PERFORMATIVITIES AND FABRICATIONS IN THE EDUCATION ECONOMY: TOWARDS THE PERFORMATIVE SOCIETY?[1]

STEPHEN J BALL

King's College London

Man himself must first of all have become calculable, regular, necessary even in his own image of himself, if he is to be able to stand security for his own future, which is what one who promises does! (Nietzische 1967/1887, p. 58).

This paper 'joins in' and contributes to an emerging stream of ideas and conversations related to 'performativity' in education and social policy—which includes, among others, Jill Blackmore, Judyth Sachs, Erica McWilliam, John Elliott, Tricia Broadfoot and Bob Lingard. The paper attempts to look at both the capillary detail and 'the bigger picture' of performativity in the public sector. Ideally it should be read in relation to the multitude of 'performative texts' and 'texts of performativity' with which we are continually confronted and which increasingly inform and deform our practice[2]. The paper is intended to be both very theoretical and very practical, very abstract and very immediate[3].

Let me begin by offering a working definition of performativity. Performativity is a technology, a culture and a mode of regulation, or a system of 'terror' in Lyotard's words, that employs judgements, comparisons and displays as means of control, attrition and change. The performances (of individual subjects or organisations) serve as measures of productivity or output, or displays of 'quality', or 'moments' of promotion (there is a felicititous ambiguity around this word) or inspection. They stand for, encapsulate or represent the worth, quality or value of an individual or organisation within a field of judgement. 'An equation between wealth, efficiency, and truth is thus established' (Lyotard 1984, p. 46). The issue of who controls the field of judgement is crucial. 'Accountability' and 'competition' are the lingua franca of this new *discourse of power* as Lyotard describes it. A discourse which is the emerging form of legitimation in post-industrial societies for both the production of knowledge and

its transmission through education. My aim is to begin work on/towards an analytic of this discourse of power, and resistances and accommodations to it. This is both an exercise in critical ontology and the analysis of new regulative forms.

In referring to various texts or 'data' I am not attempting in any simple sense to mobilise proof of my arguments and most are not intended to be read, rather recognised, acknowledged. I am trying to establish the existence of an 'attitude' and an 'ethical framework' within which teachers and researchers in schools, colleges and universities are having to work and think about what they do and who they are! I am interested in the way in which these texts play their part in 'making us up' (Hacking 1986, p. 231) by providing 'new modes of description' and 'new possibilities for action'; thus creating new social identities—what it means to be educated; what is means 'to be a teacher' or a researcher. This re-making can be enhancing and empowering for some but this has to be set over and against the various 'inauthenticities' discussed below[4]. There are 'winners' and 'losers' in the 'struggle for the soul of professionalism' (Hanlon 1998) which is embedded in this remaking.

The argument focuses upon a struggle over visibility. I shall explore a paradox, arguing that tactics of transparency produce a resistance of opacity, of elusivity—an escape from the gaze—and that this resistance is also paradoxical and disciplinary. In general terms I want to outline a new mode of social (and moral) regulation that bites deeply and immediately into the practice of state professionals—'reforming' and 're-forming' meaning and identity—producing or 'making up' new 'professional subjectivities'. This new mode involves, as Deleuze (1992) puts it, a shift from *societies of discipline* to *societies of control*: 'controls are a modulation, like a self-deforming cast that will continuously change from one moment to the other, or like a sieve whose mesh will transmute from point to point' (p. x).

Within this new mode of regulation, the organisation of power within definite forms of time-space (e.g. factory or office production systems) is now less important. It is the data-base, the appraisal meeting, the annual review, report writing and promotion applications, inspections, peer reviews that are to the fore. There is not so much, or not only, a STRUCTURE of surveillance, as a FLOW of performativities both continuous and eventful—that is SPECTACULAR. It is not the possible certainty of always being seen that is the issue, as in the panopticon, it is the uncertainty and instability of being judged in different ways, by different means, through different agents; the 'bringing-off' of performances—the flow of changing demands, expectations and indicators that make us continually accountable and constantly recorded—'giving the position of any element within an open environment at any given instant' (Deleuze 1992, p. 7). This is the basis

for the principle of uncertainty and inevitability, it is a recipe for onotological insecurity:—'Are we doing enough? Are we doing the right thing? How will we measure up?.

In effect 'controls' overlay rather than displace 'disciplines' in most educational organisations even if the emphasis is shifting. There is at work here a combination of *rituals* (grandiloquent pronouncements and spectacular events) which serve to naturalise the discourses of control (like Inspections, Audits, promotion applications, Job interviews), and *routines* (record keeping, commitee and task-force meetings, interactions) which address forms of identity by treating people in terms of the identities of the discourses of performativity (Corrigan & Sayer 1985). However, McCollow and Lingard (1996) make the point that while:

> most academics' lives have at least been 'touched' by the forces of the market. The impact of the market on academic work is mediated by various factors, for example, the degree to which the individual operates as a state, market or corporate professional (p. 15).

As ever the impacts of performativity and market disciplines are uneven across and between institutions—different identities and performances are more or less possible, more or less available, in different locations (see Blackmore & Sachs 1999). Commenting on the Higher Education marketplace, Bernstein (1996, p. 74) notes that:

> Those at the top, or near the top, of this hierarchy may maintain their position more by attracting and holding key academic stars than by changing their pedagogic discourse according to the *exigencies of the market*... On the other hand, those institutions which are much less fortunate in their position in the stratification ... will be more concerned with the marketing possibilities of their pedagogic discourse.

