Remodelling the School Workforce in England: a study in tyranny

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Abstract

Remodelling the school workforce is being rolled out across England with official purposes articulated around work-life balance, improving standards, and the need to efficiently and effectively deploy staffing. This is not new and can be related to ongoing policy thrusts designed to restructure the state as manifest in the haphazard construction of site-based management from the late 1980s. I intend developing an intellectual argument about ways in which researchers and practitioners can engage with this major piece of government reform. Central to this argument will be to examine the how tyrannies form, how they work, how they sustain themselves and how they end. In particular, I will be examining the power structures that are embedded within Remodelling, and how the experiences of practitioners who are being remodelled and who are doing remodelling can be described, understood and explained.

Schools in England are undergoing rapid centralised modernisation with structural and cultural changes taking place to those who practice, how they practice, who they practice with, and for what purpose. Consequently, the division of labour in regard to the place of teachers, their work and how they relate to other adults is being radically changed. New roles are being created to do with securing organisational efficiencies and effectiveness, new types of credentials are being required such as business administration, and new power relationships are being developed within the range of adults being employed, and in a situation where more non-teachers may work in a school than teachers.

The reform is known as Remodelling the School Workforce and it has

been phased in from September 2003. While the New Labour lexicon is of transformation, change, futures, improvement, effectiveness, and impact, much of what is currently presented as innovative reform is rooted in site-based management. Schools have had the right to hold their budget and to make decisions about the employment and deployment of staff since the 1988 Education Reform Act, and while Remodelling is being deployed as neutral, the reforms are being presented as a break with the past. However, history is embodied and is revealed within practice through how agency interplays with structures, and so how the individual experiences reform is core to this paper.

I intend asking if Remodelling is a form of the tyranny of the ordinary. In doing this I am positioning the analysis as a form of "conceptually informed practice" (Gunter 2001) where I focus on how data is created, accessed, engaged with, understood and used. This runs counter to the traditional rational accounts of knowledge production, and Barnes (2004: 570) uses Hilary Putman's vivid metaphor of "brains in vats" to illustrate his point of the distorted nature of intellectual work as "disembodied, disconnected, disembedded". My position can be best summed up by Bourdieu's (2003) case for "scholarship with commitment" where politics and scientific rigour are productively combined. This is a legitimate position because what we know, who is recognised as knowing it, why we know it, and why we might want to know differently are matters that connect knowledge production with power structures.

Tyrannies

It seems that tyranny is very popular means of conceptual analysis, and GoogleScholar (accessed 23/03/07) generated 95,900 results including: "A nation of salesmen: the tyranny of the market and the subversion of culture"; "Bodies: overcoming the tyranny of perfection"; "Tyranny and the political culture of ancient Greece"; "Are accounting researchers under the tyranny of single theory perspectives?"; "Anorexia nervosa: the tyranny of appearances"; "The tyranny of the positive attitude in America: observation and speculation"; and the page ends with

"An invitation of escape sexual tyranny". It is easy to condemn tyranny as being everywhere and nowhere, but this is probably essential to the underlying conditions: it can exist in families, in workplaces, in seminar rooms, and not just nation states, and a person may not necessarily recognise the conditions in which oppression is operating. It could be what Bourdieu (2000) identifies as misrecognition, where a person forgets that what is assumed to be normal is a product of the context in which it is structured and does the structuring of practice.

It makes sense to want to know how reform is enabled through how people actually go about their everyday working lives, and how they practice the changes that are being legally required of them. Consequently in examining Remodelling there is a need to ask questions regarding whether people support the policy and why, and what happens if they do not agree? The argument put forward in this paper is that Remodelling is a form of tyranny because it works through the ordinariness of every day practice in ways that can be handled, seem sensible, but makes teachers complicit in a form of practice that is disconnected from learning, and which could be leading to the deregulation of the profession. It is a form of tyranny through how "there is nothing innocent about making the invisible visible" (Strathern 2000: 209), and so all the audits and transfers of work from one part of the workforce to another may be seductive through the calls for hearts and minds transformations but there is a need to connect this to wider narratives regarding public sector workers. Let me say more about this.

