

Critical Education

Volume 7 Number 7 May 15, 2016 ISSN 1920-4125

Worldlessness and Wordlessness How Might We Talk about Teacher Education in a Fractured World?

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Citation: Panayotidis, E. L., Lund, D. E., Towers, J., Smits, H. (2016). Worldlessness and wordlessness: How might we talk about teacher education in a fractured world? *Critical Education*, 7(7). Retrieved from <http://ojs.library.ubc.ca/index.php/criticaled/article/view/186130>

Abstract

In this polyvocal article, four teacher educators evoke Arendt's notion of world alienation or worldlessness: a fracturing not only of the spaces that allow action in concert with one another, and a more generous recognition of plurality, but also wordlessness, the experience of a flood of meaningless words and constructions that serve to cover up possibilities for understanding. The authors reflect collectively and separately on neoliberal influences on faculties of education, and of experiencing a loss of language that might allow for deeper understandings of humanity in our academic institutions. These collective reflections about teacher education highlight the stories and discussions of experiencing worldlessness, and facing the challenge of narrating more generously the meanings of our work.



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the Institute for Critical Educational Studies and housed at the University of British Columbia. Articles are indexed by EBSCO Education Research Complete and Directory of Open Access Journals.

¹ As a research team, we have collaborated on all stages of the preparation of this paper from the outset, and the order of authors here is somewhat arbitrary. Our ideas began with a paper we prepared for the Provoking Curriculum conference (Panayotidis, Smits, Lund, & Towers, 2015) and are an extension of over a decade of collaboration.

Introduction: Fracturing Teacher Education and the Loss of Contemplation

“The primacy of contemplation over activity rests on the conviction that no work of human hands can equal in beauty and truth the physical *kosmos*, which swings in itself in changeless eternity without any interference or assistance from outside Seen from the viewpoint of contemplation, it does not matter what disturbs the necessary quiet, as long as it is disturbed.” (Arendt, 1958, pp. 15-16)

Worldlessness (or ‘world-alienation’ as Hannah Arendt writes) refers to the deep sense of disconnection we experience from the world (meaning the physical, social, cultural, and natural worlds) we are born into as dependent beings. Stephanie Mackler (2010) writes that “loss of the world, for Arendt, is loss of a common sphere—something beyond any one individual” (p. 511) and that “worldlessness is interrelated with thoughtlessness” (p. 511). Arguably, contemporary forms of life exacerbate *worldlessness* in the ways we are increasingly engaged with all kinds of activity, and it is this activity—more than what it means—that dominates our experiences. In *The Human Condition*, Arendt (1958) emphasizes the historical reversal of the relationship between contemplation (thinking) and doing (fabrication and making): in the modern world, “contemplation [is] no longer believed to yield truth... and has lost its position in the *vita activa* itself and hence within the range of ordinary human experience” (p. 304, emphasis in original). What this means is not that things take precedence over contemplation and thinking, but that our reflection on our work has been supplanted by the very activity itself.

We are struck by recent events, especially the tragic events of so-called “terrorism” and our inability to give expression to the meaning of those events while the air is filled with too many words. We read and watch the news and wonder about the meaning not only of the acts of terrorism, but also how our political leaders so quickly rush in with language that forecloses our need and ability to think about things, and to deny, most grievously, the existence of plurality. We hope that a recent electoral change in this country and a new ideological path might offer a more inclusive narrative of belonging.

As Arendt suggests above, the necessary space required for us to think more deeply and to think in concert is excluded/marginalized/supplanted by the noise of language that denies the very ability to contemplate life more fully. Recent events in the world evoke Arendt’s notion of world alienation or *worldlessness*: a fracturing not only of the spaces that allow action in concert and more generous recognition of what she calls “plurality” in the world but also then, *wordlessness*; wordlessness refers not simply to the lack of words, but the experience of a flood of meaningless words and images, ones that may only cover up possibilities for understanding. We may as a result experience a loss of language that would allow for deeper understandings of the “human condition” and what constitutes the necessary sustenance for more fully human lives.

It is our contention in the following discussions that emerged from our collective reflections about our work as teacher educators that we are not immune to experiences of worldlessness and the challenge of narrating more generously the meanings of our work. Within the practice of teacher education, the continual busy-ness and the act of doing has come to constitute the bureaucratic notion of what constitutes good work. As teacher educators, researchers, and curriculum thinkers, the idea of worldlessness should give us pause from such frenetic activity. Mackler (2010) notes that our very approach to thinking and how we use language and conduct our research and teaching—how we conduct scholarly inquiry—can

contribute to worldlessness, if it does not contribute to some sense of a public good and towards our engagement with worldly issues and concerns. So how might we talk and write about this? Here, worldlessness meets wordlessness in the challenge to grasp both our doing and thinking in terms of solidarity with others, responsibility, attunement to difference, and the exercise of courage and imagination.

The four of us whose words are represented in this article had both the good fortune, but also, at the risk of overdramatizing it, the tragedy, of living through a teacher education program that attempted to encourage a more contemplative approach—one following the precepts of practical judgement rather than the primacy of technique (Dunne, 1993; Lund et al., 2012). What that program did was expose and our students and us to difficulty: to questions not only of how to teach, but what the responsibility of teaching requires to engage children and students in a renewal of the world. But that effort, as flawed and contentious it might have been (Lund et al., 2012), has now been eclipsed by the imposition of a belief in certainty and the naïve notion that teacher preparation can achieve through prescription and preparation what already exists, rather than what might be, in more transformative terms. In other words, we might say that we have become wordless about what might be understood about teacher education in deeper terms of the human condition.

The challenge we faced when writing this article is how to make sense of certain experiences of teacher education or, to use Pinar's term, elements of the *currere* of teacher education. The notion of *currere* alerts us to the existential: that curriculum (in our case, the curriculum of teacher education) is not simply or only the program structures and documents that define our work, but rather to what we experience as teachers and researchers as we enact our knowledge and beliefs in relation to our students, our disciplinary identities and the communities in which we live and work. Understood as *currere*, we may recognize ourselves within the practice of teacher education, as being constantly busy, as though the fragmented “doing” itself constitutes good work. That fragmented sense of work can be understood as an experience, as Arendt (2003) reminds us, where activity can be become bereft of thought and can indeed take on qualities of worldlessness: that is, work that becomes activity without thought and without a sense of what activity and effort means for a larger good and a sense of public attachment. In the prologue to her *The Human Condition* (1958) Arendt provocatively states her concern: “the heedless recklessness or hopeless confusion or complacent repetition of ‘truths’ which have become trivial and empty—seems to me the outstanding characteristics of our time (p. 5).

As teacher educators, researchers, and curriculum thinkers, the idea of worldlessness so expressed can be existentially dominant and bring on a sense of academic frenzy. We experience a lot of talk, research, and activity around reforming teacher education programs. For example, discussions about such issues as program coherence, design and construction, the length and placements of field experiences, how to meet external accreditation standards, and so on, are prominent in the literature and dominant in the activity of faculties of education. There are also ongoing concerns about how we may ensure stable contributions of our work as teacher educators, in terms, for example, of generating and disseminating knowledge of the disciplines or one of the other areas of scholarly expertise characterizing teacher education programs.

