



The performative institutional embrace

Performative
institutional
embrace

Bob Jeffrey

Graduate School of Education, Exeter University, Exeter, UK, and

Geoff Troman

The Department of Education, University of Roehampton, London, UK

195

Abstract

Purpose – This ESRC-based research article aims to investigate the effects of performativity on primary schools and the teachers therein. It also aims to show how performativity to maintain and improve the school's position in an educational market affects the teacher relations with their institution and how the school works to embrace its teachers in developing the school's market position.

Design/methodology/approach – Four researchers carried out this ESRC (RES-000-23-1281) research, to a greater or lesser extent. The researchers in all of the schools, except City, carried out interview/conversations in the main, with observational field notes accounting for just over 50 per cent of their total data. They then began progressive focusing on City school where the rest of the observational field notes were carried out and in particular the bulk of conversations with young learners. This focus also included the largest group of teacher interview/conversations. This progressive focusing bears the weight of the ethnographic data and the analysis for this article, in line with a grounded theory approach. The whole database included 52 days' observational field notes, 54 recorded conversations with teachers and other significant adults, and 32 recorded conversations with learners. All recorded conversations with management, teachers, pupils and parents that were seen as being of theoretical significance were transcribed.

Findings – The paper outlines some of the similarities with these institutions, but also shows how this new model differs and how it could be applied to a much wider constituency than the earlier three models – that of the public and private sector. It shows how the embracing performative institution in a marketised environment influences the practices of its teachers and changes to their professional commitment, which focuses more on the institutional development than broader professional values. At the same time it can be seen how supportive professional cultures encourage teachers to embrace the school's performative development and how this influences teacher identity. The findings suggest that institutional members both constitute, and are constituted by, the influence of the embracing institution and performative regulation and that their professional identities are constantly readjusted to ensure their interests coincide with the institutions interests.

Originality/value – This article provides useful formation on how performativity to maintain and improve the school's position in an educational market affects the teacher relations with their institution and how the school works to embrace its teachers in developing the school's market position.

Keywords Institution, Embracing, Performative regulation, Ethnography, Professional identities, Teachers

Paper type Research paper

Context

A marketised school system is now the major vehicle for educational delivery in England as opposed to educational experiences being organised, prior to the 1990s, by local education authorities alongside pedagogic expertise based on professional teaching and learning values and strategies. Since the 1990s, there has been an

The authors would like to acknowledge the valuable assistance of our funder, the ESRC (RES-000-23-1281), two assistant researchers, Elena Zezlina Phillips, Andrea Raggl and their consultant Professor Peter Woods.



epidemic of educational policy of which the common global themes are economic: increasing criticism of schools; reduced funding; changes in governance; increased use of market approaches; and an emphasis on standards and achievement (Levin, 1998). The European Commission appeared to put an end to the debate on educational principles in 1995 when it stated that education policy was in the service of economic imperatives (Ball, 1998). Policy texts, such as the UK Government's 2005 White Paper on education (DfEE, 2005), make it clear that choice and diversity is the new mantra on which to base an education policy. The transparent ideology behind the economic and educational models that now seem enjoined is a public market (Woods, 1998) in which there is choice of school, diversity of provision based on demand-driven funding and school self-determination. These policies of choice and competition encourage schools to market themselves more effectively, to target parents as consumers and consequently increases competition and rivalry intensifies (Bagley, 2006). The effective school approach, based on the ideology of good schools defying disadvantage, appears to have failed and diversity and choice is now being extended to increase achievement levels (Harris and Ranson, 2005). Raising standards is now the responsibility of schools (Woods, 2004) and pragmatism and compliance are the enforced strategies (Alexander in Woods, 2004). However, the positional autonomy of schools – their primary location with those in authority over them – is ambiguous and contradictory. They still have targets and conditional freedom. However, their relational autonomy is ambiguous due to that freedom being constrained by the necessity to conform to the logos of market competition and by the power of new managerialism to play the market game and infect the field (Maton, 2005). The main strategy for delivery in this market system has become performativity.

Performativity is underpinned by a major policy to improve economic status and social well-being, a market-based approach that encourages performance-based activity – the generation of a culture of performativity (Ball, 1998; Ball, 2000; Lyotard, 1984). The performativity of Lyotard is a technology, a culture and mode of regulation that employs judgements and comparisons and displays the performances of individual subjects or organisations to serve as measures of productivity. In the educational field, the performativity culture is used by government to raise standards in schools through national inspections in England (Ofsted) (Jeffrey and Woods, 1998; Perryman, 2006) and to raise the achievement of the mass of the population through target setting and testing. In setting targets for local authorities (LA) and schools, government hopes to develop a highly skilled workforce that can compete in a new global industry – the knowledge economy. The higher the skills base and the higher levels of excellence achieved in knowledge acquisition and the best use of that knowledge, the higher the economic return for the UK.

Our ESRC research (RES-000-23-1281) examined the effects of two policy discourses – that of creative teaching and learning and performativity – on the institution of the English primary school carried out in six schools in the mid-2000s. The general focus was on how schools manage the twin policies of performativity and creativity and we found that a particular type of institution has developed to ensure the success of both these and other relevant policies within a market context.

However, this article focuses only on performativity and examines the effects of this policy on the institution of the primary school. The specific foci upon which this article is based were:

- the effects of performativity on institutional policies and operations;

- the coping strategies used to ameliorate any tensions and dilemmas;
- the educational identities constructed during this process; and
- the significance of a market environment on the professionalism and institutional commitment of teachers.

Performativity, according to Stephen Ball (2003) changes people and their social identities through the regulative ensemble of policies. Teaching becomes a life of calculation, a remaking and, for some, an empowering experience, such as managers who become the heroes of reform. He sees a paradox in that the move away from low trust centralisation to a more autonomous delegated problem-solving role for schools adds new forms of surveillance, such as self-regulation, that create existential anxiety and is not a local freedom. He goes on to argue that, following the law of contradiction, the benefits of more autonomy are not realised as organisations and workers focus on impression management. He suggests that there is a schizophrenia of purposes and management inherent in all we do as performativity becomes ubiquitous. It engenders cynicism and he sees it as a further colonisation via audit, and the fabrications to deal with audits and performance criteria are experienced as both a resistance and capitulation. It fosters a pathology of creative compliance and, he argues in an earlier paper (Ball, 1997), this compliance is a new subjectivity of the market, one in which the regulation of private conduct becomes the major aim for schools, teachers and learners. He invokes Bagguley's view that the Gramscian relationship between the state and civil society and the dichotomy between them is dissolving into radically new political technologies of market power.

