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Under new management: changing conceptions of teacher professionalism and policy in the further education sector

Farzana Shain & Denis Gleeson

Keele University

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Abstract

This paper examines the impact of recent changes in the structure and funding of Further Education following the 1992 Further and Higher Education (FHE) Act, on conditions of academic work for lecturers in the sector. In doing so it contributes to a debate on FE lecturers' work and professionalism in the managerial state (Clarke and Newman 1997) that has largely centred on schools. The paper assesses the impact of the shifting policy framework on FE lecturers' working practices and their identities at the local level by drawing on preliminary analysis of data from an ongoing ESRC funded research project, Changing Teaching and Managerial Cultures in FE (CTMC), undertaken at Keele. It outlines three different lecturer responses to changing conditions of work in FE; these are resistance, compliance and strategic compliance. The narratives presented in the paper suggest that changes are occurring in terms of what counts as being a 'good lecturer' in FE, through mediation of managerialist discourses that emphasize flexibility, reliability and competence. Though there is evidence of some incorporation of lecturers into this discourse, it is by no means complete or uncontested. Rather, residual elements of 'public sector' or 'old' professionalism are drawn on and reworked by lecturers through their practice in highly managerial and competitive contexts. This suggests patterns of deprofessionalization go hand in hand with patterns of professional reconstruction (Seddon 1997). The paper concludes with some tentative suggestions that strategic compliance may provide a basis for rethinking professionalism in the FE sector.

Introduction

Teacher's work in the current Further Education (FE) sector is undergoing reconstruction through processes of marketization and managerial control. With reductions in public funding to FE and increased competition between institutions for students, many lecturers have experienced reductions in their pay, security, academic freedom and job satisfaction accompanied by an increase in their workload. This coupled with widespread college insolvency, sporadic strike action and financial mis-management has, in a short period, turned FE into an industrial relations battlefield. A reported 15,000 lecturers (a fifth of the entire workforce) have been made redundant or retired early since colleges left local Authority control in 1993 (TES 12/09/98c); yet, FE remains unexplored research territory (though see Ainley and Bailey 1997, Randle and Brady 1997, Elliott 1996a, 1996b), when compared with wider media and research interest in HE and school sectors.

This paper focuses specifically on FE and examines the impact of changing conditions of academic work for teachers in this sector. It draws on preliminary analysis of data from the ESRC funded project Changing Teaching and Managerial Cultures in FE (CTMC) at Keele. This project investigates the impact of the 1992 Further and Higher Education Act (FHE) on teaching and managerial cultures in the FE sector through a local study of five colleges, and seeks to understand how the changes taking place in the structure and funding of Further Education (FE) impact and influence professional identities in the work place. This paper seeks to understand how teachers make sense of the changing conditions of their work and, in doing so, explores the usefulness of professionalism as a conceptual tool for understanding contemporary educational change.

School-based research on changing teachers work has so far revealed ambiguous and contradictory conclusions from assertions that professionalism under managerial conditions is being redefined in ways that work for teachers (Millett 1999), to those which suggest that we are entering a 'new age' of professionalism in a post-modern world (Hargreaves 1994). Other researchers discuss the complexities such as the organizational restructuring of educational institutions that simultaneously change teachers' identities (Mac An Ghail 1992, Menter *et al.* 1997). Though limited in scope, the available FE research also draws on different conceptualizations of professionalism. Randle and Brady (1997) argue, for example, that although teaching in FE is being deskilled and deprofessionalized, lecturers retain a commitment to 'public service' values and teacher autonomy that are fundamentally opposed to managerialism. Elliott (1996a), on the other hand, rejects professionalism in favour of a concept of the 'reflective practitioner' for understanding lecturers' work while Hodkinson (1995), argues for the retention of professionalism without accepting the exclusivity of a traditional view of a profession. He explores the uses and limitations of competence attributes towards a redefinition of professionalism, based on notions of personal effectiveness, critical autonomy and community.

Drawing on research from both schools and Technical and Further Education (TAFE) in Australia, Seddon (1997) has developed an analytical framework for understanding the changing conditions of lecturers work in managerial contexts. This work draws on a conceptualization of professionalism as a constitutive and regulatory discourse, or as a culture and a social practice of organizing individuals and institutions. This analysis reveals that 'public sector' concepts of teacher professionalism, which find expression in notions of service to community and teacher autonomy, are being challenged by market liberal reform committed to privatization and deregulation, and that new responses are called for. It also suggests that deprofessionalization proceeds alongside reprofessionalization as part of an ongoing 'politics of knowledge, power and social organization'. Seddon encourages researchers to consider the character and parameters of *preferred* forms of professional reconstruction that might be pursued through contemporary processes of educational change. In the course of this paper we take up and examine this approach.

Through a focus on FE this paper seeks to provide a clearer picture of the trends towards deprofessionalization and reprofessionalization in highly managerial and competitive contexts. It is informed by recent work that has explored the relationship between managerialism and the re-definition of professionalism in the managerial state (Clarke and Newman 1997, Seddon 1997). The paper is divided into three sections. The first outlines the policy context of Further Education that provides the backdrop for the changes in lecturers work. The next section draws on ongoing research from the CTMC project to assess the impact of this shifting policy framework on lecturer reactions to change at the local level. The final section discusses the implications of lecturer responses to change in the context of wider debate about lecturers' work and their professionalism.

Background: The changing context of Further Education

The 1992 Further and Higher Education (FHE) Act granted FE institutions their independent corporate status. Colleges are now corporations governed by non-elected boards drawn mainly from business and industry. The Further Education Funding Council (FEFC) was initiated by the Government with the task of ensuring the 'adequacy' and 'sufficiency' of provision in the sector. It also assumed responsibility for Inspections previously performed by HMI, and for the funding and strategic control (though not curriculum) of colleges, previously the domain of the LEA (McFarlane 1993). Despite an increase in autonomy, FE colleges are in reality controlled by central government principally through the FEFC's funding mechanism (Randle and Brady 1997). The new funding formula, based on the principle of 'more for less', means that funds may be 'clawed back', if colleges fail to meet targets, retain students or if students fail to successfully complete courses. The FEFC is, therefore, a crucial agency in the new management of FE in terms of funding, inspection and quality control.

