Diversity Deficits: Resisting the TEF.

If it is true that the grid of ‘discipline’ is everywhere becoming clearer and more extensive, it is all the more urgent to discover how an entire society resists being reduced to it, what popular procedures (also ‘miniscule’ and quotidian) manipulate the mechanisms of discipline and conform to them only in order to evade them […]. De Certeau, 1988, xiv

In this short passage the French social theorist Michel de Certeau is criticising the systems of power which seek to control society through disciplinary measures and looks to discover the ways in which people resist these systems of power. While written in the late 1980s this post-structuralist framing of the issue of power and resistance is just as relevant today as we face a myriad of increasingly complex ensembles of power and attempts to control society through a wide variety of means (Amoore, 2013). These means range from the overt observation and policing of behaviour through CCTV and security systems, to covert digital data collection and algorithms used to collate information about movements, shopping habits and leasure time (ibid.). De Certeau’s use of the term ‘discipline’ refers to Michel Foucault’s exploration of the diffuse nature of power and the possibilities to resist it. Both philosophers concerned themselves with an interrogation of the world around them as an increasingly complex set of practices aiming to control behaviour, and the theorisation and implementation of individual and collective responses to those practices. De Certeau’s quote is therefore a confluence of two thinkers who have been highly influential in my understandings of power, subjectivity and resistance, and serves as a touchstone for this chapter and a rallying cry for political thought and action.

In this chapter we draw on de Certeau’s twin notions of strategies and tactics in order to analyse the Teaching Excellence Framework (TEF) as a practice of UK higher education institutions, and the actions of teaching active academics as forms of resistance to the TEF. UK higher education institutions operate as part of a larger neo-liberal framework which in the past two decades has seen some substantial changes including a shift to a younger student body and a change in financing through higher tuition fees and a drop in funding grants (Universities UK, 2015). The UK government paper *Success as a Knowledge Economy* in 2016 introduced yet more changes which aimed at the greater integration of UK higher education sector with broader neo-liberal frameworks. This included the marketisation of higher education, the role of institutions as service providers, and a student-teacher relationship based on provider-consumer economic logic (Brogan, 2017; Department for Business, Innovation & Skills, 2016). A central element in these changes is the TEF which represents an explicit attempt to control the behaviour of teaching active academics through the lens of neo-liberal economic logic which seeks to reduce judgements of excellent teaching to a set of proxi-measures like student satisfaction, student outcomes, and graduate employment.

Approaching the TEF through de Certeau’s work, the TEF is a strategy through which UK universities orient and define themselves in relation to institutions exterior to them[[1]](#footnote-2), as well as defining and orienting the practices of academics within the institution itself. Operating both externally and internally the TEF results in higher education institutions having a myopic focus on processes of measurement and accounting, despite the well-documented challenges with this approach (**Reference to other chapters**). My concern and contention in this chapter echoes the words of de Certeau above: the imposition of the TEF reduces the notion of excellent teaching to a set of proxy-measures, and this must be resisted. If we, as teaching academics, allow teaching and learning in higher education to become reduced to student satisfaction, contact hours, or graduate employment we do ourselves and students a disservice. Teaching and learning in higher education is about the collaborative construction of knowledge and the growth and expansion of society and its members: this is not something which can be captured through accounting, bureaucracy and ranking. And yet, we as teaching active academics work in these institutions, are held accountable to these proxy-measures, and are complicit – however reluctantly – in their continuation. This chapter is concerned with exploring how we are able to navigate this tension between the demands of the TEF and the economic logic underpinning it, and the desire to engage in collaborative knowledge construction. The questions at the heart of this chapter ape de Certeau’s language, and are concerned with how we as teaching active academics can manipulate the TEF and conform to it only to evade it? How can we as teaching academics resist the attempts to control us and our actions while still being enmeshed in those systems of control?

To this end the chapter proceeds in three movements. The first is an exploration of de Certeau’s concept of strategies which serves as the theoretical foundations for our understanding of and possible resistance to the TEF. The second movement is concerned with the use of tactics in resisting the TEF in the classroom: a development of de Certeau’s *la perruque* (1988, 25), or ‘wiggery’ (Heilbronn 2013, 36) in which lecturers are able to use the practices imposed on them for ends entirely alien to the practices themselves. In the final movement we explore the necessary creativity involved in ‘wiggery’ and the use of this creativity in classroom tactics which enables us to play in the tensions of our positions in higher education rather than being paralysed by them. The end of the chapter comes with hints of possibilities of resistance drawn from personal experience, striking a hopeful and defiant tone to finish on.

