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Machine and Professional Bureaucracies: Barriers to Inclusive Education

The history of special education is largely one of exclusion - the more students in mass education Systems have failed to learn and behave in a manner deemed appropriate to mainstream schools, the more they have been squeezed out of the schools or the mainstream curriculum

In 1985 I noted that "special education in Britain, as in other advanced technological societies, is expanding, In changed forms, and rationalised by changed ideologies, notably the ideology of special needs, it is becoming an important mechanism for differentiating between young people, and allocating some to a future which, if not as stigmatized as in the past, will be characterised by relative powerlessness and economic dependency" (Tomlinson *1985,* p.157). I see no reason to change the view, except to note that many developing countries, are also adopting Western models of educational exclusion for large numbers of their students on the grounds of 'handicap', 'disability' or 'special need'.

In the UK it is unsurprising that segregation, whether in special schools[1] units, centres, programmes or via straight exclusion, has increased since 1988.

The effects of league tables of test results, school management of their own finances, and staffing Cuts, have encouraged the removal of the 'difficult' and the 'disabled', the expense of exclusion supposedly being offset by the enhanced credentials acquired by the remaining students, unimpeded by their troublesome peers. It is likely that the 1994 Code of Practice (DfE 1994) will encourage the identification of more not fewer, such troublesome students.

This situation will never change until mainstream schools change their goals, functions and ~ organisation, and evolve into totally different kinds of institutions. This would seem to be an impossible objective at the present time, given the close links between schooling and the economy   a major current goal of schools being to "produce" students who have demonstrably collected a large number of qualifications, skills and competences as a passport to their possible future employment.

However, the relationship between existing schools -modelled as they are on

nineteenth century industrial organisations and emulating the standardised work practices of factories, and the kind of learning institutions that will be needed for the twenty-first century - now need to be examined with a view to change. We need to consider a different relationship between schools and the economy, and changed goals and organisations of "schools" from an attitude of utopian realism (Giddens 1995, p~ 101). Utopian realism is not an unrealistic endeavour because it corresponds to observable trends. Observable trends certainly indicate an increasing dislocation between the goals, organisation and management of secondary schools in particular, and the needs of the economy and of individuals As a prelude to providing a blueprint for the inclusive learning institutions of the future, we need a more critical understanding as to why schools have an inbuilt tendency to identify and separate out students considered troublesome or "not normal".

This paper uses Skrtic's (1991, 1995) elaboration of Burrell and Morgan (1979) and Mintzberg's (1979) work, in which he describes schools as machine and professional bureaucracies. It suggests that both these configurations are antagonistic to inclusive schooling An increasingly desperate process of exclusion via ideologies of special need or "acceptable behaviour" is an inevitable result, of attempting to fit all students into out-dated and dysfunctional organisations called school

Machine bureaucracies

Organisations set up within mass societies develop bureaucracies to run them, although bureaucracies can take different forms. Max Weber's (1947) classic definitions of rational bureaucracies suggested that they were characterised by continuity, discipline, rationality, reliability, legitimacy of authority, and regulated tasks and rules   all these being characteristics of 'effective' schools in the nineteenth and twentieth centuries. However, nineteenth century schools tended to model themselves on machine bureaucracies - organisations that co-ordinate standardized work processes and specify rules for each task, "The theory behind the work in a machine bureaucracy rests with technocrats.' they do the thinking, the workers simply follow the rules" (Skrtic 1995, p. 199). School organisations emulating factories were initially modelled as machine bureaucracies. Such structures, influenced by scientific management theories (Taylor 1947) which issued detailed prescriptions for standardizing work processes, were adopted as a model for most public organisations up to the 1960s, and were assumed to epitomise rationality, and technical efficiency - people being "processed" along the lines of raw materials in factories.

Schools, as Skrtic (1991, p.163) noted, are conceptualised, managed and governed as if they are machine bureaucracies, as if they were factories turning

out an identical product. The assumption is that workers (teachers) routinely and precisely process the raw material (students), for example, they teach a prescribed curriculum, and the raw material shapes up into the required product. Quality control mechanisms tests and assessments - are routinely applied to the producer and misfits and failed products are rejected. Schools, because of their history, and public and political expectations, are forced to adopt the trappings of machine bureaucracy (centralised power, routines, tight control of personal, standardized work processes, regular reporting) even when these processes manifestly do not fit the reality of the complexity of the tasks schools carry out, and the complexity of individuals. It is relatively easy to demonstrate within this model that 'disability', 'disaffection' 'disruption' or whatever labels we currently applied to non-standard products, becomes both an organisational and an individual pathology

The 'SEN' student in a machine bureaucracy

1. rejected as 'disabled or an 'SEN' child
2. failed and rejected for employment or further education

Although it is tempting to develop further examples of the effects of schools as machine bureaucracies on their rejects, Skrtic points out that in fact the formal machine bureaucratic structure of schools is a myth. Despite the apparent machine structure of schools, they actually operate more as professional bureaucracies. This is largely because machine bureaucracies can only cope with simple work tasks, those that can be broken down into precise tasks and controlled by rules and regulations. Schools undertake complex work, and when organisations are faced with tasks that are too complex to be rationalised and too uncertain to be formalised, they turn themselves into professional bureaucracies (Mintzberg1979, p 377; Skrtic 1995, p.201).

