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Chapter 2: England

The Liberal State: Permanent Instability in the European Educational NPM 'laboratory'

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Introduction

This chapter seeks to make a contribution to debates about NPM and educational reform and modernisation in England. It does so in two main ways as part of a wider theorisation of how and why these changes came about and characterisation of the principal features and dimensions of NPM within education in this context. First, building upon previous work on continuities and discontinuities in education policy between New Labour and Conservative administrations (Bache, 2003; Ball, 1999; Hatcher, 2009; Power and Whitty, 1999; Whitty, 2009) and analyses of the Coalition government's educational reform programme (Husbands, 2015; Wright, 2012) this chapter offers a distinct contribution to extant debates about educational reform in England. This is achieved through the identification and analysis of a cross party political convergences on education policy stretching from the 1970s to the present day. This notion of political convergences in education is analysed via a conceptualisation of their evolution within NPM located in three separate stages of development through successive changes of government from the Conservative, Thatcher led (1979-1990) and Major (1990-1997) administrations, the New Labour Blair (1997- 2007) and Brown (2007-2010) led governments through to the Cameron led Conservative/Liberal Democratic Coalition of 2010-2015. Each of these stages is viewed as representing a significant point in the evolution of NPM in education in this context and even though the nature of these convergences are identified as having shifted over time alongside changes in the emphasis of policies through changes of government, it is argued here that NPM related

policy convergences have dominated for in excess of thirty years. Our foregrounding of cross political party convergences in education is not intended to distract from the appearance of divergences between these groups over the period of time in question, but to reveal the political basis for the rapid and deep penetration of NPM and post-NPM policies in education in England. It is asserted that these convergences, rather than offering a secure basis for educational institutions and those who work and study within them, has instead resulted in a permanent instability. The second contribution of this chapter is the conceptualisation of England as a global laboratory for educational change. This conceptualisation locates the development of NPM in an English educational context within theoretical work examining the colonial and post-colonial dimensions of international and global educational change (Rizvi and Lingard, 2009). As part of this the English educational laboratory is identified as having started with a neo-colonial and outward looking perspective upon educational reform and as having ended with a largely inward focused set of concerns as the contradictions of neo-liberal change have become increasingly apparent in this context.

It is asserted in this chapter that NPM continues to retain potency in enabling a critical examination of education policy in England even though the term post-NPM (Christensen and Lægveid, 2011; Dunleavy et al, 2005; Hall et al, forthcoming) probably now better characterises this contemporary context.

The research underpinning this chapter has been undertaken by the authors and colleagues in the Critical Education Policy and Leadership research grouping in the Manchester Institute of Education (Courtney, 2016; Gunter and Forrester, 2008; Hall et al, 2011; McGinity, 2015; Woods, 2014) and has focused upon contemporary developments in English education policy and leadership.

NPM in Education in England

The current provision of education in England, following over thirty years of NPM reforms, can be characterised as one of complexity, even chaos. Layering and over-layering of reforms

have created a situation in which there are at least 70 types of schools (Courtney, 2016), with the 'independent' and 'autonomous' school as the model for the effective and efficient delivery of educational services. Hence there has been a shift from the 'common' school within a community towards a restoration project of distinction, branding and competition between schools. This has two main thrusts: first, the introduction of business models to schools through their local management from 1988, where schools could control the budget, funding was based on a formula linked to parental preferences for a place for their child and in which the right of schools to hire and fire teachers was trialled; and second, the provision of schools as businesses outside of local democratic control and accountability; as explained later in this chapter this has been through the establishment of a variety of school types. Alongside and in tension to such decentralisation has been forms of centralisation through the national curriculum and the regulation of standards through high stakes testing and inspection audits through Ofsted, whereby data design, collection, control and analysis has become integral to judgements of quality and educational purposes (Hall et al, forthcoming). The interplay between autonomy in a market place and regulation regarding standards has been enabled through the three main stages of NPM identified in this chapter, and is explained as follows through key features identified in the Introduction:

Managers: educational professionals are trained and accredited to deliver reform changes based on national standards that structure identities, practices and careers. Relocation of educational professionals from local systems of democracy to independent schools and/or chains of schools has shifted attention away from notions of educational professionals to business managers and entrepreneurs. An increased emphasis is on such roles as school leaders, who lead and do leadership, whereby the focus is on the exercise of power in order to deliver performance outcomes. Differentiation is through titles (e.g. school principal, executive headteacher, headteacher, senior leader, middle leader, teacher leader), role and job descriptions linked to performance packages and remuneration.

Managing: the focus is on delivering and auditing national standards through prescriptive curriculum and lesson packages, testing, and performance reviews. This provides the data to demonstrate continued/discontinued public investment, to support marketing to parents regarding the exercising of preferences, and to enable bidding for income streams. The main management tools are: planning, target setting, data collection and analysis. This has focused increasingly on self-evaluation of the student and staff member with judgements about performance through lesson observation and grading, examination results and general conduct.

Management: the approach is on securing change through people, and so a strong emphasis is on control through processes of economy, efficiency and effectiveness. Organisational values of consultation, participation and team work may feature, where the increasing dominance of performative leadership enables vision and mission to be used to inspire and motivate the workforce and students to secure improvement and acclaim. Values related to 'school owners' feature from private interests such as faith,

philanthropy, business, and local consortia, where local democratic participation remains but is increasingly under threat from UK government reform.

Managerialism: new hierarchies of power are being intensified through ‘within school’ distinctions between senior, middle and teacher leaders, and ‘outside school’ controls through owners (faith, business, philanthropy, consortia) and the wider market. Line management relationships have been installed that clearly identify who manages what and how, and through which performance is measured, instrumental accountability operates, and contracts are awarded, extended, terminated.

Having set out the main features of NPM in education in England we now move on to detailing the development of this phenomenon. From our examination of Tables 1 and 2 in Chapter 1 of this book and our programme of research, the evidence suggests that there are three main waves or stages of reform that illustrate how the main features of NPM have been built over time.

The Foundation Stage of Educational Reform 1979-1997

The key features of this stage are outlined in Table 1:

Table 1: Key Features of New Public Management in Education in England: The Foundation Stage.

Factors	Tools and Practices
Managers	Teachers become managers of data in relation to pupil performance A cadre of teachers are reconstituted as educational managers trained to monitor class, departmental and institutional level performance in schools Competition between schools emerges as a new logic of educational activity Teachers are reconstituted as deliverers of a National Curriculum
Managing	Standards of attainment in relation to national testing become the benchmarks against which pupil, teacher and institutional performance is judged. School league tables based upon attainment data are developed at national and local levels as a means of enabling educational markets. School governing bodies reconstituted to comprise a widened membership including members of the local business community
Management	Line management established in schools whereby teacher performance is evaluated in relation to national performance data. Headteachers made responsible for school performance and accountable to OFSTED during periodic inspections. OFSTED inspects schools and grades schools according to their performance.

Managerialism	National test results established as the key indicators of pupil, teacher and school performance. School managers, as headteachers, afforded responsibility for managing schools in line with performance indicators, teacher appraisal introduced.
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Taken together, various features of the UK policy context in England, most particularly the political ascendancy of the New Right from 1979 when the Thatcher led Conservative administration took office, older traditions of a liberal state and a disenchantment with state led interventions following the economic crises of the 1970s (Gamble, 1988), combined to offer an extremely promising set of circumstances for the propagation of an intense form of neo-liberalism well suited to an aggressive version of NPM.

The foundation stage of installing these changes within schools came about through major reform initiatives by Conservative administrations in the 1980s and 1990s, building upon a new cross party convergence that emerged during a series of educational ‘crises’ in the 1970s regarding the need for improved educational standards (Whitty, 1989). These reforms are viewed here as representing an attempt to interrupt publicly funded schools as public institutions and to break with the practice of insulating such institutions from private interests (du Gay, 2008).

