

>> A CRITICAL EXAMINATION OF THE IMPACT ON TEACHERS AND TEACHER EDUCATION IN THE UK OF THE EVERY CHILD MATTERS PROGRAMME FOR CHANGE

Professionalism, Multi-Professionalism, Inter-Professionalism and Trans-Professionalism

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Introduction

This paper has three prime focuses:

To describe to an international audience the principle features of current U.K. policy on child care and education. This policy is encapsulated in the document 'Every Child Matters' (2003) which sets out a 'holistic' approach for all government agencies dealing with children. The fact that this policy has its counterparts elsewhere in the world (see 'No Child Left Behind' in the U.S.) suggests that this is not a nationally specific phenomena but an international development of great significance to teacher educators.

To critically analyse the ways in which this policy is conceptualised professionally and to link this conceptualisation to a nascent set of further standards for teachers.

To argue for a transprofessional conceptualisation of teachers education, rooted in a phenomenological approach to our work with teachers.

Social policy in the UK

Recent developments in social policy in the UK have proposed development of multi-agency coordination of services following the Laming Report (2003) and subsequently 'Every Child Matters' (2003) reforms which have had a major impact on all child care services including education. Teachers are now required to meet an additional set of standards referred to as the five outcomes: Be healthy; Stay safe; Enjoy and achieve; Make a positive contribution; Achieve economic well being. Every Child Matters proposes a set of far reaching developments leading to the reorganization of services so that they will reflect more of a multiprofessional sense of connection that will help to develop national and local systems that offer: "Integration of key services around the needs of children, in particular, education, social care, health, youth justice and Connexions." (Chief Secretary to the Treasury 2003,

69). The hope central to the policy is that changes to practice will lead to a coherent national system that will integrate all services involved in child care. These new arrangements could be argued as representative of a liberal tradition which is aimed at tackling serious inequalities such as deprivation and child poverty whilst reducing the risk to children of being abused and ill-treated by adults and at the same time improving existing services such as education. However the impact on practitioners and practice and in particular teacher's professional identity, pedagogical independence and teacher education may be viewed as reductive, authoritarian and 'anti-professional'. Indeed the effectiveness of Every Child Matters to be able to deliver its promised objectives may also be questioned. Despite these reservations the paper argues that whilst there are clear challenges to teacher pedagogy from the discourses represented through the policies represented by Every Child Matters the social agency brought by teachers into contexts of practice will also be influential in contributing to developing practices.

However, the policy to integrate services as set out in Every Child Matters is directly linked to the Laming Inquiry into the death of Victoria Climbiè. The development of such an integrated service provision with a strong community presence forms part of an historical liberal discourse. This tradition sees education as having a liberating influence by improving the social lives of its citizens by focussing on objectives such as overcoming poverty, although its success has been challenged (see Hill 2004).

The current government has therefore a stated agenda to target deprivation through innovations such as Education Action and Employment Zones which focus on the most deprived areas to attempt to alleviate the problems of schools and chronic unemployment (Glennister 2000). Education is seen as bringing about significant change in society by making it a fairer and more equal place for developing opportunity.

Prime Minister, Tony Blair has committed the welfare state to tackling exclusion and developing new ways to deliver welfare including partnerships between the public, private and voluntary sectors. Over the last few years of the New Labour Government a diverse range of white papers, green papers and legislation have been set in motion: "The 1997 White Paper *The New NHS: Modern, Dependable* (DH, 1997) repeatedly urged NHS and local authority organisations to work more closely together. This was formalised in the "duty of partnership" imposed by the 1999 Health Act on all NHS organisations and supported by a number of other policy and funding initiatives. Conversely, the Local Government Act, 2000 empowers local authorities to work in partnership with other local agencies to improve economic, social and environmental well-being." (Glendenning et al. 2001).

The message from government emphasises the importance of partnership as a model for developing new joint working practices that are constructed along recognisable and clear lines that include pooling budgets, delegating responsibilities to a "lead" organisation and integrating front-line health and social services staff into a single organisation (Hudson et al, 2001 cited in Glendenning, 2001).

This pattern is repeated across a number of key areas of provision including childcare through the Surestart strategy which is pledged to offer where they are needed most which is in the most disadvantaged areas in order to offer families pre-school education childcare and health and family support with advice on employment opportunities etc. Children's Centres are seen by government as providing a linking point to , and (www.Surestart, September 2005). The Surestart Children's centre will be a home to a number of community services aimed at supporting service users and their children and they should be able to access the services that they need without fuss or difficulty.

