School leadership and education policy-making in England

Helen M. Gunter [a]; Gillian Forrester [b]

[a] University of Manchester, Manchester, UK [b] Liverpool John Moores University, Liverpool, UK

PLEASE SCROLL DOWN FOR ARTICLE

RESEARCH ARTICLE

School leadership and education policy-making in England

Helen M. Gunter[a]* and Gillian Forrester[b]

[a]University of Manchester, Manchester, UK; [b]Liverpool John Moores University, Liverpool, UK

We report on a major Economic and Social Science Research Council funded study: the *Knowledge production in educational leadership* project (RES-000-23-1192), with a particular focus on the relationship between the state, public policy and knowledge. The project focused on the first 10 years of New Labour education policy-making, with a particular emphasis on investment in school leadership as a means of delivering radical reforms. The specific aims of the enquiry have been to examine knowledge production: the types of knowledge used in policy-making, the methodologies and claims to the truth being made, and the people involved in developing policy as politicians, advisors, consultants and researchers. We have explained the policy-making process by using theoretical tools from political science (regime theory) and Bourdieu's theory of practice (field and habitus) to develop a conceptual framework that we call *regimes of practice*. The article presents these regimes and examines their impact on how and why knowledge is used in policy-making.

Keywords: education policy; New Labour; Bourdieu; knowledge production

Introduction

Within nine weeks of assuming power in May 1997, New Labour launched its first education White Paper, *Excellence in schools* (DfEE 1997), where it laid out the principles and the agenda for modernisation in order to deliver on its election promise of 'education, education, education'. While major reform had been a part of the education system from the 1960s, New Labour diagnosed the problem as one of implementation: how to ensure that strategy and policy is actually put into operation in schools and classrooms. Barber (2007), the newly-appointed head of the Standards and Effectiveness Unit in the Department,[1] emphasised delivery so that the radical reforms would not be resisted or changed at local level. Central to this strategy has been the targeting of headteachers who New Labour identified as in need of higher status and training as school leaders in order to ensure that reform was secured. New Labour made a major investment in financial and symbolic capital into leadership through speeches, strategy documents and legislation that emphasised the importance of the headteacher for school improvement, and established in 2000 the National College for School Leadership (NCSL) in order to train and support aspiring and serving headteachers.

---

*Corresponding author Email: helen.gunter@manchester.ac.uk

This article reports on a major Economic and Social Science Research Council (ESRC) funded project: *Knowledge production in educational leadership* (RES-000-23-1192), which has examined the aims and strategies of New Labour's policy-making processes. Specifically, by focusing on New Labour policy of headteachers as leaders, the project explored the relationship between the state, public policy and knowledge. We are interested in examining the people and ideas that New Labour drew on in order to frame and promote its policies. Hence we have worked on identifying and examining the types of knowledge, the ways of knowing and the legitimisation of knowers involved in framing, promoting and securing leadership. We have done this by examining policy documents, and importantly we have interviewed ministers, civil servants, advisors, consultants, headteachers and researchers. We have constructed a conceptual explanatory framework that we call *regimes of practice* based on theoretical work from political science (Harding 2000) and sociology (Bourdieu 2000). This framework has enabled us to map those who are inside and outside of policy-making and how their professional practice is central to understanding how and why decisions are made. This is the first study of its type that examines a range of agents who are actively and variously involved in the development and enactment of policy.

New Labour and the leadership of schools

The New Labour has sustained a reform rationale to improve the standards of education as defined by national and international performance data (see DfEE 1997, Barber 2007). The emphasis from 1997 was put on failing schools and teachers, where investment in education was tied to centralised regulation and performance targets in order to demonstrate to the electorate, particularly parents who might exit the state system that publicly-funded education would not let them or their children down. In taking office New Labour rapidly laid out its agenda, and made bold statements about the importance of headteachers as leaders:

> The vision for learning set out in this White Paper will demand the highest qualities of leadership and management from headteachers. The quality of the head often makes the difference between the success or failure of a school. Good heads can transform a school; poor heads can block progress and achievement. It is essential that we have measures in place to strengthen the skills of all new and serving heads. (DfEE 1997, p. 46)

A year later the blueprint for leaders and leadership in schools was outlined in *Teachers: meeting the challenge of change*:

> All the evidence shows that heads are the key to a school's success. All schools need a leader who creates a sense of purpose and direction, sets high expectations of staff and pupils, focuses on improving teaching and learning, monitors performance and motivates the staff to give of their best. The best heads are as good at leadership as the best leaders in any other sector, including business. The challenge is to create the rewards, training and support to attract, retain and develop many more heads of this calibre. (DfEE 1998, p. 22)

During the next decade, New Labour invested in headteachers by holding conferences where their importance and role in modernising education was explained. The selection of particular research evidence was used to tell headteachers that they made a difference to student outcomes, and this was symbolised by higher pay, the award of honours (knighthoods and dames) and the establishment of the NCSL as a

'Sandhurst for headteachers' where bespoke training programmes in a separate college portrayed the distinctiveness of this role. New Labour realised that 24,000 heads rather than 400,000 teachers had to be their direct agents and the training of heads and labelling their work as effective leadership is regarded as central to this. This generated a need for compulsory and centrally regulated (i.e. branded) programmes through a college that was under the remit of the department (Gunter and Forrester 2008). Training was based on national standards for headteachers which identified them as reform deliverers (DfES 2004), and they were given major curriculum and staffing changes to introduce while ensuring that national standards were not affected and indeed improved. National literacy and numeracy strategies had to be implemented together with the introduction of performance management in schools. Changes took place to staffing composition and deployment through the wider use of non-qualified teachers to support and deliver curriculum packages and secure improved student outcomes (Butt and Gunter 2007).

