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The impact of neoliberalism on academics and students in higher education: A call to adopt alternative philosophies

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In adopting neoliberalism, higher education institutions may view students as consumers rather than learners. This sits uncomfortably with humanistic and critical teaching philosophies which view learning as contextualised within a caring environment. In this environment, students become effective, lifelong learners who can contribute to a better society. However, although humanistic educational philosophies, such as Vygotsky's social-constructivist approach and Freire's pedagogy of care appear to resonate with academics and students, we argue that neoliberalism and its associated issues are predominant in higher education. This paper discusses the effects of neoliberalism in higher education. It outlines the financial, economic and psychological toll on both students and academics in a climate of increasing casualisation of the workforce and loss of employment; factors which not only impact on students and academics but also on the viability of universities themselves. Finally, we suggest that higher education institutions and universities emphasise alternative philosophies that nurture and support higher education students and their learning.

Key Words: neoliberalism, alternative philosophies, Vygotskian philosophy, pedagogy of care, students, academics, higher education, casualization.

1. Introduction

Neoliberalism is now the dominant ideology of global higher education, upholding practices and policies that allow the control of social life by private entities for profit (Mahony & Weiner, 2017; Connell, 2013; Baltodano, 2012; Chomsky, 2011; Kumar, 2007). Neoliberalism promotes freedom of competition in a global market, private enterprise, freedom of consumers to choose their products, entrepreneurship and reduction of government spending on social services including those for health as well as education (Kumar, 2007). Its consequences for the educational process, the roles of teachers and students, and the goals of education, have been examined by sociologists, educational experts and researchers (Giroux, 2017; 2014; Saunders & Ramirez; 2017). Such consequences include the reconceptualisation of teachers and students as human capital in a commercial transaction whereby the teacher as well as the higher education institution sell education to the student who functions as a consumer (Saunders & Ramirez, 2017). Teachers are considered as economic units who can be dispensed with at short notice to maintain profit margins, and casual contracts allow for this to happen (Barnes & Kniest, 2019) while students must be able to purchase education which is packaged as a product with a limited life (Lorenz, 2012; Hill, 2007). This reconceptualisation is at odds with critical approaches which consider education as a lifelong, liberating and transformative process for its participants, that engenders the capacity to critically

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examine society and contribute to concrete changes for social justice, transparent socio-economic processes, equal distribution of, and access to resources and services Giroux, 2017; 2014; Chomsky, 2011).

It is clear from the predominant neoliberalist profit motive that the purposes of education and neoliberalism are at odds. The latter's goal is to amass wealth while the aim of education is to enhance learning and sharing of knowledge (Hill, 2007). Education focuses on the development of students through learning and on supporting them in this process (Freire, 1997) but neoliberalism focuses on treating students as consumers with purchasing power who have to be pleased in order to maintain corporate profit (Lorenz, 2012; Hill, 2007). Education considers the depth and scope of enquiry for both teacher and student as valuable (Freire, 1997) but in the neoliberalist agenda, what is important is success of product sales and length of product shelf life (Hill, 2007, pp. 124-125). Education focuses on learning and teaching as a positive, lifelong endeavour (Freire, 1997), but in neoliberalist practice, the focus is on education as a product which has to be sold as a specific item within a particular time frame (Hill, 2007). These are limited comparisons as it is beyond the scope of this paper to offer a comprehensive treatise on these conflicting ideologies because the focus of this paper is on the effects of neoliberalist policies on students and academics. It is evident, however, from the literature that neoliberalism is now a global ideology reflected in higher education institutions (see Mahony & Weiner, 2017 on the UK; Connell, 2013 on Australia; Baltodano, 2012 on the US experience) as discussed further in the sections on its effects on academics and students.