## Strategies and Places

To help us understand the TEF as a strategy of higher education institutions we first need to explore the role of strategies in de Certeau’s work. De Certeau writes:

I call a strategy the calculation (or manipulation) of power relationships that becomes possible as soon as a subject with will and power (a business, an army, a city, a scientific institution) can be isolated. It postulates a place that can be determined as its own and serve as the base from which relations with an exteriority composed of targets or threats (customers or competitors, enemies, the country surrounding the city, objectives, objects of research, etc.) can be managed. de Certeau 1988, 35-36.

For de Certeau, strategies are attempts to control the actions of people by creating places of conformity. Institutions like universities use strategies to establish areas of control by demarcating exterior actors with which they interact, and parcelling out interior spaces through a ‘panoptic practice’ (de Certeau 1988, 36) in which each interior actor is held in a specific position and relation to other interior actors. Looking both outward and inward the university as an institution attempts to locate different actors in positions which can be observed, measured, and accounted for attempting to bring a stability and control to the university (ibid., 36). This stability is introduced through a rigid application of specific places where one actor and their behaviours cannot overlap with another (ibid., 117) meaning that two actors cannot occupy the same place at the same time. The idea of place has an important role in de Certeau’s strategies as it is through the control and manipulation of actors externally and internally that institutions like universities are able to deploy strategies with such effect.

We can use these notions of strategies and places to analyse higher education institutions and TEF. In this analysis higher education institutions are the ‘subject with will and power’ (de Certeau 1988, 35) which establishes a place from which it operates both physically and in the abstract. UK higher education institutions draw borderlines to separate themselves from others. The markers of this border are the elements of the university tasked specifically with managing relations with the exterior: marketing departments, media-trained academics, research funding applications, and of course, the TEF.

In many cases a university’s internal place has a physical form of a campus or a set of buildings with controlled access limited to those who are part of that institution, either as students, lecturers or support services. Once in these physical locations, the specific places of actors within the institution are carefully managed in relation to one another. There are places in which the individual groups are separated but also places in which these groups are meant to interact, and forms of behaviour guiding that interaction: lecture theatres, seminar rooms, etc. One way of controlling the behaviour of different actors within the physical institution of the university is to define the places each actor can occupy and to make it clear that different places require different behaviours. In the case of the classroom the university establishes a location which positions the lecturer at the front of the room by the lectern or the whiteboard, and sets the students on tables and chairs about the room, most often in rows or squares. This establishment of location in the classroom reinforces an understanding of teaching and learning which assigns the lecturer as the arbiter of knowledge and the students as recipients, an understanding of UK higher education which echoes the TEF.

Strategies are those procedures that make an institution knowable to the exterior while simultaneously aiding the institution in maintaining the internal order of place. The TEF is the primary strategy of the UK higher education institution: externally the TEF operates in unison and overlapping with other strategies like the REF, the NSS, and different league tables to present a particular and managed image of the university beyond its boundaries. It does this through the provision of easily recognisable colour-coded awards of bronze, silver, or gold. Potential students, employers, other institutions and others external to the university are told that the awarding of a particular TEF status conveys all they need to know about the teaching and learning which occurs in this particular university. Through the TEF the university makes itself known to others beyond its boundaries and locates itself within a larger societal framework which assigns the university value through the lens of potential economic gain for the individual student. The TEF functions as a watermark of quality, a public review of a product in much the same way as we may turn to star-ratings on Amazon or TripAdvisor to help us make decisions about where to spend our money in the hope for the best return possible – whether that is a superior consumer product or a particular holiday ‘experience’.