What New Labour established is the *leadership of schools* as distinct from school or educational leadership. Educational leadership is based on the *headteacher* as qualified teacher where s/he is able to teach and has risen through the ranks to take on professional leadership. Hence the headteacher knows about teaching and learning, and can lead professional colleagues in debates and decisions about curriculum development and improvements to teaching and learning. School leadership developed rapidly from 1988 when site-based management was introduced, where the school could hire and fire staff, and where funding was based on open enrolment by students. Curriculum was taken from professionals and handed over to national agencies who determined what was to be taught. The school as a small business challenged the 'teacherness' of the head and emphasised an entrepreneurial, chief executive role. New Labour accelerated the removal of curriculum and pedagogic decisions from professionals begun under the previous Thatcherite governments, and provided schools with curriculum strategies, scripts and learning resources that meant teachers had to deliver what had been determined externally and centrally, and the school as a business was controlled though outcomes measurements by national benchmarks, such as 30% of children in a secondary school to achieve five A*–C grades at GCSE (end of Key Stage 4, 16 years of age). Performance management identified failing teachers and schools, with demands for measurable improvement. The consequences were that failing teachers would be removed, and failing schools would be closed, with private companies taking a lead role in the design and delivery of new provision.

The leadership of schools was therefore centralised with a focus on the single person as transformational leader who is part of a 'delivery chain' (Barber 2007) down the line from national to local, and hence accountable for the delivery and impact of national reform. The formalised delegation of delivery and impact within the system and organisation has been characterised by the NCSL as distributed leadership. In developing this approach primacy has been given to private-sector leadership models to secure leader responsibility and accountability, and provide the language, processes and legitimacy for delegating work, commanding commitment through followership. Professionalism has been redesigned as technical capability (e.g. data-handling competence) combined with personal attributes (e.g. charisma, responsibility), underpinned by an overt commitment to New Labour strategies and processes.

There has been continuity in this leadership of schools approach during the first decade of New Labour, but with one major shift. The role and status of the leader remains important but whether this is a headteacher, that is, a teacher with qualified teacher status (QTS) is undergoing change (DfES/PricewaterhouseCoopers 2007). New Labour faced a number of issues, not least that in spite of their investment there was a shortage of headteachers. Additionally, New Labour remained concerned that 'heroic' headteachers as enthusiastic transformational leaders had not always been able to turn around failing schools, and that headteachers had retained a professional identity where they not only resisted or modified changes, but also continued to develop their own strategies for school improvement. New Labour's solution was to turn to the private sector. During the early part of the decade, and without any public debate that we can identify, the requirement to have QTS to be a headteacher was removed but the requirement to have the National Professional Qualification for Headteachers (NPQH) has been made mandatory (from 1 April 2009). Consequently, generic effective leadership skills are what matters and this fits with two main thrusts in the structures of educational provision: first, the *Every child matters* (DfES 2003) agenda means that children's services with a children's workforce through the collaborative provision of education, health, welfare and policing, on one site or campus, requires a chief executive who need not have QTS; and second, the acceleration of private-sector delivery of public provision through academies, trusts and federations, means that there is some job redesign for the chief executive in leading more than one organisation and/or promoting networks of privately 'owned' and 'branded' schools. The person who heads up educational provision on a campus alongside other services, such as a health centre or welfare services, may have QTS, but the overall executive can come from the public, private or voluntary sector. While the New Labour rhetoric about this development is about the 'new' and 'modern', the reality is that the leader remains a single appointed person who is officially trained and licensed according to prescribed standards, and leadership is about localised delivery in the school or wider area (what policy-makers are calling systemic leadership). Local autonomy is framed around the tactics of delivery in regard to local context (e.g. pace of reform implementation), and to building on New Labour policies and strategies rather than creating alternative agendas and models (see Gunter *et al.* 2008).

Knowledge production and the leadership of schools

Studying the first decade of New Labour's leadership of schools has enabled us to ask questions about the type of knowledge being used to frame policy; the ways of knowing that supported this; and the knowers who have developed the knowledge and knowing, and have been listened to and engaged with. We have therefore studied the knowledge production underpinning the formation, development and implementation of New Labour's leadership of schools. We have sought to examine why school-improvement and school-effectiveness research has dominated thinking. Why the business model of entrepreneurial transformational leadership has been the preferred model for the training of aspiring and serving headteachers. Why the headteacher has been 'remodelled' (Butt and Gunter 2007) so that the chief executive role need not be held by someone with QTS. Why particular research methodologies and methods are preferred, and who has been involved in the production of these ways of knowing, and

why these people have been regarded as knowers who know in ways that are useful and authoritative. Such questions not only allow the examination of official knowledge, knowing and knower, but also to examine the structures that support this, and that construct silences and exclusions from policy-making.

