The Discourses of Educational Management

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Abstract

This paper attempts to apply the techniques of discourse analysis to some of the key concepts in educational management. It employs a conceptual framework which is informed by management theory and policy studies as well as by the literature on discourse. The central part of the paper considers examples of discursive forms which serve to disguise or conceal the power dimension in educational institutions: these include appeals to 'learning communities', 'transformational leadership' and 'participation'. It also examines the significance of discursive shifts from 'rational' to 'emotional' language in education, drawing on the work of James (2000) and Hartley (1999). The dominant vocabulary of educational management is then related to wider issues of political power. Finally, the paper summarises the value of discourse analysis at three levels of critical interpretation - text, voice and narrative - and suggests that, despite the pervasiveness of managerial discourse, there remains scope for interrogation and challenge.

Starting Points

Much has been written about the origins of discourse analysis in the work of Baudrillard, Derrida, Lyotard and, above all, Foucualt, and its analytical and critical techniques are now widely employed in the humanities and social sciences. The present paper draws on this background but it does not attempt to enter the highly complex theoretical debates about competing definitions of discourse or to take sides amongst the various postmodernist schools of thought. Its aims are much more modest in scope and focus on the use of rhetorical devices by managers in educational settings and the purposes which they serve. One point of departure is a belief in 'the significance of language in the production, maintenance, and change of social relations of power' (Fairclough, 1989, p. 1). It will be argued that the

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management of meaning is an important instrument of professional, institutional and ideological control. Peter Cookson states:

> Decoding the power discourse requires a series of understandings about the nature of language as a verbal expression of social relations. Words do not exist in a disembodied form; they have meaning within a social context that is class bound, conflictual and power driven. Those who control this symbolic world are able to shape and manipulate the market- place of educational ideas. (Cookson, 1994, p. 116)

The ‘social context’ that frames the prevailing rhetoric requires that attention is paid not just to verbal expressions but also to organisational structures and processes, social relations and taken-for-granted assumptions about institutional ‘reality’. Commenting on Foucault’s account of the relationship between knowledge, rhetoric and power, Harvey (1990) observes:

> Close scrutiny of the micro-politics of power relations in different localities, contexts and social situations leads him to conclude that there is an intimate relation between the systems of knowledge (‘discourses’) which codify techniques and practices for the exercise of social control and domination within particular contexts. (p.45)

Schools, colleges and universities are examples of particular sites where these micro-political processes can be seen at work (see Blase and Anderson, 1995). In these institutional settings the prevailing discourses (promoted by those who ‘manipulate the marketplace of educational ideas’) provide the concepts and assumptions which shape the ‘common sense’ view of the world held by teachers and students. The deconstruction of some examples of these prevailing discourses forms the central part of this paper.

In respect of methodology, discourses ‘can be analysed at various levels, from their basic constituents, statements, to accumulated discursive formations’: they are ‘associated with ‘games of truth’ working within fields such as science and government to authorise what can be judged as true or untrue’ (Dannaher, Schirato, & Webb, 2000, p. 45). In the case of education, the task is to examine educational ‘texts’ of various kinds produced by those seeking to promote or explain policy initiatives and management practices. These ‘texts’ invite scrutiny not just in terms of their surface meaning but also in terms of their underlying purposes. Sensitivity to the nuances of language, to the relationship between speaker or writer and audience(s), and to the social and cultural dynamics of the institutions which generate and receive ‘texts’, is at the heart of the process.

Discourse analysis has been employed very effectively by Stephen Ball (1990; 1994) in the relation to UK (particularly English) educational policy and its influence can be seen in policy studies in other countries (see, for example, Hargreaves, 1994; Smyth, 1995). Its application to management has been less fully developed though Anderson and Ginsberg (1998) have offered a subtle theoretical account of how Foucault’s ideas on power can illuminate the field of educational administration. The deployment of a range of discursive techniques has been an essential element in the legitimation of educational policies and management practices in a period of rapid change. The policy context within which this process

has occurred will be sketched in the next section. First, however, it is necessary to comment briefly on the changing character of management as a discipline.