The TEF also operates as the primary internal strategy for higher education institutions, playing a guiding role in the internal organisation of relationships and actions within the university, ensuring each actor is held in their proper place in relation to another and is acting in the desired way. This internal organising role of the TEF is particularly apparent in the relationship and behaviours it attempts to establish between the institution and lecturers. To explore this relationship and actions we need recap what the TEF measures when determining teaching quality, as it is this series of metrics which establish the basis of the relationship between institution and lecturer, and which establishes the expected actions for lecturers to follow as members of the institution. The TEF uses proxi-measures for teaching excellence which include student satisfaction, student outcomes and employment rates following graduation (Department for Business, Innovation & Skills 2016, 46). Each of these proxy measures – which are not without their issues as individual metrics, let alone as a collection, establishes expected actions of lecturers in their day-to-day lives in the institution. Concerns with student satisfaction, student outcomes and graduate employment take precedence over the traditional university focus on the pursuit and creation of knowledge and the importance of student learning. Increasingly, the above metrics are institutionalised as internal performance metrics for individual lecturers, building on the notion of academic performativity as outlined by Stephan Ball (2012). The metrics become the procedure by which higher education institutions organise and manage the actions of teaching staff and determine the relationship between the institution and the teaching active academic. The metrics of the TEF are *the* strategy through which a higher education institution manages lecturers as part of the pursuit of a high TEF status which then enables the institution to promote and maintain itself as a place, as a subject with will and power.

Following de Certeau’s work we have demonstrated how higher education institutions can be approached as subjects with will and power maintaining a place in distinction to external others, and internally organising a place for each element within it. Alongside this it has been shown how the TEF operates as *the* strategy simultaneously addressing the external and internal actors of the university, whether that is through using the TEF as the strategy by which it makes itself known and accountable to external others, or by using the TEF and its metrics as the organising principle guiding the management of lecturers in the pursuit of the externally recognisable statuses of bronze, silver, or gold. This understanding of higher education institutions and the TEF brings us back to the question posed earlier in the chapter: how can we as teaching active academics manipulate the mechanisms of the TEF and conform to them only to evade them?

## Tactics and Spaces

At the heart of de Certeau’s concept of strategy is the attempt to control people through the creation of places of conformity: de Certeau writes of this attempt using the language of production and consumption. Production and consumption are not confined to economics in de Certeau’s work, but carry a much broader meaning, including the production and consumption of culture, and the production and consumption of societal practices (de Certeau, 1988). By way of an example we can consider television programming: TV shows are largely made to entertain or inform, or with the increasing prevalence of online streaming services, captivate and totalise an audience’s attention and time. Yet, there is no guarantee that the intended aim is how these TV shows are consumed in practice. The audience may indeed watch episode after episode of a newly released box-set, but they can do this simultaneously with other actions, be that updating social media, browsing the internet, eating, drinking, or talking with friends and family. The nature of the other activities undertaken whilst watching TV is not important, the point is that other actions are performed, and so while the aim behind the production of the TV show may be to capture the full attention and time of the audience, consuming the TV show can be done in parallel with a wide variety of other actions which the producers of the show cannot possibly account for. While TV shows may be produced with a particular aim in mind, *how* the audience consumes that TV show cannot be fully accounted for in that production. This signifies an important gap between production and consumption.

The television example may appear fairly benign, but it sets the ground for approaching the TEF as something which is produced with one aim in mind, but can be consumed differently. The TEF as a strategy of UK higher education institutions is part of a move to further integrate UK universities into neo-liberal market logic and as a result attempts to determine the actions of teaching active academics through a focus on student satisfaction, student outcomes, and graduate employment, among others. In the pursuit of the TEF status UK higher education institutions adopt these metrics as internal forms of organisation and accounting for lecturer performance, with the place, relationships and actions of the lecturer becoming oriented by the TEF. However, as with the television example above, UK higher education institutions cannot completely close the gap between the production of the TEF, its metrics, and the assigned locations and behaviours of teaching active academics. On the contrary, the university’s myopic focus on TEF as *the* strategy used to determine and maintain itself as a place enables a gap between the production of the TEF and the aim with which it was designed, and its consumption and the way it is used by academics in the classroom. As UK higher education institutions seek to impose ever-stricter modes of organisation on academics, they inadvertently create blind-spots: those areas of academic practice which fall outside the concentrated focus on the TEF metrics. In order for us to conform to the TEF and simultaneously exploit and play in the gap, we need to develop tactics which can create subversive spaces in the classroom by developing academic practice which is entirely alien to the wider strategy of the TEF. Any possible resistance to the TEF lies in this gap between production and consumption, a gap explored and exploited through various tactics.