Whilst we recognise these possible outcomes, our research finds a more nuanced situation within our research sites, one in which the institution has developed into an embracing one. The institution embraces government policies and everyone in the institution and, in turn, the members embrace the institution as the vehicle most influential for their development, security and career.

Theoretical frame

We found the categories of social institutions such as the total institution (TI) (Goffman, 1961), the greedy institution (GI) (Coser, 1974) and the reinventive institution (RI) (Scott, 2010) relevant in attempting to understand the operation of performativity. Our overall contribution to this area is to suggest that a new category of "the embracing performative institution" (EPI) adds to these types of institutions, framed in a similar symbolic interactionist approach to those used by Goffman, Coser and Scott.

Goffman's (1961) description of the TI was one based in an asylum in which the three aspects of modern society – sleep, work and play – were carried out in the same place and time, unlike our more general social arrangement in modern society where they are contextualised separately. The members lived their lives under the same single authority, together with a batch of others, in tightly scheduled activities brought together in a single rational plan to fulfil the aims of the institution. He traced how identities were constructed in this authoritative institution, similar to that of the army barracks, boarding school and prison, and concluded that, although inmates carried out continuous minor regular acts of resistance, they saw themselves as powerless even though they played the system to suit themselves. Goffman argued in *Asylums* that this particular special institution arrangement did not "so much support the self as constitute it" (1961, p. 154). In this sense, Scott (2010) argues that the interactionism

the TI embodies is not a static structure but a dynamic, agentic team performance through which identities are collectively reshaped and redefined and that the TI was a precariously constructed social reality that was constantly re-accomplished and upheld by its members.

GI (Coser, 1974) are similar to TIs in that they seek exclusive and undivided loyalty and they attempt to reduce the claims of competing roles and status positions in those they wish to encompass within their boundaries in order to gain maximum productivity. Unlike Goffman's TI, the GI rarely physically confines its inmates, but creates symbolic boundaries between insiders and outsiders that are equally powerful. These are disciplinary mechanisms, not blockades (Foucault, 1977), or "institutions without walls" which members are ostensibly free to leave but choose not to (Scott, 2010, p. 218). Nor do GIs rely on external authority, as in the TI, but "tend to rely on voluntary compliance and to evolve means of activating loyalty and commitment" (Coser, 1974, p. 6). They claim the totality of their member's social identities by pervading every role they play and every aspect of their lifestyle: for example, religious cults, vocational training schools and secret societies. GIs are exclusive and demand absolute commitment. New recruits are expected to weaken existing ties with other social groups and give the institution their undivided loyalty.

Scott (2010) argues that a new form of institution has emerged which, though ostensibly benign, subjects its inmates to a subtler form of social control through performative regulation. The same characteristics of coercion in the TI and voluntarism from the GI can be observed in this new RI but a reversal of the balance between the two has created new techniques of reinventing the self. She goes on to argue that surveillance in RIs is maintained, she argues, not only by disciplinary regimes imposed on and responded to by bodies (Foucault, 1977) but also by the negotiations of reality that occur between members in the context of their physical, spatial and social institutional arrangements. As with the classic TI, it is not enough to say that inmates are subjected to surveillance. We must also consider how their interactions collectively define this situation as non-coercive and the meanings they attach to their obedience. Scott (2010) notes the parallel observed between Goffman's writings and Foucault's views of power as dispersed and ubiquitous. Burns (in Scott, 2010) begs the question of how institutional regimes are upheld by routinised conformity to interaction order or "why do they put up with it" (Jenkins cited in Scott, 2010, p. 220). Both Goffman's "cooperation with disadvantage" and Foucault's disciplinary power suggest essentially negative motivations for compliance: actors cynically conform in order to retain the dramaturgical loyalty of their team mates, or restrain themselves by internalising a punitive omniscient gaze. However, where institutional membership is perceived as voluntary, discipline may be welcomed as positively empowering, experienced through discourses of self-improvement that are both internalised and personalised. Paradoxically, these private meanings are publicly shared, communicated between as well as to inmates, which strengthens their belief that conformity is of mutual benefit.

Performative regulation is a conceptual synergy of Foucault's disciplinary power, Strauss's negotiated order and Goffman's interaction order (Scott, 2010). It occurs where groups of people submit themselves to the authority of an institution, internalise its values and enact through them mutual surveillance in an inmate culture. Power operates horizontally as well as vertically (Bernstein, 1999), as members monitor each other's conduct, sanction deviance and evaluate their own progress in relative terms. The disciplinary gaze is not merely transmitted but reticulated: dispersed and refracted

through an agentic network. Power is not only discursively constitutive but also interactively productive of new identities. The rituals of peer group interaction are central to this process and can be as important as the formal instruction they receive in motivating people to commit to an institution (Scott, 2010) instead of going to it alone. Moral trajectories of reinvention are mediated by an interaction context and narratives of change are collectively negotiated. In this respect, power is not only discursively constitutive but also interactively productive of new identities.

In dramaturgical terms, mutual surveillance involves performances of obedience and role embracement: members seek to demonstrate the sincerity of their commitment to the institution, and manage the impressions they communicate to fellow staff (Scott, 2010). The result is an emergent team impression (Goffman, 1959) of conformity: actors sustain a collective belief in both the institutional rhetoric and their voluntary adherence to it, making resistance seem unnecessary.

In contrast to the repressive authoritarian power of the asylum and its like, RIs rely on a more dispersed, intangible authority built into relationships and practices. This power operates through a pervasive gaze that captures every inmate and appears to emanate personally from the institution itself and the expertise it represents, rather than the specific individuals within it. Scott's RIs are voluntary therapeutic clinics, utopian retreats and academic hothouses, in which members were attempting to reinvent their identity.

