

January 1983

Carpenters or Cabinet-Makers : The Developing Role of Teachers in Urban Society

Crispin Jones
University of London Institute of Education

Follow this and additional works at: <https://ro.ecu.edu.au/ajte>



Part of the [Education Commons](#)

Recommended Citation

Jones, C. (1983). Carpenters or Cabinet-Makers : The Developing Role of Teachers in Urban Society. *Australian Journal of Teacher Education*, 8(2). <https://doi.org/10.14221/ajte.1983v8n2.4>

This Journal Article is posted at Research Online.
<https://ro.ecu.edu.au/ajte/vol8/iss2/4>

most in the social sciences, it does not allow a prediction on the basis of which we can interrogate nature in the Popperian sense. It is robust enough to encourage exploratory forays into the field in search of understanding and insight, not 'proof'. I do not anticipate tidy outcomes: anyone who has done qualitative fieldwork knows how unlikely that is. Kelly seems to have anticipated vaguely some concerns of current sociology. Fielding has linked this with a line of enquiry that has contemporary relevance. That is worth pursuing.

Bibliography:

- BERGER, P. and LUCKMAN, T. *The social construction of reality*. Harmondsworth; Penguin, 1971.
- COHEN, M. D., et al A garbage can model of organizational choice. *Administrative science quarterly*, 1972, 17(1) 1-25.
- GOFFMAN, E. *The presentation of self in everyday life*. Harmondsworth: Penguin, 1971.
- GRAY, H. C. *Management in education*. Driffield: Nafferton Books, 1980.
- HOLLAND, R., in BANNISTER, D. (ed) *Perspectives in personal construct theory*, London: Academic Press, 1970.
- KELLY, G. A. *The psychology of personal constructs*. New York: Norton, 1955.
- LACEY, C. in WOODS, P. *Teaching strategies*. London: Croom Helm, 1980.
- LEVERHUME ENQUIRY *Monographs 43-53*. Guildford, Surrey: Society for Research in Higher Education, 1982.
- LITLER, C. R. Understanding Taylorism. *British journal of sociology*. 1978, 2 (June), 185-202.
- PETTIGREW, A. M. *The politics of organizational decision making*. London: Tavistock, 1973.
- ROSS, A., et al An experiment in teacher education. *Research into higher educational monographs*. Guildford, Surrey: Society for Research in Higher Education, 1977.
- SHAW, K. E. Contraction and mergers. *Journal of education administration*. 1978, XVI(2) 212-218.
- SIMON, H. A. On the concept of organizational goal. *Administrative science quarterly*. 1964, 9, 1-22.
- SOCKETT, H. Researching educational futures. *Educational review*. 1981, 33(2), 97-103.
- STONIER, T. *The wealth of information*. London: Thames Methuen, 1983.
- WEICK, E. Educational organizations as loosely coupled systems. *Administrative science quarterly*, 1976, 21, 1-19.

Paper 2

CARPENTERS OR CABINET-MAKERS: THE DEVELOPING ROLE OF TEACHERS IN URBAN SOCIETY

Crispin Jones

University of London Institute of Education

Fielding's article is a brave attempt to make more systematic the present inchoate organisational structures by which we train and in-service educate teachers. In England and Wales, government cuts in education have led to, amongst other depredations, many thousands of newly-qualified teachers being unable to find jobs. One of the consequences of this is that most of the teachers in British schools in the year 2000 are already in post, already initially trained. The concern of many teacher educators therefore, has partly moved away from initial teacher training (IT) towards the provision of a more efficient and comprehensive pattern of in-service training (INSET). In neither area, however, would many claim to have got the pattern right. At the IT level, many young teachers find themselves in culturally diverse classrooms, often in economically declining urban areas, with little information and understanding of the pupils in front of them, without certain crucial pedagogic skills and having attitudes about children, learning and society frequently at variance with their pupils and the communities from which they come. Their more experienced colleagues are often in a not dissimilar position, and are often sceptical, with some justification, of the efficacy of the range of INSET offerings open to them.

