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Education Policymaking and Time

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This paper examines the global policy convergence of national and international testing and the use of test results to ‘steer at a distance’, particularly as it applies to policymakers’ promise to improve teacher quality. Using Deleuze’s three syntheses of time in the context of the Australian policy blueprint Quality Education, this paper argues that using test scores to discipline teaching repeats the past habit of policymaking as continuing the problem of the unaccountable teacher. This results in local policymaking enfolding test scores in a pure past where the teacher-as-problem is resolved through the use of data from testing to deliver accountability and transparency. This use of the database returns a digitised form of inspection that is a repetition of the habit of teacher-as-problem. While dystopian possibilities are available through the database, in what Deleuze refers to as a control society, for us the challenge is to consider policymaking as a step into an unknown future, to engage with producing policy that is not grounded on the unconscious interiority of solving the teacher problem, but of imagining new ways of conceiving the relationship between policymaking and teaching.

Introduction

The impact of global, or international, agendas in national and sub-national contexts is a growing concern in analyses of contemporary education policymaking. This international effect has produced convergence around specific approaches to monitoring and improving education, particularly regarding the quality of teaching. We argue that while convergence has occurred, and is changing practices in many systems, a profound difference in education policymaking has not emerged. There has been a shift in education policy, specifically toward the use of student testing as a means for monitoring teaching performance; however, this shift has not displaced the disciplinary problem of the unaccountable teacher, which remains the sine qua non of education policymaking. While education policymaking is no longer simply national and sub-national, it continues to perpetuate a logic, or habit, of education policymaking as policing the teacher.

Despite the international effect changing how the problem is articulated, captured and addressed, the problem of the teacher remains. The policymaker’s desire to inhabit the space of problem solver is a discursive one, encompassing an unconscious, if naïve, habit that requires “first, an existing problem that, second has to be solved” (Trohler, 2010, p. 14). This habitual repetition utilises different (digital) technologies to capture or record that problem. Policymaking is as much a process of interiority, which for Deleuze represents a limiting, unconscious desire-production or mode of individual and collective thought that is founded upon State or Enlightenment rationalities, as it is a process of textual production, or an act of policy-writing (Deleuze & Guattari, 2005). One manifestation of this interiority is the emergence of standardised testing as “the chief instrument of educational governance” (Trohler, 2010, p. 6). The rise of testing through policymaking has been described in a number of ways, ranging from Ball’s (2003, p. 223) “performative culture”, Lingard and Sellar’s (2013) “catalyst data”, to what Ozga has described as the shift from “government to governance” as evidenced by the growth in data as a “policy instrument” (2009, p. 150). As Ozga has suggested, this shift has occurred progressively over time. When looking at the 1990s, she observed
that “the massive investment in change seemed to have produced ‘neither catastrophe nor transformation’ in the services themselves” (Ozga, 2009, p. 151). It is this seeming paradox that lies at the heart of this paper: while the international effect has changed policy, these changes appear to have continued, albeit with increased intensity, the (disciplinary) focus on the teacher-as-problem for quality. To an extent, this paper engages with Moore’s suggestions that all education processes mobilise psychosocial repetition and that this logic of repetition has a psychological effect, as subjects (including for the policymaker) “unconsciously repeat patterns of interaction, infused with power relations, previously experienced” (Moore, 2004, p. 20). Policymaking calls forth, or repeats, habits of teachings past.

This paradox is exemplified by the Australian Labor Government’s blueprint Quality Education: The case for an Education Revolution in our schools’ continues the teacher-as-problem logic. In particular, the call in QE to increase “transparency and accountability” to improve teaching and student achievement becomes, in practice, a testing rationality, as there is “good evidence, primarily from the United States and the OECD’s Program for International Student Assessment (PISA), that the publication of school-level test scores tends to improve the performance of all schools” (Rudd & Gillard, 2008, p. 31). One result of this enfolding of the international effect within the Australian context, as suggested in the quotation, has been the introduction of NAPLAN, Australia’s version of literacy and numeracy testing (Thompson & Cook, 2012). This ‘new’ testing regime that aims to “drive improvements in student outcomes and provide increased accountability for the community” (ACARA, 2011) through datified accountability is enfolded within the logic of the teacher-as-problem.

