

NEOLIBERALISM, EDUCATION AND CURRICULUM

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Introduction

Everywhere we look these days there is evidence of education being understood as an economic good. Parents navigate 'education markets' in the hope of choosing 'the best' school for their children. Policymakers talk about the economic benefits of increasing young people's literacy and numeracy skills. University students compare the future financial pay-offs associated with one university degree or another. We also see public schools increasingly operate like private businesses, as competition intensifies between schools. More than ever before, school principals are positioned as managers, accountable to the needs and wishes of 'clients' (parents and students). Schools now adopt sophisticated marketing strategies to recruit local and international students. The results of high-stakes tests are published on the *My School* website to inform and promote parent choice. More parents choose private schools over public schools, leading to strong competition within and between the public and private sectors. The content of school curricula is also being reimagined in line with changing economic demands. Vocational and applied learning programs are growing in secondary schools in the hope of better preparing young people for post-school employment. Traditional 'academic' curricula are being transformed, with new 'twenty-first-century skills' and a focus on science, technology, engineering and mathematics (STEM) designed to prepare young people for participation in an economy that is increasingly global and requires much higher skills than in decades prior.

These economic and market-based ways of thinking about and doing education might seem natural to many of us, but if we rewind the clock 50 years, some of these now commonsense ways of imagining and organising schools would seem very strange and foreign. Historically, of course, there have always been links between schools, curriculum and the economy, and in many Australian states and territories there are strong histories of technical schools that provided work-related pathways into employment for young people who did not pursue an 'academic' education. However, since the 1980s, Australia and other nations have seen a significant intensification of links between schooling and the economy, and profound related shifts in how schools are governed. Indeed, rather than simply being *linked to* economic markets, schools are now seen as central cogs *in* economic markets. This shift has fundamentally transformed how schools operate, how parents navigate school systems, how policymakers seek to manage schools, how curriculum

designers decide the knowledge and skills young people must learn, and how school principals and teachers operate in schools.

If you start asking questions and doing research into how these shifts in schooling have been made possible, you are certain to come across the term *neoliberalism*. From *Wikipedia* articles through to complex academic texts, you will see 'neoliberalism' used as a way of describing ways of thinking about, designing and governing schooling systems that have become dominant since the 1980s. Neoliberalism is also used widely to describe broadly similar shifts in other areas of policy, including health, transport, telecommunications and many more. In its most general sense, neoliberalism refers to ways of governing society that emphasise the central role of markets and advocate for minimal state involvement and intervention in market processes. But what does this actually mean in practical terms? What does neoliberalism look like in terms of everyday ideas and practices? For example, does this 'thing' called neoliberalism mean the same thing across the world? Or are there multiple forms of neoliberalism in different countries and education systems? And when it comes to education and curriculum, how exactly does neoliberalism influence what happens in schools? Perhaps more importantly, why is it even important for educators to know anything about neoliberalism in the first place?

In this chapter, I will seek to define neoliberalism and argue that it is a highly complex concept that is of great importance for educators who want to understand how contemporary education systems operate. In fact, I will suggest 'straight up' that if you do not understand the basics of neoliberalism and its impacts on education, then you will remain largely blind to the dominant forces that underpin what happens in schools. My hope is to provide a rudimentary overview of neoliberalism and some of its manifestations in education and curriculum. In doing so, I will attempt to be as clear as possible about what neoliberalism means and looks like in practice.

This chapter is not designed for the advanced policy researcher or curriculum theorist. Instead, it is designed for students of education and curriculum who want a relatively 'easy-to-consume' introduction to neoliberalism and its implications for schooling. I begin by briefly charting the historical emergence of neoliberalism over the past century. After this, I consider key features of neoliberalism as a way of governing society and schools. I then illustrate some ways in which neoliberal ideas and practices manifest in schooling and curricula, offering two examples: the quasi-marketisation of public schooling systems and the economisation of the official curriculum. I conclude with brief reflections on the future of neoliberalism and why it is important for teachers to be critically aware of its influence in schools.

KEY TERMS

classical liberalism	markets	privatisation
global knowledge economy	neoliberalism	quasi-marketisation
human capital	political rationalities	socialism
marketisation	political technologies	welfare states

HISTORICAL PERSPECTIVES: THE EMERGENCE OF NEOLIBERALISM

Neoliberalism literally means ‘new liberalism’ (*neo* meaning ‘new’, from the Greek word *néos*). The term first emerged in the post-Great Depression 1930s as part of a movement of thinkers who believed that older forms of laissez-faire ‘classical liberalism’ had failed society, leading to the Wall Street Crash of 1929 and the Great Depression. A ‘new liberalism’, they argued, was required, which would involve a more interventionist role for governments in regulating markets and societies. Alexander Rustow, a German economist, is widely considered to be the first person to have used the term ‘new liberalism’, at the Walter Lippmann Colloquium, held in Paris in 1938. The colloquium brought together a number of high-profile intellectuals committed to devising a new ‘middle way’ liberalism, which avoided the pitfalls of both classical liberalism (on the right) and **socialism** (on the left). These 1930s attempts to create a new liberalism were very distinct from the kind of neoliberalism that evolved in the second half of the twentieth century and now dominates government policies globally (see the following discussion of marketisation and privatisation).

Not all participants at the Walter Lippmann Colloquium held the same views on what ‘new liberalism’ should look like. One of the participants, Friedrich von Hayek, was not convinced that classical liberalism was a failure, and went on to found the Mont Pèlerin Society in 1947, comprised of an international group of economists who advocated for a revived form of classical liberalism that strongly promoted free-market economics and minimal state intervention. The Mont Pèlerin Society is frequently cited as laying the foundations for the kind of neoliberalism that came to dominate global capitalism from the 1970s onwards. The trajectory of the Mont Pèlerin Society was at odds with broader postwar shifts towards what is known as *Keynesian economics*, named after British economist John Maynard Keynes. While Keynesianism was by no means as ‘left-leaning’ as socialism, it did promote a more interventionist role for governments to regulate markets and develop strong **welfare states** in areas such as health and education. Keynesian economics dominated in democracies such as Australia and the United Kingdom in the postwar era, and helped bolster the significant expansion of public schooling and higher education systems. Keynesianism is seen by some to have driven ‘the Golden Age of capitalism’, marked by strong economic growth and prosperity, paired with strong social protections. Critics, however, view Keynesian economics as inefficient and as driving the unnecessary expansion of government roles, responsibilities and spending.

