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'I love to teach but No Thank You!' Factors responsible for the demise of teaching as a profession: An Australian Perspective.

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If a doctor, lawyer or dentist had 40 people in his office at one time, all of whom had different needs, and some of whom didn't want to be there and were causing trouble, and the doctor, lawyer or dentist, without assistance, had to treat them all with professional excellence for nine months, then he might have some conception of the classroom teacher's job. (Quinn, 1984)

Introduction

Within Australia, state governments are implementing a variety of enticements to attract and retain teachers. At the federal level, the Prime Minister, Julia Gillard, announced a plan to pay cash bonuses to the country's top-performing teachers. The rationale behind this bold but controversial plan is to improve teacher quality. According to the plan, 'approximately 25, 000 teachers which equates to merely one in ten, will be rewarded with bonuses of between \$5400 and \$8100 depending on their experience ... Teachers' performance will be measured from lesson observations, student results, feedback from parents, qualifications and professional development' (Osborne, 2011, p. 1).

However, the plan has faced strong criticism from Opposition leader, Tony Abbott, who stated that the processes involved in the granting of bonuses were too bureaucratic and would result in schools losing control, which would inevitably affect teacher retention. Lending support, Angelo Gavrielatos, president of the Australian Education Union was of the view that this plan would fail. He stated that:

There are clearly some within the government's ranks who share a fascination with a corporate approach to education that has been experimented in the United States ... But it has failed spectacularly ... a Harvard University study of a similar scheme in New York found no evidence that teacher incentives increase student performance, attendance, or graduation, nor ... student or teacher behaviour. (World News Australia, 2011, p. 1)

In South Australia, the state government has introduced mentoring programs and teaching awards for teachers; created new super schools that boast super facilities for both students and teachers; and has encouraged the removal of burnt-out teachers by

offering the latter a severance package of \$50 000. It is envisaged that senior teachers, those that are fifty years and older, will opt out of teaching thereby making way for young, enthusiastic educators. It is also expected that this particular 'program will then free up more permanent positions for graduates and early career teachers who struggle to find long-term employment' (Hood, 2011, p. 1).

In addition, a discussion paper entitled, *Supporting Our Teachers*, describes South Australian initiatives aimed at improving the training of pre-service teachers, development of teachers and raising the profession's profile. Initiatives include a major recruitment drive for new and prospective teachers; as such: an inaugural state-wide '*Teaching for the 21st Century conference*'; five new '*School Centres of Excellence*' which will assist final-year teaching students in gaining practical experience in the classroom; a new mentoring program in which retiring teachers will be invited to work as mentors for younger teachers; a new annual awards scheme for public teachers, leaders, preschool and support staff; extra practical teaching placements in schools where teachers are needed to support struggling students; and a review of the professional development system with a particular focus on the teacher training required for a smooth transition to the new National Curriculum (Hood, 2011, p. 1).

The South Australian government has also launched the *Teaching is Inspiring Project* that describes teaching as such:

As a profession there is nothing quite like teaching. Every student presents a unique puzzle, in the way they connect, engage and learn.

There's no denying that it's challenging, but when you break through, when you make that connection with a student and you can see that they're ready to learn what you have to share ... teaching is inspiring.
(Department of Education and Children's Services, 2011, p. 1)

Undeniably, teaching is both a challenging and rewarding profession. But will the above change initiatives to the profession result in happy teachers? In a research project conducted by the Centre for Marketing Schools, 850 teachers across 17 schools were surveyed. The key findings in relation to the profession on teacher morale, levels of satisfaction, and hence retention, are listed below:

1. *Many teachers talk about burnout, being asked to do too much for little reward or recognition and of being overwhelmed.*

2. *When questioned about their own performance, ratings were invariably positive; about their relationships with their students and other teachers, responses were generally happy; about school leadership, the school executive and management hierarchy, satisfaction levels plummeted; about communication between staff and administration, the ratings were the lowest.*
3. *Discipline problems loomed large in the survey as teachers spoke about the stress associated with unchecked bad student behaviour.*
4. *Teachers highlighted a lack of transparency with decision-making, changes without discussion, things just dropped on them, demands for extra time, the distant principal who is not accessible and staff being kept out of decision-making.* (Vining, 2011, p. 20)

In addition to the above, teachers also have to contend with economic and political conditions that influence their work; the issue of devolution; school-based management; de-skilling and re-skilling; the demise of professional autonomy; managerialism; and the control of their work.

