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## **Performativity and primary teacher relations**

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## **Performativity and primary teacher relations**

### **Abstract**

Performativity discourse currently pervades teachers' work. It is a discourse that relies on teachers and schools instituting self-disciplinary measures to satisfy newly transparent public accountability and it operates alongside a market discourse. The introduction of the performativity discourse has affected teacher relations at three levels of professional work - with students, colleagues and local advisor/inspectors.

Ethnographic research with primary teachers, which focused on their experience of Ofsted inspections in six schools over periods of up to four years, is the source of this paper. The paper argues that a humanist discourse prevalent in teacher relations with students, colleagues and advisor/inspectors has been challenged by a performativity discourse that:

- distances teachers from students and creates a dependency culture in opposition to previous mutual and intimate relations
- creates self disciplining teams which marginalize individuality and stratifies collegial relations in opposition to previous relations where primary teachers sought consensus
- creates subjugatory, contrived and de-personalized relations between local advisors/inspectors in preference to previous partnership relations.

The paper concludes that the change in relations is an indicator of fundamental change to social relations but that primary teachers are in a good position to influence the performativity discourse, albeit it a struggle, by reconstituting it through the maintenance of humanist relations.

## **Performativity and primary teacher relations**

### **Background**

The rise of a performativity discourse in education in England emanates from the importation of an economic 'market' structure for schools in order to improve the effectiveness and efficiency of the outputs of learning and to increase the opportunity of choice for the 'consumers' of education (Ball, 1998). Institutions focus their policies and practice, on improving performance and survival to maintain and develop their market share. This is due to the competitive nature of a market structure. The performativity criterion of efficiency and effectiveness is an optimisation of the relationship between input and output (Lyotard, 1979). In the case of education this means both ensuring a favourable qualitative award from a national inspection service and raising the achievement levels of pupils in national tests to ensure a high position in published tables of educational performance. High ratings on these two performativity indicators improve a school's attraction to parents and students in the educational market place. This results in improved resources, increasing the opportunity for the school to be more selective about the students it accepts and the quality of the teachers it employs.

Other benefits of a performativity process for the education system are seen to be: the closure of the policy 'implementation gap' (Fullan and Hargreaves, 1992); a challenge to 'provider capture' by teachers (Lawton, 1992); simplified national measures of school achievement; and a reduction of the multiple goals for teachers (Mentor et al., 1997) that produced an intensification of their work leading to 'over conscientiousness' (Campbell and Neill, 1994). An improvement in achievement levels of children, in particular those from poor environments, is considered to be the main prize for government policies intended to benefit both the individual and future societal needs.

The performativity discourse began to be developed in primary schools after the introduction of the National Curriculum in England and Wales in 1989. Children's competencies were assessed in a wide range of skills, knowledge and understanding of each curriculum subject and then they were allocated overall level age related gradings. The introduction of national Standardised Assessment Tasks (SATs) in which children aged seven and eleven were assessed in English, Maths and Science soon followed. Individual results were passed on to parents but the overall school results were published in the form of

league tables comparing schools and Local Education Authorities (LEAs) in local and national newspapers. Schools and LEAs felt it was important to maintain their league position and some began internal testing in the other years of a child's school career and instituting revision periods prior to the SATs taken in the early part of the summer term.

Teachers' performativity became the focus of the discourse with the introduction of national inspections by the Office for Standards in Education (Ofsted). Ofsted inspections established a national set of criteria by which schools and teachers were assessed. The inspectors were privately employed by Ofsted and were generally unknown to the school. They examined documentation, observed school practices for three or four days, analysed their findings according to nationally devised criteria and reported back to the school governors, the LEA and the national Ofsted office within six weeks of the inspection. The reports were then published and made available on web sites. Schools were concerned to ensure a positive and improving report and spent a good deal of time and money on preparation to ensure that the Ofsted team recognised the school's strengths and achievements (Jeffrey and Woods, 1998).

Performance indicators act mainly as a form of accountability, particularly related to a systems approach that incorporates an input-output model. However it is also a discourse because it is a practice that incorporates values, establishes behaviours and affects relations. Discourses are, 'about what can be said and thought, but also about who can speak and with what authority. Discourses embody meaning and social relations, they constitute both subjectivity and power relations' (Ball, 1990, p. 2).

Primary teachers' subjective and power relations have been significantly affected by the introduction of a performativity discourse. Prior to this development an influential discourse was a humanist one based on a 'set of values centred around holism, person-centredness, and warm and caring relationships' (Woods and Jeffrey, 2002). These values were central to the construction of learning theories, collegial practices and the implementation and maintenance of accountability. The performativity discourse prioritised the pursuit of excellence and accountability by focusing on the satisfaction to be gained from the achievement of goals and improvements in performance. It has required primary teachers to face up to radical changes in practice (Osborn, McNess, and Broadfoot, 2000) and in some cases to engage in profound self inquiry engendered by perceived changes in the identity of the teacher's working self (Woods and Jeffrey, 2002). It has also affected the key area of teacher relations, in particular, teacher's relations with children, colleagues and local advisors/inspectors.

