# Positioning further education and community colleges:

## Abstract

This paper explores ideas about quality in further education and community colleges as articulated by two policy texts. Published in 2012 'How Colleges improve' examines the factors that have contributed towards sustained high performance or improvement in Further Education (FE) colleges in the UK. 'The Heart of Student Success: teaching, learning and college completion' published in 2010, focuses on similar set of concerns for Community College (CC) students in the US. Both documents are analysed as enactments within an extended policy process through which the use of language separates the pedagogic encounter into two distinct activities, teaching and learning, strips it of its grounding in social, political and material relations and through the demands of quality ensures that a disaggregated pedagogy loses its emancipatory potential. I make use of a qualitative comparative methodology to explore how this is accomplished through three textual positionings: the positioning assumed by the documents themselves; the positioning ascribed to teachers and the positioning that defines students.

## Introduction

This paper explores ideas about quality in further and adult education as articulated by two policy texts in the UK and the US drawing on sensibilities derived from Critical Discourse Analysis (Fairclough, 1996). The analysis questions the policy understanding of quality that surrounds publicly funded organisations. Such an analysis argues that while educational policies appear to be driven by a relentless pursuit of efficiency, facts, indicators and effectiveness grounded within a pervasive hegemonic frame, this anchoring is always on-going and therefore always incomplete.

Education policies, once developed in a national setting, are now located within global systems (Rizvi & Lingard, 2010). Driven by particular beliefs, these discourses confer value on educational activity only when it is presumed to meet the needs of the global economy by contributing towards national competitiveness. The idea of education as a good in itself resonant amongst Further Education (FE) and Community College

(CC) practitioners, (Rooney, Rhodes, & Boud, 2010) exists on the unwritten margins of publicly funded organisations.  The preference amongst the gatherers of global policy data is for quantitative at a glance measures of educational performance (OECD, 2005, 2009). These disaggregated comparisons treat colleges as if they were independent, freewheeling systems. Global educational policy discourses rest precariously on these analytical abstractions: quantitative displays of educational performance tabulated as international data sets. Collated in the form of league tables with the avowed purpose of providing legislators with a basis for effective policy (OECD, 2009)p3 quantitative comparative information is intended to enhance individual and national economic prospects.  They mobilise rather then re-articulate beliefs about the value of education; they also provide an insecure basis for national policy (Hamilton & Barton, 2000; Rose, 1991).Their pervasiveness means that educational policy although enmeshed within the socio-material fabric of the local and the particular is inscribed through a transnational echo chamber as ideas are borrowed (Lingard & Rawolle, 2004), copied or exchanged across the globe. The act of educating, I am referring here to the pedagogic encounter between student(s) and teacher, is always locally situated. The educational policies that enfold this encounter take shape beyond the confines of the nation state. National governments' designation of educational policy is inflected by the imperatives of global competition, which is both motivation for, and desired outcome of their shaping. Similarly, global processes have the capacity to transform and transport educational policy in complex and contradictory ways.

This global dimension to national educational policy requires a global research imagination, or at least a global analytical frame. The declarations of bodies such as the Organisation for Economic Cooperation and Development (OECD) achieve comparison by ironing out differences. Their seven defining pick and mix features of tertiary education globally include expansion of provision, diversification of curricular, an increasingly heterogeneous student body, reductions in funding, outcomes driven accountability, networked based governance and the necessity of / desire for global competitiveness (Santiago, Tremblay, Basri, & Arnal, 2008). The features described as trends in international policy making simultaneously inscribe global dilemmas that require policy intervention. The ironed out smoothness of the OECD's seven features, can be added to or replaced by other common characteristics.  This paper is based on two specific policy

texts; one published in the UK about quality in FE the other in the US about quality in CCs.  As translocal institutional counterparts FE and CC both value a responsiveness to their particular environment; they endeavour to be inclusive and are driven by an open-access ethos to enable participation by all students regardless of academic background; their mission is based on a commitment to workforce development (Jephcote & Raby, 2012). Both have developed and diversified in response to the massification of post compulsory education.

In the UK FE is a large amorphous sector, which incorporates all publicly funded educational provision that falls outside of schools or universities. This may include the largest and most established of these organisations: general further education colleges, but also includes other less well-defined institutions: adult education institutes, prisons, community centres and workplace training providers. Further education colleges often have franchise arrangements meaning that provision may be funded and managed through an FE college but situated within many other less intimidating settings.  As such, FE is a significant contributor to the lifelong learning tapestry. Most Adult Literacy, Numeracy and English for Speakers of Other Languages provision is FE college based (Howard, 2009). These institutions work with students who are normatively constructed as other: the cohort referred to as 'widening participation' or 'non-traditional'. Their learning trajectories typically mean that in pursuit of long term goals they slip in, out and in between different educative spaces (Lopez, Litster, Vorhaus, & Salter, 2007) including FE and CCs as well as libraries, churches,  prisons, community organizations, trade unions and the home.

In the US, CCs are also situated between school and universities (Curry, 2003); they cater for the same group of students associated with FE (Dougherty, 2010). The history of widening participation in the UK has parallels in the expansion of educational opportunities that has taken place in the US.  CCs represent a common point of (re) entry into public education for those groups who have been traditionally excluded. Basic writing is an important aspect of the provision offered as students catagorised as 'underprepared' are required to enroll on segregated or mixed pre-college language courses.

FE colleges and CCs are thus argued as institutional counterparts that occupy similar translocal spaces within a lifelong learning tapestry.   There is, however, another important sense in which the US and UK are analytically valuable for the global research imagination (Kenway & Fahey, 2008). The UK and the US, both gripped by a rage for accountability, have developed (in different and distinct ways) a prescriptive insistence on quality.  My suggestion links this to Ecclestone, Hayes, & Furedi's 'therapeutic turn in post-compulsory education' with its  ' turn away from people's potential for agency'  (2005)p185.  Quality once embodied by the professional in terms of trust, expertise and authority has become disaggregated and replaced in part at least by fear of the future, an acute awareness of danger and vulnerability (Furedi, 2004) p 414.  Quality prescriptions soothe public anxiety by offering state sanctioned predictability, accountability and reassurance for a risk adverse populace.

