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Publisher Routledge

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British Educational Research Journal

Publication details, including instructions for authors and subscription information:

<http://www.informaworld.com/smpp/title~content=t713406264>

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To cite this Article Burnard, Pamela and White, Julie(2008) 'Creativity and performativity: counterpoints in British and Australian education', British Educational Research Journal, 34: 5, 667 – 682

To link to this Article: DOI: 10.1080/01411920802224238

URL: <http://dx.doi.org/10.1080/01411920802224238>

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Creativity and performativity: counterpoints in British and Australian education

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This article explores the complex interplay of power between performativity and creativity agendas—a mutual tension that resides in British and Australian education. Accountability constraints and conflicting policy debates are problematised against the wider imperatives of similar government agendas. This ‘counterpoint’ of freedom and control has significant implications for pedagogy and, through accommodating performativity, teacher agency and professionalism are under threat. The authors propose a ‘rebalancing’ where pedagogy transforms from a site of struggle for control, to one where a higher trust is placed in teacher professionalism. The idea of ‘rebalancing pedagogy’ offers a way for teachers to navigate and be supported through the opposing demands of performativity and creativity. It acknowledges the importance of teacher agency and where teaching is judged against the characteristics of a systemic approach that facilitates the building of creative learning communities capable of supporting any curricula or content-focused programmes in and beyond schools.

Introduction

For nearly half a century, education policy has played an explicit role in shaping and linking educational achievement levels with economic development and international competitiveness between contemporary western democracies. While trying to raise standards and increase accountability, governments have established benchmarks and instituted measurement regimes while simultaneously attempting to promote creativity in classrooms. In contrast, performativity, a key element of current educational reform worldwide, has marked a disturbing phase in the resetting of education (see also Ball, 2001, 2003; Blackmore, 2002; Hartley, 2003, 2006; Sachs, 2005). Teachers are required to measure and test students, to report using mandated standards and systems and to teach in state-sanctioned ways. Pedagogy has been shaped and reshaped by reform policies focused on school organisation, the curriculum and student attainment, with assessed teacher

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performance now itself the direct focus of change which has substantially impacted on the work of teachers.

While educational discourses highlight the importance of creativity (Jeffrey & Craft, 2006), creativity is eminently suited to the multiple needs of life in the twenty-first century, which calls for enhanced skills of adaptation, flexibility, initiative and the ability to use knowledge in different ways than has been hitherto realised. The production of 'benchmarks' and the meeting of 'standards' as displays of quality or measures of achievement are often not linked with the values held by individual teachers or school communities. A central characteristic of policy development is recognition of the need to set equally high expectations for all students. There is, however, no attempt to show how and in what ways teachers accommodate creativity *and* performativity in their practice.

While important research conducted a decade ago by Woods *et al.* (1997) suggested that primary teachers, following Office for Standards in Education¹ inspections, felt constrained by pedagogic dilemmas and tensions surrounding new reforms, the ongoing debate recognises 10 years on that the translation of education policy into practice is neither straightforward nor unproblematic (Ball, 2003).

Rhetoric about 'good' pedagogy and teacher 'performance' is widespread (see Australian Council for Educational Research [ACER], 2004; Everton *et al.*, 2007) but those who speak *on behalf of* teachers are usually not working as teachers. We know that teachers have endured much during the recent performative past, and that this experience has been highly individualised (Ball, 2003). This has challenged us to reconceptualise pedagogy in relation to performativity and creativity. Using the context of what might constitute a newly principled pedagogy for the future, one which places a higher trust in professionals than is apparent in contemporary reforms, we begin by unravelling some complicated knots in creativity, performativity and contemporary understandings of pedagogy.

In this article we propose a rebalancing of pedagogy where professionalism² is transformative and looks optimistically towards the future. In their discussions of the *schome*³ project, Twining *et al.* (2007) focus on the importance of *learner* agency as a crucial element in future learning. We take up the issue of *teacher* agency as a precursor for future learning and pursue the argument that teachers are critical for and integral to making a difference in 'an emerging knowledge-based economy wherein creativity is at a premium' (Hartley, 2003, p. 81). How teachers attempt to 'balance' requirements to meet benchmarks and improve standards while promoting and fostering creative teaching and learning remains dependent on how policy is interpreted by teachers, principals and school communities. Whether the inherent tensions that result from the conflicting discourses might give rise to growth and positive transformation is of particular interest here.

