



Value production and struggle in the classroom: Teachers within, against and beyond capital

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To the extent that their labour produces value and surplus value, teachers are productive labourers. This paper discusses teachers' labour in relation to the production of new labour power, explores the extent to which it is alienated, and explains how it produces surplus value. But the classroom is also a site of struggle. The paper explores some of the ways in which teachers and students may both refuse capitalist work and create space in order to pursue alternative projects that better meet their own needs. To this extent, teachers and students are productive, not of value, but of struggle.

Introduction

Marxists have long recognised that educators play a key role in the reproduction of capitalist relations of production in general, and of that special commodity, labour power, in particular. Bowles and Gintis, for example, in their *Schooling in Capitalist America* (1976), set out to demonstrate the education system's role in socialising young people for the workplace, while David Yaffe agrees that 'Those who are engaged with training productive workers are involved with changing the special commodity labour power itself' (1976: 12). But for most classical Marxists, educators do not labour within that 'hidden abode of production' in which value and surplus value are produced, in which 'capital is itself produced' (Marx, 1976a: 279–80). Rather, educators have been considered to be unproductive labourers and, perhaps, part of the 'middle class'. For instance, Kevin Harris has argued that 'Economically, teachers are positioned between the capitalists



and the working class, and bear features common to both. They belong to a middle class, positioned between the global function of capital and the function of collective labourer, sharing both functions' (1982: 128). For Althusser (e.g. 1972), teachers and the education system form part of the 'ideological state apparatus', whose role it is to generate and install in individuals the dominant system of values and ideas.

I propose here an alternative perspective to that of classical Marxism, suggesting (in Section 1) that we should, in fact, understand teachers as *productive* labourers: that is, as producers of value and surplus value. (This is not to say that educators produce value and surplus value *instead* of (re)producing 'ideology' and capitalist social relations. Rather, the production of commodities—value—is inseparable from the reproduction of the capital relation.) I argue, first, that teachers are in fact *producers* (or rather, co-producers) of the commodity labour power. Through their shaping of this special commodity they also produce surplus value, although this is realised only through the exploitation of the new labour power. Second, I suggest that we should understand teachers' labour as directly value-producing, since there is a tendency for this labour to take the form of *alienated* and *abstract* labour, where abstract labour is the substance of value. Part of this second argument hinges on the question of *commensurability*: I suggest that the imposition of *metrics* is part of capital's strategy to make diverse teaching (and other) activities commensurable.

Many of the issues are not new. Schools and universities have always been of central importance to the reproduction of variable capital and hence to the accumulation of capital, as theorists of the 'social factory' recognised early on (see, e.g. Tronti, 1973, or Cleveland Modern Times Group, 1976). In particular, my argument here extends and adapts that of Mariarosa Dalla Costa and Selma James (1972) and other participants in the domestic labour debate of the 1970s, who argued that housework is productive of value for capital. And in *Discipline and Punish*, Foucault discusses the development of 'educational space', which, from the eighteenth century onwards, comes to 'function ... also as a machine for supervising, hierarchizing, rewarding' (1977: 147).

But education has undergone widespread restructuring since the 1970s, largely in response to the crises and struggles



of that decade,¹ and it is therefore useful to revisit these issues. ‘Warwick University Ltd’ (Thompson, 1970) was a forerunner in consciously attempting to align itself with the needs of capital; but education systems and institutions globally have now become a terrain for marketisation agendas (Levidow, 2002; Rikowski, 2001). Ovetz (1996) and the contributors to *Steal This University* (Johnson et al., 2003), for instance, chart the ‘entrepreneurialisation of the universities’ and the ‘rise of the corporate university’ in the United States. ‘What is new about today’s university is not only that it serves the corporation—for it always has done that—but that it *emulates* it’ (Johnson et al., 2003: 13). Universities themselves ‘are *becoming* businesses’ (Ovetz, 1996: 113). In the United Kingdom, many neoliberal trends are articulated in the government’s White Paper on *The Future of Higher Education* (DfES, 2003). Critiquing this document, and state education reforms more generally, Robinson and Tormey (2003) suggest that a ‘once “independent” public service [is being reduced] to a wing of capital. ... [T]he penetration of neoliberal assumptions goes well beyond the formal status of the higher education sector, it permeates every assumption about the rationale of education itself’. While the situations in the UK and the US are not identical, there are many common themes, also shared by education systems in other developed states. These include the growth of ‘for-profit’ education institutions; the invasive intervention of both private-sector corporations and government in the day-to-day running of ‘public’ universities; the increasing importance of market relations; management’s use of ‘performance indicators’, ‘performance management’ and various forms of ‘performance-related pay’ (or ‘merit pay’); the rhetoric of ‘efficiency’ and ‘global competitiveness’; and the ‘proletarianisation’ of academics.

In the global South, higher education has been a casualty of the more general imposition of neoliberal policies, as indebted governments have been forced by the IMF and World Bank to implement structural adjustment programmes (SAPs) (Levidow, 2002). African universities have been hit particularly hard. SAP ‘conditionalities’ have included the removal of student subsidies, currency devaluation—which has inflated the cost of educational materials—and cuts in government funding for education. While the Bank argues that SAPs present African governments with ‘a golden opportunity to “increase the efficiency of resource use”’, and



has itself promoted various restructuring packages, teachers and students who have protested against these policies, and against SAPs more generally, have frequently faced repression (Caffentzis, 2000: 5–8).

The neoliberal agenda for education means that teachers' role in capital's reproduction and development is now unambiguous. Moreover, the neoliberal project's obsession with 'performance', 'efficiency', external controls and *measure* (metrics) has the effect of deepening the alienated-and-abstract-labour characteristics of concrete teaching activities. Teaching labour thus becomes directly value-producing and, inasmuch as they are productive of value, educators exist within capital.

But this is only one side of the story. Educators (and students) also struggle: against the capitalist imposition of work; against neoliberalism as it manifests itself on- and off-campus; against their own function as producers of labour power; and for their own needs. Globally, education is contested terrain. Sometimes teachers' struggles are collective and very visible. Other times, they are both more individualised and hidden. Often, the latter forms of struggle are not even recognised as such, and we can only detect their existence through observing capital's response. Struggles around education, whether collective or individual, are rarely consciously anticapitalist.

Even so, struggles against manifestations of neoliberalism nevertheless impede capitalist development, and hence are against capital. Frequently, struggles are ambiguous: they may, for instance, impose work on others, or drive capital's development in alternative directions. But struggles may also—again, this is rarely conscious—posit a transcendence of the capital relation. To the extent that educators struggle, I suggest (in Section 2) that we should understand them as *un*productive of value for capital and as existing against-and-beyond capital.

