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# Neoliberalism and education: A reformational-pedagogical perspective (part 2)

## Abstract

*This is the second part of an article that forms a link in a series of studies and publications from the pens (computers) of reformational educationists regarding the so-called –isms deemed to be threats to the Christian (Biblical) orientation to education (including teaching and learning). In the first part, an overview was given of how reformational educationists have so far attended to the various “-isms” that they have perceived as threats or challenges to Christian education. This was followed by an attempt to define the concept “neoliberalism” and to indicate what it means in general and, in particular, for education. The first part of the article has paved the way for what follows here: a critical analysis of neoliberalism as a recognisable “philosophy of education” and of its transcendental preconditions.*

**Key concepts:** liberalism, neoliberalism, education, Christian education, teaching and learning, philosophical preconditions, transcendental foundations

## Opsomming

### Die neoliberalisme en opvoeding en onderwys: ‘n reformatories-pedagogiese perspektief (deel 2)

*Hierdie is die tweede deel van ‘n artikel wat ‘n skakel vorm in ‘n reeks artikels en publikasies uit die penne (rekenaars) van reformatoriese opvoedkundiges oor die sogenaamde –ismes wat hulle geag het bedreigende te wees vir die Christelike (Bybelse) benadering tot opvoeding (insluitend onderrig en leer). In die eerste deel van die artikel is ‘n oorsig gegee van hoe die reformatoriese opvoedkundiges dusver aandag geskenk het aan die “-ismes” wat hulle gemeen het sodanige gevare vir die Christelike opvoeding inhou, of uitdagings daaraan rig. Dit is opgevolg deur ‘n poging om die begrip “neoliberalisme” te omskryf en aan te dui wat dit in die algemeen beteken, dog ook in die besonder vir opvoeding en onderwys. Die eerste deel van die artikel het die weg voorberei vir wat nou hier aangepak word, naamlik om ‘n kritiese ontleding aan te bied van neoliberalisme as ‘n herkenbare “opvoedingsfilosofie” en van die transendentale voorwaardes daarvan.*

**Kernbegrippe:** liberalisme, neoliberalisme, opvoeding, onderwys, Christelike opvoeding en onderwys, onderrig en leer, filosofiese uitgangspunte, transendentale grondslae

## 1. Introduction

The first part of this article paved the way for a discussion of the philosophy of education associated with neoliberalism in this part. As with all other –isms, the neoliberal “philosophy of education” flows directly from its transcendental preconditions. Put differently, it flows from its underlying assumptions about reality (its ontology and cosmology), its view of man (anthropology), its view of knowledge (epistemology), its convictions about ethical behaviour (ethics), society (theory of societal relationships), about values (axiology) and so on. According to Strauss (2009:58), every view of society and/or education has philosophical suppositions; the basic question is always philosophical. It is therefore incumbent upon scholars to give account of such philosophical suppositions, in this case, hidden behind neoliberal views (Strauss, 2009:59). Coletto (2008:461) agrees with him in

saying: "...there is always a connection between presuppositional frameworks and concrete theories, a connection which is sometimes not immediately visible yet nevertheless real". This applies also to neoliberalism as a theory or a philosophy of education.

To avoid repetition, the following section contains only a brief outline of "the" neoliberal philosophy of education together with the pre-theoretical (life- and worldview) suppositions and assumptions on which its philosophy of education rests. The article closes with a critical evaluation of neoliberalism in general and of the transcendental preconditions on which it and its philosophy of education rest.