In locating and framing our philosophical position, we introduce a discussion of pedagogy that is philosophically embedded in both postmodernism and post-structuralism. The juxtaposition of 'doubt' with 'certainty' that characterises postmodernism encouraged us to question the certainty and rationality of the modernist and bureaucratic performativity so prevalent in Western education.

Eagleton (2003) points to postmodernism as ‘sceptical of truth, unity and progress’ (p. 13), which flies in the face of the certainties espoused in relation to standards, accountability and data-driven values in education. For Lather (2001) post-structuralism refers to ‘a sense of the limits of Enlightenment rationality’ (p. 487). We have found the post-structuralist assertion—that meaning is not stable, fixed or determinable—to be helpful in our consideration of both performativity and creativity.

Discourses of creativity

Our conception of pedagogy relates to teaching in a general sense, rather than a more specialised approach such as subject-specific pedagogical content knowledge. We point to the inherent complexity of teachers’ work, which we suggest evolves through identity and biography. The beliefs, values and attitudes towards students, colleagues and community members as well as classroom strategies and processes all contribute to our conception of pedagogy. For Alexander (2000), pedagogy ‘encompasses the *performance of teaching* together with the theories, beliefs, policies and controversies that inform and shape’ (p. 540). A more recent exploration of pedagogic discourse is offered by Zembylas (2007), who defines pedagogy as ‘the relational encounter among individuals through which many possibilities for growth are created’ (p. 332).

The term ‘*creative pedagogy*’ has also been used to suggest the empowerment of teacher and learner, building of innovative learning cultures, and foregrounding the impact of creative partnerships and the *production of new knowledge*. This new knowledge concerns the creative potential and capacities of young people and the development of creative teaching and learning in different forms of schoolwork, within and beyond school classrooms (Woods & Jeffrey, 1996; Jeffrey, 2005; Jeffrey, 2006; Hall & Thomson, 2007). The emergence of a centralised pedagogy (or ‘one best way’ approach to lesson delivery) potentially diminishes the creative space within which teachers exercise professional judgement.

Echoes of Bernstein’s ‘invisible pedagogy’ (Bernstein, 1975), a concept of social class reproduction in education, can be heard in the recent comments of the former Director of Education at the Organisation for Economic Cooperation and Development (OECD), that in Australia ‘The education system is consistently conferring privilege on those who already have it and denying it to those who do not’ (McGaw, 2006, cited in Cobbald, 2007, p. 145).

Creativity is now considered good for economies, good for society, good for communities and good for education. The globalisation of economic activity has had the effect of universalising creativity. Economic and political imperatives have led to the foregrounding, appeal for and politicisation of creativity, as well as a range of creativity initiatives in schools and teaching. One such appeal was issued by the Director-General of UNESCO in 2001:

At a time when family and social structures are changing, with often adverse effects on children and adolescents, the school of the twenty first century must be able to

anticipate the new needs by according a special place to the teaching of artistic values and subjects in order to encourage *creativity*, which is a distinctive attribute of the human species. *Creativity is our hope*. (p. 40, emphasis added)

The global educational challenge is to enable people, successfully and effectively, to adapt new knowledge and cope with new situations (UNESCO, 1992; Darling-Hammond & Sclan, 1996). Many countries have initiated education reforms that emphasise the 'role of knowledge, technology and learning in economic performance' in a global knowledge economy (OECD, 1999, p. 1). Policy makers in both the public and private sectors have seized upon the perceived potential of creativity to solve, to various degrees, a range of social, political and economic problems. Australia and the UK provide two such exemplars.

Creativity in Australian education is synonymous with *innovation* and *invention*. Policy documents consistently state the purpose of creativity as a necessity for enhancing science and technology and improving economic outcomes. A recent report by the former Prime Minister's Science, Engineering and Innovation Council (PMSEIC, 2005) describes creativity in Australia as a 'fundamental curiosity' through which economic growth, research and development and commercialisation, scientific innovation and discovery will provide the pillars for Australia's future (2005, p. 17). Following a cursory acknowledgement of education, the teaching of 'observation, perception and imaginative ways of thinking', this report asserts that: 'For creativity to become economically productive and its benefits to contribute to social good, it has to be combined with scientific and professional knowledge and applied with discipline and business wisdom' (p. 17).