The EPI has similarities with all three institutions described, but the context in which they operate differs. It operates in the modern performative world similar to the RI. However, teachers join their schools as workers and careerists, in contrast to the RI, where members focus on changing or renewing their personal identity rather than their professional career. As in the GI and the RI, the staff of a marketised primary school are, to some extent, there voluntarily for they apply to take posts in schools. They have to teach in a highly structured institution with specific policy purposes and their main identity development is one of professionalism.

Nevertheless, the situation ensures similar changes in identity and role, as in the three institutions described above, for the EPI embraces members to assist in the development of both the institution and the member. Authority structures are similarly dispersed, as in the RI, as performativity becomes a major guiding value for teachers themselves, their careers, professional competence and job satisfaction, for performative success and school position in the local market encourages or deflates their efforts.

EPI members do not perceive themselves to be powerless. They see themselves as both constrained by market demands for performativity but, also, creative in managing the performativity of the institution and perceive opportunities to develop their interests with the support of the embracing institution.

Methodology

The observations and analysis of the micro, we believe, is linked to macro discourses, policies and structures, in this case those associated with marketisation and performativity. We follow an interactionist sociology in which we see people carving out space despite the lack of formal power. In our studies of teachers, we asked: what problems do they face? How are they experienced? What meanings are given to them? What feelings are generated? Ethnography respects the empirical world, penetrates layers of meaning and facilitates taking the role of the other by the researcher, an empathetic understanding, defining situations and grasping the sense of process

(Woods, 1996). The research took cognisance of the structural influences in situations and the dilemmas, tensions and constraints under which people work and live and the way they manage and cope with their situations. To understand the complexities of what is happening, we needed to employ a qualitative approach, which “captures and records the voices of lived experience [...] contextualises experience [...] goes beyond mere fact and surface appearances [...] presents details, context, emotion, and the webs of social relationships that join persons to one another” (Denzin, 1989, p. 83). Data needed to be collected within the school context, since experiences, perspectives and identities are strongly shaped by their context (Rosenholtz, 1989). Our ethnographic approach of spending time in the field using three different time modes – compressed, selective intermittent and recurrent (Jeffrey, 1999; Jeffrey and Troman, 2004). The first is an intense immersion such as the attendance on a school journey by one of the researchers; the second involved selecting particular events in the school calendar such as the week allocated for testing Year 6 (Standard Assessment Tasks (SATs)), sports day and book weeks, and the third regular fieldwork on a specific day or week of the calendar. This ensured that we took into account the broad experience of teaching, learning and obtained a complex, rich analysis of how the performativity discourse interacted with the lives of those in schools.

We based the research in six primary schools across five local education authorities. We judged this the maximum possible, given the depth of fine detail we sought, but large enough to offer some limited reliability of the research schools (inner city, rural) in terms of size and socio-economic status. We ensured a balance of learner age range and teacher experience, in terms of career status, positions and roles. We have used this methodology in major projects in the past (Woods and Jeffrey, 1995; Jeffrey and Woods, 1998; Jeffrey, 2007) in order to validate, to a limited extent, our qualitative approach. The ethnographic priority was to highlight the perspectives of the institutional inhabitants and their daily practices.

Four researchers carried out this research, to a greater or lesser extent. They carried out extensive interview/conversations, together with observational fieldnotes, the latter accounting for just over 50 per cent of the total data. We then began progressively focusing (Strauss and Corbin, 1990) in City school where the bulk of the observational fieldnotes and conversations with young learners were carried out. This focus also included the largest group of teacher interview/conversations. This progressive focusing bears the weight of the ethnographic data and the analysis for this article, in line with a grounded theory approach (Glaser and Strauss, 1967). The whole database included 52 days observational fieldnotes, 54 recorded conversations with teachers and other significant adults and 32 recorded conversations with learners. We transcribed all recorded conversations with management, teachers and pupils that we saw as being of theoretical significance (see Table I).

Access was gained due to prior engagement in two cases and, in the other four cases, local authorities. The research was approved by The Open University ethics committee and we followed the BERA Ethnical Guidelines. Headteachers gave formal approval and access to all teachers, although any teacher was able to refuse to take part. Student access was also approved by the headteacher and we were informed of any student whose parents expressively forbade any interviews/conversations/ photography of their children. The schools and teachers have been anonymised as indicated above.

The authors of this article carried out most of the analysis from all the material collected by the participant researchers using qualitative software Atlas-Ti. This was

Schools/data Researcher	City (C) Suburban Estate 2 Form BJ	Istead (I) Rural 1 Form EZP	Hampstead (H) Rural 1 Form EZP	Morden (M) Suburban 3 Form EZP	Victoria (V) Urban 2 Form GT	Westside (W) Urban 2 Form Consultant
Teacher transcribed conversations (54)	19	3	4	1	11	16
Typed fieldnotes – days (46) ^a	20	6	9	3	7	1
Transcribed children's conversations in groups (19)	13	0	0	0	6	0

201

Notes: Each school in the paper is identified in the text by the initial letter of its pseudonym; the Yr. refers to the year group taught by the teacher; each teacher's name begins with the school identification letter; DH and HT indicate deputy head or headteacher; FN, fieldnotes; learner's names are not identified in full. BJ, PI; GT, collaborator; EZP, researcher. ^aEach researcher also had fieldnotes that were not transcribed and entered into the digital software

Table I.
Sample data

mainly due to the unexpected departure of our main researcher half way through the research and an imperative for the principal investigator to step in and lead all analysis. We read our data literally, interpretively and reflexively and then used categorical indexing (Mason, 2004). Our analysis proceeded in the sequence: data collection, analysis, data collection, analysis.

The EPI

The EPI works to develop open, welcoming collective, inclusive cultures in which there appear to be few centres of power but where power circulates freely by binding people together to develop the institution and its inhabitants. We found that the EPI differed from the TI, GI and RI in three ways: it looked both outwards and inwards due to its market orientation; it develops its members in a humanitarian fashion and encouraged them to play a large part in the maintenance of the institution; and it created a culture of aspiration for both learners and teachers which maintained commitment and encouraged members to embrace the institution's values, policies and processes.

