of such policy is the Maths Premium initiative in England, through which schools “receive £600 for every additional pupil who takes an advanced maths qualification, helping to ensure Britain has skills for success in the future” (DfE, 2018b). The economic intentions of this premium are emphasised in the related policy documents. As one might guess, there is no such thing as an English Literature premium, a poetry premium, or a drama premium, and most likely, there will be no such premiums, at least, until these areas of the curriculum become important to employers.

Another current policy aimed at improving STEM education in England includes reforms in GCSEs and A-levels. To this end, it is urged that, “there is a need to increase [the] number of people able to study for STEM degrees to support the current economy and its growth” (DfE, 2018a, p.1) and assured that actions are being taken to encourage this. Ontario’s (Canada) *Protected Time for Daily Mathematics Instruction Grades 1 to 8* is another example of a policy designed to support STEM education, where “school boards are expected to protect a block of time during every school day for teachers in Grades 1 to 8 to focus on effective mathematics instruction” (Ontario Ministry of Education, 2016, p. 25). Once again, there is no such thing as protected time for poetry, drama, or literature, and most likely, there will not be, unless these subjects become economically relevant.

Another set of policies whose aim is for the education system to produce youths with higher probability of success in an enterprise culture revolves around the setting up vocational education. Through better vocational education, a neoliberalised education system can address the needs of a wider spectrum of learners, and avoid situations where learners complete compulsory schooling without having any certification to sustain their employability. Good quality vocational education provides learners “with a good set of both occupation specific and general skills that enable them” (OECD, 2011, p. 15) to find and retain employment, engage in lifelong learning opportunities, and possibly, find better employment should the opportunity arise. In England, current efforts to strengthen vocational education include putting “technical education on the same footing as [the] ...academic system, with apprenticeships and qualifications such as T-levels” (HM

Government, 2017, p. 25). Courses are planned to commence in September 2020. Other aims include the establishment of “a technical education system that rivals the best in the world” (HM Government, 2017, p. 25). These initiatives are undertaken in an ongoing effort to involve “employers ever more closely in the education system” (HM Government, 2017, p. 25). Keeping the employers’ demands at the forefront is important as regards vocational education, albeit equally important in general education. This was indicated in a press release, where the UK School Standards Minister Nick Gibb confirmed that the “new, more rigorous GCSE exams ...have been designed with employers in mind” (DfE, 2018a, p.4).

Apart from all the policies mentioned in this section, there is another policy that aims to enable the education system to enhance students’ employability. This policy is related to Career Guidance, that is, the “educational field through which individuals are encouraged, supported and guided to think about and take action in their lives” (Hooley et al., 2017, p. 12). Career Guidance policies manifest themselves differently, depending on the political philosophy that underpins a specific education system. Watts (2008) explains that, within a market model, career guidance includes “*learning goals*” (p. 342), such as, when aiming to improve the efficiency of the education system (Watts, 2008), as well as “*labour market goals*” (Watts, 2008, p. 342), such as, the effort to meet the demands of the labour market (Watts, 2008). Career Guidance is given its due importance within a neoliberalised education system because its aims are precisely those which neoliberalism prescribes for schooling in general, namely, preparing students for the enterprise culture.

In their analysis of careers education in England, Barnes et al. (2002) point out that the purpose of career guidance is to enrich the education of a workforce to boost national competitiveness by enhancing employability, or as the document *National Framework 11–19 for Careers Education and Guidance in England* (2003) explains, to support students to “...make the right choices about their education and prepare them properly for working life” (DfES, 2003, p. 2). In recent years, the principles remained the same, even though economic realities have changed. In a recent communication on career guidance in England, it is explained that, “tailored advice will be at the heart of a new Careers Strategy designed to make sure young people have the skills they need and employers want” (DfE, 2017, p.4), as is expected from an education system that is sensitive to the needs of the economy.

Current career guidance policies are replete with neoliberal rhetoric that is identical to that found in policies on entrepreneurship education and lifelong learning skills. In England, this rhetoric includes the idea of linking “schools and colleges with local universities and employers to help broaden pupils’ horizons” (DfE, 2017, p.1), and the idea of “the government’s commitment to make sure people have the skills they need to get on in life and help build a Britain that is fit for the future” (DfE, 2017, p.1). It is thus suggested that these aims can be reached by providing “every school and college ... [with] a dedicated careers leader... [to] give the most up-to-date advice and fully prepare young people for the world of work” (DfE, 2017, p. 11), and by providing “quality interactions between schools and businesses” (DfE, 2017, p. 1). Education policies on the matter show that career guidance has much to contribute to the neoliberal project. The money that governments are ready to invest in its development is further proof of the importance that such education is given within neoliberal contexts.

Another policy that aims for the education system to produce students with a greater probability of success within an enterprise culture is the setting up of a national standardised curriculum which schools need to adhere to. Such curricula are in place in England, Wales, New Zealand, Australia, and Ontario (Canada). A standardised national curriculum is essential for the proper functioning of parental choice policies, thus enabling parents to choose among schools, knowing that they all follow more or less comparable curricula content. Such a curriculum would additionally provide a government with the necessary control over compulsory education to make sure that this can be altered swiftly in order to respond to the needs of the economy. For instance, when coding, ICT, or any other skill becomes important for the competitiveness of the country, it is promptly introduced into the curriculum. Standardised curricula are rendered even more useful for the world of employment when these are written in a transparent manner, such as, when using a learning outcomes format, so that it becomes easier for employers and educational institutions to understand what students know and are able to do.

Outcomes-based curricula make schooling more efficient because they provide students with information on the subjects they may wish to choose, while providing career advisers with clearer information that supports them in fulfilling their duties. They can also potentially aid the learning process since they may support teachers in their planning and teaching by enabling them to inform learners about what is expected of them. Outcomes-based curricula further enable learners to understand their learning process better since they

understand what they have learnt and where they may need additional support. Nonetheless, not all students are inclined to use outcomes-based curricula in such manner, thus making outcomes-based curricula yet another technique that may contribute to widening the performance gap among students. However, the advantages still outweigh the disadvantages, and make such policies worth investing in. These policies are additionally also effective in supporting schools that may not be obliged to implement a mandatory curriculum, but such regulatory objectives are nonetheless achieved through the parents' scrutiny, inspection reports, and formal funding agreements. In such cases, national curricula fulfil their regulatory duties indirectly because they support other mechanisms to function more effectively.

Student employability can also be enhanced through the establishment of a regulated qualifications framework. The creation of what is essentially “a common currency of qualifications” (OECD, 1994, p. 178) may indeed have many benefits. Unsurprisingly, this has been introduced in England, Wales, and Northern Ireland (Young, 2009), in New Zealand (Strathdee, 2009), in Australia (Wheelan, 2010), and in parts of Canada, such as for example, the *Alberta Credential Framework* and the *Ontario Qualifications Framework*. Qualifications frameworks support the implementation of the neoliberal agenda for education by enabling employees to fulfil their duties as lifelong learners since they improve the individuals' ability to decide about their learning (Allais, 2012). Indeed, this was one of the reasons for their establishment in the vocational areas in the UK, with the then Prime Minister affirming that “business success will increasingly rest on people at every level who are equipped with good training and good qualifications. Qualifications that carry esteem, are coherently structured and capable of being updated throughout working life” (Major, 1992, p. 1). Entrepreneurial selves have indeed much to gain from the establishment of such a framework, which enables them to enter or re-enter training (Allais, 2011), while enabling the recognition of prior learning (Allais, 2011). Knowing exactly what further training one needs in order to move on to another job is essential for anyone to make more informed and presumably better decisions.

Employers also stand to gain from the standardised qualification frameworks since these can serve as a “means by which information on qualifications is made available to labour markets” (Blackmur, 2004, p. 267) thereby allowing employers to choose employees more efficiently and effectively (OECD, 1987). This occurs when such frameworks, especially when written in an outcomes format, can provide clear information to employers

about what qualified learners are trained to do (Cedefop, 2008). This feature of qualifications framework prompted the support of supranational organisations such as the OECD, which sustains that “a good education and training system ... should also provide labour markets with standardised credentials by which particular skills can be identified and matched efficiently to jobs” (OECD, 1987, p. 71).

Qualifications frameworks assist in the implementation of the neoliberal agenda for education by enabling the reduction of producer capture in educational provision through the elimination of monopolies in the sector. This is achieved by fostering the marketisation of education provision. Qualifications frameworks manage to do so by enabling course designers to develop courses in line with the frameworks, while allowing providers to teach against them. Most importantly, such a framework acts as a standard against which regulating agencies can regulate both designers and providers, thus providing the means for those who wish to engage in such practices to do so, thereby fostering competition. The transparency brought about by qualifications frameworks makes it clearer to all stakeholders involved what the endeavour will entail thereby enabling more efficient decision-making processes. Qualifications frameworks also enable the quantification of educational experiences, which can lead to education markets worth billions in the form of the most diverse educational services. These may include “creating and disseminating information, providing distance learning and packaged curriculum ... selling test preparation and the administration of tests, and providing teacher preparation” (Taubman, 2009, p. 103). Considering these concerns and benefits, it comes as no surprise that, in her documentary analysis, Allais (2012) found that the specific intention of supporting marketisation and addressing producer capture was a major reason for institutionalising such frameworks in England, Australia, and New Zealand.

In his evaluation of qualifications frameworks, Blackmur (2015) concludes that “the development of NQFs, of whatever variety, is not, moreover, a logically necessary component of a neoliberal ‘marketisation’ strategy” (Blackmur, 2015, p. 216). Nonetheless, considering the usefulness of these frameworks to a neoliberalisation process, and the fact that “they operate within and reinforce a neoliberal notion of the state and society, and an approach to governance that promotes individualism and personal responsibility instead of collective welfare and state provision of public services” (Allais, 2014, p. 255), it may be concluded that more advanced stages of neoliberalisation in education would be more likely to exhibit such a characteristic. However, as happens with every policy, no matter how

crucial it may be to the progress of an ongoing neoliberalisation process, political feasibility may impede its implementation.

7.5 Creating the Entrepreneurial Self

Neoliberalised education systems can support the preparation of students for adult economic autonomy in two ways. The first is achieved by the job-readiness policies that have been identified above, while the second way includes the entrepreneurial policies identified in the subsequent section. As regards job-readiness policies, students need to be prepared to find (and find again) employment that sustains their life as free individuals who are able to choose what they consider most appropriate. Neoliberalised education systems reach this objective by ensuring that young persons are well prepared for the enterprise society. Policies with such objectives include investment in early childhood education, longer school days, a focus on industry-requested subjects such as Maths, Science and Computing, and the establishment of centralised curricula and qualification frameworks.

A second category of policies comprises moulding students into becoming entrepreneurial selves, which consists in instilling in them a neoliberal subjectivity, an entrepreneurial selfhood mainly characterised by the acceptance of the principles of individualism and individual responsibility in learners, while conceptualising democratic citizens as consumers and free-market agents (Leitner et al., 2007). Apart from preparing them to become better employees, the effort to create the entrepreneurial self is intended to make students better managers of themselves as their own firms. Indeed, such education policies as Entrepreneurial Education, Lifelong Learning Skills, and Self-Directed Learning are mostly meant to create the entrepreneurial self. Through such policies, compulsory education becomes a means to promote entrepreneurial ideals throughout society (Marttila, 2018), thus enabling the process of neoliberal subjectification. To a large extent, one can say that this entire category of neoliberal education policies on employability and human capital aims mostly to reconfigure students into entrepreneurs of their own lives (Davies & Bansel, 2007) in preparation for survival in the enterprise culture.

Preparing students for the enterprise culture involves changing their frame of mind in a way that makes them act more responsibly, while ensuring that each student takes the necessary actions to invest in their employability to the best of their abilities. These education policies are meant to weed out any form of dependency-culture, which would make “a society quite happy to be dependent upon the government” (Thatcher, 1988a, p.1).

This would, in turn, lead to a section of the citizenry “having a vested interest in having higher taxation, and more coming to them, by protests and great lobbying of government” (Thatcher, 1988a, p. 1), instead of focusing on what one can do to improve one’s life, in spite of the many difficulties one might be facing. Neoliberal education policies are specifically designed to ensure that such a scenario does not take place. Therefore, education is tasked with the development of new subjectivities more closely in line with the needs of the enterprise culture (Sears, 2003). This process includes accepting the idea that schools need to be “reconfigured to produce the highly individualised, responsabilised subjects who have become entrepreneurial actors across all dimensions of their lives” (Brown, 2003, p. 38). In order to produce such responsabilised individuals, the neoliberal curriculum needs to be adjusted to enable students to become self-disciplined and entrepreneurial (Stasiulis & Bakan, 2003), hence leading to a school experience where individual learners are educated, through official and hidden curricula, to become increasingly self-reliant.

Neoliberals are also convinced of the need to educate students in this manner because they believe that, in order to function, a free and just society “requires not merely the existence of strong moral convictions but also the acceptance of particular moral views [...] without which ...[a free society] cannot survive” (Hayek, 1962, p. 232). Consequently, a neoliberalised education system aims to infuse students with fundamental principles. The two indispensable ones are “individual responsibility” (Hayek, 1962, p. 232), that is, “the readiness to assume the responsibility for one’s fate” (Erhard, 1958, p. 185), and a second moral view, or “spiritual attitude”(1958, p. 186), as Erhard refers to it, which includes “the approval as just of an arrangement by which material rewards are made to correspond to the value which a person’s particular services have to his fellows” (Hayek, 1962, p. 232). The latter is the principle of market justice, which enables “the readiness...to participate in honest and free competition” (Erhard, 1958, p. 186). The measures described below, that is, Entrepreneurial Education, Lifelong Learning Skills, and Self-Directed Learning are specifically meant to create the entrepreneurial self, the citizen who assimilates these two core principles, and who is ready to contribute to finding creative ways through which to maintain their economic autonomy.

7.5.1 Creating Entrepreneurs: The Role of Entrepreneurial Education

Within states that adhere to neoliberal political rationality, education for direct employability forms only one part of what is expected of an education system that prepares students to face their future. Indeed, all the initiatives referred to above go a long way to prepare students for the enterprise society, but on their own, they are not enough to satisfy the requirements of a neoliberalised economy. Other aspects need to be taken into consideration, including “the volatile nature of consumer markets, the challenge to assumptions about lifetime employment, and the pace of technological innovations with built-in occupational obsolescence” (Brown et al., 2001, p. 258). When considering such characteristics of a neoliberalised high-competition economy, it becomes evident that education policies aimed to sustain direct employability, while necessary, are insufficient. Consequently, apart from a concern with direct employability, a neoliberal education system aims to sustain economic competitiveness by furnishing society with citizens who are able and willing to participate in the enterprise culture. This necessitates specific knowledge, skills and, most importantly, attitudes that provide citizens with the necessary character to thrive in a neoliberal economy.

Within neoliberalism, such education is considered to be necessary since, even if the economic system were to be altered in line with neoliberal principles, and the nanny-state were successfully transformed into a far less generous one, there would be no guarantee that citizens would participate in the enterprise culture. The necessary sense of entrepreneurship can be numbed “by prices and incomes policies, by high taxation, by nationalisation, [and] by central planning” (Thatcher, 1988d, p. 1), all of which divest citizens of their sense of individual responsibility, and discourage their entrepreneurial attitudes. The simple removal of these anti-enterprise policies through neoliberal governance is no guarantee that the citizens’ entrepreneurial spirit would rise up to the occasion. If social-democratic restrictive practices were to be replaced by an economic order that focuses on supply-side economics and establishes policies in line with deregulation, marketisation, reduced state expenditure, and reduced taxation, there still would be no guarantee that citizens would eventually adopt an entrepreneurial mindset that is necessary for the enterprise culture to flourish. Therefore, such an enterprising mindset needs to be cultivated through an appropriately designed education. To achieve this goal, the school curriculum has to be “redesigned to reflect the new realities and the need for the highly skilled flexible worker who possesses requisite skills in management, information handling, communication, problem-solving, and decision-making” (Besley & Peters, 2007,

p. 171), as required by a neoliberalised economy. One way to achieve this objective is through the provision of entrepreneurship education that “reflects a neoliberal mentality of governance which aims at transforming the passive citizens of welfare societies into active enterprising selves” (Komulainen et al., 2011, p. 347), ready to take responsibility for themselves as entrepreneurial selves.

Entrepreneurship education involves knowledge, skills and, most importantly, attitudes and dispositions aimed to prepare citizens for full participation in the enterprise culture. Teaching entrepreneurship education is important because it fosters self-reliant individuals with an enterprising attitude, which aligns well with the needs of a neoliberal society (Lackéus, 2017). Instilling the entrepreneurial frame of mind in learners also counts as a form of human capital development. This type of human capital is “grounded not so much in the amount of information students have but in the learning attributes they are able to develop, with which to deal effectively and creatively with unfamiliar and constantly changing conditions of work” (Rizvi, 2017, p. 5), which is the only way through which individuals can thrive in an enterprise culture. In fact, generating a proactive attitude towards life management is the ultimate aim of teaching entrepreneurship, apart from various other, more evident benefits, such as, the ensuing higher propensity for citizens to engage in enterprising activities (Chatzichristou et al., 2015; Colette et al., 2005; Elert et al., 2015; European Commission, 2006), thus mitigating the negative effects of unemployment and stagnant economic growth (Elert et al., 2015; Chatzichristou et al., 2015; Rasmussen et al., 2011), while enabling individuals to adapt more easily to economic changes (Anderson & Jack, 2008).

Financial literacy is important within entrepreneurial education, but the attitudes that are necessary to become an entrepreneur are of even greater importance. Creating entrepreneurs entails developing learners’ key attitudes that equip them with the character to thrive in an enterprise culture, necessitating the cultivation of “enterprising subjects – autonomous, self-regulating, productive individuals” (Du Gay, 1991, p. 49), who take full responsibility for their own future (Du Gay, 1991). This objective is achieved principally by prioritising interpersonal skills and developing specific attitudes (Sahlberg, 2006). Moreover, entrepreneurship education is seen to be essential to equip young people with the character required to survive a fast-changing economy. Consequently, entrepreneurship education in a context of neoliberal governance also acts as character education, hence the importance given to certain virtues and specific attitudes. Entrepreneurial virtues have a very important

role to play in an education system that is tasked to prepare students for a society that prioritises individual negative freedom. Such virtues as “classical virtues in economics, reliability, honesty, self-reliance, [and] individual responsibility” (Becker, 2002, p. 6) also count as an investment in human capital. This investment is extremely important for Becker (2002), who concludes that “without these attitudes... you cannot have... a successful economy and a successful life” (p. 6), especially within societies that adhere to a free-market, low-taxation, limited safety-net economic approach.

While there are a number of practical outcomes that result from entrepreneurship education, “entrepreneurship should not be considered just as a means for creating new businesses, but as a general attitude that can be usefully applied by everyone in everyday life and in all working activities” (European Commission, 2002, p. 9). This ‘general attitude’ is essential because entrepreneurship is primarily concerned with discovering opportunities for profit (Shane & Venkataraman, 2000) which, in a neoliberal social arrangement, becomes almost a duty. In this context, having the skill and character to sustain ongoing attentiveness may be as useful as having specific marketable know-how. Certainly, the creation of the entrepreneurial mindset is an ongoing “neoliberal oriented educational restructuring process” (Holmgren & From, 2005, p. 382) because it is indispensable for the enterprise culture to function.

Entrepreneurship education aims to instil various attitudes in learners. One way to do this is by helping learners develop their sense of initiative (Carr, 2000; Down, 2009), along with an “element of alertness to possible newly worthwhile goals and to possible newly available resources” (Kirzner, 1973, p. 35). Considering that, “in a free society we are remunerated not for our skill but for using it rightly” (Hayek, 1960, p. 72), learners need to be empowered to develop a sense of initiative that encourages them to evaluate diverse possibilities that can eventually sustain their economic autonomy. Cultivating the skill of alertness is deemed to be very important by neoliberals. In fact, it is claimed that “the skill of discovering the most effective use of one’s gift, is perhaps the most useful of all” (Hayek, 1960, p. 72). Indeed, one’s sense of initiative goes a long way by making individuals take an interest and discover different ways to achieve success in an enterprise culture. This is an important element of the disciplined entrepreneurial self, where “one is always at it” (du Gay, 1996, p. 193), in the sense that the quest towards improving one’s employability has no end.

7.5.2 Creating Entrepreneurs: Lifelong Learning Skills

The concept of lifelong learning as used by neoliberals is intimately linked with ideas of productivity, competitiveness, and economic growth (Rizvi, 2017), sustaining a discourse that insists that for future citizens to thrive in an economic system based on the principle of competition, they need to be equipped with the necessary knowledge, skills, and attitudes required to become competent lifelong learners. In a state of affairs marked by competition, “learning is the key to prosperity – for each of us as individuals as well as for the nation as a whole” (DfEE, 1998b, p. 7), hence the increased need for lifelong learning skills.

In many ways, the concept of lifelong learning constitutes the education version of the notion of flexibility that is so central to neoliberal discourse, that is, that discourse which prioritises economic growth through competitiveness, innovation economics, and technological development. Living in such an economic context requires that each individual makes “adequate provision for the preservation, reproduction and reconstruction of one’s human capital” (Gordon, 1991, p. 44) by maintaining an ongoing investment in one’s own skills and, most importantly, in the ability to update them. In an open economy, the human capital element that consists of marketable skills has an increasingly short expiry date. Enhancing one’s lifelong learning skills is thus the only way to extend that expiry date. This is in fact the reason why the European Commission has been suggesting for many years that learners should be taught how to be more independent, prepared to learn new knowledge, and to ready to face new problems (European Commission, 1998) so that they can truly be productive members of society.

The fast rate of change generated by a neoliberal economic system transforms results in the need to become a learning society where improved competitiveness can only be achieved through individual’s ability and capability to keep learning long after they have completed formal schooling (Gee et al., 1996; Sahlberg, 2006). Lifelong learning skills help to manage insecurity within an enterprise culture, where citizens are in constant need for retraining to ensure their economic autonomy (NCEE, 1983; Avis, 2004; Francis, 2006). This becomes particularly important in a neoliberalised political context since employees will most likely have several different occupations and employers over their working lives (OECD, 2011), while entrepreneurs equally face the same situation of having to survive in a constantly changing economic environment.

Avoidance of unemployment is not the only reason why teaching lifelong learning skills is important in a neoliberal society. Lifelong learning is additionally important to sustain economic growth because it can augment a nation's competitiveness when increasing productivity by encouraging innovation (Moltó Egea, 2014). One way to ensure that learners become lifelong learners is to integrate lifelong learning skills in the curriculum. In Wales, for example, the document titled *Making the most of learning: Implementing the Revised Curriculum* (DCELLS, 2008) identifies the same aims, and states that

“the fundamental aim of education is to produce learners who are motivated and effective, increasingly responsible for their own learning, able to make full use of the new technologies and who will be able to learn and apply new skills effectively throughout their lives” (DCELLS, 2008, p. 14).

The above is an accurate description of the entrepreneurial self, and is an equally accurate description of the ideal neoliberal citizen, who seems to have replaced the active citizen primarily education to be well prepared to participate in democratic deliberations about the common good.

Teaching students to become lifelong learners entails that curricula are enriched with specific skills and attitudes that enable citizens to take control of their learning, especially once compulsory education is completed. Some of these skills include, problem-solving, creativity, interpersonal skills, study skills and self-discipline amongst others, while key attitudes include, motivation, positive mindset, adaptability, and initiative (Carter, 2010). This array of useful skills becomes all the more relevant when one takes into consideration that, particularly within advanced economies where scientific advancement occurs at a fast rate, “never again will a qualification once earned be sufficient for a lifetime. Training, re-training, updating will become increasingly necessary” (Major, 1992, p. 1). Such is increasingly the case today.

There is a clear overlap between entrepreneurship skills and lifelong learning skills since, both as lifelong learners and as entrepreneurs, individuals are meant to take responsibility for their own life. Within a free enterprise culture, these skills become indispensable for one's own survival because individuals are constantly required to make an effort to become able to compete better. Knowing that there is only a thin social security safety-net to compensate for possible wrong decisions encourages individuals in

neoliberalised economic systems to keep investing in themselves as much as possible, hence the increasing relevance of education policies that prepare students to face the enterprise culture. All in all, teaching lifelong learning skills is one of the most beneficial policies to neoliberalise compulsory education, especially when lifelong learning includes an element of critical thinking. This measure can potentially help both the individual and society by supporting the creative endeavour of imagining improved alternative futures and ways to work towards them. Even though, there may be limited hope for the development of such imagination, since citizens would be mostly busy focusing on reinvesting in themselves to obtain better jobs or simply to retain their current ones.

7.5.3 Creating Entrepreneurs: Enabling Self-Directed Learning

Over and above education policies that promote job readiness, financial literacy, an entrepreneurial character, and lifelong learning skills, there is another set of neoliberal education policies designed to prepare citizens for their participation within the enterprise culture, namely, policies that promote a pedagogy that is designed to turn students into self-directed learners. According to Tabulawa (2003), “that a pedagogical style can be used as a political instrument should not be surprising at all” (Tabulawa, 2003, p. 18) since curricular and pedagogical choices are political choices (Tabulawa, 2003). This political activity becomes evident when specific pedagogical approaches are harnessed to achieve possibly even different political ends. This is evidently the case with the self-directed learner, which holds impressive wide-ranging support, where similar objectives are in fact underpinned by very diverse philosophies. Self-directed learning, for example, enjoys the support of widely different views, ranging from the unschooling movements (Illich, 1970; Holt, 1981), to progressive educators (Dewey, 1938; Kohn, 2004), albeit for very different reasons. Under neoliberalism, self-directed learning is supported since it is seen as a key attitude that must be instilled in the entrepreneurial self.

Teaching through a self-directed approach, that is, through a learning process that favours self-designed learning pathways, setting own goals, active participation, vetting information, scaffolding one’s own learning process, and self-evaluation, is important because, as future entrepreneurs, as lifelong learners, as taxpayers, as voters, and as customers, citizens need to perform continuous independent thinking resulting from self-directed learning. Additionally, self-directed learning is essential where employees are required to function in fast-changing settings (Morris, 2018), which is increasingly the case in neoliberal economies. Furthermore, when students get the opportunity to monitor their

academic progress, identify their difficulties, develop solutions, and ask for help where needed (Newman, 2002), they eventually learn the necessary attitude to thrive in an enterprise culture, where the reality of competition impels them to behave rationally and responsibly to ensure their own well-being.

