

Critically evaluate how the role of the educational professional has been influenced by policy developments since 1996

Policy developments since 1996 have had a profound influence on the role of the educational profession. "There was a time when education policy as policy was taken for granted. Clearly that is no longer the case. Today, educational policies are the focus of considerable controversy, and public contestation. Education policy-making has become highly politicised." (Olsen et al. 2004; 2-3)

Policy can be interpreted as in the need for change, and in the way change can be managed. Change is inevitable and even though not always positive, it can shape the way forward to improve, gain knowledge recognising areas where improvements need to be made. "A policy as we may understand it is a statement of intent, a plan of action or a set of guidelines. Policy should not mislead us into unexamined assumptions about policies as 'things'; policies are also processes and outcomes." (Ball.1994;15)

I will primarily be looking at the role of the teacher and the influence of policy developments since 1996. Focusing on the impact of The Labour Party, implementation of the foundation phase, the radical reform of the National Curriculum and looking at more recent policies from Professor Graham Donaldson "Successful Futures" and Professor John Furlong "Teaching Tomorrow's Teachers".

Ending the 18 years of conservative rule in Britain on the 1st May 1997 were the Labour Party. With the labour's party mantra being "Education Education Education." New Labour's education agenda departing from policies wanted by Thatcher and Major. Labour focusing on standards and not structures with education being their number one priority. In 1997 the White Paper was proved and policies had already been written, listing six principles:

- education will be at the heart of the government
- Policies will be designed to benefit the many (not just the few)
- Standards will matter more than structures
- Intervention will be in proportion to success
- there will be zero tolerance of under performance
- Government will work in partnership with all those committed to raising standards.

“New labour now believes that throughout schooling, standards are more important than structures. Each school should be made clearly responsible for its own performance and be subject to a mixture of external pressure and support in order to praise it.” (Mandelson and Little.1996; 92-3)

Being a teacher is rewarding but can be demanding especially when new policies are made. Some argue why change something that is not broken where others believe in the importance and accept change. Our genetic makeup is not to like change but within the teaching profession if change is not addressed appropriately can make the teacher feeling under valued and worth-less. Teaching needs creativity, patience and focus. Understanding their role and what needs to be delivered to give the children the best educational opportunities to learn. Unfortunately there are many factors to why the teaching profession is not admired as it once was. One being the intense pressure and accountability for standards and results. Another increased administration adding to their very heavy workload. Teachers have more than enough to do within the classroom, pressure of the head teacher, school, parents, colleagues, and lesson planning. “Work of a class teachers a world beyond the classroom walls, a world that instituted the primary school in the first placed perpetuates it as a key social institution. It is the world beyond the classroom that controls the school, defines the role of primary teachers, the context primary teaching is innately political”. (Cunningham.P. 2012;1)

Is there any wonder that by 2003 there is evidence that many teachers leaving the profession. “It is believed that nearly 36,000 between 1996 and 2001- an attrition rate of 7000 a year”. (TES 14th February 2003) This confirming the un happiness of teachers with the intense workload, lack of creativity within the classroom and profession target driven culture being created with tests, targets and inspections. Targets can become very destructive to both pupils and teachers stopping the possibility of being creative which will affect the quality of standards. This inevitably will affect confidence , morale and the vision they once had. Such external pressures the implications are evident. Schools being under this much pressure will impact on teachers and pupils. With devastating consequences validating the research of teachers leaving the profession and their careers as many can become over worked, under valued and stressed. In 2003 Margret Hodge (Minister for children) published a Green Paper “ Every child Matters” which was heavily influenced by the Sure Start Programme which focused on poverty intervention for young children and their

families. The programme offered a range of health, well-being and educational support. Offering home visits and community centre's across the country. The initiative was to help whole communities out of severe poverty giving families the help and support they need, in hope of giving every child the best possible start in life. The Green Paper at the time of publish created huge controversy promising that no child would slip through the net. All childhood services would now work together as a whole. To create leadership appointing head of departments and services. "In recent years interest in 'leadership' has burgeoned and consequently studies of leadership have proliferated. Research around the world is contributing to increasingly rich understanding of how education and other institutions are led and managed". (Bell.L. Stevenson.H. 2006 ; 1)