This urban context is worth examining in more detail, because the issues that it raises for IT and INSET are germane to a possible development of Fielding's model; namely the giving of a more definite sociological strand to the analysis.

Mention was made earlier of how central government cuts in expenditure have effected education at the local authority level. In their most recent report on educational provision (DES, 1983), Her Majesty's Inspectorate note that the rate of deterioration in provision has slowed down compared to the previous year, but that there is still cause for grave concern. However, the urban school and its teachers work within a context where government policies in general, most notably the general cut in revenue to a wide range of local services, coupled with the general economic decline common to much of the corporate capitalist world, have

markedly affected the lives of the communities that they serve. A most notable feature of this would be the high levels of unemployment, where figures like a 20 per cent unemployment rate disguise the massive unemployment rates of the young, the ethnic and racial minorities and women. In addition, much of the job loss in urban areas of unskilled and semi-skilled occupations is permanent, principally due to the impact of new technologies.

The literature on the urban teacher (e.g. Grace, 1979) indicates that teachers in such working class, culturally diverse urban schools are in the main inadequately prepared for this complexity of social educational problems. Grace also indicates that issues of social control and alienation have been a constant feature of such schools for much of this century and earlier.

Fielding's model is an attempt to tackle some of these issues. Although he explicitly rejects the idea of a linear progression, there is a sense in that, hedged though it be with the constraints he mentions, the development of a teacher's competence is seen as moving from skills, his 'whats' and 'hows', to theoretical questioning, the 'whys' of education. This rejection of linear development is correct, but perhaps needs to be emphasised more. In the light of the earlier mentioning of the need for a more definite sociological perspective, it would perhaps be beneficial to spell out in a little more detail why the constraints that Fielding mentions are so important. In particular, that the 'whats' and 'hows' of educational development are nigh on impossible to disentangle from the 'whys'. Indeed, that it is probably dysfunctional to development to even attempt it. Although such a praxis model poses considerable organisational problems at the initial training level, particularly with regard to one-year postgraduate teacher preparation programmes, it can and does work at the level of in-service. To explore this issue further, it is worthwhile to examine in more detail the knowledge, skills and attitudes that teachers in such urban contexts are likely to require in order to operate more effectively.

As Fielding notes, it would be simplistic to take for granted the acceptance of an overarching value system. Such 'common sense' views of the nature of knowledge and values have been extensively criticised, as have their consequences for school knowledge (Young, 1971; Bourdieu, 1977; Apple, 1980). The subsequent epistemological debate has called into question the apparent cultural neutrality of the social sciences and even

the natural sciences (Feyerabend, 1982). Yet our education system still maintains the myth that there is unproblematic 'knowledge' from which the teacher selects to pass on to his or her pupils.

These are difficult issues and it would be easy to say that in the early development of a teacher's competences their exploration should have a low priority. There is something to be said for this view, for much of the literature is opaque and not readily accessible. Challenging and important as is such writing, this does not excuse an often lamentable inability to communicate on the part of its authors. However, the educational issues raised by an examination of class, race and gender relationships is accessible and should inform both IT and INSET at all of Fielding's stages. And the discussion of such issues will inevitably introduce such epistemological issues within a context that is meaningful and appropriate to teachers. This is not as difficult as it sounds, nor is it necessarily an apologia for left-wing pedagogic practice. It is radical, however; but, more importantly, it does relate in a very real fashion to the settings within which students and teachers work. Issues like those of control and combatting apparent pupil apathy cannot be effectively dealt with along the lines of simple 'tips for teachers'.

Such a debate about the nature of knowledge should also inform the discussion of the skills that student teachers and teachers in post require. An obvious example in many urban schools is the fact that many of the pupils speak English as a second or third language and that the failure to give them competence impedes their general educational progress. The provision of specialist teachers is only part of the answer. All teachers need a new range of skills to effectively help such children improve both their command of English and the subject area with which the teacher is principally concerned. A further example, of particular concern to schools in England and Wales, is that of information technology.