In 1988 a new Education Reform Act offered a remarkably wide-ranging set of reforms that would inscribe themselves upon generations of school children and teachers and unleash a subsequent ‘permanent revolution’ (Pollitt, 2007) of subsequent educational reforms.

Some of the key provisions arising out of the 1988 Act included the following:

- Centralisation of curriculum and assessment in schools through the creation of a National Curriculum linked mainly to established academic subjects assessed at four intervals (Key Stages) via national tests.
- The marketization of schooling through the creation of educational quasi-markets (LeGrand and Bartlett, 1993).

- The local financial management of schools establishing them as individual business units
- The legislative underpinning of privately sponsored City Technology Colleges and the creation of Grant Maintained Schools.

The 1988 Act is viewed as a re-purposing of education in England whereby the role of teachers as curriculum developers and pedagogues gradually came to be replaced by one in which they became the deliverers and managers of educational standards in schools newly imagined as business units. In this way the purposes of education, including a marginalization of educational processes, were re-worked so that a cadre of teachers re-imagined as managers came into being with a brief to manage educational institutions around specified standards, national testing and a subsequent system of national inspection run by a newly created Office for Standards in Education (OFSTED)¹.

Within the 1988 Act, the emphasis upon choice, markets and competition and attempts to create independent schools within the state system are seen as reflecting the neo-liberal preferences and ambitions of reformers whilst the central control of curriculum and assessment designed to counter educational progressivism and promote educational standards are viewed as reflecting the more neo-conservative demands of reformers. These tensions between neo-conservative and neo-liberal approaches to educational reform in England are viewed as being directly analogous to wider tensions within the discourse of NPM itself. These are tensions between a 'hard' version of NPM where the discursive emphasis is upon the controlling of public service institutions and their employees in an environment low on trust and with lower levels of autonomy for employees. And a 'softer' version of NPM the emphasis is more upon enabling change to emerge within the public sector through creativity, innovation and entrepreneurship with concomitantly higher levels of trust. (Ferlie and Geraghty, 2005). These discursive tensions were especially heightened within the context of education given its elevated position amongst elite policy makers as a strategic imperative vital to the nation's capacity to compete in international markets. This concern initially manifested in the Foundation Stage as a more generalised policy obsession linking educational to economic success, but as described later in the chapter they would in

the reinforcing stage come to revolve around OECD/PISA scores and the imagined relative international success of England's education system.

Under the 1988 Act all pupils would come to know and be assiduously reminded of their levels of attainment in relation to targets set against national norms (William et al, 2004). Teachers would come to be managed via class level data and schools and, despite well-established relationships between the institutional performance of schools and the relative socio-economic advantage of their pupils (Ozga, 2009; Perryman et al, 2011), schools would be judged according to raw performance data published in School League Tables. This created near ideal conditions for the emergence of a managerialism in which the managerial purposes of this new performance regime might supplant previous educational rationales. Unsurprisingly this new data rich environment of schooling would have dramatic consequences for those directly affected. In this 'hard', low trust and controlled version of NPM teachers would come to experience not only a substantial loss of autonomy, but also it has been argued forms of terror (Ball, 2003). For young people subjected from a very young age² to the performance regime arising out of these reforms, the effects of these changes although already charted in terms of their early consequences (Reay and William, 1999) are commonly associated with rapidly increasing levels of depression, anxiety and self-harm (Green et al, 2005; Nuffield Foundation, 2013). The 'softer' version of NPM as expressed in the 1988 Education Act can be located within the affordances offered primarily to headteachers to respond to the quasi-market and to take responsibility for the financial management of their schools. The growth of the field of educational marketing and associated advertising and promotional activities that followed on from the 1988 Education Act in England (Chitty, 1992) was directly linked to the new importance school attached to recruiting sufficient pupils within a newly marketised environment. This along with the schools' new found freedoms to manage their own finances did provide opportunities for innovation and entrepreneurship for some headteachers and a newly recruited cadre of school business managers (Armstrong, 2015; Woods, 2014).

