

14-19 work related learning

[Business](#), [Work](#)



Key words: Student voice, democratic participation, egalitarianism, meritocracy, commodification, consumerism, post-modernism.

Every Child Matters

In 2003, the Government published the green paper 'Every Child Matters' (ECM); this was published alongside the Climbie report (2003). The ECM (2003) emphasis's four key themes: supporting families and careers, child protection, multi-agency collaboration, and ensuring that the people working with children are valued, rewarded and trained.

The Every Child Matters (2003) green paper also identified five outcomes that are most important to children and young people: being healthy, staying safe, enjoying and achieving, making a positive contribution and achieving economic well-being. These five outcomes are universal ambitions for every child and young person, whatever their background or circumstances.

Following wide consultation with children's services, parents, children and young people, the Government published Every Child Matters: the Next Steps in November 2004, and passed the Children Act (2004), providing the basis for developing more effective and accessible services focused around the needs of children, young people and families.

The recently formed DCSF (Department for Children, Schools and Families) echo's the points made in ECM (2004) and seeks to ensure that all children and young people stay healthy and safe, secure an excellent education and the highest possible standards of achievement, enjoy their childhood, make a positive contribution to society and the economy, have lives full of

opportunity, free from the effects of poverty. These outcomes are mutually reinforcing.

For example, children and young people learn and thrive when they are healthy, safe and engaged. The DCSF also aim to raise educational standards so that more children and young people reach expected levels, lifting more children out of poverty and re-engaging disaffected young people. This is particularly applicable to my practice as the socio-economic circumstances of most of my students disadvantage them. Most of my students live in Camborne, Pool, Redruth and Hayle.

These are widely recognized as deprived areas regarding economic opportunities, high number of single parent households, low employment prospects, and the majority of employment being minimum waged, relatively insecure, part time, seasonal or flexi time. (SDRC 2004). This relates back to ECM (2003) in that this seems to be applied in context of the geographic and demographic circumstances of children and young people.

For example, a student from a poor single parent household in a deprived area with high crime rates who participates in under age smoking and drinking may be majority behaviour or the 'norm' in certain subcultures in Camborne, Redruth, Pool and Hayle but would attract more attention and concern in a more affluent area where this was not the 'norm'.

We Could be Left Behind

In every decade children are maturing physically earlier than before resulting in a constant shortening of childhood in a biological and social sense. This has a converse repercussive effect involving the constant lengthening of

childhood in an educational sense. Cunningham 2006) This is reflected in the proposals in the DfE (Johnson 2007) report Raising Expectations: staying in education and training post-16 are highlighting the need to continue study for 14-19 year olds and by 2015 the school leaving age will be increased to 18 years of age. The reasons the government have given for such policies being implemented are illustrated by the secretary of education; Johnson (2007: 3) when he said ‘ the undeniable truth is that if a young person continues their education post 16 they are more likely to achieve valuable qualifications, earn more and lead happier, healthier lives’.

A seeming contradiction to Johnsons (2007) policy of staying in education longer and its benefits have been researched by Walker and Zhu (2003: 145) who asserted that ‘ there is no evidence that raising the minimum school leaving age made people who have not intended to leave at the minimum age raise their educational standard. This is consistent with the view that education raises productivity and not with the view that productive people get more educated’

Johnsons (2007) statement seems concerned with happiness, health and wealth. The Universal Declaration of Human Rights (UDHR 1948) has wider reaching concerns. The UDHR (1948) states in Article 26 that ‘ education shall be directed to the full development of the human personality and to the strengthening of respect for human rights and fundamental freedoms. It shall promote understanding, tolerance and friendship among nations, racial or religious groups for the maintenance of peace’.

However, Johnson (2007: 18) goes on to explain ‘ we have a duty to prepare all young people for the labour market’ as ‘ the world economy is developing

at an ever more rapid pace. If we do not act now we could be left behind'. So it seems that it is not just for the benefit of our children's wellbeing that Johnson encourages the parents of the youth of today to continue in education and so 'achieving valuable qualifications, earn more and lead happier healthier lives' (Johnson 2007: 3) but more to do with deeper issues of 'the world economy's development and the UK's position of power within it'.

In the same report Johnson (2007) quotes research carried out by the National Institute for Social and Economic Research (NISER) that reinforces the idea that when individuals achieve higher levels of skill and qualification, businesses and the economy benefit. This is compelling evidence that increasing the educative stock of human capital raises productivity at the macro economic level. In relation to literacy for example, a study by Coulombe Trembley and Marchard (2004) found that if a country's literacy score increases by 1% relative to the international average a 2. % relative rise in labour productivity and a 1. 5% rise in GDP per year can be expected.

