Teacher as technician: semi-professionalism after the 1988 Education Reform Act and its effect on conceptions of pupil identity

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Abstract

This paper discusses whether the occupational culture of teachers has changed as a consequence of what Inglis (1989) would describe as 'the moral ascendancy of managerialism', using as an exemplar some of the routine planning, assessment and reporting procedures in common use in UK schools. The paper examines this claim in the light of developments after the 1988 Education Reform Act, which had a profound effect on the way education is delivered in the UK. It then relates this question to the issue of teacher and pupil identity within the UK education system, and concludes that there are dangers with using such frameworks for education, as they can undermine the role of the child as an individual within the schooling process.

Key Words

Managerialism, teachers, professionalism, semi-professionalism, planning, assessment, reporting, neoliberalism, neoconservatism, 1988 Education Reform Act, teacher identity, pupil identity.

Introduction

Since the 1988 Education Reform Act, UK teachers' work has been subject to increasing levels of surveillance and appraisal, based on commercial management techniques (Mac an Ghaill, 1992; Smyth *op.cit.*, 2000). The routine procedures discussed and illustrated in this paper reflect such an increase in surveillance, as they have become increasingly detailed and standardised over the years, and they seem to be aimed at external audiences rather than pupils and their parents. The paper argues that such standardised procedures fail to take into account the individual needs of children and their teachers, or local circumstances. They also fail to take into account the prior experiential knowledge that teachers might usefully bring to bear on any analysis of children's progress. Instead, the procedures use a quasi-standardised model that fails to make explicit its empirical basis. Teachers are not allowed to challenge this model, but are forced to work within it, if they are to be perceived as effective teachers by senior managers and school inspectors alike.

An overly systematised approach of this kind has led to confusion regarding individual children's progress through the school system. Whilst it might be possible to obtain a snapshot of some of the achievements of a particular child, this does not tell us a great deal about achievements not listed in official versions of the educational process, nor does it allow us to compare individual children usefully to their local social, cultural and intellectual peers. Instead, this approach relies on a vision of the 'average' child as an ideal type that exists in official rhetoric. This vision remains relatively unarticulated, and unchallenged. Therefore the planning, assessment and reporting procedures in common use are relatively opaque to pupils and parents, despite the fact that they are time-consuming to complete, and contain high levels of detail.

Strict levels of control and assessment have in turn led to the deprofessionalisation of teachers, rendering them 'governable' rather than autonomous in this respect, and that subsequently they have become technicians rather than professionals in the true sense of the word. This has serious implications for the future delivery of UK education, as its structures and processes increasingly reflect the rhetoric of Government policy, rather than issues relating to child development. The root of this dilemma lies in tensions between the neo-conservative desire for a relatively small, strong state, and the neo-liberal desire for a free market ideology with consumer choice at its heart. As demonstrated in the paper, the identity of the child as pupil within this dilemma is unclear. On the one hand, pupils are seen as recipients of education according to a set, non-negotiable model, as exemplified by the National

Curriculum. This education is designed to prepare them for life as workers in a post-industrial economy (Macdonald, *op.cit.*). On the other hand, pupils and their families are seen as consumers of education, exercising rational choice.

The paper concludes that a better understanding of the nature of pupil identity in relation to this tension within post-1988 UK education provision is vital, if we are to think of education as transcending neo-liberal and neo-conservative politics, instead preparing pupils for life as people, rather than workers or consumers.

The technification of teaching through the National Curriculum and Foundation Stage Curriculum

This section of the paper examines the relationship between teaching and UK Government education policy. It argues that teachers have become more compliant and less willing to challenge systems imposed upon them from outside.

