

(Dis)continuity and the Coalition: primary pedagogy as craft and primary pedagogy as performance

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Abstract

Shortly after taking power following the May 2010 UK general election, the Conservative/Liberal Democrat government published its education white paper, *The Importance of Teaching*. In this, certain features for primary school pedagogy can be discerned. Using the lens of the “position call”, this article examines the discourses implicated in the white paper to highlight the position calls offered to the primary profession concerning pedagogy. These are compared to those made by New Labour in its previous 13 years in power. Accordingly, the article proposes that whilst the previous administration offered the position calls for primary education of *pedagogy as collective craft* and *pedagogy as collective performance*, continuity and discontinuity can be seen in the recent white paper, namely that the position calls now being made are for *pedagogy as individual craft* and *pedagogy as individual performance*.

Keywords: education policy, pedagogy, positioning theory, Education White Paper 2010,

Globally, pedagogy is a term widely used and widely assumed to be self-evident. That pedagogy is deployed to talk about classroom practice is unsurprising: it does, after all, relate to issues of teaching and learning. As the *practice* of teaching it is informed by knowledge that is shared and structured (Pollard 2010 Pollard, A., ed. 2010. *Professionalism and pedagogy: A contemporary opportunity. A Commentary by TLRP and GTCE*, London: Teaching and Learning Research Programme (TLRP).). The “pedagogy of the classroom” or the acts and situations brought to bear in the immediacy of specific moment-by-moment human–human and human–resource interactions form and are part of particular storylines that define “pupil”, “teacher”, “subject” and so on. But it is the institution itself that, in some ways, gives rise to such forms through the messages conveyed about the relative power positions of those involved in the pedagogic process and the knowledge to be considered. More broadly still, society, imbued as it is with beliefs about the role for teachers and pupils and concomitant orientations for classroom and school organisation, paints particular versions of pedagogic events. These three theatres for pedagogy, “the classroom”, “the institution” and “wider society” have discourses which act to socialise pupils. Importantly, therefore, pedagogy should be conceived of through the prism of the interaction between social, political and cultural forces and that which occurs through classroom processes. It is incumbent upon teachers that they “... be able to make professional judgements which go beyond pragmatic constraints and ideological concerns, and which can be explained and defended” (Pollard 2010 Pollard, A., ed. 2010. *Professionalism and pedagogy: A contemporary opportunity. A Commentary by TLRP and GTCE*, London: Teaching and Learning Research Programme (TLRP).5).

For Pollard, in a liberal democracy, pedagogy embodies values such as the “... furthering of individual and social development, fulfilment and emancipation” (2008 Pollard, A. (with J. Anderson, M. Maddock, S. Swaffield, J. Warin, and P. Warwick). 2008. *Reflective teaching*. London: Continuum.4). It is to such matters I wish to attend; specifically, I am concerned to demonstrate how political manoeuvring has positioned pedagogy since 1997. Here I consider the continuities and discontinuities in pedagogic discourse both within New Labour’s terms in office and the recent white paper *The Importance of Teaching* (DfE 2010a Department for Education (DfE). 2010a. *The importance of teaching: The schools white paper 2010*, Norwich: The Stationery Office.). I explore this through the lens of the “position call”, a theoretical perspective that considers the ways in which discourse “calls us” and provides for possible “positions” and in so doing presents possibilities for action and discussion.

In the next section I consider pedagogy, briefly, so that I might demonstrate the intricate implications for pedagogy of the social, political and cultural. In the

third section I outline the concept of the “position call”, drawing attention to its salient features and its relationship with and to discourse more broadly. I then outline the role New Labour played in positioning pedagogy. This I do in relation to the two main discourses present in New Labour policy: be accountable; and, provide high quality teaching. Following this, I examine Coalition pedagogic discourse as published in their document *The Importance of Teaching* (DfE 2010a Department for Education (DfE). 2010a. *The importance of teaching: The schools white paper 2010*, Norwich: The Stationery Office.). Here I demonstrate that this is, in some ways, similar to the previous administration. However, I also demonstrate the subtle differences in the substance of this new discourse. In the final section I outline what I believe are the position calls offered to the profession by the Coalition, namely, *pedagogy as individual craft* and *pedagogy as individual performance*.

Towards pedagogy

Brian Simon’s article “Why no pedagogy in England?” (Simon 1994 Simon, B. 1994. “Why no pedagogy in England?”. In *Teaching and learning in the secondary school*, Edited by: Moon, B. and Shelton Mayes, A. 10–22. London: Routledge.) explored the precarious place pedagogy held in the latter years of the nineteenth century. Simon’s work did not infer that no teaching took place at that time, rather he was concerned that “... pedagogic discourse was confused, anecdotal and eclectic rather than coherent, systematic and purposeful” (Alexander 2008b Alexander, R. 2008b. *Essays on pedagogy*, London: Routledge.3). Specifically, Simon outlined historical, cultural and political reasons why English conceptions of pedagogy lacked rigour and sustainability.

He was concerned with Pedagogy as the “science of teaching” and in this regard discussed, particularly, psychological inputs to defining the term. Most importantly, Simon was concerned to show that the concept of Pedagogy had been “shunned” in England in favour of amateurish and pragmatic educational theory and practice (Simon 1994 Simon, B. 1994. “Why no pedagogy in England?”. In *Teaching and learning in the secondary school*, Edited by: Moon, B. and Shelton Mayes, A. 10–22. London: Routledge.10). His belief, as Alexander (2008b Alexander, R. 2008b. *Essays on pedagogy*, London: Routledge.43) notes, was that “... teachers in England tended to conceptualise, plan and justify their teaching by combining pragmatism with ideology but not much else.”

Simon’s treatise is of note here for the way in which an interplay between political forces and positivist research were implicated in the lack of development of the pedagogy concept. Simon notes the role the prestigious and leading public schools played in the latter half of the nineteenth century in

forestalling pedagogy's theoretical and practical development. He argued that it was their contempt of professional training in favour of on-the-job "learning" coupled with their role as the developers and custodians of the moral and spiritual development of the children of the aristocracy and bourgeoisie that denied pedagogy prestige.