This understanding of productive and unproductive labour clearly differs from that of classical Marxism, including Marx's own explicit writings on the distinction.² I do not seek to demonstrate logically that the classical Marxist distinction between productive and unproductive labour is somehow wrong or incorrect. Such a demonstration may not even be possible. But I do believe that the perspective suggested in this paper is more useful in helping us to understand the ways in which teachers produce and reproduce



capitalist social relations, and hence to appreciate teachers' potential power to rupture this (re)production. In fact, this understanding can help us to recognise the ways in which teachers' existing practices already rupture, and even go beyond or transcend, the capital relation: that is, are productive of struggles. As Brian Massumi suggests in his translator's foreword to Deleuze and Guattari's *A Thousand Plateaus* (1988): 'The question is not: is it true? But: does it work?'

1. Producing value in the classroom; or Educators within capital

1.1 Classical Marxism and unproductive labour

Marx explicitly excluded labour whose function consists of reproducing labour power from being considered productive: 'Hence the former class [productive labourers] will produce immediate, material wealth consisting of commodities, all commodities *except* those which consist of labour-power itself. ... *In so far therefore as we leave labour-power itself out of account*, productive labour is labour which produces commodities' (Marx, 1969: 161 & 172; my emphasis). Classical Marxists have tended to follow Marx's lead on this issue. For example, Simon Mohun suggests that

Labour-power is not a produced commodity; it is a commodified aspect of human beings, and human beings are not produced in any valorisation process. It might be suggestive for some purposes to consider that labour process which (re)produces people, but the relations involved are not class ones, there is no private property in the means of (re)production from which non-possessors can be excluded, the labour involved is not wage labour, and (re)production is neither production for sale nor production for profit. (Mohun, 1994: 401)

Activities such as the 'daily and generational reproduction of labor-power' do not produce value, because there is no social mechanism for commensurating different labor activities, and so there is no way in which the time taken in such activities can be regarded as 'socially necessary'. ... Such labor is non-productive; indeed, in value theory terms it does not count quantitatively at all. (Mohun, 1996: 38)

Harris is also explicit in his view that (most) teachers are unproductive because they ‘are employed by the State and they are paid out of revenue’ (1982: 57). According to Savran and Tonak, although education (and health) workers produce use-values, ‘the national education system or the national health service of a capitalist country cannot be regarded as capitalist enterprises. Consequently, the workers they employ cannot be classified as productive labourers’ (1999: 139).

The labour of (re)producing labour power is thus not productive of value because: (i) labour power is not actually a *produced* commodity; (ii) there is no ‘process of adding value’; and (iii) ‘there is no social mechanism for commensurating different labor activities’. Aside from educators employed by private, profit-making institutions, whom Marx did regard as productive (Marx, 1976a: 744), all three points seem to apply to the labour of teachers and academics. Finally, teachers are not productive since they are (for the most part) employed by the state, rather than by private capital. We will consider each of these points in turn.

1.2 Teachers reproducing labour power and producing surplus value

First, teachers’ labour, along with that of many others in capitalist society, does in fact *produce* that ‘other great class of commodities’ (Rikowski, 2002/2003)—that is, labour power.³ Reproductive labour has a number of aspects, which can be distinguished on the basis of whether it is, first, concerned with (re)producing human beings as *Homo sapiens* or with (re)producing human beings as the commodity labour power (its function); and, second, whether this labour is waged or unwaged (its form). This two-dimensional typology is illustrated in Table 1. The work of teachers tends to fall into cell [2.2], in that it is usually waged, and is concerned with producing humans as labour power.

It is certainly true, as Mohun suggests, that labour power is a commodified aspect of human beings. But this aspect—this ‘capacity’ or ‘potentiality’—must be shaped and developed. In general, labour power—the capacity to labour—does not simply mean the *ability* to perform physical or mental work. It means, in addition, the willingness to do so under another’s control, regardless of whether this control is direct or indirect, and whether it is exercised by a private capital or by social capital.

Table 1. Typology of reproductive labour

		Function	
		(Re)production of humans <i>qua</i> humans	(Re)production of humans as labour power
Form	Unwaged	[1.1] ‘Natural’ biological reproduction; aspects of obtaining and preparing food; within family and community healing	[1.2] Many aspects of parenting, e.g. basic rules of capitalist society: ‘don’t steal’.
	Waged	[2.1] ‘Artificial’ biological reproduction; aspects of state and private health services	[2.2] Education services; judicial system; many aspects of ‘capitalist culture’

It means the willingness, even if reluctant and ‘unwilling’, to submit to capital’s discipline. When Marx was writing, capital made far more use of overt force in order to coerce people to submit to its discipline. More recently, particularly in post-war, ‘developed’ countries, it has tended to use far more subtle methods of ensuring compliance. But this compliance must be produced, and a key figure in this process of production is the teacher (along with parents and, of course, new labour power itself—a teacher can only teach: the student must also be willing to learn and to submit). Foucault (1977) argued, for example, that the school system’s regime of ‘hierarchized, continuous and functional surveillance’, makes it an integral part of ‘disciplinary society’. And Maurice Brinton, promoting a Reichean thesis, suggested that ‘The purpose of education—both East and West—is the mass production of robots ... who have so internalised social constraints that they submit to them automatically’ (1975: 29).

The different abilities that distinguish one form of concrete labour power from another must also be shaped. These tend to vary across historical periods, geographical locations and strata of workers. For most labour powers in advanced capitalist economies, a certain degree of literacy and numeracy are desirable aspects; but this has not always been the case, and it is still not the case everywhere. Some labour powers require the ability to think creatively and to solve



problems; others, the ability to follow instructions without question. In some labour powers, the ability to kill other human beings efficiently is a desirable characteristic, while others call for tenderness and caring qualities. Although all of these characteristics have always existed in human beings, one cannot say that capital has simply appropriated certain of them without changing and developing them. We can think of this process of capital's development and shaping of labour power, as opposed to the mere appropriation of it, as part of the *real*, as opposed to merely formal, subsumption of labour under capital (Marx, 1976b). Really, it is impossible to disentangle any 'natural', human 'essence' of people from their existence as labour power within capital.

Finally, it is not sufficient that new labour power is educated, in both the general sense of compliance and the particular sense of specific abilities and skills. New labour power must also be categorised and ordered into a hierarchy that reflects the extent to which individual subjects have been educated in these ways. 'This student has good leadership skills and would make an excellent manager'; 'that student was gifted but lacks motivation'. 'She lacks imagination but is diligent and a hard worker'; 'he is practically unemployable'. Everett Reimer has argued vigorously that this process of the 'sorting of the young into the social slots they will occupy in adult life is a central function of formal education ... The school system has thus amazingly become, in less than a century, the major mechanism for distributing values of all kinds among all peoples of the world' (1971: 25 & 26-7).