These issues are addressed in the discussions that follow.

a) Economic and political conditions influencing teachers' work

Teachers' work is currently situated within economic and political changes reshaping western economies as a result of the effects of postmodern conditions. The restructuring of capital from transitional to reorganised capital (Bernstein, 1990) is symbolic of the present condition influencing teachers' work. An outcome of these shifts in the international economic balance of power is the emergence of what Yeatman (1993, p. 3) describes as the world market where 'the new types of transnational structures of privately-oriented economic activity are setting the public policy agenda of nation states'. Lingard (1993a, p. 26) refers to this phenomenon as 'the realisation that the internationalisation of economics restricts the degree to which the nation state can respond to the pressures on it'.

As a result of these far-reaching economic shifts teachers and schools are increasingly subject to reformist policies as governments seek to enhance human capital in the face of globalised competition. Some policy theorists argue that 'economic restructuring is the master discourse which informs all policy decisions' (Kenway, Bigum, Fitzclarence, Collier & Tregenza, 1994, p. 318). Thus, what we currently have is an education system primarily concerned with enhancing the economy; one that has to change in response to international economic and technological trends; and one in

which state costs are kept to a minimum. Education is no longer valued for its role in developing political, ethical and aesthetic citizens. Instead, the goal has become the promotion of knowledge that contributes to economic productivity. In this context, teachers' work has become characterised by 'increasing organisational complexity, economic flexibility and scientific and moral uncertainty on a scale of global proportions' (Hargreaves & Goodson, 1996, p. 19).

According to Gaffney (1997):

Changing social, economic and technological contexts are playing increasing demands on teachers' work. The capacity of teachers to anticipate and respond to these demands is constrained through a combination of industrial age school structures, bureaucratic system policy and industrial frameworks, and a prevailing self-concept by teachers themselves as a form of organised labour. (cited in Hawkes, 1997)

To elaborate, the impact of new technologies in communication and information (Aronowitz & Giroux, 1991; Kenway, Bigum & Fitzclarence, 1993) contribute to changes to every aspect of contemporary life. Conspicuous consumerism (Lasch, 1979) and the marketing of the previously non-marketable (Kenway, Bigum & Fitzclarence, 1993) are the emergent cultural forms. Denzin (1991, p. 8) refers to the 'language of the visual' which functions as the 'production and reproduction of official ideology'. Crucially, shifts in production are accompanied by the need by capital for a different kind of worker, identified as compliant, educated and motivated by consumerism (Kenway, Bigum & Fitzclarence, 1993). The workers' role according to Baudrillard (1990), is to be socialised in the new order of consumption.

Faced with these economic pressures, the Australian state implemented what Lingard (1993b, p. 24) calls 'corporate federalism' which 'is framed by a number of discourses and practices, including neo-corporation, economic rationalism, corporate managerialism and a reconstituted human capital theory' (Lingard, 1993b, p. 29). Williamson (1989, p. 217) identifies the central feature of the state under corporatism as:

a structure of domination which encompasses interests that seek to maintain the existing social order against the behaviour of producers which are inimical to the maintenance of that which are inimical to the maintenance of that order.

b) Devolution and teachers' work

Devolution involves the democratisation of education through devolving power to the school and school community. Liberal education is redefined as a focus on the possessive individual of market economies, in the guise of the 'new vocationalism' (Moore, 1987, p. 227). In this sense, as Moore (1987, p. 227) argues, education 'is an ideology of production regulating education rather than an educational ideology servicing production'.

Accompanying devolution is the shift in control from visible and centralised forms to invisible and diffused forms. In these arrangements, bureaucratic authority, centring on structures, on accountability and responsibility (Lingard & Rizvi, 1991), are transferred from central office to the school administration (Astuto & Clark, 1992), but the selection of administrators and decisions guiding policy and curriculum are controlled by central office (Dimmock & Hattie, 1990). The participation of the school community, students and parents, is 'encouraged only within tight central guidelines' (Smyth, 1992, p. 271). As a strategy for managing schools, opportunities for school-based decisions on policy or curriculum issues are constricted (Smyth, 1992). Despite the increased and differentiated workload, teachers' involvement in the decision-making processes of the school is still 'constrained to non-essential decisions . . . Their decisions have to "fit" system directives or they are overruled' (Astuto & Clark, 1992, p. 103).

