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The Political And Economic Argument In Contemporary Classroom Teacher Effectiveness Research And Inquiry.

Introduction

This paper outlines the specific political and economic parameters that influence public education. In doing so, the paper examines theoretical aspects of the policy-making debate within Australia centred on effective classroom teaching practice and instruction. The paper implies that significant and global political and economic considerations invariably force governments to act thus exerting influence and control over educational matters including classroom teaching practice. To this extent, public education policy-making must grapple with prevailing political and economic considerations in so far as they involve and require an educational response.

There are four parts that comprise the paper. Part one expresses the main contextual arguments involved in clearly identifying, in broad terms, the political and economic forces that guide and control public education. The modern prioritisation given to change and disorder, particularly in terms of the economic, signifies the major challenge for education. In quite specific terms, this part of the paper provides the prevailing and broad-based economic argument that is the vital and important feature that propels change and transformation in terms that affects public education, the general work of schooling and classroom teaching.

The implicit facilitation of large-scale economic change occurs via the political process. The second part of the paper considers the major political imperative that has defined significant economic transformation and change in recent times. This imperative is described for the purposes of this paper as the movement towards State sanctioned dislocation and removal involving withdrawal from economic provisions and commitments that once drew upon State-based involvement. The contemporary and prevailing State sanctioned blue-print recommends and provides for market driven approaches including enhanced economic competition. The performative component of classroom teaching practice and its subsequent evaluation for systemic compliance is symptomatic of this contemporary mode of existence.

The third aspect of the paper discusses the core aspects of post-Fordist productive capacity in terms of preparation and ‘job-readiness’. The new post-Fordist work order privileges demonstrative and performative capacity. To this extent, it is a skills-based new world, and education and training hold a distinctive and pre-eminent position. Classroom teaching practice is crucial for it directly links to individual student skill development.

Finally part four of the paper completes the argument by locating the apparent constant of change and dislocation within the terminologically accepted reference point of globalization. The major point emphasized here relates to control brought about by economic and political change. If one accepts the political and economic conditions portrayed at the start of the paper that have resulted, it is argued, in significant change and capital dis-organisation, the control and management, or in other words, governance of public education is paramount. In the current context, it is not surprising that education policy-making explicitly targets and emphasizes classroom teacher effectiveness and the evaluation of individual classroom instruction. Moreover and importantly, bureaucratic and policy-making arguments in support of the evaluation of individual teacher performance are sustained by positivist articulations of teaching practice. Their veracity is acutely questionable and contestable.

(1) Organised to Dis-Organised Capital: The Contemporary Milieux

The basis of organised capital production, the long established mode of productive exchange incorporates inter-related features (see Lash and Urry, 1987, p. 3). These features are characterised and suggestive of clear and structured relations of capital that now no longer dominate. Indeed, the post-
Fordist shift in productive exchange is based on disorganised modes of productive capacities that include non-uniform multi-dimensional individual abilities and talents for productive interaction and application.

Subsequently, the representative capitalist derivation of disorganisation has a conceptual but also tangible and real basis. Its affirmation in particular and individual western countries is somewhat different; nevertheless, prominent factors adhere to similar features and aspects (see Lash and Urry, 1987, pp. 5-7). Some of these include:

1. The growth of a world market combined with the increasing scale of industrial, banking and commercial enterprises...From the point of view of national markets there has been an effective de-concentration of capital.

2. The continued expansion of the number of white-collar workers and particularly of a distinctive service class (of managers, professionals, educators, scientists, etc.), which is an effect of organized capitalism, becomes an increasingly significant element which then disorganizes modern capitalism. This results from the development of an educationally based stratification system which fosters individual achievement and mobility and the growth of new ‘social movements’ (students’, antinuclear, ecological and women’s movements, etc.) which increasingly draw energy and personnel away from class politics.

3. Decline in the absolute and relative size of the core working class, that is, of manual workers in the manufacturing industry, as economies are de-industrialized. (Lash and Urry, 1987, pp. 5-7)

Disordered forms of capitalism signify economically systemic disaggregated conversion. Cultural and sociological features sustain it and propel it forward. But, its overall and foundational standpoint is built upon the productive capacities and features of capitalism itself without which it would not have importance, and moreover, would not eventuate.