The framework of Incorporation was laid in the 1988 Educational Reform Act (ERA) which initiated the process of removing LEA control over School and Post Compulsory education by delegating financial and managerial control to governing bodies of colleges. It also determined the composition of FE college governing bodies with a requirement of a minimum of 50% business and industry representation, and a maximum of 20% local authority representation. (Elliott 1996b). Moreover, the shift towards competence-based assessments dates back to the establishment of the NVQ framework in 1986 (Ainley and Bailey 1997, Hodkinson 1995). Incorporation and marketization of FE cannot, therefore, be understood without reference to wider educational reforms, including the sustained attack on public sector professionalism from the late 1970s, and the shift towards managerial control of teachers work in the 1980s.

Shifting discourses of professionalism

In the 20th century, professionalism became the basis of teacher regulation located in shifting state-teacher relations (Grace 1995). In the immediate post-war period, the shortage of qualified teachers, the public demand for increased educational opportunity and the strength of organized labour placed teachers in school and FE in a strong market position and permitted teachers to defend their licensed autonomy gained earlier (Dale 1989). In the 1950s and 60s these factors combined to strengthen claims for teacher autonomy and to force the state to maintain the rhetoric of indirect rule, partnership and professionalism. However, with economic contraction and growing political instability, teachers came under increasing attack (Ozga 1995). Following Labour's election defeat in 1979 the momentum was taken up by Thatcherism and the new right, with its emphasis on traditional values, market discipline and the doctrine of tight fiscal controls of public expenditure (Avis *et al.* 1996). It was also during this period that a new discourse of education workers had been constructed, sparked by the Ruskin speech of 1976. In this speech, the then Labour Prime Minister,

James Callaghan, identified the teaching profession as complacent and as one that was not paying enough attention to skills and attitudes required to regain Britain's declining prosperity (Esland 1996). Thus, by the time Margaret Thatcher's new right government had been elected, images of teachers as self-serving and monopolistic professionals were already being reworked in common sense, to justify greater state control and regulation of education, and to remove barriers to consumer choice and corporate interest (Ranson 1994). In FE the assumption was that FE lecturers were overpaid and under hours, classic conditions deemed necessary for both restructuring FE and increasing levels of student participation, at little extra cost.

Over the past two decades, in a period of recession and unemployment (Friend and Metcalf 1982), this reassertion of control has been achieved through direct state intervention in school and FE while, 'paradoxically', leaving education to market forces. This 'free market/strong state' approach to crisis management (Gamble 1988) can be seen in the 1988 ERA and the 1992 FHE Act. ERA introduced a series of measures which 'marketized' Education while, simultaneously, reclaiming central control through the National Curriculum and Assessment, thereby marking the end of teachers' curricular autonomy (Dale 1989). The Act introduced formula funding, local management of schools (LMS) and encouraged schools to obtain Grant Maintained Status (GMS), by 'opting out' of local authority control. This was further encouraged in the 1992 FHE Act, granting independent incorporated status to the FE sector. Education and training reforms enacted by successive governments since 1979, have thus had two different but related objectives (Esland 1996). The first is economic in attempting to meet the demands from employers for a more vocationally relevant curriculum and assessment system, as part of the task of preparing young people for the flexible workforce of the 1980s and 1990s. The second, politically connected with the ambitions of the new Right, is concerned with the necessity to attack and replace the cultural and ideological basis of education, to destroy its potential for undermining the free-market economy. Successive education reform in both schools and FHE has '... substantially redrawn the lines of responsibility and accountability which have led to greatly increased regulation of professional workers and intensification of workloads (Esland 1996: 48).

Central to the processes of regulation and intensification is the discourse of *managerialism* that has pervaded the new management of FE in an attempt to elicit the compliance of FE lecturers in new modes of control over their work. Ostensibly, managerialism has been introduced into FHE and the public sector in general as a rational process, linked with new principles of funding, efficiency and professional-ism. A number of features of managerialism have been outlined in recent research (Pollitt 1990, Fergusson 1994, Clarke and Newman 1997) which associate its economic rationalism with ulterior motives. These include on the one hand, its control over professionals, by reasserting 'management's right to manage'. On the other, it conveys the notion that good management resides only in the private sector and by implication, that the public sector is characterized by liberalism and dogged sloth. This 'economizing of education' brings with it the discipline of the market into the workplace, and the legitimizing language that goes with it (Kenway 1994). Through its discourse of Human Resources Management (HRM) and Total Quality Management (TQM) such 'economizing' represents a powerful mechanism for both the internalisation of control, and surveillance of professionals and others. Another controlling feature is the way in which managerialism turns professionals, who might otherwise be resistant to loss of professional autonomy into managers, 'by giving them budgets or by setting them adrift as quasi-autonomous business units' (Hoggett, cited in Avis 1996:109). In schools and FHE this has led to a shift in the locus of control from the centre to the local college site with power invested in the Principal as Chief Executive responsible for the self-regulating institution.

In addressing such issues, the next section explores the impact of this shifting policy framework for the local context of FE through the accounts of staff in the CMTC project. Fieldwork was conducted over a 15-month period from January 1997 to March 1998 in five colleges. The colleges varied in terms of

size and provision, internal structures and management styles. In each institution, semi-structured interviews were conducted with a cross-section of 20-25 individuals including principals, governors, 'middle' and senior managers, lecturers, union officials and support staff on a range of issues relating to their work in the colleges. This paper draws mainly, though not exclusively, on lecturer interviews. In addition, documentary data from the colleges was analysed and observations were recorded where possible of key meetings (strategic planning, management and sector meetings). The lecturers interviewed were drawn from a variety of backgrounds in terms of age, experience, responsibilities, gender and length of service. Though each institution was subject to different geographical, educational, business and labour market conditions, we have sought to illuminate different narratives, which express recurring themes among participants across the colleges. Our approach attempts to capture and analyse the professional work of a small group of lecturers as they mediate FE reform at college level. We have endeavoured to analyse such data in terms of the wider policy context outlined above, which connects managerialism with the identities and experiences of professionals 'on the ground'. Thus, any claims made for the authenticity of this study reside less in conventional notions of representatives and more in the qualitative complexities of analysing changing professional and managerial cultures in the fractured environment of the FE workplace. The next section then explores the changing conditions of lecturers' work in the new management culture of FE.

