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'Enabling' participatory governance in education: a corpus-based critical policy analysis

Jane Mulderrig

INTRODUCTION

The idea of the 'enabling state' has emerged in recent decades as a way of theoretically conceptualising and politically enacting advanced liberal governance. At its heart lies the assumption that the primary goal of the state is international competitiveness and that this is best achieved through economic liberalism and labour market activation. The result is a growing emphasis on 'productive social policy' in which the enabling state provides 'workfare'[1] incentives and structural opportunities for the active citizen to work. Framed in the rhetoric of reciprocity, of 'rights and responsibilities' (Giddens, 1998), this brings about a new *contractual relation* between citizen and state. In an era when the state is no longer perceived to be capable of offering economic guarantees and social protections, the weight of responsibility shifts to the individual. In 1990 the OECD proposed the 'Active Society' as the future for social policy, in which the primary goal of governments is no longer guaranteeing full employment but facilitating full employability. The main policy instruments to achieve this are education and training alongside (limited and contingent) income support, whereby the state 'foster[s] economic opportunity and activity for everyone in order to combat poverty, dependency and social exclusion' (OECD, 1990:8). In terms of the *social relations of governance,* this entails new forms of 'active, participatory' citizenship coupled with a more devolved, 'enabling' model of political leadership. In other words, advanced capitalist societies have, it is claimed, undergone a fundamental reconfiguration of the distribution of *social power*, *roles* and *relations* in the state. This chapter uses critical discourse analysis to explore the extent to which this was historically brought about in the UK through education policy discourse.

Alongside these postulated changes in the relations of governance, there has been an increasing emphasis in advanced capitalist economies on educational investment *as* economic investment. This is particularly explicit in the ambitions set out in the Lisbon Agenda (2000) for the European Union to become 'the most dynamic, competitive, knowledge-based economy in the world, with sustainable growth, more and better jobs and greater social cohesion'. At the heart of this competitive economy is a new commodity: knowledge. With a post-industrial shift in primacy from physical to intellectual labour growth is now seen to depend increasingly on the production and application of knowledge (Bell, 1973; Castells, 1998). It follows that in a knowledge economy individual success for the 'active citizen' (and protection from social and economic exclusion) lies in the ability to acquire and market this commodity better than one's competitors. In effect, investment in learning is now seen as a key political mechanism for achieving economic growth and social cohesion. This has inevitable consequences for the perceived value, function and content of schooling, fundamentally challenging the educational status quo and generating structural and ideological pressures to align education more closely with economic policy goals. Here again this process relies on reshaping the roles and relations of education so as to foster the lifelong learning

citizen, whose responsibility is to safeguard her future 'employability' through the accumulation of skills (Brine, 2006). The case study outlined therefore focuses on the historic negotiation of the roles and relations of governance in UK education policy discourse during the late 20th and early 21st centuries. In particular the analysis examines how their historic reconfiguration helped shape a new policy hegemony in which an apparent consensus on, and thus legitimacy for, policy goals is construed through an inclusive governmental identity. At the same time an 'enabling' and distinctly managerial model of governance progressively reconfigures the balance of power in education towards a more devolved, managerial model. A computer-aided approach to Critical Discourse Analysis (CDA) is used to highlight the systematic grammatical forms through which these transformations are historically enacted and naturalised in policy discourse.

The remainder of the chapter is organised as follows. I begin by discussing CDA as a distinctive approach to interpretive analysis and its potential contribution to critical social research. A key characteristic of CDA is that it explicitly acknowledges the (normative) position of the researcher and the interpretive process in the research. In other words CDA has an explicitly emancipatory agenda in which critical *interpretation* of empirical objects is seen as a mechanism both for explaining social phenomena and for changing them. This explicitly interventionist stance sets CDA apart from some other approaches to social science, while it is nevertheless committed to the same levels of scientific rigour. In this chapter I therefore argue that rather than a discrete stage in the research process, interpretation is integral to the multi-layered, iterative methodology that typifies CDA. In essence this approach involves a continual movement between, and critical reflection upon, the different stages and levels of the research (formulation of the research object or 'problem'; selection of appropriate data; identification of relevant conceptual and procedural tools with which to analyse them; assessment of the significance and normative implications of the findings).

CDA is inherently interdisciplinary, combing a theory of discourse and a range of (always variable) text analytical methods with social and political theories relevant to the object of inquiry in order to contextualise and interpret its findings. Thus the social context of the data under investigation is always crucial to the interpretive process. In the next section I therefore present a more detailed account of the historical context of this case study, framed in a political economic theorisation of specific transformations in the British welfare state (Jessop, 2002; Hay, 1996; 1999). This account of the political economic context of the case study is itself a theoretically informed *interpretation* of the social practices (of educational governance) under investigation. Moreover, this theoretical account was used as the lens through which the research questions were refined, the foci of textual analysis identified and the significance of the findings *interpreted*. Thus at every stage of the research process the object of inquiry was shaped through processes of theoretical and methodological *interpretation*. Reflecting this integration I do not treat it here as a separate element of the research, but rather point to its relevance *throughout* the research process.

Following a more general account of the historical context of this study I briefly discuss the rationale for focusing on, and questions formulated in order to do so, the changing roles and relations of neoliberal governance as constructed in education policy discourse. I begin with a description of the combined corpus-based methodology developed for this particular study, outlining the procedures this involved. I then present the findings from the research, drawing on the political economic context of the data in order to interpret their potential significance. I

conclude with a brief reflection on the insights afforded by the interpretive analytical process of CDA into the reality of so-called 'enabling', participatory forms of educational governance and the salient role played by discourse in their enactment. In particular I suggest that as advanced liberal democracy moves towards greater emphasis on 'reflexive, participatory' governance and 'active, responsible' citizenship, critical language awareness is vital for the defence of democratic freedoms and the promotion of alternative visions for education.

CRITICAL DISCOURSE ANALYSIS AS INTERPRETIVE METHOD IN EDUCATIONAL RESEARCH

CDA is an approach to social scientific research that brings a detailed account of the role of language (and other forms of semiosis) in social life. In particular it offers a dialectical theory of discourse that recognises its socially constitutive potential without reducing social practices (and their analysis) to 'mere signification'. Combining detailed textual analysis with theoretically informed accounts of the phenomena under investigation, CDA identifies the processes by which particular ways of using language (re)produce social practices and help privilege certain ways of doing, thinking and being over others. The approach has its origins in Linguistics, although unlike some branches of the discipline, it is not a discrete discipline with a relatively fixed set of methods. Instead it is best seen as a problem-oriented interdisciplinary research movement that includes a variety of approaches, theoretical models and research agendas (for recent overviews see Fairclough et al., 2011; in education Rogers et al., 2005). What unites them is, broadly, a shared interest in the semiotic dimensions of power, injustice, abuse, and social change. The way I engage with CDA is mainly influenced by Fairclough's discourse-dialectical, critical realist approach (2003; 2006; Fairclough et al., 2002) and shares with it a research interest in investigating the impact of broad processes of social and political change (here characterised in relation to advanced liberalism). Other approaches to CDA have developed in different theoretical and methodological directions depending on the foci of research. The variability in theory and method in fact stems from some important theoretical principles and ontological assumptions underpinning CDA. I begin by outlining these, as well as the analytical concepts this gives rise to, and discuss the interpretive and methodological implications for educational and other areas of social scientific research.

The dialectics of discourse

A key theoretical starting point for CDA is the dynamic and mutually constitutive relationship between discourse and other non-discursive elements that comprises any object of social research. It is this dialectical approach which leads CDA to engage explicitly with social scientific theory, since it seeks to correlate its close textual analyses with a view of social practice as something which people actively produce on the basis of shared norms of behaviour that are partly constituted in language. Further, it seeks to interpret these practices in relation to the formation and transformation of social structures, thus making one of its research objectives the investigation of social change. In short, CDA seeks to explore the 'ways in which discourse '(re)constructs' social life in processes of social change' (Fairclough, 2005:76). A useful way to conceptualise the relationship between the discursive and non-discursive is Harvey's (1996) framework in which he posits six 'moments' of

social processes. An ontological distinction between different elements of the social world, the term 'moment' is deliberately chosen to reflect their transient and contingent nature. Briefly, these moments are 1) beliefs/values/desires (our epistemology, ontology and sense of self), 2) institutions (ways of formally organising political and social relations on a more or less durable basis; for example education, religion, politics, the military etc.), 3) material practices (the physical and built environment), 4) social relations, 5) power (internalising all other moments since it is a function of them), and 6) discourse[2]. Each of these moments has distinct properties therefore researching them gives rise to distinctive academic disciplines. One thing that marks out CDA from other research traditions in Linguistics is its commitment to dialogue with other disciplines[3] in order to understand the *relationship between* discourse and these other dimensions of social life.