In this paper, we examine the effects of neoliberalism on tertiary institutions, teachers and students as well as some emerging literature on the COVID-19 pandemic's effects on higher education. We argue that the impacts of neoliberalism including high rates of staff casualisation and reduced work benefits have become even more prominent with the current COVID-19 pandemic (Nicolls & Griggs, 2020). We also show how neoliberalist policies have contributed to student inequality (Edmond & Berry, 2014) such as via the escalating student debt, considered in neoliberalist ideology in a positive light (Haiven, 2019; Hudson, 2019; Nissen, Hayward & McManus, 2019). As an alternative, we present humanistic philosophies, particularly Freire's pedagogy of the heart and Vygotsky's social constructivism (Fitzsimmons, 2015; Hagenauer & Volet, 2014; Liu & Matthews, 2005; Freire, 1997; Vygotsky, 1994, 1987). We propose that these philosophies counter the utilitarian, profit-orientated dominance of neoliberalist thought and place student and academic in a humanist and caring environment where teaching and learning is a lifelong endeavour for the betterment of society. In examining the literature on the effects of the neoliberalist model on teachers and students in higher education and educators' philosophies, we hope to contribute to the discussion and research on support for students and academics in a neoliberalist higher education environment. We suggest that alternative philosophies can provide means for nurturing and supporting students in higher education despite pressures brought upon students and teachers from neoliberalist policies and practices. In concluding, we suggest further research and debate be undertaken on how educators and students under the present dominant neoliberalist ideology could be sustained as they face current financial, economic and personal pressures.

2. The impact of neoliberalism on academics

Educators and academics in higher education have borne the brunt of widespread casualisation coupled with the damaging reconceptualization of themselves as 'human capital' and sellers of education (Bone, 2019; Mahony & Weiner, 2017; Rustin, 2016). The effects of the latter have also been exacerbated under the COVID-19 pandemic (Nicolls & Griggs, 2020). Educators are expected to further the corporate goals of the university (Cannella & Koro-Ljungberg, 2017; Giroux, 2017). Recently, 126 UK academic signatories to an open letter stated they were expected to perform as "small businesses" pushed by "highly-paid university managers (and even more highly-paid management consultants)" who have minimal comprehension of what constitutes teaching and learning at university (Lesnick-Oberstein et al., 2015 in Mahony & Weiner, 2017,

p. 563). The economic orientation of education under neoliberalism runs counter to the educative principles of imparting, acquiring and creating new knowledge for professional and personal fulfilment espoused by teachers and researchers for whom the profit gained is not the primary focus of education (Fitzsimmons 2015; Freire 1997).

2.1. Pressures to "perform" and loss of autonomy

The neoliberalist agenda requires academics to produce knowledge for commercial purposes and to quantify such production in terms of monetary value (Cannella & Koro-Ljungberg, 2017; Jessop, 2017) with the expectation for research staff to attract as much external funding as possible (Mahony & Weiner, 2017). Professional autonomy is lost in this process especially when researchers are required to court large corporations to fund their projects (Giroux, 2017; 2014). In this approach, works produced with "multiple critical pedagogies" are lost (Cannella & Koro-Ljungberg, 2017, pp. 157-158). The loss of professional autonomy with the requirement to comply with commercial sponsors and in line with the university's corporatist goals means academic work is limited. Diverse views are sacrificed as "publications which are based on histories, focused on diversity, multiplicity and justice are often forgotten by scholars attempting to survive in current neoliberal contexts" while present pedagogies are ruled by the neoliberal dominant goals of "profit, competition and entrepreneurialism" (Cannella & Koro-Ljungberg, 2017, p. 158).

2.2. Bullying and harassment

A culture of bullying and harassment has also been found to be increasing, leading to higher stress among university staff in the UK (Mahony & Weiner, 2017, p. 562). The pressures to conform to the neoliberalist profit imperative (Mahony & Weiner, 2017) adds to increasing workloads (Rustin, 2016), leading to anxiety and stress among academics (Evans et al., 2018; Thornton, 2013). In the US and the UK, such extensive stress and anxiety has contributed to increasing suicide on campuses (Mahony & Weiner, 2017). The recent suicide of Professor Stefan Grimm of Imperial College London has been attributed to these neoliberalist pressures. Professor Grimm was informed by his superiors that "he was struggling to fulfill the metrics" (Parr, 2014 cited in Mahony & Weiner, 2017, p. 563), failing to undertake adequately expensive research while also being subjected to constant bullying (Mahony & Weiner, 2017, p. 562).

