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New Voices, New Knowledges and the New Politics of Education Research: the gathering of a perfect storm?

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ABSTRACT This article outlines and discusses a set of related developments in the governance, reform and privatisation of knowledge production in the field of education policy. It argues that *knowledge about*, performative knowledge, and *knowledge for* leadership knowledge are key facets of the new governance and ongoing reform of public sector education but increasingly are created and sold to governments by private sector and philanthropic organisations. In all of this public sector higher education institutions are being displaced as knowledge brokers, and at the same time 'enterprised' and 'hybridised', in a new education policy knowledge market. Increasingly the idea of a public/private divide in education is redundant.

Introduction

In this article I explore a set of broad, diverse and fundamental but also fragile and uneven 'moves' and trends and developments in education policy, education governance and the politics of educational knowledge. These are increasingly evident and 'effective' across Europe and beyond.

I hope to show that the 'moves' I am describing involve very real and ongoing changes to the form and modalities of the contemporary state within which we [educational researchers] work, and constitute an ongoing transformation of the values, meanings and possibilities within our day-to-day activities in higher education (as well as in other sectors of education). Many of us are already affected by the new politics of education knowledge and more of us will be affected in the future by changes in the ways in which nation-states manage and deliver their educational systems and in particular by the deployment of new kinds of 'research' knowledge (I use the term loosely here) in relation to policy generally and new techniques of system management specifically.

In general terms the developments I have in mind are part of what is sometimes called the move from *government to governance* – that is a set of complex changes in the planning, provision and delivery of educational services of all kinds and thus a reshaping of the traditional image of policy processes in sub-national, national and supranational politics (Pierre, 2000); in other words, a change in the nature of what it means to govern which manifests itself through increasingly blurred boundaries between different tiers of government, and the public and private sectors, and between the state and civil society. Crucially, these new ways of governing require new forms of knowledge to make them work.

To enable this discussion I will draw indirectly, for illustration, on some of my own research [1], build on the research and analysis work of Ozga (2008) and her colleagues, and outline a rather complex argument which touches on and relates together a number of things:

- governing by knowledge;
- the government of knowledge;
- the repositioning of educational knowledge as a commodity, with increasing potential for privatisation and/or commercialisation;
- the participation of new knowledge brokers within policy conversations;
- a convergence in forms of institutional and state governance across Europe based on transnational knowledges;
- some possible implications for public sector higher education.

Given the very broad scope of my concerns here and my attempts to 'join things up', I have to accept that this analysis may well turn out to be 'interesting but somewhat incoherent' (Foucault, 2004) and also somewhat apocalyptic!! One way of thinking about these developments as a whole is as the emergence of a form of neo-liberal government.

Governing Knowledge!

Jenny Ozga and colleagues (see *Journal of Education Policy*, 24(2), Special Issue) have been mapping and analysing the increased use, across a variety of European states, of what they call 'governing knowledge'; that is, knowledge of a new kind – a regime of numbers – that constitutes a 'resource through which surveillance can be exercised' (Ozga, 2008, p. 264) – that is, the use of performance information of various kinds as 'a resource for comparison' (p. 267), addressed to improvements in quality and efficiency, by making nations, schools and students 'legible' (p. 268). These 'numbers' are deployed within schemes like the Programme for International Student Assessment (PISA), national evaluation systems, school performance tables, test comparisons, throughput and equity indicators, etc. (Rinne et al, 2004), and are increasingly important in the ways that states monitor, steer and reform their education systems at every level and in every sector. That is, 'the technology of statistics creates the capacity to relate to reality as a field of government' (Hunter, 1996, p. 154). As part of this:

The shaping of policy through data and the constant comparison for improvement against competition has come to be the standard by which public systems are judged. Indeed, public systems of education are recreated, and Europe is formed. The mediation of travelling policies and policy discourses across Europe constitutes a polymorphic policyscape in which quality assurance and evaluation (QAE) has become a major instrument. (Grek et al, 2009)

There is a marked paradox here in that these techniques which rest upon the granting of greater autonomy to institutions and processes of deconcentration within education systems also provide the state with new modes of governing society and the economy and shaping and reshaping individuals and individual conduct.