Second, teaching labour produces surplus value, i.e. 'adds value', and valorises capital. Here, we can extend Leopoldina Fortunati's (1995) argument concerning the productive nature of housework. Fortunati argues that the labour of a (usually female) houseworker that reproduces the labour power of the male wage-worker thereby increases the value of that male worker's labour power. Moreover, when put to work by capital, the male worker's labour power has enhanced use value because it is more productive: a well-fed worker, one whose emotional needs have been met, is likely to be more productive. But the houseworker's labour has some special characteristics. It is (a) unwaged; (b) largely not recognised as labour, being considered rather as a 'natural' activity and perhaps performed 'for love'; and (c) doesn't appear to be organised capitalistically. Finally, (d) her



‘product’ is inseparable from a commodity—the male’s labour power—which must be owned by someone else—the male himself. Because of these characteristics, which largely concern the hidden nature of the houseworker’s labour, capital is able to systematically pay the male worker a wage below the value of his labour power. That is, the wage reflects the costs of reproduction of the wage-worker and his family: this wage is sufficient to pay the houseworker for her necessary labour, but not for the surplus labour she also performs. Thus, capital exploits two workers with one wage; both workers produce value and surplus value and hence valorise capital.

Teachers’ labour is waged, but it does share the other aspects, (b), (c) and (d). At least historically, teaching has appeared less like labour than other forms of labour. Many teachers have seen themselves, and been seen, as engaged in a vocation, with their activity a ‘natural’ part of themselves. This is particularly true for university lecturers and certainly, until the present restructuring, universities have not appeared to have been organised in a capitalistic manner. Finally, like housework, the ‘product’ of teachers’ labour cannot be separated from a commodity—labour power—owned by someone else. Given these characteristics of teaching labour, the exchange value of school, college or university graduates’ labour power (i.e. the wage they can command) may reflect the cost of their education; that is, the *value* of their educators’ labour power, rather than the value *produced* by their educators and embodied in the graduates. Yet graduates are, at least potentially, more productive by virtue of their education: by employing these graduates, capital is thereby able to appropriate not only the surplus value produced by them, but also that produced by their teachers.

1.3 Abstract labour and alienated labour in the classroom

By this point, the classical Marxist will already have objected that a teacher’s labour (like that of a ‘housewife’) does not add value to the labour power it (re)produces because this labour is not in itself value-creating. So I will here consider teaching labour in relation to the substance of value: abstract labour. This discussion also underpins the question of the



commensurability of different concrete labours, which I address in Section 1.4.

Value is embodied labour that is also abstract labour. That is, abstract labour is the substance of value. Then, since productive labour is that labour which produces value (and surplus value), we can say that any labour in capitalist society that has a two-fold nature, being a unity of abstract labour as well as concrete labour, is also productive labour. Now, for Marx, abstract labour is ‘human labour-power expended without regard to the form of its expenditure’. Like labour, like result: ‘All its sensuous characteristics are extinguished.’ (Marx, 1976a: 128). Abstract labour is labour that is ‘alienated, imposed, and boundless in character’ (De Angelis, 1995: 111–13). Labour is alienated because the work activity appears to the worker as an external power, outside his or her direct control: it is not ‘the satisfaction of a need but a mere means to satisfy needs outside itself’ (Marx, 1975: 326). Since alienated labour appears as an external power, such labour is ‘not voluntary but forced, it is forced labour’, i.e. it is imposed (ibid: 326). And since abstract labour by definition abstracts from concrete labour and from the useful character of concrete labour, it cannot be limited by a set of needs. It is thus boundless—‘production for production’s sake’ (De Angelis, 1995: 111–773)

Our understanding of abstract labour—and thus value—here is of a tangible reality, the ‘sensuous-less’ reality of alienated, imposed and boundless activity (see De Angelis, 1996). And this tangible reality is as applicable to the labour performed in capital’s reproductive circuit, $LP-M-C(MS)...P...LP^*$ (see Cleaver, 2000: 123), as it is to that performed in its industrial circuit, $M-C\{LP, MP\}...P...C^*-M^*$. In his *Economic and Philosophical Manuscripts of 1844*, Marx (1975) distinguishes four aspects of alienation. Under the capitalist mode of production, workers become alienated from (i) the act of production, i.e. from their activity; (ii) the product of their labour; (iii) their own species being; and (iv) their fellow workers. Each of these aspects of alienated labour is increasingly applicable to the labour of teaching (and that of studying). Moreover, much teaching (and studying) labour appears as imposed and boundless. We can characterize teaching labour as *becoming-alienated*.

First, teaching labour is increasingly an activity that is alien—an activity that does not belong to the teacher. The very separation of knowledge into more-or-less well-defined



and discrete ‘disciplines’ or ‘subjects’ constrains the majority of teachers within ‘their’ subject’s boundaries. Such constraints become more rigid as soon as students are required to sit examinations: material taught then becomes largely determined by examination syllabi—particular novels, specific historical periods, or designated branches of mathematics. This imposition by external power of curriculum content, as well as of teaching methods, has accelerated in the current period of education reform. In the UK, for instance, the so-called ‘national curriculum’ dictates what is taught in schools; and there has been a proliferation of testing and school inspections, performed by the Office for Standards in Education (Ofsted), which are used to ensure teachers’ compliance with particular educational methods. The state’s close control of content can be understood as part of an attempt to define ‘desirable labour power attributes’ (Rikowski, 2002/2003), which of course relates back to educators as producers of this commodity. And as teachers (and, of course, students) become increasingly forced to subsume their own interests to those of capital, their activity becomes forced labour.

On the face of it, academics retain far more control over the content of their teaching than do schoolteachers. Although university curricula in the UK are now required to conform to so-called ‘subject benchmarks’, these benchmarks are themselves relatively permissive.⁴ However, while academics may still enjoy relative freedom to design their own curricula within a particular discipline, many disciplines are themselves under attack, and have been forced to reinvent themselves as a response to market pressures. In many universities, arts, humanities and social science degree programmes have contracted or even closed down altogether. Others have refashioned themselves as branches of business or management studies.⁵ Again, what results is the imposition of activity on academics by an alien power—in this case, ‘market forces’. Of course, besides teaching students, both schoolteachers and university lecturers are required to *grade* them and to write references. This labour of hierarchising and categorising is also alien and imposed.

