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## Pattern in Professional Formation

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## Paper 1

### PATTERN IN PROFESSIONAL FORMATION

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Soothed by what now seem the easy banalities of the spate of DES and HMI documents in the wake of the Great Debate, the curriculum of secondary schools in the United Kingdom seemed to be settling down. In 1982-1983 it was abruptly destabilised by unprecedented interventionist policies of the central authorities, the backwash from the activities of the Manpower Services' New Training Initiative, discontent with the traditional offering provoked by massive unemployment amongst leavers and the re-emergence of pressure for vocationalism. Teacher education, both pre-service and in-service had by then largely moved on from the traumas of boom and bust in the seventies, and had shaken down as a much smaller system, out of the limelight, its structures simplified and most of the weaker enterprises out of the market. It had begun to consolidate in reduced circumstances, with great incentives to think through its perennial problems (they are many!). We have learned once again that the best chance of serious staff development comes when big changes are imposed from outside, when the organisation, be it school, college or university faculty, has to take on new tasks and sharply revised priorities or else get out of the business. Following the elections of June 1983, there are clear indications that more institutions will be forced out of business, quite possibly including some universities.

In-service teacher education has felt the chilling blast of financial stringency and central pressure. Until a few years ago the market would take almost anything that was on offer; counties and authorities poured in money to lubricate reorganisation of secondary schools and curricular adaptation. Now there is little money for secondments, and in-service course providers have to meet much stiffer requirements. The Department of Education and Science, channelling its funds through the Inspectorate to ensure strict control, will only support, grudgingly, high priority needs, not what the providers enjoy offering. Because of destabilisation, curricular needs and the training which is on offer are not in phase. The traditional trainers are facing not merely sharper criticism, but the threat of competition.

This has concentrated minds. One thing it has concentrated them upon is the teachers' professionalism: what does it really reside in, and how can it be deepened? A host of commercial trainers, industrial tutors, supervisors and subcontractors of all sorts to the Manpower Services Commission are staking a claim on school leavers. The Further Education Unit, a DES agency, has displaced the Schools Council, now defunct, as a curriculum development leader. If not the school leaving age, at any rate the job starting age, has been raised to 17+, with 18+ the next target, but leaving out of account teachers, schools, and, even, to a large extent, Further Education Colleges. Mainstream teachers have been left somewhat stunned and certainly demoralised; their professionalism has been fundamentally challenged. Tony Fielding's research proposal, particularly because it envisages the whole career and its processes, comes at a moment of heightened awareness.

Teacher education attempts to provide knowledge, skills, and, to borrow a phrase of Stonier (1983), meta-skills. The latter are those dispositions and achievements which enable people to learn new skills faster and to be self-starting, for example, in adapting their current competencies to the needs of new and unforeseen situations. Skills include both product skills (those which have a quick pay off in the classroom in producing traditional schoolwork and behaviour) and process skills (those, for example, of task analysis, course preparation, resource finding, classroom management and capacities for relationships), which are less end-product orientated and more tied in with the complexities of the 'how' of learning. Initial teacher training is still emerging from the quick-in/quick-out cycle where large numbers of modestly prepared candidates were given a short, cheap training in the expectation that many would not stay long in the profession. Mergers and closures have led to the universities displacing colleges as the main suppliers of new teachers in secondary schools, as honours graduates trained for a year (Shaw, 1978). Pedagogical formation (as opposed to the subject knowledge as a component in the formation of professionals) has tended to be a short-term survival kit of product skills. Process skills lurk about at an often primitive lead in training; three-year-trained primary teachers are often more sensitive to them (one reason for their success with less able 16+ leavers). The nature of, and need for, meta-skills is only just beginning to be understood as a deliberately planned element of training. There are just a few imaginative attempts to change the style and mix of subject knowledge, short and long term skills, and meta-skills (for example, Ross et al, 1977).

As to 'logique de formation', the whole cluster of knowledge-states, kinds and levels of skill, attitudes, competencies and dispositions are transmitted (or merely exhibited) to the learners in a jumbled way, too quickly for digestion, and by giving them a taste of many aspects. The learning sequence is rarely well co-ordinated in detail, and uses an idiosyncratic mix of lecture room, experiential, technology-based education and self-teaching methods. Fielding's proposal has the merit of focussing on what the recipient is able to make of, and do with, all this, how it is reworked, recontextualised at different stages of professional development by the individual. Except for the careerist who worked near the providers, in-service education was (and is) for most teachers, very short term, intermittent, product-skill honing rather than deepening of process skills; and with little serious concern for meta-skills, save on higher degree courses. Most of the task of development has had to be accomplished by the teacher in the day-to-day struggle with classroom realities.