In 1988, the UK Parliament passed the Education Reform Act, which changed the face of UK education radically. It was the first Education Act for over a generation, and unlike previous ones that had been passed during the earlier part of the twentieth century, this Act was grounded in the neo-liberal political ideology of the free market, and the neo-conservative desire for a small, strong state. This was in stark contrast to the 1944 Education Act, which on many levels was concerned more with the personal and societal, rather than the political. Amongst other things, the 1944 Act had raised the level of the school leaving age, introduced universal free secondary education, introduced free higher education and student grants, and encouraged a social system that saw pupils as individual children in the care of the school during the day, making provision for hot school meals, milk, medical inspections and so on. The state very much saw itself *in loco parentis* in this respect. There was no guidance as to which subjects should be taught in school, with the exception of Religious Education. Even though only one subject was listed as compulsory, this caused protest at the time, as many teachers felt it undermined their professionalism to have classroom practice dictated to them.

Whilst the 1944 Act represented a national desire for greater social inclusion within the country, ensuring equality and access to high quality public services, the 1988 Act instead sought to achieve a complete overhaul of the UK education system. It introduced measures such as Local Management of Schools (LMS) leading to local management and accountability, a National Curriculum, Standard Assessment Tests (SATs) for children at 7, 11 and 14, parental choice of schools via Open Enrolment, and school inspection by the Office for Standards in Education (OFSTED). However there were tensions within this model for UK education that had been absent in the 1944 model.

One example of this was that schools were required to manage their own affairs, yet they were obliged by law to implement the National Curriculum. This model was based on a quasi-historic vision of a 'good education', relying on the idea of a fixed canon of knowledge, or what Young might term a 'bookish model of learning' (Young, 1988, cited in Macdonald, 2005) that needed to be delivered at all costs to all state school pupils, regardless of their talents or situation (Bernstein, 2000; Leaton Gray, 2004). This was in deliberate contrast to the pupil-centred teaching that had been advocated in the 1960s and 1970s in the UK, which had been criticised as inadequate by academics Tony Dyson and Brian Cox in the Black papers, and in James Callaghan's Ruskin College speech of 1976.

Another example of tension within the 1988 model for education can be found in the practical application of the Open Enrolment policy. Parents were free to choose amongst schools, but whether the school wanted to give their child a place was a different question, as most schools were at liberty to select able pupils, or apply arcane 'catchment area' rules to ensure an intake from a local, possibly affluent area. Similarly, parents in rural areas were only able to choose alternative schools for their children if they were also able to pay for and organise transport to and from alternative schools, which might be more than an hour away by public transport, if it existed. A different tension existed in the case of school inspection. The state provided guidelines for school inspection processes, but it was carried out by private contractors in a quasi-market arrangement with OFSTED. Schools were obliged to pay for this inspection service out of their own budgets, yet it was not possible for schools to choose between contractors, as they might expect to do with examination boards.

In 1987, a year before the UK Education Reform Act, Apple wrote presciently of the impending 'technification of teaching'. He argued that teachers would be robbed of their traditional class skills in curriculum and assessment, and forced to experience intensification of work, implementing plans that had been designed by others. These plans would have been conceived by managers, for execution by teachers. Apple had anticipated an important trend in UK teaching, that was to come to pass over the next ten years, and which was one of the direct consequences of the Act. The dominant discourse of the centralised state was embedded within the Act, and manifested itself in the defining of teacher task via control through the National Curriculum; the surveillance and control of teachers via school inspection procedures, and the insistence on their compliance and consent (Smyth *et al*, 2000).

A useful example of what this meant in practice can be seen in a paper criticising the overly clinical approach of OFSTED to school inspections at the time. Jeffrey and Woods (1996) described the inspection regime as part of a process of 'deprofessionalisation' of teachers. They stated "if deprofessionalisation is to work, teachers need to feel that they have failed as professionals". Jeffrey and Woods considered that there were several aspects to this failure. For example, deprofessionalisation would involve the loss or distillation of skills, routinisation of work, loss of conceptual (as opposed to operational) responsibilities, and a weakening of autonomy. Indeed, as Pollard *et al* (1994) also argued, this approach would result in a shift away from a vocational commitment towards a primarily instrumental one, with corresponding compliance on the part of teachers. The logical consequence of the imposition of such a regime was for teachers to become increasingly accountable to Government, yet less responsible for the design of structures and systems in the everyday course of their work. This was and is an uncomfortable dichotomy, highlighted widely (Maisuria, 2005; Davis, 2000). Later in the paper, as an illustration of this, there will be an example of how reporting procedures have changed in response to increasing Government prescription, leading to the loss of conceptual responsibility as described above, amongst other things, replaced by an operational approach to understanding child development, that involves filling out forms without questioning their content.

