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The Risk of Being a Teacher

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Abstract

This paper provides an account of the ways in which risk-consciousness is changing the nature of teachers' work and identity. We argue that all teachers are now 'at risk' in that they may be unable to enact or maintain the radically expanded duty of care that is the effect of risk minimisation as an organisational logic of schooling. The paper begins by elaborating the notion of 'risk-as-danger'. It then moves to draw on two recent studies of teachers, risk and schooling, (an Australia study and a New Zealand study) to understand how risk and its minimisation are impacting on what teachers do and don't do as professional workers with a duty of care to children.

The Risk of Being a Teacher

Thirty years ago, Paul Torrance wrote an article called 'The Risk of Being a Great Teacher' (1974), in which he set out a thesis about danger and teaching. His thesis was, in simple terms, that 'great teachers' are a rare and dangerous species. Intentionally or unintentionally, they destabilise institutions like schools in their enthusiasm for pedagogy. Their passion for knowledge generates energy that constantly threatens to spill over into excess. The result can look remarkably like chaos and anarchy in the classroom, especially to the teacher whose class is quietly working next door. So it is that 'great teachers', according to Torrance, endanger themselves by generally being unpopular with those who have the responsibility of ensuring that same good order. The thrust of his critique is to bemoan the fact that great teachers are both crucial to education and anathema to schools.

In this paper, we are, like Paul Torrance, providing an account of risk and the teacher. However, the account we provide is necessarily different from that provided by Torrance. First, and most obviously, the word 'great' has been omitted from the title. For a range of reasons that we will touch on briefly, 'great' is a word that has been delegitimated in relation to the nature and purposes of 'post-millennium' teaching. Second, and more importantly, we have insisted on the idea that *all teachers great and small* now live with the condition of being 'in danger' ie, that risk-as-danger is a pervasive condition in which *all* teachers work as a result of a radically expanded duty of care. What this means for teachers' changing work and identity will be the primary focus of this paper. The paper draws focus group data from primary school teachers two research projects about teachers and risk management: a study by McWilliam, Singh & Sachs (2002) in Queensland, Australia, primary schools, and a study by Jones (see Jones, 2001, 2003) in Auckland, New Zealand, primary schools, for evidence in support of claims made about the nature and purposes of 'risk-conscious' teaching.

Risky business

Our understanding of 'risk-as danger' is different from that of Paul Torrance. At a time when we are experiencing both 'the globalization of insecurity' (Camilleri, 2002) and the spread of 'child panic' (Wallace, 1997), the minimising of 'risk' has become a powerful organisational logic that takes priority over all other organisational activities in schools as anywhere else. It is not our intention here to provide a comprehensive overview of the sort of theorizing that has been made available around risk and 'the risk society' (Giddens, 1990; Beck, 1992). While we are aware of a number of psychological studies of 'risk perception' and 'risk tolerance' that date back over two decades of research (eg, Gardiner & Gould, 1989; Slovic, 1987), our interest is in the social, cultural and institutional processes that pertain to the management of risk within organizations like schools. Thus we draw for our definition on cultural theory, particularly studies that draw on the foundational anthropological work of Mary Douglas (1966; 1990; 1992) and Douglas and Wildavsky (1982). Douglas's work insists that, in contemporary times, risk now simply means *danger*. She states:

The modern risk concept, parsed now as danger, is invoked to protect individuals against encroachments of others. It is part of the system of thought

that upholds the type of individualist culture which sustains an expanding industrial system. (Douglas, 1990: p.7)

Risk as *danger* rather than *odds* is certainly in keeping with Torrance's understanding of the term 'risk'. However, what cultural theorists add to this idea is that 'risk-as-danger' serves the "forensic needs" (see Douglas, 1990) of a new and expanding global culture in "politicizing and moralizing the links between dangers and approved behaviours" (Pidgeon et al, 1992: 113). Put another way, the notion of performance in a risk society is very much focused on the danger of failing to perform in ways that are morally and politically, as well as organizationally, acceptable. As Beck (1992) argues, risk society is characterized by negative logic, a shift away from the management and distribution of material/industrial 'goods' to the management and distribution of 'bads', ie, the control of knowledge *about* danger, about what might go wrong and about the systems needed to guard against such a possibility. This is a long way from Torrance's common-sense understanding of the nature of 'risk-as-danger'.