However, whatever our location, we now operate within a baffling array of figures, performance indicators, comparisons and competitions—in such a way that the contentments of stability are increasingly elusive, purposes are contradictory, motivations blurred and self worth slippery[5]. Constant doubts about which judgements may be in play at any point mean that any and all comparisons have to be attended to. What is produced is 'a state of conscious and permanent visibility [or visibilities sjb] at the intersection of government, organisation and self formation. And one key aspect of the 'steering' effects of judgement and comparison is a gearing of academic production to the requirements of national economic competition, which are in turn supported by:

'Policies which pursue the general goal of reorganising, maintaining and generalising market exchange relationships' (Offe 1984, p. 125).

Performativity works from the outside in and from the inside out. As regards the latter performances are, on the one hand, aimed at culture-building, the instilling of pride, identification with and 'a love of product or a belief in the quality of the services' provided (Willmott 1992, p. 63). On the other hand, ratings and rankings, set within competition between groups *within* institutions, can engender individual feelings of pride, guilt, shame and envy—they have an emotional (status) dimension, as well as (the appearance of) rationality and objectivity. Let me quote a teacher who appears in Jeffrey and Woods' (1998) powerful, moving and indeed terrifying book *Testing Teachers* which deals with the UK regime of School Inspections and examines 'teachers' experience of these inspections as a conflict of values, a colonisation of their lives, and de-professionalisation of their role' (back cover).

> I don't have the job satisfaction now I once had working with young kids because I feel every time I do something intuitive I just feel guilty about it. "Is this right; am I doing this the right way; does this cover what I am supposed to be covering: should I be doing something else: should I be more structured; should I have this in place; should I have done this?" You start to query everything you are doing—there's a kind of guilt in teaching at the moment. I don't know if that's particularly related to Ofsted but of course it's multiplied by the fact that Ofsted is coming in because you get in a panic that you won't be able to justify yourself when they finally arrive (p. 118).

Here then is guilt, uncertainty, instability and the emergence of a new subjectivity[6]- a new kind of teacher. What we see here is a particular set of 'practices through which we act upon ourselves and one another in order to make us particular kinds of being' (Rose 1992, p. 161). Crucially, and this is central to my argument, together, these forms of regulation, or governmentality[7], have *a social and interpersonal dimension*. They are folded into complex institutional, team, group and communal relations (the academic community, the school, the subject department, the University, for example). WE sit on peer reviews, WE write the accountability reports, WE assign grades to other departments, WE berate our colleagues for their 'poor' productivity, WE devise, run and feed departmental and institutional procedures for monitoring and improving 'output'.

Within this economy of education, material and personal interests are intertwined in the competition for resources, security and esteem and the intensification of public professional labour—the changing conditions of and

meanings for work[8]. While I have acknowledged the significance of the changes I am addressing in relation to the international competitiveness of nation states, I focus primarily here on 'performance' itself as a system of measures and indicators (signs) and sets of relationships, rather than on its functions for the social system and the economy. My starting point is Lyotard but my use of the concept of performativity moves beyond his presentation of the *principle of performativity* 'as the optimising of performance by maximising outputs (benefits) and minimising inputs (costs)'. I also want to differentiate between perfo*rmativity* in Lyotard's sense—'be operational (that is, commensurable) or dis:appear' (Lyotard 1984, p. xxiv) and in Butler's (1990) sense as enactment or p*er*for*mance*. I am also interested in a perverse form of response/resistance to and accommodation to performativity that I call *fabrication*.

At the risk of stating the obvious, let me be very clear here. While at times I will talk about schools and school teachers in this piece, and refer to other public sector organis*a*tions, I can claim no luxury or objectivity of distance in all this. My daily prac*ti*ce within a University is the most immediate reality for what I am attempting to analyse. Thus, some of my illustrations are taken from documents, events and observations within my own institution. Some of the oppressions I describe are perpetrated by me. I am agent and subject within the regime of performativity in the academy. This is in part an exercise in autobiography.

> Each time I have attempted to do theoretical work it has been on the basis of elements from my experience—always in relation to processes that I saw taking place around me. It is in fact because I thought I recognised something cracked, dully jarring or disfunctioning in things I saw in the institutions in which I dealt with my relations with others, that I undertook a particular piece of work, several fragments of autobiography (Foucault in Rajchman 1985, p. 36).

Social relations of practice

As represented by Lingard and Blackmore (1997, p. 13) the policy duality of accountability and enterprise in higher education produce tensions which 'are played out in the everyday/everynight lives of individual academics, in the form of demands made upon their time to provide feedback and accountability upwards to their institutions, through performance management, quality assurance and research quantums and productivity agreements under enterprise bargaining'. Two points follow from this. First, there is the contradiction, what Lyotard calls *the law of contradiction*, which arises between intensification—as an increase in the volume of first order activities—and the 'costs' of second order