Education is drawn into and cannot escape this maelstrom. On the contrary, education is not only a key part of this new world; it is one of the major facilitators of its existence and sustenance. Education through an articulated conscripted attachment to a provisionally enacted form of practical interaction produces desired outcomes. As a result, they are deemed necessary and indeed vital to the new world configuration and become de-facto policy-making inscriptions of governance. To comprehensively sense and grasp the relevance of education in this transformative transfiguration requires the elaborate discursive outline of the pervasive political and economic influence that has dominated modern contemporary times. It is also to specifically focus on schools and in particular the relevance and importance of classroom instruction and so classroom teachers.

Indeed, a major contention of this paper is to suggest that contemporary education policy-making emphasizes a re-casting of the problem and question of classroom teacher effectiveness. A specific current concern in education policy-making appears to have shifted focus and attention upon student learning, and in particular, academic underperformance. The contemporary neo-liberal emphasis on the standardization of education depicted by outcomes-based educational measures is central to policy reform strategies, particularly those that are unique to classroom instruction and student achievement. But, significantly, systemic neo-liberal audits of classroom instruction and student achievement are a prominent display of the success or failure of schools, their students and teachers. Teacher effectiveness research, particularly if it is solely defined by convoluted mathematical research designs limits its depictions of classroom practice and student achievement to the knowledge gained about teaching and learning from standardized external tests.

Consequently, the contemporary education system replete with its particular mechanisms and regimes of accountability, generally expressed as a set of education system policy-objectives and teacher personnel performance statements, obliges governments to provide an educational service. The Panoptic process of procedural surveillance that is the very formula of an imposed neo-liberal education order of governmentality over teaching practice dominates. For the school as an institution it means constant evaluations of student attendance figures (enrolments), and an attention to arbitrarily contrived numerical
comparisons of school performance-(standards) within and across geographic regions or zones and across
a State. It is also characterised by attention to curriculum policy and its development. For classroom
teachers it increasingly regards teaching and the work of teachers primarily for the formation of student
skills. It is an agenda that has its genesis in aspects of economic performativity and relates very much to
phases of a teacher’s work that can be measured and verified through testing. Consequently, the role
of the individual classroom teacher becomes increasingly “routinised and proletarianised” (Smyth &
Shacklock, 1998, p.50) as they are “subjected to the discourses as well as the practices of managerialism”
(Smyth & Shacklock, 1998, p.50). This for teachers means a performance regime that as expressed by
Ball (1994) “begins with the testing of students, but raises the possibility of monitoring the performance
of teachers and schools and making comparisons between them” (p.107). It also results in an “increase in
the technical elements of teacher’s work” (Ball, 1994, p.106) compressing, or perhaps in extreme cases,
eradicating available room for expressions of professional autonomy and judgements.

(2) Commitments Withdrawn: Performance and Persistent Evaluation

The “advanced” (Rose, 1996, p.40) or neo-liberal political program is the major change in the
“ideological environment of Australian schools” (Connell, 2002, p.323). Its specific focus is cast in terms
of corrective intervention and redirection with a capacity to do something about a “practicable object”
(O’Malley, 1996, p.193), for example, re-formulation of schooling practice away from the “limitations of
the classical welfare state” (Connell, 2002, p. 323). This new conceptualisation, incorporating
technologies of measurement and surveillance “of which the Panopticon and insurance are examples”
(O’Malley, 1996, p.192), reflects programs of reform that have shifted key and core “coordination
functions of nation-societies away from states and bureaucracies to economies and markets” (Pusey,
1991, p.3). The “trend line of change and rationalisation” (Pusey, 1991, p.3) having dismantled
commitments to an equity agenda in Australian schooling, has been reconceptualised into a political
program and process of strategic control that is justified in terms of efficiency and effectiveness.