While not denying the importance of these questions as aspects of our work, we may wonder what may be lost or forgotten in the desire to channel legitimate concerns for doing teacher education well into what sometimes seems like obsessive concern with, for example, the structure of programs and forms of assessment. What can become occluded and perhaps even

denied is the required time and space for contemplation: to think about what it means to work with and within programs as organized and formally legitimated structures of activity and actions that are fundamental to the way that we as humans organize our responsibilities.

In his discussion about what sustains and nurtures good practice (practice in terms of working with an ethical aim) Paul Ricoeur (1992) defines institutions (in our discussion, the institution of teacher education) as structures “of living together as this belongs to a historical community... [and hence] what fundamentally characterizes the idea of an institution is the bond of common mores and not that of constraining rules” (p. 194). Institutions are structures not reducible to interpersonal relations, nor the manipulation of things, but rather reflect the interests of a larger community in enabling what Ricoeur calls “action in concert,” a term he cites from the work of Hannah Arendt (p. 194).

Institutions, however, may evolve into forms of domination that may deny possibilities for living together well. Institutions may deny the recognition of plurality and of holding power in common and, thereby, negating sensitivity to historical and contingent possibility. Further, our concern about worldlessness and the paucity of language to address it is, as we suggest in the ensuing discussions, is especially impacted by pervasive neo-liberal forces and ideologies. Thus in our collaborative work, we became more attuned not only to program issues and how we might best understand and practice teacher education, but also we reflect on the impacts of larger economic, cultural and social changes on our work and what that means for teacher education. We understand a discussion of neo-liberalism and its impacts on teacher education is complex and requires extensive deliberation. But for our purpose, which is to locate our work and to think about it, we framed our observations on market forces and their influence on the academy with a general definition of neoliberalism offered by Ford, Porfilio, and Goldstein (2015)

as an intensification of the private and its dominance over the public; as an ideological and political force that seeks to generalize the rule of the market throughout society, as a project aspiring to subject every domain and aspect of life to the rule of market exchange and capitalist production. (pp. 6-7)

As we attempt to show in our individual contributions to this paper, the institution of teacher education and the institution more broadly, might constitute a response to worldlessness. We each echo Ricoeur’s concerns about plurality and action in concert, in terms of our concern about how programs—and the languages we use—may be restrictive. Specific structures limit questions of purpose and enact forms of power that constrain how we think about excellence and the nature of responsibility with which we are entrusted as teacher educators. In what follows, we approach these issues first with individual perspectives on our work as teacher educators; then, we bring our individual voices together in a collective contemplation of possibilities as we ponder the future of teacher education practices in Canada.

Through our individual and collective reflections we hope to offer a sense of what we mean by taking up responsibility in the Arendtian sense of that term in the face of worldlessness and our response to wordlessness. It is a kind of hope and a sense of responsibility captured in a chapter of a forthcoming volume on research in teacher education in Canada; the chapter deals with philosophical issues in teacher education and summing up the responsibility of thinking in philosophical terms, the authors write that,

our hope is that this chapter may provoke us to consider how we, as teacher educators, stand in relation to our projects of research, our teaching, and our wider

relationships to the educational community. How do we speak our knowing? Here the argument would be that despite appeals to science and methods of research, claims to impartiality do not remove us from the responsibility to question our work. As Gadamer (in Palmer, 2001) says in an interview, "...I would say that the fact that we are able to apply certain methods to certain objects does not establish why we are pursuing knowledge in the humanities and social sciences" (p. 41). As a question of historical consciousness we may think of our work as a form of science, or research, but is it sufficient to rest legitimacy on certain methodological (or paradigmatic) forms of asserting truth and what counts as knowledge? (Phelan, Smits, & Ma, forthcoming)

Our ensuing stories are appeals to thinking about teacher education, its purposes, and how it may live in the world in contexts of adversity and conditions that make thought difficult. We understand our responsibility, then, in terms of Arendt's challenge: "*What I propose, therefore, is very simple: it is nothing more than to think what we are doing*" (1958, p. 5; italics added).

A Crisis of Wordlessness in Teacher Education **Jo Towers**

This brief essay attempts to give voice to a troubling crisis of identity I have been experiencing since the dismembering of a previous learner-focused, field-oriented, and inquiry-based teacher education program at our institution, and its replacement with a new program that we are told is giving schools and principals exactly what they need—subject specialists, from Kindergarten to Grade 12. The route to specialization includes traditional methods courses in the subject discipline together with separate courses in such topics as Lifelong Learning, First Nations, Métis, and Inuit History, Education and Leadership, Pragmatics of Teaching and Learning, and Assessment and Evaluation. There is even a *separate* course in *Interdisciplinary Learning*. My experience of this replacement of the previous integrated, case-based model of teacher education (Lund, Panayotidis, Smits, & Towers, 2012) with the course-based specialism model is one of fragmentation, de-skilling of teaching, privileging of rules and procedures over the exercise of practical wisdom, a breathless rush to accountability, and a silencing of any kind of theorizing in or about education. This trajectory is a manifestation of the "new managerialism" that is sweeping across post-secondary campuses throughout the world:

New managerialism represents the organisational arm of neoliberalism. It is the mode of governance designed to realise the neoliberal project through the institutionalising of market principles in the governance of organisations. In the public sector (and increasingly in civil society bodies) it involves the prioritisation of private (for-profit) sector values of efficiency and productivity in the regulation of public bodies. (Lynch, 2014, n.p.)

One of the most insidious effects of new managerialism in public institutions is that, as Davies (2003) fearlessly describes, it systematically removes the locus of power from practising professionals and actively silences dissent. To begin to understand how this push to wordlessness manifests itself in my particular context, I begin, deliberately, with someone else's words—those of educational philosopher Shlomo Back (2002):

In an age of uncertainty, there is no practical advantage; it is even, perhaps, ethically dangerous to transmit doubtful theories or rigid pedagogic technologies.

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It is essential to teach... [teacher education] students to create their own practical knowledge, knowledge that will have meaning for them and will help them to act successfully in confusing... situations. (p. 4)

How best this might be achieved, according to Back, is through a rethinking of the relation between theory and practice in traditional teacher education programs. A wonderful place to begin to look at how theory and practice are related in a teacher education program is through its assessment and evaluation mechanisms. While it might seem curious to begin with assessment (for many, the end-point of learning), in traditionally-structured teacher education programs the assessment “tail” wags the education “dog” and so understanding the structures being privileged in this crucial phase of the educational process helps to illuminate the overall trajectory.

