

Thinking Differently About the Effects of Policy upon Teacher Educators in the University

By Ken Gale

Abstract

This paper is inspired by and constructed around a number of fundamental questions that are asked by the author, both of himself and of practitioner colleagues in the field of teacher education within the higher education sector in the United Kingdom. Questions such as: 'What is my role as a teacher?', 'In what ways are the subjectivities of teacher constructed?', 'How might these subjectivities shift in the light of recent policy changes?' frequently appear in the narratives of teacher educators within the sector. Their voices speak of attempting to preserve autonomous teaching and research practices within the context of a continually rising tide of government policy initiatives and implementations.

Positioning his practice style within the context of ethical and aesthetic sensitivities, the author uses this practice and that of his colleagues and students as sites of inquiry, both in terms of the effects of these policies upon practice and of these subsequent changing practices upon constructions of self and practice style. In attempting to map these changes the author has employed the figures of the fold, the nomad, the rhizome and haecceity from the work of Deleuze and Guattari as resistances to the traditional and established models of influence that often unproblematically describe structure or culture as acting upon individual agency. In such models agency is often constructed around notions of acquiescence, compliance and relative passivity. By using writing and speaking as methods of inquiry the author attempts to incorporate these figures within a post foundational research practice. This is carried out to encourage, first of all, a reflexive engagement with the representations of self and practice style that these policy influences seem to be designed to promote and, secondly, to further represent models of practice that incorporate strategies of risk taking, disidentification and critical inquiry amongst teacher educators and those with whom they work.

Introduction

The major tide flows of policy initiative and implementation that have affected teacher education in the post compulsory sector, and specifically in Higher Education, appear to be attempting to act in a reductive manner by re-constructing teaching and learning practices within narrowly prescribed and measurable learning outcomes, evidence based practice and the setting up of standards which are subject to assessment, monitoring and appraisal through systems of surveillance and inspection. This tidal shift appears to have been

designed to bring about a number of significant changes to teacher education within the sector in the UK in recent years. Of particular significance in this respect has been the publication of the Office for Standards in Education paper, *The Initial Training of Further Education Teachers* (Ofsted, 2003) and the Department for Education and Skills consultation document, *The Future of Initial Teacher Education for the Learning and Skills Sector* (DfES, 2003). Policy documents such as these are designed to exert a major influence upon curriculum organisation and approaches to teaching. This includes the promotion of evidence based teaching and learning practices and the rigorous and standardised assessment of learning according to prescribed learning outcomes. Central to these initiatives is the identification of the components of a licence to practice for qualified teachers, provided by the Further Education National Training Organisation (FENTO) and a framework for the inspection of the initial teacher training of further education teachers provided by Ofsted.

Ten years ago Maxine Greene wrote of education in the USA:

There is constant talk about the way in which schools meet the demands of technology, prepare for the workplaces, and offer training in skills. There is a reiteration of the centrality of “outcomes”, curriculum tools, competencies. We speak of the young as “human resources”, not as persons with the potential for thinking for themselves and the potential to choose.

Greene M (1995: 13)

By applying no apparent heed to Greene’s claim, teacher education within Higher Education in the UK, through the implementation of what Ball (2001) has referred to as ‘policy technologies’, appears to be designed to generate similar uniformity of professional identity and practice style in the search for quantifiable certainty and standardisation, based upon the discovery of facts to do with teaching and learning. Such approaches appear to have a certain self fulfilling quality as they serve to justify, but in a highly performative manner, through the use of evidence based recognition, that the outcomes from the investment in such politically charged initiatives as lifelong learning and widening participation have been realised. Teacher educators might be seen to experience frustration with the spaces that appear to be opening up between the rigorous but narrowly prescribed demands of policy, on the one hand, and the actual vagaries of practice, on the other. Whilst they may have become aware of Lyotard’s (1984) prescient espousal of the need to express incredulity toward such metanarratives and to come to tolerate and inquire into ambiguity within the many contexts of their teaching and learning practices, they are made acutely aware of the need to satisfy the policy demands that require adherence to clearly defined models of practice, standards of achievement and systems of inspection.

