

2022-04-03

# (C)old beginnings and technologies of rectification in early years education: the implications for teachers and children with special educational needs

Done, EJ

<http://hdl.handle.net/10026.1/12767>

---

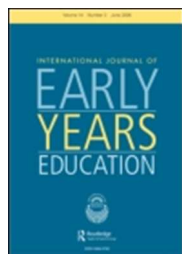
10.1080/09669760.2018.1547633

International Journal of Early Years Education

Taylor & Francis (Routledge)

---

*All content in PEARL is protected by copyright law. Author manuscripts are made available in accordance with publisher policies. Please cite only the published version using the details provided on the item record or document. In the absence of an open licence (e.g. Creative Commons), permissions for further reuse of content should be sought from the publisher or author.*



**(C)old beginnings and technologies of rectification in early years education: the implications for teachers and children with special educational needs**

Journal:	<i>International Journal of Early Years Education</i>
Manuscript ID	CIEY-2018-0010.R2
Manuscript Type:	Original Article
Keywords:	Early years education, Inclusion, Special educational needs, Deleuze, Policy

SCHOLARONE™  
Manuscripts

1  
2  
3 **(C)old beginnings and technologies of rectification in early years education: the**  
4 **implications for teachers and children with special educational needs**  
5  
6  
7

8 **Abstract**  
9

10 This paper considers varied governmental initiatives in England and their implications for  
11 early years education, including: an Office for Standards in Education (2017) report entitled  
12 'Bold beginnings' proposing curriculum changes in Reception teaching based on identified  
13 features of a small number of 'good' and 'outstanding' schools; Department of Education  
14 (2014) advice for early years providers on special educational needs; and proposals from the  
15 same department for a single statutory baseline test in Reception. All assume a linear model  
16 of child development conceived as 'progress' and reflect moves to codify all aspects of child  
17 learning and early years professional practice. An alternative view of early years education  
18 drawn from poststructuralism is suggested here that affords more scope for intuitive practice  
19 and professional judgement in a child-centred approach.  
20  
21  
22

23 **Key words:** early years education; special needs; Deleuze; child-centredness.  
24

25 **Introduction**  
26

27 Guidance relating to special educational needs and disabilities (SEND) in England is  
28 outlined in the latest SEND Code of Practice 0 – 25 years issued by the Departments of  
29 Health and for Education (DoH / DfE 2015). Earlier advice directed specifically at early  
30 years education (EYE) providers (DfE 2014) notes the pivotal role of early years practitioners  
31 in realising the vision enshrined in the Children and Families Act 2014 (Stationery Office  
32 [TSO] 2014) upon which the revised Code is based. The key elements of this role are  
33 summarised as the early identification of additional needs, the provision of appropriate  
34 support and the fostering of aspiration in an outcomes-driven system; notably, long-term  
35 change in educational culture is stated to be conditional upon the confidence and skills of  
36 practitioners (DfE 2014, 3). Whilst such statements can be read as political affirmation of the  
37 deeply-held conviction of early years practitioners and researchers that EYE can determine,  
38 or significantly influence, the future academic attainment and life trajectories of young  
39 people (MacNaughton 2004), the key argument presented in this paper is that such political  
40 affirmation signals a two-fold political process that radically alters understandings of  
41  
42  
43  
44  
45  
46  
47  
48  
49  
50  
51  
52  
53  
54  
55  
56  
57  
58  
59  
60

1  
2  
3 professional knowledge and judgement, transformational learning experiences and, indeed, of  
4  
5 childhood itself.

### 6 7 *A poststructuralist perspective*

8  
9 We will consider this two-fold process and the implications of governmental expectations  
10 that early years practitioners can, and must, deliver quantifiable progress in specified areas of  
11 child development. Drawing primarily on Deleuze and Guattari (2004), and related texts, we  
12 critically frame this process as educational hylomorphism. It is suggested that early years  
13 teachers and their pupils are discursively constructed as passive, that is, as if they were  
14 formless inert material waiting to be shaped by external agencies. This occurs through a  
15 political educational discourse comprising policy papers, statutory guidance and school  
16 inspection regimes which, unsurprisingly, also supply templates stipulating what constitutes  
17 the teaching role and pupil progress within EYE. Whereas MacNaughton (2004) argues that a  
18 ‘politics of logic’ now pervades early childhood research and policy, we maintain that the  
19 valorisation of linear causality evidenced in political educational discourse is equally  
20 suggestive of the Platonic concept of the matter-form relation as outlined by Protevi (2001,  
21 7). Many EYE practitioners tacitly perpetuate such valorisation and it is now applied to early  
22 years teachers themselves as we explain below.

