

## **Impacts of neoliberal policy on the lived experiences of primary school communities**

Call for Papers for a Special Issue of Power and Education

Guest Editors: Dr Mark Pulsford and Professor Richard Hall



### ***Background***

Contributions to *Power and Education* continue to challenge contemporary educational practice and policy, and to critique the complicit practices and assumptions of mainstream educational research. Such practices and assumptions emerge across a heterogeneous educational terrain. In challenging dominant narratives, the intersection of policy and lived experiences is an increasing terrain of rupture. From this intersection, the focus is upon the relationship between the idealised, 'as if' state of policy, and the 'as is' realities of those policies as they are implemented in concrete communities.

In light of this potential disconnect between policy and practice, this special issue explores the impact of neoliberal policy on the lived experience of school communities in Primary education settings, from a range of theoretical and practice-based perspectives. We seek contributions that may afford international comparisons to be made, either within or across papers in the special issue; to enable this, we include in the definition of 'Primary' any form of education designed to provide 'basic' education to pupils aged between 3 and 13 years old.

The over-arching aim is to analyse the ways in which neoliberal policy agendas infect and inflict the daily experiences of members of Primary school communities, be they pupils, teachers, middle and senior leaders, Teaching Assistants, peripatetic teachers, parents, Governors, donors, faith groups, teacher training providers, local government, charities, Academy Trust management, service providers, and so on. In recognising that 'schools are complex and sometimes incoherent social assemblages' (Ball, Maguire and Braun, 2012, p.2), this wide perspective – beyond just pupils and teachers - marks the particular contribution that the Special Issue seeks to make; in examining how neoliberal logics thread through and organise relations between parts of Primary school communities, we hope to develop a sustained critique of the apparently factious contemporary landscape, potentially doing so on an international scale. This may then generate alternate ways of conceiving the relationship between education (and social) policy, and the lived experiences of being part of a Primary school community.

As such, this Special Issue intends to address themes at the heart of Power & Education's mission, aiming to interrogate the damage done to 'education by the general and specific imposition of crude discourses of neoliberalism and managerialism; the need to analyse carefully what is happening in particular contexts; and the possibility of constructing resistance and concrete alternatives' (Piper and Sikes, 2015, p.4).

### ***Areas of interest***

- We are seeking contributions that ground neoliberal policies and logics in the everyday routines and practices within Primary school communities. How is current education policy, framed by a neoliberal agenda, concretised in the mundane happenings in classrooms, playgrounds, staffrooms and offices? How are bodies placed, inside/outside

rooms and activities, as opposed to having autonomy for sensuous activity? What can we offer to the emerging corpus of research on the 'quotidian neoliberalisations' (Ball and Olmedo, 2013, p.85) of educational settings and engagements? What are the pedagogical issues, implications and im/possibilities emerging in this space?

- A consideration of how – or to what extent - disadvantage and inequality becomes normalised and accepted would be welcome, including analyses of the mechanisms and blind-spots via which this functions. Therefore explicitly addressing policies and practices of inclusion, diversity, equality and community involvement would be desirable. As a result, we might ask: who does choice favour, and how is the choice agenda/personalisation fetishised against the idea of the quantified self and self-regulation (by pupils and their families/carers, by teachers, and by school management)? What does progress and success look like in the context of an ableist culture, where standardisation and benchmarking allegedly lead to rational choices by responsabilised, atomised actors (Goodley, Lawthom and Runswick-Cole, 2014; Peters, 2017)?
- The issue is also concerned with matters of autonomy and power-over the curriculum and classrooms, in terms of performance management and managing targets and behaviours (Pring, 2015), for instance in the relationship to the development of human capital. This underpins considerations of the academic labour of those communities and its relations of production, alongside the economic value of primary schooling. Here there is also scope to focus upon the relationship between school governance and neoliberal policy imperatives as they impact specific communities (Slater and Bradford Griggs, 2015; Connell, 2013).
- We are also interested in the role of parents and carers in schooling, as these roles are affected by the relationship between schools and the State. This connects to critical questions about whether certain communities or sub-communities are seen as problems to be fixed? Are certain bodies, people, schools or communities seen as more desirable, and how is this manifested in, outside of and because of classroom practices/educational policy (Keddie, 2016; Wilkins, 2012)?
- In order to push this area of scholarship forward, we wish to engage with a range of theoretical lenses, tools and frameworks that can be employed to make sense of the everyday experiences within Primary school communities in the contemporary period. We see these as potential resources for mapping – maybe even prompting - resistances and re-workings that challenge the neoliberal paradigm. Such resistances and re-workings might emerge through consideration of:
  - spatial theory;
  - new materialist approaches;
  - body, affect and emotion;
  - queer theory;
  - critical disability studies;
  - critical race theory;
  - critical pedagogy;
  - assemblage theory, and so on.
- We invite and encourage international contributions, with a view that comparative analyses - either within individual papers or enabled across the whole Special Issue – can provide new insight and spur fresh lines of enquiry.
- Whilst we intend to develop a special focus on the Primary sector, this does not preclude contributions from researchers whose empirical examples are from informal education settings or other phases of education (e.g. prisons, Secondary, FE, HE), but which have a theoretical or practical application to Primary school communities and its members' experiences.

## ***Contributions***

1. *Power and Education* focuses upon: academic articles (up to 7,000 words); and shorter 'think pieces' (up to 3,500 words). A variety of forms and approaches, demonstrating a clear and analytical engagement with the relationships between neoliberal policy and the lived experiences of specific communities in the context of primary education, would be welcomed. These include: theoretical critiques; case studies; historical analyses; comparative studies; (auto-)ethnographies; and narratives are all welcome. Contributors from all academic disciplines are encouraged.
2. All contributions will be refereed in two stages: first, a fully-referenced abstract, which will serve as a gateway for acceptance of the full paper submission; and second, the full contribution. *Power and Education* has a detailed peer-review process and author submission guidelines, which can be viewed at: <https://us.sagepub.com/en-us/nam/journal/power-and-education#submission-guidelines>
3. Contributions and questions should be sent to: Mark Pulsford ([mpulsford@dmu.ac.uk](mailto:mpulsford@dmu.ac.uk)) or Richard Hall ([rhall1@dmu.ac.uk](mailto:rhall1@dmu.ac.uk))

## ***Publication timetable***

- Fully referenced ABSTRACTS by 1st December 2017 [see below]
- Authors notified by 9<sup>th</sup> January 2018
- Deadline for full contributions: 1st June 2018
- Authors notified of initial reviews by: 1st August 2018
- Revised papers due: 21<sup>st</sup> September 2018
- Publication date: November 2018.

## ***About the Editors:***

Mark Pulsford is a former Primary school teacher and now Senior Lecturer in Education at De Montfort University, Leicester, UK. He teaches about and researches Primary education, in particular teacher identity, gender, inclusion and professional development.

Richard Hall is Professor of Education and Technology at De Montfort University, Leicester, UK. At DMU he is Co-Director of the Institute for Education Futures (<http://ief.our.dmu.ac.uk>). Richard is a UK National Teaching Fellow, a co-operator at the Social Science Centre in Lincoln, UK, and a Trustee of the Open Library of Humanities. He was a Primary School Governor for 7 years, with a focus on both early years and ICT. He writes about life in higher education at: <http://richard-hall.org>.

## ***Next steps***

Should you wish to offer a contribution, please send a 300 word abstract (by midnight on Friday 1<sup>st</sup> December 2017) to Mark or Richard. The abstract should include references,

which are not included in the word limit. Feel free to email the editors any questions about the call or tentative ideas about a contribution.

### **References**

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