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RESPONSE

Constructing the document: A cultural political text

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Jesson's paper concentrates on the process of the document formation as 'official' (ie. State), on the political process of how this curriculum came about, and how various ideas were incorporated, excluded or changed. Jesson employs Elsmore and Sykes (1992) 'garbage' or 'waste stream' model of curriculum policy making to analyse the 'component problems, solutions and ideology (that) merge independently of each other in a primeval soup'. The model allows for an account of the way in which the unpredictable and opportunistic outcomes of the policy making process still manage 'to meet varying legitimation requirements of the authorities'. Through the use of the model, Jesson contrasts the political nature of *science education* as a 'selection mechanism' with the shifting nature of *science* where 'the bench mark of excellence is now economic rationalism which is concerned about notions of sale and return on investment...'. Yet, Jesson argues, even with their considerable differences, all the various advocates of the curriculum policy believe that education can actively change society.

Jesson contrasts the 'primeval soup' model as an alternative to the positivistic characterisation of curriculum development that, according to its proponents, provides a straight forward, no nonsense, depoliticised account of the Document development. In this latter model, the relationship assumed between policy intention and social outcome 'portrays curriculum policy making as a purposeful, instrumental and non-political activity' with 'assumptions of essential rationality and assumed predictability of both the process and the actors'. The outcomes in the form of curriculum documents however, appear to these policy advocates to be self-evidently beneficial, and totally predictive as if there are no political agendas.

In Foucauldian terms Jesson provides an account of a 'regime of practices' that illustrate ways in which legitimation was achieved. The interesting thing is how this unpredictable process ends with any legitimation role. A problem is presented in the paper of confusion among many competing interests, caused by the different competing ideological interests. These interests were 'polarised into attacking the links between the Document and the constructivist theories of learning and conflicts over process or content in science education'.

Jesson provides a highly plausible account of the practices of curriculum policy development which includes: an account of the implications for contractual curriculum writing and implementation; an account of the political purpose of the science curriculum; the demand for teacher development; and the potential for teachers to teach science using a constructivist approach. Lack of consultation did not alienate teacher organisations using dual meanings of terms such as 'community and devolution in decision-making'. These found favour with most teachers. Potential legitimation problems with the 'opposition alliance involving local government, academics, teachers and parents' due to the employment of language in the document such as 'achievement standards', 'national assessment' and so on were headed off through consultation. The new policy direction became amalgamated with the earlier Curriculum Review (Department of Education, 1987), which had been largely supported by teachers. Intermixing the language of the Curriculum Review with the language of the Document was an exercise in Governmental rationality

in the form of a strategy of integration which 'allowed political space for the interpretation of the various key words'. Jessen entitles this section of her paper the 'political conditions behind the document', but on reflection that it might have been better to suggest that this account is not so much about what is behind the Document, but rather what is integral to its development. This section of the paper addresses the cultural politics of curriculum policy development.

Foucault and governmentality

I support the line of argument advanced by Jessen about the value of the 'waste stream' model rather than the technical-linear model to explain the regime of curriculum development practices. I want to argue however, that rather than viewing the process as a technology of domination that interferes with what she sees as the legitimate domain of teachers, Jesson might have been better to have employed Foucault's (1991) notion of Governmentality.

Govemmentality is Foucault's (1991) neologism for the way in which government can be accounted for. The term refers to a domain of research about the rationality of government.

> Govemmentality is a contact point where techniques of domination - or power - and techniques of the self interact, where technologies of domination of individuals over one another have recourse to processes by which individuals act upon themselves, and, conversely where techniques of the self are integrated into structures of coercion (Burchell, 1993: 268).

Governmentality means governance of both self and others and establishes the relationship between technologies of domination and technologies of self in the subjectification of individuals. From this perspective, 'techniques of power in a modem democratic state presuppose both the activity and agency - or freedom - of those on whom they are exercised' (Foucault, 1982: 220-221). There is no simple determination of techniques of self by techniques of domination - techniques of self and techniques of domination are not reducible to one another and they are not necessarily harmonious or mutually reinforcing. 'Study of their interaction is relevant to the ethical problems of how freedom can be practised' (Burchell, 1993: 269).