## **2. The neoliberal "philosophy of education"**

As has been argued in the discussion of neoliberalism in the first part of this article, neoliberalism as a life- and worldview has so far not been systematically developed as a full-blown philosophy. Neither has its philosophy of education. As will be shown below, its "philosophy" of education is just as narrow and under-developed as its "philosophy" of life and the world in general. This can arguably be ascribed to the fact that no ardent proponent of neoliberalism can be pinpointed. Neoliberalism, as argued in the first part of the article, has stealthily crept onto the scene and has since infiltrated every nook and cranny of our existence. Neoliberalism and its relatively unsophisticated "philosophy of education" have therefore had a great impact on modern life and particularly on education at all levels. It will also emerge from the following discussion that because of the rudimentary nature of its "philosophy of education", this philosophy does not formally cover all the aspects normally associated with a well-developed philosophy of education. It has rather little to say, for instance, about the school as such and about discipline, neither does it carefully distinguish between views about the person to be educated (the educand, the learner, pupil, young person) and the educator (parent, teacher, lecturer). Nor does it distinguish between the settings in which education typically takes place such as the parental home, the school, the religious institution or the university. It also does not express a view about the possibilities and the limitations of education, as one would expect from a fully-fledged philosophy of education. Neoliberalism seems to have availed itself only of a few broad brush strokes to typify its view of and approach to education, as will now be demonstrated in the following six sub-sections.

### **2.1 The essence of education**

In line with neoliberalism's reductionist ontology and cosmology in terms of which it sees social and other aspects of reality through the narrow lens of economics and business only (Adams, 2006:8), it has also developed a new language, discourse and vocabulary regarding education (Ball, 2003:218). In terms of its reductionist view of reality and hence of education, it speaks of education in economic and business terms. Education is, for instance, seen as couched in the doctrine of economic growth (Maistry, 2014:7). Not only is the focus on the middle class (Ball, 2003:65) but also on an instrumental agenda for education (Maistry, 2014:65) that contains items such as that education, including teaching and learning, should achieve its outcomes cost-effectively (Maistry, 2014:63), that education must be instrumental for growth (Welch, 1998:158) and therefore be technologized, commodified and saleable (Welch, 1998:160). Investment in education should be weighted against all other possible areas of financial return (Welch, 1998:158). Acculturation through education therefore has come to be defined as the acquisition of social and human capital (Rustin, 2016:149). In essence, education is seen as the sorting and grading process that is natural to a class society (in which the middle-class elite predominates)(Rustin, 2016: 148).

### **2.2 The purpose of education**

The neoliberal purpose of education resonates with its view of the essence of education. It therefore propounds a narrow instrumentation with respect to educational aims and purposes (Welch, 1998:161). Education has to serve the needs of the economy; that is its

primary purpose (Maistry, 2014:60). Educators should constantly keep the needs of the economy in mind: education should ideally deliver a free, possessive individual, able to create personal wealth for him or herself, with the capacity to earn and pay wherever necessary, a possessor of private property and capital (even at the cost of greed and self-interest, some would argue – cf. Hall, 2011:9-11), intent on making money and profit and focused on self-interest and –enrichment. Education should deliver individuals that will be useful to the (national) economy (Welch, 1998:165), serve “conservative” (that is, neoliberal) political interests and be useful to the industrialising economy (Welch, 1998:164-165). It has to provide the workforce needed for the economy; it has to train for “a workforce at large” (Rustin, 2016:150). The training of a new administrative elite is also important (Rustin, 2016:149). In the process, education has to train for economic competitiveness, and for people who can effectively participate in a global economy (Rustin, 2016:150; Adams, 2006:3).

### **2.3 The view of the human being: educator and educand/ teacher and learner**

As mentioned, neoliberalism tends not to distinguish between these two parties involved in education (either in the broader sense of education in terms of educator and educand, or in the narrower sense of education as teaching and learning: in the persons of teacher/ educator and learner/pupil/student). The neoliberal life- and worldview nevertheless is “carried” by powerful agents, and how they see the world and education leads to deep changes in how people are seen (what they are) and what they do. As a result of this view, the human being is reductionistically viewed as *homo economicus* (Shenk, 2015:npn) and in terms of the human capital theory as “human capital”, an asset and a resource (Welch, 1998:158). This, in turn, leads to educators and educands finding themselves in a process of re-regulation, under new forms of control that are based on contracts between parties rather than on mutual understanding, agreement and covenant (Ball, 2003:215-217).