It is usual to expect tyrannies to be headed up by a single tyrant where there is a personal control of decision-making and resources, enabled through a cult of personality and a culture of surveillance. History shows that the interplay between a tyranny of a person with a tyranny of process (organisation, communications) can create grim oppression and the most immoral waste of human lives (Latey 1972). Control is secured through a cult of personality combined with the creation of an enemy through scapegoating (e.g. show trials in Stalinist Russia) and disappearing (e.g. purges). It seems that tyrants abuse power and deny the rule of law in order to sustain this form of control, and so definitions tend to juxtapose a tyrant's tyranny with constitutionality. However, tyrannies that are led by tyrants need others to make

them work: to carry out decisions, to undertake surveillance, to write newspaper articles, and to stage elaborate events where participation symbolises legitimacy.

Tyranny as a practice can take place in settings where there is no clearly identifiable tyrant, but it seems as if the *conditions of tyranny* can be detected. Three examples from the English political context can suffice to illustrate this: first, in 1959 Thomas Balogh wrote *The Apotheosis of the Diletante* in which he argued that civil servants had "effective power without responsibility" (cited by Kellner and Crowther-Hunt 1980: 24); second, in 1976 Lord Hailsham gave the Richard Dimbleby Lecture and argued that the UK state is an "elective dictatorship" where the trappings of constitutional and democratic government are in place but in reality the executive dominate decision-making not least through the party 'whipping' system, and the location of the exercise of the royal prerogative in the great offices of state; third, Anthony King (1976) published a book entitled: *Why is Britain Becoming Harder to Govern?* in which arguments were explored regarding the growth of the state and how the nation had become over dependent on bureaucracy. These three examples are all about forms of tyranny or the ways in which power is structured and exercised in ways that are perceived to be oppressive, and they all construct a case based on a form of conspiracy where 'privileged' interests such as the civil service, the executive, and the "welfare dependent scrounger" are maintained. However, events can thwart such neat and tidy accounts such as Sarah Tisdall's leak to the media of the date for the arrival of cruise missiles to Greenham Common, or through public demonstrations such as the opposition to the Poll Tax. The interplay between oppression and dissent means that there is a need to examine practice, and a place where practitioners and researchers might begin is Hannah Arendt's work.

Tyranny within ordinary social practice emerges within Arendt's thinking and is helpful in understanding modernisation. It was in her study of the Eichmann trial (1977 *Eichmann in Jerusalem: a report on the banality of evil*) that she argued that his actions were not based on an ideology as such but on a "deficit of thought" or what she labelled his "banality":

> "The longer one listened to him, the more obvious it became that his inability to speak was closely connected to his inability to *think*, namely, to think from the standpoint of somebody else. No communication was possible with him, not

because he lied but because he was surrounded by the most reliable of all safeguards against the world and the presence of others, and hence against reality as such" (Arendt 1977: 287-288).

Therefore evil came from person who it seems "never realised what he was doing" (Baehr 2000: xxvi). Consequently, while it is usual to focus on the tyranny of Hitler and connected with this are matters of dogma, evil and madness, what Arendt's observations and analysis does is to shift the gaze from who to how, and from an elite to the collective. Hence if orders are followed there is, as Fuller (2005: 29) argues, a form of "negative responsibility (which) can arise from the failure to ask questions, perhaps out of fear of what the answers might be". Furthermore, he goes on to argue that there could be "an *upstream* version of the same problem" (30) where those who give orders are similarly banal in the doing of evil through the witnessing of implementation. If those who give the orders see them carried out then such orders need not be questioned.

For those who could and did stand outside of this banality the problem lies in what might be done about it. Arendt (1951) struggled with the possibility that internal conditions could bring about change within a totalitarian regime. It was change in the Soviet Union following the death of Stalin that led to the argument that regimes can be internally transformed. This is based on arguments that the human being can do the unpredictable through political action:

> "Without action, without the capacity to start something new and thus articulate the new beginning that comes into the world with the birth of each human being, the life of man, spent between birth and death, would indeed be doomed beyond salvation" (Arendt 2000a: 181).

Arendt's attempted to understand political life, and she sought to return some dignity to the purposes and practice of the political. Arendt argues that politics is a space, it is where humans describe the self, where there is discussion and where the new can be initiated. The "common world" is what: "we enter when we are born and what we leave when we die. It transcends our life-span into past and future alike; it was there before we came and will outlast our brief sojourn in it", and what matters is the public and what we decide we want to "save from the natural ruin of time" (Arendt 2000b: 202-203). What we need to hold the common together are places (such as public

institutions) where we can be separate but at the same time connected, where there is "solidarity and respect" (Baehr 2000, pxii).