### 23 24 **Hylomorphism**

25  
26 A hylomorphic conceptualisation of production, whether it is ‘progress’ or sanctioned  
27 teaching practice or schools that meet government expectations which is being produced,  
28 implies the top-down imposition of a pre-given form upon passive matter. Protevi (2001, 8)  
29 characterises hylomorphism as ‘arche-thinking’ in which ‘a simple unchanging commanding  
30 origin’ is presented as ‘responsible for change in others’. As such, it is a denial of multiplicity  
31 and immanence whereby change is produced relationally, that is, through changes in the  
32 immanent relations and the forces at play within a social field. As Protevi (2001) notes, this

1  
2  
3 hylomorphic doctrine forecloses the possibility of nuanced pragmatic experimentation that  
4  
5 responds to the singular features of the matter in question.  
6

7 Philosophical thought has always influenced, and continues to influence, pedagogic theory  
8  
9 and practice and educational policy (Peters and Tesar 2017), and hylomorphism is clearly  
10  
11 evidenced in the conception of the child as a *tabula rasa* or blank sheet that can be inscribed  
12  
13 according to social priorities. The difficulty here is that this hylomorphic conception makes it  
14  
15 impossible to think about the contribution of the child to the educational process or how  
16  
17 teachers might respond intuitively to the singularities of the pupils that they encounter as  
18  
19 implied in the concept of child-centredness (UNESCO 1994) or, more recently, personalised  
20  
21 learning (Scott 2015).  
22  
23

24 Contrary to the Platonic conception of matter as inert or passive, Deleuze and Guattari  
25  
26 (2004) insist that matter should be understood as carrying singularities or implicit forms  
27  
28 which are, in fact, variable affects or, in Protevi's (2001, 7) terms, potentials for self-  
29  
30 ordering. A useful example drawn from Deleuze and Guattari (2004, 450) is that of wood  
31  
32 whose fibres reveal 'variable undulations and torsions of the fibres' that the artisan must  
33  
34 respond to or negotiate and that guide the 'operation of splitting wood'; this implies that  
35  
36 'form must be seen as suggested by the matter rather than as the pure product of the  
37  
38 architect's mind' (Protevi 2001, 7). There is a political dimension to this analogy when  
39  
40 Protevi (2001, 204) states that 'what is needed is the "artisanal" recognition of the ability to  
41  
42 coax forth the positive contributions of material inputs to desired products'; by contrast,  
43  
44 arche-thinking focuses only on a vision of the desired product and neglects the affectivity of  
45  
46 contributors to the production process.  
47  
48  
49

50 It is the teacher's capacity to coax forth positive contributions to any learning process  
51  
52 from the child - which assumes professional judgement but also familiarity or relationship  
53  
54 and the uniqueness of every child, that a statutory baseline test undertaken only weeks after a  
55  
56  
57  
58  
59  
60

1  
2  
3 child enters school fails to acknowledge. Teaching is reduced to a teleological or outcome-  
4 driven exercise in which the standards agenda is prioritised, a narrow definition of progress is  
5 reified (Bradbury and Roberts-Holmes 2016), and in which the contexts and complexity of  
6 pedagogic practice do not feature. Neoliberal educational policy discourse bears a remarkable  
7 similarity to the Platonic doctrine of hylomorphism in that it can only command and is blind  
8 to singularities (Protevi 2001, 8). Demands for the early identification of SEND also bypass  
9 calls for a values-driven education as conceived by Biesta (2010); they position teachers as  
10 the passive recipients of skills training such that policy implementation will produce the  
11 politically desired results, that is, the identification and rectification of ‘progress’ deficits.  
12 Peters and Tesar (2017, 6) regard this current political environment as one that is likely to  
13 ‘managerialise’ and ‘marginalise’ childhood, whilst Davies (2005) has argued that neoliberal  
14 educational discourse constructs educational professionals as perpetual novices with an  
15 assumed training deficit.

