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Payback time? Discourses of lack, debt and the moral regulation of teacher education

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Abstract

This paper analyses recent policy and discourse in the UK Lifelong learning (LLL) sector to identify a tension in discourse which positions teacher educators as essential to the knowledge economy while simultaneously insisting on the deficits they represent. Drawing on critical analyses from Friedrich Nietzsche, Maurizio Lazzarato and Gilles Deleuze, I challenge altruistic views of professional motivation and situate individual professionalism under a construction of an indebted subject. Examining recent attempts to redefine professional standards in the sector, I argue that teachers are positioned as subject to homogenisation and ethically indebted to a higher ideal. Ethical commitments to adult learning, I suggest, are a cost-effective instrument of social control because of their imbrication in this discourse of irredeemable moral debt to the sector. Responses to this situation, I argue, are likely to include forms of professional mobility which undermine it.

Introduction

This paper examines recent attempts to reposition teacher educators in the UK's Lifelong Learning (LLL) sector. In particular, I link discourses of "professionalisation" to a discourse of debt, reflecting the increasing performativity and precarity of professional labour in the sector, as well as their potential threat to health and political agency (Schostak, 2012). Schostak reminds us of the importance of performativity in a sector where teacher professionalism is increasingly construed, not least by policy, in terms of its contribution to economic performance. I return to this later in more detail, but teachers do not just perform to policy but understand it through notions of "independence, self-doubt, denial, and inadequacy" (Honan, 2004, in Taylor Webb and Gulson, 2012, p. 92), The negative impact of such a culture is worth examining, and I look at how recent policy texts reflect these notions in a discourse of "debt" in LLL teacher education, drawing on analyses of the phenomenon of debt and its impact on professionalism. Initially, I critically analyse the professionalisation of teacher education in LLL and suggest that it relies on defining professionals by discourses of deficit. This, I suggest, informs the growth of increasingly intensive self-regulation in the UK, raising the important question of how such self-regulation can itself be (cost) effectively enforced.

Responses to this question can be traced back, I argue, to criticisms by Friedrich Nietzsche, who linked moralising discourse and adult learning as tools for control. The implications of

Nietzsche's critique are developed in contemporary contexts by Maurizio Lazzarato, for whom a neo-liberal project of subjectivation implies an economy of moral debt with special relevance to LLL. In particular, Lazzarato's critique leads to a focus on Gilles Deleuze's analysis of a developing society of control in which lifelong education plays a key part in establishing, maintaining and distributing this network of debt. I thus hope to show how Nietzsche's psychological approach provides useful insights which Lazzarato, and especially Deleuze, help bring into the realm of specific contemporary practices. To do so, my argument draws on a range of voices from the sector, including official reports and announcements from political and professional stakeholders on the nature and value professionalisation in the sector. I challenge the idea that professionalisation exists to improve quality, and suggest that professionalisation has another, very different, effect on practice

Professionalisation

Workforce professionalisation in various forms has been an important recent trend in many anglophone countries (Ryan and Bourke, 2013). In the UK, teaching qualifications for LLL became mandatory in 2001, and in 2007 a new teaching qualification, regulated professional standards and the requirement to register with a professional body (the Institute for Learning, or IfL)[1] were all introduced. The development of attitudes and skills required by flexible, adaptable employees and consumers in a knowledge economy has become inseparable from teacher professionalism (e.g. BIS, 2011).[2] However, following a change of government and an independent review in 2012 (BIS, 2012a), the need for specific teaching qualifications, minimum performance standards or CPD requirements apart from those stipulated by their employers were all revoked by a process which normally requires "no parliamentary discussion or approval" on 1st September 2013 (IfL, 2013a, p.4). The professional standards by which teachers continue to be judged nonetheless have "the potential to raise the status and profile of teachers, trainers and tutors across the education and training sector" (Education and Training Foundation, 2014). Currently under consultation, the official standards are likely to be influenced by political events, notably the publication of the Lingfield report (BIS, 2012a), which announced the deregulation of teacher

[1] The Institute for Learning was created in 2002 to promote the professional interests of teachers and trainers in LLL. I refer regularly to recent publications by the organisation on the grounds that its highly accessible voice is potentially influential for practitioners.

[2] The UK government Department of Business, Innovation and Skills has responsibility, among other things, for economic growth, investment in skills and education, promoting trade, boosting innovation and business growth.