A core feature of this new shift and formulation of schooling practice within Australia is the
political and economic response to a sense of crisis. Its manifestation expressed in terms of
“ungovernable democracies and of overloaded states” (Pusey, 1991, p.3) is preceded by core negative
descriptions of developed economies the emphasis of which is centred on conditions of “directionless
consensus and pluralistic stagnation” (see Pusey, 1991, p.17). A dominant free market orientation
imbibed by the dynamics of reforming economic rationalisations and “systems of logic” (Pusey, 1991,
p.11) provides a framework and base upon which public education policy determinations are made and
enacted. The economic focus of this new market orientation advocated on grounds that exclusively
presumes “system integration in which the burden of co-ordination is passed from the inferior medium of
coordination of state bureaucracy to the supposedly better one of the economy” (Pusey, 1991, p.18)
infiltrates public education policy development and enactment. In Australia it has resulted in, as Connell
(2002) states:

the prioritization of ‘training’ over education, the partial privatization of universities, the increased
subsidizing of private schools as a half-step towards vouchers, the continuing attempts to turn
public schools into enterprises and principals into entrepreneurs, the invasion of public education
by corporate advertising, the corporatization and fragmentation of Technical and Further
Education (TAFE), the shift of research funding towards marketable products and processes, the
adoption of business management practices in public education, and the ‘outsourcing’ of
educational research and development. (p.323)

This sought after rise of a free and unfettered market agenda as a “contemporary technique of rule”
(O’Malley, 1996, p.194) which “reinstates the morally-responsible individual” (O’Malley, 1996, p.194)
also re-asserts individual initiative and risk-taking. It has re-cast pedagogic action and the work of
schooling that for classroom teachers reflects a personal performative and individual representation of
jurisdictional administration and management.
Fundamental to the current reform of public education is a system of self-management articulated in terms of a “new culture of schooling” (Ball, 1994, p.65), one that prioritizes “commodification and output indicators” (Ball, 1994, p. 65). Local school management allegedly free of the burdens of systemic constraint, are encouraged and empowered pursuing enterprising and innovative agendas for change. An indispensable and representative development of self-management based on the “illusion of autonomy and flexibility” (Ball, 1994, p.66) and brought by an adherence to free market principles of administration results in what is termed “steering at a distance” (see Ball, 1994, p. 66). As a disciplinary practice, it removes and re-locates authorial power away from those with an immediate and actual stake in education; classroom teachers, students and parents. Yet, paradoxically, it has resulted in the heightened and acute centralisation and convergence of authorial scrutiny onto those most exposed to its unequal excesses; classroom teachers and public school students.

The managerial conduit through which one can then map and record the “preferred teacher” (Smyth & Shacklock, 1998, p. 107) is a disciplinary process of exchange through forms of control that steers pedagogical action towards market imperatives and exemplars. Important characteristics include approaches that emphasize variety and responsiveness to market demands. The standardisation and normalisation of teacher’s work and classroom practice becomes a function of curriculum, the market and management approaches. The stratification experienced by the classroom teacher practitioner across these domains has invariably resulted in their objectified and commodified formation. The teacher becomes a deliverer, tester, technician, commodity-producer, performer, entrepreneur that is a resource and a cost and remains accountable (see Ball, 1994, p.49).

Indeed, the process of reform in public education has elevated management of pedagogic practice and the work of schooling so that it becomes a necessary function of exchange. Management becomes “an end in itself” (Ball, 1994, p. 71). The reformulation of public education so that it conforms to a free-market ideological outlook provides a mechanism through which delivery of key and dominant system outcomes can be attained. It “ties classroom practice, student performance, teacher appraisal, school recruitment and resource allocation into a single tight bundle of planning and surveillance” (Ball, 1994, p.71). Classroom teaching practice is re-made, and a good teacher/bad teacher dichotomy prevails. Significant differences in interest, between those that manage and those that are managed are unavoidable, notwithstanding policy document statements to the contrary.