During the 1960s, the Mont Perèlin Society became highly influential among economists, academics and politicians, particularly in the United States. The Department of Economics at the University of Chicago gained prominence as an epicentre for neoliberalism, driven in large part by Milton Friedman, an economist and academic who was also a member of the Mont Perèlin Society. The University of Chicago generated what became known as ‘the Chicago Boys’: a group of Chilean economists who studied with Friedman and were funded by the US Government, as part of a Cold War-era program ‘to counteract left-wing tendencies in Latin

Classical liberalism: In an economic sense, refers to ideas and practices that favour ‘free markets’ and very minimal intervention of governments in market processes.

Socialism: In contrast to classical liberalism, favours strong government control over markets and forms of ‘collective ownership’ over the means of economic production.

Welfare states: Systems in which governments play a strong role in protecting the wellbeing of citizens, particularly the most disadvantaged, in areas including health, housing and education. Free health care and education is a policy of the welfare state.

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America' (Harvey, 2007, p. 8). The Chicago Boys were responsible for dramatic neoliberal reforms in Chile after Augusto Pinochet came to power in 1973 and appointed multiple Chicago School trained economists to powerful government positions. This kick-started what is commonly understood as the first national experiment in neoliberalism, with Chile instituting dramatic economic reforms that were later emulated in other nations.

The rise of neoliberalism in Chile coincided with the global oil crisis recessions, which bolstered critiques of Keynesian economics and paved the way for the rapid expansion of neoliberalism in the West. Neoliberalism is typically seen as being cemented in the West during the 1980s by President Ronald Reagan in the United States and Prime Minister Margaret Thatcher in the United Kingdom. Much has been written about the role of these two leaders in promoting neoliberal reforms, which fundamentally reshaped economic policies and the role of governments. In Reagan's case, these reforms are often referred to as 'Reaganomics'. While the neoliberal reforms of the 1980s were varied in scope and nature, a 'family likeness' was clear, as these reforms emphasised the central role of markets in the governance of society, and advocated for minimal state involvement and intervention. In practice, this translated to a range of actions, including: **marketisation** and **privatisation**. Privatisation typically refers to the selling of (and transfer of responsibilities for) government services to private companies of aspects of public services such as health and education; shifts towards minimal regulation of markets; various cuts in government spending, including reducing the size of some government departments and agencies; tax cuts (particularly to the highest earners); strategies to promote de-unionisation; and new managerial techniques of governance that foregrounded new systems of accountability and remodelled the public sector in line with the private sector (see the following section on 'The quasi-marketisation of public schooling systems' for a description of what this looked like 'in practice' in schools). Similar policies were pursued in Australia under successive Labor Prime Ministers Bob Hawke and Paul Keating.

The kind of neoliberalism that emerged during the 1980s was very different from the 'new liberalism' initially imagined by 1930s intellectuals at the Walter Lippmann Colloquium. Instead of a new 'middle way' between socialism and classical liberalism, neoliberalism resembled a rejuvenated form of laissez-faire classical liberalism, with some similarities to that which dominated policies prior to the 1929 Wall Street Crash and the Great Depression. Indeed, many parallels have been drawn between the 1920s and the 2008 Global Financial Crisis (GFC), the latter seen by many as evidence of the failure of neoliberalism (e.g. Rudd, 2009). However, as I note in the section to follow, there are also important differences between the older 'classical liberalism' and more recent forms of 'neoliberalism'.

From the late 1980s onwards, neoliberal reforms spread rapidly, buoyed by the global expansion of capitalism and the transnational integration of markets. Rizvi and Lingard (2010) suggest that the fall of the Berlin Wall in 1989 was a turning point, signifying 'a fundamental shift in policy thinking around the world, both resulting from and giving rise to the globalisation of capitalism and the emergence of a dominant "neoliberal" ideology' (p. 2). In the decades that followed, they argue, neoliberal ideas and practices have vastly reshaped the ways policies are 'forged, implemented and evaluated' (p. 2). Indeed, the influence of

Marketisation:

The introduction of market ideas and practices into the organisation and delivery of government services (e.g. ranging from cases where users pay for accessing government services, through to public services adopting more market-like and competitive practices borrowed from the corporate sector).

Privatisation:

This typically refers to the selling of government services to private companies of aspects of public services such as health and education.

neoliberalism became so widely accepted, that it emerged into a kind of new world order, 'embraced by parties across the political spectrum, from right to left' (Ross & Gibson, 2007, p. 2). The ascendancy of neoliberalism led to the catchphrase 'there is no alternative' (TINA), which was originally coined by Thatcher to describe what she saw as the inevitability and ultimate triumph of neoliberal economics.

Despite the dominance of neoliberalism in reshaping policies, the past decade has seen a range of strong criticisms emerge, arguing that neoliberalism is a failed approach that needs to be replaced. Critiques of neoliberalism have intensified since the GFC, and have come from a diverse range of individuals and groups, including leading politicians. For example, in 2009, during the aftermath of the GFC, then Australian Prime Minister Kevin Rudd wrote a highly critical essay on neoliberalism for the political magazine *The Monthly*. Rudd (2009) suggested the GFC had spawned events of 'truly seismic significance', and marked 'a turning point between one epoch and the next'. Rudd did not hold back, describing neoliberalism as promoting 'extreme capitalism and excessive greed' and as rising to become 'the economic orthodoxy of our time'. Positioning himself as a social democrat, Rudd argued for an end to neoliberalism and said that a new approach was required to 'save capitalism from itself' by recognising 'the great strengths of open, competitive markets', while at the same time 'rejecting the extreme capitalism and unrestrained greed that have perverted so much of the global financial system in recent times'. Rudd's arguments channelled similar ideas to those related to with British 'third way' politics, which are commonly associated with the Labour Party under the leadership of Prime Minister Tony Blair from 1997 to 2007. Third way politics have similarities with 1930s arguments for a 'middle-way' liberalism that unites the best elements of 'left' (socialist) and 'right' (free-market) models. Third way politics also have similarities to postwar Keynesian models.

Despite such arguments for new post-neoliberal models, neoliberalism has continued as the dominant form of governance to the present day (Springer, 2015). Indeed, many theorists have argued that even though the GFC had bone-rattling impacts, governments have since fallen back into familiar modes of neoliberal governance (see e.g. Brown, 2015). Moreover, as I will argue later (see 'Neoliberalism, education and curriculum'), neoliberalism shows little sign of abating when it comes to the governance of education and schooling. Far from being a dying orthodoxy, neoliberalism is alive and well, reshaping multiple aspects of schooling, curriculum, and the lives of educators and students across the world.