Lecturers work and 'new management' cultures in FE

Changing conditions of work

Incorporation and marketization has reconstituted colleges as autonomous education and training enterprises. New funding arrangements and independence from local authority control has intensified competition between colleges and other providers including schools and universities, encouraging college management teams towards a greater market share and competitive advantage. Effective 'facilities management' (FEFC1998) has been one such area, in encouraging competitive bidding for students, resources and funding in areas of defined local and national need. In addition to marketing campaigns, college budgets are spent on improving the physical or corporate appeal of colleges to attract new clients. As a consequence the physical appearance of many colleges has changed radically in the immediate post incorporation period. One of the case study colleges in the project, Oldhill College, spent vast sums of money on refurbishing the foyer, cafeteria, IT facilities, investing in new desks, chairs and uniforms for support staff in corporate colours. There had been reports that uniforms were planned for lecturing staff but following the then Principal's departure, this policy was not pursued. The other case study colleges also spent sums of money though with less impetuosity on facilities management with a view to updating their facilities in order to attract students. According to one manager in Westgate College- an advocate of reform- this had given the college a 'new professional air':

This college has had to wake up. It has had to realise that nobody will bail it out if it goes under. It has had to develop a professional air which in some areas [the lecturers] still don't have. They still have the view that, 'I'm the teacher and the student must put up with it'. In the main there is a growing feeling of professionalism. Now we are front of house. We look as smart as we can. We attempt to be as professional to our public as we can; we have a frontage ... We have set up a new personnel office and new finance office, whereas we relied on the LEA before. (Monica: Manager, Westgate College)

In such accounts 'professional' is used as a noun or adjective that is uncoupled semantically from professionalism to denote 'the business of FE,' in terms of efficiency and reliability, and a nonsense anti-intellectualism (Ainley and Bailey 1997). In this 'new' discourse of professionalism, skill is given priority over knowledge and compliance over judgement (Hoyle 1995); essentially, being a professional is associated more with a pre-determined product and brand image than with

pedagogy. In such circumstances teachers are expected to be competent (Hodkinson 1995) and, above all, 'flexible':

The curriculum changes quite a lot and I am sure will continue to change even more. ... If you are a teacher, part of being a teacher means you have to be flexible and you have got to respond to your pupil/student demands. You have got to be student led haven't you? I do think incorporation has brought some good things such as being more customer led; you do what the student wants. In the past the student had to sit there and take what you as a college were prepared to do for them. I think it has given far more flexibility, particularly to adults wanting to go into higher education. (Harvey: lecturer, Oldhill College)

Critics argue that this dominant discourse of professionalism in the FE sector distracts attention from poor working conditions 'back of house' for lecturers, that also lead to greater work intensification (Elliott 1996a, Randle and Brady 1997, Ainley and Bailey 1997). This new discourse of professionalism is used to elicit the compliance and consent of lecturers for reduced conditions of employment. The old Silver Book agreement in FE was dismantled in 1993 and a new flexible contract replaced by the then College Employers Forum (CEF). The Silver Book agreement was regarded by many Principals as inflexible and over-generous, giving lecturers and unions too much power. Central government, via the FEFC, intervened by threatening to 'hold back' £ 50 million from college funds if they failed to introduce more flexible contracts, based on the CEF model. New contracts that included reduced vacation time, increased teaching hours, no limit on teaching and lower pay, replaced the Silver Book agreement almost overnight, creating widespread industrial action by FE lecturers. The new contracts were offered to existing staff with financial inducements and pressure applied through continued pay freeze for those who elected still not to sign. Finally, the remaining recalcitrant staff were threatened with dismissal. In the current FE sector, colleges operate with varying pay and conditions and, where budgets are devolved to sector level, there can be differences within colleges and even within sectors. In some colleges, support staff under new arrangements can be contractually required to teach up to eight hours. At Eastward, all staff are encouraged to teach, including the principal, support staff and technicians. This step is viewed by many lecturers as 'lecturing on the cheap' and indicative of an increasingly casualized and deprofessionalized FE sector.

In addition to new contracts, the cost driven and managerialist agenda of the FEFC - enshrined in 'more for less' - has led to more colleges making economies around staff pay and conditions. This has resulted in widespread redundancies, short-term contracts and re-hiring of part-time staff on less advantageous contracts. FE has a long history of employing casualized labour on termly or yearly contracts, but casualization became institutionalized with new funding methodologies and is now mirrored in the recently established private employment agency, Education Lecturing Services, (ELS), which offers colleges a sub-contracted lecturing services. ELS are also recognized as the approved supplier by the CEF and AoC. Lecturers are technically self-employed, although ELS deducts tax, and National Insurance, and do not receive rights of employment that the FEFC paid colleges £ 11 million to implement. Today ELS services 200 FE colleges. In a recent report by the TUC, FE employees are highlighted as one of most casualized workforces in Britain with more than half of FE lecturers employed on some form of casual contract (*FENow*, 02/98 p. 3). Although none of the colleges in this study employed staff through ELS or other similar agencies, Westgate had recently reduced its part-time rates to the same as those of ELS. Incoming lecturers were appointed on a four-point scale starting at between £ 11,000 and £ 13,000, and ending on £ 14,000- £ 16,000, which is fast becoming the norm in many colleges, and which compares unfavourably with school teaching.