Embracing openness

The EPI looked to embrace not only its members but the local community, like the RI, but to maintain its market position rather than to only enhance commitment and, to that end, unlike the GI, it developed an open culture.

The six primary schools had an openness to the local community through their websites, publication of test results, community interests and willingness to engage. Their values, aims and objectives, policies, activities, performance, physical structure and location, staff events, ethnic makeup, poverty indicators and learners were all open to scrutiny across the world through their websites which provided information about the school year, student performance and the quality of learners' work, as well as carefully selected images to represent the school's ethos. They were open to a community, albeit through a strict physical electronic entry system:

Samantha persons the reception desk in the area just inside the locked school entrance. She has access to the entry button and organises things with a phone and ensures everyone signs in. She is immediate contact with visitors and shows a friendly but professional image of the school (FN, C, 21 March 2007).

The performance of the teacher was a daily public affair, unlike the closed classrooms of a professional autonomous phase prior to 1990 (Hargreaves, 2000), and its qualitative nature had changed:

Yeah it's more open door. We don't have our door shut and we don't teach like that so much. We're a bigger team than we used to be when you were on your own in the classroom from 9-3. It's much more open and we encourage teachers to show us what they can do (Carolyn, C, Yr.2).

This is opposite to the "siege mentality" of the 1990s (Woods, 1993). The impression is that now everything is pushed to the front of the stage for all to see (Woods, 1995), instead of being confined to the back regions (Goffman, 1959):

The staffroom is upstairs and its role as a "back region" (Goffman, 1959) appears to have been dissolved. The kitchen side of it, reached directly from the stairs, is used for group work during special days (e.g.: Gifted and Talented). There is a separate, smaller room with chairs for staff to sit. Children do come up now and again to look for things or people. Although children don't seem to walk directly into the smaller room, its door is never shut and the children freely address the staff within. Visitors, once admitted are given free rein to roam (FN, H, 25 February 2007).

Meetings often took place in public, not in the head's office, which in one of our schools was only used to house her two dogs, with the door open of course. One such meeting we noted was in the school café and included a Department for Education and Schools person and another meeting constituted six local headteachers (FN, C, 21 March 2007). The school is not just willing to share information, but positively eager to share it:

On my first visit, I am offered a wealth of information (including access to the curriculum folders). I have a chat with the Assistant Head over coffee in the staffroom, and she tells me all about the introduction of the curriculum, and about creative aspects of her current work, before I even have time to ask her. Slight variations of the invitation to "wander around, they won't mind" were offered by several different people (FN, H, 20 October 2006).

Schools were also open to the community and at the same time they established the school as an important community institution that was worthwhile supporting, developing and embracing:

The Children's Centre in the school has picked up and is running the family therapy groups, PCAMS, (the Primary Child Mental Health Group). They're providing parenting through the family links programme. It's beginning to have an impact but it will slow. But it does fundamentally change things and certainly more schools are like us. When I appoint people the first thing I do is put them on the family links training. (Camile, HT, City).

There was more collaboration between teachers, who often worked together planning a term's work for the same age group, and joint activities often take place with two teachers working in the same room or the whole school worked on one project for anything from one to six week in which teaching ideas and strategies were shared and displayed:

I think that's quite exciting for us as a whole school because it's something new and something different and it makes sense to work very closely together with our year colleagues which is good. It's good for me because I love to learn from other people. I watch them and think "oh that's a good way of explaining that" or she'd talk about a topic in such a way that I think I must remember that (Carolyn, C, Yr.2).

This open culture made hierarchical power less visible and appeared to show how horizontal power (Bernstein, 1999) operated by focusing on the institution and less on hierarchical influence. Everyone was embraced and everyone embraced the development of the institution.

Embracing members – team work, nurturing and distributed leadership

The embracing institution is constituted by a “negotiated order” (Strauss, 1978) similar to that of the TI (Scott, 2010), except that compliance is more evolutionary than revolutionary due to the lack of an observable and operational hierarchy to react against. The EPI contains more flattened hierarchies, where members develop the institution. Belonging to a team, the opposite of the lone professional of Lortie’s (1975) study and the holistic individual/professional integrated identity of those in Jennifer Nias’s 1980s study (Nias, 1989), was the new major way in which the primary teacher’s identity was constructed (Jeffrey, 2002).

Today’s professional primary school teacher is a team player in open competition with other school teams, but also part of a team that needs to present itself as a unified, creative, inclusive and effective managerial organisation, “doing member” (Garfinkel, 1967), “Being part of a team, getting to know adults as well is rewarding. It was very lonely when previously I was with just children all the time and then going home and having my own life” (Wanda, W, Yr.6). An air of supportive collegiality pervaded the institution:

I think the staff are wonderful. Everybody here, in general, works very, very well together. I think we support each other very well and that’s teaching staff and non-teaching staff. So that’s TA’s and DSA’s and office staff. I think everyone gets along really, really well and works together superbly to make sure that the school is the place that it is (Wheatley, W, 15 January 2006).

Professional cohesion and good professional relations were essential to the development of the team approach:

I find, in the staffroom, a display board entitled “Staff Achievement Board”, with some displayed certificates on which some members of staff have been commended for certain actions or for just starting a new role. All staff are encouraged to download a copy and to fill it in for someone they think worthy. The TEAM approach “Together Everyone Achieves More” is written in large letters above the main notice board and outside at least one classroom (FN, C, 26 February 2007).

These corporate teams reflect the modern commercial organisation in which everyone plays a part in the development and promotion of the cultural institution (Peters and Waterman, 1982).

The most significant aspect of these embracing institutions was the care they exhibited towards its members, bringing them close to the institution’s cultural life and development:

We do a lot of professional development. We have specialists in to motivate us and I think that really does keep you going. We try to nurture each other and help each other and we’re all very hot on family links and we do that with the class but we also try to do that with each other and support each other and have networks and have teams (Carolyn, C, Yr.2).

And developing their careers was closely tied to institutional development:

There are so many high spots actually – the buzz you get from seeing people learn and grow. New teachers coming in and managing new exciting things. Parents and carers have got OCM accredited courses now so I’ve just seen some parents and carers getting their first ever

certificate. That was fantastic – it was fabulous. When people grow and the fact that I have a tiny influence on that (Camile, HT, C).