NEOLIBERALISM AS A FORM OF GOVERNANCE: KEY CHARACTERISTICS

The brief history I offered above focused mainly on the broader (macro-level) developments of neoliberalism, looking in particular at its emergence among a powerful group of thinkers in the mid-twentieth century, and its rapid spread from the late 1970s to become the status quo among governments globally. In this section, I will shift focus to examine in more depth the key characteristics of neoliberalism as a form of governance (i.e. as a way of governing populations).

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In doing so, I will draw upon the theories of French philosopher Michel Foucault to argue that neoliberalism relies upon ‘modes of reason’ (i.e. ideas and ways of thinking) derived mainly from the field of economics, which assume that individuals are inherently economic beings and that markets are the most effective means for governing populations. These neoliberal modes of reason have generated many techniques and practices that now commonly govern individuals and institutions across the world.

In a series of lectures delivered at the Collège de France in Paris between 1977 and 1979, Foucault provided a detailed analysis of the neoliberal ideas and practices that were beginning to take hold globally in the late 1970s. Foucault paid specific attention to the historical emergence of neoliberalism, and examined how neoliberalism was beginning to shape the lives of governments and individuals in various ways. Foucault developed two powerful concepts for examining how neoliberalism operates as a form of governance: **political rationality** and **political technology** (Foucault, 2008, pp. 285–332). The primary difference between political rationalities and political technologies is that the former is concerned with forms of reason (ideas), whereas the latter names a technical realm and is concerned with specific techniques or mechanisms of governance (practices). Together, these two concepts are useful for understanding how neoliberal ideas and practices ‘play out’ in specific contexts and influence our everyday lives—including what happens in schools on a daily basis (see ‘Neoliberalism, education and curriculum’, later in this chapter).

Political rationalities:

Ways of thinking about and justifying forms of governance (i.e. ideas about how to govern).

Political technologies:

The techniques, mechanisms, instruments and processes through which governance ‘gets done’.

Human capital:

Skills, knowledge and experience possessed by an individual or population of people, understood as a measure of their economic value. Education produces human capital.

Foucault argued that the defining feature of neoliberalism was a shift towards a new political rationality based on ‘truths’ associated with the economy, the market, **human capital** and an entrepreneurial vision of the individual (Foucault, 2008, pp. 215–290). These ideas and forms of reason, he argued, have generated multiple political technologies which govern societies and individuals in ways that reflect neoliberal rationality. Put simply, therefore, Foucault argued that the ideas and practices of neoliberalism are intimately entwined. For Foucault, neoliberalism was not simply a ‘rejuvenation’ of the earlier classical liberalism that dominated prior to the 1930s, but instead represented a much deeper and more comprehensive reshaping of society in line with economic ways of thinking. One of the key features that Foucault saw as distinct about neoliberalism was the extension of market thinking and forms of practice into previously non-commodified domains—that is, ‘domains previously considered to be non-economic’ (p. 215). This included essential public services such as health and education, which were either subjected by governments to forms of privatisation or were reorganised in order to operate more like the *private sector* (see ‘Neoliberalism, education and curriculum’). Neoliberalism, therefore, was not just about loosening government regulations on the economy; it also involved a reimagining and reformulation of life in the image of the market, and in ways that have had profound effects over the shape and functioning of governments and public services. Foucault called this ‘the economization of the entire social field’ (p. 242), whereby markets became the new ‘truth’ for governing human life.

A similar argument has been made by sociologist Nikolas Rose, who has argued that neoliberalism involved ‘a new relation between expertise and politics’ (1996, p. 54), whereby previous Keynesian modes of governance—which were based on ‘truth claims’, with a basis

in the social and human sciences—were gradually replaced by modes of governance based on truth claims from the ‘grey sciences’ of management and economics. Education researcher Michael Peters has made a similar argument, suggesting that in the 1980s, ‘a distinctive strand of neoliberalism emerged as the dominant paradigm of public policy’. Central to this change was either the abolishment or drastic rewriting of Keynesian policies in favour of ‘market solutions’ at ‘all levels’ of government (2010, p. 370).

Reflecting on the impacts of neoliberalism on public policy in Australia, journalist Laura Tingle writes:

It long ago became taken for granted in politics—and in the broader political debate—that market-driven outcomes are always the best. Similarly, the presumption is that the private sector knows how to do things better than the public sector, and governments in general are bad. All sorts of public policy has been built on these foundations: government debt is always bad; contracting out is good; the public sector should adopt the managerialism and language of the private sector; public assets should be privatised; government regulation is little more than a frustrating pile of red tape. To argue against these propositions, particularly at the height of the fervour in the 1980s and ‘90s, was to invite ridicule or contempt. (2015)

In addition to charting major changes to practices of governance, Foucault (2008) also examined the influence of neoliberalism on individuals. Importantly, Foucault argued that neoliberal forms of governance rest upon the assumption that individuals are inherently economic beings. Central to neoliberalism, he argued, was a vision of the individual as *homo economicus*; that is, as a fundamentally self-interested ‘entrepreneur of himself’ (p. 226), who perpetually strives towards self-maximisation and self-capitalisation (i.e. personal improvement and gain) in competitive markets and social arrangements. Neoliberal governance operates on the assumption, therefore, that individuals are, above and beyond anything else, competitive beings who seek to gain advantage not only through participation in the economy, but also through all aspects of their lives.

This vision of humans, Foucault argued, has profound implications for: (1) how governments seek to govern populations; and (2) how individuals seek to govern themselves. In line with this, individuals are seen by governments as ‘human capital’, which must be invested in. Individuals are also expected to self-invest and take responsibility to nourish their productive potentials. Foucault called this form of self-governance ‘responsibilisation’. The impact of framing individuals in primarily economic terms can be seen in a dizzying array of everyday examples. A good example in education is the policy shift in Australia and other countries towards promoting ‘school choice’ (see ‘Neoliberalism, education and curriculum’). Such policies reframe parents as entrepreneurial choosers and investors in their child’s education, rather than treating them as citizens who are entitled to equal access to quality education in all schools. In summary, therefore, neoliberalism has not only involved new attempts by governments to govern populations in line with market-based ideas and practices, it has also generated new ‘conditions of possibility’ for how individuals imagine and govern themselves.

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Theory in action

In societies influenced by neoliberalism, individuals are often positioned to *invest* in themselves in various ways (especially through education), market themselves and contract out their skills and knowledge, and compete with others in pursuit of maximising their *human capital* and potential.

- 1 What are some real-life examples that illustrate this?
- 2 How might the popular notion of 'lifelong learning' align with neoliberal ideas?

