BECOMING A PROFESSIONAL (AND OTHER DISSIDENT ACTS)

Language and Literacy Teaching in an Age of Neoliberal Reform

BRENTON DOECKE & ALEX KOSTOGRIZ

Monash University, Australia

Abstract. Over the past two decades Australia has witnessed a range of standards-based reforms that have significantly redefined the work of language and literacy educators. Standardised literacy testing and other forms of accountability are increasingly mediating the relationships between teachers and their students. Teachers' work is in danger of being reduced to a technical activity, a pre-packaged set of skills designed to produce mandated educational outcomes. This trend mirrors developments in other Western countries where neoliberal reforms have been introduced under the guise of improving literacy standards and rendering teachers accountable (Kostogriz, 2007; Doecke, Howie & Sawyer, 2006; Doecke, Locke & Petrosky, 2004). What are teachers to do in these conditions? How can they maintain their professionalism when they are swept up by the machinery of such reforms? This essay explores the complexities of engaging in a critical pedagogy and resisting the enormous pressure of neoliberal governments to conform to their mandates. By focusing on 'the ideological becoming' (Bakhtin, 1981: 341) of a small group of pre-service teachers, we shall investigate how a complicated nexus between ideology and practice shapes their professional learning, opening up the possibility of a critical perspective on the neoliberal policy landscape around them.

Keywords: teacher education, literacy, ideology, neoliberalism, narrative inquiry

> Ideology is a crucial construct for understanding how meaning is produced, transformed, and consumed by individuals and social groups. As a tool for critical analysis, it digs beneath the phenomenal forms of classroom knowledge and social practices and helps to locate the structuring principles and ideas that mediate between the dominant society and the everyday experiences of teachers and students.
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> Giroux (1997: 91)

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Correspondence concerning this article should be directed to Brenton Doecke, Faculty of Education, Clayton Campus, Clayton, VIC 3800, Australia. Email: Brenton.Doecke@education.monash.edu.au

Chines
[Translation Shek Kam Tse]
成为一名专业人士
——新自由主义改革时代的语言与literacy教学
在过去的二十年，澳大利亚经历了一系列标准化的改革，在很大程度上促成语言与文学教育工作的重新定义。标准化的literacy测试，以及其他追求问责性的方式，越来越影响师生之间的关系。这使教师的工作面临危机，被简化为技术活动，成为一套为了达到某些预设目标而被预先包装的技巧。这个趋势与其他西方国家相仿，即在提升literacy水平与促成教师问责制度的前提下，推出新自由主义改革。在这样的情况下，教师应该怎么办？当他们被改革的机制卷入，应该如何保持自己的专业性？这篇文章探讨的，便是从事批判性教学法以及抵抗新自由主义政府所施加的压力中，教师所面对的复杂性。通过一组职前教师身上所反映出的"意识形态形成"，我们将探讨意识形态与教学实践的复杂交错如何塑造他们的专业学习，并如何促成他们对周遭新自由主义政策生态的批判性视角。

Dutch
[Translation Tanja Janssen]
TITEL. Een beroep leren uitoefenen (en andere dissidente activiteiten)
SAMENVATTING. De laatste twee decennia is men in Australië geconfronteerd met een reeks op standaarden gerichte hervormingen die het werk van taaldocenten ingrijpend veranderd hebben. Gestandaardiseerde taaltoetsen en andere vormen van rekenschap afleggen bepalen in toenemende mate de relaties tussen docenten en hun leerlingen. Het werk van leraren dreigt teruggebracht te worden tot een technische activiteit, een voorverpakte reeks vaardigheden die moeten leiden tot onderwijsopbrengsten die het mandaat hebben. Dezelfde ontwikkeling doet zich voor in andere westerse landen waar neoliberale hervormingen zijn doorgevoerd onder het mom van verbetering van taalvaardigheid en het rekenschap afleggen door docenten (Kostogriz, 2007; Doecke, Howie & Sawyer, 2006; Doecke, Locke & Petrosky, 2004). Wat moeten leraren doen onder deze omstandigheden? Hoe kunnen zij hun professionaliteit bewaren wanneer zij geplet dreigen te worden onder de wals van zulke hervormingen? In deze beschouwing onderzoeken we de complexiteit van het beoefenen van een kritische didactiek en het verzet bieden tegen de enorme druk van neoliberale regeringen om zich te conformeren aan hun regelgevingen. Door ons te richten op 'the idelogical becoming' (Bakhtin, 1981: 341) van een kleine groep leraren in opleiding, onderzoeken we hoe een gecompliceerde verbinding tussen ideologie en praktijk van invloed is op hun beroepsgerichte leren, de mogelijkheid openend tot een kritische blik op het neoliberale politieke landschap rondom hen.
TREFWOORDEN: lerarenopleiding, geletterdheid, ideologie, neoliberalisme, 'narrative inquiry'

Finnish
[Translation Katri Sarmavuori]
TITTELI: Ammatillistuminen (ja muita erimielisyyksiä). Kielen ja kirjallisuuden opettaminen uusliberaalin muutoksen aikana
ABSTRAKTI: Kahden viime vuosikymmenen ajan Australia on kokenut suuren määrän standardimaisia muutoksia, jotka ovat merkittävästi uudelleen määritelleet kielen ja kirjallisuuden kasvatustyötä. Standardisoidut lukutaitotestit ja muut velvollisuusmuodot ovat lisänneet opettajien ja oppilaiden välisen suhteen määrittymistä. Opettajien työ on vaarassa surkastua tekniseen toimintaan, esipakattuun sarjaan taitoja, jotka tuottavat määrätyt kasvatustulokset. Tämä trendi on peilikuva länsimaiden kehityksestä, missä uusli-beraalit uudistukset on ajettu kirjallisten standardien edistämisen ja opettajien vastuullisuuden varjolla (Kostogriz, 2007; Doecke, Howie & Sawyer, 2006; Doecke, Locke & Petrosky, 2004). Mitä opettajat tekevät tässä tilanteessa? Kuinka he voivat säilyttää ammatillisuutensa, kun heidät on pyyhkäisty pois semmoisen uudistuskoneiston tieltä? Tämä essee selvittää kriittisen pedagogiikan monimutkaisuuksia ja uusliberalististen hallituksen asemiensa vahvistamista. Fokusoimalla pienen opettajaryhmän 'ideologiseen tulemiseen' (Bahtin, 1981: 341) tutkimme, kuinka monimutkainen yhteys

ideologian ja käytännön välillä muovaa heidän ammatillista oppimistaan ja avaa mahdollisuuden uusliberaalin toimintamaiseman kriittiseen perspektiiviin heidän ympärillään.
AVAINSANAT: opettajankoulutus, luku- ja kirjoitustaito, ideologia, uusliberalismi, narratiivinen tutkimus

French

[Translation Laurence Pasa]

TITRE : Devenir un professionnel (et autres actes dissidents) – L'enseignement du langage et de la littéracie à l'époque des réformes néolibérales