In contrast to a strategy as a form of control, a tactic is ‘a calculated action determined by the absence of a proper locus. No delimitation of an exteriority provides it with the conditions necessary for autonomy. The space of a tactic is the space of the other’ (de Certeau 1988, 36-37). De Certeau explains that tactics always play on and with the ‘terrain imposed on it’ (ibid., 37) and as such operate in continuously isolated instances. This transient nature of tactics means that they can never consolidate a position and can never plan particular practices, but instead must seize moments as they arise and be forever on the lookout for any possible gaps between production and expected consumption (ibid., 37). So, if strategy seeks to create protected places in which all possibilities are controlled and accounted for in favour of the predominant forms of social relationships and actions, tactics seek to create spaces that subvert these expected relationships and actions. Buchanan summarises tactics as ‘being constantly in the swim of things and are as much in danger of being swept away or submerged by the flow of events as they are capable of bursting through the dykes’ (2000, 89).

In the fleeting and momentary development of tactics we can create spaces: a physically and temporally limited area which is embedded within and yet paradoxically separate from the established place. De Certeau explains that spaces occur because of certain practices that ‘orient it, situate it, [and] temporalize it’ (ibid., 117) lending space a greater fluidity than place. The tactics that orient, situate, and temporalize mean that spaces are constantly in formation and dissolution creating a state of instability and unpredictability in contrast to controlled places. This also means that space is a ‘practiced place’ (ibid., 117), a location which is brought into being by the very actions that both require and constitute it.

The symbiotic concepts of tactics and spaces operate within strategies and places but are separate from them, like a bubble in liquid. It is these notions of tactics and spaces which offer us possibilities to resist the TEF as the strategy of UK higher education institutions. While tactics and spaces offer us a starting point, we need to explore another part of de Certeau’s work to help us better understand what such tactics may look like. In his exploration of how to resist the practices of everyday life, de Certeau introduces us to the tactic of *la perruque*, or ‘the wig’. *La perruque* is a French term for ‘the worker’s own work disguised as work for his employer’ (de Certeau 1988, 25). Two examples offered of *la perruque* are the furniture maker and the secretary. A furniture maker uses the lathe at work, scraps of wood, and parts of her work time to build a sideboard for her home. This is a creative act on the part of the furniture maker which is not driven by economic considerations of selling the sideboard and making a profit, but by a desire to make the item for her own pleasure. A secretary uses a pen, paper, and work time to write a love letter. Again, the love letter is written for the secretary’s and carries no financial motive. Crucially, la perruque is different from both, stealing, as nothing of material value is taken, and absenteeism, as the worker is still present at her job. In both cases people make use of the dominant frameworks in which they find themselves to produce something entirely unaccountable for by those frameworks and neither action is motivated by an economic concern or directed toward profit (ibid., 25). De Certeau points out that this subversive behaviour is not always tolerated, and that turning a blind eye to its occurrence has become less common as the attempts to control the gap between production and consumption have increased. But, there are still ‘sleights of hand’ (ibid., 28) available to us as we divert time which is owed to institutions in order to produce other objects, play games of free exchange, and exchange gifts, all actions that subvert by bypassing the predetermined aim of the dominant political and social frameworks of society (ibid., 28). de Certeau argues that *la perruque* is one among many tactics that ‘introduce *artistic* tricks and competitions of *accomplices* into a system. […] Sly as a fox and twice as quick: there are countless ways of “making do”’ (de Certeau 1988, 29, original emphasis). It is this sense of creativity which we need to embrace in our attempts to conform to and simultaneously resist the TEF: we need to both discover and create sleights of hand.