2.3. Subjects of audit culture

Furthermore, academic educators are also now subjects of constant auditing. They need to comply with "audits, performance indicators, competitive benchmarking exercises, university league tables, management by targets ... punitive assessment exercises and periodic teaching reviews" (Shore, 2008, p. 282) and at the same time teach, design courses, conduct research and complete administrative tasks. This "audit culture" pervades higher education institutions around the world; in Australia, the US, UK, New Zealand and other nations dominated by neoliberalism and its imperatives of "privatization" and "deregulation" (Shore, 2008, p. 293). This works alongside neoliberalist managerialism which creates the narrative that academics are lowly, cannot be trusted, are not compliant and need to be managed with the use of "policies, regulations, guidelines and performance management metrics" (Sims, 2019; Shore, 2008, pp. 289-290).

In the UK, "audit culture" as enforced by the UK's National Student Survey (NSS), the Research Excellence Framework (REF) and the Teaching Excellence Framework (TEF), translates as management possessing the power to "increase the 'performance' of professionals" (that is, academics), in a commercial environment and from whom these managers then require "excellence" in "teaching and research" outcomes according to these frameworks (Cruickshank, 2016). This kind of culture evaluates the quality of teaching on standards which could be viewed as "coercive" and "authoritarian" (Shore, 2008), leading to very high levels of stress for academics (Cruickshank, 2016).

2.4. Casualisation

The corporatisation of higher education is very evident in data which show that most teaching at Australian universities is done by lowly-paid casual staff with insecure working conditions. Casualisation has been escalating in universities worldwide over the last 30 years. It is used to push costs down, maintain profit and increase organisational flexibility (Nicolls & Griggs, 2020; Bone, 2019; Cruickshank, 2016; Rustin, 2016). Current figures reveal an almost entirely casualised workforce that can be removed at any time if needed to cut costs and maximise profit (Mahony & Weiner, 2017). Research data shows that 8 out of 10 full-time academic positions at Australian universities are casual, while 8 out of 10 research-only jobs are "limited term contracts" (Barnes & Kniest, 2019, p. 24). Mirroring the rest of Australia, 68.74% of university staff in Victoria are casuals or on fixed-term contracts while at the University of Melbourne, 72.9% of academic staff and 72.8% at Monash University have insecure work (as casuals or on short-term contracts) (Duffy, 2020). In the UK, 2/3 or 67% of university researchers and almost half of the teaching staff (49%) are only on fixed-term contracts, while over "6,500 academic faculty" are on "zero-hours contracts" and "68,845" are on "atypical contracts" (O'Malley, 2020). As women have been found to dominate the lower levels of academic staff with a higher likelihood of working part-time in comparison to men (Strachan et al, 2011, p. 309), it is possible that they are much more affected by this casualisation trend than their male colleagues.

The personal, economic and social effects of casualisation for academics are damaging. Casual staff do not get paid holiday or sick leave, their superannuation is very much decreased, and when employment is terminated, there is no notice period nor payment for any redundancy (Bredehoeft, 2018 as cited in Nicolls & Griggs, 2020, p. 6). 71% of casual academic staff surveyed in the UK stressed that their mental health had been destroyed by working for contracts without job security and 83% stated that their casualised status at work made it hard for them to commit to any long-term decisions such as purchasing a house or planning to have a family (O'Malley, 2020).

2.5. COVID-19, job losses & workplace exploitation

The current COVID-19 pandemic has exacerbated the effects of neoliberalism on academics and academic work with higher education institutions shedding more casual staff. In Australia, the border closures to limit the pandemic spread has resulted in the destruction of the $Aust 9 billion international student market (Morrison, 2020; Tiffen, 2020). Thousands of academic staff, particularly casual staff have lost their jobs with further terminations predicted for those on continuing contracts (Duffy, 2020; Nicolls & Griggs, 2020). At least 5,000 academic staff at just two Melbourne universities have been made redundant with other unreported job losses throughout the country at higher education institutions (Duffy, 2020). In addition, by the end of 2020, at least 21,000 full-time academic jobs are at risk with 7,000 of these being research-only jobs (Duffy, 2020; Lane & Long, 2020).