For teachers, devolution has meant increased workloads as the demands of committees proliferate, school-based curricula are developed, subject options generated and timetables manipulated (Connell, 1985). Demands for accountability, a widening of social responsibilities, and the implementation of vocationally-orientated education through devolution have become tools for fiscal management at the school level. These developments are central to definitions of teachers' work. In such a work regime, calls for responsible, reflective involvement by teachers at the grassroots level of schooling are paralleled by increasingly restrictive preferred practice and increased surveillance of teachers' work (Apple, 1982; Smyth, 1991, 1995a). Smyth (1991) says:

Teachers, therefore, are supposedly being given more autonomy at the school level at precisely the same time as the parameters within which

they are expected to work and against which they will be evaluated, are being tightened and made more constraining. (p. 224)

In a similar vein, Barcan (1992, p. 95) draws our attention to two ambiguities of devolution. He states:

- *Devolution itself embraces two processes—administrative decentralisation of vast, often inefficient, educational bureaucracies through regional boards and local management of schools through school councils. The possibility of tension between the local administrative bureaucracy and school governing body is great.*
- *Another ambiguity within devolution is the possibility that instead of a reduction in size of the educational and administrative bureaucracy, decentralisation could produce a multiplicity of local bureaucracies.*

c) School-based management

An example of this kind of fabrication is the raft of reforms in Victoria that have occurred with the introduction of school-based management to enhance student outcomes and make school organisation more responsible (Caldwell & Spinks, 1992; Blackmore, Bigum, Hodgens & Laskey, 1997). This has typically focused on the decentralisation of budgets and decision making from the central bureaucracies, with enhanced site-based or school level management. The objectives for this restructuring have been to make schools more effective and efficient by aligning decisions over resource allocation to local bodies, while maintaining elements of centrally determined forms of accountability (Mander, 1997). Whilst Caldwell and Spinks (1992) forcefully defend the justification for the use of school-based management in Australia, Smyth and Shacklock (1998, p. 2) point to the exclusion of classroom teachers from this process of educational policy framing. Specifically, they argue that teachers have been excluded as active agents from shaping their work identities, and being involved appropriately in solving school problems from the inside. The effect has been to significantly devalue teachers' work.

d) De-skilling and re-skilling of teachers

In Apple's (1982, p. 256) view, the pressures of devolution involve 'the ongoing atrophication of educational skills' by reskilling through the incorporation of the 'skills and ideological visions of management'. Teachers lose pedagogic skills and gain student-policing skills. The process impacts especially on women as men are

reskilled at the expense of deskilling women (Apple, 1992). Deskilling in education has resulted in what Watkins (1992) calls a secondary (feminised) labour market of casual and part-time labour. The sum effect is teachers' work becomes more controlled by management and less reflective. Their skills are devalued.

e) The demise of professional autonomy

The changes in educational policies have sparked numerous debates regarding teachers' work and their identity. However, 'whether these reforms have empowered teachers and enhanced their professionalism, or made their work more "routinised" and "deskilled" is contested' (Forrester, 2000, p. 136). Nias, Southworth and Yeomans (1989) argue that in their study of primary school teachers, staff worked more or less as a team under the leadership of the head-teacher. These teachers, according to Nias, Southworth and Yeomans (1989), worked in a 'culture of collaboration'. Furthermore, these teachers gained invaluable experience in the school curriculum development program leading to enhanced professional growth and had greater autonomy within their own classrooms, in terms of curriculum, assessment and pedagogy. Nias, Southworth and Yeomans' (1989) accounts illustrate that changes in educational policies have contributed to making teaching more skilful and professionally satisfying. According to Hoyle (1975), what the latter mentioned teachers are enjoying is "extended" professionalism whereby they engage in educational values and theory underpinning pedagogy and structures outside their immediate working environment' (cited in Forrester, 2000, p. 136).

However, other research on teachers' work has indicated that the teacher's autonomy has been tremendously reduced (Pollard, Broadfoot, Croll, Osborn & Abbott, 1994). Forrester (2000, p. 136) argues that this is best understood as the 'proletarianisation of teachers' work' where teachers have become 'deskilled' and 'deprofessionalised' as a direct result of these educational changes impacting directly on their work and their lives. Smyth and Shacklock (1998, p. 8) state that current educational change 'is producing a set of policies and reforms indicative of what [they] term a "preferred" teacher—that is to say, one who conforms to the new marketised, customer-oriented teacher able to demonstrate government policy through the satisfaction of pre-determined criterial indicators of performance'.

Menter, Muschamp, Nicholls, Ozga and Pollard (1997, p. 7) state:

We are persuaded that the policy agenda for education and other key areas of public-sector service is driven by commitment to neo-liberal (marketized) principles not only in pursuit of choice as a vehicle for improvement, but as a means towards destabilizing professional bureaucratic expertise and diminishing professional autonomy.

f) Managerialism

Another matter for concern is the issue of ‘managerialism’. Dimmock and Hattie (1990) argue that the tide of ‘managerialism’, which has been borrowed from the private sector and applied to public services such as education, has resulted in a greater concern for managerial effectiveness and efficiency in schools. Successful management of schools is now regarded as a *sine qua non* for organisational effectiveness, as it is in the private sector. Corporate style of management is increasingly viewed as having as much relevance for the running of educational enterprises as for private companies (p. 156). This shift on organisational change in education has been conceptualised in various ways.