We will engage the workforce in professional learning as part of an overall approach to service improvement. Leadership will be a major focus, as we know it is a major driver of improved performance. People must be developed and supported from the moment they choose careers in learning and development. (State Government of Victoria Education Blueprint, 2008, p.33) This social re-adjustment for those involved in the work of schooling defines the reform process. “Self-management is the panopticon of modern educational organization” (Ball, 1994, p. 72) and power exerted through subtle means is control at a distance despite sentiments of engagement and professional collegiality.

The idealization and trumpeting of “new freedoms and possibilities of devolution and school-based management” (Ball, 1994, p.72) overplays distance and downplays control and steering. It occurs within a systemic nexus between “flexibility and constraint, autonomy and response” (Ball, 1994, p. 72). A devolved educational environment incorporating technologies of policy legitimization and regulation centralize the performativity of teacher pedagogic action. The “ideological co-optation of the moral and ethical consciousness” (Smyth, J., Dow, A., Hattam, R., Reid, A and Shacklock, G., 2000, p.86) of teachers where they are re-skilled and re-instructed to meet the demands of education consumers in a free-market re-focus classroom teaching practice. Market responsiveness as a guiding principle behind the performative classroom teacher practitioner signifies school based self-management.

Furthermore, the advanced neo-liberal “need for enhanced accountability” (Smyth, 2006, p.302) has occurred against a background of what Smyth (2006) terms “enduring myths” (p. 302), namely:

1. That we have a crisis in schools, attributable to schools, teachers, and teacher education.
2. That the way of fixing these alleged problems is by cutting schools and higher education institutions loose from a public education system and allowing them to be disciplined by ‘market forces’.
3. Furthermore, that the way of improving ‘quality’ in education is by requiring close adherence to arbitrarily determined standards and targets, and ensuring compliance through forms of prescribed accountability.
4. That the language, rhetoric, models and modes of thought of the business sector are preferable and more appropriate to anything that can be developed by schools, students, teachers or teacher educators.
5. That the role of parents is that of judicious consumers exercising ‘choice’ of school that provides the best deal for them and their children, rather than active citizens interested in a system of education that is in the interests of everyone’s children, not just those most adept at working the system. (Smyth, 2006, pp. 302-303)

Systemic conformity and methods of compliance bracketed and cushioned by accountability that is itself indicative of “a new industry, bureaucracy and language” (De Lissovoy and McLaren, 2003, p. 131) propels action. It “demands certain action be performed, while forcefully foreclosing on others” (Smyth, 2006, p. 304). The dilemmas that approaches of this kind provide are exacting and demanding. They marginalise and subordinate “educational and social justice values” (Ball, 2006, p. 92). Narrow and pragmatically restrained market focused actions predominate. Subsequently, suppression of any values laden debates and approaches is preferred thus elevating a “lexicon of expediency, pragmatics and financial necessity” (Ball, 2006, p. 92). Consequently, new kinds of teacher professionalism proceed and are advanced. Their specific localized frameworks intertwine career identification with school-based success and or failure. They also incorporate key features of economic characterisations largely of a prudentialist and enterprising kind, the new and transfigured post-Fordist expressions of educational engagement.

Indeed, the steady movement towards post-Fordist re-configurations of accumulation and production involve a re-intensification, or perhaps more specifically, re-investment in processes of valorisation. The implicit and key ingredient, incorporating a re-constituted attachment to a competitive skills base embedded within all sectors of the post-Fordist workforce is crucial. A vital aspect of a multi-skilled and highly flexible and productively adaptable post-Fordist worker cohort sustains the new economic transfiguration. In the maintenance of its generation is located an individual attachment to continuous pathways of education and training. It signifies a new ‘spirit’ epitomised through personal commitment to continuous and life-long training and learning. The aim here reflects the transient and impermanent nature of post-Fordist productive capacity and accumulation.

