Professionally Acceptable Workload
Changing our habitus

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Professionally acceptable workload: learning to act differently towards effective change.

A second companion paper to DfE advice on addressing teacher workload

Use the charts above to show how you feel you divide your week between family/leisure/work.

Job title:........................................................................................................
Use the board above to illustrate, in any way you choose, the relative size of family, leisure and work which you feel would give you a good balance in your life (rules of physics need not apply!)

*example*
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Introduce a teacher
would you like to earn yourself
£150?
Global Education Reform Movement (GERM) (Sahlberg, 2011)

financialisation of individual worth

‘what works’

“Relates to who we are as human beings, what we value...it changes what it means to be a teacher and to teach” (Ball, 2013)

neo-liberal agenda (Ball, 2003)

marketisation

encroachment of the economic into education

‘sufficiency’ of teachers (DfE)
Resistance – Stephen Ball (2013)

- ‘Counter discourse is possible’
- ‘Maybe the target now is to refuse what we are’
- ‘Recognise its presence in our everyday lives and relationships – the possibility for struggle and resistance’
- ‘The ethics of opposition’.
Ideological co-option – the essential problem

- More than acquiescence/giving up/being resigned to workload.
- Internalisation of workload as a proxy for expertise and worth.
Extreme workload is inevitable – it’s how we maintain standards.

The best teachers work extremely long hours.

Guilt is a natural reaction to being out of school to access professional learning.

Teachers teach better by serial adopting of the latest initiatives.

Data collection, management & communication are part of being a great teacher.
Ideological co-option of experienced teachers

- They embody such beliefs in their own practices
- They model excessive workload and being able to ‘cope’
- They have earned seniority and respect
- They are instrumental in perpetuating the practices that have led to their success
- They believe this is intrinsic to a teacher’s professional identity
- It becomes part of their professional DNA
Professional Behaviours (Standard 8 – ‘Fulfil wider professional responsibilities’)

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<tr>
<th>Learn that...</th>
<th>Learn how to...</th>
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<td><strong>Manage workload and wellbeing, by:</strong></td>
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<td>• <em>Observing how expert colleagues use and personalise systems and routines to support efficient time and task management and deconstructing this approach.</em></td>
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<td>• <em>Discussing and analysing with expert colleagues the importance of the right to support (e.g. to deal with misbehaviour).</em></td>
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<td>• <em>Protecting time for rest and recovery and being aware of the sources of support available to support good mental wellbeing.</em></td>
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<td><strong>And - following expert input - by taking opportunities to practise, receive feedback and improve at:</strong></td>
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<td>• <em>Collaborating with colleagues to share the load of planning and preparation and making use of shared resources (e.g. textbooks).</em></td>
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pp. 30-31
Ideological co-option – the risks of best intentions

- We ask the wrong questions about workload and seek the wrong solutions.
- We develop strategies to maintain the marketised system as it is.
- We become unwittingly complicit in perpetuating the problems.
- As a profession, we need to be critically aware of the consequences of the decisions we make to satisfy the R&R crisis.
- The dangers of the ‘what works’ agenda, now applied to reducing workload.
- We need to be alert to sleepwalking into de-professionalisation of teaching.
Fabrication, strategic silence and how new teachers learn to keep quiet

**Ulvik and Sunde (2013)**

- School leaders’ ‘**lack of awareness**’ of the reality of ECTs’ experiences and feelings
- They have different priorities and indicators of leading a successful school
- Concern for assimilation – ‘to fit in’

**Hobson and McIntyre (2013)**

- ‘**Teacher fabrication** as an impediment to teacher learning and development’
- ‘...a concern amongst [new] teachers to prevent significant others in or associated with their schools from becoming aware of what they felt were inadequacies in their professional practice’
Maintaining the illusion

strategic silence

‘No one wants to expose their weakness... I can openly admit when I started at this school that I wouldn’t go to anyone’

strategic avoidance

‘You never want to mention any potential failings that you might have to your mentor or your line manager... I have got the acting down to a fine art’
‘The profession that eats its young’ (Halford, 1998: 33)

What has been missing from the workload debate?