This approach promoted:

an ownership of the school and its policies and its beliefs right through and it's engrained in staff as soon as you come in. You get a huge amount of support as I've had in my NQT (Newly Qualified Teacher) year and it's been particularly appreciated given the social and economic difficulties that the children live with here. If you didn't get it, it would be a disaster. That for me is the single biggest factor of teaching in this school making it easier to teach in this school in a different way (Christopher, C, Yr.3).

The wider team discourse of culture of business and commerce can be seen in the language used to portray primary school cultures and professional identities:

I don't do many of the things I should do as a Head, I don't take many assemblies, I never cover classes, I don't do very much paper work. I've got brilliant people in the office and brilliant people in the leadership team. I don't do that, what I do is influence. I influence children; I influence parents and carers (Camile, C, HT).

The headteachers were not seen overtly as decision makers, as were the leaders in the RI, but as people who frame and influence the conduct of conduct – the culture of the institution (Gillies, 2008). The global interest in harnessing intellectual and creative labour through cultural processes is as prevalent for teacher identities in today's schools as it is in corporate institutions (Jones, 2001).

Why do I stay? Because it is a nice school. I've got a Head who's very supportive, who allows me to do a lot of different things that maybe I wouldn't be able to do in another school, all the extra curricular things. I'm very keen on the health of the children and he is very supportive. If I want to do something to do with that he'll let me. So it's a combination of a nice school, lots of change happening in it all the time, lots of things going on and the supportiveness of the Head and the Deputy, who's excellent. She's always there with the door open and I think that matters (Imogen, I, Yr.5).

The reticulation – dispersal and refraction – of the disciplinary gaze involves the incorporation of a managerial identity (Scott, 2010) but, in the EPI, the obvious trappings of managerialism have been moved to a back region:

In my last school I came in for a meeting with external visitors in a suit and the teachers were surprised. So I asked them about it and they said that I meet with important people I wear a suit but when you meet with us you don't wear a suit because we're not important. Well after that, I wore a suit every single day I taught the kids and I didn't wear a suit when I went to meetings 'cos I wanted to turn it on its head (Camile, C, HT).

Contemporary primary school teacher identities involved both a teaching and a management commitment:

I particularly enjoy managing staff and managing the TAs (Teaching Assistant). I'm TA co-ordinator and I'm also the NQT mentor. We have two NQTs in the school and I mentor them. And I really enjoy that side of it. I've always given it my best. I am also a Physical Education co-ordinator and now I have an Assistant Head role which is very new. I'm shadowing our deputy at the moment (Carolyn, C, Yr2).

The team approach and distributed management (Woods, 2004) enabled class teachers to assist other teacher's professional practice, specifically in performative practices:

I sit with the Yr. 5 teacher and we look at areas where there is a dip and we look at different strategies, with writing for example, looking at how the children can set their

own manageable writing targets so that they understand in “children speak” (Harriet, H, Yr.6).

One major aspect of the cultural development of the institution was the positive relationship between career guidance and counselling and flexibility of employees and their ability to function in flexible organisations. There was:

a clear relationship between the employee’s perception of being valued by the organization on the one hand, and job performance, motivation, self-esteem and innovative behaviour on the other hand. The main reason for these positive effects is a social exchange process: “When the organization is good for me, I am good for the organization”. These results suggest that career guidance and counselling for teachers can provide a promising platform for personal sense-making in relation to actual developments and changes that are taking place in schools (Geijsel and Meijers, 2005, p. 427).

Embracing performativity and aspiration

Performative regulation (Scott, 2010) occurs where groups of people submit themselves to the authority of an institution, internalise its values and enact through them mutual surveillance in an inmate culture. Power operates horizontally as well as vertically (Bernstein, 1999) as members monitor each other’s conduct, sanction deviance and evaluate their own progress in relative terms. Power is not only discursively constitutive but also interactively productive of new identities. The rituals of peer group interaction are central to this process and can be as important as the formal instruction they receive in motivating people to commit to an institution (Scott, 2010) instead of going it alone. A performative culture of awards and rewards has replaced the authority of the TI and the GI. It is an embracing discourse, celebrating achievement and progress. For example, City school has a Healthy Award Status for 2006-2009.

There were an array of awards and rewards across every school’s culture:

The room is very tidy, there are things hanging from the ceiling, but not as many as in Yr.2. Some seats have “Star of the week” sheets stuck on the back, with the name of the pupil and a dozen or so reasons, such as “You are kind and caring”, “You are very good on the play equipment” “You can do very difficult calculations” etc (FN, H, Yr.5, 8 January 2007).

Vertical ladders and steps are some of the metaphors used in the awards and rewards discourse:

They then sit down on the carpet and discuss with the teacher why two children were sent out during rehearsals, and the consequences if they misbehave again. The two children in question are sent to “climb down a step” of a paper ladder which has to do with “Climb the teddy to be a winner”, where little photos of the children continuously move up and down a poster of a teddy according to good and bad behaviour (FN, H, 1 December 2006).

External awards are applied for and prized:

And receiving the International School Award for the work that the whole school had done, through my kind of initiative. It was made by the British Council and you have to send them a portfolio of all the things we’ve done and then we keep the award for 3 years (Cecile, C, Yr.2).

Learners are drawn into the performativity game through the assignment of personal responsibility:

Oh, I always tell my kids that it’s for them to know how well they’re doing, for their parents to know how well they’re doing, and for the rest of the teachers to know how well they’re doing.

So they have to show us that they're doing their best, otherwise they'd let themselves down (Celina, C, Yr.3).

Improvement is a key feature of the discourse:

I think schools should be judged and I think we should have a standard that we should reach and keep on striving to get better and you need to have inspections and things like that to – nobody wants it but you need that. It keeps you on your toes and helps you move forward (Wendy, W, DH).

That pressure permeates the school's discourse of performativity, particularly in Yr.6 where SATs play a prominent role:

We are saying to them at the start, "you want to get into your school and you need to perform well" and the results are recorded, which they are, so that other teachers in secondary school can access them. I say "you need to get good results to get where you want to go" (Witney, W, Yr.6).