As well as the external forces acting on work *content*, teachers’ *workloads* have expanded sharply as student numbers have grown and as the quantity of tests and ‘quality assurance’-related administration work has proliferated. Anyone who has completed the paperwork associated with



Ofsted inspections or Quality Assurance Agency (QAA) ‘audits’ will have no doubt as to the alienated, imposed and boundless nature of this activity. Here, the classical Marxist may well object that my use of ‘alienated’, ‘imposed’ and ‘boundless’ is too flippant, and that I have misunderstood the true meaning of Marx’s terms: that inconvenient administrative tasks performed by teachers, although tedious, cannot really be compared with the daily toil of, say, factory workers; that the growth of bureaucratic tasks (paperwork) is nothing like capital’s unquenchable thirst for surplus value and the endless circuit $M-M'-M''-M'''$... (however mediated). I would counter that it is more useful to focus on value—whose substance is abstract labour—as a lived experience, rather than on one of its common forms of appearance, money; and that we should understand the capitalist mode of production as a specific social form of imposing work, rather than as simply a system geared towards profit-making. And, in fact, the more vernacular meanings of many of Marx’s terms may be appropriate. The growing number of tests in schools and universities is a source of considerable stress to teachers, not to mention the students who have to sit them. The phrase ‘testing for testing’s sake’ expresses well the boundless nature of this system of assessment.

The *second* aspect of alienation concerns the alienation of workers from the product of their labour. Now the ‘product’ of a teacher is the school or university graduate who, as a result of his or her education, is now supposedly the bearer of a range of knowledge, skills and attributes. But as control over curricula is increasingly determined by the needs of capital (whether mediated by the state or the market), this knowledge and these skills and attributes will increasingly correspond to ‘desirable labour power attributes’.

Teachers (co-)produce new labour power. But this new labour power—new workers—will in turn be employed to produce value and surplus value, i.e. to produce and reproduce capital, the very social relation that exploits human beings, including teachers. Thus, the ‘product’ of teachers’ labour is turned against them: they become alienated from the product of their labour.

Third, the becoming-alienated labour of teaching includes the alienation of teachers from their own species-being. In all human societies, there have been mechanisms, customs and social codes to regulate the passing-on of knowledge,



skills and culture from one generation to the next. In fact, it is the existence of culture, understood in its broadest sense, that distinguishes humans from (most) other animals. Clearly 'education', in its broadest sense, is part of the cultural transmission mechanism. However, when 'education' becomes simply a means by which particular, externally prescribed subjects are taught in a particular context, then teachers—who are employed to teach these subjects—become estranged or alienated from their human species-being, i.e. their natural propensity to impart knowledge and to nurture thinking in others.

Fourth, resulting from teachers' alienation from their activity, from the product of their labour and from their own species-being, they also become alienated from their fellow workers. The workers with whom teachers most closely associate are, of course, their students. But the relationship between teacher and student is mediated by their mutual imposition of work. On the one hand, the teacher imposes work on students and possibly grades them—the hierarchical nature of the relationship here is clear. On the other hand, the student may impose work on the teacher, seeking extra help or pressurising teachers to do additional work to make tedious material more interesting. Thus the relationship between teacher and student can become antagonistic and alienated.

Teachers also become alienated from their fellows as external pressures (powers) increasingly mediate their mutual relationships. Such pressures or powers can take the form both of bureaucratic structures and of 'market forces'. As an example of the former, a teacher's peers (organised into some committee) may force him or her to justify how a new teaching arrangement conforms to a particular set of guidelines.

An example of the latter is the competition, within and between institutions, to attract students to particular courses, schools or universities. And although not the main focus of this paper, it is also the case that student will become alienated from student, since students are essentially competing with one another: for the student seeking 'employability', the most important goal is not to become good at something; it is to become better than one's peers. A first-class degree is meaningless if everyone gets one! Antagonism may also arise between students who simply want to be taught only whatever is necessary in order to obtain a good grade, and those who wish to spend class time



exploring issues of interest to them that lie outside the examined curriculum.

Thus the work of schoolteachers and university lecturers (along with that of students) is increasingly taking on all the characteristics of alienated labour: teachers' labour is *becoming-alienated*. This labour is increasingly imposed and, moreover, is boundless, without limit. As Glen Rikowski (2000) suggests, 'school improvement' is a concrete expression of capital's '*social drive to enhance the quality of human labour power* [which] like all of capital's social drives is *infinite*'. (Of course, capital attempts simultaneously to drive down the cost of this 'enhancement', through cutting back funding for education.) Teaching labour, then, increasingly takes on a two-fold nature, becoming a contradictory unity of concrete labour *and* abstract labour, which is the substance of value.

1.4 Commensurability and measure

The discussion of the abstract and alienated nature of teaching labour brings us to the question of the commensurability of different concrete labours and socially necessary labour time (SNLT). (This is the *third* reason for teachers' labour being *unproductive*, outlined in Section 1.1, above.) In the previous section, I discussed some of the tendencies that are forcing teaching labour to assume the qualities of abstract labour. Many of these tendencies and processes also facilitate the establishment of SNLT for various teaching activities. This, in turn, allows *first*, the *commensuration* of teaching labour vis-à-vis other teaching labour and completely different concrete labour; and *second*, the driving-down of these socially necessary labour times. Other important tactics include the construction of league tables and the fostering of cultures of 'best practice' and 'efficiency'. League tables facilitate quantitative comparisons of schools, universities and/or departments and, coupled with their use in determining funding decisions, become a key tool in capital's strategy of marketisation, while SNLT is driven down as individual 'units' strive to become 'more efficient'.

Many structures employed to impose content are also used to enforce quantities—to define, for instance, *how much* a student should know in order to be awarded a particular qualification. Across the university sector, the role of external



examiners, now augmented by the QAA, is to ensure comparability across institutions. Within universities, elaborate systems involving committees and ‘quality managers’ are used to ensure this commensurability. Such systems function to monitor the course content, modes of assessment, and the location and dispersion of grades awarded.⁶ Formalising further what Paolo Freire (1972) criticised as ‘banking education’, in which students become ‘receptacles to be filled by the teacher’, the acquisition of knowledge and the development of critical faculties are thus broken up into discrete steps as ‘learning outcomes’ are codified across ‘levels’ of a degree programme. There is a clear tendency here towards rigid definition of the quantity of work (number of hours) required of a student of ‘average ability’ in order to achieve a certain qualification and grade; that is, to define socially necessary labour time for the labour of studying.