- Language
- Power
- Work creep
- Speaking up
- Intellectual satisfaction
- Ownership
First, when a manager interrupts with a request, the work requested is added to the current workload, adding on tasks to the individual’s job. Second, interruptions have the effect of detracting from the worker’s efficiency at accomplishing the first task because there are significant costs associated with having to go back and try to remember where one was when one was interrupted (Perlow, 1997; Seshadri & Shapira, 2001).

Interruptions, thus, contribute to the expansion of work hours in two ways: by adding tasks and by creating inefficiency in the accomplishment of current tasks.

The need to put on your ‘Boudicca pants’ to stand up and have your voice heard
What influences choices – are they choices?

• Individuals with high self-esteem may be more willing to attempt to protect their time for non-work activities than individuals with low self-esteem.

• People who are high segmentors may be more capable of blocking out time for their non-work activities than people who are integrators.

• The more central an individual’s work identity is to his or her sense of self, the less likely it is that the individual will be able to resist the pressures that cause the expansion of work hours.
Bourdieu in a nutshell...

• Our ‘field’ is the social setting in which we operate, which may overlap; e.g. ITE, a classroom, or staffroom.

• Our ‘habitus’ is the structure in which we have internalised all the influences on us from home, family, friends and society and which form our unknowing reactions and responses within the field(s) in which we operate as social beings.

• Our capital, ‘that ‘energy of social physics’...in all its different forms’; economic capital (student loan, bank of mum and dad); social capital (who we know; how they help or hinder us); cultural capital (what we know; how we use that to our advantage or how it disadvantages us)

• Our doxa are the rules of the habitus; the commonly agreed policies of the school and unwritten rules of the school community, e.g. ‘We don’t take hot drinks onto the playground and we don’t go onto the playground unless it is our duty.’
Habitus

‘I don’t know why I think this but…’

Field e.g. placement school

Symbolic capital

Position in the field

Economic capital

Characteristics

Social capital

Political viewpoints

Resources

Cultural capital

Attitudes of others

Beliefs of others

Emotional capital

Emotions of others
Some examples of emotional capital which are likely to have a negative exchange

Received
• ‘I know you’re feeling over worked at the moment, but we do just need this by Friday’
• You don’t mind doing this for me, do you?’
• I’ve been feeling so stressed all night, after you told me how upset you were after that incident yesterday’

Communicated to others
• ‘I’ve come in to work this morning, but I really don’t feel well…’
• ‘I know you would have been able to get this done in a few minutes, but it literally took me hours.’
Some examples of emotional capital with potential for positive exchange

Received
• ‘Would you be able to work on this more easily from home or in school?’
• ‘What seems a reasonable timeframe?’
• This has really played on my mind, how are you feeling about it?

Communicated to others
• ‘I have found this quite hard to make sense of. Would you be able to go through it with me again?’
• ‘I am feeling very anxious in the mornings in the staffroom briefings and there may be days when I struggle to come in. Can I talk to you about how to manage this better?’
Emotional capital

‘to analyse and challenge emotion norms in education, for example, means to reveal their historicity and contingency that have come to define the limits and possibilities of teachers and students’ understandings of themselves, individually and collectively.’

Emotional capital
(Cottingham, 2016)
‘Work-life balancing is an ongoing job, one that can be consciously managed by employees and employers. The process is necessarily—although rarely explicitly so—an ongoing negotiation between employee and employer.’

Kossek and Lambert (Eds) 2004

All members of school communities need to engage to benefit from their collective knowledge and experience of workload, to build new insights and practices.

An understanding of emotional capital is key to this.
We need a dialogic process involving all staff and all partnerships. Changing school cultures – making safe spaces to talk about workload and making change.

• Where and when to have honest conversations?
• Talking with leaders and mentors about
  - the responsibilities of modelling the way we work
  - the way we talk about work
• Acknowledging co-option and the emotional work that needs to be done
• Critiquing technicist advice on workload that maintains and protects the source of the dilemmas we face.

It’s about supporting ‘ethical opposition’
The workforce has to be central to its own change
References


• Reynolds, C. 2015. [http://eprints.hud.ac.uk/id/eprint/23228/1/](http://eprints.hud.ac.uk/id/eprint/23228/1/)