Reflecting England's international role as an early adopter of NPM (Hood, 1991) the reforms of this Foundation Stage can be viewed as an early attempt at trialling NPM related policies within a particular national educational context. Whilst England was not alone in experimenting with NPM reforms in its education sector it is widely viewed as having been especially zealous in this regard in relation to other countries both in Europe and more widely. This 'laboratory' dimension of educational reforms within England and the political confidence which inspired such a radical change from a previous civic-welfarist era it is argued here must also be viewed within the context of 'victories' secured by a newly emboldened Thatcher led administration during the 1980s. These included repeated national electoral successes in 1983 and 1987 that secured a firm, territorialised basis for the sustained application of NPM policies and underpinning this were symbolically important victories at home over the National Union of Mineworkers³ (Beckett and Hencke, 2009) and overseas via a 'victorious' armed conflict in the Falklands/Malvinas⁴. In the post-colonial context of a nation still struggling to come to terms with the loss of Empire (English and Kenny, 2001; Gamble, 1981) this new mood of triumphalism in England during the 1980s enabled the reform of public services to be re-imagined by its architects as a new imperial venture (Harvey, 2005a). In this re-imagined future Great Britain would once again seek to assert its position as a world leader, in this case as the role model and global proselytiser cum exporter of reformed public services in the newly rolled-back state. Viewed through this lens NPM is seen as both the nationally configured and focused venture represented earlier in this section and simultaneously as being intimately associated with its roots in wider European projects of imperialism and colonialism (Rizvi, 2007). This analysis of NPM in England both foregrounds the colonial fantasies and ambitions associated with educational reform and offers further explanatory purchase to the intensity with which NPM related policies were applied in this context.

So the Foundation Stage of NPM in education, built upon a cross party political convergence that emerged during the 1970s and regarding the need to improve educational standards, offered a robust and promising basis for further reforms by establishing the normality of management in direct tension with professional norms, and the idea of central regulation of professional identities and practices. Nevertheless it was widely anticipated amongst

education professionals themselves that the election of a New Labour government in 1997 would signal a significant and marked change of policy direction.

The Reinforcing Stage of Educational Reform 1997-2010

Rather than a marked change of policy direction, the entry of New Labour into government from 1997 is better represented as a further intensification of NPM reforms in education. This 'reinforcing' stage of the main outcomes of change is outlined in Table 2:

Table 2: Key Features of New Public Management: The Reinforcing Stage

Factors	Tools and Practices
Managers	<p>Teachers role as managers of data in relation to pupil performance is reinforced through national strategies that seek to restrict pedagogic practices in schools</p> <p>As the performance regime intensifies and national test performance assumes ever greater importance, the managerial role of teachers further increases</p> <p>Competition between schools is reinforced as a new logic of educational activity</p> <p>Teachers internalise OFSTED prescriptions so that practices become strongly shaped by predominant concern of 'how would OFSTED judge this?'</p>
Managing	<p>Standards of attainment in relation to national testing are further reinforced as the benchmarks against which pupil, teacher and institutional performance is judged.</p> <p>School league tables become critical to local and national perceptions of school performance.</p> <p>Schools forced to close through national level intervention where performance falls below benchmarked levels.</p> <p>Performance management introduced for all teachers.</p>
Management	<p>Headteachers sacked and replaced by 'Super Heads' when they fail to deliver improvements in educational standards</p> <p>OFSTED reports and performance data used as the basis for school closures</p> <p>Performance related pay introduced for teachers and headteachers</p> <p>Under distributed leadership a new cadre of teachers reconstituted as leaders are encouraged to assume responsibility for locally managing reform processes and outcomes.</p>
Managerialism	<p>National test results reinforced as the key indicators of pupil, teacher and school performance through target setting, audits and inspection.</p> <p>School managers, as headteachers, afforded enhanced responsibility for managing schools in line with performance indicators and prescribed pedagogic practices.</p>