At the level of institutional relations and individual working practices these legibilities work through the technologies of performativity (Ball, 2001, 2003). Performativity invites and incites us to make ourselves more effective, to work on ourselves to improve ourselves and to feel inadequate if we do not. It operates within a framework of judgement within which what 'improvement' and effectiveness are, is determined for us, and 'indicated' of us by measures of quality and productivity. Performativity is enacted through a myriad of measures and targets against which we are expected to position ourselves but often in ways that also produce uncertainties about how we should organise ourselves within our work. These uncertainties make us susceptible to leadership. Shore & Wright (1999) even go so far as to suggest that these uncertainties are a general tactic of destabilisation of the public sector. Performativity 'works' most powerfully when it is inside our heads and our souls; that is, when we monitor and manage ourselves, when we take responsibility for working harder, faster and better, thus 'improving' our 'output', as part of our sense of personal worth and in the ways we judge the worth of others. And it is important to recognise that performative systems offer us the possibility of being better than we were, or even being the best – better than others. Performativity is not in any simple sense a

technology of oppressions; it also offers satisfactions and rewards, at least to some. Indeed performativity works best *when we come to want for ourselves what is wanted from us*; when our sense of purpose is aligned with its pleasures. As Davies (2005) puts it, 'The language and practices of neoliberal managerialism are seductive. They lay the grounds for new kinds of success and recognition' (p. 8). In a sense it is about making the individual into an enterprise, a self-maximising productive unit operating in a market of performances – committed to the 'headlong pursuit of relevance as defined by the market' (Falk, 1999, p. 19). The neo-liberal subject is malleable rather than committed, flexible rather than principled – essentially depthless. Within all this the organisation – school, college, university, agency – and the person are treated in exactly the same way. The self-managing individual and the autonomous organisation are produced within the interstices of performativity through audits, inspections, appraisals, self-reviews, quality assurance, research assessments, output indicators etc. We and our workplace are made visible and we become 'subjects which have to be seen' (Foucault, 1979, p. 187). Audits of various sorts work 'both to evaluate and to shape the performance of the auditee in three dimensions: economy, efficiency and effectiveness' (Power, 1994, p. 34).

The first-order effect of performativity in education is to re-orient pedagogical and scholarly activities towards those which are likely to have a positive impact on measurable performance outcomes for the group (and thus funding and other income streams), for the institution and increasingly for the nation. The social and moral purposes of scholarship and teaching that have no immediate measurable performative value are put under threat. This is summed up in Lyotard's (1984) terms, in a shift from the questions 'is it true' and 'is it just' to 'is it useful, saleable, efficient'.

A second-order effect is that for many teachers this changes the way in which they experience their work and the satisfactions they get from it – their sense of moral purpose and of responsibility for their students and for 'truth' is distorted. Practice can come to be experienced as inauthentic and alienating. Commitments are sacrificed for impression. Social structures and social relations are replaced by informational structures. And there is a particular set of skills to be acquired here – skills of presentation and of inflation, making the most of ourselves, making a spectacle of ourselves.

But the force and logic of performance are hard to avoid. To do so, in one sense at least, means letting ourselves down, and letting down our colleagues and our institution. The point is that we make ourselves calculable rather than memorable. This is a commodification of the public professional. But crucially, the rendition of teaching and learning and research into such calculabilities also makes it possible to translate them into contracts with performance indicators, which can then be opened to 'tender' and thus to competition from private providers by means of 'contracting out'.

Contracts bring about a reshaping of the culture and structures of governance (both institutional and national) and of service relationships and of the commitments of public service workers. At heart this is a process of disaggregation and individualisation both of governance itself and of service relationships which are increasingly 'conceived as a series of cascading contracts linking principals and agents' (Yeatman, 1996, p. 285). Collectivist conceptions of 'genuinely public values' (Yeatman, 1996) are displaced. The social contract within which the professional works in the public interest is replaced by forms of commercial relationship between educator and client and employer. The body politic is replaced by what Foucault (1979, p. 194) calls 'mercantile society', which 'is represented as a contractual association of isolated juridical subjects'. Contractualism and juridical forms are being extended into many aspects of the educational process. As Shore & Wright put it, this is 'the re-invention of professionals themselves as units of resource whose performance and productivity must constantly be audited so that it can be enhanced' (1999, p. 559).[2]