The logic of this appears to be that if the language, structures, organisation and administration of teacher education are established, then the right kind of pedagogical practices and desired forms of learning will somehow emanate from that. Thus the theory and practice of teaching and learning not only becomes the object of disciplinary control by policy makers through the way the work of teaching is organised but also, and, somewhat ironically, teacher education is constructed as a technology of discipline in the way it directs and manages the lives of their students, themselves prospective teachers. The development of tightly organised modules and programmes with detailed performance criteria written into them suggest the existence of a teacher education sector whose graduates who measure up to behavioural objectives become in, Foucault's (1977) terms, 'docile bodies', who have agency only to the extent that they adopt the standards, adhere to the models of practice and co-operate in putting the new policy prescriptions into place. Foucault's work on institutions argues strongly that discipline is not accomplished through explicit force but is continually constructed through the participation of individuals in their own self regulation. What appears crucial in these observations for teacher education is that policy is not only an agent for generating curriculum change but also, and perhaps more significantly, it can be seen as being responsible for establishing a framework of legitimacy for a certain kind of professional identity and practice style. It is therefore tempting to present a picture in which policy engenders structures and cultures which then function to impact upon individual agency. Within such imagery individual practitioners are seen to lose autonomy and the ability or desire to offer resistance to these policy discourses, becoming naturalised and habituated participants within the cultures that surround and construct them.

In contrast to such a view, itself reductionist and dualistic in nature, the purpose of this paper is to suggest that there are ways in which researchers, teacher educators, teachers and students are able to and indeed are already involved in the engagement with educational practices that are not simply framed by a passive acceptance of policy instrumentation. Resistances to the structural constraints of policy discourses appear to be occurring in ways that are not simply problematised as representations of linear, antithetical response. It is not the purpose of this paper, therefore, to simply 'other' the kind of practices that are promulgated by the kinds of policy initiatives that are referred to here, neither is it the intention to necessarily argue for vigorous alternatives to what might have become mainstream practices in the light of the subsequent policy implementations. Rather, it is to encourage an approach to teacher education practices within Higher Education that encourage a troubling of the smoothness of the grand narratives that appear to have come to discipline theory and practice; to begin to inquire into the incommensurate, the uncertain, the incomplete, the tentative, the contingent and the ambiguous. In working out a logic of multiplicity, Deleuze encourages us to move away from what he refers to as the 'discursive illusion' of being able to derive predicative relations between premises and conclusions. Rather he proposes a 'logic of sense and event'

(2004:) rather than a more traditional form of logic based upon predication and the search for attainable truth which is not so much concerned with the recognition of the true but instead with the complications and multiplicities in our thinking.

I am using, therefore, in the style of Richardson (2000), writing and speaking as methods of inquiry to explore the ethical and aesthetic sensitivities of the situated practices of myself, my colleagues and students in teacher education. By asking questions and listening to their stories I feel that I am encouraging a reflexive engagement with their representations of self and practice style. As a means of thickening the descriptions offered by these responses I have attempted to weave a number of Deleuzian figures into the text of the paper. In carrying out this process I hope to 'frame narratives that work against the terrain of controllable knowledge' (Lather 2000: 221) as a means of acknowledging and beginning to explore the discontinuity, differentiation and diversity that is apparent across a range of situated teaching and learning contexts.

Connections, Multiplicities and Becomings

Deleuze and Guattari (1994) describe philosophy and the use of concepts in a particular way; it is an exposition which will assist in understanding of the figures being examined here within the context of the approach to teacher education that is being taken:

The philosopher is the concept's friend; he is potentially of the concept. That is, philosophy is not the simple art of forming, inventing and fabricating concepts, because concepts are not necessarily forms, discoveries, or products. More rigorously, philosophy is the discipline that involves *creating* concepts ... the object of philosophy is to create concepts that are always new. Because the concept must be created, it refers back to the philosopher as the one who has it potentially, or who has its power and competence ... sciences, arts, and philosophies are all equally creative, although only philosophy creates concepts in the strict sense. Concepts are not waiting for us ready-made, like heavenly bodies. There is no heaven for concepts.