RÉSUMÉ : Durant les deux dernières décennies, l'Australie a été témoin de plusieurs réformes des programmes qui ont, de façon significative, redéfini le travail des formateurs de langue et de littéracie. L'évaluation standardisée du savoir lire-écrire ajoutée à d'autres mesures de l'efficacité conditionnent de plus en plus les relations entre les enseignants et leurs élèves. Le travail des enseignants risque d'être réduit à une activité technique, un ensemble de compétences prédéfinies susceptibles de fournir les résultats scolaires attendus. Cette tendance rappelle des orientations prises dans d'autres pays occidentaux où des réformes néolibérales ont été présentées comme des solutions pour rehausser le niveau moyen en littéracie et pour rendre les enseignants responsables (Kostogriz, 2007; Doecke, Howie & Sawyer, 2006 ; Doecke, Locke & Petrosky, 2004). Que doivent faire les enseignants dans ces conditions ? Comment peuvent-ils maintenir leur professionnalisme alors qu'ils sont ballottés dans les rouages de telles réformes ? Cet essai explore les difficultés d'implication dans une démarche pédagogique critique et l'effort nécessaire pour résister à l'énorme pression de gouvernements néolibéraux exhortant à se conformer à leurs autorités. En se centrant sur « the ideological becoming » (Bakhtin, 1981 : 341) d'un petit groupe d'enseignants en formation, nous étudierons l'articulation complexe entre idéologie et pratique qui est au cœur de leur apprentissage professionnel et ouvre la possibilité d'une perspective critique sur le paysage politique néolibéral qui les entoure.
MOTS-CLÉS : formation d'enseignant, idéologie, néolibéralisme, récit de vie, savoir lire-écrire

Greek

[Translation by Panatoya Papoulia Tzelepi]

Τίτλος: Η ανάπτυξη του επαγγελματία (και άλλες πράξεις διαφωνίας)

Η διδασκαλία γλώσσας και λογοτεχνίας στον καιρό της νεοφιλελεύθερης μεταρρύθμισης

Περίληψη: Στις δύο τελευταίες δεκαετίες η Αυστραλία δοκίμασε έναν αριθμό μεταρρυθμίσεων στηριζόμενων σε σταθερότυπα, οι οποίες έχουν αναθεωρήσει έντονα τη δουλειά των δασκάλων γλώσσας και λογοτεχνίας. Σταθμισμένα τεστ γραμματισμού και άλλες μορφές λογοδοσίας υπεισέρχονται όλο και περισσότερο στις σχέσεις των δασκάλων και των μαθητών του. Η εργασία των δασκάλων κινδυνεύει να περιέλθει στην κατάσταση τεχνικής δραστηριότητας, ένα προαπαιτούμενο σύνολο δεξιοτήτων, σχεδιασμένο να παράγει εκπαιδευτικά αποτελέσματα επί παραγγελία. Αυτή η τάση καθρεφτίζει εξελίξεις και σε άλλες Δυτικές χώρες, όπου η νεοφιλελεύθερη μεταρρύθμιση έχει εισαχθεί κάτω από το μανδύα της βελτίωσης της στάθμης του γραμματισμού και της λογοδοσίας των δασκάλων. Τι πρέπει να κάμουν οι δάσκαλοι σε αυτές τις συνθήκες; Πώς θα διατηρήσουν τον επαγγελματισμό τους όταν πλήττονται από τους μηχανισμούς τέτοιων μεταρρυθμίσεων; Αυτό το δοκίμιο εξερευνά τις πολυπλοκότητες της εμπλοκής σε μια κριτική παιδαγωγική και τις αντιστάσεις στις τρομερές πιέσεις των νεοφιλελεύθερων κυβερνήσεων για συμμόρφωση με τις εντολές τους. Εστιάζοντας στο «ιδεολογικό γίγνεσθαι» μιας μικρής ομάδας φοιτητών δασκάλων, θα διερευνήσουμε πώς ένας σύνθετος δεσμός μεταξύ ιδεολογίας και πρακτικής διαμορφώνει την επαγγελματική τους μάθηση, ανοίγοντας την πιθανότητα μιας κριτικής προοπτικής του νεοφιλελεύθερου τοπίου που τους περιβάλλει.
Λέξεις κλειδιά: Εκπαίδευση εκπαιδευτικών, γραμματισμός, ιδεολογία, νεοφιλελευθερισμός, διερεύνηση της αφήγησης.

Italian

[Translation Manuela Delfino, Francesco Caviglia]

TITOLO : Diventare un professionista (e altre azioni di dissidenza). Insegnare lingua e *literacy* in un'età di riforme neoliberali

SINTESI: Negli ultimi vent'anni l'Australia è stata testimone di varie riforme basate sulla definizione di standard di competenze che hanno ridefinito in modo significativo il lavoro dei docenti di lingua e *literacy*. La relazione tra i docenti e i loro studenti è sempre più mediata da test di competenza standardizzati e da altri strumenti di verifica del lavoro dei docenti, che rischia di ridursi ad un'attività

tecnica, a un insieme di abilità preconfezionate e disegnate per ottenere risultati didattici prestabiliti. Questa tendenza rispecchia quella di altri paesi occidentali in cui sono state introdotte riforme neoliberali con il pretesto di migliorare gli standard di *literacy* e di rendere verificabile il lavoro dei docenti (Kostogriz, 2007; Doecke, Howie & Sawyer, 2006; Doecke, Locke & Petrosky, 2004). Cosa devono fare i docenti in queste condizioni? Come possono mantenere la loro professionalità quando sono travolti dalla macchina di queste riforme? Questo articolo esplora la complessità che richiede il coinvolgimento in una pedagogia critica e la resistenza all'enorme pressione imposta dai governi neoliberali per conformarsi ai loro mandati. Ponendo l'attenzione sul 'divenire ideologico' (Bakhtin, 1981: 341, 'ideological becoming') di un piccolo gruppo di insegnanti in formazione, noi indagheremo su come il complesso legame tra ideologia e pratica dia forma al loro apprendimento professionale, aprendo le possibilità di una prospettiva critica sul panorama delle politiche neoliberali che li circonda.
PAROLE CHAIVE: formazione insegnanti, literacy, ideologia, neoliberismo, ricerca narrativa

Polish

[Translation Elżbieta Awramiuk]

TYTUŁ. : Stawanie się profesjonalistą (i inne akty dysydenckie). Nauczanie języka i literatury w Erze Reform Neoliberalnych

STRESZCZENIE: Przez dwie ostatnie dekady Australia była świadkiem licznych reform standardów, które w sposób znaczący zredefiniowały pracę wychowawców nauczycieli języka i literatury. Standaryzowane testowanie umiejętności czytania i pisania oraz inne formy statystycznego oceniania coraz bardziej wpływają na relację między nauczycielami a uczniami. Praca nauczycieli zagrożona jest zredukowaniem jej do technicznej aktywności, do określonego zestawu umiejętności potrzebnych do wytworzenia założonych rezultatów edukacyjnych. Ten trend stanowi odbicie wydarzeń w krajach zachodnich, gdzie reformy neoliberalne zostały wprowadzone pod pozorem poprawy standardów nauczania czytania i pisania oraz kontroli pracy nauczycieli (Kostogriz, 2007; Doecke, Howie & Sawyer, 2006; Doecke, Locke & Petrosky, 2004). Co nauczyciele mają robić w tych warunkach? Jak mogą zachować swój profesjonalizm, kiedy przygniata ich maszyneria tych reform? Niniejszy esej omawia złożoność ich zaangażowania w krytyczną pedagogikę i sprzeciwiania się niezwykłej presji neoliberalnych rządów do potwierdzenia swojego mandatu. Koncentrując się na „postawach ideologicznych" (Bakhtin, 1981: 341) małej grupki studentów – przyszłych nauczycieli, będziemy starali się ustalić, w jaki sposób skomplikowany splot zależności między ideologią a praktyką kształtuje ich przygotowanie zawodowe, otwierając możliwość krytycznego stosunku do neoliberalnej polityki.
SLOWA-KLUCZE: kształcenie nauczycieli, umiejętność czytania i pisania, ideologia, neoliberalizm, dociekanie relacji