### 31 ***Defining or de-contextualising ‘progress’***

32  
33 The first element of the two-fold process which we have dubbed educational  
34 hylomorphism has been aptly conceptualised as the ‘reification of progress’ within national  
35 school monitoring and accountability procedures and the revised framework of the Office for  
36 Standards in Education (Ofsted) for school inspection (Bradbury and Roberts-Holmes 2017,  
37 943); that is, ‘progress’ is presented as a real or concrete process rather than one that is  
38 constructed through a politicised educational discourse. School performance is now assessed  
39 not only on student attainment in standardised tests but also on whether expected levels of  
40 progress are achieved. All children are thereby involved in a high stakes testing regime that  
41 simultaneously reinforces an idealised linear model of child development. EYE is now to be  
42 prioritised as the site of baseline data production (DfE 2017) – the point where progress  
43 tracking begins, rather than as the site of formative and potentially transformative educational  
44  
45  
46  
47  
48  
49  
50  
51  
52  
53  
54  
55  
56  
57  
58  
59  
60

1  
2  
3 experience. Inclusion based on the child-centred education envisaged in the Salamanca  
4 Statement (UNESCO 1994) has been replaced as an organising principle by a political  
5 discourse in which child development is reduced to the achievement of stipulated degrees of  
6 progress in narrowly defined subject areas. Additionally, according to the DfE (2014) and  
7 SEND Code statutory guidance (DoH / DfE 2015), interventions must be provided to children  
8 who deviate from governmentally prescribed levels of progress in order to minimise that  
9 deviation. EYE has become a key component of an ‘outcomes-driven system’ (DfE 2014, 3)  
10 in which teachers are no longer free to judge which outcomes really matter for a particular  
11 child or school. The current Conservative government’s proposed introduction of a single  
12 statutory baseline test in Reception (DfE 2017) disregards research such as that of Bradbury  
13 and Roberts-Holmes (2016, 5). In that research, teachers argue that existing baseline  
14 assessment ‘has little use in terms of the identification of additional needs’ (5). Consequently,  
15 it is teachers and schools that must undertake the task of assimilating isolated policy areas.

### 31 ***De-professionalising EYE***

32  
33 The second element of this political process of educational hylomorphisation can be  
34 described as a de-professionalising of teachers (*removed for review purposes*). Following  
35 Davies (2005), this involves the repeated discursive construction of educational practitioners  
36 as novices, accompanied by their mandatory participation in a complex set of training,  
37 monitoring and accountability practices. The DfE (2014) report which prioritises early  
38 identification of additional needs in EYE exemplifies this tendency to present successful  
39 policy implementation as largely a matter of teachers acquiring confidence and skills. Issues  
40 such as the freedom to exercise professional judgement and the availability of adequate  
41 funding or external support services when required are consequently side-lined. The  
42 implication of the DfE (2014) report is that the early identification of additional needs in  
43 EYE is dependent on teachers acquiring codified competences that they are assumed to lack  
44  
45  
46  
47  
48  
49  
50  
51  
52  
53  
54  
55  
56  
57  
58  
59  
60

1  
2  
3 and that must be incorporated into their practice in order to address this purported deficit. The  
4 report fails to acknowledge teachers' awareness of the frequently uneven development or  
5 learning of young children and the potentially negative consequences on the self-esteem of  
6 young children of being labelled 'SEN'. Such knowledge and legitimate concerns around  
7 labelling are pre-empted and foreclosed when inclusion is presented as a matter of the future  
8 training of early years practitioners regardless of how much professional experience they  
9 possess.  
10  
11  
12  
13  
14  
15  
16  
17