Let us get back to Back (2002) who, drawing on Aristotle, positions every event as “‘exceptional,’ requiring thought and study” (p. 3). In this framing, assessing a student’s assignment is an exceptional event—requiring deliberation and a personal and unique response. However, within our new teacher education program, the standardized evaluation rubric is king. These are developed, in the absence of the students on whose work they will be applied, either by a “Course Coordinator” who coordinates all sections of a particular course or, sometimes, by the team of course instructors who will later apply the rubric. They are printed in course outlines and distributed to students before instructors meet their classes, and are required to be systematically applied to each piece of work so as to confer a transparent consistency on the grading process (no doubt so that when students appeal a grade the administration and their lawyers can point to the rigorous and consistent nature of the program-wide assessment process). I face a crisis of identity, though, each time I am required to somehow fit students’ offerings within such a standardized evaluation rubric (that I and my students have not created and that I do not feel is adequate to the monumental task of assessing thinking). I take seriously the etymological derivation of the word assessment (from the Latin *assidēre*, to sit beside), understanding my assessment role as one of sitting beside learners to assist in their learning. Part of this sitting beside, for me, includes a conversation with students to negotiate what constitutes good work, what knowledge has value, and how it might show itself in any document or media they produce. The standardized, already-published rubric strips me of my capacity to have such a conversation with my students.

In order to ensure rubrics are being consistently applied, instructor teams often meet to collaboratively mark some examples of student work and calibrate the grading process. As Davies (2003), drawing on the work of Schmelzer (1993), noted, such meetings, while touted as wholesome collaboration between colleagues, serve as a surveillance mechanism ensuring not only that, for instance, the prescribed rubric is applied consistently but, significantly, that it *is* being applied (and not ignored or subverted). Hence, “we have the multiplied gaze of the workers on each other, their gaze shaped by the policies and practices emanating from management” (Davies, 2003, p. 92). As Davies wrote, “the multiplied gaze [even] infiltrates and shapes the way work is understood” so that the scholarly conversation about assessment at such meetings simply no longer strays beyond the bounds of how everyone is applying the prescribed rubric. Constraining of such conversation begins well before instructors have specific work to grade. In orientation meetings at the beginning of each semester, questions about what philosophy undergirds the program (and therefore ought to be guiding our potential actions within it) are acknowledged to be “important” but then swept aside because the agendas at such

events are already populated with activities designed to relay the responsibilities of those charged with teaching individual constituent parts of the program.

The system also relies on a form of morality described by Foucault (1977, 1980) as an orientation to compliance founded on a sense of responsibility to one's colleagues. Any disruption of the single-minded focus of new managerialism therefore brings with it a sense of guilt that one is hampering one's colleagues' ability to function within the system. Further, "within the terms of the new system individuals [are] presented with an (often overwhelming) range of... administrative tasks for which they are responsible" (Davies, 2003, p. 93). Everyone is under pressure to produce results (i.e., in research, in teaching, and in service) and so when the task at a particular meeting has been pre-decided (e.g., forging consistency in grading with a rubric) critique and dissent are received as a time-expensive interruption rather than as a critical part of the scholarly endeavour of educating teachers. Any questioning of the system itself, therefore, "is silenced or trivialized" (Davies, 2003, p. 93) and "the system itself is characterised as both natural and inevitable" (p. 93). Individuals, particularly untenured faculty members, are particularly vulnerable to the control exercised by such systems:

Within [such] new managerialist systems, the individual's sense of their own value is no longer primarily derived from responsible self-conduct and competent knowledge and practice of professional knowledge. And yet, at the same time, new managerialism relies on habitual, internalised surveillance, through which the conduct of conduct is carried out, to press subjects into making and remaking themselves as legitimate and appropriate(d) members of the latest shift within the particular new managerialist systems that they are caught up in.... As Schmelzer [1993] points out, that remade self is extraordinarily vulnerable and peculiarly unable to hold on to the openness of mind so valued within the professional ethics of teachers and scholars. (Davies, 2003, pp. 92-93)

A closing of the mind to alternative ways of thinking and doing is particularly evident in the messaging that we, in our institution, have received about giving feedback to learners. In some multi-section courses instructors have been required not to give formative feedback on assignment drafts and not to accept amended submissions from students that address such feedback. Apparently, such practice (while it is grudgingly acknowledged to help students learn) does nothing for the bell-curve grade distribution of grades and makes the students of instructors who do engage in formative assessment practices appear "better" than those of instructors who don't. "Sitting beside" students, then, while in whispered tones is acknowledged to be more ethical practice and to be beneficial to student learning, hence becomes a problem to be solved, a practice to be expunged in favour of a high-stakes, no-second-chance evaluation that can be declared rigorous and equitable and that it is assumed will confer the administrative holy grail of "consistency" across the program.

Stepping back from assessments, we can also consider the system of production of the assignments that feed the assessment machine in today's post-secondary institutions. In the new undergraduate teacher education program at our institution, the doing, the busyness, and the frenetic pace of assignment production increasingly constitute the very purpose of the educative endeavour. Every course has a plethora of assignments, designed by individual Course Coordinators, sometimes, though not always, with the assistance of the team of instructors who teach the particular course in any given year. Given that there are so many assignments for students to produce, these now need to be minutely scheduled across each semester to ensure that

no more than three assignments are due in any one week across every element of the hyper-scheduled course structure. Getting assignments completed has therefore supplanted the “doing” that might, in the previous program, have included whiling over a case study, hunting and gathering for readings and resources that had personal significance for the learner, and deep reflection on an educational issue.

Edicts have been issued to faculty members appealing for us not to ask our teacher education students to read too many articles—and certainly not ones that might be “difficult”—because students are “very busy” (doing assignments!). But this is a university, and these are future educators. What hidden curriculum might these future teachers be learning? That teachers should leave the “difficult” texts to other university students (presumably those more capable)? That such challenging philosophical material has no practical relevance to what happens in schools? That thinking is a luxury afforded to those who have time on their hands? That reflection on action is a waste of time? That producing something (anything?), in APA format and by the required deadline, is more important than being thoughtful about what one is asked to do? These are not the values I want children to learn from their teachers, yet teacher education programs enveloped by new managerialist principles seem determined to teach future teachers that this is what matters. As Arendt (1958) would contest, we are obsessed with activity (developing exhaustive course outlines, calibrating grading schemes, etc.) and it is this activity—more than what it means (to teach)—that dominates our experience and that has begun to transform our conception of what “good” teaching looks like in a university.