Classroom teaching practice and the outcomes of education have added significance in a new work order in which heightened levels of performative capacity dominate. The specific and measured evaluation of teacher effectiveness can be used to configure and determine effective instruction that meets the needs of a post-Fordist economy. This can be achieved at the system level leading to the identification of schools in terms of their academic performance relative to a system-sanctioned standard norm and or indicator. Schools that the education system deems ‘under-performing’ are specifically targeted and the specific evaluation of teaching practice becomes the subject of action. An important aim is the transformation of teaching practice through a concerted process of re-skilling. The major focus becomes actionable conduct performed and enacted on the classroom teacher in order to assist development of strategies of teaching practice that have been found to work in terms of enhancing individual student achievement.

(3) Transfigurations-The New Economy

The transfiguration of the old economy toward the new is characterised by a distinctive shift in Fordist production. The neo-liberal “expansion and metamorphosis of capitalism” (Bayart, 2007, p. 3) supercedes less functional modes of labour. The “replacement of Fordist types of work organization by less hierarchical modes of business management which emphasizes flexibility and the arrangement of production units in horizontal networks” (Bayart, 2007, p. 3) typifies the new shift. The old work order
typical of Fordist styles of labour and production including inescapable levels of “rigidity” (Harvey, 1990, p. 142) have declined. The new economy seeks to overcome Fordist rigidities. “Flexible accumulation” (Harvey, 1990, p. 147) best describes the present transfiguration in capital production. It rests on flexibility with respect to labour processes, labour markets, products, and patterns of consumption. It is characterized by the emergence of entirely new sectors of production, new ways of providing financial services, new markets, and, above all, greatly intensified rates of commercial, technological, and organizational innovation. It has entrained rapid shifts in the patterning of uneven development, both between sectors and between geographical regions, giving rise, for example, to a vast surge in so-called ‘service sector’ employment as well as to entirely new industrial ensembles in hitherto underdeveloped regions. (Harvey, 1990, p. 147)

Operating in this post-Fordist world requires a new set of capacities and skills. Indeed, the competitive sustainability and competitive advantage of firms will rest on an employee’s training and ability to engage with the new economic and work order. Smaller work units will prevail incorporating a rationalisation and intensification of skill levels. Transferability of skill application embodied by functional utility is an aspect synonymous with the post-Fordist worker.

In order to achieve a seamless transition and transferability of skill levels, a change in knowledge is necessary. At its very core, a post-Fordist neo-liberal-hyper-economy utilises goods, services and knowledge. Economic activity is increasingly defined by a shift from “manufacturing and production of physical goods to information handling, knowledge accumulation, and production of knowledge goods” (Burton-Jones, 1999, p.12).The commodification of knowledge and its utilitarian and economic value re-defines capital production. The valorisation of individual productivity and efficiency rests on a capacity to integrate knowledge as an indispensable factor and ingredient of production. Computerisation incorporating information technology in all of its varied manifestations is central to this aspect of economic and industrial reform.

An important and key factor in this shift of production is education and the vital role of schools. New relationships between education and the economy in a changing society predominate and schools, including the type of pedagogical practice that they engage in, matters. A significant part of these new relationships is embodied in a rationalisation of knowledge, particularly for the post-compulsory school curriculum with now an emphasis on key and specific outcomes of knowledge. The movement towards a core curriculum for all students reflecting the “high and rising minimum threshold of knowledge and competence that is demanded by modern economies” (OECD, 1989, p.29) is important. It reflects post-Fordist shifts towards automation including the importance attached to knowledge generation as a crucial part of economic growth. There is clearly a human capital element to this aspect, one that fits a post-Fordist model of economic production. It responds to the rise of information technology as the new “basic” (OECD, 1989, p.32) in the school curriculum, notwithstanding the emphasis on making school education “more relevant to real-world labour market needs” (OECD, 1989, p.31).

The educational response to the alleged needs of a new economy and “new work order” (Smyth & Shacklock, 1998, p.78) characterised as the “new vocationalism”(see Smyth & Shacklock, 1998, p.78) highlights political and economic imperatives as major influences on education in contemporary times. Indeed, the regulatory needs of “fast capitalism” (see Smyth and Shacklock, 1998, p.78) including the influence of an enterprise culture as “the new educational organiser” (Smyth & Shacklock, 1998, p.80), reconfigures individual productive capacity including the work of public school teachers. Moreover, the neo-liberal political and ideological regime of advanced production whose significance features prominently in re-constructed entrepreneurial productive engagement takes place within the “installation of neo-liberal forms of governance” (Davies & Bansel, 2007, p. 248), symptomatic of large scale global change.

