A service, a ‘way of working’, or a profession? A discourse analysis of community education/ community learning and development in Scotland

Howard Sercombe,* Gordon Mackie, and Anne Ryan
All of University of Strathclyde, UK

Community based informal education, like other practices, is fundamentally shaped by the discourses under which it is constituted. In Scotland, since 1975, the practice has been formally established by government policy as an amalgam of youth work, adult education and community development under a discourse of informal education. This combination carries its own internal tensions alongside the continually contested relationship between the field of practice and the State. This study analyses key documents in order to chart the shifts in discourse around the constitution of Community Education/Community Learning and Development (CE/CLD) since 1975. The analysis reveals the force of managerialist discourses which transformed understandings of the practice from post-war welfare state discourses as a service, to its reshaping as technique under New Labour. Current discursive work is directed to its reconstitution (still somewhat ambivalently) as a profession. This ‘re-professionalisation’ connects with similar movements in medicine, social work, parole and teaching which are attempting to reduce the costs of actuarial disciplinary techniques (in record-keeping, reporting, and the generation of outcome data) by returning professional trust and judgment to practitioners.

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Introduction

Community work as a field of activity in Scotland is at the same time an old practice and a relatively new one. The practice traces its origins to the social upheavals of the Industrial Revolution in the nineteenth century (Cooke, 2006; Tett, 2006), with focused State involvement emerging progressively through the twentieth century, accelerated by rapid social change after World War II. Further cultural upheaval in ‘the sixties’ and the decade immediately following led to the formal constitution of youth work, community based adult education and community development, under the common designation of Community Education (CE), significantly through a 1975 report into the status of adult education in Scotland. This was generally known as the Alexander Report (after Professor Kenneth Alexander, the chair of the Committee of

* Corresponding author: University of Strathclyde, Community Education, 76 Southbrae Drive, Glasgow, Scotland, G11 6BT UK. Email: Howard.sercombe@strath.ac.uk

Inquiry (Scottish Education Department, 1975). Currently, the reconceptualisation of the field is being conducted under the auspices of the Standards Council for Community Learning and Development in Scotland, set up in response to a recommendation from 'Strengthening Standards' (Scottish Executive, 2006), the report of a short-life working group set up by the Minister for Communities in 2004.

In Scotland, governments have always maintained a close interest in this field of work. While funding for the sector has always been patchy, the State has repeatedly turned to community based practitioners to help with issues such as poverty, urban decline, and the disengagement of young people. Alongside this, there has been a more or less recurrent endeavour (and recurrent allocation of resources) to constitute and reconstitute the practice, its objectives, and its systems of governance to meet the conflicting objectives of retaining the integrity and independence of community based practice, while exerting effective control over direction and objective, as well as the administration of funds.

As a result, there is a succession of documents, a kind of canon, which attempt to define this field of practice and establish, challenge, defend, or reshape authoritative discourse. Examining this body of work enables us to chart the development of the discourse over time, to notice when and how it shifts, to identify the elements which have survived and those which have not, and to make some observations about definitions in the present. Some of this is specific to Scotland, but there are also shifts in conception and designation that will resonate with movements in many places across the world.

The authors of this paper are located within the history of this field of practice both in Scotland and elsewhere. We have been active as practitioners and academics in Scotland through many of the shifts in policy and discourse that we analyse in this paper, including, a period with CeVe, the body responsible for accrediting professional training. The first author of this paper (Howard Sercombe) joined the group only in 2007, but he has been a lifelong youth worker, academic and researcher in the field in Australia. His work in professional ethics and his membership of the Standards Council for CLD has become part of the process of re-professionalisation which this paper describes. We are committed to expanding the scope of effective democracy and inclusion, and greater capacity for active agency in the people with whom this field of practice is engaged. A critical dimension of this is what happens in the relationship to the State, both for the practice and its constituents, and the capacity for critical engagement and an independent voice within that relationship.

Theoretical approach

Discourse analysis is widely understood as an approach to understanding social processes from an analysis of talk and text (Van Dijk, 1985). It has a long pre-history, from the centuries-long tradition of the analysis of sacred texts (Sercombe, 1996) and a range of contemporary influences from sociology, the history of ideas, socio-linguistics, post-structuralism, cultural studies, and semiotics (Rogers, R, Malancharuvil-Berkes, E., Mosley, M., Hui, D., & Joseph, G, 2005). These separate streams of theory have undergone some convergence under the Critical Discourse Analysis (CDA) rubric, especially in the study of education. This brought together the approaches of key scholars such as Teun Van Dijk (1985), Ruth Wodak (see Wodak & Meyer, 2009) and Norman Fairclough (with Wodak, 1997). This movement has been particularly influential with scholars who are interested in

instances of talk and text (Rogers et al., 2005). The diversity within the theoretical field continues; however, Gee (2004) usefully distinguishes between CDA as a school and the more general approach of 'critical discourse analysis'. This paper is located within the broader tradition, with a more direct relationship with the work of Michel Foucault.