Meanwhile, recent research on creativity and innovation is revealing troubling trends in the patterns of children’s thinking that are linked to the patterns of schooling in which they have been inducted. Using the Torrance Tests of Creative Thinking, Kim and Pierce (2013) found that, in America, young children’s ability to produce many ideas in response to a given prompt has decreased since 1990 and their ability to produce statistically infrequent, unique, and unusual ideas has significantly decreased over the same period—a period during which new managerialism has taken a firmer hold in American public institutions. They note that

over the last 20 years, children are becoming less emotionally expressive, less energetic, less talkative or verbally expressive, less humorous, less imaginative, less unconventional, less lively or passionate, less perceptive, less connecting of seemingly irrelevant things, less synthesizing, [and] less seeing of things in a different angle. (p. 158)

Some of the tests have indicated that children are becoming “less intellectually curious and less open to new experiences and more narrow-minded” (p. 158). Additionally, they are less likely to be able to elaborate upon a given idea and less able to capture the essence of an idea and to know what is important to a certain problem. In what ways might these declines in children’s innovative thinking be associated with the new managerialist structures within which their teachers have been educated and their school systems, increasingly, are operating? The kind of de-skilling and over-prescribing of curricula and assessments I have described is, in Schwartz’s (2009) words, “a war on wisdom,” a declaration of a lack of trust in teachers (including university teachers) to make good judgements about practice. Such rules and procedures may, as Schwartz claims, be an insurance policy against disaster “but what they assure in its place is mediocrity” and, perhaps, a lack of creativity and innovative thinking. Like Arendt (1958), who called for us to “think what we are doing” (p. 5), Schwartz calls on us to pay attention to

what we do, to how we do it, and, perhaps most importantly, to the structure of the organizations within which we work, so as to make sure that [the structure] enables us and other people to develop wisdom rather than having it suppressed.
(n.p.)

The structural organization of teacher education programs should, therefore, be mindful of their obligation to enhance practical wisdom and actively work against the imposing of wordlessness on faculty members. It is a matter of some importance in a university that academics continually ask how it might be otherwise, that we strive to guard against structures that discourage us from keeping open certain possibilities and ways of being in the world that would allow our students to respond creatively and surprisingly to our prompts. Narrowly conceiving the goals of (teacher) education forecloses contemplation in favour of an already-decided way to think about what teaching is and how it might live in classrooms. Conversely, Arendt's (1958) work, according to Mrovlje (2014), "consists of no prescriptions on what to think, nor... procedural rules on how to think. Rather, it arguably suggests a way of being in and relating to the world" (p. 66). Those of us with the necessary systemic capital, such as the relative safety of tenure, might be of service to our colleagues by recovering (quickly) from the wordlessness that is being imposed upon us within neoliberal institutions and appealing for a different way of being in the world in post-secondary institutions.

We must turn our collective minds to active contemplation of just what a post-new managerialist society might look like [and ask] just what... collective stories we might tell ourselves about this period of our history and about why and how it is another world [in which]... we want to live. (Davies, 2003, p. 102)

This essay begins one such collective story.

Whimper Against the Machine: Mourning Inquiry, Humanity, and Thoughtfulness in Teacher Education **Darren E. Lund**

"Don't it always seem to go that you don't know what you've got 'til it's gone?"
– Joni Mitchell, 1970, *Big Yellow Taxi*

*"I've got no patience now, so sick of complacence now; time has come to pay.
Yes, I know my enemies; they're the teachers who taught me to fight me.
Compromise, conformity, assimilation, submission,
ignorance, hypocrisy, brutality, the elite,
all of which are American Dreams."*

–Rage Against the Machine, 1992, *Know Your Enemy*

There is a strange kind of nostalgia growing in my colleagues and me, and perhaps it is a healthy and admittedly naïve hearkening back. There is also a chance that it is a kind of toxic thinking, the type of rumination that can eat away and erode one's sense of personal agency and efficacy. It is borne of a kind of mourning and, like all losses, it comes in waves and is triggered, at some unexpected moments, by unanticipated catalysts. Our collective work for the past decade has been to trouble and problematize our understandings of teacher education as we lived them in an innovative university teacher education program that strived for much more than an instrumentalist training of teachers for a set of status quo professional competencies. The

polyvocal text that documented our reflective thought pieces – along with critical responses to those writings – entailed a wistful recalling of a now defunct inquiry-based, field-oriented program that broke the norms of what has become a neoliberal university driven by market principles (Lund, Panayotidis, Smits, & Towers, 2012). The teacher education program we recall and now grieve had a goal to centre the student experience on fostering practical judgement, and asking complex questions about what it means to teach. For the faculty, the program demanded we ask what it means to educate teachers at that particular time in our history. The approach deliberately foregrounded a deep engagement of personal identity and collective responsibility (Arendt, 2003, p. 149), through asking big questions, building ethical pedagogical relationships, and fostering ongoing critical self-reflection among students and faculty alike.

For me, teaching “against common sense” (Kumashiro, 2009) also means intentionally tackling issues of equity and social justice through nuanced and complex questioning of power and privilege. This is one of the many vital areas of focus that seems to have been appropriated, over-managed, and commodified, all seemingly falling in line with a more pragmatic and neoliberal university model. These core values become words only, disconnected to our sense of worldliness or being in the world. Educational reforms such as we are now experiencing serve to “reinforce knowledge in the interest of existing relations and protect the people who benefit from them. They contribute to knowledge in the service of power” (Leonardo & Grubb, 2014, pp. 24-25). As academics we are being groomed to ignore our role in troubling inequities and oppression, and see ourselves as merely delivering approved content and skills to pre-service teachers. In a corporatized version of postsecondary learning, there is little room for difficult and nuanced conversations toward critical self-reflection in this sterile curriculum. To this end, Kanu (2006) asks:

How must educators attend to issues of equity and social justice in the current context of neo-liberal, neo-conservative, and managerial commitments to market-driven, standards-based education? What is the particular poverty of curriculum and pedagogy within these contexts and what kinds of curricular imaginations are possible in the alleviation of this poverty? (p. 17)

Sadly, we and other colleagues in the academy across North America now find these notions lacking in the curriculum, a graduate and undergraduate program model that seems more about universalizing a common set of deliverables, disseminating and testing knowledge acquisition, standardizing course outlines, creating one-size-fits-all rubrics for assessment, and monitoring and adjusting instructor compliance to the goals of the program.

We know these growing concerns about the academy are not new, and that the “radical left” have been warning us for decades, but there is a particular poignancy for us; it is a sense of having something – or at least trying something radical and important – and then losing it. There exists for me a tingling feeling, like those who have experienced amputation report receiving from their severed limb. You can see the thing is gone, but you still experience the sensations from when it was there. There was an unusual emotional investment and an embodied experience that lingers. Perhaps it was a kind of naivety that lulled us into believing that our way of thinking about teaching and the preparation of professionals was constantly progressing and improving, working toward a kind of ideal. I wanted to think that. But this is what Hedges (2010) calls “magical thinking,” and it inhibits necessary action:

This magical thinking, this idea that human and personal progress is somehow inevitable, leads to political passivity.... It exacerbates despair. It keeps us in a state of mass self-delusion. Once we are drawn into this form of magical thinking, the purpose, structure and goals of the corporate state are not questioned. (p. 200)

And it is indeed a form of corporatism that we are seeing. Unlike Arendt's (2003) notion of imaginative thinking, grounded in the "silent dialogue between me and myself" (p. 157) and here, in the everyday practice of what it means to teach, we are drawn into a mythological type of thinking devoid of such meaning and intention. Rather than use our faculty of judgement using relevant practical examples, we allow representation through magical thinking that has no meaningful basis in our lived experiences as educators.

