

TEACHERS FOR THE TWENTY-FIRST CENTURY

THE PARADOX OF EDUCATIONAL
REFORM IN THE EVALUATORY
STATE: IMPLICATIONS FOR
TEACHER EDUCATION¹

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The changing policy context of education

In a post-industrial world, we are witnessing the gradual withdrawal of the State as the direct provider of public services like education. This is accompanied by the destabilization of bureaucratic 'command and control' systems of governance. Two alternative scenarios are on offer.

DEREGULATION THROUGH PRIVATIZATION

The first is regulation by the mechanisms of the free market. It amounts to the privatization of services. Let private sector organizations run our schools, universities, hospitals and prisons for profit. Let them recruit, train and employ our teachers, university professors, doctors, nurses, social workers and prison officers. Radically reduce the role of the State and confine its role to the defence of the nation and the provi-

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sion of a welfare 'safety net' that guarantees a minimum standard of provision to those who cannot afford to buy essential services. In the educational field, this first scenario gets rid of the idea of education as a public good that is necessary for the development and sustainability of a just, equitable and democratic social order. What constitutes a good teacher, what knowledge and skills are required to become one, and who is best placed to provide the necessary training when it is needed would all be shaped by market mechanisms. The accountability of service providers would be to citizens cast in the roles of consumers and shareholders.

This view stands in marked contrast to one in which providers are accountable to a citizenry conceived as active agents in the creation and maintenance of a social order that contributes to their collective well-being. Accountability in this context operates in a public realm and is shaped by conceptions of collective well being, of the public good, that transcend market values.

Within the market scenario universities, as privatized organizations, would only engage in teacher training if it were profitable, in a situation of intense market competition against alternative providing agencies within the private sector. These may not only include private companies who specialize in the provision of educational services and an extended role for schools, but also those in the established service industries, such as supermarket chains and fast-food outlets, who might see education and training as an opportunity to extend their service range. In this situation, the competitiveness of universities in the field of teacher training will depend on their 'market price', which means that the profitability of their provision will in turn depend on a 'cost-efficient' use of human resources in 'delivering' programmes. It is the 'cost-efficiency' of teacher training 'delivery systems' that will determine the future of university-based teacher preparation and continuing professional development.

In order to remain competitive, and therefore profitable, the purposes and values that shape the development of teacher education in universities, in their role as public institutions, are likely to undergo radical transformation. Hence, some emerging images of 'the professional teacher' may not, in practice, shape teacher-education programmes because the means of realizing these identities are likely to prove too demanding in terms of high-cost human resources. In this respect, I am thinking of such images of the teacher as a 'reflective practitioner' engaged in collaborative inquiry/action research with peers to improve the quality of children's learning experiences, or as an active agent in the development of a socially inclusive pedagogy that is 'socially reconstructionist, anti-racist, anti-assimilationist, and aimed at social justice' (see Cochran-Smith, 2001, p. 542). Images of the teacher as a technically skilled operator of a production technology are more likely to fit programmes driven by market mechanisms, and result in the reduction of an educational vision of teacher preparation and development to a vision of training in narrowly conceived technical skills concerned with instructional design, behaviour management and assessment techniques.

Market mechanisms may even render traditional university-based pre-service teacher preparation programmes unnecessary and confine training to skills acquired on-the-job under a work-place mentor, or in-service contexts where specific skill deficiencies that have been identified need to be rectified. The shift from bureaucratic to market-

based regulation in the field of education opens up a discourse about alternative routes into teaching and alternative forms of certification as a precursor to gathering evidence to show that the latter are just as effective as traditional routes in safe-guarding teaching quality (see Cochrane-Smith, 2001, p. 532). It will all be justified as a pragmatic solution to the problem of teacher supply. What is clear is that arguments about whether universities have something distinctive to offer in the field of teacher preparation and development will be undermined from within academe itself as it strives to transform its programmes into cost-efficient delivery systems in an increasingly competitive market-place.