Indeed, the advanced “neo-liberal theory of progress” (King and Kendall, 2004, p.143) has an over-riding strategic locus, an economic characterisation that renders the State as less important than the ‘market’. Post-Fordist considerations of production that include heightened and elevated espousals of
economic competitiveness dominate. There is nothing inherently surprising in this development. A capitalist process of production must seek to re-create itself through innovation and creative endeavour (see Marx, 1990; Schumpeter, 1942). A process of economic globalization facilitates this mode of productive exchange. “Globalization intensifies competition which, in turn, stimulates innovation” (King and Kendall, 2004, p.144). This represents the post-Fordist connection between competitive intensifications, expressed through global exchanges and transactions of ‘fast capital’ and the urgent need for a renewed educational sentiment and settlement.

The economic and political configuration that the new educational settlement adopts also incorporates non-State based forms of governance. The new economic and political order that increasingly utilizes non-governmental means of representation, acts to control and confine. It is an order and form of governance that at its core has four distinctive characteristics and features. The first is an undoubted acceptance and reliance upon rationalist knowledge. The second is an emphasis on capitalist modes of production that in turn is dependent upon post-Fordist automated technology. Lastly, this means of production is largely managed through bureaucratic forms of governance (see King and Kendall, 2004, p.153).

Implicit in the contemporary post-Fordist structure of governance is transition.

Globalisation foregrounds education in specific ways that attempt to harness education systems to the rapid and competitive growth and transmission of technologies and knowledge linked to the national competitiveness of nations within the global economy. (Ozga and Lingard, 2007, p.70)

Governance becomes a question of transition, the emphasis of which is situated in methods of preparation for post-Fordist mechanisms of production. Indeed, the transformative structure of global capital including the necessary facilitation of one mode of production (Fordist) to another (post-Fordist), becomes the “object of transformation” (Balibar, 2009, p.307), and thus the accepted norm. Schools and classroom teachers form a tangible conduit and reference point for economically enacted change. Their exposure to transformative economic processes limits their functions towards the competitive needs of economic exchange. Under these conditions, teaching practice warrants particular attention for it is teachers and their specific classroom contributions that have added significance. The unique form of post-Fordist governance that globalisation can provide legitimizes active external regulatory interference steering education and what may constitute effective teaching practice in specific economic and vocational directions.

(4) Globalization

The individualization of pedagogical practice and action, and thus, the constructed and problematised account of effective teaching, is a planned scheme. Its derivation, if one accepts the formation of social inequality and exclusion through political and economic domination, is not necessarily located in relations of exploitation. Put simply, its contrived conceptualisation as a mechanised prospectus of surveillance and control is situated in post-Fordist and neo-liberal modes of corporate managerial existence as a form of governance. This in itself could be read as a form of exploitation, but is better cast generally in terms of “certain social arrangements” (Lea, 2009, p. 2) representative of the corporation now spread into all modes of employment, thus reflecting the pervasive “modern corporate structure” (Lea, 2009, p.2).

Indeed, it is this very notion of pervasiveness and immersion in a corporate dynamic of control and efficacy, generally symptomatic of unfettered and unrestrained modernity-globalization-that constitutes comparative and evaluative systems of performance and appraisal. This is not to suggest that globalization and all that this term entails reflects in itself a system, but it is to acknowledge that “we have been faced with a change of scale” (Bayart, 2007, p.6), one that is manifestly scientific (technological) and entwined within the economic and political.

