The refugees issue: between 'Fortress Europe' and solidarity

Antiracist Observatory of the University of the Aegean

The Antiracist Observatory of the University of the Aegean (AOUA) consists of professors and researchers of the University of the Aegean. It was established in 2012 with the aim to intervene in order to deal with racist manifestations or practices taking place in Greece, and focusing on the islands of the Aegean where the various departments of the University of the Aegean are based. The past years the AOUA has placed more emphasis on current issues related to the transition of refugees from various countries to the EU area, whose first stop is Greece. More specifically the AOUA has been focusing on the recent 'flood' of refugees mainly passing through the islands of the North Aegean.

The AOUA does not have a typical hierarchical structure or an authorisation and representation mechanism. It relies on a horizontal cooperation allowing each member to take the responsibility to coordinate specific actions and represent the AOUA, on the basis of the accountability of the person to the meetings of members. From this perspective, even though the actions of its members are voluntary and selective, they do require commitment to the basic principles and guidelines of AOUA which are summarised in the following: a) All humanbeings are entitled to help in their effort to acquire basic living conditions with dignity, and b) All humanbeings have the right to be respected and equally treated irrespective of their cultural, religious, ethnic, social or other characteristics.

In the summer of 2015 some of the Aegean islands (mainly Lesvos, Chios, Kos, Leros, Samos) received a huge influx of refugees, which by far exceeded existing capabilities in reception and hospitality. Typically, only last July Lesvos received nearly 55,000 refugees/migrants, while the number of arrivals on the island in 2014 was almost 12,000 and in 2013 less than 4,000 refugees/migrants!

This summer we experienced a real humanitarian crisis, a situation that could have led to an unprecedented tragedy if hundreds of volunteers hadn't mobilised and offered their unconditional and continuous solidarity to those who had come from war zones across the Middle East, Central and Southern Asia and North Africa and were heading towards Europe.

Those rough summer days seem to have passed for now, but the alarm has not yet to be stopped. During the last few days we have had dozens of refugees drowned in the Aegean Sea. We are aware that hundreds of thousands of refugees of all ages are in Jordan, Lebanon and Turkey, waiting for the first opportunity to get into the European 'promised land'. Nevertheless, the painful events that have been unfolding in countries of the Balkan Peninsula and Central Europe, and the ensuing urgency for 'handling' the great refugee flows to northern Europe seem to have led the EU to a new strategy of 'refugee management'. This development does not

bode anything good for the future. The main objective of this strategy is to dramatically decrease the refugee/migrant flows, and for this purpose the so-called 'Fortress Europe' should be reinforced.

This goal is served by specific and centrally planned European policies that are to: (a) make a clear distinction between 'refugees' and 'migrants'; (b) strengthen FRONTEX, and the forces that deter sea travel as well as to 'militarise' sea borders both in the Aegean and the wider Mediterranean Sea; c) create 'hotspots' on the Aegean islands and elsewhere, aiming at an administratively effective separation between refugees and migrants, with the latter being deported expeditiously; and (d) to appoint Turkey as the regional 'policeman' so that deterrence policies are strengthened and crossing the waterways in the Aegean Sea can be discouraged. Thus it becomes conspicuous that the EU, in the face of the huge humanitarian crisis, with hundreds of thousands of refugees/migrants as its victims, has chosen to stick to the hard logic of previous years – that is, (a) the logic of a hermetically 'sealed' fortress that allows a very small and targeted number of persecuted people from war-ridden countries in Africa and Asia to come to the European land; and (b) the logic of these people's assimilation and their direct incorporation into the cheap labour market (of Germany and other countries) as a 'reserve army of labour'. Characteristic of this logic is the decision to permit the migration of only 160,000 refugees in the EU, an outrageously small number if the real needs are taken into consideration.

At the same time, drastic cuts in funding for food and health programmes by international organisations (eg the United Nations High Commission for Refugees) has worsened the already critical situation of refugees throughout the Middle East, and will surely create even larger refugee flows into Europe.

Whereas it is clear that only a single European emergency response could effectively address this refugee crisis, European states continue adopting a piecemeal approach, being reluctant and having a mood of retrenchment, which undermines any efforts to rebuild responsibility, solidarity and trust; this very attitude causes chaos and despair to hundreds and thousands of refugees - women, men and children. So far, the problem has been dealt with in a conscious but sporadic and isolated way, as it is limited in multiple initiatives of intervention that fail, however, to be converted into a strong common European response based on European values, so that people's basic humanitarian and social needs are met when they arrive at their destination, or when they cross a country. This support is also necessary in countries that are not EU members but are rather transit zones of refugees and migrants.

At the same time, there is an urgent need for the adoption of measures so that the situation in the EU's neighbourhood becomes stabilised, including the provision of additional funding for humanitarian assistance and structural support to countries that host large refugee populations. This support can be implemented by endorsing institutional reforms that provide the refugees with increasing legal opportunities to enter the EU, including the permission to enter for humanitarian reasons, for family reunification or for study.

The emergency situation that Europe is facing nowadays (this year there have been over 500,000 new arrivals by sea) is primarily a refugee crisis. The vast majority of those who arrive in Greece and wish to continue their journey come from conflict zones such as Syria, Afghanistan and Iraq. Such a state of emergency can only be addressed through a holistic and integrated approach, during which all EU member states can work together in a constructive way. The promotion of cooperation among EU member states may also positively affect the citizens of the countries, by strengthening solidarity for refugee populations and by preventing racist and zenophobic phenomena.

However, this is not the case.

Unacceptable

The 'Antiracist Observatory of the University of the Aegean believes that the core of the planned EU policies is the geopolitically arbitrary and politically unacceptable distinction of persecuted people into 'eligible refugees' and 'deportable economic migrants'. The EU and its hegemonic member states seem to have realised that their chosen policy of 'fortification' should be consistent, even marginally, with the humanitarian legacy of the European political tradition. For this reason, and under the pressure of increasing signs of solidarity shown by ordinary European citizens towards the refugees, the decision to close the European borders to 'outsiders' is accompanied with some 'touches' of humanitarianism, as is the decision to allow the migration of only 160,000 refugees into the EU (of 508 million inhabitants!). Within this context, the above distinction serves a double goal: on the one hand, it allows a substantial closing of European borders, and, on the other hand, it gives the impression of a European leadership that cares for the most vulnerable people.

Nevertheless, the distinction between 'refugees' and 'migrants' has been proven completely groundless, since it is based on an outdated conception of geopolitical reality that ignores

contemporary developments. Nowadays, wars have completely different characteristics compared to those in the 1950s, a period during which it was defined administratively what constitutes a 'refugee' or a 'migrant' at an international level. How can one classify (and handle) as 'economic migrants' people who, under the burden of war and terrorist threats, experience the fear of persecution, starvation and/or extermination, or simply do not possess the necessary means to educate their children? By what criteria is a person coming from Afghanistan or Iraq not a 'refugee', but only an 'economic migrant'? Who defines the content and limits of an unbearable life? Does the guilt of the EU's leadership make it forget very easily how long-lasting are the consequences of wars and other conflicts that Europe itself instigated? How can people's efforts to take refuge in other countries, hoping for a sustainable life, be divided between 'documented avoidance of risking death or persecution', on the one hand, and 'improving their living standards' on the other?

Who decides who will live and who will die, either within their countries or in the 'civilised West'? Who holds the power of life and death over the persecuted of this planet? Shouldn't various cliché terms found in international law regarding the status of refugees, such as 'well-founded fear of persecution' make us reflect on and try to define what 'fear', 'justified fear' and 'persecution' mean for those who experience those extreme situations? Who gives the right to the EU to decide which countries, nationalities and ethnic groups may be excluded from the 'refugee' status, implying that the members of the respective population groups are not entitled to flee unbearable conditions of life in their countries of origin? How can whole populations be collectively identified as 'economic migrants' but not as 'refugees', when even the existing refugee law prescribes that the procedures for recognition of a 'refugee' status should take into account the special conditions of each individual (likelihood of persecution), and this recognition is, above all, a humanitarian act?