Discourse is a cross-cutting dimension in so far as it internalises all other moments including values, beliefs, desires, and institutionalised ways of doing and being. The discourse moment is at its most potent as a mechanism of sociocultural reproduction when it is the most invisible and naturalised. Critically analysing (here, policy) discourse therefore means highlighting the inconsistencies, assumptions, vested interests, values and beliefs that sustain the relations of power it internalises. CDA offers the analytical apparatus to do this, illuminating how different (representations and enactments of) moments of the social are textured into discourse. This 'porous', hybridising quality of discourse (in CDA terms its 'interdiscursivity') is the conduit that allows the slippage of values, norms, practices and power relations between different domains of social practice (for example from business management to education).

Key concepts in CDA

In the previous section we observed how the discourse moment internalises all other moments; hence the ideological and material significance of language and why we should analyse it. Equally, because of its socially constitutive and constituted nature it is possible and necessary to identify different levels of analytical abstraction. The analytical categories developed in CDA[4] remind us that texts do not exist in a social vacuum but instead form part of a process through which discourse structures and enables social life. The concept of **social practices** will be familiar to many social scientists. It refers to the more or less stable, durable, *conventionalised* forms of social activity that help (re)produce our institutions and organisations. In Fairclough's terms (2003), they mediate the possible (social structures) and the actual (social events). For example the field of school education comprises a range of different practices like classroom teaching, assessment, professional training, financial management, policy-making, curriculum and materials design, and so on. Each has a discursive dimension and is partly characterised by its distinctive set of **discourse practices**. Taken together these form the **order of discourse** of that social field or institution. These discourse practices essentially provide the conventionalised (but mutable and contestable) resources for doing, thinking and being in a manner appropriate to participation in a particular institution or organisation. For this reason socialisation and explicit training in a particular social practice (e.g. teaching) involves learning particular ways of using language. Discourse practices can therefore be analysed along three main dimensions: **genres** (ways of acting and interacting), **discourses**[5] (ways of talking and thinking about the world from a particular perspective), and **styles** (ways of being or self-identifying). Different orders of discourse are

characterised by their distinctive configuration of genres, discourses and styles. Given that these are never entirely fixed, understanding change over time is about understanding changes in this configuration. More concretely discourse practices (made up of genres, discourses and styles) are instantiated in particular **texts** (spoken or written language or other forms of semiosis).

A given text may be simultaneously analysed in terms of genres, discourses and styles. For example a primary school lesson may exhibit a broadly 'child-centred' educational philosophy through 1) a lesson structure that begins by presenting pupils with a problem to solve and provides the interactional space for them to do this (e.g. through group work) (**genre**), 2) explicitly representing the lesson as a discovery process in which the pupils will be 'in the driving seat' (**discourse**), 3) a less didactic, more informal style of teaching (**style**)[6]. This kind of analysis highlights the distinctive mix of genres, discourses and styles in a given text, or its **interdiscursivity**. This important analytical concept allows us to capture the 'porous' nature of discourse through which it incorporates diverse elements of its wider social context and therefore to investigate the role of discursive change in driving social change (Fairclough, 2003; 2005). For example a widely documented feature of recent change in the UK education system has been the increasing influence of market-oriented managerial practices and values. This phenomenon can be investigated through the lens of discourse by examining the interdiscursive links between these two fields and asking to what extent managerialism is enacted through new genres (appraisal, audit, league tables), articulated through particular discourses (leadership, excellence, accountability), and inculcated through particular styles (manifest in the adjectives teachers feel obliged to use about themselves when completing their annual professional development review). We can equally examine the interdiscursive mix within a single text, exploring its hybrid mix of other genres, discourses and styles. Interdiscursivity is an inherent feature of all discourse; in Bakhtin's (1981) terms texts are always 'dialogical' containing traces of other texts. For this very reason the discursive 'import' of (competing) values, ideologies and beliefs from other social fields may be readily accomplished, routinized, and ultimately come to be accepted as common sense. Interdiscursive analysis allows us to render explicit these textual processes of 'normalisation' and to trace the sociocultural trajectories of the ideas and values contained in discourse practices. Our reasons for doing this may be explanatory (in order to explain social change or the persistence of certain practices) or normative (in order to question the (ethical) acceptability of the practices examined). In this sense CDA can contribute a focus on discourse to normative or explanatory critical social science (see Fairclough and Fairclough, 2012).

Interpretive Methodology

CDA typically begins by looking at the social world in order to identify a particular topic or problem to investigate – we might call this '**stage 1**' (e.g. gendered patterns of participation in the primary classroom; the dominance of market competition in the organisation of state education; the role of social class in educational attainment; the construction of cultural diversity in teaching materials; the increasing salience of 'entrepreneurialism' in teachers' professional identities etc.). Next ('**stage 2'**) it draws on dialogue with other disciplines and theories that address the issue under investigation, incorporating their theories and methods as appropriate in order to a) theoretically construct the object of research (Bourdieu and Wacquant, 1992) and b) develop a model for analysing it. The methodology, and the particular forms of

detailed textual analysis, will vary from one research project to another depending on the object(s) of research. For example analysis of political discourse in general will logically (though not exclusively) entail a particular emphasis on argumentation (Fairclough and Fairclough, 2012). Thus having selected an object of research the methodological procedure then involves identifying further discourse analytical concepts (like argumentation, transitivity, modality, metaphor etc.) likely to support a critical exploration of the research object(s). In keeping with the dialectical-relational ontology underpinning CDA its methodology is reflexive and abductive, continually moving back and forth between theory, method and data in order to achieve 'explanatory adequacy' in the research process. In this way the findings from the empirical analysis of text are set in dialogue with and interpreted in relation to (a theoretically informed understanding of) their social context. Part of this process involves making practical decisions about the validity and viability of the research design, as in the case study discussed below.

CASE STUDY: TOWARDS NEOLIBERALISM IN UK EDUCATION POLICY

The following case study illustrates one way of working with the interpretive approach associated with CDA. The findings selected for discussion here focus on the New Labour government (1997-2005) but stem from a larger study exploring historical change in the representation and legitimation of the social relations of UK educational governance (Mulderrig, 2009). The overall project used a corpus-based critical discourse approach to analyse education policy texts dating from the Heath government of 1972 to that of Blair in 2005, theoretically contextualising the data with the aid of a neo-Marxist state theoretical account of the co-evolution of the UK state and its regime of economic growth during this period (Hay, 1996; 1999; Jessop, 1999; 2002) and educational sociology to position the findings within this specific area of social policy (Dale, 1989; Tomlinson, 2001; Trowler, 2003).

The Position of the Researcher

The motivation for this project (and the identification of the research problem) stemmed from quite personal judgments about the changing face (and language) of UK politics shaped by my own past experiences. Having spent several years abroad, I returned to Britain in 1998 to find Tony Blair at the head of the government and seemingly omnipresent in the media. I was struck by his charismatic style, which seemed to me so polished it actually drew attention to the rhetorical manipulation involved in political rule. When I later came to embark on a PhD my aim was to try to place the 'Blair phenomenon' in its wider political context by exploring the escalating use of promotional techniques used by the New Labour government in 'selling' politics and policy. Returning to a long-held interest in education, my particular concern lay with the political discourse of education. I initially approached this problem, following Fairclough (1992a), through the concept of 'marketization', whereby the practices and content of education (or any other extra-economic social practice) are progressively reshaped according to (or colonised by) the practices and principles of the market and its institutions. The goal of my research would be to try to explain, through the lens of language, how this had come about. Thus having identified the social problem ('**stage 1**') I attempted to construct a theoretical framework with which to explore this question. In the course of doing this my research question became more defined around the concept of governance. In order to

explain why marketization happens at all, one must first have an understanding of the significant role of the economy in shaping the social world. I thus arrived at a political economic understanding of the social phenomenon I wished to investigate, which took shape as the interdisciplinary framework for this case study. In turn, this shaped my understanding of the discourse practice I wished to investigate, and the historical conditions of its development. Moreover, this critical inquiry into the wider context of political discourse, its conditions, causes and consequences refocused my line of inquiry into matters of power and legitimacy in the art of governing, and the negotiation of change over time. As Rose (1999) observes, a crucial element in this is the discursive enactment of governmental identity. Thus, through social theoretical inquiry, I returned full circle to the question of self-presentation in political discourse. This time, however, my exploration of the discourse was shaped by an understanding of the historical conditions of its production. A study of historical change in government self-presentational style could now be understood in its socio-political context as an investigation of changes in the practice of governing. This logically suggested the textual analysis of policy discourse, which is a historically constant mechanism of educational governance through which educational leadership at a national level is enacted and legitimated. Thus my own *interpretation* informed the research at every stage: from initial perceptions about the political landscape, selection of the object of research, its theoretical construction and refinement, to the selection of data and methods, and the use of political economic theory in order to historically contextualise and interpret the significance of the findings. This (theoretically informed) understanding of the historical context I outline in the next section.