There may be an explanation for this degree of compliance on the part of teachers. Research into teachers' conceptions of their own identity has identified that some teachers regard managerialist changes as necessary remedial measures to balance the inadequacies of the education system in past decades (Troman, 1996; Hargreaves, 1994; Hatcher, 1994; Furlong, 1992). Examples of this might include recognition of the need to plan lessons effectively, sharing relevant information with colleagues; keeping systematic records of pupil achievement in a standard format, and preparing pupils for Standard Assessment Tests as a way of ensuring they have covered a certain minimum standard in relation to the National Curriculum requirements. However it is clear that others consider that this conformity to Government models for education serves to undermine and alienate teachers from the very groups they feel that they should serve, such as pupils, parents and wider society (Leaton Gray, *op.cit.*; Troman, *op.cit.*). A useful exemplar for this purpose is the way standardised curricular and reporting procedures influence classroom practice, and this will be considered in more detail now.

Standardised curricular and reporting procedures

This section will discuss in more detail how planning and assessment procedures in UK schools have been affected by the Education Reform Act of 1988, and it will give some examples to demonstrate the increasing levels of centralised control of teachers' work.

There are now many incidences of teachers implementing plans designed by others in contemporary UK schooling, but usually these practices are conceived at Government level, rather than by managers. For example, the introduction of the National Curriculum in the early 1990s, for children between the ages of 5 and 16, defined the subjects that should be studied in schools and placed them into a notional hierarchy with "core" subjects at the top, (English, Mathematics and Science) and "foundation" subjects underneath (currently Art and Design, Citizenship, Design and Technology, Geography, History, Information and Communications Technology, Modern Foreign Languages, Music, Physical Education, Personal Social and Health Education, and Religious Education). This framework for study is compulsory in UK state maintained schools, and in response has been adopted almost universally by independent schools as well. By defining subject areas and courses of study relatively precisely, it has removed the curriculum from what might be considered a 'democratic and dialogical' space (Brown and Kelly, 2001). Indeed, the curriculum has been accused of promoting the education

most accessible to existing power groups (Levine, 1994; Macdonald, *op.cit.*), and having little concern for the lives of teachers and pupils (Wexler, 1989).

Subsequently the imposition of a standardised curriculum filtered down to younger age groups as well, with the introduction of the Foundation Stage Curriculum for children from the ages of 3 to 5 in 2000. This came about as a result of a desire to track the effectiveness of primary schools, which relied on having a benchmark level of achievement on record for pupils entering primary school. The curriculum was made compulsory in 2002 for all Early Years settings[1] in receipt of the Government's new nursery grant for 3 and 4 year olds. According to the legislation, the Foundation stage profile has 13 summary scales covering the six areas of learning, which need to be completed for each child receiving government-funded education by the end of his or her time in the foundation stage, whether in a state maintained or independent facility. However this meant in practice that the curriculum was often applied to all children in Early Years settings, including day care, kindergartens and nurseries, and many childminders. The consequence of this framework was that babies of a few weeks or months old, entering day care for just a few hours a week, could find themselves being classified in terms of the Foundation Stage Curriculum, which emphasised six overarching aspects of development, as follows:

- Personal, social and emotional development
- Communication, language and literacy
- Mathematical development
- Knowledge and understanding of the world
- Physical development
- Creative development

Progress in these areas is reported on in detail, and parents usually receive annual reports stating that their under-fives have made progress in crawling, walking, talking, or similar, in terms of the Foundations Stages listed below. There will now be two examples of this type of reporting, dating from 1999 and 2005 respectively, to show how reporting procedures have increasingly become tailored to centralised Government guidelines.