All involved in education furthermore should be committed to an ethic of individualism and individual choice, as competing individuals, committed to entrepreneurship, intent on profit-making and self-enrichment (Rustin, 2016:153). Students are seen as future consumers and clients of the educational services, as human resources, in the process of being prepared for the labour market (Rustin, 2016:155-157). In brief, they are seen as “market actors” and cast as “human capital” with an equal right to compete in a zero sum market of winners and losers. People are seen as rational choosers in an economic reality as consumers of commodities, including education (Adams, 2006:8; Redwood, 1993: 6-7). Despite the role assigned to the human being as *homo economicus*, there is also the mantra of doing more with less, which inevitably leads to a reduction in staff numbers (at schools and universities) (Welch, 1998:167).

### **2.4 The pedagogical content (including the curriculum)**

Also in this regard, neoliberalism is not very explicit. According to Rustin (2016:149), the idea of classical education was supplemented by the neoliberal demand for “modern” subjects that are more sympathetic to business values such as economics and political science. The curriculum should also have a strong vocational and occupational bias in that it should create expertise to be able to supply in market needs. This approach inevitably leads to a commodification of knowledge, teaching and learning and education in general. The curriculum should be more practical than in classical humanistic education in that it has to inculcate business acumen and business common sense, capabilities that are not so easy to teach (Welch, 1998:160-164).

### **2.5 Pedagogical method (including methods of teaching and learning)**

It follows from all of the above that neoliberalism tends to prefer a mechanical approach to teaching and learning. The children are drilled rather than broadly educated; rote

learning is encouraged; teaching is done in a rather narrow and instrumental fashion, and is decidedly practical and utilitarian. Where possible, non-human technology is employed (Welch, 1998: 161-171). In view of the economistic bias of neoliberalism, educators have to understand that they are working in conditions where resources are scarce, and that they should do more with less. Above all, they should employ teaching methods that will prepare the children for a future of competition (Rustin, 2016:150).

## **2.6 Assessment of achievement**

The neoliberal ground rule is that education should lead to continuing improvement. Continual assessment in the form of high stakes testing (Maistry, 2014:67) is therefore essential (Rustin, 2016:155) and the emphasis should be on quality of performance in the school and in assessment tasks. The assessment criteria should specifically focus on economically quantifiable elements in education, and others should preferably be discounted or assigned an (arbitrary) economic value (Welch, 1998:158). For this reason, assessment procedures that promote total quality management, quality improvement, quantification, calculability and prediction should be favoured (Welch, 1998:168-171). Achievement is defined as a set of productivity targets (Ball, 2003:218). Quantitative performance indicators are preferred since they enable processes of ranking and rating, and also of reward and punishment (Welch, 1998:166-168; Rustin, 2016:155). The rating and ranking and all other quality audits done in an educational context (school, for instance) should preferably be an unbiased mechanical process that satisfies the formal bureaucratic demands of the assessment procedure (Welch, 1998:168).

## **2.7 School (and higher education institution) management**

In line with the core precepts of neoliberalism, school management has to understand that it works in the context of a "monetarist economy" (Marois & Pradella, 2015:3) where everything is economised (Brown, in Shenk, 2015: npn). The main concern is with commodification and commercialisation (Brown, in Shenk, 2015:npn). "Management" is therefore synonymous with "utility maximisation" (Shenk, 2015:npn). This reductionist view of school management comes down to managerialism (Shenk, 2015:npn; Adams, 2006:5, 6, 8) and economism ((Welch, 1998:157). The key words associated with this approach to school management are: work according to economic, business, functionalist and systemic principles, be efficient and effective, be flexible, competitive (also internationally), responsive, attend to total quality management, cost containment, neo-vocationalism (cf. the discussion of the curriculum above), commodify as much as possible, including knowledge, teaching and training, entrepreneurship (Welch, 1998:171), practise pedagogies of management, constant surveillance, individualisation, productivity, self-monitoring, work with facts, figures, comparisons, costs, emphasise what works, and everything must be auditable in a culture of competitive performativity (emphasis on results and achievement) (Ball, 2003;219-222; Sparkes, 2007:521-534). Symbolism is clearly seen as key to the management of schools and other institutions of learning: everything stands for the corporate consensus of the institution (Ball, 2003: 226).

