Before translation

**The constitution of teacher subjectivity in Brazil:**

**Some global context**

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# Abstract

This paper explores some of the educational reforms which are taking place in Brazil and sets these within a ‘global overview’ which pays close attention to the trends and commonalities which can be seen in neoliberal education reforms around the world. We will outline a number of interrelated processes that are acting on the school as a workplace, including intensification of teachers’ work, flexibilisation of the teaching workforce, and the liberalisation of the supply side of public education.

What will be shown is that these processes are being informed by neoliberal policy enactments on a global scale through a combination of *endogenous* and *exogenous* privatisations. The reforms taking place in Brazil, and elsewhere, act powerfully not only on the practices and values of public education, but also on the social relationships within the school and supra-school environment. They have a significant impact on teacher professionalism and work to constitute teachers and their subjectivity in line with performance and competition. Although we highlight general trends in neoliberal educational reforms, we also attend to some of the local specificities of policy enactments in a number of different countries.

# Introduction

The global economic restructuring movement spanning the last three decades has produced remarkably similar developments around the world. In particular this process of transformation has drastically changed how we think and conceive the nature of schooling. Furthermore, it has resulted in a profound change in the way we conceptualise teacher professionalism. In short, teachers are mobilised to meet political objectives in order to drive up educational performance and, in the long run, to deliver economic growth and enhance global competitiveness. The re-definition of teacher professionalism alongside the contemporary education reforms has delimited space for teachers to be autonomous selves; most significantly, it makes up new teachers who internalise requirements of performativity and thus become self-regulatory and ‘autonomous’ in a new sensibility.

Some aspects of this restructuring ‘double’ – autonomy and performativity – are evident in Brazil. In the mid-90s, during the administration of Fernando Henrique Cardoso, the Brazilian education system was reformed through the introduction of a policy agenda that had significant impacts on the lives of teachers, students and hence, on Brazilian society. With the new law of education (Lei de Diretrizes e Bases da Educação Nacional - LDB) enacted in 1996, and other legal instruments, starts a process of decentralization that brings new forms of governance: at the same time that states and municipalities become responsible for the administration and provision of education, individual schools themselves are expected to become more autonomous in their functioning. However, the central state (União) kept the application of evaluations within its sphere, as well as the production of reports on the provision of education, both of which serve as technologies of control and recentralization.

Alongside this, the curriculum has been modified through the introduction of new frameworks, such as the competence-based curriculum, aligned with the guidelines of International Agencies such as the World Bank, Organisation for Economic Co-operation and Development (OECD), Inter-American Development Bank (IDB), etc. In that sense, the reform in Brazil and many other countries should be considered in the context of the expansion of a more general policy discourse that promotes an education functional to the demands of the so called ‘global economy’. The policy devices and the ideological components embedded in them have acted powerfully on the design of the curriculum as well as on teachers’ identities and their constitution as professionals. This is because while decentralization and autonomy are two cornerstones in the reformulation of educational provision, the running of the reform also incorporates measures that restrain teachers’ autonomy and professionalism.

Even though recent Brazilian governments have asserted a more active presence and responsibility of the central state (União) in the provision of education and the decent working conditions for teachers, the drivers of what is known as neoliberal tendencies are to be found in a complexity of networks, ideologies and interconnected events. That is the reason why it is important to recognize that both reforms and resistances operating at various levels in Brazil can be interpreted as active responses to an assemblage of neoliberal conceptions and practices impacting on teachers throughout the world. Actually, it is worth noting that the actions of collective resistance have been significant in Brazil (e.g. in the case of the National Minimum Wage) as well as other places, such as Chile, according to local conditions. Education is an arena of political struggle where the contestation of a policy at micro or macro level may reshape the course of policy enactment in the future ([Larner, 2000](#_ENREF_41)).

This article sets out some of this global context in order to broaden understandings of the processes taking place in Brazil. We start by describing some typical mechanisms of the assemblage of neoliberal policies that can be found in educational reforms across the world, after which we argue that these policy components and their wider assemblage as policy discourses work to reconstitute the subjectivity of teachers. Although we identify and isolate general trends, effects and commonalities in neoliberal reform, this does not reflect a singular and monolithic understanding of such processes. In this way, we stress the importance of attending to the national, regional and local contexts in which these reforms are occurring, and agree with Springer’s ([2010, p. 1031](#_ENREF_58)) assessment that ‘Neoliberalism is appropriately understood to be as much of a political, social, and cultural practice, grounded in local specificity, as it is a globally informed economic rationality’.