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education in LLL in concert with the new, Conservative-led coalition. Interestingly, as we will see below, Lingfield mixes the language of aspiration and diversity with preconceptions of deficit in the teachers who are to be "professionalised". This reflects the ambiguity of professionalisation in FE, where job insecurity has left the idea of teacher professionalisation "rest[ing] on shaky ground" (Bathmaker and Avis, 2013, p. 734).

An awareness of this issue underpins declarations from organisations such as the Institute for Learning (IfL) and the new Education and Training Foundation (ETF). These organisations are tasked with setting standards and pursuing the professionalisation of the sector, backed up by the Office for Standards in Education's (OFSTED) inspections. Established in August 2013, the ETF is a registered charity which imputes its existence to sector-wide consultation. Calling itself "The Foundation", its website declares that it has ambitious targets and "[n]ever loses sight of the need to improve learners' experiences and outcomes" (ETF, 2014). It is "committed to drawing on expertise from across the breadth of the sector to inform, review and monitor its work", and its rhetoric (ibid) is often hyperbolic:

> The Education and Training Foundation's vision and aspiration, is for all learning to be of the highest quality, achieve the best outcomes, and result in the greatest impact; and that is for all learners, providers, and the wider communities they serve.

Deficit

These ambitions, whose aspirations are perhaps necessary, may struggle in a historical context where unstable funding and an excessive managerial focus on measured outcomes have damaged the sector (TLRP, 2009, p.14).[3] Moreover, alongside this aspirational rhetoric, the sector is expected to compensate for a deficit in human capital linked to the negative effects of economic development (Ecclestone, 2002). As Bathmaker (2001 in Atkins, 2010) argues, the sector is traditionally seen as a purveyor of 'second chances' and social justice to those in deficit, having been unsuccessful in earlier, compulsory phases. This second chance, far from reflecting the hopes expressed above, is often perceived as second best, lacking something compared to a more "academic" educational context on one hand and the more "up-to-date" world of "industry" on the other.

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[3] The Teaching and Learning Research Programme was created in 2000 with the aims of examining teaching and learning practices over the lifecourse and linking findings with policy.

At the same time, those fortunate enough to profit from this second chance owe a debt of gratitude to the sector for providing it, creating subjects who are ethically bound to the knowledge society as their self-certified benefactor. This more negative view includes the accusation that practitioners in the area are insufficiently professional and, perhaps, lack dedication (Nicoll and Edwards, 2012, p.237). Expected to enhance the national capacity for competition and fulfil supranational political objectives (TLRP, 2009, pp. 32-33), both young and established employees are positioned in a "permanent state of deficit" towards a present and future economy (Fenwick, 2013, p.361).

This may express what Gowlett (2013) calls the current entrenchment of a type of neoliberalism which Evans (2014, p.46) identifies with a "persistent hegemony" of individualistic, reductivist divisiveness. Neoliberalism is of course a hotly contested term, but can be defined as the political shifting of financial control from the public to the private sector. In LLL, this shift from the collective to the individual can be seen to operate by mobilising latent populations. For example, vocational teachers and learners, "a core profession in the knowledge society" (Skills Commission, 2010, p.8), are seen as an untapped resource to be mobilised in the national interest. Training should be a "two–way street" where employers and trainees benefit each other (CAVTL, 2012).[4] Professionals should "add value to employers' businesses" (ETF, ibid) and undertake research and development for the private sector:

> If our colleges, training providers and universities are the engine room of economic performance and productivity, there are really important messages in this for our lecturers, teachers and trainers…it's important the nation recognises and acknowledges that you're [teachers] not trailing industry but trailblazing for industry.

> (Humphries, in Skills Commission, 2010, p. 16)

For popular teacher-trainer Geoff Petty (in IfL, 2013b, p. 27) "[o]ur economy is irrigated by a well of knowledge and skills, and it is teacher trainers who have their hand on the pump". It is perhaps unsurprising to see teacher educators being given responsibility for competitiveness. But the work being done here is necessarily abstract and implies abstract forms of investment in image, creativity, innovation and change management. Described as

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[4] The Commission for Adult Vocational Teaching and Learning is an independent organisation established by the UK Department for Business Innovation and Skills in 2011 to raise the quality and impact of vocation teaching and learning.

both lacking in the necessary skills and regulated by organisations which demand hyperbolic levels of aspiration, professionals may well feel disempowered. Far from profiting from mutual benefit, on Petty's view teacher educators simply supply the unskilled hard labour of continuously sustaining the liquidity of the knowledge society. Sustaining this implies the individualisation of the problem, ushering in the need for effective self-regulation.