Foucault's work, especially his earlier writings, were concerned with the development of broad patterns of language and concepts, and their impact on general ways of thinking and being, and ways of doing power. Of necessity, this work addressed broad sweeps of language rather than the detailed analysis of particular instances of talk and text. Interestingly, for our purposes, it included analysis of the development of the professions and of professional discourses: Foucault's own historical research was concerned with the development, among other things, of psychiatry and psychoanalysis (1961). At the core of this analysis is the study of the ways that discourse (that is, more or less coherent constellations of language and conceptual frameworks, expressed in accepted or conventional ways of knowing) constitute individuals and groups of human beings as subjects (Rabinow, 1986). The idea of human beings as 'subjects' includes both the sense of their constitution in relations of domination and subordination (as in a king and his subjects) and their constitution as coherent acting identities (as subjectivities). Discourse creates identities and self-concepts, the possibilities (and limits) of 'ways to be' (Hacking, 1986), and places people in a kind of power matrix as a particular kind of person (a patient, a king, a homosexual, a woman, a professor, a child, a youth worker).

Because of this relationship between discourse and power, the study of the way that people are constituted in discourse is important for the study of power, and the struggle over discourse – its production, establishment and dominance – for the study of the struggle for power (Foucault, 1984a). It is the analysis of the way that power operates through discourse that makes the analysis 'critical'.

The establishment of a practice such as CE/CLD[1] is subject to these discursive forces. As Foucault (1961) indicated in his study of madness and psychiatry, the practice depends on the identification of a particular kind of person or collective of persons as an object of intervention: constituents of the practice are named as homeless, unemployed, excluded, socially isolated, at risk, illiterate, disadvantaged, marginalised, working class, asylum seekers, etc. A particular kind of worker is constituted to engage with, and develop knowledge about, these subjects. In the process, they too are constituted as subjects of discourse, as particular kinds of people: as youth workers, adult educators, community developers, community educators.

It is customary to differentiate between two modes of analysis in Foucault's thought: the *archaeological*, which studies the way that discourses have emerged and changed over time, and the *genealogical*, the study of the way that discourse works at any given point in time to constitute people as subjects, both as people with a certain identity and self-concept, and as people located (and in varying ways, controlled) in a power matrix in which language is the core means of making the whole system work. While the two approaches can be pursued separately, it is clear that Foucault thinks that they must, ultimately, be connected (Foucault, 1984b). We would agree. Text works within context: the history of the emergence and transmission of the discourse shapes the way that discourses are operationalised in the present. New entrants to CE/CLD confront the latest official 'guidance' on the practice but also the longer archaeology of the discourse expressed in their training, in the architecture of workplaces, and in the practices of their more established colleagues.

Studies of CE/CLD which employ this approach have so far been few and far between, though this body of theory has been influential across a wide range of other contexts. It clearly has a great deal to offer our field of practice. It identifies CE/CLD as a process within which people are constituted as subjects, both as practitioners/professionals and as 'young people', 'adult learners' or 'communities'. It urges us to look at the discourses under which our practice is constituted, and to take responsibility for the way that we constitute (in discourse) ourselves and the people we work with, and the matrix of power that exists between us. It provides a framework for tracing the history of these discourses, the continuities and discontinuities, the shifts in discursive framework that break and blossom at various points in time. And it enables us to be active in the ongoing constitution of our profession in the present: to identify the core elements that make the discourse of our practice what we want it to be, to embrace changes that enhance it, to resist change that would corrupt or co-opt it.

Alongside *Madness and Civilization* (1961) a later essay by Foucault 'What is an author?'(Foucault, 1986) is useful for understanding the foundation of a discourse for community education in Scotland. For Foucault, the term *discourse* relates to the collected texts considered to have a similar area or 'object' of study, and a similar methodology or complex of ideas within them. In 'What is an author', Foucault makes a distinction between what we understand as an 'author' and something which he calls the 'author function'. While the prehistory of ways of thinking and speaking about particular topics is often long and uneven, systematic discourses emerge at a particular time and space. The 'fixing' of a discourse is often a function of a particular work: Darwin's *Origin of the Species,* Marx's *Capital,* Adam Smith's *The Wealth of Nations.*

The 'author function', which is executed by the 'author', is the process by which sometimes disparate and unorganised elements are synthesised into a discourse which becomes 'authoritative' for the issue under question. Foucault argues that the author of a discourse, what he calls the 'founder of discursivity' can be recognised by a 'ritual pilgrimage back to the origins' in subsequent texts (Foucault, 1986). So, economics textbooks begin with an introduction to Adam Smith, biology books tell the story of Charles Darwin and the *Beagle.* For CE/CLD, the foundation to which texts continually return is *the Alexander Report* (Scottish Education Department, 1975). An account of the genealogy of Community Education in Scotland therefore begins with this text.