3 Surf's up This emphasis on cultural superficiality, fragmentary sensations and disposability offers wide implications and questions; not least 'what is postmodernism? Postmodernism itself is a much disputed term that has occupied much recent debate about contemporary cultures since the early 1980s. In its simplest sense it refers generally to the phase of 20th century Western culture including the products of the age of mass television since the mid 1950s.

More often, though, it is applied to a cultural condition prevailing in the advanced capitalist societies since the 1960s, characterized by a '

superabundance of disconnected images and styles most noticeably in television, advertising, commercial design, and pop video' (Baudrillard 1998: 72) In my practice I notice that these media have a profound impact on defining student's social standing and identity within their peer group. In my role as a lecturer I observe that the students are encouraged through media and peer pressure to consume.

Children's identities centre prolifically on brand names and icons (mobile phones and hoodies) which help to fulfil their aspirations to obtain products which make statements about who they are. The latest fashions all contribute to the identity of the youth of today where a distinct subculture and language exist involving Xboxes, ipods, beebo, Bluetooth, myspace, chavs, hoodies, emos, skaters and goths. I ensure that I participate and involve such subcultural language within my practice when explaining tasks, demonstrating skills or providing metaphorical illustrations.

Whatever postmodernism is and however the term evades definition, what the intellectual highbrows have been lecturing on postmodernism are soon to become extinct by their own doing. The postmodernist wave of consumer students have climbed the ladder and are nipping at the heels of the old school who created them like Doctor Frankenstein who is dispatched by his creation. This wave of postmodernist students could also be seen as in a vast ocean of modernity where far from the shore one can see the formation of a wave.

As the wave builds in popularity it slowly approaches the shore, the crest breaks; postmodernity is born. As we stand and watch, it slips beneath itself, down into the ocean, and there in time it becomes 'the modern', dissolved

and replaced by yet another breaking new wave. Paradoxically the new wave will emerge in a significantly disposable, shifting, fragmentary postmodern society with expectations of structured, quantifiable, standardised educative processes.

One of the latest waves to begin its postmodernist journey towards the shore before slipping back into modernism and the norm is the Qualification and Credit Framework (QCF) announcement in January 2008 by the Qualifications and Curriculum Authority (QCA) who have “ allowed commercial companies the ability to award nationally accredited qualifications to employees, for the first time Network Rail, Flybe and McDonald’s all achieve the standards set by QCA for awarding accredited qualifications, enabling them to assess, track and recognise work-place learning” (QCA 2008) McQualifications This links to Ritzers (2000) notion of the McDonaldisation of education, where education is based on the premise of efficiency, calculability, and predictability and is partially governed by non-humantechnology. This perspective is rooted in both Fordian principles of mass production, mechanisation and assembly lines (Ling 1991) and Weberian (1968) principles regarding the growth of formal rational systems with its emphasis on the rules and regulations of large social structures.

Ritzer (2000: 2) applies this process of McDonaldisation not only to ‘ restaurants but also to work, health care, travel, leisure, dieting, politics, thefamily, and virtually every aspect of society’; including, of course, education. This could be illustrated with the OFSTED standardisation of observations and grading, league tables, units of competence, knowledge requirements etcetera.

For example, Young (1961) asserts that in a meritocracy, all citizens have the opportunity to be recognized and advanced in proportion to their abilities and accomplishments. The ideal of meritocracy has become controversial because of its association with the use of tests of intellectual ability, such as the Scholastic Aptitude Test, to regulate admissions to elite colleges and universities. It could be argued that an individual's performance on these tests reflects their social class and family environment more than ability.

Maybe this is what Chomsky (1989) would label a necessary illusion. One that allows the system to keep on running with the support of its members even if massive disparities and inequalities exist. Supporting a system that does not support you as an individual is a typical hegemonic regime of truth; a discourse that the society accepts and makes function as true (Foucault 1980: 131). Excellence in Schools (DFEE 1997) and Meeting the Challenge (DFEE 1998) were introduced as the Government's educational policies and marked the change from centralised control to educational intervention where direct involvement and partnerships with parents, schools, Local Authorities and businesses recognised them as stakeholders in an attempt to improve standards in schools and to find 'radical and innovative solutions' (Blair 1998: 1 cited in Meeting the Challenge 1998) to problems of underachievement.

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