(1994:5)

So here they are clearly talking of a creative philosophy: it is not to *produce* concepts in a congealed or fixed sense, it is to create them as part of a process. These processes of conceptualising can be used as a means of contextualising the figures of the rhizome, the fold, the nomad and haecceity. Central to their overall philosophy, therefore, is a sense of becoming, where talk is of the process of creating concepts in ways which are fluid and open, where closure and a fixed approach to meaning and knowledge are to be avoided. From this it is clear that their approach to research practices would always encourage

reflexivity about any established or foundational representations that might precede or hamper the creative process of becoming. As St. Pierre says: 'the concepts they have created are not like bricks that weigh down thought but like toolboxes full of levers and gizmos that open things up' (1997a: 407).

Deleuze and Guattari's use of the figures of rhizome, the fold, the nomad and haecceity are to be found in a number of different philosophical works; they are clearly interrelated and taken together go some way toward offering a picture of the way in which their work can be positioned. I am employing these figures in an attempt to rethink certain aesthetic and ethical aspects of my research into teacher education within the higher education sector and the way in which I am using writing and speaking to represent this. I will spend some time analysing these figures here within the context of a teacher education practice that attempts not to promote a recognition of the truth or falsity of propositional relations but rather a sense of awareness and concern with the complications and multiplicities such practices appear to embrace.

Folds? Foldings? Unfoldings?

The figure of the fold is particularly relevant to this open, dynamic and volatile philosophical approach to teacher education research practice. In attempting to expose the nature of the figure of the fold to my students in the hope that they will be able to conceptualise it for themselves, I share a memory of my mother with her mixing bowl, her sleeves rolled up and her arms bare, gradually adding flour, butter, water and other ingredients in a growing and sweet smelling cake mixture; I remember that she used to talk about 'folding in the butter' and it is this image of folding in that begins to allow the idea of the fold to unfold for me. As the butter is folded in, from the outside so to speak, some richness, some new quality begins to emerge in the mix, something is unfolding. In Deleuze's work (2003) the fold relates to processes of individuation, of literal becoming; the endogamous 'folding in' adds richness, multiple layers and intensification, the exogamous unfolding opens out, reveals and makes the familiar strange. In this respect the unfolding can be seen not only as an emergence but also as a synthesis or a synthetical moment, part of a process, where, as new elements are added or folded in new relationships and connections are made or folded out. In Deleuze's own words: 'Folding-unfolding no longer simply means tension-release, contraction-dilation, but enveloping-developing, involution-evolution (1993: 8). St. Pierre describes 'discovering' the fold when writing her dissertation and how this opened up for her a new dimension in her research practices,

'it seemed to describe the conflation of the subject-object, inside-outside binaries I had experienced as I interviewed women I had known all my life, women whose language was my own. I could not contain myself with them; I escaped; I traced their words, their gestures, their bodies. I was them.

(ibid: 411)

The figure of the fold with its compelling disruption of the interiority-exteriority binary has also been extremely useful to employ within my own educational research practices. Examining Woods (1983) influential early qualitative work on modes of adaptation to pedagogical and classroom practices, for example, I found difficulty with some of the interpretive conclusions that he reached in his work. The classification and representation of student responses using terms such as 'intransigence', 'colonisation' and 'ritualism' told me little of the children who had been classified in this way, or of the kinds of changing relationships that they shared with their peers or their teachers, or of the dynamics of classroom interaction that the study was meant to interpret. The following comment from a full time post graduate teacher education student suggests a fluid, situational approach to learning that does not appear to fall into the categorization provided in Wood's model:

Its funny, I find that I react differently to each situation ... it depends a lot on who is taking the session and also how much I know about what is being talked about. I'm usually confident and assertive but recently I have found it comforting to work quietly with my peers and to discuss things in more detail ...

I have experienced a range of similarly complex and often contradictory affinities with my own students that these somewhat general classifications did not seem to represent. So my discovery of the figure of the fold opened a range of conceptual and practice based possibilities within my own research practices with adult learners.

Rhizome?

Deleuze and Guattari's figure of the rhizome provides an excellent means of conceptualising the kind of complex and contradictory relations described above; the following description is clearly illustrative of the way in which it can be employed to represent the kinds of multiplicities and connections being discussed here.

A rhizome ceaselessly establishes connections between semiotic chains, organisations of power, and circumstances relative to the arts, sciences and social struggles. A semiotic chain is like a tuber agglomerating very diverse acts, not only linguistic, but also perceptive, mimetic, gestural, and cognitive: there is no language in itself, nor are there any linguistic universals, only a throng of dialects, patois, slangs, and specialised languages. There is no ideal speaker-listener, any more than there is a homogenous linguistic community. Language is ... an essentially

heterogeneous reality. There is no mother tongue, only a power takeover by a dominant language within a political multiplicity. Language stabilises around a parish, a bishopric, and a capital. It forms a bulb. It evolves by subterranean stems and flows, along river valleys or train tracks; it spreads like a patch of oil. A method of the rhizome type ... can analyse language only by decentering it onto other dimensions and other registers. A language is never closed upon itself, except as a function of impotence.

(1988: 7/8)

The figure of the rhizome challenges established relationships between structure and agency, which tend to lean toward linearity or to depend upon binary oppositions and Cartesian dualisms. As St. Pierre says, 'This figuration of the rhizome, then, allows me to think outside of systems, outside order, outside stability. Rhizomes favour exteriority, motion, chance, and variation outside the contrived confines of a text.' (ibid: 409). As I engage in my qualitative inquiries into teacher education I find that concepts are in a continual condition of flux: as I work through interviews and ethnographies, nothing appears fixed; new ideas emerge, a sense of becoming infects my practice. There are dialogues taking place between the researchers and the respondents, between the researchers themselves and between the researchers and other research findings which they choose to consider. The following comments from a colleague engaged in her own narrative research into professionalism and values with graduate teachers in post compulsory teacher education illustrates this: '... a part of me feels a sense of fascinated wonder, watching the succeeding and emerging ripples transpire from these conversations'. I am warmed and encouraged when I read about the way in which Deleuze talked about working with Guattari:

We were only two, but what was important for us was less our working together than this strange fact of working between the two of us. We stopped being 'author'. And these 'between- the-two's' referred back to other people, who were different on one side from on the other. The desert expanded, but in so doing became more populous. This had nothing to do with a school, with processes of recognition, but much to do with encounters. And all of these stories of becomings, of nuptials against nature, of a-parallel evolution, of bilingualism, of theft of thoughts, were what I had with Felix. I stole Felix and I hope he did the same for me. You know how we work - I repeat it because it seems to be important – we do not work together, we work between the two.

(2002:17)

Like the rhizome there are a multiplicity of interconnected shoots going off in all directions; as it grows, folding in and unfolding occurs, an assemblage of ideas, data, impressions, interpretations and notes connect in pluralistic ways which defy totalising exposition. Research within the rhizome reflects a sense of

becoming, of changing interpretations and of a qualitative flexing where the process of the research not only provides insights and critical judgments but also moments of evocation, excitement, response and drama. By acknowledging the figure of the rhizome and working within its complexities and contradictions I have found that my research does not simply take a radically oppositional and devoutly anti-positivistic stance in relation to other research practices but instead it begins to make connections with other research and with the teacher education practices that are the subject of my inquiries.

Nomads?

The intensely plural and dense interconnectedness of Deleuze and Guattari's work sees the figure of the nomad inextricably linked with that of the rhizome. In their work we can see the researcher, the teacher and the students as nomads searching and inquiring in spaces outside the traditional 'fields' of research. In her work on 'transgressive data', for example, St. Pierre (1997b) offers examples of such 'fields' in her investigation of 'dream data, sensual data, emotional data and response data', research fields that she claims exist outside those of traditional inquiry. The complex shoots, branches and chains of the rhizome become 'mobile arrangements of space where thought can settle for a time then multiply and recombine, always displacing the sedentary and unified' (1997a: 412). In describing his own research subjectivity and practice style the following quotation from Foucault helps to illustrate the way in which the nomad can be seen to operate:

My work takes place between unfinished abutments and anticipatory strings of dots. I like to open out a space of research, try it out, then if it doesn't work try again somewhere else. On many points...I am still working and don't yet know whether I am going to get anywhere. What I say ought to be taken as 'propositions', 'game openings' where those who may be interested are invited to join in; they are not meant as dogmatic assertions that have to be taken or left en bloc...

(1991, pp. 90-91)

The nomad engages in a territorialisation of a complex variety of textual, theoretical and practice based spaces and also a re-territorialisation of such spaces that had already been inhabited. I am attempting to employ this, not only as an investigative research practice but also a reflexive teaching and learning practice that attempts to disclose, that continues to ask questions and that opens up lines of inquiry that might hitherto have been seen to be not worth pursuing. So, for example, in a conversation with a group of student teachers about the pedagogical practices they employ in their teaching placements when addressing the group dynamics of learners, I found a number of them expressing unease about the models which they have become familiar with through their studies on the programme. The discussion centred around the highly influential model

researched and presented by Tuchman (1965) which talks about the group dynamic 'evolving' through a number of stages, 'forming', 'storming', 'norming', 'performing' and 'mourning' and also in a similar vein, the work of Heron (1989) which talks about the group dynamic following a seasonal path from winter through spring and summer to autumn.

First student: 'I've read all that Tuchman stuff and it all seems so linear, general and progressive ... it seems to be presented in such an unproblematic way ... I think that I am getting somewhere with a group and then something happens and they are back to storming again!'

Second student: 'Yes, hasn't Heron heard about summer thunderstorms!'

Congeaed models of this kind appear to have emerged from qualitative research practices which, having posed the research question(s) and carried out the interviews, then seem to proceed to establishing an interpretation of the research phenomenon which, over time, takes on a canonical quality, directing and infecting the thinking and practices of those who come into contact with it. This in itself might be unproblematic, however, the problem arises when the interpretation becomes received and takes upon the identity of a given which extends itself beyond the spatio-temporality of its origination, resisting reflexivity and critical interrogation.

The form of hermeneutic inquiry found in the phenomenology of Heidegger (1962) describes 'hermeneutic circles' which can also be used to critique such a narrowly prescribed post positivist position. For Heidegger the relationship between the researcher and the researched exists in the context of interpretation itself. A research text is constituted as such by its meaning, and hence by being understood. Its character and identity is determined by a history of encounters between, for example, interviewers and respondents. Each encounter transforms its meaning, and hence its identity. This is also true for the emerging subjectivities of the (nomadic) researcher/practitioner whose situated being is always 'under erasure', necessary as a representation or signifier but inadequate because of its non-generalisable spatio-temporal grounding. Hence a hermeneutic approach to educational research practice has some resonance with the position being described here. As St. Pierre has pointed out, 'a nomadic adventure ... cannot be defined in advance because it takes advantage of flows and multiplicities and disjunctions to make a different sense in different ways or to refuse to make sense at all' (ibid: 413). It resists what Baudrillard (1983) has referred to as the hyperreal processes in which maps precede territories: the precession of simulacra.

Haecceity

The final figure from the work of Deleuze and Guattari to be considered here is that of haecceity. They describe this figure in the following way:

It should not be thought that a haecceity consists simply of a décor or a backdrop that situates objects, or of appendages that holds people and things to the ground. It is the entire assemblage in its individuated aggregate that is haecceity.

(1988:262)

The figure that they describe here is extremely complex and dense in its conceptualisation and articulation but I consider that it can take an important place within research into teacher education theory and practice in Higher Education. Specifically, haecceity can be seen as an assemblage that allows researchers, teachers and students alike, those who are inquiring into and being reflexive about their practices to begin to examine their relationships with one another, with their terrains of practice and also with the time and space in which events occur. In Deleuzian terms the subject no longer remains separate from objects or time or space but enters into composition with them.

Haecceity exists in at least two forms, of which the latter is given prominence here. The first form sees it as a finite principle of individuation, similar to that proposed by the mediaeval scholar Duns Scotus, which suggests a becoming whole, of person, of self. Such an approach subordinates haecceity to matter or form or species; self knowledge is achieved through rational or empirical processes of discovery. A similar formulation is found in transcendentalist Kantian thought where we are all seen to have essences or noumenal qualities, we exist as things in themselves and through the employment of a rational 'critique of pure reason' we come to discover what these essences are and hence gain knowledge about that which they are seen to constitute. This form of thinking sees the self taking on transcendent qualities that exist in and through time and space. An illustration of this kind of thinking can be found in the Jungian notion of individuation, where, through psycho-therapeutic practices and the 'accenting' of the rational and irrational 'functions' of the mind, the individual somehow becomes 'whole'.

Within teaching and learning contexts, for example, we can relate this thinking to the notion of autonomy, as in the concept of the 'autonomous practitioner', the introspective, reflective, self controlled and self regulating self. The lone reflective practitioner in the work of Schon (1983, 1987) comes to mind. It resembles J.S. Mill's (1985) notion of the individual introspection having the quality of freedom of thought as the basis of rationality and utility.

The notion of haecceity which I have employed in this research and which is offered by Deleuze and Guattari differs because it is based upon the coming together of elements into some kind of assemblage. It does not preserve knowledge in any congealed sense; rather it frees the individual from absorption into fixed categories. It is a temporary and transitory resultant in a moment of

becoming, a point on a trajectory. It is a moment of heteronomy, not of autonomy, in which a sense or a knowing of other and difference come together in a captive but elusive and ever mercurial moment in space and time through the 'logic of sense'. 'Climate, wind, season, hour are not of another nature than the things that populate them, follow them, sleep and awaken within them ... Five 'o' clock is this animal!' (Deleuze and Guattari, 1988:263) I think of crystal moments of communication with friends or colleagues which go beyond words and which seem to embody unity of thought, feeling and emotion. In this sense haecceity is not about discovery or learning in any conventional sense, it is more about opening up, about acknowledging difference and, of course, about the celebration involved in allowing and making the familiar strange. There is a kind of individuation here but it is not of the self, it is more momentary, where in that crystal moment of time and space something is felt, briefly held and the drifting of the space or the moment into the next dimension or point on the trajectory is something that is celebrated and not a moment for nostalgia or mourning. The crystalline qualities that are evoked by this haecceity are prismatic, refractive, of multi layered intricacy and offering infinite possibilities of mood, interpretation and meaning. Richardson offers an excellent critique of the research method of triangulation as a method of 'testing', which not only provides a clear illustration of haecceity but also encourages us to envision our theories and our practices, not in some flat two dimensional way but instead through

...the central imaginary (of) the crystal, which combines symmetry and substance with an infinite variety of shapes, substances, transmutations, multidimensionalities, and angles of approach. Crystals grow, change, alter, but are not amorphous. Crystals are prisms that reflect externalities *and* refract within themselves, creating different colours, patterns, and arrays, casting off in different directions. What we see depends upon our angle of repose. Not triangulation, crystallisation.

(2000:934)

As well radicalising their practices, haecceity offers a great challenge for educational researchers, teachers and students alike. The complexity of the assemblage represents a form of individuation for the researcher; not in a Kantian or historical hermeneutic sense, wherein the individual, through forms of actualisation, achieves a noumenal whole, rather in the sense of becoming, where subjectivity is in a constant condition of flux, responding to changes and internal and external influences. It could be said that haecceity represents a sum, an empirical collection, the interconnected and interdependent set of relations between concepts, skills, words, theories and events which, the moment that they are interpreted, judged and classified, lose some of their original vitality. As suggested, this is not a moment for nostalgia, rather one in which the moment itself, through its unfolding, perhaps, offers a future trajectory

of optimism and growth. St. Pierre provides an illustration of this in her description of her own research interest in identities, when she talks of

Keeping subjectivity in play, mobile, a line of flight with no referent and no destination is my desire and my ethical charge ... subjectivity is a mobile assemblage that arranges and rearranges itself outside all totalising paranoia.

(Ibid: 413)

(Not a) Conclusion

I am employing these figures in an attempt to rethink certain aesthetic and ethical aspects of my research into teacher education within the higher education sector. Having begun an analysis of these figures here within the context of my research into teacher education practices in higher education, I am continuing to use writing and speaking with my colleagues, my students and myself in creative ways. I am carrying this out both as a method of inquiry and as a means of representing modes of practice that question and reflexively engage with foundational responses to policy implementation and practices. Such approaches are not designed to enable recognition of the truth or falsity of propositional relations or to suggest models of agency that might be employed to resist the structural constraints of policy but rather to promote a sense of awareness and concern with the complications, connections and multiplicities that our teacher education practices appear to embrace.

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