There exist parallel tendencies towards the definition of SNLT for teaching labour. If class contact hours and assessment methods are standardised across courses for students, then this standardisation frames workload calculations for teachers too (the other key variable is the number of students taught). Managers can (and do) construct workload models on this basis, from which emerges a ‘norm’ for the ‘average’ number of hours required to teach a course unit or module to a certain number of students. It is easy to ridicule such norms, and the workload models through which they are constituted, as ‘made-up’ or ‘abstract’. Of course, they *are ridiculous*, but they are also *real*: ‘inefficient’ teachers—those unable to meet or beat the ‘norm’—are usually required to justify their need for additional time and may be pressurised to reduce it or else work in their ‘own time’. Thus, a consequence of standardisation and the use of workload models is the emergence of definitions for socially necessary labour time.

A series of so-called ‘transparency reviews’, imposed on English and Welsh universities by the UK Treasury and implemented by the Higher Education Funding Council (HEFC), constitute a set of overarching calculations specific to university academics’ teaching workloads. The aim here is to discover how much time academics spend on various defined activities such as ‘teaching’, ‘teaching-related’, ‘administration’, ‘research’ and so on. This is yet another *metric*, which can then be used to make commensurable different types of teaching activity and other aspects of teachers’ work. And metrics developed within the education



sector do not stand apart from wider capitalist society. A fast-growing body of economics literature is concerned with estimating the ‘returns to schooling’, both to the economy and to the individual. Using such studies, and experimenting with alternative funding models, capital can attempt to link education labour to the wider economy. For capital, the ideal is to make commensurable the concrete labour of any individual university lecturer or schoolteacher with that of any other social subject. In such a model teacher, remuneration is tied to ‘productivity’ and ‘performance’, and we can already see examples of this strengthened link between teaching work and income in the proposals for ‘advanced skills’ or ‘super-teachers’ and teachers’ ‘discretionary payments’ (see, e.g. Boxley, 2003), and in ‘leading’ universities’ demands for the freedom to tear up national bargaining agreements in order to set ‘market rates’ for academics’ pay.

My argument concerning commensurability is different to that of classical Marxists. Mohun, for instance, argues that commensuration of diverse labours can only take place through the market, and that the aspects of ‘marketisation’ in education are only ‘quasi-market’ criteria (1996: 47). In contrast, I would argue that the market is simply one tool by which capital can attempt to make diverse labours commensurable. Taking value and abstract labour as our starting point, instead of ‘the market’, we can investigate other tools—such as the metrics discussed here—that capital may use to make commensurable different concrete labours, and thus to command that labour.

Finally, the cultures of ‘best practice’ embody many of the tendencies described above. *First*, the requirement to conform to ‘best practice’ imposes work. *Second*, this labour is alien, since ‘best practice’ is defined by an external power. *Third*, since ‘best practice’ is usually defined in ‘generic’ terms, it also facilitates the comparison to the performance of teachers across subject areas and across institutions. We can also note the frequency with which ‘best practice’ is actually the creativity of teachers themselves, appropriated and turned against them. Given a specific task which needs to be accomplished, an individual teacher or group of teachers may invent a new, better or more efficient way of performing it—a way which is simply quicker or preferable for them, perhaps. However, in time, managers may define this new method as ‘best practice’—for which, read: ‘minimum



acceptable practice'. This has the effect of imposing more work on teachers in general, and/or of driving down socially necessary labour times. 'The best practice always hints at a better one, even as it winks at the question of "Better for what?"' (Martin, 2003: xi)

1.5 Educators within capital, contradiction, and the development of the school-as-factory

We have argued that teaching labour has, or is tending towards having, the following characteristics: (i) it is (becoming-)abstract labour, where abstract labour is the substance of value; (ii) it produces a commodity, namely the special commodity labour power; (iii) it is becoming commensurable with other teaching labours and other labours in general, facilitated through processes associated with the 'marketisation' of education; and (iv) it produces surplus value and valorises capital, but capital appropriates this surplus value only through exploiting the labour power of school or university graduates. Inasmuch as teaching labour has these characteristics, we can say that teachers are productive labourers—productive of value for capital, that is—who labour within the *school-as-factory* and exist *within* capital.

Some of these characteristics would seem to apply, to a lesser or greater extent, to many forms of education within capitalist societies, from the eighteenth- and nineteenth-century French elementary school described by Foucault to the contemporary university. Indeed, the education system's value-productive function of producing, classifying and hierarchising new labour power does appear to be a constant feature of the capitalist mode of production. However, there have also been important developments in the school-as-factory—linked, of course, to the development of wider capitalist society. Space limitations preclude a full discussion of these changes here, but we can make a few remarks.

First, and most obviously, schooling's scope has extended considerably over the past two centuries. Far more young people attend school, from an earlier age, and an increasing proportion of the population remains in school well into adulthood. In the global North, many people will spend almost two decades of their lives working in the school-as-factory. And in the UK, for example, the government, with its



rhetoric of 'lifelong learning', is even encouraging adults to *return* to school. This instance can be understood as an attempt by capital to formalise the point made above—see footnote 3—that labour power is never *finally* produced. Here we can also mention again the proliferation of testing and trends towards 'continuous assessment', and attempts to establish cultures of 'best practice' (read: ceaseless bettering). These would all appear to be suggestive of a shift from *disciplinary society* to *society of control*: 'Just as businesses are replacing factories, *school* is being replaced by *continuing education* and exams by continuous assessment. It's the surest way of turning education into a business' (Deleuze, 1995: 179).

Second, wider society has undergone many transformations. Of particular interest is the shift from 'Fordism' to 'post-Fordism' (and from disciplinary to control society) over the course of the post-war period. This shift has been characterised by a number of factors: the rise of *immaterial* or *affective* labour; the increasing importance to production of decentred, rhizomatic cooperation, the *collective intelligence* and *virtuosos*; the replacement of discipline by *biopower*; and the generalisation of *precarity* (see, for example, *Greenpepper*, 2004; Hardt & Negri, 2000; Lazzarato, 1996; *Mute*, 2005; Virno, 2004). Clearly, such a shift in the nature of production requires a shift in the nature of labour power, which is reflected in the type of education that schools are charged with providing. For example, and as alluded to above, schools and universities are now required to emphasise the importance to 'employability' of communication skills, the ability to cooperate, flexibility, imagination and critical thinking.

Third, with the related shift from Keynesianism to neoliberalism, education systems themselves have come under increasing pressure to restructure: to become more 'efficient' and to provide 'value-for-money'. These pressures have driven the marketisation of schooling, the corporatisation of schools and universities, and the many and various attempts to design and impose metrics across this sector. And, as a result of this shift, teachers' labour is becoming *more* abstract-like, *more directly* productive of value.