As translocal institutions FE in the UK and CCs in the US are treated here as analytical counterparts in an approach that overwrites the limitations of an either / or bi-polarity. All comparison is tenuous.  The slipperiness of situational complexity makes this inevitable.  I am none-the-less intent on exploring the strategic potential for resistance, agency and collective support that emerges from these different spaces, their positionings and their contemporaneous co-existence.

This paper contributes to the study of quality in adult, further and community education in the UK and the US. Drawing on Fairclough's analysis of language and power, social and material relations my detailed textual reading of two policy texts adds to the global research imagination by noticing the ways in which policy positions not only its own artefacts but also teachers and students with particular effects. Theoretical and empirical resources are mobilised to highlight the extent to which these processes are on-going and therefore incomplete: there are many responses (possible and actual) to the ways in which text, teacher and students are positioned.

## Relational and Networked Positioning

My comparative analysis of FE and CCs centres around a critical reading of How Colleges Improve (HCI) and The Heart of Student Success (THSS) and the meanings they embed as part of a dispersed

heterogeneous network through which agency is both amplified and distributed. Both documents are concerned with the quality of college provision, based on evaluative (inspection and student survey) data. Their ideal reader is an educational professional (rather than an academic). While neither texts are written by people who work in colleges, both position themselves as able to speak authoritatively about leading and managing colleges. Their common purpose is to advise leaders and managers about how to improve student outcomes. Neither texts are explicitly purposed with clarifying government policy though both are part of the extended network through which the education, economy, competition, state responsibility, studentship and teaching are aligned and established in relation to one another.

To accomplish this analysis I work with a notion of positioning derived from Fairclough (1996) rather than that elaborated upon through Positioning Theory (Harré & Langenhove 1999). Fairclough points out that texts produced for mass consumption - that is texts produced for multiple, asynchronous, dispersed readers who are unknown to the writer - address out of necessity an ideal reader.  In face-to-face exchanges communication involves a dynamic interplay of interpretations and messages that enable participants to temper their mutual understanding in response to feedback. Synchronous negotiations emerge organically to suit the intricacies of a particular encounter. The writers of HCI and THSS do not know precisely who their readers are and so cannot tailor their message to suit the fluidity of an unfolding situation. To stabilise possible interpretations, they construct and then address an 'ideal' reader. The tendency is for actual readers to fall-in with the position the text ascribes to them. This is not an automated response. The fluidity of positioning is not negated by textual agency. As such positions may be assigned, acquired or seized; they may also be accepted, challenged or simply ignored. The process of positioning may be deliberate, inadvertent, presumptive or taken for granted.  Amidst these negotiations, positioning confers intelligibility to situations, to people and their reactions (Hollway, 1984). It is a constituent element within the discursive material of narratives and facilitates implicit and explicit patterns of reasoning realised in how people and things interact, in how extended networks come together and hold together.  Once a position has been adopted the individual navigates the world from and through its strategic stance. The use of metaphors,

images, narrative lines and concepts are woven into and from particular positions.  This process is no less evident when interaction is amplified through textually mediated, asynchronous dispersal.

## First positioning: the writers / the text

Both HCI and THSS pivot around a desire to see FE and CC teachers improve their pedagogy as a necessary precursor for improvement in student outcomes.  However, each document is located within a different set of co-relations and therefore base their legitimacy on contrasting material arrangements; they mobilise slightly different networks to achieve their purpose; they speak using a different language. Amidst these substantive disconnections what they say about teachers, education, students and the economy – has broad similarities.

HCI emerges from the Office for Standards in Education, OfSTED, an agency sponsored by the UK government. It has a high national profile and is largely responsible for the UKs high-stakes quality culture (Secret Teacher, 2012). Public scrutiny based on quantitatively derived notions of quality induces a climate of fear in the UK provoking disparate professional reactions: strategic compliance, cynicism, hijacking, commitment or passive resistance (Shain & Gleeson, 1999, Dennis, 2012). While conceptions of quality are subject to on-going contestation (Dennis, 2011), OfSTED's judgements about an organization can make or break professional careers, can result in the closure of a college or department, can have a devastating impact on personal, professional or organisational reputations through naming and shaming.  OfSTED grades the work of all state funded establishments including adult and further education from within a one-dimensional four-part scale (where one is outstanding and four inadequate) on a tri-annual cycle according to an excessive 200 quality criteria. They work within a legislatively endorsed definition of a hotly contested concept: quality.

HCI – is unlike the standard reports that OfSTED publishes in response to inspections. It does not refer to a specific institution. It does not grade.  It is an annual report that focuses attention on a curricular or phase

specific area. In 2012 this report was commissioned by the now disbanded Learning and Skills Improvement Service (LSIS), a government funded agency which between 2008 and 2013 held responsibility for leading improvements in adult, further and community education provision.  The report also emerges at a time of radical austerity as the UK's Conservative led coalition government presides over a shrinking, reluctant or privatised state (Ball, 2009) whose responsibilities are being re-configured in ways which exploit the possibilities presented by a fiscal crisis.