Deleuze’s ideas help to resolve the apparent paradox of this new tool being used in an old way. While Deleuzian concepts have powerfully informed recent policy analysis and critique (Lingard & Sellar, 2013; Thompson & Cook, 2013; Webb & Gulson, 2012), his philosophy of time has yet to be used in the context of education policy. Deleuze’s ideas about time allow us to explain how, as a state/disciplinary practice, education policymaking has required the problem of teacher accountability and that this problem continues to underpin education policymaking within an international education policy effect. In addition, Deleuze’s theorising of the control society speaks to those new systems of “transfer of educational authority from the professional teacher to the standardized tests and those who construct them” (Rizvi & Lingard, 2010, p. 98). This explains the enfolding of national and sub-national education policy into an international education policy effect produced through international and national testing. Third, Deleuze’s philosophy of time explains why this change in the monitoring of teaching does not break with education policymaking as it has always been made, and why little is different even though much has changed. QE repeats past discourses of teacher-as-problem. In this, the document does not break with the habit of addressing education policymaking as a process of resolving the problem of teacher accountability.

The International Education Policymaking Effect

Many scholars have discussed the way that national and sub-national education policymaking are being affected by “new policy networks and communities” that are “located within global architecture of political relations that not only involves national governments, but also IGOs [World Bank, OECD, International Finance Corporation, World Trade Organisation]” that assess and provide advice with respect to the right education policies (Ball, 2011, p. 9). ‘Lower’ levels of education
policymaking are being overlaid by a ‘higher’ level of international policymaking causing profound changes in education policy introduced in any locality. This is the principle of “global policy convergence” (Lingard, 2010, p. 136). A key technology of this convergence is testing and the assumed accountability to and through the data produced that should now be considered “a fourth message system” alongside Bernstein’s three message systems (curriculum, pedagogy, evaluation) (Rizvi & Lingard, 2010, pp. 93-94).

In the case of the OECD, Sellars and Lingard note that “Since the mid-1990s, the OECD has increased its agency as a policy actor in education globally” (Sellar & Lingard, 2013, p. 13). The general effect is that “the education work of the OECD has shaped the assumptive worlds or policy habitus of the policymakers who drive reforms within nations” (Sellar & Lingard, 2013, p. 14). For Shahjahan “the OECD has become a major player in global higher education policy formation” and “has acquired a brand identity and asserts ‘soft power’ among its member nations” (Shahjahan, 2013, p. 2). A similar analysis could be extended to many non-State policy organisations, as evidenced by Colwell’s analysis of the 2007 and 2010 McKinsey Reports (Coffield, 2012).

This convergence manifests in the spread of systems of monitoring teaching quality by aggregating and analysing student tests scores to determine the presence, or absence, of good teaching (Thompson & Cook, 2012; Clarke, 2011; Ozga, 2009; Taubman, 2009). The international effect manifests as the increasing trust in quantitative data by those who make national or sub-national education policy. A source of the OECD’s “agency is exerted through infrastructural governance, a product of the international networks and systems it has established to collect and compare statistical data in education” (Sellar & Lingard, 2013, p. 13). The OECD’s “well-established capacity to shape the views of key actors in education across local, national and global scales” derives, to a significant extent, from the testing regimes it has introduced. “There is a self-perpetuating dynamic here, through which the OECD both prescribes education policy approaches and assesses the performance of national education systems in these terms” (Sellar & Lingard, 2013, pp. 13-14).

Lingard, Martino and Rezai-Rashti’s argue that international testing constructs “the globe as a commensurate space of measurement, in effect globalising comparison in schooling policy as a mode of governance” (2013, p. 2). This is accompanied by “globalised educational policy discourse that suggests that high-stakes standardised testing will drive up standards, and enhance the quality of a nation’s human capital and thus their international economic competitiveness” (Lingard, Martino, & Rezai-Rashti, 2013, p. 2). A telling effect of this global space of measurement is the “anxiety displayed” by policymakers in order “to compete successfully in the global knowledge economy” (Coffield, 2012, p. 132). In Australia this anxiety driving policymaking is exemplified by Education Bill 2013, where the Federal Government enacted a law committing Australia to be “by 2025, in the top 5 highest performing countries based on the performance of school students in reading, mathematics and science” (The Parliament of the Commonwealth of Australia, 2013).

For Clarke, this “fixation on testing and accountability, its desire to establish, consolidate and reproduce a hegemonic numeric ‘politic’” is made possible by a particular coding of concepts, such as quality, through quantitative data (Clarke, 2014). This desire has meant that “teaching, teacher education, and education have increasingly been abstracted and recoded as numbers such as test scores” (Taubman, 2009, p. 2). In this landscape, teaching is rendered increasingly contradictory through the introduction of a new form of governance that “works through the discursive
production of self-responsibilizing individuals... and involves networks and partnerships of various kinds that cut across older hierarchies” (Rizvi & Lingard, 2010, p. 17). In the context of education policy and practices, accountability has become “technical-managerial” accountability, which represents a “reconfiguration of the relationship between the State and its citizens” (Biesta, 2010, pp. 52, 53).