These three remarks, in turn, provoke two further, related observations.

First, the fact that teaching labour seems to have become *more* productive with the shift from Keynesian to a neoliberal regime does not mean that it was not productive under the



earlier regime. Attempting to conceive of the state in black-and-white terms—as a fully functional and productive part of Fordist capitalism (the structuralist approach); or as a socialist island within the market economy; or even as somehow class neutral—is not a useful approach. Rather, it seems more helpful to theorise the state as a dynamic moment in the class struggle, as a set of relations—whose form and content are determined by this struggle—rather than as a *thing*. (See, for example, Bonefeld & Holloway, 1991; Clarke, 1991.) With this understanding, we can see that many elements of teaching *were* productive of value for capital: teachers produced, categorised and hierarchised new labour power, and thus produced . At the same time, the relatively permissive conditions under which schoolteachers and, especially, university academics laboured frequently allowed them time and space to explore other interests (their own and those of students; and possibly interests antithetical to capital's). So in this sense, they were *not* productive—we explore these questions in more detail in Section 2, below. But for *all* teachers (and students) there was a tension between the productive and non-productive elements of their labour: while the state provided (often 'generous') resources with which teachers could meet their needs—to share knowledge, to engage in scholarship and so on—it also involved them in relationships they'd rather do without, mediated through examinations, hierarchies, externally-imposed subject boundaries, etc. (See, for example, London Edinburgh Weekend Return Group, 1980.)

Second, the current neoliberal restructuring of schooling, and its effects on classroom activity, may actually make schooling *less* functional—and therefore less productive—for capital than in the Fordist era. One would imagine the relatively unconstrained environment of the 1960s university to be more conducive to engendering imaginative social subjects able to communicate and to cooperate—that is, immaterial labourers. The existence of such spaces, which appear (at least) to be partially outside of the capital relation, and upon which capital can draw, may be necessary for capital's development. Indeed, many capitalists prefer employees with 'traditional' degrees and A levels to those with 'vocational' qualifications, while the Confederation of British Industry opposed the abolition of student grants and the introduction of fees.⁷ On the other hand, schooling's regime of 'continuous control' and its systems of measuring



success—it rewards those who can (i) cooperate yet appropriate to themselves cooperation’s effects; and (ii) pass off as original work that may have been ‘plagiarised’—in fact mirror the structures of society in general. As such, schooling may be an effective way of sorting new labour power in order to meet social capital’s needs.

It becomes apparent, then, that teachers’ labour contains both productive and unproductive elements. In part, teachers’ labour may be unproductive because the tendencies described in the sections 1.2–1.4, above, are just that—tendencies, which are incomplete and contested. And, given the immaterial nature of education labour and the degree to which education and socialisation are social processes, involving the cooperation of numerous subjects, how could the contribution of an individual teacher ever be measured? In this way, then, Hardt and Negri’s suggestion that the production of value now takes place ‘outside measure’, where this ‘refers to the impossibility of power’s calculating and ordering production at a global level’, can be applied to educators’ labour (2000: 357). And in part, as discussed briefly in this section, teachers’ labour may also be unproductive because some of the neoliberal reforms—such as the imposition of metrics, which seem to make this labour more productive—may actually make schooling less functional for capital-in-general. But, most importantly, teachers’ labour becomes unproductive as a result of the struggles of teachers themselves: against neoliberalism; to resist measure; to create alternative educational practices and relationships. That is, struggles to exist against-and-beyond capital. In the next section, we will discuss some of the ways in which teachers may (produce) struggle.

2. Producing struggle: Teachers against and beyond capital

2.1 Visible and collective struggles

The most visible struggles to oppose capital’s neoliberal project within education—and hence capital—are the collective ones organised through various teachers’ and students’ unions. In the UK, for instance, lecturers’ unions—AUT and NATFHE—have been at the forefront of campaigns against the ‘modernisation’ of university pay structures. Employers desire the freedom to set academics’ pay and



conditions locally, and to ‘reward’ academics on a differential basis—for example, to pay scientists more than humanities lecturers—both important elements of marketisation. University managers have thus attempted to overturn national collective bargaining agreements and, in 2004, lecturers reluctantly accepted a so-called ‘national framework agreement’ which, with a 51-point pay spine, allows for considerable local variation. Academics organised through unions have, however, won some concessions that limit employers’ freedom under the agreement. Following strike action, for instance, the AUT negotiated a ‘memorandum of understanding’ that gives some protection to existing ‘old university’ employees.⁸

Given this agreement, AUT and NATFHE activists have turned their attention to its implementation at the local level. At the University of Nottingham, for example, the AUT responded to managers’ attempts to introduce performance-related pay—again, another key component in marketisation—with strike action and a call, in September 2004, for a global boycott (‘greylisting’) of the university. The boycott was suspended in December following an ‘interim agreement’.⁹ At London Metropolitan University (LMU), NATFHE activists are involved in an ongoing struggle against that university’s attempt to impose new contracts on academic staff. Since the dispute began, in April 2004, lecturers have taken industrial action, and have called for a boycott of the university. And they responded to the vice-chancellor’s order to destroy all copies of a history of the university by burning their own new contracts.¹⁰

In addition to these issues, the AUT and NATFHE have both been involved in campaigns to support research and teaching staff on short-term contracts, and against casualisation and flexibilisation more generally—again, other important elements in marketisation. They have also expressed concern at the likely re-emergence of a tiered higher education sector, with research concentrated in a handful of the ‘top’ institutions while many others are designated ‘teaching-only’, as institutions are ‘encouraged’ to specialise. Given the importance to the neoliberal project of all these reforms, the academic unions’ opposition to them is *de facto* opposition to neoliberalism.

The academic unions have, however, been more ambivalent about other aspects of the neoliberal project. Neither has been particularly keen to question the imposition



of work on students, the ‘function’ of the education system in itself, or the general role of the Quality Assurance Agency and performance indicators in themselves. In contrast, the largest schoolteachers’ trade union, the National Union of Teachers (NUT), recently balloted its members on a possible boycott of so-called SATs (‘standard assessment tasks’) for seven- and eleven-year-old children. Schoolteachers have been joined by parents in their hostility to testing, with the launch of a ‘Stop the SATs’ campaign. And all the teaching unions have been quite vocal in their opposition to the increasing burden of bureaucracy faced by teachers—bureaucracy that, of course, enables the measurement of teachers’ labour.¹¹

In American colleges and universities, a high and increasing proportion of teaching is performed by casual labour—graduate students and ‘adjuncts’.¹² These workers are in the forefront of a growing academic labour movement, leading unionisation drives, challenging the ‘apprenticeship’ model used by administrators in order to continue graduate student exploitation, and demanding collective bargaining (Johnson et al., 2003). Besides ‘basic’ issues like pay and job security, activists are also taking on such issues as freedom of expression and the whole concept of ‘academic citizenship’.