What we think of as an author is historically and socially constructed and situated: the author is a product of a particular time and place. When we refer to Alexander in a community education context therefore we mean more than Kenneth Alexander the person. The author in this context is placed in the context of Scotland in the 1970s, an academic at the University of Strathclyde in Glasgow with strong political links to the Labour party, trade unionism and the Workers Educational Association (Cooke, 2006). It is also important to see his ideas in terms wider than Scotland. European societies generally were concerned with the pace of societal change and how education systems should respond to support the development of their citizens, particularly in the light of the growth of mass media and the power of propaganda witnessed in World War II. The concerns expressed in the report are echoes of other reports, most notably Albemarle (Ministry of Education, 1960).

There can be little doubt that Alexander and the Report which bears his name founded the community education discourse in Scotland in a Foucauldian sense. It is continually referred to in a number of documents coming after it, meaning that it

‘indicates the status’ (Downing, 2008, p. 64) of Alexander. In 1983, Kirkwood, for example, stated that ‘Community Education has officially existed in Scotland for over seven years’ (Kirkwood, cited in Kirkwood, 1990) and McConnell (1997) states that the book edited by him ‘traces the emergence of this occupation since the publication of the Alexander Report’ (p. vii). Milburn and Wallace (2003) point out that although the ‘conceptual origins go back much further … organisational origins’ go back to Alexander, a view supported by McConnell. Tett (2006) proposes that ‘Community education as now practised’ was established ‘as a result of the recommendations of the Alexander Report’ (p. 1). All pay homage by way of reference to this point in time.

To use Alexander’s surname is therefore to invoke him as the founder of a discourse, allowing us to ‘group together a number of texts, define them, differentiate them and contrast them to others. In addition, it establishes a relationship among the texts’ (Foucault, 1986, p. 107). This describes the coming into being of a ‘field of conceptual or theoretical coherence … which arises out of the separation or difference between the writer and their writings. ‘The author’s name manifests the appearance of a certain discursive set and indicates the status of this discourse’ (1986, p. 107). It is therefore this ‘author function’ which is important in establishing the Scottish ‘community education’ discourse. As will be seen in the examination of texts (most notably government-instigated reports), the ideas, definitions and value statements which are first pulled together and given the definitional title ‘community education’ in Alexander remain intact and are not subject to any fundamental shift until the late 1990s.

Community education as a service: the Alexander Report

The Committee of Inquiry into Adult Education was established in May 1970 with a mandate to make recommendations to the Secretary of State for Scotland regarding the purpose, current operation, and future provision of non-vocational adult education courses. At the centre of the Report’s concerns is the consciousness that society was changing, and a concern about the vulnerability of working men to ideological persuasion in the light of the new mass media and the experience of propaganda in World War II. In a society in which the shackles of authoritarianism were clearly loosening, the capacity of working people to be active in civic life but also self-regulating and resistant to radicalisation was dependent on sufficient education.

The Report senses that current schooling was generally adequate for the purpose, but observes a generation gap in education between those born in the post-war period and the current generation, and sees an urgent need to redress this gap. There is a strong emphasis on ‘individuality’ (Scottish Education Department, 1975, p. 26) as a response to the speed of societal change and ‘the growing technological basis of society, the dehumanising aspects … of work and the impact of the mass media’ (p. 26). The challenge of change in a democratic society, it argues, therefore requires more people to become involved in education beyond a basic schooling and needs to include those beyond the ‘usual suspects’. The report goes on to identify who this might include (pp. 38-48) and also gives some thought to why people are ‘turned off’, or refuse to participate in education (pp. 14-16).

There are also reflections upon the standard interventions of adult educators and the need to develop new ways of engaging and retaining adults as learners. The restricted reach of existing structures such as the Workers Educational Association

and university extension departments meant that the ambitions of the Report were unlikely to be met through existing practices, and that new approaches were needed to take adult education beyond middle-class hobby courses into 'communities' – that is, in their vision, to working class men. This would require new approaches, new methodologies. Seeing potential in the adaptation of youth work techniques of engagement to reach a non-middle-class constituency, the Report recommends the marriage of adult education and youth work, plus the more generic practice of community work or community development, into a new service, funded by government and operationalised through local authority structures. Adopting a term that already had some limited currency in Scotland and elsewhere, the Report proposes the inauguration of a *Community Education Service*.

A decade earlier, the Albemarle Report (Ministry of Education, 1960) in England had led to the creation of a professional 'Youth Service', with significantly increased funding for the employment of staff, buildings, and professional training. This precursor (and elements of its discourse) is clearly present in the minds of the Committee. The establishment of the practice as a 'Service' is significant. This is not a Department. Like the Broadcasting Service or the Civil Service, it is an expression of a qualitative intervention by governments in civic life through the provision of services direct to the public, expressed through a set of administrative arrangements and conventions, rather than by coherent definition of the practice, developed theory and a clear conceptual framework (Barr, Hamilton, & Purcell, 1996). As an intervention which proposes bringing together existing cognate practices, it is not exclusively government-based provision.