Portuguese

[Translation Paulo Feytor Pinto]

TITULO. Tornar-se num Profissional (e outros actos dissidentes). Ensino da Língua e da Literacia numa Era de Reforma Neo-liberal

RESUMO : Ao longo das últimas duas décadas, a Austrália assistiu a um leque de reformas assentes em referenciais ou parâmetros de avaliação que redefiniram significativamente o trabalho dos professores de língua. A avaliação através de testes baseados nesses referenciais e outras formas de prestação de contas estão a mediar de forma crescente as relações entre professores e estudantes. O trabalho do professor corre o risco de se tornar numa actividade técnica, num conjunto de competências pré-estabelecidas e concebidas para obter determinados resultados educacionais obrigatórios. Esta tendência espelha desenvolvimentos ocorridos noutros países ocidentais onde reformas neo-liberais foram introduzidas sob pretexto de melhorar os níveis de literacia e a prestação de contas por parte dos professores (Kostogriz, 2007; Doecke, Howie & Sawyer, 2006; Doecke, Locke & Petrosky, 2004). O que devem os professores fazer perante esta situação? Como podem eles manter o seu profissionalismo quando são varridos pela maquinaria destas reformas? Este ensaio explora as complexidades da aposta numa pedagogia crítica e da resistência à enorme pressão dos governos neo-liberais para impor os seus padrões ou referenciais. Através do enfoque na "emergência ideológica" (Bakhtine, 1981: 341) de um pequeno grupo de professores em formação inicial, investigaremos como uma relação complexa entre ideologia e prática molda a sua aprendizagem profissional, abrindo a possibilidade de uma perspectiva crítica sobre o contexto político neo-liberal que os rodeia.

PALAVRAS-CHAVE: formação de professores, literacia, ideologia, neo-liberalismo, indagação narrativa.

Spanish
[Translation Ingrid Márquez]
TÍTULO : Volverse profesionista (y otros actos disidentes)
RESUMEN: Durante las últimas dos décadas, Australia ha experimentado una amplia gama de reformas relacionadas con los estándares; han redefinido de manera contundente el trabajo de los docentes de idiomas y del dominio lingüístico. Exámenes estándares de comunicación eficaz y otras formas de probar habilidades tienen un papel cada vez mayor en la relación entre los maestros y sus estudiantes. El trabajo docente está en riesgo de reducirse a una simple actividad técnica, requiriendo un conjunto de habilidades fijas pre-diseñadas para producir ciertos resultados educativos bajo mandato. Esta tendencia refleja desarrollos en otros países occidentales donde se han introducido reformas neoliberales bajo el pretexto de mejorar los estándares de alfabetismo, con la responsabilidad cayendo en los docentes. ¿Qué deben hacer los maestros en estas circunstancias? ¿Cómo pueden mantener su profesionalismo cuando son llevados por semejante corriente de reformas? Este ensayo explora la complejidad de participar en una pedagogía crítica y resistir la presión enorme de los gobiernos neoliberales para cumplir con sus mandatos. Al enfocarnos en el "volverse ideológicos" (Bakhtin, 1981: 341) de un pequeño grupo de maestros en entrenamiento, investigaremos cómo transforma su aprendizaje profesional el nexo complicado que nace entre la ideología y la práctica; se abre la posibilidad de una perspectiva crítica en el escenario de políticas neoliberales donde operan.
PALABRAS CLAVES: Educación normalista, alfabetismo, ideología, neoliberalismo, inquisición narrativa.

1 INTRODUCTION

We live in the age of neoliberalism – a phenomenon that was spectacularly heralded by the divisive social and economic policies of Reaganomics and Thatcherism, but which has since become the common sense of our era. In less than one generation, neoliberalism has become the dominant ideology in education, influencing all aspects of the professional lives of educators and decisively shaping the way children experience their schooling. Critical inquiry into this phenomenon has become an urgent task for researchers and educators who are committed to achieving social justice, as is shown by a proliferation of studies in recent years (Apple, 2006; Ball, 2001; Furlong, 2005; Giroux, 2004). Whether such studies explore the changing conditions of educators' work and the impact of performativity and accountability measures on their professional identities, or debate the detrimental effects of privatisation on the project of a democratic education that is freely available to all, one central message is clear – neoliberalism is a counter-revolutionary ideology that aims to halt, or even reverse, historical achievements gained through decades of struggle for social justice and partially realised in the Keynesian, post-war compromise.

As with any ideology, neoliberalism has two sides: a utopian side (conspicuously retailed in images of individual gratification through the possession of chic consumer goods) and another 'dirty' side that conflicts with this utopian aspiration (cf. Žižek, 2005). As a form of economic utopia, neoliberalism dates back to the ideas of Adam Smith and David Ricardo about the need to liberate the economy from excessive state control. Using the 'invisible hand' as a metaphor for a self-regulating market, Smith (1976) argued that the possibility of social harmony depends on the degree of freedom individuals have to pursue their own interests.

Individual freedom was seen by him as an essential condition for production and exchange that would resolve social and economic conflicts. In this lies the utopian nature of neoliberal ideology to which political systems now increasingly cling in the project of building a perfect *laissez-faire* society characterized by economic individualism. Notwithstanding the hard lessons learnt from the 1930s Depression, neoliberals have revived this fantasy of market fundamentalism. They criticize the Keynesian state as an ineffective form of economic regulation in the era of a post-national, global economy and seek to replace its welfare policies by a new set of principles that emphasise the preponderance of private interests over the public sphere. However, the provision of mass education has historically been the prerogative of the state rather than private providers. Rich and poor alike aspire to provide an education for their children, and the state has taken primary responsibility for ensuring universal access to schooling. This is not simply because education is a basic human right, but because the state requires an educated workforce for economic productivity in order to remain competitive within a globalized market-economy. Therefore, neoliberal governments understand that any cuts in spending that undermine education as a social provision and that promise more choice for individuals paradoxically require public approval; individuals must be persuaded to accept the dismantling of a social infrastructure that has (however imperfectly) been a key factor in maintaining a sense of a public sphere and community affiliation. To make sure that privatization and the creation of an educational 'market' occur, ideology needs a second side. As Žižek (2005: 63) puts it, 'the price [one] must pay for sticking, clinging to the first fantasy is the second, dirty fantasy'.