### 18 **Recent developments in EYE**

19  
20 Unlike the Early Years Foundation Stage (EYFS) profile introduced under a previous  
21 Labour government which is restricted to the identification of areas for development  
22 (Standards and Testing Agency [STA] 2016), the baseline reception test which is likely to  
23 become statutory in 2020 is designed to permit national comparison of test scores and  
24 measurement of the child's progress (i.e. school performance) when leaving primary school  
25 (STA 2017). Testing will cover literacy, numeracy and communication and language but may  
26 also include the capacity for self-regulation. Ironically, given the affirmation of early years  
27 practitioners' pivotal role noted above, assessment based on teacher observation will not  
28 feature in this proposed testing regime (Ward 2017). The price of political affirmation of the  
29 pivotal role of EYE is the inclusion of young children in a politicised standards agenda that  
30 reduces them to providers of performance data with the attendant risks of a narrowed  
31 curriculum. The direction of travel is confirmed in a recent Ofsted (2017) report which  
32 construes 'Bold beginnings' in Reception as an enhanced emphasis on literacy and numeracy;  
33 such an emphasis can be interpreted as likely to diminish the time allowed for play even  
34 though play is widely regarded as integral to early learning (Magnusson and Pramling 2018;  
35 Nolan and Paatsch 2018).  
36  
37  
38  
39  
40  
41  
42  
43  
44  
45  
46  
47  
48  
49  
50  
51  
52  
53  
54  
55  
56  
57  
58  
59  
60



1  
2  
3 The unstated assumption in the advice directed towards EYE providers (DfE 2014) is that  
4 familiarity with statutory requirements and acquisition of the skills required to fulfil them  
5 will result in confident practitioners who are able and willing to enact the policy enshrined in  
6 the latest SEND Code of Practice (DoH / DfE 2015). A key feature of this Code is a shift of  
7 responsibility such that teachers are now responsible for all children in their class, including  
8 those with SEND, whilst Special Educational Needs Coordinators (SENCOs) are charged  
9 with the strategic leadership of SEND-related change and the development of an inclusive  
10 ethos across their setting. The remit of the SENCO now includes ensuring that practitioners  
11 within their setting are familiar with their statutory responsibilities, identifying skill gaps and  
12 organising appropriate training. Teachers who have achieved SENCO accreditation following  
13 university-based training report increased confidence. However, contrary to the DfE (2014)  
14 advice, small-scale setting-based research undertaken by SENCOs undertaking such training  
15 indicates that repeated training exercises can raise awareness of this shift in responsibility and  
16 associated SEND identification procedures; but they do not necessarily produce a similar  
17 increase in confidence in applying this knowledge in the classroom. Such findings seemingly  
18 speak to concerns around the failure to provide post-qualification training for early years  
19 professionals (Marshall, Ralph and Palmer 2002; Mroz and Hall 2003); but they contradict  
20 the link between awareness, skills and confidence that is assumed in the DfE's (2014) advice  
21 directed to EYE providers. In the following section, we explore why this may be the case and  
22 suggest that research findings around, and governmental constructions of, confidence deficits  
23 may be masking resistance to what Campbell-Barr (2018, 76) has described as 'the "know  
24 and fix" mentality of policy makers', and concomitant silencing of 'the views and  
25 experiences of ECEC [early childhood education and care] professionals'.

### 52 **Cold beginnings**

1  
2  
3 The assumption that the acquisition of knowledge and skills will inevitably produce  
4 confidence is suggestive of the crude linear causality that MacNaughton (2004) argues is  
5 frequently evidenced in discourse around EYE; it is the same model of causality which is  
6 exemplified when neuroscientific research is mobilised to highlight the critical role of EYE in  
7 subsequent child development and academic attainment. MacNaughton (2004) suggests that  
8 early years practitioners have interpreted such research findings as a form of professional  
9 recognition that can also function as political capital in debates around funding within the  
10 education sector. In reality, the links between SEND-related interventions which are  
11 marketed as founded on scientific research and peer-reviewed basic scientific findings are  
12 often tenuous (Rose 1990; 2007, 29-30); such reported findings cannot precisely predict  
13 outcomes for an individual child or dictate the form that applications of such findings should  
14 take in EYE settings; this remains largely a matter of professional judgement or intuition.  
15 MacNaughton (2004) argues against the reductionism that linear causality implies and for an  
16 alternative poststructuralist logic which acknowledges the complexity of learning  
17 environments and contingency of outcomes. Deleuze and Guattari (2004) provide such an  
18 alternative and their conceptualisation of the brain neatly illustrates the contrast between  
19 linear causal logics and the poststructuralist preference for multiplicity. Deleuze and Guattari  
20 (1994) viewed the brain and its formation of neural pathways as exemplifying open and  
21 probabilistic systems, that is, ones where particular outcomes may be likely but are never  
22 guaranteed and can be unpredictable. The processes involved are suggestive of a material  
23 self-ordering (Protevi 2001) that, when considered in the context of EYE, implies a pedagogy  
24 that recognises both the positive contribution of the child to any educational process and the  
25 intuitive aspect of professional judgement.