HCI is an un-authored text.   There are no named individuals credited with its writing. This allows the text to position itself as depersonalised, authoritative and distant; its (invisible) writers are shielded in an undefined, dislocated space beyond question or critique.  The narrative that unfolds is however grounded by virtue of being based on a series of inspection reports whose authors can be identified. (These reports are referred to rather than directly referenced). HCI draws on the OfSTED inspection reports of 16 (further, adult and independent) colleges visited between May and June 2012. It also draws on an analysis of 55 inspection reports conducted between September 2009 and May 2012. Concluding that leadership and management are central to college success, HCI's executive summary offers 11 recommendations. Seven of these are addressed to colleges; one is addressed to the Department for Business, Innovation and Skills (BIS) within whose remit adult and further education falls; a further three recommendations are addressed to the now defunct LSIS. HCI views improvement as something that is achieved collaboratively between different institutions. BIS and LSIS's role is cast as facilitative – allowing communication between colleges around best practices and the importance of data.

The bureaucratic production values of HCI are a stark contrast to those of THSS which looks and feels like a glossy magazine. THSS has columns, call out boxes, colour images of curious students and smiling teachers, texts of different sizes and varied fonts. At 28 pages it is considerably shorter than the 48 pages of HCI. THSS has subheadings but unlike HCI it has no numbered paragraphs. It is possible to flick through THSS, to review emboldened highlighted text and headlines, to get the gist of what the writers are advocating. Both texts are branded. THSS has a star shaped logo and by using the word 'Heart' in its title evokes pedagogic love; it also, however, has a small subtitle '2010 findings' suggesting the text has serious

intentions in claiming an empirical base for its assertions. Published by the Centre of Community College Student Engagement (CCCSE) a private corporation based at the University of Texas, THSS seemingly positions itself as empirical research. CCCSE is a fee paying membership organisation and the survey upon which this annual report is based draws on a membership of 400 CCs. CCCSE has no legislatively invested authoritative status. It is an indirect comparator to OfSTED. There is no national high-profile organisation in the US invested with the national authority enjoyed by OfSTED.  Equally, OfSTED while invested with legislative authority, commission their inspections to two private corporations – Tribal and Centre for British Teachers (CfBT) who may comfortably parallel the private corporate status of CCCSE.  The translocal nature of these organisations make direct parallels tenuous. They are, and can only ever be, alike in some ways, unlike in others.  This is further complicated by the US which quite unlike the UK: has no 'national education system' (Moodie, 2011).  Each state has its own legislature. The analytical significance of this difference is that CCCSE's legitimacy has to be carefully negotiated and maintained.   The writers of THSS – who are both named and located within the first few pages - spend a great deal of their time establishing their authority, aligning their own and their ideal readers' subjectivities and securing their credibility.

Their perception of what is required to enable college improvement when compared to the narrative adopted by HCI is simultaneously broadened and narrowed.  The text opens with a quote about the desperate state of the 'American Education System'.  "The American education system today is experiencing the most sustained, diverse, wide-spread, and persistent challenge ever to confront it. Virtually everyone agrees that something has gone wrong, that corrective action is needed." (Center for Community College Student Engagement, 2010)p2.  The reference is both playful and misleading. Its contemporary resonance tricks the reader who is soon surprised that it dates from the 1970s.  This swift double move allows the text to immediately mobilise a sense of longstanding urgency to frame its purpose. The writers of the text, their ideal readers, 'the White House [...], the statehouse [and] the family house' p3 at once have their subjectivities aligned:  all are brought into the text's purpose. Students' views and experiences form the text's empirical base. The writers deploy qualitative and quantitative research protocols - focus groups and questionnaires – to gather their views.  The outcomes of these encounters are presented in a series of

infographics – coloured tables, pie charts and graphs that make up 14 of the text's 28 pages. CCCSE is based in the University of Texas and its two authors have an established history of writing about quality in community college improvement. They draw on the University, their own history, and discourses of fear about the dire state of the American Education System to establish an authoritative position from which to write.  But the text's appeal is at best quasi-academic. The text uses data gathering methods that are no longer the exclusive province of sociologists or other social researchers (Savage & Burrows, 2007), and their empiricism is designed to engage their ideal reader - presumably a college professional rather than a University of Texas academic peer. What I am suggesting is that the text makes decorative use of the accoutrements of academic enquiry, but has little use for its substance. There is no critical engagement, rigorous interrogation of data or theorisation. THSS is, therefore, never more than quasi-academic. (I am not suggesting here that an academic text would be appropriate given the imagined readership or that an academic text was intended I critique THSS as policy rather than research. A critical reading of the text as research would probably lead in different directions and possibly generate different conclusions). HCI has a legislatively endorsed authoritative base and as such makes no attempt to attempt to establish quasi-academic credibility.

Given that the unnamed writer(s) of HCI and the named writers of THSS are located in different places in relation to national policy, colleges, teachers and students, there is inevitability to the contrast in tone they adopt. THSS is disarming, while HCI maintains throughout the voice of the strict father (Lakoff, 2004). The disarming appeal of THSS is encoded not only in the title's romantic reference to and invocation of the 'heart'; it emerges powerfully in how teachers are positioned. I make use of a melo-dramatic interplay between being disarmed and punished in my analysis. How HCI and THSS make use of language has significance. It implies / creates a particular set of social and material arrangements. Both texts, despite their differences, operate within a barely distinguishable hegemonic frame with material effects. They accept as true that what is good for the economy is good for education.  The texts (and the discourses it mobilises) are constituent elements enmeshed within the materiality of social life.  The insistence on quality is an insistence that the economy must thrive and that teachers and students in colleges must contribute

towards this. The detailed textual analysis attempted here explores how HCI and THSS achieve their task through a complex network of human and semiotic associations.

While the tone of each text differs, from disarming to punitive, this should not obscure similarity in how they position teachers.  In THSS teachers are first flattered and then chastised for their purported failings. HCI remains in a single voice throughout. Leadership and management are held responsible for college success. Their fulfilment of this responsibility requires them to ensure that teachers, inescapably central to effective pedagogy, are flexible conduits. When policy reduces matters of education to concerns for the economy its determinations are best implemented through teachers hollowed out by policy.