Figure 1 below dates from 1999, and is an example of an independent fee-paying nursery reporting on an eighteen-month-old child, who had attended the nursery on a daily basis since October 1998.[2] It predates the Foundation Stage curriculum in its present form, but it conformed to government inspection requirements of the time, which were broadly similar. The childcare worker has related a child's normal physical developmental stages to the outline curriculum in force.
[3]

Figure 1
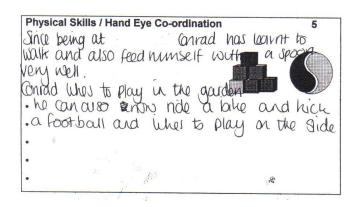*Sample of nursery reporting on an eighteen-month old child, June 1999*

Figure 2 is part of a nursery report dating from June 2005 and shows how the situation has changed over a period of six years. It shows the reporting procedures of a different independent fee-paying nursery three miles away from that of figure 1, using an official grid supplied by the Local Education Authority to record physical development in terms of the Foundation Stage. This document reports on the physical development of a four-year-old child who had been at the nursery[4] since September 2002. It is clear that the guidelines have been applied to him before the age of 3, as many of the dates on the

grid predate his third birthday in April 2004. The highlights are those that exist in the original document, and relate to the year in which the goals were achieved by the child.

Figure 2
Example of nursery reporting on a four-year-old child, June 2005

	Movement (104)	Movement (106)	Sense of Space (108)	Health & Bodily Awareness (110)	Using Equipment (112)	Using tools and Materials (114)
Cream	Move spontaneously within available space *Jan 03*	Manage body to create intended movements *April 03*	Negotiate an appropriate pathway when walking, running or using a wheelchair or other mobility aids, both indoors and outdoors *March 03*	Show awareness of own needs with regard to eating, sleeping and hygiene *June 03*	Operate equipment by means of pushing and pulling movements *March 03*	Engage in activities requiring hand-eye coordination *March 03*
	Respond to rhythm, music and story by means of gesture and movement *Jan 03*	Combine and repeat a range of movements *June 03.*	Judge body space in relation to spaces available or negotiating holes and boundaries *April 03*	Often need adult support to meet those needs *March 03*		Use one-handed tools and equipment *April 03*
	Can stop *Jan 03*					
Blue	Move freely with pleasure and confidence *April 03*	Sit up, stand up and balance on various parts of the body *Oct 2003*	Show respect for other children's personal space when playing among them *July 03*	Show awareness of a range of healthy practices with regard to eating, sleeping and hygiene *October 2003*	Construct with large materials such as cartons, long lengths of fabric and planks	Demonstrate increasing skill and control in the use of mark-making implements, blocks, construction sets and 'small world' activities
	Move in a range of ways, such as slithering, shuffling, rolling, crawling, walking, running, jumping, skipping, sliding and hopping *July 03*	Demonstrate the control necessary to hold a shape or fixed position *Oct 2003*	Persevere in repeating some actions/attempts when developing a new skill *May 04*	Observe the effects of activity on their bodies *Jan 04*	Show increasing control in using equipment for climbing, scrambling, sliding and swinging *July 03*	Understand that equipment and tools have to be used safely *January 2004*
	Use movement to express feelings *May 03*	Mount stairs, steps or climbing equipment using alternate feet *January 2004*	Collaborate in devising and sharing tasks, including those which involve accepting rules			
	Adjust speed or change direction to avoid obstacles *August 03*					
	Negotiate space successfully when playing racing and chasing games with other children					
Green	Go backwards and sideways as well as forwards *May 2004*	Manipulate materials and objects by picking up, releasing, arranging, threading and posting them *January 2004*	Move body position as necessary *May 04*	Show some understanding that good practices with regard to exercise, eating, sleeping and hygiene can contribute to good health *May 2004*	Use increasing control over an object by touching, pushing, patting, throwing, catching or kicking it	Explore malleable materials by patting, stroking, poking, squeezing, pinching and twisting them *January 2004*
	Experiment with different ways of moving *January 2004*	Show increasing control over clothing and fastenings *May 04*	Show a clear and consistent preference for the left or right hand *May 2004*		Retrieve, collect and catch objects *January 2004*	Manipulate materials to achieve a planned effect *January 2004*
	Initiate new combinations of movement and gesture in order to express and respond to feelings, ideas and experiences					Use simple tools to effect changes to the materials
	Jump off an object and land appropriately *Aug 2004*					Show understanding of how to transport and store equipment safely
						Practise some appropriate safety measures without direct supervision
Grey	Move with confidence, imagination and in safety	Move with control and coordination	~~Show awareness of space, of themselves and of others~~ *Jan 05.*	Recognise the importance of keeping healthy and those things which contribute to this	Use a range of small and large equipment *Oct 04*	Handle tools, objects, construction and malleable materials safely and with increasing control
		~~Travel around, under, over and through, balancing and climbing equipment~~ *April 05.*		Recognise the changes that happen to their bodies when they are active		