26  
27  
28 The same positivistic and reductionist causal logic criticised by MacNaughton (2004) now  
29 pervades governmental reports, policy texts and guidance, and political discourse concerning  
30  
31  
32

1  
2  
3 education. It is integral to a marketised educational sector that is characterised by what Ball  
4 (2003) terms 'soulless performativity', where every aspect of child development is  
5 scrutinised and quantified, and the performance of educational practitioners and their settings  
6 is similarly scrutinised through various accountability procedures. Performativity implies  
7 public demonstrations of effectiveness, conceived in linear causal terms. The associated  
8 performance data must permit comparison of teachers and schools if it is to carry disciplinary  
9 power (Foucault 1977, 1982); or if it is to exercise what Deleuze (1995) viewed as political  
10 control of dividualised (de-individualised) objects of scrutiny.  
11  
12  
13  
14  
15  
16  
17  
18  
19

20 The forthcoming single statutory baseline test (DfE 2017) is designed to replace the three  
21 currently approved and non-mandatory tests: BASE, which is computer-based and from  
22 Durham University's Centre for Evaluation and Monitoring; EExBA, from the Early  
23 Excellence training organisation which is based on teacher observations; and the Reception  
24 Baseline Assessment from the National Foundation for Educational Research which  
25 combines tasks and observations (Ward 2017). The governmental objective is to create a  
26 floor standard that 65% of schools are required to meet (DfE 2016, 2017). In the political  
27 discourse around standards, a mandatory standardised baseline test ostensibly generates  
28 reliable comparative data such that claims about the raising of schools performance nationally  
29 are viewed as well-founded.  
30  
31  
32  
33  
34  
35  
36  
37  
38  
39  
40

41 The move to only one standardised mandatory baseline test will mean that schools will no  
42 longer have the freedom to select an assessment that is deemed appropriate to their context.  
43 The DfE's preference for a test which may, following a tender process, be computer-assisted  
44 (Ward 2017) follows ministerial dismay that the majority of schools had elected for the  
45 EExBA assessment which relies on the observation and professional judgement of teachers  
46 (Ward 2016). Ironically, it is precisely the professional judgement of Reception and early  
47 years teachers – once they are skilled up and acquire confidence, that the government insists  
48  
49  
50  
51  
52  
53  
54  
55  
56  
57  
58  
59  
60

1  
2  
3 should be relied on in the early identification of additional needs (DfE 2014); this is despite  
4 the simultaneous discursive construction of teachers in other policy documents as producing  
5 potentially unreliable assessments (Ward 2016; DfE 2017, 4, 13, 19, 31) such that  
6  
7 standardised testing must be introduced. In the Ministerial Foreword to the DfE (2017)  
8  
9 report, Justine Greening, does refer to ‘teachers’ professionalism’ but also describes what a  
10  
11 future assessment regime should look like; the implication here is that current assessment  
12  
13 practices may not be offering an appropriate degree of reliability and trustworthiness – a  
14  
15 theme evidenced throughout the report:  
16  
17  
18

19  
20 I am clear that our primary assessment system must be fit for purpose and sustainable. It must  
21  
22 produce data that is reliable and trusted, so that progress can be measured fairly and  
23  
24 accurately (DfE 2017, 4).  
25

26 The discourse around inclusion, like that around raising standards, is characteristically  
27  
28 neoliberal in its future-orientation and implies a grossly over-simplified version of causality.  
29  
30 Historically, both features were evidenced in Ofsted’s SEND Review (2010) which attributed  
31  
32 failures in inclusion to poor teaching. Teachers are repeatedly presented as both problem and  
33  
34 solution within neoliberal political discourse, suggesting a two-fold hylomorphism in which  
35  
36 teachers must orchestrate politically desired change in the student population whilst  
37  
38 simultaneously being acted upon as a teaching body in order that the form of both meets  
39  
40 political expectations.  
41  
42