Self-regulation

The discourse of lack is singularly useful in supporting that of conformity. Practitioners mobilise themselves, professing their commitment and "personal investment" in lifelong education (cf. Ryan and Bourke, 2013, pp. 412-13), thus making amends for their lack and redeeming themselves by self-regulation. Powerful, naturalised media images of education (Thomas, 2011) contribute to "conformist pressures" which suggest a "culture of control" (Thurston, 2009, p.29). The fear is that, rather than being transformative and motivating, a lifelong participation in formal learning might end up as a series of "instrumental, individualistic and self-regulating experiences" (Ecclestone, 2002, p.12). For Massumi (1992, p.40) such "self-interest" is suspect because it conforms so closely to the demands of the basic capitalist expression of the common good, and is a significant adversary to change. For example, Vinson (in IfL, 2013b, p.11) criticises the current round of deregulation in teacher education provision on the grounds of self-interest. He promotes subsidised teacher training in the interests of job success and professionalism, but also criticises its poor return on investment. He is perhaps right to do so: university fees, and the risks and costs they incur have of course inspired much debate, rising higher than any other OECD country (Holmwood, 2014). Teachers, Vinson states, spent "thousands of pounds" last year on PGCE training for FE, but discovered that "their investment is basically worthless" (in IfL, 2013b, p.11). On this view, the relevance of initial teacher education as a tool for professionalism is dismissed for as long as it fails to provide a purely financial payback on financial investment. There is, however, more to the issue than this reduction of professionalism to a speculation, with a discourse of moral debt effectively ensuring conformity to its demands.

Moral debt

> There is more to the issue of human capital investment, because a doubt exists regarding the discourse of continuous improvement so often linked to professionalisation in the sector. Robson (in IfL, 2013, p.9), argues that being "good at both one's subject and in the way that one teaches it

is insufficient. Practitioners "need to be continually striving to become better and better at what [they] do and how [they] teach it."

Being good at the job is not good enough, because continuous improvement also makes staff responsible for the innovation which is "critical to the successful delivery of sustainable and balanced growth across the UK economy" (BIS, 2012b, p.3). To achieve this, practitioners should conform to a standardised form of professionalism in a profession which "teaches standards, lives by standards, and requires standards" (Crowther, in IfL 2013b, p.14). Crowther's insistence on standards presents a common view of the sector's use of regulation to develop active professionalism, but a tension between professional autonomy and regulation undoubtedly exists. The "behavioural-heavy standards" used to shape teachers and teaching have little regard for the attitudes, emotions and intellectual dimensions of professional practice, and they demonstrate little trust in practitioners (Ryan and Bourke, 2013, p. 421). Standardised teaching and learning, on this view, is losing touch with the practices of FE teachers on the ground (Bathmaker and Avis, 2013).

Thus practitioners are called to become "super-teachers" with mastery, excellence and outstanding practice as criteria (cf. Bathmaker and Avis, 2013; IfL 2013b). This call to excellence can be clearly seen in statements by bodies such as the IfL (2012a), for whom "excellent vocational teaching" is "vital" for "good careers" and "successful enterprises" in "an increasingly globalised and competitive economy". Teachers and trainers need to be "specialists" with "expertise and experience", as well as the "high-level professional status" to teach flexibly in both schools and colleges. They will combine "expert teaching" with "a commitment to staying up to date" as they run to keep up with demand. Going further, such repetitive calls to excellence cannot be divorced from a certain hyperbole, where compliance with such demands reflects practitioners' frequent declarations of altruism. Professionals in LLL assert a strong "emotional bond" to their employment (Further Education Reputation Strategy Group, 2012, p. 4) and "giving something back" is their only purpose for coming into FE (op.cit. p.88).