My colleague has cogently outlined above some emblematic examples that reveal specific ways our university and faculty, like many others, have embraced much of the new "reality" for universities. This approach values standardized curricula and assessment, and sees university governors and administration bowing to corporate-led economic forces, and eagerly answering the demands of restraint and strategic restructuring guided by the consumerist ideals of conservative governments. As Giroux (2011) warns, this market-driven approach has become a form of "casino capitalism" and has made our schools places that "deadens the imagination by defining and framing classroom experiences through a lethal mix of instrumental values, cost-benefit analyses, test-based accountability schemes, and high-stakes testing regimes" (p. 114). Further, our new education models have drowned out and repressed

those spaces and pedagogical practices that provide the conditions for students to think critically, value their own voices, mobilize their curiosity, engage in shared learning, and – most of all – acquire the knowledge, habits, public values, and social relations necessary for the practice of empowerment necessary for fostering a real democracy and taking responsibility for sustaining it. (p. 114)

There is no political courage allowed, encouraged, or even tolerated in this regime. Indeed, as Jubas and Seidel (2014) astutely observe:

We see evidence that the public university as a hub of liberal, humanistic, or even radical purpose has been traded in for a vision of the university as a training and credentialing body in the service of the economy.... The importance of critical thinking and intellectual rigor can clash with a discourse of the learner-as-consumer and the consumer-as-always-right. (p. 8)

Adhering to standard responses of fiscal accountability, economic crisis management, program planning through bottom-line thinking, and group-think approaches to curriculum design, are just some manifestations of what Ritzer (1996) termed the new *McUniversity*, and we all play some part in supporting its formation and maintenance. I have willingly been a member on some of the "program planning committees" that consumed vast swaths of time to produce a "new and improved" curriculum in one program, and yet, the results of these "collaborative" endeavours have always felt a bit pre-planned from the outset.

Also slipping away is any sense of individual efficacy or agency. Our intellectual expertise and public voices at universities across Canada and the U.S. are discouraged by the random assignment of new "canned" and pre-planned courses just slightly outside of our area of expertise. In these faculty-wide offerings, there will be little chance of our drawing on our own

findings or expertise in subject-area literature. There will be even less chance of our being deeply invested in the course content and “delivery,” already pre-determined by a pat course outline prepared in advance by an administrator, or an administration-led team. The inexorable movement of most of the graduate—and now more undergraduate—course offerings online to improve institutional profitability as a unit is another unquestioned development.

Further, the hiring of vulnerable, low-paid, temporary sessional workers to deliver these courses is pitched as simply making good economic common sense. Our roles as public intellectuals are over; instead we become replaceable cogs in a more efficient degree-granting machine. In analyzing these trends in the academic and business worlds, Hedges (2010) cited an interview with Jaren Lanier, the father of virtual-reality technology, who described this model as enabling a “new collectivism.” I would apply this description to the new collective model for the academy; like a mini-Wikipedia, course outlines are no longer our unique intellectual property nor are they created for our independent academic imperatives, but rather, are part of a “hive mentality” with “technologies that accelerate mass collective thought and mass emotions. Privacy, honesty, and self-reflection are obliterated in favor of image” (p. 209). The disregard for private intellectual property rights, proliferated on the Internet and now through cyber-versions of our own courses, becomes, as Hedges concludes, “the final and perhaps the deadliest assault on the arts and intellectual inquiry” (p. 210). It all seems so inevitable and simply the way things now are.

But is there even a chance to “rage against the machine” to fight our wordlessness in this system? What would effective and lasting forms of resistance look like? And how can we resist being complicit with a structure we helped create, and one that we continue to help maintain? The current teacher education program at my university, for all of the shortcomings I think I can identify, now feels like it was somehow the result of my own construction. How can any of us possibly reimagine our roles in this neoliberal creation that we helped form? On the other hand, how can we not? I wish to remain hopeful, to keep whimpering against the machine until a change happens. I am both daunted and encouraged by the words of Hedges (2010):

The indifference to the plight of others and the cult of the self is what the corporate state seeks to instill in us. That state appeals to pleasure, as well as fear, to crush compassion. We will have to continue to fight the mechanisms of that dominant culture, if for no other reason than to preserve, through small, even tiny acts, our common humanity. (p. 217)

Echoing the poignant words of T. S. Eliot’s poem, “The Hollow Men,” will we collectively stand by impotently and let our world end “not with a bang but a whimper”? I am also trying to be inspired by the words of the American activist band, Rage Against the Machine, from their song Guerilla Radio (1999): “It has to start somewhere. It has to start sometime. What better place than here? What better time than now?”

Spatial Stress and the Neoliberal Green Campus ***E. Lisa Panayotidis***

“There is always someone around the campus who likes to talk about life there.”

(Callaghan, 1948, p. 3)

The disillusioning processes and experiences—the worldlessness according to Arendt that my colleagues and I discuss in this paper—alters our sense of self and the collectivities to which we belong. Radical contemplation, thoughtful critique, and interpretation are supplanted by an interminable but vacant textual *wordliness*, as allusions to “collaboration,” “innovation,” and “equity” proliferate. As agents “commonly assumed to be passive and guided by established rules,” we are subject to an “operational logic that is concealed by the form of rationality currently dominant in Western culture” (de Certeau, 1984, p. xi). In these untenable relations, I am always cognizant that the estrangement and objectification my colleagues and I confront, in our day-to-day work in teacher education is contextualized in a specific place and time. Our struggles with institutional practices and policies that curtail our wisdom and scholarly knowledge—emblematic of neoliberalism—are lived out, imposed, resisted, and negotiated not only through bureaucratic and textual practices, but in the very physical spaces themselves.

The reconstitution of university teaching and learning spaces—a significant aspect of teacher education—is a manifestation of the larger project of neoliberalism. Scholarly critiques of the neoliberal university in Canada have long pointed to the unyielding process of strategic reorganization and commodification of academic work. Intended increasingly to serve labour market needs, knowledge production has become commercialized and knowledge producers have been unwittingly cast as “entrepreneurs.” This neoliberal agenda, and broader mechanism of regulation and efficiency it promotes, is starkly exhibited in the physical spaces of the institutions we inhabit. Institutional spaces—in and outside of Faculties of Education, in many cases newly built or refurbished—such as classrooms, lecture halls, libraries, and the campus environment itself, reflect, re-produce, and authorize this neoliberal agenda and the practices of order and regulation to which my colleagues spoke above.

Rushing to showcase our progressive facility with the *latest technological advances for 21st century learning*, we boast of classrooms that contain no windows. We have expensive libraries flush with the *latest technological advances for 21st century learning*, which have few seats and fewer books, outside of select reference works. Such books must be ordered well in advance from the off-campus repository and are best used in one’s individual office. Even though classroom space is limited and often wanting on most campuses, university lands are continually sold off to “research firms” for revenue. If that firm is a technology start-up company, then all the better, because we can then negotiate the *latest technological advances for 21st century learning* for our own use. And in the end, if space is at a premium, why not embrace technological platforms, such as *Blackboard* or *Desire to Learn*, and simply teach online? Our students, we are told, demand that their anachronistic teacher educators demonstrate their competencies of the *latest technological advances for 21st century learning*.