NEOLIBERALISM, EDUCATION AND CURRICULUM

While the effects of neoliberalism have definitely not been 'the same' everywhere, it is undeniable that neoliberal modes of governance have had wide-reaching impacts on education systems globally. In Australia, government schooling systems and curricula have been fundamentally reshaped by neoliberalism, and this trend continues, with reforms increasingly driven by market-based logics. The past two decades in particular have seen Australian governments borrow heavily from neoliberal reforms in the United Kingdom and the United States, despite a vast body of research that has highlighted the negative effects of many of these reforms on schools, educators and students.

The transformation of education in relation to neoliberalism has been extensively theorised by researchers, particularly in the fields of education policy studies and sociology of education. Arguably the most significant impact of neoliberalism in education has been the broad-scale reimagining of schooling from an economic point of view (Rizvi & Lingard, 2010). Education, therefore, is now framed and justified in policy as primarily a site for building human capital and contributing to economic productivity, from the early childhood years, right through to the tertiary level (Savage, 2011). In Australia, this is evident in a wide range of schooling policies, including major agreements such as the *Melbourne Declaration on Educational Goals for Young Australians* (MCEETYA, 2008). The declaration, which was signed by all education ministers (federal, state and territory), frames education as an economic investment tied to the nation's global competitiveness. Education, it argues, is central to building a competitive twenty-first-century workforce, with 'the ability to compete in the global economy on knowledge and innovation' (p. 4).

While, in historical terms, schooling has always been seen by governments as having important economic benefits, what is unique about policy shifts over the past two decades is the extent to which economic purposes of schooling have risen to dominate policy agendas at the expense of 'other' purposes. Many important social, personal and emotional purposes of schooling, therefore, have either become peripheral concerns in education policy, or have been *reimagined* in line with economic imperatives. The past decade, for example, has seen things like 'equity' reframed in education policy as being central to broader economic reform agendas

(Savage, 2013; Lingard, Sellar & Savage, 2014). For example, if young people are not finishing school or participating in education, or are underachieving on NAPLAN or the international Programme for International Student Assessment (PISA) tests, this is represented as a policy problem because it 'costs' the nation economically. In other words, because schooling is seen as primarily important from an economic point of view, then a failure by young people to successfully engage with and succeed in schooling is mainly seen as *an economic problem*. Equity, therefore, has been reframed as a 'market-enhancing mechanism' (Savage, 2011). This reflects what Foucault has called the economisation of the social and what Nikolas Rose has called the 'neo-social': that is, a rejuvenated policy interest in enabling 'social' goods like equity, but primarily for the sake of fostering greater economic productivity. While there are certainly important links between inequalities in schooling and the economy, which I am not denying, the key point is that this economic framing of equity has become *dominant*, which means 'other' ways of understanding equity get lost and broader concepts, such as 'social justice', get pushed to the margins.

Theory in action

Belonging, being and becoming: The Early Years Learning Framework for Australia (EYLF) 'marks a point in Australia's history when supporting young children's learning became a national priority; it is the first national statement to guide learning and teaching across varied settings providing early childhood education ...' (Connor, 2011, p. 9). For Cheeseman, Sumsion and Press (2014), the Federal Government's curriculum intervention into the realm of early childhood is motivated by its concern for 'nation-building':

Focusing on ever younger children, productivity policies today are aimed at harnessing potential early and ameliorating risk factors before they become entrenched. The policy focus has manifested into an intensification in the learning dimension of early childhood, evidenced in part through the increased production of national curricula documents. (Cheeseman et al., 2014, p. 408)

In other words, the early childhood curriculum is an *instrument of government* guiding 'the education of young people towards the advancement of particular national ideals' (Cheeseman et al., 2014, p. 411).

- 1 Based on your reading, what are some of these national ideals?
- 2 It is possible that such government intervention into early child development and learning could *not* be in the interest of a child and their family?
- 3 In what ways might the interests and beliefs of children, families and governments differ?
- 4 At what age do you think children should be placed into a learning setting? Why?

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The spread of neoliberal reforms in education has been rapid and wide-reaching. Australian education policy theorists Fazal Rizvi and Bob Lingard (2010), for example, argue that neoliberalism has now cemented itself globally as the new ‘common sense’ in education policy. They refer to this as the rise of the ‘neoliberal imaginary’, which they argue is rapidly transforming national education systems—which were previously more distinct—in line with a dominant set of policy solutions that strongly reflect neoliberal ideas and practices. In a similar vein, education policy theorist Stephen Ball (2003) argues that education reform agendas influenced by neoliberalism have spread across the globe, like ‘a policy epidemic’ (p. 215), and are being strongly bolstered by powerful economic organisations, such as the World Bank and the Organisation for Economic Co-operation and Development (OECD). Indeed, perhaps more than any other organisation, the OECD has driven reform agendas in schooling through a wide range of policy work—including PISA—that focuses on reforming schooling for the sake of increasingly economic productivity within nations. This is to be expected, given the OECD is an *economic* organisation. Nevertheless, many researchers and educators question whether its profound influence in education is justified.

Neoliberal reforms have also been strongly promoted by a proliferation of edu-businesses and think tanks, which have capitalised on changes to the public service and the marketisation of schools (Reckhow, 2013; Thompson, Savage & Lingard, 2016). As Ball (2003) argues, neoliberal reforms have created the conditions, ‘for various forms of ‘privatization’ and the ‘commodification’ of core public services’ (pp. 215–216). Major edu-businesses, such as Pearson, have benefited considerably from these changes, through the production of educational resources and lucrative government contracts to deliver core educational services (Hogan, 2016). Pearson, for example, holds the contract to conduct NAPLAN tests in Australia and has recently won a global contract to develop the 2018 PISA tests.

It is important not to view these various changes, however, as producing a ‘one-size-fits-all’ set of policy reforms across the globe. Instead, the influence of neoliberalism in education systems has resulted from a gradual and varied series of interventions by governments, which have introduced reforms that share a ‘family likeness’. In other words, various reforms have emerged that share overarching similarities in the sense that each seeks to reorganise education in line with market ideas and practices. It is also important to note that neoliberal reforms have not played out in homogenous ways across systems (i.e. these reforms have not had the same impacts everywhere), but instead have emerged in context-specific ways, depending on multiple social, economic, cultural and historical factors. This shows us that rather than being a ‘monolithic identity’, neoliberalism is more a flexible force of governance, always morphing and adapting to specific circumstances and contexts (Springer, 2015; Ong, 2006). For example, school choice reforms or strategies to promote the commercialisation of schools (just two examples of neoliberal-style reforms) often manifest quite differently in different nations and systems.