The effects of this growing casualization and reduced conditions of work are, however, felt across all the colleges in the study, where reorganization and the threat of redundancy have become integral features of college life. At Oldhill over 200 redundancy notices had been issued due to financial problems encountered by the college. This had a significant impact on the culture of the organization. Increasingly as staff left, they were not replaced, resulting in increased workloads for remaining staff. With the threat of further redundancies, many staff felt that they were not in a position to argue for improved conditions of work. Ingrid, for example, in her mid-twenties, and

'chronically underpaid' to use her words, was already the third most experienced member of staff in her section due to a rapid turnover of staff. She explains here that despite taking on an extra group, her fear of potential redundancy discouraged her from seeking help:

We have all been very stressed; really it has been incredible the amount of stress we have been under. I have personally felt very stressed because I have had twice the number of second year groups I should have. The way the course works is that each student produces sixty-five pieces of course work over the two years and these pieces of course work have to be marked so each group has a tutor who marks their work. ... Come last September, the person who had the group opposite mine left, which meant that this group was without a tutor and I was asked if I would step in as a stop gap, which I did. It was muttered that there would be help with the marking but help with the marking never appeared and a replacement tutor also never appeared, so I have ended up with two groups. With everything else that has gone on again it is something you don't really feel you can make too much of a fuss about, because they might decide to get rid of you altogether. (Ingrid: lecturer, Oldhill college)

Her account reveals the potential abuse of staff as one consequence of insecurity within the new management culture of FE. At Northway too, redundancies had been announced, but only a third were carried out. For Wendy this situation produced a mixture of relief and growing realization of the disciplinary power of the new 'macho' management culture in the college. In her account she talks of the impact this experience has had on her own practice:

The stress and the unnecessary aspect of it I think is the most distressing: ... is that management have made this decision and caused people that suffering and then in the end it was all for nothing, you do actually start to get paranoid and you think is this a deliberate strategy. Is it deliberate power assertive techniques? Are they succinctly saying "We can do this? We can do this to you" and you know people begin to think like that. It seems like it is [...] very macho ... yes, for the sake of it. Using power for the sake of it to keep people in their place and it works; it works because people have been terrified these last few weeks that they are going to lose their jobs. Even though people in my team and in [my department], are safe ... you don't just think to yourself - well I am all right; phew, I am all right? I don't have to worry. You don't actually think like that; you know that it could easily have been you and it does have the effect that the next time a memo comes asking you to do something you make damn sure you do it by the deadline, if not before. It is not a very nice atmosphere (Wendy: lecturer, Northway college)

Teachers' work and working practices are also being restructured in other ways under managerialist control. A number of features of teachers' work have been highlighted by critics of reform, as posing a threat to lecturers autonomy and control of the teaching process (Elliott 1996, Randle and Brady 1997). These include:

- Competence based assessment that reconstructs the lecturer as trainer or assessor - it's over prescriptive nature, it has been argued is designed to introduce new forms of control over lecturers (Hodkinson 1995, Randle and Brady 1997);
- The shift to flexible IT-based learning when delivered by instructor or technicians rather than qualified teachers, threatens the expertise of the FE teacher and raises questions about the ownership of intellectual property;
- The re-definition of quality from one based on process to outcome, measured by performance indicators or outcomes based primarily around recruitment, retention rates and exam results;
- Increased monitoring and surveillance of teachers through internal and external control mechanisms including FEFC inspections, self-assessment, teacher appraisal, observation, increasingly through student and employer evaluation forms- based primarily around the student and employer as both customer and consumer; and
- Competition between FE, schools, TECs, private trainers and employers which drive down teacher and student unit costs, with subsequent knock on effects for teacher autonomy and professionalism.

FE teachers are historically susceptible to the effects of such conditions since more than a third do not have a recognised teaching qualification (Young 1995). Moreover, the voluntaristic and entrepreneurial legacy of FE, including a pervading culture of teacher instrumentalism - (as engineers, architects, nurses or horticulturists *in teaching*) - has further contributed to the deprofessionalization of FE teachers in contrast with their counterparts in schools (Lee 1964,

Venables 1967, 1974, Tipton 1971, Gleeson and Mardle 1980). Such conditions have made FE teachers vulnerable to market and vocationalist tendencies which predate incorporation but which have more recently been overtaken by market and funding led reform. According to Randle and Brady (1997) such conditions explain the recent polarisation between managers and teachers over differences between market and pedagogic values.

The deprofessionalisation of the lecturer is a direct outcome of government strategy within the FE sector.... Lecturers continue to fight to maintain control over their labour process to counter both deskilling and the degradation of work and a radical deterioration in their conditions of employment. Together these can be seen to represent the deprofessionalization and the consequent 'proletarianization' of this occupational group. That the traditional weapon of proletarians, the strike, has been employed with increasing regularity serves to both underline the degree to which lecturers are coming to terms with their changing status and the limitations of traditional forms of professional control within the sector. (Randle and Brady 1997: 136)

Although the CTMC project produced evidence of growing work dissatisfaction and even demoralisation among some lecturers, talk of proletarianization or the effectiveness of industrial action is premature. Such analysis is based on the assumption that lecturers share a set of common values (based on public sector professionalism, i.e. teachers as defenders of pedagogy) that are opposed to managers values (based on managerialism, i.e. managers as promoters of the market). The problem with this sort of analysis is that lecturers in FE have historically been internally stratified according to divisions of skill, age, gender, ethnicity, expertise and class. The difference *now* is that the new managerialism today is able to exploit these existing divisions, but it is not new. Unity and unionism cannot, however, be assumed as an automatic consequence of deskilling or strike action. The assumption, for example, that 'newer' managers uncritically share the goals and values of managerialism is also subject to scrutiny. As we have indicated elsewhere, Gleeson and Shain (1999), some of these 'newer' managers (with roots in teaching) retain commitments to educational values that draw on public sector professionalism, and operate strategically to ensure their staff are protected within the new management culture of FE. Similarly, as the next section argues, lecturers position themselves within, and respond differentially to, new management cultures - some comply willingly, and a majority, we argue, are more *strategic* in their approach rejecting some aspects of the reform agenda, while accepting others in informing their practice. This suggests that a more complex reading of polarization is required, as Seddon and Brown (1997) in their study of TAFE in Australia, point out:

Despite reform advocates' glowing pictures and critics' bleak assessments, there are no simple relationships between contemporary reform and teachers work. Rather, decentralisation and marketization drive diverse responses, shifting the patterns of educational provision and practice in ways that are, in most cases, extraordinarily double edged. Neither advocates nor critics of reform capture this complexity sufficiently. Each group is too quick to flag either the good or bad, the black or white, in reform without acknowledging that the contemporary changes in education bring both good and bad together in uncomfortable, and often confusing ways. Exciting developments in the application of technology in pedagogy and innovative assessment practices exist alongside and *because of* huge work intensification, casualization and the erosion of teachers working conditions (Seddon and Brown 1997: 6).