As a result of these policy assemblages “what it means to teach and to be a teacher are subtly but decisively changed” (Ball, 2003, p. 218). The psychosocial effect is that teaching becomes “ontologically insecure” within education systems that policy has made “volatile, slippery and opaque” (Ball, 2003, p. 220). On the one hand, schools function psychosocially as “sites of repetition and transference” (Moore, 2006, p. 493), yet policymaking “produced by technocrats who are far removed from the classroom” seems to have become less and less representative of the experiences of those in schools (Coffield, 2012, p. 140). Many teachers find themselves responding to policy that utilises words that makes a discursive sense to them, such as quality, excellence, equity and accountability, but that are woven together and implemented in a different ways from what could be expected, both for the policymaker and teacher (Biesta, 2010). These interactions force flows towards both “institutional schizophrenia”, the contradiction between intensification and costs of teachers’ work, and “values schizophrenia”, the resolution of tension that arises when professional ethics or values are sacrificed to performance (Ball, 2003, p. 221).

The discourse of teacher-as-problem that functions within global policy convergence around particular practices of testing and accountability is not a recent ‘truth’. It preceded the emergence of digital databases and can capture these technologies in its disciplinary logic. Education, then, has long had a disciplinary logic; for example, in the 1800s Jeremy Bentham devised ‘efficient’ school systems for different classes of students that were based on hierarchies of school inspection (Bentham, 1816). Efficiency, or quality, in these systems referred to a mix of official inspections and inferred, constant, informal inspections. A feature of these school systems was that the panoptic inspection was surveilling the teacher as much as the student. In addition, Taylorist logics of scientific management and efficient production through the collection of productivity data have been compelling in education for much of the 20th century (Callahan, 1964).

The advent of New Public Management in the UK, which is often seen as the catalyst for the marketisation of education, contributed to the new way of addressing the teacher-as-problem that has emerged though the international effect. It signalled “a different conception of public accountability, with different patterns of trust and distrust and hence a different style of accountingization” in which the public and private sectors were conflated and accountability came to mean data as results (Hood, 1995, p. 94). For Au, the ways that the data generated through high-stakes testing in the US represents a “New Taylorism in teaching through the inherent decontextualization and commoditization that such testing requires” (2011, p. 40).

While this shift is significant, it merely continues the reliance on, yet suspicion of, the teacher that underpins the disciplinary logic expressed in the new high stakes testing regime. The teacher has always “occupied an intensely ambivalent strategic position” (Jones, 1990, p. 66). The story of the urban schoolteacher “is the passage of a failure which, paradoxically, induces a more extensive examination” (Jones, 1990, p. 75). So, there is a history of teaching as the subject of various policy interventions to address the teacher-as-problem. However, the localised inspection that Jones
articulates has, in our opinion, had superimposed over it a virtual, incorporeal control that, rather than capturing teaching differently, simply changes the intensity and extensity of examination. In this database, testing scores generate a new representation of quality.

Digital databases that collect and analyse student test scores as a means of monitoring teaching quality, then, are recruited to the task of policing the teacher. It displaces surveillance through inspection with a system of surveillance through digital databases. The database is used to generate the (disciplinary concept of) the normal. As Hacking pointed out, the idea of normality “has always been with us, but which can in a moment adopt a completely new form of life” (Hacking, 1990, p. 160).

**Discipline v. Modulation and Databases**

While it is being employed in the perpetuation of a disciplinary logic, the database represents a technology through which an entirely new education policymaking logic could be deployed. The datified representation of ‘teaching’ in national and international test scoring databases could be part of Deleuze’s dystopian control society. Rather than being trapped in a disciplinary society, we are “moving toward ‘control’ societies that are no longer exactly disciplinary” (Deleuze, 1995a, p. 174).

For Deleuze, institutions, including prisons, hospitals, factory and schools, were changing in character as they became “less and less a closed site” but give way to “frightful continual training, to continual monitoring of worker-schoolkids or bureaucrat-schoolkids” (Deleuze, 1995a, p. 175). In a control society, disciplinary logics are displaced by database effects and this is what the new testing systems could produce. Databases could produce an environment in which students, and teachers, no longer responded to some specific model or mould for a normal student or teacher but responded to outputs from a continually updating database. Databases produce “the integrated management of information, and control operates less through confinement than through the use of tracking systems that follow you … your information is available and matches a certain pattern or profile” (Bogard, 2009, p. 19). For a student, it is her/his series of test scores; for teachers, it is a series of analyses of their students’ test scores that come to represent or profile ‘them’ in specific contexts. The patterns or profiles do not normalise, as each is specific to the one about whom data is collected. There can be deviation from a pattern, which may induce systemic controlling responses to induce a return to pattern, but no judgements around good or bad, or quality. For Deleuze, the logic of a control society lies the increasing use of computers and “language which is *digital*” through which individuals become “samples, data, markets or *banks*” becomes the organising logic of a control society (Deleuze, 1995b, pp. 178, 180).

