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I have encouraged the use of the perspectives outlined below for many years but as the education policies of the Coalition Government gathered speed I felt the need to draw further attention to them.

Under New Labour we had experienced intense legislative activity and target setting. A faultline in educational policy making was, however, that while target setting, performance management and inspection might have been expected to generate coherence, at the same time government was engendering social fracking by not only disconnecting schools from local democracy but also separating them in terms of specialisms, types and religion.

Under Michael Gove this accelerated while many of the supports that had prevented everything falling apart were removed. Fortunately, his effect upon education was confined to England though that is the largest part of the UK. We lost the Training and Development Agency (TDA), the General Teaching Council for England (GTCE) and the small but significant subsidy for postgraduate professional development (PPD) and more.

Re-publishing this editorial from more than four years ago is, I believe, worthwhile. The perspectives are still useful.

Professional Life: Perspectives Needed

To make sense of the role of professional educator it is important to be able to use more than one perspective. I offer three plus one significant other.

The regulatory/official/inspection perspective

Using the perspective of regulations, official policy and inspection regimes is unavoidable because, especially since the late 1980s in England, failure to see things from this angle can mean professional death. We are discouraged from problematising and critiquing policy because the paymasters only require its implementation, no matter how strange, temporary, contradictory and socially damaging a policy might be. The only wriggle room we have is that we are allowed to think about different ways of doing what is required. We give governments the right to make, implement and regulate policy when we elect them, even if they promised to do something different when vying for our votes.

The academic/theoretical perspective

This brings to the examination of professional life not only greater width but also the values of proper enquiry. It helps us to formulate questions carefully, research and find out what has been said by others. It helps professional educators discover their voice. Politicians may regard theory as airy-fairy hot

air but it is actually about the well-founded formulation of questions and the rigorous examination of evidence in terms of its strength and significance.

The personal/professional perspective

This is the perspective from schools and schoolteachers just doing their job. The rush to respond to the demands of work can mean that this does not feel like a perspective at all: there is so little time to stand back and reflect. It can easily be relegated to 'getting through till Friday'. But there are many values involved; priorities are decided; and courses of action are taken, changed and cancelled in favour of new ones. Without treating seriously the confusing and clashing rhythms of professional life we are guilty of regarding the anxieties, imperatives and concerns of teachers and schools as no more than the usual professional moans. They are, in fact, a rich resource for making sense of professional life.

Another perspective is needed

The policies of the present government make it urgent that we think more seriously about the role of professional educators in shaping society. Much has been written about the rise and rise of politicians who never had a 'proper job'. You need flexible values to get power these days. Groucho Marx put it well when he said, 'These are my principles and if you don't like them.... I have others'.

Politics is not about power; it is about values: deciding collectively what we believe is best and wise. For many years professional educators have taken very little part in this process. It does not help that anybody attempting to think seriously about educational policy has to cope with a blizzard of unchallenged silly sound bites about 'modernisation', 'effectiveness', 'excellence', 'improvement', 'choice', 'raising the bar', 'standards', 'outstanding', 'competition' and much, much more. But the real problem is that, despite the superficiality of political discourse on education, politicians often have deep lying predispositions towards particular ways of teaching, particular kinds of schools and a preferred picture of society.

So we need a politico/ideological perspective

Professional educators, individually and collectively, help to shape society. We may not always realise it but we are recruited, managed and directed to do just that. Sometimes we are unclear about government intentions. It is easy to complain about what is happening but, partly because politicians do not always clearly articulate, or even understand, their own ideologies, it is not so easy to challenge and make critical sense of what is happening. The Big Society is not an ideology but a cloaking device for ideology: a super sound bite.

Michael Gove, David Cameron and Nick Clegg do not seem to know that they are differentiating and stratifying society by creating different kinds of schools for different kinds of children and parents: widening social gaps. But they are.

In the first four years of the 1970s, Margaret Thatcher, as secretary of state for education, created more comprehensive schools than all other secretaries of state, irrespective of party, put together. But, because she did not know what she was doing, she had no idea that by narrowing social gaps she was acting contrary to her own deep beliefs. It took her a while to learn that she was a Thatcherite and to start consciously reversing the trend.

Universities also caught the 'excellence disease': they wanted to be 'World Class' but they did not mean being world class at widening participation or reaching out to their local communities; they professed collegiality while behaving as ruthless competitors. It seems easy to acquiesce in the gradual subversion of educational values in order to construct a more divisive society.

I recommend a search for ERIC ED295339 where you will find a slightly untidy photocopy of a book that is very rare in the UK: *Orientations to curriculum and transition: towards the socially critical school*. It is small, easy to read and stimulating. It was written by Stephen Kemmis and others in Australia in 1983, well before the regulatory/inspection perspective came to dominate professional life here. Try it. You will gain even more professional perspective. And if he knows you are reading it Michael Gove will be very displeased.

For further thoughts on perspectives you might also find it useful to go to www.criticalprofessionallearning.co.uk and www.ipda.org.uk.

Cliff Jones re-publishing December 2015