Nowadays, as far as the refugee issue is concerned, the European continent is confronted with a big dilemma, which entails two opposing perspectives. On the one end, we have the neoliberal alliance of political and economic oligarchy with racism and, sometimes, fascism. On the other end, we have the forces of solidarity towards refugees: democratic citizens, ordinary people: the 'underdogs' of Europe. Those of us who belong to the solidarity side need to fight to prevent the militarisation of sea borders and the setting-up of 'hotspots' that will decide, usually with unsubstantiated and arbitrary demarcation criteria, who will stay and who will return to a situation of continuous risking of one's life (ie through the perpetuation of all the risks associated with the dangerous conditions of illegal travelling). At the same time, we need to fight both to open up legal and safe migration channels to Europe, and to immediately stop the wars and disasters that cause massive exoduses of civilian populations.

Where we stand:

Post-16 Educator seeks to defend and extend good practice in post compulsory education and training. Good practice includes teachers working with students to increase their power to look critically at the world around them and act effectively within it. This entails challenging racism, sexism, heterosexism, inequality based on disability and other discriminatory beliefs and practices.

For the mass of people, access to valid post compulsory education and training is more necessary now than ever. It should be theirs by right! All provision should be organised and taught by staff who are trained for and committed to it. Publicly funded provision of valid post compulsory education and training for all who require it should be a fundamental demand of the trade union movement.

Post-16 Educator seeks to persuade the labour movement as a whole of the importance of this demand. In mobilising to do so it bases itself first and foremost upon practitioners - those who are in direct, daily contact with students. It seeks the support of every practitioner, in any area of post-16 education and training, and in particular that of women, of part timers and of people outside London and the Southeast.

Post-16 Educator works to organise readers/contributors into a national network that is democratic, that is politically and financially independent of all other organisations, that develops their practice and their thinking, and that equips them to take action over issues rather than always having to react to changes imposed from above.

LGBT and ESOL

Laila El-Metoui

Language acquisition can be hindered if learners are not in an environment which is conducive to fostering a welcoming atmosphere, where all feel free to talk about themselves, their identities and personal lives. This is particularly relevant to LGBT (Lesbian, Gay, Bisexual and Transgender) ESOL learners. However, ESOL learners can sometimes display strong homophobic views, linked to culture, religion and/or personal beliefs.

Furthermore, adult ESOL materials tend to have a strong heteronormative content, with few LGBT-friendly teaching resources available to ESOL practitioners. Despite the paucity of resources, one can still embed LGBT lives and issues within the ESOL curriculum, at any level. In addition to creating resources oneself, there are now more and more resources being created and made available.

Under the Common Inspection Framework (CIF), OFSTED identifies LGBT learners as a group vulnerable to discrimination, and educational institutions have to demonstrate how they address homophobia and transphobia. This is not about delivering a 'gay lesson' but about fostering a welcoming and inclusive environment, with a strong focus on language practice and acquisition.

Myths:

'You can't do it with lower ESOL levels.'
Students may have a lower level of language but they do not lack the concept. LGBT can be embedded at all levels, using the theme of family, for example, and looking at different families (1).

'You're not respecting their culture / religion.'
Embedding LGBT is about meeting British legal and institutional frameworks. We are lucky in the UK to be protected by the Equality Act 2010 and the Ofsted CIF. ESOL students are migrants, refugees and asylum seekers, who may themselves identify as LGB or T. Bringing this topic into the classroom leads to respect for all.

'It's too confrontational.'
Using a potentially controversial topic in the classroom is a great opportunity to develop language of opinion. From a linguistic perspective, teachers should aim to elicit the difference between: an insult and an opinion; accepting and agreeing; normal and normative; religious teaching and personal interpretation.

The subtlety and indirectness of English can at times be a difficult concept to grasp for cultures that have a more direct way of expressing needs or opinions. It's important to get the students to think about the impact of what they say and how this can affect the recipient. Challenging homo/bi/transphobia in the classroom is not about changing people's minds. It's about developing students' ability to express their opinions in a non-offensive and more respectful way. All opinions and views are valid as long as they are not harmful or hurtful to others.

Teaching English is not just about the language. It's about developing critical thinking skills, encouraging students to question things and find out answers for themselves. It's about supporting them to become independent learners and take ownership of their learning (2).

What students might state / ask:

'There are no gays in my country'.
Students may not be aware of the existence of LGBT people in their home countries, given the fact that it is illegal in over 79 countries in the world (3).

'It's a sin / against my religion.'
It is not a case of one size t-shirt fits all. Each religion, faith and belief is on a spectrum, and some liberal and progressive voices within religions tend to view LGBT people more positively (4).

'Which one is the man / woman?'
As Ellen Degeneres once said: 'Asking who's the 'man' and who's the 'woman' in a same-sex relationship is like asking which chopstick is the fork?'. This theme provides a great opportunity to understand what can be perceived as a new concept for some, and to develop the ability to express opinion in a non-confrontational manner.

The ESOL context provides an excellent opportunity for challenging homophobic social representations and for enabling students to explore alternative representations regarding sexuality and sexual orientation, contextualised within a broad range of ethnic backgrounds (5).

Notes:

1. Some ready-made lesson plans and teaching resources can be found at:
http://www.equalitiestoolkit.com/content/embedding-lgbt-curriculum-resources
http://www.niace.org.uk/projects/esolcitizenship/docs/04

2. Further strategies can be found in this video:
Exploration of Equality and Diversity in the ESOL Classroom (British Council Seminar Series)
https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=Rkygkkowp60&feature=sharenoembed

3. See:
http://76crimes.com/76-countries-where-homosexuality-is-illegal/

4. See:
https://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/LGBT_and_religion_topics#Homosexuality_and-religion

5. Further reading:
https://www.britishcouncil.org/voices-magazine/english-language-teachers-address-lgbt-issues-class
British Council, ESOL Nexus Research Awards 2013. *Exploring LGBT Lives and Issues in Adult ESOL Final Report - March 2014*
https://esol.britishcouncil.org/sites/default/files/attachments/informational-page/Exploring_LGBT_Lives_Issues_Adult_ESOL.pdf
ESRC Seminar Series November 2013 to June 2015. *Queering ESOL, Towards a cultural politics of LGBT issues in the ESOL classroom*
https://queeringesol.wordpress.com/
Skills Funding Agency: *Research into Sexual Orientation and Gender Identity Equality in Adult Learning*.

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Education, training and the elasticity of youth

Robin Simmons

Concerns about young people's transitions from education to work are hardly new, although traditionally these related largely to school leavers, whereas today securing and maintaining employment is increasingly problematic for much larger sections of the population. At the same time, words such as 'youth', 'young person' and other terms usually reserved for teenagers are now applied to a much broader range of individuals than was the case hitherto. This is apparent across both popular culture and official discourse but is particularly evident in relation to education and employment, and especially the way in which youth unemployment is now conceived. The acronym NEET was, for example, originally created to describe 16 to 18 year-olds 'not in education, employment or training' but, in Britain, is now commonly used to refer to unemployed individuals up to the age of 25. Elsewhere, the term NEET is applied to an even broader age range – in Italy and Spain, for instance, it is used to describe 'young people' up to the age of 29, and in Japan sometimes up to 35! Meanwhile, the UK Equality and Human Rights Commission (2015) recently referred to '18 to 34-year-olds' as if meaningful generalisations can be made about those within this age range. Whilst all this might seem slightly bizarre, the increasing 'elasticity of youth' is also deeply problematic – not least because it distracts away from the fact that there are far greater differences within any age-based classification than between any such categories. Clearly, it is nonsense to regard a 25-year-old Oxbridge graduate from a wealthy background as disadvantaged just because he or she is younger than a 45-year-old on the minimum wage or an old-age pensioner living on state benefits. Having said this, most people, though especially those from working-class backgrounds, face a far rockier path into adulthood than was the case in previous generations.