The Political Economic Context

The historical context of the data examined in this study was a turbulent period of political and economic change as Britain, like other liberal Western economies, instituted a range of state-restructuring strategies that enabled the progressive dominance of neoliberal, market-valorising principles in the exercise of state power. Key symptoms of this were progressive privatisation and marketisation of public services alongside labour market flexibilisation and welfare retrenchment. In education this entailed a reconfiguration in the balance and loci of power, progressively removing it from the middle tier (LEAs[7]) and increasing it at the top (nationally imposed curricular and assessment regimes; government audits of individual and institutional performance) and at the bottom (creating a differentiated market among quasi-autonomous state schools[8]). These interventions in the social practices of education necessarily ran alongside discursive change. As Dale (1989) has it, this period saw a change in the 'vocabularies of motives' - the discourses that articulate the goals and values of education - redefining the nature and purposes of education[9]. Thus the restructuring of UK state education was in part enacted through a change in the orders of discourse of education. New genres emerged like Ofsted[10] reports, league tables, performance reviews; new discourses of accountability, competitiveness and targets; and new entrepreneurial and competitive styles of participating in education for teachers, pupils and parents alike (see Mulderrig, 2003). This discursive restructuring was in part instituted and legitimated through policy discourse, a discursive barometer of the changing goals and values of educational governance. Thus, reflecting a progressive alignment between education and economic policy goals, from the early 1990s an insistent call to competitiveness

became one of the key drivers underpinning education policy in the race to create a globally successful 'knowledge economy' (Mulderrig, 2008).

The focus of the proceeding discussion is the New Labour government, under which it is argued the neoliberal trajectory in education policy gained particular momentum. As observed at the outset of this chapter, at the heart of this is the assumption that education can and should be a key vehicle for productive social policy, linking economic competitiveness with an entrepreneurial and lifelong learning model of active citizenship. This core premise is reflected in the following extract: 'the wealth of nations and success of individuals depend upon the imagination, creativity, skills and talents of all our people' (Department for Education and Skills, 2003: 2). It assigns each citizen responsibility not just for her own but for the nation's prosperity. By linking together in equal grammatical weighting national economic goals with individual well-being, it draws a relation of equivalence between the two. It also illustrates the centripetal movement of power in contemporary governance, towards an 'enabling' model in which the individual assumes greater levels of responsibility for their own welfare and economic prosperity, while the government assumes a more managerial and devolved form of power. I have elsewhere argued (Mulderrig, 2011b) that this model of governance can be linked to the general idea of 'soft power' in which political power becomes much less about coercion and much more about providing *incentives* and structural *opportunities* for others to act (Courpasson, 2000; Nye, 2004). This is a hegemonic form of power, attempting to secure consent for decisions rather than enforcing them. Drawing evidence from a corpus of New Labour policy discourse I argue that such political 'powers of attraction' rest heavily on a highly distinctive set of discursive strategies. Moreover I suggest that by emphasizing the importance of individual participation this form of power also dilutes responsibility for government decisions, shielding it from criticism. Any renegotiation of power entails new roles, relations and responsibilities for the actors involved (both individual and institutional). In the analytical terms outlined above, the power shift suggested by an 'enabling' model of governance means new discursive ways of being (styles), doing/relating (genres) and thinking (discourses). The primary focus of the analysis is therefore on the way in which the government represents its own acts of governing, the institutional identity this entails and the (power) relations this constructs.

Questions, Data, Methods and Dilemmas

As explained above the object of research in this study was progressively defined through dialogue with political economic theory. In general terms this was a historical investigation of the (re)negotiation (through policy discourse) of power relations between state and citizen entailed by the emergence of a broadly neoliberal model of educational governance in the UK (alongside other advanced liberal economies: Peck, 2001; Thrift, 1997). An explanatory critique seeks to describe and understand both the significance and success of these postulated changes in their discursive dimension. Thus having identified and theoretically positioned the object(s) of research it is necessary to formulate a set of linguistic questions through which to guide the analysis. Here again there are **methodological and practical dilemmas** posed for the researcher: What kind of and how much data will be appropriate? How do you decide which aspects of it to explore? What linguistic analytical tools will be appropriate? How do you know that your chosen focus for textual analysis isn't biased? Some of these issues can be addressed through careful methodological decisions relating to the

handling of the data (e.g. triangulation), while others call for a reflexive acknowledgement of the researcher's interpretive role. In this study the principal question about power and identity in educational governance was formulated in terms of the following linguistic questions:

1. Who are the prominent actors in education policy
2. How and to what extent do grammatical patterns construct for these actors distinctive roles, relations and differing degrees of agency?
3. Do these patterns change over time?

In this study the decision was made to use a sociologically grounded model of textual analysis, 'systemic functional grammar'[11] (Halliday, 1994) to examine patterns of reference (construing actors and actions), agency (control over actions), and modality (commitment to propositions). The study also used Van Leeuwen's sociosemantic model for analysing social action (1995). In order to trace historical change a large body of data was required. Thus all education policy documents[12] issued during the relevant time period (1972-2005) were collected in a digital corpus of around 0.5 million words. The decision to analyse every document in this historically constant genre had the advantage of representativeness but generated yet further **methodological dilemmas**: how to handle such a large dataset? The decision was made to incorporate these textual analytical methods with corpus linguistics, a computer-based method for analysing large bodies of textual data[13]. Its incorporation in CDA has been a relatively recent development[14]. One advantage this combined approach brings is a relatively systematic and readily replicable approach to CDA. There is also a heuristic value to this combined approach in directing the analyst's gaze in unexpected and often fruitful directions. Combining this essentially quantitative approach with the qualitative methods typically associated with CDA also, however, throws up further practical and theoretical problems.

Corpus linguistics involves using 'concordancing' software (here 'Wordsmith' by Scott, 1997) designed to perform a range of searches for various textual patterns. This software was used to search the entire corpus, its subsections, and to compare against a reference corpus[15]. Most corpus software tools offer the same basic functions: 'keywords' (list of the most unusually frequent words in your corpus – ranked by 'keyness' - compared with a reference corpus); concordances (every instance of a particular search word with its co-text); and collocate information (those words frequently co-occurring with that search word, including the statistical significance of the pairings). These search functions can serve as a useful entry point into the data, providing a principled and automated means of narrowing the analytical focus and reducing the corpus to a more manageable size. In short, they provide an 'automated gaze' on the data (though not a neutral one), highlighting particular sections of it for more detailed analysis. However, there are important limitations to this procedure. Narrowing the focus of analysis in this way inevitably means that other potentially significant elements of the texts may be entirely overlooked. It is also important to remember that corpus tools present the data to the analyst in the form of short extracts removed from their context, thereby inevitably making retrieval of all relevant discoursal and contextual information virtually impossible. Any analysis of these findings must therefore be seen as a partially informed interpretation of the data.