Neoliberalism would insist on the school (and other institutions of learning, including universities) being run as a powerful corporate system, as an expression of corporate power (Rustin, 2016:153, 154), according to business principles, i.e. like a service or a business (Shenk, 2015: npn; Adams, 2006:8). A hierarchical structure of management is taken to work best. Schools should exude and practise a business ethic (Welch, 1998:164).

Schools and other institutions have to be managed financially efficiently (Adams, 2006:7; Welch, 1998:157) if they are to successfully compete for the scarce resources in an educational market regulated by the state (Rustin, 2016:154, 158) (the notion of "competition in a regulated structure") (Rustin, 2016:155). Management should be effective in a strong and competitive market, the so-called social market economy (Ptak, 2009:124-125). One of the main purposes of management is to minimise costs (Rustin, 157) and to strive for higher production, higher outputs and improved standards (Rustin, 158).

Schools and other institutions should be the embodiment of an enterprise culture (Rustin, 156). The emphasis is on efficiency in the natural free market, and hence on awareness of factors of production (Palley, 2004: npn). As a result of this orientation, there must be a tendency towards privatisation of schooling (Shenk, 2015: npn) and towards increased productivity (Welch, 1998:157): schools must do more with less (Welch, 1998:166).

School managements work within a regime of accountability (Rustin, 157). Financial and public accountability is the first and foremost duty of management (Adams, 2006:4, 7; Welch, 1998:157). The school has to be managed as an "auditable" institution (Ball, 2003:225).

Management of this type has a strong instrumental slant (Adams, 2006:8) in that it operates with increasing technology of control (Welch, 1998:159, 162-163).

### 3. The assumptions on which the neoliberal philosophy of education is based

In contrast with many other philosophies of education, neoliberalism works with a rather restricted ontology and cosmology in the sense that it assumes as natural and right that reality is dominated by global corporations, powerful oligo polities that exercise a considerable degree of control over consumers, citizens and even the political environment. These corporations include banks, multi-national manufacturing companies, and media and information-based organisations. These entities' profit-making aspirations dominate the world, and hence also education (Rustin, 2016:153). Put somewhat differently, this corporate world is the "world" and the "reality" to which neoliberalism restricts "the world" and "reality at large". The rest of the world, reality or creation is deemed to form sub-structures of this corporate "world". Not only is this reality rather narrow; it is also seen as an economised world. Every field of activity is seen as a market, and every entity is governed as a firm. Neoliberalism even construes non-wealth generating spheres such as education, teaching and learning and exercising in market terms, and governs them with market techniques and practices (Brown in Shenk, 2015: npn). According to Adams (2006:8), for neoliberals there is one form of rationality more powerful than any other, that being the economic reality. In the process, they combine economic, social, political and other dimensions (modalities) of reality for the sake of rational choice as the principle of legitimacy.

The neoliberal **anthropology** echoes this ontology. People are seen as competitors and clients in this world market in which corporations do their business. They have to become strongly competitive and master the secrets of entrepreneurship in order to be successful, effective and efficient in this "world". Corporations see their staff as human capital and resources, and urge their staff members to be aware of client satisfaction because of the commercial rivalry between large corporations. They should also be accountable and their work should always be auditable. They should be open to competition in the market, and they should develop new occupations in order to meet market needs. They should also be prepared to help their managements swallow up weaker competitors and to constantly strive for economies of scale. They should be intent on minimising costs, on being more productive and becoming used to surveillance and tight control by management. Their pre- and in-service training should be regarded as investments in their future, and they should constantly be on the lookout for opportunities that would be rewarding to them and their employers (Rustin, 2016:153-158).

Human beings are furthermore seen as market actors (Brown, in Shenk, 2015: npn). Neoliberalism casts people as human capital (ibid). The human being is viewed, as mentioned, as *homo economicus* whose basic tasks are commercialisation, financialisation, marketization, commodification, a concern about personal value (rating and ranking), competition, individualism, utility maximisation, entrepreneurship, profit making, consumption, investment in self and the business, management, administration and

governance (Shenk, 2015: npn; Rozenzweig, 1994:14), participation in the global economy, accountability, performance (Adams, 2006:7). Individuals are seen as rational and autonomous choosers and consumers of commodities (Adams, 2006:8).

