

Two final points of which readers should be aware. For North American academics the predominance of British examples of select committees, the research assessment exercise and the like will be off-putting. Also, the price in the US—a whopping \$95.00—will severely limit the book's potential readership. This book should really be in the hands of all lecturers who ask themselves the most basic questions regarding their practice—What should I teach? What do I want my students to learn?

As such, the book illustrates the enduring relevance of another critical theory concept—Marcuse's repressive tolerance. This describes how society allows a veneer of open dialogue and critique (the book has been published, after all) whilst simultaneously circumscribing its effectiveness (few can afford it!).

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### **Inspection, inspection, inspection: how Ofsted crushes independent schools and independent teachers**

Anastasia de Waal, 2006

London, The Institute for the Study of Civic Society

£9.50 (pbk), 148 pp.

ISBN (10) 1-9033-8651-9

The most effective critiques of managerialism in schools in general and Blairite New Public Managerialism (NPM) in particular have been largely confined to a group of anti-managerialist academics such as Thrupp, Gewirtz, Ball, Mahony, Hextall, etc. Their judgment of NPM has been restricted to the state sector of education and, for them, NPM has had a wholly detrimental impact by forcing through the implementation of a toolkit of Governmentally approved processes and practices. Some of these processes and practices have the force of statute, others take the form of 'guidance'—all are driven by the expectation that they will enable schools (and their teachers and pupils) to achieve a related set of centrally determined targets—the 'standards agenda'.

The implementation of these processes and practices has been criticized by academic anti-managerialists on a number of grounds including: a failure to recognize the special nature of school culture by imposing business practices on schools; ignoring the impact of the socio-economic status of pupils; encouraging inequity and anti-welfarism; ignoring the values that school leaders may hold; as well as a failure to have any favourable influence on schools except through achievement (or not) of largely spurious targets. As a result, they argue, teachers and school leaders have been reduced to a de-professionalized technicist function. In addition, the values and controlling objectives of Central Government have imposed this peculiarly confining form of managerialism as the dominant discourse on the state sector as a whole.

The publication of this book opens up another thread of criticism centred on the under-researched (though widely discussed) independent fee-paying sector. Independent schools are generally perceived to be unaffected by Government policy, being largely regulated by the requirements of a relatively small market—i.e., parents with a particular view of education and who can afford the fees. In this context, what is new about de Waal's critique is that she is examining the impact of one aspect of NPM—what she judges to be a rigid protocol for school inspection as implemented by Ofsted—on independent schools. Ofsted inspections are normally associated solely with state schools, but Ofsted nevertheless also monitors the performance of a sub-set of independent schools educating around 20% of the sector's pupils—typically enrolled in small, often recently established, primary schools which do not belong to one of the various independent schools associations affiliated to the Independent Schools Council (ISC).

De Waal revisits an Old Labour mantra—the desirability of the abolition of the independent sector. For her, the excellence of the independent sector remains a running sore which New Labour wants to become 'the casualty of a transformed excellent state sector' (p. 4), an objective which was hobbled by a failure of earlier Labour Governments to control what goes on in the typical independent school. Her thesis rests on the case that the weapons of independent school destruction are now sufficiently sophisticated, taking the form of condemnatory Ofsted inspection reports. She is rightly exercised by the performative approach of Ofsted inspectors to teaching and learning in the classroom and the encouragement of teachers to fabricate evidence for an inspection. For her, Ofsted is a means to make state schools look better and independent schools look worse—particularly those independent schools which do not fit within the prevailing state school model.

Not that the sector is doing much to help itself. For her, supine independent schools are letting the Government get away with their degradation by participating in the imposition of a form of state school NPM audited by Ofsted. For de Waal, this is something we should all be worried about because it is the existence of a thriving independent sector which most effectively demonstrates the failure of NPM-type managerialism in the state sector.

The assertion that the consequences of a poor Ofsted report can prevent newly established independent schools from being registered is the most clearly argued assertion in de Waal's otherwise rather rambling polemic. Failure in this regard may result in the forced closure of the school. However, her attempt to spread her generalizations to cover the entire independent sector is hard to accept given that she has used as her evidence base an unrepresentatively small sample of non-ISC primary schools.

She touches on the importance of affiliation to ISC as a form of protection from NPM-type managerialism for independent schools, largely because ISC schools are not inspected by Ofsted but by a separate inspecting body—the Independent Schools Inspectorate (ISI). She also leaves unexplored the impact of ISI's use of current or recent practitioners to conduct inspections, as well as the extent to which ISI (which is itself monitored by Ofsted) mediates Central Governmental aims and objectives, though she argues that the two models of inspection are converging ever closer.

This book, for all its imperfections, is welcome in that it takes a rarely grasped opportunity to look behind the curtain of the independent sector and glimpse the nature of the

culture of independent schools. Most importantly, I hope it encourages researchers to engage more with independent schools in looking for alternative perspectives on managerialism and anti-managerialism.

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### **Adult literacy as social practice: more than skills**

Uta Papen, 2005

London, Routledge

£70 (hbk), 176 pp.

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Considerable attention is being paid to the professional development of practitioners involved in adult literacy, language and numeracy (ALLN). This book is a very welcome addition to an increasing literature on ALLN, how it is defined, how it is used and what the implications are for practitioners and learners. In particular, this volume has a key aim to introduce readers to the social practice view of literacy and its implications for teaching and learning ALLN.

The initial chapters cover the theory of literacy as social practice and then move on to discuss the implications for policy and practice. A primary aim is to show how theory and research can inform policy and practice and how this can be achieved through collaboration between research and practice.

A central tenet of the social practice view of literacy is that by understanding the role of literacy in learners' lives, it is possible to apply this understanding in relation to the literacy demands in work, home and in social and familial relationships. This approach can also address how ALLN is taught and learnt and it can help contribute to policy in the UK and further afield.

Each chapter contains short readings to further illuminate and expand issues raised, followed by research activities, suggested issues for reflection and additional reading. For example, in chapter one, which sets out theoretical perspectives on reading and writing, readers are encouraged to critically examine their own assumptions about literacy and numeracy and there are two readings, one by Mary Hamilton discussing four 'strands' or ideologies of literacy: emancipatory, social control, cultural missionary work and remedial. A second article by Jean Searle discusses how literacy is not a neutral concept. Readers are then asked to collect definitions about literacy and apply the ideologies outlined by Hamilton and to reflect on whether their own programmes fit these too.

In part I of the book, Uta examines the 'new' way of looking at reading and writing. She identifies the literacy debates about functional skills versus social practice, using the example of making a journey by train to illustrate how literacy and numeracy are important