Can such altruism be questioned? Personal commitments to such values as diversity and solidarity struggle to compete with strong performative pressures and an instrumental organisational agenda (Ryan and Bourke, op.cit). This ultimately reinforces conformity (Bathmaker and Avis, 2013, p.736), and it may be that a discourse of deficit and payback may motivate compliance with it. To show this, I'd like to turn to criticisms of exactly such a problem in Nietzsche, providing both a sense of the problem's long-standing nature and a background to more recent criticisms of it from Lazzarato and, ultimately, Deleuze's insistence that such immaterial forms of control are becoming increasingly important.

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Nietzsche: the moralisation of debt

Nietzsche's references to education's moralising discourse shed surprising light on recent developments in the discourse of teacher education in LLL. His position on morality is (in)famously trenchant, of course. In *The Gay Science* and elsewhere, Nietzsche asserts that we are often victims of a mentality of conformity which suppresses individuality and difference, both of which threaten a collective dependency on similarity and exchange-value. He asserts for example that the way we assess, evaluate and rank experiences is not actually intended to benefit the individual, but rather the community. Morality itself is thus no more than "herd instinct in the individual" Nietzsche claims (2001, p.115), and it "instructs" the individual to become a "function" of the community and to see value in themselves only as a function. It is neither teleologically nor politically necessary, evidencing instead the personal wretchedness of those who cannot envisage new ideals (2001, pp. 187-189).

Such caustic remarks extend Nietzsche's assertions about the task of higher schooling which, he says, exists to turn people into machines, a task best achieved by teaching learners to be bored through the concept of duty (Nietzsche, 1998, p.57). The model of such training is that of the civil servant, and behind Nietzsche's scorn for the production of functionaries, there are real questions for teacher education. These questions arise when we take seriously the idea of duty as a management tool which actively exploits triviality and tedium to coercive ends:

> We learn reading and boredom, writing and boredom, arithmetic and boredom, and so on according to the curriculum, till in the end it is quite certain you can put us to the most boring job there is and we'll endure it.

> (Common, in Hargreaves, 1982/2012, p.1)

Boredom may be one way of managing compliance, but guilt is another. Nietzsche asserts (1996, pp.51-54) that guilt, as a feeling of personal responsibility, is also integral to a primordial relation between buyer and seller. Nothing can really be exchanged because everything is basically different, and there is no common measure, for example relating crime and punishment. To permit exchange, a sovereign justice must place itself beyond law in order to level out these irredeemable differences. We cannot repay this service, and acquire guilt as a result of a debt which defines our subjection, a point picked up by Lazzarato.

Lazzarato: the indebted subject

This is why debt, understood as the recognition that one owes something to a hierarchy, is a means of control for Maurizio Lazzarato (1996; 2009). It effectively transforms the practices of everyday life into a series of calculations: how to reimburse the debt, be it financial, moral or otherwise. Debt is extremely powerful because its exercise is direct: relations between people are no longer mediated exclusively through the physical products of labour, but increasingly through this relation between debtor and creditor, or the promise made by me to you. Indeed, for Lazzarato the neo-liberal 'project' is conducted through these processes, reflecting the identification of neo-liberalism, above, with the transfer of responsibility from public to private spheres. But the promise to reimburse debt in the future provides the basis for more than economic speculation, initiating and perpetuating a pervasive sense of the debtor's guilt. Economic processes thus create new subjects by changing what were previously taken for rights into credits: individual life insurance replaces a right to retirement; the right to take out a mortgage replaces a right to housing; the right to a loan replaces a right to further or higher education.

Thus systems of debt exist not to resolve social problems, but to incite, extend, and perpetuate the system of debt itself, making it effectively irredeemable. Since investment in capital is itself the infinite process of accumulating more capital – a fact taken for granted by Vinson above - the debt cannot be redeemed, least of all by human capital. On this analysis, only the state has the power to annul these debts, whose purpose is not to spur economic development, but to harness difference expressed by unruly subjects. As parts of LLL grow ever closer to capital (through bodies such as the ETF, for example) lifelong learners labour to increase their self-interest and thus become a piece of capital to be invested in and rendered ever more productive by speculating on a return on investment over time. The productivity in question here is 'immaterial': it supersedes the material and intellectual properties of commodities to produce their informational, cultural or affective content (Lazzarato, 1996). This "immateriality" is perhaps the most telling aspect of these processes of debt, since they indicate new forms of social control which, Gilles Deleuze argues, go beyond familiar "material" disciplinary structures.