.

## Second positioning: teachers / teaching

HCI and THSS both work within a hegemonic frame that fuses education and economy in a frequently evoked but rarely evidenced or explicated causality.  Employers' needs are accepted as sacrosanct. Education is cast as subservient to the economy; the purported needs of employers are placed beyond challenge, their empirical base accepted without critical scrutiny.  What is good, bad or irrelevant about education is defined through a process of economic filtration.  What counts as of educational value in policy discourse is that which has first passed the test of the economic. Global futures are primarily economic and linked causally to educational outcomes. All other determinates are excluded.

Teachers are positioned as the celebrated Heart of Student Success. And as if they are unaware of the value of a college education, the writers remind them (as the imagined reader) that 'the prospects of individual students [...] the future viability of both the U.S. economy and [...] American democracy,' are dependent on educational attainment and college completion.  The texts opening eulogy offers more than a hint of filmic pedagogic romance. THSS is dedicated to 'those who match their love of learning with a love of learners'. This pedagogic love should not be confused with a Pedagogy of the Heart (Freire, 1998).  The teachers in THSS are compliant heroes. The text is not concerned with emancipation, equality or curriculum as praxis.

Nor is the heart in THSS based on a Utopian hopefulness in which curriculum-as-process is of equal or more value than curriculum-as-outcome (Halpin, 2006)p1. THSS is concerned with quantitative displays of pedagogic prowess, standardised processes and internalised technologies of accountability. It is teach-*ing* not teach-*ers* who are the heart of student success.

This eulogising of teachers is short lived. For those who 'refuse to accept as tolerable the attainment gap that separates low-income students and students of colour from their classmates' are soon chastised. They misunderstand and misjudge the abilities of 'today's community college students'. Their inability to adequately assess means that they are alarmed by, rather than aware of and able to manage, the needs students bring. Their expectations of students' preparedness to study requires adjustment to suit 'the skills deficit, lack of confidence' and apparent disinclination to learn that defines contemporary CC entrants. (The text offers no line of reasoning to explain how or why students who voluntarily register for CC can be described as disinclined to learn).  The heartfelt dedication with which the text opens betrays a belief that positions teachers alone as responsible for student success, or at least - they alone are accountable.  Once teachers are made accountable for educational success (or failure) and through an opaque causality economic success (or failure) what begins as flattery soon turns to chastisement and with mercurial ease becomes accusation. Teachers, having misjudged the skills and therefore the needs of their students are cautioned not to use the challenging needs students bring to 'rationalize low expectations' p5. Students are the victims of teachers' low expectations.  Teachers are their victimisers.

The dedication at the front of the text declares that good teachers, the fantasy teachers of pedagogic love 'expect much from their students and then support them so they can rise to those expectations'.  The text retains its gentle chastisement, as teachers who are unable to accept that all students can succeed, who conclude that a college education is not for everyone, who are disinclined to 'set unreasonable goals, and then chase them unreasonably.' p4 risk doing extraordinary harm to their students.  The text establishes that all students can succeed and that good teachers believe this. Any teacher who harbours a lingering doubt about the potential of all students is left with little doubt about the honourable thing for them to do. The texts suggests that amidst systemic disparities in race, class, gender, access to resources, poverty,

inadequate nutrition and health care, despite differences in disposition, circumstances and personal preferences inequality in opportunity can be ironed out by equality of outcome. The needs that students bring can be supported and remedied. The severity of the potential damage caused by staff who do not believe students can succeed requires colleges to engage in 'courageous conversations'. Colleges are advised to root out teachers who do not fit the 'fantasy teacher of pedagogic love' mould. The text, disarming in tone, persuasive and gentle in its chastisement, mercurial in its metonymic of blame does not explicitly advise colleges on what to do with faculty who do not change their attitudes. An identifiably student voice declares the college's responsibility: 'If [a teacher] can't encourage [their] students to do better, then [they] don't need to be a teacher.'

It is hard to disagree with this text. The fantasy teacher of pedagogic love is a persuasive condensation symbol (Edelman, 1985). It enfolds powerful emotions: pride, desire, professionalism and aspiration. To place yourself beyond the rhetorical power of its appeal is to place yourself beyond a normative framework that confers a positive sense of professional being. All teachers should have high expectations of their students. Low expectations have a detrimental impact on student learning. Teachers may inadvertently play a significant role in the reproduction of social inequality. They need to be vigilant in ensuring equality. Yet, the high-stakes culture of accountability is also damaging to equity in student outcome. It creates what Gillborn refers to as the A-C economy (Gillborn & Youdell, 2000); those students who are defined as crucial to raising overall success rates are supported to the exclusion of others. Students who are assessed as unlikely to achieve prescribed passing grade within a specified period of time are sidelined, ignored and left to flounder. Thompson's ethnographic fragment suggests a similar impact. Policies which transform students into measurable data intended to raise attainment, can have the opposite effect (Thomson, Hall, & Jones, 2010). The difficulty with THSS as with globalised educational policy discourse is its treatment of education as if it were an Olympic sport (Stronach, 2011). Educational success is taken as proxy for economic advantage, with little sense of the multiplicity that intervenes (between education and national economic advantage). In THSS teachers are asked to 'claim collective responsibility for student success'. They are positioned as pedagogic super hero able to compensate for the damage wrought by inequitable

impact of austerity and a fiscal policy which creates 'increasing student enrolments and draconian budget cuts' p2.