The fundamental change established by Alexander is the bringing together of the 'three strands' of practice – youth work, adult education, and community development, under a common designation and set of organisational practices. While the ways that these strands are named varies, this core configuration is remarkably persistent through the next 35 years of policy and practice. Little conceptual work is done in Alexander to establish definitions: the definition of community education provided by the report is administrative in nature, rather than conceptual.

> In our report we use the term 'community education' to refer to the educational opportunities available through social, cultural, recreational and educational provision by statutory authorities and voluntary agencies, and through involvement in the numerous voluntary groups in the community. (Scottish Education Department, 1975, p. 1)

However, a number of themes are contained within this definition which then confirm or constitute the discourse of CE/CLD from this foundation.

The definition confirms the understanding of this practice as *education*. Internationally, this field of practice has always occupied ground between dominant discursive practices of education, recreation and welfare (and slightly more peripherally, perhaps, health, employment, justice and housing) and in various parts of the world can be aligned with any or all these. While the report dwells significantly on welfare (1975, p. 38ff) and to a lesser extent recreation (1975, p. 27, 69ff) as loci of concern, the tradition of community-based informal education (Jeffs & Smith, 2005) precedes the Report, and is not challenged by it: the Report locates the practice decisively in Education both administratively and discursively.

Implicit rather than explicit in the definition is the Report's concern with the purpose of Community Education. The Service is intended to constitute a particular kind of subject: the educated working class citizen, who is able and willing to actively participate in the processes of *democracy*, understood within the liberal tradition.

Especially, the Service is addressed amelioratively to immigrants, people with disabilities, the isolated, the disadvantaged, the illiterate.

The location of the practice is '*in the community'*. Again, the notion of community is taken as given. Geographical and social communities are recognised, but concepts remain unelaborated. However, the client-centred nature of the practice is established here: the Service is not to be prescriptive, but enabling.

The practice involves a close, but ill-defined relationship with the State. Clearly, the State is intended as the source of financial provision for the practice. But the work is not only located within 'statutory authorities'. 'Voluntary agencies' are, from the beginning, conceived as being included within the enterprise. This constitution sets up the ambiguous and often tense relationship between community education practice and the State: to varying degrees dependent, but autonomous. The position of voluntary agencies (often with long prerogatives) such as the YMCA with respect to the Community Education Service remains ambiguous. They are included, but really the Service could only command adherence within local authorities.

The influence of the discourse of community education on administrative arrangements was not universal, partly because the new resources required and asked for by Alexander were never forthcoming. Bidwell (in Bidwell & McConnell, 1982) maintains that the Report did not lead to a 'universal administrative and terminological re-organisation in Scotland' as 'barely two thirds of full time Community Education Workers employed in Scotland are actually employed by an organisation which calls itself [a] Community Education Service' (1982, p. ii). However, two-thirds is not an insignificant figure, and the Community Education designation became customary among practitioners and in university-based training beyond the naming of local authority administrative units. At the same time, the connected discourses of youth work, adult education and community development continued to have an independent existence, especially (but not only) within the non-government sector.

Elaboration of the conceptual framework was left to the Scottish Council for Community Education (SCEC) recommended by the Report, and to academics within the new or redesignated university departments constituted under the Community Education banner (e.g. Nisbet, Tett, Martin, McConnell, Barr, Bidwell, Milburn). Already, however, there were instabilities in the Alexander formula. *Training for change,* a 1984 Report by SCEC on the training of CE/CLD workers (Scottish Community Education Council, 1984) identifies a number of inadequacies in the foundation provided by Alexander. The lack of conceptual and definitional development is clearly identified, and there is some attempt to address this. *Training for change* observes, for example, that community development is all but ignored in Alexander, and the Report seeks to address this deficit. It also notes that in the failure of Alexander's ambitions for expansion, the three-strand composition of community education remains unbalanced, with youth workers outnumbering adult educators in local authority employment eight to one (1984, p. 6).

The politics of this are important. Notwithstanding the success of the Alexander formula, there is persistent competition between the different intellectual traditions of the three strands. Youth work has the numbers, a significant weight of practice in the voluntary sector and established traditions outside government, and following development in England, the strongest claim to establishment as a Service. Adult education is smaller but with a foothold in well-developed academic and intellectual traditions. Both would lay claim to emerging professional status.

However, when community developers are active and influential in the framing of discourse, the ground shifts perceptibly. The professional aspiration of community developers is much more ambiguous, and the conception of practice notably different. Two related themes emerge. First, is the focus of the discourse on the practice, or on the practitioner? Are we describing a kind of work, or a kind of worker? Second, in terms of the field of practice, is this to consolidate and discipline a coherent and defined body of practitioners who identify and name themselves as community educators (or perhaps, youth workers/adult educators/community developers), or to embrace a wider constituency of workers who are engaged in some way 'in the community': from volunteers in the Scouts to community nurses, police, social workers and community minded clergy?