Relevant Knowledges

I want to elaborate upon this analysis in two respects: first, by pointing up the role of another sort of concomitant 'governing knowledge' which is also entwined in the processes of the reform of educational institutions. This is what we might call as a shorthand 'leadership knowledge', which draws on the nostrums of business theory as a means to bring about changes in the roles of senior

organisational actors and in the 'responsibilities', work relations and commitments of all staff – it is a means of re-enchantment of the workplace (Hartley, 1999). In the most recent iteration of this knowledge, 'leadership' becomes distributed or shared across the organisation – everyone becomes a leader. We are all enfolded in its discourse.

Second, I want to highlight the commercialisation and commodification of this *leadership knowledge*, as well as that involving 'numbers' and other forms of 'policy knowledge', and the emergence of what Gunter (forthcoming 2010) calls 'the leadership industry'; which brings new voices and new knowledge brokers into the market of research ideas, and also, in a variety of ways, into the conversations of education policy. This involves a new generation of knowledge companies and consultants for whom policy is a business opportunity and from whom governments are increasingly purchasing 'policy knowledge'. In the United Kingdom, Matrix Knowledge Group and A4e are examples of such knowledge businesses.



Matrix Knowledge Group Seminar
New Opportunities White Paper:
Providing effective evidence to support policy delivery
Wednesday March 4th
Breakfast from 8:00 am
Seminar: 8:30 - 9:30 am
Venue: The Navy Board Rooms,
Somerset House, Strand,
London WC2R 1LA



To mark the launch of its new division, Matrix Evidence, The Matrix Knowledge Group would like to invite you to a breakfast seminar to explore how research evidence can best support development of government plans to build fair chances for everyone to succeed in the new economy.

Launched by Minister for the Cabinet Office Liam Byrne and the Prime Minister, the New Opportunities White Paper sets out the Government's agenda for capturing the jobs of the future and investing in families, communities and citizens throughout their lives to help them get on and ahead. Against the backdrop of record public investment planned for the next two years, the White Paper details plans that cover the full range of government departments and offers focused support for people at key stages of their lives to make the most of their potential.

Areas of social research of direct relevance to the New Opportunities agenda, such as education, poverty reduction, crime and justice, and substance abuse prevention have met with limited success in influencing public policy. In this session Natascha Engel, MP for North East Derbyshire and PPS to Minister for the Cabinet Office Liam Byrne, will examine the issues we need to address to ensure the Government's agenda for building fair chances is informed by evidence on proven interventions. A panel discussion will be led by Ken Young, Professor of Public Policy and Director of the King's Institute for the Study of Public Policy.

You will learn:

- How the New Opportunities agenda is going to influence government objectives over the next 18 months;
- What major unknowns evidence can shed light on; and
- What effective evidence looks like.

Kind regards,

Two handwritten signatures in blue ink, one on the left and one on the right, appearing to be 'Natascha Engel' and 'Ken Young' respectively.

Figure 1. Matrix Knowledge Group.

The Matrix invitation (see Figure 1) makes evident some of the ways in which policy is now a profit opportunity, as well as the tightness of the relationships between policy and business interests. There is also a process here in which relevant or 'effective' knowledge (fast, friendly and flexible) is being defined. Furthermore, the boundaries between a service relation to policy and participation in policy communities and policy formation are being blurred.

In another example (Figure 2), A4e, a broad-based public service company, which now also operates in France and Germany, offers to the state, in addition to other services, ‘innovation’ or ‘reform knowledge’, new solutions to ‘wicked’ (Van Beuren et al, 2003) and intractable social problems which will ‘Square Circles’. They will ‘Test new ways of delivering front line public services’.



Figure 2. A4e.