Apart from continuing job losses, the effects of the changed workplace circumstances due to COVID-19 has deepened the damaging effects of neoliberalism on academic staff, particularly for casual staff with increases in "workplace exploitation" and "systematic underpayment" (Nicolls & Griggs, 2020, pp. 3-4). Of 159 tutors, lecturers and researchers surveyed at the University of Sydney, 82% undertook unpaid work in Semester 1 2020 with a median of 50.58 unpaid hours per employee, some reportedly earning $8 an hour equating to one third of the average hours in a semester for which a casual academic is hired) with higher workloads and personal additional expenses on higher internet and electricity bills in the switch to online teaching (Nicolls & Griggs, 2020, pp. 3-4).

3. The impact of neoliberalism on students

The reconceptualisation of the student as human capital and a buyer of education within the neoliberalist university has entailed consequences which include the marked debt burden carried by higher education students, high levels of mental illness, stress and anxiety, and decreased access

to education for disadvantaged students. As higher education under neoliberalism has become an entrepreneurial endeavour, universities are now corporatised entities maximising profit from all aspects and processes of higher education (Giroux, 2017, 2014); hence the logical corollary has been that education is a product that has to be paid for and students who cannot afford to pay outright for their university education are allowed to borrow monies to finance their studies, from their governments to whom they repay their debt once they have completed their degrees.

3.1. Escalating Levels of Student Debt

However, debt incurred by students to be able to afford their university degrees is "unprecedented and rising in many democracies", although there are arguments that such debt can be "good" and is a chance for students to "invest in themselves as human capital" (Nissen, Hayward, & McManus, 2019, p. 245). There is a view that the rise in student loans and fees is "fair", making it possible for many more students to participate and study at university while being an "affordable" price for taxpayers to pay (Nissen, Hayward, & McManus, 2019, p. 245).

In addition, the capitalist logic in the creation of student debt, and debt in general, forms part of the neoliberalist cycle of money, whereby capital is created through lending and borrowing and debt is used to produce wealth (Haiven 2019; Hudson, 2019).

Nevertheless, it is difficult to imagine how this unprecedented higher education student debt can possibly be paid for during the students' lifetime: in the US, student debt is now over US$ 1 trillion (Hoffower & Akhtar, 2019; Giroux, 2017), while in New Zealand $15.9 billion is owed by 730,000 students with an average loan of $32,000 for each student completing a bachelor's degree; this level of student debt is the seventh highest among OECD countries and the same debt level as that in Australia and Canada (Nissen, Hayward & McManus, 2019, p. 245). The highest student debt rates are in the UK (with the US second); UK university students will graduate with an average debt of 50,000 UK pounds (Nissen, Hayward, & McManus, 2019, p. 245).

3.2. Effects of student debt

In an analysis of 65 articles and books on student debt, researchers also found that student debt in higher education affects students' economic, physical, mental and social well-being (Nissen, Hayward, & McManus, 2019, p. 247). Those with debt were less successful in their academic results, less engaged, and more likely to drop out of their studies; they also had to work in jobs while studying to manage financially although such jobs did not assist with their career development. They were also more likely to graduate with lower overall financial worth in comparison to those of their peers who could afford tertiary education and did not have to incur debt to pay for their studies (Nissen, Hayward, & MacManus, 2019, p. 247).

It is also possible that already present inequalities would be reinforced by debt incurred by students in order to complete higher education studies. The students finding it difficult to make ends meet while studying tended to be those already negatively affected by debt, such as students from poorer families, those from ethnic minorities and women (particularly single mothers), with debt made more pronounced by dependence on finance options like credit card debt (Nissen, Hayward, & McManus, 2019, p. 248).

Higher education students with debt also experienced more difficulties with their mental health and psychological functioning, with feelings of shame and stigma associated with taking out a loan for their studies. Furthermore, those with student debt experienced higher levels of loneliness and social isolation as well as stress with family relationships and in order to pay off their debt after university, many would defer getting married, purchasing a house and starting a family (Nissen, Hayward & McManus, 2019, p. 248).