The dizzying breadth and variety of neoliberal reforms in schooling mean that it is impossible to capture the full range of influences in the space of this chapter. Indeed, it would take a large number of very long books to even begin such a task! As such, in what follows, I will provide a brief

illustration of two ways in which neoliberal ideas and practices have manifested in Australian education schooling and curricula over the past few decades. While these examples are by no means exhaustive, they each signal some important shifts that have taken place in Australian schooling, and together provide some tangible insights into the impacts of neoliberalism.

The quasi-marketisation of public schooling systems

Reflecting the core tenets of neoliberal governance, one of the most prominent changes to education since the 1990s has been the reshaping of government schools in line with market-based practices. The marketisation of public education systems in Australia and other nations, including the United Kingdom and the United States, is often referred to as ‘quasi-marketisation’. This is because rather than promoting a shift towards unregulated ‘free markets’, governments have instead maintained strong regulatory powers over schools, but at the same time have introduced reforms that make the public schooling sector operate more like the private sector (Marginson, 1997). The shift towards quasi-marketisation has been driven by a view that public schooling is inefficient, overly unionised, unresponsive to user-demand, lacks accountability, and does not effectively nourish the growth of human capital. Market practices are positioned as ‘solutions’ to these perceived problems.

The impacts of quasi-marketisation are incredibly complex and difficult to capture in a concise way. This is because quasi-marketisation does not emerge from one specific set of reforms, but instead is the result of a broad range of interrelated reforms, introduced over several decades, which have reshaped schooling in Australia and many other nations. Governments, therefore, have not followed a single market formula, but have instead rolled out a complex assemblage of reforms of ‘breath-taking’ scope and complexity (Ball, 2003, p. 217). In Australian schooling, reforms that have contributed to quasi-marketisation include, but are not limited to, the following:

- Policies have been designed to heighten competition between schools, driven by new regimes of accountability, measurement and comparison based on standardised testing measures. For example, the My School website and NAPLAN work together to hold schools accountable through publicly displaying test data. This, in turn, promotes competition between schools and informs and promotes parent choice. NAPLAN and My School arguably have both positive and negative effects. For example, on the positive side, these reforms make schools more publicly accountable and highlight inequalities between schools; but on the negative side, they can promote ‘teaching to the test’ and might cause anxiety among school leaders, teachers, parents and students.
- New school autonomy models position schools to operate more like businesses, and reposition school leaders as managers, who are increasingly responsible for tasks such as marketing and ‘client’ recruitment, as well as the hiring and firing of staff. A recent example of this is the Federal Government’s Independent Public Schools (IPS) initiative, which is designed to give principals greater autonomy, particularly over resource allocation matters such as the school’s budget and staff hiring. In effect, an IPS principal operates more like the CEO of a

Quasi-marketisation:

The redesign of public services in ways that require such services to operate more like the private sector, through introducing market-based ideas and practices.

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company, working closely with an elected school board (akin to a board of company directors) that usually comprises parents, community members and business representatives.

- Schools have been opened up to corporate sponsorship, partnerships and involvement. For example, a major trend in Australia has been the shift towards various ‘school–industry partnerships’ with major businesses. This includes schools such as Aviation State High School in Queensland, which works in partnership with the aviation company Boeing. Warrnambool College in Victoria has also designed a science and technology program in association with the pharmaceutical company GlaxoSmithKline.
- Government funding to fee-paying non-government schools (Catholic and independent) has increased, resulting in a steady drift to these schools among the economically privileged. Indeed, Australia has a very high number of students in private schools in comparison to other OECD nations. The private school drift has increased the need for public schools to compete for enrolments with private schools, and has also increased competition within non-government school sectors. While non-government schools have played important roles in Australian schooling since colonial times (and thus should not be seen as ‘effects’ of neoliberalism), government funding increases to private schools have rapidly grown since the 1970s and have directly supported the growth of private school enrolments. The rapid expansion of enrolments in private schools can be seen, therefore, as one impact of neoliberalism. Critics see these trends as undermining the public system.
- There are increased financial incentives for public and private schools to generate revenue through attracting and enrolling full-fee-paying international students. This has spawned a new era of international roadshows, whereby Australian schools are marketed to families overseas, especially in China. International students are a particularly valuable source of income for public schools, as these students are ‘fee-paying’ and generate money for the school in ways that local students do not.
- Education businesses have new and powerful roles, especially via the ‘contracting out’ of government services, but also through new business arrangements with schools. There is a litany of examples of this trend, from the large-scale contracting of NAPLAN and PISA testing, to the edu-business Pearson, to the rapid expansion of ‘iPad schools’, supported by the technology company Apple.

The everyday impacts of quasi-marketisation are varied in scope, influencing multiple areas of school governance, as well as the lives of school leaders, teachers, parents and students. As you can imagine, schools are subject to multiple forms of quasi-marketisation, with the dot-point examples offered above (plus many more) often overlapping simultaneously to influence what happens in schools. Previous research I have conducted, for example, looked at the impacts of quasi-marketisation on two public schools in Melbourne (Savage, 2011, 2013). One of the most significant findings of my research was the extent to which the professional lives of school leaders were being transformed by market reforms. The school principals I interviewed, for example, spoke in depth about the changing nature of their work, suggesting the role of a principal was rapidly changing from that of a leading educator, to that of a business manager or CEO. The interviews I conducted generated significant amounts of data to suggest market ideas

were increasingly naturalised among school leaders in terms of how they talked about schools and their relationships with young people and parents. Principals, for example, would regularly evoke market metaphors and language to describe their school, using terms such as product, hierarchy, clientele and market position. School leaders also spoke in very hierarchical and transactional terms when framing relationships between schools, parents and students, using market logic to judge their school's value relative to other 'competing' local schools. Strongly reflecting Foucault's concept of *homo economicus*, the conversations I had with school leaders would often revolve around what different schools offered consumers, what parents or students could gain from their school, or which strategies set some schools apart from others. Rather than viewing government schools as part of a relatively homogenous system, school leaders viewed public schools as part of a highly differentiated market, with individual schools seeking to provide education 'products' to 'clients' (i.e. parents and students) based on consumer demands.

Here we see the link between knowledge and the formation of individuals' identities and senses of self previously described in Chapter 3.

These market forms of reason had strong impacts on the professional identities of school leaders. Many, for example, appeared to strongly embrace a market identity, imagining themselves as 'managers' and as 'educational entrepreneurs', striving to maximise their potential as leaders and the competitive advantage of their school. These findings are also reflected in the work of education researcher Brad Gobby, whose research into IPS schools in Western Australia found a similar repositioning of school leaders (Gobby, 2013). As one principal in his study said, 'I run the school like a business, the students are our clients, my shareholders. It's a business' (p. 282).