Pollitt (1997) has drawn attention to different stages in the evolution of management theory and has identified the 1980s as a period when 'culture management' became fashionable. This was a reaction against over-rational mechanistic and 'systems' approaches to the management of organisations. By contrast, 'culture management' emphasised the importance of metaphor, symbolism and ritual in organisational life. The task of shaping the organisational culture was seen as the responsibility of senior management who were expected to motivate staff, not through traditional techniques of regulation but through a positive climate which encouraged the internalization of constructive attitudes among the workforce. Metaphorical and symbolic representations of the values of the organisation were a crucial part of this process. The place of metaphor in educational contexts will feature in later discussion.

There is usually a time lapse between the development of management ideas in the private sector and their appropriation by the public sector and recent debate within the field of educational management reflects this. A special edition of the journal *Educational Management and Administration* appeared in the summer of 1999 and sought to redefine the conceptual map of the field. Bush (1999) argued that while educational management was not in a state of 'crisis' it was at a 'crossroads' and needed to avoid the charge of merely serving to justify the agendas of bureaucratic bodies such as the Teacher Training Agency (TTA) in England. Likewise, Ribbins (1999) drew attention to the danger of the field of educational management becoming 'overly technicist and managerialist in its orientation' and suggested that 'one set of possible correctives is to refocus on policy, context and environment' (p. 235). This leads back to particular institutional settings and the discursive strategies that are used to maintain their structural and managerial 'integrity'. It also requires some understanding of the wider policy framework which sets limits to the way individual institutions can function.

The Policy Context

All advanced educational systems have experienced major reforms in the last two decades. Although the specific policy configurations have varied in different countries, certain general trends are identifiable. These include an emphasis on market forces and consumerism, choice and the rights of parents, school effectiveness and school improvement, teacher competence and accountability, and raising standards of achievement. The role of central governments in promoting these policies has invited contrasting interpretations. From one perspective, government intervention can be viewed as a necessary step aimed at challenging the conservatism and self-interest of professionals and the inefficiency of intermediate layers of government (at state, district and local authority levels). From another perspective, it can be seen as a confused attempt to devolve responsibility to individual schools and colleges, leaving them without the collective support structures they need and, ironically, leading to an increase rather than a decrease in

bureaucracy (as each institution has to deal with administrative matters formerly handled elsewhere in the system).

The effect of these trends on teachers and other education professionals has received a great deal of attention from commentators: for example, the reforms of the 1980s, particularly in England but also in other parts of the UK, have been subject to extended analysis by Knight (1990), Lawton (1992, 1994), Barber (1996), and Hartley (1997). More generally, the literature on the management of change has become increasingly international in character (Hargreaves 1994, 1997; Fullan & Hargreaves, 1992). One reading of these developments is that they have created educational systems that are so caught up in the implementation of reform that most teacher energies are directed towards ensuring that new systems, structures and processes are in place. There is little or no time to reflect on aims and principles. As far as teachers are concerned, it is permitted to ask 'How?' questions but not 'Why?' questions. Indeed, some politicians and bureaucrats would argue that it is not the business of teachers to spend time on these 'first order' questions: their job is to concentrate on operational matters within a framework that is 'given'. Chris Woodhead, HM Chief Inspector of Schools in England and Wales, has been disarmingly frank on the subject. With reference to the training of headteachers, he has posed the question: ' . . . should a headteacher qualification involve participants in 'scrutinising' (a weasel word if ever there was one) government policy?' His answer is unambiguous: 'Training for headteachers ought to be practical . . . To suggest that they should waste precious time sitting around pontificating on the rights and wrongs of the latest political announcement simply reveals how ludicrously out of touch and self-indulgent some academics, on occasion, can be' (Woodhead, 1998, p. 55). The message is clear. Would-be headteachers who value questioning, reflection and critical thinking, and who believe that these skills can lead to better-informed practice, need not apply for a place in Woodhead's Brave New World.

Another way of describing these trends would be to say that they can be interpreted as an attempt to decouple policy and management. A few years ago the present writer published an article reflecting on this in the Scottish context and argued that the effect of some of the reforms that were taking place was de-skilling and de-professionalising, not just for teachers but also for managers. Staff were encouraged 'to focus on the 'efficient' performance of the immediate task in hand, and to refrain from thinking too deeply about the constraints within which they work, far less about the social function of institutionalised schooling' (Humes, 1994, p. 182). The article called for greater courage on the part of managers and suggested that they have a moral obligation to challenge policy makers to live up to the ideals contained in policy documents - by, for example, providing adequate resources to ensure effective implementation (see also Fairley & Paterson, 1995).