The data on which this research draws is a sample of 73 teachers, 6 head teachers, 30 pupils and 6 Lead Ofsted inspectors from six primary schools who took part in the preparation and experience of Ofsted inspections between 1994 and 1998. The schools were researched ethnographically for six months prior to their inspections and up to a year afterwards. Further research was carried out in two of the schools during their second Ofsted inspection four years after their first. The sample contained a range of primary teachers from Key Stage (KS) 1 – children aged 4-7 and Key Stage 2 – aged 8-11. It included newly qualified teachers and those on the verge of retirement but the data for this paper has mainly drawn on teachers with more than five years experience as they were more able to make comparisons with changes in relations. Although we did not talk to any LEA advisor/inspectors, we interviewed all the Ofsted lead inspectors who had all been LEA inspectors and two of them maintained this role contemporaneously with their Ofsted contracts.

## **Teacher and child relations**

The humanist discourse that was influential in primary schools in England prior to the introduction of the performativity discourse focused on learning theories that emphasised learning as an holistic process. The Hadow report (1926) recommended that prioritising children's needs and interests was a more effective teaching strategy for young children than punishment and coercion (Broadfoot, 1996). This was echoed in the Plowden Report which advocated more attention to children's biographies and the adoption of 'child centred' strategies. Its core features were,

full and harmonious development of the child, a focus on the individual learner rather than the whole class, an emphasis on activity and discovery, curriculum integration, and environmentally based learning (Sugrue, 1998). They (teachers) place a high priority on feelings in teaching and learning, and on making emotional connections with knowledge and with children (Woods and Jeffrey, 2002).

Changes in teachers' relations with children, due to the influence of the performativity discourse, have been identified in this research as taking place in three particular areas, dependency relations, familiar relations and pedagogic relations.



## *Dependency relations*

The Plowden discourse advocated inter-dependent relations, where the teacher, although responsible for curriculum selection, acted sensitively to children's interests and was aware of the motivating advantage to be gained from following children's interests. 'I've always drawn from the children and I've always gone off at tangents if it's got really interesting' (Carol, KS 1). Projects were often workshop investigations, (Woods and Jeffrey, 1996). 'It's being able to take a child's idea or a group of children's ideas and seeing what you can do with them' (Carol, KS 1).

This form of inter-dependency was constituted by both teacher and child having opportunities to influence the direction and pace of the curriculum. The performativity discourse, on the other hand, meant that, children became more dependent upon teachers to supply all the necessary knowledge and skills to increase performance levels. 'It is like being eaten alive because these kids are constantly expecting more and more from you. You just have to stand up, perform and deliver' (Carol, KS 1). Pollard et. al., (2000) reported a doubling of children's time spent in whole class interaction compared with the 1970s, leaving less time for one-to-one interaction with the teacher. As the performativity discourse gathered pace teachers 'became more pressured. We may get the results but at what price'? (Cloe, KS 2). One of the consequences has been 'mutual instrumentality', (Pollard et al., 2000, p. 290) in which both teachers and children focus predominantly on assessment outcomes. Relations in this situation result in increased dependency as children act strategically to please the teacher and avoid approbation (Pollard et al., 2000). Mutual dependency has developed out of the performativity discourse in that teachers become dependent on children's performance in tests for assessments of their practice,

It became clear that the school will be judged on how well the children I've got this year do in those tests and any failure to meet the level will be seen as my failure. The inspectors were like bloody flies on dung about these bloody tests in my room. Everything seemed to depend on the results (Cloe, KS 2)

and children dependent on results for self esteem (Davies, 1999) .

'We work at the SATs to make our teachers proud of us. So that teachers can say 'we have got the highest marks of the schools in our borough. So they can say we are the best school (Yr. 6 child) (Jeffrey, Forthcoming).

An objectives led approach to learning is a feature of the performativity discourse and is seen by some teachers as positive in that they develop mutual dependency (Pollard et al., 2000).

As a result of Ofsted I now say at the beginning of a lesson 'what I want you to get out of this by the end of it'. I never used to do that. I used to assume that they would empathize with me and understand these things as if by magic. I just think that I am giving them clearer goals than I probably ever have done in my teaching career so far.... That timetable wouldn't have been there prior Ofsted, it's there and it's real, it's not Mickey Mouse. I worked it, I'm happier, the kids are happier and I genuinely think it works (Larry, KS 2).

Relations between teacher and child have changed from the Plowden form of interdependency, in which teachers and children relied on humanist connections between them, to a dependent relationship based on a mutual necessity to achieve satisfactory performance.

### ***Familiar Relations***

Primary classrooms, which incorporate a Plowden discourse, are intimate arenas, 'you get to know them and you talk to them a lot' (Becky, KS 1). Intimacy is necessary for relations built on knowledge of each child, 'The whole point of teaching is that you know what question would suit a particular kid, because you are working with the children' (Clare, KS 2). Responding to a performativity discourse means that teachers become more formalised in their relations with the children because children's and teachers' unique dispositions and humanity became less relevant. 'It's turning round and saying that we're not particularly special to this particular time and place, anyone can do it' (Shula, Deputy Head). Teacher's humanist relations with children have affinities with other 'caring' professions,

When I was in nursing, there may have been a certain designated way of nursing that patient but if it wasn't right for the patient, I'd automatically change it to ensure it suited that patient. 'Child centred education', is what I call 'person centred' and that's what they are trying to take away from teaching (Simca, newly qualified, KS 1).