Returning to my own research (Savage, 2011, 2013), school leaders were also engaged in a complex variety of marketing practices to improve the image and competitiveness of their school and lure potential 'clients'. These practices, which would have seemed very strange to public school principals a few decades earlier, included:

- the production of glossy brochures and elaborate websites, often mirroring the marketing language and style of elite private schools;
- highly orchestrated school tours and open nights;
- the concerted promotion of school successes (especially tertiary entrance scores) to media outlets, and strategies to avoid 'bad press' when issues occurred;
- marketing tours to China to lure international student enrolments; and
- various attempts to refine the school's brand image through school logos, facilities and uniforms modelled on private schools (e.g. blazers, ties, etc.).

Many researchers and educators are vehemently against the quasi-marketisation of public schools, viewing such reforms as divisive and antithetical to the notion of a public schooling system that offers equality of opportunity and provision. Indeed, in the United States, where market reforms are in many ways more advanced, multiple researchers have argued that neoliberalism is driving the demise of public education (e.g. Ravitch, 2013; Hursh, 2015), and there are mounting fears within the Australian education community that our nation is following a similar path.

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Despite research that has highlighted divisive and negative impacts of quasi-marketisation, there is little sign that such reforms are losing momentum. In fact, quite the opposite. Take, as just one example, the aforementioned IPS initiative, which has received \$70 million in funding from the Australian Federal Government. The purpose of the reform is not to make government schools truly 'independent' or to 'privatise' schools, but to instead remodel the governance of public schools in ways that more closely resemble private schools. The reform gives principals and school communities greater control, and is designed to reduce bureaucracy and improve operational efficiency. Core features include greater authority for principals over their school's budget and the staff members they hire, as well as some ability to develop locally tailored policies and processes. The initiative shares some broad similarities with 'free schools' in the United Kingdom and 'charter schools' in the United States; however, it is misleading to make direct international comparisons, as countries have unique education systems and legislation (some US charter schools, for example, are run by for-profit corporations). The IPS policy suggests the reform 'will lead to higher productivity' and 'better quality education outcomes for students'. However, to date there is no credible evidence that the reform produces any of these positive effects. Despite this lack of evidence, however, free-market think tanks such as the Centre for Independent Studies have argued for even more radical reforms to school governance, suggesting that Australian governments should consider introducing charter schools based on the US model, which could include government-funded for-profit schools (Jha & Buckingham, 2015). The tenor of such debates, paired with continued global momentum towards neoliberal reforms in education, suggests the marketisation of Australian schooling may only be in its infancy.

ASK YOURSELF

More than ever, today's schools are marketing themselves to prospective students and their parents. This often involves a concern for managing impressions, school reputation and the community's perception of a school's 'quality' and 'excellence'. How might 'quasi-marketisation' impact on schools and their staff and students? In what ways might it be a problem?

Global knowledge economy:

A term used to describe global changes in economies and work, particularly in developed nations, towards wealth being created through highly skilled occupations and industries, and innovations in areas such as technology and science.

The economisation of the official curriculum

In Australia and internationally, curriculum reforms since the late 1980s have strongly reflected broader trends towards framing schooling in economic terms. As a result, the kinds of knowledge and skills young people learn in schools have been reimagined (and in some cases entirely transformed) in line with economic and market-based forms of reason. As a result, the official school curriculum is increasingly being assessed and reformed based on its 'utility' in terms of preparing young people for the evolving **global knowledge economy**. Many terms have already been conjured to describe this trend, including the 'utilitarian curriculum' (Goodson, 1997), 'technical-instrumentalism' (Young, 2008), and 'new vocationalism' (Wheelahan, 2010). In this section, I will refer to these trends as the *economisation of curricula*, and will draw attention to two key features that have dominated curriculum reforms in Australia over the past three decades: the expansion of applied and vocational curricula in schools; and the rise of the twenty-first-century skills agenda.

The first key feature is the rapid expansion of applied and vocational curricula in schools since the early 1990s, particularly in the senior secondary years. This includes Vocational Education and Training (VET) in schools, school-based apprenticeships, and other applied pathways such as the Victorian Certificate of Applied Learning (VCAL). To understand the expansion of applied and vocational curricula, it is necessary to take a step back to consider the significant economic changes that took place globally during the 1970s and 1980s. In the early 1970s, for example, the global oil crisis recessions had profound impacts on youth unemployment across developed nations. In Australia, rising youth unemployment meant that more young people than ever before were staying on to Year 12, with retention rates rising dramatically from 28 per cent in 1982 to 82 per cent a decade later (ABS, 1993). The economic prospects for school leavers were made worse due to declining manufacturing industries and the growing competitiveness of entry to white-collar professions. These conditions bolstered criticisms of Keynesian economics and nourished arguments in favour of neoliberal reforms, which implicated schools in the wheel of the economy in new ways.

By the late 1980s, policy debates had begun to centre on the extent to which schools were aligned with the needs of the economy, and whether or not schools were effectively developing the human capital required to support economic growth. In particular, policymakers began to focus on the role of applied and vocational education in schools. Historically, applied and vocational education had existed separate to mainstream academic schooling. In Victoria, for example, a dual system of 'high schools' and 'technical schools' had existed for the most part of the twentieth century, until the 1980s, when the landmark *Blackburn Report* (1985) led to the development of the Victorian Certificate of Education (VCE) and the discontinuation of technical schools. These developments, which occurred in broadly similar ways in other states and territories, meant that young people from diverse backgrounds (and with diverse aspirations) were all studying a general academic curriculum and that few pathways remained within school for young people who did not aspire towards university study. Many people saw this shift towards a 'general academic education for all' as a victory for equality of opportunity, as it put an end to the historical 'tracking' of young people into vocational or academic pathways. However, the move towards a general academic curriculum was seen by others as being 'out of step' with the needs of the economy and unfair to young people who did not want to pursue university study after school. These various problems and tensions, set within the context of broader economic change within Australia and globally, spurred a series of reports and initiatives in the early 1990s that led to the development of a national VET system based on the principles of 'competency-based training'. The VET system expanded rapidly into schools in the decades to follow, to the extent that all Australian states and territories now allow some VET subjects to be counted towards the award of a senior secondary certificate.