Indeed, the success of any political ideology depends on its ability to develop a second, 'dirty' layer, one that is driven by the spectre of the Other. This 'Other' is seen as an impediment to the achievement of social harmony. Even though neoliberalism is relentlessly critical of bureaucratic state apparatuses, the state itself cannot be positioned as the Other for it continues to play a vital role both as a 'partner' to 'private' interests and as a steering committee for managing markets and maintaining social order. Rather, the Other must be defined as an alterity *within* the managerial structures of the new society – this might be a group of people who continue to work in 'old', economically unproductive ways, or other 'unruly' sectors of the population who have failed to secure a place for themselves within the new society and who need to experience this failure as something personal for which they are entirely to blame. As a result, recent decades have witnessed a proliferation of 'crisis' discourses that have reproduced neoliberal hegemony. With respect to education, it is only necessary to look at recent media reports and policy developments to get an idea about how the Other of neoliberal ideology is produced (see Sawyer, 2006). Currently, teachers are effectively being blamed for the injustices that inhere within new capitalism. There is supposedly a 'crisis' of values, a 'crisis' of literacy, a 'crisis' of youth. The subliminal message is that, unlike private schools, government schools are failing students because they lack values and are unaccountable (Donnelly, 2004). Similarly, teacher educators are blamed for failing to 'train' pre-service teachers in how to transfer the 'correct' knowledge effectively. According to Julie Bishop, a former Federal Minister for Education in

Australia, state governments should surrender their jurisdiction over school curriculum and a national curriculum should be implemented to ensure that adequate standards are reached. This, as she puts it, is to redress the way postmodern and left-leaning ideologues have hijacked curriculum, 'experimenting with the education of our young people from a comfortable position of unaccountability' (Davidson, 2006: 15). It is interesting to note that, if the first layer of neoliberal ideology promotes unreserved endorsement of market-oriented capitalism as a context for realizing individual freedom and enjoying the pleasures of consumerism, its second layer gives rise to an aggressive, populist neo-conservatism, crudely targeting certain individuals and interest groups (teachers, teacher educators, intellectuals) as culpably irresponsible and even morally corrupt.

As a result of this ideological work, neoliberalism spreads into every corner of education systems. Managerial practices, standardised literacy testing and other forms of accountability are increasingly mediating the relationships between teachers and students in government schools. Teachers' work is in danger of being reduced to a technical activity, a pre-packaged set of skills designed to produce mandated educational outcomes. What are teachers to do in these conditions? How can they maintain their professionalism when they are swept up by the machinery of such reforms? This essay explores the complexities of engaging in a critical pedagogy and resisting the enormous pressure of neoliberal governments to conform to their mandates. By focusing on 'the ideological becoming' (Bakhtin, 1981: 341) of a small group of pre-service teachers, we shall investigate how a complicated nexus between ideology and practice shapes their professional learning, opening up the possibility of a critical perspective on the neoliberal policy landscape around them. First, however, we shall discuss briefly the role of ideology in teacher education with the aim of reclaiming the word 'ideology' after a long period when this concept has been dismissed as 'obsolete' (Eagleton, 1991: xi) and to demonstrate its relevance to research into professional learning in the current political climate.

2 IDEOLOGY AND TEACHER EDUCATION

The notion of ideology has been out of fashion for some time now. Yet despite claims that society has somehow moved 'beyond' ideology, as though ideology is no more than an historical materialist relic in a postmodern world, this concept actually provides a vital frame of reference for understanding how neoliberalism constructs the reality of everyday life. As Žižek (2005) argues, that reality is itself never fully constituted; the 'truth' is not out there for all to see, in comparison with which ideology represents a 'false' consciousness. What ideology does is provide a means for individuals to imagine the social relationships that form the fabric of the world in which they find themselves (Althusser, 1971), thereby mediating those relationships in powerful ways. Another way to put this is to say that ideology comprises the stories that people tell about themselves and the conditions of their existence – stories that they continually tell themselves and others – thus giving meaning and

purpose to their lives and creating a sense of agency, even when they are actually shaped by forces outside their control.

In the age of 'endisms', neoliberalism is an effective ideology because it maintains that ideological conflict has been brought to an end by the collapse of state socialism and the global triumph of liberal democracy (Fukuyama, 1992). Proclaiming the end of ideological struggles and the disappearance of social conflict, neoliberal ideology arrests dissident discourses and denies the possibility of critique. There is only one reality - that of the dominant market order, where profit and consumption are the defining moments of social life. The free-market is conflated with democracy as the culminating stage of relations between free individuals within a hyper-capitalist order that is beyond any critique. As Macedo *et al*. (2003: 111) argue, 'this general failure to question is a direct by-product of the neoliberal ideology, which has managed to produce a powerful myth about itself that it does not need to be interrogated'. This is precisely how ideology works. Althusser (1971: 175) once pointed out that the omnipresence of ideology lies in its absence as well as in its ability to work silently – 'ideology never says "I am ideological"'. Effective ideologies are also affective in that they become part of everyday experience. They are not a body of ideas imposed from above, by governments or the mass media. Althusser famously argued that ideology works by 'interpellating' or 'hailing' subjects, identifying schooling as one of the key ideological state apparatuses for telling us who we are and training us to behave in certain ways (Althusser, 1971: 170).

Neoliberalism's triumph as an ideology is reflected in the way it has managed to achieve a level of 'transparency' and 'inevitability' with respect to its educational reforms. It has refocused attention from the class character of the curriculum to its post-class naturalness by re-presenting knowledge as the skills necessary for all to operate in market economies and by providing a corporate language to mediate teaching and the relationships between teachers and students. The standards-based reforms that are currently being implemented by governments paradoxically support Althusser's thesis on the reproduction of ideology through schooling, in that they are explicitly designed to produce students with the requisite dispositions and skills to become (neoliberal) individuals. Similarly, teacher education has come under increasing pressure to prepare new 'managed' professionals who are responsive to the imperatives of a neoliberal agenda and who are able to provide appropriate services to their clients. Nothing is more threatening to the idea of democratic schooling than this view of teacher professionalism as something that can be equated with the delivery of a standardized curriculum, controlled by accountability mechanisms that eliminate any sensitivity towards the socio-cultural diversity of classrooms. The real subtlety of the neoliberalization of teacher professionalism is to re-present schooling as a set of neutral practices.

These issues provide a context for our essay that focuses on research we have conducted into the challenges teacher educators and student-teachers face in a neoliberal policy landscape. Our study involved university students who were completing their third year of a four year teacher education program. As their lecturers, our aim was to capture the way they were experiencing a unit we were teaching on language and literacy across the curriculum. This unit was meant,

according to regulations set out by the Victorian Institute of Teaching (VIT, 1999), to equip all pre-service teachers, not just prospective English teachers, with the capacity to address the language and literacy needs of their students. We are obliged to show that we are achieving this outcome when our institution is audited by the VIT for reaccreditation of our programs (see VIT, 1999). However, as language educators we were also investing the unit with our own purposes, namely to problematize common sense understandings of language and literacy and to challenge the students' personal success stories. As university students they could all claim to have gained access to a world of language and literacy that had been denied to others, and we were interested in exploring whether they could see beyond their success as individuals and reach a larger understanding of why some children and adolescents might struggle with school literacy practices, rather than simply judging those individual abilities as somehow deficient and therefore a matter of personal responsibility and even blame.

Our aim is two-fold. First, we wish to explore how neoliberal ideology operates in such a way that many (if not most) student-teachers 'do not even begin to suspect the "work" the system (which is bigger than they are and crushes them) forces them to do, or worse, put all their heart and ingenuity into performing it' (Althusser, 1984: 34). This presents a very dismal picture of professional learning in conditions when neoliberalism slowly indoctrinates students to accept its ideas and work ethic: they must 'learn' to serve the needs of those in power and ultimately to reproduce the system that oppresses and 'manages' them. But second, whilst we accept many aspects of Althusser's analysis of the ideological work that teachers perform, we nonetheless attempt to show how some of our students oppose the neoliberal discourses of indoctrination and actually see education as an arena of resistance and hope. In doing so, we shall discuss two sets of data that involve respectively oral discussions and written texts which they produced in the course of completing our unit. By analysing these data, we tease out the way ideology figures in their everyday activities, most notably the language of their conversations and other social exchanges in which they engage. This means conceiving ideology as something that exists 'between' people, in the same way that language belongs to an "interindividual territory" (Voloshinov, 1973: 12), forming an inescapable dimension of social life. As Voloshinov argues, 'the word is the ideological phenomenon par excellence' (ibid., p. 13), constituting a proper object for scrutiny when it comes to understanding how consciousness takes shape with our entry into and participation in the world we find around us.