So two sorts of ‘governing knowledge’ are being traded here. The first kind takes the form of or is represented in numbers, inspections, evaluations, comparisons and rankings of public sector organisations, and is what might be called ‘*knowledge about*’ – although this is not simply a means of describing the public sector, it is an effective knowledge, which through processes of performativity, organises that which it describes. I want to distinguish this from a second sort, that is, ‘*knowledge for*’, which takes the form of discourse and practices as methods of organisation or means of reform of public sector actors – involving changes to their form, their culture and their conduct – in particular through the organisation trope of leadership. The teacher is ‘hailed’ as a leader.

Leadership, and distributed leadership in particular, is a means of focusing individuals on goals and practices oriented towards organisation ‘improvement’ or productivity (or income generation) and the raising of system standards, as Elmore’s (2009) account (below) makes very clear. That is, leadership is a means of reworking and narrowing the responsibilities of the practitioner by excluding ‘extraneous’ issues that are not directly connected to performance outcomes. It is, as Elmore describes it, a move from loose to tight coupling, which ties teaching and learning activities in the classroom (or research activities in higher education) ‘tightly’ to group, organisational and national ‘productivity’.

Creating a new model of distributed leadership consists of two main tasks: 1) describing the ground rules which leaders of various kinds would have to follow in order to engage in large scale improvement; and 2) describing how leaders of various kinds in various roles and positions would share responsibility in a system of large scale improvement. (Elmore, 2009, p. 19)

In a distributed leadership system the job of leaders is to buffer teachers from extraneous and distracting non-instructional issues so as to create an active arena for engaging and using quality interventions on instructional issues. (Elmore, 2009, p. 24)

Furthermore, it is important to recognise that 'leadership' knowledge' is nested within a broader discursive ensemble of organisational practices and values that together work to transform public sector organisations into the 'enterprise form' – meaning that these organisations come to 'follow principles of economic sustainability and cost-benefit risk-management and adhere to standards of performance that are adjusted to the reality of an all-encompassing market environment' (Shamir, 2008, p. 6). Gunter (forthcoming 2010) describes the UK New Labour version of school leadership as 'the business model of entrepreneurial transformational leadership'.

Although different in form I shall try to indicate that the two sorts of knowledge (*about* and *for*) are intimately connected at the level of organisational functioning; both are moral technologies focused on teachers as 'practical subjects', they activate teachers and researchers towards 'productive' ends. These individual techniques and devices taken as a whole constitute a political economy of details, 'small acts of cunning' (Foucault, 1979, p. 139) which work as mundane but inescapable technologies for the 'modernisation' and 'transformation' of the whole public sector. That is they work in very mundane ways through specific techniques, like annual reviews, appraisals, 'goal-setting, tests and a number of new comprehensive and mandatory reporting mechanisms' (Andersen et al, 2009), etc., and the insertion of generic commercial relations based on contracts, best value, partnerships, performance monitoring, brokering, etc. These in their component parts and as a whole constitute a political economy of details (Foucault, 1979, p. 139) and together they work on us to produce new subjectivities.

These relationships take the form of 'a multiplicity of often minor processes, of different origin and scattered location across and beyond the state. These overlap, repeat, or imitate one another according to their domain of application, they converge and gradually produce the blueprint of a general method. (Foucault, 1979, p. 138)

Within all of this, 'reform' ideas or forms of 'improvement' which seemed radical, even unthinkable, become more and more possible, then normal and then necessary – in part through what I call a 'ratchet effect' (Ball, 2008). Overtime practices that are 'fragmented, repetitive and discontinuous' (Foucault, 2004, p. 4) become 'totally inscribed in general and essential transformations' (1979, p. 139): in this case in the '*firming-up*' or *enterprising* of the public sector, and indeed of the state itself. Two aspects of change are involved here; one is endogenous (meaning that we are *changed*) and the other is exogenous (meaning we are *replaced*).

These, then, are knowledges of governing and forms of *governmentality*, which through their techniques mobilise actors to undertake self-governing tasks. They are particular forms of moral agency and disposition for social action which rest upon a taking of 'responsibility' – what is called 'responsibilization' (Rose, 1996) – as indicated above. As Shamir (2008, p. 4) puts it, 'responsibility is the practical master-key of governance'. Within all of this, there is the interpellation of new sorts of actors who have 'appropriate' reflexive moral capacities. In effect, 'the framework of relations between individuals and governments is currently undergoing a profound transition' (Tuschling and Engemann, 2006, p. 451).

