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The 'Good' Teacher? Constructing Teacher Identities for Lifelong Learning

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Abstract: The symposium will focus on trans-national constructions of the 'good' teacher through popular culture, through professional development orthodoxies and through professional practices such as professional growth plans, inspection and teacher regulation.

We all recognise trends such as a focus on performance aspects of teachers' work; the development of competence models based on standards derived from industry; a resulting standardisation in ideas of the 'good' teacher; and dramatic increases in levels of teacher accountability. The professional standardisation of the 'good' teacher through specifications and norms is regulated through a wide range of mechanisms: performance measurement, technologies of professional development, quality assurance and inspection, as well as teacher competence frameworks, professional bodies, and so on. These measures are part of a response to global economic restructuring in which governments have sought to use education as 'a tool of micro-economic reform, through a re-skilling of the workforce'(Smyth, 1995, p.3). Teaching is thus construed as a vehicle for implementing economic policy, with a wide range of measures to ensure that teachers do the business. Thus, not only do teachers have to guarantee their students' learning, with learning defined externally, but they are also responsible for changing the economic performance of countries through the training and retraining of workers.

At the same time, the rhetoric of lifelong learning, so familiar to many of us trans-nationally, has brought with it a surge of both academic and policy interest in workplace learning. Broader conceptual understandings of learning as embodied and relational offer us a chance to explore teachers' identities as relational, and to think about teaching as a site of workplace learning (that is, the classroom, the community centre, the university and so on).

Here, therefore, we focus on constructions of the 'good' teacher in a number of ways: through popular culture, through professional development orthodoxies and through professional practices such as professional growth plans, inspection and teacher regulation. We have chosen examples from the UK and North America, and from across educational sectors, because we believe that these illuminate trans-national trends. Adult educators are not – if they ever were – an identifiable group of people, separate from those who work in schools, colleges and universities. Those teaching children may be working with parents; those teaching adults may find themselves working with adolescents; those teaching undergraduates are more likely than ever before to be teaching mature students. Boundaries between institutions, workplaces, sectors, disciplines are dissolving. Simultaneously, the trends we observed above affect all teachers. We therefore need to consider what we might learn about the construction of the 'good' teacher from across the educational terrain.

We also recognise that teachers are adults – and we should be concerned with their education in the broadest sense. We want to expand the notion of 'education' here to include

subjectivities, identities and metaphors in popular culture, as well as workplace learning. We want to resuscitate teaching and pedagogy as opposed to the current obsession with learning, and we want to raise critical questions about the ways in which teachers are 'disciplined' through workplace practices, professional development practices and scrutiny.

Popular culture and teacher identity: Ann Harris and Christine Jarvis

Teacher education in the UK has been transformed by outcomes and standards driven educational models. Within increasingly prescribed curricula limited perspectives on the nature of teaching and learning are presented as universal truths to new teachers. Standards are enforced and examined; without conformity, teachers cannot qualify. Our research and experience as teacher educators, however, indicate that the concept of the 'good teacher' held by new and trainee teachers is closer to popular cultural representations than it is to the models implicit in the standards and behaviours imposed by regulatory agencies. Film and television, in particular, present images of the 'good teacher' that draw on a liberal, individualistic model of teaching. Students we interviewed consistently ignored technical discourses of teacher competence and offered instead a construct of teacher as a charismatic performer unconstrained by quality regimes or set objectives. Our argument, therefore, is that policy makers and teacher educators need to deconstruct the concept of the 'good teacher' not only to assist understanding about prospective teachers' aspirations but also to provide a dialectic with which to interrogate current technical models of competence, and thus raise questions about the disparity between the social and political agenda.