In *The Human Condition* Arendt (1958) examines labour, work and action. Labour is necessary to produce the goods needed to survive, and this consumption means that they are "the least durable of tangible things" (Arendt 2000a: 171). Work produces goods that are more durable and hence stabilise the social. Humans produce and their product can outlast the process that produced it and the objective for which it was produced. Humans therefore live amongst and with each other, and action with others requires the presentation and understanding of who we are:

> "Wherever men live together, there exists a web of human relationships which is, at it were, woven by the deeds and words of innumerable persons, by the living as well as by the dead. Every deed and every new beginning falls into an already existing web, where it nevertheless somehow starts a new process that will affect many others even beyond those with whom the agent comes into direct contact... But the reason why each human life tells its story and why history ultimately becomes the storybook of mankind, with many actors and speakers and yet without any recognizable author, is that both are the outcome of action. The real story in which we are engaged as long as we live has no visible or invisible maker because it is not *made*" (Arendt 2000a: 179-180).

It could be that if the world is not made then we cannot unmake our errors, and Arendt handles this pessimism by arguing that we can forgive, and while we cannot necessarily determine it does not mean that we cannot make promises.

What is helpful from Arendt's work are the arguments that knowledge is located in the philosophical questions of humanity, and the dignity of a lived life combined with the contribution that life could make to humanity. Knowing is through the stories of how humans present the self and through the validity of political action. Hence humans know and while we are located in the history that we are born into, and we will leave a legacy for others, we can through political action do new things. In trying to understand why terrible things happen, then a person does not need to be 'evil' to do harm to others. There is a need to get underneath a complex process of what Holland and Lave (2001: 5) describe as "history in person": "a constellation of relations between subjects' intimate self-making and their participation in contentious local practice". But such "little stories" (Griffiths 2003) need to be linked to wider issues and there is a need to think beyond the potential banality of is happening to the wider

impact on others. If work is going to be studied then there is a need to consider what is done to survive (labour), what is done to enrich with a sense of purpose and longevity (work), and what is done to make a difference (action).

Remodelling the School Workforce

Tyranny within ordinary activity means that reform strategies such as Remodelling need to be examined through asking questions about what is being presented as legitimate practice and why, and how that practice is being adopted and why. This is difficult to examine, it is by it is very nature fluid and slippery, and there is little actual research evidence (a part of the tyranny) to draw on.

Following the National Agreement (DfES 2003) between the government, employers and unions (except the NUT, one of the largest teaching unions) in January 2003 the school workforce in England is being Remodelled[1]. The agreement is regarded as "historic" (DfES 2003: 1) and is designed to tackle the problem of workload, and the crisis in teacher recruitment and retention, identified by recent official studies such as PricewaterhouseCoopers (PwC 2001) and the School Teachers' Review Body (DfES 2000)[2]. The official strategy is primarily about, first, the tasks that are and should be performed in schools with an emphasis on reducing bureaucracy and freeing teachers to focus on teaching and learning; second, the adults who are employed within schools and how support staff such as classroom assistants, clerical assistants, technicians, and bursars, undertake work that has usually been undertaken by qualified teachers; and third, the cultural norms that sustain traditional ways of working can be challenged by using a change process that embraces the whole workforce through participation in change management teams[3].

The reform has been phased in over three years beginning with the movement of routine work from teachers, moving on to making provision for cover, and guaranteeing time for preparation, planning and assessment (NRT 2003). Schools are now within an unofficial fourth phase (Gunter 2008) where the remodelling of headteachers is taking place based on recommendations from PricewaterhouseCoopers that the Principal or Chief Executive need not have Qualified Teacher Status (DfES/PwC 2007). The headteacher could be relegated to the leading professional on a senior team within a diverse workforce, and who is