While there will always be a mix of discipline and control, the question concerns which dominates. Currently, the modulatory effect of the digital database, which represents teaching is continually reterritorialised on the disciplinary practices of education-past:

modulation overlays discipline; uses it in some cases, contradicts it in some instances and complements it in others... disciplinary and modulating power must coexist as they often use
similar technologies, albeit with different intensities. Disciplinary power still produces subjectivities and knowledges in schools (Thompson & Cook, 2012, p. 574).

The global spread of testing and the construction of teaching in terms of quality, premised on the notion that there is ‘good’ and ‘bad’ teaching that is revealed through the database effect, is an example of a disciplinary enfolding of a modulatory machine.

In other words, despite this move towards control, disciplinary apparatuses remain powerful as the database functions in disciplinarity; in fact it appears to many that the disciplinarity within schools is greater than before. Datified monitoring of the teacher is of both a control and disciplinary society, in that it uses the database, which is a potentially modulatory tool, to repeat the teacher as disciplinary problem. National and sub-national education policymakers continue to respond to local pressures to produce ‘quality teaching’ and to do this they repeat past logics of enclosure, producing disciplinary power relations and subjectivities through the digitised database. In so doing they retain the logic of education policymaking that preceded the international effect. National and sub-national education policymakers have not conceded their centrality to achieving outcomes in this regard and continue to see themselves as responsible for producing quality education. This problem may be characterised as follows: how is it that so much of what policy constitutes as change or ‘reform’ in education appears to desire repetition of the past more it does create new futures? To respond this question, we engage Deleuze’s ideas of difference, repetition and time.

**Deleuze and the 3 Syntheses of Time**

To make sense of this idea of a significant change that does not produce any real difference, we use Deleuze’s theorising of time. In Deleuzian terminology, the problem is that education policymaking continues to function through a habit of requiring a problem, in this case, that of the unaccountable teacher. This persists despite a revised memory of datification as the way to represent, or capture, teaching. The result is that a new time of education policymaking does not represent difference in kind, but merely repeats past failings. Education policymaking as delivering a ‘revolution’ through utilising better systems for capturing, analysing and using data repeats the problem of teacher accountability. Like many others, Deleuze sees time as bound up with human practice and not some abstract field within which human practice occurs. But being bound up with human practice does not mean that it is consciously produced. For Deleuze, “the problem of time concerns the generation of time as the Event in which something new can be produced, prior to all subjectivity and in which the subject is produced as well” (Turetzky, 1998, p. 212).

*Deleuze’s first (passive synthesis) of time: Habit*

For Deleuze, the first passive (or unconscious) synthesis of time is that of habit. Habit refers to gestures, movements and actions that are the synthesis of earlier events. Habit can also be understood as the synthesis of contraction, or that the unconscious repetition of the gestures and movements of an occupation like teaching or policymaking, can usefully be understood as a process of contracting past events into a present. This “living present therefore goes from past to future... from the particulars that it envelops in contraction” (Deleuze, 1994, p. 26). Importantly, the present is a process, and the process is the connections formed in the present of the past and future.
Provocatively, “we live as time-makers... There are therefore many and multiple living presents” (Williams, 2011, p. 37).

It is important to note that this living present is not deterministic, there is not one path of and for contraction, nor should it be seen as an individual process. Williams argues that for Deleuze, the challenge is to “explain the relation of instants in time, without having to rest on an answer claiming that instants somehow imply one another or are somehow contained in a larger entity that they are a subset of” (Williams, 2011, p. 24). The contraction of past events into the lived present is always future oriented, to an extent the concept of “Habit” refers to the facts that contraction is asymmetrical, “it goes from past to future in the present” (Deleuze, 1994, p. 97). The habit of education policymaking, then, is the collective contraction of past events into a lived present that is future oriented, or specifically the idea that education policymaking (particularly those drives expressed through ‘reform’) contracts the past events or problems into a solution-focused lived present as a means to build a better future. The question remains, what are the habitual problems that are repeated, or contracted, within this living present? To answer this question, we engage with the second synthesis, that of memory.