Our empirical work with trainee teachers using questionnaires and semi-structured interviews indicates that students generally construct their vision of a good teacher within a narrative that is personal and decontextualised. The story they generate is of an inspired individual who, against the odds, wins over the disaffected and disheartened. A comparison of the semantic fields used within trainee teachers' discourses with those employed in teacher education and government standards is revealing. Initial analysis indicates that, even where standards appear student-centred (emphasising differentiation, for example), they are couched in remote and technical terminology. Our students, however, chose words to describe teaching that came from a more ancient, less scientific language; words that were damascene and excited emotional engagement. Most commonly used were variants of 'passion', 'inspire', 'fire', 'excite', 'vocation', closely followed by 'care', 'pastoral', 'genuine', 'transform'. Often, they chose words that suggest the uncontrollable. The teaching they admire does not necessarily generate predetermined and measured outcomes, but it does stimulate passion, build fires, bring illumination. Vocation, too, does not suggest a calculated choice, but an inevitable calling related both to subject and to students themselves as individuals.

Trainee teachers rarely connect this passion and inspiration to occupational or institutional goals or to wider social movements. The latter is perhaps more interesting in the light of the second lexical cluster: those words dealing with pastoral care. It is here that the notion of transformation appears and that students spoke about wishing to change people's lives. Disadvantage was largely identified at an individual level. Teachers could help worthy individuals to escape and enrichment, but they were not seen to be in the business of fighting a class war. The idea that systematic, structural disadvantage might be operating or that educators had a role making people aware of this featured only to a very minor degree. No mention was made of gender, in spite of a good selection of mature female interviewees and only one person mentioned race.

These broad perspectives are compatible with the dominant values evident in the popular cultural texts most frequently cited by the interviewees. Weber and Mitchell's analysis (1995) noted that good teachers in popular fiction are inspirational individuals, often new to teaching. Good teaching results not from experience or training but from innate character and personality traits: enthusiasm, commitment, passion, performance and a profoundly caring nature. Ayers (2001) argues that film makers show a good teacher as a 'solitary hero', who alone can save the worthy few from the horrors and pain of urban life. The texts mentioned most frequently by our students were the films 'Dead Poets' Society' and 'Dangerous Minds', and both seem to typify the individualistic, liberal and socially naïve view characteristic of many popular texts about teaching. John Keating in 'Dead Poets' Society' works in the school where he had been a student. His mission as a teacher is not dissimilar from his vision as a student: to stand out and shine. For him the classroom can contain a secret and superior society, where susceptible minds linger on each word, venerating heroes and challenging convention.

In 'Dangerous Minds' Lou-Anne Johnson, a new teacher, encounters less familiar territory and needs to be reconstructed to differentiate herself from the establishment and become acceptable to her students. She achieves this by wearing black leather, using street dialect, teaching karate and song lyrics and by offering an expensive excursion as reward for endeavour. Lowe (2001) highlights how Lou-Anne Johnson ignores the curriculum, a notion which, certainly in the UK with its emphasis on schemes of work and lesson objectives, is unthinkable. Lowe also notes the racism inherent in a film that does not begin to examine the social and structural factors leading to students' disaffection and difficulties. 'Dangerous Minds' implies that this educated white woman, independently, has the capacity and insight to redeem these young lives, offering them inspiration and opportunity in contrast to the intellectual poverty and low expectations of their neighbourhood. Lou-Anne Johnson, like John Keating, assumes the role of saviour, leading students able or willing to follow, and thereby counteracting the prevailing educational ethos, the uncaring behaviour of fellow teachers, the insensitivity of parents and the negative impact of dominant social and cultural values. In neither film is there any attempt to unpack these larger institutional realities.

Attrition rates in teaching are high. We believe that the dissonance between teachers' own values with respect to education and teaching and definitions of the competent teacher imposed by regulatory bodies may contribute to this. Teachers are likely to be the ones suffering from disillusion and disaffection after a period of time in the classroom. We suggest that, in a climate of teacher shortage as currently in the UK, governments and departments of education would be wise to address and accommodate the motivations and interests of intending teachers.