Relations were formalised by 'categorising everything in little boxes and children are not things to be shoved in little boxes, they're human beings, they have their good days and their bad days, they have their strengths and weaknesses' (Veronica KS 2). Primary teachers, in the past, focused on 'the children as whole human beings', they 'wanted to know how they felt about things and to nurture them' (Naomi, KS 2). Under the

influence of the performativity discourse the person in the child has become transformed into the 'pupil' (Woods, Boyle, and Hubbard, 1999).

The student teachers were very confident in planning their lessons and they knew very clearly what they were aiming for, but their relationship with the children was not nearly as good. None of them gave the children a cuddle or brought in little things to show them. They were very proficient teachers but they didn't have that 'warmth' (Bronwyn, KS 2).

Teachers found themselves 'applying more pressure on the children as teachers become more pressured themselves', (Dora, KS 1) and their caring, nurturing role was reconstructed into caring predominantly for pupil performance, 'I don't know the children, I don't think about the children, and I don't care about them as much as I did before', (Naomi, KS 2).

Formal relations squeeze out the humanist interactions.

We were excited and jubilant after our assembly performance but I had only about five minutes with the children before an inspector was due to see the next lesson. I felt like saying 'can you just leave me alone for a while'. All the children were on a high. All their parents were there and they were all excited and suddenly it was all over. It was just awful (Freda, KS 2)

The essential emotions of teaching and learning (Hargreaves, 1998) became restrained as teachers became more focused on performativity. Inspirational relations became evened out, with few highs, 'that's gone, that sort of vibrant, really getting excited about it, really involving all the children. They say they don't feel free to run with something' (Carl, retired teacher volunteer). There was a loss of joint excitement, 'the children aren't getting the flowing enthusiasm they used to get from teachers' (Tracey, KS 1). The routinisation of performativity relations developed due to interactions and engagements being seen as indicators of quality and not as valid experiences or processes in themselves. Formal relations are less personal and more task orientated. This form of relation is appropriate in a number of educational contexts such as the mass lecture or seminar but the performativity discourse is universalizing its use in primary teaching and learning.

## *Pedagogic relations*

Dialogic engagement is an essential aspect of Plowden's learning theories which stress exploration and discovery. The engagement involved debates, discussions, peripheral enquiries, risk taking and arguments (Woods, 1995). Topics were mutually determined and mutually experienced.

They took you over, and the kids said 'how does that work'? You said 'I'll go and get a book on that' and children would return from home saying 'I have got such and such', and the whole thing would sustain itself. I can't see this business of delivery being the way to have a stimulating environment (Carol, KS 1)

Ball (2000) suggests that in relation to individual practice we become schizophrenic as we split our 'judgements about good practice and student needs on the one hand and the rigours of performance on the other' (p. 6).

The performativity discourse through the experience of Ofsted inspections and the necessity to achieve pre-determined targets has shifted pedagogy towards an inculcatory approach, 'to endeavour to force (a thing) into or impress (it) on the mind of another by emphatic admonition, or by persistent repetition' (Shorter Oxford Dictionary).

'I teach them whether they learn it or not. They've forgotten most of the details of the Romans a few months later but I am only expected to fill in the records as having taught it and provide evidence at the time of their doing it. My main concern is to get through it (Rebecca, KS 2).

The teacher's gaze has now switched from the children onto the curriculum,

There should be an awful lot more playing taking place, and more chance for them to talk, and for me to talk to them. I haven't got the time, and that's against everything that I know that's right (Aileen, KS 1).

Dialogic relations, so central to a humanist approach, have been replaced by a technical approach in which teachers perceive of children as 'a function machine. I pressed a button and out came the answer. I went at it bang, bang, bang, and if they hadn't got it tough titty. They learnt the facts, questions that might come up and examination skills' (Cloe, KS 2).

If there is a reduction in the 'commitment to care' (Hargreaves, 1994) then there is a reduction in concern for the child as person and 'how they felt about things' (Amy, KS 2). Care of the child means caring mainly about 'those Standard Assessment Tests (SATs) results. We're not doing our school and the community any favours if we choose to ignore them' (Toni, Deputy Head). An inculcatory approach means that teachers are 'not working *with* the children any more, I'm working *at* the children and it's not a very pleasant experience. There is this feeling of being alienated from it all, divorced from it all' (Deena, KS 1).

Developing children's knowledge, skills and understanding of the curriculum is the aim of a National Curriculum and is supported by most primary teachers (Osborn, McNess, and Broadfoot, 2000) as is the raising of achievement. The approach favoured by those teachers supporting a whole child theory of learning is a dialogic one in which teachers and children engage in discussion and exploration of curriculum. A performativity approach changes the learning relation from an investigative one into one of deliverer and receiver (Dadds, 1994), a relation in which the child as pupil becomes the subject of curriculum aims.