**Deleuze’s second (passive synthesis) of time: Memory**

Deleuze’s second syntheses rises from a problem of multiplicity – given that there are multiple living presents, how is it that they are related? In other words, given that each teaching and each policymaking are unique, what is it that paradoxically orders them the same in time? This paradox is that of the present serving “to constitute time, but to pass into that constituted time” (Deleuze, 1994, p. 53). The second synthesis, as Williams explains, is the time “into which the present passes away” (Williams, 2011, p. 53). In this synthesis, the pure past is the creation of a memory of that past – “We cannot believe that the past is constituted after it has been present, nor when a new present appears” (Deleuze, 1994, p. 64).

If we return to the idea of teachings and policymakings, there is a process of memory for each person who stands in a given present and constitutes our past as pure. In other words, the pure past is the policymakers’ memory of the past in the present. While we may live as time-makers, the tendency to think repetitively, or to remember similar pasts that may be more institutionalised than active, is a function of the past as always being created from the standpoint of the present as process. In the second synthesis, the arrow flies from the present to the past. Thus, while teaching has a memory of teaching as a pure past, that pure past changes within the various lived presents communicated through signs, significances and subjectivities of the contemporary world. This is equally true for policymaking.

**Deleuze’s third (passive synthesis) of time: Novelty**

Both the first and second syntheses are syntheses of repetition. In a way, they are synthesis of capture, in that new is not possible within a colonising lived present in the case of the first synthesis, and a repetitive process of a pure past that holds no way out from those subjects and objects repetitively created. The third synthesis is that of the new or novel – of possibility that requires an emptiness, an indeterminacy (Williams, 2011, p. 87). This emptiness of the third time “uncovers the future” (Deleuze, 1994, p. 93) that is not the future coordinated and created by the present and past. It is here that new teachings and new policymakings are made possible, even though the first
and second syntheses function to create repetition, rather than novelty. This is a revolutionary concept – that of policymakings and teachings yet to come or a possibility where “the coherence of the self… shatter(s) into thousands of pieces” (Deleuze, 1994, p. 93).

**Quality Education and the Three Syntheses**

QE was released in 2008 as the strategic outline of the Rudd Government’s commitment to reforming education in Australia. The policy document links education to economic productivity and outlines a ‘revolution’ that will focus on “real changes in three core areas” (Rudd & Gillard, 2008, p. 5). These are “raising the quality of teaching”, “ensuring all students benefit from schooling through strategies based on high expectations, engagement, and transitions” and “improving transparency and accountability of schools and school systems at all levels” (Rudd & Gillard, 2008, p. 5). As an exemplar of education policymaking that captures the discursive (recursive) challenge of national responses to global challenges, perceived within neoliberal mindsets, QE outlines the vision of education as an economic good that only becomes a social good when it results in improved economic performance. QE builds the case for an education revolution because “schooling is an important enabler of economic potential” and focuses particular attention to improving “basic literacy and numeracy skills” (Rudd & Gillard, 2008, p. 15). The defence of the need for this revolution of accountability and transparency is an economic one, based on productivity and human capital agendas. Australia faces an education and skills challenge to sustain “the economy’s growth rate in the future [that] will depend on increasing our productive capacity” (Rudd & Gillard, 2008, p. 7).

In practice, this document has been a blueprint for the introduction of what many have called neoliberal reform technologies, such as the implementation of a testing regime (NAPLAN) (Thompson & Cook, 2012), performance pay for teachers (Thompson & Price, 2012), a national curriculum (Reid, 2009) and the increased regulation of teachers and teacher education through the AITSL standards (Connell, 2009). The revolution implied in the subtitle is, in practice, aimed at teachers and teaching – it speaks to a wider positioning of teachers as the problem, both nationally and globally, that requires a policymaking intervention. The paradox is that the revolution is both a change to and a continuation of past policymakings. In this sense, QE is the repetition of teaching-as-problem, but within the different way to conceive and address the problem that is basic to the shift from discipline to modulation (Deleuze, 1995b). To paraphrase Deleuze, QE is neither the beginning nor the end of something; it is in the middle of multiple logics and series that are both in time and of time. It partakes of a habit of teacher-as-problem, but recalls this habit differently. It remains disciplinary logics to maintain normalcy, but employs a modulatory technology with a radically different, but not more desirable, potential.