The paucity, narrowness and shallowness of the neoliberal life- and worldview and of the assumptions associated with it is can be starkly illustrated with analyses of its theory of society, its epistemology, ethics and deontology. A brief look at its value system (**axiology**) underscores this observation. Its value system is determined by how it views the world and the human being functioning in that world. Neoliberalism draws the attention away from the intrinsic meaning and value of things towards impersonal, other-managed measures of value such as peer assessments for purposes of promotion or ranking (Rustin, 2016:155). Neoliberals are more interested in financial and economic values than in any other values (Rustin, 2016:159). People get paid what they are worth as factors of production (labourers and providers of capital) (Palley, 2004: npn). Neoliberalism, as stated, casts people (*homo economicus*) as human capital who must constantly tend to their own present and future value, value that is more often than not speculatively determined. Neoliberalism's insistence on efficiency can be seen as predicated upon the idea of economic value of the human being and his or her actions (Welch, 1998:158). The value of activities could and should be measured, largely or wholly, in economic terms. Indeed, technology, having become autonomous, dictates its own value system (Welch, 1998:159). The test of relevance in the neoliberal world includes making what is done useful to the national economy (Welch, 1998:165). Values are central to the consideration of efficiency in all spheres of life, including education (169). The performances (of individuals or organisations) serve as measures of productivity or output, or displays of the "quality" or "moments" of inspection or promotion. As such they stand for, encapsulate or represent the worth, quality or value of an individual or organisation within a field of judgment. The question then becomes: who is it that determines what is to count as valuable, who is in charge of that particular field of judgment of what should be regarded as effective, satisfactory and what norms or indicators are considered valid (Ball, 2003:216)?

Individuals are expected to calculate about themselves, their chances in life and their personal value by improving their productivity and striving for excellence. Neoliberalism has brought with it a new ethical system the core values of which are self-interest, pragmatics, entrepreneurship, self-discipline, self-reliance and performative worth (Ball, 2003:217, 218; Hall, 2011:19; Maistry, 2014:62). All other principles are set aside as worthless (Ball, 2003:223). In brief, arbitrary quantitative measures are being used to determine the value of individuals and groups (Ball, 2003:541).

It is clear from the above brief discussion of the core precepts of neoliberalism (part 1 of this article), its philosophy of education and the assumptions in which this philosophy is grounded, that neoliberalism suffers from two main shortcomings: the paucity of the world- and lifeview that the term "neoliberalism" encapsulates and of the philosophy of education constructed thereon. We end this two-part article with a critical discussion of both these inadequacies.

## **4. A critical appraisal of neoliberalism and its philosophy of education from a Biblical perspective**

### **4.1 Ontological reductionism**

A core objection to neoliberalism is the ontological reductionism that it harbours. It has an obsession with effectivity, effectiveness and efficiency, with individual freedom and choice, with the profit motif associated with business and enterprise, with competition, achievement, assessment/measurement and rating/ranking, with growing prosperity, democratisation (despite the fact that business principles have been edging out the interest of the *demos* — the people)(cf. Brown, in Shenk, 2015:npn), individualisation, materialism

and growing inequality and inequity among individuals and social groups.

In actual fact, reality, the world “out there”, God’s creation, is much more and more complicated than the world that neoliberals suppose us to live and work in. Neoliberal reductionism can be observed in its tendency to economise reality, in other words its tendency to subsume all other modalities under the economic modality of reality. In the process, it absolutizes the economic modality of reality, thereby deifying or idolizing that aspect of reality. Neoliberals worship this economic deity of their own making in various ways. They employ technical instrumentation to worship this “god”; they commodify everything and sacrifice all their energies to serve this “god” (in the form of profit-making, entrepreneurship, self-interest seeking, productivity, performativity, managerialism, with their idea of human freedom and of the human being – whom they reduce to *homo economicus*, their view of democracy, their ideas regarding responsibility, accountability and autonomy). Neoliberalism allows “economics to masquerade as rationality” (Welch, 1998:171).