Simon's argument is powerful for the way in which it alludes to two things: the role for government; and, the argumentative and epistemological base deployed in pedagogy's defence or otherwise. Certainly no government of the time sought to prescribe how teachers should teach. Indeed, such moves have only become manifest, as we shall see, in the last 14 or so years. What is clear, though, is how political ideology set the scene for pedagogic orientation. The Liberal doctrines of the late nineteenth and early twentieth centuries established a certain position for schooling that was market based with an orientation towards the individual. The conclusion was that any attempt to describe "good" education for all was fraught with difficulties as individual self-interest is then lost.

Simon's treatise displays the ways in which pedagogy was, historically, conceived of as a craft, a set of skills developed through *in situ* practice and ideology. Certainly it can be argued that the more one teaches the more likely one is to develop a more *experienced* conception of what pedagogy is and might look like. It seems intuitive to note that pedagogy with its inherently practical dimension can be realised and improved through practice. Indeed, the craft of teaching is a notable dimension of pedagogy, foregrounding as it does, the practical elements therein.

But practice alone does not necessarily improve pedagogy. To assume that more of the same, or even an increase in quantity, produces qualitative uplift is erroneous. Aligning pedagogy solely with such craft ideas is problematic. For if all that exists as evidence of good practice is a series of personal successes and failures then generalisability is lost. To ascribe "truth" to a set of pedagogic statements such that these should be adopted and adhered to denies the fluid nature of human existence: what works in one situation may well not work in another. Such theory/practice arguments have played a major role in educational thinking for some time, and have often been the matter of educational debate as to the relative importance of each separately and together. Indeed, it is this challenge, "... to distinguish between what is known in a scientific sense of being explicit, cumulative and generalisable, and what are the irreducibly intuitive and creative elements of teaching' (Pollard 2010 Pollard, A., ed. 2010. *Professionalism and pedagogy: A contemporary opportunity. A Commentary by TLRP and GTCE*, London: Teaching and Learning Research Programme (TLRP).5) that so challenges the educational professional. The

instantaneousness of pedagogy as craft and pedagogy as art set against the specific nature of pedagogy as science marks one of the defining features of professional decision-making. It is in the drawing of such conclusions that the professional exercises his/her professionalism and professionalism. For Furlong, this theory/practice relationship is crucial; the matter is not about the interconnections between the two, but is, rather, concerned with whether professional theories

... have been justified and developed by being exposed to the critical scrutiny of other practitioners, whether they are based on a consideration of evidence from research ... whether they have been interrogated in terms of the values and assumptions on which they are based. (Furlong 2000 Furlong, J. 2000. *Higher education and the new professionalism of teachers: Realising the potential of partnership. A discussion paper*, London: SCOP/CVCP.13, quoted in Pollard 2010 Pollard, A., ed. 2010. *Professionalism and pedagogy: A contemporary opportunity. A Commentary by TLRP and GTCE*, London: Teaching and Learning Research Programme (TLRP).6)

This is important. For pedagogy to be meaningful there is a need for it to extend beyond the boundaries of the individual classroom. Professional sharing of practice is crucial; such craft knowledge is part of the pedagogic makeup. But it is research and theory which bind and legitimate pedagogic technique.

For Alexander (2008b Alexander, R. 2008b. *Essays on pedagogy*, London: Routledge.47) pedagogy is a discourse that "... informs and justifies the act of teaching and the learning towards that which teaching is directed ...". In his view, teachers engage with three distinct but related domains of: ideas and values (*children, learning, teaching* and curriculum, what is to be taught, to whom and how); the legal and institutional contexts of *school* and *policy*; and, the purposes and values of the *community, culture* and the *self*. The first domain enables teaching, the second formalises and legitimates it and the third locates it. Pedagogy is thus not just about disembodied technique. Instead it

... reflects and manifests values. In turn these are not merely the personal predilections of individual teachers, but the shared and/or disputed values of the wider culture. (Alexander 2008a Alexander, R. 2008a. *Education for all, the quality imperative and the problem of pedagogy*, Create Pathways to Success, Research Monograph No. 20. London: Institute of Education.19)

Pedagogy, then, represents "... something greater than a more effective approach to teaching" (Leach and Moon 2008 Leach, J. and Moon, B. 2008. *The power of pedagogy*, London: Sage.3). Such discussions offer interesting and workable ways by which to locate pedagogic theory: the day-to-day actions and activities of the classroom and other micro teaching-contexts within the wider

discourses of the institution and local and national policy. They enable consideration of how the language of pedagogy at the personal level is both constructive of, and resultant from, those discourses that seek to orientate pedagogy. Clearly they articulate a need for one to consider the social, cultural and political for their impact on pedagogical “moments”.

The relationship between society, culture, politics and pedagogy is, then, of importance. Notably, for Vygotsky (1997 Vygotsky, L.S. 1997. *Educational psychology*, Boca Raton, FL: St Lucie Press (originally published 1921–1923).), pedagogies gain form through social events and situations. Davies (quoted in Daniels 2001 Daniels, H. 2001. *Vygotsky and pedagogy*, London: RoutledgeFalmer.4) explicitly notes the connection between these and pedagogy

Pedagogy involves a vision (theory, set of beliefs) about society, human nature, knowledge and production, in relation to educational ends, with terms and rules inserted as to the practical and mundane means of their realisation. (Davies 1994 Davies, B. 1994. On the neglect of pedagogy in educational studies and its consequences. *British Journal of In-Service Education*, 20(1): 17–34.26)

Here we see the reprise of the general *and* the specific, an amalgamation of the two to form a conceptualisation replete with messages about the ways in which the aforementioned three theatres for pedagogy (classroom, institution, wider society) can be realised together. This is important for it notes the political implicit in the discussion of the social and cultural; thus can be seen the need to consider these realms if we are to build pedagogies that can merge the general with the specific. For as Daniels states when discussing the work of Popkewitz, there is a need to “... provide an account of pedagogic practice in which large-scale or macro factors are integrated with micro levels of analysis” (Daniels 2001 Daniels, H. 2001. *Vygotsky and pedagogy*, London: RoutledgeFalmer.6).