Soft regulation of the good teacher: Tara Fenwick

In Canada, the combination of neo-liberal provincial governments with continuing public anxiety about accountability in schools has helped contribute to increasing overt regulation of teaching competency. Teachers shudder and teaching associations have fought hard against initiatives such as Alberta's Teaching Standards, New Brunswick's mandatory professional development credit-for-pay scheme, and Ontario's calls for provincially-administered teacher tests and mechanisms of re-certification. But processes of 'soft' teacher regulation are perhaps even more pernicious, cloaked in lifelong learning discourses of 'growth' and self-direction. These exercise powerful influences on shared notions of what makes good teaching, what is worthwhile teacher knowledge, and who gets to decide. One example is the Teacher Professional Growth Plan (TPGP). Now legislated and monitored throughout Alberta, growth plans are quickly spreading in practice and policy to other provinces. In my study of uses and meanings of

these TPGPs by teachers, principals and district administrators (Fenwick, 2003), I found Foucault's notion of pastoral power (1980) particularly fruitful in illuminating the directions and processes of soft regulation. This analysis understands that production of teacher identities and knowledge occurs through disciplinary power and norms internalised through compulsory visibility and technologies of the self.

In Alberta, provincial policy requires all public school teachers to create an annual written growth plan (Alberta Learning 1998). This plan must reflect goals based on a self-assessment of learning needs; show a demonstrable relationship to the provincial 'teaching quality standard'; take into consideration school and district educational plans; and be submitted annually to the principal for review. In essence, TPGPs require teachers to turn upon themselves as objects of scrutiny and knowledge, construct a stable rational self, then plan and structure the development of this 'self' to fit pre-determined behavioural norms and identity categories, all under the scrutiny of a supervisor.

Both principals and teachers appeared well-aware of the power relation constructed through the surveillance embedded in the TPGP process. Teachers were variously enthusiastic, cautious, guarded or dismissive of TPGPs. But most over time accepted confession and supervisory scrutiny of their growth through these tools. Most accepted the imperative to continue 'growing' and changing in forms desirable to the organization, consented to the alternative of not growing as being somehow stuck or buried, and an ironic delight in the invitation to participate in one's own growing. Principals also demonstrated awareness of the vulnerability and stress involved in a teacher sharing personal growth goals (i.e. revealing weaknesses) with any colleague, especially a supervisor with power to evaluate and promote. Principals had no problem judging teachers' growth goals: as too large and unmanageable, or too 'trivial', or too unmeasurable, or too questionable in their connection to teaching practice, or too personal. Principals struggled in balancing such judgments with respect for teachers' professional autonomy and right to self-direction. But none questioned the assumption that they should require teachers to create pre-determined goals to manage their growth in the first place, or that they should scrutinize these private reflections. Certainly none voiced concern about their own interpellation in teachers' sense of what is worth learning and the teaching identities being shaped through these joint TPGP engagements.

Teachers also began aligning their personal goals for growth with system initiatives. This was partly due to the administrators' emphasis on school and district goals (such as integrating more technology into curriculum, increasing teachers' personal excellence, improving parental relations, and so on) and encouragement (ranging from suggestion to insistence) that teachers link their own growth to system goals and provincial Teaching Quality Standard. Some jurisdictions charted teachers' goals along with school and district initiatives in thematic patterns that then were targeted for development resources and workshops. Such overt control strategies appeared accepted as reasonable and productive. Some teachers described positively their new sense of identifying their own learning with the goals of the school jurisdiction, not the teaching collective, the community, or a wider pedagogical project of social transformation.

The study findings demonstrated three effects on teacher knowledge and identity through the soft regulation exercised in growth plan implementation. First, growth plans normalized the 'fact of growth'. Second, TPGPs functioned as a confessional technology, manufacturing an individualized, knowable autonomous self-as-perpetual learner through the teachers' own self-regulation. Teachers naturalized this surveillance and even welcomed it as an affirmation of self and practice. Third, TPGPs fostered teachers' internalizing of rational goal-oriented practice and

reflective self-regulation. Foucault's attention to governmentality of this process encourages us to look at what gets erased or denied by the discourse of a rational self. What effects of a teacher's daily pedagogic encounters escape intention, in terms of that teacher's learning and development? 'Good' teacher knowledge was often reinforced as what Popkewitz (1998) described as recipe knowledge. Again, the teacher is normalized through participation in a discourse whose classificatory boundaries preclude alternate views and disallow system critique.