# Neoliberalism and education reforms

One of the most pervasive and consistent arguments underpinning contemporary education reforms is the assertion that the invisible hand of the market will inexorably lead to better schools ([Apple, 2004, p. 18](#_ENREF_7)). This idea is an expression of what is generally referred to as neoliberalism, a set of notions and practices of governance that extend the model of market relationships to areas formerly ruled by other rationales ([Larner, 2000](#_ENREF_41)). In this new market frame, schools are made more responsive to external outputs-based measurement and are more receptive to consumers’ wishes. Thus, greater emphasis is placed upon public impression management which includes raising national testing and school inspection results in order to attract consumers and maximise income. Schools are rendered into business units competing with each other ‘to ensure that they have a population [students] that they deem to be most likely to perform well in relation to external measures’ ([Ball and Youdell, 2007, p. 44](#_ENREF_9)). In other words, schools are expected to operate ‘more like private enterprises, to market themselves, to compete against one another for students and resources’ ([Smyth, 1996, p. 39](#_ENREF_57)).

It is to be briefly mentioned that the action of international organizations in the introduction of the education reform in Brazil has been crucial in the design of the education reforms adopting a neoliberal approach. The same situation has been observed in other Latin American countries in the same historic period ([Gentili *et al.*, 2004](#_ENREF_25)). Multilateral international organizations such as CEPAL, UNESCO and The World Bank have set a series of guidelines within narratives that claimed: the existence of a new globalized order with new forms of production to which the systems of education had to adapt; that education was functional to providing qualified workforce and containing poverty; decentralization and institutional autonomy as the ways to a more efficient provision of education ([Silva and Abreu, 2008](#_ENREF_56)). Moreover, regarding teachers’ careers and formation, Myriam Feldfeber ([2007, p. 446](#_ENREF_21)) identifies some of these imported neoliberal devices in the education reforms introduced in Latin America: “redefinition of the teaching career through the flexibilization of labour, salary based on merit, incentives based on performance, incentives to attract “the best” to the profession, assessments based on ‘objective rules’, mechanisms of accreditation and definition of standards at the national and international level’.

Indeed, there are many ways in which teachers and their work are being remodelled. These include the terms and conditions under which they are employed, and the ways in which they are trained, evaluated and represented. There are a number of different elements to this process, which taken together act to erode the professional autonomy and authority of teachers, at the same time that make room for the emergence of competition, private ownership and profit seeking in education as something possible, even necessary. What will be shown here is that this is being achieved through a combination of *endogenous* and *exogenous* privatisations, and that this is a global phenomenon. In order to understand the various ways in which the professionalism of teachers is being undermined, we will outline a number of interrelated processes that are acting on the school as a workplace, including intensification of teachers’ work, flexibilisation of the teaching workforce, and the liberalisation of the supply side of public education. First, however, endogenous privatisation will be introduced and explained in terms of the rise of New Public Management in public education.

## Endogenous privatisation

### New Public Management (NPM)

Teachers and their work are increasingly subject to regulation, intervention and prescription. This is informed, in part, by a politically charged distrust of teachers and a new-right/neo-conservative political orthodoxy that is, although not ubiquitous, internationally prominent ([Apple, 2001](#_ENREF_5)). Performance management and systems of accountability have colonised education systems around the world, a process which is embodied in the figure of ‘the manager’, and which is informed by the discourses and practices of what is sometimes termed New Public Management (NPM). The proliferation of NPM in education is a prime example of endogenous privatisation, which ‘involve[s] the importing of ideas, techniques and practices from the private sector in order to make the public sector more like businesses and more business-like’ ([Ball and Youdell, 2008, p. 14](#_ENREF_15)).

Importantly, NPM functions alongside centralised policies as an organisational and operational principle. In this way NPM creates the conditions for the development of a culture of performativity within schools, ‘a regime of accountability that employs judgements, comparisons and displays of ‘quality’, or moments of ‘promotion’ or inspection’ ([Ball, 2008, p. 49](#_ENREF_12)). Through this regime, teachers’ work, and the relations that they have with staff and students, is reduced to calculabilities attached directly to market requirements of competition and performance indicators. The hailing of management, or ‘leadership’, within schools, as opposed to teachers, is a symbolic part of this process. ‘Leaders’ are increasingly empowered with greater responsibilities, and in many ways can be seen as key agents in neoliberal reforms and the ‘modernisation’ of public sectors. They ‘play a key role in the wearing away of professional-ethical regimes in schools and their replacement by entrepreneurial-competitive regimes – a process of ‘de-professionalisation’ [of teachers]’ ([Ball, 2008, p. 47](#_ENREF_12)).

The implementation and enforcement of NPM in ‘emerging and developing’ countries worldwide can be seen in the ‘Education for All’ (EFA) initiative, led by UNESCO. The ‘movement’ describes itself as a ‘global commitment to provide quality basic education for all children, youth and adults…As the leading agency, UNESCO focuses its activities on five key areas: policy dialogue, monitoring, advocacy, mobilisation of funding and capacity development’ ([UNESCO](#_ENREF_61)).These ‘five key areas’ in practice involve the importing of performative technologies through the implementation of generic policies designed to impose systems of accountability and performance management in schools. Indeed, one of the six goals outlined by UNESCO is ‘Improving all aspects of the quality of education and ensuring excellence for all so that recognized and measurable learning outcomes are achieved by all, especially in literacy, numeracy and essential life skills’ (ibid). The reducing down of education to measurable outcomes in this way, as has been shown above, is a key feature of NPM and, as we shall see, directly feeds back onto the teacher, their subjectivity and their work.