For thirty years after the end of World War Two, the journey into adulthood was, for the great majority of young people, relatively rapid and straightforward. Most left school at the earliest opportunity, normally to enter full-time employment, and usually leaving home, marriage and parenthood followed soon thereafter (Jones, 1995). Whilst unemployment was generally low, youth unemployment tended to be lower still, and the ready availability of work, increasing levels of prosperity, and relatively affordable housing acted in synergy to produce rapid youth transitions (Ainley and Allen, 2010, pp. 20-21). For young men especially, the movement from education to work was also often collective, and the mass transfer of boys from school into the various industries which then dominated local labour markets was commonplace. Girls and women were, however, also an important part of the workforce, and millions of females were employed on the production lines of British industry, as well as across different parts of the service sector. Meanwhile, the growing assertion of youth in music, fashion, sport and so forth meant the 1950s and '60s were, in many ways, a good time to be young and working-class – although we should not romanticise the past. Whilst employment offered a degree of stability that simply does not exist today, factory work in particular was often dull and deeply alienating (Beynon, 1973), and the general availability of employment masked the way in which some young people 'churned' chronically from job-to-job (Finn, 1987, p. 47). The workplace was also often a site of bullying and abuse, and the ritual humiliation of young workers was often regarded as simply part of working life. Meanwhile, sexism, racism and other forms of prejudice were widespread. Dennis, Henriques and Slaughter's (1956) book *Coal is our Life* and Young and Wilmott's (1962) research in the East-End of London offer vivid insights into some of the harsh realities of working-class life in post-war Britain.

For most young people today, the shift from school to work is nevertheless a much lengthier and more complex process than was the case for their parents and grandparents; and, for some, access to the traditional signifiers of adulthood – finding a job, financial independence, a place of their own and so on – has become suspended, sometimes almost indefinitely (Ainley and Allen, 2010). This had led some sociologists to talk about 'delayed transitions', 'fractured transitions' and the like, and it has become fashionable in some circles to argue that there is a growing rejection of adulthood (see Furedi, 2015). Such notions have some appeal: one doesn't have to look too far to find middle-aged men and women dressing and behaving as if they were much younger, and notions of perpetual adolescence, the 'crisis of adulthood' and so forth have become popular amongst the chattering classes. But, whilst delayed marriage and parenthood, so-called 'boomerang' children *et cetera* are significant social trends, we should not misrecognise them as simply cultural processes. They are in fact embedded in structural economic change and can, in Britain at least, be traced back to the collapse of its industrial base from the 1970s onwards, and the demise of the traditional youth labour market which accompanied it. Education and training is, however, also deeply implicated in all this, albeit in different ways for different social groups.

Although education has always been a site of social control as much as emancipation, the great expansion of post-compulsory education over recent decades has, in many ways, become part of a more general attempt to 'educationalise' a variety of social problems. Whilst society has become more and more unequal and divided, various educational initiatives have been charged with the impossible task of resolving deeply-entrenched social and economic inequality. Meanwhile, the 'Prevent' agenda and the promotion of so-called British values in schools and colleges are supposed to act as an antidote to the rise of 'violent extremism' across society. Universities – or at least those outside the elite few which serve the ruling class – turn out more and more graduates whose labour market prospects are increasingly precarious and uncertain. The further education system then – if the mish-mash of public, private and voluntary organisations which now delivers FE in England can be actually described as a 'system' – supposedly provides the key to tackling a range of problems facing both the individual and the economy, whether this is 'upskilling' the workforce, increasing economic competitiveness or resolving youth unemployment.

The notion that youth unemployment can be resolved through increased participation in education and training is not particularly new though, and there has, from the late-1970s onwards, been a series of initiatives, each of which, it is claimed, will make young people more employable and therefore enable them to find work. This discourse is, of course, rooted in supply-side economics and is part of a broader strategy which attempts to make us believe that individual shortcomings are responsible for a range of social and economic problems associated with neo-liberal regimes. The way in which Apprenticeships are currently being shamelessly over-sold as the solution to the intractable problem of youth unemployment, as well as supposedly being a viable alternative to university, is a case in point. It is also, in many ways, a cruel trick, especially for young working-class people and their families, for whom the word apprentice is traditionally associated with images of security and artisanship, rather than the various forms of fetching and carrying which, in many cases, have been reclassified as Apprenticeships (see, for example, Allen and Ainley, 2014).

Either way, the fact that each new training initiative – whether these are YOP programmes, NVQs, Apprenticeships or Traineeships – fails to live up to expectations is unsurprising. The way the British economy has been restructured means that most employers simply do not require large numbers of young workers, whether they are Apprentices or not. This, in turn, is symptomatic of a more general mismatch between the supply of workers and the demand for labour, especially for skilled workers. The problem, then, is not located merely in the structure and content of any particular programme or initiative but also in the nature of the labour market more broadly. Although employers' groups moan constantly about skills shortages, increasingly the UK workforce is in fact over-qualified and underemployed (Allen, 2015, pp. 19-20). So, on the one hand, there is a general underutilisation of skill, but, on the other hand, graduate 'down trading' squeezes other workers out of employment for which they might otherwise be considered suitable, and into increasingly poorly-paid, low-quality jobs or, in some cases, out of the labour market altogether.

Different forms of education and training, then, perform different functions in producing and reproducing inequality. At one end of the market, various low-rent employability programmes attempt to prepare those classified as NEET for a future of labour market insecurity, whereas Oxbridge and other elite institutions are still largely the preserve of the privileged. The various layers of education and training in between act, in many ways, as a holding pen for other sections of the population as they desperately compete to secure whatever work they can. Here, it is it difficult to avoid turning to the

Providers fail to meet needs

Stephen Lambert

A hard-hitting report produced by Newcastle City Council's Education, Skills and Training Scrutiny Group claims that the city's training providers, businesses and some of its schools are failing to meet the needs of the 16 to 24 age group and the region's economy.

The aim of the Group, made up of councillors and post-16 education experts, was to examine the learning and training opportunities available to young people in Newcastle aged 16-24 (25 for those with special needs). The group analysed the level of supply in relation to demand, along with the accessibility and suitability of provision. It explored the effectiveness of support offered to young people to achieve their full potential and equip them for the job opportunities and long-term career options available.

Areas for examination included the role of schools, regional colleges and training providers, and the links between them. We looked at the role of funders, particularly the Skills Funding Agency. The role of business and employers was examined,

together with the choice and availability of apprenticeships. In addition, a range of careers advice was explored, including careers advice in the city's schools. The role and scope of 'Connexions' in the council was looked at, alongside teenagers' destinations after year 11. The responsibilities of different parts of the local authority, plus communications between them and with external agencies was taken into account.

Finally, the developing role of the North East Combined Authority and its potential to have a strategic role in skills training across the region was examined.

In the city, 18 per cent of 16 to 24 year-olds are NEETs, the highest in all core cities across the country. Although the number of NEETs aged 16 to 18 is falling, unemployment amongst people under 25 is 12 per cent, compared to 10 per cent nationally. Young people have been hit hard by austerity. In a recession, young adults are often the first to be made redundant by firms, whilst new hiring opportunities are also lower. That's why post-16 providers, local businesses and central government must get it right if we are to give young people fulfilled and successful lives in a competitive jobs market.

All young people need to be well informed about career choices available to them from an early age, and supported in making the right decisions to enable them to follow their aspirations.

The region as a whole – and Newcastle in particular – needs to be able to keep skilled and talented people, providing meaningful and rewarding employment opportunities and an appropriately skilled workforce to develop a thriving economy and successful local industry.

For both the welfare of young people and the North-East as a whole, our Group has had an ongoing interest in the effectiveness of post-16 education, skills and training provision. To date, Newcastle's 'Learning Challenge', based on the successful London model, has explored ways of narrowing the education achievement gap of disadvantaged youngsters in the city, but little research has been done on the post-16 cohort there.