INDIRECT REGULATION THROUGH THE EVALUATORY STATE

The second scenario depicts a radical alternative to the bureaucratic State and casts the State in the role of a purchaser of public services rather than a direct provider. The State sets the *standards* of provision, pays for it and holds providers accountable for it. It issues contracts that place providers under an obligation to 'deliver' services that meet the standards in a *cost-effective* manner over a set period of time. The relationship between the State as purchaser and the providing agencies takes the form of *contractual accountability*. This relationship is established through a competitive bidding system in which prospective providers are required to demonstrate that they can give the State *value for money*. Successful bids are likely to be those that promise to meet the required standards at the lowest cost.

The primary function of the State in its role as *purchaser* rather than *provider* is an *evaluation function*. It is by evaluating the performance of the providing agencies that the State is able to indirectly influence and shape the 'quality' of provision.

The mechanisms of indirect control exercised by the evaluatory State open the gateway to the State purchasing public services in the educational field from the private sector if they promise to yield better value for money.

At the time of writing this paper, the *Times educational supplement* (6 July 2001) carries the headline 'Independent schools poised for takeovers'. Leading private schools are considering forming companies to take over 'failing' public sector schools and even education services currently provided by local government. They are also considering banding together to sponsor educational initiatives announced by the government such as 'specialist schools, city academies, education action zones or Excellence in Cities schemes'. As the TES comments, the formation of such companies fits the British New Labour Government's vision of a diversified public schools system run by both public and private sector providers working in 'partnership' with the government.

Such a vision of private sector involvement in the delivery of public services in a form that is consistent with the policy goals of government has been described as *the third way*, a radical alternative to both bureaucratic socialism and the New Right agenda of free-market conservatism. It tends to reflect the emerging policy context of 'left of centre' governments across the world.

The major mechanism of indirect control by the evaluatory State is an audit tech-

nology for rendering performance within the providing agencies transparent to its gaze. Performance audits provide a basis for decisions about whether or not to renew a particular contract at the end of the specified time-period. The threat of termination shapes the organizational climate of providing agencies. In a contract organization, the work-force will tend to be structured around 'income streams' that flow from contracts, and therefore largely consist of temporary and even part-time appointments. Such a work force will be rationalized, as the means of securing the flexibility the organization needs to survive in an unstable economic environment. It will be characterized by an intensification of feelings of insecurity. In such a climate, it is increasingly difficult for staff to predict their long-term futures with any degree of certainty. 'Careers' collapse into 'jobs' and a sense of 'vocation' based on a commitment to an ideal of service gives way to more pragmatic considerations. Performance becomes increasingly driven by the need to secure the next job.

The restructuring of providing institutions as contract organizations leads to the creation of an inner core of managers whose major function is to ensure that the organization gives, or appears to give, the State 'value' for its money. Hence, within the *evaluatory State*, in contrast to the *bureaucratic State*, it is the role of providing agencies to manage their own compliance to the regulatory frameworks of the government. The task of *performance management* is the construction of *creditable performance*, i.e. to render performance inside the organization transparent to the gaze of the evaluatory State in a form that brings credit to it. The high level of job insecurity that obtains inside the contract organization makes the task of performance managers easier inasmuch as it fosters a *culture of compliance* within the work-force.

The transition from the bureaucratic to the evaluatory State involves the establishment of national auditing agencies that enable governments to evaluate whether they are getting value for their money. In the initial stages of this transition, such auditing agencies will tend to carry out direct audits of performance within the providing agencies. However, as the performance management function becomes internalized, such agencies can be increasingly entrusted by the State to carry out their own audits of performance. In the later stages of the transition towards the evaluatory State, providing agencies are largely self-auditing. It then becomes the task of the external agencies to *audit the internal audit* procedures rather than performance as such. In this sense, the State regulates the mechanisms of self-regulation. This, as Power (1997, p. 53) has argued, does not constitute any diminishing of State control but simply the replacement of direct control technologies by indirect 'liberal' technologies that may prove far more effective as instruments of State power. The borrowing and adaptation of market-based instruments is a characteristic of such technologies. One of the most powerful technologies employed by the evaluatory State is 'value for money' audit (VFM).