By governmentality Foucault meant something like a way or system of thinking about the nature or practice of government. His research focuses on questions such as, who can govern? What is governing? Who is governed? The system of governmentality is capable of making that activity thinkable and practicable to practitioners and to those upon whom it is practised. Government concerns the relation between self and self, interpersonal involving some control and guidance, with social institutions and community, and with the exercise of political sovereignty relations. Foucault asks *how* questions for the immanent conditions and constraints of practices. He says there are no immediate polemical implications between *how* questions and classical political philosophy. The *how* questions are not a concern with the purely expedient or factual. Governmentality is about critique, problematisation, invention, imagination, and changing the shape of the thinkable. According to Foucault (Gordon, 1991: 8), the perceived internal constraints of governmentality are just as capable as principles of legitimation of carrying normative meaning and content. Foucault sees that the ·state has no essential properties and it is a function of changes in the practices of government. It has a central concern with the legitimate foundations of political sovereignty and political obedience.

Governance through science curriculum policy development

There are two related ways in which one can view the curriculum policy development and the accompanying constructivist - objectivist debate. The first concerns the politics of curriculum reform and the way participants focus on epistemological issues. The second concerns the relationship between the activities of the participants in the construction of the Document and the way the activities function as governance. Governance of self and others is integral to the activity of

Document construction and can be seen for example, in the way in which teachers became implicated in their own governance through the way in which language was employed in the policy construction.

Rather than focussing on epistemological issues, I wish to account for governance to explain the practices of the participants as having a life of their own and with their particular forms of rationality. Rather than attribute failure to the State in its choice of curriculum design model, it might be better to show the form of rationality inherent in the confusion. After all, the result was a legitimation for government in the production of the finished Document.

Jesson makes one implicit reference about governance where she argues that 'Government policy is more effectively implemented through persuasion than force'. One would need to ask about the agenda of the Minister of Education. Whom was he representing? What are his views on the philosophy of science education? Prior to the education reforms, the Minister received advice on curriculum policy development matters from his advisers, who were informed on the basis of nation wide committee work performed by interested parties. This was a well-understood political process. So far I have not seen any literature to convince me that this essentially democratic process was inadequate. Upon what does the Minister privilege his expertise of science education? The interference by the Minister represents, in my view, the move from education as a grounded process of cultural politics to an economic device within a neo-liberalist managerialist culture. Managerialism however, is not without its problems, especially when applied in a sovereign manner on the basis of the politics of public choice. According to Enteman (1993), managerialism is not a form of democracy but is an international ideology on which the economic, social, and political order of advanced industrialised societies is actually based. It rests on the impoverished notion that societies are nothing more than the sum of the decisions and transactions that have been made by the managements of organisations. Managerialism is both a normalising force and a form of disciplinary knowledge. Social decisions in education as a consequence are seen as the interactions of managers and not necessarily the will of the community (including its scientists), the students, or the needs of its lecturers. From this perspective, the nature of curriculum policy development initiatives assume a function of the changes in the practices of management over time. Managerialism in this sense, concerns governance of self and others.

I would argue that in some sense all parties involved in the politics of science education policy curriculum reform are implicated in their own governance and that the agenda of the Minister is but one - albeit an influential one - among many. The focus in Jesson's article on the confusion emanating from the primeval soup of the politics serves to mask the way in which politics as micro-practices actually function in a manner which Foucault (1988) describes as 'technologies of self through which subjects are implicated in their own governance - ie. subjects become disciplined through their practices.

From a Foucauldian perspective, it seems more plausible to argue that the development of the Document had more to do with governance than science or science education per se. The curriculum developers constructed themselves (and the Document) subject to the prevailing political rationality. This is evidenced by the fact that the Minister determined the parameters of the document, but teachers were able to choose the content and pedagogical methods. Teachers were free to carry out instructions within what Jessen argues, is 'the conflict in (the Document's) purpose between the State's mandated requirement and a permissive teacher's guide'. In this case, the teachers' guide is really a mechanism to produce commitment even though it is at the level of the implementation of activities and assessment. Jessen characterises this as space for a 'high degree of school and teacher decision making' but such a commitment from teachers to a notion of science education might be better characterised as an example of what Foucault (Hutton et. al., 1988) called 'technologies of self. From a perspective of Governmentality, the role of teachers is interpreted in terms of their daily practices. The teachers lack of political involvement or otherwise in the philosophy and deliberations of the theory underpinning the curriculum (unlike that of the

Minister), raises issues of an application of technologies of domination. There is further evidence of technologies of domination in operation where Jesson's paper reports that the more elite members of the science education community indulged in activities which attempted to 'preserved science from mass society in favour of the selective tradition'.