There is a dual and linked set of responsibilities embedded here; *one for performance (standards, outcomes, ranking, improvement)* done by working on and with students or maximising research 'outputs', but sometimes working on and with data itself (fabrication [Ball, 2003]); *and the other is for efficiency* (cost-reduction [replacing expensive labour with cheaper labour], innovation [which can be addressed to costs or to productivity] and entrepreneurship [which can maximise income by increasing recruitment or by generating new income flows]). Together these responsibilities are fundamental to the competitive well-being of the organisation. The first is elicited through the sanctions and rewards of performance, at individual and organisational level. The second is elicited through participation in or the visions of 'good' leadership in relation to the financial disciplines of a market environment.

Insinuations of the Commercial

Having outlined these new governing knowledges, and some of their consequences for educational practitioners, I want to look a little more at how these knowledges get distributed. There are three forms of dissemination or insinuation of these new knowledges into the organisational life of the

public sector – philanthropy, profit and hybridisation – all of which are commercial in different ways (see Table I).

One insinuation is profit: that is, a straightforward commodification of knowledge and educational ‘products’ and the emergence of new networks of ‘preferred’ knowledge producers (Thrupp, 2005) as well as, to some extent, a sense of those to be avoided. Leadership knowledge and branded ‘leadership products’, both off-the-shelf (training) and custom-made (coaching), are available in the retail education services market (Ball, 2007, 2009). These products range from airport-guides-style bullet points and nostrums – mantras, alliterations, and magic (Stronach, 1993) – to some more thoughtful and reflexive analyses (Thrupp & Willmott, 2003). These products, offered as ‘transformational’ and innovative forms of practice, are paradoxically very similar and continually reiterated and they are uniformly validated by reference to the world of business (see The Place Group below).

	Knowledge about	Knowledge for
Philanthropy	Self-evaluation and improvement programmes	Leadership mentoring projects
Profit	Institutional evaluations Self-evaluation Satisfaction surveys Student tests	Leadership training and programmes Consultancies Brands (see Table II)
Hybridisation	Evaluations/research	Demonstration and training Qualifications

Table I. Governing knowledge.

The Place Group

Understanding what leadership is and looking at how it operates in the business world can assist educational establishments enormously when it comes to defining their own leadership skills and requirements. It’s not just about management or about executing processes, it’s about engaging with staff and students to inspire the whole organisation.

Our consultants have many years [sic] experience in transformational leadership roles, and the Place team includes individuals who have worked as school and college principals, professional coaches and senior managers within other organisations. We can help to structure, communicate and deliver organisational development plans based on devolved leadership models, and we also work closely with Ashridge Business School for the delivery of specialist leadership coaching. (<http://www.place-group.com/services/Leader.html>)

The second means of distribution is philanthropic, as part of the work of ‘corporate conscience’ and the so-called ‘socio-moral obligations of market entities’ (Shamir, 2008, p. 2). This often involves the same agents – commercial organisations – working in different ways, through Foundations or business charities, but with the same or similar ‘products’ and the same effects. Solutions may be ‘given’ or maybe sold to the public sector. This then is a dual process that Shamir (2008) calls ‘enfolding’, within which the ‘economization of the state and civil society’ is mirrored by ‘the moralization of the market’ (Shamir, 2008, p. 2).

Bertelsmann Stiftung (the Bertelsmann Foundation of Germany) is a good example of a corporation assuming ‘socio-moral duties that were heretofore assigned to civil society organizations, governmental entities and state agencies’ (Shamir, 2008, p. 4). In their strap line Bertelsmann claim that they are ‘Inspiring people, Shaping the Future’ (see Figure 3).

Bertelsmann are doing the work of education reform and doing policy, bringing particular knowledges and techniques to bear, working with and inside the state (see below). From the Bertelsmann website you can order your policy online (see Figure 3).

The Bertelsmann Stiftung has been working to improve quality in schools and the education system since the 1990s. We at the foundation believe that efforts to improve schools and teaching need to focus on three key elements: greater autonomy for schools, systematic evaluation processes and effective support systems for the schools. The Bertelsmann Stiftung is

working together with education authorities from North Rhine-Westphalia, Lower Saxony and Baden-Württemberg on pilot projects testing and expanding school autonomy in regional education networks.[3]



Figure 3. Bertelsmann Stiftung.