activities themselves like performance monitoring and management[9]. Thus, as a number of commentators have pointed out, acquiring the performative information necessary for perfect control, 'consumes so much energy that it drastically reduces the energy available for making improvement inputs' (Elliott 1996, p. 15, see also Blackmore & Sachs 1997)[10]. Survival and competitive advantage in the economy of education rests equally upon the energy of first order activities and the energy of second order activities—producing what Blackmore and Sachs (1997) call 'institutional schizophrenia'. However, I also want to suggest below that there is no simple 'realist' relationship between the former and the latter and that they are mediated by the effort devoted to the production of personal and institutional *fabrications*. Furthermore, as noted already, it is important to recognise the extent to which these activities enter into our everyday relations. These are most apparent in the pressures on individuals, formalised by appraisals, annual reviews and data bases, to make *their* contribution to the performativity of the unit. Again in this there is a real possibility that authentic social relations are replaced by judgmental relations wherein persons are valued for their productivity alone. In Deleuze's (1992) terms, 'individuals have become "dividuals" and masses, samples, data, markets or "banks"' (p. 5). This is part of what Lash and Urry (1994, p. 15) call the 'emptying out' of relationships, which are left 'flat' and 'deficient in affect'. Thus, in my role as Chair of our School Research and Development Committee, I regularly review the Schools' publications data base and 'meet with' those colleagues whose publications look like they might fall short of the measures and requirements of the national Research Assessment Exercise. These meetings both offer support and entreat the person to greater efforts[11]. The interplay of collegial and disciplinary aspects in all this are very murky indeed.

In relation to individual practice we can also identify the development and ravages of another kind of 'schizophrenia'. There is the possibility that commitment, judgement and authenticity within practice are sacrificed for impression and performance. *There is a 'splitting' between the teachers own judgements about 'good practice' and students 'needs' on the one hand and the rigours of performance on the other*. Perhaps I can illustrate this again quoting teachers from Jeffrey and Woods (1998, p. 160) study of UK school inspections. Veronica, talked about resenting 'what I've done. I've never compromised before and I feel ashamed. It's like licking their boots'. And Diane talked about a lost of respect for herself.

> My first reaction was 'I'm not going to play the game', but I am and they
> know I am. I don't respect myself for it; my own self respect goes down.
> Why aren't I making a stand? Why aren't I saying, 'I know I can teach;

say what you want to say', and so I lose my own self-respect. I know who I am; know why I teach, and I don't like it: I don't like them doing this, and that's sad, isn't it?

There is alot here. There an indication of the particular performativity—the management of performance—which is 'called up' by Inspection. What is produced is a spectacle, or what we might see as an 'enacted fantasy' (Butler 1990), which is there simply to be seen and judged. And as the teacher also hints the heavy sense of inauthenticity in all this may well be appreciated as much by the Inspectors as the inspected; Diane is 'playing the game' and 'they know I am'. Nonetheless, the effects here in terms of discipline and control are powerful indeed; as are the 'costs' to the self. Jeffrey and Woods (1998) note the 'most dramatic' example of Cloe.

> She was the only year 6 teacher at Trafflon and after criticism of their SATs results she resolved to go down the path of 'improvement of results'. She changed her curriculum, and achieved her aim by getting the second best results the following year in her LEA. She justified this by saying that she was 'now just doing a job'; and had withdrawn her total involvement to preserve her 'sanity'. 'The results were better because I acted like a function machine' (p. 163).

Again the alienation of self is linked to the incipient 'madness' of the requirements of performativity. The result, inauthentic practice and relationships. Another teacher from our own research study (Gewirtz & Ball 1999) made a similar point, 'gabbling' as she described it, about the use of Total Quality Management systems in her secondary school.

> ... how much personal do you have to sacrifice for having the rest there ... is probably what would be my... You see, I think one of the strategies behind it, and I think Peter Waters [the TQM consultant] said it, you don't have to like each other, as long as you can work within the systems... well... I'm sorry, I'm not a product, and I don't ... you know, and that really gets me (Main Grade Teacher 2).

We also see here the emergence of 'new forms of social relations'—social structures are replaced by 'information structures' (Lash & Urry 1994, p. 111). I am reminded of Zygmunt Bauman's point that: 'The sociality of postmodern community does not require sociability' (1992, p. 198).

We might find a similar 'splitting' and personal and social inauthenticity as teachers and researchers in Higher Education when we apply for grants in which we have no academic interest but will look good on departmental returns or earn income, or give conference papers or submit journal articles which are unready or unoriginal in order to chalk up another 'count' in the annual 'output' review. We may also be applying for grants in which we have limited personal interest to keep contract staff colleagues employed. This may exemplify a situation that Giddens' sees as endemic in late modernity; where there is an institutionalised 'existential separation' from 'the moral resources necessary to live a full and satisfying existence' (1991, p. 91), as a result, he suggests, the individual may experience personal meaninglessness. However, I do recognise the problem of 'mixed' motives here—we tell ourselves 'necessary fictions' which rationalise our own intensification or legitimate our involvements in the rituals of performance.

Nonetheless, I am suggesting that this tension, this structural and individual schizophrenia, and the potential for inauthenticity and meaninglessness is increasingly an everyday experience for us all. The activities of the technical intelligensia, of management, drive performativity into the day to day practices of teachers and into the social relations between teachers. They make management, ubiquitous, invisible, inescapable—part of, embedded in, everything we do. We choose and judge our actions and they are judged by others on the basis of their contribution to organisational performance. And in all this the demands of performativity, dramatically close-down the possibilities for 'metaphysical discourses', for relating practice to philosophical principles like social justice and equity. And 'fables' of promise and opportunity such as those which attend democratic education are also marginalised[12]. There is a 'silencing [of] alternative voices' (Broadfoot 1998, p. 176). Evenso, we are all expected to make our contribution to the construction of convincing institutional performances. Which brings us to the issue of fabrication.