The idea that education can compensate for society is compelling.  Yet, in 2013 at a time when it is difficult to overstate the depth of crisis wrought by fiscal austerity - unemployment, growing economic inequalities, the erosion of welfare and the loss of a social security safety net for the poor, disabled, hungry and homeless (Apple, 2012) the idea that education can offer more than marginal amelioration has to be greeted with caution  (Gorard, 2010). I am not here attempting a disconnect between ideas of education and emancipation. This is an important and extended dialogue that continues to thrive. What I am casting doubt upon is the fantasy teacher. The THSS teacher who single headedly – liberates through  'setting unreasonable goals, and chasing them unreasonably' p4. This super-heroic teacher is ultimately a diminished pedagogue.  When teaching becomes the heart of student success, complicated connections between college, employment, workplace competence, economic success and inequality are erased.  The heroic teacher is quite unlike the activist or expansive professional (Avis, Wright, & Fisher, 2011; Avis, 2003; Ecclestone, 2008). They are instead a diminished pedagogue, preferred by THSS and HCI, a conduit through which attention becomes focused exclusively on matters of accountability and data (Taubman, 2009).  THSS avoids the discourse of derision (Ball, 2006) that characterises OfSTED in the UK. But the web of causal co-relations that position teachers' high expectations as a sufficient rather than merely necessary precursor to student success requires from teachers single-handedly more than they can structurally deliver. What begins as a flattery becomes a metonymic of blame.

HCI focuses attention on the determinations of leadership and management who ensure that 'their visions and values become the culture and ethos of their colleges'.  They instil in their staff a willingness to accept critical (self) assessment of their performance.  Performance, or more significantly underperformance, is a phenomenon revealed through understanding the significance of quality data. It is quickly managed. In HCI the defining features of improving colleges focus on leadership and management. The recommendations are entirely about teachers, with the might of the organisation including information administrators, middle

management, principals and governors united in systematic monitoring of their performance.  Staff in such colleges have a 'sense of urgency about and commitment to continuous improvement'.

The key findings and recommendations provided by the executive summary are followed by a series of illustrative vignettes.   These vignettes narrate college success as something that emerges 'after the appointment of a new principal' and / or after a process of welcomed 'staff restructuring'.  The inner world of teachers is frequently evoked. The text suggests they feel a sense of pride and belonging towards of their college, affection for their principal. In one vignette a successful and improving college had lost a third of its staff team after restructuring. Teachers were placed on flexible contracts (Edwards & Clarke, 2001, Jameson & Hillier, 2008) that specified no fixed number of teaching hours with the justification that this allowed the college to benefit from a 'model [that] enabled managers to deploy staff resources according to developmental or quality needs.' It is not entirely clear why deploying staff according to developmental or quality needs requires contracts that offer no staff protection by limiting the number of teaching hours required in any given academic year.  The employment rights of teachers are considered problematic in HCI. In the narrative of these vignettes, colleges' contractual obligations prohibit progress. HCI mobilises an intensely managerial notion of leadership and management. Successful colleges are places where teachers' performance is measured by outputs scrutinised closely by the entire organisation; they are required to perform - to produce desirable outputs - without regard for the circumstances within which they work. In HCI teachers are proud, emotionally content, eager to please and smiling despite the ruthlessness of organisational instability, employment insecurity and the intensification of workload (Avis, 2009; Robson, 1998).

In a paper that adopts the fictional allegory of the Stepford lecturer to explore how change is engineered by managers in colleges and how lecturers resist such impositions, Mather, Worrall, & Mather (2012) parallel the decline in professional autonomy with expansion in the number and organisational prominence of managers tasked with the realignment workers' subjectivities achieved through a multi-layered processes of organisational change. Lecturing staff in such organisation find their capacity for resistance weakened. There is a danger here – of evoking the vulnerability of lecturers in ways that negates their capacity to act

otherwise (Ecclestone et al., 2005). But it is the external rather than internal world of teachers I am captivated by in referring to the diminished pedagogue. Teachers who are considered to be non-compliant (or union activist) are restructured out of existence and replaced with cheaper staff on insecure contracts. Mather, Worrall, & Mather's (2012) work offers a prosaic illustration of Klein's shock doctrine (Klein, 2007). Managers make use of the fiscal crisis to effect curricular or staffing change that would in normal circumstances be unthinkable. Frequent 'staff culling' is part of a process through which teachers are completely and continually re-defined. These managerial incursions into professional territory, the battle ground of which is the teachers' soul (Ball, 1998), reframe and narrow teaching until it becomes synonymised with delivery. The colonisation is almost complete when HCI presumes to know how staff in colleges feel. In one of the texts many illustrative vignettes, teachers are positioned as pleased to be greeted each morning by a college principal as they enter the workplace; they are confident about their leaders; they are empowered by their participation in data driven self-assessment and willing to accept change even if those changes are considered detrimental. Throughout HCI teachers are spoken to in the voice of the strict father (Lakoff, 2004) who requires silent smiling grateful compliance however demanding his strictures.

## Position three: students / learners

HCI makes no direct reference to students. Indeed, a reader unfamiliar with UK policy discourses might well conclude that there are no students in FE. In UK policy discourse students became learners in the late 1980s and since then there has been no further reference to them in policy text. This discursive shift parallels material shifts in the role of the state and the nature of its responsibilities towards its citizenry (Griffin, 1999), shifts that are part of a wider re-writing of social security and the provision of education (Whitty & Menter, 1989). Learning is essentially an individual internal process (albeit one achieved through the social). The state cannot meaningfully have a 'learning policy' in the way it can have an 'education policy' (Field, 2001); the internal nature of learning makes it unnameable to policy intervention. When

discourse valorises learning at the expense of education it succumbs to the neo-liberal fixation with the individual, a process referred to by Biesta as learnification (Biesta, 2013).  When policy language reduces education to learning – one of the many effect s is to disappear the socio-material relationships that surround the pedagogic encounter.  The current wave of policy treats learning as a matter of authority and control. Students-as-learners are there to be directed by the teacher - a skilful didactician - towards the achievement of pre-defined outcomes, learning outcomes - the repetition of that which is already known. Taubman (2009) does not use Biesta's phraseology nor does he work within an ontology of complexity, but his deconstruction of discourse surrounding education drives towards a similar point: when education becomes synonymous with learning its content, purpose and relationships are disappear.