Specifically, “pedagogy is invariably political” (Leach and Moon 2008 Leach, J. and Moon, B. 2008. *The power of pedagogy*, London: Sage.15); to ignore this is to devalue and deflect pedagogy from its original meaning (Best 1988 Best, E. 1988. The metamorphoses of the term “pedagogy”. *Prospects*, XVIII(2): 157–166.). And Vygotsky (quoted in Daniels 2001 Daniels, H. 2001. *Vygotsky and pedagogy*, London: RoutledgeFalmer.5) as well:

Pedagogy is never and was never politically indifferent, since, willingly or unwillingly, through its own work on the psyche, it has always adopted a particular social pattern, political line, in accordance with the dominant social class that has guided its interests. (Vygotsky 1997 Vygotsky, L.S. 1997. *Educational psychology*, Boca Raton, FL: St Lucie Press (originally published 1921–1923).348)

There is, then, a need to consider wider social, political and cultural forces for the ways in which they position pedagogy. These are manifest in pronouncements and policies, but are also evident in the ways in which discourses that seemingly do not directly impact on teaching in effect offer certain position calls for professional acceptance or rejection. Notably, position calls are implied through wider discourses. These calls, implicit or explicit, are the substance of action; they provide touchstones towards which professional activity might march or from which it might retreat. Importantly, such debates and conversations locate the practical; that is they mark the realm of classroom actions, embedded as these are in wider discourses. The craft of pedagogy is positioned by wider social, political and cultural forces.

And it is this positioning that is important. The fluid nature of culture, society and politics and the myriad ways in which these might be attended to by the professional, alone or in a group, requires a theory that permits the instantaneousness of decision-making. It is not enough to simply suggest that role defines action, for role is a label and not a means to understand individual activity. It is for this reason that I wish to explore the ideas of “position” and “position call”.

Position calls

The idea of positioning as a means by which to examine possibilities for, and actualities of action is well documented in the literature. Broadly, writings on such matters fall into two camps. Some, such as Harré (cf. 2004 Harré, R. 2004. Positioning theory. http://www.massey.ac.nz/_alock/virtual/positioning.doc, (accessed May 16, 2006).), discuss the ways in which moment-by-moment conversational acts construct various positions for an individual to accept or reject within wider discourse. This perspective “... acknowledges the active mode in which persons endeavour to locate themselves within particular discourses during social interaction ...” (Burr 2003 Burr, V. 2003. *Social constructionism*, 2nd ed., Hove: Routledge.113).

Another view considers the ways in which discourse constructs positions; it does not speak of the instantaneousness of the former position. Crucially what this perspective alludes to are the ways in which discourse makes one listen as a certain type of person. For example, discourse may well call teachers to adopt a particular orientation for their day-to-day classroom persona. It may call on them to dress in a certain way and to use language to certain effect. In this way the teacher is “... constrained by available discourse because discursive positions pre-exist the individual whose sense of ‘self’ (subjectivity) and range of experience are circumscribed by available discourses” (Willig 1999 Willig, C., ed. 1999. *Applied discourse analysis: Social and psychological*

interventions, Buckingham: Open University Press.114). The teacher's self recognition is in terms of the available discourses that call to her; when she recognises herself as that person, she is that person (Burr 2003 Burr, V. 2003. *Social constructionism*, 2nd ed., Hove: Routledge.).

This latter position is insufficient however. To assume that our subjective experience is provided by discourse alone presumes that language is key, that is, language pre-ordains us: it gives us who we are. But this implies the "death of the subject"; for the individual is not able to make decisions for herself. It is here that the work of Drewery (2005 Drewery, W. 2005. Why we should watch what we say. Position calls, everyday speech and the production of relational subjectivity. *Theory and Psychology*, 15(3): 305–324.) is of note. For her, discourse is not only a set of statements that more or less belong together (Holloway 1984 Holloway, W. 1984. "Gender difference and the production of subjectivity". In *Changing the subject: Psychology, social regulation and subjectivity*, Edited by: Henriques, J., Holloway, W., Urwin, C., Venn, C. and Walkerdine, V. 227–263. London: Methuen.) but is also a set of practices which, in the words of Foucault (1972 Foucault, M. 1972. *The archaeology of knowledge*, London: Tavistock.49), "... do more than use these signs to designate things ...". For Drewery, individuals are offered positions from which they might choose as agentic subjects, that is, as "... persons who are participants in the conversations that produce the meanings of their lives ..." (2005 Drewery, W. 2005. Why we should watch what we say. Position calls, everyday speech and the production of relational subjectivity. *Theory and Psychology*, 15(3): 305–324.315).

In essence what this version of positioning theory does is marry the two. It signals that the individual constructs identity both within conversations *and* discourse, but in ways that are neither only one nor the other. Rather, what Drewery notes is how discourse provides position calls that individuals are able to take up, modify or reject in relationship with others: for persons cannot be agentic on their own (2005 Drewery, W. 2005. Why we should watch what we say. Position calls, everyday speech and the production of relational subjectivity. *Theory and Psychology*, 15(3): 305–324.315).

Thus, to be positioned agentively is to be an actor in a web of relationship with others who are also engaged in co-producing the conditions of their lives. (Drewery 2005 Drewery, W. 2005. Why we should watch what we say. Position calls, everyday speech and the production of relational subjectivity. *Theory and Psychology*, 15(3): 305–324.315)

For the purposes of this article, then, and with regard to pedagogy, I wish to consider the calls that are made by wider discourse. I will consider the ways in

which pedagogy is possibly positioned, possibly because agentic action may well construct a different response. I wish to start with New Labour's term in office in order to note the continuities and discontinuities of the Coalition government.