3 A VERBAL-IDEOLOGICAL WORLD OF PROFESSIONAL LEARNING

Oral Discussions. Our student-teachers were interviewed three times over a semester outside class hours, in focus group discussions that were facilitated by a research assistant who was not much older than they were. (There were originally three focus groups, but by the end of the semester the remaining students came together in one group in order to participate in a final conversation about what they had learnt.) Despite the critical intent of our curriculum and pedagogy, we were

confronted from the very first interview by language and understandings that conflicted with our aims as university teachers. The first two interviews, in particular, reflect the 'heteroglot opinion' that students are obliged to negotiate, as they alternately attend university classes and visit schools as part of their fieldwork placements, not to mention their continuing participation in their communities and friendship groups. When visiting schools or community settings, they obviously encounter other kinds of talk about language and literacy than that which they experience at university, and there were traces of this talk in the conversations we recorded. Whatever the topics covered in class – 'multiliteracies' (Cope & Kalantzis, 2000), literacy and social disadvantage (Comber, 1997), language 'acquisition' as distinct from second language 'learning' (Gee, 1991) – the students typically found themselves in an entirely different social space when they engaged in professional conversations with teachers and students. The focus group discussions themselves constituted an alternative space to their university classes, a distinct discourse community in which they were able to talk freely about the issues raised in class, and to present a different version of 'self' to their identities in tutorials. Their discussions also show the full force of opinion which they encounter daily in conversations with their parents, their peers, and through their reading of newspapers and other popular media: that 'literacy' is something you 'get' in early childhood, that it is an individual cognitive ability on which everything else depends, and that if you do not receive the necessary 'innoculation' (Luke & Luke, 2001), you run the risk of being handicapped for life.

The paradox with which we and other teacher educators are grappling is that the cultural capital that has enabled these young people to gain a university education, and which, according to all conventional markers such as the standards for entry into the profession developed by state authorities like the VIT, means that they are supremely well equipped to take their place in the teaching profession, arguably constitutes a major cultural barrier between them and the students they meet in state schools. Increasingly, state schools in Victoria and across Australia are becoming residualized, catering for the needs of students whose parents cannot afford to send them to private schools. Neoliberal reforms have led to the privatisation of education as a public sphere (cf. Giroux, 2004) whereby students and their families are positioned as consumers, even when they have no choice but to attend their local state school (cf. Doecke, Howie and Sawyer, 2006). The challenges faced by educators in state schools are rendered invisible; any acknowledgement of literacy as a culturally specific set of social practices is buried beneath standardized measures of performance that supposedly render all schools accountable. Yet state schools are crucially bearing the brunt of catering for increasing ethnic diversity, including refugee children, some of whom have never experienced formal schooling, and whose grasp of English remains insecure (cf. Kostogriz, 2005).

By contrast, the pre-service teachers in the discussion groups give the following accounts of how their parents inducted them into literacy practices when they were children:

> My dad he always encouraged us to write stories. So he'd sit down at the typewriter and we'd talk, like before I could read, before I could write. And he would just type as we spoke. And then he would sort of print it off on a page and he'd put a spare page

> between and we could draw pictures, so we were creating books from the age of three or four. (Felicity)
>
> I remember going on holidays and mum would make us write a journal. I suppose I was out of school already. And like we'd go and do something for the day and then come back and we'd write you know three or four sentences and then have to draw a picture. So I suppose it's like taking what we've seen and putting it down on paper and talking about it. (Toni)
>
> I think my parents are a big part too. I mean if they're around. Sort of some kids don't have parents that are around, like they're working full time or whatever, so you know they don't have that there to help them like. I know from my experience parents play a huge part in reading, writing, and literacy in general in my experience. (Jane)

The conversations between these students not only reflect their upbringing, but signal how they continue to value those moments when their parents inducted them into reading and writing. Their talk evokes a 'verbal-ideological world', a collective memory from which they draw images and phrasing to capture their literacy socialization. This should not be read as a criticism of the stance they are taking. To a significant extent, they are not 'taking' a stance at all, as though they were ever in a position to choose their education and upbringing. Their conversations reflect a world beyond which it is difficult for them to see, and which they daily renew through their ongoing practices as university students and actors in wider social settings.

Their university classes with us had sensitized them to the ways schools privilege some types of discourse over others. They had all read Heath's 'What No Bed Time Story Means' (an old text which is new to them), developing a broad understanding of a social world comprising people from communities like 'Maintown', 'Roadville' and 'Trackton' (Heath, 1982). Although they could see how the differences between these communities provided a perspective on their own 'Maintown' values and practices, this hardly translated into a recognition that their lives were bound up with other people and groups beyond their immediate communities. Their continuing affiliation with people just like themselves prevented them from effectively grappling with their relationships with these 'others'. A feature of their conversations with one another is the way their pronominal usage – 'we', 'you' – slips from referring to specific scenes and individual experiences they had known in their childhood (i.e. family scenes involving mum, dad, and the kids) to embrace the community being enacted by the focus group discussion itself. When Toni says 'you know', this is a sign of her affiliation with the others, an acknowledgement of the values and experiences they share. They are, in short, operating within a 'We-horizon' (Husserl, 1970: 359; cf. Bauman, 1993: 48) that makes it difficult for them to engage in the lives of others who might hold contrasting views and values.

In many ways, the cruellest irony of all is that the better the student-teachers understood the differences in social uses of literacy, the less they could see value in the alternative literacy practices of students from working class or ethnic minority groups, and the more they became committed to motivating these students to learn standard language and normative literacy. One student, for example, tellingly describes how he was 'saved', recalling how he grappled with the demands of the

'system'. This particular student was conscious that children from many families were failing to meet the 'system's standards.

> The parents know what the kids need to cover …, they know what they need to understand so there is that system for them, you know. And where there's not, there's not been a system at home and eventually we're just producing, probably the wrong terminology, but we're going around in circles and the circle's getting bigger with the number of people that are falling into that trap. And I see that being the economic aspect that I was talking about in that if we don't put money into these systems not just simply for you know the next five or ten years, but over the course of the next you know fifty or sixty years that the gap will just become wider and wider. (Ken)

Far from using the 'wrong terminology', Ken's comments reflect much of the language that is currently being used to describe the 'system' of literacy education in Australia. Both his and the other students' reflections about the significance of literacy repeat the dominant narrative about literacy education that has been used to justify the introduction of dedicated blocks of time to teaching literacy in Australian primary schools, as well as the imposition of standardised literacy tests to ensure that students reach appropriate standards. This is against a background of claims made by neoliberal politicians and media commentators about literacy being in a state of 'crisis' (Sawyer, 2006), a 'crisis' which supposedly sees significant percentages of students failing to achieve agreed benchmarks. Ken's talk conjures up a sense of his own individual isolation vis-à-vis an anonymous and alien 'system'. To borrow from Voloshinov, this is a system which is "completely independent of individual creative acts, intentions, or motives", where "meaningful language creativity on the speaker's part is simply out of the question", and language "stands before the individual as an inviolable, incontestable norm which the individual, for his part, can only accept" (Voloshinov, 1973: 53-54).