Christian philosophers (of education) have through the last century and a half resorted to two principles with which to avoid the problem of reductionism or absolutism as far as societal relationships are concerned, namely sphere sovereignty and sphere universality. In principle, each societal relationship, in this case education (also in the shape of schools, universities) should be autonomous or sovereign in its own sphere of competency (Adams, 2016:4). The obverse of this principle, namely sphere universality, implies that while economism has to be questioned and rejected, the economic aspect of reality must never be forgotten, as Gramsci has reminded us (Hall, 2011:9). Although economics and education are in a sense inextricably connected, care should be taken that the latter is not totally subsumed and dominated by the former (Maistry, 2014:60). It should be kept in mind that the economic aspect is only one of many modalities of reality, and that they all enjoy equal ontological and cosmological status. All things, including all the modalities of reality, exist in an interwoven coherence, equally dependent upon the cosmos-encompassing law of God, from which each creature and modality acquires the determination and boundary of its meaning. This theory of modal aspects provides us with an account of both the uniqueness and the unbreakable coherence between the diverse sphere-sovereign modal aspects (Strauss, 2014:11, 13).

#### **4.2 Reductionist anthropology**

Neoliberals see themselves and all other human beings as servants of the idol named economism: humans are degraded to forms of human capital and resources, reduced to the status of *homo economicus*, expected to perform optimally, constantly under surveillance, their performance constantly assessed, their value as human beings reduced to what is deemed worthwhile in terms of service of the “god” economy, expected to understand that they work in a system of rewards and punishments, that they are expected to work not in a relationship of trust and covenant but of contract, expected to be efficient, effective and productive and never seriously concerned about the growing divide between rich and poor.

Neoliberalism is a modern form of idolatry and hence in principle totally unacceptable from a Biblical point of view. The Bible teaches in Deuteronomy 6:4-5 that the Lord our God is One and that even those involved in business should love Him with all their heart and with all their soul and with all their strength, in total surrender to Him. People should therefore not put their trust in other “gods” (idols, such as “the” economy and business). God should be recognised as king over the whole earth (Zechariah 14:9). According to the Life Application Study Bible (1997:262), this injunction sets a pattern that helps people relate the Word of God to our daily lives, including our economic and business lives: people are to love God, think constantly about his commandments, teach his commandments to their children, and live each day by the guidelines of his Word.

Stiglitz (2013: npn) is quite correct in stating that neoliberalism with its mantra of unfettered markets often not only does not lead to social justice but does not even produce efficient

outcomes; the pursuit of self-interest does not necessarily lead to economic efficiency. Brown (in Shenk, 2015: npn) agrees: true democracy requires that citizens be modestly oriented toward self-rule, not simply value-enhancement, and that they understand their freedom as resting in such self-rule, not simply in market conduct. An investment in equity can be seen as contributing to increased efficiency. Equity, it can be argued, is an important part of efficiency, rather than its counterpart (Welch, 1998:168). What is needed in the place of neoliberalism's narrow view of human and social life is a wider and fairer form of efficiency that does justice to notions of equity, equality and difference (Welch, 1998:173).

### **4.3 Confusion of meaning with value**

The neoliberal view of value, as discussed above, is of particular concern to reformational educationists. The neoliberal view is humanistic and relatively superficial in that only value based on assessment (in some cases, on the grounds of arbitrary and subjective norms) seems to count. There seems to be very little understanding that human beings as created by God in his image and their education have intrinsic value. The value of a human being and of his or her education can never be measured in concrete terms and according to humanistic norms such as "pay an individual what he or she is worth" as if people were saleable and measurable commodities. Individual worth and the worth of education can never be reduced to economic terms; they can never be measured in objective economic terms, even if "worth" is understood to mean "useful", "efficient" or "performing well". Human beings are much more than this; they have been created in the image of God. As such their value is immeasurable.