The Corpus-based Procedure

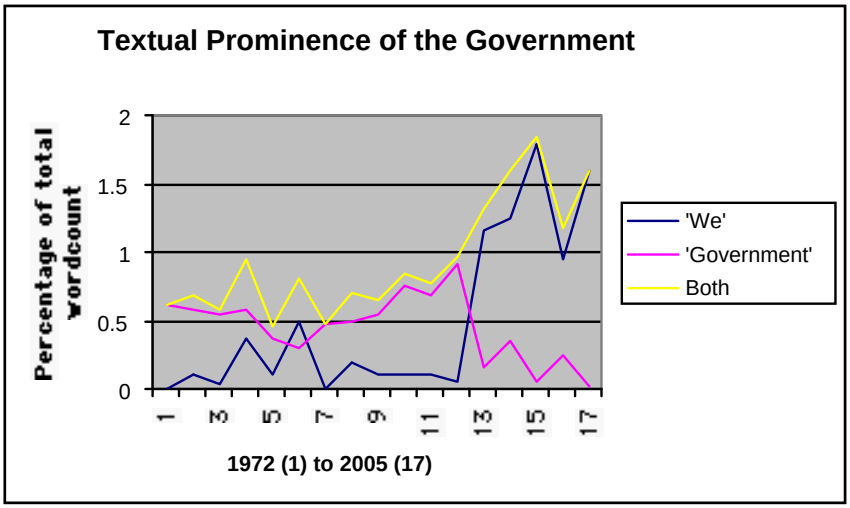
In the first stages of the analysis I ran concordance searches for the most prominent (in terms of 'keyness') forms of actor representation used in the corpus (*school(s), we* and *government*[16]). I then used functional grammar (Halliday, 1994) to code each instance according to the type of action it performs[17]. This first stage of the analysis displayed a marked trend in the New Labour section of the corpus: the government itself becomes by far the most prominent actor in the corpus and undergoes a marked shift in the way it is represented towards an increasingly personalised identity. It is this trend which I discuss in the next section.

PROXIMISATION[18]

As an institutional entity, the government can refer to itself with either the third person (*the government*) or the first (*we*). The former makes a clear separation of the government from the governed; the latter does not. As Wilson (1990: 62) puts it, 'indicating self-reference by means other than *I* or *we* is said to represent a distancing strategy on the part of the speaker, because the choice of pronoun indicates how close-distant the speaker is to the topic under discussion, or the participants involved in the discussion'. The use of first person reference in policy discourse we might thus characterise as a 'proximisation' strategy, drawing the public closer to and apparently involving them in the policy-making process.

One of the most striking findings in the whole corpus was a shift from third to first person reference under New Labour, where the pronoun *we* eventually displaces the term *government* almost entirely[19]. This is illustrated in the following graph depicting the use of these two terms over the entire corpus (New Labour begins at point 13 on the graph).

Figure 1: Textual prominence of the New Labour government



The graph clearly indicates a dramatic surge in the overall textual prominence of the government (taking both forms of reference together), almost doubling the figure for the preceding period, with an average figure of 1.34% compared with 0.74% under Major. As shown in the graph, the use of the pronoun *we* in New Labour is not entirely without precedent, although its use is negligible until Thatcher where it is

used in a limited and fairly inconsistent way. This is in fact quite surprising, given that *we* is acknowledged to be an important rhetorical resource in politics and its strategic use by Thatcher herself in speeches and interviews is well-documented (Fairclough, 1989; Wilson, 1990). It has been shown that the increasing use of the pronoun *we*, alongside other discursive strategies, is part of a general trend in recent decades towards the 'personalisation' of public discourse[20], removing explicit textual markers of power asymmetries in favour of a more inclusive and collective style. Sometimes referred to as 'corporate we' the phenomenon is usually thought to have originated in the world of commerce, where the success of businesses may rest on their ability to project the right corporate identity to the public.

Despite its increasing salience in public discourse more generally, the findings clearly indicate that this pronoun plays a key role in constructing a distinctively different mode of self-identification (style) for the New Labour government (and its successors[21]) from that of preceding governments. In the realm of politics it has particular significance; by collapsing the distinction between the government and the people, this mode of representation draws citizens into the very processes of governing, thus implicating them in policy decisions. When adverts or commercial organisations adopt this 'personalised' collective identity, the effect is not the same. It may generate greater affinity and identification with the brand or company in question (as it is doubtless intended to), but it does not draw us into the governance processes of that organisation. In New Labour discourse the pronoun *we* may have been favoured over *the government*, with its inherent marking of authority, in order to create a discourse style more consonant with its claims to participatory democracy. Moreover, this pronoun plays a strategic role in the legitimation of New Labour policy decisions. It does so by systematically exploiting the semantic complexity of this pronoun (explained below). Therefore interpreting the rhetorical and sociological significance of *we* in this study involved reference to both its distinctive linguistic properties and the wider political and cultural context in which it is used and with which it is likely to resonate.

Deixis and the Meanings of *we*

The pronoun *we* belongs to a closed class of deictic expressions like *I*, *you*, *here*, *yesterday* whose meaning is not encoded intrinsically but instead depends on the context of utterance in order to 'anchor' the meaning. The meanings of deictic items are anchored in terms of their relative proximity to or distance from the 'deictic centre'. The default or 'unmarked' centre is that of the speaker or writer (I) and the time (now) and place (here) of utterance. Deictic choices always entail a particular demarcation of participatory boundaries in the 'discourse world' created in texts; of speakers' and hearers' relative positions to the events described and their involvement with them. In political discourse roles and responsibilities are negotiated in part through the deictic system (Chilton, 2004). Central to this process is the pronoun *we* which can both *include* and *exclude* participants from the deictic centre. Most analyses capture this duality by drawing a distinction between 'inclusive' forms whose reference includes the addressees ('we the nation') and 'exclusive' forms where it does not ('we the government'). Where inclusive forms are used in policy documents '*we* the public' thus acquire a presence in the discourse world of policy-making and its arena of accountability. Deciding which form is intended is frequently a tricky matter of context-dependent interpretation. Significantly, policy texts are widely recontextualised (Fairclough and Wodak, 2008) and 'repackaged' for diverse

audiences, making the retrieval of such context-dependent meaning quite problematic. However, this can also be a strategic rhetorical resource. Grundy (2008: 28) cites this example from Salman Rushdie's written apology for the distress caused by his 'Satanic Verses', issued after an Iranian fatwa on him had been pronounced: 'living as *we* do in a world of so many faiths, this experience has served to remind *us* that *we* must all be conscious of the sensibilities of others'. If we interpret *we* 'exclusively' this statement appears more apologetic; it is more accusatory if *we* is taken to be 'inclusive' and more neutral if its reference is left ambiguous. This kind of deictic vagueness is in fact exploited quite systematically in New Labour policy discourse. For this reason I identify a third category of 'ambivalent' *we* in order to assign full weight to the rhetorical significance of this 'strategic vagueness'.

In the corpus *we* can variously refer to 'the government', 'the nation', 'citizens of the world', 'England and Wales', 'businesses', 'the partners of government' or 'those people concerned about education'. I therefore coded each instance of *we* as inclusive (I), exclusive (E) or ambivalent (?)[22], then analysed their clausal environments throughout the data.

Functional Distribution of *we*

The New Labour government makes strategic use of the referential ambivalence of this pronoun to merge its identity with that of the people, thereby blurring responsibility for more contentious claims and implicating us all in the legitimation of policy by assuming, rather than building, consensus. It does this by systematically texturing the different forms of *we* with distinctive speech acts (in square brackets), forms of propositional content and modality (underlined), as illustrated in the concordance extract below:

Figure 2: Concordance extract for *we* coded by speech act

[Promise] Challenge and How [E] We Will Meet It. Skills for Employers,
[Assertion] skilled, qualified people[?]We will not achieve a fairer,
[Assertion] re inclusive society if [?]we fail to narrow the gap between the
[Exhortation] term. To achieve that [?] we need to act in five key areas
[Evaluation] where it is vital that [?]we identify best practice and share
[Evaluation] our experiences. [I] We all know that skills
[Evaluation] that skills matter. But [I]we also know that as a nation we do
[Evaluation] know that as a nation [I]we do not invest as much in skills as
[Evaluation] as much in skills as [I]we should. Compared with other
[Comparison]with other countries [I] we perform strongly in some areas
[Assertion] er education. But [I] we have major shortfalls in
[Assertion] consumer demands [E]We are under no illusion about
[Assertion] their contribution [?] we can make much faster progress
[Exhortation] shared objective. [?] We must put employers' needs
[Exhortation] to those needs [?]We must raise ambition in the demand

This extract illustrates a widespread pattern in the corpus whereby there is a systematic correlation between exclusive *we* and boasts about the government's achievements or its future intentions. Secondly, inclusive *we* is regularly textured with evaluative statements comparing the relative achievements of different actors or nations. Finally claims about the imperatives arising from economic globalisation

(usually realised through modalised forms) regularly collocate with cases of ambivalent *we*, so as to obscure responsibility for the claims made.