Deleuze: debt and control

The immateriality of capital and its implications are central to Gilles Deleuze's analysis of society's increasingly pervasive potential to harness living difference. Deleuze (1990/1995) argues that contemporary means of discipline are developing via the gradual dis-placement of the places and spaces of control. It is precisely in the affective sphere that control takes

over from disciplinary society, since instead of the material enclosures of the Foucaultian disciplinary archipelago of prisons, hospitals and schools (Foucault, 1975/1981), today's virtual enclosures are networks of new technologies. Modern media, e-surveillance, database collection, self-surveillance and so on are all possible immaterial vectors of increased micro-control. Greater freedoms are possible, but must escape the way in which subjects are reduced to the state of 'dividual' by this control. Deleuze uses the term 'dividual' in order to reflect the fact that it is more efficient for subjects to be corralled *en masse* than separately disciplined. To do this, the individuated subject is divided into fragments ('dividuals'), for example by reducing subjects to a statistical trace or target which can then be monitored.

A highly effective means of achieving this, Deleuze argues, is by ensuring that learning never finishes. Qualification is no more than a rite of passage to further training and an endless sequence of performances which must always recommence. For Deleuze collective discourse demands that one can never progress from one space to the next without recognising one's debt to it; one is always continuously expected to display one's deficit and capacity for adaptation. He argues that this demand for self-display has signalled a shift towards the deployment of professional training as a form of internalised über-surveillance. Normalisation on a bureaucratic model is simply the most cost-effective means of doing it:

> One can envisage education becoming less and less a closed site differentiated from the workplace as another closed site, but both disappearing and giving way to frightful continual training, to continual monitoring of worker-schoolkids or bureaucrat-students.

> (Deleuze, 1990, p.237/ 1995, p.175)

The continuous monitoring of staff and its professionalism is undoubtedly an increasing facet of education management generally (e.g. Krejsler, 2007). It also supports the view that it is the field of visibility which makes acts of surveillance inseparable from those of assessment and subjectification (Hier and Greenberg, 2009, pp. 23-25). For critics of these developments, acts of anthropometric scrutiny are justified only by the assumption that individuals are potential terrorists, requiring the carceral transformation of whole cities by hi-tech surveillance methods (Agamben, 2007, p.48). The widespread use of lanyards, turnstiles and security guards alongside the usual apparatus of assessment and monitoring in institutions may well reflect this. But virtual and web technology, which are immaterial insofar as they replace old-style concrete disciplinary enclosures , further facilitates the

creation and maintenance of profiles and presences online as 'data doubles' at the service of this system of surveillance (Haggerty and Ericson, 2000).

However, rather than seeking to control individuals, these techniques are particularly effective parts of a sophisticated regime of *mass* control. Reforms act to guarantee the effectiveness of social sorting processes which go beyond the simple necessity to maintain structures of power or deliver a service to these masses. On this analysis, LLL's continued interest in the continuous assessment and categorisation of its participants might be understood as a telling example of a wider social issue. Here, continuous training becomes a 'total institution' for Deleuze, where individual extra-professional activity is absorbed by that of a professional mass with few temporal or spatial boundaries. Indeed, it is no longer spaces which enclose and constrain, but flows, especially of practices, communication and data, facilitated by professionals themselves. This is why, for Deleuze, professionals are recruited not as facilitators of social development, but as the functionaries of a network of blame and control:

> Every category of professional is going to be urged to exercise police functions which are more and more precise: professors, psychiatrists, educators of all stripes, etc. Here we see something [Foucault] predicted a long time ago, and which we didn't think possible: the global reinforcement of the structures of imprisonment

(Deleuze, 2002, p.294 / 2004, p.210)

Debt and teacher education

Deleuze's analysis seems highly speculative, but recent examples of sector discourse on the development of new professional standards provide a testbed for its accuracy. For example, a critical analysis of the suggestions in the recent Lingfield review (BIS, 2012a) implies that while they help to establish boundaries to entry, the criteria used to measure professionalism also make sure that the process of achieving these goals is never actually complete. Professionals are, in this sense, judged on the basis of criteria according to which they will necessarily be inadequate.