A second similarity between self-regulated learners and citizens in an enterprise culture is that “self-regulated learners ...do not ask for help needlessly when they are capable of solving the problem by themselves...they confine their questions to just those hints and explanations needed to allow them to finish performing the task on their own” (Puustinen et al., 2008, p. 161). This is similar to the responsabilised attitude that is expected of adults who are meant to cope with their problems themselves, and only ask for assistance from the community when in genuine need. Under such social arrangements, the limited resources available can be used to focus on those who are most in need of support. Likewise, the limited time of the teacher can be used more efficiently since the teacher can focus on providing support to those learners who require it most. Most importantly, under the practice of self-directed learning, students are enabled to rely less on teachers, becoming freer to make their own choices (Tabulawa, 2003). Once again, in empowering learners to strengthen their ability to make up their own minds, self-directed learning contributes to the effort of creating citizens who are ready to face the enterprise culture.

Self-directed learning is useful preparation for adulthood insofar as it is a process that enables students to learn how to be independent and responsible. It thus “focuses on student-designed inquiry that is organised by investigations to answer driving questions” (Marx et al., 1997, p. 341). In fact, self-regulated learners do not simply consume information, but become responsible for their learning by taking important decisions that affect the learning process (Lapan et al., 2002). The process of taking decisions related to one’s own learning is educational in itself, particularly as a preparation for the enterprise culture which they will face once out of school. Self-directed learning can be sustained in various ways. Firstly, it builds on the skills needed for independent learning, which is why self-directed learning “presupposes certain skills that allow tasks to be performed without supervision, these include the ability to plan, regulate and assess one’s own activity and to work collaboratively with others” (Winch, 2008, p. 662). One way to support this process is for teachers to identify and share success criteria so that learners are then supported to understand what the task entails, where they need to improve, how they may be able to do so and most importantly be aware of the learning process itself (DCELLS, 2008, p. 14). The

main argument behind this strategy is that when learners are aware of what is expected of them, they are then more likely to improve the self-evaluation skills which are necessary to become a self-directed learner (MEDE, 2012). Additionally, in practice, the self-directed learning approach entails joint control over the learning process through a collaborative approach that encourages student autonomy and even creative problem solving (Carter, 2010), thus making students increasingly responsible for the learning process. This is meant to enhance their engagement with the learning process by giving them increased responsibility. All the above teaching strategies further serve to influence the character of learners by making them more independent and responsible.

At a first glance, all the effort made to enhance personal autonomy may seem to be similar in spirit to elements within the different interpretations of progressive education, but what in fact leads to similar pedagogical approaches is actually underpinned by very different rationales. Progressive education aims to enhance personal autonomy as part of the quest to strengthen individuals' freedom, hence giving students a more central role in mapping their learning journey. Alternatively, under neoliberalism, independent thinking is supported insofar as it is necessary for the functioning of the enterprise culture, in line with the principles of individual responsibility and negative freedom. It is more valued as an element of the entrepreneurial subjectivity, rather than a freer educational experience, as, for example, envisaged by A.S. Neill (1960) or Kohn (2004). The various progressive approaches and neoliberalism are likely to enrich the learning experience with innovative teaching methods, but while progressive approaches are "underpinned by a focus on the learner's desire" (Watkins, 2007, p. 305), the neoliberal support for self-directed learning is unrelated to such focus. Lesson content is more prone to be affected by what the economy needs, and the curriculum demands, rather than by what the learner chooses. The similarity between progressive pedagogies and the neoliberalisation of compulsory schooling lies in the emphasis on skills for independent learning. Neoliberalism finds fertile ground in such a notion, but under neoliberalism, "teaching becomes a form of 'learning management' refashioning the role of the teacher and, in the process, contemporary pedagogic practice" (Watkins, 2007, p. 315) towards one which, similar to the diverse progressive methods, focuses increasingly on learner independence.

7.6 Concerns with Conceptualising Education as Investment in Human Capital

Concerns with these specific neoliberal policies abound, both as regards negative consequences on compulsory education per se, and the negative repercussions for society at

large. As regards education, it is often claimed that the neoliberalisation of compulsory education, through the array of policies which are aimed to boost students' employability, eventually impoverish the very concept of schooling. This occurs because much effort is dedicated to that element of schooling which prepares for economic autonomy, while other key educational elements, such as, exposure to the richness of human culture, citizenship education, what we owe each other as fellow citizens, collective responsibility, and social inclusion end up being marginalised (Brown, 2015; Marginson, 1997; Nussbaum, 2009)

In truth, one would very rarely find views against such aims in any official policy document; however, such elements, which some maintain should be the main purpose of compulsory education (Walzer, 1983), often become conspicuous through their absence. Indeed, Hughes and Tight (1995) correctly point out that, in its overemphasis on achieving the economic aims, a neoliberalised education system “seems likely to marginalise the interests of the individuals in pursuing learning for their own ‘self-fulfilment’” (p. 297) in favour of pursuing learning which is economically relevant. In truth, it could also be said that they are even encouraged to do so as responsible students, and this would indeed be a pity. Furthermore, educational systems that prioritise the instrumental side of schooling, tend to transform the entire educational experience into a hurdle race (Popper, 2011/1945), where “instead of encouraging in him [the student] a real love for his subject and for inquiry, he is encouraged to study for the sake of his personal career” (Popper, 2011/1945, p.196), or even worse, to only focus on the knowledge necessary to pass examinations (Popper, 2011/1945, p.196). This is clearly not the best structure to promote the love for knowledge and research, which could perhaps be more conducive to innovation and possibly even scientific discovery.

Other major concerns within this strand of policies include the view that the subjectivity of the entrepreneurial self brought about by such an education system, is conducive to egoistic behaviour that can be detrimental to social cohesion due to the ensuing greed and selfishness. Additionally, many affirm that the idea of the entrepreneurial self is nothing but a fantasy used to cover a situation where individuals are constantly under stress to invest (and keep investing) in themselves to make sure that they remain employable, and that, in such a situation, being free to choose means very little. None of these situations would, in any way, be deemed to be morally satisfactory for many people, even though for neoliberals, such consequences may be deemed to be acceptable. These concerns are addressed in Chapter Nine.

7.7 Conclusion

The education system within states led by governments that adhere to neoliberal political rationality is characterised by the effort to equip students for successful participation within the enterprise culture. This entails the implementation of specific education policies, such as, education for improved job readiness, entrepreneurship education, lifelong learning skills, and self-directed learning. Such policies are meant to improve students' employability by providing them with knowledge, skills, and attitudes that cultivate in them an enterprising character.

Neoliberalism prioritises the view that “there is no virtue in producing socially well-adjusted members of society who are unemployed because they do not have the skills” (Callaghan, 1976, p. 7) that enable them to participate productively in the economy. In a neoliberal order, this means that students' employability has to be enhanced to ensure future economic success. Consequently, this future, marked by economic insecurity, job volatility, and competitive anxiety, transforms the educational process and what young people are actually expected to gain from it (Gonçalves et al., 2012). This is an integral part of the process through which education is conceptualised principally as an investment in human capital aimed to sustain national competitiveness.

The neoliberal education policies that derive from the conceptualisation of education as an investment in human capital and preparation for participation in the enterprise culture are a reflection of the specific understanding of what social arrangements should be brought about according to neoliberalism, that is, the setting up of an enterprise culture, where citizens are meant to look after themselves and their dependents, and in this manner, contributing to the common good, which for neoliberal equates to safeguarding individual negative freedom. These policies are evidence of the view that “neoliberalism denounces social democratic liberalism as a recipe for an interventionist government that threatens individual liberty through taxes and other regulations” (Hursh, 2007, p. 495). Consequently, a neoliberalised education system is designed to educate individuals in a way that prepares them for a life where they would supposedly be paying less taxes (to the benefit of their negative freedom), but at the price of having only a minimal safety-net. Under such social arrangements, being able to cater for one's needs becomes even more important.

The importance of this chapter in the context of the vision of this thesis lies in that it manages to explore systematically how specific neoliberal education policies can be seen to be consistent with and follow from neoliberal political rationality as a coherent ideological position. This chapter contends that the neoliberal aim of achieving economic growth through competitiveness sustained by an enterprise culture has deep repercussions for compulsory education, which is consequently conceptualised in terms of investments in human capital, where students need to be reconfigured into entrepreneurial selves through an educational experience that instils in them specific knowledge, skills, and values, whose aim is to prepare students for their neoliberalised future.

Considering the vast array of policies that constitute the three categories of policies that make up the neoliberalisation of compulsory education, it comes as no surprise that such reforms give rise to deep repercussions for both teachers and students. The next two chapters will explore the dynamics of these consequences.

Chapter Eight: Moral Implications of the Neoliberalisation of Compulsory Education: Effects on Teachers.

8.1 Introduction.

The changes brought about by the three policy categories that constitute the neoliberalisation process, that is, hyper-accountability, parental choice, human capital development, change the roles that teachers are expected to fulfil. As shown in the respective chapters, the quest for efficiency leads to a state of affairs marked by hyper-accountability (Chapter Five), the establishment of parental choice policies leads to extensive fragmentation of provision (Chapter Six), while the focus on human capital development has repercussions that go as deep as affecting the pedagogy employed in the classroom (Chapter Seven). The neoliberalisation process ends up reconceptualising several elements of compulsory education: the curriculum provided, life at school, what does it mean to be a good teacher, the notion of teacher professionalism, what is expected from teacher training, and even the contribution of teachers towards a more socially just society. This chapter engages with these issues in an effort to contribute to a richer understanding of the extent of the changes brought about by neoliberal reforms.

8.2 The Challenging Learning Environment of Neoliberalised Schools

The preoccupation that neoliberal policymakers have with issues such as limiting state expenditure, the idea that public servants need to be constantly monitored and with “market-inspired managerialism” (Hogan, 1995, p. 226), leads to the institutionalisation of an array of accountability measures. Furthermore, neoliberal governments link education policies with economic policies to the extent that educational success is regarded as part of the “nation’s welfare and competitiveness in the global marketplace” (Coloma, 2015, p. 14) and therefore crucial for what the neoliberal policymakers consider to be the common good, that is, becoming increasingly competitive to ensure economic growth. Accordingly, as it has been discussed, teachers are expected to be responsible for developing the skills required by a neoliberalised economy (Attick, 2017) making this the first duty of every educator. Consequently, neoliberal governance makes sure that such skill development occurs by controlling more rigorously, teachers’ actions, curricular content and even teaching methods (Attick, 2017) and more importantly, the state decides what falls within their remit of expertise and what is out of their professional discretion. In the process of achieving the aims set for compulsory education (Chapter Four) neoliberal policymakers perpetually aim to set targets and develop standards-based performance indicators (Pollitt,

1993). The desire to maintain high levels of transparency leads to a system marked by initiatives, such as, league tables (Woods & Jeffrey, 2002), high-stakes standardised examinations, performance management, target setting, inspections, and public reporting (Taylor Webb, 2005) along with other initiatives intended to make teachers' work as visible as possible. Unfortunately, evidence has shown that such measures are conducive "to make all of us, teachers at whatever level, boring, exhausted and hating the job" (Inglis, 2000, p. 428). In fact, the neoliberalisation process makes the teaching profession less attractive in different ways.

The neoliberalisation of compulsory education generates a number of changes that can contribute to teachers' dissatisfaction with their job. One of these is a "low trust" culture (Mahony & Hextall, 2000) that results from the many hyper-accountability initiatives that are put in place for transparency's sake and which are meant to address issues such as producer capture and the principal-agent problem. Essentially, what happens is that "trust in teachers' professionalism is totally displaced by performativity" (Alexiadou, 2001, p. 429). This creates a situation where increased importance is given to the production of tangible evidence meant to demonstrate the effort put into a task and the outcomes that result from it. As regards the UK, for example, there is a general agreement that "the high-trust, *professional* accountability of the 1960s and 1970s gave way in the 1980s to low-trust *public* accountability" (Hartley, 1997, p. 143, emphasis in original) in parallel with the ongoing neoliberalisation of the education system. Clearly, such a culture of low trust does very little to engage and motivate teachers. In fact, studies throughout the Anglosphere have repeatedly revealed the disadvantages that emanate from low trust school cultures. Various studies conducted in different countries such as, Scott and Dinham (2002) in England, Australia, New Zealand and the USA, Tschannen-Moran and Hoy (2000) in the U.S., and Elliott (2002), Mahony and Hextall (2000), Hartley (1997), Grace (1991), Green (2011), Hanlon (1998), Pollitt (2003), Lane (2000), and Manson (2004) in the UK, indicate that neoliberal hyper-accountability reforms generate an ethos of low trust that results from teachers having to constantly provide evidence that their duties have indeed been carried out. This process often includes the need to fill tick-boxes, school inspections where sometimes teachers feel pressured and bullied (Harness, 2016) and even accountability systems that assume the likelihood of opportunism and are specifically designed to eliminate it (Boston et al., 1996).

As Green points out, such structures of managerial regulation can both undermine one's inner sense of professionalism and weaken trust (Green, 2011), which is why it is often argued that neoliberal hyper-accountability with its national examinations and standardised learning outcomes "rests upon a profound distrust of teachers and seeks to close down many of the areas of discretion previously available to them" (Ball, 1990, p. 214), especially those areas related to curriculum and assessment and even areas related to pedagogy.

In fact, the neoliberalisation process is conducive to result in "a low trust relationship between society and its teachers" (Whitty, 1997, p. 307), who are then increasingly made to work in a glass cage for accountability's sake. Alarming, a working environment marked by distrust can potentially weaken professional responsibility (Green, 2011), it can lead to decreased commitment (Le Grand, 2003) and even alienation from one's duties (Tschannen-Moran, 2014) none of which can reflect in any way positively on a system that supposedly prides itself on customer-centredness. Indeed, it is often argued that if schools are to reach their targets, the issue of trust must be addressed (Tschannen-Moran & Hoy, 2000) because this can potentially undermine much of the positive outcomes of the neoliberalisation process. An environment of low trust is particularly unjust towards hard-working teachers who deserve to be trusted, yet such a system seems to be able to create very little space for such trust to flourish.

A second element that contributes to teacher dissatisfaction with their job is the high-surveillance culture (Mahony & Hextall, 2000) that results from the neoliberal hyper-accountability regime. In this regard, one has to consider that the neoliberal policymaker perceives teachers as employees who are, protected from market-forces, in a situation that is prone to producer capture, and also in an advantageous position as regards the principal-agent issue because teachers are alone in their classrooms offering a service to clients (students) who are unable to properly evaluate its quality. Hence the need for high levels of surveillance. Consequently, the neoliberal standards-based outcomes-focused hyper-accountability regime aimed at creating tangible evidence (Olssen, 1996) that leads to a situation where teachers are obliged to work under constant surveillance, a situation that has been documented in diverse studies including Mac an Ghail (1992), Smyth et al. (2000), Leaton Gray (2007), Haggerty and Ericson (2006) and Stevenson and Wood (2013). Each one of these studies, along with others, provide evidence that "globally, where neoliberalism has triumphed in education, common results have been ...increases in levels

of surveillance” (Hill, 2007, p. 212) which is unsurprising considering the kind of policies enacted. When added to the low-trust culture referred to above, the high-surveillance factor adds to making teachers prone to be dissatisfied with their jobs. Once again, exponential levels of surveillance would be perceived as unjust especially by experienced teachers who after years of provision may expect a modicum of trust as part of the respect owed to them as experienced professionals.

Another feature of a neoliberalised education system that contributes to teacher dissatisfaction is the fact that teachers’ daily professional lives become marked by threats and punishments aimed at controlling their behaviour. Such attitude pertains to the contractual accountability (Gleeson & O’Donnabha, 2009) that is characteristic of the neoliberal market rationality of ‘I will give you this if you give me that’, where the attachment of consequences to performance is taken for granted (O’Day, 2002). Due to the hybrid nature of actually existing neoliberalism, the forms that such deterrents take up vary considerably depending on what is politically feasible in different settings, yet there is fundamentally a relationship between principals and agents based on rewards/punishments related to measurable outcomes. Once more, this characteristic is a testimony of distrust towards educators (Falabella, 2014) along with the assumption that teachers only perform when threatened or rewarded (Falabella, 2014) and not because of professional commitment.

In different jurisdictions, punishments can take very different forms, these include: withdrawal of financial resources (Falabella, 2014), modification of curricula and replacement of personnel (Kelley et al., 2000), performance pay (Moe, 2003, p. 87), removal of special responsibilities (Figlio & Loeb, 2011), mandatory training and termination of employment (Hursh, 2013), increased requirements for planning (O’Day, 2002), loss of accreditation (Stecher & Kirby, 2004), public shaming (Bruns et al., 2011) through published performance tables, and possibly even closure (Bruns, et al., 2011). Evidently, none of these punishments would be a pleasant experience. Furthermore, such measures can potentially be unfair towards teachers especially when one considers how difficult it is to measure teacher performance accurately.

A fourth negative consequence of the neoliberalisation of compulsory education for teachers is excessive workload. Much research has shed light on this phenomenon, and it has become widely acknowledged that the neoliberalisation of compulsory education

inevitably leads to more work for teachers (Bloomfield, 2009; Gallant & Riley, 2017; Green et al. 2018; Stevenson & Wood, 2013; von der Embse & Putwain, 2015). Replies provided by teachers in some of these studies are particularly indicative of the consequences brought about by neoliberal education policies as regards work-intensification. Statements, such as, “I’m much more conscious of the clock ticking and therefore I am very, very reluctant to have anything interrupt that time plan” (Gewirtz, 1997, p. 228) reveal the extra pressure. Additionally, comments such as, “I feel as though somebody’s turned up the treadmill under us without our permission” (Leithwood et al., 2002, p. 109) and “more and more has to be done; less and less time is available to do it” (Apple & Jungck, 1992, p. 25), leave little doubt about the added pressures on teachers.

Work for teachers is intensified under neoliberal governance due to various causes. Causes include, more time devoted to teaching as demanded by prescribed curricula (Merson, 2000), the extension of administrative duties (Merson, 2000), less “down time” during the working day (Ballet et al., 2006), more time spent planning and justifying one’s decisions (Bailey, 2000), time taken to work on assessment and target setting, time taken to plan due to repeated changes to syllabuses, time spent on recording students’ progress (Gewirtz, 1997), along with the production of evidence of one’s performance (Apple, 2007). Recent research conducted by the Department for Education in England revealed that the major causes for excessive workload were: “recording, inputting, monitoring and analysing data ... marking ... lesson and weekly planning ... administrative and support tasks ... attending staff meetings ... reporting on pupil progress ... setting and reviewing pupil targets ... [and] implementing new initiatives” (DfE, 2015, p. 206). Apart from hyper-accountability, there are other factors that are conducive to work intensification, all of which are a direct result of neoliberal policies. Such factors include the process of marketisation of compulsory education provision that leads to a situation where competition amongst schools to attract students results in the intensification of teachers’ workload (Stevenson & Wood, 2013; Weinstein et al., 2016).

A third source of work intensification for teachers results from neoliberal social policies, or lack thereof. It should be taken into consideration that “under social democratic liberal policies, social inequality is a social responsibility. Social justice requires that inequalities be minimized through social programmes and the redistribution of resources and power” (Levitas, 1998, p. 14) and as a consequence, Robin Hood policies are institutionalised in pursuit of an egalitarian society thereby directly helping those worse off

with positive repercussions that can affect even classroom life. On the contrary, under neoliberal governance, inequality is considered to be the inevitable result of spreading opportunity more widely and free-markets, therefore despite unequal outcomes, there is no justification for collective redress, except in cases of severe deprivation. In such a state of affairs, where the individual is held fully responsible (Hursh, 2009) state support actions are curtailed. As a result, limited redistributive policies generate more frequent social problems of the most varied kinds (Wilkinson & Pickett, 2009). The lack of generous social services to compensate for structural disadvantages bring changes in society that are naturally reflected in the classroom. In such a situation, teachers need to be more creative and ingenious to compensate for the deprivation which some students face when compared to others.

The effects on teachers of work-intensification include feelings stress and anxiety (Ballet et al., 2006; Bloomfield, 2009; Boyle et al., 1995; Troman, 2000; Whitty, 1997). The fact that excessive workload increases teacher stress to the detriment of teachers' physical and mental health, is worrying because the neoliberalisation process is a source of teacher stress in various other ways as well. Other aspects of neoliberalisation process that can increase stress include school inspections and performance appraisal systems (Travers & Cooper, 1996), high stakes testing (Berryhill et al., 2009) and the use of student pass rates as the basis of teacher performance evaluations (von der Embse et al., 2016). This is also of concern because teachers who end up stressed out are less likely to be effective teachers to the detriment of students (Goddard et al., 2000; Tschannen-Moran & Barr, 2004). Furthermore, it has been shown that work intensification is a direct cause of lack of self-esteem (Gallant & Riley, 2017), it leads to professional dissatisfaction (Scott & Dinham, 2002) and finally work intensification even undermines teacher creativity (Ballet et al., 2006), thus further sustaining the view that the neoliberalisation of compulsory education, in spite of all the effort towards "excellence" may end up having counterproductive effects, unless managed carefully.

Actions can be taken to address this issue, for example, the current UK government has pledged to raise "teachers' starting salaries to £30,000 – among the most competitive in the graduate labour market" (UK Conservative Manifesto 2019, p. 13) to make teaching a more attractive job. Additionally, the UK Department for Education has launched the "Reducing Teacher Workload" (DfE, 2015) initiatives aimed specifically at finding ways that support teachers with their workloads. One consequence of these initiatives was Ofsted's

prioritisation of exploring “practices that reduce workload and improve teacher well-being” (Ofsted, 2018, p. 28) in 2019, and their unequivocal admission that “the data-gathering culture in our schools, EY providers and colleges has grown out of all proportion to its usefulness. We needed to stop contributing to this overload. Inspectors no longer look at school-generated attainment or progress data ...We hope that this will help end any data collection that is asked of teachers ‘for Ofsted’ and so make a meaningful contribution to reducing workload” (Ofsted, 2020, p. 15). Increasing workload could be seen as a positive feature of neoliberalism: if this were kept within reasonable levels, if adequate remuneration were provided, and if it were made explicit from day-one what the job actually entails. When any one of these elements is absent, then teachers would be right to complain about unfair amounts of work.

Another repercussion on teachers following the neoliberalisation of an education system, which can potentially have unfair consequences on teachers results from the fragmentation of provision caused by parental choice policies that make it more difficult for teachers to unionise because of the increasing incomparability of their employment conditions. This may have a number of benefits, but it would be wrong to put teachers in situations where it is practically impossible to speak with one voice. In essence, as Giroux accurately points out, “the rhetoric of accountability, privatisation, and standardisation...weaken[s] teacher unions” (Giroux, 2010, p. 713). A neoliberal government aims at infusing competition into the system with the aim of improving it. In practice, this often results in teachers being employed directly by their schools instead of by the state. This change in employment conditions can have negative effects on their employment security with weaker protection against arbitrary dismissal and weaker income security (Hill, 2007). It is maintained that variability of employment conditions that result from the fragmentation of educational services “strikes at the heart of professional equity, under which teachers having similar qualifications can expect the same pay and conditions at any education institution of the same level across the country” (Torres et al., 2004, p. 4).

Once education service is fragmented, it is difficult to speak with one voice for equal working conditions. This leads to weaker representation security (Hill, 2007) thereby decreasing the bargaining power of teachers’ unions (Torres et al., 2004). In fact, considering the nature and extent of neoliberal reform, it is not difficult to understand why most would agree that where neoliberalism takes root, it generates casualisation and widened differences in employment conditions (Hill, 2007) that are collectively conducive to weaker working conditions and weaker union strength. While possibly far-fetched, it

perhaps could also be argued that the many different routes that enable individuals to join the teaching profession, for example in jurisdictions such as England, is also a means through which the teaching profession itself is weakened and teachers' voice as a stakeholder in education reforms is muted. This is an intentional outcome of neoliberal reforms because without weaker employee voice there is no way in which neoliberal hyper-accountability policies can be implemented successfully. Strong unions would want to halt work intensification, weaken school inspections, and all causes of low morale that result from constant surveillance (Ambler, 1987). It can arguably be said that the neoliberalisation process of compulsory schooling would simply not happen unless first actions are taken to weaken union power. The potential unfairness towards teachers is a cause of concern since teachers, like other employees, should be able to speak in a collective voice, but the ability to do so is weakened in situations of very different employment conditions, where everyone ends up having very different demands. Nonetheless, it is also true that very strong union power can potentially hold innovation down, which means that a balance must be found that is fair for children and taxpayers, in allowing smooth implementation of more efficient practices, yet, without annihilating teachers voice in the process. In the long run, weakening teachers voice to such an extent that it makes many feel helpless, may affect teacher retention negatively thereby resulting in weakening the education system. This would benefit no one.

The neoliberal agenda for compulsory education, through its prioritisation of efficiency and accountability and the aim of establishing consumer sovereignty, has extensive consequences on teachers' life at school, some of which can be potentially unfair towards teachers because neoliberal reforms may be demanding more from teachers than can reasonably be expected, and because teachers may not be provided with the space which they deserve as professionals where to exercise their professional discretion. The established two-pronged approach to sustain educational accountability, maintained through the extensive array of policies that uphold administrative accountability and market-based accountability through parental choice policies generates a culture in schools that is marked by distrust and surveillance, threats, excessive workloads and possibly even weaker employment conditions. Unsurprisingly, the neoliberalisation process has a propensity to impinge negatively on teachers' morale and job satisfaction (Brehony, 2005; Day et al., 2006; Dinham & Scott, 2000; Nichols and Berliner, 2007; Scott & Dinham, 2002). Considering the neoliberal agenda for compulsory education, along with the prioritisation given to efficiency and accountability and the very philosophical anthropology inherent to

the system where individuals are perceived to act on self-interest, there is not much else that could have been expected from the neoliberalisation of compulsory education. Responses, such as, “I’ve been appraised, inspected, observed, interviewed, chewed-up and spat out by all manner of experts telling me what to do...” (TES, 1998) are a symptom of the ensuing overall depressing working environment that is an outcome of the neoliberalisation process. Such situations are unfair to teachers and demand compensatory measures.