While de Certeau addressed the role of *la perruque* as a subversive tactic which could be utilised in and through any manner of strategies, his work does not fully capture the power present in such an approach. *La perruque* reveals itself as a uniquely flexible and nuanced tactic of resistance which avoids a reduction to dichotomies of position/opposition by embracing the tensions we face in everyday life. The work of Ruth Heilbronn is particularly illuminating here. Heilbronn has taken de Certeau’s ideas and used them to explore the tensions which arise between many school teachers’ vocational aims of student learning and growth, and the institutional aims of target-driven ends and assessment (Heilbronn 2013, 31-32). Heilbronn argues that teachers rarely seem to question the broader institutional strategies which they are working in, and adds that this is entirely reasonable because ‘to ask fundamental questions of one’s daily work could lead to a loss of faith in that work, in the sense of removing the ladder one is standing on’ (Heilbronn 2013, 35). A key responsibility for teacher educators is to assist teachers in being able to question their positions and situations without jeopardising their ability to act. The ethical imperative for teacher educators is to help teachers to cope with living with contradictions (ibid., 36-37). The primary means for dealing with these tensions comes through teachers developing a ‘strategic competence’ (ibid., 35) about the institution they work in, and then the ability to engage in *la perruque*, translated by Heilbronn as ‘wiggery’ (ibid., 36). Highlighting, as de Certeau does, that wiggery is not unethical behaviour, Heilbronn suggests that it is instead playful, creative, and witty, and that it is this playfulness that is vital for teachers to navigate the tensions in their daily lives and resist the overwhelming pressures of the institution: ‘Playfulness enables and announces that alternative viewpoints exist, even if these alternative viewpoints are not fully rationalised’ (ibid., 36). *La perruque* enables teachers to hold, and at times pursue, different aims to the institution without confronting the authority of the institution head-on (ibid., 36). *La perruque* for teachers can be a subversive and tension-releasing act without necessarily drawing the attention of the institution and negatively impacting on their own position.

We can follow in Heilbronn’s footsteps in addressing the tensions faced by academics in higher education institutions. Higher education institutions operate within a larger neo-liberal social framework based on economic exchange and the pursuit of individual gain, a key part of signalling their position in and adherence to this social framework is through the TEF as a strategy. As above, the TEF acts as an external face and an internal means of organisation, becoming the primary means by which the actions of teaching active academics are monitored, assessed and managed. But what if we as teaching active academics do not want to our teaching and actions reduced to the TEF metrics? Rather than being paralyzed by the TEF as a strategy and the larger neo-liberal framework in which UK higher education institutions operate, let us embrace the creative, witty and playful wiggery to explore those alternative viewpoints to higher education by changing our classroom practice in ways that are not, and cannot be accounted for by the TEF.

## Creative Subversion

The above exploration of strategies and tactics provide a theoretical constellation through which we can approach UK higher education institutions, the TEF, and the possibilities for subversion through our actions as academics. Our next step is to address what these practices of wiggery may look like in our everyday academic lives. The aim of this final section of the chapter is to offer suggestions and possibilities for exploiting the blind-spots of the institutional focus on the TEF. To help us explore this creative resistance I consider the classroom layout and our position within it, our interactions with students, and collaborative module design, each offering a way to meet the requirements of the TEF while simultaneously, and indirectly, resisting it.

The classroom in UK higher education institutions is the place in which most student-lecturer interactions take place, and the focal point of many of the TEF metrics. Many UK higher education institutions share a similar set of physical features: tables, chairs, whiteboard, lectern, projector board. The exact position of tables and chairs for the students may vary but the overall orientation of the room is fairly common with the attention focussed on the whiteboard, lectern and projector board. In other words, those pieces of furniture which are primarily the domain of the lecturer. This orientation acts to focus the attention on the lecturer, explicitly reinforcing the notion that the lecturer is the provider and arbiter of knowledge in the classroom. Even when conversation and debate is encouraged in such a space contributions are directed to the lecturer who then becomes a living echo, repeating the point back to the students in order to garner the next response. In combination with the layout of the classroom, the corporeal presence of the lecturer herself reinforces the idea that teaching and learning emanate from the lecturer. bell hooks (1994) and Ron Scapp encourage us to address our corporal presence in the classroom. Exploring their two different physical presences in the classroom, hooks as a black woman and Scapp as a white male, consider what it means for lecturers to be aware of their physical presence – their bodies being imbued with history and particular positions in social structures – in the classroom. In the case of my own physical presence in the classroom I cannot ignore the social and educational authority that is assumed to come with my position as a tall, white male and the impact my physical presence might have on the mainly female and ethnically diverse groups I work with. hooks and Scapp remind us that there is no binary mind/body split at work in academia and that it is not possible to claim a detached and disembodied knowledge to be transferred from lecturer to student (hooks, 1994). The lecturer’s physical presence is often anchored and immobile in the classroom, present only behind a desk or a lectern. The impact of this immobility is that lecturers are detached from students and inaccessible to them, further exacerbating the impression that knowledge is delivered by the lecturer to the waiting students.