In support of this argument a range of research studies suggest that teachers do not simply receive policy as empty vessels (Ball 1994); rather they filter policies of reform and change through their existing professional ideologies and perspectives. This produces different strategies or adaptations in the teacher workforce that range from willing compliance with new policy to resistance and rejection (Mac An Ghaill 1992, Troman 1997, Gewirtz 1997). In presenting the teacher responses, it is not our intention to suggest that they are fixed, static or in any way exhaustive; rather, we wish to illuminate how different responses (in this case *resistance and rejection; compliance and strategic compliance*) arise from ambiguities and contradictions in the FE workplace. It is to this issue that we now turn.

Teacher responses: shifting work identities

Rejection and resistance

A small but core group of lecturers in this study were extremely critical of the new reforms in FE. They found it difficult to identify with any positive aspect of Incorporation. In rejecting markets and competition, they expressed a wish to return to the 'old days' of FE, the existence of which is questionable (Gleeson and Mardle 1980). Such lecturers predominantly established contract staff had often been in service for 10- 20 years. Refusal to abandon the Silver Book agreement was their main way of expressing their resistance. Change was filtered through an existing commitment to 'old' public sector professionalism in defence of pedagogy (Randle and Brady 1997). This discourse enabled them draw on key values (reward for expertise; FE as a public service, adequately resourced; professional autonomy) as a defence against changed rules of funding, deregulation and managerialism. Their anger and frustration is vented against managers who are viewed as corporate 'go-betweens', between the enterprise state and FE lecturers. In the following account, it is the Principal who is identified as refusing to offer David a pay rise:

It is about this stupid image colleges have of themselves that they think they are a company making a profit to sell their goods and compete for markets. It is about incorporation really and, the fact that we have now got a Governing Body made up of more than 50% of industrialists who think that Further Education is a business, but it is not. It is a public service and it just has to be paid for in the proper way, so I would like to get back to the old days. I don't mind working harder but I must be paid for it ... We have got to get rid of the markets. We have got to stop competing with other colleges. That is extremely inefficient. We have got to dispose of some of the wasteful, I regard it as wasteful anyway, employment of managers who look after marketing and things like that in an educational establishment ... if the Principal left tomorrow I would probably wave a big flag because that is one of our problems. He himself is one problem ... even though he claims that it is not his fault that some committee decides salaries. But to my mind this is the guy who is not prepared to pay me any more than 1993 prices. (David: lecturer, Eastward College)

Potential new recruits were actively discouraged from entering FE by David and other colleagues:

Oh, forget it. Don't; and that is a shame. There are a lot of good people being lost to Further Education and schools. It is not just in Further Education that it is happening but at the moment don't go into it, definitely not. Wait and see what happens in the future. (Martin: Lecturer, Eastward College)

Those who had recently been forced to sign over to the new contract through threat of dismissal were considering new ways of expressing their resistance, principally by working to the letter of the contract and no more.

I think you do feel a certain loyalty towards the students which maybe was lost towards the college. I am sure that I try and do a decent weeks work but I think I have caught myself thinking things like, 'They are going to insist that I am on the premises for thirty seven hours'. Well I have done an extra week, an extra night invigilation this week, I am having an extra afternoon off, but I would now want to stick to the letter of my contract in a way that I wouldn't have done or didn't do in the first two or three years of service. (Anna: lecturer, Oldhill college)

The established contract staff were criticised by newer lecturers who had entered FE post-incorporation. Their criticisms, expressed in the following two accounts, are suggestive of an internalization of the dominant discourse of pre-incorporation FE lecturers, as being 'lazy' and 'complacent'. They also indicate that such lecturers have not moved with the times, and that managerial reform is able to exploit the divisions, which exist between, in this case, newer lecturers on flexible contracts and lecturers on old contracts of employment.

I think the members of staff that have been here for a long time are reasonably unhappy and disgruntled, cynical and unhappy with a lot of things ... but some new members. ... I mean this is my first real permanent job and I get paid very well for what I do ... the things that people moan about are really going back to something like ten years ago when we used not to work on a Monday morning and a Friday afternoon; and we just did twelve hours teaching and there was no preparation, and all that sort of stuff. Well those days have gone unfortunately, but if you don't like it then well go and get a job in industry, and they are not really rushing to do that. (Alan: lecturer, Eastward College)

This view is endorsed by Harvey:

... The people who moan generally about their lot are the old contract people who up until now had a very 'cushy number'. Most of them finished on June 30 and they only came back yesterday [September 1st]. They have been off for two months. Two months holiday. ... I suppose it could just be my perception of FE coming into it from the school sector. I can see that, even the people who are here now and

complain, say that "Yes before incorporation it was a cushy number". FE was always very well paid. The working conditions were very good. The hours that you actually taught were much shorter than they are now and the holidays were much greater than they are now. They see this as a wonderful golden period that they should go back to. I can't see that they can ever go back to it. I don't think that they should go back to it. I think some of the criticisms of the general public of teachers unfortunately has been aimed at people like that. (Harvey: lecturer, Oldhill College)

Both Alan and Harvey were not only critical of 'old contract' staff, they were also more willing to comply than other lecturers with new managerial reform agendas. There are, as we shall argue, different responses from newly appointed staff post-incorporation: those who willingly embrace the new enterprise culture of FE, and those who strategically bridge both old and new professional cultures. First, we turn to the 'compliers'.