outnumbered by adults who are credentialised in business and change delivery. There is no robust research evidence regarding school and workforce experiences of this reform, and what seems to be in the public domain are: first, government policy documents which outline the intensions of Remodelling e.g. *Time for Standards* (DfES 2002); second, government agency reviews such as OfSTED's report on the first year of Remodelling (2004), and next steps consultancy advice from PricewaterhouseCoopers (DfES/PwC); third, NFER reports (Easton et al. 2005, Wilson et al. 2005) which outline the functional implementation of the policy and the role of agencies in delivering the reform; fourth, the National Remodelling Team website where there is a map showing progress according to the following categories: "sustaining, developing, aware of remodelling", plus there are also articles, case studies, an ideas bank, and official guidance booklets and ministerial speeches (www.remodelling.org). Fifth, there are newspaper accounts that consist of articles and letters to the editor (see Gunter et al. 2005). Important work is being done to locate reforms strategies such as Remodelling within analysis of wider modernisation developments (see Brehony and Deem 2005; Furlong 2005; Ironside and Seifert 2004), but the main evidence base is from a government directed pilot project known as *Transforming the School Workforce Pathfinder Project* which took place between 2002 and 2003, with the change team at the London Leadership Centre (Collarbone 2005) and the evaluation team at the University of Birmingham (Butt and Gunter 2005, 2007, Gunter et al. 2005).

Reading and analysing this reform strategy is therefore challenging. One source is from the positive accounts from Heads and Teachers that it has enabled the school to examine the nature of work and who does it, and there have been benefits from this for students, the workforce and for teachers. For example, Crace (2004) reports on Grey Court School in Ham, south west London, where the Head argues that "It's not just about getting the staff to feel better about themselves... it's also about getting a better deal for the students. If staff are doing the jobs they are trained for, then pupils will be getting their educational needs met". Examining such accounts suggests that Remodelling is delivering on what site-based management promised in the late 1980s regarding the relocation of decision-making from distant local authority committee rooms to the classroom. For example, Peter Downes (1988) put a collection of papers together about Local Financial Management of Schools (LFM), and John

Brackenbury (1988: 43) outlines his hopes for LFM that echo what could be hoped for from Remodelling: "The purpose is the enablement of better education for the learners in the schools. LFM is not, and never should be, an end in itself. The method has to match the purpose, that is to say it, too, must be educational". Hence Remodelling is not new, as schools from 1988 onwards under Local Management of Schools (LMS) and Grant Maintained Status (GMS) began looking at purposes and practices, and how best to recruit and deploy the workforce.

What needs to be asked is why this didn't develop to the extent that the Government now regards essential for a modernising education system? Two patterns of arguments seem to be emerging: first, site-based management created the opportunity for schools to generate and deploy their resources in ways that related to the market and to bidding for funds. Hence a teacher having to do low level administration is a product of the failure of school leaders to realise what site-based management was really about and the possibilities within it. The profession prevented site-based management from working in the ways it might because of provider capture. Consequently, teachers are the architects of their own tyranny. Faced with choices over the recruitment and retention of the workforce teachers tended to replicate their own kind and hence reappoint an expensive qualified teacher rather than ask whether the work could be done by others such as clerical staff or a computer. If teachers are over worked, and it is a job that few want to do or remain in, then it is because of a form of professional 'demarcation' or 'restricted practices' that is at the root cause. Site-based management requires a workforce that is flexible, trainable, and deployable in order to deliver national programmes and standards, and so headteachers need to be able to employ and deploy adults who can do this, and these may not be teachers.

A second argument is that site-based management was done on the cheap in regard to the provision of resources to enable the relocation of functions into schools, and as a consequence the new work was taken on board by qualified teachers whether it was the head or a classroom teacher. Teachers have to prevent harm to children from the worst effects of such tyrannical conditions within education. For example, a head of department in a secondary school would have been given a budget, but if this is not supported by clerical staff then the qualified teacher as middle manager had to do low level administration. So teachers made site-based management work in spite of this,

and this undermined the status of the profession by making it a job that people didn't want to go into or remain within. Furthermore, the potential of site-based management was realised by the profession but eclipsed by the performance management strategies of the 1990s (OfSTED, League Tables and Testing, Bidding and Contracting, Performance Related Pay, National Curriculum reforms), and so not only did schools have to take on additional work due to restructuring but also undertake new work from central government to prove they were doing the job and this required paper trails and data collection.