In Africa, students and teachers have engaged in countless struggles—student strikes, teacher strikes, exam boycotts, demonstrations, road blockades, occupations of school and university buildings—against the structural adjustment programmes adopted by their governments and education institutions.

In country after country, demonstration after demonstration, in its slogans, flyers, and position papers the African student movement has shown a remarkable homogeneity of demands. ‘NO to starving and studying’, ‘NO to tuition fees’, NO to cuts in books and stationary’, ‘NO to Structural Adjustment, to corrupt leaders, and to the recolonization of Africa’ are slogans which have unified African students in the SAP era to a degree unprecedented since the anti-colonial struggle. (Federici & Caffentzis, 2000: 115)

For the ‘corporate university’ chasing ‘global competitiveness’, low labour costs and ‘market responsiveness’ are key requirements. Hence its need for a casualised, flexible labour force. For global capital more generally, reducing social spending, including spending on education—that is, shifting the costs of reproduction back onto labour power itself—is



essential to the success of its neoliberal project to restore capitalist profitability following the crises of the 1970s. Capital must also strengthen the link between money and work.

In other words, it must make more labour productive. Thus we can understand all of these organised struggles—against structural adjustments, against funding cuts, against limitations on academic freedom, against casualisation; in Europe, North America, Africa and elsewhere—as directly anticapitalist, and as struggles against the becoming-productive of the labour of teaching and studying.

2.2 Sabotage and subterfuge: Individual and invisible struggle

Collective struggles are clearly important, but there are many ways—more varied and less obvious—in which education workers, acting outside of any formal organisations, refuse capitalist work. In the language of Deleuze and Guattari (1988), we can understand such actions as *lines of flight*: ways of fleeing capital's attempts to rigidify or codify working practices and to impose labour, to flip over from one abstract machine (that of capital) to another.

'Good teachers' are enthusiastic about their subject. They deliver stimulating, original lectures or lessons, tailoring their classes to meet students' interests and needs. They set stimulating tasks, welcome questions and discussion, and are always available to provide additional help. Moreover, they remember all their students' names. However, this takes considerable time and energy, and is particularly difficult when teaching activity must be subordinated to the external requirements of curriculum, assessment and high workload. Many teachers thus adopt the obvious work-reduction tactic of simply teaching from the textbook and/or constantly recycling old material.

Although this may make life easier, and probably duller, for the teacher, it will almost certainly make classes far more tedious for students: it therefore increases the amount of labour they will have to expend in order to achieve a certain grade. Teachers may also severely limit their availability for answering student queries and be purposively unhelpful—which may include being condescending, arrogant or aggressive—whenever they are tracked down. Again, this individual work-refusal tactic shifts labour from teacher onto student.

Lecturers or schoolteachers may reduce their own burden of marking or grading work by setting multiple-choice-



question (MCQ) test and examination papers, which can be marked by computer. Besides reducing teacher work, this can also make life easier for students, many of whom prefer MCQ-type tests. Teachers may therefore adopt this tactic as a means of freeing-up class time in order to pursue their own and/or their students' interests. But since managers may perceive such work-reduction tactics as 'efficiency gains'—using them as a way of driving down (socially necessary) labour times—there is a strong incentive for individual teachers to conceal their full effects.

Another individual work-refusal tactic is that of refusing the labour of writing comprehensive and reliable student references, i.e. shirking the hierarchising and categorising function. Many school and university teachers simply have too many students to know any of them very well. Rather than performing the laborious task of consulting files and colleagues, and then attempting to compose an accurate portrait, it is far easier to simply continually reuse a few standard, frequently glowing, reference letters. An alternative tactic, which certainly produces more personalised references but which just as surely undermines the recruitment system, is that of essentially allowing students to write their own references, which the 'referee' then simply edits.

Within schools, many are refusing teaching labour by refusing to become or remain teachers, particularly in subjects such as mathematics, science and IT. Others are refusing much of the labour 'normally' required of teachers—administrative tasks, writing of student reports and references, attendance at parents' evenings—by working mainly as 'supply' teachers.¹³

Students, too, adopt a variety of collective and individual tactics in order to reduce their own labour, some of which are considered to be good 'study skills', and others, 'cheating'. These include: cooperating in order to share work; plagiarism or copying of others' work (whether that of other students, of textbooks or academic articles, or downloading essays from commercial or free internet sites); studying only certain topics; and smuggling notes into examinations. A cohort of students in fact constitutes an informal work group, and may resist work on this basis by tacitly agreeing effort levels: 'if none of us do it ...', 'she can't fail us all ...'. Such considerations are a material foundation for the ostracising of the 'swot'. Many educationalists, teachers and others consider plagiarism to be a growing problem, exacerbated



by the proliferation of material available to students electronically, and education institutions are devoting increasing resources to fighting it, themselves drawing upon new technology to do so. However, teachers may alternatively take a far more relaxed attitude, either by simply refusing the labour of attempting to detect or track down plagiarism, or by turning a blind eye to it and other forms of 'cheating': they may simply accept, for example, that their students might well have better things to do with their time. Some teachers may themselves give students 'hints' regarding examination questions; they may make their courses easier; or they may systematically 'mark-up'. These are all examples of educators refusing the labour of imposing labour (on their students).

More generally, teachers' and students' work-refusal activities are reflected in concerns regarding 'grade inflation' and 'falling standards'. More concretely, we can observe their effect in the response of employers. Many, concerned about the 'value' of university degrees, are taking into account job applicants' A level grades. Others have resorted to increasingly sophisticated procedures for recruiting employees. These include multiple-stage recruitment processes; extended two-day assessments, in which applicants may be required to carry out a number of tasks both individually and in groups, as well as 'traditional' interviews, and in which they are under constant observation; and psychometric testing. Clearly, these protracted recruitment procedures impose considerable labour on students/applicants, but we should understand them as part of capital's response to educators' refusal and/or inability to provide reliable information on job candidates' intellectual and character attributes. In effect, teachers' and university lecturers' (more-or-less individual) struggles are pushing the costs of screening, ranking and categorising new labour power back onto capital.