Where the negative logic of a risk society meets heightened concerns about child vulnerability, the 'forensic needs' of any organisation whose brief is it to manage duty of care are great indeed. The phenomenon of "child panic" (Wallace, 1997) has seen teachers and other caregivers becoming the targets of numerous 'safety' and 'child protection' policies, and this has meant a burgeoning number of rules and regulations for minimising risk to children in educational settings (Scott, Jackson, & Backett-Milburn, 2001). As a result of all this, according to Jennifer Nias (1999), we are seeing an unprecedented expansion of the parameters of a properly enacted ethic of pedagogical care, so that it now includes an unprecedented array of issues for which teachers can and do hold themselves responsible. Not only are teachers engaged in teaching children a curriculum, but they are disciplining their behaviour in order to allow teaching to occur in an orderly fashion. On the grounds that *all* child learning is within the teacher's domain of duty, teachers now routinely take responsibility for the protective welfare of children far beyond the old-fashioned pedagogical encounter – including their protection from drugs, bullying, over-excitement, sunburn, falling over, nastiness, sadness, racism, and 'inappropriate' physical contact with others.

One hallmark of this expanded duty of care is that teachers now work in a climate of suspicion, characterised in part by sensational media revelations of priestly and teacherly impropriety. So, for instance, while teachers were once considered 'saviours' via their privileged ability to identify and nurture abused children, they have now become objects of distrust themselves. Their pastoral 'caring' now occurs in a climate that is very much focused on the potential of a care-giving adult to harm children sexually and psychologically (Jones, 2001; McWilliam, 2001, 2003 forthcoming). To be a professional caregiver with legal responsibility for children is to be the target of numerous workshops and other professional development activities designed to generate 'awareness' (see Jones, 2003 forthcoming) of the nature of the risks that pertain to that duty of care, and the practices that are necessary to minimising those risks. Schools who are heavily enrolled in this sort of work find themselves investing more heavily in an "audit culture" (Strathern, 1997) that is hyperactive in its quest to make explicit all the risk minimizing protocols and activities.

Safe schools

An average 'risk conscious' primary school today might be expected to have at least a dozen risk minimising or child safety policies, and to hold regular training workshops in risk management to familiarise teachers with the policies and their specified procedures. An ordinary suite of school policies aimed at managing risk and increasing child safety will include detailed, written documents covering psychological, emotional, sexual as well a physical safety, for instance: Creating a Safe Emotional Environment policy; Tobacco, Alcohol and Drug policy; Social Functions policy; Child Abuse policy; Health and Safety, Infectious Diseases – Risk Management policy; Responsibility For Students Before and After School policy; Rules and Discipline policy (for an 'orderly emotionally and physically safe school environment'); Sexual Harassment policy; Shady School policy; Administration of Medication at School policy; Outdoor Education policy; Policy on Dealing with Child Abuse Allegations against Employees in Schools; Complaints against Staff Members policy; Procedures for Making Complaints Policy. Out-of-school activities can be governed by a wide array of official forms, each two or three pages long, ranging from 'verification of venue safety' to 'risk management plans' which identify and address any conceivable risk to children while on a school camp or outdoor activity away from the school.

In a safe school, each of the child safety policies provides for detailed regulation of teacher behaviour and for reporting any incident or event which might be deemed a risk to the child or the teacher. For instance, if a child has a cut and bleeding knee, under 'Health and Safety, Infectious Diseases – Risk Management policy' the child 'should be treated as if they have a blood borne disease', certain detailed sterile procedures followed, and an accident record sheet completed. If a child is not treating others with 'consideration, kindness and respect', according to the 'Creating a Safe Emotional Environment policy' a 'Discipline Process' is to be followed by the teacher, including 'Child's name to be recorded...Check that the detention date is correct... Child goes to the withdrawal area...Parents informed... Staff to act as role models...Classroom programmes aim to develop social and co-operative skills...' (Parnell District School, March 2003). The risks to children (or teachers) associated with peer nastiness and blood borne diseases, or class canoe trips or sunny playgrounds, have been calculated, and what counts as responsible or professional practice determined in relation to these.