The identification of objectives is not necessarily identified as a negative learning experience. Identifying goals means that children may well have a clearer understanding of specific tasks and forms of mutual benefit may well develop between teachers and children (Jeffrey, Forthcoming). It is the narrowing of the goals within the performativity discourse and the narrowing of assessment instruments (Gipps, 1994) that alters the relations from dialogic to preceptive one in which teachers convey precepts.

**(Insert Table 1 here)**

## **Teacher relations**

Drawing on six studies into primary school organisational cultures, from 1985 onwards Southworth et al (2000) assert that school improvement is enhanced by

the existence of a professional culture which supports strong professional ties between teachers.

These ties are sustained by frequent informal and formal interaction, social peace, and professional discourse. (Southworth 2000, p. 281)

These cultures act as nutrients (op. cit.) and contain humanist features such as sensitivity, flexibility, empathy, familiarity and personal support. (Nias, Campbell, and Southworth, 1992; Nias, Southworth, and

Yeomans, 1989; Troman 1997; Troman and Woods, 2001). The performativity discourse has led to new school relations that prioritise commitment to institutional 'team' success determined by criteria established by external auditors - Ofsted - and 'consuming' parents and pupils. This has meant a restructuring of primary teachers' democratic, collegial and personal relations

### ***Democratic relations***

The primary school staff relationships (PSSR) project (Nias, Southworth, and Yeomans, 1989) showed how cohesion was negotiated in the whole school development discourse. In this democratic form whole school policies were developed through a striving for consensus between teachers of equal status in discussion and debate. A performativity discourse refocuses teachers' attention from the issues of how to interpret curriculum policy to ensuring that delivery of it's basic tenets and reproduction of them illustrate the success of the school in the educational market place. This priority imposed a discipline on teachers (Ball 1990) and reconstituted teacher relations in terms of

the team being only as good as the weakest link and I keep thinking, 'I'm the weak link here, I'm going to let the others down' (Aileen, KS 1).

Team discipline worked to achieve league success.

'In the end what matters is that the team is strong and that the school is strong, it's not particular individuals that matter. Sometimes people rise to the occasion or play the game better. Ofsted is a team sport' (Angelina, Deputy Head).

At the same time discipline led to the suppression of opinions, 'I've heard other people criticise things that he, (Chris Woodhead, Chief Inspector of Schools at the time) has said, that I agree with. However, I don't think I'd dream of saying that anywhere apart from here, in this interview, privately' (Letica, KS 1).

Dissension within teams was considered harmful to successful performance.

Many people disagreed, but they were just told that they had to get the children to use pens. So much for democracy. Consensus is going. I used to have a feeling that it was okay to disagree (Diane, KS 2).

The need to succeed in the performativity climate united teachers and management in defending the institution from adverse public admonition but at the same time reconstituted some teachers' humanist values.

I have become less sympathetic. I now identify less with those who don't fit this system. They know what the game is and they should be fulfilling what we, as a school, ask of them, because there is no place for them otherwise. You can't be an individual in this system at the moment, it just makes it hard work for everybody if you try to be (Toni, Deputy Head).

Expediency became essential to ensure conformity,

Confidentially the new Information Technology policy won't be done with the staff, it will be done by me and then represented to the staff in draft form, not the way that you are told a policy should be constructed (Rita, Deputy Head).

Democratic relations, where individuals bring their values and perspectives to the policy-making arena and where the construction of consensus was prioritised, was replaced by a team culture which although enhancing the possibility of school success acted as a disciplinary force to marginalise collegial debate and consensual relations.

### ***Collaborative relations***

Primary teachers in the England are less 'balkanised' (Fullan and Hargreaves, 1991) than secondary teachers, who prioritise school departmental relations and experience more status differentials. Teachers involved in the whole school, collaborative cultures research developed an interdependency (Nias, Southworth, and Yeomans, 1989) which 'created overlapping roles and responsibilities which encouraged adaptability, flexibility and collective strength' (Southworth, 2000, p. 276). However, with the shift from consensus policy development to outputs and performance, the overlaps and equality of status between primary teachers, embedded in what we term collegial relations, have been eroded and we now see the development of the 'expert' teacher manager (Troman, 1997).

As always, there has been this dilemma of being a teacher and a manager. I feel great anger and frustration that I'm having to virtually order implantation of the literacy programme rather than the development coming from those who are doing it (Carol, KS 1).

Subject co-ordinators have become 'experts' and managers, a different role to that of curriculum co-ordinators (Webb and Vulliamy 1996).

You have got to bow to superior knowledge from somebody who will put it together and then say:  
'Come on, what do you think about this' (Rita, Deputy Head)?

The 'experts' have also become supervisory managers.

The senior management job description has been changed by Ofsted to include heavier monitoring. I don't think teachers were particularly happy about it because I don't think that staff have seen the science, maths and English post holder as being a line manager, somebody who checks up on your work. It was always viewed as the support of a colleague (Norman, Deputy Head).