We offer this discussion in an attempt to further the useful critiques of this document that already suggest that contradictions function at, or as, the core of this document. Clarke, for example, makes the important point that the attempt to marry quality and equity in QE is “structured by a number of social logics”, which include competition driven by performance data, the individuation of teacher, making students and schools responsible, and the overall instrumentalisation of education (Clarke, 2011, pp. 180-181). Savage focuses on the incongruous equivalence of excellence and equity in the policy document and argues that seeing schooling as both “excellent and equitable learning
The Habit of Quality Education

The very title of the document contains the implication that “quality education” is not already being provided and closer inspection reveals the way that the document is founded upon a teacher-as-problem logic. Only the teacher readily comes to mind when the goal of the policymaking is one of “raising the quality of teaching in our schools” (Rudd & Gillard, 2008, p. 5). The habit of education policymaking that runs through this document continues the series of policymaker responding to problems in teaching. The habit is of policymaker as ‘change agent’, as driving the “revolution” needed to “build a culture of high expectations in our schools for our students and teachers” (Rudd & Gillard, 2008, p. 5).

The creation of monitoring systems that allow policymakers to act against “low performers” is the stuff of policymaking. It becomes the very substance from which the document is formed. To remove reference to the teacher-as-problem would be to remove much of the text and all of the subtext of the document. It is found in the continual repetition of words and phrases that project one and only one ‘now’. This is the time when policymaking is addressing the teacher-as-problem. The disciplinary habit of constituting the teacher-as-problem requires the differentiation of good and bad teaching (which in turn requires separation and hierarchy – low quality/high quality). A means for monitoring teachers is necessary because poor teachers have to be identified and addressed. For the impact of a “poor-quality teacher not only imparts less knowledge for the period they teach the student, but can leave the student worse off when they later attempt higher level work” (Rudd & Gillard, 2008, p. 21).

The habit of teacher-as-problem is manifested in a series of statements that can only make sense if quality teaching is absent. It is found in the continual repetition of the phrase “raising the quality of teaching in our schools” (Rudd & Gillard, 2008, p. 19). It emerges in a fascinating gloss on the McKinsey report, which has been widely criticised for problems of method and analysis (Coffield, 2012). The McKinsey found, unsurprisingly, “that the quality of an education system simply cannot exceed the quality of its teachers” (Rudd & Gillard, 2008, p. 21). Recognition of the fact that teacher quality constitutes a limit of the level of quality that can be achieved is immediately taken to imply “that the only way to improve outcomes is to improve instruction” (Rudd & Gillard, 2008, p. 21).

The habit of teacher-as-problem manifests most clearly in the repetition of the phrase ‘to improve’. The word ‘improve’ or its derivatives is repeated 49 times in the 27 pages of content in the document (‘raising’ and ‘betteering’ are found 6 times each). To improve has various usages in the document. At times it is used to link school performance specifically to economic indicators; such as to improve labour productivity, workforce productivity, human capital outcomes, access to vocational education and training (VET) in schools, transitions to work, School-Business Linkages and
career pathways. At other times it is used in the context of indicators of school performance; to improve school completion rates, schooling, student well-being and learning outcomes, public reporting and student outcomes. However, it is also used frequently in the context of teaching, or at least the ‘quality’ of teaching.

The logic of this usage is one of working backwards from improved economic prosperity, as the goal to the problem of poor school performance and schooling, to the cause of that problem, poor quality teaching. The obsessive repetition around improvement that leads us to the teacher-as-problem reveals the reality in which the education policymaker functions. It is one in which the policymaker causes education outcomes to improve by “facilitating and rewarding reforms that will support systemic improvement in the quality of teaching” (Rudd & Gillard, 2008, p. 22). This is why “the Australian Government is working with State and Territory Governments to develop a strong and transparent data and reporting framework... to support future improvements” (Rudd & Gillard, 2008, p. 31).

That evidence for a lack of ‘quality’ teaching comes from international assessment mechanisms, such as the OECD’S PISA (Programme for International Student Assessment) suggests something of the memory at work in this document (discussed later), but it is quickly enfolded in a disciplinary logic. QE noted that “PISA results indicate that over the last six years the percentage of students who are less than proficient at reading or maths has not reduced” (Rudd & Gillard, 2008, p. 16). But their response is to assert the existence of superior teaching, “Australia boasts many excellent schools, as well as high-quality and dedicated teachers and principals” (Rudd & Gillard, 2008, p. 16), and inferior teaching, in the requirement to distinguish the “low performers” from others. While delivering quality education may require improvement in so many other aspects of students’ lives, many of which are not even related to schools, the policymaker obsessively returns to the (habitual) knowledge that “improving the quality of the teaching workforce is fundamental to any overall improvements in schooling” (Rudd & Gillard, 2008, p. 21). In the end, the teacher is the problem to which/whom QE has to be addressed.