### Reprofessionalisation and deprofessionalisation

Within and through this endogenous process there is an insertion of new sensibilities, practices and forms of subjectivity into schools, a dual process of ‘reprofessionalisation’ and ‘deprofessionalisation’. Reprofessionalisation is perhaps best understood as a shift of emphasis away from the professional capacities of teachers, and toward the transformational capacities of individual leaders and public sector managers. At the same time, teachers are deprofessionalised through a loss of autonomy in decision-making, the displacement of judgement by calculation, greater scrutiny and surveillance over their work, and increasingly prescriptive curricula and centralised performance targets.

The intensification of teachers’ labour also contributes to the erosion of their professional autonomy and authority, and is directly linked to the rise of managerialism and performativity. Larson ([1980, pp. 166 - 167](#_ENREF_42)) views intensification as ‘one of the most tangible ways in which the work privileges of educated workers are eroded’, and contributes to what Hargreaves ([1994, p. 118](#_ENREF_29)) describes as an individual and institutional state of ‘chronic and persistent overload, which reduces areas of personal discretion, inhibits involvement in and control over longer-term planning, and fosters dependency on externally produced materials and expertise’.

Apple ([2004, p. 25](#_ENREF_7)) notes that ‘both principals and teachers experience considerably heavy workloads and ever escalating demands for accountability’ adding ‘these movements are truly global. Their logics have spread rapidly to many nations’. Intensification can also be seen as symptomatic of the ‘proletarianisation’ of teachers ([Apple, 1982](#_ENREF_3); [1986](#_ENREF_4); [Hill, 2006](#_ENREF_33); [Hypolito, 2004](#_ENREF_35); [Ozga and Lawn, 1981](#_ENREF_52)), and as demonstrative of a neoliberal concern for efficiency and productivity that aligns educational provision with the political economy of globalisation, and the imperatives of international competition. Merson ([2000, p. 160](#_ENREF_47)) argues ‘one response to greater international competition, common to the New Right and the modernisers, has been to look for gains in efficiency and productivity amongst workers. This has led to intensification of work…of teachers’.

In Brazil, the issue of teachers’ salaries and the flexibilization of their labour are masked by a depiction of teachers as belonging to the middle classes. Teachers of public schools face ambivalence in relation to their class, since their relationships, their site of work, where they live, are working class settings and yet they are considered to carry out “intellectualized middle class work” ([Hypolito, 2010](#_ENREF_36)). As such, teachers may be perceived as professionals that, as any other professional, must perform to maintain a status, which works against popular support for teachers’ cause. Regardless of how contested this idea might be, the proletarianisation of the teaching profession becomes either invisible or perceived as fair in the context of the fierce competition among middle class workers. Indeed, applying the concept of deprofessionalisation within the context of Brazil obscures the fact that teachers there have historically been denied the kind of professional status enjoyed by other more middle class occupations, a predicament of being not once, but twice denied professional status; we develop this argument later on. Indeed, referring to the Brazilian context Hypolito ([2004, Introduction Section, para's. 2 & 7](#_ENREF_35)) pertinently identifies ‘professionalization as a promised land and a denied dream’, adding ‘there have been visible indications that this discourse has been used more for creating an illusion that significant steps are being taken in that direction, when, in fact, what has been happening is the creation of educational and administrative policies that serve to deny instead of affirm professional practices’.

A further feature of deprofessionalisation and deskilling worldwide can be seen in the narrowing and ‘streamlining’ of teacher training courses and the opening up of new, less scholarly and flexible routes into teaching; for example ‘Teach for America’ in the US, ‘Teach First’ in England, and more recently ‘‘Teach for All’ which is currently supporting initiatives in Brazil, Chile, Argentina, Israel, Lebanon, China, Germany, Estonia, Latvia, Lithuania, Bulgaria and Australia’ ([Ball and Junemann, 2011, p. 65](#_ENREF_14); [also see Kincheloe, 2009](#_ENREF_40)). These initiatives remove much of the theoretical and critical content of teacher training and aim to place ‘high-flying’ graduates straight into the classroom in ‘challenging’ schools after just a few weeks of initial training for a two year commitment. They are funded mainly by corporate philanthropies, though are also subsidised with public money, and exemplify the increasing presence of the private sector as a key player, globally, within education policy processes and service delivery; the Bill and Melinda Gates Foundation is one of a number of philanthropic organisations which funds Teach For America, for example, and in England a number of commercial and investment banks, such as HSBC and Goldman Sachs, are also very much involved[[1]](#footnote-1).