Fabrications

The fabrications that organisations (and individuals) produce are selections among various possible representations—or versions of the organisation or person. Complex organisations like schools and universities are multifaceted and diverse, indeed they are sometimes contested and often contradictory. Clearly, particular groups or individuals will be able to privilege particular representations. However, these selections and choices are not made in a political vacuum. They are 'informed' by the priorities, constraints and climate set by the policy environment. In many instances these representations are simulacra. To

paraphrase Foucault, fabrications are versions of an organisation (or person) which does not exist—they are not 'outside the truth' but neither do they render simply true or direct accounts—they are produced purposefully in order 'to be accountable'. Truthfulness is not the point—the point is their effectiveness, in the market or for the Inspection, as well as the 'work' they do 'on' and 'in' the organisation—their transformational impact. As Butler (1990, p. 136) puts it, in a rather different context: 'Such acts, gestures, enactments, generally construed, are *performative* in the sense that the essence or identity that they otherwise purport to express are *fabrications* manufactured and sustained through corporeal signs and other discursive means'. However, as Butler is swift to point out such fabrications are paradoxical, and deeply so. In one sense organisational fabrications are an escape from *the gaze*, a strategy of impression management that in effect erects a facade of calculation. But in another sense the work of fabricating the organisation requires submission to the rigours of performativity and the disciplines of competition—resistance and capitulation. It is, as we have seen, a betrayal even, a giving up of claims to authenticity and commitment, it is an investment in plasticity. Crucially and invariably acts of fabrication and the fabrications themselves act and reflect back upon the practices they stand for. The fabrication becomes something to be sustained, lived up to. Something to measure individual practices against. The fabrication becomes embedded in and is reproduced by systems of recording and reporting on practice. It also excludes other things which do not 'fit' into what is intended to be represented or conveyed.

All of this keeps the gaze in place, the professional teacher and lecturer are here defined by their grasp of and careful use of systems and procedures, and by the particular 'rewards' and new identities that this delivers through a regressive, self regulation. All of this is evident in the current program in the UK for the Professional Accreditation of Lecturers and other teaching staff in Higher Education. Part, in turn of the project of 'Academic Quality Enhancement'. The Course Directory of the Accreditation program of the University of London Institute of Education begins with a quotation describing the key role of the 'Portfolio of Practice':

> This is a compilation of learning intentions, accounts of learning activities, learning outcomes, records of reflective dialogues. It includes evidence from a variety of sources including your private learning journal/diary/log, and most important of all, a reflective document detailing your learning process. *The ... portfolio, while confidential to you, is intended for assessment...* [my emphasis] (Brockett & McGill 1998, p. 103).[13]

It is in these ways that we become more capable, more efficient, more productive, more relevant; we become 'user-friendly; we become part of the 'knowledge economy'. And within all this there is 'the possibility of a triumphant self' (Erica McWilliam, personal communication). We learn that we can become more than we were. There is something very seductive about being 'properly passionate' about excellence, about achieving 'peak performance'.[14]

Nonetheless, the work of fabrication points to a second paradox. Technologies and calculations which appear to make public sector organisations more transparent may actually result in making them more opaque, as representational artefacts are increasingly constructed with great deliberation and sophistication. The 'phantasmagoria of signs becomes more substantial as the reality it once represented evaporates' (Slater 1997, p. 194). The discipline of the market is transformed into the discipline of the image, the sign.

Apart from their 'official' functions, as responses to accountability, both main aspects of educational performativity—comparison and commodification—are linked to the provision of 'information' for consumers within the education market form. And they are thus also different ways of making schools and universities more responsive or appear as more responsive to their consumers. As part of this educational organisations increasingly avail themselves of what Baudrillard (1998, p. 159) calls 'the msytique of solicitude'.

Within all this (some) educational institutions will become what ever it seems necessary to become in order to flourish in the market. The heart of the educational project is gouged out and left empty. Authenticity is replaced by plasticity. Within the education market institutional promotion and representation take on the qualities of postmodern depthlessness—yet more floating signifiers in the plethora of semiotic images, spectacles and fragments that increasingly dominate consumer society. Indeed, the particular disciplines of competition encourage schools and universities to 'fabricate' themselves—to manage and manipulate their performances in particular ways. Increasingly educational institutions are taking the position that part of what they offer to 'choosers/consumers' is a physical and semiotic context which is no longer 'left to chance, but has to be heavily designed' (Lash & Urry 1994, p. 204). Certainly schools have become much more aware of and attentive to the 'need' to carefully organise the ways in which they 'present' themselves to their current and potential parents through promotional publications, school events, school 'productions', open evenings, websites (Abbott 1999)[15] and local press coverage. Furthermore, there is a general tension or confusion in the education market between information-giving and impression management and promotion. This blizzard of hype, (pseudo) information and impression management also contributes to opacity rather than transparency.