The technology of audit inside the evaluatory State

VFM render organizations and the individuals who work inside them accountable for the three Es – acquiring resources on the best *economical* terms possible, ensuring

that maximum output is obtained from the resources employed (*efficiency*), and ensuring that outcomes conform to the intentions specified in a programme of tasks and activities (*effectiveness*). Such audits presuppose a framework of beliefs and assumptions that include the following:

- service outcomes can be pre-specified in advance of provision;
- outcomes can be operationally defined as measurable *outputs*;
- output measures can be *standardized* as *performance indicators* over time and context. They are immutable and fixed.

The reconstructions of meaning involved here: of 'outcomes' as 'outputs', and 'standards' as *standardized performance indicators*, are integral to the VFM technology and shape the kind of information produced through audit. It is information that can be used by the State to judge the 'performativity' of organizations and individuals, defined as the best equation between *inputs* and *outputs*. The increasing use of elaborate systems of 'indicators' reflects an extension of the audit's traditional function beyond holding organizations accountable for their legal stewardship of inputs (fiscal regularity) to include functions related to value for money (see Power, 1997, pp. 16–20).

VFM audits originated in the private sector and their skills and knowledge-base reside in the associated disciplines of business studies and accountancy. As mechanisms for regulating performance, their transfer from private to public sector organizations, such as educational institutions, stems from the problems surrounding the resourcing of the welfare State. In their role as guarantors of quality assurance and accountability to the public, they legitimate organizational changes in public sector institutions that make them look like business organizations. In order to render them fit for audit, educational institutions have to be re-engineered along the lines of private sector organizations. Hence, the creation of the educational system in the United Kingdom as a 'new public management system' (NPM) with increasing private-sector involvement as business management consultants in organizational restructuring, implementing new management and information systems, standards-setting, etc.

Traditional procedures for monitoring and evaluating performance in the educational system within the United Kingdom – inspection, examinations and testing, staff appraisal – have been recast as instruments of a VFM audit aimed at rigorously monitoring, evaluating and regulating professional standards in the name of enhancing public accountability and quality assurance. 'Dip-stick' inspections of schools, for example, have been transformed through the Office for Standards in Education (OFSTED) into an instrument for regularly checking compliance to national curriculum requirements, evaluating teacher and school effectiveness – 'including the value for money it provides' – and the quality of internal management and leadership. Tests and exams have been calibrated against standards as measures of input and output at various 'key stages' of schooling. Appraisal has been reconstructed as a form of internal audit of the 'performativity' of individuals for the purposes of performance management, including the 'rational' distribution of financial incentives.

The emergence of the evaluatory State in the United Kingdom across the public services has impacted on higher education institutions, which are now well advanced in transforming themselves into quasi-business production units. This includes the

departments of education in these institutions. They are still the major providers of teacher education/training, although increasingly competing against alternative sources of provision that include schools and school consortia, as well as private sector organizations. Provision is purchased by the Teacher Training Agency (TTA) and the continuation of services by the contractee, including higher education institutions, is dependent on regular performance audits carried out by the OFSTED. Both the TTA and OFSTED are quasi-governmental agencies. The TTA has responsibility for defining professional standards for teachers at different levels of responsibility. These tend to be defined in terms of instrumental competencies as opposed to theoretical knowledge and understanding. Such 'standards' provide the structure for audits of performance by OFSTED, which are then reported to the TTA as a basis for future funding decisions.

The form in which standards are specified also gives the higher-education institutions no privileged status as providers of teacher education/training. The idea that such institutions had something distinctive to offer by virtue of their cultural and intellectual capital is being rendered redundant by the political reconstruction of the meaning of 'standards'. Schools and private-sector institutions now increasingly compete with higher education on an even playing field in terms of their 'cost-effectiveness' as *delivery systems*.

In this context, teacher-training provision in some higher-education institutions can be, and has been, terminated. Since the TTA fixes the price of provision in a competitive bidding situation, higher education institutions are forced to manage performance in a cost-efficient manner. The latter involves restructuring the workforce in departments of education along the lines described earlier, and instituting performance management systems. Staff are increasingly employed on temporary contracts, and growing feelings of anxiety and insecurity lead to an inevitable loss of professional idealism. Teacher education is becoming transformed into training, and its status as a lifelong vocation and career is fast vanishing.