Fielding seeks to understand this process better, to find in it, or impute to it, some kind of pattern. It certainly is an area where we need theoretical advances. Sockett (1981) has shrewdly pointed out that we are seeing the end, now, of the isolation of educational from other forms of social and economic planning. To the extent that we have no theoretically supported view of the nature of long term professional development, we shall have fewer arguments with which to resist simple cost-cutting proposals from the centre, loss of our clientele to outside, often commercial, groups, and forced curriculum change based on pure ideology and sectional interest. If we cannot show that professionalism in teaching is valuable because it is adaptive, and comes from a long-term development of process and meta-skills, we cannot put up a resistance to short-term solutions. The use of briefly 'trained' graduates is one example; two-year degrees have been mentioned by the Leverhulme (1982) enquiry as another.

Fielding's is an ambitious two-fold proposal for a major research enterprise. It seeks first to penetrate below "merely learning a set of teaching skills" to deeper structures, essentially of personality. These more psychologically fundamental levels are understood by the use of Kelly's views of role integration, and the proposal rests on the belief that without such progressive integration, skills, knowledge-states, competencies, are shallow-rooted and have meagre potential for development. Hence the imposition of values, attitudes, skill practising by the training institution are less valuable in their long term consequences than learning in conditions of greater freedom, which encourages the learner to develop his

or her personal learning style (conscious awareness of which is part of a meta-skill). Secondly, Fielding looks for a sequential or cumulative pattern in relation to which learning experiences for teachers can be arranged on clearer principles. Such a pattern is perhaps less like a staircase than like a fan: some novice roles can be lived through and superseded, the experience remaining at the periphery as part of the deeper structure of selfhood; but still a resource, say, in new situations where the teacher is partially de-skilled again. Other more sophisticated roles achieved by successful development reach forward at the centre in a cluster to be used as a repertoire as circumstances demand.

How is the proposal grounded, and how can it be used to instigate research?

Even Kelly's admirers concede that he was somewhat marginal to the mainstream of American and (certainly) of European psychology; so that though his grid technique made its fortune as a research tool, the kind of underpinning he gave it in his writing has visibly dated. Beside the scientism of the behaviourists and psychometrists, Kelly's thinking is humane and attractive: though not so prominent he is like, say, Fromm or Margaret Mead, a writer with an acceptable rhetoric. But it is of its time. It emphasises the autonomous individual quest for selfhood, it is subjectivist in concern, stressing the personal and unique as against the institutional or culturally determined, the 'over-socialised view of man'. It uses not a language of drives, needs, rewards, punishments, but of receptivity, exploration, predictions to be experientially confirmed or disconfirmed, leading to the growth and integration of constructs and roles over time. This is fundamental to Fielding's view of the progressive growth and integration of the professional personality in which a strong notion of individual initiative is important: the Kellian actor makes something of what he or she experiences. The constructs are flexible, allowing for growth, increase of complexity, corrigibility and adaptation to new conditions. What they structure is in the mind; experience, perceptions, meanings; not events nor external reality. Their validity is subjective and the tests are not interpersonal in the last resort; yet they are the basis for choices, behaviours, activities, concerns. The grid technique assumes that if key constructs can be elicited from someone, we have a basis for understanding their behaviour and appraising their development. Skills somehow get left out of all this, the emphasis being on personality growth. Also, the Kellian view is subject to all the criticisms that have been directed against recent interactionist views in sociology centring on the

term 'meaning'. Of course we attribute meaning to experience, but the experience is independent of our perception and cannot be wished or interpreted away. Power, whatever meaning we impute to it, is still power, and may be used socially, politically and institutionally to constrain our lives; for example to influence professional development — as any ambitious woman teacher knows! Any research plan must take account of the institutional context: opportunities, hindrances, career pathways, distribution of power, internal politics.

Kelly also makes great play of the concept role. In the thirty years since he adopted it, it has proved a slippery notion. His use of it has been well criticised by Holland (1970), who shows how he benignly underestimates conflict, domination and cultural processes acting through institutions. Since then, a major development in sociological theorising stemming from Berger and Luckman (1971) and from Goffman's early writings (i.e. 1971) has further stressed the importance of the social rather than the personal in the notion of role. Kelly tended to see humans as radically unconstrained by relationships and external realities, neither needing social ratification of their constructs, nor needing to elaborate performances before a social group. Without having to go too far down the road to the more mind-blowing developments in recent sociology, we have to face that we have come a long way since the structuralist assumptions which are reflected in the way Kelly used the idea of role.