Name: A

Physical Development

Summary sheet
shire Care and Education Training Service

Here we see the reporting process less as a snapshot of the development of the child, and more a list of skills as 'commodities' (Sfard, 1998) developed by the child, but mediated and interpreted by the carers. It is probably as well that the child concerned did not realise that, in the eyes of his carers, he was considered 'unable to move with confidence, imagination and safety' (Movement 104 column, final box) by the age of four, and that his skills in transporting and storing construction bricks and the like were lacking (Using tools and Materials, 114 column, penultimate box).

Just as teachers and childcare professionals are encouraged, and in most cases compelled, to link their reporting to National Curriculum or Foundation Stage frameworks, this also happens with their planning processes. These plans will then usually be posted up in the school, nursery/kindergarten or daycare facility for parents to see, with the aim of encouraging a collective interest in, and understanding of educational processes and activities. Possibly an indirect aspect of these displays is proving to parents and inspectors alike that the Foundation Stage or National Curriculum is being covered adequately, in terms of inspection requirements. Consequently it is not unusual in UK schools to see annotations on children's artwork displays, explaining which curriculum areas have been covered, and how this has been achieved.

Compliance to the National Curriculum is ensured by compulsory Standard Assessment Tests, based on the National Curriculum subject framework. These have the effect of standardising conceptions of pupil progression and attainment. In state maintained primary and secondary schools, children sit tests at the chronological ages of 7, 11 and 14, and consequently they are classified as achieving at a particular level. For a 7-year-old child, this might mean that they were 'Level 3 Mathematics', for example. This means that they are achieving at an average level for their age group, but this fails to take into account the child's latent intelligence, local conditions, and so on. It has been described as a 'dogmatic insistence by the system on pupils conforming to what is categorised as acceptable work according to standards criteria" (Maisuria, *op.cit.*). In turn, the overarching nature of school inspections by the Government Office for Standards in Education (OFSTED) defines what constituted appropriate education at all levels, regardless of the particular educational community under scrutiny. Exceptions can be made in rare situations, such as the replacement of science with music as part of the core subject component, in specialist music schools for highly talented young musicians. However it is not possible for state maintained schools to adopt an alternative yet widely respected educational system, such as the Steiner or Montessori method, for example, without risking the censure of the OFSTED inspectors (Leaton Gray, *op.cit.*).

This latter example is particularly odd in the case of Montessori education, as it was explicitly designed to meet the needs of deprived inner-city children, and therefore seems particularly suitable as a tool for meeting the social inclusion challenges so frequently articulated by the Blair Government. Similarly, the Steiner school system's emphasis on educating the whole child, and promoting the development of the individual inside a supportive community, could be seen to respond directly to the Blair Government's inclusion agenda for children with special educational needs. Despite this, currently there is little if any scope for the Steiner approach to be adopted within the UK state school system . This is unlike Germany, for example, where Steiner education is heavily subsidised and widely available. On many levels, the sterile, limited model for state education in the UK means that true professional autonomy is limited in most schools. It is curtailed by the need to conform to prescribed curricular frameworks. Consequently it is difficult for teachers to see beyond their training, and even more difficult still for them to feel they have enough confidence in alternative systems to use them in the classroom, however successful the track record of these alternative systems might have been in the past.