Perhaps the most intense and subtle risk management in the school is focused on the most mundane of teacherly activities: the everyday proximity of child and teacher. Government of when and how teachers touch children, and whether they are alone with a child, is central to modern, routine risk management in schools, and shapes teachers' expanded duty of care. Teachers are subject to training in policy and procedures which make it clear that virtually every moment with children is potentially 'high risk'. As the New Zealand primary teachers' union (NZEI) puts it:

Where physical contact is concerned, teachers and support staff ... are in a high risk occupation. Any physical contact with students presents a risk to the teacher or staff member... With any type of physical contact between staff member and child there is an inherent risk that it can be construed as assault...

Avoid being alone with a child, including pupil monitors/helpers whenever possible.

Where staff need to be alone with a child they need to use extremely careful judgement and remain in view of others eg. install mirrors, have glass panels in internal doors or leave doors open...' (NZEI Physical Contact Code of Practice, 2002: www.nzei.org.nz).

Such statements make it clear that risks to child safety – and to teacher protection from ‘unsafe’ practice - demand the routine recruitment of all teachers in the regulation of a very wide range of their own practices, not just during rock climbing or playground accidents, but in the normal daily practices of teaching. Teachers in Australian schools are equally vigilant in this respect. A study currently being conducted into the work of teachers in Queensland primary schools (McWilliam, Singh & Sachs, 2002) indicates that these teachers are likewise convinced that ‘open doors, open windows’ speaks of professional propriety:

Well, this [isolation with a child] happens to me all the time and I always – I always have to be sure that I have open doors. I always – you never ever see me with a closed door. You always make sure – see me with windows open and I always [am] visible - as best possible I can be....Because I am always in that situation where I am working one to one with kids testing or doing other things, talking to kids and it is really scary. It is an issue that really concerns me.
[Queensland School 1 Focus Group, 10/10/02]

Widely accepted social anxieties about child vulnerability – whether to accidents, bullying or predatory adults - mean that schools who *fail* to have an auditable suite of child safety policies, or teacher unions who do *not* issue instructions to their members to ‘use extremely careful judgement’ about being near children would be seen as remiss. In fact, it is impossible for a ‘good’ teacher to ignore rules about appropriate touching, or to be alone with a child, or for an ‘excellent’ school today to be without a comprehensive set of documented safety policies and procedures.

The key point is that within the set of social and cultural conditions which make such documents necessary, ‘child safety’ and ‘child protection’ policies do more than provide guidelines for teacher conduct. According to Michel Foucault (1985), such prescriptive texts serve as devices that enable individuals to “question their own conduct, to watch over and give shape to it, and to shape themselves as ... subjects” (p. 13). They work as scripts for turning individuals into more professional – *ie, more risk-conscious* - teachers.

Safe teachers

It becomes a requirement of the audit culture that all teachers acquire new knowledge for managing risk, knowledge out of which they must constitute themselves as self-regulating subjects. Thus, in the risk-conscious school, ‘safe’ teachers come to mirror the logic of the risk organization, with its unending demands for accountability through self-audit and self-surveillance. Self-surveillance training becomes a part of broader teacher education so that, for instance, training courses in support of the NZEI Physical Contact Code of Practice (above) require teachers to consider

questions such as ‘Over the last 24 hours when have you touched a child?’ (New Zealand Educational Institute, Te Riu Roa (NZEI) (2000) *Training Programme: Safe Practice*. Wellington: NZEI, p.2) and to ask themselves whether these incidences of touching were absolutely necessary.

Thus the primary school teacher is invited to consider herself as a player in the economy of risk which characterises any site where children are present; indeed, the professional teacher today is a necessary player in that economy, and judges her practice in its terms. In research into New Zealand risk-conscious primary school teachers who reflexively consider their touching practices, it is possible to identify some normative orientations which might be said to characterise the ‘safe teacher’ (Jones, 2003 forthcoming):

- The safe teacher is always risk-‘aware’

Safe teachers have a particular alertness, which they describe as being ‘aware’. While they deny being anxious or preoccupied about it, ‘safe’ teachers are constantly ‘aware’ of the possibility of risk and danger – to children and to themselves - inherent in the teacher-child relationship, and as a consequence they treat every event as a risk event. Such teachers are ‘aware’, for instance, that child abuse ‘can occur’; in particular they know that others may be concerned or suspicious about any adult’s, including teachers’, proximity to children. Many we interviewed had been the subjects of ‘awareness training’ in relation to child abuse by adults, and the possibility of allegations of child abuse, and all would agree that risks of, say, touching children are ‘always at the back of the mind’. Three teacher trainees put it in these terms:

I have not been directly told about [rules for touching] as such, but I have become aware that care should be taken with respect to being left alone with a child or touching a child. This becoming aware is a sense of the atmosphere, hearing stories, watching other people and the policy that I read. [Auckland graduating primary teacher]

I am very aware of this issue and will not put myself in any situation that will jeopardise my professional practice. [Auckland graduating primary teacher]

I am aware of the appropriate behaviour that needs to be followed. [Auckland graduating primary teacher]

The ‘professional’ teacher, as opposed to a ‘sloppy’, ‘out-of-touch’ or ‘abusive’ one, not only automatically understands his (or her) every action in the classroom in terms of its potential risk, but also has a repertoire of practices which reflect this risk awareness. In an era of child panic, because the teacher properly understands himself as a risky subject, he is constantly alert to reducing the risks attendant on all interactions with children. For the safe teacher, everyday events, such as being close to a child on the mat, or walking through the playground, are ordinary risk-management moments, for which rules are made and avoidances practiced:

The thing that I do in my classroom is have your own space. We all need space so [if a child is too close to me] I straight away say, can I please have

my space because I really need that. That's a rule in the classroom – we all have space around ourselves. [Auckland experienced female teacher]

In the playground I have a rule – no holding hands, sorry. I am not your mother or your auntie, I am your teacher. [Auckland experienced female teacher]

Those professionals who want to 'nurture' and 'love' children, and to hug them as a routine part of the culture of their classroom, enact those hugs – as risk situations - within particular, explicit parameters. The children of some women teachers with whom we spoke come regularly to hug their teacher goodbye at the end of the school day; in response to the difficulties of maintaining professionalism in the face of such intimate acts, these teachers have rules.

If they want a hug, I always make sure they cuddle me side on. I only let them stand there and I put my hand round them and give them a hug. I would never let the child come front on and give me a two handed cuddle. The side-on cuddle, I feel it's – less personal.... With a full frontal hug you're more vulnerable ... you shoved your breast in my face or whatever. [Auckland experienced female teacher]

The hug, while constrained as side-on, is ambivalent; it remains a risky moment. The 'safe' risk-conscious teacher is inevitably threatened by the intimacy of a child whose exuberant affection threatens to overstep the bounds of proper, professional distance. To avoid such dangers, children need to be taught that there are limits; hugs and kisses (and expressions of love) are not included within the usual, distanced, boundaries of the 'professional teaching environment'.

It is just quite an affectionate class and they will come and give you a hug and that but then they also know the boundaries. I think they actually learn those boundaries, almost like from day one, and it just becomes part of them, that there are times when okay, you can go and hug the teacher and there are times when you sit back and it's a professional teaching environment. [Auckland experienced female teacher]

Occasionally a child wants to kiss you and I say, 'kiss my hand'. It just keeps a little bit of distance. [Auckland experienced female teacher]

Some teachers – in our experience, only women allow themselves this admission – eschew anxieties about touch and the 'nonsense' about safe teachers. Some 'never touch children anyway', but others call themselves 'tactile people', and insist on being physically close to their pupils as they teach and nurture them. These are teachers who 'treasure teaching', 'believe in the positive power of touch in society' and 'love kids' – and who would leave teaching, they say, if they could not touch children at all.

If we're sitting and reading a book, in a group – they like even just sitting close to me and, you know, leaning up against you. There's something really amazing about that and I think it's really special and those are things that I treasure about teaching. [Auckland experienced female teacher]

Such 'touchy' teachers are most often older women, irritated with the social anxiety about touch ('political correctness gone mad'), well-established in their school communities, confident in their views about what children 'need', and determined to assert their own methods of good teaching. Nevertheless, the strength of the social hegemony of safe touch, and the necessary requirements of the new professionalism, ensures that these teachers also speak of themselves as 'sensible' and their touch as 'appropriate', and 'always in full view':

I have thought a lot about the issues and come to the conclusion that the benefits of touching and the securities and the independence and confidence you build in the children, far out-weigh the potential danger. But then from a professional standpoint we still have to protect ourselves. So therefore I've come to that balance... where I will maybe hug for instance, but I will never be alone with a child for any reason at all. [Auckland experienced female teacher]