My criticism of Jesson's article is that it does not discuss the terms of the debate within a critique of the nee-liberal underpinnings of the reforms to education which Foucault's (1991) notion of governmentality exposes as having their own logic. Nee-liberalism, it has been argued, underpins the reform of education in New Zealand. In this perspective, it is possible to argue that the participants were not confused, but were implicated in a relationship of power where 'freedom must exist for power to be exerted' (Foucault, 1982: 221). Neo-liberalism (which allows for conceptions of negative freedom) as a form of Governmentality (Peters, 1994) is employed as an alternative to theories of state as a means of understanding the nature or practice of government that enables individuals to construct themselves subject to the prevailing political rationality. The target of the analysis of Governmentality is not,

> *institutions, theories,* or *ideology,* but *practices* - with the aim of grasping the conditions which make these acceptable at a given moment; the hypotheses being that these types of practice are not just governed by institutions, prescribed by ideologies, guided by pragmatic circumstances - ... but possess up to a point their own specific regularities, logic, strategy, self-evidence and *reason.* It is a question of analysing a regime of practices - practices being understood here as places where what is said and what is done, rules imposed and reasons given, the planned and the taken for granted meet and interconnect (Foucault, 1991: 75).

The practices of language

Jesson has referred to the way in which the commitment of the various participants in the Document construction process was affected by the practice of language. Language in this sense functions as a practice that as Foucault (1991: 7 5) argues 'possess(es) up to a point (its) own specific regularities, logic, strategy, self-evidence and reason'. A postmodern view of language practices offers a useful commentary on the way in which through language curriculum policy developers are implicated in their own governance. In respect of analysing a regime of practices understood as "places where what is said and what is done, rules imposed and reasons given, the planned and the taken for granted meet and interconnect" (Foucault, 1991: 75), Weedon's (1987: 21) line of argument is particularly apposite in that,

> Language is the place where actual and possible forms of social organisation and their likely social and political consequences are defined and contested. Yet it is also the place where our sense of ourselves, our subjectivity, is constructed. The assumptions that subjectivity is constructed impious that it is not innate, not genetically determined, but socially produced. Subjectivity is produced in a whole range of discursive practices - economic, social and political - the meanings of which are a constant site of struggle over power language. Language is not the expression of unique individuality; it constructs the individual's subjectivity in ways which are socially specific ... subjectivity is neither unified nor fixed. Unlike humanism which implies a conscious, knowing unified, rational subject (postmodernism) theorises subjectivity as a site of disunity and conflict, central to the process of political change an to preserving the status quo.

Jesson' s account of the political process of the construction of the Document emphasises the importance of theorising the way in which teachers construct their place in science education. In this view, their subjectivity is no longer assigned to the apolitical objectivist world of essences and essentialism. The process of constructing the Document illustrates science education as a basis for cultural politics and the struggle for power has been opened up to include the issues of language and teacher identity. In this sense, the Document and the regime of practices that attended its construction can be viewed as a cultural text.

Final comments

Jesson has analysed a regime of curriculum development practices in detail. Particularly useful is the comment that underpinning the utopian ideal that permeates education, there actually is hope for accessible education, kept alive by teachers, which is created by the legitimating role of the Document. Exposed is the idea that the whole exercise, including the debate, is not about education per se, but about governance.

In my response, Foucault's (1991) notion of governmentality is interpreted as operating through the curriculum policy development mechanisms which are not primarily about enhancing individual science learning, transforming educational institutions, increasing national wealth or even dealing with international competition. These ideas have been discounted by the competing interpretations of the purposes of the Document illustrated by Jesson. An alternative interpretation is what Foucault (1982: 221) calls relations of power. The strident objectivist position (eg. Matthews, 1995) that criticises the construction of the document does not allow for the contradictory spaces that attach to science education as a notion of governance. The stridency of the objectivist position however, does indicate relations of power - in the words of Shakespeare, 'methinks he doth protest too much! ' According to Jesson's article, the idea that education (and hence science education) makes a difference in terms of social control and sends out a message of hope for its legitimation. I am tempted to ask, what is the agenda of those who would deny this function of education? To paraphrase Foucault (1991: 84), when transformation actually happens it won't be because a plan of reform has found its way into the heads of educators. It will be when all those who have to do with the reality of education, have come into collision with each other and with themselves; run into dead ends, problems and impossibilities, been through conflicts and confrontation; when critique has been played out in the real, not when reformers have realised their ideas.

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