In THSS the heroic teacher focuses on students' capacity to learn to the exclusion of all other considerations.  In HCI teachers are held in a state pre- or post-restructured insecurity.  Despite this, measures of quality are not always able to constrain the actualities of the pedagogic encounter. Colleges aspire to be learner centred. They aim to achieve outcomes for students that are targeted, explicit, immediate and quantifiable.  They complete self-assessment documents that describe their work in these terms. This is what the calculable economy of performance requires. In the ecology of practice learners' outcomes are sometimes un (ac) countable. They are complex, ineffable, dispersed, distributed and emergent in unpredictable time frames (Fenwick, 2010; Stronach, Corbin, McNamara, Stark, & Warne, 2002).

In HCI developing learner centred provision means developing systems that allow for the effective management of information. HCI does not replicate the tabulations that fill 14 of THSSs 28 pages. It does not need to. In the UK translations of students into data is an extraordinarily well-established technology. There is a high degree of familiarity surrounding it.  FE college managers are skilled performers of the annual self-assessment verification ritual. HCI does not define what an outstanding college is, nor what improving means. This definition is provided elsewhere. What HCI makes clear is that outstanding colleges are defined by 'how they manage and use their data'.  The text concludes that if students' needs are met this will be reflected in the achievement of learning outcomes which are accurately captured by data upon

which the designation of grades one to four: outstanding, good, requires improvement or inadequate is determined.   High performing colleges are colleges with good success rates. Their defining features start from this point and work retrospectively, adding detail to the profile.

Students are not placed at the centre of provision, learners are. And students-as-learners placed at the centre of provision do not learn as such; at least, they do not engage in the kind of learning that involves transformation, questioning, exploration, creativity or experimentation. They rather display 'competences for assessment in a simulacrum of study' (Taubman, 2009). Once students are reduced to learners, they are then translated into data.

Students-as-learners translated into data allow the policy process to designate  'centres of calculation' (Rose, 1991)p676. That is, data enables the at-a-distance exercise of power over events and processes, turning them into traces that can be mobilised and accumulated.  The translation of students into data, part of the turn from government to governance (Ozga, 2009), requires complex events and processes to be inscribed in standardised forms. Quantification is an essential prerequisite to the exercise of power.  The avalanche of printed numbers is stressed in the work of Latour (1987). These centres of calculation connect to other locales, making everything a commensurate space for comparison through measurement; they enable the centre to act as centre by means of its centrality in the flow of information. Once students are translated into data, data becomes synecdoche for the worthwhileness of the institution. High performing colleges are colleges whose data suggest they have high success rates. The designation of outstanding, good, requires improvement or inadequate is determined through these translations.

Students are also numericised in THSS. The text presents the reader with a series of contrastive tables. The demographic profile of students vs. that of faculty; students aspirations; their progression intentions; contrastive faculty and students perceptions of the barriers faced in returning to college.  There are tables that treat students as customers as they numericise their experiences of being at colleges; approaches to learning and study habits.  In slight but extraordinary move, students' perceptions are used as justification for the initial and continuous professional development of teachers. This then is a variation on the theme of

teaching by numbers (Taubman, 2009). While students needs are central to what the text is about those needs once numericised are simplified, stabilised, made commensurate and translated into customer feedback that determines pedagogy. It is not the prescriptive lack of creativity - implied by teaching by numbers - that concerns me here.   Nor is it the idea that student feedback can shape evaluative perceptions of teaching. After all students are part of the pedagogic encounter.  It is the connection that is made between the numercised reduction of students' experiences as a direct determiner of pedagogic practice.  THSS offer strategies to promote what they call 'learning that matters' based on four key principles: strengthen classroom engagement, integrate student support into learning experiences, expand professional development focused on engaging students, focus institutional policies on creating the conditions for learning. The justification for these suggestions is connected to the feedback gathered and numericised from students-as-data. While learning is placed at the heart of student success - teaching gains a foothold in as much as teachers are a necessary part of the enterprise.

The assembling and holding together suggested here points to the danger inherent in a disaggregated pedagogy. Teaching and learning separates a single complex activity: pedagogy, and then reassembles it. The trouble is in splitting and reassembling pedagogy as 'teaching-and-learning' its meaning changes. 'Teaching-and-learning' reflects a linear causality: teaching leads to learning; learning is the result of effective teaching. In 'teaching-and-learning' a division of intellectual labour is encoded: the teacher teaches, the student (or learner) learns.  Such division of labour does not and does not (in HCI or THSS at least) admit the emancipatory potential of dialogic learning (Freire & Shor, 1987)

The disaggregation of pedagogy into 'teaching-and-learning' enables not only addition but also exclusion: the teaching in 'teaching-and-learning' is a technical process of enabling learners to achieve pre-defined, policy determined outcomes that are quantifiable, measurable and explicit: SMART targets. Pedagogy, despite its own troubling etymology, includes the act of teaching with its attendant discourses of educational theories, values, evidence and justifications. It is what a teachers needs to know and the skills they need to command to weigh up and justify the different decisions that constitute the pedagogic

encounter. 'Teaching-and-learning' extracts and places under erasure the purposes, values, ideas, assumptions, theories and beliefs that inform, shape and justify pedagogy (Alexander, 2008).