As a further variation on the fabrication of organisations in the UK many schools and Universities have used their new budgetary freedoms to re-design and re-decorate their entrance and reception areas—typically in open-plan 'bank' style—comfortable sofas, pot-plants, posters and up-lighting[16]. Again, as I have noted elsewhere, the purpose seems to be to take control of and change the organisational messages conveyed. There is a detachment and confusion of signs; a shift from bureaucratic to business-like imagery; from something that is clearly 'represented' as a public service to something that *might be* a consumption good. We have noted similar changes in the production of prospectuses and brochures—a process we call 'glossification' (Gewirtz, Ball *et al* 1995)—colour rather than black and white; promotion rather than information; pictures rather than text; and careful attention to style and production values and formats.

Again individually we also fabricate ourselves. We produce versions of ourselves for and at job interviews—and increasingly may have to 'perform' a presentation for our potential colleagues—for promotion and for grant-getting (see below).

Let me try to be even more specific with some more examples and in doing so begin to develop an analysis of the *poetics of fabrication*. This might allow us to think about how plausibility and believability are acheived, or 'brought off', both tactically and creatively. It might be useful to distinguish between trivial or *representational* fabrications (which is not meant to underplay their effects) and those which are *constitutive* and arise from *organising* principles.

The routine selection (or manipulation) of statistics and indicators

Systems of calculability almost always leave latitude for representational variation (Ball 1997). In the research mentioned above (Ball 1998), I observed several instances when the management of figures for public consumption was discussed. At a year heads' meeting with the senior deputy she talked about attendance figures and the need for 'the Judicious use of authorised absences' (1st Deputy). At a SMT meeting on Staffing analyses the Head asked the senior teacher responsible; 'How do we show the contact ratio in the best light' (for Ofsted). And in interview the Head of one subject talked about the very direct pressure coming from the Headteacher to get the exam results presented in a particular way.

I'm rushing around like a loony today trying to put together this exam results display she wants... I didn't have any data to do it with and I've had to collect that and then I've had to find a way of presenting the results in a way that looks good... GCSEs and A level results against the national

average... that's presented us with some problems, because obviously
with four subjects the results are uneven... I've found a way of doing the
A-level that looks alright, I'm struggling a bit with the GCSE (Hog2).

In higher education the dual-authoring of papers with 'less productive' colleagues
is another fairly innocuous method of massaging publications returns. Leo
Walford, Journals editor at Sage Publications has recently talked about the RAE
in the UK leading to what he calls the 'salami-slicing of strong research papers in
several thinner articles' (Headline 'RAE can "corrupt" research', *THES* 26.3.99).
In addition the re-publication of just slightly different versions of essentially the
same paper seems to be becoming more common. Publishers are harrassed to
organise their production schedules to ensure publication before the RAE cut-off
date.

The choice of indicators, where more than one is available, is another routine
act of fabrication And in the UK the run up to each RAE is now marked by a
flurry of 'transfers' of 'star' performers to institutions wanting to boost their
chances of a better grade—another form of instant fabrication. The most recent
point of struggle over the form of the RAE is related to 'whether a minimum
percentage of staff should be submitted in order for a department or unit to be
eligible for a 5 or 5* rating' in assessment (letter from David Blunkett, Secretary
of State for Education and Employment to the HEFCE). A publication concerned
with research policy suggested that 'some SHEFEC officials have serious
reservations about the proposal. They argue that it would trigger more game
playing along academics, who would simply redefine departments to maximise
the proportion of staff submitted to the exercise' (*Research Fortnight* 5 [6] 1999,
p. 1). As before, *they* know we are 'playing' the game, but the process does its
work nonetheless.

In the school sector we can point to the introduction of base-line testing in UK
schools as another point of struggle over and manipulation of indicators. Primary
schools are eager to test early—despite advice to 'let the children settle
down'—to produce maximum 'under-performance', against which 'value-added'
gains can be made, and attributed to the schools. Some parents on the other hand
are preparing their children for the tests to ensure a 'good' showing, or are
shocked by the poor performance of their 'unprepared' children. The interests of
'good-schooling' and 'good-parenting' are made antithetical by the demands of
performativity. And the way in which performativity can easily become totally
divorced from service is dramatically demonstrated by a UK private rail company
Connex, which on several occasions has run trains without stopping at scheduled
stations to ensure that they meet their punctuality targets. Or we might note the
impact of the publication of the morbidity rates of individual surgeons in the

USA which has lead to many doctors refusing to operate on difficult or high-risk cases. The same may happen in the UK—'Surgeons may refuse high-risk cases' (Headline, *The Independent* 7.10.99).

The stage management of events

A colleague in London described to me a situation where two schools rented extra computers for their 'Open evening'. The idea being to give parents the impression of a 'hi-tech' learning environment. Another colleague at the Chinese University of Hong Kong, described a practice in mainland China in which schools about to be inspected rented plants and bushes from local nurseries in order to meet the requirement that they should provide a pleasant and conducive learning environment for students. In both cases the rented items were returned once the event was finished. Jeffery and Woods (1998) again, describe a school preparing for Inspection by rehearsing the inspectors questions: "We practised ensuring that we presented a consensus for any interviews we had. It was very helpful. I want them to say that the Senior Management Team has a shared clear view" (Grace quoted p. 155). School Open Evenings are now typically carefully choreographed events, sometimes with professional support.

Constructing accounts of the institution

Increasingly public sector institutions are required to construct a variety of textual accounts of ourselves in the form of development plans, strategic documents, sets of objectives etc. (as are individuals—see below). Symbolism is as important as substance here. In at least two senses. Such texts symbolise and 'stand for' the corporate consensus of the institution, and indeed these exercises in institutional extrapolation can also work as a means of manufacturing consensus (Ball 1997)—the focusing of activities around an 'agreed' set of priorities. They provide a touchstone of shared endeavour which displaces or subsumes differences, disagreements and value divergencies. Of course they are also a version of the institution constructed for external audiences. They deploy discursive tactics to convey order and coherence, consensus and dynamism, responsiveness and careful self-evaluation and to other audiences, a synthetic personalism—'a caring institution'. In a recent BERA lecture (1998 Laurence Stenhouse Lecture) Barry Macdonald, only half-humorously, talked about not being able to recognise his own Department in their written submission for the RAE. By such means the organisation is written into being.

Performance as performativity

Perhaps not surprisingly drama and music productions—performances—attract much larger numbers of parents or potential parents into school than Governors' meetings for parents or Parent Teacher Association socials. The former are also

much more likely to be reported in the local press. The issue here is the blurring of the distinction, in relation to such productions, between educational as opposed to promotional or marketing purposes. Again the issue is whether is it the recruitment concerns of the school that are to the fore or the educational experiences of students. The extract below—which I have quoted elsewhere, illustrates the issues and concerns here, and perhaps also gives some indication of the way in which calculability and exchange relationships have come to the fore in the micropolitics of schools (Ball, Maguire *et al.* 1997)[17].

> The Head [Principal] takes a genuine interest in the Arts and we have a very good position in the curriculum, compared with a lot of other schools, but the quid pro quo if you like is a thriving kind of public face and most of the teachers are actually committed to that, funnily enough... I mean they enjoy doing it, they get a lot out of it... a problem with performance, the public performance in education, although it's educationally beneficial, very, for those students involved, it is inevitably selective, and what you're doing is concentrating on the able students ... at the expense, well you haven't got the time to spend so much on others, although of course we try and get ... other people involved as much as we can... we've got so much keenness to be involved, and if you're doing what we're doing at the moment... the pressure's on and we're not gonna pick kids that can't do it, and anyway one of the things that the Principal would say is, we don't want anyone who can't act involved really... she doesn't like people in the orchestra who can't play instruments, who've only just started, although you can get away with that to an extent, but she's against that, so there is that... I think it's unfortunate but performance is really aimed at ... the kids who benefit are the ones who are able... (Head of Arts, Grant Maintained school).

All of these examples of what I have called *representational* fabrications do in different ways have *organising* effects. As I argued more generally earlier fabrications act back on their producers. And indeed as technologies of accountability some of the requirements referred to here are intended to work as much as formative interventions as they are as summative indicators. Thus, *The School Management Task Force Report* (HMSO 1990) identified School Development Plans which incorporated a management and staff development policy as a major characteristic of successful schools. But Logan, Sachs *et al.* (1994) argue for the need to distinguish between such requirements to plan as encouraging 'organisational learning' or as 'assertions of power'. Of course they may well be both.

The other sense of fabricating an institution as *constitutive*—in relation to certain organising principles—is the way in which performativities are produced by the adoption of particular policies and practices. One way in which we can see this, which also points up the relationship between market incentives, market values and market 'information' is in the generation of GCSE examination results and league table positions in certain UK schools. The logic of market incentives would suggest that any school or university which can select its clients will do so—either formally or informally. Those schools which do select their students, either formally or informally, are more able to control their league table position and their reputation generally. Furthermore, those students who offer the best chance of GCSE success tend to be the cheapest to teach, and easiest to manage. Students who threaten the reputation or performance of the school will be de-selected—excluded—and indeed we have seen a massive growth in the number of students excluded from school in the UK since 1991. Similarly, in some schools, students, especially in years 10 and 11, who are poor attenders will be left to their own devices in the hope that they will complete 40 days off-roll and can be excluded from GCSE returns and published figures for unauthorised absences—although the advantage of a small percentage increase in GCSE performance has to be weighed against loss of income. Generally, as explained by head-teachers in our research on many occasions, the most effective long-term strategy for improving GCSE performance is to change the student intake. It is not so much what the school can do for its students but what the students can do for their school. Thus, GCSE attainment percentages and Local League Table positions do not in any simple sense represent the outcomes of teaching and learning they are artefacts produced out of a complex set of policy strategies and practical tactics which achieve the fabrication of performance.

Individual fabrications

In addition to these organisational fabrications, as noted earlier, we are increasingly required to fabricate ourselves. While there have always been 'performance' and 'impression management' aspects of *rituals* like interviews and lectures, they are increasingly a part of organisational routines, in annual appraisal interviews, in students' assessments of their tutors, and in promotion and job applications. In one school we have researched teachers talked about the need to 'make your contribution' by 'being noticed' through the manufacture of some kind of event or spectacle. Such 'contributions' were often 'measured' in particular by the attention they could attract outside the school. The point is to make yourself 'different' and in the case of representational texts to express yourself in relation to the performativity of the organisation. This is an aspect of

what Blackmore and Sachs (1999, p. 10) call 'self-management'—'the issue was as much what was seen to be done, rather than substantively what was done'.

The application or promotion text is increasingly an art or artifice of high order. In my department we 'work on' and 'work up' these texts with as much or more care than devoted to papers for publications. They are subject to literary criticism and questions of emphasis and balance are frequently raised. The requirement is that you make a narrative of yourself. A career is reconstructed as a seamless, developmental progression to the present, with lines of further development, a potential value-added, streaming off into the future. We rehearse our 'national and international reputation', quote from reviews of our books, highlight the 'excellence' of our teaching and our contributions to administration and the institutional and academic communities. We become rounded paragons with multiple strengths and infinite possibilities for further work, adept in the studied art of convincing exaggeration. We make fantasies of ourselves[18], aesthetisise ourselves. Appraisal documents can be equally fantastical in setting and reporting on personal targets. But again we are increasingly caught up in the logic of our own representations. We are engaged in an indexing, a tabularising, of the self. Increasingly we represent and enact our academic selves in terms of productivities and tables of performance. We work on ourselves and each other, through the micro-practices of representation/fabrication, judgement and comparison. A new kind of practical ethics is articulated and realised. In all this what we are seeing, I want to argue, is 'a general change in categories of self-understanding and techniques of self-improvement' (Rose 1992, p. 161).

The performative society

... the generalisation of an enterprise form to all forms of conduct may of itself serve to incapacitate an organisation's ability to pursue its preferred projects by redefining its identity and hence what the nature of its project actually is' (Du Gay 1996, p. 190).

This is also Lyotard's point. It is not that performativity gets in the way of 'real' academic work, it is a vehicle for changing what academic work is! At the heart of Lyotard's thesis is his argument that the commodification of knowledge is a key characteristic of what he calls 'the postmodern condition'. This involves not simply a different evaluation of knowledge but fundamental changes in the relationships between the learner, learning and knowledge 'a thorough exteriorisation of knowledge' (1984, p. 4). Knowledge and knowledge relations, including the relationships between learners, are de-socialised.

Underlying this is the dissemination of the market or enterprise form as the master narrative defining and constraining the whole variety of relationships within and between the state, civil society and the economy. As far as public sector activities are concerned: '... the emphasis shifts from the state as provider to the state as regulator, establishing the conditions under which various internal markets are allowed to operate, and the state as auditor, assessing their outcomes' (Scott 1995, p. 80). As Bernstein (1996, p. 169) puts it 'contract replaces convenant'. Within the public sector this process of 'exteriorisation' also involves a profound shift in the nature of the relationship between workers and their work—'service' commitments no longer have value or meaning and professional judgement is subordinated to the requirements of performativity and marketing—although I recognise that there is an important element of 'cynical compliance' in play in the processes of individual and institutional fabrication. This is part of a larger process of 'ethical retooling' in the public sector which is replacing client 'need' and professional judgement with commercial decision-making. The space for the operation of autonomous ethical codes based in a shared moral language is colonised or closed down. Embedded here is what Hanlon (1998) calls 'a struggle for the soul of professionalism' (p. 50)—a contest over the meaning of professionalism which has at its centre the issue of 'trust'—'who is trusted, and why they are trusted is up for grabs' (p. 59). The ethos of 'traditional' professionalism is no longer trusted 'to deliver what is required, increasing profitability and international competitiveness' (p. 52) and is being replaced by a 'new commercialised professionalism' (p. 54). 'Such a process has created opportunities for some service-class members whilst threatening others' (p. 52) with 'winners and losers in different economic sectors, and indeed within the same professions' (p. 57). In the public sector one group of winners are those who take on the responsibility of changing the culture and controls of public sector organisations, termed by May (1994) as 'the technicians of transformation'.

The new structures and roles for organisational management with a central 'core' for policy, audit and regulation and separate 'service delivery units', as Thomson (1998) describes it, increasingly mirror the 'steering at a distance' role of the 'small state' or what Neave (1988) calls 'the new evaluative state'. In this way, the state also provides a new ethical framework and general mode of regulation, a much more 'hands-off', self-regulating regulation, which nonetheless enables and legitimates the dissemination of the commodity form as we are required to commodify ourselves and our academic productions. This is, in Aglietta's (1979, p. 101) terms, a new 'regulative ensemble' or a 'particular mode of social coherence', an historically distinct form of labour organisation. This ensemble of performative technologies is an improvised mix of physical,

textual and moral elements which 'make it possible to govern in an "advanced liberal" way' (Rose 1996, p. 58).

Within the framework of performativity, academics and teachers are represented and encouraged to think about themselves as individuals who calculate about themselves, 'add value' to themselves, improve their productivity, live an existence of calculation. They are to become 'enterprising subjects', who live their lives as 'an enterprise of the self' (Rose 1989). The explosion in academic productivity is not unrelated—new Journals, more conferences and seminars, the proliferation of research Centres. It is all too generally assumed that more outputs of these kinds is a sign of something worthwhile happening.

While we may quite understandably view many of the instances and examples quoted here and those in evidence in our own institutions with a certain rueful humour, and we must not lose sight of the value of humour, we must also not allow this to inhibit our critical reflection on what it is that we are doing to ourselves and others; 'ironicising the activity in a way that neutralises its serious examination' (Willmott 1992, p. 63). What I am pointing up here is not simply a set of changes in the nature of public sector professionalism and social relations. Rather these changes encapsulate a more general and profound shift in the way we are coming 'to recognise ourselves and act upon ourselves as certain kinds of subject' (Rose 1992, p. 161) and 'the nature of the present in which we are' (p. 161). Or to put it the other way: as Erica McWilliam and her colleagues do: 'one sort of romance about being an academic is no longer speakable, thinkable, do-able in universities' (McWilliam, Hatcher *et al.* 1999, p. 13)[19]; a certain form of life in which 'one could recognise oneself' (Foucault 1988, p. 49) is threatened or lost. Instead we are presented with other ways of saying who we are and representing ourselves. In so far as we are made calculable, more regular and more necessary, we are also offered the possibility of being passionate about excellence[20]. We have an opportunity to be enthused. We also have the opportunity to refuse these ways of accounting for ourselves, not as apathy, rather as 'a hyper- and pessimistic activism'. As Foucault puts it: 'I think that the ethico-political choice we have to make every day is to determine which is the main danger' (1983, p. 232).

Notes

[1]   This paper was presented as the Frank Tate memorial lecture and keynote address to the AARE annual conference, Melbourne 1999.

[2]   I have listed below some of the texts and materials which have crossed my desk during the preparation of this paper.

3   This is very much a work in progress and inevitably perhaps, some cracks and tensions remain embedded in my various conjectures. I am very grateful to Meg Maguire, Brian Street, Maria Tamboukou, Jane Jones, Tony Knight, Carol Vincent, Erica McWilliam, Dylan Wiliam and Michael Apple's friday seminar group for their comments in earlier drafts and my thanks to the Visiting Scholar program at the Havens Centre for Social Structure and Social Change, University of Wisconsin-Madison.

4   The idea of authenticity, as a discursive practice in it own right needs to be worked upon. It is deployed here in a neutral sense or at least as a 'nonpositive affirmation ... an affirmation that affirms nothing' (Foucault 1977, p. 197)—an act of exiting. However, I might go as far as saying that while 'authenticity' is certainly not intended as a normative condition it is intended to indicate a stance towards, an anticipation of the effects of, the discourses we employ—'a refusal to be mindlessly complicitous' (Pignatelli 1993, p. 430), the generation of 'inventive responses' and an honouring of 'disqualified knowledges' (Foucault 1980).

5   For example:

      The Smithers/Robinson Teacher Training Index, a league table of teacher education courses; *The Independent* 9.10.99.

      Research Council Inome for UK Institutions 1996/7, HEFC website.

      KCL Research Grants and contracts income against other institutions. KCL Enterprises internal document.

      Letter from QUT requesting a review of book for the DETYA research Collection.

6   Subjectivity is:

      patterns by which experiential and emotional contexts, feelings, images and memories are organised to form one's self image, one's sense of self and others, and our possibilities of existence (De Lauretis 1986, p. 5).

7   As Mitchell Dean explains:

      The notion of governmentality implies, then, first a project for the analysis of the state which would no longer rely on the juxtaposition of micro and macro- levels of power, and the conceptual antinomy of an analytics of micropower and the theory of sovereignty (Dean 1994, p. 160).

8   The pressures of performativity and performance act in particular and heightened forms on those academic workers who are without tenure or on fixed-term contracts.

9   For example:

      Document for departmental 'away day' headed 'Targets'—four such are listed "Retain 5* [RAE rating], Category B for all ITT [Rating awarded by Ofsted Inspectors], 23 or 24 in TQA [Teaching Quality Assessment Ratings awarded by HEFEC Quality Assurance Agency], develop links with other Schools/Departments.

      RAE Task force-Postal Review- First Interim report, College Research Committee paper

      Memo from Professor Keith Hoggart, Chief Academic Auditor, KCL Quality Assurance and Aacademic Audit Section

Paper for College Research Committee PhD Numbers and Submission Rates.

[10]   Another of the paradoxes which abound here is that of the way in which the disciplinary discourses of HE reform provide new performative opportunities for writers and researchers in HE. The publication of texts, manuals and self-improvement guides at the same time naturalise and instil the 're-forming' process. We are to be made more reflexive, responsive, and capable. I am reminded of Foucault's account of what he calls 'technicians of behaviour', and their task 'to produce bodies that are docile and capable' (Foucault 1979, p. 294).

[11]   These meetings sometimes take on the tone of a confessional and psychoanalytic encounter driven by the dynamics of self-relevation. As Foucault notes the confessional 'is a ritual that unfoelds within a power relationship' (Foucault 1981 p. 61); it requires the presence of a partner 'who requires the confession, prescribes and appreciates it' (p. 61).

[12]   Although it could be argued that these are replaced by the fable of 'the perfectly managed school'—the 'enchanted workplace'.

[13]   See also the new genre of 'academic improvement texts', like *Developing the Capable Practitioner: Professional Capability through Higher Education* (Kogan Page, London 1999).

[14]   Erica McWilliam pointed out to me the importance of trying to capture a sense of the seducative possibilities of performativity. See McWilliam, Hatcher *et al.* (1999) on the role of awards in Higher Education.

[15]   Abbott distiguishes between those sites which are promotional and those which are educative.

[16]   Meanwhile 'backstage' teachers complain about poor facilities and lack of resources.

[17]   The hesitancies evident within the delivery of the account perhaps give some indication of the discomfort and personal ambivalence felt by this teacher. Old and new incentives and commitments are difficult to reconcile.

[18]   A colleague in another university recently described her application for promotion to me 'as a form of prostitution'.

[19]   Or to paraphrase 'one romance about being a teacher is no longer speakable, thinkable, do-able in schools'.

[20]   It would be very difficult to see performative technologies like the UK's RAE as producing excellence, its effects are quite different.

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