Additionally, having impacted teachers’ professional lives adversely in so many ways, the minimum that could be done is for teachers to be provided with generous remuneration and improved working conditions to at least try to compensate for the changes that result from the neoliberalisation process. Unless such compensatory measures are institutionalised, then the neoliberalisation of compulsory education, as regards teachers, has to be judged as unfair because it expects a great deal from teachers without giving them anything in return. Therefore, policymakers can either choose to follow the democratic and socially just route of trusting teachers as professionals, as advised by many education theorists, where teachers are empowered and trusted as professionals with all the benefits and disadvantages that such a system entails. Alternatively, if one prefers a neoliberalised school system, along with its advantages (stronger parents voice, improved academic attainment, extra choice, economically relevant learning), then they must take into consideration the issues referred to above and compensate accordingly. This would improve the moral position of the entire neoliberal project.

8.3 The Changing Reality of Teaching under Neoliberalised Education Systems: Hyper-Regulated, Professionally Restrictive and Focused on Academic Attainment.

Under a neoliberalised education system, hyper-regulated teachers end up with less space to exercise their professional autonomy to the detriment of their identity as professionals. The neoliberalisation of an education system entails the idea that only a strong accountability system can enable schools “to deliver what is required, increasing profitability and international competitiveness” (Hanlon, 1998, p. 52). Consequently, the aim to sustain efficiency by eliminating producer capture, and the need to maintain strong control over the education system to enable a quick response to the needs of the economy pushes the neoliberal policymaker to establish hyper-accountability measures. Collectively, such policies ensure that schools are controlled more strictly through funding, testing, certification, and auditing (Connell, 2013) all of which operate within “prescriptive policy-standards of quality” (Solbrekke & Sugrue, 2014, p. 13). An example of enhanced remote-

control power can be found in the UK 1988 *Education Reform Act*, which gave the Secretary of State for Education 415 new powers (Cave, 1990; John, 1990; Jonathan, 1997; Wooldridge, 1994) and also the *No Child Left Behind Act* (US Congress, 2002) in the U.S., which increased the role of the federal government in education matters of individual states especially through funding mechanisms.

The consequences of the collective effects of the array of initiatives that maintain hyper-accountability, transform accountability practices into a continuous process thereby impinging heavily on teachers' daily actions (Ranson, 2003). This ongoing process leads to a situation where accountability becomes a process of growing specification, so that instead of a series of events, it becomes more like an internalised disposition (Ranson, 2003), to be acted upon constantly. Due to this process, it is often sustained that accountability produces new subjectivities, of teachers' behaviour informed by business ethics (Suspitsyna, 2010). This indirect system of control becomes mostly evident through the culture of performativity that hyper-accountability tends to generate, where daily practices come to be dictated through standards and criteria. Unavoidably, within a performativity culture, teachers find themselves urged "to make their work as explicit and transparent as possible" (Solbrekke & Sugrue, 2014, p. 13). Within such a system, teachers are required to spend an increasing amount of their time in producing evidence of their work. Unless implemented carefully, hyper-accountability can lead to situations where "it is not that performativity gets in the way of 'real' educational work: it is a vehicle for changing what real educational work is!" (Ball, 2016, p. 1053) so that, for example, the real work of the teacher becomes ticking a box to mark that specific learners have been given a printed copy of their timetables, rather than teaching them to become organised and how to maintain their schedule. To this end, it is argued that the need to create evidence of performance results in changing them into something different (Ball, 2016). In this manner, the hyper-accountability measures that are typical of neoliberalised education systems end up redefining what counts as professional practice. Areas of teachers' professional remit become centrally regulated to such an extent that they limit teachers' abilities to apply their judgments so that in sum, practices of accountability end up not merely regulating teachers practices but redefining teachers' professional identities.

A second feature within a neoliberalised education system that changes teachers' professional lives originates from two indispensable pre-marketisation policies. The aim of achieving consumer sovereignty in the field of compulsory education demands the

implementation of marketisation in the provision of schooling services that may occur through school vouchers (in the USA) or through the establishment of state-funded independent schools known as Charter Schools in the U.S., Academies/Free Schools in England, Independent Public Schools in Australia, and Partnership Schools in New Zealand. Such schools can disconnect from the control of local authorities and become autonomous. This is increasingly the case in England where 47% of pupils in compulsory education attend academies (NAO, 2018, p. 4) and 7% attend private schools (ISC, 2019, p. 12). The process of marketisation affects teachers because infusing competition into the provision of compulsory education requires the establishment of specific policies. As Apple accurately points out, “a national curriculum and especially a national testing programme are the first and most essential steps toward increased marketisation. They actually provide the mechanisms for comparative data that ‘consumers’ need to make markets work as markets” (Apple, 2004, p. 30). There are various reasons why this is the case. First of all, a common curriculum contributes to standardise provision. This is important because otherwise it would be “disruptive if children who moved from a school in one area to a school elsewhere found themselves confronted with a course of work different in almost all respects from that to which they had become accustomed” (Thatcher, 1993, p. 498). Such a situation would in practice discourage parents from looking for alternative school arrangements.

To this end, neoliberalised education systems are often characterised by national curricula. Consequently, one can find documents, such as, *The New Zealand Curriculum* or *The National Curriculum in England* that are meant to guide schools in aligning their provision to what the state mandates. In the case of Australia, for example, it is stated that “the Australian Curriculum sets the goal for what all students should learn as they progress through their school life – wherever they live in Australia and whichever school they attend” (australiancurriculum.edu.au). This facilitates the parents’ possibility to change their children’s schools, knowing that the change would not be too drastic. Furthermore, customer sovereignty can be enhanced when information on the performance of a school is made available. While such information can only be partial, it can still assist many parents to make more informed decisions. In fact, it is contended that this is why “alongside the national curriculum [there] should be a nationally recognised and reliably monitored system of testing at various stages of the child’s school career, which would allow parents...to know what was going right and wrong and take remedial action if necessary” (Thatcher, 1993, p. 591), including the possibility to choose a different school. Both these measures

are meant to vest parents with the so-called power of exit (Hirschman, 1970), which is deemed to be more powerful than the power of voice.

In practice, what these and similar policies mean for teachers is that their remits are redefined so that they need to follow national directions in areas of curriculum and assessment. This also counts for teachers working in schools where formally the national curriculum does not apply, for example, Academies and Free Schools in England. Nonetheless, in such cases, parallel measures including examination syllabi, inspection reports, regulated qualifications frameworks, and funding mechanisms, in practice accomplish the same functions of providing teachers with clear teaching parameters. Characteristically, in such contexts, national examinations enforce subject curricula as a dominant framework of teachers' work, thereby limiting teachers' professional discretion (Ranson, 1995). In practice, in countries such as the UK, this process has meant that progressively, governments have increased their control of the education system (McKenzie, 1993) especially through their control over strategic areas, such as, curriculum, assessment and even pedagogy. This also means that "although schools now have a greater level of autonomy, the full picture is complex, as there have also been increases in central control, particularly over matters such as curriculum and assessment" (Eurydice Unit, 2007, p. 2), with areas such as curriculum, assessment and pedagogy, having practically been elevated to the status of reserved matters, with the teachers' role redefined as being in charge of adapting such decisions to their classrooms taking into consideration their students' specific needs.

A third feature within a neoliberalised education system that changes teachers' professional lives results from the different expectations from schooling itself, which changes into one that is more focused on preparation for the enterprise society than on anything else. Having an efficient education system and maintaining consumer sovereignty through marketisation is only part of the story as regards the effects of the neoliberalisation of education on teachers. It is true that, for example, in England "the pincer movement of markets and managerialism ... have combined to effectively and radically re-shape teachers' experience of work" (Stevenson & Wood, 2013, p. 43) but these were not the only forces. The other part of the story has to do with the final product that compulsory education is meant to produce: the entrepreneurial self, the responsabilised citizen who is prepared for economic autonomy. Neoliberalisation not only concerns the issue of how education is to

be delivered, the very purpose of a neoliberalised school system, that is, what should the final product look like, also affects what is expected from teachers.

On analysing neoliberalism, it becomes increasingly evident that neoliberals have an admiration for a limited while strong state, along with a general scepticism towards thick notions of democracy and even thick notions of education. Consequently, neoliberal theories “subsume education as an economic imperative within global capitalism and discursively marginalise issues around social justice” (Bagley & Beach, 2015, p. 434) so that schools can focus on creating responsible individuals who are able to compete in the marketplace and increase the nation’s economic productivity, irrespective of the structural disadvantages that some of them might be facing. Predictably, evaluations of major education policies, such as the *No Child Left Behind* in the U.S., reveal a narrow conception of teaching “based on a technical transmission model” (Cochran-Smith & Lytle, 2006, p. 669). Additionally, analyses also revealed a “narrow view of knowledge as something that can be given to teachers to give to their students; transfer and test to see if transfer occurred” (Cochran-Smith & Lytle, 2006, p. 684) successfully. Gaches’ evaluations lead to the same conclusions. In fact, she concludes that as a direct result of neoliberalisation of education, teachers end up focusing on students’ performance in examinations (Gaches, 2018) in line with a centrally set definition of academically successful learners. Such narrow conceptions of teaching and knowledge are partly the reason why neoliberalised education systems are often criticised for their overall “narrow instrumental notion of education” (Giroux, 2010, p. 710) as successful transmission of knowledge, skills, and values. Such restrictive conceptions, in turn, lead to a reductive conception of teaching thereby affecting teacher identity.

This focus on learning is framed in a context of globalised competition with policies presented as being unavoidable due to the effects of globalisation (Hursh, 2009). This kind of discourse is, for example, very evident in England, where policy documents state that in education “what really matters is how we’re doing compared with our international competitors” (DfE, 2010, p. 50). A similar discourse can be noted in the U.S., where Paige (U.S. Secretary of Education 2001-2005) emphasised the “need to prepare our children for the workforce of the 21st century” (Paige, 2001, p.1) and where through extensive education policy rhetoric it is emphasised that enhancing educational provision is necessary for global competitiveness (Cochran-Smith & Lytle, 2006). In practice, this has meant that the moral purposes of education have been replaced by economic purposes (Skerritt, 2019).

These changes occur as part of the process through which a neoliberal agenda replaces the egalitarian agenda for compulsory schooling.

What such priorities boil down to, at classroom level, is that the neoliberalisation of compulsory education results in a process that can be called ‘learnification’ (Biesta, 2015) where the be-all and end-all of schooling becomes learning examinable content, where schools are referred to “as a ‘learning environment’ or ‘place for learning’” (Biesta, 2015, p. 76) and where teaching is conceptualised in terms of “‘facilitating learning,’ ‘creating learning opportunities,’ or ‘delivering learning experiences’ ”(Biesta, 2015, p. 76) which are principally academic in nature. Unsurprisingly, the role of teachers in such a context, which at first glance may deceptively be interpreted as an expression of progressive child-centred education, is reformulated to ensure that teachers focus primarily on the learners’ academic development. Despite the vocabulary which may lead one to think otherwise, what goes on in situations referred to by Biesta is not progressive education that would be similar to growth aimed at cultivating the democratic self and instilling dispositions for a democratic way of life. On the contrary, concerns related to fostering growth and well-rounded development are demoted (Ballet et al., 2006), while not completely omitted, yet, given second preference to academic performance that is earmarked as the truly important matter. Within such a context, “the very definition of what counts as a [teaching] skill is further altered to include only that which is technical” (Apple, 2000, p. 120) in line with the set aims assigned to schooling, aims underpinned by the principle of individual responsibility.

As a consequence of the neoliberalisation of compulsory education and the effort made to implement the set agenda, including, efficiency, parental choice, and the creation of the entrepreneurial-self, the very meaning of education changes, the role of schools changes, the idea of what is good teaching changes and the role of teachers changes as well. Unlike those policymakers who strive for social justice and aim at promoting the emancipatory powers of compulsory schooling, neoliberal policymakers do not consider schooling as a great equaliser or a way to compensate for structural disadvantages. This is considered by many to be unjust. Nevertheless, the neoliberal vision is different from one that would rather promote ideas such as equality of educational opportunity and social justice. Those who believe in social justice argue that compulsory schooling is meant to result in a less unequal society (Bagley & Beach, 2015). This is not the case for neoliberals. This aim would mean a society where the top priority is to cultivate democratic citizens (Hursh,

2009) and where more generally, it should be ensured that citizens are collectively promoting “deliberative forms of democracy that support individual rights beyond the right to choose” (Hursh, 2009, p. 162) through distributive policies that lead to a less unequal society. According to such a view, “a school is not merely a teaching shop” (CACE, 1967, p.17) but primarily a place to ensure a happy childhood, which is the basis of successful adulthood (CACE, 1967).

Conversely, not holding any ambitions towards the aim of social justice, and in fact adhering to a different vision of a just society, by prioritising negative freedom over equality, neoliberal policymakers tend to disagree and consider schools to be teaching shops, primarily focused on supporting each individual learner to improve academically and obtain the necessary qualifications that would support their aims to pursue further studies or find (or create) employment. That is, schools where teachers are meant to provide good-quality teaching services. This is not to say that schools are not expected to fulfil duties related to citizenship education and the students’ right to a broad and balanced curriculum, yet there is an understanding that each students’ individual interests, as well as taxpayers’ interests, are better served when schools focus on stretching students to the best of their academic abilities. Under neoliberal governance, compulsory schooling is conceptualised as future-focused preparation for economically independent living, schools become teaching shops, and teachers become teaching attendants responsible for the learning process, a far cry from the critical intellectuals demanded by those who hold emancipatory purposes. In a neoliberalised framework, teachers are essentially hindered from contributing to the democratic project of a more equal society, which for neoliberals is not only a delusion, but also a corruption of the concept of democracy and blatant abuse of government power intent to disregard what moral principle it takes, private property, equality before the law, individual freedom, as long as people are socio-economically more equal.

8.4 The Neoliberal Conception of the Ideal Teacher

Within a neoliberalised system of compulsory education, while there still is a commitment to respect the learners’ entitlement to a broad and balanced curriculum, there are also various factors that push for an instrumental conception of teaching understood mostly as the technical transmission of specific subject knowledge, skills and values. Factors that push for such a conception of schooling include: school cultures marked by performativity and hyper-accountability, pressures that result from national high-stakes standardised assessments, political pressure to enhance learner employability to contribute to the

country's economic competitiveness as well as pressures to perform well in the international assessments such as PISA, the OECD Programme for International Student Assessment, which measures students' abilities in reading, science and mathematics at age fifteen, TIMSS, (Trends in International Mathematics and Science Study), which measures mathematics and science knowledge at ages ten and fourteen every four years, and PIRLS (Progress in International Reading Literacy Study), which measures reading skills at age ten. Collectively, these aspects of a neoliberalised system of compulsory education push for the conceptualisation of "learning as performance on tests" (Cochran-Smith & Lytle, 2006, p. 689). This has repercussions on what is expected from classroom teachers. This specific conception of schooling leads to a particular conception of what can be considered as good teaching because of the fact that in a neoliberalised system, accountability measures influence how things are done in schools by expanding the administrative element of teachers' roles especially in areas of recording and reporting assessment. Secondly, especially in jurisdictions where national learning outcomes frameworks, national examinations and national curricula are in place, teaching ends up mostly consisting of implementing prescribed tasks (Bucelli, 2019). Furthermore, high-stakes national assessments encourage a restrictive definition of teaching mostly as accountability for student test performance (Cochran-Smith & Lytle, 2006). Considering such a state of affairs, it comes as no surprise that a neoliberalised education system requires a different kind of teacher than a system that aims for an emancipatory contribution towards a socially just society through critical education.

The neoliberal normative commitments towards the purposes of schooling and the specific conception of teaching results in the adoption of a specific definition of what constitutes an ideal teacher. First of all, good teachers in a neoliberalised education system are strong in the understanding of their subject/s and know how to transmit knowledge to students. This characteristic of the good teacher can be seen in the U.S. through policies such as the *No Child Left Behind* (U.S. Congress, 2002) and associated discourse that, "consistently portray good teachers as ...transmitters of knowledge and skills" (Cochran-Smith & Lytle, 2006, p. 677) and through the insistence on the view that "teachers with strong academic backgrounds in their subjects are more likely to boost student performance" (U.S. Department of Education, 2002, p. vii). This belief becomes so ingrained in policy discourse that a message is conveyed which holds that "teacher preparation should be streamlined with subject-matter knowledge paramount and the rest picked up on the job" (Cochran-Smith & Lytle, 2006, p. 682).

In England, this message has been conveyed through the establishment of alternative routes that lead to Qualified Teacher Status, which side-line the contribution of universities, and training in areas such as, philosophy, sociology, psychology, and history of education. These new routes prioritise subject content and pedagogy. Alternative initial teaching training routes, where teachers can start to teach in a class from very early on within the course are evidence of a push towards such a direction. Currently, in England, these include, *Researchers in Schools* (a route for PhD holders), Troops to Teachers (a route for ex-members of the armed forces), School Direct (a route for holders of a First Degree [2.2 class]) and Teach First (a route for holders of First Degree [2.1 class]) and the SCITT consortia (School Centred Initial Teacher Training). A further possible indication that in some countries, subject knowledge is perceived to be the main requirement necessary for teaching comes from the fact that, for example, in England, currently only 46% of compulsory-school aged children attend schools where the Qualified Teacher Status, which confirms adequate training, is a mandatory requirement for teachers. The remaining 54% attend schools where Qualified Teacher Status is not required. These consist of 47% of students within academies/free schools (NAO, 2018) and 7% within independent schools (ISC, 2019), both of which are independent from the local authority. Arguably, it could be contended that had policymakers believed in the importance of the wide-ranging training necessary to obtain Professional Teacher Status, the range of schools exempted from employing teachers with Professional Teacher Status, would not be as extensive. The requirement to recruit fully trained teachers would be adhered to more strictly.

Apart from being strong in subject content, the good teacher in a neoliberalised education system is a professional who can meet externally set standards (Brennan, 1996), in the sense that teachers' discretion is circumscribed by the national curriculum, possibly a national outcome framework, national standardised assessments and even national quality indicators issued by school inspectorates or state authorities, such as the *Teachers' Standards* (DfE, 2011) in England, which provide a detailed picture of what is expected from teachers.

Thirdly, good teachers in a neoliberalised system are expected to be hard workers. They need to be able to endure a system characterised by the frequent changes that are characteristic of any education system meant to supply an economy based on free competitive markets where innovation is a key element for success. Under such

arrangements, rapid change becomes inexorably part of the system and teachers are expected to be able to cope with it. Secondly, good teachers must be hard workers because they need to survive a system characterised by constant surveillance, punishment, and intense workloads. Additionally, in an education system characterised by marketisation and competition, as educators, “we are burdened with the responsibility to perform and, if we do not, we are in danger of being seen as irresponsible or indeed ... ‘unprofessional’” (Ball, 2016, p. 1053). Under such circumstances, educators are even more emphatically expected to work hard and efficiently, in order to be considered good teachers.

Fourthly, the effective teacher in neoliberalised education systems is one who prioritises progress in test scores (Hara & Sherbine, 2018). Such a teacher needs to be an expert who performs well “in meeting the standardised criteria set for the accomplishment of both students and teachers” (Brennan, 1996, p. 22), to help ensure that students perform well in examinations and that schools stand out in league tables. This may sometimes mean that the system pushes teachers to focus on those learners who are just able to make the grade to the detriment of the higher-ability or lower-ability students. This characteristic of neoliberalised education systems is one reason why it is essential to educate teachers about issues of ethics and their moral duty to support each learner in their classes. The ethical implications related to why teachers are equally responsible to care for all the learners in their class, without prioritising those students whose success profits the school and themselves most, should be part of the training of any teacher. This is even more the case for teachers working within a neoliberalised education system because they are the ones who most need to be aware of the precipice towards which the system pushes them, especially through practices such as, teaching to the test, impoverished educational experiences, and triage.

Furthermore, the ideal neoliberal teacher needs to be a good data analyst. Data is essential for formative uses in order to quickly identify learners’ needs and inform one’s teaching to address them. Data is also essential for accountability purposes especially in relation to the recording and reporting of learner progress. This is partly the reason why the *No Child Left Behind* (U.S. Congress, 2002) policy, “identifies another crucial dimension of good teaching: teachers’ uses of test data to make decisions” (Cochran-Smith & Lytle, 2006, p. 677). Indeed, it is also the reason why teachers need to have a good understanding of how to use education data to be able to meet the expectations and adequately fulfil their roles as teachers (Pierce & Chick, 2011; Wayman *et al.*, 2007; Young & Kim, 2010).

Linked with the need to be good at handling data, is the need for the ability to be good clerks to oneself. Teachers are expected to contribute to their school's accountability systems. This means that even if they were world-authorities in their subjects and excellent pedagogues, they still need to add the skill to be organised and maintain excellent records of their own and their students' performance (Brennan, 1996) and why it is increasingly evident that new administrative skills become an essential part of being a good teacher (Ballet et al., 2006). Under a hyper-accountability regime, teachers' administrative and clerical skills are as important as the skills to manage a class and to teach effectively. Many view such a situation as degrading because they relegate teachers "to the status of clerks" (Giroux, 2010, p. 710). On the contrary, I would argue that being a professional, entails a number of clerical duties that do not damage the profession, even though admittedly such duties make any profession less appealing.

8.5 Criticism of the Ideal Teacher in a Neoliberalised Education System: Restricting Teachers' Professional Autonomy

One aspect of a neoliberalised education system that is heavily criticised by those who do not share the neoliberal conception of a good society, is the neoliberal understanding of the ideal teacher. Such a teacher who, as described right above, is: strongest at subject content, a good pedagogue, comfortable with meeting goals set elsewhere, ready to work very hard, prepared to face frequent changes, able to survive under intense accountability pressures, capable of improving student grades and an expert in data analysis and administrative record keeping is considered to be the apex of teacher professionalism from a neoliberal standpoint. However, others maintain that such a conception of the ideal teacher is not even remotely close to what should be expected from teachers. There are three major concerns with such a restrictive understanding of the good teacher. Many argue that the neoliberal conception of the ideal teacher is degrading because it restricts teacher professional autonomy. Secondly, such a conception of the ideal teacher is criticised because teachers' contribution to the public good in terms of a more socially just society is reduced drastically. Thirdly, in those cases where such a restricted conception is taken to mean the possibility to bypass a rigorous university education for teachers, such a conception of the ideal teacher can be regarded a simply inadequate, even to be able to address the requirements of a neoliberalised education system.

As regards the first issue, many are of the view that the neoliberalisation of schools results in the restriction of teachers' professional autonomy. This occurs because through

this process some duties, such as, management of assessment data, record keeping and reporting, increasingly form part of teachers' professional remit, while other duties, such as, curriculum design, choice of learning outcomes, decisions related to summative assessment, and sometimes even choice of teaching methods, are taken out of the teachers' remit. At the basis of such a move there is the view that "the time has long gone when isolated, unaccountable professionals made curriculum and pedagogical decisions alone, without reference to the outside world" (DfEE, 1998, p. 14). While, this may not really have been the case, because teachers, as part of professional communities of practice, actually exercise their professional discretion within a framework of shared practical wisdom and judgement, yet neoliberal constraints should in practice provide stronger assurances that the necessary actions are taken for the benefit of students in every case, and avoid, or at least reduce cases, where a teacher may decide not to act professionally. Such restrictions are crucial for the neoliberal policymaker because the investment of taxpayers' money in education is mostly justified through the contribution that the education system is expected to make to the economy, rather than the contribution that schooling provides in terms of helping to bring about a more egalitarian society. Achieving the aim of economic growth necessitates stricter central control of aspects of the education system, in fact, as expected, "globally, where neoliberalism has triumphed in education, common results have been ...decreased autonomy for schoolteachers ... over curriculum and pedagogy" (Hill, 2007, p. 205) in favour of a system where such matters are decided upon centrally.

The issue of teachers' restricted autonomy is acknowledged by many, including Leaton Gray (2007), Biesta (2004) and Golden (2018) amongst others. Many maintain that it is unfair that a decrease in trust can lead to situations where teachers "at the peak of their professional expertise ...don't have the autonomy to define how they work" (Mahony & Hextal, 2000, p. 78) due to neoliberal processes that inevitably "result in a constrained practice" (Bucelli, 2019, p. 49). This outcome has been repeatedly documented in diverse settings including England (Ball, 2003a; Galton & MacBeath, 2008; Perryman, 2006; Perryman et al., 2011), the U.S. (Darling-Hammond, 2004, 2007; Lipman, 2004; Martina, et al, 2003) and also Australia (Adoniou, 2016; Bien, 2016). These studies, along with several others, provide evidence on how marketisation, competition and the performativity culture result in restrictions on teachers' possibility to act autonomously in matters of curriculum and choice of learning outcomes, amongst other things, by encouraging them to focus on those aspects that mostly enhance their students' and their school's performance

and that can contribute to their school's image when audited and compared with other schools.

Restricted autonomy is deemed to be undesirable because many see it as contributing to the so-called deprofessionalisation of the teaching profession (Barksdale-Ladd & Thomas, 2000; Biesta, 2019; Kostogriz & Doecke, 2011; Webb et al., 2004). Specifically, it is often argued that “test-based accountability undercuts teachers’ professionalism” (Nichols and Berliner, 2007, p. 17) by constraining the teaching process. It is also claimed that being forced to adhere to prescribed curricula leads to “the erosion of professionalism” (Simmonds & Taylor Webb, 2013, p. 22) by limiting teachers’ ability to decide on how best to fulfil their duties. Restricting areas of where professional discretion can be exercised, such as, curriculum design, formulation of summative assessment, and choice of teaching approach, also results in teacher deprofessionalisation because “by removing the expectation that teachers must go through rigorous training ... the work of teaching becomes more mechanized and more accessible to those without specialized knowledge” (Hara & Sherbine, 2018, p. 675) thereby damaging the image of teachers as professionals. Additionally, it is also sustained that the removal of matters that used to be considered as teachers’ prerogatives contributes to the “despoliation of the hinterland of indigenous professional judgement” (Fielding, 2001, p. 704) and therefore adds to deprofessionalised teachers. Furthermore, some maintain that the practice of “replacing subjective judgement with scientific evidence” (Biesta, 2015, p. 76) as part of the neoliberal conception of accountability, also undermines teachers’ professionalism.