The advice offered by THSS based on the comprehensive feedback of students-as-data  - group work, the value of adopting different approaches to delivery, encouraging student to student as well as student to teacher communication justify particular classroom management approaches. They attempt to provide teachers with the tools required to assert their didactic authority and control over learners and learning. Each of the strategies mentioned is legitimate. However, they suggests little more than an attempt to develop, based on students-as-data models of good practice. Teaching by remote control. But the successful utilisation of these models requires pedagogy. The numercised variations of good 'teaching-and-learning' - teacher-proof teaching  - is that not all strategies work for all students at all times, in all circumstances and all places. Group work is often but not always a good idea. What to use at any given moment, with what students, how to use it, how to adapt and adopt it to suit the situatedness of a particular circumstance requires the judgement of a pedagogue (Biesta, 2007).

## Disentanglements

Using Fairclough's (1996) notion of positioning, I have explored the ways in which two texts, located in contemporaneous global policy spaces, define themselves in relation to quality in further education and community colleges.  These texts are argued as part of an extensive network through which policy is amplified and dispersed. I have analysed three positionings that HCI and THSS use in relation to the text itself, pedagogy and students. These positionings mobilise particular meanings and require readers to negotiate a stance in relation to them. Ostensibly evaluating the worthwhileness of FE and CC provision, both texts entangle teachers and students in the institutional busyness of quantitative measurement resulting in a pedagogy that risks being shredded of its emancipatory potential.   There are stylistic differences between these texts, but threaded through both and the network of which they are part is pervasive set of beliefs about education and economy all of which leads to a diminished pedagogy.

Pervasive as these textual positionings seem, they are on-going and therefore always incomplete. The

positionings implied do not render non-existent connections between education, economy and

emancipation. Once texts become part of the ecology of a college practitioners may position themselves

strategically (Gleeson & Shain, 1999) or tactically (Orr, 2011) in response and as part of this repositioning

HCI and THSS become objects for analysis.

Alexander, R. (2008). *Essays on pedagogy. Europe*. London: Routledge: Taylor& Francis Group.

Apple, M. (2012). *Can education change society?* London: Routledge: Taylor and Francis Group.

Avis, J. (2003). Re-thinking trust in a performative culture: the case of education. *Journal of Education Policy*, *18*(315 - 332).

Avis, J, Wright, C., & Fisher, P. (2011). "Am I doing enough to help them?"Learners, care work and well-being: Further Education trainee teachers. *Research in Post-Compulsory Education 16*(1), 47 – 58.

Avis, James. (2009). *Education, Policy and Social Justice: learning and skills*. London: Continuum Studies in Lifelong Learning.

Ball, S. (1998). Educational Reform and the Struggle for the Soul of the Teacher! The Chinese University of Hong Kong.

Ball, S. (2006). *Education Policy And Social Class: The Selected Works Of Stephen J. Ball* (p. 290). London: Routledge: Taylor and Francis Group.

Ball, S. (2009). Privatising education, privatising education policy, privatising educational research: Network governance and the "competition state." *Journal of Education Policy*, *24*(1), 83–99.

Biesta, G. (2007). Why "what works" won't work: Evidence-based practice and the democratic deficit in educational research. *Educational Theory*, *57*(1), 1–22.

Biesta, G. (2013). Giving Teaching Back to Education: Responding to the Disappearance of the Teacher. *Phenomenology & Practice*, *6*(2), 35–49.

Center for Community College Student Engagement. (2010). *The Heart Student Success*. The University of Texas at Austin, Community College Leadership Program. Austin, TX.

Curry, M. (2003). Skills, access, and basic writing: A community college case study from the United States. *Studies in the Education of Adults*, *35*(3), 5 – 18.

Dennis, C. A. (2011). Measuring quality, framing what we know : a critical discourse analysis. *Literacy*, *45*(3), 119–125.

Dennis, C. A. (2012). Quality: an ongoing conversation over time. *Journal of Vocational Education & Training*, *64*(4), 511–527. doi:10.1080/13636820.2012.727854

Dougherty, K. (2010). *Colleges 2020*. (T. Dolphin & J. Clifton, Eds.). London and Newcastle: Institute for Public Policy Research.

Ecclestone, K. (2008). *The dangerous rise of therapeutic education. British Educational Research Journal*. London: Routledge, Taylor and Francis Group.

Ecclestone, K., Hayes, D., & Furedi, F. (2005). Knowing me, knowing you: The rise of therapeutic professionalism in the education of adults. *Studies in the Education of Adults*, *37*(2), 182 – 200.

Edelman, M. J. (1985). *The Symbolic Uses of Politics* (p. 221). Illinois: University of Illinois Press.

Edwards, R., Clarke, J., Harrison, R., & Reeve, F. (2001). Flexibility at work: a study of further education. *Journal of Vocational Education and Training*, *53*(3), 373–390.

Fairclough, N. (1996). *Language and power* (10th ed.). London: Longman Group.

Fenwick, T. (2010). Accountability practices in adult education: Insights from actor–network theory. *Studies in the Education of Adults*, *42*(2), 170–185.

Field, J. (2001). Lifelong education. *International Journal of Lifelong Education*, *20*(1-2), 3–15.

Freire, P. (1998). *Pedagogy of the heart*. New York: Continuum International Publishing Group.

Freire, P., & Shor, I. (1987). What is the "dialogical method" of teaching. *Journal of education*, *169*(3), 11 – 32.

Furedi, F. (2004). Reflections on the medicalisation of social experience. *British Journal of Guidance & Counselling*, *32*(2), 413 – 415.

Gillborn, D., & Youdell, D. (2000). *Rationing Education: Policy, Practice, Reform and Equity.* London: Routledge, Taylor and Francis Group.

Gleeson, D., & Shain, F. (1999). Managing ambiguity: between markets and managerialism-a case study of "middle"managers in further education. *The Sociological Review*, *47*(3), 461 – 490.

Gorard, S. (2010). Education can compensate for society–a bit. *British Journal of Educational Studies*, *58*(1), 47 – 65.