Compliance

A section of recently appointed lecturers are more compliant toward the new enterprise culture of FE in that they are prepared to be flexible and identify real potential in the freedom which business values bring. For Alan who had taken the traditional part-time route into FE, his role promised creativity, autonomy and career development:

... when I came here to the PE department there was no extra curriculum sport. It was part of my job really to develop that area, to run teams and sporting activity and there just wasn't that going on at all. At my previous college all that was already in place and was well established. It was a big PE department and very well organized in terms of putting on activities. Coming here I could create something. I could do some thing. I could actually have an impact in terms of my development and career. I could say that when I came here there was nothing and look at what there is now. (Alan, lecturer, Eastward College)

Elsewhere in the interview Alan compared his role as a lecturer to that of a salesman, having to sell courses to people on induction evenings. A smart 'professional' appearance and enthusiasm are necessary for this job. For Harvey, an ex-primary teacher, flexibility is the key quality for teachers in FE today:

... I have a very mixed bag of a job. I don't have a clear role. I have actually realised, certainly in the last twelve months, that the less defined your role is it seems to be the safer you are or rather the more flexible you are. I have moved around in different educational sectors quite a lot and if you are prepared to chop and change without too much fuss, if people come to you and say "Would you mind being in the resource centre, sitting there all day and being a resource", and you want to do that and you are happy to do that, that is fine. Now they (management) have just decided that the college is going to provide additional support by doing team teaching. Now some people are up in arms about that. "I am not team teaching. I don't want to do that". My reaction is "Yes, no problem. What is the problem?" but I think that is partly because of my diverse background and that I have worked in team teaching in schools and I have had to manage my own classroom as a primary teacher and, as a primary teacher, you are involved in every curriculum area. (Harvey, lecturer, Oldhill college)

Though this strategy of compliance is linked to the need for job security, it also anticipates the changing 'new realism' of FE. In the context of what is seen as the bullying of staff by a previous Principal and, in the wider context of unemployment, this strategy of compliance constitutes part of a conscious strategy of 'not rocking the boat':

I came into the college on a new contract but most of the staff that were bullied were the old contract staff. A lot of the bullying was trying to get them to move onto the new contract. A lot of it went on at a middle management level, who were really bullied. Basically if you were flexible, again coming back to flexibility, if you were flexible and did what you were told and were prepared to just go along with whatever was going on in the college, and you didn't rock the boat, things were fine. (Harvey: lecturer, Oldhill College)

Though compliers have different reasons for complying, they are no less vulnerable to ongoing changes in FE than other colleagues. In adopting this response they, nevertheless, play a key role in supporting a technician and conservative view of FE teaching wherein compliance, flexibility and smart appearance, are often valued over and above independent judgement and skill (Hoyle 1995). Between a minority of such conservative compliers and disenchanted 'old timers' there exists, however, a wider constituency of lecturers, a majority of whom we call 'strategic compliers', and who

are more selective and strategic in their 'reading' and practice of the 'new FE'. It is to this group that we now turn.

Strategic compliance

The vast majority of lecturers in the CTMC project were critical of some aspects of reform but accepting of others. Flexible learning, for example, was viewed as a positive option as long as it was not resourced 'on the cheap'; that is, through unqualified learning assistants in place of qualified lecturers, replacing direct contact teaching. These teachers draw on residual elements of public sector professionalism which is reworked in the current context to inform their practice. Of primary importance is the need to ensure that students receive a quality education within the constraints of the current system. The notion of quality is subject to competing definitions that are reflective of a tension between the 'new' official managerial discourse of professionalism and 'old' public sector professionalism. Wendy (Northway College), for example, outlines the difference between managerial definition and lecturer definition in her college. Her account is also suggestive of the way in which the managerialist definition contributes to a climate of monitoring and surveillance of lecturers' performance against narrow performance indicators:

Wendy: Quality is defined in ways by management which are completely different from how teaching staff would define quality, and there is an awful lot of resentment about this. As teachers who are doing the teaching, dealing with the students every day, we know what constitutes quality. We know that if we spend five minutes marking an essay the student is going to get lower quality feedback, than if we spend twenty minutes marking it. We know that if our time for preparation and marking is cut then we are only going to be able to mark two essays a term instead of four or five. We know that that is what constitutes quality as a part of it. There are other things as well but these are just examples of what is not being acknowledged. We know that if we have got twenty five students in a class there is no way that we can spend the same amount of time giving each one individual attention.... There is this kind of smoke screen that we can somehow maintain quality because quality is a very high-profile word in all of this.

FS: So how are management defining it in your view?

Wendy: Well purely statistically in terms of achievement figures. Each course team leader like myself recently had to see their Head of School individually to review our results from last year and to get an action plan to improve on these results.

Strategic compliers identify much more with their sector than with the college or institution. Indeed there is strong evidence of a growing sector identity with some lecturers talking of being in 'small pockets' (Pam: lecturer, Oldhill College), derived from devolved budgeting and related work intensification. Though common staff rooms still exist, there is less time for lecturers to socialise with colleagues outside their sector during break times. Breaks are increasingly being taken in busy work-rooms in which work related issues are discussed. Such sector identity is further encouraged where devolved budgets are in operation, thereby avoiding potential conflict between sectors or schools or, as Hargreaves (1994) refers to it, as 'balkanization'. Where sectors are working with tightly devolved budgets the need to recruit and retain students is perceived as integral to the survival of the sector, (though in reality 'less successful' sectors are often effectively subsidized, causing further conflict and resentment from lecturers in 'successful' sectors). In some instances this can lead to students being given inappropriate advice and recruited onto courses for which they are not suited. In this context, William a 'newer' lecturer in the Westgate General Education department, identifies this practice as morally wrong and outlines his own approach:

... I don't want to use the words foot soldier because it is such a cliché. But I see myself as a teacher in a class room. When we have consultation days with potential students, I talk to them about my courses and what

We do, and then if they have expressed 'Well this isn't it'. I say 'Well there is always Oldhill College'. I have said 'Well have you tried Oldhill' because I take the ethos that is not competition really. It is a supply of services. It depends what your strategy is isn't it. I want that person not to waste a year 'prattling around' on my course if they should be doing something else and in essence, I think I lost three students. In fact I never had them so I never lost them. Put it this way, I directed three students to other courses because, having spoken to them and looked at their grades they would have wasted their time. I think that would be morally wrong. (William: lecturer, Westgate College)

Although working within a competitive framework, William's commitment to students, in ensuring that they are not inappropriately placed, is both strategic and moral in his terms. His colleagues, who work together in other ways to ensure a genuine commitment to widening participation in FE., adopt other strategies to achieve their objectives. Debra and her sector head Mike, for example, identified a community need for a course that would not normally be considered financially viable within the FEFC framework. Accepting that they could not work outside the framework in recording units of resource, they found alternative ways of ensuring participation for a group of parents:

Debra: I know it is on tape but we are fiddling stuff all the time so that what looks like one thing will actually go down as another thing, so that such people can have the education that they are entitled to, and that it will look right on an account sheet as well.