The third form of distribution is through the hybridisation of public sector institutions *themselves and educational research specifically* (both as a result of the insinuations brought about by 1 and 2) and as a response to the changing modalities of state funding and forms of governing – that is the creation of 'knowledge markets'. We can call this the invention of Entrepreneurial Public Sector Organisations (EPSOs). One way of bringing about this hybridisation is the importation of new kinds of leaders from other sectors, but partnerships and consortia with the private sector and changes in funding mechanisms, from grants to performance rewards or tenders, are also conduits for the flow of new values and practices.

In practice a great deal of the work done by the new 'public service businesses' (like Tribal, The Place Group, Cambridge Education, Nord Anglia, A4E, etc. [see Ball, 2007]) is not done by taking services out of public sector control but rather through collaborations of various kinds with the public sector, although some are more meaningfully collaborative than others and not all rest on shared objectives or a balance of influence. Partnerships open up various kinds of flows between the sectors, of people, information and ideas, language, methods, values, and culture: 'states have a key role in promoting innovative capacities, technical competence and technology transfer ... often involving extensive collaboration' (Jessop, 2002, p. 121). Partnerships are a further aspect of the blurring between sectors. Viewed in terms of the developments outlined above, UK public universities and those in many other countries are now 'hybrid organisational forms in which public and private interests are combined' (Clarke & Newman, 1997). For example, there are many universities from the United Kingdom and elsewhere involved in overseas 'for-profit' ventures (e.g. University of Nottingham in Malaysia, Xi'an Jiaotong Liverpool University). Jane Kelsey (2006, p. 1) writes about what she terms 'an unsustainable hybrid form of a modern/neoliberal university' which is, she says, an 'integral yet incongruous part' of 'a parasitic international education industry'. She also argues that 'University/business collaborations deepen the influence of corporate priorities and preferences and compress critical space' (Kelsey, 2006, p. 9).

Within this economy of policy knowledges, knowledge production that is fast, certain, unequivocal, 'on message', and immediate and relevant is especially valued as a way of representing the world to government. This involves the taking rather than making of social

problems, and an acceptance of the lexicon and registers of policy, and participation in the discourse and logics of global competitiveness. Gunter (forthcoming 2010) notes that in the United Kingdom New Labour ‘has brought people into government either in formal employment as advisers in the Department [Department for Children Schools and Families] or the NCSL [National College of School and Children’s Services Leadership], or through contracts as consultants to undertake research based on government priorities to support the framing or legitimisation of reforms’.

	Knowledge about	Knowledge for
Philanthropy	Bertelsmann Stiftung	Partnership for Learning Teach for All
Profit	Cocentra A4e Matrix	Tribal The Place Group Cambridge
Hybridisation	Collaborations, partnerships, ‘off-shore’ campuses, ‘3rd stream activity’	National College for School and Children’s Services Leadership

Table II. Governing knowledge (brands).

Transnational Knowledges and Policy Convergences

Many of the knowledge and leadership companies I have referred to now operate internationally and are involved in services delivery in many different locations and the export of their brands and policy ideas. For the most part they deal in generic ‘transnational knowledges’ and policy solutions. For example, Cambridge Education (a subsidiary of engineering and management services company Mott Macdonald) is currently involved in projects in 33 countries ranging from the USA to Laos to Tajikistan. Policy ideas developed in the United Kingdom are being sold on to other governments seeking solutions to their education policy problems.

Alongside all of this the European Commission has created a European School Leadership Network with an online course for school leaders, and the Organisation for Economic Cooperation and Development also sees school leadership as an education policy priority (Pont et al, 2008). The 2009 *European Educational Research Journal* special issue (8(3)) is devoted to ‘The Europeanisation of Educational Leadership?’ (Guest Editors: Simon Clarke & Helen Wildy).