Griffin, C. (1999). Lifelong learning and welfare reform. *International Journal of Lifelong Education*, *18*(6), 431 – 452.

Halpin, D. (2006). Why a Romantic conception of education matters. *Oxford Review of Education*, *32*(3), 325 – 345.

Hamilton, M., & Barton, D. (2000). The International Adult Literacy Survey: what does it really measure? *International review of education*, *46*(5), 377 – 389.

Harré, Rom, & Lagenhove, L. Van. (1999). *Positioning theory: Moral contexts of international action*. London: Blackwell Publishers.

Hollway, W. (1984). Gender difference and the production of subjectivity. In J. Henriques, W. Hollway, C. Urwin, C. Venn, & V. Walkerdine (Eds.), *Changing the subject: Psychology, social regulation and subjectivity* (pp. 27–263). London: Methuen.

Howard, U. (2009). *FE Colleges in a New Culture of Adult and Lifelong Learning: IFLL Sector Paper 7. Howard, Ursula* (pp. 1 – 79). Leicester.

Jameson, J., & Hillier, Y. (2008). "Nothing will prevent me from doing a good job". The professionalisation of part-time teaching staff in further and adult education. *Research in Post-Compulsory Education*, *13*(1), 39 – 53.

Jephcote, M., & Raby, R. (2012). A comparative view of Colleges of Further Education (UK) and Community Colleges (US): maintaining access in an era of financial constraint. *Research in Post-Compulsory Education*, *17*(3), 349 – 366.

Kenway, J., & Fahey, J. (2008). *Globalizing the research imagination*. Oxon: Routledge: Taylor and Francis Group.

Klein, N. (2007). *The shock doctrine: The rise of disaster capitalism*. London: Penguin.

Lakoff, G. (2004). *Don't think of an elephant!: Know your values and frame the debate*. Vermont: Chelsea Green Publishing Co.

Latour, B. (1987). *Science in action: How to follow scientists and engineers through society. Networks* (6th ed., Vol. 6). Harvard University Press.

Lingard, B., & Rawolle, S. (2004). Mediatizing educational policy: the journalistic field, science policy, and cross-field effects. *Journal of education policy*, *19*(3), 361–380.

Lopez, D., Litster, J., Vorhaus, J., & Salter, E. (2007). Stick with it!:'Motivating'Skills for life'learners to persist, progress and achieve': year 1 report: NRDC report to the Quality Improvement Agency, October 2007.

Mather, K., Worrall, L., & Mather, G. (2012). Engineering compliance and worker resistance in UK further education: The creation of the Stepford lecturer. *Employee Relations*, *34*(5), 534–554.

Moodie, G. (2011). An introduction to post compulsory education in the USA | Gavin Moodie - Academia.edu. Retrieved March 10, 2013, from http://www.academia.edu

OECD. (2005). *Society at a Glance: OECD Social Indicators-2005 Edition*.

OECD. (2009). *Education at a Glance 2009: OECD Indicators*.

Orr, K. (2011). The end of "strategic compliance"? Practice and professionalism in the English Further Education sector. In *Journal of Vocational Education and Training conference*. Worcester College, Oxford: University of Huddersfield Repository. Retrieved from http://eprints.hud.ac.uk/11534

Ozga, J. (2009). Governing education through data in England: From regulation to self-evaluation. *Journal of Education Policy*, *24*(2), 149–162.

Rizvi, F., & Lingard, B. (2010). *Globalizing education policy* (p. 227). London: Routledge: Taylor& Francis Group.

Robson, J. (1998). A profession in crisis: status, culture and identity in the further education college. *Journal of Vocational Education and Training*, *50*(4), 585–607.

Rooney, D., Rhodes, C., & Boud, D. (2010). A community college's performance of'organisation': it's a drag! *Studies in the Education of …*, *42*(1), 18 – 33.

Rose, N. (1991). Governing by numbers: Figuring out democracy. *Accounting, Organizations and Society*, *16*(7), 673–692.

Santiago, P., Tremblay, K., Basri, E., & Arnal, E. (2008). Tertiary education for the knowledge society: OECD thematic review of tertiary education: synthesis report. In *Tertiary Education for the Knowledge Society*. Lisbon, Portugal: Organisation for Economic Cooperation and Development.

Savage, M., & Burrows, R. (2007). The Coming Crisis of Empirical Sociology. Retrieved March 07, 2013, from https://cms.gold.ac.uk/media/coming-crisis-empirical-sociology.pdf

Shain, F., & Gleeson, D. (1999). Under new management: changing conceptions of teacher professionalism and policy in the further education sector. *Journal of Education Policy*, *14*(4), 445–462.

Stronach, I. (2011). *Globalizing Education, Educating the Local: How Method Made Us Mad.* Oxon: Routledge, Taylor and Francis Group.

Stronach, I., Corbin, B., McNamara, O., Stark, S., & Warne, T. (2002). Towards an uncertain politics of professionalism: teacher and nurse identities in flux. *Journal of Education Policy*, *17*(1), 109–138.

Taubman, P. (2009). *Teaching by numbers: Deconstructing the discourse of standards and accountability in education*. New York: Routledge.

Teacher, S. (2012). Secret Teacher: "Dear Ofsted inspector." *Guardian Newspaper*. London. Retrieved from http://www.guardian.co.uk/teacher-network/teacher-blog/2012/nov/10/ofsted-inspector-notice-improve-secret-teacher

Thomson, P., Hall, C., & Jones, K. (2010). Maggie's day: a small-scale analysis of English education policy. *Journal of Education Policy*, *25*(5), 639–656.

Whitty, G., & Menter, I. (1989). Lessons of Thatcherism: education policy in England and Wales 1979-88. *Journal of Law abd Society*, *16*(1), 42–64.