Auditing processes in the public sector differ from those in the private sector in at least one important respect; namely, their standards framework is largely shaped by policy goals set by the government rather than simply market forces. Indeed, within the United Kingdom over the past twelve years, the government has played a leading role in shaping the standards by which quality is judged in schools, through the national curriculum and assessment framework and more recently through the professional standards that are to provide the basis for school managers internally auditing the performance of individual teachers in schools as a basis for performance-related pay. OFSTED is now responsible for auditing the internal auditing arrangements and supplying the government with information about their quality. Within the field of higher education, the Quality Assurance Agency (QAA) is adopting an 'audit of audit' approach. It is also playing the leading role in defining national benchmarks of attainment in academic subjects, in response to the policy goal of creating stronger links between educational outcomes and the needs of the labour market.

Standardized performance indicators are used by the evaluatory State to measure the extent to which its policy goals or agendas are being achieved in the public sector.

In contrast, within the private sector, standards are defined, at least according to the philosophy of VFM, as a direct response to the articulated needs of consumers. This renders the line of accountability for the quality of audit itself clear. The auditing agencies are accountable to the shareholders of the businesses they evaluate, and certainly not to the State. They are politically independent agencies. However, in the context of public sector institutions like schools and higher-education institutions, the lines of accountability for auditing agencies are far from clear. In theory they are, like private sector auditors, politically neutral but, in practice, is not this neutrality compromised by the fact that it is the State that makes the major investment in public services? Given this fact, does not the government have the right to call agencies like OFSTED or the QAA to account for the quality of information provided and the manner in which it is gathered? The problem for government is that in exercising this right, and therefore making it explicit, it would expose the 'political neutrality' and 'independence' of such agencies as a myth, and thereby undermine one of the central tenets of VFM audit – its political independence. The 'solution' to this problem is to deny political accountability for the quality of audit and a tendency to invest a considerable amount of 'blind trust' in the agencies that undertake it.

Power (1997, pp. 49–52) has argued that the technology of the VFM audit tends to confuse 'outputs' with 'outcomes' and, in doing so, ignores the difficult task of understanding the complex connections between service activities and their consequences, which is central to evaluations of the effectiveness of activities. VFM audits tend to confuse evaluating performance against a given level of measurable output with evaluating its effectiveness. For Power, the two kinds of evaluation rest on quite distinct logics, one emanating from the disciplines of accountancy and business studies and the other from the social sciences. As indicators of effectiveness, 'outputs' lack empirical verification since they are defined independently of any understanding of the contextual complexities that shape the relationship between activities and their actual outcomes.

However sound Power's arguments are concerning the ambiguous nature of VFM audit and its accountability and use as an evaluation technology, we should understand its political significance for the evaluatory State as an instrument for monitoring the achievement of its policy goals.

Target setting within the evaluatory State and the relationship between ends and means

One of the major characteristics of the evaluatory State is its enthusiasm for *target setting*. Targets will specify the measurable levels of output to be achieved nationally within a given time-scale in relation to a proportion of the targeted population of 'clients'. In this context, one can understand how critical the device of the *standardized performance indicator* as a measure of service outcomes is to the enterprise of national target setting.

Fielding (2001, p. 144) argues that the case for target setting rests on at least five

intrinsic considerations. Firstly, it clearly specifies what needs to be done. Secondly, it specifies this in measurable terms. Thirdly, it can specify something that is within our reach and possible to accomplish. Fourthly, it can specify something that is practically meaningful and relevant to those involved, and therefore motivating them for action. Fifthly, it can specify what needs to be done in a time-related manner. In summary, as Fielding points out, target setting offers the prospect of exercising high levels of *internal* direction and control over our activities. However, Fielding warns us against 'target mania' in the educational field: an obsessional pre-occupation with 'what works' in a purely instrumental sense to the exclusion of other considerations. Such a preoccupation places these considerations at the periphery of our attention. He argues that it: (a) obscures rather than clarifies the relationship between specific targets and the wider aims of education; (b) neglects questions about the legitimacy of the means employed to achieve them; (c) blinds us to the limitations of measurement and leads us to misrepresent important aspects of education by trying to measure the immeasurable; (d) renders the inherent realism of target setting a barrier to an educational process in which risk-taking, creativity and exploratory thinking are inherent qualities of learning; and (e) establishes a climate in which the meaning and relevance of the targets set for learners is defined by others.