Lingfield was asked, in 2011, to carry out a review of teacher education in the UK LLL sector. In a climate of economic gloom and a change of government, the brief was clearly to promote forms of accountable professionalism while at the same time deregulating the

sector to save money. Lingfield's first step involved identifying a deficit, in this case the apparent ineffectiveness of (OFSTED) inspection in providing a reliable picture of provision. This weakness is 'widely acknowledged' (BIS, 2012a, p.30), not least because collusion between staff and inspectors is widespread, the report claims. Criticisms of OFSTED's negative impact and blame-allocating function are indeed common (e.g. Lefstein, 2013), and Lingfield's solution to the problem is a refreshed form of professionalism for the sector. This is identified with an extensive set of characteristics (BIS, 2012a, p.22 - original bullet points) which are worth quoting at length:

- o "Mastery of a complex discipline;

- o Continuous enhancement of expertise;

- o Acceptance that the field of expertise is a vocation to be pursued selflessly for the benefit of others;

- o Public accountability for high standards of capability and conduct;

- o Membership of a group earning and deserving the respect of the community;

- o Membership of a defined group with similar skills, transcending local loyalties to achieve national and international recognition;

- o Acceptance of responsibility for the competence and good conduct of other members of the professional group;

- o Membership of a group which accepts responsibility for planning succession by future generations;

This list affirms influential beliefs about professionalism in LLL, using what I will call moments of homogenisation, abstraction and moralisation to define practice.

A professional group is first homogenised by its collective responsibility to a higher power whose recognition it must 'deserve'. The set of criteria serve as binding reference points, which imply the need to demonstrate one's worthiness of the status which has been granted.

The second moment, abstraction, occurs when responsibility is defined as a never-ending task within a profession described as undeserving of the label. Judgements about when professionals will be deemed to have 'deserved' this status will come from outside the profession itself, being represented by notions of 'public accountability' or 'national and international recognition'. Moreover, the judges of this repayment are themselves dislocated

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from any possible real place, and their judgment is situated on a transcendent plane removed from the considerations of day-to-day practice. The advantage of such abstraction is that the locus of judgment cannot actually be defined, making it impossible for the practitioner to ever really know to whom they must demonstrate their worthiness. Repayment of the debt by meeting its terms is therefore always deferred, since its aspirational language is so hyperbolic and out of tune with its own discourse of lack that even continuous training and qualification will never suffice.

The third moment, moralisation, comes from this implication, namely that professionals' task in hand is not just continuous but effectively limitless. It does not just concern skills but 'capability', not just knowledge but the 'field of knowledge' as part of a text whose moral overtones are hard to mistake. Criteria of continuous selflessness, mastery and transcendence place the judgment of professionalism beyond objective reach and into the realms of moral judgment. Here, failure to achieve is not simply non-professional but unprofessional; not just non-competent but incompetent, with non-compliant attracting an essentially moralising gaze. For example, on this analysis, Lingfield's report joins longstanding practices such as benchmarking, which also contribute to a system of judgment whose goals are forever out of reach (c.f. Coffield and Edward, 2009). According to many benchmarking practices, success is norm-referenced and technically unattainable. As performance is measured against a set of criteria which evolves in line with performance itself, by this process it never reaches the goals it sets itself. Applied to organisations and systems, organisations themselves are quick to make individuals responsible for the results, data and statistics which are attributed to them, regardless of whether it is legitimate to do so or not. Moral opprobrium accompanies the necessary failure of a Sisyphean task, deploying the fear of condemnation as a highly cost-effective motive for self-surveillance.

Conclusion

Against my argument so far, it has been asserted that, compared with guidelines from the rest of the UK, the language of morals and values in teacher education is relatively low key (TLRP, 2009). Plowright and Barr (2012), however, identify a real shift in the professional agenda for teacher educators in LLL, precisely regarding a codification of professional conduct and, they suggest, identity. The authors argue that the movement over the last decade, since the creation of LLL's professional body, the IfL, in 2002, has led to the imposition of a highly artificial code of 'ethics' by the sector's professional body and to unthinking managerial, micro-controlled behaviour. The discourse of debt, sugared by the consensual language of altruism and standardisation, may be a good example.