Whilst, within the Australian context, creativity is valued for its impact on the economy, the discourse of creativity in education rarely goes beyond rhetoric. By contrast, creativity appears to play a more central role in education in the UK. The Robinson Report, *All our futures: creativity, culture and education* (National Advisory Committee on Creative and Cultural Education [NACCCE], 1999) and its key recommendations served as a 'call to arms' for school leaders, educational researchers, policy makers and practitioners. Key recommendations from the report are that: (a) the importance of creative and cultural education should be explicitly recognised and provided for in schools' policies for the whole curriculum and in government policy; (b) teachers and other professionals should be introduced to methods and materials that facilitate the development of young people's creative abilities and cultural understanding; and (c) there should be partnerships between schools and outside agencies to provide the kinds of creative and cultural education that young people need and deserve.

The six years since its publication have seen a proliferation of research, systematic reviews and reports on creative teaching and learning (e.g. Fryer, 1996; Woods & Jeffrey, 1996; Craft, 2001; Jeffrey & Woods, 2003; Woods, 1995; Jeffrey, 2006; Jeffrey & Craft, 2006; Roberts, 2006). The creativity agenda is played out in development work in schools and elsewhere, supported through a range of organisations including Creative Partnerships (2004a, b), the Government's 'flagship programme in the cultural education field' (National College for School

Leadership [NCSL], 2006) and the Qualifications and Curriculum Authority (QCA, 2005a, b) and funded through a variety of government departments.

In the UK there is also vigorous debate and publicity around the policy framework *Creativity: find it promote it!* (QCA, 2005a), which promotes creativity within the Early Learning Goals and in the National Curriculum (QCA, 2005b). Government reports demonstrate the potential of creativity to raise standards and contribute to the core goals of excellence and enjoyment. But the creativity agenda is framed within a number of debates among those committed to the domain-free or domain-specific views of creativity. Furthermore, there are debates that focus upon the pressures and principles of assessment; individual, personal and collaborative creativity; which conditions help or hinder as a key element of the shifting education policy context; and the official agenda in relation to efforts to improve schools (NACCCE, 1999; Roberts, 2006).

As Runco (2004, p. 21) points out, creativity is notoriously difficult to define and measure and we have not attempted another definition here. Rather, our interest is the web of social and cultural relationships that are deeply influential in shaping creativity (see Csikszentmihalyi's systems model, 1999) and the propensity of teachers to value and foster creativity in their classrooms, within the context of performativity. Sternberg (2006, p. 2) recently observed that 'governments say they want creativity, but their actions belie their words'. But what do governments mean by creativity? Mostly, it seems that the newfound interest in creativity in education is driven by a rationale related to economic productivity: 'In a response to calls by business leaders, government is seeking to generate in the schools new kinds of ... creative capital' (Hartley, 2006, p. 60). It seems that in order for companies to reap ideas and innovation, the seeds of creativity must be sown early in education. The logic of this view of both learning and creativity demonstrates an instrumental and unsophisticated view of education. Accepting that creativity 'inputs' for children at primary school will result in creative 'outputs' by these children when they become adult workers is simplistic and denies the complexity of education and creativity.

Creativity in relation to pedagogy

Creativity is considered to be 'an essential life skill, which needs to be fostered by the education system' (Craft, 1999, p. 137). Yet, the pedagogical practices which enable teachers to support, implement and enhance the development of creativity (i.e. passing more control to students, providing space and time which enable risk-taking and student agency) while adhering to the performance agenda and its standards of measured achievement, remain complex, conflicting issues. The provocation that emerges from much of the literature about creativity research in education and teacher practice is the need to make explicit what creative teaching is and how it relates to and impacts on creative learning.

Another expressed imperative is to examine what militates against the inclusion of creativity across all subjects in the curriculum. In the UK, for example, 'booster' classes for literacy and numeracy (Hall *et al.*, 2004; Galton, 2007) appear to have

priority. Issues of risk-taking, time constraints, student–teacher agency and the explicit classroom practice of teaching to the test come into sharp relief.

The significance and value of creativity is not something that needs to be concealed by or specific to the arts but rather should emerge and be characterised differentially and in consultation and collaboration with school communities. The conceptions of creativity that have emerged require a development from current practice and, in relation to pedagogy, involve teachers rethinking their approach to learning and going beyond the safe and the known. Feldman *et al.* (1993) have argued that ‘going beyond’ is what fundamentally characterises creativity.