Restricting teachers’ autonomy is also seen to be a contributing factor to teachers’ deprofessionalisation because such restrictions risk turning teachers into deskilled deliverers of pre-packaged material (Saltman, 2009). There are various reasons why it is sustained that “the rhetoric of accountability, privatisation, and standardisation...deskill[s] teachers” (Giroux, 2010, p. 713). Deskilling occurs when one’s area of expertise is diminished and for example, curricular design and assessment design, are taken away from one’s professional remit. Deskilling is also seen to be taking place when teachers are given standardised pre-packaged teaching materials, including detailed lesson plans, for them to implement. It is maintained that such a state of affairs fosters reliance on ready-made material (Hargreaves, 1992) thereby leading to further deskilling. It is also contended that once control over such matters is lost, teachers end up “jumping from an ever-changing series of curricular and pedagogical bridges as opposed to collaborating and employing

available resources to build their own” (Golden, 2018, p. 13). Such an image, where teachers are seen as ‘jumping from a given set of instructions to the next,’ renders the idea that proponents of such a view want to convey, one where the state orders teachers to jump and teachers are simply expected to ask ‘how high?’. Admittedly, this may be seen as a degrading image of the teaching profession, over one where teachers have a wider say on what is to be done in class.

There is little doubt that the neoliberalisation process entails redistribution of duties while it also changes what is to be expected from teachers. I believe that the changes lead to situation where students’ interests are better safeguarded, yet, it has to be admitted that it can be difficult for teachers to manage the change process. I think that elevating the status of parents and children to that of clients, from that of mere stakeholders, is a step in the right direction, because it better ensures that all the other stakeholders prioritise students’ needs. Secondly, using standardised curricula and assessment in a way to construct a clearer picture of the students’ attainment level can have considerable advantages for those in charge of improving the education system because in this manner, they have a clearer picture of what exactly needs to be improved and act in a more effective manner.

In general, policies that enhance accountability are also an effective way to provide students with a better service, unless these become a straitjacket that hinders teachers from supporting students in the way that benefits them most. Yet, this feeling of being put in a straitjacket is often at the basis of the complaints of deprofessionalisation of the teaching profession. According to neoliberals, such changes merely entail a re-professionalisation where teachers are asked to focus their energy on specific aspects. However, some can, and in fact many do, interpret such changes as practices that diminish their roles. The feeling of being devalued is most acute when teachers experience the neoliberalisation of their learning environments as “a shift from a professional understanding of their work in which they make decisions based on students’ interests, desires, and needs to a framing in which the educative process is driven by financial concerns and the demands of the market” (Golden, 2018, p. 13) along with the many changes brought by the neoliberal hyper-accountability measures. Change is never easy and undergoing changes where a professional comes to feel devalued must be even more difficult. Unsurprisingly, research has shown that such changes can bring about an ‘identity crisis’ (Day et al., 2005; MacLure, 1993; Woods & Jeffrey, 2002) because the changes brought by hyper-accountability measures are deep-rooted and have extensive effects on what it means to be a good teacher.

In my view, this identity crisis is most likely transitory. New teachers who have gone through a neoliberalised education system themselves will increasingly tend to neither feel deskilled nor deprofessionalised and will increasingly adopt an attitude similar to that described by Wilkins in his 2011 study. Wilkins' study revealed a difference in view between senior teachers and younger teachers who themselves went through an educational experience where the focus on increasing student attainment dominated school life (Wilkins, 2011). Such new teachers were more open to accountability measures than their senior colleagues. Additionally, Wilkins concluded that "teachers were able to hold on to their sense of autonomy whilst accepting (and generally welcoming) an intensive regime of accountability to both internal and external managerialism" (Wilkins, 2011, p. 404) without feeling that this was in any way degrading to the professional status. It was also recognized that "whilst some acknowledged the tensions, they appeared comfortable about the impact on their sense of professionalism" (Wilkins, 2011, p. 404) that was not damaged in spite of the high amount of accountability duties that they were expected to fulfil.

In the event, Wilkins remarked that for the younger teachers "the demands ...[to] continually demonstrate the effectiveness and impact of their teaching ...does not significantly conflict with their professional identity" (Wilkins, 2011, p. 405). In such cases, acceptance of neoliberal re-professionalisation was easier to accept because it did not challenge any set professional identity. As Wilkins concludes, such teachers "fully embrace the accountability culture of teaching" (Wilkins, 2011, p. 405) and are "generally comfortable with the wider framework of performative management cultures" (Wilkins, 2011, p. 405). Some of their replies were indicative of their comfort with the performativity-based teacher identity, for example, one teacher remarked, "I have to hold back sometimes when people moan about paperwork ... to be honest I think they are hanging on to the past where teachers could get away with murder" (Wilkins, 2011, p. 401). Such reply indicates not only that they are comfortable with their professional identity, but that they regard theirs as enhanced professionalism where it is no longer possible to get away with murder. Remarkably, the study reveals that such teachers are comfortable with their professional identity not because they accept the deprofessionalisation of their professions and are trying to make the best out of a lost cause. It seems to be more the case that they have a different understanding of what it means to be a professional teacher. They wilfully comply with accountability requirements and cherish "the 'micro-autonomy' of the classroom" (Wilkins, 2011, p. 405) as a major source of their professionalism.

A similar source of professionalism was noted in other studies, McNess et al., for example, documents circumstances where teachers “seized the potential for a margin of manoeuvre between the imposed centralised policies and their implementation” (2003, p. 248). This ‘margin of manoeuvrability’, where teachers felt in control, allowed teachers to feel that they were professionals despite having no authority over areas such as curriculum and assessment. Personally, I agree with the view that in spite of the asphyxiating accountability regime, there still is wide professional discretion to sustain teacher professionalism because classroom teaching is a very complex task that leaves ample space for teachers to exercise their professional discretion. I am aware that this is not the prevalent view on the matter, and that most may believe that it is more the case that “the degradation of the teaching role has led many to reinterpret their work in terms of a ‘misrecognized professionalism’, by assuming that the technical and effective execution of prescriptions by others is the ultimate proof of their expertise and competence” (Ballet et al., 2006, p. 211), but I cannot ignore my own teaching experience where I spent 10 years preparing students for the 11+ examination. I had no say on the curriculum, or the syllabus or the summative assessment methods, yet I felt that I was a professional, even though my choices were limited exclusively to pedagogical matters, or even when these were prescribed.

In spite of this, there was sufficient space to exercise professional judgment on how best to provide learners with their curricular entitlement, through the examples I chose, the emphasis I made on certain elements, the pace of the progress made, the amount of consolidation needed, the quantity and quality of out-of-class activities required to enhance the learning experience, and so on. In truth, like the teachers in Wilkins’ study, the high-accountability reality was the only teaching reality I knew, and therefore I never had to go through any kind of ‘identity crisis’ as did those teachers in studies conducted by MacLure (1993), Woods & Jeffrey, (2002) or Day et al., (2005). That may be a reason why it may have been easier for me to adapt, and why my attitude was identical to that of the optimistic teachers in Wilkins’ study. I acknowledge the changes triggered by the neoliberalisation process as regards teacher professionalism, but I do not think that the consequences in terms of teachers’ professional status are overall degrading. On the contrary, I personally hold teachers who work in a neoliberalised school environment in relatively higher esteem, because it is a more challenging working environment to work in, then one where teachers are given extensive leeway to do as they deem best.

8.6 Criticism of the Ideal Teacher in a Neoliberalised Education System: Restricting Teachers' Role in contributing to the Formation of a more Socially Just Society

A second major criticism of the neoliberal restrictive interpretation of teachers' professional identity is the fact that, in spite of being strong at subject content and pedagogy, hard workers, able to face frequent changes and to work under pressure, such teachers have far fewer opportunities to contribute to a more socially just society. This view leads to the claim that society should bring back those teachers who were "engaged in a social enterprise that supported and sustained a democratic public good" (Attick, 2017, p. 43) instead of promoting the neoliberal conception of the good teacher who, at best, can enable students to follow their self-interest. Nevertheless, the good teacher within a neoliberalised education system is the one who is willing to embrace the target-driven culture and who feels professional accomplishment when fulfilling such duties.

The main concern of this strand of criticism towards the neoliberal conception of the good teacher emanates from the perceived inadequacy of the teachers' role as mostly responsible for the particular neoliberal conception of the 'common good', that is, contributing to the effort of enhancing national economic competitiveness through an efficient education system that is aligned with the economic needs of the nation and that efficiently produces entrepreneurial selves who are able to maintain their economic autonomy and contribute to economic growth. Under neoliberal governance, there would not be much more that could be requested from teachers. Consequently, the neoliberal thin conception of schooling and the roles of teachers leads critics to conclude that "the rhetoric of accountability, privatisation, and standardisation... offers up a model for education that undermines it as a public good" (Giroux, 2010, p. 713) through an overemphasis of what is measurable as regards literacy and numeracy skills, and by the concomitant relegation of critical learning to the periphery of school priorities. The same concerns lead others to conclude that, for example, in the U.S., the "NCLB profoundly undermines in implicit and explicit ways, the broader democratic mission of education" (Cochran-Smith & Lytle, 2006, p. 689) that is, the mission to contribute to a more socially just society.

The fact that a performativity driven system of education constitutes a very infertile soil for social justice to flourish is deemed to be a major concern, in that, a neoliberalised education system, may not be conducive to encouraging teachers to evaluate the positive and negative aspects of classroom practices regularly and see how these can be improved to

better address the needs of disadvantaged learners. What further hinders teachers from contributing to matters such as critical education, social justice and democracy is the restricted autonomy that results from the neoliberalisation process, which leads to a situation where teachers lose much control over their actions. This becomes especially the case in jurisdictions where curriculum design and summative assessment are taken out of teachers' professional responsibility. All policies that lead to a restricted autonomy reduce teachers' control over education (Ballet et al., 2006) and in the process, teachers lose much of their ability to sustain critical education and social justice. Even more of concern for some, is the fact that once teachers become essentially technicians in the "education assembly line" (Hursh, 2009, p. 157) as is the case within a neoliberalised system, they are likely to become "alienated executors of someone else's plans" (Apple & Jungck, 1992, p. 24) or as it is often articulated, the teacher becomes an uncritical implementer (Dadds, 1997) whose professional discretion is eroded by hyper-accountability (Taylor Webb, 2005), which limits teachers' ability to actively contribute to important issues such as social justice. Very often this is also the case for those teachers who would otherwise contribute much towards their emancipatory vision of a democratic and just society. It is argued that such an educational arrangement results in limiting teachers' roles as critical intellectuals (Saltman, 2009), which is interpreted as a major negative impact on teachers. This view, in fact, leads to further criticism towards neoliberal hyper-accountability, in relation to the fact that by denying teachers' agency, they are transforming teachers into "inauthentic subjects" (Ranson, 2003, p. 462). That is, employees who fulfil their duties for the sake of performativity, but who do not believe in what they are doing or in the aims that they are made to achieve. A typical situation that tends to take place where employees values are not aligned with the values of their employer or their institution or company, which leans to alienation, and which may possibly even effect employee retention negatively. Arguably, it can even be speculated that under a neoliberal arrangement, teaching may not be the ideal career for those individuals who wish to make a strong contribution towards a more socially just society and that perhaps those who derive satisfaction from student academic achievement may find that they are better suited for the job and more in line with the objectives of their schools.

Such a situation that restricts teachers from contributing to the public good is very worrying for those who subscribe to the notion of social justice and who strive for an egalitarian society marked by fair equality of opportunity. Critics of neoliberalism argue that the neoliberal conception of the ideal teacher is restrictive of the potential that teachers

have in terms of contributing to a socially just society. Most critics of neoliberal perspectives argue that teachers should be “engaging in critical pedagogy, with a commitment to developing critical reflection, and a political activist committed to struggling for social justice and equality inside and outside the classroom” (Hill, 2007, p. 215) not merely concentrating on improving learners’ academic attainment. Giroux agrees with Hill and adds that rather than disinterested technicians, teachers should be “engaged intellectuals, willing to construct the classroom conditions that provide the knowledge, skills, and culture of questioning” (Giroux, 2010, p. 710) necessary to become active citizens. Only such a teacher can be assumed to be endorsing emancipatory education which amongst other things, prioritises issues of social cohesion, makes an effort to redress past injustices, actively contributes to the democratisation of society, contributes to overcoming discrimination towards marginalised groups, and most importantly, acknowledges the existence of structural disadvantages embedded in society and the power of such structural disadvantages to perpetuate systemic discrimination. A conception of teaching that is informed by such aims would allow teachers to address issues of social justice unlike the neoliberal technicist assumptions that hinder teachers from being able to critically engage with the question of why schools are unjust for specific students (Nieto,2000) .

Many expect that, teachers should also engage in analysing school practices, such as, curriculum, pedagogy, grouping methods, and recruitment policies (Nieto, 2000), to ensure that these are in line with a socially just vision of society. It is pointed out that, the fact that none of this is expected from a good neoliberal teacher, is further evidence that neoliberalism has nothing but “disdain for the notion of teachers as critical and public intellectuals” (Giroux, 2010, p. 712) who could potentially contribute a great deal to a more just society. It is sustained that this is unacceptable and that such views should be resisted. Such views should also be resisted because “teachers are the major resource for what it means to establish the conditions for education to be linked to critical learning rather than training” (Giroux, 2010, p. 710). Considering the crucial role that they could play, such critics argue that it is even more important that teachers should not be allowed to be transformed into simple “market functionaries” (Attick, 2017, p. 43) in charge of producing enterprising citizens. In relation to this, many are of the view that what should be done is rolling back the dominance of hyper-accountability, marketisation and the conception of schooling as investment in human capital, and enable a system that provides teachers and

school communities with the ability to act as social equalisers and compensate for structural injustices that mark capitalist societies, especially neoliberal ones.

One cannot in truth expect much in terms of social justice from neoliberalised education systems, when considering that, at the basis, there is a philosophy that deems material inequality as not unjust. A neoliberalised education system promotes individual freedom (through marketisation and parental choice), in terms of the duty of humanitarian assistance it ensures that everyone is provided with at least an adequate educational provision, in terms of combating structural inequalities, measures such as the Pupil Premium indicate an effort to compensate for social disadvantages. Not much else can be expected from a system that in essence has no moral issues with notions of material inequality or inequality of opportunity. There would be no point to teach students to be critical of a system (capitalism) with which the neoliberalisation process is fundamentally in agreement, or to resist hierarchical relations of power that neoliberalism does not deem as unjust. In such circumstances, the best that can be expected from an education system is what it manages to do in the best of circumstances, that is, “to spread opportunity more widely and to see that the eleven compulsory years of education are not wasted, and that young people are taught what they need to” (Thatcher, 1988a) hence the focus on parental choice, the effort to enable talented children to progress as high as possible for their own and everyone’s benefit, and to link schooling with the needs of the world of work to enhance students’ employability.

These are the reasons why the neoliberal policymaker is less concerned by the fact that educators at schools are mostly, while not exclusively, focused on improving students’ academic attainment. The same counts for the claim that a neoliberal education system contributes very little to the public good. There is not much that can be expected from a system that is built on a philosophy that is methodologically, ethically, and ontologically individualistic. For the neoliberal policymaker, the priority remains that of supporting each individual student to achieve their maximum academic potential. In a way, the same also counts as regards the criticism which implies that the neoliberalisation process diminishes the broader democratic mission of education. Considering the thin understanding neoliberals have of the concept of democracy, far removed from conceptualising it as a way of life, such a stance is in line with the beliefs that underpin neoliberalism, to the disappointment of those who believe in social justice, but the praise of those who, like neoliberals, are convinced that the quest for social justice has negative repercussions on

individual negative freedom. A conviction that is strongly opposed by many who contend that social justice is not pursued at the expense of individual freedom. On the other hand, neoliberals are adamant about this point, and emphasize that the quest for social justice inexorably results in, (1) breaching the principle of equality before the law, (2) government expansion and the undertaking of additional responsibilities, (3) increased government direction and control of the economy, (4) increased claims on government from sectional interests to remove hinderances or provide compensation for them by increasing the burden on the relatively better off (Hayek, 1976). From a neoliberal perspective, none of these activities are seen to augur well in relation to safeguarding individual negative freedom, conceptualised as non-interference and the absence of coercion.

For those who find this problematic, the only possible remedy against the neoliberal restrictive conception of teachers, and the interference in their possibility to contribute to a more socially just society is to actively work against the very expansion of neoliberal principles by joining social movements or voting for those candidates that specifically aim at halting the expansion of neoliberalism. As long as neoliberal policies remain the go-to approach, irrespective of the hybrid form these manifest themselves (Thatcherism/ Blairism/Trumpism), there shall be only a small probability in which the social justice ambitions that critics of neoliberalism expect from compulsory education can be met. This is principally so because social justice motivations are antithetical to the neoliberal vision of the ideal society. They are essentially alien, in the true meaning of the word, in the sense of originating from and belonging to a separate system of beliefs.

The issue of the teachers' contributions to a more socially just society would stand a better chance to be addressed when the critics manage to convince the majority that the struggle for social justice is worth the effort in terms of the negative consequences on individual freedom that a less unequal society necessitates in terms of redistribution, along with the possible resulting abuse of collective responsibility that the strive for social justice breeds from the part of some individuals who 'work the system' to their advantage, thereby leading to an even more unjust society. Until then, neoliberalised education systems will be more about teachers who focus on preparing learners for the enterprise society, rather than about teachers as critical pedagogues creating democratic citizens. Admittedly, this may legitimately be viewed as a cynical standpoint since relatively, only a very small minority do in fact abuse of systems of collective responsibility, while most who benefit from social security have a genuine need. Yet, as is evident from elements within contemporary

political discourse on the welfare state, especially the one that originates from new-right parties, there seems to be a legitimate concern with such abuse, which is often enough to allow political parties elected on manifestos that reflect such concerns to obtain power, and contribute to the further proliferation of neoliberalism.

8.7 Criticism of the Ideal Teacher in a Neoliberalised Education System: The Issue of Inadequately Trained Teachers

There is yet another concern with the restrictive conception of the role of teachers as described above. This issue occurs when this restrictive conception is taken to mean that teachers may not require a university education to be able to fulfil their duties. In very simplistic terms, the question for some neoliberal policymakers seems to be: how much psychology, sociology and philosophy does a teacher need to fulfil a duty that essentially only entails data-transfer, that is, teaching content for students to obtain certifications that make employment easier? Some neoliberal policy makers, especially those more on the classical liberal side, are of the view that the answer to such question is, ‘very little’.

This concern of inadequately preparing teachers for school life arises from cases, such as England, where since the early 1980s, governments began to insist that “student teachers spend more and more time in schools rather than on their university campuses” (Furlong, 2013, p. 28). The process gradually resulted in the redistribution of power from higher education institutions to schools (Wilkin, 1996) and promoted the change to “the practical nature of the criteria and the non-reflective (i.e. non-theorizing) mode” (Wilkin, 1996, p. 151). In his review of the issue, Hill draws the same conclusions and remarks that over the 1980s and 1990s, in Britain, “this restructuring emphasised school-basing, and the development of practical skills” (Hill, 2007, p. 213) over the more academic areas. According to Furlong, similar trends continued under Labour governments as from 1997, who “won their struggle to reduce teacher education to an unproblematic, technical rational procedure” (Furlong, 2005, p. 132). Additionally, it is also contended that the same tendency continued also under the Cameron–Clegg coalition government (2010–2015). In fact, while the White Paper *The Importance of Teaching (2010)* states that greater involvement of schools in teacher training pathways for teachers “does not mean that universities would not be involved: far from it” (DfE, 2010, p. 15), yet, reference is made to research (Ingvarson et al., 2005; Musset, 2010; Menter et al., 2010; Reinhartz and Stetson, 1999), which suggests that greater school involvement is beneficial to initial teacher training because it can potentially prepare teachers better for classroom life.

This approach led to a situation where teachers started to be “trained in skills rather than educated to examine the ‘whys and the why nots’ and the social and political contexts of the curriculum, of pedagogy, of educational purposes, of the structures of schooling and education” (Hill, 2007, p. 214) as would be required for an education system that is meant to fulfil duties in relation to social justice under a thick conception of democracy. It also led to a situation where teachers are increasingly trained with “narrow technical focus based on measurable classroom skills and craft performance” (Bagley & Beach, 2015, p. 427) to the detriment of other skills that are equally important for effective teaching. Developments along these lines have also been identified in the U.S. (Darling-Hammond, 2000, 2010; Cochran-Smith, 2004; Tamir & Wilson, 2005; Darling-Hammond & Lieberman, 2013) amongst other things, through the rhetoric related to the *No Child Left Behind* (U.S. Congress, 2002) policy, which endorses the view that teachers need know only subject knowledge, and pick up the rest on the job (Cochran-Smith & Lytle, 2006). Furthermore, it has also been noted that a reductive technicist conception of teaching is gaining ground in Australia as well (Ling, 2017; MacGill & Whitehead, 2011).

There are various reasons why education policies under neoliberal governance can lead to a reductive conception of teaching thereby marginalising the importance of a university education. The restrictive conception of teaching may result from the belief that “teaching is a craft and it is best learnt as an apprentice observing a master craftsman or woman” (Gove, 2010). The problem with a craft conception of teaching, which suggests that “teaching is a matter of experience, character, and often of a certain level of general education unrelated to professional knowledge for teaching” (Hordern & Tatto, 2018, p. 697) is that even within a neoliberalised system of compulsory education where teachers’ remits have been restricted to teaching prescribed content, there still is more to teaching, than implied in the craft conception. Simply learning what is observable from experienced educators, without an academic backing, is not enough to sustain effective teaching, especially in a neoliberalised education system, with its socio-economic segregation and the increased amount of social problems that result from the decreased redistributive efforts (Wilkinson & Pickett, 2009). Even if it were true that there were contexts where “too little teacher training takes place on the job, and too much professional development involves compliance with bureaucratic initiatives rather than working with other teachers to develop effective practice” (DfE, 2010, p. 19), a craft conception of teaching cannot suffice. It would clearly fail to reach the aims of an education system that strives to contribute to a

socially just society, but it would also come short of reaching neoliberal targets for schools because it would inadequately prepare teachers to prepare students for the enterprise culture. Even in the situations where schooling is reduced to improved academic attainment, such transfer of knowledge and skills would occur more efficiently and effectively by teachers whose training covered areas such as sociology, psychology, philosophy, history and possibly even anthropology, economics and cultural studies for the reasons listed below.

A second conception of the good teacher associated with the neoliberalisation of compulsory education is the one that views a good teacher as a good technician or implementer. Due to the given training that may include strong subject knowledge and pedagogical training, one might think that such a teacher is perfectly suited to work effectively in a neoliberalised education system which is mainly focused on passing on specific knowledge, skills and values aimed at enabling improved examination performance. Yet, this would omit the problem that, while such a teacher may have considerable training, they would at best be able to apply training without the necessary reflection that is required to *adapt* such training to the specific classroom context and for each specific student. The teacher-as-technician model associated with mechanical implementation of externally designed material is inadequate teacher training because good teaching involves more than delivering pre-packaged material, even if it were the case that all that was required from teachers was to help students boost their academic attainment. Teachers' pedagogical choices cannot be accurate when only based on decisions made from outside the classroom. Understanding and addressing the needs of learners is essential, and training in psychology, sociology, philosophy, and other areas can potentially help teachers to understand their students and address their needs in a more effective and efficient manner. This is the case because the better teachers understand their students, the more effectively can they teach them. A broad teacher training programme that includes elements of history, sociology, psychology, philosophy as well as other disciplines, apart from pedagogy, is a better way to prepare teachers for the classroom, than through teacher training that does not include elements from such disciplines. For example, an element of history can help a teacher be better prepared to understand his students in teaching certain subjects, for example knowing that their community passed from economic upheaval allows a teacher to better prepared to address their views on issues such as recessions or unemployment. History can also improve the effectiveness of teaching through the understanding of the intricacy of change, the effects of the students' past on their present

and through strengthened ability to use historically accurate examples in one's teaching. Similarly, psychology improves teachers' understanding the students in their classrooms through deeper understanding of issues of cognitive development, motivation, self-discipline, the effects of different forms of assessment or punishment on different students and a myriad of other issues that can also contribute to make teachers' decisions more effective, and teaching more efficient. As regards Sociology, this can provide teachers with deeper understanding of issues like economic decline, socio-economic background, social dislocation, and other aspects that can help teachers in their quest to scaffold the learning process for the benefit of their learners.

While it may be arguably true that subject content knowledge and pedagogy are the core of what teaching is about, and teachers must primarily master "the most powerful analogies, illustrations, examples, explanations, and demonstrations" (Shulman, 1986, p. 9) to sustain an effective learning process, it is difficult not to see the valid contribution that the disciplines mentioned above can provide to teachers' ability to provide improved versions of the tasks mentioned by Shulman. Such improvements would enable teachers to build the bridges that would allow students to reach the aims in the prescribed curricula. This idea broadly prepared teachers becomes even more important when one considers the extensive research available that highlights the crucial role played by teachers in the process of educating children. When considering that teachers can potentially have very positive effects on students' educational success (Ainscow, 2010; Darling-Hammond, 2000; Hattie, 2003; Hayes et al., 2006; Hutchings et al., 2015; McBer, 2000; Rockoff, 2003; Sammons & Bakkum, 2012; Stéger, 2014; Sutton Trust, 2015), it becomes more evident that investing in high-quality broad teacher training is preferable to restricted mainly school-based training. The extra return on investment in terms of more effective teaching should make the additional cost worth it in the long run.