The Group began by interviewing young people with a range of backgrounds and experiences, aged from 16 to 24, and we were alarmed to find that most had received no impartial advice and guidance on skills training (with the notable exception of one teenager who attended an independent school!). Careers advice was inadequate and clearly failing. Many teachers had little experience or understanding of post-16 vocational training opportunities, including apprenticeships, other than the traditional academic A-level route. As a result, many young people were not familiar with apprenticeships or the high quality vocational courses provided by Newcastle and Gateshead College. In short, many were unable to make informed choices at 16.

The Group then had a series of in-depth meetings with groups of careers advisors, council officials, skills training providers, funding bodies, representatives from industry and commerce and senior college managers. Disturbingly, some of the (state funded) private training providers were delivering job-related courses which were not relevant to meeting the needs of the changing regional economy. There appeared to be no insight into how the city's economy will look in 2020. There were also concerns about the quality of the provision. Some was good in terms of social care and hospitality, However, the rest was poor.

Our Group discovered that the current organisation and funding of skills provision in the North-East was 'something of a free-for-all', with little strategic leadership or direction, raising the key question whether the needs of young people or industry were being seriously addressed. According to the North-East Skills Action Plan 'the skills system in the North-East is a complex, interconnected web of institutions involved in designing, resourcing and delivering the improvement of skills'. Councillor Hilary Franks, chairperson of the Group and former assistant principal at Gateshead College, dubs it a 'dysfunctional mess in need of leadership, an overview and reorganisation'.

Schools are keeping hold of 16 year-olds in order to boost funding, even though a significant minority may be better off following BTEC National courses in Health, Care, Hospitality and Tourism, IT and Business at local FE colleges. Several publicly funded private training organisations are failing to provide high quality and meaningful accredited vocational programmes which lead to real jobs. There appears to be little real co-ordination between headteachers, college principals, senior council officials and business leaders.

With the Government's devolution agenda now firmly on the table for the region, a new North-East Combined Authority and elected mayor in 2017 must take overall strategic responsibility and leadership for all skills training and careers guidance and public funding. To do otherwise is to let down thousands of young adults, as well as failing to meet the skills needs and shortages of a changing regional economy.

Resilience and the social work curriculum

Tom Considine

Despite claims made shortly after the Autumn Spending Review 2015, the age of austerity is set to continue under the sole auspices of the Conservative government at least until 2020 ('Autumn statement: IFS warns on tax rises and spending cuts', *Guardian* 26/11/15). However, a possible answer has emerged to the growing levels of poverty (O'Hara 2014), widening degrees of social and economic inequality (Atkinson 2015) as well as an intergenerational divide in life opportunities (Standing 2013): it is resilience. Or rather, a dominant notion of resilience is emerging which is being touted as the solution to the problems above.

For example, the president of the Rockefeller Foundation has recently (2015) published a book offering solutions to the world's most pressing problems, titled *The Resilience Dividend: Managing disruption, avoiding disaster, and growing stronger in an unpredictable world*. First, considering the institution of which this person is president, the approach here is unsurprisingly supportive of continuing the neo-liberal model from whence most of the social problems have emerged. Secondly, the title itself is indicative as to why resilience is being promoted as the solution to our social problems. It fits with the prevailing neo-liberal orthodoxy. The use of the word 'dividend', with its glaring connotations of investment, financial speculation and profitable gains immediately frames it within the world of free-market enterprise. The sub-title, with its accumulation of gerunds (infinite and active verbs such as 'managing', 'avoiding' and 'growing'), fits with the blossoming 'can-do' literature of self-improvement. The work itself seeks to offer solutions to what it sees as the world's most pressing problems (economic uncertainty, the effects of over-population and environmental deterioration) by indicating ways both individuals and societies can work to protect themselves from such adversities and sustain their own survival. The analysis never questions or challenges the structural and political framework which shapes these crises (Rodin 2015).

Within the field of education a similar development has manifested itself. In response to a report by the Social Mobility and Child Poverty Commission in 2014, chaired by former Labour Health Minister Alan Milburn, which claimed that social mobility had stalled in the UK and inequality was growing, the headmaster of Westminster School, Mark Mortimer, responded with a solution in a letter to the *Daily Telegraph* (27/05/15) with the heading: 'Pupils need lessons in resilience if they are to improve their lot in life'. He said that private schools were working with state schools to improve the admission process as it would be based on 'ability rather than ability to pay' and if one wanted to know the answer to lack of social mobility, '. . . one should consider the *Character and Resilience Manifesto*, produced by the all-party parliamentary group on social mobility, which makes a clear connection between the development of character and perseverance (along with other 'soft' skills) and social mobility'. According to this manifesto, there is widespread evidence that children from disadvantaged backgrounds are much less likely than their more affluent peers to possess these 'soft skills'.

Significantly, this manifesto supports the view that character and resilience can be developed. It defines them as 'umbrella terms for a range of attributes that help people to make the most of opportunities as they arise, to stick at things and to bounce back from adversity'. Embedded in these proposals is the notion that those from lower social orders lack the right moral fibre to cope with the demands of this world, and those from a higher social order can benignly offer them a way to learn these qualities. It is, in effect, a heady mixture of nonsense, racism, class hatred, disrespect for teachers, and purposeful denial of the deep-rooted structural causes of educational inequality.

The promotion of resilience within social work education has been prevalent for the last few years. It was originally promoted with regard to the way it would support service users. It is largely associated with a model known as a 'strengths-based approach' (Saleeby 2002), which is characterised as identifying unrecognised coping abilities in people

and communities that normally experience exclusion. People are helped to find ways to adapt to difficult circumstances. More recently, social work students are encouraged to develop resilience as part of their professional practice. There is a growing body of research seeking to identify the qualities which underpin resilience and how they can be embedded in the curriculum. Indeed, it could be argued that there is an emerging resilience industry, as, over the last few years, there has been a conference on protecting oneself from burnout in social services, a toolkit freely available to order to help one survive increasingly difficult work conditions, and a webinar discussion promoting resilience. (It is somewhat ironic that the speaker on this topic had to reschedule the proposed talk owing to ill-health. It may not be as effective as the rhetoric claims.)

On the face of it, such a development seems logical, as social work is, by its very nature, a challenging job and requires a robust character. The most comprehensive study (Grant and Kinman 2014) draws upon a disparate range of ideas, ranging across positive psychology, self-help therapy, eastern philosophy and business jargon. At the heart of the various methods and techniques that one can undertake to acquire is the need for the individual to learn to be flexible to the demands placed upon him/her. This approach plays down the significance of the social environment in which the student must try to survive. It places the responsibility exclusively on the individual, and if he/she is struggling to manage the pressures, then it is a result of his/her personal shortcomings rather than the circumstances he/she has to face.

We are giving social work students much to be resilient about. As well as incurring the highest HEI fees in the world (OECD Report – *Guardian*), along with the likelihood that they will increase again over the next five years, they have to contend with a reduction in bursary support for their placement training, and 25 per cent of them have no bursary support at all. (As with other professional courses, social work students have to undertake work-place training as part of their professional education, and they have traditionally received financial support, because the requirements are equivalent to a full-time job and the options to supplement their income via other work are restricted.) On top of this, the opportunities for future employment will be restricted, as cuts to social services will continue unabated for at least another five years.

In order to counter this pervasive but potentially divisive and pathological ideology, there is an alternative approach called social resilience (Hall and Lamont 2013), in which resilience is sustained by social cooperation and collegiate support. This idea is being developed in at least one social work curriculum (Considine, Hollingdale and Neville 2015). It offers a critique of the dominant model of resilience as described above, and also seeks to promote the benefits of a mutually enhanced learning environment through group work activities. Students are encouraged to identify their respective strengths and how they can support their colleagues, as well as how they can be supported by their peers in the learning exercises. This is a model which is still in its infancy, and the exploration of other opportunities is under-way. (The present article seeks only to draw attention to one notion of resilience, which in fact sustains the very problems it seeks to protect us against, and to indicate this other way forward.)