As so I argue that one strand in the attempt to appraise the value of Fielding's model must involve the close study of staff in the context of the school and the system seen as a structure of opportunities and constraints. It is often forgotten, for example, that bureaucracy is not only a structural arrangement of control but a mode of commitment, an employment relationship, to the institution (Litler, 1978) to which individuals accommodate and which, more or less, they internalise. One of the classics of organisation theory was Simon's (1964) analysis of participation on a model of a calculus of demands and benefits offered by the enterprise to the individual, and the employee's attempt to keep a positive balance of satisfaction. The mode of participation seems to me especially important, given the nature of teachers' work, particularly its intangible outcomes and variable demands. Teachers are professionals but not free professionals: they bring their skilled labour power to a monopolist employer who recruits the clientele and provides the workplace.

This approach to understanding processes of professional development thus brings me to Gray's (1980) question: how do the needs and interests of the individual come into relation with the needs and opportunities exhibited by the school as a work place? No doubt the style of commitment of any teacher evolves over time, possibly, but not self evidently, in a rhythm which might relate to Fielding's view of evolving role integration. The probationary teacher has different needs and interests from those of the Deputy Head/Principal. Amongst teachers there is an unusual balance of prescribed and discretionary elements in the role (compared, say, with a draughtsman) so that in the secondary school there is the possibility of a wide range of accommodations. In an attempt to clarify them by talking to the teachers *in situ*, I would not brush aside the view that they may be in part unconscious of the nature of this accommodation of their personality and professional interest to the school, or, because of the strong ideological element in training, even have a false consciousness of it. The technology of teaching, if it deserves such a term, is, in contrast to workplaces where machine technology rules, very flexible; the task is carried out frequently in private without direct supervision or regular managerial intervention. What has to be done to get the primary tasks of the school performed is not a matter of clear specification and easily managed accountability: imprecise expectations, conventions, traditions, local institutional cultures loosely govern most of the work. Because of these non-tangible but important features of control (dependent on goodwill, not detailed contract as to pacing, division of labour, allocation of responsibilities, intensity of effort, monitoring of performance), the individual's view of his or her relationship to the school is likely to be very idiosyncratic: the personal construct is personal. Yet if behaviour is to be predictable and accountable, even loosely, if complex activities are to be (even notionally) co-ordinated by school leadership, there must be some shared or overlapping constructs; but how to tease these out with any validity is a daunting problem methodologically, if we want to study teachers in their working environment, not abstract them from it by using grids.

I am sympathetic to the view that there is a struggle in organisations to impose and make prevail the official definition of the situation by the use of positional and other power, but that other, less powerfully supported, definitions are not squeezed out or driven underground. When a teacher enters into a contractual relationship with the school as a career (and it involves a complex unspoken psychological contract to give and receive a fair crack of the whip to official and personal definitions) the

school has as one of its tasks to use the willing conformity of the new teacher, his or her potentialities for creativity and skills, in a profitable mix with the existing pattern. It may have benign aspects; but what Fielding sees as a progressive role integration might be fuelled by, come as a result of, a power struggle, the separate teachers (or, more commonly, as organised groups in departments) and the school each trying to maximise their pay-off. Pettigrew (1973) has written a convincing account of such a process in commerce.

A last point: secondary teachers work commonly in sub-units of the school, the departments. Suggestive research by Lacey *et al* (in Woods, 1980) has shown that just as the school is not a wholly united and single minded place, neither is the department. Lacey showed, for example, that within English departments there could be the linguistic/grammatical believers, the creative writing believers, the traditional Eng. Lit. believers and the sociologically-orientated believers. It is quite plausible, then, that if the teacher is subject to some behaviour moulding (in the longer run, personality shaping) pressures from the institution, in one of its most intimate domains, that of the teaching subject, the situation is not simple. The department may have plenty of 'play' in its mechanism.

I am not sure that we yet know enough about how school processes operate to be able to set up testable generalisations about how they interact with the individual teacher's developing professionalism, especially if the latter is viewed as a kind of personal quest. I have difficulty in conceptualising the problem sufficiently to set up carefully planned research, chiefly because I can imagine an infinity of variations in the accommodations between teacher and institutions. What I can see is the possibility that a detailed on-the-ground case study of staff careers within one school might be a useful exploratory move. Case studies uncover processes and compare perceptions; this might be a way in to the relationship between development in professionalism and the experience of membership of the organisation. It might get beyond the kind of calculus view of participation proposed by Simon and the simplicities of formal bureaucratic models. Somewhere between these and the 'garbage can' (Cohen 1972) and 'loosely coupled' (Weick, 1976) models, the run-of-the-mill secondary school lies; it has a degree of institutional uniqueness, and so a case study can only be suggestive not conclusive: it can face up to the complexities.

Fielding directs attention to the right quarter, in short, but I do not think that his model is tight enough for strict experimental testing. Like

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.

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## Paper 2

### CARPENTERS OR CABINET-MAKERS:

### THE DEVELOPING ROLE OF TEACHERS IN URBAN SOCIETY

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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