New Labour education discourse

In 1997 New Labour swept to victory in the general election. Whilst it might have been expected that much of the discourse of previous New Right administrations would be dismissed, it was soon very clear that this was not to be the case. Although it is disingenuous to state that New Labour simply continued with the policies of old, it is the case that much of the marketplace rhetoric and practice built up over the previous 18 years was, in one form or another, adopted and deployed. There are, though, fundamental differences between the New Right and the Third Way of New Labour. Importantly, whilst Neo-Liberalism rests on a rather rigid belief in markets and the private sector coupled with an almost zealous disregard for the public sector, New Labour's approach utilised "...a 'flexible repertoire' of state roles and responses" (Ball 2008 Ball, S.J. 2008. *The education debate*, Bristol: The Policy Press.88). Put more simply, New Labour's mantra was more akin to the non-ideological adage of "what works". Blair's mantra of "Education, Education, Education" (Blair 1996 Blair, T. 1996. Speech given at Ruskin College, December 16, in Oxford. <http://www.leeds.ac.uk/educol/documents/000000084.htm> (accessed February 20, 2011).) directed the state towards the provision of a policy of high expectations, seen through the realisation of standards through the procurement of mechanisms seen to be "obviously" successful. Blair's vision for education, indeed for all public services, was one of improved and sustained effectiveness. This was particularly notable where pedagogy was concerned. In this regard, the discourse can be articulated two-fold: accountability and high quality teaching.

Accountability

It was through continuous accountability measures that New Labour drove the main aspect of its primary phase education agenda. This was operationalised in the primary school through the setting and realisation of specific targets for end of Key Stage tests (SATs) for children aged 10 and 11. In support of such ends New Labour introduced the National Literacy Strategy (NLS) (DfEE 1998 Department for Education and Employment (DfEE). 1998. *The National Literacy Strategy: Framework for teaching*, London: DfEE.) and National Numeracy Strategy (DfEE 1999 Department for Education and Employment (DfEE). 1999. *The National Numeracy Strategy*, London: DfEE.). They were pointedly clear: schools needed to consider how they were to adopt the teaching methods described therein or demonstrate that they achieved high standards in

these two areas through their own methods. As Dadds (2001 Dadds, M. 2001. The politics of pedagogy. *Teachers and Teaching: Theory and Practice*, 7(1): 43–58.45) notes, the way in which the “guidance” was produced was specific to the point of being formulaic. It was doubtful whether any school or teacher had the time, or inclination, to produce something as comprehensive as this. Whilst neither was statutory, the teaching methods extolled soon became the norm across the whole curriculum.

At the same time stringent targets for 11 year olds in end of key stage literacy and numeracy SATs were announced. It soon became the norm that the teacher would set certain pupil attainment levels which would, in turn, necessitate certain actions. In effect, pupils became required to give an account of themselves through the technology of the testing regime.

Through the necessities of the testing regime, teachers were required to act in ways which conferred both themselves and school with certain accolades. It was this adherence to performance that so dominated education in the late 1990s and early to mid-2000s. Although national targets were dropped in 2004 the culture of constant year-on-year improvement continued. Whilst such performance measures provided the main theme for New Labour’s term in office, it must be noted that concerns over the equitability of “raw” scores alone led to the development of Contextual Value Added (CVA) measures. By making judgements about school performance based on the levels of attainment upon entry to the school and levels of local circumstance, such measures were deployed to drive home the message that relative success should count for as much as success in absolute terms. In some regards such systems are more equitable for they actively consider the success schools have in moving children forward. However, such systems still measure attainment as a proxy for learning (Adams 2006 Adams, P. 2006. Exploring social constructivism: Theories and practicalities. *Education 3–13*, 34(3): 243–257.) and are overly simplistic in their uses and effect.

High quality teaching

Whilst the Office for Standards in Education (OFSTED), soon after its inception, began to pass comment on teaching methods, there was no real emphasis on the prescription or proscription of teaching methods over and above a desire to see a return to whole class teaching. But this was an inspirational measure not realised through particularly prescriptive measures; pedagogy was still an individual professional pursuit (Furlong 2005 Furlong, J. 2005. New Labour and teacher education: The end of an era. *Oxford Review of Education*, 31(1): 119–134.). New Labour’s position was somewhat different, and it was through calls on professionalism that pedagogic formulation also

came to fruition. The language of high expectations and excellence soon came to be seen both as a mantra for a rejection of failure and a clarion call to the professional heart of teachers. Weight was added to this discourse by Barber (2001 Barber, M. Large-scale education reform in England: A work in progress. Paper presented at the Managing Education Reform Conference. October 29–30, Moscow. cited in Alexander 2008b, 53–54) when he advocated that whilst the Thatcher era had driven teachers and teaching from *uninformed professional judgement* towards *uninformed prescription*, New Labour legislation had ushered in an era of *informed prescription*. Higgins (1998 Higgins, D. 1998. The National Literacy Project: A case study into status quo and change. MA diss., University of East Anglia, Norwich. cited in Dadds 2001) reminds us that many teachers, tired of being blamed for the ills of education, countenanced the external prescription as a means to absolve responsibility should things go wrong. Duly, the advice associated with the strategies through schemes of work, although presented as “guidance”, was widely adopted.

Such moves to define pedagogy were attempts to ameliorate the effects of the poor teaching assumed to have existed prior to the introduction of literacy and numeracy. The initiatives defined the problem to be overcome in so much as they positioned teaching deemed “other” to that described by official guidance as problematic; they conferred status through “official pedagogy”. Norms were created so as to hold up as an exemplar a certain view of pedagogy. This “new” pedagogy was positioned as a collective enterprise: individualism in teaching was to be discouraged, replaced instead by adherence to a collectivist pedagogical treatise of “what works”.