Teacher Education, not unlike other fields of study, and the institution itself, seeks to embrace sustainability, attempting to speak on behalf of an environmental stewardship and concern for the “more than human world.” (Abram, 1996) The proverbial campus—so boldly featured in promotional materials—serves as the site of scholarly engagement and educational attainment. And yet the campus spaces—the classrooms, buildings, administrative offices, and green spaces (natural and constructed)—that we inhabit today are seldom visible to our collective critical gaze. While we travel through the campus, we race from one building to the next, we teach in various classrooms, and work in our offices, the campus is merely seen as the “obscure background of social activity” (de Certeau, 1984, p. xi). Our nominal awareness of the campus—as much as the forms of teacher education we critique—is a deterrent to our

intellectual deconstruction and re-articulation of the lives we (and our students) live on campus (Panayotidis, 2009).

In contrast, Henri Lefebvre (1991) and Edward W. Soja (2010), among other theorists, have written about the critical importance of understanding the social production and organization of space, as ordered around multiple “simultaneities” and relations among people, the political and ideological apparatuses in the urban environment and everyday life. Directed toward the revolutionary transformation in society that is possible by imagining architecture and spaces as an organic and vital elements of our daily lives, they propose that inhabitants could experience urban spaces, as vital relational, embracing, and politically just. Disenfranchised and unmindful to our campus spaces, we are solitary tourists (sightseers at worst!), rather than engaged and immersed travelers or inhabitants who share a collective ethos and space. Lefebvre and Soja might argue that attending to the neoliberal campus is a critical aspect of what they term “spatial justice.”

Problematically, the campus, Latin for “field” or “an expanse surrounded by woods or higher ground” has always loomed large in the popular imagination and has evoked a certain nostalgic cache that is conducive to historicist neo-liberal agendas. Popularly represented and reproduced through a variety of media such as university yearbooks, student and city newspapers, alumni and popular magazines, memoirs, autobiographies, postcards, decorative and topographical maps, paintings and illustrations, movies, novels and poetry, the campus has always spawned vibrant images of the space and place of the university campus and cultural understandings about the intersecting function of intellectualism, academic learning, teaching, gendered student life, professors, and the institution. In text and image, the campus was often cast as an elite enclave and, to some readers, an impenetrable intellectual grove and pastoral refuge. For example, over the course of the twentieth century, novelists—in and outside of the university have portrayed the mythical campus as being populated by larger-than-life eccentric characters with idiosyncratic comportment, energized by desirous and oft-times capricious motivations. Canadian campus fiction authors such as Stephen Leacock, Morley Callaghan, and Constance Beresford-Howe endowed the space of the campus with emotional and romantic resonance. The campus was encountered as an organic and vital organism that was subjectively and reflexively linked to its dwellers.

The neoliberal agenda that has influenced the spatial and nostalgic re-envisioning of the campus has been shaped, in one instance by the “Greening of the Campus” movement and the historicism it seeks to evoke. Represented by notions of sustainability, environmental stewardship, and dialogic engagement between past and present it serves to enhance institutional branding. “Greening the Campus” inexorably forges a dualistic tension between the *local* and the *global*, between an idealistic past and progressive global futures. Bulotaite (2003) observes that in promoting a “university heritage” through branding and marketing serves “to communicate ‘corporate identity’ in order to promote attraction and loyalty and to create a single platform for the strategic communication of a given university to differentiate it from its competitors” (p. 450). Memory, space, and place, have become corporate commodities in today’s university campuses. One might argue that historical universities have always shown an insightful understanding of how to promote their historical paths (see Panayotidis & Stortz, 2011).

Over the past two decades, a new historicism has taken hold of campus planning across North America. Greening the sustainable campus draws heavily on historical discourses and language of environmental determinism and 19th Century social theorist John Ruskin’s social-

aesthetic notions of “preserving natural beauty.” Iconographic symbols such as the campus gates, a central village green, and lines of trees and open spaces that created aesthetic viewpoints have become stock features for post-war universities seeking to mould a more expansive historical lineage and academic character. Nonetheless, even older universities are focussed on *re-enhancing* their historical features. We might ask: what does it mean today to argue for such historicism in campus and university planning? What new forms of pastoral-fantasies or educational sanctuaries does it seek to elicit? Significantly, is this pastoral image of the university problematic in the face of existing neoliberal university agendas? Implicit in this pastoral idealism is a misdirected and politically sanitizing nostalgia.

Foucault would remind us that the bureaucratic and unceasing “doing” we experience on a daily basis—knowingly or unknowingly—distracts us from the underlying neoliberal agendas of higher educational institutions. Lest we imagine that a reassuring walk in the natural spaces of the campus will bring us respite, we forget the way in which such spaces are pre-scripted to stimulate our desire for environmental and sustainable living. Accordingly, they are not conceived as spaces of intellectual dissent or democratic counter insurgencies. They are not sites of inclusiveness but mere ideological enclosures branded to evoke particular “images, emotions, experiences,” and associations. Bulotaite (2003) suggests that, “in the increasing competition among higher education institutions, heritage may provide a powerful advantage in attracting prospective students and employees (p. 450).

To inquire into the historical, cultural, political and ideological space of the campus is not simply a “philosophical” (or romantic) pursuit that is, to many people, “a polite way of making them seem interesting, yet also irrelevant” (Varela, Thompson, & Rosch, 1991, p. 133). Rather, it raises the profound implications for understanding more deeply the conditions of world-alienation, conditions we experience in our classrooms alongside our students. It offers possibilities for us to take up the ethical question of how to live well together so we can flourish as humans, in particular spaces and places.

Hannah Arendt’s notions of natality and the renewal of the world through the young remind us that as teachers we have an obligation and duty in the face of the other, as Levinas would say, to speak and name the unspeakable. For our part we are not facilitators nor guides; we are teachers entrusted to lead (and sometimes follow) young people to places that are often difficult for both of us to confront. Simply reducing the world to a set of regulations, protocols and procedures erases the complexity of what can be cultivated in our classrooms and in our world through critical contemplation and thoughtfulness.

Countering Wordlessness in Teacher Education: What Stories Can or Should we Tell?

Hans Smits

“We are...so completely submerged in the human world, in what Heidegger called the ontic, that we have little time any longer for what he liked to call the question of Being.” (Fredric Jameson, 2015, p. 125)

I take my cue from Lisa’s statement above, that as teachers, “we are entrusted to lead (and sometimes follow) young people to places that are often difficult for both of us to confront.” As teacher educators, we are perhaps removed from the immediate exercise of authority, in Arendt’s terms, for children, but our fundamental interest and concern is nonetheless a renewal

of the world (in more immediate terms of schools, teaching and learning) and to offer a “scaffold,” to use an older term of learning, for new teachers to take up their responsibilities.