The fear of failure is constant, for rewards and successes bring further imperatives to do better:

We have got a slightly falling roll so there's peer teacher pressure because last year's Yr.6 did exceedingly well compared to the previous two years. We have been constantly told if you don't do well again we're going to get OfSTEDed because an alarming set of results triggers one (Calvin, C, DH).

Embracing performativity becomes one of the ways members embrace the institution's values and care shown towards them:

My high points of teaching are when you hear children whispering to each other on the carpet and they say "I've got that" or they've done something, a sense of achievement or they come up to you and they're desperate to get their books marked, you just get the sense that they're thriving and they're enjoying what they're trying to get over (Wheatley, W, Yr.3).

In these circumstances, children and teachers feel they are thriving not just surviving or striving. Progress is also fulfilling even, if it is a minor progression:

I went through my results yesterday and although on the face of it they don't look great, when you compare them with October when they came to me, they've all achieved, they've all moved up and that's made me happy although the results aren't fantastic when you compare them with other schools', everybody's gone up and that was good, so we must be making a difference. When you go through it with a tooth comb, you can see something positive and that's good (Weatley, W, Yr.3).

The school embraces external support, unlike the TI, GE and the RI, for times when the results are not so good:

The ISP (Inspection Support Programme) programme will come in and support purely curriculum based activities and we've had EAZ (Government Educational Action Zone) come in and work with us to write our literacy plans which has been great, so if you don't perform well they will come in and help which is great (Witney, W, Yr.6).

There's satisfaction in assisting teams to enhance progress through targetting:

As Key Stage 1 (age 5-7) Coordinator my job is to check and I say to my Key Stage 1 staff "let's have a chat about how people are reaching their targets". We are constantly looking to see how people are getting on with our "flying high" group – those who are near the class level and need extra help to get to it. I target them as soon as they

came in and decide on my overall list as to where they should be by the end of the term (Carolyn, C, Yr.2).

There is satisfaction and a reward in knowing that progress has been made, that achievements have been reached and targets met:

I think it's good that Ofsted (Office for Standards in Education) could be round the corner or could be checking on us at any moment. I don't particularly like it when they're in (laughs) but no it doesn't worry me. I don't think it worries the school either because I think we know what we're doing and I think we know where we want to get to, we know what we want to achieve and we've got our school improvement plan and we know what's on that, so I think its fine (Carolyn, C, Yr.2).

Achievements are gained by working harder and satisfaction of a job well done is felt:

My colleague in Yr. 5 was saying that those sentence structure and punctuation scores were much higher because we've been focussing on it as a whole school and the children are really good for if you tell them you need to do more of this and you make it explicit they'll do it. On the whole they want to please, they want to do the right thing and they want to get good grades and prove themselves to the teacher and get attention for the positive things they achieve (Mary, MM, Yr.2).

Any failures were internalised and teachers developed responsibility towards their pupils and the institution, a form of internal embracement of the institutional problems:

The 75% target is a measure of how much progression the children in my class have made this year and I'm not going to get that. 75% of them haven't got the national average, so I feel I haven't got them there It's not like we look at it in the staff meetings and say "Oh these teachers didn't get them to this target so you must be a rubbish teacher" so it doesn't feel personal, in public, but I do feel personally responsible for it. However, I think it helps to feel personally responsible for the progression, and it focuses you more on the children that could do with a lot of help (Celina, C, Yr.2).

Perversely, the support of the team culture of the PEI appeared to protect them from this personal criticism but the responsibility was, nevertheless, felt acutely. However, it was also accepted as part of the role to reach these targets, so they had incorporated these responsibilities.

They accepted the situation and sought to manage the tension:

Obviously we have targets for all children in the school that's how it is, not that I always agree with these things but you do have targets and children are assessed to a certain level of a target and at the start of the year you have the previous year's targets and you are expected to move them up. I think you need to know that performance is being assessed because we have performance and appraisals and we have to reflect on our practice and we need to know that what we are doing is working (Harriet, H, Yr.6).

They embraced the imperatives of the performativity culture to ensure the continuing success of their institution in the local market place. We saw how testing and targets alongside external auditing were accepted by teachers as part of their role, more of a craft role ensuring everything was effective and striving for improvement.

The demanding GI always wants more of its members and teacher commitment to the institution ensures it gets more, but the negative aspects of institutional life are internalised and marginalised by their interest and commitment to embrace a culture of openness and aspiration, improvement and collaboration.

Scott notes that:

Lukes (2005) argues that power is most effective when it operates not through coercive domination but by securing the willing compliance of subjects to be governed. This “third dimension” of power – performative regulation – may be subtle and insidious but it is not necessarily exploitative. Lukes warns against condescending theories of false consciousness and cultural doping, arguing that while cultural discourses may shape people’s perceptions of their “true” or “best” interests, these individuals are actively involved in translating general principles into personally meaningful terms. Furthermore, insofar as they perceive the effects of power to be positive (for example when therapy makes one feel better), they can be said to have acted in their *real* interests. We should therefore beware of underestimating the agency of RI inmates just as much as that of those in the TI (Scott, 2010, p. 221).

There was clearly a technicisation of work, represented by levelling assessment procedures and target setting, but general educational values were present with passion which, to some extent, counters some of the literature showing primary schools and teachers as depressed and stressed, resulting in a loss of commitment (Troman and Woods, 2001):

The schools demonstrated an aspiring culture in which members held personal aspirations for career, for the learners, for their school and community and the values underpinning these aspirations were at the same time meritocratic, egalitarian and humanist. Our schools were littered with cultural and educational homilies exhorting members to think and act positively, to see learning as a comfortable but challenging journey made easier through self assessment and through co-operation with others, identifying mistakes as learning points and generally celebrating the joy of learning and education and downplaying authoritative power relations. These homilies were for adults as well, some of them placed in staff toilets. An aspirational culture was prominent throughout with a celebration of continual improvement as each member arrived at a station on the never ending journey through professional and personal life (FN, C, 14 March 2007).

Promotion and challenges were daunting but welcome in this new “can do” culture:

It is a big job and it is a responsible thing to do. There are downsides to it but I think quite positive. Perhaps it’s me in my innocence or my ignorance, I don’t know. It’s a big responsibility but I think it’s one that I’m quite happy to take on. And I think I would do it very well. So that’s just how I look at it really (Vicky, V, DH).