Overall, growth plans appear to foster an image of 'good teacher' as a goal-oriented, systematic learner focused on pursuing technical, measurable knowledge that is directly linked to organizational goals defined by its administrators. This good teacher assents to an identity as continually in knowledge deficit, continually developing and reporting this development. Practical wisdom and rational acquisitive knowledge containable in pre-defined goals is good. The good teacher also consents to a construction of certain systemic problems as learning issues, which the good teacher will resolve by learning what the system deems necessary. In fact, this teacher accepts responsibility for merging lifelong learning with the job in a perpetual project of developing both personal human capital and the organization. Isolated in an individualistic journey of continuous self-regulated learning, the good teacher turns for affirmation to the supervisor and to the 'achievement' of individual developmental goals year after year. This image of good teacher minimizes alternate images of teachers as a collective, leading social change through critique, curricular and political action -- challenging the very knowledge economy and human capital discourses that construct policies regulating teachers' knowledge and identity.

Teaching as learning in the workplace: Janice Malcolm and Miriam Zukas

In the UK today, 'good' teaching and teachers are increasingly prescribed and scrutinised through rigorous and frequent inspection regimes, and through performance measurement and benchmarking. No sector of education is spared. For example, within higher education, each discipline has prescribed benchmark statements to which teachers must adhere. Teachers' performance is inspected regularly through internal 'quality assurance' mechanisms such as 'peer review' of teaching and externally through the Quality Assurance Agency who visit universities to 'assure standards'. Most recently, in the Government White Paper, *The Future of Higher Education* (2003), it is proposed that all new higher education teachers take a compulsory teaching qualification that will meet certain standards laid down by yet another external agency. The picture is, if anything, worse for those in the learning and skills sector. Teachers may be inspected by up to three different agencies. Recently, performance-related pay was introduced in some institutions where a proportion of teachers' salaries is paid by results (by comparing their student retention and attainment figures to national benchmark figures). Teacher education in the field is also increasingly tightly regulated by several different agencies, although those involved may have different (and contradictory) priorities and approaches (Malcolm and Zukas, 2002).

As a result of such scrutiny and regulation, much formal teacher development is concerned with teaching teachers new tricks, such as how to write learning outcomes or to fill in assessment grids. A conscious approach to pedagogy has taken a back seat in the rush to fulfil the paperwork requirements and, in a series of interviews which we conducted recently, we have seen the extent to which teachers are preoccupied and driven by quality assurance processes. Whilst Edwards and Usher (2000) suggest, in relation to teachers, that 'anxieties about the 'loss' of disciplinary and/or professional communities may arise ... as much from the intensification of reflexivity as from the increased spread of managerial mechanisms' (p. 102), our evidence suggests that there are severe restrictions upon the areas in which teachers are able legitimately

to be reflexive. Instead, many teachers feel unable to challenge the 'hoops' through which they have to jump and adopt what Moore et al (2002) call a 'discourse of pragmatism'. Of course, some may generally feel positive towards these kinds of changes (what Moore et al call 'principled pragmatism'), but for those who may be opposed and yet wish to continue in their work, pragmatism (in this case 'contingent pragmatism') may seem like the only response. Like Moore et al, we believe that this adoption of a pragmatic approach, which we found throughout our work, has considerable dangers for teachers who are, in effect, depoliticised through their internalisation of dominant discourses of compromise and compliance.

As an alternative to this depoliticisation, we suggest that it is time to consider the construction of pedagogic identities in the workplace (classroom, staff room, etc), particularly in relation to recent theoretical developments in workplace learning. There is a tradition of research about adult educators which has tended to focus on the conditions of work, or on identity politics, particularly in relation to race, gender and sexuality. Whilst these are critical issues, we suggest that, in the current policy context in which teaching is constituted only in relation to student learning, the field needs to pursue more vigorously research about pedagogy and teachers' own learning. This plea for research about pedagogy is not intended to be restricted to issues of 'instruction' (Cullen et al, 2002). Such a definition is restrictive and fails to recognise that any educational transaction is related to a broader social, cultural, institutional and historical context. However, we do not think of the 'teacher' and the 'context' as somehow independent of each other. Instead, we believe that pedagogy incorporates 'a critical understanding of the social, policy and institutional context, as well as a critical approach to the content and process of the educational/training transaction' (Zukas and Malcolm, 2002, p. 215).