Occasionally, when these students recount their fieldwork experiences, they report moments of insight when they have seen teachers addressing the needs of individual students and other personal encounters that typically occur within the social space of the classroom. Michelle, for example, describes how she worked 'with a little boy who had trouble forming his letters, actually writing his letters', and how she devised an activity to help him: 'He would have to write letters on my back, form the letter, and I would have to tell him whether it was the wrong way or the right way and then I would write letters on his back and he'd guess them.' But, by and large, what these pre-service teachers 'see' when they visit classrooms is mediated by understandings of expected levels of performance, the outcomes pupils are required to achieve at each stage of their learning, which necessitate classifying students instead of seeking to acknowledge and respond to them as unique individuals. And rather than a differentiated understanding of school literacy, as something that is curriculum specific (Green, 1988), they tend to fall back on a concept of 'literacy ability' that somehow underpins everything.

Eliza, for example, voices her dissatisfaction with a Geography class where the students' 'literacy ability wasn't being tested at all… the main focus in the first place it should be the English skills that you use in English class and then bring the rest of it into that'. She continues: 'The time they spent teaching the students how to authenticate web sites and stuff means that they weren't spending it on teaching

them how to spell and which "there" to use in a sentence and I mean I really do deep down believe they should make time for that… they need to have background literacy first'. The notion that 'literacy ability' is something generic that should be 'tested', that such 'background literacy' should be distinguished from ability in specific curriculum areas, that work should be judged by pre-determined standards of performance that chart a student's progression – this language is not peculiar to Eliza. Her talk reflects the talk that she finds around her, which she uses in order to make meaning in the course of her learning to teach.

Partly the language used in these discussions reflects 'the kind of banter going around the staff room' (so Patricia describes her experiences in the school she visited), which in turn reflects the language of the professional landscape in which teachers are currently operating, including the language of standards-based reform delivered via the policy 'conduit' (Clandinin & Connelly, 1995). Partly it reflects the baggage these students bring from home and community. The very form of their conversation – their willingness to generalize on the basis of their relatively limited experience of particular schools and classrooms, their tendency to assert the authority of their experience without reference to any relevant research literature – replicates the way such issues are usually treated in the mass media, echoing the language of the day.

Written Narratives. Narratives about early literacy experiences constituted the other main set of data for gaining insight into the professional learning of these pre-service teachers, and in many respects these narratives provided an interesting contrast to the somewhat bleak picture that we have just painted on the basis of their conversations. Rather than asking them to write only traditional academic essays which demonstrated their understanding of the issues with which we were concerned, we invited them to interrogate their own experiences of literacy by writing stories about their early 'literacy events' (Heath, 1982). The prompt for this activity was Heath's description of the literacy practices typical of Maintown, Tracktown and Roadville in 'What No Bedtime Story Means'. By reading this text, the students developed an understanding of how literacy practices were part of the patterns of socialization and language they experienced as children (as is shown in the transcripts of their discussions earlier). We were, however, expecting them to gain more than this knowledge. Crucially, their writing in response to Heath's text took the form of a narrative, where they explored how their identities and their engagement in schooling were shaped by literacy practices at home and at school. In addition to their narratives, the students were expected to write a reflection in conclusion on the issues raised by their stories.

What they produced were heteroglossic texts which matched the heteroglot world around them. That this was an intellectually challenging exercise can be seen from a statement by Jane, one of the students who participated in the focus group discussions analysed in the previous section of this essay. She is reflecting on the nature of the writing she has done:

> Just as an afterthought to this project, I found it really hard to come up with something that even resembled a narrative. For the past two years at university we have been told time and time again to write academic essays that usually aren't what you want to write

> about or say, but rather what someone else wants to hear. The creative process has not been regarded as something important, which is sad yet painfully true, and it took quite a while to slip into thinking about something that had influenced me and then to write a narrative about it . (Jane)

Another student provides the following justification of her narrative, illustrating the complexity of the textual work she felt obliged to do:

> When trying to remember literacy experiences from my childhood I was drawing a blank. My parents are both lovers of books, so I was surrounded by books and literature from a very young age. But I could not think of any literacy event in particular. So I tried another tack. I began thinking of things I did and places I went as a child, hoping that I would get inspiration and the literacy events would come flowing out. Funnily enough, they did. (Tanya)

Many of the students' narratives reflect a conscious attempt to reconstruct moments from their pasts, rather than supposing that their memories are simply available to be retrieved. As another student remarks of her work (referring to herself in the third person), 'these fragments of memory are a reconstructed account of her memories from early childhood'. They were not, in short, being invited to engage in reminiscing, but to think carefully about the point of view from which they might tell their story, and other factors relating to the construction of their narrative that might enable them to achieve a critical perspective on their early literacy experiences. This meant reflecting on the times and places of the narrated events (or what Bakhtin (1981: 84) calls 'chronotope [literally, "time-space"]', as well as the time and place from which the narrator is recounting those events (ibid, p. 255).

A sense of the kind of textual work the students performed can be gained from some of their opening paragraphs:

> Wedged between his two eager grandparents, my 18th month old nephew sits on the couch in his favorite truck pajamas, transfixed. Book after book. World after world. Everything is new and exciting. Suddenly, at the turn of the page, his eyes light up and a squeal of delight is heard all through the house. "Doddy! Doddy!" he says, pointing to the picture in front of him. A round of applause. "That's right!" exclaim Grandma and Grandpa in proud unison. "Clever boy! It's a doggy, just like our Daisy. And what does the doggy say?" A short pause. Bated breath. "Oif! Oif!" More applause… (Virginia)

> Scenario One. 'Next!' The young girl walked into the room and perched herself up on the bed, ready for the evening reading ritual. Her sister passed her on her way out of the room, grinning proudly. Whoaaa, she must have got through a lot of cards, thought Marilyn; I better put in an extra special effort for Dad tonight. Now is the moment when Marilyn senses that the father is beginning 'teaching mode' – some serious learning is about to take place. Forget the jokes, silly fart noises and play fighting. Attention, concentration and respect are now required. The father holds up a big red flash card with the black letters marked 'C A T'. (Marilyn)

These opening scenes show these writers attempting to capture the language in which these literacy events occurred: the child's talk and the grandparents' praise; the flashcard with the black letters marked 'CAT'. Other narratives show a playful approach to genre. For instance, some students' texts sustain the language of fairy tales, combining language with the imagery of picture story books. Other stories involve a series of imaginary scenes, taken at random without being firmly anchored

within a chronology, and thereby disrupting any notion that life is lived as a steady march of events that go to the making of one's 'self'.