We have identified that knowledge production under New Labour is taking place within a form of *institutionalised governance* where the state is adapting to the interplay between hierarchy, markets and networks (Newman 2001). Traditionally the hierarchy of government dominated in the UK with public-sector services delivered through government funded and controlled organisations. From 1988 the Thatcherite governments challenged the state as education provider and so located education within a quasi-market with the outsourcing of provision to the private sector (see Ball 2007). The state contracted preferred-private consultants to work within government institutions in order to reform the bureaucracy and to develop managerialist processes (Saint-Martin 2004). Consequently, arguments have been built that the state was 'hollowed' out (Rhodes 1994) with decisions relocated into agencies, networks and private companies. However, our study of New Labour shows that the state and public institutions continue to matter, as the government has directed and intervened in professional practice rather than steered at a distance. Indeed, Béland (2005, p. 3) argues that 'political institutions create constraints and opportunities for those involved in policy-making', and so formal authority matters: first, the primacy of national public institution remains strong in educational policy-making with the dominance of the prime minister, his advisors at No. 10, and the Treasury; and, second, intervention into the professional practice of teachers in school classrooms was extended by establishing specialised units in the Department, such as the Standards and Effectiveness Unit, and by creating non-departmental public bodies, such as the NCSL with a remit determined by central government priorities.

While central public institutions continue to matter in New Labour's education policy, there has been a drive to secure ideas and support from outside. Indeed, Béland (2005) argues that an institutional focus on its own is limited and there is a need to give attention to 'ideational forces' (p. 13). In this way governance through networks of trusted people remains important, and New Labour has not so much outsourced delivery but brought people into government either in formal employment as advisors in the department or in the NCSL, or through contracts as consultants to undertake research based on government priorities to support the framing and legitimatisation of reforms. In doing so, New Labour has accessed existing networks and/or constructed networks and inter-connections between people. Like the Thatcherite governments, New Labour excluded 'welfare bureaucrats and professionals' as 'inefficient, self-interested and guilty of fostering welfare dependency...' (Gewirtz 2002, pp. 2–3). They identified the problem of 'risky' bureau-professional groups, such as teachers and local authority personnel with unmodern professional attitudes. A marketised network of private-sector consultants have replaced them as attractive outsiders (Collarbone 2005), together with co-opted bureau professionals who repositioned themselves as attractive risk-free insiders in the New Labour 'big tent' (Hyman 2005). In Kingdon's (2003) terms this coalition of ministers, civil servants, advisors and consultants are 'policy entrepreneurs' who recombine existing ideas and so provide evidence, language and distinction to legitimise the reform imperative. They have a 'willingness to

invest their resources – time, energy, reputation, and sometimes money – in the hope of a future return' (p. 122), and as 'policy groupies' they 'enjoy advocacy, they enjoy being at or near the seat of power, they enjoy being part of the action' (p. 123), where they engage with the preference for the private sector to deliver change, and they feed that preference by doing it. The 'return' on the investment is that private interests are enhanced through policy impact and business success. Notably they have co-constructed a specific change narrative that is about delivery, what works, and an imperative to be business-like. There has been a privileging of measurement evaluations (e.g. Leithwood and Levin 2005) with functional interventions into professional practice in order to bring about change.

Research design

In order to investigate ideas and agents in New Labour policy-making the focus was on individuals, associations and practice, with two parallel strands of data collection. The first was documentary: (a) primary sources where we gathered and read over 200 government documents; and (b) secondary sources where we gathered and read 300 published articles and books on leadership and policy. The second was empirical: a purposive interview sample of 116 people from government, non-departmental public bodies (NDPBs)/agencies, local government, unions, universities, schools and private-sector companies:

  (1)   Eight from government (three former Secretaries of State for Education; five civil servants).
  (2)   Ten advisors from NDPBs/agencies/local government/unions.
  (3)   Sixty-three researchers in universities.
  (4)   Twenty-five headteachers.
  (5)   Ten private-sector consultants.

A multi-site and multi-level approach within and between national and local was undertaken and so through this formal and informal connections were explored. The research design enabled knowledge production within the dynamics of activity to be captured, mapped and analysed through narrated professional biographies. The emphasis was on situated stories because this gives access to experiences and facilitates the meaning given to activity. It is about how 'identities-in-practice and subjectivities' have been 'fashioned' through the interplay of agency and structure in historical, political, social and economic experiences and struggles (Holland and Lave 2001, p. 1).

   Prior to each interview biographical work was undertaken based on Curriculum Vitae and, where applicable, nominated publications by the interviewee. Semi-structured interview schedules were based on:

Interviewee background: role, responsibilities and professional biography.

Professional practice: for ministers and civil servants on the purposes of and evidence base for policy; for researchers on purposes and contribution; for headteachers on approaches to leadership; for private sector consultants on business products.

New Labour policy: the aims, gains and concerns about education policy and leadership bespoke to the respondent context.

Each interview was recorded, transcribed and a copy returned to the interviewee for factual checking and to identify any text that they would not wish to be directly quoted. The full transcriptions were uploaded to NVivo7. 'Sets' plus 'tree' and 'free' nodes were created. Passages of text were coded systematically by individual case and allocated to these nodes accordingly. Data analysis was iterative and as key themes became apparent new nodes were developed and refined and more complex node hierarchies were created. The data from various nodes were reconstructed as field reports and provided consolidated accounts of particular responses and themes. A thematic analysis was subsequently undertaken whereby individual nodes, datasets and cases were investigated and interrogated (electronically and manually) in order to address the project's main research questions.