But this prescription alone was not enough to coerce professionals into adopting that proclaimed as “right” and “proper”. Part of both strategies was the creation of an army of literacy and numeracy consultants whose job it was to support and monitor the implementation of literacy and numeracy foci in schools. Schools were effectively pitted against each other in a game of “sharing good practice” whereupon those officially positioned as having “got it right” were paraded as beacons of “best practice”. Teachers and schools were thus faced with a choice: adopt the strategies with the possibility of official approval, or plough an individual furrow and risk criticism. This was a dilemma and many in the profession did not have the wherewithal to undertake the task of political challenge.

(Dis)continuities in the New Labour project

This desire to position pedagogy, manifest via central steerage, was operationalised through the very definitions of pedagogy held up at the time; the advice contained in the literacy and numeracy strategies were two cases in

point. Essentially, in its early years, New Labour aimed to establish a new kind of professionalism, one which accepts

... that decisions about what to teach and how to teach and how to assess children, are made at school and national level rather than by individual teachers. (Furlong 2005 Furlong, J. 2005. New Labour and teacher education: The end of an era. *Oxford Review of Education*, 31(1): 119–134.120)

This was collective reasoning, validated by large-scale positivist research projects, directed towards the development of a specific collectivist pedagogy. The position extolled was technical in orientation; a rationalist endeavour which implied "... that there is a common framework for people, with fixed goals" (Furlong 2005 Furlong, J. 2005. New Labour and teacher education: The end of an era. *Oxford Review of Education*, 31(1): 119–134.127). But the undertakings were not without their detractors and by 2002 there was mounting concern that, in particular, the literacy and numeracy strategies were distorting the primary curriculum (Brehony 2005 Brehony, K.J. 2005. Primary schooling under New Labour: The irresolvable contradiction of excellence and enjoyment. *Oxford Review of Education*, 31(1): 29–46.).

In 2003, and in an attempt to reduce the stultifying effects of the performance culture, the National Primary Strategy (DfES 2003 Department for Education and Skills (DfES). 2003. *Excellence and enjoyment: A strategy for primary schools*, London: DfES.) was published. However, the strategy still required schools to set themselves challenging targets so that there would be year-on-year improvement in the results for end of Key Stage 2 (10–11-year-old) tests. Further, acknowledging concerns raised in other government quarters than the Department for Education and Skills (DfES) and by thinkers such as Bentley (1998 Bentley, T. 1998. *Learning beyond the classroom: Education for a changing world*, London: Routledge.) a director at the think-tank DEMOS, the strategy was positioned to continue to raise educational attainment albeit with a measure of enjoyment thrown in. As Galton (2007 Galton, M. 2007. New Labour and education: An evidence-based analysis. *Forum*, 49(1–2): 157–177.) notes, though, whilst the desire may well have been an increase in enjoyment, the methods of the national literacy and numeracy strategies were the favoured mode of organising teaching for the primary school. Indeed, the strategy was clear: it desired the extension of such methods to all parts of the curriculum.

The discourse of high expectations was that which continued to drive the development of education. The marking out of certain levels and types of achievement served as a mechanism for the evaluation of the system as a whole and in particular a determination as to the quality of pedagogy and learning (Adams 2008 Adams, P. 2008. Considering 'best practice': The social

construction of teacher activity and pupil learning as performance. *Cambridge Journal of Education*, 38(3): 375–392.). Whilst certain statements regarding issues such as creativity may have been made in an attempt to embolden wider considerations these were themselves judged in the same way: simplistic measures designed to capture some “essence” at the heart of the educational project. Whilst it is clear that attainment on tests is one way to judge, this measure misses fundamental points about learning and its relationship to personal position and growth. What is elided is the potential of all to succeed in a variety of ways; expectations lead to behaviours with concomitant effects on the learner, which, in turn, lead to a certain orientation for achievement which further confers expectation.

The pedagogy lauded was that of the institution. Individualism in defining and practicing pedagogy was gone, replaced instead by a raft of measures designed to ensure conformity. As Reid et al. note when speaking of teacher development

The focus has not been on equipping teachers with the skills to engage in professional self-development, to develop evidence-based practice, to run educational teams, to innovate or facilitate, but rather to prepare a generation of teachers as technicians or deliverers of set strategies. (Reid et al. 2004 Reid, I., Brain, K. and Comerford Boyes, L. 2004. Teachers or learning leaders? Where have all the teachers gone? Gone to be leaders everyone. *Educational Studies*, 30(3): 251–264.263)

Collectivism was the order of the day, offering two position calls for pedagogy. Firstly, the concentration on classroom practice gave rise to a certain calling for pedagogy, that of *craft*. Here was seen the elevation of specific skills which, taken, as they were, on their own, reified the specific moment-by-moment practices which make up part of the day-to-day work of teachers. This position call, *pedagogy as collective craft*, made use of officially identified mechanisms for “excellent teaching” which established a series of procedures by which efficiency and effectiveness might be achieved. Secondly, the measurement of learning by SATs tests effectively engendered a performance culture for primary education. However, this was not enough. Through the establishment of national targets initially, and school level calls for increased improvement latterly, a collective ideology was promoted, one which called upon schools *as institutions* to be accountable. Added to this were mechanisms for hardening the relationship between pedagogy and performance. In effect, teachers were offered another position call: *pedagogy as collective performance*.

The Coalition

In November 2010, the new Conservative/Liberal Democratic Coalition government published its education white paper, *The Importance of Teaching*.

That pedagogy was not referred to once is notable for a document of this title. The phrase “teaching and learning” was also only mentioned 10 times. What is discernable, though, are the implications for pedagogy implicit within the text. Close inspection reveals the intent for pedagogy behind the veneer of the importance of teaching. The Coalition government is seemingly embarking on a notable mix of policy that can be said, in some regards, to mirror the discourse of New Labour; once again the position calls of performance and craft are notable.

Performance

Certainly, the measures used to call schools and teachers to account seem to be an area of continuation. On the one hand the Coalition does not differ from New Labour in matters of accountability through performance and comparison; it does, in fact, recognise the positive features of such a system.