This exercise helped these student-teachers to develop an awareness of diverse literacy practices, in particular of the role of family practices in becoming literate. Writing such texts enabled some students to understand how they are positioned within the machinery of schooling that largely ignores the socio-cultural diversity of meaning-making experiences in the world and emphasises middle-class practices. There were instances in their narratives when they emphasised the importance of overcoming this kind of alienation. Some argued that to make the process of learning meaningful the students' experience of schooling should be connected with their experiences in the world. For teachers, this entails developing a critically reflexive practice and making one's own experiences and values an object of scrutiny. While the content of most students' stories matches the accounts they gave of their childhoods in the group discussions (i.e. they largely reflect the values and practices of 'Maintown'), their form creates a perspective on their early literacy experiences and the social relationships in which they came to consciousness that is largely absent from their talk. By writing their stories, these students are grappling with what Bakhtin calls their 'ideological becoming' (Bakhtin, 1981, p. 341), capturing voices and discourses from their early childhood which still form part of their identities. The challenge remains for them to understand what they have written, but they have nonetheless succeeded in positing their early childhood literacy experiences as a focus for continuing inquiry rather than treating them as what naturally happens.

4 IDEOLOGICAL BECOMING

We have resisted the temptation to structure the preceding account of our own pedagogy as tertiary educators around a 'before' and an 'after', as though the students' narratives about the literacy events of their childhood by themselves constitute a decisive moment when they were able to transcend their circumstances and upbringing and to see the world differently. Such a concept of transcendence fails to do justice to their ideological becoming, to the way the characters and events in their stories still shape their identities. Human beings arrive in a verbal-ideological world that pre-exists them, a heteroglot world of competing discourses in which they must find their way (Bakhtin, 1981). The language used by these pre-service teachers, ranging from the childhood talk that echoes in their memories, the staffroom 'banter' they hear in schools, to the words they encounter at university, show their ongoing ideological struggle to become teachers. It is noteworthy that the conversations examined earlier took place throughout the semester. They do not represent some kind of pretest that captures the assumptions and values these students held before they commenced their studies with us. To the contrary, their conversations convey a sense of the heteroglot world in which they continue to operate, a larger social space in which they struggle to attain insight and to articulate the values that will eventually inform their professional lives as teachers.

At one point in their discussions they spend time reflecting on the words they have learnt to use at university, pondering their initial strangeness , or, as Patricia puts it: ‘all those words that you know you go “Christ!”, where did they come up with that?’ As another student in the same discussion group observes: ‘There’s the sort of formal language that you use at university and the conventional writing styles you know’. The task of writing a narrative, as well as their participation in discussions outside class, threw their newly developed academic literacies into relief, without exactly bringing them to a point where they were able to challenge this ‘authoritative discourse’ (Bakhtin, 1981: 342). They are still struggling with academic discourse, miming a language which they have not yet wholly appropriated. The complexity of this struggle is compounded by the power of that other ‘authoritative’ discourse which crucially mediates what they say and write, namely those common sense understandings of ‘basic literacy’ purveyed by the mass media and neoliberal politicians, and enacted in the day-to-day routines of schooling.

We are arguing the value of what these students have accomplished by writing their narratives, while stepping back from any large claims about the transformative power of what they were doing. Whilst as teacher educators we might wish to affirm the possibility of social critique, involving the creation of teachers ‘who regard teaching as a political activity and embrace social change as part of the job’ (Cochran-Smith, 2002), such a critique can only emerge out of conflict between the authoritative discourses that constitute their world and a burgeoning sense of their personal ideological affiliations and professional engagement. With most of the students in our classes, this means struggling with their Maintown ‘success’ stories, and endeavouring to see their education differently, in much the same way that an ethnographer makes the familiar strange. Yet it is finally instructive to observe how a small number of students were able to tell different stories about their education and upbringing that provide a small window on the complexities of ideological becoming. Sophie, for example, begins her narrative with a conversation involving her sister and two-year old niece, thereby conveying the values and practices of ‘Maintown’:

> ‘Belinda, why don’t you show Aunty Sophie those new books you got from the shops the other day…’
>
> ‘Would you like me to read these to you?’ I ask.
>
> ‘ess’, she says nodding her head.
>
> ‘Should we go and sit on the couch so we can get comfy?... Which book would you like me to read to you first?’
>
> ‘Dis un’, she says smiling.

This exchange, however, is in a stark contrast with her story as it unfolds, which takes the form of an historical narrative, marked by the year of Sophie’s parents’ births in Italy in 1928, their experiences of their youth and early adulthood during the thirties and forties, and then their migration to Australia ‘during the 1950s… to begin a new life, full of opportunity’. Sophie then describes her own upbringing, involving ‘a verbal mix of “broken” English and an Italian dialect’.

The narrative Sophie constructs is reminiscent of social realist tales of migration collected in oral histories (cf. Loewenstein & Loh, 1977). Indeed, by invoking the ‘real’ vis-à-vis the make-believe world of school books, she knowingly runs the risk of appearing to subscribe to a naïve realism, where the life of the ‘vegie patch’ and the Italian community she knew as a child is more authentic than school and the world from which she is now writing. She notes the trouble she had ‘relating to and understanding books that weren’t about or related to “real” life”, a crucial connection that Maintown children typically make. Yet the fact that she places the word ‘real’ in inverted commas shows that she is doing valuable identity work by narrating her parents’ experiences of post-war migration and her own encounters with school. Her text includes several important statements at different stages of the narrative about who she is. She writes in the first person singular but significantly widens her statement to include others, most notably her parents and Italian working class people who migrated to Australia in the post-war era:

On struggling to find an event, I realised that, to understand my lack of eventfulness with ‘mainstream’ literacy events, I had to look at my parents lives – their childhoods and the circumstances they were in when I was a child. …These are the experiences that are etched in my mind. This is my experience of ‘literacy’. One that is quite different to that of my niece in the opening extract… I, a first generation Australian, grew up in a situation that was far from ‘mainstream’. I grew up in a world created by Italian migrant working class parents, where the values, beliefs, norms and traditions were very different from many of my Australian counterparts.

She then arrives at this judgment about the nature of literacy:

> Literacy is much more than being able to read and write at a specific level judged or dictated by a mainstream educational system. It delves into much deeper territory than what is classified as the ‘norm’. Rather, literacy is about who we are as individuals and how we explore our own worlds in terms of our interactions with different people, places, books, things, traditions, values, beliefs, norms, languages…. our whole environment. It’s about what we take from our world, imaginary or real, written or spoken, and the depth of importance, value and richness we place on these experiences.

Sophie demonstrates a capacity to engage with Heath’s arguments that is not always apparent in the writing of other students. She is in dialogue with Heath, questioning Heath’s understanding of ‘literacy events’, rather than merely using her analytical categories to classify her early childhood literacy experiences in an essentializing way. After evoking the scene with her sister and niece at the start of the narrative, she interpolates with the authorial comment that: ‘reflecting on my early childhood experiences involving “literacy events”, as described by Heath (1982: 50), was an especially difficult task for me. In actual fact, I didn’t (and still don’t) remember any occurring.’ This sense of a lack of fit between Heath’s analysis and her own childhood opens up a critical perspective on Heath’s account of the patterns of socialization and language development prior to schooling.

Sophie’s work points beyond the ‘We-horizon’ reflected in the conversations we examined earlier, showing an acceptance of the need to work with others whose experiences cannot be captured by pre-existing norms or standards. In her final piece for the semester, she wrote:

> … we learn less about individuals when we make them conform to a certain way of doing things. The schooling system accepts and regards those who are competent, not in producing work that is reflective of their individual experiences and expressions, but rather, in producing a good enough copy of what the teacher of 'mainstream standard' expects. This seems to me to be superficial and limiting… We as teachers must embrace, value and work with the aspects of what students bring with them to the classroom, rather than streamline students to fit into the mainstream.