A conceptual framework was developed and used to read the data: first, the starting point was regime theory (Harding 2000, p. 55) because it focuses on inter-connections between agents as a 'governing coalition', who require entry into public institutions (as ministers, civil servants and contracted providers) in order to retain competitive advantage (win elections and contract renewal); second, Bourdieu's (1990, 2000) thinking tools of field, habitus, capital, codification and misrecognition, were used to develop understandings of how regimes work as practices. Field is an arena of practice where *habitus* is revealed through that practice. Hence the leadership of schools is a *game in play* where entry is based on dispositions to take up a position through the staking of *capital* as being knowledgeable about leadership through professional experience and/or as researchers who align with school improvement and school effectiveness. This is codified into a *doxa* or self-evident truth which is constructed through practice (books, policies, speeches, training programmes and language) in such a way that those located within it *misrecognise* the process that they are located within. Our argument is that a regime of practice is a networked position within a field, and as such the staking of capital through entering and positioning provides a dynamic explanatory construct through which the location and practice of power can be understood. Following Bourdieu (2005) Figure 1 presents the map where positions are taken in relation to proximity to and distance from the state as power and economy.

Interviewees have been located according to indicators of capital (cultural, social and symbolic) in their biography, professional practice and dispositions. This includes: where they have worked e.g. university and/or private company, experience of working in a school, not least as headteacher; where they currently work e.g. in a government department, NCSL, school, university, private company; what they do in that work e.g. make policy, undertake independent and/or commissioned research, teach, develop products such as training programmes; and, their attitudes to their work, not least attitudes to the public and private sector as education providers. Those who demonstrated through their practice dispositions to occupy a space close to power and to economic productivity are located in Economy+ and Power+, which is in contrast to those located in Economy− and Power− who reveal scholarly dispositions and who occupy a space that seeks to develop alternatives at local level and for purposes that are not directly about economic efficiency. Those who occupy the space Power+ and Economy− are concerned to influence policy but in the wider interests of public-sector services. Those who occupy Economy+ and Power− are in a space where there is no direct access to policy-making, but who continue to work for educational provision as a market, not least through the adoption of private-sector

		Economy +		
Power-	Space is occupied by those who do not have direct access to public 'government' institutions, but who are using leadership as a means to make public-sector services work more efficiently and effectively as a business.	Space is occupied by those who have direct access to public 'government' institutions, and are using leadership as a means of extending private-sector practices and cultures into public-sector services.	**Power +**
	Space is occupied by those outside of public 'government' institutions, who undertake critical policy analysis of leadership, and its place in policy-making. The aim is to develop alternative approaches to leadership within the public sector.	Space is occupied by those who have direct access to public 'government' institutions and who want to engage with leadership to develop public-sector services.	
		Economy -		

Figure 1.   Presenting regimes of practice.

leadership practices and cultures. Each of the 116 respondents was placed into the grid and this led to the mapping and identification of two regimes of practice and an emerging potential third regime. It is to this mapping that we now turn.

Mapping regimes of practice

The project findings demonstrate how it is the interplay between the agency of people and the structures that enable or limit ideas that is a key feature of institutionalised governance and how it has produced a particular configuration of the leadership of schools. Figure 2 shows how the interplay between networks of agents has been mapped as *regimes of practice.*

Regime 1 or 'school leadership policy network' (Gunter and Forrester 2008) is positioned primarily towards the dominance of the economic and political power. Those positioned in this regime tend to be:

- Ministers: appointed by the prime minister to strategically lead on policy.
- Civil servants: permanent role as civil servants but they move around within and between departments. Role is to give policy advice and to implement policy decisions.
- Advisors: from local government, universities, business and schools. Appointed to roles in the Department to head up a particular unit e.g. Standards and Effectiveness Unit, Innovations Unit and/or to lead on a particular reform initiative; and to roles outside of but connected to the Department, in agencies
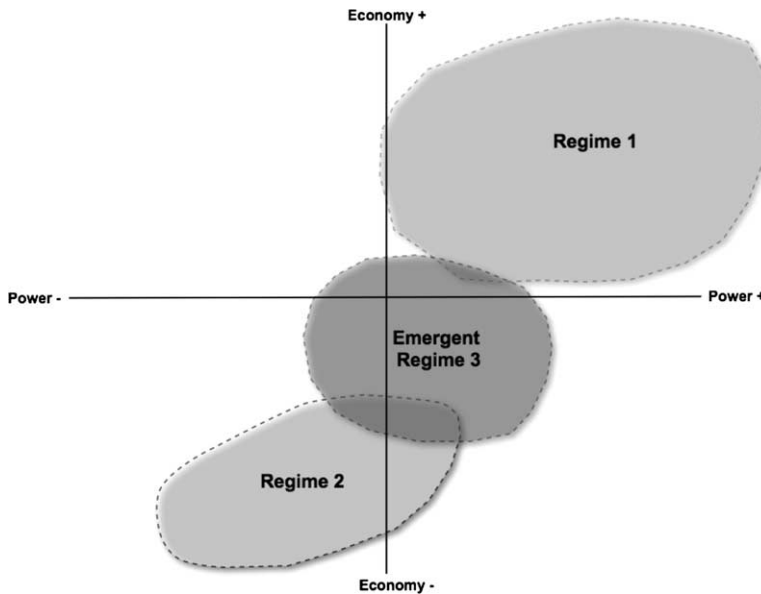
Figure 2.   Regimes of practice.

and NDPBs, such as the NCSL, Specialist Schools and Academies Trust (SSAT),[2] and the General Teaching Council (GTC).[3]

● Consultants: from universities and private-sector companies who are contracted to deliver, for example, a research evaluation to measure the impact of a reform initiative. From the universities this tends to be school-improvement and school-effectiveness researchers who are directly involved in contracts with either the Department and/or the NCSL or the SSAT. From the private sector, there are consultants who are working on contracts with the Department, through to those who are from small companies or who operate as individual consultants with e.g. the NCSL and/or its regional centres.