Despite this enforced professional parochialism, Whitty (2002) argues that teachers have recently moved towards a new kind of professional model, known as 'collaborative professionalism', in which they liaise with each other and a range of external bodies in the course of their work. This may well be the case for many teachers, but collaborative professionalism does not really allow teachers to engage with curriculum design and assessment in anything but the most routine sense. A music teacher may have built up contacts and expertise in the area of harpsichord construction, for example, but he or she is not at liberty to teach this in the UK music classroom at will, as it conforms to neither of the National Curriculum Attainment Targets for music – Performing/Composing, and Listening/Appraising. Therefore in terms of curricular planning and delivery, Government centralisation means that teachers have had an important aspect of their professional status undermined, in the sense that they have little control over their work methods and processes. They have been forced to submit to the imposition of external control and moderation. This loss of autonomy has made them 'semi-professionals' in terms of the seminal analysis undertaken by Etzioni into teaching, nursing and social work (Etzioni, 1969). Following on from Etzioni, it could be argued that teachers have therefore become governable people rather than self-governing. In this sense they have moved away from the idea of a professional obligation towards society, and professional closure on the body of knowledge that provides the basis for their work (Weber, 1978). This has been replaced with knowledge of the controlling systems that administer education via the state, as a proxy for professional knowledge.

Arguably teachers already had a tendency towards this state. In a paper that debates the current state of professional identity of teachers in Scotland, MacDonald (2004) makes some valuable general observations about teacher professionalism in relation to managerialist changes. She argues that teachers display a tendency to act as subordinates within a school environment. Their ongoing compliance with the existing hierarchical system means that there is little opportunity for teachers to behave in a truly collegiate manner. Developing MacDonald's point further, it is possible to see an important motivator for this behaviour. In many respects, advancement in teaching still relies on patronage, and this is bound to inhibit debate in the staffroom. To quote one example, if a head teacher has a right of veto over a subordinate's right to attend the NPQH (National Professional Qualification for Head Teachers) training course, which is now compulsory for aspiring head teachers, then this is bound to favour compliant teachers over challenges ones, in turn leading to self-replication.

Another manifestation of this reluctance to engage in truly collegiate professional activity might be the habitual lack of contact between the state maintained and independent sectors, as both sides maintain separate traditions, with little opportunity for crossover. After all, it is hard to play lacrosse or rugby football against the local comprehensive school, if their sporting menu focuses on netball and soccer. It is even harder to run a joint academic course in a minority subject if one group of parents resents paying handsomely for something others are seen to be getting for free. For these and many other reasons, teachers in either sector are not usually encouraged to fraternise, despite the best efforts of the Government to encourage them to do so.

Therefore education is dominated by what is largely a hegemonic group. The membership of this group varies, depending upon the ranks of the teachers about whom this claim was made, and the sector in which they work. It could include senior managers, head teachers and governors, or even philanthropists in the case of city academies[4] Building on MacDonald's argument, we therefore see that

teachers as a professional group were never particularly likely to pay sufficient attention to the erosion of their autonomy. I have written at length about the lack of democratic participation amongst teachers in guberantorial processes, as well as in their unions and professional associations (Leaton Gray, 2006). This abdication of responsibility on the part of many teachers may have played an important part in ushering in the dominance of the Government in education as a whole, and contributed to the fact that it has been relatively easy for the Government to position teachers as passive implementers of externally driven changes (Wood, 2004) within its centralisation agenda.