Memory

The continuation of the education policymaking habit of teacher-as-problem, however, does not mean that nothing has changed. Indeed, while nothing is truly Different, given the persistence of the habit, local or national policymakers come to understand their habit within an international history of addressing the teacher-as-problem through the database effect or testing where the “codes and grids of visibility” rank and pit “education systems against each other” (Lingard, Martino, & Rezai-Rashti, 2013, p. 4). This is a new memory, or synthesis of the multiplicities of living presents through data into a pure past in which we have always been and will always be addressing the teacher-as-problem. The OECD is one source of knowledge concerning the value of education and how to ensure quality delivery. The very pursuit of “quality education” reflects the fact that “improving upper secondary education attainment was one of the five policy priorities the OECD identified for Australia in its 2008 report, Going for Growth” (Rudd & Gillard, 2008, p. 16). This suggests that education policymaking is becoming a generic activity as “policy networks... involving particular kinds of social relationships, flows and movements” are constituted “based on shared conceptions of social problems and their (sic) solutions” (Ball, 2011, p. 5).
This is a new memory, as database effects are used to constitute a ‘story’ of multiple lived presents which prefigures a history in which the latest and best answer to the always and forever teacher-as-problem is through the production of better data. In QE this is represented by the expressed desire to create data systems as “accountability mechanisms”, not for the needs of teachers and students, but “that meet the needs of parents, policymakers and the broader community” (Rudd & Gillard, 2008, p. 5). This history or memory grows national and sub-national policymakers come to see themselves as belonging to an international practice.

The result is that education policymaking is recalled as an international practice for which national specificity has no role. Completion rates, for example, can be treated as the same thing from one country to the next. Comparison reveals a problem for Australia, because, “while other OECD countries have progressively improved school completion rates, in Australia these rates have changed little over the past decade” (Rudd & Gillard, 2008, p. 16). Other data presented in the document is of various, recent quality failures, for example of an Australian decline “in both its absolute and relative performance in reading literacy” (Rudd & Gillard, 2008, p. 16). This decline is further constructed as worrying because “International testing also shows that the reading performance of Australian students at the high end of the achievement scale has declined between 2003 and 2006” (Rudd & Gillard, 2008, p. 16). This performance anxiety is demonstrably quantitative; the “tail of underperformance linked to disadvantage” particularly among low SES families and Indigenous students quantified in terms of years of schooling: “The difference between students from the low SES quartile and those in the highest is also more than two years of schooling in both literacy and mathematics” (Rudd & Gillard, 2008, p. 16).

The significance is that the data outlined here, the various statistical representations of decline through the PISA testing, functions as a semiotic or sign system, or in this context a memory. It enfolds an international history of testing as a new sign system of schooling, complementing curriculum, pedagogy and evaluation (Bernstein, 1971). For us, the rise of testing, the use and application of testing data to constitute quality teaching, is evidence of a new memory of teaching for the policymaker, a new pure past where teaching was characterised by policy that sits alongside the habit of the teacher-as-problem. And this memory reconstructs a pure past so as to enfold the database.

A new memory of policymaking emerges that is one of reshaping all of the teachings present through capturing it through datification, particularly test data. The function of memory is nowhere better illustrated by then Australian PM, Gillard recalling her history of forcing the emergence of a time of datified monitoring of teachers.

I fought a ferocious battle as Education Minister ... to get each of us, all of us, more information than we have ever had before on the education of our children. On my first day in Government, no one in this nation could have given you the list of our best performing schools or our worst performing schools. But now you can get more information than our nation has ever had before on Australian schools on your smart phone. I was determined to win the My School battle because I always believed the more we knew about our children’s education, the more we would be driven to improve it (Gillard, 2012).
By forcing the collection of data and making data available to the public (through the My Schools website) Gillard forms part a specific history of education policymaking. She can now remember her role in the realisation of a new time of education policymaking.

The Third Syntheses: Novelty

A problem with the current time of education policymaking is that it brings about change without producing real difference. This is because attempts to bring about quality through a) repeating the habit of teacher-as-problem, and b) using testing data to steer at a distance continue past policymaking. In other words, there is nothing new about the habit of teacher-as-problems, and the use of testing data to construct a new memory of teaching repeats the teacher-as-problem. For Deleuze, the challenge has always been to arrive at difference, rather than repetition. This requires maximising difference in kind; and “the most profound difference in kind is between the average forms and the extreme forms (new values): the extreme is not reached by carrying the average form to infinity...” (Deleuze, 1994, p. 54). This is the point of the third syntheses of time, or Novelty. For this “eliminates the average forms and uncovers ‘the superior form of everything that is’” (Deleuze, 1994, p. 55).