Collegial observations in the past were seen as 'going into someone else's class just to find out what they're doing that's good' (Carol, KS 1). A series of hierarchical vertical relations has now developed as teachers dispense authority for one subject area and defer to 'expert' colleagues in other areas. Some primary teachers found that this challenged their collegial values, 'I'm just not the kind of personality that goes around telling people what they've got to do' (Dora, KS 1).

As teachers' areas of professional competence is narrowed and specific expertise is enhanced, teachers became more dependent on colleagues (Broadfoot, 1999), not in a collegial sense but in seeking reassurance that everything they do is 'right' (Osborn, McNess, and Broadfoot, 2000). This development altered teacher relations in such a way that teachers now

expect an answer. Whereas before I could say things like 'it doesn't work for me either'. I've become more of a specialist in solving problems quickly. I find I can't afford the time to really play around with it in my head. I need to get in there, listen to the problem, ask pertinent questions and be able to say 'Right, how about trying this'? and they trot off quite happily because you've given them something to do (Shula, Deputy Head).

Perceiving pedagogic issues as managerial reduced the possibility of enquiry and debate and reconstituted teacher relations as hierarchical.

Further differentiation was experienced with the introduction of the grading of teachers.



In my department we discuss together and look at areas we think need to be developed and improved. But if they give individual grades, it's not a team, they're separating people out from that team by awarding individual grades. It is divisive (Aileen, KS 1).

The categorization of teachers by grades created differentiated relations (Jeffrey and Woods, 1998) and reconstructed collegial relations,

I didn't want an excellent grade. I don't value that. When I sit in a staff room and put forward my ideas I want people to see me, not my grade. Judging me by the number that has been stuck on the hat that I'm wearing is not my idea of gaining respect (Amy, KS 2).

The move towards creating teacher experts and managers increased the effectiveness of successful outcomes in terms of the assessment criteria of curriculum tests and Ofsted inspections but collegial relations gave way to hierarchical relations.

### ***Personal Relations***

A collaborative culture

Arises from and embodies the best of social and moral beliefs about desirable relationships between individuals and communities of which they are a part, and not from beliefs about epistemology or pedagogy (Nias, Southworth, and Yeomans, 1989, pp. 73-4).

In the primary 'whole school' culture humanist personal relations are considered to be the mortar that ensures institutional development and stability. The time spent on supporting good relations in primary schools is seen as effective school development (Nias, Southworth, and Yeomans, 1989; Troman and Woods, 2001). The disciplinary effects of the performativity discourse exerted supportive practices but often in terms of a siege mentality (Osborn, McNess, and Broadfoot, 2000), 'There was a lovely atmosphere here yesterday as we prepared for the Ofsted inspection, even though it was half term, it was like we were having a party' (Rachael, Headteacher). However, the process of external examination, the ranking of schools, departments and teachers also exacerbates confrontational relations (Troman and Woods 2001). Within the team, personal relations suffered as discipline was exerted and considerateness marginalized, particularly when it was close to an inspection.

Tears came to her eyes, and I thought ‘Oh God, I’ve done it again!’ It’s my management role, I’ve got no choice. I thought I was actually being quite helpful by photocopying some more check sheets and giving them to her when she arrived this morning (Toni, Deputy Head).

Human relations were compromised as performativity took precedence and schools became internally divided due, for example, to Ofsted reporting on separate Key Stage departments. Differing assessments between departments resulted in a cooling of teacher relations.

It was Key Stage 1 that was criticised last time and this time it’s Key Stage 2’s turn. We are not happy with the fact that we were being picked on for extra courses when other parts of the school are being thought of as ‘being really good’ (Reen, KS 2).

The public reporting of critical performance in the interests of accountability further soured teacher relations, ‘We had to sit in the staff room with the others and listen to these Ofsted criticisms of our department, while others were praised and it divided us from the rest of the school’, (Robina, nursery). Confrontations developed as differentiation increased and individual human circumstances took second place to the interests of the team, particularly for head teachers, who feel the full force of accountability of an Ofsted inspection (Troman and Woods, 2001).

The head was very, very unsympathetic when my daughter was rushed back into hospital. One of the reasons why I decided to come here was the humanity she showed. Before the pressure of the Ofsted inspection I don’t think she would have reacted in that way. It’s affected my view of her as a manager and I certainly don’t feel this keen spirit that we’re all supposed to be part of (Lucy, KS 2).

Head teachers’, when being inspected, are under pressure to ensure that their system is performing efficiently and effectively.

Not only did I have pressure to return to work after the death of my mother, but I was threatened with loss of salary if I didn’t return quickly. I was looked upon as part of this machinery. The head actually said to me that I am very highly thought of, and that a significant part of the machine was missing and it had to be put back (Naomi, KS 2).

The development of team cultures constructs a new form of collaboration, one that is based upon treating teachers as potential weak links. Consequently personal relations become less considerate and more confrontational.

