

Mapping the educational field following workforce reform

Paul Garland, Irene Garland

Sheffield Hallam University, Sheffield, United Kingdom

Background

The incoming New Labour government in 1997 called for a 'new professionalism' for teachers that would herald a new era of involvement and collaboration with government following decades of political confrontation and public derision of teachers. Workforce reform has brought in a new range of grades for teachers, with promotion based upon performance management, and grades defined with reference to national standards of competence. In addition the School Workforce Agreement of 2003 reduced contact time for assigned teachers by 10% to allow them more time for planning, preparation and assessment, opening the way for the expansion of the roles and work of Teaching Assistants (TAs) and other pedagogical support workers. The workforce agreement also allowed for Higher Level Teaching Assistants (HLTAs), credentialed through their own HLTA status using similar standards as those for QTS, and enabled to take whole groups without the presence of the assigned teacher. The numbers of TAs (which includes those with HLTA status) have risen by over 100% since 1997 (DCSF 2009). These developments signal significant changes in the structure of the education workforce in England and invite further research into the impact of the reforms upon the education profession. That workforce reforms have implications for the professionalisation project for teachers is clear (Stevenson et al 2007, Webb and Vulliamy 2006, Burgess 2008). McCulloch et al (2000: 5) would suggest that "The professional standing of teachers and teaching has deeper implications...for instance as a means of assessing the nature of socio-political change."

This paper explores the positioning, relative power and status of the different groupings of pedagogical workers within the current educational field with reference to the workforce reform policy agenda and process.

Research Questions

The focus of this enquiry is the structure of the education workforce within the educational field. As part of a larger project, we are attempting to address aspects of the following broad questions:

1. Who are the teachers now? Who can be said to be carrying out pedagogical work in schools? How does the work of different types of pedagogical workers differ? What do we know about the backgrounds, qualifications, aspirations, of these groups?
2. What prestige is attached to the different forms of educational work carried out by different groups of pedagogical workers? How can the prestige and status of this work be measured?
3. What are the normative demands in the field for education/training of educational workers?

Methods

In answer to the question of how to carry out a study of a field, Bourdieu identifies 3 necessary and connected approaches (1992: 104-5). Firstly the field must be analysed in relation to the field of power. Secondly, the structure of relations between the agents and institutions competing for legitimate authority within the field must be mapped. Lastly, one should analyse the habitus of the agents, "the different systems of dispositions they have acquired by internalising a determinate type of social and economic condition" (1992: 105). The preliminary work reported in this paper is concerned with the second step: analysis of the structure of relations between the agents and institutions competing for legitimate authority within the field.

In attempting this analysis we are developing an open and wide ranging methodology that reviews data and research findings already available to us and identifies areas where there is insufficient data. Apart from reviewing the current state of knowledge of the pedagogical workforce in England through a review of research articles and projects we include analysis of national datasets on numbers, gender, ethnicity, age and relate these to what is known about the existing qualifications, pay scales and working conditions of different groups. Our analysis includes professional formation and routes into pedagogical work, as well as what is known about the barriers to progression faced by different groupings. We also include attempts to measure the status and social esteem of pedagogical workers, including the symbolic values of different forms of professional knowledge and we relate this to literature on professionalism (e.g. Larson 1977, Freidson 2001) and on teacher professionalism (e.g. McCulloch 2001, Stevenson et al 2007). We also look at the prestige attached to different positions within the field, looking at salaries, trends, public opinion surveys, entrance levels of recruits to educational positions. This again will help to identify the cultural and symbolic capitals at play in educational careers. The paper discusses the problematics of mapping field or segments of a field as part of a wider project intended also eventually to lead to research on the position taking and dispositions of individual pedagogical workers, in order to contribute to understandings of the impact of workforce reform on educational professionals.

Frame

Our theoretical frame is based on Bourdieu's concept of field. In this paper we map out our initial attempts to capture, construct and validate the "objective relations" between individuals and groups of pedagogical workers. The work thus forms part of our interest in "...the two-way relationship between objective structures (those of social fields) and incorporated structures (those of habitus)." (Bourdieu 2001: vii) We are developing a model using Bourdieu's relational analytical approach to understand the dynamics of the educational field in relation to the recruitment, formation and further development of pedagogical workers since workforce reform.

Bourdieu defines field as " a network, or a configuration, of objective relations between positions" which have objective existence outside of individual consciousness and these positions reflect the "structure of the distribution of species of power (capital) whose possession commands access to the specific profits that are at stake in the field" (1992: 97). The field is a field of struggles aimed at either maintaining or transforming the existing configuration of power within that field. Agents are positioned within the field according to their possession of different types of capital (economic, social, cultural - all of which having properties of symbolic capital according to their relative perceived values within the field) and to "the perception that they have of the field depending on the point of view they take on the field as a view taken from within a point in the field." (1992:101)

Bourdieu agrees that clarifying the extent of a field is a difficult one:

"In empirical work, it is one and the same thing to determine what the field is, where its limits lie, etc., and to determine what species of capital are active in it, within what limits and so on. (We see how the notions of capital and field are tightly connected.)" (1992: 98-99).

This paper summarises our attempts to operationalise the advice given by Bourdieu in the Chicago workshops, presents the findings of our review of data sources and research findings and evaluates the methodological approach adopted.

Research findings

The current aim is to arrive at better understandings of the structural relations that affect the position taking of a group of agents within the educational field: the group we define as 'pedagogical workers'. Our contributions will be in two main forms. Firstly, we will provide a synoptic overview of current research findings of relevance to the aim, supplementing these with analysis of other sources of data. Secondly, we will report on and evaluate the methodological approach, with a view to refining a methodology for understanding the impact of recent reform on educational professionalism.

References

Bourdieu, P. (1990) *The Logic of Practice*, trans. Richard Nice, Cambridge: Polity

Bourdieu, P. et al (1999) *The Weight of the World: social suffering in contemporary society*, Stanford Ca.: Stanford University press

Bourdieu, P. (2001) *Practical Reason*, Cambridge: Polity

Bourdieu, P. and Wacquant, L. J. D. (1992) *An Invitation to reflexive Sociology*, Cambridge: Polity

Burgess, H (2008) *Primary Workforce Management and Reform (Primary Review Research Survey 6/4)*, Cambridge: University of Cambridge Faculty of Education

DCSF: *School Workforce in England (including Local Authority level figures)*, January 2009 (Revised) accessed 21/1/10 at

<http://www.dcsf.gov.uk/rsgateway/DB/SFR/s000874/index.shtml>

Freidson, E (2001) *Professionalism: the third logic*, Cambridge: Polity

Larson, M,S (1977) *The Rise of Professionalism: a sociological analysis*, Berkeley: University of California Press

McCulloch, G., Helsby, G. and Knight, P. (2000) *The Politics of Professionalism: Teachers and the Curriculum*, London: Continuum

McCulloch (2001) 'The Reinvention of Teacher Professionalism' in Phillips, R. and Furlong, J. (eds) *Education, Reform and the State: twenty-five years of politics, policy and practice*, London: Routledge/Falmer

Stevenson, H., Carter, B. and Passy, R. (2007) "'New Professionalism" workforce remodelling and the restructuring of teachers' work' in *International Journal for Leadership in Learning* Volume 11 (15)

<http://www.ucalgary.ca/~iejll/>

Visited 18.2.08

Webb, R. and Vulliamy, G. (2006) *Coming Full Circle? The impact of New Labour's education policies on primary school teachers' work. A First Report*, London: ATL