Clear performance information and good comparative data are positive features of our system. (DfE 2010a Department for Education (DfE). 2010a. *The importance of teaching: The schools white paper 2010*, Norwich: The Stationery Office.12)

And,

... rigorous assessment is important. It provides sound information for parents on their child’s progress and the effectiveness of schools. (DfE 2010a Department for Education (DfE). 2010a. *The importance of teaching: The schools white paper 2010*, Norwich: The Stationery Office.48)

Here is more of the same: the continuing judgment of schools and teachers against performance data. In *The Case for Change* (DfE 2010b Department for Education (DfE). 2010b. *The case for change*, Norwich: The Stationery Office.) the government echoes this concentration on key performance data. Citing international comparisons, this document, the sister to *The Importance of Teaching*, notes that accountability is a feature of all high-performing systems. This is particularly the case where external measures are deployed, for these, it is believed, are “... more reliable indicators of future progress and success than teacher assessment” (DfE 2010b Department for Education (DfE). 2010b. *The case for change*, Norwich: The Stationery Office.22). What is particularly notable, though, are the assertions that teacher assessment tends to downplay the successes of poorer children and those from minority groups (citing Strand 2007 Strand, S. 2007. *Minority ethnic pupils in the Longitudinal Study of Young People in England (LSYPE)*, London: DCSF. ; Thomas et al. 2008 Thomas, D.E., Bierman, K.L., Thompson, C. and Powers, C.J. 2008. Double jeopardy: Child and school characteristics that predict aggressive-disruptive behavior in

first grade. *School Psychology Review*, 37(4): 516–532.). But questions must be asked here: rather than simply elide or remove teacher assessment, would it not seem propitious to ensure that teachers developed wider professional knowledge about not only the attainment and needs of such groups, but also teachers' own responses to such matters? Unfortunately both *The Importance of Teaching* and *The Case for Change* are pointedly quiet on such professional developmental matters.

On the other hand, the Coalition's position in such matters is not simply a continuance of New Labour. Importantly, the white paper proposes to end the use of CVA measures and concentrate instead on raw scores alone, the argument being that it is difficult for the public to judge a school's worth based on how far it improves pupil's attainment relative to other schools in similar circumstances. Although CVA measures are certainly more complicated than simple raw data the fact that the Coalition does not wish to distinguish between groups on the basis of contextual factors demonstrates a misunderstanding of the relationship between life-chances, pedagogy and educational success and failure. Once again the government does not address such matters, preferring instead to simply state that "... raw attainment is a much better predictor than a Contextualised Value Added score" (DfE 2010b Department for Education (DfE). 2010b. *The case for change*, Norwich: The Stationery Office.22).

The white paper also details, quite extensively, the ways in which the previous administration's concentration on test scores drove the development of a pedagogy concerned with little more than narrow test results. Indeed, they bemoan the "gaming behaviour" undertaken by a significant proportion of primary schools through the over-rehearsing of tests (DfE 2010b Department for Education (DfE). 2010b. *The case for change*, Norwich: The Stationery Office.12–13) to a point that went beyond "what would be sensible familiarisation with the tests into excessive rehearsal and repeated practice ... [which] ... eats into valuable teaching time ...' (16). They are clear: such measures fall short of meeting the needs of pupils. It seems that such narrowing of pedagogy is to be avoided and discouraged.

It might be expected, then, that government would have concrete measures in mind to reduce or remove completely such behaviour. To reduce the narrowing of the curriculum and over-rehearsal of tests which occurs in primary schools (ARG and TLRP 2009, cited DfE 2010b Department for Education (DfE). 2010b. *The case for change*, Norwich: The Stationery Office.) would seem to be a valuable task, especially as such concerns have been voiced for some time. Notably, no such measures are proposed. What the proposals do cast gaze over is the performance of the system and parts therein, not only as an indicator of success, but also as the very mechanisms by which schools may improve. Raw

performance marks improvement and improvement is gained by a concentration on performance. It seems that more of the same is the order of the day.

And with regard to inspection, the white paper is clear. In the latter years of its administration New Labour sought to extend OFSTED's role to encompass elements of safeguarding, welfare and health. Such moves were ushered in as a result of *Every Child Matters* (DfES 2004 Department for Education and Skills (DfES). 2004. *Every Child Matters: Change for children*, London: DfES.) and a belief in the role of schools as engineers of social inclusion. Whilst OFSTED's position has never been widely lauded within the educational community, it is clear that these changes sought to acknowledge the wider role schools play. The white paper undermines this position however, and instead seeks to "... re-focus Ofsted inspections on their original purpose – teaching and learning" (DfE 2010a Department for Education (DfE). 2010a. *The importance of teaching: The schools white paper 2010*, Norwich: The Stationery Office.4) so that inspectors might "... spend more time in the classroom and focus on key issues of educational effectiveness, rather than the long list of issues they are currently required to consider" (13). Further, they are clear, national government has no role to play in deciding pedagogy. There is a desire to ensure that best-practice is shared, but nothing is said about how pedagogy can develop to meet the standards set for primary attainment. The Coalition does offer some guidance as to how schools can improve though: the use of rubrics for good lessons (26) and the deployment of traditional blazer and tie uniforms and prefect and house systems (37).

Craft matters

In the white paper we see more than the marketplace of attainment; something much more fundamental is at play. Here we see a particular position for pedagogy, one centred on ideas of individual worth and success. Whilst the seeming simplicity of the changes attests to a desire for transparency in fact all they do is further compound the belief that teachers and pupils can, through classroom practice alone, surmount the vagaries of life and attain high educational standards. Once again the linearity between teaching and learning is thrown into sharp relief. Once again social and structural influences are stripped away to reveal a belief in the individual as the engineer of educational success. It seems that where matters of pedagogy are concerned scant regard has been paid to the intricate inter-relationship between society, culture, politics and the actual deployment of pedagogical technique. The white paper infers that pedagogy is a matter of individual judgement at the point of delivery and that, in turn, wider implications for society can be elided in the drive to ensure a quality education.