The full extended school programme similarly provides a strong community focus: the intention is to make more schools extended schools, according to the Department for Education and Skills: *Five-Year Strategy for Children and Learners*. Recent research indicates a lack of consensus as to what 'extended school approaches' actually mean, while highlighting the time it takes to develop successful partnerships with parents and the community that underpin effective extended schools. Multi-agency work increases accessibility of services to vulnerable children and adults, but a clear focus and manageable goals are required. (Basic Skills Agency, January 2005).

The picture that is emerging is of local services having a stronger 'unified' sense of practice within the community, often located in the same school buildings to give the sense that this will lead to dramatic modifications to professional services developing a stronger more unified multiprofessional identity represented by health, social care and education services. In other words the days of isolated and arbitrary professional responses to community needs has been targeted leading to claims that favour integrated and coordinated multi-agency team work which it is believed will provide a progressively more successful outcome for service users as the developments of partnership arrangements becomes embedded. These developments, it is claimed, will challenge the long lasting barriers that have existed between different professional disciplines and different practitioners and should therefore lead to stronger inter and trans professional cooperation. Indeed the whole project of improving intervention in child protection cases as well as attempting to deal effectively with poverty would seem to depend on redefinitions of what constitutes professionalism among those responsible for child care in its multitude of forms.

Professionalism, multi-professionalism, inter-professionalism and trans-professionalism

Traditionally and possibly ideally, professionalism has been held to denote the possession and exercise of exclusive skills related to a body of knowledge onerously acquired and, in the public sector at least, an altruistic attitude towards those who are the object of professional attention. As those in the forefront of current changes, the professional identity of teachers is currently under pressure to change from the impact of a number of influential and competing discourses emanating from recent policy implementation arising from 'Every Child Matters'. These developments resonate with policy shifts in other parts of the world (see Sachs on the developments in Australia 2001).

Teachers are trying to grasp the changes to classroom practices which have been largely led by the external application of a powerful ideology of a professional standards discourse aimed at measuring educational outcomes. In the process teaching becomes codified, objectified, and even in Marxist terms, commodified. As a consequence of this in turn, teachers wrestle with what Stronach et al (2003) have termed ecologies of practice (their own local professional knowledge) and economies of performance (the requirements of the auditing culture). What counts as educationally successful can and often does differ between official governmental views and that of the teaching profession. For instance the official policy on literacy and numeracy strategies urges the implementation of particular organizational, structural and practice considerations which are meant to mirror the requirements of a standardized curriculum experience that could be found in most UK schools. Standards represent real challenges to successful teaching pedagogies that have been tried and tested and adjusted by individual teachers. This ongoing struggle is compounded by a disciplining managerial discourse emanating from the Every Child Matters policy which sees teachers as its agents of recognition and referral to a wide range of external professional agencies. However, the disciplinary discourse still requires teachers to operate as professional agents through practices emanating from personal ecologies which are connected to individual as well as collective interpretations of beliefs, values and ethics. There is likely therefore to be a 'space' for individual teacher pedagogies to develop and prosper in which social agency will be at the fore of any interaction.

Inter agency communication or multi agency teams

Teacher identity has been influenced by the shift of the teacher from the established landscape of education to develop further as a social agent as a response to the requirements of Every Child Matters.

Teachers have always been expected to support pupils socially particularly where children were identified as having particular difficulties and personal problems. However Every Child Matters expands this process considerably with the development of full extended schools which act as a focus for the local community. The extended school is a place that is inhabited by a community of practitioners representing a wide range of disciplinary backgrounds of which the teacher is an important one.

The location for multi-agency operations being at the school is likely to impact further on the pedagogical practices of teachers as they become constructed by discourses such as health and social care in addition to education as a means of supporting pupils. In some respects this scenario is not a new

one and teachers have played an important role in working with families and external practitioners in the past. As the Five Outcomes implies teachers will be expected to monitor children in relation to their health, safety, participation in school life and in the community, as well as preparing them for employment and further education and referring those who they feel need further intervention by another professional practitioner such as a social worker. This new raft of practices perceive the teachers role as more socially interventionist than previously and key to developing appropriate rapid intervention at an early stage in responding to wider sets of needs in the lives of children. The remainder of this paper sets out the challenges posed for teachers to meet the requirements of their newly extended role; the ways in which these requirements are becoming attached to nascent standards; and finally the kind of response teacher educators can make conceptualised as transprofessionalism.