These negative effects of student debt make one question the necessity of such debt, particularly as there are other OECD countries who are able to provide free higher education to their citizens,

for example Sweden and Norway, while Australia ranks among the top five OECD countries with the highest tertiary fees (Munro, 2016).

3.3. Student Inequality & Internalisation of Neoliberalism

Apart from the deleterious effects on students of student debt, neoliberalism has, instead of supposedly benefitting students, led to reduced intake of underprivileged students (Dougherty & Natow, 2019). With increasingly higher fees as universities have become more business-like, students from the lower socio-economic strata of society have found it harder to afford higher education (Edmond & Berry, 2014) which makes it more difficult to gain well-paid work and move out of impoverishment (Giroux, 2014; Croxford & Raffe, 2013).

Research on university students such as those in Finland (Fitzsimmons, 2015), illustrate the damaging effects of neoliberalist thinking on students who accept that they need to complete their studies as quickly as possible. This belief ensures that universities obtain maximum funding, which is based on diplomas which have been completed. As in the US where higher education institutions are termed "diploma mills" (Lorenz, 2012), in Finland they are termed "diploma factories" (Fitzsimmons, 2015, pp. 212-219). Finnish students have tended to accept the effects of neoliberalism on their education and in creating student debt, with a degree of "cynical ideological fatalism" (Fitzsimmons, 2015, p. 215).

The acceptance of what neoliberalism entails for higher education studies brings increased pressures for students. Many students are anxious to be employable as soon as completing their degrees (Winerman, 2017) while facing rising student fees, living costs and work during their studies to make ends meet. High levels of stress and difficulties in managing study and learning schedules were found among 33% of Finnish university students, with 20% worried about their finances and future (Kunttu & Pesonen in Fitzsimmons, 2015) while a study of 2,279 graduate students in 243 higher education institutions found elevated levels of anxiety among these students who felt they needed more assistance and support from their supervisors in order to succeed (Evans et al., 2018).

Finally, students themselves live out the neoliberalist thinking transforming them into buyers of education. Where previously education might have been seen as engaging and empowering students to become citizens contributing to self and society for the greater good (MacDonald, 2018; Hughes, 2017; Fitzsimmons, 2015; Giroux, 2014), there is now a belief that education is an "economic transaction between a buyer and seller" with the student being "always right in the market" (Lorenz, 2012, pp. 621-622). Hence, there are students who ask their teachers what they can offer and provide for the fees paid by the students to the institution (Giroux, 2014; Lorenz, 2012).

The reconceptualisation of students as human capital and consumers of education has altered the educative process itself with those students who willingly take on the role of the buyer, perceiving education as a form of economic transaction. However, there are also many who have internalised neoliberalism and accept its inevitability despite financial, social, psychological and emotional pressures, particularly from having incurred debt in order to complete higher education studies. Imbibing neoliberalism, corporatist higher education institutions are capitalising on shorter course offerings to maximise their profits, and financial institutions and governments are encouraging student debt (and profiting from the interest on these debts) while abandoning responsibility for the education of their citizens (Giroux, 2017, 2014).

In evaluating the impact of neoliberalism on participants of education, and recognising the pressures wrought on academics and students, one could ask how academics under such pressure continue to teach, assist and facilitate their students' learning. From the literature, it seems there are educators in higher education who are drawing on alternative philosophies to resist the neoliberalist paradigm, restoring the student to being a learner instead of a consumer and the teacher to being a facilitator of learning and knowledge, supporting the student in their growth and development. Two of these alternative philosophies are discussed below.

4. Alternative humanist philosophies which support learning and teaching

In this discussion of Vygotsky's social constructivism and a pedagogy of the heart, the emphasis is on the relationship between teacher and the student, which is a very different relationship to that conceptualised in neoliberalist discourse. The critical aspects of this relationship and the consequences for student learning are discussed below.