Jean Lave argued that teaching is 'participation in ongoing socially situated practice' (1996) suggesting that teaching is relational, social, and fundamentally involves teachers in communities of practice in which their identities change through their activities with other learners (teachers, students, management and so on). Such identity transformation might alternatively be called co-participation (Billett, 2001). Building on this view, we understand pedagogy to be knowledge building with learners in a community of practice, rather than as the transmission of knowledge as a commodity. This relationship between pedagogy and knowledge building has been explored within the context of critical education but has had little impact on ideas about pedagogy and about teachers' learning as currently articulated in the UK today. And yet, ironically, elsewhere within the 'knowledge economy', ideas about workers as knowledge brokers are increasingly a feature of contemporary workplaces (Wenger, McDermott and Snyder, 2002). Although we may be suspicious of the emerging commodification and manipulation of 'communities of practice' in some contemporary businesses, at least the relationship between practice and knowing is made explicit, alongside a recognition that knowledge production is a messy, unpredictable business.

Of course, there are pedagogic communities in which teachers' pedagogic identity development is part and parcel of day-to-day practice (for example Hodkinson and Hodkinson, 2002). But this is often a chance by-product of the pedagogic workplace, rather than something cherished, nurtured and developed by the institution. The pedagogy of the pedagogic workplace is restricted to 'staff development' workshops, and technologies of scrutiny such as appraisal. Even those practices intended to be developmental, such as peer review, have in many institutions become associated with scrutiny (Malcolm, 2003). Most opportunities (both explicit and implicit) for pedagogic learning 'afforded' (Billett, 2001) by the pedagogic workplace are dictated by quality assurance.

So we are suggesting that a new pedagogy for the pedagogic workplace needs to be developed in which teachers are recognised as 'persons in the world' (Lave and Wenger, 1991) with their own histories, values and beliefs, and with agency. There are links to be made between knowledge work as valued in the 'knowledge economy' and teaching, to challenge the dominant view that 'good teaching is efficient delivery of externally supplied curricular goods' (Edwards, 2001, p 165). For example, we do not understand enough about knowledge building in communities of teachers; we understand little about pedagogies that prepare learners to use and *produce* knowledge; we do not understand the ongoing development of teachers' pedagogic identities. We believe that teachers will find it difficult to move beyond pragmatic and largely compliant responses to scrutiny and regulation, and to find ways of challenging current versions of the 'good' teacher, unless we take teachers' learning seriously, and use some of the insights from workplace learning to help us reconceptualise pedagogic learning, and 'good' teaching.

Philosoph*ies* of teaching: a false promise? Dan Pratt

Increasingly, faculty at universities and colleges are asked to clarify and justify their philosophies of teaching. For some, this is in preparation for a review of their teaching; others are motivated by curriculum reform; and still others do so as a means of clarifying for students why they take a particular approach to teaching. This paper is about the first of those reasons – preparation for a review of teaching – and two implied promises: First, that the evaluation process is open to more than one notion of 'good teaching'; and second, that one's philosophy of teaching will be given serious consideration when teaching is evaluated. As with the smell of freshly ground coffee beans, there may be something of a false promise in asking teachers to draft their philosophy of teaching, especially when it is for evaluative purposes.

These implied promises have within them at least four unspoken assumptions that need to be put on the table if we are to move beyond hegemonic views of 'good teaching': First, the assumption that everyone knows what a philosophy of teaching statement should contain; second, that some philosophies are better than others; third, that the reviewers' own philosophy of teaching will not prejudice them against alternative philosophies of teaching; and fourth, that models of teaching that guide student evaluations, peer observations and reviews of teaching and learning materials and procedures will have fair regard for a plurality of acceptable philosophies of teaching. Let me take each of these assumptions in turn.