In a detailed study which highlighted some serious issues with the effectiveness of teachers practicing through the ‘Teach for America’ (TFA) scheme, Heilig and Jez ([2010, p. 1](#_ENREF_32)) note that ‘TFA is not a traditional teacher education program. Rather than the extensive preparation traditionally educated teachers receive over four years…TFA candidates attend a five-week training program in the summer between graduating from college and beginning their teaching assignments’. Although government rhetoric around the world asserts the importance of teachers being highly trained, their enthusiastic backing of programmes like these appears in some ways to be contradictory.

### Flexibilization

The global neoliberal drive towards flexibilization, of which there are a number of elements, further contributes to the deprofessionalisation of teachers, with its various processes sitting in an antagonistic relation to traditional professionalism. Firstly, there is the deregulation of teachers’ work, with a concomitant rise in the number of low paid non-teaching staff taking on responsibilities in the classroom. In England[[2]](#footnote-2), for example, over the past decade there has been a large increase in the number of teaching assistants in schools, with laws pertaining to the work that such staff can undertake being relaxed. This is articulated in government policy as a way of freeing up the time of teachers through the delegation of nonessential tasks to support staff. Stevenson ([2007, p. 235](#_ENREF_59)), however, notes that ‘In some areas, such as those relating to bureaucracy and administration, there is little dispute about what is nonessential. However, what is also envisaged is that *nonessential tasks* will embrace many aspects of teachers’ work that are considered central to the core task of teaching, including planning, delivering, and evaluating lessons to whole classes of students’. Ambiguous classifications of nonessential tasks are resulting in a tendency for lower paid, less well trained support and cover staff to undertake important duties previously falling within the professional jurisdiction of teachers, sometimes referred to as ‘skill mix’, with the effect of a wearing away of teachers’ authority and professionalism. This can also be understood as a process of fragmentation, where the (re)distribution of tasks, practices and staff results, in some cases, in the redefinition of aspects of teachers’ work as non-professional. This has the effect of eroding the unified knowledge of teaching practices, and presents teachers as interchangeable and disposable.

Flexibilisation can also be seen in the tying of teachers’ pay to performance. This is a part of the individuating processes of privatisation and marketization where teachers are cast into competitive relations with one another – as already noted above - and contributes to the breaking up of the political and collective power of the teaching profession and its unions ([Kessler and Purcell, 1991](#_ENREF_39)). It has a deprofessionalising effect as long as career progression and increases in pay ‘are essentially tied to the meeting of centrally devised standards [which are], arguably, a device to augment managerial control’ ([Forrester, 2011, p. 7](#_ENREF_22)). Importantly, this is a global phenomenon, with performance-related pay schemes for teachers being deployed in the US, New Zealand, Israel, Hong Kong, Japan, and Australia ([Ball, 2008](#_ENREF_12); [Bell and Stevenson, 2006](#_ENREF_16)). The construction of substitution and performativity also lays the groundwork for the more radical displacement of public sector provision by contract and the involvement of new profit seeking providers (as has been seen in Spain, Chile and Sweden).

### Centralisation

In addition to making schooling more responsive to the needs of economic growth and social transformation, another set of tendencies and trends has appeared over the last three decades which in other ways changes the nature of teachers’ work and professionalism. Increasingly, politicians and policymakers bring in more direct forms of regulation to control teachers’ work and change their conditions of employment (although this has been the case in historically centralised systems – France, eastern Europe, Finland etc.). To this end, teachers and teacher unions are under pressure both from marketisation and tighter control through centralised curricula and national testing ([Apple, 2006, p. 22](#_ENREF_6)). It is, as Dale ([1989](#_ENREF_17)) lucidly conceptualises, a move from 'licensed autonomy' to 'regulated autonomy'.

Under ‘licensed autonomy’, ‘an implicit licence was granted the education system, which was renewable on the meeting of certain conditions…subject to certain broad limitations’ ([Dale, 1989, p. 130](#_ENREF_17)). Under this circumstance, teachers had, to some extent, relative freedom to decide not only how to teach but also what to teach. ‘They had a particular responsibility for curriculum development and innovation’ whereas the state, ‘did not intervene actively in the content of either teacher training or the work of teachers in schools’ ([Whitty, 2005, p. 3](#_ENREF_63)). As for regulated autonomy, it is a shift towards tighter control over education systems and greater teacher accountability ‘largely through the codification of monitoring of processes and practices previously left to teachers’ professional judgement’ ([Whitty, 2005, p. 6](#_ENREF_63)).

There is, for example, evidence worldwide of the centrally imposed focusing of student learning on a set of narrow employability ‘key skills and competences’ deemed suitable by employers’ for middle to low level jobs ([Hatcher, 2011, p. 25](#_ENREF_30)). This can be seen in governmental policy stressing the importance of basic literacy and numeracy skills, and has been a key objective of a number of English Academies and US Charter schools in deprived areas. This also reflects the increasing alignment of education to the economy and to the requirements of the ‘world of work’.