The somewhat optimistic title of that paper was 'Policy and management: mending the fracture'. In fact, the fracture has, if anything, got worse. New Labour's reform programme continues the momentum of the New Right and ensures that a chronically tired and largely demoralised teaching force lacks the strength and the will to engage in any kind of sustained critical interrogation, let

alone develop an effective strategy of resistance (see Docking, 2000). Their position is not eased by the fact that many of those who occupy leadership roles within the education service - and this includes some academics - have succumbed to the pressure to concentrate narrowly on matters of implementation, without any serious reflection on the justification for official policies. They simply wait for the directives from above and pass them down the line. They have found, in some cases from bitter experience, that compliance and conformity are rewarded while resistance is penalised. In England, Ofsted and the Teacher Training Agency can claim much of the credit for this compliance culture. In Scotland, Her Majesty's Inspectorate has moved in a similar direction, though less crudely and with greater teacher resistance.

Sooner or later, however, a counter-movement to the regime of surveillance, policing and control will begin. On present policies there are likely to be more failing schools, more demoralised teachers seeking a way out, greater problems of recruitment, more 'super-heads' deciding to quit. The counter-movement is likely to have a number of origins, some of which cannot be predicted. An important element in preparing the ground for a counter-movement - in terms of increasing understanding of what has been happening - is the use of discourse analysis to deconstruct the rhetorical deceptions that have been an essential part of educational policy-making and management practice since the 1980s. As Fairclough (1989) remarks in his study of language and power, 'consciousness is the first step towards emancipation' (p. 1).

Metaphor and the Discourse of Community

> There are Idols which we call Idols of the Market. For Men associate by Discourse, and a false and improper Imposition of Words strangely possesses the Understanding, for Words absolutely force the Understanding, and put all Things into Confusion. (Francis Bacon, *Novum Organum*, 1620)

It was noted above that the application of discourse analysis to educational management (as distinct from policy) is somewhat under-developed. However, the territory is not completely uncharted. Some writers in the field of educational management have been very aware of the importance of language. Davies (1994) has written that 'Educational management is not a discipline, but a collection of languages, a collection of different ways of seeing . . . Before managing schools in particular directions, one has to manage meaning'. He adds that most schools are the scene of 'a series of competing [management] discourses' (pp. 4-5). Again, writers such as Beare, Caldwell and Milliken (1989), and Clark (1996) have drawn attention to the importance of metaphor in expressing the core beliefs and values of an institution (see also Bacharach & Mundell, 1995). Clark (1996) suggests that most schools 'are governed by mixed metaphors' (p. 118) and that such governing metaphors are largely taken for granted. A recent writer on Catholic education, Sullivan (2000), structures his analysis in terms of the competition between various metaphors for dominance in thinking and practical decision-making. He discusses five in particular - school as family, as business, as church, as political community, as academy. The general point is that metaphorical comparisons represent one attempt to 'manage meaning' and shape the perceptions of those who work in an

institution. Such attempts can be perfectly well-intentioned and can be motivated by a desire to give unity of purpose to staff and a sense of belonging to pupils. However, they can also serve less benign purposes and can operate as barriers to thinking about 'first order' questions of aims and values. Morgan (1997), who has written extensively about the use of metaphor in organisations in general (not specifically educational organisations) has observed that 'any given metaphor can be incredibly persuasive but it can also be blinding and block our ability to gain an overall view' (p. 347). When this happens, the restriction serves to limit the parameters of legitimate debate about policy and management. In other words, discourse itself can be subject to management.

An emphasis on ethos, climate and culture is usually associated with a symbolic or metaphorical representation of the organisation. Such representations are invariably positive in character - David Hargreaves's comparisons of schools with factories, prisons and asylums (in Mulgan, 1997) do not feature in offical discourse. Beare, et al. (1989) suggest that one way of enhancing school culture is for principals or headteachers to 'select deliberately a metaphor which affirms the way they image the school and repeatedly to use it . . . Keep it simple: one simple picture, constantly repeated which affirms 'This is what our school is like'' (pp. 189-90).

Consider the concept of community, which has become a popular metaphorical representation - more especially the school as a learning community, one embodiment of the learning society which politicians are so fond of invoking. ('Learning society' is perhaps the soft, reassuring version of 'knowledge economy'.) Community is clearly intended to be a praiseworthy concept. Communities are regarded as places which give identity and self-esteem to individuals and provide them with a network of support: they have rules and conventions which express a value system and which are intended to protect rights and freedoms that serve the interests of the members. The achievements of educational communities are sometimes given formal public recognition in the shape of Investors in People status or Health at Work awards. However, it is not unknown for staff to express scepticism about the real value of such awards which they regard as designed for external consumption rather than as indicative of a genuine concern by management for the health and welfare of employees.