Exclusive *we*: towards managerial governance

Instances of exclusive *we* were by far the most numerous (totalling 83% of the 2421 instances of *we* in the New Labour data[23]). The verbal collocates of exclusive *we* are variously past tense actions and present descriptions typically functioning as boasts (*we have already made it easy to become an Academy; we have put in place major reform programmes; we are on track with our reform of schools*) and irrealis[24], often hedged (underlined), statements functioning as promises about future policy action (*we* <u>*want to create*</u> *a spectrum along which schools have the freedom to develop further*). Wilson (1990) observes that it is much safer in politics to use explicitly exclusive pronouns with future claims because such irrealis forms don't yet exist and are thus less vulnerable to attack. As we have seen under New Labour there is a marked shift towards this more personalised and inclusive governmental self-representational **style.** Analysis of the verbal collocates of exclusive *we* also reveals a change at the level of **genre** in the actions, roles (and power relations) it constructs for itself and others. Mental and verbal processes like *consider, believe, evaluate* and *consult, discuss, ask* are a characteristic feature of the genre of policy documents because of their inherent function of presenting and weighing up arguments about policy decisions. These kinds of actions were the most frequent in the preceding governments. Under New Labour, however, there is a marked increase in the number of material processes of 'doing' (*make, create*) which for the first time become the most numerous kind of action represented for the government. In fact many of these 'material' processes represent quite abstract and somewhat vague managerial activities like providing leadership and delegating responsibilities. Stylistically this helps create a more dynamic image for the government and resembles strategies found in other public, promotional genres like advertising or the external communications of large corporations (Wodak and Koller, 2008). There are two main kinds of material process through which the government constructs its management role. One type draws on building, transportation and sporting metaphors like *deliver, establish, build, pilot, carry forward, benchmark, target, drive*. A large number of examples draw on a managerial discourse in representing actions which are very vague and difficult to classify: *set challenging targets; tackle regeneration; bring the criteria for approval in line with one another; benchmark our progress.* The steadily increasing use of managerial discourse in policy is a key factor in explaining this apparent 'materialization' of representational patterns under New Labour. Despite the often irrealis nature of contingency-planning and strategic calculation involved in the highest levels of management, its actions tend to be represented, typically through metaphors, as concrete, decisive and dynamic-sounding actions, located in the here and now. This suggests that an inherent feature of the character of the manager is a self-promotional identity. In the rigours of the competitive neoliberal marketplace, survival demands a dynamic, 'take no prisoners' social identity[25]. The second main kind of material process represents the government orchestrating in some way the actions of others. Often this is relatively direct through a particular category of verbs like *ensure, help, provide support, enable* which I call 'managing actions' and which I discuss in more detail below. Overall then, exclusive *we* helps construct a dynamic identity and managerial role for the government.

Inclusive *we* and shared (neoliberal) values

'*We are at an historic turning point: we now have an education system that is largely good, after eight years of investment… we are poised to become world class.'*

This extract[26] typifies the use of inclusive *we* in the data. It mainly occurs with (relational) processes that draw comparisons either between Britain and its international competitors, or the Britain of today and that of the past. Many of these constitute an implicit or explicit evaluation (underlined) of some aspect of the education system. Examples include: *we now have an education system that is largely good; we are poised to become world class; we have the best ever generation of school leaders; we have a highly flexible labour market; we now have some first class schools; we have particular skills gaps*; *we perform strongly in some areas; we face new challenges at home and from international competitors.* These evaluations of Britain and its education system are frequently textured with ambivalent cases of *we* articulating concomitant policy imperatives. This rhetorical patterning thus helps construe the rationale for future policy initiatives in terms of the globally competitive landscape in which education now takes place. In this sense inclusive *we* helps internationalise the context of education: success is doing better than our international competitors. Viewed from the perspective of argumentation these are the *circumstances* (premises) in which policy *goals* are being formulated. As Fairclough and Fairclough, forthcoming) observe, 'the context of action restricts the range of actions that can be thought of and the choices that can be made'. Thus contextualising education policy within the logic of global (economic) competitiveness makes it much easier to create a functional equivalence between economic and educational goals.

Inclusive *we* is also used in more explicit evaluative claims that help texture a set of shared values, which again serve as the rationale for the government's policy decisions. For example: [education provides] *the skills and attitudes we need to make a success of our lives; we all know that skills matter; we all have a vested interest in their* [pupils] *success; as we, quite rightly, become a society that seeks an ever higher level of achievement.* Such examples construct a popular consensus on a broad set of social and economic needs. The nation, as the collective referent of inclusive *we*, is represented, through mental and relational processes (underlined), as having particular knowledge, desires and needs in relation to education and society. Inclusive *we* thus allows the government to make privileged claims about shared attitudes and beliefs. These shared values appear to be relatively uncontroversial (who wouldn't want success?). Indeed the rather generic and inherently unobjectionable nature of these claims is the source of their rhetorical power; virtually any policy initiative could be introduced in their name. Create consensus over the values underpinning policy and consent over the policy may follow. Here again, in argumentation terms[27], diverse *practical arguments* about what should be done (policy actions) are consistently presented as being in accordance with a set of *values* informing policy *goals*.

Ambivalent *we* and policy imperatives

Ambivalent *we* is most frequently used to represent exhortations with varying degrees of explicitness. Thus under New Labour there is an increased tendency to obfuscate social responsibility, in respect of the obligations and desires that constitute the rationale for policy proposals. In practical argumentation the context for action is frequently seen as a problem that somehow threatens the agent's (shared) values. The

proposed action is then seen as the solution to the problem (Fairclough and Fairclough, forthcoming). In fact a problem-solution logic is at the heart of the policy genre; its core function is to define the parameters of what is thinkable and doable in education in relation to a historically specific set of political economic circumstances and values. Further, it articulates a set of policy problems (or 'challenges') to which policy proposals are presented as the solution. We can therefore expect to find in policy discourse a problem-solution textual pattern. In the case of the New Labour data, the causal relation between policy problem and policy solution is represented as social necessity. Policies are thereby construed as meeting some form of shared need, where the (grammatical) subject of that need is the ambivalent *we*.

The necessity is of two main types: a duty to act in some way (*we must do X*), or a particular felt need (*we need X*). In both cases the government effectively acts as a spokesperson, making statements on behalf of an unspecified collective. In a similar pattern found with exclusive *we*, the former typically involve rather vague managerial actions steering others' agency: *we must ensure that all pupils have the skills and capabilities; people learn how to be creative; all schools deliver high standards.* The latter type of exhortation by contrast construes social necessity in evaluative statements like: *To carry out the agenda for raising standards in education we shall need a new form of government involvement*, or *we need an active industrial policy*. In a similar way to the examples of inclusive *we* discussed above, which assume shared values and needs, these examples also provide a causal impetus for policy decisions, presenting them as a *necessary* response to a set of imperatives:

'*In February the European Commission published its Action Plan on Skills* […]. *This details particular areas where we need an additional emphasis at the European level to ensure we develop a labour force which has the necessary skills as well as the capacity to adapt and acquire new knowledge throughout their working lives'*.

This extract contains a clear intertextual link to a **discourse** of lifelong learning, a prominent feature of Third Way politics, in which the continuing acquisition of skills is construed as the solution to labour market insecurity. The reference of *we* here is unclear in both cases. The co-text suggests a European scale of inclusion, but whether this extends beyond governmental organisations depends on who are likely to be the agents responsible for developing the labour force. Presumably this also involves employers (particularly when we consider that the remit of this particular policy document extends beyond schooling to cover workplace training).

Textual sequencing: evaluation + exhortation + promise

The success of the strategy of 'proximisation' in legitimating policy rests on semantic slippage across the different types of *we*. Often this slippage works simply by juxtaposing various statements containing the different forms of *we*. This extract illustrates how the strategy can be used to legitimate a neoliberal model of citizenship through the assumption of a shared consensus.

Beyond these subjects, we[?] need to be confident that everyone leaving education is equipped to be an informed, responsible, active citizen. In an ever more complex, interdependent world, where an engaged population is crucial to the health of our society, we[E] continue to put citizenship at its heart too. And we[?] need real

confidence that our schools and colleges really do give young people the skills they need for employability. (DFES, 2005, *14 - 19 Education and Skills*)

In the extract ambivalent *we* textures an hortatory evaluation about the role of education in socialisation. The second sentence paints a picture of the global economic context for education policy in which individual responsibility is paramount. The next sentence juxtaposes this citizenship argument with an economic responsiveness discourse of education, where the emphasis is on the acquisition of skills to enhance individual employability. While not explicitly conflating them, this textual arrangement construes a close association between employability and citizenship. Significantly, where such workfarist discourse (more or less explicitly advocating 'workfare' rather than 'welfare' principles[28]) is evoked the agency of the evaluation is absorbed in an ambivalent *we*. Throughout the Blair data the semantic slipperiness of *we* helps construct an apparent consensus on the nature of the world we live in and the inescapable responsibilities this creates. In turn, this supposedly inexorable context of global economic competitiveness is used to preface and legitimate policy proposals made by the government. Through this rhetorical device, government policy decisions effectively become harder to criticise since their legitimacy rests on global economic forces apparently beyond the government's control. The legitimation is implicit, triggered only by juxtaposing: 'we (I) live in a changing world', 'we (?) must respond with X activity', and 'we (E) will provide the following policy solution'. Moreover, given the way this device exploits the semantics of the pronoun *we*, the political effect is that we are now all implicated in the rationalisation and legitimation of policy. In this way, political consensus is assumed, not jointly produced.