8.8 Conclusion

The role of teachers changes once the neoliberalisation process of compulsory education takes root. Working as a teacher becomes more challenging due to a working environment marked by low trust, high surveillance, threats, high workloads and to top it all, weaker employment conditions. Under such circumstances, teachers need to become akin to superheroes, they need to be ready to meet goals on which they have little say, work very hard, constantly use performance data, and prioritise academic attainment. Additionally, working in a hyper-regulated environment under conditions of professional restrictions is

not the best of working environments. In fact, many are very critical of the resulting restrictions on teachers' professional discretion, on the issue of inadequate professional teacher training and most of all on practically removing teachers' contributions towards the collective effort of building a more socially just society, judging such changes as wrong. Neoliberals acknowledge most of these views but claim that it is more important to have teachers focus on supporting students to achieve higher academic attainment which is more conducive to economic autonomy and therefore their individual wellbeing.

What is particularly concerning about the effects of the neoliberalisation process on teachers is the fact that they directly contribute to increase teacher attrition, a fact that cannot be denied because research on this matter clearly shows how changes brought about by the neoliberalisation process directly contribute to decreased teacher retention rates (Amrein & Berliner, 2002; Clotfelter et al., 2004; Darling-Hammond, 2010; Dunn, 2018; Dunn et al. 2017; McCarthy et al., 2014; Gallant & Riley, 2017; Nichols & Berliner, 2007). There may be some merit in the view that under alternative systems, teachers as public employees are "shielded from the normal economic disciplines which affect the outside world" (Thatcher, 1993, p. 45) and that therefore may not be fully encouraged to give their utmost effort. Yet, the neoliberalisation of compulsory education may end up leading to the other extreme, and exhausting teachers to the extent that they feel compelled to look for alternative employment. This seems to be the case in England for example where, on average, the latest eight cohorts of teachers for whom data is available, ranging from those who began teaching in 1997 to those who began in 2004, after five years of service only 71% remain on the job, after ten years of service this goes down to 63%, and then down to an average of 57% after fifteen years of service (DfE, 2019). Evidently, teaching takes its toll and urges many to look for alternative employment. It could even be argued that such levels of attrition rates contribute to inefficiency and end up weaken school effectiveness, which would be the opposite of what the neoliberalisation process is supposedly meant to achieve. This outcome of the neoliberalisation process of education should encourage neoliberal policymakers to refine some of the adopted approaches and see that teachers get an overall better deal.

Chapter Nine: Moral Implications of the Impact of Neoliberal Education Policies on Students

9.1 Introduction

The many changes generated by the neoliberalisation process have an extensive impact on students' experience of compulsory schooling. This chapter outlines the nature of this impact and engages with moral implications related to issues such as anxiety, education impoverishment and segregation, all of which contribute to weaken social cohesion, making such concerns especially troubling.

9.2 The Anxiety and Stress of Competition

A criticism of the neoliberalisation of compulsory education lies in the fact that within such an arrangement, students have to endure the constant pressure of a competitive education system. Having weathered this system, they are then required to survive the constant pressure of a competitive economic order. In essence, by transforming individual students into self-entrepreneurs, neoliberalism condemns individuals to a lifetime of competitive anxiety. Many sustain that it is not right for citizens to endure such constant stress to compensate for the weaknesses of an increasingly volatile neoliberalised economic system. Regardless of whether they are successful or not, they will have to be constantly on the lookout. Neoliberalism is particularly culpable as regards this because it has inbuilt mechanisms that, more than other forms of capitalism, seek to expand the use of competition. The preference for austerity policies and supply-side economics also makes neoliberalism particularly prone to this disadvantage. In fact, under neoliberal governance, it is not only compulsory schooling that ends up leading to “the reconstitution of subjects as competitive, nervous, stressed-out zombies” (Olssen, 2018, p. 394). The economic arrangements based on the “impersonal compulsion” (Hayek, 1978b, p. 189) of competition ensure that such pressures are present throughout one's life. Therefore, competitive anxiety begins at school through the neoliberal preference for a standards-based, outcomes-focused, hyper-accountability regime and continues into one's adult life through policies such as, deregulation, liberalisation, privatisation, and employment flexibility, all of which can have stressful effects on individuals (Western et al., 2007). Competitive anxiety in adulthood is also retained through the ongoing effort to maintain one's employability by investing in one's human capital (Costea et al., 2012), since under neoliberal governance, it is not considered to be the state's duty to guarantee employment but up to individuals to fend for themselves.

The neoliberalisation of compulsory education, especially through the chosen accountability measures, but also through marketisation measures that enhance parental choice, increase the levels of anxiety and competitive stress in students (Caterall, 1988; Davis & Brember 1998, 1999; Leckie & Goldstein, 2017; Kohn 2000, 2001). Furthermore, increased levels of stress continue into adulthood because the process of being an entrepreneur and constantly marketing oneself, as well as the collateral need to keep investing in one's human capital, is essentially a never-ending process (Costea et al, 2012). Neoliberal economic practices, such as, privatisation and employment flexibility influence the activities of individuals, constantly encouraging them to work harder. This permanent state of making an extra effort can become harmful to individuals when it reaches a situation where "by chasing to become our best we can never be satisfied with who we are or feel content about ourselves" (Berglund, 2013, p. 731) because every competitive battle that is won, can at best be a temporary victory. Consequently, some argue that what is presented as a right to learn is rather an arduous obligation to remain employable (Levitas, 1998), merely providing an illusion that one is free to choose (Lambeir, 2005), while it is simply the result of the political choice to base the political, economic and social spheres on the notion of competition, rather than cooperation.

Considering this, it can be argued that under neoliberal governance, the so-called right to choose is nothing but the continuous duty for risk management by every individual (Peters, 2016), where everyone is required to stay constantly on the alert to enhance their economic autonomy. These features of the neoliberalisation of society make some conclude that the neoliberal discourse of flexibility, adaptability, deregulation and liberation turn out to be illusory (Bourdieu, 1998) because, this message is only a process of sugaring the pill, hiding a reality where individuals are expected to manage themselves without requiring the assistance of others. In some situations, fulfilling the duties demanded by individual responsibility may end up dominating one's life and effectively restricting one's ability to choose what to do with one's time, rather than enhancing freedom. Consequently, it is argued that what neoliberals hail as "the greatest freedom of competition" (Hayek, 1978b, p. 189), can result, at best, a constant and burdensome evaluation of opportunities, if not, a perpetual struggle to cope with maintaining economic autonomy. Furthermore, such argumentation goes on to imply that the grand claims of an education system that supposedly empowers individuals to become masters of their own destiny, lead to nothing but the creation of "docile subjects who are tightly governed and who, at the same time,

define themselves as free” (Davies & Bansel, 2007, p. 249) while they are often far from being so. The crux of this criticism is based on the view that the neoliberal promise of freedom, liberalisation and deregulation, which may lure many to support neoliberalism, in practice only translates into the imprisonment generated by the requirement for constant self-investment.

It is undeniable that a competitive economic order may constrain one’s daily choices, and that the freedom of competition is depicted in a more positive light than it may result for some individuals. Yet, for neoliberals, when choosing between the impersonal (in the sense of unintentional) compulsion of a free competitive market order and the alternative, that is, the purposeful compulsion of a government in support of a collective effort of maintaining a socially just order, it would be safer for everyone’s (negative) freedom to opt for the former social setup and choose the impersonal coercion of competition, over the purposeful coercion of the central planner and the concomitant constraints of high taxation required to finance a social arrangement that adheres to a specific conception of justice, whatever form this may have. Additionally, the impersonal compulsion of competition should also be preferred over the purposeful compulsion of the state, because competition incentivises industriousness and innovation, thereby leading to a more prosperous economy to everyone’s advantage, while the state coercion and its resulting restrictions and taxation are prone to dampen efforts for wealth creation, to everyone’s disadvantage, including the poorest members of society.

9.3 The Impoverishment of Academically Focused Educational Experiences

Orphan et al. (2018) might be more correct than neoliberals would like them to be when they point out that “neoliberal ideology is evidenced in education policies that mandate that the system be evaluated by, and awarded for, its ability to strengthen economic life with disregard for the role education plays in strengthening democratic life and promoting equity” (Orphan et al., 2018, p. 17). Disregard might be too strong a word, yet, in a neoliberalised system of compulsory education, it is understood that the best way to support students is by sustaining students’ ability to flourish in the enterprise culture. In practice, this means that academic progress is prioritised over other aims, such as, education for self-fulfilment and even for democratic participation. The educational structures set up by the neoliberalisation process itself, including hyper-accountability measures, the global measurement forces such as PISA, TIMSS and PIRLS, parental choice policies and content-focused curricula also contribute to the prioritisation of the employment aspect of

compulsory education. This concern affect what passes as knowledge for the neoliberal policymaker, that is, what enhances human capital, and what needs to be evaluated as a measure of school effectiveness, that is, learners' academic progress, because ultimately that is what assists every individual in maintaining their economic autonomy, thereby safeguarding everyone's freedom. These views lead to a situation where education becomes valued only in terms of its contribution to economic growth (Down, 2009) to such an extent that it may be better referred to as 'learning' or even 'training' than a self-enhancing process primarily meant for personal growth.

The fact that schooling is interpreted restrictively as 'employment-focused learning' becomes evident once one notes a number of key characteristics. Narrowing the curriculum to focus on the parts that are going to be examined and teaching-to-the-test practices, two typical aspects of a neoliberalised education system (Dulude et al., 2017; Donaldson, 2015; Connell, 2013) indicate a restrictive conception of schooling. Increased time on test preparation is another one (Nichols & Berliner, 2007; Stecher, et al., 2000; Abrams, et al. 2003). Additionally, in an educational setting marked by league tables, frequent testing, and high stakes examinations, it comes as no surprise that "what gets tested is what is taught" (Sirotnik, 2004, p. 11). Neither can it be surprising that teachers "develop tactical means to raise student scores quickly ...sometimes at the expense of the quality of instruction" (Dulude et al., 2017, p. 366) preferring consolidation of what shall be assessed over a broad and balanced curriculum and relying more heavily on drilling, and less on discovery learning. The research confirming these effects on education is extensive (Au, 2007, 2009, 2011; Comber, 2012; Connell, 2013; Darling-Hammond, 2004, 2007; Dulude et al., 2017; Gewirtz, 1997, 2002). It would be very difficult to deny these effects of the neoliberalisation process on learning and teaching and the way neoliberalisation transforms education into learning focused on academic goals (Gewirtz et al., 1995). What some might judge as an impoverished educational experience, is morally acceptable for neoliberals because 'learnification' is seen as a better way to prepare students well for the enterprise culture, having nurtured the knowledge, skills and attitudes that facilitate economic independence.

While the neoliberal policymaker may be satisfied with compulsory schooling primarily becoming subject-focused learning, this is not the case for those who expect more from schooling. Especially for those who are very concerned with social inequality and for whom an education that "becomes less concerned with developing the well-rounded liberally

educated person and more concerned with developing the skills required for a person to become an economically productive member of society” (Hursh, 2005, p. 5) is an unsatisfactory educational provision. Yet, as noted by Mayo, under neoliberalism, “the hegemonic ‘common sense’ mantra remains that of not going beyond the perceived need of tying education almost exclusively and instrumentally to the economy to render a country more competitive in the ‘cutthroat world’ of global capitalism” (Mayo, 2016, p. 243). Many are very critical of such a view of schooling and claim that compulsory education should not be conceptualised in terms of preparedness for the enterprise culture because this detaches schooling from its civic functions (Aronowitz & Giroux, 1991).

Far more importantly for those who do not prioritise the economic aims of education, the provision of a restricted curricular experience is unacceptable when comprehensiveness is forgone for success in summative assessments (Apple, 2004). This is because adequate education should be granted a “larger political and social role, a yet deeper justification in itself” (Galbraith, 1996, p. 69), over and above the resulting benefits for the economy. Therefore, the neoliberalisation of compulsory education and its likelihood to marginalize learner interests and opportunities of ‘self-fulfilment’ (Hughes & Tight, 1995) is problematic because it may not contribute sufficiently towards better preparedness for social conviviality or improved ability to enjoy the richness and diversity of culture and knowledge. This clearly becomes the case where focusing on examination success is allowed to result in “forgoing discussion of less measurable outcomes like the inculcation of toleration and self-confidence, the cultivation of social and democratic skills and understanding and the fostering of creativity” (Van Heertum & Torres, 2011, p.15).

Considering the criticism of the neoliberal conception of schooling as ‘employment-focused learning’, there are many valid points to which one has to concede. It is in fact highly likely that in a neoliberalised education system, the aim of job preparedness tends to overshadow the other aims of compulsory education in terms of efforts for social inclusion, citizenship education and for enabling young people to be introduced to the richness of human heritage that is worth knowing even though it may not yield monetary rewards. Even the proponents of human capital theory have always been aware of such risks and also warned about the dangers of over-emphasising the needs of the economy within education. To this end, Schultz early on felt the need to clarify that his “treatment of education will in no way detract from, or disparage, the cultural contributions of education” (Schultz, 1960, p. 572), while Becker showed concern that “to approach schooling as an investment rather

than a cultural experience” (Becker, 1993, p. 392) may be considered by some as “unfeeling and extremely narrow” (Becker, 1993, p. 392). In their defence, none of those who support the primacy of job preparedness over other aims ever intended that schooling should become just that.

Woessmann, a strong supporter of the view that education is crucial for economic growth, also clarified that the economic role of education should not constitute its entire rationale (Woessmann, 2016). Several politicians also shared this view. In her memoirs, Thatcher, concedes that, “it made me concerned that many distinguished academics thought that Thatcherism in education meant a philistine subordination of scholarship to the immediate requirements of vocational training. That was certainly no part of my kind of Thatcherism” (Thatcher, 1993, p. 481). In truth, it could be concluded that those who adhere to the human capital conception of schooling would actually agree with Callaghan (UK Prime Minister 1976-1979), when he affirmed that schools are meant “to equip children to the best of their ability for a lively, constructive, place in society, and also to fit them to do a job of work. *Not one or the other but both* [emphasis added]” (Callaghan, 1976, p. 3)

In practice, such a balance turns out to be increasingly difficult to achieve especially as regards those children/young people who require additional support to be educationally successful due to low ability, low effort, or weak family support. The more support students need, the more difficult it is to sustain job preparation, principally through literacy, numeracy, and science, while also dealing adequately with all other aspects demanded by a rich educational experience. Yet, criticism of the neoliberal disregard towards the importance that should be given to prepare students for democratic conviviality should also be taken seriously. In many ways, transforming schooling into employment focused learning is an unacceptably restrictive conception of education. Many valid reasons legitimise expectations for schooling to do its utmost to “promote the relationship between education and democracy, critical thinking and active citizenship” (Giroux, 2019, p. 35). Such concerns are understandable when conceptualising democracy as a way of life that best leads to a collaborative approach on decisions related to the public good, so that through rational argumentation, common aims can be identified and addressed collectively. The focus on job preparedness can result in political illiteracy allowing anti-democratic sentiments such as discrimination against foreigners to take root. Incidentally, as Donald Trump’s electoral victory in the United States has shown, this can also potentially become a

threat to open-borders neoliberalism, leading instead to a closed-borders approach which allows levels of protectionism that are not in line with neoliberal economic theory. The neoliberal policymaker should also deem impoverished education unacceptable and consequently find alternatives to ensure that no one's education is limited to job training.

9.4 The Unfairness of the Economically Homogeneous Clustering of Schools

The right to choose given to parents as part of the neoliberalisation process of compulsory education generates economically homogeneous clustering of students, where the more affluent congregate in specific schools (Angus, 2015; Ball, 2003b; Bonnor, 2011; Brown, 1997; Coldron et al., 2010; Lauder & Hughes, 1999; Power et al., 2003; Lupton, 2006; Gibbons et al., 2006; Preston, 2010;) leaving the remaining students to cluster elsewhere to their detriment. Parental choice policies find the support of many because they result in a number of key advantages, they can potentially function as a mechanism for school improvement by strengthening parental engagement with school life, while also supporting accountability from below. Furthermore, they provide more parents with the right of exit and thereby supposedly urging schools to improve their services. Additionally, it is expected that the right to choose can potentially enhance “grassroots efforts to start schools that are relevant — often educationally, linguistically, culturally, or ethnically — to particular needs, values, and communities” (Wilson, 2010, p. 644), further strengthening the link between families and schools. Indeed, it could be argued that the genuine intention of providing schools that are more responsive to parents' needs and immune to producer capture is not meant to segregate students (Knight Abowitz, 2010). Unfortunately, extensive research has repeatedly shown that in fact it does contribute to increased segregation (Gillbom & Youdell, 2000; Oakes & Lipton, 2002; Gewirtz, 2001; Welner, 2001; Ball, 2003b, 2010; Ball et al., 1994) to the detriment of disadvantaged students.

There are two main ways through which the neoliberalisation processes of compulsory education “are offensive to long-standing aspirations to increased social equality through educational means” (Jonathan, 1997, p. 181). The first one has to do with the very fact of granting parents the possibility to choose. While most parents generally do what they can to support their children, not all are able to do so to the same extent. Once school choice powers are handed over to parents, some manage to reap as many benefits from such powers as they can, while others do not (or simply cannot) because poorer parents hold less material and cultural capital that can be passed to their children

(Darmanin, 1995; Reimers, 2000) and are less able to manage the process of school choice (Ball, 2003b).

A second reason that results in economically homogeneous clustering under a neoliberal educational arrangement originates from the tactics used by schools to recruit those learners who support the school's efforts in sustaining high academic attainment. This becomes especially the case in educational settings where mechanisms such as school performance tables, school report cards or specific funding systems are in place. In such contexts, the benefits that easy-to-teach children have over disadvantaged children may be too considerable to ignore. In their efforts to reap the benefits that family support has on student performance, schools end up disfavoured children who hail from disadvantaged backgrounds in favour of motivated middle-class learners who are more likely to contribute to school success (Gewirtz et al., 1995; Gillborn & Youdell, 2000; Jonathan, 1997; Whitty et al., 1998), when 'success' comes to be conceptualised as higher academic attainment. This leads to the cream-skimming practices in favour of specific learners to the detriment of "minorities, special education students, and low-income students" (Eastman et al., 2017, p. 68) who come to be perceived as a risk. Together, these two processes lead to the most advantaged students clustered in specific schools, and most of the disadvantaged ones grouped in different ones, to their disadvantage.

Concurrently, these two factors result in the construction of an arrangement that many consider as inherently unfair and anti-egalitarian. If one were to apply Walzer's conception of fairness for example, the segregated schools created by parental choice policies, which support the favoured and hinder the disadvantaged, look more like "a wilful impoverishment of the educational experience of the others" (Walzer, 1983, p. 218) while on the other hand, a more cooperative and mutually benefitting distributive mechanism would bring about a fairer social arrangement. Walzer is not alone to support this view. For Rawls, due to the fact that, "no one deserves his [sic] greater natural capacity nor merits a more favourable starting place in society" (Rawls, 1999, p. 86), those who have been lucky "may gain from their good fortune only on terms that improve the situation of those who have lost out" (Rawls, 1999, p. 86). This view suggests that initial unfairness morally demands redress, so that, for example, it is justifiable to assign good students strategically in different schools, so that these may "stimulate and reinforce the others" (Walzer, 1983, p.218). This would benefit the disadvantaged and in the longer run the common good. In this way initial unfairness in terms of intellect and wealth, can be corrected and used to

construct a fair basic structure that better ensures a just society. It is argued that under such an arrangement, “no one gains or loses from his arbitrary place in the distribution of natural assets or his initial position in society without giving or receiving compensating advantages in return” (Rawls, 1999, p.86) which is why many deem such an arrangement as just, and an improvement on the neoliberal alternative, including parental choice policies, which essentially provide the privileged with “a cooperative scheme that enables them to obtain even further benefits” (Rawls, 1999, p.88).

Neoliberals disagree with such an egalitarian perspective because despite the fact that students do not morally deserve their endowments (intellect, wealth, social position), it does not mean that they do not have a right to use them as they please or that someone else is entitled to them, even though much good can come out of mixing high ability students with their peers. Secondly, political distribution of favoured children diminishes parent’s rights on their children in an intolerable way. Thirdly, such distribution could potentially be ineffective because the central planner has less accurate information about children’s strengths and weaknesses than parents do and moreover, it could lead to situations where, for example, the child who has been lucky in specific ways, by being born highly able and with ample cultural and material capital, is uprooted from his back ground for the sake of equality to help others who may be disadvantaged in certain ways [intellect, wealth] but perhaps lucky in different ways [good-looks, health, personality] leading to situations that overwhelmingly favour one party over the other. While this is admittedly a farfetched example, the risk of playing God and getting it wrong are simply too high. No government should hold such powers to be able to impact citizen’s lives so deeply, and considering the risks, it is better for a society to simply focus on guaranteeing that every school is a good school and that all students are supported well, while accepting the fact that we should “let our children grow tall, and some taller than others if they have the ability in them to do so” (Thatcher, 1975). Justice is better served when the state focuses on helping the weak, rather than develop a supposedly socially just structure underpinned by someone’s conception of justice. Such a process too often risks transforming persons into tools for the achievement of the specific objectives of others, thereby consigning some members “the status of sacrificial animals” (Rand, 1966, p.156). In this case, this is increasingly unacceptable because the tools referred to are children, who cannot even give consent.

9.4.1 The Neoliberal Blindness towards Structural Inequality

A major criticism of the neoliberalisation of compulsory education is related to the general lack of concern towards the issue of structural disadvantages that some students face. Admittedly, the neoliberal approach is racially-blind, socially-blind and inequality-blind mostly because of the resolute believe in the principles of individual responsibility and individualism. Consequently, the neoliberal policy maker tends to be concerned with a universal provision of compulsory education, where access to schooling is taken for granted, where every child is in effect expected to follow a generally similar curriculum, put under the guidance of similarly qualified teachers and able to sit for comparable examinations in comparable schools. For the neoliberal, such provision overall fulfils the moral duties that society owes to children. Considering the limitations of this approach, it is to be expected that neoliberal policymakers are criticised for being insensitive towards the many disadvantages that various students face. To this end, it is often contended that “discourses of school effectiveness, standardisation, meritocracy and performativity do not address any of the wider structural inequalities” (Grimaldi, 2012, p. 1131) and are therefore unfair towards some students. Such criticism contends that neoliberal education policies such as “vouchers, charters, and other forms of privatisation and narrow approaches to testing, accountability, and standards” (Klees, 2016, p. 662) exacerbate inequality by “ignoring the realities of unequal power” (Klees, 2016) and by ignoring the fact that no curriculum is neutral, not even the one dictated by the economy, and that equal treatment does not necessarily make it fair, especially when the provision offered does not meet the needs of a student.

The issue of ignoring inequality is a genuine concern. It is sustained that if the neoliberal reforms in education were enacted in an egalitarian society, they would cause less injustice than they actually do, but because they are implemented in unequal societies, they result in exacerbating already unjust situations. Considering such a situation, many maintain that in a neoliberal social context where reforms “do nothing to challenge deeper social and cultural inequalities” (Whitty, 1997, p. 58) neoliberal education policies can only lead to social fragmentation. A major criticism of such a situation points out that “although choice may still be of value in a hypothetical world where education systems did not reflect socio-economic differences, in an unequal society where divisions do exist, policies permitting and encouraging parental choice always risk exacerbating such divisions” (Exley & Suissa, 2013, p. 347) because socio-economic differences become educational differences through unequal educational provision, which in turn become economic

inequality because the better qualified obtain the better jobs, thereby sustaining social reproduction. It is sustained that structural disadvantages must be taken into consideration especially because economic power and social background account for more of the variation in school performance than policies for school effectiveness (Apple, 2004). In practical terms, this means that, firstly, all the asphyxiating accountability measures implemented to control teachers can only have a limited effect, and, secondly, no educational reform can be successful in making sure every child reaches his full potential unless there is a very strong equalising social policy in parallel with effective education policy.

Structural inequalities can take many different forms. Children and families may face discrimination due to racial and ethnic issues, social status, religious and linguistic diversity and disabilities, as well as sexual orientation. Neither parental choice policies nor hyper-accountability policies on their own can do much to address such systematically rooted disadvantages that hinder children from reaping the full benefits of schooling. It is not only the case that neoliberal reforms seem not to address such issues, but also that the neoliberalisation of compulsory education tends to make matters worse since “what current iterations of dominant forms of the neoliberal discourse offer is an erasure of society – an absencing of structure – all in the favour of agency-centred foci” (Brown et al., 2013, p. 342) where the background conditions are ignored and focus is put on what individuals can do to help themselves irrespective of their social backgrounds. Situations of structural disadvantages become particularly limpid in relation to blatant discrimination, such as, cases of children within families who are denied loans or employment that would have allowed them to improve their situation. Considering this, neoliberal policymakers need to ensure that their belief in individual responsibility does not lead to denial towards situations where only collective support can compensate for disadvantages that are structural in nature. Most importantly, it would not be just to allow human capital discourses to blame students for low academic achievement, low attendance, dropping out or bad subject choices (Klees, 2016). The most diverse social contexts make life for some children/young people very difficult and compensatory policies would need to be institutionalised to compensate the many possible disadvantages.

The claim that the neoliberalisation process is blind to issues of structural disadvantage is intricate. In many ways, it is true that the neoliberal is less empathic towards issues of structural disadvantages, but it is not generally the case for neoliberals to agree with the

view that “if someone is disadvantaged it is because of their own faults or missed attempts at improvement” (Wingard, 2014, p. 133). As free-marketeers, neoliberals should be aware of the fact that unmerited failure is a possible outcome of a free economic market order and that it is often the case that some people need support even though they did *not* act in a neglectful manner. The market can never guarantee success, not even to those who work hard. Nevertheless, neoliberal approaches often seem to be blind to issues of inequality because the adherence to individual responsibility leads to the perception of individuals as self-entrepreneurs and as having the moral duty to do their best with what they have. As expected, inequality of luck, inequalities of natural gifts (good looks, intellect, ability to make an effort), and inequalities of inheritance and social background (cultural capital, material capital) play a part, yet, as noted by Mouffe, neoliberals tend to argue that “classes have disappeared” (Mouffe, 2005, p. 62) and that society is “basically composed of middle-classes” (Mouffe, 2005, p. 62), where everyone is urged to do his/her best to improve their lot, often genuinely believing in the view that “with capitalism and free-enterprise, there are no boundaries of class or creed or colour. Everyone can climb the ladder as high as their talents will take them” (Thatcher, 1985). To a certain extent, this reflects the fact that in a free competitive market order, the market rewards exclusively for what one has to offer, in complete indifference to either need or moral merit. This blind approach to structural disadvantages is also evident through the comfort with which neoliberals use the idea of ‘human capital’, which in a way “elides the distinction between labour and capital, [and] implies that all workers are capitalists, and blurs class boundaries” (Folbre, 2012 p. 281) classifying everyone, from Donald Trump to a librarian, as a capitalist and an entrepreneur. The major problem with the neoliberal blindness towards structural inequalities in the development of public policy, including the development of educational reforms, is that very little is done to try to compensate for them, and make sure that all students get a good opportunity to reap the full benefits of schooling.