Much of the reform process under New Labour built upon and continued the principal neo-liberal tenets of the reforms of the 1980s albeit in a hybridized form commonly referred to as the Third Way. It resulted in the underlying principles of the 1988 Act being not only maintained by New Labour governments during this period, but intensified via a range of key policy initiatives in ways that re-asserted their dominance. This wider representation of New Labour's education policies is not meant to imply that divergences did not appear during this phase. New Labour's investment in education through for example, a new school building programme and the raising of teacher salaries, and attempts to integrate public service provision for children and families are prime example of such divergences reflecting different approaches to educational reform and tensions within the modernisation process. Nevertheless, it is argued that such divergences were largely subsumed by NPM related convergences and continuities.

It is important to note that New Labour's approach to reform during the reinforcing stage was increasingly influenced by the global and international. Two particular aspects stand out. First, the travel of policy between different national contexts and the associated influence of elite global networks in education. A particular example of this was the influence of Charter Schools, a US development, upon the formation of the Academies programme. Second, the increasing importance of PISA as a key indicator of the success of education policies within the media and the so-called Westminster village; a trend increasingly evident across European contexts during this era.

The intensity of New Labour's educational interventions was ratcheted up to hitherto unseen levels during the late 1990s and 2000s. This was manifested most clearly in the 'deliverology' (Barber, 2007) approach to public service reform that was implemented in education through a data rich school system in which targets for performance improvement in relation to national levels of attainment became a dominant feature of school life at institutional, classroom and individual pupil level. It extended and supported managerialism within schools by enabling those identified as managers, and more latterly as discussed below leaders, to focus ever

more upon directing individual, teacher and institutional performance in relation to metrics based data arising out of national tests. Also present in this hybridized regime was a dominant and persistent neo-liberal emphasis upon markets, competition and choice within education with school league tables based upon national test performance continuing to provide a central plank for parental choice (Levacic and Woods, 2002). Attempts to extend choice and competition between schools occurred through the introduction of Academies as independent state schools with private sponsors outside of local authority control⁵. In addition, the invitation to all secondary schools to become specialist institutions, represented an extended and more determined attempt to break up the comprehensive, common school system that had developed since the late 1950s. The Academies Programme, in particular, was far more extensive than its predecessor under the Conservative administrations, the City Technology College, where only 15 schools were eventually established. In this New Labour version of NPM teachers became constructed as managed employees in a low trust, low autonomy working environment rather than deliberative public servants seeking to develop educational provision within their schools in accordance with notions of the 'public interest'. Interestingly this rise of managers and managerialism within English schools under New Labour was accompanied by the simultaneous rise of a discourse of leadership as manifested most markedly by the creation of a National College of School Leadership (NCSL) (Hall et al, 2013).

The importance of these reforms within education for New Labour's wider ambitions for the public sector should not be under-estimated. One manifestation of this was Sir Michael Barber's appointment as New Labour's Head of the powerful Prime Minister's Delivery Unit during Tony Blair's second term of office following elevation from his former role as Chief Advisor on School Standards to the Secretary of State for Education. Thus one of the key architects of New Labour's educational reforms was placed in a role central to public service reform, its continued roll out to other parts of the public sector in England and subsequently via his active involvement in international educational networks as a global carrier of neo-liberal reform. This prime example exemplifies the manner in which education during the

reinforcing stage occupied a position as a national laboratory for reform in the rest of the public sector in the UK alongside its continued role as part of the colonial spread of neo-liberalism under the new imperialism (Harvey, 2005b). The further intensification of NPM in the reinforcing stage also underlines the Arendtian notion of the boomerang effect (Gunter, 2013; Owens, 2009) which refers to those processes whereby the colonisers as well as the colonised are shaped by their encounters so that the effects of colonial endeavours are experienced both domestically and internationally. In this case by teachers, parents and children in England having been the determined and unrelenting focus of a managerial experiment intended at least in part to reassert the UK's position in the matrix of global capitalism.