Angus (1994), for example, describes this change towards corporate management in schools as a move away from participative/professional forms of administration, to technical/managerial ones. Grace (1995) contends that a social democratic phase of school headship has been superseded by a market phase. Others have argued that the market may be facilitating an assertion of ‘technical rationality’ in school management over and against ‘substantive rationality’ (Considine, 1988; Bottery, 1992). Yeatman (1993) describes how the culture and influence of ‘humanistic intellectuals’ have been replaced by those of ‘the technical intelligentsia’ (Gewirtz & Ball, 2000, p. 254). Clark and Newman (1992a, 1992b, 1997) suggest that this restructuring towards corporate forms of management represents an attack on ‘bureaucratic professionalism’ and an attempt to replace it with a ‘new managerial regime’. Storey (1992) writes of an increased emphasis upon ‘individual’ as opposed to ‘collective’ relations with employers. Thus, according to Gewirtz and Ball (2000, p. 266), this new managerialism is a:

transformational process that brings into play a new set of values and a new moral environment. In the process, it generates new subjectivities. The role and sense of identity and purpose of school managers are being reworked and redefined.

g) Controlling teachers' work

The reform agenda described above has impacted on teacher evaluation policy in Australia because teachers are such a large and important component of the public service. It is not surprising that disputes have arisen between the state and teachers over the context and conditions of work. The present state government wants to codify and even more closely regulate teachers' work in the guise of devolution of power, and legitimate the redistribution of public resources away from education in order to enforce its economic ideologies.

Dale's (1989, pp. 132-133) observations are helpful in and around this because of the way he gives a clearer understanding of the accelerated push for control over teachers and their work. He argues:

In circumstances where the demands on the state are so pressing as a result of economic decline and restructuring, there is a tendency to move from a pattern of 'licensed autonomy' for teachers to one of 'regulated autonomy'. Control over the education system is tighter, largely through the codification and monitoring of processes and practices previously left to teachers' professional judgement . . . this shift has come to be equated with the move to greater teacher accountability.

It is for this reason that Smyth and Dow (1998, p. 239) claim:

The balance has shifted from schools for the betterment of society through a more educated citizenry, to how best to control education by making it do its economic work through greater emphasis on vocationalism . . . the work of teachers is reconfigured so they become deliverers' of knowledge, testers of student outcomes and pedagogical technicians.

In the same vein, Angus (1993) argues that:

Educational practice is conceived of in a particularly mechanical way . . . In keeping with economic definitions of effectiveness, it is the bit that comes between 'inputs' and 'outputs'. It is seen largely as a set of techniques, the 'core technology', for managing 'throughput' rather than a complex and always unpredictable process of ongoing construction of educational practice. Practice is imposed rather than constructed, negotiated, or asserted; it is a set of techniques to be employed by teacher technicians on malleable pupils. (cited in Mahony & Hextall, 2000, p. 86)

Thus, Angus (1993) clearly illustrates the implications for teachers, their work and evaluation. Mahony and Hextall (2000) elaborate on the above by arguing that the question of teacher efficiency has now become a central issue in teachers' work. It is

for this reason that regulatory apparatus, performance indicators and accountability mechanisms need to be subjected to closer inquiry and scrutiny (p. 87).

Conclusion

Undeniably, teaching as a profession is at a demise in South Australia because the paramount aim of the state is to ensure that all its employees are fully productive in order to maximise profits. The key words behind this rationale are 'effectiveness' and 'efficiency'. However, as MacIntyre (1984) warns us, claims about 'effectiveness' and 'efficiency' are about the means of control. The workers (teachers) are manipulated so as to produce compliant patterns of behaviour. During periods of economic transition, closer regulation of state employees takes on new dimensions and new practices (Robertson, 1996), and Australian teachers are currently confronting this situation. This view is put by Robertson and Chadbourne (1998), who argue that the implementation of an 'industrial relations regime based on individualised teacher contracts', on the part of the state, 'has the capacity to direct teachers' work more closely through greater control over the terms and conditions of their work' (p. 36).

Thus, in order to attract new teachers and to retain old teachers, it is imperative that the South Australian government resolve the bureaucratic conundrum that surrounds teaching. This can be achieved by encouraging teachers to examine the bureaucratic structures that 'govern' their schools. However, in this instance, the goal should not be to find fault with the bureaucracy but rather to promote the creation of policies and procedures that support effective leadership and teaching. It is also essential that there is an immediate reduction in bureaucratic impediments that stifles the empowerment of teachers. Only then, can we 'make teaching an attractive profession to our best and brightest (so) to do this we must lift the status of the teaching profession in our community' (Weatherill, 2011, p. 1).

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