In the context of the evaluatory State, target-setting is not simply a 'self-regulating' activity – something organizations and individuals do to improve their own performance. It has been appropriated by some central governments as a basis for deregulating public service provision within a purchaser-provider framework. In such a context, target setting becomes the major instrument for exercising high levels of *external* direction and control over the activities of providing agencies. Within the purchaser-provider framework, target-setting divorces the exercise of *power* from *responsibility* for action and becomes the exclusive basis for a low-trust *quality assurance* system which distorts our understanding of education in the ways Fielding outlines.

Within the evaluatory State, targets established at the level of central government shape the performance of providing institutions and those who work in them. Institutions and individuals are encouraged to set their own targets within this framework. Hence, one gets hierarchically nested layers of target-setting running from central government to service providers to individuals. In this context the intrinsic appeal of target-setting as a self-regulating activity becomes somewhat diminished for those with responsibility for action. For example, in the United Kingdom tensions have broken out between government and schools over both the feasibility and meaningfulness of national literacy targets. Similarly, in many countries teacher educators are questioning the meaningfulness and relevance of national targets relating to literacy and numeracy skills for newly qualified teachers. In the context of the evaluatory State, the case for target-setting, as in some sense 'empowering' of human agency, is somewhat eroded by considerations that make it appealing as an instrument of indirect external regulation. According to Fielding (p. 144), these considerations dominate target-setting in education within the United Kingdom. They are linked to the way it fits the government's pragmatic outcomes-driven approach to policy-making, and its desire to make institutional and individual performance inside providing agencies transparent to

external scrutiny, thereby rendering them accountable for what they were contracted to do.

Given this appeal of target-setting for the evaluatory State, it is unlikely that conceptual critiques of VFM audit technology alone will be sufficient to change its approach to evaluating the public services.

Fundamental to the core functions of the evaluatory State in setting targets and monitoring progress in achieving them is the separation of ends from means in the policy-making process. It is assumed that policy goals and the values they are based on do not necessarily imply any view of the means for achieving them. Hence, within the evaluatory State, educational aims and purposes do not imply a vision of the means of accomplishing them. They refer solely to the desirable outcomes of learning.

This applies as much to the education of teachers as to the education of the children they teach. From the standpoint of the evaluatory State, aims of teacher education such as 'teachers as researchers' (Stenhouse, 1979), or teachers as 'reflective practitioners' (Schon, 1983), or teachers as 'critical pedagogues' (see Cochran-Smith, 2001), are ideologically rather than pragmatically based, inasmuch as they link the process of teacher development to an ideal form of professional practice and justify it with an 'educational theory'.

From the pragmatic point of view of the evaluatory State, justifications of professional practice refer to ends that are extrinsic to any particular form of practice. The training of teachers as researchers, for example, may be a good thing if it can be shown to be more instrumentally effective than other approaches in producing the specific knowledge and skills teachers need. In itself, the approach is of no intrinsic merit. It stands and falls in relation to the question of *what works* to achieve the national targets the government sets for teacher training.

Powerful philosophical critiques of ends/means thinking in education were mounted in the 1960s and 1970s in response to emerging 'objectives' models of curriculum planning (see, for example, Peters, 1966, 1973; Stenhouse, 1970, 1975). However, they have done little to stem the rise of the evaluatory State in the form depicted above. They are, however, re-emerging, not only in the specific field of educational policy (see Fielding, 2001; Elliott, 1996, 2001), but also in relation to public-service policy in general.