It can be concluded that this reinforcing stage of NPM in education in England acted to intensify, rather than weaken, the centrality of the managerial within the education sector. A key development during this stage is that the initial educational standards based political convergence on educational reform that had held sway since the 1970s expanded during this stage. This expansion was via the explicit embracing of the neo-liberal so that the reinforcing stage represented not only a re-doubling of efforts to secure the standards agenda in schools but also the clear cross political party affirmation of marketised and privatized solutions to perceived educational problems; an approach that was to provide the basis for a new fast-tracked privatization of education.

The Rapid Privatising Stage of Educational Reform 2010-2015

The drive to make existing public education more efficiently and effectively managed has also been accompanied by the entry of new providers with NPM enabling privatisation through outsourcing, new school owners, and the continued shift of education from a public to a private matter (Courtney and Gunter, 2016; Hall et al, 2016). This is outlined in Table 3:

Table 3: Key Features of New Public Management: The Expedited Privatising Stage

Factors	Tools and Practices
Managers	Teachers/non teachers become the delivers not of a public service but

	<p>of tightly centrally controlled private institutions.</p> <p>Following quarter of a century of intense reform debates about the purposes of education become largely irrelevant to school practices. Competition between schools increasingly conforms to private sector business practices through practices such as pupil exclusion and expulsion and the creation of surplus school places (via the Free Schools model).</p> <p>OFSTED attempts to secure conformity of provision come into conflict with the imperative to privatise</p>
Managing	<p>Standards of attainment in relation to national testing are further reinforced as the benchmarks against which pupil, teacher and institutional performance is judged.</p> <p>School league tables remain critical to local and national perceptions of school performance.</p> <p>Performance management, short term contracts and 'hire and fire' practices become standard for teachers and headteachers.</p>
Management	<p>A new cadre of Executive Headteachers or Chief Executive Headteachers with large salaries and executive benefits packages emerges with responsibility for a group of schools.</p> <p>Schools within local authority control forced to leave local authorities where performance falls below benchmarked levels. Schools outside of local authority control not subject to the same processes.</p> <p>'Leadership' expected from all school employees focused upon the achievement of institutional missions largely shaped by national policies.</p>
Managerialism	<p>National test results largely unchallenged as the key indicators of pupil, teacher and school performance through target setting, audits and inspection.</p> <p>Executive headteachers afforded wider powers for managing groups of schools through performance indicators.</p> <p>Private benefits such as individual salaries and value for money assessment in competitive tendering used as the dominant model for decision making.</p>

This stage of the educational reform process in England was again marked primarily by its similarities and continuity in relation to previous administrations since 1979 with the discourse of standards remaining predominant throughout this stage of reform; thus representing further continuity in this political convergence. Interestingly the centralizing dimensions of reform took on new forms during this stage suggesting that the educational laboratory was beginning to become more inward looking. Socially authoritarian ideas about approved knowledge and values reasserted themselves as the Secretary of State for Education directly intervened, for example, in what books were to be read by children in English Literature and History and,

most notably and ironically in the context of increasingly loud calls for independence from Scotland, with attempts to instill British values in pupils attending schools in England (Muir, 2014; Richardson, 2015). This inward looking turn needs to be viewed within the context of wider trends, including efforts to secure the UK's exit from the European Union and increased political support for the UK Independence Party, that reflect tensions arising from neo-liberalism. As Tom Nairn (2000) argues, it is England rather than other parts of the UK that has been most deformed by imperial globalization and the consequent fear of decline arising from this leads to intermittent bouts of attempts to define and assert Britishness with political and media elites convinced that addressing this enigma will solve the many problems faced by British society (McCormick, 2013). Given that the union of nations forming the UK had been largely held together following the loss of the British Empire by the creation of the welfare state (Devine, 2006) it is unsurprising that the subsequent dismantling of welfarism under neo-liberalism would lead to significant tensions in this Union. Correspondingly It is important to note though that this tendency towards inwardness has remained tempered by concerns about education as a strategic national asset for a nation seeking to assert itself in global markets; hence a continuation of the focus upon PISA that emerged strongly during the reinforcing stage and the borrowing and recontextualisation of policies derived from other national systems including the Swedish Friskolor (Free School).