Remodelling is therefore located within a very complex struggle over ideas and territory: the amount and deployment of resources; and, the culture and practice of professionality. Tyranny as a form of conspiracy of provider capture suggests teachers overtly and consciously grouped in order to defend their privileges, while a counter conspiracy sees business management as a tyranny to destroy professional cultures and practices by subjecting practice to the workings of the market. Each is attractive but neither fully accounts for what it means to live through reform, to practice, to make decisions and to live with the consequences. How this is done is problematic because while there are stories of professionals and schools making progress through Remodelling, there is a need, as Griffiths (2003) argues, to be careful: "telling one's story may help in self-realization but may also be an exercise in self-delusion. Voice has to be treated with the same criticality as other autobiographical expressions... linking individual perspectives with the broader picture" (82). In addition there are questions that may not have been asked or may not have been heard or may have gone unrecorded, and so those stories have not been emplotted (Yarker 2005). Therefore what is needed are the links between the local and the bigger debates about the relationship between the state and public sector workers, because tyranny is fuelled by the business of practice rather than just knowing about the meaning of practice.

Remodelling as tyranny

Remodelling is being legitimised as practice through organisational efficiency and effectiveness, and not teaching and learning. There is no requirement for schools to begin with and no research evidence being used to locate the skills and knowledge of adults in schools with learners and learning. In official documentation there is no reference to theories of learning and the role of adults such a Vygotsky's work and the

Zone of Proximal Development (1978); there is no engagement with curriculum initiatives where there is clear evidence of impact on learning such as Cognitive Acceleration through Science Education (McGregor and Gunter 2006), where there has been an integration of support staff i.e. science technicians with teachers in learning purposes, teaching strategies and resources (McGregor and Gunter 2001); and, there are no connections with learning networks such as the University of the First Age who have for over a decade interconnected the profession with the wider workforce in school and the community (see: ufa.org.uk). Children as active learners are missing from Remodelling, they are the objects of that reform.

Remodelling is premised on private sector approaches to achieving a flexible, endlessly trainable, workforce. Solving the problem of high wages and a lack of a qualified teachers (40% of new teachers leave within three years) requires a different type of workforce, combined with ICT which will deliver standards without human interference. As Sennett (1999) has shown changes in work practices has not empowered people but has reworked neo-taylorism from the assembly line to the computer keyboard. Furthermore, there have been glimpses of some "Blue Skies" thinking that has been going on in government where the possibility of the Head as the only qualified teacher buying in the workforce to deliver the national curriculum has been mooted (Gunter 2005). Certainly reports on Teaching Assistants being paid different rates of pay for the time they are doing particular types of work i.e. 'assisting' as compared with 'supervising' is illustrative of this approach to flexible work and pay, and requires a Taylorist approach to the identification of what types of work are, what level of skill is needed, and how that can be time bound (Gunter et al. 2005).

Remodelling is not evidence informed. There is data showing a problem in recruitment and retention but the evidence that the Remodelling strategies could work is not being used. The DfES funded a pilot study of Remodelling called *Transforming the School Workforce Pathfinder Project* (Thomas et al. 2004), which was a mixed method study in 32 schools (and 9 comparator schools) using baseline and end of project questionnaires, interviews, diaries, study group interviews, and cost benefit analysis. The Evaluation found that interventions that are now known as Remodelling led to teachers reporting a reduction in their workload, a change in culture and a better work-life balance, and they had begun to develop the role of support staff. However,

the research also found that the changes needed substantial and sustained funding, and that reform is itself a time hungry process that adds to the burden of senior staff in particular. An issue that does need to be taken into account is that while teachers reported an overall reduction in working hours per week (3.7 hours per week for Primary teachers, 1.2 hours for Secondary, and 3.5 hours for Special) there is variation from one school to another, and so in one primary school hours were reduced by 13 hours per week while in another hours increased by 2 hours per week (Thomas et al. 2004). It seems that local stories need to be taken seriously and questions need to be asked about how strategies develop within context. Crucially the Workforce Agreement took place mid way through this Project and Remodelling began before it was finished and the Report was published. Questions need to be asked not only about why Government commissioned evidence and then moved ahead without it, but also why the evidence has been missed out of official accounts such as the Ofsted Report on the first year of Remodelling.