Communities are not invariably or inevitably positive. Some communities are negative and destructive in their effects. Any major city - and increasingly some rural areas - has communities that are rife with crime, vandalism, drugs and intimidation, where the quality of life is poor. For some pupils and some teachers, the school 'communities' which they inhabit will be rather like that – for example, pupils who are bullied or who experience repeated failure, teachers who are suffering from stress and overwork. Furthermore, in such institutions all kinds of *negative* learning will be taking place: how to suppress fears and emotions, how to conceal feelings of worthlessness, how to remain silent in the face of unfair treatment. In such circumstances, the positive concept of community is at best a myth, at worst a sham. Even Clark, who (in his 1996 book, *Schools as Learning Communities*) holds up the concept largely for approval, acknowledges that the

power of community can be 'corrupting' and that a 'vague and unctuous version of community [can be] used to cover a multitude of sins (and conflicts).' (p. 164).

The Discourse of Leadership

The same kind of analysis can be applied to other areas of fashionable discourse. 'Leadership' is an example of a concept that is widely invoked but subject to very little in the way of critical scrutiny. Hargreaves and Goodson have written that the literature on leadership 'is often strong on rhetoric but weak on evidence' (in Leithwood, Jantzi, & Steinbach, 1999, p. viii) and West-Burnham (1997) observes: 'Leadership . . . is subject to normative writing where exhortation replaces research and where ethical stances are seen as overriding any empirical base' (p. 4). Politicians find educational leadership an attractive concept because it places responsibility for success or failure largely in the hands of professionals: thus 'failing' schools are presented as the victims of poor leadership (rather than ill-conceived policies) and the belief that a new leader should be able to turn them round gains currency. The school effectiveness and school improvement movements have (no doubt unconsciously) helped to reinforce this attitude by attaching considerable weight to 'in school' factors in explaining differential results by apparently 'similar' schools and perhaps underestimating the extent to which external social factors influence pupil achievement. Add to this the current focus on the management of change in educational institutions and the scene is set for the elevation of leadership to revered status. Fullan (1993), for example, states that ' . . . educational leaders must learn to influence and coordinate non-linear, dynamically complex, change processes' (pp. 74-5). One exception to this pattern is MacBeath (1999) whose study of the ways in which schools can, through a process of self-evaluation, manage their own strategies of improvement, does not include leadership as one of its key categories.

Those writers who do give prominence to leadership recognise that it can take a variety of forms. Leithwood, et al., (1999) offer a classification of different types based on an extensive survey of the literature: instructional leadership; moral leadership; participative leadership; managerial leadership; contingent leadership; and transformative leadership. The last category is particularly interesting because of its compatibility with the emphasis on the management of change. Included under the term transformational leadership 'are writings about charismatic, visionary, cultural and empowering concepts of leadership' . It should be noted here that all of the adjectives linked with the word 'leadership' serve to soften any authoritarian associations it might have on its own. 'Charismatic' and 'visionary' convey the sense of an inspirational quality which will energise colleagues. 'Cultural' and 'empowering' draw attention to the value system of the organisation as a whole and suggest that agency is distributed democratically. 'Transformational' implies that staff are engaged in the shared enterprise of initiating and responding to change, in which everyone has a stake in meeting the challenge successfully. Qualifying 'leadership' in these ways may serve to make it more palatable and deflect attention from its directive aspects. Similarly, writing on 'leadership as spirituality, as artistry, as the creation of meaning' (West-Burnham, 1997, p. 4) shifts the focus from the authority of the leader to the supposed benefits

for the led. Such linguistic softening cannot, however, entirely conceal the realities of educational hierarchies. In the final analysis, 'Leadership is realized in the process whereby one or more individuals succeed in attempting to frame and define the reality of others' (Smircich & Morgan, 1982, p. 258).