Our suggestion for fostering creativity in schools has three central elements. First is the need for teachers to have pedagogical autonomy and professional agency. This essential element is not adequately addressed in creativity theory, nor do education bureaucrats afford teachers the degree of professional standing to allow them to decide how to go about their work with students. Hartley draws our attention to the way in which creativity is ‘attached’ as an add-on component to the education system that is ‘decidedly performance-driven, standardized and monitored’ (2006, p.69). His gloomy prediction that ... creativity will soon ‘be managed and monitored formally as sets of competences and outcomes (p. 70) is not as far-fetched as it might at first seem. In Victoria, Australia, the latest iteration of the government curriculum standards for students aged 5 to 16 demands that teachers measure and report on their students’ creativity and thinking using the competence ‘standards’ and ‘progression points’ invented by bureaucrats of the Victorian Curriculum Assessment Authority (VCAA, 2005).

Piirto (2004, p. 97) provides a useful illustration of performativity in her account of a Colorado principal who responded to the ‘No Child Left Behind’ (United States Congress, 2001) legislation with the announcement that ‘Creativity is not permitted’ in the curriculum and exhorted the teachers in his school to focus on teaching students to achieve well on tests based on state standards. This principal is not alone in interpreting performative requirements in this way, and unfortunately has many like-minded colleagues in both the UK and Australia. This example serves also to draw attention to complex issues of power and control in teachers’ work, which raises a number of significant questions: Should teachers become more compliant? Or more subversive? What are the costs of either course of action? Is it possible for teachers to walk the middle ground? Does performativity suppress creativity? Or can creativity thrive in spite of performativity? Indeed, does performativity inspire creativity?

The second element in our suggestion for fostering creativity in schools requires support for teachers to take risks and work outside the safe, the known and the predictable. Sternberg (2003) comments that:

Few children are willing to take risks in school, because they learn that taking risks can be costly. Perfect test scores and papers receive praise ... Teachers may inadvertently advocate that children ‘play it safe’ when they give assignments without choices and allow only particular answers to questions. Thus teachers need to not only encourage sensible risk-taking, but also reward it. (p. 115)

However, we argue that it is performativity on the part of the education bureaucracies and timid principals that require *teachers* to 'play it safe' in terms of their teaching.

Our approach suggests that by encouraging teachers to take risks, to be adventurous and to explore creativity themselves, the resulting confidence will herald a willingness to develop pedagogy and classroom creativity. May's (1975) 'creative courage' (cited in Piirto, 2004, p. 47) is also relevant in this context as this behaviour on the part of teachers is inherently risky and requires courage. Those who create show what is possible, what is new, and in doing so are prepared to risk rejection and censure. As Miles Davis suggested, playing it safe is the antithesis of creativity: 'The brilliance comes in your mistakes—that's how you discover new things. And the only way to make mistakes is to stretch and take chances. If you play it safe, you'll never progress' (cited in Swann & Pratt, 2003, p. III).

The third element of our suggestion is the importance of creative collaboration in genuine partnership with school communities and amongst teachers. Sternberg (2003, p. 121) suggests that while creativity is often viewed as a solitary practice, collaboration can enhance and 'spur' creativity. Where teachers are encouraged to collaborate, higher levels of trust and enhanced collegiality allow for increased risk-taking, experimentation and creativity (White & Watson, 2006; White, 2008a, forthcoming). Within theatre and dance, trust is essential amongst the actors and dancers, and we draw on this as a way of enhancing the creative collaboration amongst teachers. In a discussion about enhancing creativity for children, Piirto (2004) suggests that 'developing group trust is imperative if people are to take risks ... and be transformed' (p. 48). We suggest that teachers who work together to develop 'group trust' might be more likely to foster creativity in their own classrooms.

In this reconceptualisation of pedagogy we have suggested that three essential elements are required for teachers to confidently reassert ownership of education and develop future learning and teaching practices that embrace, value and foster creativity. Firstly, we argue that professional agency and pedagogical autonomy should be returned to teachers;⁴ and secondly, that teachers need to be supported to take risks and to work outside the safe, the known and the predictable. The third element put forward is the importance of creative and collegiate collaboration among teachers as well as genuine partnership and consultation with school communities.