By specifying what teachers and students are expected to achieve, national governments take a much more assertive role in intervening in the detailed processes of teaching, ‘rather than leaving it to professional judgement alone’ ([Whitty, 2005, p. 6](#_ENREF_63)). Put specifically, the gradual closing down of space for professional judgement and reflection undermines the ethics of ‘licensed’ professionalism in which the teaching profession was granted ‘a measure of trust and autonomy, professional salaries and occupational securities and professional respect and dignity’ ([Grace, 1987, p. 221](#_ENREF_27)).

Processes of centralisation and ‘deconcentration’ become more complex when consideration is given to ontological changes in both the form and modality of the state and the ways in which it governs. For example, some theorists draw attention to the increasing move from government to governance, or ‘governing by network’ ([Eggers, 2008](#_ENREF_20)). This form of governance functions through interdependency, partnership and collaboration between numerous state and non-state, public/private and profit/not-for-profit actors in the development and delivery of social and public policy. In this way, governments are increasingly positioned as facilitators in ‘catalyzing all sectors – public, private and voluntary – into action to solve their community’s problems’ ([Osborne and Gaebler, 1992, p. 20](#_ENREF_51)). What Jessop ([2001](#_ENREF_37)) describes as the ‘polycentric state’, there are areas where the state relinquishes its power and responsibility, however ‘these changes in modality do not signal a thorough-going weakening of the state’s capacity to steer policy, although internationally this clearly varies from nation to nation. The state is vigorous within these governance processes’ ([Ball, 2009, p. 96](#_ENREF_13)). Indeed, Jessop ([2002, p. 199, cited in Ball, ibid](#_ENREF_38)) suggests that the state enhances its ‘capacity to project its influence and secure its objectives by mobilizing knowledge and power resources from influential non-governmental partners or stakeholders’. Within these governance changes there is reciprocity between the requirements of both capital and the state, with processes of privatisation offering opportunities for capital accumulation on the part of businesses, and reductions in public spending costs for governments. Ball ([2009, p. 97](#_ENREF_13)) points out that ‘There is mutual conditioning and accommodation…The state works to develop appropriate meta-capacities and supports the development of ‘new policy narratives’ which in turn mobilise support behind the expansion of business opportunities’.

### Performativity

Flexibilisation and centralisation are related to and enabled by the techniques of performativity and performance management. According to Ball, performativity is ‘a culture or a system of “terror”’ where ‘the teacher, researcher and academic are subject to a myriad of judgements, measures, comparisons and targets’ ([Ball, 2008, pp. 49-50](#_ENREF_12)). Its main feature is the increasing use of data compilation, annual reviews, publication of learning outcomes, inspections and report writing. Much scholarly work has documented the impacts of performative policies on teachers’ professional work and lives, and also their sensibilities and work identities (see, for example, [Mahony, Hextall and Menter, 2002](#_ENREF_44); [2004](#_ENREF_45); [2004](#_ENREF_46); [Perryman, 2007](#_ENREF_54); [2009](#_ENREF_55); [Woods and Jeffrey, 2002](#_ENREF_64)). Embedded within these policies new languages such as performance, competences, standards and accountability have capacities in constituting new ways of thinking about what teachers do. Furthermore, these new languages and procedures re-define the nature of teaching activities and lead to new ways of identifying what counts as being professional. At the core of this transformation, teaching is re-worked by the installation of a new culture of performativity.

Performativity is one of the major forces in contemporary education reforms and substantially changes the structure and day-to-day running of schools and teaching; moreover, it is also a ‘new mode of state regulation’ ([Ball, 2003](#_ENREF_10)) which makes it possible to ‘make-up’ new teachers and re-orient what it means to be a teacher. Performativity also has a direct impact on the emotional experiences of teachers, with feelings of shame, guilt, pride and envy forming an integral part of the effectiveness of its various technologies, in some cases to the detriment of teachers’ health and wellbeing. We will return to the impact of these policies on teacher subjectivity in the final section of this paper.

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## Exogenous privatisation

So far we have sought to outline how endogenous privatisations work to bring about new sensibilities, incentives and rationales for teachers. These processes have been shown to have negative effects on the professionalism of teachers in terms of loss of autonomy and authority, intensification of work, deskilling, and the breaking up of collective bargaining power through individuation. There is, however, another form of privatisation occurring in public education systems around the world that, importantly, opens up opportunities for profit. This form of privatisation can be termed ‘exogenous’, in that it ‘involve[s] the opening up of public education services to private sector participation on a for-profit basis and using the private sector to design, manage or deliver aspects of public education’ ([Ball and Youdell, 2008, p. 10](#_ENREF_15)). Nonetheless, there is a ‘logic’ which relates endogenous and exogenous privatisation, by which the moves and changes embedded in the former facilitate the latter.