- The safe teacher is the subject of perpetual (self-)surveillance

Being 'out in the open' or 'taking someone else along', when one is in danger of being alone with a child have become proper, and automatic, actions of the 'safe' teacher. Being within sight is the *sine qua non* of the professional. The safe teacher is constantly open to scrutiny; he is potentially or actually 'in public view' at all times. Indeed, schools go to some lengths to ensure that all their teachers can be 'safe' teachers by properly positioning windows, doors and watching colleagues. As one Auckland principal put it: "If teachers have to be in a room one-on-one, you set up safeguards. You put them in a fish bowl. You have the reading recovery room in constant use; you have windows."

If architecture or 'public view' cannot guarantee surveillance, such as in the case of the need for private conversations, or going into the changing sheds during sports events, teachers go to some lengths to ensure they are perpetually visible:

Sometimes when I have to talk to a student individually I'll take someone else along, or else make sure that even though we're in a quiet place, that we're in an open place so that people can walk past at any time. [Auckland experienced male teacher]

Teaching programmes, such as reading recovery, which require individual teachers to work closely and intensely with individual children in quiet spaces, represent a school site where 'risky' and unprofessional lack of visibility is possible. As a result, reading recovery rooms are often sites of anxiety, and intensified surveillance is implemented in the interests of safety, and comfort.

We have three granddads for a reading programme, and we set up a safeguard process so that they are in the same room at the same time. These are safe environments for both students and staff where staff can get on comfortably with the job. [Auckland male principal].

The key effect of the 'safe' school and its culture of compulsory visibility is not just that schools enable their teachers to be safe teachers through direct observation by others. The key marker of risk consciousness in teachers is the habit of *self-*

surveillance. While ‘fish bowl’ rooms and sight lines through windows and doors have become an expected feature of normal professional school organisation, these surveillance techniques are in place precisely to avoid the need for continuous observation. In the classic panopticon of the school, the safe teacher – like the self-disciplined subject of Jeremy Bentham’s prison architecture with its system of windows and lines of sight (Foucault 1982, p. 195) – is subjected always to her own constant, self-auditing scrutiny. In the private classroom or out on the street, the safe ‘risky subject’ teacher positions himself or herself in others’ eyes and, as a result, behaves with the reticence expected if she were under constant surveillance.

My own daughter used to go on class trips with me when she was young. She’d want to hold my hand which she would do normally when we’re out, but I had to make her desist from that because I thought, how does it look?
[Auckland experienced male teacher]

It’s pretty hard [to not touch the kids]. It is conscious in the back of your mind all the time. Like last year I was with 5-6 year olds and on the first day four or five came up and swarmed all over you sort of thing, and I just sort of gave them a little hug each. And then I thought about it afterwards ‘Whoops!’ Then the parents came into the classroom and I was thinking ‘oh my god they must have been just watching me’ and I thought ‘I’ve got to be a bit more careful’.
[Auckland first year male teacher]

Risky Enthusiasm

These accounts of how teachers and teacher trainees confront the question of safe touch provide some sense of the new risk management culture enacted in teachers’ everyday practice around touching. However, the production of the ‘safe’ teacher is never assured; it is constantly under threat by the physicality and gregarious nature of small children. Children have to be put off knees, shooed back into their ‘space’, locked out of classrooms, hugged sideways; every day, the moments of ordinary boisterous and unplanned classroom interaction fails to conform to the new professional order. The teacher’s duty of care requires fighting children to be separated, tantrum-throwers to be physically restrained, sobbing children calmed, sick children to be attended to, recalcitrant children encouraged and praised, and affectionate or needy children to be held in check. In an era of child panic, any teacher in the normal unruly classroom can find herself or himself being a dangerous teacher.