The Early Years Foundation Phase was introduced in 2008. In this year also The Welsh Assembly Government combined 3-5 year olds key stage 1 of the National Curriculum with 5-7 year olds. Combining both The Sure Start Programme and the Green Paper (2003) into one single, coherent rework for the delivery of quality of care and education, placing greater emphasis on experimental and creative learning. Reflect back to The White Paper and the labour party's principles where standards matter more than structures and zero tolerance of underperformance. National testing and targets are no longer the vision seen or supported through The Foundation Phase. Freeing the children of any restraint and focusing through the eyes of the child, learning with a child-centred curriculum through 'Play'. Consequently releasing the teaching professionals of previous policy, guidelines and structures. The highly administration demands previously imposed. "The advice about effective planning and implementation is consistent. It all amounts to focus, persistence, implementation, monitoring, corrective action and humility in the face of change". (Fullan. M . 2007; 121) Teachers can take a more active role where they can be more spontaneous, caring and creative, in a positive stimulating happy environment whilst encouraging and scaffolding young children's learning through play. This all sounds ideal however there are factors that need to be examined and considered. Whilst the foundation phase being more positively received than negative how it will be implemented is key to it being successful. Environmental factors need to be addressed looking at schools locations and funding appropriately and sufficiently in order to fully implement these changes. As in some areas and schools it will be much harder than others to implement fully and not benefiting as they should. "The purpose is to deliver a service to children and families that both

professional educators/careers and parents agree is worthwhile. Clearly such an approach contributes to the development of a dynamic early years setting. Unfortunately it ignores the political relatives associated with funding and accountability- features which recent governments are concerned". (Matherson. D. 2008; 199)

Policy influences on the teaching profession most recently are Professor Graham Donaldson report on the reform of the National Curriculum, "Successful Futures" (2015) . And Professor John Furlong's report "Teaching Tomorrow's Teachers" (2015). Donaldson's focus on The National Curriculum's six areas of learning and experience for ages 3-16year olds. Expressive arts; Health and well-being; Humanities; Languages, literacy and communication; Mathematics and numeracy; and Science and technology. In Donaldson's report there are three areas of the 'cross-curriculum responsibilities' - literacy, numeracy and digital competence that teachers are expected to deliver. This is heavily supported by Professor John Furlong's report "Teaching Tomorrow's Teachers". In order to deliver such an ambitious curriculum for the future of education reform, we must also educate our teachers.

"The current National Curriculum and assessment arrangements no longer meet the needs of the children and young people of Wales. The case for fundamental change is powerful. (The Welsh Assembly Government). Teachers need support and guidance and the right knowledge and understanding to give Professor Donaldson's vision the best opportunity for success. Without them working together collaboratively there would be catastrophic consequences for it not to succeed. The quality of teachers is paramount and the way forward of supporting Donaldson and reforming The National Curriculum, our standards have to be raised. "Teaching as a profession has not yet come of age. It needs reform in recruitment selection status, and reward; redesign of initial teacher education an induction into the profession; continuous professional development; standards and incentives for professional work and most important of all, changes in the daily working conditions of teachers". (Fullan.M. 2007; 297)

Teachers changing the profession is not an end in itself it is just the start. To constantly develop, learn from the ground up and to work closely with other organisations learning and growing together making improvements and feeding back to what is working and what is not.

"The biggest challenge will be making it happen and learning how to work with all the people already up and running and drawing on extensive support. I want you to be the person who gets credit for making it happen". (Furlong.J.2016 www.ewc.wales)

Reforming both The National Curriculum and the future of initial teachers training and education in Wales is the future of Wales, our education and our desire of giving our children and young adults an excellent education and start in life. Also creating excellent teachers and professionals alike. As small scale improvements never and will not last.

Throughout the history of education policies there are many similarities of ambitions, influenced by our cultural and economic changes. Education policy is extremely complex. However policy changes before being implemented are critically analysed. Education success creates and shapes the future of our younger generation and must always reflect in order to raise and improve standards and grow with social economics. “ As we move forward over the next few years there will be inevitably be lots of ups and downs. Also the need to keep talking about the prize because this is all about inspiration and the need to continue and inspire the teaching profession and the wider community to see what we are doing is something very special, and if we get it right, it will be fantastic”. (Donaldson. G. 2016 www.ewc.wales)

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