Hence, very recently, Michael Jacobs (2001, pp. 70–80), General Secretary of the left-of-centre Fabian Society in the United Kingdom, mounted a powerful critique of ends/means thinking in the Labour Government. This followed in the wake of a general election where the citizenry made it very clear that it wanted the Labour Government in its second term of office to demonstrate a real commitment to improving public services, like health care and education.

Jacobs argues that talk of a 'third way' and involving the private sector as partners in the delivery of services will not be sufficient to reassure the public of the government's intentions. He argues that this will involve the construction of a strong ideological narrative that will make people more aware of the values that underpin the government's policies. He believes that the construction of such a narrative is more important in winning the hearts and minds of the electorate than the demonstration of specific

improvements, since their meaning and significance will be unclear without a well-articulated political philosophy.

Jacobs appears to be arguing for something the evaluatory State has been determined to erode in public sector institutions; namely, that public service policy should be linked to a well-articulated social ideology capable of coherently shaping provision. He is clear that this involves letting go of the presumption that means have 'no philosophical content in themselves' and are 'simply neutral agents of value-based ends'. It matters, he argues, whether governments use public sector institutions or private companies, or whether they adopt centralized or decentralized forms of governance. This is because different policies and approaches to public sector provision 'create different kinds of society'. Even when different means of achieving particular policy goals or targets prove to be equally cost-effective/efficient, their outcomes will differ, Jacobs argues, 'since the outcomes must include the nature of the social relations and values which different policy approaches embody' (p. 74). Here, he not only echoes Power's point about the confusion of outputs with outcomes in the technology of VFM audit, but also clearly articulates the inseparability of social policy outcomes from the means by which they are achieved. Different social ends imply different means and different means embody different ends.

Public sector institutions, Jacobs argues, need to be protected by the State precisely because they are ideologically shaped. They embody ideals of service that are defined 'by the need of the service user, not his or her market power'. They give concrete expression to the idea of community and create a 'public space' in which diverse individuals come together to provide for their collective needs insulated from market values (pp. 74–75). For Jacobs, the State cannot protect public services shaped by social democratic values and ideals if it retreats into a residual contract-defining public role and allows public services to be largely provided by the private sector.

The implication of Jacobs' critique for public sector professionals is this: when market values come to define provision in the public realm, as they are increasingly doing in the emergent evaluatory State, then this realm takes the form of a quasi-market indirectly regulated by the State through target setting and audit-led monitoring of performance. As in the free market, the quasi-market leaves little space for professional practices that are shaped by philosophical ideals. Paradoxically, the more successful the evaluatory State becomes in regulating public-service provision to achieve its targets, the more it will generate outcomes that undermine the public realm and the social values embedded in it.

It is only when this paradox becomes visible to the citizenry that critiques of mechanisms – like target-setting and the technology of the VFM audit – become effective as levers for change in the field of policy-making. In the field of educational policy, certain counter-productive outcomes of VFM auditing are becoming increasingly apparent as manifestations of the paradox of the evaluatory State. It is to these that I turn in the concluding section. As well as describing them, I shall try to indicate how they can be ameliorated by a more balanced outlook on the role of the State in improving educational provision.

The suggestions made below do not constitute a denial of a place for private sector

involvement in such provision, particularly in areas where it can contribute to the 'cost-efficient' use of resources without eroding the core functions of public-sector institutions, like schools and universities, in shaping their educational practices according to social ideals and values. Devices like 'target setting' and 'performance auditing' have a function in securing minimum standards of provision. The problems lie in their obsessive use as regulatory mechanisms to the exclusion of other approaches to quality assurance.