4.1. Teacher-student relationship (TSR)

The relationship bond between teacher and student has been found to be crucial for effective student learning. The connectedness to the academic environment that can result from the teacher-student relationship (TSR) leads to a sense of belonging which encourages many students, particularly those at risk or who are considering dropping out in their first year, to continue with their studies, though relationships with peers also contribute to a sense of belonging (Hagenauer & Volet, 2014, pp. 379-380). TSR can depend on the context as students in different disciplines view support from their teachers in different ways and seminars rather than lectures provide more opportunity for contact between teachers and students (Hagenauer & Volet, 2014, p. 374). Nevertheless, for all students, TSR works on the basis of the "affective" and "support" domains, with the former referring to the bond between teacher and student which can lead to a secure and positive relationship, and the latter to the support provided for students to succeed (e.g., teachers answering queries and e-mails) (Hagenauer & Volet, 2014, p. 374).

The importance of TSR for students and student learning cannot be discounted as it has been shown that TSR promotes students' "commitment, effort, motivation, satisfaction, engagement, deep-learning approaches, achievement" and "intellectual development (e.g., critical thinking, learning fundamental principles)" (Hagenauer & Volet, 2014, p. 380).

4.2. Vygotsky's social constructivism

As the earlier discussion on TSR reflects, the student is more than just human capital and a source of profit; in the educational environment before neoliberalism took hold in higher education, the student has always been conceptualised as the learner at the centre of the educative process, who needs to be supported and encouraged towards positive growth and development (Rustin, 2016; Fitzsimmons, 2015; Giroux, 2014; Hagenauer & Volet, 2014).

Vygotskyian social constructivism conceptualises the student as part of a much bigger entity, who interacts with the wider environment and the learning community with the mind of the student forming part of the "social cultural group" as well as the world around the student (Liu & Matthews, 2005). Thus, the student develops with the social environment and is influenced by it, and learning provides the student with knowledge and capabilities for examining and understanding the socio-cultural and socio-political structures within which they are based while being able to confront such structures if needed (Liu & Matthews, 2005). So, during the process of learning, "the environment, the student and the teacher" affect each other, possibly developing and changing both individual student and their social environment while this external world can be influenced over time by "collective participation and collaboration" (Liu & Matthews, 2005; Vygotsky 1994; 1987).

This holistic Vygotskian philosophical concept translates into social-constructivist practices in the higher education classroom whereby the students' experiences and the wider environment form part of, and contribute to the pedagogy; in this way also thus engaging the student in learning (Murphy, 1997). These practices also include scaffolding students' learning with different forms of support during class such as practical demonstrations, division of content into manageable parts and provision of clear guidelines (Verenikina, 2008). Apart from scaffolding, other social-constructivist teaching practices include the teacher acting as coach, incorporating multiple perspectives and alternative viewpoints; basing learning goals on student needs; engaging students in "authentic activities and contexts"; teaching problem solving; providing primary data sources and

co-constructing knowledge with the student (Murphy, 1997; Richardson, 1997 cited in Desierto & Yin, 2014).

Thus, in Vygotskian social constructivism, the student forms part of the learning environment and his or her growth and development can result from the support and pedagogical approach of the teacher as well as that of the social environment. The student is thus not constructed as merely human capital and a consumer of education and in addition, as discussed earlier, the teacher-student relationship plays a significant part in students' intellectual and critical growth, facilitating learning through developing students' sense of belonging and connectedness within the educational environment.

4.3. Freire's pedagogy of the heart

As discussed, alternative philosophies to neoliberalism, such as Vygotskian social-constructivism, view students not as human capital or customers who must be serviced, but as those who must be supported and nurtured to be able to succeed in their studies. Academics are also not viewed as human capital in humanist philosophies but as contributors to the mores and ethics of society. There are a number of viable alternatives which have been used in higher education to support students in their learning, including transition pedagogies (Kift, Nelson & Clarke, 2010; Hughes, 2017). However, this part of the paper will focus on a pedagogy of the heart which has been recognised in the literature among educators as transformative for effective student learning (Fitzsimmons, 2015).