(Insert Table 2 here)

## **Teacher – LEA advisor/inspector relations**

Prior to the introduction of a performativity discourse primary teachers felt that they were part of a triangular relationship with government and the LEA (Radnor, 1996; Scott, 1989). The partnership discourse portrayed each of the partners as having an interrelated role in assuring accountability to, and from, each other. The performativity discourse has contributed significantly to a change in that relationship (Audit Commission, 1989), 'The role of advice and support was now to be subordinate to that of inspection' (Evans and Penney 1994, p. 524). The performativity discourse has meant a restructuring of accountability relations with government now responsible for all policy. LEA's and teachers' have been reduced to disseminating and implementing policies and to proving accountability through the realization of government targets. Teacher relations with local authority advisors and inspectors – now all called inspectors – have become more formalized. Relations between teachers and LEA inspectors can be categorised as supervisory and accountable.

### ***Supervisory Relations***

The Ofsted approach is necessarily a distanced one for the inspections are 'hit and run' (Jeffrey and Woods 1998) affairs. Consequently, humanist relations between teachers and the inspectors are also distanced.

I often make comparisons between bank inspectors. It's a case of, 'off you go, I need your room, I need your papers, people as well as figures. Absolutely clinical' (Neil, Lead Inspector).

However, the LEA inspector has also become more clinical in spite of past friendly relations. 'In the old days the science lady would come in your classroom and we would chat afterwards and she became a friend' (Bronwyn, KS 2). LEA inspectors have, for the most part, now adopted Ofsted practices.

When he came in on Wednesday and acted differently to the way he has in the past, the atmosphere here was totally different. People were tense, behaving differently, and they bolted things down. I almost got the feeling that he was slightly put out by this, that he thought that we should have been more relaxed because we knew him. But we said 'you were here as an Ofsted inspector' (Laura, KS 2).

The performativity discourse required more time spent on observation, monitoring and reporting to head teachers than talking to teachers. 'Why can't they come into work in your nursery and work with you. It's been made very formal and there's no need for that. That's not supportive' (Robina, nursery). LEA inspectors re-focused their sights on accountability criteria and partnership relations became less important, 'It was like we had robots from outer space standing there, discussing Colin's plans for 45 minutes, without a word to us' (Clare, KS 1).

A depersonalization (Jeffrey and Woods, 1997) took place as 'they freeze framed you. They strip all these bits off you and you feel as if you haven't got any real substance there. It doesn't matter whether they say, good, bad or indifferent, the point is they have stripped the self' (Shula, deputy head). The clinicalization of relations was a fundamental change for primary teachers who placed a high priority on humanist relations.

I don't know whether an inspection works or not but there must be a friendlier way to do it. It's too cut and dried and you can't be that way with people (Simca, newly qualified KS 1).

The 'long tradition of advice on curriculum developments and support of specialist curriculum area,' (Evans and Penney 1994, p. 521) was a major feature of inspector/advisor relations in the past.

I went on a 20 day maths course. It was wonderful. We were given new ideas; we were lectured to by modern people who were on the ball. We bounced ideas off each other and we got the latest trends, and when I came back to school I was bursting with ideas (Bronwyn, KS 2).

LEA inspectors also expressed satisfaction with a reciprocity of relations, 'I enjoy coming here because you all say what you feel, speak your mind, and we always have a jolly good discussion and debate my reports' (Mark, LEA Inspector). However the current

ethos is one of telling you rather than inter-acting with you and supporting you. It's 'how we view it from up here' rather than, 'how about looking at what we might be doing with this'. It's just a look through the paperwork. That's his main purpose in life (Colin, nursery).

The performativity discourse changed teacher-inspector relations from one of partnership to one of subjugation.

It's an 'us and them', they're not being very supportive. They're presumably supposed to be working out our literacy plan, but they seem to be doing that on their own. It's going to be very much, 'this is what we think you should be doing' (Clare, KS 1).

LEA inspectors appeared to be, 'testing us, and her appearance of pleasantness wasn't what she was thinking. She made judgements too quickly having only just seen something for a short while' (Enid, KS 2). Dialogue was eschewed in favour of what could be easily observed and tested and where there was dialogue it is seen as an infantilization of relations, 'We're adults and we seem to be put into the role of a child' (Diane, KS 2), resulting in teacher – inspector dependency. 'It is like being a child in a classroom that is failing. I think these people look at me as a pupil and them as the greater teacher' (Letica, KS 1). Teachers came to lose confidence in their own professional judgement (Ball 2000; Osborn, McNess, and Broadfoot, 2000).

LEA inspectors took on a hierarchical and authoritative role.

I didn't have any outcomes written down, and he said, 'Where are they'? and I said, 'Well, like all good teachers they're in my head'. He didn't like it. I felt I was being too outspoken and I suddenly had this sense of, 'Oh God, I shouldn't have said that'. It made me consider going home and resigning. I don't know if I can be this robot, I don't know if I can work in this particular way because it's against what I believe' (Robina, nursery).

Professional development is seen as 'something being done to teachers; teachers will be improved' (Diane, KS 2).

The change in relations to a hierarchical, formal one resulted in some cases in a reduction in teachers' attempts to maintain their own values.

We knew that local inspectors at the beginning of all this were on our side. But now they can't fight anymore. They are now Ofsted inspectors themselves aren't they? We're having to just fit in, so you give up fighting for what you think is right (Deena, KS 1).

Supervisory relations in a performativity discourse became dependent ones, as did relations with children and colleagues. The necessity to gain commendations during inspections meant, for some, the adoption of strategies to capitalise on the nature of the supervisory relations.

There were three sessions where I went and grabbed people to come in. Every time they were there, I spelled it out. 'Have you got everything you want, is there anything you want to ask me, had you noticed this'? I made sure that everything I wanted made explicit was explicit, by going up to them and asking 'Was everything clear, is there anything you want ask me, have you seen this'? Once I identified a lesson in advance and asked if someone could come and see it. I certainly encouraged them at every opportunity....Getting a good grade is in the hands of the teacher. It is up to you as to whether you want to jump through those hoops (Larry, KS 2).

Supervisory relations within a performativity discourse involves a distancing of humanist relations but the action is seen as necessary to meet the goal of raising achievement, 'I think inspections do provide rigour. They improve the quality of provision and I think, in the long term, it will raise standards (Pamela, Lead Inspector). However, it also increases a teacher's focus on gaining satisfactory performance grading to maintain career and professional identities rather than partnership relations.

### ***Accountability relations***

Accountability in education is part of the 'audit explosion' in which trust has been replaced by audit accountability 'Far from being passive, audit actively constructs the contexts in which it operates' (Power 1994, p. 7-8). LEA inspectors 'are looking to see that you are up to scratch delivering all these things that you are supposed to be delivering' (Gayle, KS 1). A discourse that focuses on performance leads to a focus on presentation, creating less open and more contrived accountability relations.

You know that they're going to clear up areas, they're going to put up displays, they're going to put in extra hours and get all their arguments sorted out. You also know that during the inspection you are going to inhibit the performance of people as well (Simon, Lead Inspector).

Teacher - inspector relations became more circumspect as they became engaged in playing the game (Jeffrey and Woods, 1998). 'You have to actually catch on to what it is they want...and then perform it' (Angelina, Deputy Head). Being a performer rather than a pedagogue meant that teachers 'manoeuvred most lessons to show what they want to see. I stage-managed them', (Bronwyn, KS 2). The focus for teachers became that of trying to please their 'parent' rather than instituting a practice based on their knowledge of pedagogy and their personal humanist commitment (Nias, 1989)

It is very difficult to be yourself when you know you are being scrutinised in this way. All the time you are thinking 'What do they think'? You are unable to be yourself, because you are more conscious of what they are thinking. You are subconsciously becoming what you think they want you to be and my style of teaching is about being me (Shula, Deputy Head).

Teaching requires a 'showmanship bit for my kids in my class because that's motivating and getting them learning and interested. That's fine, I accept that part of my role within the classroom but now it's show business in my relations with inspectors' (Carol, KS 1). The emphasis on performance led to cover-ups, 'Some teachers talked in terms of using the inspection as a vehicle to blow the whistle on the person who's been upsetting them, and I am very frightened that this could surface' (Rita, Deputy Head). The attempt to make the processes of teaching and learning transparent resulted in opacity (Ball, 2000).

As well as replicating the procedures of Ofsted practices, LEA inspectors also advised schools on how to impress Ofsted inspectors. They service schools who contract their services (Radnor, 1996), 'He was very supportive over the action plan we developed earlier in the term. He knows what the game is and he's telling us how to play the game, supporting us in playing it' (Toni, Deputy Head). Supporting teachers to manage and confront Ofsted inspections, constitutes a new kind of 'partnership' with local inspectors, one in which teachers have less opportunity to engage in professional dialogue and more responsibility for performance success. The LEA's accountability is to central government and to maintaining their league position by ensuring school success.

I was told at this meeting with the LEA inspectors that 'All you have got to worry about are the kids that are in the top section of level 3, forget about the rest'. If you get half of your top 3s into level 4 by the summer time your percentage of children at the required level 4 will rise 25 percentage. It wasn't an official policy, but it was held up as a way to improve your schools' performance. It didn't even matter about the bright ones, we were told to focus on the ones that struggled in level 3 and had low self-esteem (Cloe, KS 2).

Relations between teachers and inspectors became contrived and then together they both engaged in further contrivances to satisfy the performativity demands. Contrivances resulted in improvements in children's performance and the raising of achievement levels and they ensured that the schools maintained their market position. The new partnership between teachers and inspectors is one focused on children's and schools' performance, an instrumental one that has superseded the triangular partnership of the past.

Partnerships in the performativity discourse are less mutually collaborative than previous primary teachers experiences, 'we've got no way of being an equal partner in any kind of struggle. The same criteria are applied to every school and every classroom' (Nancy, KS 1).

Teachers are well aware that the changed dispositions of LEA inspectors is a result of the influence of the performativity discourse and in recognition of their previous partnership relations they can sympathise with their position,

I just thought 'Well that's their job, they've been told that that's what they've got to do and that's what they are going to do'. They were trying to tell us is that they have got to do this job. They didn't actually say what they thought about it all, they just said how it was going to be administered because that was how they have been told to do it (Carol, KS 1).