Some of the [older] girls were standing behind me and I didn’t – I just turned around and ... I always sort of dance around the room and I think I hit one of the girls’ ... breasts... There were three other girls there and they were laughing their heads off... I apologised and I was just waiting. I really felt very low at the time because it took three or four days before I – “oh nothing happened” ... it did bother me a lot. (Auckland experienced male teacher)

One of a group of three [five year old] boys had done a poo on the classroom floor. No-one owned up, so I just took them one at a time to the toilets and checked down their pants. I asked them if I could look, first. ... I thought nothing more of it until there was a formal complaint from one of the parents about me looking in their kid’s pants (Auckland experienced female teacher)

Both of these teachers, if they had familiarised themselves with the child safety policies and procedures of their schools, would have known that best risk management practice was to proactively 'report the incident'. The safe teacher understands herself as always-already a risky subject, and all even remotely possibly risky events as objects of suspicion. A graduate trainee who *has* learned about professional procedures might properly report herself for an unguarded, spontaneous moment:

I also recently had an incident where I was in a school and had been working hard to motivate a child at work. I was roving around the class and noticed he had completed heaps of work and I spontaneously kissed him on the top of his head. Then I quickly stunned myself with that reaction and reported myself to the Assistant Principal. [Auckland graduate female trainee]

The 'stunned' trainee followed the instructions which she had learned as part of her training; in 'reporting herself' she enacted the risky, and risk-conscious, professional subject of her training. In a doubled movement of turning herself in to the authorities, she 'turned herself in' to a potentially-guilty subject, a proper object of suspicion. As Foucault suggested, the risk management policy texts and her training enabled her to properly watched over her conduct and to make sense of it as 'risky', rather than, say, 'rewarding'. Importantly, this trainee has understood herself to be potentially guilty in much the same way as a person about to undergo a medical check might understand themselves as potentially cancerous. As the pink coat produces the patient, so too the logic of risk minimisation produces the individual who is on guard against herself.

Amazing moments

In the logic of child panic, 'tactile' teachers who have 'special' and 'amazing' – and unreported - classroom moments when children are physically close to them, necessarily seem 'old-fashioned' and not-up-with-the-play in regard to modern realities. Their enthusiasm for their children is difficult to fit within the confines of the risk management regime, or the teacher union guidelines for good practice. The passionate teacher, the infuriating teacher, the eccentric teacher, the disorganised teacher – in that his or her unconventional practices and relationships with children are not restrained - is precisely *not* the safe teacher. And, in a risk management environment, the teacher who is not 'safe' can no longer be a 'good' teacher, and never a 'great' one.

Torrance's mourning for the 'great' teacher seemed to be marked by the recognition that 'great' teachers are typically distinguished by their inability to fit the constraints of the ordered and risk-free professional. His 'great' teachers, for instance, included an inspirational teacher of John Steinbeck who "had the noisiest class" and was sacked "probably for not teaching the fundamentals" (Torrance, 1974, p 453). There are many examples of 'great' teachers whose propensity for acting outside the rules of constraint and caution made them notable. The hero of the acclaimed French documentary film "To Be and To Have", which depicted the "sheer beauty of a professional doing his job" (Nesselson, 2002, p. 16), was a teacher who, as part of his care for his pupils in a small rural village, sat in a secluded place with an adolescent

girl, listening sympathetically to her worries about going to a city secondary school. Other extraordinary and celebrated primary and infant teachers of the past, such as Sylvia Ashton-Warner, could not continue to teach within the risk-conscious school of today. Not only did her Key Vocabulary, a system of encouraging New Zealand children to name their own words in learning to read, centre around children's "two main instincts: fear and sex" (Ashton-Warner, 1963, p. 34), but she (via her teacher character Anna in *Spinster*, below, and in her autobiographical work, *Teacher*, see p. 172) spoke without blushing of her desire for her pupils:

...my arms have become itchy on the inside to hold children. From the wrists on the inner side along the skin right up to the shoulders and across the breast I know a physical discomfort. If ever flesh spoke mine does; for the communion of hands, the arms stretching round my waist and black heads bumping my breasts... The truth is I am enslaved. I'm enslaved in one vast love affair with seventy children. (Ashton-Warner, 1960, p. 188)

At the time, Clarence Beeby, who was Director of Education in New Zealand, said Anna's desires for her students' physical closeness made his "flesh creep" and he wondered "what admirers of A-W would have thought" about Anna's confessions if they "had been spoken by a male teacher about a little girl" (Hood 1990, p. 241). Nevertheless, Ashton-Warner's desire for her children was rooted in a pedagogical theory; in her view, a passionate connection between teacher and child 'in body and in spirit' was central to learning - a process which Ashton-Warner often expressed using sexual metaphors (see Jones, 2003 in press). Theories about passionate connection are more likely to be suppressed in favour of 'job satisfaction' or 'teaching excellence' measures, by today's professionals.