Remodelling is not a strategy for equity. The questionnaire data from the evaluation of the TSW Project shows that of the 292 support staff in learning roles (e.g. teaching assistants, learning assistants for SEN or EAL) at the time of the 2003 fieldwork, 277 are women and 15 are men. Of these 50 have first degrees (9 men and 41 women), and 10 have qualified teacher status (4 men, 6 women) (Gunter et al. 2005). This generates questions about the gender composition of the support staff, and why very qualified people are either not moving on to train to teach or may be using their professional skills without the status or remuneration. Research is needed about how the local community inter-relates with the school, and who does the work of teaching assistants, and why. Questions need to be asked about whether Remodelling is reinforcing gender inequalities in the workforce, and how matters of diversity are being handled.

Remodelling is not based on an authentic model of what motivates teachers. Yarker (2005: 174) says how he feels that "... the Remodelling strategy is damaging because it does not acknowledge that teaching is centrally about the moment-by-moment lived actuality of classroom interchange and exchange, of the 'live' development and production of ideas, knowledge and experience in the classroom". The schools and the teachers who participated in the TSW Project co-operated whole-heartedly with the

Evaluation (responses to questionnaires etc) because they did feel strongly about the need to protect this relationship with children from the high levels of external interference and the paper trails associated with assessment and reporting. The base line and end of project questionnaire asked a whole series of questions regarding issues in job satisfaction and quality of life, and found that there is no systematic relationship between job satisfaction and hours worked (Thomas et al. 2004). It seems that moving particular types of work from a teacher to a member of the support staff will shift the bureaucratic burden, and in particular the types of work that teachers feel that they should not be doing, but it does not mean to say that they wont be in school in a Saturday morning, or wont spend Sunday afternoon preparing lessons. What motivates teachers is more complex than the amount of hours, teachers will work long hours because they enjoy (love) their job, and care for their students.

A final point is that Remodelling, like other performance management processes, is epistemologically unsound, and published research shows that performativity is damaging to human beings, particularly in public sector professions (Ball 2003). Remodelling requires the auditing of work: what work is done, who does it, why do they do it, should they do it, and how might the work be done better or not at all, or by someone else. In order to do this practice has to be made visible through particular auditing tools to do this. For example, Strathern (2000) examines the Research Assessment Exercise (RAE) in higher education:

> "As the term accountability implies, people want to know how to trust one another, to make their trust visible, while (knowing that) the very desire to do so points to an absence of trust. At this point visibility no longer seems securely attached to knowledge and control, and the idea of audit as an obvious instrument of surveillance is thrown into doubt. Instead, a question arises: *what does visibility conceal*?" (309-310).

This is pertinent for teachers because the relationship with students is based on trust and yet they are not trusted to do the job. Much of their work cannot be captured through performance tools, it is human, it is artistic, it is flawed, it is real, it is somewhere and nowhere. Forrester (2005: 274) uses Acker's work to distinguish between work and non- work, and shows that practice related to performance ("doing your very best for the inspection regime") is of a higher status than caring ("doing your very best for the children") which is not recognised. Forrester (2005:276) goes

on to show that "caring about" in relation to the leadership teams work and the budget is higher status than teachers "caring for" children.

Ordinary Tyranny

What is being presented as legitimate practice is organisational and not pedagogic, is about replicating private sector labour management and is not about developing the public domain, and treats teachers and children as objects to be reformed rather than well motivated and interested people. There is nothing new in this. Site-based management is premised on the efficient organisation with the flexible workforce, and the banality of this upstream decision-making is inter-related with the downstream implementation. In the midst of permanent revolution of the 1990s where change and counter change became a way of life it was difficult to read events or even to have the time to think about what was going on. Remodelling is therefore seductive because it speaks to resolving this problem, it gives license to a 'can do' culture where previous barriers to solving endemic problems can be swept away. In this context there are no questions to be asked, the process is question-less, because it is all so reasonable and helpful. Teachers cannot be blamed for making this work because it can work for them through creating a culture where rest and relaxation at home is okay, and through establishing a staff composition where people with expertise (counselling, finance, ICT) can handle issues rather than relying on the overworked and non-trained teacher to sort it out.