MANAGERIALISATION[29]

The preceding discussion illustrates how the traditional authority and control of the government has progressively given way to a more managerial form of institutional identity. This also extends to the activities represented for the government, which are increasingly concerned with controlling and monitoring the activities of an ever wider range of actors. Linguistically this is realised through a distinctive grammatical construction that allows the government to steer others' activities at a distance. I call this verbal construction 'managing actions'. As argued at the beginning of this chapter, the historical context of the New Labour government is one in which the post-war bureaucratic regime and its centrally regulated industrial economy had eventually given way to an emergent neoliberal model of 'enabling, participatory' governance. A key figure in this new style of governing is the active citizen-consumer, empowered and responsibilised to make choices that further their own interests or those of the 'community'. Importantly, this requires a shift in power relations: citizens must have greater agency over their own actions; the government less direct control. We might posit that such an 'autonomising' model of democracy would be capable of absorbing potential conflict by instead offering choice, opportunity, possibility, and so forth. With greater reliance on individual volition, this form of 'soft power' would seem to be less coercive and more intrinsically democratic. However, I will argue that the discursive forms this takes, do not so much remove coercion as mask it in more subtle forms.

Managing Actions

As the name suggests the term 'managing actions' refers to a set of lexicogrammatical resources for getting people to do things. Typical examples are *ensure, require, expect, support* and *help.* Their identification arose from an initial classification of the verbal collocates of *we/the government* using systemic grammar. However when it came to the New Labour data an increasing number of them proved impossible to classify using SFL because they do not represent a simple relationship between agent, process and object. Rather than the direct agent of processes, in these cases the government is the instigator or controller of others' actions. Thus there are two participants: the manager (X - here, the government) and the managed actor (Y). Some cases involve causative-type verbs like *enable* or *allow* followed by a managing action realised in various forms. However, not all examples involve causative structures or even verbs at all. For example, in some cases the managing action may be nominalised. In fact managing actions overlap with a variety of surface forms. Moreover, systemic functional grammar fails to capture their sociological significance, thus following Van Leeuwen's approach (1999) I formulated a sociosemantic typology[30] for these actions, grouping them into three categories based on the type of managerial role they construct for the government and the kind of power relation implied between the manager and the managed. I then analysed their distribution and function throughout the data. Thus, my typology attempts to move beyond the purely textual level in order to capture the important role of social power in the discursive representation and enactment of management. In the example *We will take powers to allow schools greater freedom to innovate*, power relations are semantically encoded in the lexical forms *allow* and *freedom.* In other cases, they are assumed, as in examples representing the government's expectations of others, where the successful instigation of others' actions is vested in its institutional authority. Thus, forms of managing vary in coerciveness and intersect with the power relations between the participants. It follows that these relations may in part be reproduced or transformed through the forms of management represented. For example there is a tendency for more explicitly coercive forms of management, as encoded in the semantics of the verb (*expect*, *require*) to be textured with institutional actors whose power and influence we know to be in decline, namely LEAs (Dale, 1989; Trowler, 2003). Conversely, actions which semantically encode greater freedom and/or less coercion (*enable, allow, encourage*) tend to be textured with schools, which accords with the principle of school autonomy in the creation of an educational market of 'independent state schools' (Blair, 2005).

The full typology is reproduced in the appendix and summarised in the table below. Examples of each type are included in brackets, along with the implied power relation involved in each case. To the extent that managerialism is becoming an increasingly significant aspect of the art of governing, these categories help provide a more detailed picture of the type of managerialism the government employs, in what domains and with what people.

Managing Role	**Implied Power Relation**
Overseer (*ensure, make sure*)	'Without X, Y wouldn't do it'
Leader (*require, expect*)	'Without X, Y wouldn't do it'
Facilitator (*enable, help*)	'Without X, Y couldn't* do it'

*(for want of either opportunity or ability)

In effect, these managing actions can be variously positioned along a cline of coercion. The Overseer is the most coercive role, where the manager is in control of the managed actor's behaviour, seeing it through to completion. In other words, they encode the meaning 'without X, Y wouldn't do it'. Completion of the activity is assumed semantically. The Leader role assumes the manager's authority to instigate others' actions, but the future orientation encoded semantically means there is no assumption of their completion. Finally the least coercive is the Facilitator role. Here the manager's authority over the managed actor is assumed, but completion of the action is not necessarily assumed. They encode the meaning 'without X, Y couldn't do it', for want of either ability or permission/opportunity. Here, the coercion works by assuming the managed actor is willing to act and as such, although on the surface the least coercive, is nevertheless a particularly hegemonic formulation.

I argue that managing actions play an important role in constructing the type of 'soft power' associated with an 'enabling' model of governance. This works on two linguistic levels. Firstly these actions are semantically pre-evaluated; they subtly encode positive meanings like necessity and desirability (this being the most common). Such meanings carry their own persuasive power, conveying their own soft 'power of attraction' and thus hortatory impetus. Secondly managing actions encode assumptions about the capacity and willingness of managed actors to carry out the represented activities. Compare the following:

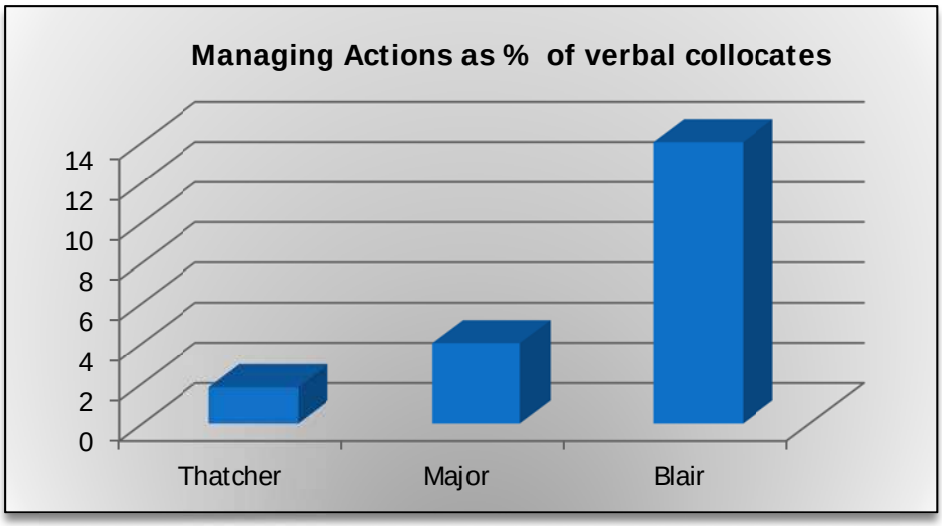
> A: *We will <u>ensure</u> that LEAs devolve more power to schools*
> B: *We will <u>enable</u> successful schools to expand further to become Centres of Excellence*

The first example implies that the stated outcome would not happen without government intervention and has an equivalent speech act function of a command. By contrast the second example implies that schools want to do this and the government's role is merely to facilitate. Here the equivalent speech act function is an offer. The second example assumes more willingness and so encodes less coerciveness than the first. Thus through 'managing actions' governmental power operates in a subtly hegemonic way, making assumptions about the desirability of the proposed policy actions and about the willingness of diverse educational actors to be managed.

General Findings

I used this typology to examine the use of these managing actions throughout the data. As illustrated in the table below there is a huge surge in their use from just 9 instances under Thatcher, to 43 under Major, to 358 under Blair. By 2005 they account for 20% of all verbal collocates[31] of the government.

Figure 3: the use of managing actions in policy discourse 1979-2005



Despite the New Labour government's claims to '*offer an active, enabling government*', it is interesting to note that this is its least prominent role in the data. Instead its most textually prominent role, and by some margin, is actually that of the traditional manager. It uses its Leader role to oversee, benchmark and monitor others - types of activities that involve fewer freedoms for educational actors than the government makes claims to.