Communication

An important area of involvement is in child protection where teachers are viewed as having local and specific knowledge about children's lives and therefore being well placed to make referrals if appropriate. There have in the past been a number of problems identified with inter-professional communication in child protection cases and as early as 1974 when the Maria Colwell Inquiry report stated that: 'Maria despite an elaborate system of "welfare provision" fell through the net primarily because of communication failures' (Maria Colwell Inquiry Report 1974, 16). Later Stevenson (1989) in the same year as the Cleveland Inquiry (into allegations of sexual abuse in the north east of England) argued that there were several potential barriers to interagency cooperation that included the different structures and organisational systems that practitioners came from. She added that practitioners from different professional organisations would tend to be working to different standards and have different historical backgrounds and cultures that informed their practice. Training she pointed out had been conducted in unitary agency contexts which tended to reinforce individual agency's values and belief systems whilst conversely she believed multiprofessional training should allow for a cross-fertilisation of agency constructs.

Reder, Duncan and Gray argue that: "Inter-professional communications are embedded within multiple relationship contexts and that during every professional interchange personal, professional, institutional and inter-agency factors colour how the messages are relayed and received" (1999, 65).

One of the identified difficulties central to the successful implementation of the policies urged in Every Child Matters -The Next Steps (DfES 2004) therefore remains that of communication. In Every Child Matters there is a requirement for practitioners to '...share a common language' (www.everychildmatters.gov.uk 2004, 41) but little discussion as to how it might be achieved. There are clearly difficulties ahead in trying to understand interpret and speak this 'common language' in a way that is meaningful to everyone who comes into contact with it including children and their carers. The notion of the need for a common language suggests a shift from unitary inter-professional interaction based on separate use of language linked to professional discipline to a shared set of understandings, meanings and perspectives that would be available as multiprofessional communication a shared multiprofessional language suggests shared values, beliefs and meanings articulated through a common way of speaking. It is interesting to consider how given the complexities already discussed how 'multi professional perspectives' might be articulated as the basis for a common language.

The attempt to show that multiprofessional communication

might operate with ease between practitioners is unconvincing when the terms that constitute it are considered separately. They clearly reveal a sense of contradiction that makes effective multiprofessional practice desired by Every Child Matters apparently difficult to achieve. More recently as working arrangements attempt to meet the requirements of the new legislation similar echoes to Colwell and Climbe are evident.

Extended Schools as the site for the location of services does not necessarily result in barriers between professional groups being lowered so that they may embrace each other. A recent piece of research highlights this reporting that the integration of Connexions staff into the life of a school had raised a number of difficulties. First staff in partner agencies were confused about the variety of different roles played by Connexions Personal Advisers (PAs) and unclear about PAs' legitimate roles, responsibilities and authority. There was lack of clarity, particularly in schools, resulted in a continuing suspicion that Connexions had not brought the radical changes some had hoped it would. However, PAs found some providers difficult to work with because of conflicting priorities and working practices. Despite some progress, there was little systematic or effective information sharing. This was most likely to occur within multi-disciplinary teams working from the same base. Failure to share information sometimes resulted in an incomplete assessment of needs and inappropriate patterns of support (Coles, Britton and Hicks 2004).

Inter-agency dynamics

The scenario suggested by Every Child Matters is one where all the relevant participants would be involved in open mutual sharing through an interactive verbal framework that welcomes all views as equally valid. However this state of affairs raises further questions concerning power arising from what is perceived in any group of professionals as the valid interpretation of events. Assertions about the nature of sharing however need to be considered in the light that a number of commonalities are likely to be in place such as the notion of being a professional and having a concerned and informed view of a child, there are also likely to be tensions present between practitioners. For example different professionals may appear to be more knowledgeable in certain situations gaining them a sense of being more powerful and therefore more important which often accompanies such a state. In addition particular 'experts' may find it difficult to be flexible in their thinking asserting that only they have the expertise and professional knowledge to make judgements about particular aspects of concern.

Of course, it would be an appropriate expectation of a group of practitioners to bring their own areas of expertise to any discussion but it could also be potentially unhealthy and even dangerous for any one voice to dominate the decision making process. However there are often barriers established between groups of professionals according to the ways that they may be officially perceived. This means that those professionals from traditional established positions in society such as lawyers or paediatricians are likely to view themselves and be viewed by others as more important than those representing professions of the next order such as teachers and social workers etc. A third order of professional status may include child minders and nursery workers who are likely to have a great deal more contact particularly with young children and their families than a doctor but who nonetheless are likely to be overlooked in the professional pecking order.