My students and I have reviewed philosophies of teaching statements and scoured the Internet for templates and guidelines meant to help faculty craft their philosophy of teaching statements. Much of what we found suggests that a few templates are borrowed and then replicated on different sites (most often with due credit). We also found that most statements are constructed around intentions and goals, but with only occasional comment on processes for implementing those intentions. Little space, however, is given to clarifying beliefs or justifications for their educational goals or intentions. For example, seldom do faculty say what they believe to be the nature of learning, the nature of knowledge in their field, profession or discipline, or the moral imperatives that guide their teaching. For the most part, philosophy statements are more about what and how, than about why. It seems that the word 'philosophy' is rather restricted in terms of what is requested or expected.

Secondly, across North America and increasingly elsewhere, there is a move toward a single, dominant philosophy of teaching, usually labeled 'learning-centered'. The way in which this view of teaching is constructed and promoted, particularly in higher education, excludes any view of teaching that doesn't portray itself as centered on learning. To some, this makes infinite sense; to me it is troubling. The commitment to learning is not, itself, troubling. Much of adult

education's history is based on a commitment to learners and learning. However, any view of teaching that excludes other views automatically eliminates variations on 'good teaching' that don't fit within that particular orthodoxy. Consider, for example, many societies with long honored views of teaching that center the teacher or the content as the focal point of value in teaching. Not only would this exclude other societies, it would also exclude many of our most memorable teachers. In short, learning-centered has become the philosophy of choice and the mantra of faculty development across our institutions without acknowledging how exclusive adherence to that view of teaching might compromise other valued orientations to teaching.

Third, when engaging in the review of someone's teaching we enter into a process of negotiation as to what counts and what doesn't count as 'good' teaching. During that process it is usually left to the individual to guard against their own philosophy of teaching prejudicing them against alternative philosophies of teaching. In reviewing the evaluation procedures and policies of post-secondary institutions in British Columbia, nowhere did we find any precautions against this. Nor did we find any attempt to encourage evaluators to make explicit their own beliefs, commitments or philosophy related to teaching and learning during the evaluative process. As a result, the process of evaluation may be open to bias and skewed in a direction where reviewers look only for a reflection of their own philosophy of teaching.

Fourth, after reviewing guidelines and instruments for evaluating teaching in post-secondary institutions my students and I concluded: (1) most institutions rely exclusively on student evaluation forms; (2) most of those forms are borrowed and adapted from existing forms; (3) and no institution adapted their use of those forms in response to faculty members' submitted philosophy statements. It would seem that the epistemology of student evaluation forms trumps the personal statements of any faculty who would be so courageous as to draft their own philosophy of teaching.

I realize that the argument for a learning-centered philosophy of teaching is, at least in part, a reaction against teacher-centered instruction that has dominated much of education for the past forty years or more. My argument, however, is derived from more than a decade of research, in several countries, studying hundreds of teachers in adult and higher education. Across a wide range of disciplines, contexts, and cultures, my students and I found a plurality of good teaching, not all of which rest on the same values or principles. Our findings are not unique. They correspond to those of many other researchers around the world, as far back as Fox (1983) in England and as recently as Grubb and Associates (1999) at Berkeley. No single philosophy of learning or teaching dominated what might be called, 'good teaching.'

Finally, I am not arguing that any and all views of teaching are equally good or acceptable in all contexts. That kind of solipsism is neither defensible nor practical. I am arguing *against* merely substituting an old orthodoxy with a new one and I am arguing *for* acknowledging a plurality of 'good teaching'. I wish to preserve those who were memorable but different; those whose teaching was instrumental to our learning and our vocational or professional path, without necessarily being 'learning-centered'. Unless we are cautious, I fear we are about to give false promise to the drafting of personal philosophies of teaching and to promote a 'one size fits all' notion of good teaching.

References are available on request from Miriam Zukas (M.Zukas@leeds.ac.uk).

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