The rise of VET in schools is an interesting example of the contradictory effects of neoliberal reforms in schools. On the positive side, through better aligning schooling curricula with the needs of the economy and by offering young people the opportunity to gain vocational qualifications while remaining at school, VET has provided some valuable options for young people who do not desire academic pathways. VET has also proved to be important as a retention strategy for young

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people at risk of dropping out of school, who can sometimes be re-engaged through practical and applied learning options (Nguyen, 2010). On the negative side, however, a significant number of researchers have argued that VET further marginalises young people (especially those from poorer backgrounds) by offering low-level skills that often do not lead to post-school employment and distance young people from the powerful academic knowledge that is needed to fully participate in modern society (e.g. Polesel, 2008). Curriculum theorist Ivor Goodson (1997), for example, writes of the ‘utilitarian’ subject tradition, comprised of ‘low-status practical knowledge’ designed to train young people for work in ‘non-professional vocations’ (p. 144). Goodson contrasts this against the ‘academic’ tradition, which has historically dominated senior secondary schooling and is typically comprised of high-status knowledge, delivered through a discipline-based curriculum that is confirmed by the examination system and designed to prepare students for ‘professional and academic life’ (p. 143). For Goodson, the high-status academic tradition and the low-status utilitarian traditions are linked to the production of class differences in a capitalist society. Australian policy researcher John Polesel (2008) makes the same point regarding VET in Australian schools, arguing that it serves as a mechanism for training children of the poor. Polesel argues that VET is low-quality and low-status, and ‘is associated with significant levels of social selection—rather than democratisation’ (p. 630).

ASK YOURSELF

- 1 How are VET subjects or the VET streams typically viewed by students and staff in Australian schools?
- 2 Do you think some schools pressure students into studying non-ATAR subjects? Why might they do this?

Significant criticisms have also been levelled at the competency-based training model upon which VET is based. Wheelahan (2007), for example, argues that competency-based training reflects a ‘very fragmented, atomistic and instrumental view of knowledge’ (p. 647), providing content in isolated ‘bits’. Wheelahan contends that rather than better preparing young people for work or further education, VET further marginalises young people from poorer backgrounds by providing them access to ‘procedural knowledge’ and skills, while denying them access to the more powerful forms of knowledge and modes of reasoning. Wheelahan (2010) further argues that a reductive ‘instrumentalism’ pervades contemporary curriculum debates, which ‘precludes a discussion about knowledge in its own right because it is primarily concerned with the needs of the economy’ (p. 109). In summary, therefore, there is ongoing debate about whether the rise of VET is a positive thing when it comes to the complex link between education and equality of opportunity. Questions also remain about whether schools should indeed be linked to economic priorities to the extent that they have been under the VET system.

The second key feature that reflects the economisation of curriculum is the rapid rise of the twenty-first-century skills agenda, which has seen the traditional academic curriculum remodelled in ways that seek to better provide young people with skills and competencies required for participation in ‘the global knowledge economy’. Proponents of the twenty-first-century skills agenda typically argue that globalisation and rapid technological changes

require a rethinking of the discipline-based academic curriculum, which is often portrayed as being stuck in the past and as not adequately preparing young people for a future workforce in which the jobs of today might no longer exist. These ideas are proffered by countless education writers and policymakers, but are arguably exemplified in the work of Yong Zhao. Zhao (2009) argues that we are in the midst of a global and technological ‘revolution’, which ‘at least rivals the Industrial Revolution’ (p. 145). This revolution, he contends, is significantly changing our societies, making new knowledge, skills and talents requisite, while rendering others obsolete. Zhao surveys efforts in the United States and Europe to embed twenty-first-century learning agendas in curricula by including new essential skills and forms of knowledge, such as problem-solving and critical-thinking skills, IT skills, social and civic competencies, and knowledge in core subjects such as English, mathematics, science and economics (pp. 145–148). Realigning the academic curriculum with such skills, Zhao argues, is the way forward.

In Australia, the twenty-first-century skills agenda has flourished over the past decade, especially through the *Australian Curriculum*. The national curriculum seeks to marry traditional subject-based disciplines with a concept called ‘general capabilities’. The curriculum includes seven general capabilities: literacy; numeracy; information and communication technology (ICT) capability; critical and creative thinking; personal and social capability; ethical understanding; and intercultural understanding. The Australian Curriculum, Assessment and Reporting Authority (ACARA)—the organisation that led the development of the national curriculum—describes the general capabilities as a key dimension of the curriculum, encompassing the ‘knowledge, skills, behaviours and dispositions’ that play a significant role in ‘equipping young Australians to live and work successfully in the twenty-first century’. Rather than being additional to the subject-based curriculum, general capabilities are designed to be woven into the curriculum of every subject, as they are considered relevant to all learning areas. As such, teachers of all subjects must now explicitly integrate the general capabilities into their teaching. ACARA (2012) describes the design of the general capabilities as an attempt to recognise the interconnectedness of young people’s learning across subjects.

The shift towards general capabilities represents a different form of economisation from that associated with VET. Unlike applied and vocational learning, the usefulness of the general capabilities is not seen by policymakers and supporters to lie in the capacity of such capabilities to train workers for specific trades or occupations. Instead, the general capabilities are supposed to imbue young people with general forms of knowledge and skills that are deemed requisite for participation in changing economic contexts. At its heart, therefore, the twenty-first-century agenda reflects a desire to create a particular type of citizen: one who is literate, numerate, flexible, creative and IT-savvy, and who is ready to compete in the global knowledge economy. As British curriculum theorist Michael Young (2008) argues, curriculum reforms globally now reflect a pervasive form of ‘technical-instrumentalism’, which, it can be further argued, is reflected in the general capabilities, and which results in ‘education, the curriculum and even knowledge itself’ becoming ‘means to an end, not ends in themselves’ (Young, 2008, p. 21). In other words, education is geared principally towards the needs of global capitalism, rather than being something that is important for its own sake.

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The twenty-first-century knowledge and skills agenda is also utilitarian because it shifts the emphasis of young people's learning away from the importance of *knowing* to the importance of *doing*, by foregrounding skills young people should be able to demonstrate (rather than knowledge they must acquire) and aligning these with various standards, tests and outcomes. The past decade, for example, has seen remarkable shifts in Australia and globally towards judging the 'quality' and achievement of students, schools and systems based on outcomes in standardised testing regimes, including NAPLAN and PISA. In Australia, while NAPLAN currently focuses on only literacy and numeracy, plans are currently under way to extend the program to assess young people's grasp of other general capabilities. Philosopher Martha Nussbaum (2009) argues that ultimately global shifts of this nature towards the economisation of education threaten the democratic role of education in producing active and informed citizens. Nussbaum (2009) describes economic trends in curriculum—for example, as part of a broader shift towards 'education for economic enrichment' (p. 6)—arguing that education is now dominated by a narrow 'economic conception of development' that focuses on 'basic marketable skills' (p. 6). These trends, she argues, are putting 'democratic education on the ropes' (p. 13). Australian education researcher Simon Marginson (1997) has made similar arguments, suggesting that the economisation of education in recent decades has seen 'the formation of citizens' subordinated to a 'new economic mission' (p. 151). Brown (2015) has also argued that the impact of neoliberalism on education has resulted in 'knowledge, thought and training' being 'valued and desired almost exclusively for their contribution to capital enhancement', rather than 'for developing the capacities of citizens, sustaining culture, knowing the world or envisioning and crafting different ways of life in common' (pp. 177–178).