There is some merit in such accusations. I would even contend that the inadequacy of neoliberalism to address issues of structural disadvantages is the Achilles’ heel of the neoliberal political rationality. Simple access to schools is not enough because unless families are in a condition to support students, very little benefits could accrue (Rizvi & Engel, 2009). Yet, it should be kept in mind that neoliberalism does not employ schools to achieve social justice, therefore such a system cannot be blamed for failing to achieve something that in reality, it is not even designed to. Yet, although neoliberalism is incompatible with the idea of social justice it still includes principles, such as, equality

before the law, the duty of humanitarian assistance, and principles of equal human dignity, which are at the basis of the neoliberal views on what is owed to students, and which push neoliberal policymakers to acknowledge and address issues of need and to ensure that educational reforms enable every student to reap the benefits of schooling, not only some of them.

A way in which this can be done is through mechanisms that provide additional bulk funding to schools supporting disadvantaged students. In this manner, such students would receive the much-needed extra support to gain more from their schooling than they otherwise would. In line with the neoliberal approach of allowing decisions to be taken as close as possible to the situation addressed where more accurate knowledge is available, a mechanism based on bulk funding provided directly to schools would have the advantage of being used flexibly, depending on the need of the individual student and according to decisions taken by those who know them best. Student needs may vary and could consist of: extra academic support, social and emotional support, material support, professional parental advice, experiences to enrich cultural capital or specialised support to address specific needs. The Pupil Deprivation Grant/Pupil Development Grant in Wales (Welsh Government, 2014), the Pupil Premium in England (DfE, 2010) and the Pupil Equity Fund in Scotland are three examples of such mechanisms that, first of all, recognise issues of structural disadvantages, and act to provide an adequately good level of education to everyone. Another way of addressing structural inequality in a context where parental choice policies have been institutionalised is to offer parents not only the information they need to make an informed school choice, but to offer such information in a reader-friendly manner and possibly even an advisory service run by specifically trained professionals to support parents, especially those who may require support in their decision-making process (Bradbury et al., 2013). Such measures could mitigate the unfairness that may result from neoliberal reforms. It would still be far from reaching the expectations of those who strive for a socially just society, yet, such a move would still be a step towards a more just social arrangement.

9.4.2 A Socially Reproductive Education System

The neoliberalisation of compulsory education and the resulting socio-economic clustering of schools, is also criticised because it contributes to socio-economic reproduction rather than promoting social equality. This occurs because neoliberals are generally satisfied with the fact that “in the market model all that is guaranteed is that everyone has an adequate

education; over and above this there is likely to be inequalities of provision, and inequalities of opportunity” (Tooley, 1994, p. 144) with such inequalities accepted as collateral of social differences. Yet, critics are concerned that “if the state settles for adequacy in the orientation of educational policy, it effectively cements the educational advantages of the well-off” (Koski & Reich, 2007, p. 612). Specifically, this would be the case because of the inequality of educational provision that different students in different schools would receive, for even if all schools were in fact adequately good schools, some of them would offer an exclusive educational provision financed by wealthy parents, which would greatly favour those students attending such schools.

Economically homogeneous clustering of students is considered by many to be unfair because it leads to the formation of the high-status schools, while simultaneously creating socially disadvantaged schools that sustain students’ progress inadequately (Exley, 2017). This occurs because students hailing from wealthier backgrounds are more likely to do well at school. Such a phenomenon has been encountered, amongst other places, in Australia (James et al., 2008), New Zealand (New Zealand Ministry of Education, 2011) and the UK (Gorard, 2008; Strand, 2010). By precluding disadvantaged students from sharing schools with advantaged ones, parental choice policies halt the benefits that could result for the poor from such a social mix. Furthermore, concentrations of disadvantaged students create difficult learning environments (Merry, 2012). This diversity exacerbates the inequality of educational provision. As a consequence of school choice policies, sink schools “become more ‘sink-like’ as more favoured schools have picked the children, they think are likely to be the cream of the crop” (Hill, 2006, p. 114) and who are more likely to help the school reach its academic objectives. This is undesirable, especially when one considers that “the manner in which that social good [education] is distributed produces fundamental changes both in its constitution and in our conception of it” (Jonathan, 1997, p. 181) so that economically homogeneous clustering ends up marring the quality of the education received by disadvantaged students because “in education, deregulation alters constitution” (Jonathan, 1997, p. 200) to the disadvantage of those who end up receiving a socially and culturally poorer educational provision.

Schooling arrangements that lead to socio-economic reproduction are judged as unjust because they contribute “to redistribute power in order to redirect society away from social democracy and towards a neoliberal order” (Ranson, 1993, p. 338) which accepts inequality as a fact of life and does very little to address it. Furthermore, marketisation

reinforces the pre-existing structure of social-classes (Ranson, 1993) thereby legitimising the transformation of economic capital into cultural capital (Apple, 2000) favouring an unfair situation where those who are born poor and disadvantaged are far more prone to dying poor and disadvantaged than their peers. This is also seen to be unfair because by creating diverse school provision that ranges from exclusive schools to sink schools, the advantaged are likely to receive a richer education and the rest more likely to get a no-frills provision that does little to push them out of their already present disadvantages. To top it all, such social reproduction occurs under a veneer of equality, since compulsory education is freely available to everyone, purporting the idea that it is the individuals' fault of either success or failure. This is particularly undesirable and indeed "some would see it as a particularly odious system because of the apparent self-righteousness of those who benefit from it" (Winch, 1998, p. 133).

Nevertheless, in spite of the disadvantages, parental choice policies can potentially be a way of providing more families with better schooling than they would otherwise have. Parental choice policies extend the power of exit from a power that is only available to wealthy or middle-class parents, who even without parental choice policies, can still either buy a place in a private school or fight the bureaucratic battle to transfer their children away from the school with which they are dissatisfied. Parental choice policies provide more parents with such power, arguably making it a policy with some egalitarian characteristics, since by making choice available to most, it is not only the middle class, who are "politically influential, skilled and adroit" (Seldon, 1990, p. 103) who will manage to transfer their children to what they perceive as a better school. Furthermore, neoliberal hyper-accountability policies, if implemented carefully, can potentially improve the probability that all schools improve their provision through stricter regimes of surveillance, even though these very policies including high-stakes examinations and standardisation of curricula can actually contribute to enhance divisions rather than minimise them (McNeil, 2000). Yet, the disciplined students of whatever socio-economic background may find schools that assist them on achieving the best possible grades to be a valid opportunity for social mobility, the academic performance achieved by Indian and Chinese students in England may be an indication of such phenomenon (DfE, 2014, 2015b; Archer and Francis 2005, 2006; Race Disparity Unit, 2019). Considering the consequences of segregation, compensatory education policies must be implemented alongside parental choice policies because segregation is not only damaging to egalitarian aims, which may be of little concern to the neoliberal, but is

also a serious threat to the neoliberal promise of guaranteeing adequately good schools to everyone including the disadvantaged, not to mention the potential waste of talent that could get lost in inadequate schools that would make the neoliberalisation process even more counterproductive. Evidently, even if egalitarian concerns were set aside, the duty to assist the weak and the belief in our equal human dignity should provide more than enough motivation to force the neoliberal policymaker to ensure that compensatory policies are institutionalised to confirm everyone's right to good quality education.

9.4.3 The Issue of Sink Schools

Another persistent line of criticism against the economically homogeneous clustering caused by the neoliberalisation of compulsory education is the inevitable creation of sink schools. These have no part in any neoliberal agenda for compulsory schooling. Sink schools are an unfortunate consequence of the freedom to choose, in the same manner in which they can be the unfortunate consequence of an education system based on the egalitarian idea of the community school, where disadvantaged communities may equally lead to the unfortunate formation of sink schools. In the case of neoliberalism, sink schools result from the ability of advantaged parents to segregate their children from the rest, and the ability of exclusive schools to choose motivated students. When such situations take place, even though the intention of parental choice policies is meant to transform a situation of 'no choice' into 'extra choice,' what actually happens is that for some children, these policies transform a situation of no choice, except for their local community school, into the imposition of a sink school, that is, their same community school but with fewer 'good' students, since these manage to evacuate to their 'extra choice' school that offers better opportunities. Such a situation is unacceptable from an egalitarian perspective, but is also morally unacceptable from a neoliberal moral perspective that is underpinned by the core principles of the duty of assistance towards children, the principle of equality before the law and notions of respecting everyone's equal human dignity which would be breached when a society does not uphold its moral duty to offer an education of adequately good quality to all students.

In such cases, the neoliberal policymaker would be morally bound to enact equity policies that compensate for the imbalances created by parental choice policies, by ensuring that sink schools have fully qualified teachers, small classes, good management and all that is necessary to ensure that all students are provided with an education of good quality that

enables students to flourish. The provision of grants to disadvantaged students in order to bring about a situation where “schools will want to admit less affluent children” (DfE, 2010, p. 81) may also be considered as part of the actions that should be taken by the neoliberal policymaker to ensure that they are fulfilling their moral duty towards all children. The wealth created by the free-market economic order should make it easier for the neoliberal policymaker to ensure that no one is left behind. Once everyone is assured a compulsory education of good quality, the freedom of some parents to invest any capital they may hold (cultural, human, material) for the benefit of their children becomes less morally disturbing.

9.4.4 A socially Divisive Education System

The socio-economically homogeneous clustering of schools is also problematic because it exacerbates economic inequality, thereby weakening social cohesion in various ways. This is problematic, even for individualists such as neoliberals, because first and foremost, weakened social cohesion negatively impacts the quality of life of citizens, and furthermore, it also results in weaker economic growth, to everyone’s disadvantage. Educational inequality damages social cohesion in different manners. Over the years, extensive research has shown that “inequality increases the social distance between different groups of people, making us less willing to see them as ‘us’ rather than ‘them’” (Wilkinson & Pickett, 2010, p. 62). This occurs especially when certain lifestyles make others feel inferior (Scanlon, 2000), which can potentially lead to envy (Wrenn, 2015) and which can have negative repercussions on social cohesion (Vergolini, 2011; Berry, 2013; Koechlin, 2013). Furthermore, the wider the gap, the more would people living in poverty be likely to become resentful because of their unequal circumstances (Fairbrother & Martin, 2013), which also contributes to social fragmentation. Additionally, it is acknowledged that educational and income inequalities produce status anxieties that hinder trust and cooperation (Green et al., 2006). Economic inequality is also linked to lowering levels of social trust (Alesina and La Ferrara, 2002; Loveless, 2013; Nagel, 1974; Olivera 2015; Wilkinson, 1996;), yet this is only part of the problem. Economic inequality, and correlated inequalities in social status, may also damage social cohesion through their propensity to increase crime (Fleisher, 1996), as well as, mental illness, alcoholism and violent social conflict (Yemtsov, 2009; Wilkinson & Pickett, 2009; Van de Werfhorst & Salverda, 2012; Klasen et al., 2018).

Research that provides evidence about the disadvantages of economic inequality should caution any neoliberal policymaker to consider the inequalities exacerbated by neoliberalisation processes very seriously and make sure that these are factored in during any decision-making process, because the price of inequality can be socially very high. The education planner should also consider elements that go beyond the prospective consequences related to economic inequalities due to the fact that “educational inequality exercises a significant effect on social cohesion independent of income equality” (Green et al., 2003, p. 462), since very different levels of education hinder understanding and communication even amongst groups of otherwise comparable economic power due to possible feelings of being inadequate (Lancee & van de Werfhorst, 2012; Solt, 2015), possibly because segregation has the unwanted effect of undermining one’s dignity (Pring, 2012) leading to feelings of unfairness, which is dangerously conducive to frustration and therefore violence.

Considering the very negative consequences that educational inequality generates, one would think that not much is needed to convince a neoliberal policymaker to ensure that policies do not lead to educational inequality, yet the problem is that very often, more equal outcomes can only come about at the price of curtailing the freedom of some parents. In spite of the advice from many academics to cater for egalitarian outcomes, for the many valid reasons mentioned right above, it may be difficult for a neoliberal policy maker to comply. Satz advises, for example, that “some differences in what private parties (e.g. parents) provide may also be justified if, and as long as, they do not undermine the social conditions for students to relate as equals” (Satz, 2012, p. 167). Yet, in line with neoliberal political rationality, no social concern related to students’ ability ‘to relate as equals’ can ever justify coercing parents into not supporting their child to the way they see best. Additionally, neither would a neoliberal policymaker ever be ready to follow up Brighthouse and Swift’s views that “children’s interests in enjoying fair opportunity in education is more important than parents’ interests in being free to act on their conception of the good in a way that unfairly advantages their children” (2014, p. 44). On the contrary, parents have every right, and even a moral duty, “to act on their conception of the good” and see that they support their children to the best of their abilities, even if some perceive such right to be selfish acts, and the use of disproportionate power held by the rich as an unfair advantage. In spite of the perceived unfairness, supporting one’s children to the best of one’s abilities cannot be unjust. The patterned conception of justice held by a government should not interfere in parents’ private sphere. In such circumstances, neoliberal morality

demands that it cannot be expected that when some individuals do not have the possibility to follow a certain action, then such possibility should be prohibited to everyone. From a neoliberal perspective, it is limiting the ways in which parents are allowed to support their children which is considered unjust, not the fact of inequality. Even if inequality generates various negative consequences, “economic inequality is not one of the evils which justify our resorting to discriminatory coercion or privilege as a remedy” (Hayek, 1960, p. 77) and individuals just have to accept the fact that there is a limit to what can be done to minimise inequality, no matter how odious some perceive this to be. On the other hand, while parents’ rights to support their children must be acknowledged, and while we “should not accept that because some people have no choice, no one should have it” (Thatcher, 1975b), nonetheless, the neoliberal policymaker must accept that parental choice policies inevitably lead to clustering which generates the unintended consequence of sink schools. Under such a circumstance, it is to be taken for granted that collective compensatory policies need to be enacted to ensure that the education provision of such schools is at a level of adequacy that makes clustering inconsequential.

The disregard of the neoliberal policymaker towards ideas of social justice such as can be seen in the case of how neoliberals handle the disadvantages of parental choice policies are often interpreted as “a very ‘weak’ and narrow notion of justice viewed largely as access to the existing institutions of education” (Rizvi & Engel, 2009, p. 529) as a sort of sham situation of equality of opportunity, while neglecting the fact that mere access leads to very unequal outcomes. Apple (2004) holds a similar view on the neoliberalised education system, which he sees as a system that reproduces inequality and which for him is equally “a prime example of ‘thin morality’ by generating both hierarchy and division based on competitive individualism” (Apple, 2004, p. 29) and an arrangement that denies real situations of equality of opportunity where every single child would stand a truly equal chance of success.

I disagree with such views and do not see a morality that can be described as either thin, weak, or narrow in the effort to make sure to safeguard individual freedom, even if this entails accepting situations of inequality of educational opportunities when, for example, allowing the rich to establish high-status schools which provide their children with a real head start thereby reproducing social inequality. In fact, the same could be said of those egalitarians who readily dismiss issues of individual freedom for the sake of their own conception of the ideal society. Arguably, it could be said that such a view constitutes an

even weaker notion of justice due to the disregard shown towards the notion of individual freedom, the indifference towards the right of parents to support their children, the neglect towards the many benefits generated by competition among schools in terms of responsiveness and innovation and the inattention to a possible better future that may result from the success of that student who would otherwise have been held back in the name of ensuring the absence of any unfair advantages. When taking into consideration the whole picture, I realise that the different conceptions of justice lead to different trade-offs and have different advantages and disadvantages but cannot honestly label the neoliberal approach as one which represents a thin morality or a narrower conception of justice.

9.5 The Threat to Democracy

Another criticism of the neoliberalisation process of compulsory education is that it is anti-democratic. The anti-democratic spirit within the neoliberalisation process manifests itself in different ways. Firstly, through an overarching effort of depoliticisation, decisions that need to be taken are generally presented “as matters of technical efficiency rather than normative choices” (Clarke, 2012, p. 298). This approach becomes evident through various claims made by policymakers, for example: standards need to rise due to global competition; parental choice policies need to expand to ensure accountability; curricula need to change because the economy needs new skills in coding, and so on. Consequently, policy options are taken out of the realm of democratic deliberation, thereby limiting its scope. Secondly, education is reformatted so that it is focused on producing the entrepreneurial self who is primarily focused on achieving economic autonomy, rather than aiming at developing a critical citizen, who strives for the achievement of a more socially just society. This effect is also reinforced by the increased power over education granted to parents, most of whom would be more inclined to make sure that their children are progressing well in terms of their academic attainment, than overseeing matters of active citizenship and social commitment.

Thirdly, the focus on institutionalising parental choice policies, and the conviction that these distribute opportunity more widely, thereby addressing social problems, risks eroding “the potential for collective deliberation and collective response” (Henig, 1994, p. 222) that would result from neighbourhood schools managed by local authorities. In fact, parental choice policies may provide less scope to work in favour of improving the local education system and more scope to invest in what assures a place in a good school for individual

students. This can be interpreted to be a missed democratic opportunity to collectively contribute to the common good that public education can provide. Such concerns in relation to weakening democracy, have to be added to the fact that furthermore, parental choice takes away the randomness of students within schools to the detriment of their ability to educate children into active democratic citizens. This concern leads Walzer, for example, to opt for randomness as “the most obvious associative principle” (Walzer, 1983, p.214) for schools, declaring that “random association would represent a triumph not only for the school but also for the state” (Walzer, 1983, p.214). Yet, in spite of its possible merits, such line of reasoning would not be able to take root under neoliberal governance since it puts the good of the state before the interests of each individual child and ignores the right of parents to have a direct say in the matter.

The de-democratisation effects of the neoliberalisation process also result from the fact that parental choice policies, together with the culture of hyper-accountability, change the parent-school relationship from a relationship of democratic stakeholders collaborating for the sake of the common good, into a relationship between a service-provider and the taxpayer as a consumer (Biesta, 2010) so that, as a result, the idea of “schools as service providers ... [becomes] embedded in policy and popular conceptions of the relationship between families and schools” (Youdell, 2004, p. 410), replacing possible democratic conceptions of collective deliberation on the common good that may have resulted from a context of collaboration. Nevertheless, this cannot take place under neoliberal governance since neoliberal education policies change the nature of the relationship between parents and schools from education that is conceptualised as a public good, into education perceived as a private concern related to the duty to maintain economic independence.

Fourthly, the neoliberalisation process can damage democracy because it exacerbates educational inequality, which contributes to economic inequality, which in turn can become political power through the “financing of political parties, candidates and campaigns, through their ownership and control of most communications media” (Smith, 2008, p. 125). This would increasingly lead to a situation where the wealthy can use their political power to shape the rules in a way that benefits them (Stiglitz, 2012; Schlozman et al., 2012; Uslaner, 2011), making a mockery out of the democratic principle of political equality.

Fifthly, income polarisation that results from inequality of educational provision can lead to political disenchantment and lower levels of political participation (OECD, 1997;

Lancee and Van de Werfhorst, 2012; Solt, 2015) especially when it is perceived that the rich have greater political power. This conveys the idea that the entire democratic system is manipulated, further discouraging democratic participation. This is yet another consequence of neoliberalisation that contributes to weakening social cohesion.

When one holds a thick conception of democracy, through which one understands democracy as not merely a form of government, but “primarily a mode of associated living, a conjoint communicated experience” (Dewey, 1916, p. 87), then the above criticism would apply fully. Yet, this is not the case for neoliberals, who hold a minimalistic conception of democracy, where “democratic values such as participation, self-regulation, collegiality, and collective deliberation” (Peters, 2017, p. 144) are often replaced by a commercial approach that “individualises, standardises, marketises, and externalises accountability relationships” (Peters, 2017, p. 144), the latter of which are preferred because they are more conducive to the functioning of a free competitive market order. In fact, when neoliberal politicians say that they are ‘true democrats’, they are usually referring to the fact that they would readily leave office when voted out by the people, but not that they would make an effort to infuse the values of democracy (including equality) in all social realms. From a neoliberal perspective, democracy is merely seen as the least harmful form of government, which can too easily become “the justification for a new arbitrary power” (Hayek, 1960, p.93). Therefore, democratic power must be kept in check to make sure that a liberal democracy does not become an illiberal one, which can develop into an even worse casualty of self-interest, because through their deliberations, democratic stakeholders, including politicians, tend to choose according to their self-interest, rather than on the basis of what they believe is the greater good for society (Buchanan & Tullock, 1962).

In relation to education, for example, neoliberals would not hesitate to point out that “the key to school improvement is not school reform, but institutional reform - a shift away from direct democratic control” (Chubb & Moe, 1988, p. 1083), that is, a situation where central governments manage schools directly, in a way that bypasses individual parents’ interests, which then disincentivises parents from taking an active interest in their children’s schooling or which makes it more difficult for them to do so. In order to understand the neoliberal’s attitude towards democracy, one has to keep in mind that for the neoliberal, a society best thrives on that kind of collaboration that is encouraged by the pursuit of self-interest and enhanced through competition. For neoliberals, “competition forms the moral backbone of a free profit-based economy” (Böhm, 1933, p. 110). It forms the moral

backbone because “the freedom of man under capitalism is an effect of competition” (Mises, 1949, p. 285) that allows the free competitive market order to flourish without having to agree on a pattern of justice to which all would have to adhere. Considering these assumptions, it comes as no surprise that the idea of democracy as a commitment towards the common good and collective deliberation (Carr & Hartnett, 1996) gets second precedence, and that wherever situations allow that decisions can be taken through the application of market rationality, these are preferred. These considerations shed light on the reasons why there is a distinction between neoliberal characterisations of democracy which “emphasise a collection of atomised individuals striving for personal gain ...and critical democracy which characterises it as a dynamic process of informed citizens actively participating in the kind of dialogue that prioritizes the substantive democratic concerns” (MacDonald-Vemic & Portelli, 2018, p. 13). The two conceptions of democracy are distinct and far apart. In societies where neoliberalism prevails, the thin neoliberal conception of democracy marginalises democratic values in favour of neoliberal ones.

Those who are critical of neoliberalism because they see it as a way to weaken the democratic process are correct in judging neoliberalism as an overall de-democratising process. Neoliberals tend to apply democracy more sparsely because they are wary of the effects that the actions of “the hungry hordes of vested interests” (Röpke, 1942, p. 181) can have on politicians, whose first interest is that of getting re-elected, rather than making sure that the state interferes in individuals’ lives as little as possible. Pressure on politicians tends to lead government action to serve specific interests to the detriment of individual freedom. This is not to say that the only governments that safeguard individual freedoms are neoliberal ones, libertarian governments would arguably safeguard it even better, but it does mean that neoliberal governance has a higher propensity to result in a fairer distribution of benefits and burdens, with which people can be prepared to live and where the idea of not interfering with individuals’ lives can be best adhered to. Considering this, free competitive markets or at least public-private partnerships are considered to be the preferable mechanism, over corruption-prone democratic deliberation. From a neoliberal perspective, which prioritises individual negative freedom over social justice, this is the logical approach to take. From an egalitarian perspective, this would be judged as unjust, because it can often reduce opportunities for more equitable redistributive outcomes.

Considering the dire state in which democracy everywhere seems to be, and its likelihood to be influenced by the least noble of interests, and the fact that too often, “what

actually goes on in democracies as we know them is best characterised in terms of, say, media manipulation, privilege, rent-seeking, log-rolling, luck, expediency, charisma, ignorance and behind-the-scenes corruption” (Tooley, 1995, p. 32), then taking away powers from politicians in favour of other mechanisms may be advisable. Arguably, the more circumspect democratic powers are, the safer everyone’s freedom is, because democratic powers given to politicians too often end up being used for the benefit of the individual person or the individual political party. When these powers are genuinely used to bring about a more just social order, this can only inevitably lead to the specific order which is deemed just by the politician, and possibly, it may even be the just order as conceptualised by the majority, but most likely there cannot be full agreement. Yet, those who do not agree with the given intervention, are forced to contribute. Such coercion has to be accepted and is an integral part of a democratic system, but this does not mean that an effort should not be made to reduce such situations to a minimum. This is not a question of capitalists deserving more trust than politicians, but the conviction that the smaller the political sphere and the powers of the state are, the less these can interfere in peoples’ lives, and the safer individual freedom is.

9.6 The Perceived Dangers of the Expansion of Market Rationality

A major criticism of the neoliberalisation of compulsory education is that it contributes to a morally corrupt society. Such argumentation is usually made along the lines that before the advent of neoliberalism, the values of solidarity, generosity and fraternity, together with “the idea that we have responsibilities one to another” (Benn, 1990) reigned supreme. Many who hold anti-neoliberal views affirm that democratic neighbourhood schools could provide good quality education without the need for the market-based accountability that results from parental choice policies, such argumentation is based on the view that the very notion of a democratic community implies grass-root accountability through political representatives elected directly by the people. Additionally, many argue that effective schools can be maintained without competition amongst parents for the school of their choice, without competition among schools to promote themselves in the eyes of parent-customers and without competition among pupils for the highest possible performance in their tests. Such a vein of criticism claims that this approach to compulsory education would be an improvement on the neoliberal arrangement, because neoliberal reforms infect the social and political realms with the egoistic ideas of self-interest and the greed activated by competition.

To this end, it is often argued that the problem lies in the fact that neoliberalism shapes individual and national identities in unfortunate ways leading to conflicts between noble values as opposed to “the greed, selfishness, moral turpitude, willingness to exploit others, and dishonesty” (Stiglitz, 2019, p. 117) encouraged by neoliberalism. These values are perceived to result in the corruption of social conviviality. Very often, it is sustained that neoliberal policymakers seem to have forgotten that market processes must be contained to the realm of business. Those who subscribe to such views maintain that, when market rationality is allowed to expand into realms where it does not belong, trust, cooperation and social cohesion are endangered (Olssen, 2000) while the democratic values of equality and fraternity are side-lined.