Many factors have created a sense of the world’s unity both in people’s minds and as an objective configuration. Among these factors are new technologies, the development of the mass media and
transport, the extension of the market economy as a legitimate problematic (if not as a way of producing effective solutions), various ecological catastrophes, especially Chernobyl, the collapse of the Soviet Union, and the unprecedented fragility of the American territorial sanctuary. (Bayart, 2007, p.7)

Yet, to isolate and bestow singular causal factors upon such a transformative and episodic period of human history is to trivialise the event. Nevertheless, one can seek to map and outline its defining features. Marginson (1999), for example, considers the six aspects of globalization to be bounded by:

- Finance and trade;
- Communications and information technologies;
- International movements of peoples;
- The formation of global societies;
- Linguistic, cultural and ideological convergence; and
- World systems of signs and images. (p.21)

Each of these inter-related aspects as world systems “have a life of their own” (Marginson, 1999, p.20), and can and usually do “affect every part of the world, including educational institutions and programmes, and the subjectivities formed in education” (Marginson, 1999, p.20).

A primary consideration then in a new world of changing circumstances is the functionary capacity of a state in terms of its authority and control-governance. The political project of globalisation becomes a question of method. The problematics of systemic control in order to establish “governance without government” (Rosenau as cited in Dale, 1999, p.4), stems from and is linked to an expressed managerial function of rule. The genesis of comparative systems of evaluation is the result for public school teachers.

This is to be expected. The central and core mechanism of compliance that is established as an individual commitment to intensified modes of productive capacity requires devotion. It also needs and surreptitiously requests heightened expressions of individual motivation. This particular aspect may be viewed by some as new and hard-fought for expressions of rights and freedoms, previously restricted within workplaces, and especially in most schools. Indeed, neo-liberal interpretations of the new order are generally cast in terms of the removal and excision of bounded work-place regularities dismissive of employee input. An important example includes employee input into major decision-making at the level of the firm or school. Nevertheless, the post-Fordist work order implies and engenders control through the expected and functional capacities enacted by an adherence to system sanctioned norms and imperatives.

In addition, in rejecting totally positivist and ideologically empiricist conceptions of classroom teacher effectiveness, the very structure of narrow and technicist evaluations of teacher performance are also rejected. Indeed, by introducing mathematically organised schematisations of teacher evaluation, based in the main upon the learning outcomes of public school students, major and particular regions of the educational ‘space’-curriculum, context (school, classroom, peer effects, and so on) are not adequately considered. This type of epistemological reduction rather than producing vivid and accurate accounts of correlations between effective teaching practice and student learning, elevates absence and omission as part of the research and process of inquiry.

Indeed, the educational process in post-Fordist times becomes an activity whose major aim is the production of “use-values” (Althusser, 2009, p.188). The particular appropriation, generally in the form of a core and common set of curriculum options, tied to systemic assessment requirements, is therefore a vital component of pedagogic work. Pedagogical practice and the work of schooling is then the source of a nation’s economic prosperity by virtue of the preparation needed in skilling ‘on-demand’ sources of labour. School-based vocational education and training (VET) and recent proposed changes (The Bradley Review) to the higher education sector within Australia are a case in point.

A theoretical conception of classroom teacher effectiveness defined by the administrative constraints imposed by neo-liberal forms of governance warrants a total exploration of the experimental method favoured by its introduction. Globalization, one of whose characterisations is an intensified
attachment to altered pathways of economic exchange, confronts political control. Consequently, and perhaps not surprisingly, the political and administrative (bureaucratic) control through a distinctive and easy application of performative evaluation is chosen. The “absolute immanence” (Althusser, 2009, p.145) that specific positivist forms of scientifical and classroom teacher effectiveness research that prevails, releases a conceptualised view of the classroom that is ideological in character. The “Absolute Knowledge” (Althusser, 2009, p.146) that specific superstructural scientific approaches of effective teaching practice that dominate as a consequence of forms of governance that are enacted within globalised forces of economic exchange represent an obvious manifestation of power and subjectivity.