Parents, family carers and their children may also find it difficult to penetrate the meaning of technical terms or the agenda that may lie behind it. Indeed it is possible for jargon to be intuited by parents as confirming a hierarchical structure

that places them at the lower end of it and leaving them feeling perhaps that little has changed. In this scenario it is hardly likely that trust identified in Every Child Matters will be developed or the belief that cooperation in the decision making process will be beneficial. A partial explanation may be that practitioners are more likely to be seen by children and their carers as representatives of official institutional discourses and the standards that they represent which are often viewed as hierarchical, distant and impersonal. On the other hand a set of inclusive strategies which encourage sharing and give the impression of there being an 'equal playing field' may lead to carers and children sharing their innermost concerns and risk being condemned by their own trusting nature as any information shared may confirm professional stereotypes. The traditional readings from practice suggest that a 'professional' possesses competence or expertness with the ability of developing a perspective that contains a 'proper or accurate point of view or the ability to see it'. However the process of assessing any multiprofessional situation is highly dependant on the quality of professional interactions and therefore the multiple perspectives brought by professionals to the context in which they are involved

It may also be problematic for the development of a multiprofessional group perspective(s) if each practitioner perceives her or his status and relevance as relative to the views of other colleagues from different professional disciplines. The positions that individuals assume in groups may reflect their sense of status and importance that may result in a group dynamic resulting in a sense of fracturing of any shared sense of multiprofessional perspective. The fracturing and reforming of a group's professional perspectives can be a healthy dynamic but one that may not be entirely effective if agreement can not be reached about which views count before deciding how to act in 'the best interests' of a child.

It is therefore likely that practitioners will allocate themselves a place in a hierarchy of 'expertise' where perhaps some feel powerful whilst others marginalised. This in turn may reinforce a group hierarchy based on perceptions of 'competence' and 'expertness' determined by strong professional characters that may undermine any attempt at a more egalitarian system. This is an important concern as it can undermine the ability of some practitioners to be able to feel fully committed which in turn can lead to marginalisation reinforcing existing barriers to communication and possibly leading to divergent and ineffective practices with the risk that little may change and children remain in need or at risk of not receiving adequate support

Transprofessionalism, pedagogy and standards

Thus far this paper has stressed the inconsistencies and contradictions arising from the press for multi-professionalism and inter-professionalism and the challenges this poses for those responsible for the education and training of these new professionals. As we move towards a conclusion we want to take a more philosophical, more biographical and possibly more optimistic turn. We relate this shift to the concept of trans-professionalism having argued that the difficulty of multi-professionalism is that it still configures a world of independent professional practitioners, united by their recently discovered skills of improved communication. These inherent tensions are compounded by the governmental standards agenda which seeks to itemise 'good practice' as a template for training.

Practice as the exercise of judgement in the face of challenging situations, as a complex process of meaning making, as highly context dependent, is marginalised. In short, the education of childcare professionals is content rather than process driven.

It is interesting to reflect on our own professional biographies

at this point and the way in which as, social worker/early year's educator and teacher/teacher educator respectively, we are able to make common cause. The basis has been the need to create and maintain a programme for serving teachers in which practical issues need to be confronted daily. From this has emerged our own local trans-professionalism, rooted in a commitment to the shared belief that the education of professionals is best served by a practice focussed approach in which practice is seen as intellectually rich. In other words we have created our own trans-professional identities, language and reference points.

This is not the place to explore the intellectual basis of both our own and, by extension, others trans-professionalism (see Pearce and Pickard 1987, 1997, Feldman 2001, Jones and Brown 2001 for such explorations). Suffice to say it is rooted in a phenomenological philosophical tradition which challenges Western idealist traditions, stresses the significance of the 'mundane' world of everyday experience, and pays serious attention to the ways in which practice is a process of selection – selection in the sense of what to attend to first, what second, etc. and selection in the sense of what conceptual abstractions matter most. The universality of this phenomenological approach to the education of childcare professionals means that traditional professional demarcation points are subsumed within a wider 'trans-professional' understanding of what it means to be good at your job. Interestingly, by enabling professionals to explore the relationship between what phenomenologically is and what they think should be, we may yet return their education to the liberal traditions we started this paper with.

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