In relation to education, the claim is that changing decision-making processes from being collective concerns that belong to the political sphere to private economic concerns corrupts society. It is claimed that this occurs because the instrumentalism of marketisation damages trusting relations and the democratic process and by extension, social cohesion. Critics are mostly concerned with the fact that such social arrangements lead to a state of affairs “where the cash nexus threatens professional integrity, ethical demands and responsibilities, axiological considerations and social need” (Whitehead & Crawshaw, 2014, p. 29) that would flourish under social arrangements broadly based on cooperation instead of competition. However, because neoliberalism has extended market principles throughout all public policy areas (Carlquist & Phelps, 2014) market values have morally degraded every realm where they have been put to use. It is often affirmed that this expansion can generate corrosive effects on moral and civic practices and can turn disinterested relationships into profitable transactions (Sandel, 2013) leading to the surrendering of social actions to market concerns (Dunford & Perrons, 2014). It is also claimed that the expansion of the neoliberal logic has extended so much that it has now weakened “the socio-cultural and biophysical bases of economy and society and of democratic governance” (Antonio, 2017, p. 672). Consequently, under a neoliberal order, the pro-social virtues are put aside in favour of an entrepreneurial ethos marked by a culture of cost-benefit costings instead of substantive values-based evaluations.

Such vein of criticism also maintains that under neoliberal governance, the social sphere is degraded by ideas of “competition and one-upmanship” (Bauman, 2001, p. 3) and with an excessive emphasis on self-interest (Giroux, 2004). As a consequence of the spread of market rationality in all social domains, it is argued that “people around seem to keep their

cards close to their chests and few seem in any hurry to help us” (Bauman, 2001, p. 3) and most characteristically, everyone looks at everyone else as a commodity to trade (Vincent, 2010). Consequently, this weakens public life and personal relations (Giroux, 2009) and can even encourage irresponsible behaviour by those who employ shortcuts towards quicker ways to make profit (Berman, 2006).

The image evoked by this kind of criticism leads many to judge neoliberalism as “wicked and evil” (Benn, 1990) especially because it aims “to set man against man, woman against woman and country against country” (Benn, 1990). In fact, taking into consideration the dystopian scenario painted above, it is not difficult to come to the conclusion that neoliberal policymakers have “failed entirely to comprehend how unfettered markets can weaken social cohesion in liberal cultures” (Gray, 1998, p. 143) and that the entire ethos of neoliberalism, including the reformatting of compulsory education in its image, can do nothing but harm to social cohesion. In fact, this is one of the major reasons why, egalitarians argue that neoliberalism should be replaced by a system based on an agreed-upon conception of justice that leads to a socially just society.

While there is much truth in the anti-neoliberal views referred to above, the complete picture is not as bleak as some make it out to be. First of all, free competitive markets can be a means that enable citizens to cooperate with those who have very little in common, thereby increasing cooperation rather than weakening it. Fraternity and solidarity might not be a top priority, but neoliberalisation processes do not lead to dog-eats-dog situations either. Free competitive markets enable citizens to collaborate with everyone, including those who have very different world views from their own, making self-interest-based relationships an improvement on those based on the collective determination of one’s future where there is a higher propensity for individuals to be coerced to contribute, especially through high-taxation, to social objectives which they do not share and to support other people’s lifestyles with which they may profoundly disagree. While those who disagree with the economisation of the political and social spheres contend that market rationality employed by neoliberalism should be kept in its place, for free marketeers, it is the substantive views that underpin “religion, traditional values and community solidarity” (Meadowcroft & Pennington, 2008, p. 119) that should actually be confined to the private sphere. Such confinement would “allow looser and more complex bridging relationships to form between people who differ in their goals” (Meadowcroft & Pennington, 2008, p. 119) and, most importantly, allow them to engage in mutually benefitting exchanges. It is to the

benefit of everyone, that engaging with the impersonal ethos of the free market (which leads to more productive relations), does not require extensive agreements on substantive ends, but only basic accords of honesty and respect for private property. This is, in fact, one of the most important advantages of free competitive markets. Alternatively, “the more we rely on shared moral ends as the basis of social cooperation, the less willing we will be to cooperate with those who are different in their values” (Meadowcroft & Pennington, 2008, p. 123) to the detriment of everyone, because less cooperation would inevitably result into slower economic growth which would benefit nobody since it would mean less wealth to distribute to those in need. Indeed, developing trust and encouraging cooperation “between actors who are very different from one another necessarily requires that the moral framework shared between these actors is relatively ‘thin’” (Meadowcroft & Pennington, 2008, p. 123). It is such thinness which allows the smooth running of a free competitive market order and which should be welcomed. While more substantive agreements are ideal for the private sphere of family and friends, “the extensive and crosscutting web of relationships that sustain an advanced economy can only be maintained by ‘thin’ bridging ties that do not require personal knowledge of other people’s characters, values or ends” (Meadowcroft & Pennington, 2008, p. 130). This ability to maintain a business relationship with people holding very different views should be seen as a merit of the neoliberal conception of a just society rather than a weakness. This is, in fact, why Boettke classifies neoliberalism as “an emancipation philosophy, and a joyous celebration of the creative energy of diverse peoples near and far” (Boettke, 2018, p. 293), because by rolling back the frontiers of the state and widening the private sphere, it can potentially enable cooperation to an even greater extent than what would be possible under different social arrangements.

A second problem with the criticism about the weakened social cohesion that results from the expansion of market rationality into all social realms including education, is with the misinterpretation which conveys the inaccurate idea that under neoliberal governance, market rationality is meant to take over every realm of human action, including the private sphere. This is not the case. It is neither the case that “in neoliberalism, the ‘enterprise form’ is generalised to all forms of conduct” (Burchell, 1996, p. 275) nor that “all dimensions of human life are cast in terms of a market rationality” (Brown, 2005, p. 40). In fact, not all dimensions of human life are meant to adhere to market rationality. It may be true that neoliberalism “involves extending the economic model of supply and demand and of investment-costs-profit so as to make it a model of social relations” (Foucault, 2008, p. 242); nonetheless, it is not the case that market rationality is meant to be extended to

general “existence itself, a form of relationship of the individual to himself, time, those around him, the group, and the family” (Foucault, 2008, p. 242). Neither is it the case that “the language of the market becomes the only vocabulary” (Bolton & Houlihan, 2005, p. 686) and nor is it the case that “all human ...action [is evaluated in terms of] rational entrepreneurial action, conducted according to a calculus of utility, benefit, or satisfaction” (Brown, 2005, p. 40).

It is true that neoliberalism leads to nothing less than “the application of the economic grid to social phenomena” (Foucault, 2008, p. 239), but that is where it ends. Market rationality may, for example, influence what subjects students decide to choose, keeping in mind that they may soon be looking for a job, but that does not imply that the economic grid should be applied to the choice of friends or partner or other personal life choices. In fact, a student may even refuse to apply market rationality to subject choice and legitimately prefer to follow, for example, theatre studies rather than a course in accounts that would offer better employment. They would have to bear the outcomes of their choice, but this does not imply that at any point anyone is going to coerce them into doing anything they do not want or that they are not completely free to choose the path they wish. They may have a myriad of constraints that may push them to favour a choice over another but the unintentional nature of such constraints (limited intellect, limited drive, limited resources) means that such limitations are not coercive, they may affect the capability to choose, but not the freedom to do so. In such situations, at no point it can be said that an individual is being coerced into anything, coercion implies intentional human action, which in this example is absent.

Additionally, the free market economic order “is not a system aimed at defining the whole of life. Its aim is to establish the practical substructure of cooperative social life” (Novak, 1982, p. 65) freeing individuals from restraints that may hinder them from following their personal aims. Nonetheless, it should be kept in mind that, at all times, a free-market economic system is “itself only a means, and its infinite possibilities must be used in the service of ends which exist apart” (Hayek, 1962, p. 236) with each individual making decisions depending on their circumstances and their own conception of the good life, using criteria that are very different from input/output calculations. In fact, what some call “the morality of the bazaar” (Walzer, 1983, p. 109), which many consider the source of the problem, is meant to be employed “in a ‘macro-order’ of more distant relationships with countless other actors who do not share their specific ends” (Meadowcroft & Pennington,

2008, p. 123) in order to be able to “acquire the goods and services they need to sustain themselves” (Meadowcroft & Pennington, 2008, p. 123). This does not mean that market rationality completely takes all aspects of one’s life.

As a matter of fact, within such a system, there is usually “a tension between the rules of conduct appropriate in family life and intimate relationships and those required in the wider world of commerce and society” (Meadowcroft & Pennington, 2008, p. 124). What is of moral relevance is that “free enterprise ...leaves the individual free to choose between material and nonmaterial reward” (Hayek, 1962, p. 236) as a basis of one’s self-interest, which is not to be confused with egoism but to be understood as “whatever it is that drives an individual” (Friedman, 1976, p. 11).

This would ensure the freedom of individuals to act in accordance with what they deem to be morally right, which cannot be presumed to necessarily constitute economic advancement, but may entail considerations for others. Most importantly, it is not that “commerce corrupts our sense of morals ...but that the context of commercial exchange implies different norms of appropriate conduct” (Meadowcroft & Pennington, 2008, p. 124). One set of morals is applicable to the enlarged economic sphere, while a different one, is meant to be employed in relation to personal matters. It is up to each individual to “learn to live in two sorts of world at once” (Hayek, 1988, p. 18) and to learn how to act accordingly, by employing one’s sense of fairness in the private sphere, while adhering to market rationality in the public domains. Accordingly, it would be wise for a neoliberalised education system to prioritise the teaching of pro-social values and to promote the idea that there are values that belong to the market (individual responsibility, market justice), while at the same time there is a different set of values that is meant to be applied within the private sphere. It is vital that children/young people are taught the difference between the two, especially since: “if we were always to apply the rules of the extended order [market rationality] to our more intimate groupings, we would crush them” (Hayek, 1988, p. 18). Hence, the unequivocal importance that should be given to values education in societies that employ free market economic systems, especially the more competitive neoliberalised ones. The expansion of market rationality in most social realms should not weaken social cohesion, yet, the gravity of such criticism demands that mitigating actions should be taken and that increased importance is given to areas such as citizenship, moral, and social education to make sure that individuals, even as enterprising citizens, know where one can employ market rationality, and where this is inappropriate.

9.7 The alleged Egoism of the Entrepreneurial Self

Many argue that the belief in the virtues of individual responsibility, leads neoliberals to give a “new form to society according to the model of the enterprise” (Foucault, 2008, p. 241). Within such a vision of the ideal social arrangement, each individual is meant to be in charge of “produc[ing] his own satisfaction” (Foucault, 2008, p. 226) and become “for himself his own capital” (Foucault, 2008, p. 226) and source of his own earnings. Indeed, in an ideal neoliberalised society, where individuals are held responsible to discover the best use of their skills (Hayek, 1960) and by investing in oneself, and putting one’s assets (good-looks/intellect/wealth/drive) to good use, all citizens considered to be capitalists, including the most disadvantaged ones. Considering the onus that is put on every individual, under a neoliberal system, specific expectations come of compulsory education. It is affirmed that under neoliberalism, schools cannot be allowed to “let the economy down by failing to inculcate young people with appropriate workplace values such as diligence, hard work, compliance, industriousness, and punctuality” (Down, 2009, p. 58). To this end, it is expected that, as shown in Chapter Eight, schools support learners in prioritising entrepreneurial virtues thereby enabling each learner to become “a sort of permanent and multiple enterprise” (Foucault, 2008, p. 241) with the purpose of maintaining their economic autonomy. These are the reasons neoliberal schooling essentially constitutes an effort to produce a specific subjectivity centred upon self-interest, in contrast to more critical forms of subjectivity, such as the active citizen (Sotiris, 2014).

While for the neoliberal policymaker, the entrepreneurial-self is to be lauded for their extensive efforts not to become a burden on others, thereby safeguarding everyone’s individual freedom, others criticise the neoliberal subjectivity imprinted on students as a “narcissistic subjectivity” (Whitehead & Crawshaw, 2014, p. 25) one that is thought to jeopardise every citizens’ moral obligation towards the common good. Advocates of such criticism are of the view that neoliberal subjects are egoistical subjects (Oksala, 2013), unconcerned with the negative consequences of their actions. In fact, it is not unusual to quote Oscar Wilde and describe the neoliberal entrepreneurial self as the person “who knows the price of everything, and the value of nothing,” thereby implying the moral shallowness of such individuals, who are seen to dispose of ideas of respect and assistance in favour of greed and egoism. Such individuals are seen as only able to pursue their own self-interest, being alien to any notion of cooperation, and who are at best, able to maintain good ‘service provider – customer’ relationships.

On the contrary, neoliberals are usually prompt to point out that “because we speak of a person in the economic market as having a private enterprise, we think of him as serving his private interest” (Friedman, 1976, p. 11), but this is not a fully accurate description since “...that interest need not be pecuniary; it need not be narrowly, physical or material ... The private interest is *whatever it is that drives an individual* [emphasis added]” (Friedman, 1976, p. 11). It is therefore claimed that, as a result of that private interest, a great deal of social good could be done including acts of philanthropy, if such acts are what drive the actions of a particular individual. Although in truth, some may even potentially argue that such acts of philanthropy which are driven by self-interest, while they are good in that they benefit other people, have no moral value since their motive is self-interest not the interest of others. This is the opposite of how neoliberals view the situation who point out that in an egalitarian society that strives for social justice, so much wealth is squeezed out of individuals to achieve the egalitarian targets that the opportunities to contribute to philanthropy, and the opportunity to gain moral merit for them, are severely reduced. As regards the supposed dangers of self-interest, one should bear in mind that “individuals maximise welfare *as they conceive it*, whether they be selfish, altruistic, loyal, spiteful, or masochistic” (Becker, 1993, p. 386) so that, those who find life worth living mostly when helping others, will choose to act unselfishly at all times.

Furthermore, even when one has more material ambitions, “it is not selfish to have an ambition...or to choose a lifestyle and a way of life which you wish to choose” (Thatcher, 1988b) irrespective of the fact that such choice may not be available to everyone. In fact, when it is said that people “ought to be guided in their actions by their interests and desires.... [what is actually meant is] that they ought to be allowed to strive for whatever they think desirable” (Hayek, 1948, p. 15) and enjoy as much of their freedom as they possibly can, within the limits of the rule of law. Such behaviour is neither selfish nor materialistic, while entrepreneurial selves who focus on their well-being should not be regarded as “selfish individuals, coldly calculating, only worrying about themselves and about their monetary benefits” (Becker in Horn, 2009, p. 145). In the first place, self-interest always includes the interest of one’s family and one’s dependents and even “anything for which people in fact...care” (Hayek, 1948, p. 12). For neoliberals, “it is not selfish ...to want to do more for your own family so that they have a better way of life than you had” (Thatcher, 1988b) including investing heavily in their education if one has the means to do so. Such decisions are for individuals to make and for everyone else to respect.

This approach is legitimate in the light that under neoliberal governance, expectations are not limited to allowing individuals to act on self-interest, but along such freedom there also is the moral obligation to sustain a social security safety-net intended to eliminate absolute poverty, while admittedly insufficient to combat relative poverty.

Thirdly, the entrepreneurial-self and the resulting motivations of self-interest sustain the general well-being and are beneficial to any community because in a social arrangement marked by a free competitive market order, the ‘selfish act’ of choosing the most advantageous option for oneself enhances economic efficiency, thereby contributing to generate the necessary wealth for oneself but also sustain the social minimum below which no one is allowed to descend under neoliberal governance. This is despite the fact that in a free market order, people do not cooperate “because they love or should love one another. They cooperate because this best serves their own interests” (Mises, 1949, p. 168). The outcomes are still meant to work for the benefit of all, while one of the most important strengths of the free markets is deemed to be their ability to facilitate cooperation between strangers with possibly very different conceptions of the good life.

Fourthly, at the risk of appearing to contradict the reasons given above in defence of the self-interested entrepreneurial-self, for the neoliberal, different rules of conduct apply depending on where these are being enacted. While in the economic sphere, it is fundamental that “what determines our responsibility is the advantage we derive from what others offer us, not their merit in providing it” (Hayek, 1960, p. 97) and “the individual ... [is] responsible for his [sic] conduct and ...[must] bear the consequences of even innocent error” (Hayek, 1962, p. 232) because only when these two principles are in place can a free-market order function. These principles are meant to be applied exclusively in the economic sphere and do not belong in the private one. As referred to above, the morality of the market, that is, “from each as they choose, to each as they are chosen” (Nozick, 1974, p. 160), belongs exclusively to the market. Being aware of this distinction in practice means that citizens, “must constantly adjust [their] ...lives ...thoughts and ...emotions, in order to live simultaneously within different kinds of orders [the public and the private] according to different rules” (Hayek, 1988, p. 18) and apply the rules of market rationality in the macrocosm of the economic sphere, and fairness in relation to moral merit in the private sphere. The importance given to the requirement to apply different criterion of justice in different areas of one’s life provides further assurance that the creation of entrepreneurial selves is not the threat to civilisation that certain criticism make it to be; neither is it the

source of all social ills. Rather than egoistic individuals, entrepreneurial selves responsibly make sure that they do not become a burden on others, and by the simple fact of not requiring assistance, they greatly enhance other people's individual negative freedom. Equally important, by doing so, they ensure that more wealth is available to those who truly require social support.

It could even be said that there can be a great deal of altruistic potential in neoliberal responsabilised subjects that, as shall be further argued below, must be sustained through an educational experience that includes elements of citizenship education, values education, and critical thinking skills. It is important for a neoliberalised education systems to make sure to be able to enhance provision in such areas especially when taking into account several views on the dangers of the ongoing increase of phenomena such as, "the dissolving of solidarity, the decline of values, the culture of narcissism, the egoism trap, entitlement thinking, hedonism" (Beck & Beck-Gernsheim, 2002, p.156) and several other similar notions that do not portray a favourable image of the entrepreneurial self. Criticism which contends that, the public and the private spheres are not as easily kept apart as neoliberals presume (Illouz, 2007) and that the "neoliberal selfhood" (McGuigan, 2016, p.117) encourages a narcissistic and hedonistic spirit (Twenge, 2006; McGuigan, 2016), further sustains the importance of instilling pro-social attitudes in students within neoliberalised systems of compulsory education.

9.8 Further thoughts on the Neoliberalisation of Compulsory Education: The Importance of Social Cohesion

Understandably, every political rationality has both strengths and weaknesses. Through specific policies, such as, depoliticisation, responsabilisation, austerity policies, and the effort towards limited government action, and the very approach of expecting less from individuals and limiting collective responsibility to the bare minimum, neoliberalism manages to do more than most in terms of safeguarding individual negative freedom, at least as regards freedom conceptualised narrowly as non-interference. It manages to interfere less in people's lives by requiring less taxation and by widening the sphere of individual action. For example, in education, administrative accountability policies enhance efficiency, thereby potentially requiring less government spending and less taxation, school choice policies expand parental choice more widely, while human capital policies should facilitate employment which is fundamental for personal freedom. As expected, this choice comes at a price. Collectively, neoliberal educational reforms lead to an education system

that neglects the importance of social cohesion and strengthening the ethos of trust between citizens. Diverse elements can contribute to this neglect. The economic context of competition and the subjectivity of the entrepreneurial-self lead individuals to focus on their own employability and on maintaining their economic autonomy, possibly decreasing their availability to contribute to the collective good. Additionally, an educational experience that focuses on improving academic attainment may assist one to find a job, but may not help as much in cultivating the attitudes for social cooperation and care. Moreover, the economically homogeneous clustering of schools is more likely to deprive children of experiences of different cultures and different ways of doing things, having become itself a socially impoverished environment. Finally, the propensity of neoliberalised schooling to lead to educational inequality (and therefore economic inequality) will itself also contribute to weaken social cohesion in many ways, not to mention possible instances of neglected schools in disadvantaged areas that are not up to the task of providing a good education. When along with the weaknesses of neoliberal education policy in matters of social cohesion, one adds the weaknesses of neoliberal general public policy in the same area, it becomes evident why it is vital for neoliberal education policy to prioritise the fostering of a commitment to live together in harmony (Jensen, 1998) and to promote the idea that citizens are often facing common challenges (Maxwell, 1996) and who could profit much by mutually supporting others.

Additionally, it is also crucial to support social cohesion because this is important for economic growth since weakened social cohesion hinders economic growth in different ways. First of all, social cohesion affects economic growth positively by reducing transaction costs because it sustains trust (Bjørnskov, 2012; Fukuyama, 1995; Putnam, 1993; Knack & Keefer, 1997; La Porta et al., 1997; van Staveren & Knorringa, 2008;). Higher levels of trust in others (and in state institutions) facilitate economic transactions by easing processes such as information gathering, communications, and contract enforcement (Coase, 1960; Meadowcroft & Pennington, 2008); on the contrary, social fragmentation makes these processes more difficult. Secondly, stronger social cohesion affects economic growth positively by facilitating cooperation (Alesina & La Ferrara, 2000; Wilkinson and Pickett, 2010) and easing collective action, including matters of public goods (Olson, 1965; Alesina et al., 1999; Keefer & Khemani, 2004). These actions become especially favourable when they manage to trigger more investment. Conversely, social polarisation neither sustains trust, nor does it facilitate cooperation, which would aid future investment. Thirdly, social cohesion facilitates economic growth because it strengthens political stability. This

attracts investment and reduces the possibility of violence, which is detrimental to economic growth (Collier, 1998; Pervaiz & Chaudhary, 2015). Political stability also supports economic growth through the need for fewer resources to maintain the rule of law. Fourthly, social cohesion facilitates economic growth by improving allocative efficiency through the reduction of discrimination, such as the avoidance of cases where employers refuse to recruit members of specific ethnicities, or trade with specific ethnic or religious groups (Patrinos, 2000; Lundahl, 1992).

Considering the relationship between social cohesion and economic growth, it is evident that a “successful economy cannot develop, let alone survive, in the absence of generalised social trust” (Meadowcroft & Pennington, 2008, p. 119). The permissiveness shown by neoliberal education policy reforms towards the exacerbation of educational inequality may be incoherent with the aim of sustaining economic growth. Considering that economic growth is a contributing factor to the well-being of everyone including people living in poverty, the neoliberal policymaker should make sure that education reform contributes adequately to sustain it. Neoliberal policymakers should make an effort to reduce inequality and take on Hayek’s advice that, “wherever there is a legitimate need for government action, and we have to choose between different methods of satisfying such a need, those that incidentally also reduce inequality may well be preferable” (Hayek, 1960, p. 151). Considering the likely outcomes of the neoliberalisation process of compulsory education in terms of inequality, it becomes evident as to why such advice should be heeded.

Yet there seems to be a lack of awareness of the fact that free markets push individuals to search for new opportunities to make profit often far afield from their communities of origin, and thereby weaken social relationships and familial ties wherever these are implemented. Such situations can lead to “the dissolution of the ties of the local community” (Hayek, 1979, p. 55), and to situations where individuals are “too sharply cut off from the old social organism to rely on the solidarity of real small communities” (Röpke, 1957, p. 58). Considering this, a safety-net is institutionalised in order to offer “the assurance of a certain minimum income for everyone, or a sort of floor below which nobody need fall even when he [sic] is unable to provide for himself [sic]” (Hayek, 1979, p. 55). The same principle of institutionalising compensatory mechanisms is required within a neoliberalised education system to minimise the negative effects that neoliberal educational policies have on social cohesion. Such mechanisms may not be able to make segregation

less hierarchical; they may not be able to reduce the gap in educational attainment between the rich and people living in poverty, but they would make such outcomes much less significant by partially neutralising some of their effects as shown below (sections 9.8.1, 9.8.2 and 9.8.3).

It is also important to institutionalise such compensatory mechanisms, because the propensity to disregard the importance of social cohesion could damage the neoliberal project itself. As Brown correctly points out: “the willingness of a large segment of the U.S. public to succumb to Trump’s embrace of what ‘fomented nationalism, racism, xenophobia and desire for authoritarian rule’ has its roots in a neoliberal culture of social disintegration” (Brown, 2017, p.1). Arguably, similar conclusions can be made about Brexit, and it could very well be the case that “political populism is not simply a challenge to the neoliberal order – it is a product of it” (Brown, 2017), a product which brought about a huge transformation in neoliberalism itself, changing it from the otherwise economically open-border types of neoliberalism, that is, the Thatcher/Reagan/Bush type and the Blair/Clinton/Obama type, into the protectionist close border neoliberalism of Donald Trump and possibly, the out-of-the-common-market UK of Boris Johnson. Considering this, the following three suggestions become even more relevant.

9.8.1 The Importance of the Absence of Sink Schools

The neoliberal policy maker should take responsibility for the sink schools which parental choice policies create. Enabling the conglomeration of middle-class learners in specific schools inevitably results in the creation of sink schools where learning becomes increasingly difficult. Indeed, the neoliberal policymaker must accept that “the whole question of ‘choice’ becomes a farce as people who cannot afford to pay for educational and health services are fobbed off with an underfunded and therefore poor-quality public service” (Mayo, 2015, p. 3) and that only the absence of sink schools can make a neoliberalised education system morally acceptable. Due to the fact that sink schools are the direct (albeit unintended) consequences of neoliberal policy, the neoliberal policy maker has an even clearer moral duty to make sure to address such a problem, then, for example, the policymaker who employs a system of neighbourhood schools, even if these can equally result in the creation of sink schools (Holme, 2002), but in such cases, sink schools are mainly the result of social policy rather than education policy so the education policy maker is at least partially exonerated. In a neoliberalised system, justice requires education policy

makers to make sure that *all* schools provide an educational service that is of such good quality that it renders segregation irrelevant.