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Social class

Patrick Ainley ***evaluates two recent studies.***

Erik Olin Wright (2015) *Understanding Class*. London: Verso. 260 pages. £14.99 pbk. ISBN: 978-1-78168-945-5

Mike Savage (2015) *Social Class in the 21st Century*. London: Penguin Random House. 449 pages. £6.29 pbk. ISBN: 978-0-241-00422-7.

Introduction

This review adds to the recent discussion about social class in *PSE*. One view was that there are growing inequalities in society but there is no longer a ruling class. Another was that in the growing gap between top and bottom, the post-war class pyramid has gone 'pear-shaped' as the division of labour and knowledge between a non-manual middle class and a manual working class has been eroded by new technology to leave a new middle-working/working-middle class. From this new middle it was suggested there is general downward social mobility into a so-called 'underclass' status. Not all living on benefits, as presented in the media, these workers are churning in and out of unskilled, temporary and insecure mainly service jobs. They thus put constant pressure on the wages and conditions of those more securely employed, functioning as today's version of Marx's Reserve Army of Labour which has ratcheted up in recession. Alternatively, the growing numbers of 'the working poor' can be seen as a whole new class that Guy Standing calls *The Precariat*, many of whom are young, including students in and out of employment. Certainly, whatever is going on, education and training are heavily implicated.

Contradictory class locations?

Erik Olin Wright is a US sociologist known for developing the *moratorium* idea that lengthening education (which happened first in the USA) effectively removes young people from the labour market and consequently any allocation by occupation that could situate them in a class. The English sociologist Ken Roberts added that this may be the reason for weakening class consciousness among the young. On the other hand, whereas previously everyone was gentled along in primary and comprehensive schools until they were divided into sheep or goats for O-levels or CSEs and then the majority goats kicked up around 13, today relentless testing from an early age gives everyone clear signals of their place in the scheme of things. Discuss!

Wright also tried to integrate Marx with Weber who had argued that, as well as Marx's class divisions based on ownership or non-ownership of capital, there were also groups with different 'marketable skills' in the labour market. Weber's was therefore a more fluid and adaptable description than the two Marxist classes of capitalists and proletarians. However, Wright proclaims in the preface to this book that 'My own approach to class is firmly embedded in the Marxist tradition' and he looks back over a long career to 'clarify and appropriate what is valuable rather than simply discrediting the ideas of rival approaches . . . to try to systematically integrate those insights into a broader framework.' Whether he is successful or not can be judged from his conclusions.

First, however, he describes the various sociological approaches with which he engages,

including a chapter on what he calls 'The Ambiguities of Class in Thomas Piketty's *Capital in the Twenty-First Century*'. He then contrasts them with his own view of the USA today, disagreeing with those proposing the death of class in favour of individualised consumerism but also with Standing's notion of the precariat as a new class.

Instead, Wright finds 'An extremely rich capitalist and corporate managerial class, living at extraordinarily high consumption standards, with relatively weak constraints on their exercise of economic power.' Beneath them 'a large and relatively stable middle class anchored in an expansive and flexible system of higher education . . . but whose security and future prosperity is now uncertain'. They share a standard of living and security with a working class once quite highly unionised 'but which now largely lacks these protections'. Beneath them 'a poor and precarious segment of the working class' and 'a marginalized and impoverished section of the population'. 'The US class structure is [thus] the most polarised at the bottom among developed capitalist countries with an 'interaction of race and class in which the working poor and the marginalized population are disproportionately made up of racial minorities' (pp. 16-17).

So what is to be done?

In an 'era of stagnation and crisis', when the social-democratic post-war decades can be recognised as 'a happy historical anomaly in which conditions were favourable for the positive class compromise that underwrote economic security and modest prosperity for most people in developed capitalists countries' (p. 241), Wright looks for 'Strategies that try to create conditions for positive class compromise' (p. 240), since 'an exit from capitalism is not an option in the present historical period' (p. 239). However, he considers it is possible to redirect dominant finance capital from speculation to productive investment by 're-establishing the capacity of the state to effectively regulate finance and hold it democratically accountable . . . partially impeding the global flow of capital' (p. 244) with a Tobin tax on financial transactions.

To achieve this requires 'mobilizing sufficiently strong and resilient political forces' (p. 245). This will be helped by strengthening non-capitalist alternatives such as worker co-operatives via employee-majority stock ownership as a transitional form between a conventional capitalist firm and a fully democratic worker co-op. The social economy of 'economic activities organized by communities of various kinds on non-profit organizations for the satisfaction of needs rather than for exchange and profit' should also be developed 'to fill gaps caused by the retreat of the welfare state' (248).

'Another way of strengthening non-capitalist elements with a capitalist economy is by expanding the ways in which popular organizations are involved in allocating capital', what Wright calls 'Solidarity Finance' (p. 249) – 'decentralized institutional devices that direct investment to those economic activities . . . complementary to regional economic development strategies organized by the state . . . expanding the space for non-capitalist alternatives within capitalist economies' (p. 250), as opposed to phoney government initiatives such as the UK's 'Northern powerhouses' which are merely means to further privatise local government services.

Together with an international Keynesianism focused in the UK's case on changing the governance of the EU – not leaving it!, this is a general outline, prefigured in proposals for a green economy, for a resolution to the crisis of social-democracy of which Corbynism is a symptom.

By contrast

With Mike Savage, you do not get much more than a contribution to the public debate on social class that his Great British Class Survey (completed by 161,000 self-selected Radio 4 listeners in 2011) greatly confused by 'elaborating a new sociological model . . . proclaiming the existence of seven new classes' (p. 5). At the top, a wealthy elite 4 per cent that is much larger than the more usually accepted 'top 1 per cent' – or even 0.1 per cent, internationalised finance-capitalist ruling class. At the bottom, a precariat, not defined in the way that Standing does, nor as an 'under-class' or Reserve Army of Labour, but making up 15 per cent of the population, though fewer than 1 per cent of the GBCS's respondents.

In between the two classes of elite snobs and precarious yobs, as it could be more crudely put, 'the dividing line between middle and working class has little purchase today' and in its place there are 'a more fragmented set of groups' (p. 180). These range through an embattled 'established middle class' (25 per cent), challenged by a rising 'technical middle class' (6 per cent) and 'new affluent workers' (15 per cent), taking over from a just about surviving 'traditional working class' (14 per cent), alongside 'emerging service workers' (19 per cent). These percentages are listed hierarchically in table 5.2 on p. 174, though it is explained elsewhere that they jostle one another, more like Weber's competing economic groups.

'In a nutshell, this is the new landscape of social

class in the twenty-first century' (p. 181)! How did such a 'Great British Class Fiasco', as it has been called in the pages of *Sociology*, arise? Moreover, one which has taken such effort and expense, building up an entire industry in Mike's progress from York to Manchester Universities, on to the London School of Economics, where he now sustains what is presented as the new orthodoxy of ' a multidimensional approach to class' (p. 401).

This draws upon the French sociologist of education, Pierre Bourdieu's theory of cultural capital (the cultural privilege that money can buy but which presents itself as an apparently natural 'effortless achievement'), combined with social capital (networking, basically) together with economic (money) capital. Savage instances Bourdieu's use of 'cultural capital' in his book *Distinction* where Bourdieu compared industrial capitalists (factory owners *etc*) with intellectuals (professors *etc*), to show in diagrams how the taste of the former for 'Bohemian Rhapsody' contrasts with the latter who prefer obscure modern composer Pierre Boulez. Since they are French, the same logic extends to their tastes in wines and food!

But Savage does not follow Bourdieu as he thinks he does by including cultural capital questions in his GBCS, such as which newspaper you read or whether you prefer opera to heavy metal etc, so as to define the seven new classes he claims to have found. By contrast, Bourdieu's respondents were already defined by their wealth and occupation and he showed that, while the capitalists were high in economic capital, their cultural and social capital, ie how many influential people they knew etc, could be low. Contrariwise, the intellectuals, though low in money capital, were high on cultural capital.