Some teachers are not unaware of the control purposes of the rhetoric of leadership and learning communities, though most teachers are simply too busy to have time to reflect on the implications. Career-minded staff may pay lip service to the prevailing management culture without being committed to it at a personal level. Others are capable of thinking and acting 'subversively' with the new forms of discourse and using them to challenge perceived management failures. Over time this can lead to the discrediting and displacement of once fashionable terms. What may not change is the day-to-day reality of teachers' lives as they struggle to cope with competing and sometimes conflicting demands for increased accountability, higher standards and curriculum reform. In these circumstances, is it any wonder that staffroom cynicism is widespread?

The Discourse of Participation

One of the paradoxes of the education policy agendas pursued by governments in advanced democracies is that the regulatory mechanisms which serve to reduce teachers' autonomy and increase their accountability are often accompanied by a discourse of participation (Hargreaves, 1994). Teachers are 'consulted' about curricular reform programmes and are encouraged to become involved in research studies, community projects and development groups. Writing in an American context, Anderson (1998) argues that 'the current discourse of participation is part of a historical concern of school administrators with public relations and - particularly when schools are viewed as in crisis - the creation of greater institutional legitimacy' (p. 573). He cites studies which suggest that teachers increasingly complain that participation is often bogus and, far from increasing job satisfaction, adds to their workload and reduces the amount of time they can devote to what they see as their primary task, namely interactions with students. Anderson refers to 'the linguistic slippage that occurs with regard to the meaning of participation and the diverse agendas that are promoted within its discursive umbrella' (p. 574). In effect, he suggests that most appeals to participation should be regarded as strategies of containment designed to disguise the power nexus within educational systems.

Presented more positively, the manager who encourages participation might be seen as a 'human resource developer' (see Usher & Edwards, 1994, 111-116) allowing junior colleagues to enjoy staff development opportunities. However, those selected to participate are often more appropriately regarded as beneficiaries of senior management patronage: they are being identified as people who will operate constructively within existing conventions and who may merit further advancement. Where a more open form of participation is allowed, the process is usually carefully managed. In Scotland, the discourse of participation is closely allied to notions of consultation, partnership and consensus (see Humes, 1986, 1997; McPherson & Raab, 1988). It is part of the received wisdom about how the Scottish

educational system functions that it is open and democratic in character, inviting widespread consultation on policy initiatives, involving all the major stakeholders and seeking a consensus wherever possible. In practice, the consultation process is skilfully orchestrated by Her Majesty's Inspectorate, the 'partners' are certainly not equal and the consensus is often more apparent than real (see Humes 1999). The preferred outcome is invariably a single cost-effective 'solution' to complex educational problems.

It would be wrong, however, to conclude that participation offers no scope for what Anderson (1998) calls 'authentic' involvement. He asks a series of important questions which open up the territory for debate:

- Participation toward what end?
- Who participates?
- What are the relevant spheres of participation?
- What conditions and processes need to be present locally for participation to be authentic?
- What conditions and processes must be present at broader institutional and societal levels to make participation authentic? (586-594)

It is by responding to these questions that educators may find some discursive space in which to challenge the limited participation that officially-managed processes normally allow.

Rational and Emotional Management

Managerial language is typically upbeat, even evangelical, in character, expressing a 'can do' philosophy of positive action and achievement. Managers like to hear and spread the 'good news' and celebrate achievement. Their discourse speaks of 'challenges' and 'opportunities' rather than 'problems' and 'obstacles'. They define their own role in terms of providing 'vision' and articulating the 'mission' of the institution and projecting its public 'image'.

Within this basic framework there are variations of tone and emphasis. Sometimes the continuing potency of hard-edged managerialism is in evidence. This is apparent in the invocation of terms like 'objectives' and 'targets', 'competences' and 'standards', 'achievement' and 'effectiveness', 'quality' and 'accountability'. The emphasis is on rational strategic and operational planning, usually with a focus on 'delivery' within a clearly defined time-scale. School development planning is an example of this.

At other times, a gentler form of discourse can be found. This is sensitive to the 'morale' of staff and the 'ethos' of the institution. It speaks of 'empowering' individuals and giving them 'ownership' of policies. 'Communication' and 'consultation' and 'collegiality' are essential elements of this approach. Managers have to adopt a 'listening' mode and be 'responsive' to the representations of colleagues. They seek to create an atmosphere of 'trust' and 'loyalty' and

'openness' in which the 'dignity' of staff is respected, in the hope that they will achieve personal and professional 'fulfilment'. The inclusion of these terms in the lexicon of educational management suggests that the appeal is more to emotion than to reason, though it would be wrong to present the two forms of discourse as dichotomous. As will be shown, there are important points of convergence.