Ball (2000) argues that the performativity discourse has resulted in a 'fabrication' of our selves and our organizations.

To paraphrase Foucault, fabrications are versions of an organization (or person) which does not exist, they are not 'outside the truth' but neither do they render simply true or direct accounts--they are produced purposefully in order 'to be accountable' .....the work of fabricating the organisation requires submission to the rigours of performativity and the disciplines of competition—resistance and capitulation. It is, as we have seen, a betrayal even, a giving up of claims to authenticity and commitment, it is an investment in plasticity (p. 9)

**(Insert Table 3 here)**

## **Conclusion**

In spite of a diminution in teacher vocationalism as a result of increasing intensification of work, teachers seemed to be retaining the humanism of their role (Woods and Jeffrey 2002). However, with the increasing dominance of the performativity discourse, relations between teachers, colleagues and local inspectors have become less humanistic as they each take up a more defined role. Teachers are defined as deliver, team player, and performer. Children are redefined as pupils, colleagues as competitors, team members, experts and 'weak or strong links' and inspectors are now examiners and authoritative coaches. Equal and open negotiative relations have been superseded by hierarchical, dependent and deferential relations.



Collaboration between teachers, pupils, colleagues and local inspectors has not diminished but has been reconstructed as teamwork. Team solidarity and attention to improving targets brings teachers, pupils, colleagues and inspectors closer as they seek to maintain and improve their levels of achievement in external assessments and public league tables. Collaboration is reconstructed as ‘mutual instrumentality’ (Pollard et al., 2000). Teachers, pupils, colleagues and inspectors are dependent on each other for the school’s success or failure because the school determines their status rather the latter being developed through trust relations with each other and with the community (Troman and Woods, 2001). Personal, social, political and moral values are subordinated as each constituent group focuses on the single purpose of gaining and improving success.

Humanistic relations in England’s primary schools have been reconstituted not so much as inhuman or dehumanised but as less personal, less familiar, less emotional, less sensitive, less warm, and less empathetic. The individual is less important as a ‘person’ but considered more as a mechanism for supporting the well being of the team. Relations between teachers, children, colleagues and local inspectors are now utilitarian – based on the greater good of the many and the quality of the relations are, as Ball (2000) notes in Lasch and Urry’s terms, ‘flat’ and ‘deficient in affect’ (Lasch and Urry, 1994, p.15).

Government policies in the 1980-1990’s have been successful in reducing provider capture, tackling the uneven quality and patchy provision of entitlements that characterised English primary schools in earlier decades - some really excellent, some dreadful (HMI, 1978) - and it is clear that standards of pupil performance, measured by SATs tests, are rising (Pollard et al. 2000). Teacher’s skills and competencies have been refocused and developed, in for example, assessment procedures and the evaluation of children’s learning experiences (Broadfoot, 1999; James and Gipps, 1998). A performativity discourse is seductive (McWilliam, Meadmore, and Hatcher, 1999), because it is possible to be properly passionate about excellence, about achieving peak performance (Ball, 2000). However, the dehumanising of the performativity discourse has resulted in the ‘emptying out’ of relationships (Lasch and Urry, 1994 in Ball 2000).

Nevertheless primary teachers’ have devised strategies for coping with these changes to relations. Some have both distanced themselves and engaged with Ofsted inspectors (Jeffrey and Woods, 1998), others have hopped between discourses (Jeffrey, 1999), constructed multiple selves (Woods et al., 1997) and restructured identities (Woods and Jeffrey, 2002).

Primary schools have a particular culture that highlights humanistic relations as they deal with young, socially developing children and daily parental concerns for the general welfare of their children (Pollard and with Filer, 1996). The 'struggle for the soul of professionalism' (Hanlon, 1998) includes, for primary teachers, a struggle to maintain humanist relations and therefore to reconstruct the performativity discourse itself, for discourses are amenable to resistance and influence (Davies and Harre, 1994). A good place to start this process is the gathering of examples of how primary teachers are managing to influence the performativity discourse (Jeffrey, 2000; Woods, Forthcoming).

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## Tables

Table one – Teacher-student relations

	<b>Plowden discourse</b>	<b>Performativity discourse</b>
<b>Inter-relations:</b>	interdependent	dependent
<b>Familiar relations:</b>	intimate	formalised
	inspirational	routinized
<b>Pedagogic relations:</b>	dialogic	preceptive

Table 2 – Teachers' relations.

	<b>Whole school discourse</b>	<b>Performativity discourse</b>
<b>Democratic relations:</b>	consensual	disciplinary
<b>Collaborative relations:</b>	collegial	hierarchical
<b>Personal relations:</b>	considerate	confrontational

Table 3 - Teacher – LEA inspector/advisor relations

	<b>Partnership discourse</b>	<b>Performativity discourse</b>
<b>Supervisory relations:</b>	friendly	clinical
	reciprocal/mutual	subjugatory
<b>Accountability relations:</b>	open	contrived