Globally, there are a number of examples of exogenous privatisation within education, some subtle and hidden, and others more explicit. These range from the contracting out of services which would normally have been undertaken by local authorities, to the contracting out of school management to the private sector ([for international perspectives see Ball and Youdell, 2008](#_ENREF_15); [for US examples see Molnar and Garcia, 2007](#_ENREF_48)). There has also been a proliferation of ‘edubusinesses’, many with a global reach, alongside involvement from multinational corporations that are exploiting the opportunities brought about by the privatisation and commodification of education and education policy, with the selling of educational services and policy solutions constituting a growing and lucrative market. This extends also to educational resources and school equipment, including the production and selling of school textbooks and teaching and learning materials. In Brazil, for example, this has been seen increasingly over recent years in the distribution of school textbooks, particularly amongst municipal schools, which have been developed and produced by private companies ([see, for example, Adrião *et al.*, 2009](#_ENREF_1)). This market is not only profitable; it also opens up schools and practices of teaching and learning to private sector influence. Similarly, and as just one example, in the UK the commercial and investment bank HSBC has been involved in curriculum development through a programme called ‘What Money Means’ which has been tested and piloted in a number of primary schools[[3]](#footnote-3). This initiative not only involves the selling of teaching and learning resources to schools, teachers and parents, but also the production of students, and indeed teachers, as competent ‘financial subjects’. On a broader level, this kind of activity is a further example of the complex but increasingly prevalent interactions and relationships between philanthropy, capital and social enterprise in the influencing, production and valorisation of education policy and provision. For the purposes of this paper, however, the focus will be on the direct involvement of the private sector in the management of schools, and in particular on the legal and institutional freedoms that are enjoyed by ‘new’ providers in public education, what is sometimes referred to as supply-side liberalisation (Department for [Education, 2012](#_ENREF_19); [Hatcher, 2011](#_ENREF_30)).

Sweden and Chile have arguably the most advanced marketised school systems in the world, with in the former publicly funded, privately owned ‘free schools’ now well entrenched within their public school system and generating, in some cases, substantial profits ([Arreman and Holm, 2011](#_ENREF_8); [Fredriksson, 2009](#_ENREF_24)) and with the latter a voucher system which parents can spend on either municipal or ‘private schools’. In the US there are an increasing number of charter schools run by Education Management Organisations. Deprofessionalisation is significant in the context of the emergence of these ‘new’ providers in that these kinds of schools have greater flexibility over the staff that they employ, the salaries that they pay them and the conditions under which they work. They also have, in some cases, greater autonomy over the content of the curriculum, and modes of curriculum delivery. Once providers are able to make a profit, as is the case in Sweden and the US, among others, the biggest constraint to this arises from staffing costs. Commenting on US charter schools, Molnar and Garcia ([2007, p. 17](#_ENREF_48)) note that ‘The simplest way to reduce personnel costs is to reduce teacher pay, which is most easily accomplished by hiring teachers with less experience and fewer qualifications or hiring fewer teachers and increasing class size’. There is both a deskilling and intensifying logic at play here, with inexperienced or non-qualified teachers being employed to handle, in some cases, larger class sizes.

In the case of the US, it has been estimated that ‘Approximately 70-80% of school budgets is for personnel: salaries and benefits of teachers and administrators. Thus the most obvious strategy to seek a profit is to reduce personnel costs’ ([Molnar and Garcia, 2007, p. 17](#_ENREF_48)). In Sweden, such cost-saving strategies have resulted in the ‘free schools’ employing a large proportion of non-qualified teachers. Lundahl ([2011, p. 38](#_ENREF_43)) elaborates: ‘the proportion of teachers with a teacher education degree is considerably lower in the independent compulsory schools (sixty-seven per cent) than in the public schools (eighty-seven per cent), and the average teacher/pupil ratio is lower’. Also, referring to for-profit Kunskapsskolan schools in Sweden, an article published in ‘The Economist’[[4]](#footnote-4) uncritically, but tellingly, compares their organisation and operation to the do-it-yourself furniture company ‘IKEA’: ‘Like IKEA…Kunskapsskolan gets its customers to do much of the work themselves. The vital tool, though, is not an Allen key but the Kunskapsporten (“knowledge portal”), a website containing the entire syllabus’ ([2008](#_ENREF_60)). This extreme example highlights the increasing under-valuation of teaching and the teacher. It suggests that for these new providers, the employment of ‘cheap’, deskilled ‘teachers’, alongside technologized forms of pedagogy, forms a part of their business plan[[5]](#footnote-5).