Discourses of performativity and the performance of pedagogy

Conceptually, there are three major strands of performativity that relate to our argument. The term 'performativity' is wide ranging and used in many contexts. In gender studies, for example, Judith Butler (1997, 2000) uses the notion of performativity to analyse gender development and political speech. Using Riviere's notion that gender is like costume, Butler argues that gender is performative, or a masquerade. Gender is presented as a regulated system of performances. Simply put, men can be expected to behave in particular ways in social situations, and there are clear expectations for women too. Failing to perform gender can have serious

consequences, and at its most extreme, can meet with ‘social isolation and mockery, violence, rape and even death’ (Mansfield, 2000, p. 77). In the same way, there are clear expectations of how teachers are expected to ‘perform’ and this is most clearly depicted in films where teachers are dichotomised into ‘good’ or ‘bad’ (Dalton, 2004, ch. 2). In relation to professional learning and change processes, teaching can also be construed as a regulated system of performances where the work climate and failure to perform successfully (perceived or otherwise) can have profoundly negative consequences such as the non-renewal of contracts⁵ and emotional exhaustion, chronic stress and teacher burnout (Goddard, 2006). Our interest in Butler’s conception of performativity relates to our argument that while the ‘performance’ of pedagogy is socially constructed, increasingly through competence standards, governments have developed a narrow and reductionist version of what it means to be a ‘good’ teacher.

Secondly, Denzin (2003, p. 4) draws on the work of Dwight Conquergood to distinguish between performativity as the ‘doing’ and *performance* as the ‘done’. Performativity, in this sense, precedes performance. Our interest in this sense of performativity is in the development of teacher pedagogy, rather than the teaching act itself. Here, the emphasis is on the ‘doing’ rather than the ‘done’, i.e. the process of developing, articulating, refining and sustaining pedagogy. For example, in education, it is mostly in the pre-service university context that teachers pay attention to performativity in this sense. Teacher performance—or *what* they actually do in classrooms—is of greater interest than teacher performativity—or *who* they are, *what* they value and *why* they establish their classroom culture and climate in the ways that they do.

Thirdly, Francois Lyotard (1984), the French philosopher, uses performativity to represent political and bureaucratic mechanisms of control. As Koopman (2005) suggests, performativity refers to the drive for the achievement of goals in increasingly efficient and instrumental ways, which goes some way to supporting understanding of performativity within both the arts and educational contexts. ‘The forces of performativity are inimical to activities that do not fit the means–ends scheme of goal directed action’ (p. 129). And this is clearly illustrated by the arts being perceived to be add-on luxuries to the core subjects of literacy and numeracy.

For Lyotard (1984) performativity represents the attitude of valuing the ‘effective’ and the ‘efficient’ in systems where the least ‘input’ produces the greatest ‘output’. As Davis (2004, p. 75) points out, ‘The principle of performativity may not be entirely bad in itself. There may be nothing wrong, for example, in trying to get a car to burn less fuel and thus to produce a better performance for less output’. However, the extension of this principle into education heralds a situation of ‘terror’ predicted by Lyotard where those aspects of education (like creativity?) that cannot easily be measured and do not readily fit into the performative system can be ignored or denied. In a significant way, our interest in this sense of performativity relates to our argument that for reasons of control, efficiency and accountability, governments in the UK and Australia have overreached themselves, and in the process, have jeopardised teachers’ confidence to optimistically transform education for the future.

Performativity in relation to pedagogy

Current conceptions of teaching as a profession involve expectations of compliance and performance and make little allowance for what it means to be a professional. The pedagogy of teachers—their beliefs, theories, epistemologies, practices and agency—has been ignored. Professionals, in contrast, make judgements on behalf of their clients and do not act as an ‘agent’ of the state (see Furlong *et al.*, 2000). And as teachers are employed, on the whole, by education departments, the state dictates *what* is to be taught, *when* it is to be taught, and increasingly, *how* it is to be taught.⁶

For the most part, despite teacher education and continual professional learning being recognised as critical to the growth of teachers, the UK Government has paid only lip service to enabling those responsible for educating the future workforce. In Australia, there have been countless government inquiries (e.g. Ramsay, 2000; Victorian Parliament, 2005; House of Representatives, 2007) into the education of teachers, with universities often being made a convenient scapegoat. Through performativity, successive governments continue to take universities and teachers to task and increasingly assert control over the professional lives of teachers. In contrast, we argue that teaching as a profession needs to be open to allow for teachers, professional teacher associations, education academics and unionists being able to forge links and reclaim education. The teaching profession could then embrace the future and focus on transformative and activist professionalism—‘whereby the profession is transformed into a politically astute and educated one’ (Judyth Sachs, 2003, p. 154).