Subsequently, the performative quality of public school teachers becomes a focus for “widespread policy debate” (Connell, 2009, p.213). A vital aspect of the debate is a sought for policy articulation of what constitutes good and effective teaching. Indeed, as Connell (2009) puts it “What is meant by a ‘good teacher’ has thus become a significant practical question” (p.214). This in itself poses problematizations. The object of knowledge, which in this case is an empiricist determination and articulation of good teaching practice, through highly metricated systems of evaluation based on scientometric models of ‘effective teaching practice’ and pedagogical action, develops as a real phenomenon autonomous of contextual modalities. Representative of this “collapse into empiricist ideology” (Althusser, 2009, p.148), is the steady intrusion of a “politic-o-economic praxis” (Althusser, 2009, p.149) unmoved by any mediated sense of historical existence and attachment to an organic lived experience of the social. The reduction and subsequent identification through at its most extreme, the negation of difference, fulfils and mirrors the neo-liberal agenda of change.

A positivist science of classroom teacher effectiveness concerned with and sure of the “obviousness of facts” (Althusser, 2009, p.175) revokes the very objectivity it claims to espouse. A science whose primary goal is certain knowledge of effective teaching practice including determination of specific pedagogical laws that constitute that practice, incorporates the empiricist-positivist neo-liberal public education policy-making agenda. The aim sought is the evaluation of teacher effectiveness and performance. This in itself is theoretically based on a post-Fordist conception of productive capacity. It depends on a naïve characterisation of pedagogical practice that is essentially skills driven.

Conclusion

This paper has discussed the significant and defining aspects of change that characterize modern capitalist existence. These aspects reside predominantly in political and economic configurations centred specifically on the management of productive capacity for the control and maintenance of modern economies. Education, including schools and classroom teachers become important components in forcing the necessary economic adjustments required to maintain competitive advantage. Classroom teaching practice must be measured and constantly monitored so that it responds to and improves the skill level and academic achievement of individual students.

The paper has four distinctive parts. Part one discussed in broad outline, the large scale economic change evident in modern and contemporary societies. It featured, in a historical sense and perspective the role of capitalist production and accumulation in ushering in change. An important feature of this part of the paper is the necessary focus on the crucial need for continued adherence to methods of productive capacity that engender change, but also inevitably result in significant disruptions and transformations of existence; social, economic and political. It was argued in this part of the paper that education as the preferred treatment is central to the continued maintenance and accommodation of, in the main, economic change. This of-course has its consequences, and schools are also affected.

Consequently, the second part of the paper considered the political imperative as it is expressed in contemporary society. The ‘advanced’ or neo-liberal political plan and programme is dominant in schools. The major function of this political platform is the re-organisation and re-constitution of the work of schooling through a re-arrangement of pedagogical action and practice. The public school classroom teacher practitioner is the focal point upon which this altered means of action is to be instituted and enacted. In order to achieve major alterations of schooling and teaching practice, the
advanced neo-liberal political project generates new approaches that specifically relate to measurement of individual classroom teacher performance and evaluation. It does this through a broader political condition that is manifestly centred on and leads to withdrawal of pre-established and agreed to social and economic commitments and practices, that incidentally also possessed a historical connection—the Keynesian economic framework as an obvious example.

The third part of the paper dealt specifically with aspects of the new economic transfigurations that feature prominently in contemporary society. This part of the paper considered the post-Fordist shift in productive capacity and exchange. The replacement of Fordist work practices with post-Fordist approaches requires new skills and capacities that individuals need to acquire in order to function productively in a hyper-capitalist economy. Indeed, the continued economic prosperity of nations rests upon the productive capacity of its workforce and education has a vital role and part in its maintenance. For this reason, the interconnection between the economy and education produces and provokes heightened expressions of individual attachment to productivity and performance. This contributes to and culminates in summative evaluations of performance, both individual and systemic. As a result of this particular development, forms of governance and control are initiated that result in and reveal the foregrounding of education as an important and specific link to the market economy.

The final part of the paper considered the issue of governance but in terms that deal with the notion of globalization as an essential and decisive element in the policy-making debate on classroom teacher effectiveness. In other words, governance of schools and classroom teachers is symptomatic of broader globalization implications that include the wilful and intractable influence of a corporate dynamic. The aim here was to illustrate that reified metricated evaluations of classroom instruction devoid of context should be expected because the modern form of authority and control is in short a question of method and thus governance.
References:


