

Danger! Alert! Enter the CPD Cyborgs

Note:

I drafted this in October 2008. I thought it would make a good editorial for CPD Update. And now that I search and cannot find it in my archive of published copies it is quite possible that I refrained from being too rude about the decision of the Training and Development Agency for schools (TDA) to disregard all the great work it had done on Postgraduate Professional Development (PPD) and to bypass (at the beginning) the real experts it had on its staff in order to impose what promised to be a dumbed down masters degree, the Masters in Teaching and Learning (MTL).

MTL is also mentioned in the following link.

<http://www.criticalprofessionallearning.co.uk/assets/ALoadOfClarkeAndBalls.pdf>

The only changes I have made to the draft are to its layout and, slightly, to the title.

DRAFT COPY

As I write the Training and Development Agency for schools (TDA) is assembling teams of people to write the official framework for the masters degree in teaching and learning (MTL). I am sure that as they walk through the door for their first meeting many of the team members will be ready to do battle over:

the limited vision that government has for this degree;

the old-fashionedness of its approach to writing modules;

the need at masters level to critique national standards not simply follow them;

the possibilities for a wide range of modes of assessment;

the need for critical impact evaluation;

the potential for critical professional learning journals;

and the importance of thinking more about the Every Child Matters agenda rather than simplistic league table performance.

They will also be aware that inserting too much specific content will make it impossible for MTL to respond to the diverse needs of teachers working in very different professional contexts; and they will want to draw attention to the need for sound arrangements for the accreditation of prior learning and experience.

What they will find, I fear, is that the TDA has:

- allocated them to specific areas of work;**
- defined their tasks very tightly;**
- controlled their chances to raise questions;**
- limited the time they can spend on each task;**
- closed down anything that powers their independent thinking;**
- and, by the end, signed them up as instruments for the implementation of policy.**

Not only will they have been made the captives of policy but when they leave to rejoin their colleagues it will be noticed that parts of their brains have been replaced by a control mechanism making them subject to the will of government.

There was a time when we did not live in a science fiction world: when the creation and implementation of policy was a more natural, if confusing, process.

In the early days of the National Curriculum someone wrote to Notes and Queries in the Guardian to ask:

'Is it possible for a chimpanzee, given unlimited time, to eventually type out the entire works of Shakespeare?' Back came a very swift response: 'Why not? He's already typed out the National Curriculum.'

That is rather appealing somehow.

Now I cannot make up my mind:

do I want to be with Charlton Heston on the Planet of the Apes or Dr. Who fighting the Cybermen (or Jean-Luc Picard fighting the Borg)? I think I can differentiate myself from the apes but how will I know if I have become a Cyborg? I won't but others might notice when I start to talk about

'making a step-change', 'targeting the outcomes', 'delivering the targets', 'distributing the leadership', 'measuring the impact', 'the need for coherence', 'implementing strategy', 'embedding

procedure', 'broadening the remit', 'closing the gap' and 'transforming the culture'. By their lingo shall ye know them: the policy pushing agents of government.

Any of you wish to reply? Or have I got it right?

Cliff Jones December 2016

p.s. most of that last set of phrases in quotation marks can be found in a poem (of sorts) that I wrote for this website. Here is the link. You may have to scroll down a bit.

<http://www.criticalprofessionallearning.co.uk/assets/WebConDemNationJan2012.pdf>