The way in which teachers are called as professionals by the white paper further demonstrates this. The proposal to increase the amount of time trainees spend in the classroom is, in part, a continuation of New Labour policy; the advance of employment-based routes into the profession was a marked feature of the post-1997 period. It could be argued that in this matter the two administrations have little to divide them. Here we should also note the ways in which the very act of teaching is positioned by them both. Although the increase in “time on the job” as promoted by the Coalition is different in substance to New Labour, in style it shares many similarities: a concern with the visible act of pedagogy, links made to best practice and resultant increases in test scores, and a desire to improve the *craft* of pedagogy.

The Coalition are clear: only 12% of Graduate Teacher Programme (GTP) students (primary) and 10% of GTP students (secondary) saw their training as too theoretical, against 46% of Bachelor of Education (BEd) students and 33% and 19% of primary and secondary Postgraduate Certificate of Education (PGCE) students, respectively (DfE 2010b Department for Education (DfE). 2010b. *The case for change*, Norwich: The Stationery Office.9). This, it believes, is a mandate for change: theory has little to offer the teacher; it is skills and craft that matter.

It is crucial that during the period of training and induction, teachers are given plenty of opportunity to practice skills, that they are exposed to outstanding skills and receive plenty of feedback and coaching. (DfE 2010b Department for Education (DfE). 2010b. *The case for change*, Norwich: The Stationery Office.9)

And this concentration on accountability measures occurs within a system which favours the craft of teaching; the elevation of day-to-day, practical matters of the classroom. But this is a craft divorced from social, cultural and political matters. It is the activities of the classroom, presented as a series of individual practices to be shared under the guise of best practice. But questions must be asked as to the efficacy of such a system, particularly as many of the mechanisms by which craft might be theorised and shared seem to be disappearing or are under threat, namely, local authorities and, potentially, university departments of education. This is not collectivism, then; rather, this position speaks to the individual teacher, requiring him to operationalise his/her own ideology.

In this regard, the simple extension of time in the classroom whilst training seems to be a continuance of previous mandate. Here there is another aspect to this though: one of the very nature of what it means to be an educational professional. What was clear in *Every Child Matters* (DfES 2004 Department

for Education and Skills (DfES). 2004. *Every Child Matters: Change for children*, London: DfES.) and later policy was the way in which the very essence of being a teacher was wrapped up with wider notions of social justice, care and an understanding that educational success is not simply down to that which occurs in the classroom (Adams 2007 Adams, P. 2007. Learning and caring in the age of the five outcomes. *Education 3-13*, 35(3): 225–237.). In this regard the two administrations could not be further apart. For the 2010 white paper clearly articulates a view of pedagogy that is concerned with the craft of the classroom and little else:

So, there are three key areas where we need teachers to be very well equipped: subject knowledge and academic preparation, overall literacy and numeracy, and the personal and interpersonal skills that are necessary in order to interact successfully in the classroom. (DfE 2010a Department for Education (DfE). 2010a. *The importance of teaching: The schools white paper 2010*, Norwich: The Stationery Office.20–21)

Indeed, in citing international evidence as reasons for the change of direction, the paper states: “These [best education] systems train their teachers rigorously at the outset, focussing particularly on the practical teaching skills they will need” (DfE 2010a Department for Education (DfE). 2010a. *The importance of teaching: The schools white paper 2010*, Norwich: The Stationery Office.19). On this matter, the white paper is quite clear: teachers are professionals whose work centres on the activities of the classroom. The picture painted of training is one of a return to the idea of the teacher apprentice: the best way to learn is from other professionals (9) as one undertakes the role of para-teacher whilst concentrating on the practical skills one needs (19).

And such apprentices are clearly identifiable at the outset:

- a high level of literacy and numeracy;
- strong interpersonal and communication skills;
- a willingness to learn;
- the motivation to teach.

Quite apart from the fact that such indicators could be applied to any job, these, notably, ignore what are probably more important characteristics: empathy; care; a commitment to social justice; and, simply, liking children. It seems that you do not need such characteristics to be a Coalition teacher.

Indeed, in discussing the current standards for qualified teacher status (TDA 2008 Training and Development Agency for Schools (TDA). 2008. *Professional standards for qualified teacher status and requirements for initial*

teacher training (revised 2008), London: TDA.), the Coalition bemoans the fact that only one standard focuses solely on teaching and learning. But this is poor thinking. Firstly, that only one standard so focuses is possibly due to a realisation that pedagogy is not something that can be divorced from wider issues of child development, gender, poverty, social class and so on. To position pedagogy as something that can be extracted and presented solely as matters of classroom practice misunderstands the intricate nature of the theory and act of pedagogy; pedagogy is not simply an affectation of practice. Secondly, this statement elides the fact that the other standards do, in fact, relate implicitly to matters of pedagogy. For example, relating to parents and carers and understanding the role of the wider school are both part-and-parcel of the pedagogic endeavour.

Pedagogy is, then, positioned as an *individual craft* with associated measures designed to learn that craft. This is a break from New Labour: the establishment of a Liberal agenda, a return to nineteenth century notions of pedagogy, professionalism, and professional training. The white paper seeks to ensure that teachers provide high quality teaching, but it is a narrow, individualist view of pedagogy that is set against the collectivist measures introduced by the previous administration.

Conclusion

Such proposals, then, seem, on the face of it, to be both a continuance and discontinuance of the New Labour project. On the one hand the deployment of attainment statistics as a measure of educational success mirrors the moves introduced by New Labour in 1997. Indeed, the Coalition proposes to introduce a new “floor” standard (DfE 2010a Department for Education (DfE). 2010a. *The importance of teaching: The schools white paper 2010*, Norwich: The Stationery Office.70) whereby primary schools can be judged by the numbers who achieve certain levels in national tests. ¹

Such mechanisms for judgement also serve as international comparisons of relative success and failure. In the foreword to the white paper, David Cameron and Nick Clegg make this clear. For them what matters is international standing.