Blair the Overseer

The single most frequently used managing verb is *ensure*, which constructs a steering role over both economic and educational practices. It does so by guaranteeing an abstract vision of excellence and success in both spheres. In an expansive, positively affective discourse, the government offers ever-widening opportunities for improvement, access, information, and participation. The most frequently managed actors are young people who are steered into lifelong learning practices. These are construed as the keys to full participation in both work and society, underlining the central role of education (specifically skills) in New Labour's Third Way alignment of social justice with economic participation. It is illustrated in the following extract:

'We will ensure:

- *young people develop* ***knowledge and skills*** *to [take their place in society];*
- *people can obtain* ***the learning and skills*** *they need to [take on new challenges at work];*
- *learn how to be creative and enterprising to generate ideas, products and innovations'*

The alignment of social justice with economic participation entails a blurring of boundaries between education and employment policy. It achieves this by merging social roles, relations and actions from different social practices. In other words it brings together competing ways of doing and being in such a way as to make them appear compatible. Textually this is achieved at three levels; by construing a series of relations of equivalence between different social roles, ways of doing and ways of being. [1] Social roles: the extract construes an equivalence between (in square brackets) participation in society (their role as citizens) and participation in the labour market (their role as workers). Moreover, this relation of equivalence is emphasised

through parallel textual patterning, both verbal (*take*); and nominal (*young people*) as objects of education policy and (*people*) as objects of employment policy. [2] Instrumental ways of doing: the extract brings diverse forms of activity in education and society under a single commodifying logic: the items in bold illustrate how education is reified into a product to be acquired and owned by individuals (through the verbs of possession underlined) in order to sell those educational outputs in a competitive labour market. A competing vision of education might instead see it as a process of mutual growth and empowerment. [3] Instrumental ways of being: the extract also brings the range of possible ways of being in education under a single instrumental logic oriented to particular material outcome**s** (in the third bullet point). The dispositions construed here typify the entrepreneurial, economically-oriented discourse through which education is increasingly represented as the most direct key to economic growth. While innovation is commendable, there is a danger that the logic of entrepreneurialism will pervade education policy entirely, encouraging young people to divorce themselves from the intrinsic value of their own learning, narrowing the perceived value of education to the economic dividends it yields, and thus reinforcing a commercial 'exchange-value' view of education among all those involved. This type of logic forces students to see their education as an increasingly expensive purchase, and educators to see themselves as purveyors of quality-assured products. Such an arrangement discourages both from taking the kind of intellectual risks from which genuine learning and intellectual innovation can arise.

Blair the Leader: delegating and coordinating

In its leader role, the government is represented as institutionalising and orchestrating joined up governance. It thus manages actors who are represented in terms of their organisational properties or functional remit. These include middle-tier governmental and non-governmental organisations, partnerships and other more-or-less abstract networks of actors (*Education Action Zones, Regional Development Agencies, Learning and Skills Council, Sector Skills Development Agency, Local Forums, Local Strategic Partnerships, and the Skills for Business Network, LEA*s). Such institutional actors are *expected, asked* and *invited* to engage in predominantly semiotic middle-management activities. Under Major prominent attention was given to macro level economic goals (competitiveness) while the locus of educational power was moved towards a hollowed out model, removing powers from the middle tier (LEAs), a key pillar in the former bureaucratic governance of state education. The Blair government builds on this, elaborating a specifically skills-based growth strategy, developing new roles, relations and institutions of a networked or 'joined up' model of governance. This extends also to LEAs who are to a degree brought back into the configuration of power and assigned new 'middle manager' roles. To the extent that we can call the flows of power under Major a 'hollowing out' of the state, we might therefore characterise those under Blair as 'filling in'.

Blair the Facilitator: enabling neoliberal change

The facilitated actors are institutions (*schools, universities, colleges*) occupationally represented actors (*learners, heads, teachers, workers, employers, parents, trainers*) or the sectorally defined *business*. The most frequent form of facilitating is *support*. While a variety of actions are managed by it, a recurrent theme is that of skills. Businesses are helped to succeed by focussing on the skills of their workforce, while

learners and young people are supported in developing them, as are heads and middle managers. Thus, in what is in fact the most textually and politically prominent theme of the Blair data, the government *supports* a variety of actors to *upgrade, acquire, develop, renew: (key, core, basic, advanced, professional, work-related) skills*.

Meanwhile schools are helped to take on an increased range of responsibilities for securing both excellence and social inclusion. The government's facilitation of schools is textured with both a discourse of competitive marketisation and a more pastoral discourse of needs and social problems, construing a central role for schools in securing social inclusion. Thus on the one hand they will be helped to *raise the quality of teaching and learning; deliver greater flexibility; meet the needs of talented and gifted children; develop further to become Centres of Excellence.* While on the other hand, they will be helped to *become healthy schools* (this refers to *pressing public health problems* including smoking, drug and alcohol abuse) and *meet the needs of children with special educational needs.* Finally, *we will* [P] *help schools* [M] *deliver this* [M] *focused* [P] *support* (for *young people* who are struggling to reach, by age 14, the required standard set for them in government targets). The represented actions in this example help texture a pastoral discourse [P] with the managerial [M], so that support and social inclusion become a matter of meeting external targets, even while still at school.

SUMMARY AND DISCUSSION

The concept of 'enabling, participatory' governance, increasingly associated with advanced liberal states, logically implies greater levels of public involvement and autonomy in the relevant domain of public (and private) life. It suggests a reconfiguration of power away from the centre and towards the periphery. This case study illustrates the salient role of language in bringing about this model of governance. In particular the use of personal pronouns helps construct a more personalised, inclusive governmental identity. The devolution of power implied in the concept of 'enabling' involves a dispersal of agency in the implementation of policy actions. Under New Labour this was partly enacted through grammatical innovations, implying a reconfiguration of power in educational governance towards a more devolved, managerial model. In particular *ensure* appears to be a prominent textual mechanism for coordinating increasingly complex networks of activity across larger political and social spaces. While this permits greater governing at a distance, it doesn't necessarily imply a weakening of power, simply a change in how it is applied, for example by monitoring performance and emphasising desired outcomes. Moves towards a more 'participatory' democratic model (as exemplified in concepts like 'the Big Society') also require a new consensus that social life is increasingly a matter of shared responsibility between the state and its citizens. Deictic expressions like *we* potentially provide a vehicle for achieving this. Through a process of textual 'proximisation' we are all apparently invited into the deliberative processes of educational policy-making. However, this does not necessarily entail genuine political agency. Closer scrutiny of how this pronoun is used in the data shows that its inherent semantic ambiguity is systematically exploited so as to *assume* rather than *win* consent over policy proposals, thereby legitimating de facto policy decisions and obfuscating lines of political accountability. Taken together, these two trends in New Labour discourse ('proximisation' and 'managerialisation') help construct a subtly hegemonic and managerial mode of governance that has all the appearances of 'enabling government' and 'participatory democracy', while masking the reality of

limited, contingent and unevenly distributed agency. The 'soft power' of contemporary 'enabling' governance relies increasingly on discourse through which we are invited to participate, deliberate and acquire self-steering capabilities. This necessarily implies a key role for critical discourse analysis in interrogating the language through which these new relations between citizen and state are introduced, reproduced and naturalised in society, and the extent to which they afford genuine freedoms and forms of political agency.

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[1] Briefly, 'workfare' is an alternative to traditional social welfare in which the state provides monetary protection against unemployment. Designed to stimulate some form of social contribution from recipients, workfare schemes have been operationalized in different ways. They also vary in the nature of the activities required (e.g. demonstrable efforts to seek work, interviews to determine 'fitness to work' among those with disabilities, mandatory training or education, or compulsory unpaid work) and the levels of coerciveness entailed. Because the workfare principle is inherently vulnerable to exploitation it is a controversial mechanism for social protection.

[2] Here I am extrapolating from Harvey and for the sake of simplicity conflating his two-part label for this moment: 'language/discourse'. The 'language' aspect refers to the language system as an internally organised resource, whereas 'discourse' is given a very wide definition that resembles the notion of semiosis: 'the vast panoply of coded ways available to us for talking about, writing about, and representing the world'. I am using 'discourse' to cover both concepts of the linguistic system and semiosis in all its forms (since the latter subsumes the former).