Our shared theme and concern in this paper is the difficulty of countering worldlessness, and the realization that a headlong rush into the language of technique, efficiency, accountability, and managerialism, while providing certain kinds of language, only make us more wordless with regard to what really matters in the work of teacher education. Indeed, it may be that what we are trying to grapple with collectively in this paper is what Jameson (2015) calls “singularity:” something unique that resists categorization and imposed limits. For us, singularity has to do with the deeper purposes of education, the responsibilities of educators and how and why we orient our young to a renewal of the world, but these are fundamental concerns not reducible, for example, to rubrics for assessment or prescribed programs of study.

The shadow that moves through all our pieces, or perhaps to borrow the cinematic term the *mise-en-scene*, literally “the environment or setting in which something takes place” (Bal, 2002, p. 96), is that of the neoliberal transformations of society and culture and indeed the institutions in which we work. It is beyond the scope of this work to outline fully the meaning of neoliberalism, and we would resist attempting to draw simple causal connections between macro-economic and global economic forces and what we see happening in our institutions and how we practice our responsibilities. But it is possible, at the risk of drawing too large strokes, to recognize what is at work on a large scale: as the political theorist Connolly (2013) describes it, “neoliberalism... projects inordinate confidence in impersonal market rationality” (p. 7; emphasis in original). He elaborates further that the imposition of neoliberal policies include phenomena such as the restraint of labour organizations and consumer groups, increased corporate participation in schools and universities, and the general colonization of public spaces and interests in favour of corporate power and wealth with forms of de-regulation that remove protection for the environment and the most vulnerable in our society. Neoliberalism in its contemporary form, Connolly emphasizes, “campaigns to make the state, the media, schools, families, science, churches, unions, and the corporate estate be ordered around neoliberal principles of being” (p. 22), which emphasizes the primacy of the market as a reality of our lives with an overemphasis on an individualistic, competitive rationality.

Rather than seeing neoliberalism in causal terms, the metaphor of *mise-en-scene* is perhaps more helpful if we think of it as a background to our work and how we attempt to narrate interests and enact our responsibilities. Using that metaphor, there are some obvious impacts on our work in the universities. For example a recent article in the *Globe and Mail* (Chiose, 2015) described the widespread use in universities of contract teachers and the corresponding decline in the numbers of tenure-track faculty members. While the overt cause of this is ascribed to decreases in government funding, the article implies a profound shift in the way the work of university teachers is construed, organized, and managed, and the concomitant increased insecurity for large numbers of teachers.

The changes in ways universities recognize and compensate instructors is only one example of how neoliberal policies of shrinking the public sphere by years of underfunding have impacted the university. Another is that increasingly public universities in Canada are required to seek resources from the private sector and rely on the generosity of private donors. Again, it would be simplistic to ascribe this as a cause of how universities organize their work and identify their purposes. But as a *mise-en-scene*, neoliberalism may lead to a perception of blurred boundaries between public purposes and private, and between broadly defined societal, cultural,

and knowledge interests or more immediate economic ones. The changes we refer thus force us “to rethink the role and reach of markets in our social practices, human relationships, and everyday lives” (Sandel, 2012, p. 15).

The effects of increasing ambiguity about the distinctions between public and private may thus be profound and yet difficult to recognize and articulate. Jameson (2015) suggests that one of the effects of the current historical period is what he calls the “death of historicity” which refers to a weakening of our concrete sense of the experiences of past and future. While post-secondary institutions like universities may be formally public, they also may nonetheless come to embody an amnesia about past origins and project ambiguously their future purposes, particularly in terms of public identity and interests. Interestingly, Jameson suggests that what has become more predominant is the contest over space rather than time: the idea of who owns what and how it is identified is at stake rather than identity in historical terms. Thus questions about temporality, the spaces in which we attempt to create meaning and understanding, the very purposes that may or should underlie or work as educators, for example, are subjected to uncertainty. Formerly stable narratives of the function of the university for example, or the purposes of education can become diffuse or even marginalized. Neoliberalism, thus understood as radical re-organizing of society as well as the undermining of stable forms of representation and language, contribute to what we are calling worldlessness in our collective discussion in this paper.

I was thinking about these ideas and what it would mean for teacher education when reflecting about a recent experience I had while sightseeing in the Catalan city of Barcelona. Rather than following a prescribed tour, sometimes, the most interesting thing is just doing some unplanned strolling and observing people as they go about their daily lives. Perhaps because it was finally spring and sunny and mild, we encountered several school groups on field trips. On one of our days in Barcelona we came upon one such group, probably junior-high-age students and their teacher. They were standing outside of an old cathedral attached to remnants of an ancient Roman wall that represents the border between the old, Gothic part of Barcelona with its maze of narrow streets, and the newer obviously modernist Barcelona beginning across the street. Outside the wall of the old Barcelona cathedral the teacher was talking animatedly and pointing things out to his students and, as a former junior high school teacher myself, I was taken with the evident rapport between the teacher and his students.

My first thought was what a wonderful, albeit literal, illustration of Arendt’s discussion of the teacher’s place in bridging the old and the new in students’ lives: a living example, if you like, of how a teacher mediates his relationship with his students in attempting to honour both the old and the new and to help them understand the possibilities inherent in what the world that has been, is, and may yet become. I couldn’t discern the class backgrounds of these children. I would guess that they were public school students, but depending on their class backgrounds, already placed differently in relation to past and future. As well, the children were a diverse group, at least visibly, of various cultures and backgrounds. So in their individual experiences they may represent Spain’s rich but problematic and contested history, including its colonial past. That history complicates what it means to the students to live in or near historical forms of life that were not necessarily that of their parents, making the confluence of old and new so interesting in this encounter.

The example I offer is belied by the vibrant simplicity of the scene. As much as it was about a happy and engaged teacher and his students, it also showed on reflection the complexity

and intricacies of that teacher's task. In the first instance the children's experiences, even though they may live in Barcelona (but likely not in the old area) may not be that different than that of a tourist, in that the "old" is simply part of an interesting spectacle, part of the museum of the past, but not something necessarily enduring in their lives. Of course I did not know how the teacher was engaging his students in terms of the discipline of history, or how he was mediating his own understandings of history and his and his students' place in it.

Turning from the old to the new, the lessons are also uncertain. Spain, like other European countries, is in the midst of a severe economic crisis, and an imposed program of austerity, which especially affects the young; indeed, unemployment is said to be as high as 50 percent for young adults, the age of the teacher we observed. As the children were being attentive to the teacher's gestures and words while facing the medieval cathedral, across the street there were bank signs dominant on glass towers representing the modern Barcelona. The "old" so to speak offers ambiguous lessons in terms of origins and identity; the "new" is also ambiguous and uncertain in its offering for future lives and possibilities (e.g., the lack of employment or permanent unemployment, fewer public sector jobs, the limiting or eradication of social supports such as pensions, and the like).