The challenge, it seems to us, is to consider policymaking differently, or policymaking as stepping into an unknown future in which “quality teaching” is realised according to the infinitive ‘to improve’ is not ruled by the habit and memory outlined above. While the general answer with respect to policy initiatives, such as QE, is ‘to improve’ that stands between the lexical and the existential “the verb goes from a pure infinitive, opened onto a question as such, to a present indicative closed onto a designation of a state of affairs or a solution case” (Deleuze, 1990, p. 215) The meaning of ‘to improve’ may be determinable, as may any instance of improving, but both rely on a pure or neutral infinitive. For,

between the verb as it appears in language and the verb as it subsists in Being, we must conceive of an infinitive which is not yet caught up in the play of grammatical determinations – an infinitive independent not only of all persons but of all time, of every mood and every voice (active, passive, or reflective). This would be a neutral infinitive for the pure event ... representing the extra-propositional aspect of all possible positions, or the aggregate of ontological problems and questions which correspond to language (Deleuze, 1994, pp. 214-215).

This pure or neutral infinitive directs attention to a yet to be space, or yet to be filled space, in which an improvement is understood to occur. It manifests the cut, or caesura, that is central to the third synthesis. This cut that splits a before, when things were done the same, from an after, when things are done differently. In this space, a specific policymaker might ask herself whether she will continue to treat teachers as problems forever. In other words, how can policymaking imagine a new relationship, a policymaking yet-to-come, with those discursive formations (teaching, schooling, studenthood for example) that remain a part object within each policy iteration.

Conclusion
Partly this requires a reconceptualisation of the international effect, as a reappropriation (or in Deleuzian terms, a reterritorialisation) of policymaking as a disciplinary affect, through the repetition of the teacher-as-problem. Grek talks about the “limits” of imagination on the parts of policymakers who simplistically assume that the global policy machine ‘trumps’ national policy agendas:

the limits of the geographical imagination of many scholars so far, who have put emphasis on the ways that the ‘global’ impacts on the ‘national’, but have failed to acknowledge the extent to which the national is critical, if not the critical element, in the formation of global policy agendas (Grek, 2013, p. 3).

The idea of “global panopticism” through testing IOs, such as the OECD and the PISA “functioning as a regulatory mechanism for nations” is only meaningful if we acknowledge that it refers to the ways that the global testing convergence is reappropriated and deployed by the State in panoptic ways (Lingard, Martino, & Rezai-Rashti, 2013, p. 4). In other words, the global testing data paid for by the State, is rendered disciplinary by the State enfolding of the database within a pre-existing habit and memory of policymaking.

Within a Deleuzian framework, this reterritorialisation constitutes repetition, not difference. Tellingly in this context, repetition is assured through the return of teaching as problem through the international effect. The challenge for Deleuze, as outlined in the third syntheses of time, is for Novelty, or something new, to emerge. What would be new, or Novel, would be for a new habit of policymaking to emerge, where the starting point of policymaking was not a problem, but an attempt to do something truly Revolutionary, to step into a policymaking present that signals “the totality of the series and the final end of time” (Deleuze, 1994, p. 94). This policymaking future “is not a dimension of the present or of the past” (Williams, 2011, p. 94). When we examine QE it is this unknown quality that is missing – there is nothing revolutionary about the repetition of education past. Clarke describes this as a “machine-like feedback loop” where quality, efficiency, accountability and transparency all function to create a logic of education (Clarke, 2011). As we have suggested, this ‘loop’ requires an understanding of time; particularly in the ways that habit and memory operate to return some past driven by the infinitive ‘to improve’. Global education policy convergence is not through an international effect, but through States reshaping the future through a specific habit and memory of the past and present.

Novelty is blocked because the technologies available for modulating teaching are being deployed to repeat discipline. Those responsible for making education policy that will apply in a particular locality, continue to address the problem of the unaccountable teacher that has always been at work in education policymaking. While the international effect may represent a possibility for introducing truly different education policymaking, it has not done so in this context. We have repetition, and no difference. While a new system for representing and controlling teaching has been introduced, it remains governed by the old logic. No break occurs to disrupt the repetition of disciplinary habits, even when these habits are recalled very differently. The result is the perpetuation of a system that neither functions effectively to replicate a fully disciplinary system, in which local disciplinary habits are at work to discipline local teachers for local purposes nor produces a true global panopticism, with some central observational centre, but yet is not a modulatory system that regulates without norms. Instead, an unstable combination of habit and memory manifests in an internationalised local approach to addressing the teacher-as-problem.
References


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1 Referred to as QE throughout the rest of the text.