Training for change makes its intentions clear. In the first coherent attempt to offer a conceptual definition of community education to that point, the authors construct the practice as open *process*, in which anyone working 'in the community' is potentially engaged.

> Community education is a process which involves the participants in the creation of purposive developmental and educational programmes and structures which afford opportunities for individual and collective growth and change throughout life. (Scottish Community Education Council, 1984)

Less than ten years after Alexander, the seeds of change are planted. Where Alexander established a Service, *Training for change* emphasises the practice as a *process*, 'a move away from a 'community service' concept' (Scottish Community Education Council, 1984). While community education workers named as such are obviously deeply involved in this kind of work, the report makes it clear that the Council is interested in bringing together others as well: school teachers, college lecturers, people working in employment schemes, playgroup leaders, community arts workers, outdoor activities leaders. For the time being, however, this broader agenda sits alongside the somewhat rickety, but still influential vision of the Alexander Committee. The Community Education Service remains, for the time being, government policy for Scotland.

Community education as technique: the Osler report

In 1988 a working group was set up under the Chairmanship of Douglas Osler to look at the future of community education in Scotland. The group was remitted to give thought to a national strategy 'in the light of Government priorities'. It also worked alongside another group established by the Council of Scottish Local Authorities (CoSLA), to look specifically at local authority community education. Neither committee (which had membership cross-over) had much time to think. As McConnell (1997) notes,

> Unlike the Alexander Committee, which met over a 5 year period and undertook extensive consultation, the 1988 reviews deliberated over a period of months. In the case of the Osler Committee report … little consultation occurred during the deliberations and none on its recommendations (p. xi).

The context for the haste was the recent election of a New Labour UK government and its policy priorities and the effects of local government re-organisation (the

dismantling, in 1996, of large regional structures in favour of much smaller local authorities) upon community education.

The Executive summary of the Report (entitled *Communities: Change through Learning)* laid out its central ideas (Scottish Executive Education Department, 1999). Key amongst these was to clear up a 'long-term confusion between community education as a way of working and community education as an amalgam of the 3 fields' (p. 8). The report asserts that in future, community education will be seen as 'a way of working' (p. 8). This 'approach' or 'technique' would be focused 'on the use of educational methods to develop skills, knowledge, and capacity in community contexts'. Whilst acknowledging that the group's ideas had wider significance beyond community education, it continued on to say that their 'conception' of it should

> … encourage the key fields of interest … to take on the practical implications … It will be essential to convey the message that community education is not a 'territorial concept but a pervasive approach to education … (p. 9)

as well as a way of 'delivering key policies'.

The report did pay its respects to Alexander and the role played in establishing Community Education Services in local authorities (though it also made reference to voluntary organizations being unable to sign up to the title). The general gist of the section entitled 'Understanding Community Education' was not so much about definitional clarity but rather a rationale for dismantling Alexander's concept. The reasons given for this included: the uneven 'nature and profile' and 'shifts of emphasis' required of Services linked to funding and cuts; the relocation of Services within the newly-reorganised local authorities (outside education departments) as a positive step; and a conceptual leap, whereby other professions' recognition of the worth of community education showed that there was shared 'common ground in their approach to work in communities' (p9).

In the late 1980s new discourses of competence-based training which had emerged in the US in the early 1970s (Elam, 1971) were achieving international dominance in the governance of training (and increasingly, educational) provision (Brown, 1994). Community Education Validation and Endorsement (CeVe) was an executive unit established by SCEC in 1989 to validate training courses for community education, and competence-based training was adopted, apparently unchallenged, as the discourse through which CeVe would accredit courses in community education. This was entirely congruent with community education as technique. The process involved a functional analysis of work processes, and the analysis of identifiable competences required to produce a work product of the requisite standard. Its functional analysis was described approvingly in Osler as bringing clarity for 'training purposes' but not in terms of what the 'meaning' of community education was: the functional analysis existed alongside an 'administrative view, which seemed to assume that adult education plus youth work plus community work equalled community education' (1999 p. 17). The CeVe analysis is described as starting something it could not finish due to insecure funding and cuts. The way to save community education was to ensure that its 'ways of working' could be applied wherever: 'a coherent practice' but initiated across a whole range of sectors using 'community education methodologies'. (p. 18)

Reports and inquiries come and go. Sometimes, their recommendations gain traction: more often they don't. Osler's strident demolition of the discourse of community education as a Service converged with New Labour's vision for 'community' and the reinvigoration of civil society at the local level. This was part of

the ‘Third Way’ between the individualism and self-interest of neo-liberalism and the expensive and stultifying state-based intervention of socialism (Driver & Martell, 1997). If ‘community’ was going to be ‘developed’ to the point where it could take on civil responsibilities and be a vehicle for government policy at the local level, the State needed a community sector which was organized, disciplined, and folded into government policy while at the same time ‘representing’ grass roots interests (Driver & Martell, 1997; Nash & Christie, 2003). The Alexander Report’s conception of a Service to the community, expressed through adult education, youth work and community development practices, was not consonant with this.