Competence standards for teachers have been hailed as a way to help promote a ‘new professionalism’ (Department of Education, Science and Training, 2003). Yet, Hargreaves (2001) suggests that the teaching profession in the UK is ‘staring tragedy in the face’ and points out that many teachers from the baby boomer generation retire early because of the stress, burnout or disillusionment with the impact of years of mandated reform on their lives and work. Added to this, he identifies the decade of relentless reform and the climate of naming and shaming—particularly in the UK—that has led to teaching being perceived as unattractive to newcomers (see Galton & MacBeath, 2002) as the basis of the teacher recruitment problem in the UK. And yet, the attrition rate of newcomers to teaching is inordinately high.⁷ This difficulty in retaining and attracting teachers has led to a staffing crisis, particularly in the UK where some schools have opted ‘to move to a four-day week; more and more schools are run on the increasingly casualised labour of temporary teachers from overseas, or endless supply teachers whose quality busy administrators do not always have the time to monitor’ (Hargreaves, 2001, p. x).⁸

Having so far explored some of the complexity in discourses of creativity and performativity in education in both Australia and the UK, we now propose fresh conceptions of creativity and pedagogy and then turn our attention to what this might mean for conceptualising a ‘*rebalancing pedagogy*’.

How teachers organise themselves and develop their pedagogy in response to targets and other performance indicators goes far beyond classroom strategy or activity (Ball, 2003). It reaches into the core of who the teacher is and what they value. It involves

thinking how the work of teaching will occur and how the constraints will be navigated. Questions about pedagogy relate to the fundamentals of education and yet ‘pedagogy’ remains a complex term that is not easily defined, but is often used interchangeably with classroom strategy. Given that those who make decisions on behalf of teachers—about content to be taught and measured as well as classroom practices—are *not* teachers, it is unsurprising that limited conceptualisations dominate. As Reeder (2005) suggests, we need to look to the future and to envision alternatives:

For education calls on our ability to question critically not only our own educational experiences but also to question current education practices, constraints, and limitations, and our own ideas about curriculum and learning. (p. 247)

Paradoxically, by constraining teachers and limiting their own creativity and autonomy, education is increasingly looking to the past, rather than the future.

There is also a body of literature associated with Peter Woods and Bob Jeffrey which explores pedagogical strategies linked to creativity (Woods, 1990; Woods & Jeffrey, 1996; Jeffrey & Woods, 2003; Jeffrey, 2006). The concepts that are particularly pertinent here are the notions of *ownership, relevance, innovation and control* (Jeffrey & Woods, 2003), as well as co-participation, in which control is handed back to the learner (Craft, 2006).

Creativity has been reported in several previous studies on progression (Craft *et al.*, 2007), possibility thinking in the early years (Cremin *et al.*, 2006; Burnard *et al.*, 2006) and creative learning (Craft *et al.*, 2006; Creative Partnerships, 2007). Specifically, their findings suggest the significance of mechanisms which enable the *breaking away* (for teachers, referred to as ‘*standing back*’) from the *expected patterns of expectation* in framing what students do and how effectively they are stimulated by the work and willing to explore their creativity. A willingness to ‘go beyond’ (Feldman *et al.*, 1994) asks much of teachers who have been coerced into playing it safe.

Pedagogy rebalanced: towards transformative professionalism

The idea of ‘*rebalancing pedagogy*’ offers a way for teachers to navigate, and be supported through, the opposing demands of performativity and creativity. We suggest that sustaining teachers through creativity in their work and through professional agency offers an approach to reframing pedagogy. As Nickerson (1999) contends, timidity and compliance is not conducive to creativity. Risk-taking is seen as an important element in creativity and learning. In order to meet the future head on, teachers need to develop a willingness to be courageous, daring and reflexive which is not compatible with being compliant.

However, there is hope and cause for optimism, as signs emerge that attitudes towards teaching may be changing. In the UK, schools that have performed well have been granted ‘earned autonomy’ (Hargreaves, 2003, p. 161) and in Australia, schools that achieve high results are allowed some choice about strategic goals and teacher learning direction (see Office for Government of School Education, 2008).