Before moving on to discuss the impact of these policies and neoliberal reforms on teacher subjectivity, it is important to point out that the dual processes of endogenous and exogenous privatization which we have described are enacted in different ways in different contexts. For example, educational reforms in England enacted an initial and gradual process of endogenous privatization which has, in a way, prepared the ground for subsequent involvement by the private sector in the form of exogenous privatization. This form of enactment, however, has not necessarily been seen in the educational reforms of other countries. As an example, Chile has had a strong private sector involvement in educational service provision for a number of years. In a sense, exogenous privatization was in place first, with subsequent neoliberal reforms enacting the kind of endogenous privatizations detailed above in the form of NPM. This comparison indicates the ways in which national and local specificities and histories inflect the ways in which neoliberal reforms are implemented and materialised.

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# Policy discourses and teacher subjectivities

Policies cannot be understood only as texts, to understand how they constitute teacher subjectivities, they must be understood as discourses. Policy discourses ‘produce frameworks of sense and obviousness with which policy is thought, talked and written about. Policy texts are set within these frameworks which constrain but never determine all the possibilities for action’ ([Ball, 2006, p. 44](#_ENREF_11)). If we consider policies as discourses, then we have to look at them not only as ‘pre-eminently, statements about practice – the way things could or should be – which rest upon, derive from, statements about the world – about the way things are’ ([Ball, 2006, p. 26](#_ENREF_11)) but also as practices themselves, ‘practices that systematically form the objects of which they speak… Discourses are not about objects; they do not identify objects, they constitute them and in the practice of doing so conceal their own invention’ ([Foucault, 2002, p. 49](#_ENREF_23)).

Initially, neoliberal discourse meant the reduction of the state in order to allow the growth of a market without restrictions; however, the role of the state has been redefined as an ally of the market, setting proper conditions to enable it to operate. For this to occur, ‘the end goals of freedom, choice, consumer sovereignty, competition and individual initiative, as well as those of compliance and obedience, must be constructions of the state acting now in its positive role through the development of the techniques of auditing, accounting and management’ ([Olssen and Peters, 2005, p. 315](#_ENREF_50)). This ‘positive role’ of the state has also implications for individual behaviour, as the state ‘seeks to create an individual who is an enterprising and competitive entrepreneur’ ([Olssen, 1996, p. 340](#_ENREF_49)). Hence, as has been described earlier in this paper, a market discourse has gone well beyond the commercial sector, entering the public sector in a whole variety of ways.

Ball claims that ‘the application of the market form to public sector institutions and exchanges encompasses, requires and legitimates a variety of changes that are structural and procedural but also brings into play new values and new kinds of social relationships’ ([Ball, 2006, p. 115](#_ENREF_11)). Neoliberal discourse then reconfigures the relationship between the state and the individual, as it ‘presents market forces as offering to everyone an apparently equal chance to utilise their powers of consumer choice and control. Those who do not exploit their opportunities, have only themselves to blame’ ([Vincent, 1994, p. 263](#_ENREF_62)).

De Lauretis’ defines subjectivity as the ‘patterns by which experiential and emotional contexts, feelings, images and memories are organised to form one’s self image, one’s sense of self and others, and our possibilities of existence’ ([1986, p. 5](#_ENREF_18)).

Thought about in terms of the subjectivity of teachers, the point is that neoliberal policy discourses change the way in which teachers think about themselves and their work, what it means to be a teacher, to teach. It changes relationships with colleagues, students and ‘leaders’. It constitutes education in new ways – as performance and as commodity. That is, it is realised in practices, relationships and in subjectivities. It is important to stress that neoliberalism is not just ‘out there’ in new structures, procedures and ‘freedoms’, it is ‘in here’, in our heads, we are neoliberalised!

The emphasis on competition and performance has altered the nature of what teachers do and how they see themselves as a teacher. They are now aligned more with the logics, values and ethics of the economic imperative. Regular target-setting, appraisal systems and performance comparisons all act as regulative techniques which designate new subject positions for teachers. Consequently, new roles and subjectivities are produced within this culture of performativity. Not only are teachers ‘presented and encouraged to think about themselves as individuals who calculate themselves, add value to themselves, improve productivity, strive for excellence and live an existence of calculation’, at the same time they are re-worked as ‘producers/providers, educational entrepreneurs and managers’([Ball, 2003, pp. 217-218](#_ENREF_10)). Policy discourses such as standards and accountability seek to reduce teaching to that of a technical enterprise that is based on sets of competencies and skills rather than practices informed by ethical frameworks. Discretion to make ethical decisions in teaching and learning is eroded and displaced by requirements of performativity, self-calculations and marketing. A professional teacher is thus re-constituted as the one who can ‘deliver efficiently according to contract a customer-led service in compliance with accountability procedures collaboratively implemented and managerially assured’ ([Hoyle, 1995, p. 60](#_ENREF_34)). Underlying this new version of professionalism, however, teachers not only ‘are more actively managed’, at the same time, ‘they themselves are more directly involved in self-regulatory management tasks’ such as target-setting, monitoring and evaluating ([Gleeson and Gunter, 2001, p. 146](#_ENREF_26)). On this account, the inculcation of self-regulating and self-policing capacities into teachers is at the expense of the autonomous ethical codes of being a professional teacher. Paradoxically, teachers become new ‘autonomous’ selves who have propensities in making themselves always presentable and manageable within policy discourses of performance and market. They are now rendered into a project which is amenable to be developed, improved and subject to regulation.