The tyranny lies in how such an ordinary process is working in ways that denies teachers the direct opportunity to restore legitimate control over their work. Teachers are having to develop a sense of satisfaction from working at a distance from the classroom by devising learning schemes that other non-teachers can implement. Teaching assistants are having to teach and while not being trained to teach or paid as teachers. Hence lesson planning under Remodelling is in Arendt's classification a form of labour that we do to survive, it is no longer a form of work that is creative or political action where the teacher aims to make a difference. Therefore the final question to be asked is whether there are opportunities to break through the required compliance of such a reform?

Modernisation and remodelling in particular have tyrannical tendencies and I would want to argue that what we know about the experience of educational reform comes from practitioners who do speak out about the negative consequences on adults and students, and from research that bucks the trend. What Remodelling suggests is that there is a need for more research projects that describe how learners, the work force, and schools are handling rapid change: what are they hanging on to? What are they seeking to develop? What do they understand their purposes and identities to be? I have been working with Pat Thomson on developing descriptions of change, and how a particular school (Kingswood High School is a pseudonym) is trying to retain control over the purposes of schools and schooling. The school is not doing Remodelling as an external policy to be implemented but has begun to engage with the meaning of learning and the needs of learners. Innovation projects are being developed and researched in school, and school purposes determined the employment, roles and deployment of the workforce (See Hollins et al. forthcoming). We are currently working with a group of students as researchers, and how the research process is a pedagogic relationship (see Thomson and Gunter, 2006). The underlying issues here are around how students shift from being the objects of reform and respondents to adult strategies, and become strategisers and policymakers in their own learning.

The realpolitik of this work is obvious as there are matters of learning involved (for adults as well as the students) but the project is beginning to challenge the location of decision-making and how student voice is more radical in conceptualisation and reality than Remodelling suggests. In particular, while a shift away from adults who teach children who learn is regarded as an important re-orientation in education (e.g. Starratt 2003), the particular focus in government policy does not deliver that. Personalised learning is essentially about the student working through pre-programmed ICT packaged schemes according to externally determined and measured standards, it is not about students knowing about and negotiating their learning needs with trained teachers who know how to structure learning and how to support decision-making within context of a student's wider life.

Opening up the realities and complexities of how professionals engage with reform in this way means that a defendable model of their practice can be revealed as always

being in play. There is the capacity downstream to do new things that are original in ways that counter and neutralise the banality of the upstream. The 'can do' culture is therefore political and is about ' we won't do' the things that do harm to ourselves and the students. This is located in two aspects of school life that were revealed by the TSW Pathfinder Project but marginalised by the Remodelling reform: first, job satisfaction is not directly related to the hours work but is located in the type of work being done; and second, injustice in the form of children and adults being disadvantaged (e.g. gender issues and teaching assistants) is obvious in schools everyday and cannot be managed away by plans and audits.

Notes

[1] These reforms are being enabled by the Workforce Agreement Monitoring Group (WAMG) made up of unions, employers and Government; the Implementation Review Unit (IRU) made up of practitioners who review policy initiatives from a school perspective in order to cut bureaucracy; and, the National Remodelling Team (NRT), which oversees a network of LEA "remodelling champions" (DfES 2004: 1) and is providing advice and support to schools.

[2] More specifically there are tasks that classroom teachers should not routinely do. They were first listed in a DfES Circular in 1998 and then ratified by the School Teacher Review Body. They include: collecting money, chasing absences, bulk photocopying, copy typing, producing standard letters, class lists, record keeping and filing, classroom display, analysing attendance figures, processing exam results, collating student reports, administering work experience; administering examinations, invigilating examinations, administering teacher cover, ICT trouble shooting, commissioning new ICT equipment, ordering supplies and equipment, stocktaking, cataloguing, preparing, issuing and maintaining equipment and materials, minuting meetings, co-coordinating and submitting bids, seeking and giving personnel advice, managing and inputting pupil data. See DFES (2002).

[3] The change process that the DfES invested in and trialled through the Transforming the School Workforce Pathfinder Project 2002-2003 in 32 pilot schools has five stages: Mobilise, Discover, Deepen, Develop and Deliver. The team who developed and trialled this process under the leadership of Pat Collarbone at the London

Leadership Centre later formed the National Remodelling Team (NRT) which was originally located at the National College for School Leadership in Nottingham before being relocated to the Training and Development Agency. See: www.nrt.org.uk

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