This showed the importance of education and the 'trick' it plays in teaching everyone the same National Curriculum (as there was also in France at that time) but with unequal results because those with the cultural capital (acquired from their more expensive and extensive upbringing and schooling) will do better in school than those who lack the 'background' to engage successfully with education. (This explains why Michael Gove went wrong in supposing that inflicting a grammar-school education upon all state pupils would provide equal opportunities for everyone to be unequal.) Thus, Bourdieu writes in his 1964 book on students that 'The university preaches only to the converted'.

Bourdieu thereby validated the original nineteenth century use of the 'cultural capital' concept to explain why, after the Restoration of the monarchy in France, the descendants of those who had lost their inheritance of land and titles under the Revolution were able to rise so easily to the top of the new society.

Savage with his 'multidimensional approach' gives equal weight to cultural and social as well as to economic capital in constituting his scale of seven classes from the elite at the top to the precariat at the bottom but with no necessary connection between them. Certainly not a causative one of exploitation that Wright defines as 'the acquisition of economic benefits from those who are dominated' (p. 9) and which he sees giving rise to class struggle so as 'to see the formation of class actors contesting for power as the central axis of class analysis' (p. 97).

However, Savage's new orthodoxy appeals to education researchers. At least, they can claim to increase some pupils'/students' chances of upward social mobility (characteristically referred to throughout Savage's book merely as 'social mobility' without specifying its direction), whose lack of real capital can be compensated for by boosting their cultural capital, if not extending their range of acquaintance to diversify their social capital. Hence, girls into engineering, visits to the opera for those on free school meals, black youth on work placements in top City banks, *etc*, *etc*. So 'educationalists' claim they are at least making the system a bit more 'fair' and are dedicated to 'social justice'.

Yet, as Ken Roberts (unmentioned by Savage) concluded in his masterwork on *Class in Modern Britain*, 'the best way to change mobility flows is to change the structure of opportunities itself' and yet 'virtually all policy-makers and many sociologists continue to act as if modest interventions in education and training will bring about significant redistribution of life-chances'. Roberts is also very good on the ruling class (less than one per cent) whom he characterises as 'the smallest . . . best organised . . . and most class conscious' class, as he describes their aristocratically encrusted and celebrity-strewn social calendar. 'There is no fence', he emphasises, between this upper class and those managers and professionals who accept ' a service relationship' to them. All this is lost to Savage who even muddles his 'elite' with an 'aristocracy' that most historians agree had married out to industrial capitalists by the mid-nineteenth century.

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Flippin' eck! An urgent call for a democratic approach to education

Joel Petrie

Jelmer Evers and Rene Kneyber (ed.) (2016) *Flip the System: Changing Education from the Ground Up*. Routledge. 306 pages. £17.99

Teachers, especially in schools but increasingly in post-compulsory education, will be aware of the modish and sometimes zealous advocacy of 'flipped learning'. Critics might suggest that flipped learning is merely a revamp of blended or mixed-mode learning; but Yeeless, in a JISC piece on flipped learning and CPD, identified a study which split a class of students with half taught in person and the other half taught through flipped learning and supposedly found that [in] 'the control classroom, students gained an average score of 41%, but the flipped learners scored an average of 74%'. *Flip the System: Changing Education from the Ground Up* playfully riffs on the notion of the flipped classroom to articulate a radically utopian vision of education. In a recent *Forum* article, Professor Stephen Ball highlights a shift over the past generation in English education: 'one of the changes – slow, incremental but profound – has been the reallocation of authority in education. Some actors, like teachers and local authorities, have had their authority diminished, while others, like philanthropists, secretaries of state, head teachers, and the technocrats of school leadership, have had theirs expanded' (Ball, 2015: 8). *Flip the System: Changing Education from the Ground Up* very successfully responds to this argument as it applies to the global stage.

Jelmer Evers and Rene Kneyber, the book's editors, are secondary school teachers in the Netherlands, and *Flip the System* is the international follow-up to their Dutch book *Het Alternatief* (*The Alternative*). The editors draw on both chalk-face and research active educationalists from around the world, such as Andy Hargreaves, Pasi Sahlberg, Ann Lieberman, Gert Biesta, Tom Bennett, Howard Stevenson and Stephen Ball himself. The book's central thesis is the urgent need to embrace a more humane and democratic approach to education, which places teachers firmly at the steering wheel of the educational system worldwide.

The book is presented in four sections with chapters often followed by vignettes which afford teachers from across the globe space to contribute to the overarching themes. Flip the System benefits from this approach and is very accessible in its style. The first section interrogates the pernicious impact of neoliberalism on education, and benefits from a particularly clear interview with Stephen Ball on the subject, which should be essential reading for any educator new to the concept and is worth the price of admission alone. Subsequent chapters explore the challenges of teaching in Cambodia and Georgia, and a final chapter by Thijs Jansen explores the compelling notion of voluntary professional slavery and proposes neorepublican alternatives to the neoliberal hegemony.

The second section shifts the focus to more theoretical concepts that might assist in flipping the educational system. For me one of the chapters from this section in particular resonates, and is here highlighted, as it is especially relevant to current post compulsory debates in the UK around teacher leadership, professionalism and trade unionism. The chapter, by Howard Stevenson and Alison Gilliland, is called 'The teacher's voice': teacher unions at the heart of a new democratic professionalism', and makes an impassioned case for teachers to reclaim their teaching autonomy via a new collective democratic professionalism. To an extent this is an

appeal that has rumbled on for years, and in a post-compulsory context the jockeying for position and ideological differences apparent between nascent professional organisations and networks including the ETF (Education and Training Foundation), the CoT (College of Teachers), and Tutor Voices illustrates their argument. Indeed several of the key theorists on democratic professionalism cited by Stevenson and Gilliland are very well known and long-standing advocates of the approach, including Sachs and Whitty. What sets their chapter apart in the professionalism debate is an outright rejection of the 'industrial versus professional' debate: teachers face pressures that entail professional, industrial and policy dynamics, and a useful example given is that a decision to increase class sizes would clearly have both a pedagogical, professional implication and workload, industrial consequences. Stevenson and Gilliland go on to argue compellingly that only teacher trade unions have the capacity to foster a new democratic professionalism: 'they are the only means by which collective agency can be asserted'.

The third section places the emphasis firmly on the necessity for collective rather than individual professional autonomy, and explores the practical democratic implications of such an approach. In the fourth section, which articulates strategies for teachers to increase their capacity to be change agents, there is another stand-out chapter: 'Teacher leadership – a reinvented teaching profession', jointly written by three American educators Barnett Berry, Noah Zeichner and Rachel Evans. The authors highlight how the concept of teacher leadership is ill-defined, arguing that effective school leadership is hampered by command and control management strategies, and needs to be replaced by a complex, collective leadership based on trust. This analysis will no doubt chime with educators in the UK working in post-compulsory provision. In *Post-16 Educator* 80 Rob Smith highlighted the beginnings of dissent emerging in FE, identifying Tutor Voices' publication of a Bill of Rights for FE as an example. He suggests we remember that 'dissent is about alternatives and the current situation requires us to engage in an imaginative and intellectual task', which could promote 'a system that is in harmony with teachers' values and properly enhances their function' (Smith, 2015: 4).

Flip the System: Changing Education from the Ground Up is dissenting in this tradition: it is intellectual and scholarly whilst being eminently readable and accessible, and it is certainly imaginative in its scope and structure. What makes *Flip the System* especially impressive is that it goes beyond diagnosing the sickness at the heart of educational neoliberalism and begins, tentatively but persuasively, to articulate a cure that must come from within teaching communities. In the words of Stevenson and Gilliland, educational professionals 'will not flip the system unless, and until, they organise collectively'.

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Locating post-16 professionalism: public spaces as dissenting spaces

Carol Azumah Dennis (1)

Introduction: what do teachers talk about when they talk amongst themselves?