[3] Following Fairclough, this entails working in a 'transdisciplinary' way incorporating where relevant the theories and methodologies of other disciplines (Fairclough, 2005).

[4] The concepts I outline here are primarily associated with Fairclough's approach to CDA (Chouliaraki and Fairclough, 1999; Fairclough, 2003; 2005), although other approaches are similarly committed to working at different levels of abstraction and to focussing on the socially constituted and constitutive nature of discourse in its historical context.

[5] Thus a distinction is made here between 'discourse' as an ontological category in the general sense of language in use (and other forms of semiosis like visual images, symbols, gesture etc) and 'discourse(s)' as an analytical category to identify the way in which language is used to talk about particular topics from a particular point of view. For example we might distinguish between Republican and Democrat discourses on health care provision in terms of how this policy problem is differently constructed depending on competing ideological perspectives.

[6] For an illustrative analysis of a political document using these three categories see Farrelly (2010).

[7] Local Education Authorities (the branch of local government traditionally responsible for overseeing the content and structure of state schooling).

[8] See West and Pennell (2002)

[9] See Mulderrig (2008) for an empirical study of this change in the 'vocabularies of motives' in state education during the Thatcher, Major and Blair governments (1979 to 2005).

[10] 'Ofsted' is the abbreviation for the Office for Standards in Education. It is the government body responsible for carrying out regular inspections of schools in the UK.
[11] The use of systemic functional grammar has been strongly associated with Fairclough's work in the field (especially his earlier work, for example 1992b; 2003). However, as he himself points out (2005) there are no necessary ties between SFL and CDA – the decision to use it in this study was because it is particularly useful for the analysis of transitivity and agency, which were the primary focus of interest here. Other approaches draw variously on text linguistics, schema theory, pragma-dialectics and argumentation theory (Reisigl and Wodak, 2009; van Dijk 2008; Fairclough and Fairclough, 2012)
[12] Those dealing with the content and organisation of schooling in England and Wales; Scotland was not included as it has a separate education system. Some policy documents not fitting the content selection criteria were also omitted (for example those dealing with special educational needs in non-mainstream schools or those proposing a programme of repairs for school buildings). While the entire corpus contains 17 policy documents, the New Labour section contains five documents 'Excellence in Schools' (1997); 'Opportunity for All in a World of Change' (2001); 'Schools Achieving success' (2001); '21st Century Skills: realising our potential' (2003); '14-19 Education and Skills' (2005). In addition to these documents the following were also consulted in a follow-up study: 'Higher Standards, Better Schools for all: more choice for parents and pupils' (2005); 'Further Education: raising skills, improving life chances' (2006)
[13] For a very accessible guide to using corpus linguistics in research and teaching see Hunston (2002).
[14] For example: Mautner, 2005; applied to educational research: Mulderrig, 2003; 2008; 2009; 2011a and 2011b; 2012 in press.
[15] The LOB and FLOB corpora respectively comprise a cross-section of British English texts from the 1960s and the 1990s. Each contains 1 million words and comprises a range of texts from informative and imaginative fiction (press, general prose, learned writing, and fiction). There exists a range of free-to-access specialist and general corpora in a range of language varieties. A general distinction is made between 'stand-alone' and 'in-built' corpora. The latter come with their own concordancing facilities (for example Mark Davies' online facility providing access to and facilities for searching and cross-comparing the BNC, COCA (corpus of contemporary American English) and a corpus of *Time* magazine. Available to registered users at http://corpus.byu). Stand-alone corpora, by comparison, must be accessed using a separate concordancer like Wordsmith or the slightly simpler but free-to-access 'Antconc' http://antconc.com . These are useful when comparing your own corpus with a reference corpus (since the same concordancer can be used to cross-compare the two datasets).
[16] These are the only actors that regularly rank within the top 5 keywords (in the case of *schools*, this is consistent throughout the whole corpus; in the case of *government/we* the distribution across the corpus is significantly skewed). For an analysis of how other actors (*pupils, teachers, young people*) are represented, see Mulderrig (2003).
[17] Using Halliday's functional grammar we can classify the elements of a clause according to its Participants, Processes and Circumstances. Generally realised as verbs, Processes are sub-divided into sub-types, which map onto the three main realms of human activity: doing, being, and sensing. Thus, they can be categorised as Material, Existential, Relational, Verbal, Mental, or Behavioural. The representation of the government's actions in the data is in fact frequently very complex, abstract and metaphorical. The analysis process itself therefore fed back into the development of descriptive tools, with additional models of description overlaid onto the analysis as it progressed. Functional grammar by no means offered an unproblematic means of classifying the data; in fact failing to find an adequate grammatical model for parts of the data, I devised a new sociosemantic category I call 'managing actions' (see Mulderrig, 2011b).
[18] For a more detailed account of this trend see Mulderrig (in press)
[19] Under New Labour the pronoun moves to a higher ranking (2) among the keywords than even *the government* had occupied in the preceding data. It should be noted that it is very unusual for a common grammatical item like a pronoun to attain a high keyness rating in a non-spoken corpus. Under New Labour it is second only to the word *skills*.
[20] Fairclough, 1992b; Pearce, 2005; Petersoo, 2007
[21] Preliminary findings from a search of 4 education policy documents issued subsequently under Brown (Labour government to 2010; 3 policy documents) and then Cameron (current Coalition government; one document) suggest that this trend, introduced under Blair, continues in this genre.
[22] See Mulderrig (in press) for a detailed account of how each instance of *we* was categorised.
[23] Of the remainder 13% were ambivalent and just 3% inclusive.
[24] Irrealis statements are those whose tense indicates that they have not yet happened. Hedged statements are those which are modified in such a way as to limit the speaker's commitment to it (e.g.

through modality: *'I would like to go'* (suggests I might not), or premodifiers *'I'm not sure you'll like the movie'*).

[25] Note how the analytical concepts of **genre** (in this case the actions performed by the government) and **style** (the identity constructed through stylistic choices in discourse) intersect to create a dynamic picture of the role played by discourse in shaping this particular social practice; its forms of participation, identification and interrelation.

[26] From 'Higher Standards, better schools for all' (2005)

[27] See Fairclough and Fairclough, 2012a; 2012b for a detailed analytical model for investigating argumentation in discourse. Relevant concepts here are: *practical arguments* (arguments about what should be done, as opposed to *theoretical* arguments about what should be the case), which end in some kind of recommended *action*. Such arguments are structured around a form of practical reasoning wherein action A is seen as the best way of allowing the agent to reach her *goals*, given the current *circumstances* and in accordance with her *values* (or those ascribed to her). In the current analysis I see the different forms of *we* and the propositions they are textured with as contributing to the practical arguments that underpin the recommended policy *actions* proposed in policy documents. This operates in a rhetorically differentiated way, whereby 'exclusive' *we* typically recommends the *actions*; 'inclusive' *we* provides the *values* with which the recommended actions are aligned and/or the *circumstances* of the action.

[28] Chief among the principles underlying 'workfare' schemes is the desire to combat the fecklessness and structural dependency that state welfare benefits putatively create. Therefore a workfarist discourse will logically highlight the importance of (individual) *responsibility* and *active social/labour market participation*.

[29] For a fuller account of this trend and a theoretical discussion of its relationship to the 'soft power' of contemporary governance, see Mulderrig (2011b).

[30] It is important to note that this typology has been derived in order to characterise the findings in the data examined; it is not intended as a universally applicable context-free grammar. Thus, for instance, the specific power relations underlying the social practice examined here were factored into the analysis. It would, however, be interesting to 'test' its interpretive capacity in other social contexts. Note also the typology only contains verbal collocates of *we* and *the government*. Thus other possible surface forms like nominalisations have been omitted.

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Appendix

Typology of Managing Actions

[1] Overseer
Ensure (that) -- does, Make sure (that) -- does

[2] Leader
Require – to, Expect – to, Look to – to, Want – to, Envisage that – should, Urge – to, Encourage – to, Ask -- to, Invite -- to, Promote [+ nominalization meaning 'the doing of X by MA']

[3] Facilitator
a) Ability
Support – (to/in doing), Help – to, Facilitate – to, Let – do, Allow – to, Enable – to, (Transform/Enhance) the capacity of – to, Make it easier (for--) to,

b) Opportunity
Free –to, Give –(greater/more) freedom(s) to, Provide/Increase/widen the) opportunities for -- to, Provide for – to

[31] ‘Collocates’ are words that co-occur. Thus the verb co-occurring with *we* or *the government* is a managing action in a fifth of all cases under New Labour.