There is also the question of pupil identity within this construction of education. A full analysis is beyond the scope of this paper, but it is an important point that should be flagged up, if only to stimulate further debate. Pupils participate within this reporting and assessment framework passively. They are defined and classified according to a static schedule, and they can be pathologised if they fall short of Governmentally-defined constructions of ability. They have no opportunity to develop personalised constructs of achievement, and they are expected to internalise official versions instead, a process described in Hamilton (2002). This can be seen as an example of how the Government can indirectly have a regulatory effect on the private social space of the family, via its bureaucratic procedures. Young children are more aware of classification and reporting systems than we think, and categorising children according to an unhelpful assessment schedule runs the risk of having a negative effect on self perception, and damaging the relationship between the school and the child. When creating systems to evaluate schools for very young children, we need to remember that we are preparing pupils for life as adults, not proto-employees or proto-consumers. Therefore any system needs to be dynamic, respecting the needs of individual children. It is interesting that in the major twentieth century education reports, such as the Hadow report (Consultative Committee on the Primary School, 1931) and Plowden report (CACE, 1967) children are not seen as simply supply for the labour market, but as individuals in their own right. Yet there is little if any reference to children as individuals in this sense in late 20th/early 21st century Government education literature. The classification frameworks described in this article are perhaps the clearest example of this. If we neglect the individual identities of young children, in favour of a putative economic goal, we run the risk of alienating them from society in the medium to long term.

Conclusion

This paper has examined the relationship between neo-liberalism and neo-conservatism in contemporary UK education policy. It has identified areas of tension and related these to conceptions of pupil identity within the education system.

The paper began by describing the 1944 and 1988 Education Acts, stating that they were different in motivation. The 1944 Act had been concerned with social equality, whereas the 1988 Act was underpinned by the neo-conservative desire for a small, strong state, and a neo-liberal desire for a free market. These conflicting policy aims were illustrated with reference to the introduction of the National Curriculum, the implementation of Open Enrolment in schools, and the Government system of OFSTED inspection to ensure compliance to policy.

There was then an examination of what Apple termed the 'technification of teaching'. This was defined by several characteristics, including teachers being forced to implement plans designed by others, and an insistence on compliance and consent from teachers. An illustration of this was the OFSTED inspection system, in which teachers were initially unwillingly participants, before reluctantly accepting the process. However it was argued that this had eventually led to an alienation of teachers from the pupils and parents that they served, in that they were forced to implement a centralised model that could have little or no bearing on the pupils in their charge.

The paper moved on to use an exemplar derived from the Foundation Stage curriculum. It showed two examples of reporting procedures six years apart for different children at nurseries that were geographically close to one another. This showed that over the six years there had been an increase in the amount of detail used, the introduction of standardised reporting forms, the application of the assessment criteria to the second child before the age at which they were obliged to do so, and the conception of the physical skills described as 'commodities' that were designed to be transferred to primary school. It was argued that this example was not atypical, and also resembled the formats commonly used in UK schools for classroom planning, Standard Assessment of children, and OFSTED

inspections. While these formats were highly detailed, the paper argued that nevertheless they remained relatively opaque to parents.

There was then a discussion of the role of alternative educational models within schooling, such as the Montessori and Steiner school systems. However it was argued that most teachers were likely to lack confidence and experience in applying alternative models, as they had been reduced to what Etzioni would describe as a 'semi professional' state. In this, teachers acted willingly as subordinates, and any dissent was regarded as challenging authority, which might lead to professional repercussions, for example through loss of promotion. The paper also touched on issues relating to the lack of contact between the maintained and independent sectors in the UK, and suggested some reasons for this. It was concluded that this had all led to education being dominated by a hegemony, which varied according to the particular circumstances of teachers and schools. It was argued that this may have come about as a result of teachers' lack of participation in democratic processes over time, and that this was a relatively harmful state for the professional as a whole. Finally, the paper argued that there was an inherent danger in creating systems of this type, as they ran the risk of undermining young childrens' sense of self-worth, and consequently their relationship with school.

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Notes

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[1] "Early Years setting" is a technical term used by the Government to describe all institutions or childcare providers that teach or care for children between the ages of 3 and 7 inclusive.

[2] The nursery and the name of the child have been anonymised according to ethical conventions in educational research.

[3] It should be noted that the examples used in the paper were collected as part of an ongoing long-term investigation into education policy in practice, and was not part of a larger study. Therefore they are offered to readers as illuminative rather than representative.

[4] City academies are public-private educational partnerships, in which the sponsor puts up 6-14% of the total cost of founding a school, and this is matched by Government funding of £25-£30 million. The sponsor retains control over the staffing, curriculum and ethos of the school.