Freire's (1997) pedagogy of the heart offers an alternative philosophy to the neoliberalist tendencies of the modern institution of higher learning. His work is situated in the context of oppression of minority groups in South America in the early 1900s; however, his theory is applicable in today's higher education context as one which values the student-teacher relationshi*p*. Freire's philosophy involves the total student - mind, body, spirit - in the learning experience and regards the teacher as one who nurtures the student without viewing them as disadvantaged or bereft of knowledge, but one who brings their histories, experiences and realities with them to higher education (Freire, 1998, as cited in Motta & Bennett, 2018). The focus is on "collaboration, collectivity, and critical reflexivity between educators, and between students and educators" (Motta & Bennett, 2018, p. 636). The process is a democratic one, in contrast to the neoliberalist view of students as customers who need to be serviced to benefit not themselves but their future employers. Under Freire's philosophy, students will leave the university as critical thinkers and caring and democratic citizens who will make useful contributions to society as a whole (Freire, 1997).

Fitzsimmons (2015) further develops the pedagogy of the heart initiated by Freire (1997) using the principles of social justice, equality, human rights and solidarity as central to teaching and learning in higher education (Fitzsimmons, 2015). Students learn to become critical thinkers and to query knowledge, themselves and society, rather than learning to pass examinations, which are the dominant mode of education used in a neoliberalist approach (Fitzsimmons, 2015). In this way, students are given the power to engage more positively and confidently in their learning and in society rather than being stressed and worried about whether or not they can find employment once their studies are complete.

In this social-transformative approach, the care and support of the teacher is important so that learning can take place effectively. As such, it is a useful approach in student support or enabling programs at universities. A review of the literature on enabling and support programs suggests that this pedagogy of the heart is not specifically referred to as the underlying philosophy in such programs. Despite this, the authors posit that it is an approach being taken; many such programs report elements of the pedagogy in that "they [are] focused on establishing relationships, providing pastoral care and support, and building a community of learners" (Relf et al., 2017, p. 10).

Another teaching and learning strategy which can be incorporated in this pedagogy of the heart could be one whereby academics view students as partners. The strategy and concept of students

as partners is "seen as a counter-narrative to the consumer model" as it enables "a shared and collaborative space where students and staff together could contribute to the planning and development of teaching and learning practices—sharing responsibility for those" (Matthews et al., 2018, p. 961).

Through these alternative philosophies of Vygotskian social-constructivism and a pedagogy of the heart the teacher-student relationship (TSR) is recognised as the core of the educative process and teachers and students are conceptualised as human beings with positive roles to play in the process. Teachers provide support, facilitate learning and engagement, deliver and co-construct knowledge, while students are engaged, active learners contributing to the educational process and the creation of knowledge, contributing to the world for human good. Reclaiming this purpose for education and its participants (teacher and student) from the quantitative and narrowed focus of neoliberalist education might be possible through these alternative philosophies which many educators espoused before the advent of neoliberalism.

5. Conclusion

Neoliberalism in higher education views students as consumers rather than learners and academics as human capital required to contribute to the neoliberalist economies of the world. The impacts of neoliberalism on students and academics in higher education institutions are extremely damaging and these impacts have only been exacerbated by the current COVID-19 global pandemic affecting countries and their universities. The negative impacts on academics include increased stress and anxiety as a result of the globalisation and commercialisation of higher education and the casualisation of its workforce. In addition, the audit culture and the pressure to 'publish or perish' has led to increased rates of mental health issues and suicides among academics. For students, the negative impacts of neoliberalism include increased debt, stress, anxiety and mental health issues as students struggle to find their place in a commercially orientated society.

Institutions need to return to their original role as a place of knowledge as well as for the creation of social citizens; this can be achieved through the implementation of philosophies which are a viable alternative to neoliberalism. Vygotsky's social constructivism and Freire's pedagogy of the heart allow the institution and their academics and students to return to the purpose of education as one where everyone contributes to learning and teaching for the good of society. However, while these philosophies can help provide support and care for students, it would be helpful to conduct further research on how educators might be sustained in their endeavour to support students in face of extreme financial, psychological and personal pressures from casualisation and job losses, as well as investigating how students may be supported from critical aspects of the neoliberalist agenda in higher education.

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