In an era of child panic, for women or men teachers - great or small - to speak about teaching and learning in terms so opposed to what counts as 'appropriate' is to risk losing one's job, or certainly to face serious censure from principals attempting to manage the public perception of their teachers as restrained professionals. The creative, the passionate, the pedagogues with the 'grand espousal', who regularly embrace the risks of unscripted (or 'outside the policy') moments are necessarily 'at risk' in the risk managing school; they quickly become 'old fashioned', unwise and dangerous.

Less greatness, more compliance

Any claim to personal pedagogical greatness is necessarily one of the first casualties of risk-consciousness. A 'great teacher' is less likely to be amenable to the particular sort of self-scrutiny necessary to the self-auditing culture of the risk-conscious school. Indeed, the idiosyncrasy and spontaneity that Torrance's 'great teachers' exhibit are anathema to audit (Strathern, 1997).

Once risk management achieves the status of a high priority, institution-wide system of communication in schools, it becomes a system into which the local, disciplinary-specific or 'craft' knowledge of a teacher must be plugged in order to count as the proper knowledge of the true professional. It is not that the unique, informal knowledge of teachers is being displaced altogether. Rather it is being made over as

‘professional expertise’ through a process that Ericson and Haggerty (1997) describe thus:

[P]rofessionals obviously have ‘know-how’, [but] their ‘know-how’ does not become expertise until it is plugged into an institutional communication system. It is through such systems that expert knowledge becomes standardized and robust enough to use in routine diagnosis, classification, and treatment decisions by professionals. (p.104)

One of the problems this creates for teachers, as for academics, is that any claim they might want to make to be professional experts will now require them to be expert not only in their disciplinary knowledge but in matters such as health and safety, conflict resolution, team-building, risk protocols and the like. For the teacher whose passions do not extend to this new risk-management curriculum, this is an unwelcome development in their work.

There are some, however, who are more sanguine about the more compliant culture of self-audit and self-development that is necessary to risk management. As McWilliam has indicated elsewhere (McWilliam, 1999), the term ‘facilitator of learning’ has preceded the compliance culture of schooling, doing important work in re-constituting the teachers’ passions away from unruly displays of intellectual fervour towards a client-focused ‘guide-on-the-side’. Such an ethical comportment of the teacher is a very useful tactic for guarding against the possibility of a sudden eruption of passion for teaching ie, pedagogical breakout. While ‘risk averse’ teaching may be experienced as a loss, it is clearly a safe option for many teachers, including the following in a Queensland primary school:

Male A: [You protect yourself] ... but then you take something out of your profession – you’re losing something.

Female B: You feel as though you’re between the four walls all the time.

Male A: Yeah.

Female C: ...on the oval I had one [child] that had a nose bleeding and the father was really irate... she just bumped into another little boy. ...And – you know – this is disgusting and all this – he was really off and it just – I thought, “I’m not going out next week.” You know – and with all the bats and balls – I think I’ll stay in and do something – you know worksheets or something.

Male A: Yeah. Cut and paste.

Female C: Yes. Yeah I’m back again now – I’m all right again. I’m back again now but there was a couple of weeks I didn’t want to go out.

Female B: My grade 6’s up until now have just been –their behaviour – they won’t be in two lines – but I’m even too scared to take them across to the art gallery. Thirty-two kids and two teachers I wouldn’t be game to.
(Queensland School 2 Focus Group, 16/10/02)

Conclusion

What we have attempted to demonstrate is that 'proper' teaching involves a high degree of risk-consciousness and this is so for better and worse. We are not, like Torrance, making a plea that "reasonable" risks be encouraged in the service of a good education (Torrance, 1974, p. 459), nor are we seek to condemn those teachers who "wouldn't be game to" take risks with students. Rather, we have attempted to document what it means to do the work of a teacher at a time when potential danger is understood to be ubiquitous and when risk minimisation is the fundamental logic of child-care. Most importantly, we indicate how teacher propriety is very much focused on the business of being on guard against one's own capacity for transgression. Risk-taking behaviour - unpredictable, arbitrary, affectionate or disputational conduct - is not aligned with the sort of teacherly disposition that mirrors effective risk management. That disposition is more likely to be characterised by *compliance* than charisma.

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