Philanthropic networks and relationships also provide conduits for the movement of generic policy ideas, and for the insinuation of particular forms of knowledge and for establishing relationships inside the state for representatives of business. Philanthropies act as international policy brokers. A good example of the export of reform ideas through philanthropic activity is ‘Partnerships for Learning – Deutschland’. The Pfl programme was developed from a London pilot in 1996 initiated by KPMG working with the Business in the Community (BitC) charity. Since its launch, 5000 head teachers have been matched with a business partner. Over 1200 companies throughout the United Kingdom have been involved. KPMG also participated in the extension of this programme in Germany, together with companies like Herlitz, Bank Deutsche and Siemens (see Figure 4). It provides mentoring support to head teachers in Berlin, Brandenburg and Frankfurt. Since 2005, 86 schools have registered for the German scheme.

Another example of the movement of policy ideas through networks of business philanthropy is the Teach First programme. This originated in the USA as ‘Teach for America’ and was imported into England as ‘Teach First’ (TF); it is a teacher training and recruitment programme aimed at placing graduates from elite universities in socially disadvantaged schools for two years (60% of participants now stay on beyond their two-year commitment). TF (which is supported by a mix of corporate and government funding) is the largest graduate recruiter from Oxford and Cambridge and it is now being exported globally through ‘Teach for All’ (funded by a group of US foundations) to countries including Germany (see Figure 5), Estonia, Latvia, India, Australia, Lebanon and Chile. TF brings new concepts and language into indigenous teacher education programmes and has received high-level political support in the USA, United Kingdom and the export countries.



Figure 4. Partners in Learning.



Figure 5. Teach First Deutschland.

A final example comes from a philanthropy network established by the Private Equity Foundation (PEF), a UK-based private equity and venture capital funded charity, which now also operates in Germany through the Forum for Active Philanthropy and recently made its first investment in the Hamburger Hauptschilmodell (HHM). This is a charity helping young people in the transition from school to work. In France PEF is working with the KPMG France Foundation 'to learn more about the charity landscape and identify organisations that we may be able to work with'.^[4]

A Convergence of Governance

As noted already, these new forms of participation in the provision, monitoring and evaluation of public sector services, and new forms of public sector organisation, bring new players, voices, values and discourses into policy conversations. In effect, to different extents in different countries, the private sector now occupies a range of roles and relationships within the state, and the educational state in particular, as sponsors and benefactors, as well as working as contractors, consultants, advisers, researchers and service providers (see Ball, 2007, 2009); that is, *both sponsoring innovations (by philanthropic action) and selling policy solutions, and services to the state.*

Education policy communities are thus being reconstituted and new policy discourses and narratives are flowing through them. New forms of policy influence are enabled and in some respects some established policy actors and agencies, like educational researchers, are disenfranchised or circumvented. In particular the new participants in the policy process colonise the spaces opened up by the critique of existing state organisations. In other words, the market in 'governing knowledges' is closely entwined with the dissemination of new policy narratives and with the developing market in public services.

All of this drastically blurs the already fuzzy divide between the public and the private sector. (In effect, analytically this distinction is no longer useful to us.) In general terms this is the move towards a 'polycentric state' and 'a shift in the centre of gravity around which policy cycles move' (Jessop, 1998, p. 32). The participants in these new, diverse and disaggregated policy communities act from many 'points' and sites, roles and responsibilities, which constitute a new grid of power 'above, across, as well as within, state boundaries' (Cerny, 1997, p. 253) through which particular forms of discourse are distributed, embedded and naturalised. Commercial consultants and public service companies (as well as philanthropists of various kinds) are eager to provide and enact radical and innovative 'solutions' to policy problems, solutions which almost always take the form of inserting into public sector organisations technologies of 'modernisation' and 'transformation' (like leadership, performativity, marketisation) as well as changing the relations between organisations – as in the deployment of the 'market form', but also via the development of partnerships, consortia and contracting. However, in many instances, as part of the process of reform, public service companies are seeking to replace state providers by becoming public service contractors.

Restless capital is always seeking new opportunities for profit, new possibilities for commodification – especially at times when existing arenas of profit are less attractive. There is an iterative relationship between policy change, policy opportunities created by the state, for knowledge and services, and policy solutions which are sold by the private sector to the state, in the form of consultation *reports and recommendations* for the reform of the state itself and of the public sector, and such reforms once implemented (*as in the case of marketisation of services*) in turn create new opportunities for profit for private sector organisations. Nonetheless, the state is the key market maker here.