Professional bureaucracies

Professionals, as the history of professionalism tells us (Larson 1977, Tomlinson 1982) work autonomously and personally with 'clients' and cater for individual needs. "In principle, professionals know the theory behind their work and have the discretion to adapt it to the actual needs of their clients" (Skrtic *1995,* p.199). They receive specialised training to give them particular expertise and they obtain rewards by both money and status.

They have a degree of power but are also agents of power in that they legitimate structures of control, domination (and inequality). During the twentieth century professionals have increasingly become 'paid servants of the state' carrying out legitimating practices for policies that government has decided on. Teachers are

here taken to be professionals although they are labelled in the literature as 'semi-professionals' and they have always been paid servants of the state. Doctors, educational psychologists and other ancillary professionals dealing with special education are caught between state expectations versus their own professional self-perceptions, for example, educational psychologists are pressed by particular LEAs to statement or not to statement, not to specify particular resources for staternented pupils, etc. professional bureaucracies however, do try to balance the need of the clients with the expectations of the organisation or the wider constituency. Also, unlike the workers in a tightly-coupled machine bureaucracy, they work in a loosely-coupled structure, sharing common faculties and expectations but often working 'alone' with the client.

The SEN student in a professional bureaucracy

1. individual needs met in special programme
2. individual's needs met in special post-school career

Thus, as Skrtic (1991, p. 165) pointed out we can understand schools in terms of two incompatible structures:
- a formal structure (machine bureaucracy) which satisfies the pubic image of what organisations should look like
- an informal structure professional bureaucracy) which does complex client-centred work but still conforms to the machine bureaucracy model because both use a principle of standardization. Professional and machine bureaucracy cannot accommodate heterogeneity -they force the clients (students) into standard (curriculum) programmes and have standard expectation of 'normal' behaviour, or they force the pupil out of the system altogether Thus students have to be credentialed so they are categorised as 'normal', 'capable', 'able'. Clients who present problems are labelled, categorised or 'treated'. Professionals try to improve diagnoses, assessment and intervention, that will ostensibly help the client but will still differentiate and separate out the special from the normal.

Both types of bureaucracy will lead towards some form of segregation rather than integration of pupils.

Conclusion

If we are trying to explain the 'failure' of integration, the larger number of statemented pupils, those segregated in special schools, units, classes and the expansion of exclusion of the 'disruptive', we have to look at the structures,

functions and goals of schools and organisations.

Teachers and others may think special education is a rational response to school failure, but it can be <u>regarded as a problem of school failure</u> - a failure of the schools as an organisation to adapt and change to accommodate all pupils. If we continue to separate the 'special' from the general education system, we will never confront the uncertainty, think about real innovations and change. If we start to think of special educational needs as an organisational pathology, rather than an individual deficit or pathology we have to think of new forms of organisations, in which teaching and learning takes place.

However, the learning institutions of the future will need to move away from the apparent intense concentration on the goal of <u>"productivism"</u> - an ethos where <u>work</u> has a distinctive and central role, defining whether or not individuals feel socially valued (Giddens 1995, p. 175). At the moment all young people are being urged to consider a career in terms of jobs which may change - 'life-long' learning of new skills and competences being required. Young people are persuaded that gaining negotiable qualifications, skills and competences is in their hands, reflecting their 'ability' and enthusiasm. Within this scenario of productivism, if people are not employable, they have not invested enough in themselves. Those labelled 'disabled', 'difficult' or special are likely to find more difficulty in collecting meaningful skills and competences and are likely to suffer more sharply from messages that it is their fault if they fail to find and keep a job (Tomlinson and Colquhoun 1995, p.199). They will continue to be 'managed' within professional bureaucracies dealing with the [4]adult special'. Giddens has pointed Out that while the autonomy of work still survives as a dominant ethos and defines the experience of unemployment and dependency, there are very clear counter-trends (ibid, p. 177). He notes that the objective of full and permanent employment for <u>anyone</u> makes little sense any more and that a major question emerging is what relation work should have to other life values. He prefers to consider what he terms p<u>roductivity</u>, "a productive life is one well-lived ... one where an individual is able to relate to others as an independent being, having developed a sense of self-esteem" (p.180).

As trends away from old-style productivism continue schools will have to seek new organisational forms, <u>not</u> modelled on machine or professional bureaucracies with their elaborate mechanisms for rejection and exclusion
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