

Introductions – setting the scene

Dr Andrew Wilkins and Dr Mark Murphy

In this short introduction we outline the focus of the symposium and discuss the significance of neoliberalism (or ‘neoliberalisation’) to education research. We reflect briefly on the seductiveness of neoliberalism as a normative and political construct, its elevation to a master narrative within dominant discourse, its genealogy and promiscuity, and its articulation and application within different strands of education research. At the same time, we consider the limitations and complications inherent to such theorising. In the spirit of critique and problematisation, we encourage delegates to use the symposium as an opportunity to think through the utility of neoliberalism to their thinking around issues of education as well as engage with the tensions and struggles arising from such work.

Andrew Wilkins is Reader in Education at the University of East London. He is a member of several journal editorial boards including Critical Studies in Education, Journal for Critical Education Policy Studies, British Journal of Sociology of Education, and Journal of Applied Social Theory. Recent book publications include *Modernising School Governance: Corporate Planning and Expert Handling in State Education*, published by Routledge and awarded joint-second prize by the Society for Educational Studies (SES) for books published in 2016, and *Education Governance and Social Theory: Interdisciplinary Approaches to Research*, to be published by Bloomsbury in 2018.

Mark Murphy is Reader in Education & Public Policy and Co-Director of the Robert Owen Centre for Educational Change, University of Glasgow. He has written extensively on the relationship between education and broader public policy, with a specific interest in public sector governance. He has published widely in the field of social theory and applied research, with recent books including *Habermas and social research: Between theory and method* (Routledge, 2017), and *Theory as method: On Bourdieu, education and society* (with C. Costa, Routledge, 2016). Mark is the editor for the book series *Social theory and methodology in education research* (Bloomsbury Press).