Those in formal roles (ministers, civil servants and advisors) have done two main things in the first decade of New Labour: first, continued the close relationship with the private sector, with particular people (a) close to the prime minister; (b) actively involved in the Department; (c) actively involved in non-departmental public bodies such as the NCSL. Second, new institutional structures have been created (e.g. the Standards and Effectiveness Unit) and those positioned here tend to have links to schools (as former headteachers) and to school effectiveness and school improvement (as professors/researchers from universities). Private-sector consultants and those in formal advisory roles directly advise (both formally and off the record) and are controlled through contract renewal. Policy automatically positions the 24,000 headteachers in schools here but the data show that, in Lather's (1991) words, a large group work 'within/against' this regime, and so headteachers can be found in Regime 2 and emergent Regime 3, see below.

Those who locate within this regime reveal dispositions where they are most likely to:

- Be leader-centric and accept the normality of the single person as the causal connection to change and delivery. Prime Minister Blair as a charismatic leader who sets direction and demands productive impact through others is replicated through the system, not least through the model of the leadership of schools initially by heads and more recently by effective local leaders as chief executives.
- Locate their employment in or be contracted by a public institution to deliver services. Are less likely to be from a local authority or university, and if they are then they tend to be: first, from or supportive of school effectiveness and school improvement; second, on short-term contract/secondment; third, accepting of private-sector knowledge about effective leadership; fourth, politically neutral in self-presentation of their purposes and impact.
- Recognise centralised policy strategy as the starting point for meeting standards and improving performance at local level. Headteachers who model the local transformational leadership role are both included and favoured. Other potential sites for change narratives, such as local authorities, unions and universities, are framed as problematic, are excluded and are often criticised as oppositional to reform.
- Relate their role and identity to achieving national policy and making it work as a means of securing contracts in order to maintain their involvement. Criticism is rare and when it is voiced it is usually about technical implementation of a change rather than the strategic direction. If concerns are shown then it tends to be retrospective with statements about how the model of transformational heroic leadership was flawed at the time but how they have worked to develop this with more distributed approaches that are now more accepted by policy-makers.
- Accept neo-liberal thinking about the school as a business firm to which ideas from the private sector can be transferred. School-effectiveness and school-improvement research is attractive because it is consistent with functional private sector models. Notably the emphasis on the effective leader who can develop organisational processes to bring about change at local level dominates, and epistemologically there is an emphasis on the science of measurement where knowledge workers, commissioned by the New Labour government, continue to seek evidence of the impact of the headteacher on student outcomes (Leithwood *et al.* 2006).
- Be concerned to work with headteachers and teachers to help them be contractually enthusiastic. Through training programmes advisors have constructed a culture of problem-solving where it is possible to have the right behaviours, skills and knowledge to bring about change through reform implementation. If there are problems raised by practitioners in ways that cannot be ameliorated in training sessions or at conferences then this is passed up the delivery chain and used as leverage to develop new business in ways that enhance policy.
- Frame their identity about what they want to do, achieve, believe in and value, than with an epistemic community and/or a discipline. They are more likely to undertake commissioned research from the Department, the NCSL and the SSAT. While school improvement and school effectiveness dominate as the knowledge base from which policy is constructed, there is limited identity with

this community as a group of knowledge workers and is more about the technical political relevance of their ideas, beliefs and techniques. There is evidence of rival power bases: for example, the SSAT has leadership training for specialist and academy schools that is separate from the NCSL which has a remit for national training. This is seen as either a positive 'diversity' development or is a problem to be resolved through contract renewal or severance.

Regime 2 is a form of critical governance, positioned at a distance from the domination of economic and political power. Those who locate here are mainly in universities, are researchers and are leading members of their fields with national and international reputations. They tend to articulate their work as policy studies, notably policy sociology. Some headteachers have direct association with higher education institutions (HEIs) through research and postgraduate programmes; they tend to critique New Labour from either the right (they benefited from Thatcherism) or from the left (they want to see more socially just policies from New Labour).

Those who locate within this regime are most likely to:

- Problematise the historical legacy of leader-centric structures and cultures, and critique school improvement and effectiveness as elitist through its framing education in ways that maintain existing power structures. Those who take up a position in this regime put emphasis on developing change narratives around a more socially just and participatory democracy. This takes place through the discussion of ideas, as well as empirical work that examines the realities of life under the Thatcherite and New Labour governments, and often work takes place in schools to examine alternative strategies for change.
- Locate employment in HEIs and frame their work as research. Most of those who occupy this space tend to have a career as researchers and are interested in education as a site to examine policy-making and change. Those who have been teachers and/or headteachers before relocating into higher education are indistinguishable in intellectual positioning and research disposition from those whose biography is mainly research.
- Emphasise how neo-liberal agendas dominate at the expense of narratives about democratic development and social justice. They are not prepared to make something work that is undemocratic and unfair, and are critical of those who undertake commissioned research in order to enable neo-liberal policies to flourish. By problematising what is taking place, particularly through a critique of school effectiveness and school improvement, the aim is to focus on the realities of practice and so create spaces to reveal alternatives. Arguments are made about the need to shift the focus from the leadership of schools to pedagogy and curriculum.
- Use social theories regarding class and gender, and draw on theories of power such as Foucault and Bourdieu to frame investigations. Social theory is used to provide descriptions, meanings and explanations of what is happening and to develop alternative policy scenarios. Those who position themselves here are more likely to problematise the context and to look at the interplay

between the strategic bigger picture of policy strategy and the realities of local practice in a school and classroom.

- Identify with a discipline with a tendency to be sociologists, and/or to be located in the wider area of public policy where they are not just concerned with education. They are less likely to talk about leadership as the prime focus of their work, and indeed they are more likely to talk about the relationship as being tenuous.
- Use reflexive approaches to their own and others roles in knowledge production, and they tend to debate the relationship between power, the economy and professional practice. This position recognises contradictions and what it means to pursue a critical agenda at a time of neo-liberal modernisation. Those who position themselves here recognise that they cannot stand outside of the globalised economy and funding contracts, but seek to open this up to scrutiny.

Emergent Regime 3: a third regime could emerge from the fringes of Regimes 1 and 2. On the edge of Regime 1 there are two 'communities': first, a pool of school-effectiveness and school-improvement people in higher education, some of whom are new entrants with great expectations, others are those who have been inside Regime 1 and find themselves outside, temporarily or permanently. Second, headteachers are officially positioned by policy within Regime 1 as reform deliverers, but two-thirds of interviewed heads find themselves variously distanced from it. Some are 'strategisers' who want to develop local educational provision, and some are 'tacticians' who face difficulties in implementing reform. Engaging with policy is more dialogic (within/against) than totalising self-surveillance (Ball 2007), where their stories show (a) teaching and learning dominates as *headteacher*; (b) motivation is based on making a difference; (c) reforms are too speedy and the realities of local implementation are not thought through; and, (d) views are communicated through local networks and/or union. Headteachers are assumed within policy to be inside policy but they may not be an insider headteacher, and there is a sizeable group who feel distanced from the NCSL.

On the edges of Regime 2 are those in higher education who identify with practitioners and who have a track record of project delivery for government or its agencies. Previous research shows that this was a vibrant space for practitioners who had relocated into higher education as educational leadership and management knowledge workers (Gunter 1999). The data show that postgraduate masters programmes in educational leadership and management remain where school effectiveness and school improvement is strong and where NCSL programmes are located. Repositioning is based on availability as contract and consultancy researchers. There is evidence of criticality in regard to the objectives and outcomes of Regime 1 but it is not sufficient to put potential access to contracts in danger.

Therefore Regime 3 could emerge from school improvement, school effectiveness, educational management and leadership knowledge workers in higher education together with headteachers who are distanced from Regime 1. This Regime 3 could form from the staking of claims around practitioner interests. However, currently there is more interest in positioning in relation to Regimes 1 and 2 than in creating another regime. For a third regime to emerge there would need to be a direct linkage

between those in higher education and in schools who want to generate alternative strategies to that which currently dominate through Regime 1 practices.

Regimes of practice at work

Following Thomson (2005, p. 251), agents from the economic and political fields 'breach(ed) the borders' of education and used institutional methods (new structures, cultures, jobs and rules) to secure change. Therefore private-sector consultants and politicians privileged particular types of knowledge and knowing and brought in particular people from higher education, schools and local authorities as approved knowers. Knowledge production in Regime 1 is highly functional, based on an underlying belief in what is to be done overlain with positivist evidence. This enabled the leadership of schools 'game' (Bourdieu 1990) to focus on eradicating failing schools and teachers as a means of keeping middle-class parents as consumers of public provision. New Labour has entered into symbolic capital exchange with the private sector which has its own 'game' of market expansion in play. All share a 'doxic acceptance of the world' regarding effective leadership as an 'objective structure' where the conceptualisation of the local chief executive is the product of structured and structuring practices revealed through what is normal and necessary to secure domination (Bourdieu and Wacquant 1992, p. 168). The exchange is based on shared dispositions to deliver, where the government gives private capital access to new markets and private capital gives government access to a modernising '*kulturkampf*' (Marquand 2004). Consequently leaders of schools with QTS are being replaced by effective leaders. The logic of practice that produces such policy strategies is based on unspoken rules of the game where there is 'knowledge and recognition' (Bourdieu 2000, p. 198) of both domination and dominated. Misrecognition can be detected in the failure to speak about the interplay between the 'subjective truths' of the leadership of schools by chief executives as the only thing to do, with the 'objective realities' of how this has been constructed through the game in play (Bourdieu 2000, p. 95).

'Illusio' or 'interest in the game' (Bourdieu 2000, p. 207) is generated by the symbolic effects of this capital exchange where the position is based on the experience of playing it before or seeing it played, and having a 'habitus predisposed to anticipate it' (Bourdieu 2000, p. 12). Regime 1 players are provoked and predisposed to the game, and it 'speaks' to them as 'agents characterized by possession of a certain capital and a certain habitus' (Bourdieu 2000, p. 220). The leadership of schools game will only work if those who are at a distance from classrooms stake the claim of knowing more and better, and this is enabled through the misrecognition of those who take up a position in government. The 'esteem, recognition, belief credit, confidence of others' in headteachers, consultants and professors as deliverers is 'perpetuated...(because) ... it succeeds in obtaining belief in its existence' (Bourdieu 2000, p. 166). While there is evidence of attempts to create power bases within the regime, with 'new' leadership products and internal conflicts, there comes a time when the staking of capital that threatens the regime is dealt with though contract termination. This acts as a disciplinary process for those at the centre or the edges, and those who are on the fringes of Regime 1 sustain this existence by their loyalty to the doxa in their teaching, research and writing, and so are ever ready to stake their claim for recognition.

Those who are objects of the leadership of schools game are: first, codified beneficiaries such as teachers, parents and students, who are dominated through the 'representations of power' such as titles, role and pay (Bourdieu 2000, p. 171). Nevertheless they can themselves dominate: for teachers it can be through reform implementation; for parents it can be at elections; and for students it can be through absenteeism. Second, there are those who are deemed irrelevant to the game and do not find the illusio of the Regime 1 game to be congenial. Hence in Regime 2 another educational policy game is in play: (a) to open up the Regime 1 game to scrutiny and reflexive theorising, particularly through 'historical critique' (Bourdieu 2000, p. 182); and (b) to develop an illusio located in issues of power processes. The doxa is one of knowledge production in an unjust world. Those in Regime 2 who are close to practitioners in schools have a 'game' that enables alternative narratives about practice to be opened up. Symbolic exchange may not normally happen between Regimes 1 and 2, but within Regime 2 those who hold major grants from funding councils and esteemed chairs in Russell Group universities do hold symbolic capital of titles, posts and institution that enables them to speak differently to the New Labour project, and as such there is a capital exchange with others in higher education, local authorities, unions, schools, parents and communities. While the New Labour leadership of schools model may not directly speak to these interests, Regime 2 may speak to matters of social justice and radical change, and hence they provide symbolic effects of countering the charges of irrelevance from Regime 1.

What is currently not in a play is a Regime 3 with a doxa located in researchers, headteachers, teachers and children in a pedagogic relationship. Currently those who might create the necessary narratives to invite investment are too few in number and/ or who position themselves as actual or potential players in Regimes 1 or 2. This is mainly due to the lack of symbolic capital around teachers and students as active subjects in educational change, and how the market operates in ways to render their capital as only valuable if they are the objects of reform. For Regime 3 to emerge strongly there would need to be a symbolic capital exchange between universities and schools through research and postgraduate study combined with forms of activism (Apple 2006a). The data show that this tends to be happening either under the radar and/or it is not a widespread feature, not least because universities have been marginalised. However, the data show that some practitioners are pro-NCSL, some are anti, while most are ambivalent, and hence the opportunity exists to revitalise universities as places where practitioners can seek support for their professional practice. The intellectual resources exist to enable this to be a legitimate area of interest: first, Young's (2008) conceptualising of change narratives as theoretical and political debates with a boundary that needs to be understood is helpful in enabling the staking of capital to be opened up to scrutiny and strategising; second, Whitty's (2002) analysis that crossing such boundaries by policy sociologists as appropriate, but not an imperative, means that policy as analysis and activity are not automatically oppositional but are distinct contributions to educational change.

Conclusion

New Labour has undertaken a major investment in the leadership of schools with direct intervention in the purposes and practices of teaching and learning. Through

institutionalised governance, New Labour has worked through the control and dominance functions of government institutions to frame and implement the leadership of schools, and has done this by bringing into government advisors and consultants from schools, private-sector companies, universities and local government. Those who locate themselves here have a form of professional practice that we have identified as Regime 1, and knowledge production underpinning policy-making is based on established knowledge and knowing through school improvement and effectiveness, and on the recombining of ideas through discussions, papers, speeches and ultimately official policy documents and strategies. Symbolic exchange of being close to political power and extending economic power is the logic of practice within New Labour policy made visible through this research. While the state favouring a particular regime of practice in the production of public policy based on a specific form of knowledge suggests a settlement, history shows that such stabilities tend to remain vulnerable to fracture (Gewirtz 2002, Ball 2007). Notably, we have identified Regime 2 where knowledge production is based on research and theorising in ways that open up Regime 1 to critical scrutiny and the production of alternative strategies for educational change. There is a potential Regime 3 where those on the fringes of Regimes 1 and 2 might stake claims for a new positioning around practitioners interests and local needs. This could fit with recent developments in New Labour thinking where there is the argument for more bottom–up voice and choice by parents and children as consumers of educational provision variously provided (PMSU 2006). However, contradictions are emerging, not least that the leadership of schools remains, nicely put by Coffield (2007) who argues that 'the current version is focused on faithfully carrying out whatever reforms the government stipulates' (p. 65). If a participatory model is to be developed then the capital from knowledge workers from Regime 2 (and the emergent Regime 3) gains in value. This is a new game and while the intellectual resources exist to develop position and positioning, it is likely to remain a minority game unless Apple's (2006b) strategy of interruption is deployed and Arendt's optimism for change is recognised (Gunter 2005). The opening up of the policy-making process through this research project is a step towards realising this, not least because all those involved in the Department, in private companies, in universities and in school classrooms, need to examine the location and practice around what it means to be a policy-maker and/or policy-taker.

Notes

1. When New Labour came to power in 1997, the national ministry in London was called the Department for Education and Employment (DfEE) after reorganisation had taken place in 1995. The DfEE became the DfES or Department for Education and Skills in 2001. In

2007 the DfES was split into two: Department for Children, Schools and Families (DCSF)/ Department for Innovation, Universities and Skills (DIUS).
2. The SSAT dates back to the City Technology Colleges Trust set up in 1987. In its current format the SSAT supports (1) secondary schools who have applied for and been awarded specialist school status e.g. sports or languages, (2) secondary schools that have been given academy status with private sponsors. www.ssatrust.org.uk.
3. The GTC for England was established by Act of Parliament in 1998 as the professional body for teaching. www.gtce.org.uk.

Notes on contributors

Helen Gunter is a Professor of Educational Policy, Leadership and Management in the School of Education at the University of Manchester. Her most recent books include: *Leaders and leadership in education* (PCP 2001), *Leading teachers* (Continuum 2005) and *Modernizing schools: people, learning and organizations* (Continuum 2007, co-edited with Graham Butt). Her main area of research is in knowledge production in policy studies and educational leadership. She is grant-holder for the ESRC project: *Knowledge production in educational leadership*, and she is researching the origins and development of school leadership in England.

Gillian Forrester is a Senior Lecturer in Education Studies in the Faculty of Education, Community and Leisure at Liverpool John Moores University. Her main research interests are in education policy and modernisation, teachers' work, performance management in schools and school leadership. Between January 2006 and December 2007 Gillian was Research Assistant to Professor Helen Gunter (School of Education, University of Manchester) on the ESRC project: *Knowledge production in educational leadership*, which investigated the origins and development of school leadership in England.

References

Apple, M., 2006a. Review essay: rhetoric and reality in critical educational studies in the United States. *British journal of sociology of education*, 27 (5), 679–687.
Apple, M., 2006b. Interrupting the right: on doing critical educational work in conservative times. *In:* G. Ladson-Billings and W.F. Tate, eds. *Education research in the public interest*. New York: Teachers College Press, 27–45.
Ball, S.J., 2007. *Education PLC*. London: Routledge.
Barber, M., 2007. *Instruction to deliver: Tony Blair, the public services and the challenge of achieving targets*. London: Politico's.
Béland, D., 2005. Ideas and social policy: an institutionalist perspective. *Social policy and administration*, 39 (1), 1–18.
Bourdieu, P., 1990. *In other words*. Cambridge, MA: Polity Press in association with Blackwell Publishers, Oxford.
Bourdieu, P., 2000. *Pascalian meditations*. Cambridge, MA: Polity.
Bourdieu, P., 2005. *The social structures of the economy*. Cambridge, MA: Polity.
Bourdieu, P. and Wacquant, L.J.D., 1992. *An invitation to reflexive sociology*. Cambridge, MA: Polity.
Butt, G. and Gunter, H.M., eds., 2007. *Modernizing schools: people, learning and organizations*. London: Continuum.
Coffield, F., 2007. Improving the quality of the education system. *In:* F. Coffield, R. Steer, R. Allen, A. Vignoles, G. Moss, and C. Vincent, eds. *Public sector reform: principles for improving the education system*, Bedford Way Papers. London: Institute of Education, University of London, 62–75.
Collarbone, P., 2005. Touching tomorrow: remodelling in English schools. *The Australian economic review*, 38 (1), 75–82.
DfEE, 1997. *Excellence in schools*. London: The Stationery Office,. Cm 2681.
DfEE, 1998. *Teachers: meeting the challenge of change*. London: DfEE, Cm 4164.
DfES, 2003. *Every child matters*. London: DfES, Cm 5860.

DfES, 2004. *National standards for headteachers*. London: DfES.

DfES/PricewaterhouseCoopers, 2007. *Independent study into school leadership*. London: DfES.

Gewirtz, S., 2002. *The managerial school*. London: Routledge.

Gunter, H.M., 1999. *An intellectual history of the field of educational management from 1960*. Unpublished thesis (PhD). Keele University.

Gunter, H.M., 2005. *More leadership?* Inaugural Lecture, School of Education, University of Manchester, March 2005.

Gunter, H.M., *et al.*, 2008. *New models of leadership: a literature review, report to the National College for School Leadership*. Nottingham, UK: NCSL.

Gunter, H.M. and Forrester, G., 2008. New Labour and school leadership 1997–2007. *British journal of educational studies*, 55 (2), 144–162.

Harding, A., 2000. Regime formation in Manchester and Edinburgh. *In*: G. Stoker, ed. *The new politics of British local governance*. Basingstoke, UK: MacMillan, 54–71.

Holland, D. and Lave, J., 2001. History in person, an introduction. *In:* D. Holland and J. Lave, eds. *History in person: enduring struggles, contentious practice, intimate identities*. Oxford: James Currey, 3–33.

Hyman, P., 2005. *1 out of 10, from Downing street vision to classroom reality*. London: Vintage.

Kingdon, J., 2003. *Agendas, alternatives and public policies*. 2nd ed. New York: Longman.

Lather, P., 1991. *Feminist research in education: within/against*. Geelong, Vic.: Deakin University.

Leithwood, K., *et al.*, 2006. *Seven strong claims about successful school leadership*. Nottingham, UK: NCSL.

Leithwood, K. and Levin, B., 2005. *Assessing school leader and leadership programme effects on pupil learning*. London: DfES.

Marquand, D., 2004. *Decline of the public*. Cambridge, MA: Polity.

Newman, J., 2001. *Modernising governance*. London: Sage.

Prime Minister's Strategy Unit (PMSU), 2006. *The UK government's approach to public service reform*. London: PMSU.

Rhodes, R.A.W., 1994. The hollowing out of the state. *Political quarterly*, 65, 138–151.

Saint-Martin, D., 2004. *Building the new managerialist state*. Oxford: Oxford University Press.

Thomson, P., 2005. Bringing Bourdieu into policy sociology: codification, misrecognition and exchange value in the UK context. *Journal of education policy*, 20 (6), 741–758.

Young, M.F.D., 2008. *Bringing knowledge back in*. London: Routledge.

Whitty, G., 2002. *Making sense of education policy*. London: PCP.