The aim of a micro-computer in every primary school is not being matched by having a teacher in every school with the requisite skills to fully utilise the equipment. With many of us being almost Luddite in our attitudes and Neanderthal in our skill levels as regards micro-computers, an urgent need for skills training is only just being acknowledged. More importantly (although there is a rather sharp debate on this) it is important that the social context within which this technological

innovation has taken place is discussed by teachers, and by teachers and their pupils. This point argues for the rejection of a simple skills acquisition model at any point in the development of teacher competence.

A similar case has to be made over the third aspect mentioned earlier, namely the provision within IT and INSET of space for the examination and discussion of teacher attitudes. Obviously, such a debate links in with the earlier examination of the nature of knowledge. Poor expectations of pupils' potential, highlighted in attitudes towards certain racial and ethnic minorities (Coard, 1971; DES, 1981) or differing expectations, as in the case of girls (Deem, 1978), are a reflection of the dominant epistemological positions in society. Again, the case is being made for such an examination, not so much in order to change attitudes — a difficult task even where it is seen to be desirable — but more to enable teachers to critically examine their own attitudes, their foundations and their educational consequences.

What is being argued for here is not the force feeding of huge lumps of indigestible theory to IT and INSET students. That is inappropriate, and it will not work. Nor does it argue for a similar degree of emphasis on skills. Much of the cynicism regarding INSET is that the teacher trainers appear too distanced from the reality of the classroom, and either retreat into theory which appears irrelevant or wrong or talk about practice which appears more appropriate to schools ten years ago rather than now. Recent moves in Britain to ensure recent and relevant experience in classrooms for IT teacher trainers is therefore to be welcomed, as are moves to bring experienced teachers more into the process.

So far this paper has argued that the Stage 6 Educational Theorist of Fielding's model is probably not as discrete an entity as may have been argued. The same is probably true of the other states: namely, that however important and desirable it is to clearly identify the specific needs of a teacher or group of teachers at a particular point, in practice, (if not in theory) this is somewhat difficult. However, there is no doubt that teacher trainers do need to clarify, to a greater extent than at present, the nature of the task that they have set themselves. There is thus a need to move Fielding's model on to action, particularly at the initial training level where it seems to be more solidly based. Again there are problems here, mainly concerned with evaluation, but it is worth attempting to solve these. For example, as he notes, "successful teaching" is a difficult term to concretise. However, this difficulty is a crucial one to examine. Without

a serious debate to attempt to identify with clarity the various positions, 'successful teaching', the 'good' teacher and the 'successful' urban (or rural) school will be seen in the conventional terms of public examination passes and quiet classrooms. Rutter's work, on a sample of urban schools in London (Rutter, 1980) put forward a more elaborated set of criteria, and work has continued to try to both refine and operationalise these. However, these criteria are often regarded as unproblematic. This is particularly true of public examination results, popular because of their putative objectivity. The nature of such examinations, their in-built biases and, more importantly, their epistemological foundations, are seldom questioned.

This is, of course, a political issue. Attempts to depoliticise education are both naive and pernicious, hence the carpenters and the cabinet-makers in the title of this paper. The concepts of 'professionalism' and 'professional' development for teachers need to be scrutinised carefully. Much of the thinking on this area probably derives from Liebermann (1956) and to a large extent (within the British context at least) marks the historical struggle of teachers in the state system to raise their status from the carpenters they were mainly regarded as in the nineteenth century, to the status of the cabinet makers of our society, such as doctors and lawyers. The debate overlooks the fact that the professions are, in the main, extremely powerful interest groups, dedicated primarily to the enhancement of the status of their members. This closed shop mentality is subsequently legitimised by claims to public service. In modern, complex societies such claims are questionable. It also encourages the view that the professional group knows what is best for its clients, who are, it is claimed, in the main ignorant of the arcane mysteries which the professional group alone is privy to. Fielding draws attention to this in his description of his Stage 5, where teacher awareness of the communities that they serve becomes an important focus of their development. It is argued here, however, that this awareness of clientele, particularly in the diverse forms it takes in urban schools, is an essential prerequisite for successful teaching, however that be defined.