Implications for Knowledge/for Higher Education – a 'perfect storm'?

We must neither over- nor underestimate the consequences of these trends and moves, but the case can be made that the conditions are being created for a 'perfect storm' for public sector higher education; that is, a particular and unusual combination of circumstances which will aggravate and contribute to an already drastic situation. Governance, new forms of knowledge and educational reform and privatisation are tightly intertwined in the scenario I have outlined at all levels of education.

The interrelations among these different policy moves address, require and enable the reform of education services generally, and knowledge 'services' in particular. They produce a new repertoire of possibilities for 'useful knowledge', while excluding or residualising others. They also 'invite' new kinds of knowledge brokers into the process of policy knowledge production and into the field of policy itself. There are also advantages accruing to governments both in terms of costs and flexibilities when they replace more traditional policy knowledge producers with these new providers. The 'needs' of the competitive state (Lingard & Rizvi, 2009) may be better met by the new providers. A market in 'reforming knowledge' and 'governing knowledge' is being created – and while this is not entirely new it is gathering pace and a new generation of specialist 'knowledge companies' is emerging.

In using these new forms of knowledge the state is able to develop new modes of metagovernance – involving devolutions, deconcentration, earned-autonomies and commercial or agency status on the one hand, and monitoring, target-setting, commissioning, tendering and contracting on the other; that is, forms of 'fragmented centralisation'.

Public sector higher education is being 'enterprised' and hybridised, as the values and sensibilities of competition, contracting and income generation are set over and against the values of academic freedom and scholarship. In many respects the public/private sector binary is now redundant!

Through these new relationships a new 'architecture of regulation' is being constructed based on interlocking relationships between disparate sites in and beyond the state and displays many of the characteristics of what Richards & Smith (2002) call a 'postmodern state', which is dependent, flexible, reflexive and diffuse – centrally steered but 'at a distance'. Policy is being 'done' in a multiplicity of new sites 'tied together on the basis of alliance and the pursuit of economic and social outcomes' (MacKenzie & Lucio, 2005, p. 500); although the strength of such alliances should not be overstated.

Finally, these new modes of governing – both on the part of the state, and on the part of providers – are generic and post-political. They are generic both in the sense of their application across all forms of organisational activity and to all forms of social relations, and as having no particular relation to historic or culturally specific forms of government. That is, social relations are grounded in the economic rationality of the market – the generalisation of a neo-liberal epistemology, as Shamir (2008) calls it. They are post-political in the sense of being regarded as commonsensical rather than ideological, or as a form of relation that is neither left nor right, neither market nor state.

Perhaps, then, what we have here is a set of over-determined conditions for a catastrophe in public sector higher education – I leave you to judge.

Notes

- [1] Economic and Social Research Council funded project, "'New' Philanthropy, Education Policy and the State'.
- [2] A complex set of changing relationships is involved here, between the state and the public sector and privatisation and performativity. One part of what performativity does, as indicated above, is to re-render practice into measurable outcomes. That is, the work, the processes, of education come to be represented and appreciated in terms of products, or calculabilities. This means at an individual level, employees can be contracted on the basis of output requirements. This enables greater use of fixed-term contracts and individual contract negotiations and thus provides for greater budgetary flexibility for organisations and for the funders of knowledge creation. At the institutional level of educational services the work of the organisation as a whole can be rendered into performance indicators and again can be translated into the form of a contract for 'service delivery'. Once rendered into the form of such a contract the work of organisations can be put out to tender on a fixed-cost, performance-related basis, and opened up to new providers – it can be exogenously privatised!
- [3] http://www.bertelsmann-stiftung.de/cps/rde/xchg/SID-C3105C47-656DD100/bst_engl/hs.xsl/336.htm?drucken=true&drucken=true& (accessed 2 June 2010).
- [4] PEF website: <http://www.privateequityfoundation.org/newsletter/july-2008/developing-as-a-european-foundation-pef-invests-in-germany/> (accessed 2 June 2010).

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