Being placed in special measures (a critical Ofsted assessment) proved to be a challenge, “to come in and have that clear mandate to change a school in special measures was very exciting. And a clear understanding that it really did need to change” (Camile, C, HT), as did wider challenges.

A commitment to social justice strengthened the power of the institution and of those individuals who embraced these principles. Their commitment was not just to maintain their league table position in the market environment but to improve children’s opportunities. Their aspirations were tied closely to the children’s education, although they accepted that the methodology was not perfect for all children. The discourse of improvement and challenge pervaded the whole culture, a postmodern form of governmentality (Foucault, 1979; Jeffrey and Troman, 2012):

In fact one of the kids last week at Breakfast Club gave me the best feedback I have ever had. I want it written on my tombstone. I think it sums up best what you need to do and you do on a good day. She said, “I think you’re like the Wizard of Oz Mrs Herbert because you educate our brains, you’re kind but you give us courage”. And I thought well, there you go there’s a pretty good leg up that you need to give to your staff too as well. Give them the courage, give

them the stamina but also give them a challenge. We mustn't see them as problems but give them the challenge and give them the support (Camile, C, HT).

The discourse of improvement, challenge and aspiration seeped into the life of all, including the students.

Conclusion

The EPI encourages teachers to take on more managerial roles, to supervise each other, to take responsibility for various parts of the school organisation and curriculum, often without extra pay or designated seniority. In this way, the institution is continually reinvented with the collaboration and support of the inmates for institutional development and, at the same time, individuals benefit as they develop careers and performative institutional competences. It looks to embrace not only its members but the local community in order to maintain its market position and, to that end, unlike the GI, it develops an open culture but, nevertheless, like the GI, it separates staff from wider professional relations due to the necessity to maintain a competitive approach in its marketised environment.

The recent government policy development of academies, federated schools managed by one organisational body and "free schools" administered by private organisations can be seen as a widening of market influence and they will extend the experience of being a member of an embracing institution as each one seeks to popularise their schools.

Being embraced is supportive and it ensures institutional survival in the marketised world and embracing the institution allows members to influence some outcomes and to gain personal satisfaction as well as reconstructing relevant situational identities. This model of the EPI applies to institutions that develop supportive cultures, unlike the TI, but similar to the GI and the RI. However, these EPI are not exclusive, like the GI, nor do they focus solely on exploring and reinventing individual and personal identities, as in the RI. A more general distinction is that an EPI model can apply to a wider set of institutions than either the TI or the RI, both public and private sector institutions that seek to enhance their worth, status, values and practices in a marketised context. They use the full force of member effectiveness to gain market position, like the GI, but at the same time develop each member's commitment through embracing their development, professional values, interests and sociability. The EPI creates a positive, supportive and creative internal culture to enhance the performativity of its marketised institution.

Glossary

Achievement level: a level descriptor that designates the level a pupil has reached in each subject and at the same time indicates the next level to attain according to the average standard for their key stage.

Ofsted: which inspects all schools and related educational establishments and provides regular reports on them.

SATs: given to all primary pupils, but the Yr:6 tests are externally marked and taken in one designated week in May each year across England. The government Department of Education publishes LA results.

Special measures: a school assessed by Ofsted to be in need of extra assistance to meet satisfactory performance targets.

References

- Bagley, C. (2006), "School choice and competition: a public market revisited", *Oxford Review of Education*, Vol. 32 No. 3, pp. 347-62.
- Ball, S.J. (1997), "Good school/bad school: paradox and fabrication", *British Journal of Sociology of Education*, Vol. 18:3, pp. 317-37.
- Ball, S.J. (1998), "Performativity and fragmentation in 'postmodern schooling'", in Carter, J. (Ed.), *Postmodernity and Fragmentation of Welfare*, Routledge, London, pp. 187-203.
- Ball, S.J. (2000), "Performativities and fabrications in the education economy: towards the performative society?", *Australian Educational Researcher*, Vol. 27 No. 2, pp. 1-23.
- Ball, S.J. (2003), "The teacher's soul and the terrors of performativity", *Journal of Education Policy*, Vol. 18 No. 2, pp. 215-28.
- Bernstein, B. (1999), "Vertical and horizontal discourse: an essay", *British Journal of Sociology of Education*, Vol. 20 No. 2, pp. 157-73.
- Coser, L.A. (1974), *Greedy Institutions: Patterns of Undivided Commitment*, Free Press, New York, NY.
- Denzin, N. (1989), *Interpretative Interactionism*, Sage, London.
- DfEE (2005), *Higher Standards, Better Schools for All*, HMSO, Norwich.
- Foucault, M. (1977), *Discipline and Punish: The Birth of the Prison*, Penguin, London.
- Foucault, M. (1979), "Governmentality", *Ideology and Consciousness*, Vol. 5 No. 21, pp. 7-26.
- Garfinkel, H. (1967), *Studies in Ethnomethodology*, Prentice-Hall, Englewood Cliffs, NJ.
- Geijsel, F. and Meijers, F. (2005), "Identity learning: the core process of educational change", *Educational Studies*, Vol. 31 No. 4, pp. 419-30.
- Gillies, D. (2008), "Developing governmentality: conduct and education policy", *Journal of Education Policy*, Vol. 23 No. 4, pp. 415-27.
- Glaser, B.G. and Strauss, A. (1967), *The Discovery of Grounded Theory*, Aldine, Chicago, IL.
- Goffman, E. (1961), *Asylums*, Penguin, Harmondsworth.
- Goffman, I. (1959), *The Presentation of Self in Everyday Life*, Penguin, London.
- Hargreaves, A. (2000), "The four ages of professionalism and professional learning", *Teachers and Teaching*, Vol. 6 No. 2, pp. 152-82.
- Harris, A. and Ranson, S. (2005), "The contradictions of educational policy: disadvantage and achievement", *British Educational Research Journal*, Vol. 31 No. 5, pp. 571-87.
- Jeffrey, B. (1999), "Distancing research objects through the involvement of the self", in Massey, A.W.G. (Ed.), *Studies in Educational Ethnography: Explorations in Ethnography*, Vol. 2, Jai Press, Stamford, CT, pp. 163-82.
- Jeffrey, B. (2002), "Performativity and primary teacher relations", *Journal of Education Policy*, Vol. 17 No. 5, pp. 531-46.
- Jeffrey, B. (2007), "Creative learning in Europe: making use of global discourses", in Craft, A., Cremin, T. and Burnard, P. (Eds), *Creative Learning 3-11 and How We Document It*, Trentham, pp. 35-42.
- Jeffrey, B. and Troman, G. (2004), "Time for ethnography", *British Journal of Educational Research*, Vol. 30 No. 4, pp. 535-48.
- Jeffrey, B. and Troman, G. (2012), "Governmentality in primary schools in the UK", in Jeffrey, B. and Troman, G. (Eds), *Performativity Across UK Education: Ethnographic Cases of its Effects, Agency and Reconstructions*, E&E Publishing, Painswick, pp. 67-86.
- Jeffrey, B. and Woods, P. (1998), *Testing Teachers: The Effects of School Inspections on Primary Teachers*, Falmer, London.