This is not to deny that teachers do have specific occupational skills, often acquired over a long period of time and requiring a personal investment of time and energy of a high order. (The same is true to a large extent of many of the pupils they teach.) Fielding's paper suggests a way of analysing this process in an attempt to make it more efficient. It is, however, a view of occupational skills acquisition which, initially at least,

is, literally, self centred. Schools are important institutions within society. Society makes demands on the school system which have to be accepted, or, if contested, contested in a manner which is likely to gain support outside the world of education.

Fielding's paper is a valuable contribution to this important debate if it helps to bring these concerns to the fore in the processes by which teachers' occupational competences are developed.

References

- APPLE, M., *Ideology and curriculum*. London: Routledge and Kegan Paul, 1979.
- BOURDIEU, P. and PASSERON, J. *Reproduction in education, society and culture*. London: Sage, 1977.
- COARD, B. *How the West Indian child is made educationally sub-normal in the British school system*. London: New Beacon Books, 1971.
- DEEM, R. *Women and schooling*. London: Routledge and Kegan Paul, 1978.
- DEPARTMENT OF EDUCATION AND SCIENCE. *West Indian children in our schools* (the Rampton report). London: HMSO, 1981.
- DEPARTMENT OF EDUCATION AND SCIENCE. *Report by Her Majesty's Inspectors on the effects of local authority expenditure policies on the education service in England, 1982*. London: DES, 1983.
- FEYERABEND, P. *Science in a free society*. London: Verso, 1982.
- GRACE, G. *Teachers, ideology and control*. London: Routledge and Kegan Paul, 1979.
- LIEBERMAN, M. *Education as a profession*. Englewood Cliffs, N.J.: Prentice-Hall, 1956.
- RUTTER, M., et al. *Fifteen thousand hours*. London: Open Books, 1980.
- YOUNG, M. F. D. (ed.). *Knowledge and control*. London: Macmillan, 1971.

Paper 3

LESS IDEALISM AND MORE REALISM: THE PROGRAMME FOR TEACHER EDUCATION

David McNamara
University of Lancaster

First, on a positive note, I wish to nominate three issues which are implicit in Fielding's paper which busy teacher trainers and educational researchers often set aside, possibly because of the disturbing consequences of thinking seriously about them. The first is that he is prepared to recognise the limitations, indeed failings, of contemporary teacher training* programmes, in so far as available evidence indicates that training effects are rapidly 'washed out' when beginning teachers enter the classroom and that, setting aside periods of school-based practice, students are disenchanted with teacher training courses (for example, see Desforges & McNamara 1977; Shaw, 1981; Wilson, 1975). The second is that Fielding recognises that teachers must develop their skills and competencies within the context of the school. This is a theme which has certainly been reflected in official pronouncements on teacher training during the past decade and within the United Kingdom there is a groundswell in this direction (see, for example, DES, 1972; DES, 1983(a); DES, 1983(b)). Fortunately, Fielding goes further than the official documents in arguing that in order to claim full professional status, teachers must be able to locate their skills and classroom competence within theoretical contexts which provide a framework for thinking analytically and critically about practice. Thirdly, Fielding recognises that teachers are not fully qualified and competent after what may be a comparatively brief period of initial training. Becoming a well rounded and accepted professional is a process which continues throughout the career.

I wish to begin my response to Fielding's proposals by comparing his "model" of professional development with a somewhat cruder and less clearly articulated notion of teacher training which has a long and distinguished pedigree. It is the view that teaching is an 'art', or, to express it in different terms, that teaching is 'commonsense', an amateur activity,

* Throughout this paper "training" is taken to include the "education" of student teachers as well as skill training etc.