Post-16 professional identities emerge through the negotiation of axial tensions between professional aspiration and policy embodiment; between policy requirements and professional commitments. In these spaces practitioners comply with policy, but their compliance is outward, superficial and strategic.

This article explores these negotiated spaces through an online chat room hosted by the *Times Educational Supplement* (*TES*), the 'World's biggest teaching community. Where teachers can get together [to] offer support, healthy debate and a whole lot of inspiration'.

New discussion threads are opened or closed on the *TES* site daily. At the time of this enquiry there were 114 different forums on varying subjects, attracting in excess of 2,800 different contributions. My analysis focuses on a thread entitled *'Should we keep the [professional body] in business?'*, a forum focused around whether post-16 teachers should comply with the legislative requirement to pay membership fees to a state-sponsored professional body (2). My analysis starts with the opening of the thread in May 2010 and ends with its closing in December 2012. This discussion thread attracted 225 contributions, substantially more than the 60 contributions to the next most popular strand.

The data – which feels like a series of overheard staffroom conversations – allows me to gain an insight into what teachers talk about when they talk amongst themselves (in the absence of managers and educational researchers). What I am exploring is how tactical resistance or superficial compliance becomes critical defiance and dissent.

What is wrong with a 'professional body'?

In 2002, the professional body for FE teachers had a voluntary membership of about 2,000. In 2007 new regulations made membership mandatory for all teachers working in post-16 provision. Individual membership fees, initially paid for by government on behalf of teachers, by 2012 were required from members to enable the professional body to become self-financing. Teachers felt bullied into membership; some 47 per cent opined that they had joined against their wishes. Ironically, an organisation charged with protecting the professional interests of post-16 teachers required them to be passively compliant in response to policy imposition.

In rejecting mandatory membership of a professional body, contributors were not rejecting the idea of themselves as professionals. They questioned the credibility of the professional body and the validity of conferring professional status through such membership. An underlying and implied interrogations: who defines and what bestows professional status?

'I have myself been graded as 'outstanding', grade one, by both internal and external OfSTED inspections, who again regularly assess my abilities and competence. Yet even had I been graded as 'inadequate', grade four, I would still have been entitled to join the professional body, confirming my professionalism.' TES Forum, Crackers (3)

'I know I'm a trained professional and so do my colleagues. Perhaps they realise we are, in fact, recognised as professionals without needing this unnecessary additional tax on our chosen vocation?' TES Forum, Healthy Teacher

The teachers who rejected the professional body coalesce around a particular view: teachers who had undergone a period of academic qualification, who were respected by colleagues, who had demonstrated their commitment to developing valued classroom practices – sometimes to the detriment of their health and wellbeing, teachers who were in many instances poorly paid on insecure hour-by-hour contracts – were further imposed upon by the requirement that they pay a fee to a legislatively derived organisation to which they felt no allegiance.

Who confers professional status?

'Teachers of arts and crafts, languages, book clubs, family and local history, skills for life and so on, know that their efforts bring satisfaction, pleasure and wellbeing to hundreds of thousands of people.' TES Forum, DiOxide

This contribution conveys an embodied, experiential rather than an argumentative, truth. The contributor is arguing for a notion of teaching and learning that is not predicated upon the contribution it makes to the economic good. It is instead valued for the 'satisfaction, pleasure and well-being' it brings. New Labour's Skills for Life policy is an intriguing reference here. Between 2001 and 2010 Skills for Life exemplified New Labour's ideas about education as shifting from adjunct to direct focus for economic policy. Literacy and numeracy provision were recast as strictly vocational, an economic good predicated upon global competition between states. Its grouping along side curricular subjects associated with the liberal arts is both striking and casual. I suggest it marks a blasé refusal of policy-predicated determinations. That is, despite the entire weight of policy defining literacy and numeracy as skills required for global competition, the writer of this letter and her co-signatories blithely associate Skills for Life with the liberal arts, subjects that, if valued at all, are valued for entirely different reasons.

This is an emotive space. And contributors return to the thread's central theme: professional body membership was neither a necessary nor sufficient pre-requisite for professional status. Such membership could not compensate for other, more pressing concerns, such as the terms and conditions of service.

'[We are] the lowest of the low in the college hierarchy. 'The professional body' may try to tell you otherwise, but the reality is that teaching is much like serving burgers in a fast food outlet. That is: lowest cost to operate.' TES Forum, Healthy Teacher

My reading of this thread is based on following the divergent lines of argumentation that determine the oppositional stance taken. Amidst these exchanges professionalism emerges as something that was self-derived, negotiated between professionals or a body of practitioners and the public. It was not something that was bestowed by policy. Nor for the experienced or qualified teacher was it located within policy-directed behaviour.

The focus of contributors' protest is a specific policy requirement, but at times their line of vision broadens. A casual resistance to the idea of education as handmaiden to the economy changes to connect the space of post-16 professionalism to discourses around equity, inclusion and social justice.

The space is an openly campaigning one. This is the text of a letter that later appeared in a national newspaper. It is posted in the forum in an attempt to gather more signatories.

'Opposition to the [mandatory membership of a professional body] fee is additionally symptomatic of a general malaise: the degradation of pay, conditions and pensions; the casualisation of part time and agency staff; issues of career development, pay differentials and promotion for women, Black, disabled and LGBT lecturers; the widening gulf between ; lecturers' pay and executive salaries; and the glaring inconsistencies in the wider sector's professionalism agenda with school teachers and HE lecturers.' TES Forum, Joel Petrie (4)

What emerges is a distinct sense of professionalism that is somehow preserved even when a teacher leaves his/her institutional moorings. In the following reference a teacher without her actual teaching being observed is graded as inadequate for not having the required paperwork with her on an unannounced observation. When informed she would be disciplined for gross professional misconduct, she decided to resign her post.

'I set up the classes privately, took the students along and almost immediately was taking home twice my previous hourly rate plus no hours of paperwork and no hassle from 'Management' (who were really just a bunch of uber administrators

suffering from OCD). As for the other post, I am whittling down the hours each year and hiring the halls privately. The students are happier and I feel more enthusiastic than I have in years. By September, I will only teach (a group of seriously disabled students to whom I feel very loyal).' TES Forum, Entrepreneur

There is no scope for verifying or refuting the reliability of the narrative here; the appropriateness or inappropriateness of the actions or reactions are not, in this analysis, significant. It is the independence of professional identity and the idea that even the physicality of the classroom can shift to accommodate the professional scope of the teacher that furthers my line of argument. Teacherly commitments to public service remain (in the form of commitment to the most vulnerable students) alongside a refusal to comply – strategically or tactically with the administrative burden that she sees as imposing on her professionalism.

Space for manoeuvrability: from strategic compliance to open dissent

I locate teacher professionalism rather than define it. I have acknowledged that while successive waves of educational reform have reduced teachers' scope for manoeuvrability from strategic compliance to tactical resistance, discussion of teaching nonetheless continues in, within and through the public sphere. Teachers engage in extended analytical debate in order to rally support and solidarity, to raise awareness of their concerns, and to cultivate the persona of an activist professional. What this implies is that there are professional spaces beyond those scripted by policy. In these spaces, those who represent themselves as teachers are openly critical, defiant and dissenting. They extend their pedagogic focus to explore what it means to be a professional, how their professionalism is conferred, and the implications of their professionalism. I suggest professionalism might reasonably be located within these spaces.

In these public professional spaces, post-16 teachers can and do resist – and in doing so locate their professional selves in spaces that are neither strategic nor tactical, but openly critical, defiant and dissenting.

Notes:

1. This is a shortened version of a research paper that has been published elsewhere: Dennis, C. A. (2015) 'Locating post-16 professionalism: public spaces as dissenting spaces' in *Research in Post-Compulsory Education*, 20 (1), pp. 64-77.

2. The discussion revolves around the mandatory membership of the Institute for Learning (IFL). To maintain focus on professionalism (rather than the rights and wrongs of a particular organisation, the IFL) I have used the term 'professional body' throughout.