- Jones, K. (2001), "Travelling policy/local spaces: culture, creativity and interference", *Education and Social Justice*, Vol. 3 No. 3, pp. 2-9.
- Levin, B. (1998), "An epidemic of education policy: (what) can we learn from each other", *Comparative Education*, Vol. 34 No. 2, pp. 131-41.
- Lortie, D.C. (1975), *Schoolteacher*, University of Chicago Press, Chicago, IL.
- Lyotard, J.F. (1984), *The Postmodern Condition: A Report on Knowledge*, (trans by G. Bennington and B. Massumi), Manchester University Press, Manchester.
- Mason, J. (2004), *Qualitative Researching*, Sage, London.
- Maton, C. (2005), "A question of autonomy: bourdieu's field approach and higher education policy", *Journal of Education Policy*, Vol. 20 No. 6, pp. 687-704.
- Nias, J. (1989), *Primary Teachers Talking*, Routledge, London.
- Perryman, J. (2006), "Panoptic performativity and school inspection", *Journal of Education Policy*, Vol. 21 No. 2, pp. 147-61.
- Peters, T.J. and Waterman, J.R.H. (1982), *In Search of Excellence*, Warner Books, New York, NY.
- Rosenholtz, S. (1989), *Teachers' Workplace*, Longman, New York, NY.
- Scott, S. (2010), "Revisiting the total institution: performative regulation in the reinventive institution", *Sociology*, Vol. 44 No. 2, pp. 213-31.
- Strauss, A.L. (1978), *Negotiations: Varieties, Contexts, Processes and Social Order*, Jossey-Bass, San Francisco, CA.
- Strauss, A. and Corbin, J. (1990), *Basics of Qualitative Research: Grounded Theory, Procedures and Techniques*, Sage, London.
- Troman, G. and Woods, P. (2001), *Primary Teachers' Stress*, Routledge-Falmer, London.
- Woods, P. (1993), *Critical Events in Teaching and Learning*, Falmer Press, London.
- Woods, P. and Jeffrey, B. (1995), *Creative Teachers in Primary Schools*, Open University Press, Buckingham.
- Woods, P. (1996), *Researching the Art of Teaching: Ethnography for Educational Use*, Routledge, London.
- Woods, P.A. (1998), *School Choice and Competition: Markets in the Public Interest*, Routledge, London.
- Woods, P.A. (2004), "Democratic leadership: drawing distinctions with distributed leadership", *International Journal of Leadership in Education*, Vol. 7 No. 1, pp. 3-26.

Further reading

- Ball, S.J. (1993), "Education markets, choice and social class: the market as a class strategy in the UK and the USA", *British Journal of Sociology of Education*, Vol. 14 No. 1, pp. 3-19.

About the authors

Bob Jeffrey, who is an Honorary Research Fellow, has researched, with Professor Peter Woods and Professor Geoff Troman, the work of primary teachers since 1992. They focused on the opportunity for creative teaching and the effects of the reforms of the 1990s in England on this form of pedagogy and teacher identities. In the 2000s they developed this focus to learners and their opportunities for creative learning including a nine nation European study from 2004-2006. He has also worked closely with Professor Anna Craft developing research and promoting creative teaching and learning in the educational research community particularly through BERA and through a nationwide seminar series from 2004-2005 and they edited a special issue on Performativity and Creativity for *BERJ* in 2008. He has been a leader of two

JOE
1,2

212

recent ESRC studies into primary teacher's careers in performativity cultures and into the effects of performative and creative policies on primary schools – 2004-2008 together with Professor Geoff Troman of Roehampton University. They have published extensively including a great many methodology articles focused on an ethnographic approach including a focus on cross-cultural approaches. He is founder with Geoff of the *Ethnography and Education* journal (with Geoff being its first editor), and he now edits it. Together they have co-organised an annual ethnography conference in Oxford as well co-editing a book series with Tufnell Press. He coordinates the E&E Network www.ethnographyandeducation.org. Bob Jeffrey is the corresponding author and can be contacted at: b.jeffrey@exeter.ac.uk

Geoff Troman is Emeritus Professor of Education at Froebel College, School of Education at Roehampton University, London and Director of the Centre for Research on Education Policy and Professionalism – CeREPP. Previously he was a Research Fellow and Associate Lecturer in the Faculty of Education and Language Studies at the Open University. He is foundation Editor (with Bob Jeffrey, The Open University; Geoffrey Walford, University of Oxford) of the journal *Ethnography and Education* published by Routledge, Taylor & Francis Group. He taught science for 20 years in secondary modern, comprehensive and middle schools before moving into higher education in 1989. Throughout his time in schools he carried out research as a teacher researcher. His PhD research was an ethnography of primary school restructuring. He maintains a research interest in education policy, ethnography, ethnographic and qualitative methodology, comparative qualitative studies, sociology of education and teachers' work.

To purchase reprints of this article please e-mail: reprints@emeraldinsight.com
Or visit our web site for further details: www.emeraldinsight.com/reprints

Reproduced with permission of the copyright owner. Further reproduction prohibited without permission.