The Osler report was followed by the Scottish Executive’s (2004) policy statement *Working and Learning together to build stronger communities* (universally known as WALT). The policy was a firm statement of the integration of community education into New Labour policy. WALT unequivocally re-establishes the practice, now assertively renamed as Community Learning and Development (CLD), as a ‘way of working’ (Scottish Executive, 2004). Community Education is to be replaced by this new ‘approach’ which aims to ‘bring together the best of what has been done under the banners of ‘community education and ‘community development’. The three strands of practice are retained, but reconfigured as priorities, rather than services or practices. They become respectively ‘achievement through learning’ for adults and young people, and ‘achievement through building community capacity’ (Scottish Executive, 2004). The central structural mechanism for the practice is no longer a Community Education Service, but local and regional Community Learning and Development Partnerships, putatively bringing together ‘stakeholders’ from local authorities, health, police, non-government sectors plus grass-roots constituencies such as residents committees. These committees would oversee planning for communities and administer funds to resource their delivery. Their work would be governed through the increasingly universal planning and audit techniques of managerialism and quality assurance: the establishment of plans, strategies, performance indicators, and evaluative mechanisms to evaluate performance against objectives.

While there was some resistance, the attempt to reconstitute the discourse of community education as Community Learning and Development was generally successful, particularly within local authorities. Labour Party dominance at national, Scottish and local level, combined with the new technocratic techniques of governance that managerialism offered ensured its firm establishment. The community education practitioner, however, did not quite disappear from the frame. Most university based courses continued to use the Community Education designation: so students continue to be trained as ‘community educators’. Outside the universities, there was an awareness that if practitioners were to carry this new set of priorities there needed to be investment in ‘staff skills’ (Scottish Executive, 2004 p. 27), to be measured and validated through CeVe’s competence-based framework, aligned to a global qualifications framework, and subject to the same quality assurance/audit environment as CLD ‘partners’, so this new diffuse practice nonetheless required dedicated practitioners.

This reproduced a fundamental instability in the discourse between CLD as a process, a ‘way of working’ which anyone could practise, and the fact of a body of practitioners for whom this constituted their professional identity (Scottish Executive 2004, p. 27). Is CLD then technique, or a profession? The tension had already been indicated in a post-Osler Scottish Executive brief which claimed that –

> Our understanding of and our strategy for community learning and development is twin-tracked. It remains one of investing in a core of dedicated and highly trained professional youth workers, community workers and community based adult educators … Equally, it is about ensuring that a much wider resource of public service disciplines increasingly adopt community learning and development styles of working of listening and engaging with people. (Scottish Executive, 2002, p. 4)

This position, often reasserted, is an attempt to resolve the instability of the discourse of CE/CLD as technique. In principle, the twin-track position is quite coherent. Medicine, for example, refers to a 'way of working' and also to a profession. But this had not been what Osler/WALT had in mind: Osler was an attempt to demolish the organisational basis of community education while promoting the practice as a generic 'way of working'. Some workers would do more of it than others, but all would be identified as CLD workers. In the end, this could not be sustainable. A 'way of working' could not be maintained without a core of practitioners who would continue to generate coherent CLD practices and discourses. Alternative ways of constructing the practitioner in discourse needed to be found. The increasing anxiety attending the risk society, especially around child protection, also called for attention to be given to the quality of the workforce, leading to a shift in attention towards the first 'track', the practitioner, rather than to the 'way of working'. The discourse of CLD as technique, having eliminated the acting subject, was now not competent to reconstitute it.

CE/CLD as a profession: the Milburn Report

A series of reports from early in the first decade of the new millennium raised the question of training and qualification for CE/CLD practitioners. Following Osler, the Scottish Executive had established a Ministerial Advisory Committee to report on the training of community educators, generally known as the Community Education Training Review (CETR). Alongside the review's own deliberations, an extensive report into the training needs of the sector report was commissioned and carried out by University of Glasgow consultants (Malcolm, Wilson, & Hamilton, 2002). The Scottish Executive's response is encapsulated in *Empowered to practice: The future of community learning and development training in Scotland* (Scottish Executive, 2003). This document endorses the shift in discourse established in Osler and documents following that report. However, *Empowered to Practice* also flags the need for a stronger disciplinary apparatus for practitioners. A range of techniques is available at this time through the processes of managerialism and the audit culture. But audit mechanisms are expensive, time consuming and difficult to operationalise in informal situations and where there are high degrees of practitioner autonomy. It is unclear to what extent it is conscious, but many of the disciplinary mechanisms foreshadowed in *Empowered to Practice* belong not to managerialism and the audit culture, but are borrowed from the professions.