3. I have used pseudonyms rather than names as they appear in the thread. Although the material is available in the public domain, in recontextualising it here I have sought to offer some degree of anonymity.

4. The author's name is included here as the text was published in a national newspaper and since the inital full publication of this paper the author has consented for his name to be included.

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Lecturers' self-organisation then and now

This article by* Colin Waugh *is based on the notes for a talk, a shortened version of which was given to the Tutor Voices conference held at Northern College, near Barnsley, on 26th September 2015

I was an FE lecturer from 1969 to 2013, mainly at Brixton, Tottenham, Barnsley and North West London Colleges. From 1969 to 1991 I taught Liberal and/or General Studies - that is, the one or one-and-a-half hour of open-ended general education that used to be attached to courses for day- or block-release students in such vocational fields as engineering, building, science, hairdressing, nursery nursing and the like.

As such, I was involved in the Association for Liberal Education (ALE), which was like a sort of subject association for lecturers and managers in that area of work. In 1977, with others, I started the more leftwing, London-based group General Studies Workshop, which in 1980 was the main impetus behind the foundation of the NATFHE General Studies Section. From 1980 to its dissolution in the 1990s, I was the national secretary of that section, which at one stage had 750 members in 250 colleges. In 1988, I also took over the editorship of the ALE Journal and along with this initiated the Section's own journal General Educator. In 1991 we made this into a bi-monthly publication, and in 1997, after 67 issues, with a broader grouping within NATFHE and some NUT members concerned with post-compulsory education, we re-organised this as Post-16 Educator, which has been sustained through 80 on-schedule issues till now. In 2009, as a spin-off from these activities I also wrote the pamphlet 'Plebs': the lost legacy of independent working-class education', which we have since developed into the Independent Working-class Education Network (IWCEN).

My remarks here, then, are based on the experience which I have outlined, as well as other attempts to organise lecturers and teachers which there isn't time to spell out here. I must stress that 'we', in the sense of all those active in these initiatives, and I in particular, no doubt made many mistakes. Therefore I'm not setting myself up here as someone who can tell people in Tutor Voices what they should do, only as someone whose experience they may find it useful to learn from.

There are quite a lot of differences between the situation with regard to General and Liberal Studies in FE in the 1970s and 1980s and the situation in which Tutor Voices is organising now.
For example, at that time there were about 500 colleges, whereas now there are apparently no more than 240. Those colleges were under local education authority control. They were driven mainly, though not only, by the technical education of part-time industrial-release and similar students. The inspectorate, then called HMI, was broadly supportive. There was in every college a large group of tenured - ie securely employed - basic grade lecturers. And there was a basic assumption that lecturers knew their trade or academic discipline and could put it over, especially if they had undergone a period of pre- or, more commonly, in-service FE teacher education. Within this set-up, there would at any given time have been somewhere between five and ten thousand GS lecturers like myself.

To me the single most important change since then has been the 'deindustrialisation' of the UK economy that took place mainly from the early

1980s onwards. Effects of this that are directly relevant to this talk include the destruction of time-served industrial apprenticeships and with this of much of the technical education side of FE. At the same time, the majority of 16-19 year olds were driven out of the mainstream labour market. One consequence was that General Studies was destroyed along with industrial release and apprenticeships, and for many students replaced with narrower, basic skills-type provision that began around 1975 and in recent years has taken the form of Functional Skills.

Creeping

Another key change was the 'incorporation' of colleges in 1993 (ie their removal from local authority - and hence at least partly democratic - control). A long term consequence of this has been the development within FE of the Ofsted regime, which is clearly an engine of creeping privatisation, itself accelerating now. Ofsted derives its power from and itself promotes the increasingly insecure employment of lecturers, and is also tied up with the attempt by the state to force people to stay in 'education' to 18.

Against this background we can identify some similarities between the situation in which GS lecturers organised and that in which Tutor Voices is seeking to organise now.

For a start, FE remains essential to many working-class people's life chances. Secondly, FE is still mainly - and, to me, rightly - vocational. (In fact it can be argued that it should be more so, in the sense that it should provide more reliable access than it currently does to worthwhile employment.) And as a consequence, most courses - now, as then - contain a large element of work-related training. A basic issue therefore is: is this training to be accompanied by a hidden curriculum of miseducation or even indoctrination, or by some form of consciously organised, real - that is to say, problem-posing, dialogic - education?

In the period 1950 to1990 this issue took the form of struggle around Liberal and General Studies. But now it takes the form of struggle over FE teacher education and continuing professional development. Therefore the present day struggle of Tutor Voices and the earlier struggles of Liberal and General Studies lecturers are different forms of one and the same underlying struggle.

The agenda pursued by the state, the Government, Ofsted and senior managers in colleges now is to push FE towards narrower and narrower forms of non-specific 'employability' 'training', in which malleable instructors, employed on an increasingly precarious basis - or even outsourced to agencies - operate IT systems to deliver pre-determined learning packages
They want FE teacher education staff to promote and police this agenda, especially via appraisal systems and draconian micro-management. At the same time, however, they want those same teacher education lecturers to provide a smokescreen of educational professionalism to camouflage this, and there is a strong drive to remake the working lives of these lecturers so that they conform to this role. This in turn means that teacher education staff stand between, on one hand, the broad mass of lecturers and of actual and potential FE students, and, on the other, the state, the Government, Ofsted, those journalists and other media commentators who support their agenda, and senior management in FE itself.

In this situation the most conscious and principled FE teacher educators will see themselves as answerable to FE lecturers generally, and via them to the broad mass of working-class students and potential students, and they will try to organise themselves collectively on this basis. To the extent that Tutor Voices is the expression of this impulse, I believe there are some fairly specific organisational lessons which the history of the General Studies struggle may offer to those involved.

First, such a movement needs to be based in a coherent group of practitioners with a clearcut common interest (in this case, FE teacher education staff in universities and in colleges). Secondly, this group should reach out to the widest possible range of practitioners and students of FE teacher education and CPD across the system. Thirdly, they must have a positive, rational vision of what FE can and should be like. Fourthly, they must organise themselves in such a way as to minimise the risk of victimisation. Fifth, they must maintain a clear line between specific campaigns and longer term collective self-organisation. Sixth, the development of a positive vision and the building of an organised grouping must proceed in parallel - that is, neither can be postponed till the other is complete.

Collective

There are some more specific points that I feel should be made about the relation between campaigns and collective self-organisation. Clearly, campaigns need to reach out beyond practitioners and draw support from a wide range of people and organisations. Further, in campaigns, the proposed practitioners group will necessarily relate to sympathetic union officials, national union officers, exam board employees, consultants, inspectors,

managers, journalists, student union officers, media personalities, community spokespersons and the like, and those heading campaigns will need to intervene in and work through bodies that will often be dominated by management. (An example of this in the General Studies struggle was the Association for Liberal Education, and in recent ESOL struggles, NATECLA.)

I believe it is nearly always useless to try to abstain from such involvement. But I also believe that under no circumstances should the practitioners involved allow any of these other people or organisations to shape the agenda that underlies their campaigns and their struggle as a whole. In short, they should restrict the process of longer-term collective self-organisation to practitioners.

Threshold

This applies at the level of ideas as well as of campaigning. The practitioners' group must develop for itself - initially, of course to a threshold level - a common body of principles and ideas. This group must also develop a capacity to go on doing this - that is, to continue to extend, test and remake this shared ideological basis.

My experience strongly suggests that the whole thing will degrade quickly if both these capacities are not developed. To put this another way, either we make - and keep on making - our own ideas, or we will have the bosses' ones, whether we know it or not.

It's also a corollary of this that the development of ideas must not be left to one or two individuals; that it must be collective. And this in turn requires that within the practitioners' group democracy must operate both in spirit and letter, and both as regards decisions about action and as regards the exchange of ideas.

In short, I believe that the experience of practitioners like myself shows that the practitioners organising as Tutor Voices will need to develop and maintain amongst themselves the same autonomy which valid education seeks to develop amongst both teacher education and mainstream FE students.

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