# Conclusion

In the context of the global knowledge economy education is the site of increasing political struggles of different kinds. To understand these struggles, it is important to appreciate both their global nature and the power of policy discourses to redefine the practices, purposes and values of education, and to reconstitute teacher subjectivity. As products situated in a context, policies articulate meanings and material resources available at a point in space and time. In that sense, a critical approach to policy analysis aims to “denaturalise” the foundations, assumptions and implicit mandates that a policy encompasses. To that end, it is necessary to examine how a policy is anchored to local historical conditions, and its interconnection or ensemble with other policy devices - and last but not least – to the development of global trends which have constituted the focus of this article.

What we have tried to show is some of the commonalities and typical effects of global neoliberal reforms in education, whilst at the same time stressing the importance of paying close attention to the ways in which these reforms are materialised and enacted within specific local contexts. In doing so, we have attempted to walk the ‘fine line’ between what Peck and Tickell ([2002, pp. 381-382](#_ENREF_53)) describe as

producing, on the one hand, overgeneralized accounts of a monolithic and omnipresent neoliberalism, which tend to be insufficiently sensitive to its variability and complex internal constitution, and on the other, excessively concrete and contingent analyses of (local) neoliberal strategies, which are inadequately attentive to the substantial connections and necessary characteristics of neoliberalism as an extralocal project.

Whilst we have tried to give some examples of the varying nature of local neoliberal educational reform enactments in a number of different countries around the world, we have placed these within a ‘global overview’ which pays close attention to ‘the more generic and abstract features of the neoliberalization process’ ([Peck and Tickell, 2002, p. 382](#_ENREF_53)).

The current educational reforms in Brazil which we have referred to certainly reflect many, but not all, of the ‘generic’ and ‘abstract’ features of the global neoliberalization of education. One important contextual variance which is significant, however, is that struggles over teacher professionalism in Brazil are perhaps more acute in that the neoliberal reforms are being enacted within an educational context where teachers have been historically denied professional status. Returning to Hypolito’s ([2004](#_ENREF_35)) important observation, what is apparent here is that teachers in Brazil have been not once, but twice denied the promised land of professional authority and autonomy which was once, in some crucial ways, enjoyed by teachers in other countries around the world. Rather than a reductive process of deprofessionalisation, teachers in Brazil are being constrained within a pre-professional stasis, with the neoliberal remodelling of their practice and working conditions acting to undermine, undervalue and exploit their labour. Understanding how the particular neo-liberal assemblage of policies in Brazil constitutes teacher subjectivity is an ongoing process of interpretation. Hopefully, this article has been useful in highlighting some of the dimensions that explain the real power of the policies being pushed forward and how they are related to each other.

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1. These schemes are heavily sponsored and backed by the corporate sector and by private philanthropies, with the organisations and companies mentioned here being just a few out of a vast array sponsors. Teach For All, the global scheme, is a joint venture between Teach For America and Teach First. It describes itself as ‘a global network of social enterprises working to expand educational opportunity in their countries…Teach For All’s mission is to expand educational opportunity internationally by increasing and accelerating the impact of these independent social enterprises’ ([Teach For All, 2012](#_ENREF_2)). These schemes reduce down the complexity of social issues which impact on educational inequality, and propagate neoliberal ideologies pertaining to the so-called ‘natural’ human virtues of ‘personal responsibility’, ‘self-reliance’ and ‘entrepreneurship’ where ‘In true neoliberal fashion, the responsibility for self-fulfilment…is downloaded onto the individual’ ([Hearn, 2008, p. 203](#_ENREF_31)). [↑](#footnote-ref-1)
2. England has arguably the most neoliberal of the four education systems operating in the UK. [↑](#footnote-ref-2)
3. This is a partnership programme between Personal Finance Education Group, a social enterprise, and HSBC. It is described as ‘a five-year programme to increase the quantity and quality of personal finance education in primary schools. Through working directly with teachers and pupils, What Money Means has been able to create a wealth of resources that have been successfully tried and rigorously tested in schools across England’ (Personal Finance Education [Group, 2012](#_ENREF_28)). [↑](#footnote-ref-3)
4. The economist is a UK based international affairs publication which takes a ‘free trade’ position. [↑](#footnote-ref-4)
5. It should also be noted that such schools are often situated in buildings not designed for educational purposes, such as office blocks and retail units. Companies such as Kunskapsskolan, amongst others such as Jon Bauer, also rent buildings so as to reduce costs through a negation of the need for maintenance expenditure. [↑](#footnote-ref-5)