These recommendations resulted in the establishment in 2004 of a Short Life Task Group under the chairmanship of Professor Ted Milburn, with a mandate to give advice 'regarding the establishment of a practitioner-led body responsible for validation, endorsement, accreditation and registration for community learning and development, with enhanced capacity' (Scottish Executive, 2006, p. 4.). The report, *Strengthening standards: improving the quality of Community Learning and Development service delivery* (the Milburn Report) did not directly challenge the

assumptions and contentions of CE/CLD as technique. Many of the recommendations put forward by the Milburn Report were direct endorsements of responses from *Empowered to Practice*. However, there are some fundamental shifts in discourse which contradict Osler/WALT and create a new environment for the discursive development of the practice.

The core of this shift is a move to considering the practice as a profession. The opening line of recommendations promotes 'the establishment of a professional body for the community learning and development (CLD) sector' (Scottish Executive, 2006, p. 6). The shift is not explained or argued for, but the reaffirmation of the field as a 'sector' directly contradicts Osler's earlier deconstruction (p. 17). Likewise, the substitution of 'professional' for 'practitioner-led' in the Group's mandate (Scottish Executive, 2003, p. 6) is significant and powerful. In recommending a transition to a State-sponsored *profession,* a range of other possible regulatory mechanisms are put aside. If successful, the long and contested tradition of discourses of professionalism becomes part of the legacy. The constitution of practice not in competences, but in ethical commitments (Koehn, 1994) is a part of that tradition, as is autonomous and independent professional judgment.

The proposed 'professional body', while still being government funded, would have 'independent status' (Scottish Executive, 2006, p. 7). It would be responsible for developing a qualifications framework for the profession, approving training courses (as CeVe had), promote a framework for continuing professional development, and, significantly, be a mechanism for the registration and deregistration of practitioners. This latter responsibility especially takes the constitution of CE/CLD in a different direction from Osler/WALT. Registration means that a line can be drawn between practitioners who are CE/CLD workers and those who are not. This is a fundamentally different construction from CLD as technique.

Following Milburn, an Interim Standards Council for Community Learning and Development was established by Ministerial appointment in 2007, with a mandate to move to a membership-based structure. Subcommittees were set up to cover course approvals, professional development, and the question of registration. After consultation with colleagues in other professions (notably social work) the subcommittee recommended membership by self-identification, based on the affirmation of commitment to a code of ethics. Levels of membership would be established, based on a matrix of qualifications and experience. While ethical commitment through a statement of values had always been part of the consciousness of CE/CLD and had been written into CeVe's register of competences, a formalised code of ethics introduced a tighter set of ethical commitments, including prohibitions, and moved the practice closer to a formal understanding of the practice as a profession. The Code of Ethics was adopted by the Standards Council in 2010. Processes of practitioner registration are currently in train.

The discourse of CE/CLD as a profession is early in its development. There is no question that the resources provided to establish the Standards Council have greatly accelerated the process. However, in the context of the global financial crisis and the ensuing fiscal crisis of the state in Britain, the financial circumstances within which the Council will be doing its work over the next year or two are likely to be much more difficult. How the establishment of CE/CLD as a profession progresses in this environment remains to be seen.

Conclusion

This paper has tracked the development of discourses of community education in Scotland through a range of configurations over the last 35 years. However, while discontinuities in discourse are evident, a range of features persists through change. Many of these were laid down as 'axioms' (Foucault, 1986) of the original discourse in the Alexander committee's foundational work in 1975. These include the 'three strands' of adult education, community development, and youth work, which have maintained both a distinct existence and a collective CE/CLD one; the linking of the practice to a broad understanding of democracy, and to understandings of disenfranchisement beyond the narrow question of the eligibility to vote; the establishment of the practice within a critical educational discourse, emphasising life-long learning and informal rather than didactic processes; attention to the subject in their social context, especially their social geography; the relationship between practices located in local government authorities and those in the non-government sector; the (somewhat ambivalent) dependent but critical relationship with the state. Especially, the texts maintain and reproduce the core purpose of the practice: the facilitation of agency for individual persons, groups and communities. This is carried forward through discursive expressions which range from 'reaffirmation of individuality' in Alexander, to 'helping communities and individuals tackle real issues in their lives' in Osler, and 'positive development and participation' or 'active citizenship' in Milburn. Arguably synonymous terms like participation, inclusion, self-determination and empowerment run through and across discourses.

Likewise, the discourses we have described, while achieving dominance at particular points in the history of the practice, have not been absent from the consciousness of the sector at other times. Naming this respected, but low-status practice as 'a profession' would probably not have been thinkable for the Alexander Committee: in 1975, the list of accepted professions was shorter and more exclusive than now, and to call community education a profession would have been prohibitively pretentious. However, it was possible to use the adjectival form ('professional') of the work even then: the conception of the professional is not absent from the discourse (Scottish Education Department, 1975). Similarly, the conception of the work as 'an approach' or 'a way of working' is present both in the discourse of community education as a practice and CLD as a profession.