If I been nosier (and understood Catalan!) I may have tried to listen in on the teacher's lesson: how was he taking up historical understanding? Was he merely a tour guide, or showing the old as one might observe artifacts in a museum? Was it only to instill a sense of justifiable pride, evident in his animation, in the rich heritage still vibrantly alive in their city? Or in that pedagogical moment, something else, something that might spark the children's thinking about their places in that moment, both spatially and historically? Or do those questions even matter in the scheme of things? It was a beautiful spring day, in a beautiful, if flawed in contemporary political and economic terms, part of the world. Perhaps the teacher and children were simply revelling being outside the walls of a school. It was, by what any observer could see, an apparently happy moment in the lives of these people. Why burden this with questions of intent that perhaps are difficult if not often impossible to follow in the workdays of teaching and learning?

And yet it is these kinds of questions and concerns that bother our work as teachers and teacher educators. My story perhaps points to what is "educational" and what constitutes learning, in contrast to simply fulfilling what is demanded by programs. Serres (1997) asked, "Do schoolmasters realize that they only fully taught those they thwarted, or rather, completed, those they forced to cross?" (p. 7). Further, in following this question, he wrote evocatively of learning as a kind of voyage, requiring

a rending that rips a part of the body from the part that still adheres to the shore where it was born... whoever does not get moving learns nothing.... The voyage of the children, that is the meaning of the Greek work pedagogy. Learning launches wandering. (pp. 7-8)

"Wandering," echoes Hannah Arendt's emphasis on the importance of natality, as in terms of our responsibility for creating spaces and openings that might allow wandering into the unknown. Whether or not the teacher in my Barcelona story was conscious of his actions, it is possible that his work with students could allow them to glimpse, whether in the present or more likely longer term, possibilities for themselves as members of the community or communities in which they will find themselves. But being well-trained and prepared, for example, in his discipline of

teaching, or organizing learning at age-appropriate levels, or the refinement of his ability to communicate well and authoritatively which may have been the emphases of a “program” that formed his training as a teacher (all of which is important in terms of professional preparation) still would not fully explain his work and responsibility as a teacher, and about who he is as a teacher and his place in the world. And in terms of my discussion at the outset of this section, the background of neoliberalism that frames the *mise-en-scene* of our discussion, my story of the Barcelona teacher and his students shows the complexity, in the current era, of providing any firm footing in history, or any certainty in temporal hopes and teleologically-oriented goals of education. It is in this sense that we question a retreat into technique as a wordless response to what is required from us educators and encourage us instead to question what kinds of “stories” we ought to attempt to create in order to situate ourselves and our students in the world that is both given to us and awaits our concerted thinking and action.

Conclusion: Responses to Wordlessness

“To think what we are doing” (Arendt, 1958, p. 5)

“The manifestation of the wind of thought is no knowledge; it is the ability to tell right from wrong, beautiful from ugly. And this indeed may prevent catastrophes, at least for myself, in the rare moments when the chips are down.” (Arendt, 2003, p. 189)

We are drawn to Arendt’s notion of worldlessness because it seems to point to how we think (and understand such thinking) about our work and how we keep open certain possibilities and ways of being in the world that can respond productively and hopefully to its difficulties and the gift and challenge of plurality. Much of the quality of our responses to challenges of practice are necessarily consumed in the demands and needs for research and as well struggling with how we enact in our work in the frameworks of instrumentally and results-oriented managerialism. Education that becomes framed in terms of narrowly conceived goals does not allow us to engage more fully with the issues and examples of practice we have discussed in this paper. Simply relying as well on research and its production, while central to our identities as scholars, also does not ameliorate wordlessness. If we think of our work in education as a scholarly or scientific enterprise, we may nevertheless be cautioned that, as the Italian hermeneutic philosopher Vattimo (2011) suggests, “science doesn’t think” (p. xxx). Vattimo proposes that we cannot simply take [research] as the truth of things without an attunement to the very contexts that demand careful attention and understanding. It is not that we are questioning the importance of research or to denigrate the need to critically engage in writing and dialogue with questions for which we carry responsibility. Rather, it is to remind ourselves, as we attempt to do in this paper, to commit to and engage in a concerted effort to acknowledge the challenges of worldlessness, and the recognize as well the limits of language and the ways our work is framed that may limit possibilities for alternative visions, perspectives, and actions in the world.

As we try to show above in our individual stories, we are trying to understand a certain kind of commitment that is integral to Arendt’s notion of responsibility. The kind of hermeneutic engagement which we hope we have exemplified involves a critical reflection on our practices, spaces and the language and concepts that may hold more deeply our hopes and intentions. Arendt (2003) has emphasized that thinking, much like Vattimo suggests above, is not just about accumulating knowledge, but to rather the effort to find meaning. Thinking as a quest for

meaning, however, is not just idle speculation but a way of guiding ourselves through the exigencies of the world and how we think about and enact “practical purposes” (p. 166). If there is a forgetting about the need to engage in thinking as a fundamental quality of our work then there is a danger that thinking becomes the “handmaiden of knowledge, a mere instrument for ulterior purposes” and citing Heidegger, Arendt writes that thinking as a mere instrument is “out of order” (pp. 165-166).

Thinking, reasoning, and narrating our experiences can contribute to wordlessness when they become “mere instruments” for meeting programmatic ends, for which we offered examples in this paper. But it is a way of being out of order, as Arendt suggests. However, being *out of order* in another sense of that term is what we need more of. Agamben (1998) has written that one of the fundamental questions challenging us in the face of unremitting global and neoliberal transformations of the social order is what constitutes a life, what it means to be human as more and more people are, in his terms, exempted from fuller participation in productive and democratic lives. As we have tried to illustrate in our contributions to the discussion above, the old categories of politics and programs perhaps fail us, but on the other hand, as Agamben (1993) emphasized, we can think more determinedly and ethically about the means that can pull us together in challenging identities and assumed universalities in the interest of more inclusive understandings of what constitutes as humans. As Arendt emphasizes, thinking in such terms—giving space for contemplation—is more than just filling the space with words that may avert our responsibility to live and work well with others.

Keeping open that space is in part what we mean by responsibility. That kind of effort requires that we locate ourselves as teacher educators who want and desire certain possibilities in our work, how we might “live in relation to a peculiar human possibility,” but with an awareness that we need to figure out what that possibility is (Lear, 2006, p. 7). It is that kind of effort that we have committed to here as a way of taking up the challenge of worldlessness and creating possibilities for creating meaningful engagements with our responsibilities as teacher educators. To paraphrase Agamben (1993) when he writes, “every lament is always a lament for language, just as all praise is principally praise of the name” (p. 58), we may indeed lament the words that fail us in contemplating more deeply and cogently the world in which we find ourselves, but worldlessness does not absolve us of seeking language that can guide our judgements and responsibilities, and indeed question the “name” of what identifies what we do and to what it is oriented.

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Critical Education

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