During the period 2010-2014 over half of all secondary schools, nearly 3,000, converted to Academy status and were removed from local democratic accountability. Accompanying the development of Academies has been the rise of Executive Headteachers made responsible for the management of groups of schools reflecting a trend towards further concentrations of managerial power and the increased distancing of school management from children and classrooms towards data, targets, performance and audit. This further, more determined shift to independent, state funded, schools has been directly inspired during this period by attempts to emulate elite and socially privileged independent schools and in the case of Free Schools, by their Swedish forerunners. So this development that initially emerged on a small scale with the creation of City Technology Colleges, has rapidly developed as the default model for schooling in England influenced and shaped by developments in other national

contexts as policy travelled across national boundaries creating interplays between the local and the global. In accordance with its neo-liberal origins it is a policy driven by attempts to create choice and diversity within an educational marketplace and by ambitions to eliminate common schools and to replace what remains of the civic and welfarist in education in England with private interests. Interestingly during the election campaign of 2015 it became clear that the Labour Party had no clear intention to reverse this trend towards educational privatization thus underlining the continued and enduring strength of educational political convergence (although at the time of writing the election in September, 2015 of a new Labour Party Leader, Jeremy Corbyn, presents the possibility of significant disruption to extant convergences). In these circumstances a post-NPM era can be seen as having come into being (Hall et al, 2016). Consequently education has become a privately managed, although still largely state funded system with the potential for rapid conversion to private funding and extended private financing. The election of a majority Conservative government in 2015 seems likely to consolidate and accelerate this latest policy turn.

The above account of educational reform in England suggests a near complete revolution in which educational modernisation within the socio-political climate of this context and the more internationally located paradigm of NPM precedes a wider move from public to private provision to the point where NPM is less readily identifiable in any coherent sense.

Discussion

The analysis of the stages of the development of NPM in England in this chapter from early experimentation with the centralizing of education combined with marketization through to the rapid privatizing of more recent years might suggest a well ordered transition for schools, children and young people to new forms of educational provision. In reality the process of change in the education system in England has been bedeviled by a series of paradoxes, ironies and contradictions that offer a more complex picture of how these reforms have played out.

As noted by Rose (1999) there has been a marked dissonance between the imaginings of states and their associated ideologues and the enactment of these imaginings by various actors and institutions as policy is variously accommodated, resisted and complied with according to a range of contextual features (Hall and McGinity, 2015). In education in England it was imagined that successive waves of reform turning the screw of performance management ever deeper into the professional lives of teachers and schools would result in a significantly higher performing education system where the products of the school system would be able to compete with their international counterparts in an increasingly globalised world. Our research evidence suggests strongly that these reforms have indeed led to significant changes in school and classroom practices where institutional and professional efforts have become ever more tightly focused upon the performance demands of testing regimes (Courtney, 2016; Hall et al, 2011; McGinity, 2015) and new forms of knowledge have emerged in educational contexts (Gunter and Forrester, 2008; Woods, 2014). Yet judging even by the kind of official performance measures such as PISA and TIMSS now so routinely relied upon by Ministers it is not at all clear that even in this narrowest of senses the reform process has 'worked' in England (OECD, 2014). Indeed our research has raised important questions regarding the deleterious effects of these changes upon learners and education professionals in ways that challenge the entire basis of the reform effort (Courtney and Gunter, 2016; Hall, 2013; McGinity, 2015). Similarly in making the shift from an 'inefficient' public service ethos rooted in bureaucratic and administrative processes it was imagined that NPM would inspire a new efficiency in the public sector promising enhanced value for money for citizen consumers. Again in education, one clear outcome from the reform and modernisation process has been the adoption of a series of intensely demanding and bureaucratic processes in schools. Amongst other things these additional bureaucratic demands have included the recording, tracking and assessment of pupil progress in relation to national targets for achievement, the preparation of documentary evidence prior to OFSTED inspections and the creation of institutional responses to a myriad of initiatives, policy directives and structural reforms. These have combined in ways that have resulted in schools, teachers and pupils experiencing NPM as a 're-disorganisation' (Pollitt, 2007) of their professional and school lives (Hall et al, 2011). Ironically, these additional demands have