43 In an analysis of ‘audit cultures’ and high-stakes testing in the U.K., U.S.A. and Australia,  
44  
45 Thompson and Cook (2013, 243-244) consider the generation of data for performance  
46  
47 measurement and situate such measurement within ‘an international education reform  
48  
49 trajectory that aims to promote quality and equity as articulated through a particular logic of  
50  
51 good education, good policy and “good teaching”’. The U.K. version of ‘good teaching’ is  
52  
53 ‘quality first teaching’, as specified in statutory guidance relating to SEND (DoH / DfE  
54  
55  
56  
57  
58  
59  
60

1  
2  
3 2015). It is similarly couched in a neoliberal discourse that, ultimately, justifies the  
4  
5 codification of teaching practice as a matter of national economic performance and priorities.  
6  
7 Perhaps echoing McNaughton's (2004) cautionary note about the risks of seeking political  
8  
9 recognition, Thompson and Cook (2013, 244-245) also suggest that the full implications of  
10  
11 this discursive shift have not been grasped; and this is despite the now routine invoking in  
12  
13 educational discourse of a terminology of efficiency, effectiveness, transparency,  
14  
15 performance and accountability (245).  
16

17  
18 This changing manifestation of 'good teaching in education policymaking, however,  
19  
20 has not resulted in a corresponding change in the way teachers conceive and practise  
21  
22 'good teaching'. Most teachers continue a tradition of 'good teaching' that precedes  
23  
24 and succeeds an audit culture. Teachers are most likely yet to appreciate the change to  
25  
26 the logics of 'good teaching' that result within audit cultures. (Thompson and Cook  
27  
28 2013, 244).  
29

30  
31 The proposed standardised and statutory baseline test at Reception stage signals the  
32  
33 incorporation of EYE into an audit culture in which the 'complexity of multiple possibilities'  
34  
35 (Thompson and Cook 2013, 244) is rationalised such that 'only that which is measurable is  
36  
37 important (Apple 2005, 11). It is questionable whether children with 'special' or additional  
38  
39 needs will benefit from such a data-driven environment. High stakes testing regimes threaten  
40  
41 the pastoral dimension of the teaching role (Thompson and Cook 2014) and risk  
42  
43 exacerbating, rather than reducing, inequities within education ((Thompson and Cook 2012).  
44  
45 Curricula tend to become narrower as schools and teachers are evaluated on pupil  
46  
47 performance in core subjects. As McNaughton (2004) suggests, an emphasis on outcome-  
48  
49 based education works to alter how pastoral care is conceived and provided. Early  
50  
51 identification of additional needs in EYE is likely to lead, for example, to selected children's  
52  
53 participation in highly structured interventions that are ostensibly designed to foster self-  
54  
55  
56  
57  
58  
59  
60

1  
2  
3 regulation but involve numerical scoring systems (linked to appropriate and inappropriate  
4 behaviours) that meet governmental demands that progress must be calculated and displayed.  
5  
6 It is also useful to note that the latest SEND Code of Practice (DoH / DfE 2015) incorporates  
7  
8 practices, such as increased and structured parental engagement, which were trialled in the  
9  
10 Achievement for All initiative (Department for Children, Schools and Families 2009). This  
11  
12 initiative was designed to raise the performance of and improve the wider outcomes of pupils  
13  
14 with SEND. In a subsequent evaluative study (Humphrey and Squires 2011, 16-17), it was  
15  
16 explicitly acknowledged that such practices were resource-intensive and were therefore likely  
17  
18 to require additional provision, and that contextual factors would determine whether the  
19  
20 reported progress could be replicated beyond the participating schools; it was similarly  
21  
22 acknowledged that some groups of pupils with additional or 'special' needs, for example,  
23  
24 those with autism, responded to varying degrees. In Ofsted (2017), it is emphasised that the  
25  
26 sample of 41 'good' or 'outstanding' schools upon which its recommendations are based  
27  
28 contains many which are located in socio-economically deprived areas; presumably this is  
29  
30 intended to pre-empt criticism that contextual factors are neglected. However, there is no  
31  
32 explicit reference to pupils with SEND and only one paragraph, reproduced below in its  
33  
34 entirety, devoted to children who fall behind their peers, which appears under the header  
35  
36 'Interventions':  
37  
38  
39  
40

41  
42 Importantly, when children were not as quick to pick up knowledge and  
43  
44 understanding as others, they were given the extra support needed to help them keep  
45  
46 up with their peers or catch up quickly when they arrived later in the school year.