Yet although such explicit resistance to standardizing or normalizing practices (Popkewitz, 1998) was rare, the narratives the students produced still showed them endeavouring to see further than they could see before, and approaching a professional ethic that might acknowledge the existence of others and not seek to deny their humanity by pretending to comprehend completely and thus contain them (cf. Critchley, 1992: 284).

5 CONCLUSION

Neoliberalism appears to be everywhere. Yet its omnipresence as a political ideology of contemporary hyper-capitalism does not seem to be because it offers an especially compelling set of values or 'world view' that gives life meaning. Rather, the affective nature of neoliberal ideology derives from the way it maintains relations of power and domination across multiple domains of social life, locking individuals into practices that reproduce existing society, even when they may espouse other values and beliefs, or imagine their life differently.

As 'new managerialism', neoliberalism mediates social relationships within institutions, employing managerial language to exercise control over multiple scales of management, from the governance of transnational economies to the professional lives of employees within local settings. Even though there are signs of resistance to the diffusion of neoliberal managerialism in the public education sector in Australia, it is increasingly difficult to find an antidote to its 'contamination' (Peck & Tickell, 2002: 392), and to see how public education can resist being recast as a market where knowledge and skills have become no more than consumer goods. This model is geared towards the naturalization of market logic and incorporates some of the major characteristics of hyper-capitalism – with greater emphasis on the 'private', the 'individual', 'performance' and 'choice' (cf. Doecke, Howie & Sawyer, 2006). The model mimics the operations of competitive markets, promoting increasing productivity (in Australia some Ministers for Education are promoting the value of merit pay for teachers on the basis of improved performance), while masking the uneven distribution of resources between state and private schools. Public attention has been diverted away from the injustices created by market-driven education and instead focuses on teachers who are simultaneously praised as the most important factor in a child's education and blamed when students supposedly fail to achieve agreed benchmarks (cf. Doecke, 2006). The attacks mounted by neoliberal politicians and media commentators on state school teachers and the public education system show their abandonment of the social democratic ideal of a free, secular education in favour of a market-driven model of education where individuals purchase private goods for their own personal comfort and betterment.

But far from conceiving ideology as simply a negative concept, the foregoing analysis also illustrates what can be gained by seeking to understand how neoliberalism produces and controls certain types of teacher professionalism. This critical work – which begins by naming current standards-based reforms as neoliberal ideology, i.e. as a partial view of the world that serves specific interests – can contribute to raising future teachers' awareness of how neoliberal values and practices are currently shaping their sense of their professional responsibilities. It is no easy task to transcend neoliberalism. As Eagleton argues, social life has become 'too complex to be grasped as a whole by everyday consciousness' (Eagleton, 1991: 151), and stories that repress this sense of complexity and provide simple answers to big questions have an immense appeal. Certain aspects of neoliberal ideology are undoubtedly seductive for precisely this reason, even when they are crudely couched in terms of 'value-adding' to students' learning. Teacher education, as with any other field of socio-cultural life, is itself being increasingly shaped by the language of neoliberal reforms which 'hail' future educators in specific ways. Those future educators become, in Althusserian terms, a *subject* because they recognize that the salutation is addressed to them; it is not someone else but they who are accountable for implementing standards-based reforms. However, as subjects they are also able to entertain the notion that they are capable of doing something that is of social benefit (as with Ken's resolve to serve the 'system' and 'save' children from illiteracy).

Yet, despite its rhetoric of providing 'individuals' with 'choice' about the best education for their children, neoliberalism conspicuously fails to provide all students with equal access to a quality education, and this may ultimately undermine its hegemony. Standards-based reforms in education are blatantly discriminatory; they disadvantage whole communities, rendering them invisible or aberrant, outside the 'mainstream' valorized by standardized literacy tests. The inequalities that are being created through the residualization of the state education system belie the political spin with which neoliberal politicians and media pundits attempt to legitimize their undermining of schools as public spaces. This residualization is, paradoxically, opening up the possibility of going beyond politicians' and media pundits' illusory representations of current conditions, through 'crisis discourses', to engage with the contradictions and complexities of hyper-capitalism. The discrepancy between the rhetoric of standards-based reform and existing social conditions can provide an opportunity for professional learning where one recognises the way professional knowledge and practice are currently being mediated by neoliberal ideology (as distinct from taking the professional landscape of 'literacy continua' and 'outcomes' in which we operate as a given, as simply 'there'). The recognition of such mediations can also be an opportunity to render ideology visible through critical reflection on one's own literacy experiences, as our students have shown when they wrote their critical narratives. By writing these stories, some were able to achieve a reflexive understanding of the conditions of their existence and to discover what Giroux calls 'a language of resistance and possibility' that enabled them to look beyond 'the horizon of the given' (Giroux, 2003: 98). The 'ideological becoming', that we have traced in the writing and conversations of these pre-service teachers, is cause for optimism precisely because they contain such moments of critical insight.

Witnessing their struggle with words and the demands of classroom situations, including their sense of a lack of fit between their burgeoning understanding of literacy as a culturally situated social practice and the imperative of standards-based reforms, is better than not seeing them struggle at all.

Professional becoming is always already an ideological becoming. It is a process by which student-teachers experience themselves and their relationships with others through grappling with the demands posed by their contemporary professional landscape. Our study reveals the difficulties involved in resisting neoliberalism's hegemony, for ideology cannot be reduced to a phenomenon of either consciousness or social practice. To challenge ideology can never be a matter of simply persuading people to think otherwise. Words from the past that echo in our minds as we converse with one another, the routines that we follow in order to participate in institutional settings, the communities or social networks to which we belong – ideology names the multifarious forms that the relationship between consciousness and social practice can take. Yet this very diversity simultaneously provides teacher educators and their students with an opportunity to resist the oppressive climate of 'metaregulation' created by neoliberalism, enabling them to glimpse a role for educators beyond neoliberal versions of performativity. Such critical awareness opens up dimensions well beyond the attainment of basic professional attributes that have been formulated for graduates of education faculties by systems as a condition for their accreditation. It raises questions as to the meaning and purpose of education rather than promoting a dull compliance with pre-determined outcomes.

To build democratic schooling, teachers need to recognize themselves as agents in this process, not in the problematical sense of 'value-adding' to students' learning, but as 'transformative intellectuals' (Giroux, 1988) who can enable their students to critically engage with the conditions of their lives and thereby achieve a better sense of their possibilities as human beings and members of a larger community. This means, to borrow from Giroux (2005: 205), cultivating an ability to read various codes historically and critically, from cultural to managerial, 'while simultaneously learning the limits of such codes, including the ones they use to construct their own narratives and histories'. (Giroux's words provide a rationale for what we have been attempting to achieve by inviting our student-teachers to write critical narratives). Neoliberalism 'hails' individuals in powerful ways, attempting to appropriate their histories and subjectivities for its own purposes. Our research has shown that it is possible to disrupt this interpellation, enabling students to see themselves differently by exploring the disjunction between what they think and what they do, between what they understand and what they feel, between their consciousness and their social being. Rather than accepting their role as mere cogs in the machinery of educational markets, they can develop a professional identity as intellectuals who are also informed political agents (Giroux, 1991). But we are obviously still celebrating what are simply moments of critical insight, sparks of critical awareness that might open up other ways of being in the world than neoliberalism permits. The critical question remains: How can we build on such critical insights to engage in a larger project of social reform? And where will we be if this work is not done?

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