In an unpublished paper, James (2000) has offered an interesting perspective on these discursive modulations. He states that schools are 'complex emotional mazes' which require headteachers to 'consider more than the rational and functional aspects of their leadership'. Moreover, 'emotions are powerful and intrinsic within organising and because educational institutions are arenas for particularly high levels of emotion, especially during radical change, managing this emotional dimension is significant'. James draws a distinction between *emotional containment,* which he presents as a legitimate process involving the creation of 'structures and processes in organising within which emotions can be experienced' and *emotional control,* which involves illegitimate attempts 'to limit and restrict the experience of emotion'. He concludes that since there is no escape from the emotional dimension 'it must in some sense be managed'. He adds, however, that 'emotions cannot be managed in the way that other objects can be during the management of radical change in schools'. Among other things - though this is a point that James himself does not make explicitly - the management of emotions requires a different form of discourse from the management of, for example, curriculum, resources or finance.

Addressing similar issues, Hartley (1999) offers a more critical account of the shift from 'rational' to 'emotional' management. Whereas the former attends mainly to structures and bureaucratic processes, and the strategic objectives of the organisation, the latter attends to social processes and the human (not just the professional) qualities of staff. Hartley goes on to suggest that 'emotional' management 'may serve as the new legitimatory rhetoric in the management of teachers' (p. 317). He cites the discourse employed in a 1998 publication on the training of headteachers in Scotland. This document describes the preferred interpersonal qualities which might be required of headteachers. These are:

- demonstrates confidence and courage
- creates and maintains a positive atmosphere
- inspires and motivates others
- communicates effectively
- empathises with others
- values and works through teams

(Scottish Office, 1998, cited in Hartley, 1999, p. 317).

The discursive shift represented by this terminology can be explained as a recognition that schools are increasingly seen as complex, ambiguous, messy institutions which cannot be managed solely on the basis of rational planning. Attitudinal and dispositional qualities are at least as important: thus the *management*

of those attitudinal and dispositional qualities becomes an issue and the example set by the headteacher is crucial. The headteacher is expected to display and demonstrate a range of *permitted* emotions which, unsurprisingly, are to be positive and optimistic in character. Hartley coins the term 'contrived emotionality' (p. 320) to describe this attitudinal and dispositional repertoire. In a sense, what is happening is the rationalisation of the emotions, a process that helps to explain why the two styles can co-exist without obvious conflict. The sociologist Mestrovic, whom Hartley quotes, decribes the process as the 'manipulation of emotions by self and others into a bland, mechanical, mass-produced yet oppressive ethic of niceness' (Mestrovic, 1997, cited in Hartley, 1999, p. 319).

Blase and Anderson (1995) show how a culture of 'niceness' leads to the 'institutional silencing' (p. 138) of criticism. Norms of propriety, courtesy and civility discourage the voicing of concerns which might be construed as a challenge to authority. Furthermore, if meaning is managed effectively, the majority of staff internalize the professional and organizational vocabulary through which work is defined by officialdom. Dissent is silenced by representing it as straying beyond the boundaries of acceptable professional discourse. Descriptions such as 'troublemaker', 'negative', 'not a team player' and 'over the top' are used to label those who refuse to play by the (linguistic) rules of the game. 'The individual is marginalised and pathologised through labelling in order to protect the legitimacy of the institution' (Blase & Anderson, 1995, p. 138).

The business of management, however carefully presented and softened by emotional terminology, is at one level concerned with control. It is designed to defuse those aspects of institutional life which are potentially disruptive - the rivalries and ambitions of staff, the personal resentments and disappointments, the anger, frustration and cynicism that simmer in staffrooms, the sense of injustice which management decisions sometimes provoke. These are real emotions, not the sanitised variety that so often features in official documents about ethos and school culture. But they are also negative emotions and so are not 'permitted', however justified they may be by circumstances. The functioning of the organisation requires that they are controlled, not least in the interests of pupils. Professional socialisation at the training and induction stages of a teacher's career provides the basis for self-imposed emotional control. But with a teaching force increasingly affected by low morale, overwork and surveillance regimes of various kinds, other influences are required. It is against this background that emotional management from above becomes important.