been directly linked to the very reform process that was supposed to have rendered them unnecessary. In this way a breath-taking gulf can now be discerned in education in England between the discursive regime of NPM inspired reforms and the lived realities of teachers, pupils and schools.

This gulf can be located at least in part within contradictions relating to the role of education for neo-liberal reformers that has generated significant instability in relation to NPM and post-NPM reforms in England. As discussed above these contradictions have previously been manifested in terms of tensions between neo-conservative and neo-liberal approaches to educational reform, but they are also manifested in tensions between the marketised and privatising agendas pursued by neo-liberals and the centralising tendencies in reform efforts that recognize the strategic importance at a national level of education in terms of enabling the development of a suitably skilled and knowledgeable workforce able to sustain national economic competitiveness. These tensions go deeper still if, as has been argued above, it is the high level of state intervention in education in England that has created the very conditions that have subsequently enabled the marketization of education. This raises questions about the tenability and resilience of an educational system located within such a contradictory policy environment and reveals a neo-liberal ascendancy in education in England that is less stable than recent decades of convergence based reform might suggest.

Conclusion

The strong and enduring educational convergences in England focused upon the rapid and intense implementation of NPM that has subsequently morphed into rapid privatization has not provided a stable basis for the future development of schooling. Instead the educational laboratory in England has offered a permanent instability for teachers and young people. Both the volume and nature of the reforms have contributed to this instability as schools, teachers and young people have been required to constantly adapt to a fast changing and turbulent environment; the laboratory has been a very busy site of activity. This has been an environment in which the professional demands upon teachers from educational managers

and the performative demands upon children and young people have continued to multiply as the technologies of managerialism and the processes associated with the breaking up of the common school have been applied with ever more intensity. As referred to at the beginning of this chapter in terms of the sheer number of school types generated by these reforms the situation is probably best described as chaotic. Educational change in this context has offered significant space for educational managers, leaders and entrepreneurs who have been increasingly empowered by successive waves of reform. Yet teachers, children and young people have found themselves increasingly strait-jacketed by a pedagogic turn designed to enable those appointed to manage them. These tensions are currently being managed through a process of privatization that offers the promise to political administrations of simultaneously distancing themselves from the seemingly inevitable fall out of rapid educational change whilst maintaining a tight control over the pedagogic activities of teachers, children and young people. As seen earlier in this chapter, from the very beginning of NPM in education, the replacement of the public with the private has been integral element of the reform process; this is now an aspect of the NPM project that has reached a dominant position in English education and, notwithstanding dramatic changes in the political landscape, seems likely to remain the preferred option for elite policy makers for the foreseeable future as they continue to grapple with the instabilities, contradictions and complexities described in this chapter.

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¹OFSTED was created four years later via the 1992 Education (Schools) Act

² Key stage 1 testing was targeted at six and seven year olds

³ Following the national mineworkers strike of 1984-85

⁴ There is some dispute regarding the longevity of electoral benefits accruing to the Conservative Party following the Falklands/Malvinas crisis of 1982 (Sanders et al, 1987)

⁵ Local authorities were made primarily responsible for schools under the terms of 1944 Education Act.