Besides actions, individual and collective, *against* capital, teachers may struggle to go *beyond* capital. This activity may be consciously anticapitalist, but more likely it is not. Many schoolteachers and university lecturers constantly seek, frequently successfully, the time and space to teach material that lies outside or beyond externally imposed curricula. Indeed, some of this material may be implicitly or explicitly critical of capitalist social relations. In universities, lecturers may even be able to offer whole courses in Marxist or other critical theory. Teachers may seek to explain the power relationships that divide them from their students as a first



step towards dissolving them, albeit partially. And it may also be possible for teachers to adopt various tactics in order to weaken the link between labour performed in the classroom and the grade awarded. For example, it is sometimes possible to design courses such that students receive credit for activity they would choose to do anyway.¹⁴

Conclusion

Within the capitalist mode of production, the education system performs a key function for the (re)production of that special commodity, labour power. I have suggested that: *first*, the labour of those who work in schools, colleges and universities—teachers, lecturers, students and others—has a two-fold nature, containing both abstract and concrete labour; that, *second*, this labour is alienated; and *third*, that it produces value and surplus value for capital.

As such, we can think of those who labour in the school-as-factory as productive labourers, and to the extent that these workers are productive of value and surplus value, they exist within capital. However, the school, college or university is also a site of struggle. I have suggested some of the varied ways in which teachers and students may struggle, either collectively or individually, *against* the imposition of work in the school-as-factory and *for* activity and relationships that transcend capitalist social relations. To the extent that teachers and students struggle against imposed labour and for other ways of being, they are *unproductive* labourers, they are productive of struggle, and they exist against-and-beyond capital.

I have treated these two antagonistic moments—on the one hand, that of producing value, of existing within capital; and on the other hand, that of producing struggle, of existing against-and-beyond capital—separately. This is for ease of exposition only. In fact, it may be hard to disentangle the two moments. Capital develops in response to struggle and, in turn, new forms of struggle emerge in response to capital. Capital's response to the problem of plagiarism, for instance, is to invent detection software and 'best practice' procedures for dealing with it.¹⁵ Capital's response to teachers' refusal (or inability) to perform categorising and hierarchising tasks adequate to its needs is to extend its own labour power recruitment processes. Teachers have employed various forms



of subterfuge in response to the imposition of workload models and bureaucratic structures. But many teaching practices may be ambiguous, simultaneously combining *within*-capital elements with *against-and-beyond* elements. One such example is provided by radical academics who offer courses in Marxism or other critical theory, yet take pride in their strictness as graders. They essentially use radical theory as a means of imposing additional work! It is for this reason that a clear understanding of the ways in which teachers produce value, on the one hand, and produce struggle, on the other, is useful.

For the Marxist who believes that the function of education is purely 'ideological', being strict may be necessary in order to ensure that students learn the 'correct' ideology, even the 'lazy' ones. The idea that education is somehow outside of 'normal' capitalist social relationships can also lead to radical or progressive teachers choosing to cross picket lines; and there have even been instances of progressive professors turning in striking students to the university administration.¹⁶

It is also important to recognise that 'education' is a collective activity, involving the cooperation of many subjectivities: the teacher works with administrators, other teachers and, most importantly, with students. Just as no education system can guarantee the production of human beings with 'desirable labour power attributes', neither can radical teachers 'produce revolutionaries'. It is quite possible to draw on Marx's insights, say, and human skills in critical, imaginative thinking, and harness them in the interests of capital. Indeed, capital *needs* such thinkers. Clarke and Mearman, for instance, in arguing that 'Marxist economics should be taught', suggest that 'students [might] become more creative, better problem-solvers, which can raise their productivity!' (2003: 69).

Teachers, like all other human beings, exist within-against-and-beyond capital. Their labour is both productive and unproductive of value; or rather, their activity is both productive of value *and* productive of struggle. In this paper, I have attempted to analyse and illustrate the ways in which teachers exist within capital on the one hand—the ways in which they (re)produce (the) capital (relation); that is, produce value—and on the other hand, the already-existing ways in which they undermine and rupture this reproduction; that is, struggle against-and-beyond capital. This knowledge

can be an important tool both in our struggle against the former form of activity, and in our struggle to expand spaces for the latter.

Notes

1. Caffentzis (1975) discusses ‘the universities in [that] crisis’.
2. See Harvie (2005) for a more general reformulation of the productive-unproductive labour distinction.
3. Unlike most commodities within the ‘general class’, labour power is never ‘finally’ produced. Rather, it is constantly reproduced (or not) within each human being.
4. ‘Subject benchmark statements’ are produced and policed by the Quality Assurance Agency for Higher Education—see <http://www.qaa.ac.uk>.
5. Marginson (2002) discusses this in the context of Australian universities, and presents quantitative evidence.
6. The mean mark measures the average quantity of work the lecturer imposes, while the standard deviation of marks measures his or her relative contribution to the hierarchising of students.
7. The CBI has also opposed the expansion of higher education on the grounds that many workers are ‘over-educated’. Thus, in some sense, capital’s ‘infinite social drive to enhance the quality of human labour power’, noted above, may not be functional to its needs in other sectors.
8. In 1992, the so-called ‘binary divide’ of Britain’s higher education system was formally abolished, as polytechnics were allowed to call themselves universities. ‘Old universities’ are thus the pre-1992 universities, while ‘new universities’ are the former polytechnics. The AUT has traditionally represented old-university academics, while new-university staff are typically members of NATFHE. The two unions are likely to merge in the near future. For more information on union activities see their websites: <http://www.aut.org.uk> and <http://www.natfhe.org.uk>.
9. See Nottingham local AUT website <http://www.nottingham.ac.uk/aut/> for more details.
10. See NATFHE (2004).



11. On the other hand, the leader of the second-largest teachers' union, NASUW, was quick to condemn suggestions that school students skip school in order to take part in demonstrations against the 2005 G8 summit at Gleneagles.
12. Some estimates suggest that such workers teach more than 50 per cent of undergraduate courses (Johnson, 2003).
13. In the UK, supply teachers are employed on a daily, weekly or termly basis to provide cover for absent staff. Pro-rata pay rates are equivalent to those applicable to teachers permanently employed.
14. See Harvie (2004) for a more extensive discussion of the communities that may exist in universities, including classroom communities, and the ways in which they seek to transcend capitalist education.
15. In fact, capital profits from both 'sides' of plagiarism. So-called 'paper mill' websites, which provide essays, and plagiarism-detection software are both becoming big business.
16. David Brion Davis, a scholar of the history of slavery, and Sara Suleri, a postcolonialism theorist, both reported their teaching assistants to Yale administrators for participating in a graduate students' strike (Nelson, 2003).

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