The counter-productive outcomes of rendering performance transparent to the gaze of the State

I would suggest that too much stress on VFM-shaped performance audit is counter-productive in the following respects:

1. *It drains too much trust out of the system where it counts, at the level of the work place*

If accountability for the quality of public services is too weak, there is an increased danger of service providers neglecting the legitimate interests of central government, communities of stakeholders and individual citizens; of internal systems being more liable to corruption and inefficiency and of the provision failing to fit the needs of a wider policy context. If, on the other hand, accountability is too strong in its drive to render performance increasingly transparent to the public gaze, trust in practitioners is drained away and they in turn come to mistrust the integrity of the auditors. Sustained mistrust turns into a pathological fear of audit and the resulting despair produces a counterproductive situation in which practitioners, like teachers and teacher educators, lose motivation and interest in their work, go through the motions of compliance, and avoid taking reasonable and necessary risks for fear of being wrong (playing it safe). The outcome for educational institutions, like schools and higher-education institutions, is that they fail to innovate in order to respond to new challenges and needs which emerge from a dynamic, unstable and continuously changing social environment.

2. *It prevents teachers from performing the difficult task of understanding the complex connections between service activities and their consequences, which is central to the continuing development of practices like teaching*

As Power argues, it is one thing to assess performance against certain standardized outputs or targets to which it should conform and quite another thing to assess the impact or consequences (unintended, as well as intended) of performances, including those which comply with the given standards. Too much stress on the former prevents the latter form of assessment, and disempowers the practitioner as an effective agent in transforming their practice. This is because an exclusive focus on targets as a basis for improving performance blinkers the practitioner to a complex chain of side effects, some of which may prove counterproductive.

It is one thing to assess performance against certain standardized outputs to which it should conform (e.g. 'exam and test results', 'average waiting times for patients', 'police response times to emergency calls', 'meals on wheels per 1,000 of the elderly population') and quite another thing to assess the impact or consequences (unintended as well as intended) of performances, including those which comply to the given standards. Although it may be a fact that teachers and schools are improving their performance when it is measured against such indicators as 'exam results' and 'truancy rates', we have very little understanding of the chain of effects such improvements set off within the education system and beyond. For example, is decreasing attention to the 30% of secondary school students that are unlikely to attain their pass grades in the General Certificate of Secondary Education examinations at the age of 16 a direct consequence of measuring performance against this indicator? Again, is the problem of teacher supply in under-performing inner city schools in any way connected to the difficulties in such schools of generating performances that are up 'to standard'? What, in these circumstances, is effective teaching?

Governments need to give more space in the public accountability system for teachers to develop a form of performance evaluation that is more sensitive 'to the complexities of connecting [. . .] processes causally to outcomes' (see Power, 1997). These would include 'self', 'peer' and 'students/parents' evaluation components, in addition to an 'external' evaluation by an independent agent. Within this form of evaluation, indicators of effectiveness are 'things' to be empirically verified, refined and discovered in particular contexts of practice. They will also include qualitative as well as quantitative indicators. Cost-effectiveness considerations would not be ruled out, but instead of simply measuring the costs of achieving a given level of output, they would involve a more sophisticated weighing up of costs against evidence of impact.

3. *It is intolerant of time*

The prevailing technologies of audit rest upon the assumption of fixed and immutable performance indicators that do not vary across time and context. They leave little room for a view of teaching effectiveness as a time-dependent and context-bound phenomenon. The impact of teaching on students, the chain of effects it creates in particular contexts, takes time to unfold, and our understanding of the connections between processes and outcomes therefore changes over time and is never perfect. Teaching, argues Strathern (2000), is audited as if 'immediate assimilability' is its goal. Yet, we know that learning takes place over time and 'may manifest itself weeks, years, generations, after teaching, and may manifest itself in forms that do not look like the original at all' for 'the student's experiences will introduce his or her own "indirection".'

Whereas performance audits aim to make activities within the organization perfectly transparent through the use of timeless indicators, such an aspiration is largely illusory as a comprehensive basis for professional accountability. It is simply not the case that quality in teaching does not exist if it cannot be measured against fixed and timeless targets. Indeed, the reverse is often the case: namely, that the gaze of audit,

if too unremitting in its quest for transparency, makes evidence about the real impact of teaching on learners invisible and in doing so masks real quality.