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How realistic is such pessimism? Certainly, a search for standardisation seems to echo an infantilizing pessimism about individuals' ability to cope with everyday life, as well as a desire to control and reduce even mundane risk at any cost (Stronach and Clark, 2011). And doubtless, the idea of professionals 'invested with an ethos of high moral authority' (Nicoll and Edwards, 2012, p.241) has been displaced by a discourse of insufficient technical competence, fuelling distrust and blame. Perhaps this is a deterministic world where 'technologies of mastery' have become so powerful that their overthrow seems 'infinitely remote' (Schostak, 2012, p.418).

But if these processes of production of oppression are endless, why bother looking for them through a critical lens such as Deleuze's? As Williams (2008, p.173) argues:

> Deleuze demonstrates the inadequacy of a time organised around the
> actual present [and] refutes the point that ethical action stands primarily
> on action in the present, even if this is in relation to eternal truths.

Williams is right to focus on Deleuze's insistence that events demand a different time. The implication is that Deleuze's events actually take place in some distant, immaterial zone with no relevance to the here and now. In arguably his most important ethical text (Deleuze, 1969/2004), he repeatedly returns to the way events escape instrumentalisation and common measure, demanding a "sick" form of non-linear time in which difference can be acted out. Deleuze may be right that ethical conduct begins with a modest acceptance of the fact that we are not yet capable of ethical conduct (Goodchild, 1996, p. 208), but doesn't this effectively deprive us of the motivation to act at all?

This would be a misunderstanding. More complexity in education implies an expansion of the space of the possible and thus a necessary turn to 'the conditions for the emergence of the as-yet unimagined' (Davis and Sumara, 2008, p.38). In line with this, rather than requiring a form of epistemological enlightenment about the pervasiveness of structure or discourse – be it deficit, debt or any other - it may be that a particular ontology of the sector is at play. This is where Deleuze's analysis really begins. The flat hierarchy implied by the active encouragement of professional communities, sharing of best practice, benchmarking, peer solidarity and so on have always had the potential to work as highly efficient techniques of governmentality. But, following Butler (in Schostak, 2012), rather than making itself ubiquitous by engaging the agency of individual subjects as its capillaries, the body which decides when the debt has been repaid is in the process of idealising its own sovereignty. In his study of a 'failing' primary school, Lefstein (2013, 655) suggests that 'intangible but significant' factors were blamed for poor performance. The power of such judgments lies

precisely in the fact that it cannot be located, identified or reached. A segregative, central sovereignty separates itself from the masses it wishes to control by installing a 'kind' to which we are all too eager to first recognise ourselves and secondly belong as superior beings (Deleuze and Guattari, 1972, p.333/ 2004, p.305). This seems evidence of an irresolvable tension between two forms of becoming: the major becoming-sovereign of LLL and its standardised professionals, and the minor becoming-subject of professionals themselves.

If so, the key question on this analysis seems to be the extent to which educators in LLL, like grass under the paving stones, will continue to 'double' the sorts of discursive control identified here in what Deleuze would call a 'line of flight'. By this, I mean that analyses such as that undertaken here are useful if they highlight problematic presuppositions, indicate counterproductive trends or inspire different practices. But they are not alone in developing alternative ways of being, which (also) involve the extra-discursive dimensions of practice and affect. Indeed, as some of the views above suggest, educators may actually welcome the notion of financial, or even metaphysical, debt if it provides the sorts of rewards they seek. Lefstein (2013) is surely right to highlight the ritualistic, performative nature of blame culture in some education contexts where failure is a statistical necessity. Whether this is as unstoppable as he suggests is, however, debatable. Discourse is certainly key to the 'differential production of power and subjectivity' (Lim, 2014, p. 62), but its performance does not necessarily mean compliance, particularly when extra-discursive possibilities still exist.

In practice terms, those who are uncomfortable with the discourse of debt, in LLL at least, can and often do make the most of the sector's breadth and exploit the mobility it offers, shifting to different roles and jobs, in and out of the sector (cf. Colley, 2007; Bathmaker and Avis, op.cit). Yesterday's teacher educators may have joined enclosed, preformed spaces of LLL, but today's are more 'nomadic' in the Deleuzian sense that when nomads invest space, they redefine and redistribute it. Discourse is an open system of events, and will by definition become-other between the cracks which develop (in) its own unfolding logic. Joining and redistributing such spaces may be one way in which we can continue to prove ourselves 'beyond good and evil' and no longer bound by a desire to pay back on the moralistic terms of standardised professionalisation.

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