The physical layout of the classroom and our position in it can be understood through de Certeau in the following way: the institution provides us with a classroom, and the lecturer and students are each meant to occupy a certain place within that: standing at the front of the room behind a lectern for the lecturer, seated at tables and chairs oriented to the front for the students. These classroom layouts and positions of actors may be the way the classroom space is produced, but it does not determine how it is consumed. Once we, lecturers and students alike, enter that room it becomes ours for the duration of the timetabled session and this opens possibilities for us. Tables and chairs are not fixed to the floor, they can be moved and reorganised to suit the session needs. Granted, this takes time and coordination on the part of all involved, but doing so can yield interesting results that help to disrupt the expected behaviours associated with the TEF. Similarly, the immobility of the body of the lecturer and knowledge can be disrupted by the lecturer moving out from behind the lectern and engaging with students in the classroom. Moving our bodies out into the classroom brings with it the possibility of face-to-face communications and relationships (hooks, 1994) disrupting the perception of a provider-consumer relationship as encouraged by the TEF and the wider UK higher education sector.

The layout of the classroom and our physical presence in it can help to establish a different basis of the lecturer-student interaction, moving away from the delivery of content and the supply of a product towards a space in which lecturers and students work together to discuss and create new knowledge. If this idea sounds familiar, it may be because it has a long and rich history in educational thought and practice, developed through Paulo Freire’s work (1993) and the subsequent explorations of many others working under the broad umbrella of critical pedagogy. Critical pedagogy does not aim to do away with the role of the lecturer in guiding the learning which occurs in the classroom, but to embrace the knowledge students already bring to the classroom. Examples of how to embrace students’ knowledge are abound throughout literature on critical pedagogy, and feminist and anarchist approaches to education. I would like to highlight Donnelly and Hogan’s example of freehand drawing which I have adapted and used to great effect in several different university teaching contexts. Inspired by Freire’s work, Donnelly and Hogan (2013) use freehand drawing at the beginning of their course on Irish politics to introduce all students to the wide variety of knowledges present in the classroom and to illustrate the ways in which each student contributes to a collective understanding of Irish politics. I have adapted the use of freehand drawing for an introductory session on the philosophy of education, asking the students to draw a response to the question: what is education? The advantages of the freehand drawing exercise are three-fold: first, it shifts the focus away from me as a lecturer and disrupts the expectation that I will deliver an answer to the question and the students do not need to engage with the question. Second, it places the students’ knowledge as the foundation of the session. Third, it asks the students to take an active role in the session. Through the presentation of their knowledge in the drawings students and I are able to start asking fundamental questions of one another about what we assume education to be and how it should operate. The drawing increases student involvement in the content of the session, and takes seriously any contributions they make. While we meet calls for student satisfaction through the TEF, we do so in a way which the broader economic and neo-liberal logic of the higher education sector cannot account for. The session is driven by a collaborative and dialogic approach to education rather than the neo-liberal provider-consumer logic which permeates the TEF.

A further step along the path of student involvement in the creation of knowledge is for modules to be designed in collaboration between teaching academics and students. What I present here is a confluence of different ideas including work on decolonising the curriculum (Students' Union, University College London, 2014), and inspiration drawn from the Lincoln Social Science Centre in the UK (Neary & Winn, 2017; The Social Science Centre, Lincoln, n.d.) and various Occupy encampments (Mann, 2012; DiSalvo, 2013; Entin, et al., 2013). While a seemingly disparate collection of educational experiences, they share a commitment to radical democratic practice in education. Starting with the provocative video by students at University College London, UK, academia is challenged about the role of whiteness and racist curriculums which either ignore contributions to knowledge from non-white scholars, or include non-white scholars as a token gesture to diversity (Students' Union, University College London, 2014). Instead, the students at UCL call on academia to decolonise the curriculum, which means re-assessing and re-designing the curriculum from a starting point which does not assume the unquestionable status of a white canon. To do so would be to take into account the diversity of the students we work with and reflecting this in the content of courses, building a further connection through which students can recognise and contribute to the creation of alternative knowledges (Begum & Saini, 2019).