There is some evidence of an emerging professional debate involving administrators, policy makers and school leaders, not just academic researchers, about the importance of emotion in educational settings. A recent online conference organised by the Australian Principals Associations Professional Development Council (APAPDC) had, as one of its key themes, 'Healthy School Communities' and a number of the contributors made reference to the importance of understanding the emotional dimension of school dynamics affecting students, teachers and parents as well as principals (headteachers). A Canadian contributor (Beatty, 2000) in a paper entitled 'Pursuing the Paradox of Emotion and Educational Leadership'

(http://www.apapdc.edu.au/) offers a particularly interesting report of empirical studies investigating the positive and negative emotional experiences of, first, teachers in their interactions with educational administrators and, secondly, principals (headteachers) in their roles as leaders. Beatty's aim is to begin 'to create a collection of voices pertaining to emotion and educational leadership' (see also McCrea & Erlich, 1999). Her approach complements (and in certain respects challenges) the perspective on leadership offered earlier in this paper.

Power

Underlying all of this is the question of power. Whose interests do the various strategies of 'discursive containment' serve? Who is advantaged by the strategic capture of the marketplace of educational ideas? Ball (1994) says: 'Discourses are about what can be said, and thought, but also about who can speak, when, where and with what authority' (p. 21). To gain discursive control enables a 'regime of truth' to be established – ie, a 'common sense' version of events that comes to be seen as self-evident and serves to marginalise or exclude other representations. Thus persuading teachers that they work in a 'learning community' in which they are 'empowered' and allowed to develop 'ownership' of the policies which they are expected to implement is a sound managerial strategy which serves to disguise the power dimension of the organisation. It strengthens the legitimacy of the leadership by representing policy and management in terms of democratic consultation, partnership and consensus. Against this background, it is very hard for teachers to find their own voice, far less to have it listened to, in an arena that will enable it to have any impact. Leaders who present themselves as benign change-agents using a rhetoric that makes great play of 'participation' are likely to be much more successful than those who simply invoke the authority of their formal status.

Whether this is, in the words of Bacon, a 'false and improper imposition of words' or a legitimate way of trying to cope with the uncertainties and confusions of the post-modern world, might be a matter for debate. But, however it is interpreted, it is important to note the wider political context within which all this is happening. This is an age of public relations experts, spin doctors whose function is to present 'reality' in a particular way, an exercise that involves the skilful manipulation of language and media images, the leaking of information and mis-information, the promotion, destruction and rehabilitation of political and professional reputations. Witness the rise, stumble and rise of Chris Woodhead.

Presentation becomes all-important. 'Reality' becomes malleable, another commodity that can be packaged and marketed. What emerges is an Orwellian world in which words mean something other than that which they ostensibly denote. Thus 'guidelines' are, in fact, mandatory; 'empowerment' involves taking on additional responsibilities without additional power; 'ownership' requires unreflective acquiescence in the face of central directives; and 'consultation' is a process to be managed rather than a source of insight. In all of this the notion that education has something to do with knowledge, truth and understanding becomes a naive anachronism.

It will be apparent by now that the present writer subscribes to the sceptical school of management represented by writers such as Furnham (author of *The Psychology of Managerial Incompetence)* and Burrell (author of *Pandemonium: Towards a Retro-Organization Theory*). The value of certain forms of management thinking for educational institutions has been oversold and, fortunately, there is a growing awareness of some of its weaknesses. For example, the jargon associated with Human Resource Management (HRM) and Total Quality Management (TQM) is increasingly subject to criticism (see, Fitz 1999). The mantra of so-called management gurus - terms like commitment, flexibility, excellence, integration, transformation, continuous improvement - is recognised as offering a simplistic solution to highly complex problems. It is no accident that people speak of the 'cult' of managerialism - implying a naive faith, gullible followers and charismatic leaders concerned as much with their own power as with the enlightenment of their audience. Certain forms of managerial discourse have outlived their usefulness - the 'macho' variety of the 1980s and its 'spiv Del-boy' successor which offered to credit-rate and certificate students with an ease that rested uncomfortably with claims of quality. More subtle forms are now in evidence - thus the emergence of emotional management and the appeal of learning communities, the latter implying a collegiality of approach to counteract the less attractive aspects of private corporate culture invading the educational world.