In trying to work around externally imposed requirements aimed at bringing teachers ‘to heel’, a strong and specific notion of transformative professionalism

involving rebalancing pedagogy, classroom autonomy and professional agency is required. Dichotomising performativity and creativity into ‘either–or’ does not acknowledge the careful balancing teachers somehow manage in navigating their way through. Indeed, it is this contradiction, the inherent ambiguity and uncertainty, that characterises the interaction of performativity and creativity. We propose that by rebalancing power and pedagogy there is hope for future education. Confident professionals who are able to transform themselves and the ways in which students learn are required. Professional pedagogical practices that foster and promote student creativity cannot be expected from teaching assistants and bureaucrats. Such practices are those arising from the professional artistry involved in valuing the process and outcomes of risk-taking, problematising knowledge, journeying from the known to the unknown, and sharing the process of education with students (Craft, 2005). If this longer-term thinking about our educational future is not pursued, and teachers are not professionally sustained, then the distressingly high numbers of teachers leaving the profession (in the UK and Australia) can be predicted to continue (Everton *et al.*, 2007; Australian Council of Deans of Education, 2005, pp. 33–36).

While the policies of both countries reflect the particular dynamics of an information society as well as the global economy, both remain oblivious to the importance of teacher autonomy and transformative professionalism. By unravelling the discourses of performativity and creativity, it has emerged that the greatest challenge is to rebalance pedagogy—from stepping between what is ‘easily measured’ and what ‘can’t be easily measured’⁹—by making teachers themselves feel reinvigorated as professionals who work at the centre of shaping education.

Notes

1. The Office for Standards in Education, Children’s Services and Skills (Ofsted) is the non-ministerial government department of Her Majesty’s Chief Inspector of Schools in England (HMCI). It is the official body for external inspection of schools. Here we see a specific notion of pedagogy which is enshrined in the measurement of practice and teacher performance (as well as student learning). How teachers handle these externally monitored cycles of inspection and what it means to be a professional in such circumstances places teachers in a position where they are unable to challenge the orthodoxy that the inspection (and its anticipation) ascribes. See www.ofsted.gov.uk
2. Discourses of teacher professionalism are equated to by Kennedy (2007) as managerial and democratic perspectives and by Sachs (2003) as distinguished by ‘old’ and ‘new’ forms. We use the term ‘transformative professionalism’ as a potential further sub-category to Sachs’s ‘new professionalism’, which acknowledges the importance of teacher agency and where teaching is judged against the characteristics of a systemic approach that facilitates the building of learning communities capable of supporting any curricula or content focused programmes in the schools (Crick *et al.*, 2007).
3. See website: <http://www.schome.open.ac.uk/wikiworks/index.php/Schome> (accessed 3 August 2007).
4. We suggest that ‘pedagogical autonomy’ is the freedom for teachers to teach within their classrooms as they see fit, which concurs with professionalism; whereas ‘professional agency’ is a term related to teachers’ work outside the classroom—where teachers would have voice in the development of curriculum including assessment processes.

5. It has become standard practice for newly qualified teachers in government schools in Victoria, Australia to be employed on successive 6 and 12 month contracts while their performance is continually assessed (see White, 2004).
6. In Victoria (one of the eight states and territories of Australia), for example, in recent years the state has required that primary teachers implement the formulaic 'Early Years' structured literacy program in the first two hours of each school day (Hill & Crevola, 1999; Department of Education and Early Childhood Development [DEECD], 2008b). In the UK, A White Paper appeared in March 2006 which contained a whole chapter setting out a strategy for teaching and learning in further education (Department for Education and Skills [DfES], 2006). This strategy for teaching and learning is essentially a prescription of pedagogy, which is like the National Numeracy and Literacy Strategy, in that it severely restricts teacher professional judgment.
7. In a recent submission, the Australian Department of Education, Science and Training estimated that up to 25% of beginning Australian teachers will leave their current teaching position or the profession within their first five years of teaching (House of Representatives, 2007, p. 87). The figures are not dissimilar in the UK.
8. Indeed the teacher employment sections of Australian newspapers are full of advertisements from UK agencies that also approach universities for recruitment purposes.
9. According to Charles Handy (1994, p. 219) the Macnamara Fallacy stipulates that 'The the first step is to measure whatever can be easily measured. This is OK as far as it goes. The second step is to disregard that which can't be easily measured or to give it an arbitrary quantitative value. This is artificial and misleading. The third step is to presume that what can't be measured easily isn't important. This is blindness. The fourth step is to say that what can't be easily measured really doesn't exist. This is suicide'.

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