Guaranteeing a good quality education to everyone would help to make sure that no one's education is limited to literacy and numeracy but is a rich educational experience which achieves more than the ever-important economic aims. This may mean that some children may require longer school days, along with "high-quality preschools, well-trained and culturally sensitive teachers, childhood nutrition, learning enrichment programmes, and other inputs" (de Saxe & Favela, 2018, p. 45) as well as a myriad of other measures. Under neoliberalism, such additional help is legitimised by two distinct sources. Firstly, even in the absence of egalitarian concerns, it simply is more difficult for disadvantaged children to reach the centrally mandated standards (Kozol, 2005; Valencia et al., 2001) so that even if the ambition is only for an adequate educational experience, the disadvantaged would still need to be provided with additional support. Secondly, having been further disadvantaged by a system that clusters them in schools characterised by "the concentration of disillusionment and despair" (Nairn & Higgins, 2011, p.181) further legitimises the extra funding required to ensure a truly adequate educational experience of good quality as required by a state that aims for competitiveness.

Guaranteeing good educational provision to everyone would mean that all the legitimate effort made by middle-class parents to ensure good schooling for their children, and the unjust cream-skimming activities employed by the better schools would not be as damaging to social cohesion, since everyone would still be well catered for. The assurance of good schools for everyone would also contribute to social cohesion, because it would minimise envy and promote a more democratic ethos ensuring that more people with a disadvantaged background make it to the top. It would also ensure that the neoliberalisation process is in line with the core principles of neoliberal rationality by making sure that everyone is equal before the law in the sense that everyone would have been provided with good quality schooling. Indeed, as pointed out by Walzer, in relation to educational provision, "as in other areas of communal provision, the stronger the public system, the easier one can be about the uses of money alongside it" (Walzer, 1983, p.218), because such money would be allowing rich or ambitious parents to follow on their own conception of the good life, while severely limiting the negative effects that such freedom can have on those who do not have the material possibilities to act on their freedoms.

Encouragingly, this commitment is present in the latest UK Conservative Party electoral manifesto, where while acknowledging their commitment to parental choice, by stating that, “we will continue to ensure that parents can choose the schools that best suit their children” (2019, p. 13), it is also promised that they will continue to do everything they can “to ensure every school is a great school” (UK Conservative Manifesto, 2019, p. 13). Apart from strong investment in educational and human resources in the least advantaged schools, there are other initiatives that contribute to ensuring that everyone has a good education. The *Pupil Deprivation Grant/Pupil Development Grant* in Wales (Welsh Government, 2014), the *Pupil Premium in England* (DfE, 2010) and the *Pupil Equity Fund* in Scotland are three examples of a mechanism that could potentially contribute to ensuring an adequately good level of education for everyone. Such mechanisms are compatible with neoliberal governance because they specifically assist the disadvantaged, without interfering with other parents’ right to support their children as much as they wish.

9.8.2 The Provision of High-Quality Citizenship Education

A second assurance that needs to form part of the neoliberalisation of an education system is the provision of citizenship education, one which can at least partially compensate for the possibly anti-social effects of otherwise individualistic policies. This is clearly important since, despite the widespread depoliticisation measures along with the many efforts to restrict the political sphere and to roll back the frontiers of the state, it still remains the case that “without widespread education in the basic aspects of constitutional democratic government for all citizens, and without a public informed about pressing problems, crucial political and social decisions simply cannot be made” (Rawls, 1993, p. 139). This would constitute a problem to any democratic society, even to those which only adhere to a thin conception of democracy.

Unfortunately, the neoliberalisation of public policy in general, including economic policies, but also education policies, collectively push “the individual to look further away for opportunity, abandoning the community which she may have called home” (Rothbard, 1970, p. 1315). This does not contribute to enhancing social cohesion, in the same manner in which parental choice policies do not contribute to social unity and in the same way in which schooling that focuses on academic attainment does not contribute to foster social solidarity. Once one adds to this situation the generally open-borders economic approach adhered to by neoliberalism, increasingly leading to more diverse societies where “the glue of ethnicity (people who look and talk like us) has to be replaced with the glue of values

(people who think and behave like us)” (Walzer, 1983, p. 64), the provision of citizenship education that educates children to feel part of their community and which teaches them how to contribute to the wellbeing of their community, becomes even more imperative. Considering this, one cannot but suggest that those policymakers who are keen to implement neoliberal reforms need to do so in a way that takes into consideration their propensity to weaken social cohesion and compensate accordingly. This could be done by cultivating values of cooperation (Green et al., 2003) and by making sure that students’ educational experience includes exposure to civic virtues especially dispositions aimed at enhancing social cohesion such as “kindness, truth-telling, mutual respect, self-discipline, compassion, loyalty, toleration, and generosity” (Merry, 2012, p. 467). Such education would contribute to mitigate some of the effects that result from the weakening of social cohesion brought about by measures implemented as part of the process of the neoliberalisation of compulsory education.

Neoliberal policymakers need not search far for a syllabus of such provision. One of the fathers of neoliberalism, Wilhelm Röpke, was concerned with the fact that “from the sociological and moral point of view it [competition] is even dangerous because it tends more to dissolve than to unite” (Röpke, 1942, p. 181) and argued that a free society requires “an undegenerated community of people ready to cooperate with each other, who have a natural attachment to, and a firm place in society” (Röpke, 1942, p. 181). To this end, he suggested that in order to be considered ready to participate in free market activities, citizens should master important principles such as, “self-discipline, a sense of justice, honesty, fairness, ... moderation, public spirit, respect for human dignity, [and] firm ethical norms” (Röpke, 1958, p. 125). Such education would go a great way to compensate for the possible impoverishment of academically focused educational experience, the social disadvantages of the economically homogeneous clustering of schools and the possible anti-social consequences of the de-democratisation that results from the expansion of market rationality.

In order to make sure that society does not reach a point where “community is dissolved in the acid bath of competition” (Beck, 1992, p. 94), neoliberal educational provision needs to be enriched, not only to ensure that every student receives an education of good quality, but that every student is also equipped with the tools necessary to ensure that citizens are provided with an education that enables them to evaluate their social realities and to care

enough to act accordingly. Unless this is catered for, the view which holds that the market overpowers critical thought (Hill, 2006) would not be farfetched criticism.

Interestingly, the neoliberal use of citizenship education within a neoliberalised education system is legitimatised by an instrumental rationale, since it is intended to consolidate social cohesion to maintain the necessary social capital that is required for the market to work efficiently. It is another element of what may be termed as enlightened egoism from the policymakers' part. The aim is to ensure the proper functioning of the free market economic order not moral concerns such as fraternity and cooperation. In fact, while at a first glance it may appear otherwise, institutionalising citizenship education within a neoliberalised education system can still be criticised as yet another example of a thin sense of morality. This should not be surprising since a system based on the principle of self-interest cannot be expected to produce substantive moral reasons on why people are to cooperate in the public and social spheres. Hence, while the promotion of citizenship education may seem to suggest differently, it is in fact coherent with neoliberal views underpinned by a pro-market, individualist rationale. Furthermore, it goes without saying that, while due importance is to be given to citizenship education at the level of compulsory schooling, this does not mean that compulsory schooling should prioritise citizenship education to such an extent that importance of differences in students' ambitions and abilities can be postponed, "so that children learn to be citizens first-workers, managers, merchants, and professionals only afterward" (Walzer, 1983, p.202) thereby leading to a situation where citizenship education becomes the main purpose of schools, so that "schooling ceases to be the monopoly of the few" (Walzer, 1983, p.202). Such central role for citizenship education within compulsory schooling would not be compatible with neoliberalism because it would be seen as an unfair way to limit those learners who are able to achieve more from their schooling than just citizenship skills, as Walzer suggests. Compulsory education should be able to provide students with an education that is good enough to address both the economic aims as well as the democratic aims. No society can afford to leave either out. Deficiency in either would neither benefit the student, nor the state.

9.8.3 Teaching Political Education and Critical Thinking Skills

Beyond teaching citizenship education, for a neoliberalised education to be considered morally just, it would need to ensure that it does not lead to any form of indoctrination.

Hence, including critical thinking skills in the curriculum would be necessary to ensure that the neoliberalisation of schooling is far removed from including forms of indoctrination.

The dangers of indoctrination under neoliberalism is a legitimate one and should be given special consideration. Ensuring anti-indoctrinating mechanisms should be given due importance because, as a political rationality, neoliberalism holds very specific convictions and relies on assumptions that can easily effect individuals without their knowing. It is firmly believed, for example, that “the individual’s life itself . . . must make him into a sort of permanent and multiple enterprise” (Foucault, 2008, p. 241) and that “if you have a free society under the rule of law, it produces both dignity of the individual and prosperity” (Thatcher, 1988e). Considering that as a type of governance where the primary aim “is to change the soul” (Thatcher, 1981), it is to be expected that neoliberalisation processes includes agendas to promote such assumptions as part of the transformation process and as a way to address the fact that a stable society requires “widespread acceptance of some common set of values” (Friedman, 1955, p. 3). The main concern regards the issue that unless implemented carefully, the necessary moulding of individuals into entrepreneurial-selves may risk becoming a form of indoctrination, especially where students are made to internalise the neoliberal conception of the just order of things, without criticising alternatives, so that without realising, they become uncritical subjects contributing to legitimising a system they take for granted.

Secondly, the neoliberal policy maker should also give special attention to the issue of indoctrination because apart from the spilling over of convictions, there is the fact that the neoliberalisation process itself results in governments having a strong control over compulsory education. In such circumstances, Poppers’ warning that, “too much state control in educational matters is a fatal danger to freedom, since it must lead to indoctrination” (Popper, 1945/2011, p. 111), deserves special consideration, enough to merit specific mitigating actions.

Thirdly, there is also Ackerman’s criticism of parental choice policies to consider, where Ackerman argues that educational arrangements that give too much power to parents, lead to schools that so closely replicate children’s backgrounds that they end up being “a series of petty tyrannies in which like-minded parents club together to force-feed their children without restraint” (Ackerman, 1980, p.160). While national examinations, curricula, qualification frameworks and inspections may be able to somehow deter such

overwhelming parental control. Ackerman's warning that "such an education is a mockery of the liberal ideal" (Ackerman, 1980, p.160) needs to be taken seriously, and the teaching of critical thinking skills, political education and other initiatives to ensure that children develop an open mind need to be prioritised.

The commitment to individual freedom and to democracy, despite the adherence to a thin interpretation of it, and the very consequences of several favoured education policies, should encourage neoliberals take precautions against such situations and make sure to instil in all students the critical awareness necessary to ensure that compulsory education is in the business of opening minds, as opposed to indoctrination. This includes the ability to evaluate one's decisions and what actually prompted one's actions to move in a certain direction and not another, why some social aspects are taken for granted, why social institutions are designed in the way they are, who benefits from present social structures, who are the latter disadvantage and, more generally, to "question the basic precepts of society" (Aronowitz & Giroux, 1991, p. 188) and "to cultivate the capacity for critical judgment" (Giroux, 2004, p. 31). In order to make sure that a neoliberalised education system does not lead to indoctrination, it would be propitious to make sure that political issues and critical thinking skills form part of students' educational experience to ensure that education is more than a handmaid to the economy. Such political education is an indispensable part of a broad education that genuinely prepares students to face their future. In the case of a neoliberalised education system, it is fundamental that such education is part of the curriculum, because it is needed to counterbalance the focus made on education for employability. It would also address the criticism that such education takes over the entire life of students to use them as cogs in the economic machine to which all citizens are expected to contribute.

This is also important in neoliberalised education systems because through the teaching of entrepreneurial attitudes, lifelong learning skills and the implementation of self-directed learning, neoliberal education policies transform compulsory education into a type of character-building education that may not necessarily be compatible with democratic values. Bringing the political into the classroom would help to mitigate the effects of such neoliberal character education since "engaging children in an imaginative, intellectually challenging encounter with political ideas, and helping them to understand the historical and social context of collective endeavours to translate these ideas into reality" (Suissa, 2015, p. 115) would serve as a means of opening students' minds to possible alternatives

and equip them with the skills to actively work towards a better future. In the case of neoliberalised education systems, this would mean: engaging with ethical considerations such as the notions of the dehumanisation of individuals when conceptualising them exclusively as expensive machines, the meaning of freedom in a society underpinned by the principle of competition, the effects that race and socio-economic status have on equality of opportunity and the effects that the permanent state of anxiety resulting from competition and the “spectre of failure” (Nairn, 2007, p361) can have on individuals. These are critical areas with which students should be engaging. Without proper engagements with these notions, education risks becoming indoctrination. Enabling students to actively engage with these issues would ensure that a neoliberal education system is not producing automatons to be used as cannon fodder to satisfy the needs of the economy, but is in fact offering a genuinely educational experience that opens one’s horizons and truly enhances individual freedom. This is of vital moral importance especially because under neoliberal governance, all the education policies identified in this thesis, serve as “a necessary cornerstone for the re-forming of the social order in accordance with neoliberal beliefs and principles” (Jonathan, 1997, p. 19). Therefore, in order to make sure that under neoliberal governance, education does not become indoctrination, a strong effort must be made to enhance the students’ ability to critically engage with their social environment. Additionally, this may also serve to address criticism which points out that neoliberal education policies lead to a system that “creates robotic people less able to think beyond the scope of their function in society” (Hill et al., 2009, p. 117) and that under neoliberalism, schools serve only “as the primary source of sorting and initial training for corporations” (Torres & Van Heertum, 2009, p. 156). Neoliberal governance should expect more from its education system than fulfilling employers’ requests, as implied in such criticism. The enterprise culture needs citizens with a richer education in order to be able to function.

Interestingly, one might think that once anti-indoctrination education is enhanced, through the teaching of critical thinking skills, students would, as if by default, prefer the egalitarian values of collective responsibility, public commitment, social equality and the primacy of the collective well-being over the negative freedom of individuals. This is presumably why the teaching of critical thinking skills gets much support from those who hold anti-neoliberal sentiments. Nevertheless, it could arguably be the case that such an enlightened individual, who can question the precepts of society thoroughly, may note situations where collective responsibility is abused by free-riders and people are made to contribute disproportionately to social well-being to the detriment of their individual

freedom. They may come to the conclusion that the price of equality is too high and that the neoliberal approach occupies the moral high ground. Either way, what is of concern is the fact that students, as present and future citizens, are able to criticise and engage with the socio-political contexts that surround them. Teaching such skills should form an intrinsic part of any compulsory education that purports to prioritise freedom before anything else. Despite the fact that teaching critical thinking skills is far from being a sufficient guarantee, it remains necessary to at least partially counterbalance the indoctrinating effects of a social and educational reality that is permeated by a neoliberal spirit which pervades so much of citizens' daily lives.

9.9 Conclusion

The effects of the neoliberalisation of compulsory education on students are extensive. A neoliberalised education system tends to prioritise academic attainment over a broader educational experience, to the possible detriment of both the individual whose knowledge will be limited to literacy and numeracy and society at large. Additionally, a neoliberalised education tends to weaken social cohesion because many of its consequences contribute to this. In fact, albeit in different ways, economically homogeneous clustering of schools, the resulting sink schools, the weaker focus on democratic education, the expansion of market rationality, and the very creation of the entrepreneurial self, are all features that are more likely to contribute to social fragmentation than to social cohesion, even if one were to argue that the picture is not as bleak as many critics make it out to be.

In those cases where all schools are good schools, and where the curriculum includes good quality citizenship and critical education, it can be concluded that a neoliberalised education system is a morally just one. Considering the strong efforts made by the hyper-accountability policies to make sure that all children receive the best education service possible and the preparation that they will get in relation to their employability, as well as the fact that they would be enjoying their future in a free, and probably more prosperous society, it would be an overall improvement. As is always the case in politics, some would be getting a better deal than others, but that is inevitably the case, irrespective of which political rationality gets to inform a given social arrangement. All in all, standards-based outcomes-focused accountability is more effective than professional accountability, parental choice is morally superior to denying parents a say in their children's education, and an educational experience that prioritises the economic aims of education, when not

taken to extremes, can result in a useful and relevant educational experience to the benefit of both the individual and society at large.

Understandably, many critics view such judgments as cruel and insensitive, especially for those who take economic redistribution for granted and see no reason why individual liberties cannot be curtailed to ensure that many other individuals are better off, such as when parents are forced to send their children to specific schools to ensure a just socio-economic balance amongst all schools, or when, less radically, citizens are forced to pay the high levels of taxation required to ensure that the materially advantaged and the materially disadvantaged attend schools that offer equal educational experiences. According to neoliberal political rationality, both such alternatives are morally inferior to the neoliberal approach because they both expect some individuals to contribute more than is morally due, for the admittedly highly noble purpose of increasing what the disadvantaged are able to do. Nevertheless, neoliberalism is fairer because it does not expect as much from everyone, it assigns everyone the poverty burden, but spares everyone the equality burden, and thereby better safeguards everyone's negative freedom.

The suggested mitigating actions are being put forward in line with the belief that while neoliberalism may have become omnipresent within public policy in the Anglosphere, including education policy, this does not mean that actions cannot be taken *in combination* with the neoliberalisation process to ameliorate the situation, taking advantage of its inherently hybrid nature. The suggestions provided in this chapter on the effects on students, and in the previous chapter on the effects on teachers, make a contribution in this sense. The solutions presented would not eliminate the disadvantages that result from the conscious trade-offs made by neoliberal policymakers. Nevertheless, they should be able to improve the provision of compulsory education within states that employ neoliberal governance in a way that improves the situation of those most disadvantaged.

Chapter 10: Conclusion

Answering the chosen questions has revealed a great deal about the nature of the morality on which neoliberal education policies are based. In clarifying what is meant by neoliberal political rationality, it became clear that the aim of this political rationality is not an egalitarian society underpinned by the values of social justice and material inequality, but one characterised by the importance given to individual negative freedom, equality before the law, and the primacy of the individual over society. It is these principles that, when applied to neoliberal governance, bring about a society marked by depoliticisation, responsabilisation of individuals despite possible structural inequalities, supply-side economics, the use of globalisation to induce productivity and an active effort to infuse the economic and social spheres with the principle of competition.

The same approach is applied to the realm of education. The aims of the neoliberal agenda for compulsory education reflect the same trade-offs, characteristic of a morality marked by the primacy of individual negative freedom over concerns of inequality. All three policy categories are informed by the same value trade-offs: individual responsibility over collective responsibility, market justice over social justice, individualism over social wellbeing and strict adherence to the principle of equality before the law. These value trade-offs have extensive repercussions on the resulting education system that they generate. Hyper-accountability systems focus most stakeholders' attention on improving students' academic attainment, to the possible detriment of a more balanced and rich educational experience and more socially just schools. Parental choice policies secure the rights of parents to support their children in any way they deem fit, but in the process, the disadvantaged are put at a relatively further disadvantage due to the segregation that results when parents are increasingly given the rights that enable them to choose. The third strand of policies within the neoliberalisation process of compulsory education is also an expression of the same kind of morality that focuses on the values of individual responsibility. This is particularly evident from the effort of moulding entrepreneurial selves, as individuals who responsibly take it upon themselves to do anything in their powers to maintain their economic autonomy and avoid becoming a burden on others. These trade-offs mark the effort of the neoliberal approach to safeguard individual freedom, even if this comes at the cost of increased social inequality.

This inquiry's systematic exploration exposed how specific neoliberal educational policies are consistent with and follow from neoliberal political rationality as a coherent

ideological position that has specific conceptions of what is morally right and wrong. Indeed, throughout the thesis, it was evident that there is an alignment among the core principles that underpin neoliberalism as a political rationality, the chosen aims that constitute the neoliberal agenda for education, the specific policies enacted, and even the specific consequences, which result from the value trade-offs made by policymakers. None of the repercussions that result from the neoliberalisation of education can justifiably be labelled as an ‘unintended consequence’. All outcomes result from calculated risks and conscious decisions meant to protect what is considered to be morally superior (individual negative freedom, the private sphere, absence of coercion), over less important moral concerns (social and material equality).

As has been discussed in Chapters Eight and Nine, the repercussions of the neoliberalisation process, and the morality it impinges on the education system, are extensive. As regards teachers, neoliberal education policies, underpinned as they are by market rationality, prioritise the fact of making sure that the money invested in compulsory education yields the expected results, even if this means creating a working environment characterised by active distrust, surveillance and work-intensification. Overall, the neoliberalisation process makes teaching a harder job. The pressure put on teachers inevitably leads to increased attrition rates because it demands too much from them. The least that can be done is to make sure that remuneration reflects the increased expectations. This would be a way of making the neoliberalisation process more just towards teachers.

Neoliberal education policies also risk becoming unjust when allowed to lead to an impoverished education due to examinations-based accountability policies that encourage teaching short-cuts such as teaching-to-the-test, triage, and the narrowing of curricula, which restrict students’ educational experience to academic progress, to the detriment of other aspects, such as, citizenship education and civic virtues, which are also important. These policies ignore student needs because these should be offered a broad curriculum which not only prepares them well for economic autonomy, but also enables them to fulfil their democratic duties. Special attention should be given to ensure that compulsory education prepares students well for both employment and life in general. Only when this balance is maintained can it be said that a neoliberalised education provision is really being just towards students.

Neoliberal education policies are morally inadequate from egalitarian moral perspectives, amongst other things, because they are conducive to economically homogeneous clustering of schools, thereby making them susceptible to accusations that they covertly reproduce class interests. In truth, segregation is also problematic from a neoliberal perspective because the resulting inequality of educational provision contributes in many ways to the weakening of social cohesion which in turn, hinders economic growth, the ultimate aim of all neoliberal public policy. By weakening social cohesion, neoliberal education policies can end up hindering, rather than sustaining, the contribution that compulsory education is meant to provide to economic growth. Considering these undesirable outcomes, it can be concluded that while neoliberal educational policies support economic growth by increasing efficiency and addressing the needs of the economy, simultaneously they can hinder it by exacerbating social fragmentation, unless adequate corrective actions are implemented, starting from the guarantee that all schools are good schools. Without such an element, a neoliberalisation process cannot be considered as just, not even when judged by the neoliberal criteria of justice.

Neoliberal education policies would clearly still be considered a moral failure from an egalitarian perspective. They would remain morally inadequate until parental choice policies are scrapped in favour of a more comprehensive provision or at least a guarantee of equality of educational opportunity, if not equality of educational outcomes by the end of compulsory schooling. Additionally, from a social justice perspective, the neoliberalisation of compulsory education can never be considered to be a morally just process, as long as, it prioritises academic attainment over all other educational concerns, as long as schools are conceptualised as teaching shops, as long as students are considered to be expensive machines and as long as schools are seen as training factories instead of a democratic microcosm that prepares citizens for active participation in the democratic macrocosm of the society in which they live.

In spite of the considerable weaknesses of neoliberal education policies as identified in this thesis, once these weaknesses are addressed, it can neither be concluded that these policies end up undermining the neoliberal project for education, nor would it be a logical conclusion that neoliberalism, as applied in the realm of education, is an overall worse alternative either to the quest for social justice, or to a libertarian minimal state. This can be concluded, even though admittedly, as is the case in other policy areas, the neoliberal approach “must appear highly unjust from the point of view of distributive justice” (Hayek,

1963, p. 257). Yet, the positive outcomes must be weighed in as well in order to get to a more complete evaluation. Through the neoliberalisation process, schools are more likely to be effective in supporting most students' academic development, most parents are more likely to have a stronger say in their children's education, employers are more likely to find the skills they need, and students are more likely to be better prepared for economic autonomy.

However, for these specific educational policies to be considered as just - at least when applying the criteria of justice applied by neoliberals, that is, in line with criteria of justice that "take no account of personal or subjective circumstances, of needs or good intentions, but solely how the results of man's activities are valued by those who make use of them" (Hayek, 1962/1967, p. 257), while also being in line with the acknowledged duty of humanitarian assistance, the resulting weaknesses identified in this thesis would need to be addressed. Once these weaknesses, that is, unfair treatment of teachers, instances of impoverished education, and inadequate school provision, are catered for, these policies could then be considered to be coherent with the neoliberal conception of a just social arrangement, and at least for those who prioritise individual negative freedom over concerns of social justice, such policies would also be considered as morally just.

It would still be correct to argue that "a neoliberal socially just education system is a contradiction in terms" (Reay, 2012, p. 588), especially when one considers that neoliberals do not even attempt to bring about such an arrangement. Nevertheless, this does not mean that the neoliberal vision does not lead to an individually just arrangement, when implemented in line with the neoliberal core principles. In fact, within neoliberalism, it is generally acknowledged that the consequences of the prioritisation of individual negative freedom over social equality favours a social arrangement marked by "freedom from state interference which implies an acceptance of inequalities generated by the market" (Peters, 1999, p. 3). In the realm of education, this results in greater parental choice and possibly even reduced taxation as a result, amongst other things, of the higher levels of efficiency brought about by a stricter accountability. Unfortunately, this comes at the price of economically homogeneous clustering, inequality of educational provision and the exacerbation of socioeconomic inequality that may weaken the voice of some citizens while strengthening that of the advantaged, thereby posing a threat to the democratic decision-making process.

The neoliberal rejection of the principle of social justice is an outcome of the view that the price to pay, in terms of the freedom of those who are required to pay for others, is unacceptably high. In the realm of education, imposing common schools of equal quality for everyone, would entail having to impede those who have the means of enhancing their children's educational experience even further from using their resources as they please, breaching the principles of individual freedom, private property and equality before the law, while it may also entail exorbitant taxation, once more breaching the principles of freedom and private property.

Considering the alternatives, neoliberals opt for inequality of educational provision along with guaranteed adequately good schooling to everyone. The neoliberal approach may be deemed to be unjust by egalitarians, including modern liberals, because it abandons the pursuit of social justice. Nevertheless, this is not considered to be unjust by neoliberals, who emphasise “freedom as the ultimate goal and the individual as the ultimate entity in society” (Friedman, 1962, p. 5), and for whom “coercion is evil ...because it ...eliminates an individual as a thinking and valuing person and makes him a bare tool in the achievement of the ends of another” (Hayek, 1960, p. 21). For those who deem that the way to a just social arrangement is paved by the neoliberal compromise of providing adequately good schooling to everyone, along with the corollary inequality of educational provision, there is no alternative to properly implemented neoliberal education policies; anything else would either be a road to serfdom (Hayek, 1944), generated through the consequences of the effort to create a socially just society, or a road to the unkind society envisioned by Rand (1964) and Rothbard (1978). Neither of these alternatives constitutes a morally superior alternative to the social arrangements brought about by neoliberal education policies, as long as provisions are taken to mitigate their negative impact on social cohesion.

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