The movement from understanding the practice as a Service, to technique, to a profession is not unique to Scotland nor to Community Education, though the pattern of movement and the particularities of discourse would be different in different countries and practices. In particular, the notion of a Service is a peculiarly British one, taken up to a degree by nations within the British hegemony but never with the same resolute (if often unfulfilled) sense of obligation. For example, the recommendations of the Kirby Report in Australia (Committee of Inquiry into Labour Market Programs, 1985) to establish an Australian Youth Service on the foundations of the Community Youth Support Scheme and the Voluntary Youth Programme were entertained positively but never enacted. Youth work was delivered in this period in Australia almost exclusively by the voluntary sector, with increasing involvement of government through grant funds, but little in the way of statutory provision.

The dominance of managerialism and the audit culture, however, established by this account in the middle period of this history, extends across the Western world,

and across such widely disparate practices as medicine, social work and academia (Simmons, 2004; Strathern, 2000). As a technique of governance for practices which understand themselves as professional, in which the core dynamic is trust in the professional's ethical commitment to their client and in their professional judgment and propriety in their relationships with their employing organisations, its invasion has been met with very mixed feelings. However, as ponderous and administration-heavy as the regime is, it has provided bureaucracies with a means for the *legal-rational* governance of practices which were informal, relationship-based, diffuse, often based on the *traditions* of the professions or the *charisma* of practitioners (to complete Weber's (1978/1922) triad of dominance systems), and in the field of community education, by their nature 'undisciplined'. This was especially strong in Britain where the coincidence between managerialism as a technique of governance and the political aspirations of Labour's Third Way created a powerful driver whose dominance has not yet diminished.

However, this history exposes a contradiction at the heart of rationalist managerialism. The discourse of inputs, outputs and outcomes had no register for what was at the core of the practice (and indeed all professions), which was the transformative quality of the relationship between practitioner and constituent (Sercombe, 2010). The discourse of competences, skills and knowledge could not contain qualities and dispositions, let alone charisma. The attempted Taylorisation of the practice into discrete and transferable competences which could be taught, tested and practised by social workers, teachers, health workers, police officers, or the clergy, or by genericised 'human services' or 'social care' practitioners who would work flexibly across any or all of these fields, missed the core ethical commitment of practitioners to their people and to their calling (Koehn, 1994). The growing list of outcome measures, reports, requirements, audits of best practice and boxes to tick, measured something, but arguably not what community educators were actually trying to do. In practice, managerialism forced a technocracy which attempted to incorporate the professions' discipline, competence and ethical commitment, but which by undermining professional autonomy also undermined these qualities.

The turn towards professionalisation in the present seems partly about reinvesting in the practitioner, reasserting the practice as a function of the identity and commitment of the practitioner as active subject (Hilferty, 2008), rather than a depersonalised catalogue of skills and outcome measures which could be pursued by 'anybody'. These processes, like managerialism before them, seem to be moving internationally and across professions. For example, similar processes are evident among teachers in secondary education (Beck, 2008; Hilferty, 2008) further and vocational education (Matthews, Moorman, & Nusche, 2010; Shain, 1999) social work (Harris, 1998), and medicine (Vogt, 2006). Duyvendak, Knijin, & Kremer (2006) of professionalisation/deprofessionalisation in social work and medicine mirrors closely the narrative presented in this paper. Similarly Beck's (2008) account of teaching (with the establishment of the General Teaching Council for England, (GTCE)) foreshadows the Scottish experience with the Standards Council for CLD.

This is not to argue that reprofessionalisation will herald a new dawn of liberation for practitioners and the communities they serve. Managerialism represented a legal-rational regime which bureaucratic systems understood, and will not be easily discarded. Discourses of professionalism, like any other, are also about control and containment, about the disciplining of both practitioners and constituents, and need to be engaged with reflexively. However, to say all discourses are about control and containment does not mean that all discourses control and contain in the same way, or

to the same degree, or offer the same possibilities for emancipatory practice. There are new possibilities in reprofessionalisation, as the potential for greater autonomy ripples through.

But it is not unusual in such circumstances for informal and internal controls to escalate to compensate. For many of us, the financial strictures of the present economic environment represent one set of those controls. Escalating workloads and expectations in an environment of declining resources may mean that the greater autonomy and ethical commitment of a professionalised workforce is harnessed to the task of doing more and more with less and less. The tensions between State control and direction and the independence of the practice, so strongly inscribed in the post-war history of medicine, are arguably intensified with professionalization. Typically, the State would like the professions' discipline and commitment to competence, but would prefer that the package came with compliance, rather than autonomy. How this tension plays out in the changing environment of CE/CLD, especially in the light of the current fiscal crisis, remains to be seen.

Note

[1] The joint designation CE/CLD is used here as the naming of the field in discourse is not settled. Community Learning and Development emerged as the dominant nomenclature, with State backing, post-2004. However, assent was by no means universal, and the Community Education designation retains significant currency, particularly outside the statutory sector.

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