In yielding only imperfect information at any point in time, evaluations of a school's or teacher's effectiveness have a 'transient use' (see Strathern, 2000). They provide feedback that can be used by practitioners to further develop their practice. Accountability for the effectiveness of teaching involves a willingness on the part of teachers to publicly demonstrate, when called upon to do so, how evidence about the impact of their teaching on learners has been used to further develop practice. This type of accountability presupposes a growth of 'evidence-based practice', where teachers engage both *with* and *in* research into the quality of their teaching. It lies at the heart of *quality development* in educational institutions, and should not be confused with audit-based accountability.

The idea of 'evidence-based teaching' as a process of rectifying 'deficiencies', identified by measuring performance against a normative template of fixed indicators, rests on a distorted conception of what constitutes relevant evidence about the relationship between teaching and its outcomes. Evidence of measurable *improvement*, defined as bringing performance up to a fixed standard, is not the same as evidence of *development*, defined as an open-ended and on-going process over time.

Accountability for the *development of true quality in teaching* is conditional upon teachers being trusted to engage in the process free from the unremitting gaze of audit. This is because it is a process that is essentially invisible to audit. The more the technology of audit – the creation of information systems and audit trails for the purposes of inspection – encroaches on and shapes teaching and learning, the less space teachers have for *quality development* and becoming *effective teachers*.

It is precisely because quality development in teaching requires an investment of trust in teachers, that society – in the form of its representational bodies – has the right at particular points in time to call them to account for their practice in terms of its outcomes for students and others. Teachers can exercise 'accountability' by demonstrating at these points their ability to make transient use of evidence about the impact of their teaching in ways that improve their practical judgements and decisions. Such demonstrations would consist of accounts of reflective practice. This kind of accountability implies trust, but not unconditional trust.

There comes a point at which the strengthening of performance audit at the level of classrooms becomes counter-productive. At this point, it disrupts rather than enhances the development of teaching quality, drains away the necessary amount of trust such development depends on, and renders teachers largely unaccountable for the outcomes – as opposed to the outputs – of their teaching. The strengthening of accountability through audit may bring more comfort to policy-makers, and perhaps the 'consumers' of education, as a guarantor of minimal standards, but it is likely to depress quality development. It is not that accountability within education systems is not in need of further strengthening, but this needs to be based on a different logic of evaluation to the one that shapes performance auditing. A better balance between evaluation for performance audit and evaluation for quality development needs to be achieved.

4. *It puts teachers into a constant state of activation*

Given its intolerance of time for development and its aspiration to render performance totally transparent to its gaze, unremitting performance auditing places teachers in the role of the ever-active performer. The audit culture is intolerant of time because it is shaped by a sense of urgency. From its perspective, the system is in a state of crisis and disaster is always imminent. Things have to be done now to ward it off. People within the organization therefore have to be kept in a continuous state of activation. This implies changes to the way in which the teacher's 'professional self' is conceptualized as the aim of his/her professional development; namely, to 'promote the auditable, competitive and ever-active performer' in the place of the 'inspiring teacher' (see Strathern, 2000).

Before the rise of performance auditing, the accountability procedures for teachers were very weak, and it can be justifiably argued that too much trust was invested in them unconditionally. But the solution to the problem is not to keep on extending a compliance model of accountability derived from the private sector. When it is extended to the point where most of the trust invested in teachers has finally drained away, and teachers are kept so busy improving their fitness for audit that they have no time left over for reflectively developing the quality of their teaching, such an accountability system becomes dysfunctional. The solution is to strengthen a form of accountability that invests conditional trust in teachers and is underpinned by a different logic of evaluatory practice. This is where some operationalizations of the idea of evidence-based practice using the methodological resources of the social sciences may point to the way forward.

What is clear is that the way forward must involve a significant transformation of the social democratic State's approach to its role within the public sector, and its relationship to its institutions and those who work in them. It may still evolve as an evaluatory State, but the approach to evaluation must transcend one shaped purely by devices transferred from the private sector. It will be an approach that invests more trust in public sector professionals to self-regulate and evaluate their practices in the light of service ideals that are consistent with the values of a pluralistic democracy. In the field of education, it should be one of the major tasks of teacher educators in higher-education institutions to safeguard and sustain a discourse about the ideals of education in such a democracy.

Note

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