FS: Can you give me an example of when you have had to do that?

Debra: Well, yes. I am teaching a course at the [****]Centre. Now these are parents who have got really difficult children who have been withdrawn but not excluded from mainstream schools. At this stage in the year they are mainly new parents. . . . They come on this course with a sort of attitude, not attitude problems but really quite angry and we are doing a programme for them. The whole idea of the course is to get them talking, to make them feel more comfortable and to then start exploring ways in which they can actually help their children. There is no written course that exists that will do that; no qualification exists that will do that and an hour a week is enough for them; an hour a week isn't worth doing financially, but any way that is beside the point. We can make it worth doing by stretching it over two terms because you don't pick up anything unless it is twenty hours so we will be doing that for two terms, so that satisfies them (FEFC) . . . but we have to think about that all the time. It might be that five weeks would suit them but five week courses just don't show up as anything on the books - then what do you put the course down as? Well we are calling it Adult Basic Education, which really and truly is literacy and numeracy but it is also Adult Basic Education in my book because it is basic communication skills. So it is all that kind of thing where you are sailing very close to the wind sometimes' but internally you are doing the very best for the community. The greatest good for the greatest number of people kind of thing, and the accountants up there just want neat rows and columns.

For strategic compliers the ethos of competition does not preclude cooperation or effective networking with colleagues and other institutions. Mike, the Sector head, for example, encourages his staff to take an active role in forums and discussion groups that involves meeting and working collaboratively with colleagues from comparative institutions. As a result there is a growing culture of collaboration within an overall competitive framework which allows Westgate and Oldhill General Education sections to share resources and write courses together. Debra explains the significance of this initiative in the local context where Oldhill had traditionally adopted a fiercely competitive approach under its previous management regime - one that had previously excluded the possibility of collaboration with other providers. Strategic compliers are, as Debra explains, more likely to take the initiative, bend rules and network better than straight compliers or 'old timers'.

Debra: I went to a family planning project meeting one Friday and I got chatting to the lecturer that does my job in Oldhill and, this sounds awful, but I realised that she was a perfectly nice human being because this is the other thing. I mean Oldhill have been monsters, talk about folk demons and whatever they are called. She is a person doing the same job as me under the same constraints and perfectly prepared to share ideas and possibly resources, if I can get hold of her next time.

In addition to collaborating with Westgate the Oldhill General Education section also began collaborating with the LEA and local schools, who were seen as competitors under the previous Principal's regime. Pam explains why she views this as a positive approach:

I feel quite positive about it actually. I think it makes a lot of sense. There is no point in having two sets of adult education provision in one area and it means that we get the chance to work with an organization which is also meeting the needs of youth and community development. It looks at a much more holistic view of what a community needs whereas a college, by its nature, by its funding nature, only looks at its own personal interests at what a community needs. It never ever can be a community educator really. It looks to see what it can make money out of (Pam: lecturer, Oldhill College)

Again the lecturers here adopt a strategic view whereby they are able to offer 'alternative' measures within the system, to ensure that quality education is provided to a range of students. The regaining of ownership of enrolments is another such area. Under the previous Principal's regime this aspect of teachers' work was centralized resulting in a situation where that students were not always guided onto appropriate courses. Such was the inefficiency of centralization that, on one occasion, over 100 students had failed to be invited by central services to interview from a local school. When the

college later got into financial difficulty over recruitment and retention rates, lecturers saw this as a way of regaining the initiative. With the appointment of a new sector head, a School Liaison post was created. The first task of the liaison officer was to compile a report outlining the drawbacks of adopting a centralized approach (couched in appropriate managerial and FEFC language associated with student participation). The new Principal took an active interest and allowed the sector to develop its own approach. It was also opportune for both staff and the principal (who was in first year of post), to initiate change at this particular time.

... under the previous Principal we had a system whereby teaching staff were no longer able to interview their students. We had people who were appointed to roles as study supervisors with an administration assistant, who then interviewed our students for us. We then ended up with this group of people in our class that - I am not going to say we hadn't handpicked - but maybe in some cases the right questions hadn't been asked ... General Education had gone out on a limb. What we actually do is hold an information evening once a month so anybody who is interested in any of our courses can come along. As part of that information session you get a 'one to one' and we then don't have anything after that by way of an interview. People then know a face and a name and I think that is fairly important, but at one point in time we weren't allowed to do that. (Maria: lecturer, Oldhill College)

Two further examples indicate the various ways in which teachers strategically cooperate, share and make the best use of scarce resources in often competitive and under-funded circumstances. Though often sceptical of the way IT Learning Resource Centres have become used - as a way of 'warehousing' large numbers of students in response to staffing cuts - many lecturers remain committed to new thinking about learning and IT. The sector in Maria's institution, for example, continued to make use of IT and resource-based learning where teaching hours had been cut, and where teachers accepted this was non-negotiable. When students were unable to make use of the resource centre and lecturer time, lecturers prepared additional materials for students to take away

... all of the students have an induction into the resource centre and are encouraged to use it but many of them, particularly those that come to us in the evening, are people who hold down full time jobs as well, and time is a problem, but we do have resources that they can take away as well. I am quite happy to open up whatever I do to anything that is going to benefit the students. (Maria: lecturer, Oldhill college)