Discourses are constantly developing in response to internal and external pressures coming from ideological, economic, political, professional and institutional forces. This means that the language in which educational policies are expressed is subject to constant adjustment and refinement - examples would be the successive formulations of the National Curriculum in England and Wales and higher still in Scotland. In higher education, staff in the UK are currently having to come to terms with the notion of 'benchmarking' as a way of trying to ensure comparability of standards across institutions teaching similar subjects for the same level of award. This exercise, at one level, is a sensible attempt to respond to the move towards a mass system of higher education taught within a highly diversified range of institutions. At another level, it represents a victory for the educational bureaucrats of the Quality Assurance Agency (QAA), and a dangerous move towards a centrally-directed national curriculum in higher education. There is considerable scope for the use of discourse analysis in deconstructing the documentation of QAA and the Funding Councils. For most senior managers in universities, the massive task of simply assimilating the contents of the daily directives which issue from these bodies ensures that critical interrogation is rarely possible. This may help to explain why someone like Sir Stewart Sutherland, Principal of Edinburgh University, has suggested that in recent years universities have failed to ask the right questions and, to that extent, have been complicit in their own containment (Sutherland, 1999). These examples reinforce the point made in the opening section about the need to locate the language/power configurations of particular institutions within the wider political/ideological context which frames them. The final section will attempt to summarise the ways in which the study of discourse can inform both micro and macro levels of analysis.

Text, Voice and Narrative

Both policy and management discourses can be considered at the simple level of 'text'. This involves looking at what is said, the central concepts and recurring metaphors that are employed, their clarity and consistency, their meaning for the audience or audiences to which they are directed, and the extent to which they relate to the stated purposes of the organisation. Text can be read 'on the lines' and 'between the lines': discursive threads can be elucidated and subjected to analysis. It is not enough, however, to confine the exercise to internal linguistic deconstruction. Gale (1999) points out that 'discourses produce texts as well as interpret them and they appeal to ideologies while also being informed by them' (p. 397). Attempting to explain the ideological context within which discourses are developed and come to dominance is an essential part of the process.

Management discourses can also be considered at the level of voice. Here the questions are: 'Whose account is being heard?' 'Is it an authentic voice based on real experience or an unconvincing application of half-understood management jargon to the world of education?' 'Is there scope for alternative voices, including minorities?' A comparison with feminist readings of history is instructive here. The dominance of male voices has been challenged and illuminating feminist readings of many fields of human endeavour are now available. Similar techniques need to be applied to the world of educational management in which the dominant voices remain those who exercise authority and have access to privileged knowledge (see Blackmore, 1996). Creating discursive space for the voices of classroom teachers to be heard is not easy, particularly in a climate where they are discouraged from straying from the tightly-defined territory mapped out for them by officialdom. But it is not impossible. There is major work to be done, both in initial teacher education and in continuing professional development, to counteract the negative effects of recent and current policies on teachers' perceptions of their potential contribution to policy development and management practice.

The voices which control the text are able to construct a 'narrative', a preferential account of what happens in organisations. It is usually a story of managerial success and organisational achievement which is hard to challenge, as the experience of 'whistleblowers' testifies. Failures are consigned to footnotes or explained as the result of circumstances beyond managerial control. The 'integrity' of the organisation and the 'credibility' of the management requires that counter-narratives are discredited - by, for example, being presented as the the misrepresentations or fabrications of disaffected employees. The highly contestable nature of many of the official narratives that are presented for public and professional consumption is disguised by the form in which they are written. 'Public policy documents . . . almost always conform to a generic structure that is 'written in such a way as to deny the politics of discourse'' (Gale, 1999, p. 400, quoting Yeatman, 1990, p. 160). Thus certain narratives become dominant and serve as the received wisdom of educational institutions and systems. Discourse analysis can help to expose the political character of official accounts of policy and challenge the ostensibly 'neutral' stance adopted by bureaucrats.

The interrogation of managerial discourse along the lines suggested takes the researcher beyond the particular institutional context in which the language appears. It opens up questions about the origins of dominant discourses, the way in which they have been promoted, the ideological climate which has enabled them to gain currency, and the groups which benefit from them. It re-instates the importance of theory in educational debate and lifts the head (and the spirit) above the mind-numbing routine and bureaucratic regulation that afflicts so many educational institutions. Finally, it challenges the claims to knowledge which managers and decision-makers assume and requires them to explain, justify and defend both their own position and the demands they make on others.

To the extent that these opportunities for discursive interrogation and the occupation of discursive space are seized, the possibility of beginning the counter-movement to the oppressive regimes of control, which have become a feature of educational systems in advanced societies, will be strengthened.

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