Neoliberalism seems to confuse meaning with value. Human beings have been placed on earth and in their societies to serve the Lord and by doing so experience the true meaning of their existence (Genesis 1:26-28; 2:15). People discover true meaning by doing meaningful things such as loving and caring for those who are unable to perform, those who fall by the wayside in economic terms: the poor and destitute, for instance. The question to ask is not what should we do to be regarded as valuable in neoliberal terms, but rather: What does the Lord our Creator and Mandate-giver expect us to do in this world? True meaning comes from fulfilment and enjoyment of the work that we have been entrusted with. This applies also to education: true meaning comes from learning to serve the Lord and others, to think critically and imagine sympathetically (develop moral imagination)(Wright, 2009:418-428), and to become a noble person with integrity (Nolan, 2009:13).

### **4.4 Reductionist view of education**

Neoliberalism entertains a view of education that is seriously flawed when viewed from a Scriptural perspective. Education, as Rustin (2016:148) correctly mentions, should be seen as the most valuable real resource we have, and therefore "something which we have to produce a special argument to limit (to narrow and downscale) rather than a special argument to extend". Education, including teaching and learning, should be seen as an intrinsic value in itself that *among others* have to contribute to the national economy and the welfare of people. It should in essence be aimed at the total well-being of all concerned (Maistry, 2014:62). This applies in an even more profound sense when education is viewed from a Scriptural view. Bible-inspired education is God-breathed, and therefore useful for teaching, rebuking, correcting and training in righteousness, so that the man of God may be thoroughly equipped for every good work (II Tim 3:16). According to this perspective, young people should not only be trained for economic productivity but for every good work in the service of the God of the Scriptures.

In a sense, the ancient Greeks (in terms of their *paideia*-ideal) and the later classic liberals were correct in saying that we have to avoid a narrow conception of education. Education does not only apply to the economic and the business part of life. The whole of life has to be touched by education: one lives and functions as a whole person and both one's flourishing and one's effect on others flow from one's overall character (Grayling, 2002:157). Scripture-based education should therefore see the essential task of education as the

nurturing, reassurance, comforting and guidance of the entire person. Education has to do with the growth processes of the entire person: body, mind and spirit, and should never be downscaled, narrowed, restricted or reduced to an instrument for the implementation of economic principles (Welch, 1998:169).

In addition, education should provide equal opportunity and access, and create spaces for freedom of mind and creativity (Maistry, 2014:70). Brutal utilitarianism is therefore not acceptable in educational circles; education has to transmit and interpret the cultural and intellectual heritage of a nation, and should stimulate creative thinking without undue regard merely to its financial value (Rustin, 2016:159). It should prepare young people for a future existence, particularly for living a meaningful life, and should be offered as widely as possible, not only to a selected elite group (Rustin, 2016:160-166). The main aim of education should therefore not be to provide in the needs of the economy and the labour market (Stiglitz, 2013: npn). What is required in the place of neoliberalism's narrow curriculum is a more humane and inclusive form of education that cultivates talent (Welch, 1998:173).

Although, in Bourdieu's terms, neoliberalism has succeeded in colonising the habitus of many people, including that of many educators and educationists, we have to seek out and explore alternatives to economic efficiency discourses and economic growth discourses, especially in relation to their marginalising effects on the social aspect of life and reality (Maistry, 2014:60).

## 5. Conclusion

In a previous article in *Koers* on the subject of how the neoliberal life- and worldview has dominated life in general in the world and particularly education, Conradie (2011:443) concluded that "the hegemony imposed by any ideology is never complete. The tighter it is imposed the more vulnerable it becomes to voices of resistance and pluralising tendencies". For the time being, however, he contends, "the explosion of agency that has accompanied the consumer culture precludes any turning back. The only way forward is through consumer culture...". Since these words were written, a groundswell has begun to develop against neoliberalism and its precepts. It takes the shape of the Post-Truth and the Occupy Movements, to mention only two recent manifestations thereof. A discussion of this new movement has to be kept in abeyance until the anti-neoliberal sentiment has assumed such proportions that it might become a real threat to neoliberalism. In the meantime it remains important for Christian educators and educationists to keep on rejecting the narrow conception of education resulting from a neoliberal life and worldview (cf. Conradie, 2011:444) who correctly states that education is "more than packaged and instrumentalised information".

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