The move to decolonise curriculums is an important consideration in the design of modules, and can be wedded to the radically democratic practices of Occupy and the Lincoln Social Science Centre. The teaching and learning occuring in Occupy encampments around the world and in Lincoln were reflections of the staff and students in their specific contexts. Even more than this, the teaching which took place in the Occupy encampments and Lincoln was not at the behest of a single lecturer or teacher, but the result of collaborative democratic decision-making. At various Occupy encampments working groups formed for the organisation and running of the camps, and in many cases, like that of Occupy Wall Street, this included a specific working group for educational projects (Blanchard, 2013; DiSalvo, 2013). The aim of these working groups was not to devise the educational programmes of the encampments, but to assist others who proposed courses. Operating on a non-hierarchical democratic approach working groups would collaborate with participants from the encampments to support and promote the educational programmes suggested, with the educational moments of each encampment reflecting the context and make up of the encampment itself (Entin, et al., 2013). The Social Science Centre (SSC) at Lincoln followed a similar non-hierarchical democratic approach to course design by establishing and operating as a cooperative. The aim of the SSC was to provide higher education level programmes with rigourous academic study, and to do this through collaborative programme design: ‘All classes are participative and collaborative in order to ground inquiry in the experiences and knowledges of the participants. Student-scholars and teacher-scholars have opportunities to design courses together’ (The Social Science Centre, Lincoln, n.d.). Areas of current knowledge were taken into account, but the educational content was not designed by someone in the role of a traditional lecturer prior to the establishment of the programmes. Much like the various Occupy encampments, participants in the SSC worked together to design educational programmes and all were encouraged to contribute to the teaching and learning as part of the programme itself and the wider SSC (Neary & Winn, 2017).

Together, the push to decolonise the curriculum and the radically democratic approach to education seen in Occupy and the SSC are a formidable tactic available to the teaching active academic in resisting the TEF. These two elements of course design inspired one of my own modules, a first year course on philosophy of education. In this module I present a diverse long-list of fourteen different educational philosophers, and in the first session of the module it is the students who decide which nine thinkers they would like to study in more detail throughout the course. Within the confines of the UK higher education institution there are various proceedures I must follow in the validation of a module, including adherence to the broader Quality Assurance Agency guidelines for the degree programme, university guidelines on contact hours, module overview, learning outcomes, assessment design, etc., but by keeping the documentation on these delibeartely vague I am able to leave enough space for student participation and collaborative module design. While it is not possible to take this collaboration to the same level as that found in Occupy or the SSC, I am able to offer students the chance to decide what they study. The impact of this is two-fold: in the first instance, it creates space for students to access a wider variety and diversity of possible educational thinkers, helping decolonise the curriculum through the options of a variety of non-white and/or non-male philosophers. In the second instance, the collaborative and democratic approach offers students a greater agency and common ownership of the module, increasing the chance of positive results on the all-important TEF metrics of student satisfaction, while simultaneously undermining the broader social and political framework the TEF and UK higher education institutions operate in and through. Collaborative module design and ownership disrupts the underpinning logic permeating UK higher education institutions that it is the lecturer who designs and delivers courses and the students who receive knowledge and are educated in that process.

The four tactics explored above are presented as personal suggestions for resisting the TEF, rather than blueprints for action. In each case the examples have enabled me to meet the institutionally imposed requirements of student satisfaction as reflected in mid- and end-of-term evaluations, while simultaneously consuming the classroom in a way that aligns with my understanding of the role of teaching and learning in higher education. The TEF as a strategy of UK higher education institutions may appear pervasive but by embracing wiggery we are able to create alternative spaces and social practices to escape while within. My contention here is that to practice wiggery, the development of tactics and the creation of fleeting spaces of resistance, we as teaching active academics often need to look for inspiration from beyond the immediate field of education. In the case of hooks and the lecturer’s corporeal presence this came through her engagement with feminist theories, for Donnelly and Hogan it was in embracing the possibilities of art, for the students at UCL it was post-colonial theory, and for the Social Science Centre and Occupy it was forms of radically democratic politics. Perhaps this should not come as a surprise. For those of us working in the UK higher education sector we are immersed in a system which prioritises a very narrow conception of teaching and learning, and so inspiration from beyond that immediate context is needed. There is a second element that unites these different tactics and attempts to resist, and that is the recognition of our teaching and learning practice as something that is not, and cannot be reduced to the metrics of the TEF. In the very action of looking beyond the borders of the place of the university and resisting the TEF as a strategy we are *already* resisting the moves to constrain us. We are *already* operating in ways and means entirely unaccountable to and through the TEF as the dominant strategy of UK higher education institutions through approaching our and others’ teaching as something other than a means to the end of student satisfaction and a higher institutional TEF status.

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1. Such as: government, businesses, other universities and educational institutions. [↑](#footnote-ref-2)