Similarly, teachers in the sector developed various schemes for sharing resources with one another in response to student need in ways which still acknowledged their own individual ownership of different styles of delivery:

What happens is we each have the syllabus and we each have the scheme of work, and then it is really up to individuals to deliver it how they want. We do share resources. For example, I have just produced my package on transition, moving a child from school and home to hospital, a multiple transition and I have given everybody a copy of that. If we do a handout and we think is good, we give it to other people or if we have got a task that went really well, we say how about trying this? It is very much an individual thing (Ingrid: lecturer, Oldhill college)

In the context of such limited examples the question arises: what does sharing and cooperation around diminishing resources tell us about the *meaning* of professionalism in the current reform agenda of FE? One response is that in reduced conditions of funding and increased teaching load, lecturers are more likely to share in the interests of time and self-preservation. Such a view would seem to legitimate market reform as delivering 'more for less', and to confirm the existence of slack in the system. Alternatively, a less cynical response suggests that something more interesting is going on, in the way teachers are redefining professionalism *in spite of rather than because of* official policy agendas. In conclusion we discuss the implications of this with reference to the ongoing and related processes of deprofessionalization and reprofessionalization in FE.

Reconstructing professionalism

The narratives presented in this paper suggest that changes are occurring in terms of what counts as being a 'good lecturer' in FE, through mediation of managerialist discourses that emphasise flexibility, reliability and competence. Though there is evidence of some incorporation of lecturers into this

discourse (*Compliance*), it is by no means complete or uncontested. Rather, residual elements of 'public sector' or 'old' professionalism are drawn on and reworked through lecturer practice in order to 'make sense of the changing conditions of work in managerial and competitive contexts.

The responses across the colleges in this study are diverse but the vast majority of lecturers interviewed were strategically compliant in their approach to their work. The main element of this response suggests a commitment to ensuring that students receive a 'quality' education based on a definition of quality through *process*, rather than just output measures. This has encouraged lecturers in some sectors to share resources and place emphasis on developing collaborative modes of work within highly competitive environments. This growing climate of collaboration operates across colleges though, at this stage, it is contained within particular sectors and not others. There also exists apparent support for this growing atmosphere of collaboration at both local and national levels. At the local level, recently appointed Principals proclaim that they are working towards collaboration as far as possible within conditions of low morale and an overall competitive framework. At the national level, this move towards partnership and collaboration has been underwritten by commitments in the Dearing Report (1996), Kennedy Report (1997) and more recently the Hodge report (1998). One way of interpreting this emphasis on collaboration within competition, is to view it as yet another form of control that reflects a 'lighter touch' HRM policy towards the management of education work and of educational workers (FEFC 1998: 4). However, another possibility is to see it as a basis for re-thinking professionalism in the FE sector, as a way of raising new questions about the way in which professionalism can be reworked in *preferred ways*, based on the type of evidence generated in this paper.

Seddon (1997), for example, emphasises the way that 'liberal market reform in further education is changing the boundaries of professional practice, challenging occupational standards and reshaping the framework that connects education-work transitions, including broader articulations of power, knowledge and community in the wider politics of civil society'. But, she argues, to focus on deprofessionalization alone without paying attention to patterns of professional reconstruction is to be reactive, and to treat lecturers as victims of managerial reform. It is important, therefore, to recognize that the powerful 'reprofessionalizing' agendas that exist alongside deprofessionalizing processes influence new thinking, professional cultures and ideas in FE, and elsewhere. As Seddon argues:

Understanding professionalism as discourse provides a way of rethinking contemporary education change. It affirms a rich contextualization that invites us to look beyond processes of deprofessionalization and reprofessionalization in education to consider how education, the organization of educational work, and roles of educational workers in the social organization of knowledge and power, resources and recognition, might be reworked and to what ends. (p. 12)

Based on the evidence generated in this study we suggest that the response of strategic compliance can be 'read' as offering possibilities of such a reworking of professionalism by lecturers in preferred ways. Though we have taken care to emphasize the fluidity of responses, acknowledging that professionalism has different meanings in different contexts and for different people, there do appear to be core values that guide, in different ways, the routine practices of a majority of lecturers in our study. These as we have argued, include the commitment to student learning agendas with an emphasis on a particular model of quality that is defined through process rather than outcome, and a genuine commitment to widening participation that also recognizes the need for collaborative modes of work. Moreover, our research suggests that these values were already in place pre-Kennedy and Hodge and are not merely a reactive response to wider official policy agendas. Rather they have emerged via a complex process that involves the mediation of educational reform through existing professional ideologies and commitments.

Evidence from this study suggests then that strategic compliers are not 'artful dodgers' who comply for the sake of their 'own skins'. They display neither the retrospective disgruntlement of 'old timers' nor the astute self-interest of compliers. Thus, despite reports of wider evidence of polarisation, deprofessionalization and managerial control in FE (Kerfoot and Whitehead 1998), this study suggests that different professional cultures are also at work in the sector, which render prevailing deterministic and optimistic accounts of a rebirth professionalism in FE unreliable.

For us this emphasizes the complexity and variety of emerging professional cultures in the further education workplace. If trust and sharing of strategies can flourish in such a fractured environment as FE at this time, then this may help 'solve' one of the problems of market professionalism as promulgated by indirect rule, that is, its *individualism* (Hodkinson 1995). It could also be argued that as lecturers become more aware of these processes of identity reconstruction it may enable them to think critically and reflexively (Elliot 1996a), allowing them to develop priorities and professional possibilities in new ways. From the accounts presented in this paper it would seem that education commitment to students and their learning agendas is the main area in which FE teachers are likely to gain professional credibility as FE recovers from a period of mismanagement, industrial action, sleaze and low morale. If, as Ranson (1994) argues, future resources of professionalism reside in the communities which professionals serve, this offers FE an opportunity to respond beyond the present narrow confines of market and managerial reform. It may also provide meaning and substance to the elusive concept of *lifelong learning* at college level which to date remains more rhetorical than real.

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