THE FUTURE OF NEOLIBERALISM (AND WHY THINKING ABOUT IT IS IMPORTANT)

In the immediate aftermath of the GFC, there appeared to be a global shift in the tide of public opinion towards critiquing the economic and social effects of neoliberalism. Neoliberal policies were typically framed as driving forces behind the collapse of financial systems and as exacerbating inequalities. Activist agendas such as the Occupy movement found voice in this context, arguing against growing social and economic inequalities across the globe and advocating for a fairer distribution of resources and life chances. In particular, the negative effects of neoliberalism on income inequality have been thrust into the spotlight since the GFC, with a number of leading economists illustrating the stark inequalities that have emerged (and are deepening globally) as a result of expanding neoliberal reforms. Thomas Piketty's (2014) bestseller, *Capital in the twenty-first century*, for example, concludes that growing income inequalities within nations across the world have not emerged by accident, but have instead been made possible by a lack of government intervention in economic markets over several decades. These deepening inequalities, he argues, are undermining democracy. Piketty suggests the consequences of continued growths in inequality are 'potentially terrifying',

particularly given ‘the divergence in the wealth distribution ... occurring on a global scale’ (p. 571). Piketty argues that we are witnessing ‘a drift towards oligarchy’ (p. 514)—that is, a planet ruled by a relatively small number of economic elites—and suggests a new system of progressive wealth taxes is needed globally to arrest the concentration of wealth in the hands of a minority and to reduce overall inequalities. A significant rethink of neoliberal policies, therefore, is needed.

Old habits, however, die hard. Despite such vocal agitations against neoliberalism and despite some minor tinkering around the edges by governments in the wake of the GFC to better regulate aspects of the economy, there is little broader evidence that neoliberalism is receding as the dominant form of governance. Moreover, as I have argued in this chapter, quite the opposite is the case in education, where rather than seeing a retraction of neoliberalism, we are instead seeing an expansion. Indeed, neoliberalism (and the market-based ideas and practices it inspires) is alive and well, and is continuing to reshape multiple aspects of school governance, curricula and the everyday lives of school leaders and teachers across the world.

The future, however, is not yet written and the continued expansion of neoliberalism is not inevitable. As more individuals learn about and experience the impacts of neoliberalism, new opportunities open up to think differently about it and to agitate for change. It is critically important, therefore, for educators to understand the profound impact neoliberal policies have had on shaping the ‘conditions of possibility’ for schooling, and how they impact upon their everyday lives. Why? Because without such understanding, educators will remain little more than ‘subjects of’ the broader forces of society and policy, rather than being informed and better placed to actively participate in reshaping the direction of reform. In the United States, for example, widespread concerns about the impacts of high-stakes testing have recently led to the ‘opt out’ movement, which has seen large numbers of teachers and parents choosing not to facilitate the involvement of young people in testing programs. You might think this kind of activism is unhelpful, and I am not personally advocating for or against it. Instead, my point is that examples like this show us that educators are (whether they like to believe it or not) powerful social actors, who can negotiate and ‘speak back’ to dominant powers and politics in multiple ways.

Of course, it is naïve to think that neoliberalism is all bad and that we might need to ‘return’ in some rosy-eyed way to a ‘better past’ that existed before neoliberal reforms were introduced. The truth is that education systems in pre-neoliberal times were rife with inequalities and problems too. There are also good arguments to support aspects of contemporary neoliberal policies in schools. For example, there is little doubt that policies such as *My School* and NAPLAN are making schools more accountable and are making it easier for policymakers, researchers, educators and parents to identify certain inequalities and performance gaps between schools. An uncritical relationship to neoliberalism that paints it as an ‘all evil’ force, therefore, is just as unhelpful as an uncritical celebration of its benefits. Instead, what is needed by ‘us’ as citizens (including educators, parents, students and policymakers) is an ongoing critical engagement with neoliberalism as part of ongoing efforts to make education better for everyone. The impacts are what matter most.

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Conclusion

'Neoliberalism' refers to ways of governing society that emphasise the central role of markets and advocate for minimal state involvement and intervention in market processes. Neoliberal policies have had profound impacts on education systems globally, particularly since the 1980s. In Australia, government schooling systems and curricula have been fundamentally reshaped by neoliberalism. This trend continues, with reforms increasingly driven by market-based reform strategies. Two examples of neoliberal policies on education that have been canvassed in this chapter are the quasi-marketisation of public education systems and the economisation of curricula. Neoliberal reforms in education have not played out in homogenous ways across systems, but have instead emerged in context-specific ways. Neoliberal reforms have also had arguably positive and negative effects. Given the profound impact of neoliberalism in shaping the 'conditions of possibility' for education, it is imperative for educators to understand its impacts and engage critically in its evolution.

QUESTIONS AND ACTIVITIES

- 1 How would you describe neoliberalism to somebody who had never heard of the term before?
- 2 Do you think some people are advantaged and others disadvantaged by neoliberal policies and reforms? Speculate on the reasons why this may or may not be the case.
- 3 What are some of the positives and negatives associated with schooling being tied closely to the economic needs of a nation?
- 4 To what extent can (or should) teachers resist broader policy agendas?

KEY FURTHER READINGS AND RESOURCES

These internet search terms may assist you in sourcing further information on ideas presented in this chapter: Classical liberalism, Marketisation & Education & Australia, Markets & Foucault, Neoliberalism & governmentality, Political rationalities, Political technologies, Social democracy, Welfare state.

Brown, W. (2015). *Undoing the demos: Neoliberalism's stealth revolution*. Brooklyn: Zone Books.

Analysing neoliberalism as a form of governance, this book argues that it is a threat to democracy.

Harvey, D. (2007). *A brief history of neoliberalism*. Oxford: Oxford University Press.

David Harvey offers a history of the development of neoliberalism.

Rizvi, F. & B. Lingard. (2010). *Globalizing education policy*. New York: Routledge.

This book analyses global policy trends and how neoliberal forms of governance have influenced education.

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