... but what really matters is how we're doing compared with our international competitors. That is what will define our economic growth and our country's future. (DfE 2010a Department for Education (DfE). 2010a. *The importance of teaching: The schools white paper 2010*, Norwich: The Stationery Office.3)

Such discourses carry with them great weight both as an intra-national barometer of the quality of educational provision, but also as an international comparator of success. A clear decision has been taken to use international

standards to address what is seen as local failure. Indeed, the use of international information is deployed to show that accountability and autonomy can co-exist quite happily. For the first time, England is to take part in the Teaching and Learning International Survey (TALIS) so allowing government to compare teacher beliefs, attitudes and practice so that underperformance might be addressed. It is not that comparisons are ill-advised; rather it is the ways in which such comparisons are conducted and, more importantly, the uses to which such comparisons will be put that should be questioned. What is important here is the link with pedagogy; on this matter the white paper is quite clear:

... the most important factor in determining how well children do is the quality of teachers and teaching. (DfE 2010a Department for Education (DfE). 2010a. *The importance of teaching: The schools white paper 2010*, Norwich: The Stationery Office.9)

At first glance, then, it may seem that certain features of the Coalition's proposals are a simple continuance of New Labour thinking. Time spent in the classroom by trainee teachers, standards, accountability measures, targets and inspections all seem to align well with what has passed previously. In such matters it appears as though the Coalition has simply followed the logical extension to the New Labour project. The discourses offered by the Coalition are, in essence, the same as those offered by New Labour, certainly in the early part of their tenure. However, closer inspection does reveal three different and worrying discourses for pedagogy.

Firstly, the belief that time spent in the classroom learning from fellow professionals is the best way to begin one's teaching career and to develop it represents a shift in time to nineteenth century notions of the place and form for pedagogy. Whilst a classroom focus was definitely part of initial teacher training prior to 2010, this was undertaken in accordance with a collectivist pedagogy. The individualistic ideals presented by the Coalition concur with the idea that individual close attention to the craft of the classroom is that which will engender educational improvement. This is worrying, for it signals a simplistic, practical view of pedagogy. As I showed earlier, pedagogy is a complicated concept, replete with messages about class, culture, politics and society; to elide such factors and describe it as the substance of classroom practice alone is ill-advised. Whilst the collectivist ideals promoted by New Labour were far from ideal, the move to simple individualism is one which has the potential to develop a raft of pedagogies born of personal ideology and not much else. Moves to relocate teacher training into schools may well have the effect of closing down many university departments of education. From where, then, will pedagogic research come so as to drive the sharing of good practice?

It seems as if the nineteenth century notion of the isolated professional is once again rearing its head.

Secondly, the adoption of raw data to demonstrate success and failure is a double edged sword. On the one hand, it will necessitate schools concentrating on exam scores even more forcibly than before with the obvious outcome a concentration on measures designed to improve attainment at the expense of a broad and balanced curriculum. Even though this cuts against the tenor of the white paper, it seems that such an outcome is a real possibility. On the other hand, the removal of CVA as a measure of success elides the explicit link between societal and educational matters. It remains to be seen whether the floor measures for progress will attest to such factors as deprivation, poverty, ethnicity and gender.

Finally, alterations to OFSTED's inspection remit overtly reposition pedagogy away from matters of social justice and care, towards the provision of a "traditional" educational fare. The proposals are explicit in their view that good education consists of

... just four things – pupil achievement, the quality of teaching, leadership and management, and the behaviour and safety of pupils. (DfE 2010a Department for Education (DfE). 2010a. *The importance of teaching: The schools white paper 2010*, Norwich: The Stationery Office.69)

Clearly pedagogy is at the heart of education and any changes to the inspection regime will affect it. Again, the removal of wider measures by which schools can demonstrate effectiveness and improvement concentrates the minds of teachers into delivering "good lessons" that attend to behaviour and with an eye on future raw-score league tables.

These discourses highlighted above all offer two position calls for pedagogy, position calls which will be hard to resist: *pedagogy as individual craft*; and, *pedagogy as individual performance*. In some respects these are similar to New Labour's position calls: the craft of pedagogy and performance matters are positions that continue to drive the educational venture. But there is the subtle shift towards individualism that is potentially so pervasive in these proposals.

The white paper notes the ultimately self-limiting results of an overtly centralised pedagogy and cites evidence from Singapore and Finland to support its view that individual teachers are the best designers of teaching and learning matters. Indeed, it states,

By contrast, highly skilled teachers will be able to use their knowledge of their students to develop a refined approach which outperforms any central model.

(DfE 2010b Department for Education (DfE). 2010b. *The case for change*, Norwich: The Stationery Office.17)

This belies the simplicity of the craft model, however, for it recognises the need for teachers to have nuanced and informed knowledge of the pedagogic process, knowledge born of the interplay between theory and practice

Crucially, education more broadly and pedagogy more specifically are social endeavours, born of intricate relationships; to obviate such matters could be catastrophic. Whilst there are certain features in the white paper which suggest that teachers will assist teachers to develop, the main scope for this is the sharing of “best practice”, itself a problematic concept (Adams 2008 Adams, P. 2008. Considering ‘best practice’: The social construction of teacher activity and pupil learning as performance. *Cambridge Journal of Education*, 38(3): 375–392.). But such measures can only take place within the confines of the structures and opportunities presented. The drive to release schools from local authority control and the measures taken to teacher training that may well decimate university departments of education may both lead to impoverished opportunities for professional pedagogic development. Certainly, New Labour’s collectivism was more than a step too far, but there is a real danger that the proposals in the white paper will lead us back to nineteenth century modes of individualism. That the white paper is an extension of New Labour mandate is, at first glance, laudable. However, upon closer inspection it is clear that such a position is untenable; closer analysis reveals the shift from collectivism to individualism. As with all things, the devil is in the detail.

Notes

1. This has now been set as 60% of all pupils achieving Level 4 in each of English and Maths SATs tests at the end of Year 6.

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