47  
48 Interventions were not about introducing new teaching methods to see if they would  
49  
50 work better. Instead, the existing content was broken down into smaller steps and  
51  
52 children were given more time to practise and embed their new learning. (Ofsted  
53  
54 2017, 18).  
55  
56  
57  
58  
59  
60

1  
2  
3 The lack of clarity and detail here and in the Ofsted (2017) report more generally – for  
4 example, in content related to the time which should be dedicated to play in Reception, is  
5 worrisome on several counts. Ofsted (2017) conveniently ignores the disproportionate  
6 representation of children with special needs (of varying degrees of complexity and severity)  
7 in some schools such that resourcing a high level of ‘extra support’ may prove challenging  
8 for many. The cursory and seemingly dismissive treatment of interventions also contradicts  
9 the statutory guidance outlined in the SEND Code of Practice (DoH / DfE 2015); the Code  
10 obliges teachers to introduce appropriate interventions and provide evidence of having done  
11 so prior to seeking referral to external support services where children do not progress at a  
12 stipulated rate. Historically, this graduated approach was designed to address an alleged  
13 problem of over-identification of special needs in the school population linked to funding  
14 mechanisms (DfE 2011; *removed for review purposes*). When considered against the Ofsted  
15 (2017) report, we begin to understand why some teachers may lack confidence in  
16 implementing statutory advice around SEND (DoH / DfE 2015; DfE 2014); teachers are  
17 required to ensure early identification whilst avoiding over-identification in a political  
18 climate where failure to do both risks feeding a discourse of poor teaching (Ofsted 2010).  
19 Now, Ofsted (2017) appears to be discouraging interventions on the grounds that they permit  
20 teachers to engage in pragmatic experimentation with different teaching methods, risking  
21 deviation from the model of ‘good’ practice and curriculum design that it wishes to promote.  
22 Ofsted’s (2017) key recommendation is that Reception should involve more formal direct  
23 whole class teaching focusing on literacy. Despite statements about the importance of  
24 maintaining a broad and balanced curriculum, the time allocated to play in the study schools  
25 is never specified. Play is presented as facilitating only social and emotional development and  
26 less of a priority than aligning the Reception curriculum more closely with that of Year 1.  
27  
28  
29  
30  
31  
32  
33  
34  
35  
36  
37  
38  
39  
40  
41  
42  
43  
44  
45  
46  
47  
48  
49  
50  
51  
52  
53  
54  
55  
56  
57  
58  
59  
60



1  
2  
3 This contradicts wider recognition of the importance of play in EYE and child learning  
4  
5 (Nolan and Paatsch 2018).  
6

7       It is unclear why Ofsted (2017) assumes that a statutory baseline reception test will avoid  
8  
9 teaching to the test (Thompson and Cook 2014) given the former's criticism of the EYFS  
10  
11 profile on the grounds that teachers design activities around profile assessment areas.  
12  
13 Similarly, its acknowledgment of excessive teacher workloads is confined to recognition that  
14  
15 the evidence gathering required for the EYFS profile is onerous. Ofsted (2017) simply fails to  
16  
17 explore the implications, for children in Reception, of being incorporated into an education  
18  
19 culture in which pupil performance is repeatedly quantified; and where both teachers and  
20  
21 pupils are reduced to suppliers of performance data for accountability purposes. The de-  
22  
23 professionalising of early years teachers is evidenced in the failure of Ofsted (2017) and  
24  
25 governmental advice (DfE 2014) to acknowledge teachers' objections to EYE being  
26  
27 constructed as a site for the early identification of SEND; and for the delivery of  
28  
29 interventions which reinforce a dominant norm and create a pressure on children to learn at a  
30  
31 similar rate to their peers or risk stigmatisation. Early years teachers on mandatory SENCo  
32  
33 accreditation programmes are acutely aware of the potential effect of labelling on young  
34  
35 children and have deeply held views about the nature of childhood and function of EYE.  
36  
37 Objections to statutory advice in this area are not solely based on concerns about work load  
38  
39 and inspection-related 'data-readiness' (Bradbury and Roberts-Holmes 2016, 948). They are  
40  
41 based on professional experience of uneven or irregular rates of progress and convictions that  
42  
43 children must be afforded a space in which to develop without being subject to the pressures  
44  
45 that attend 'creating an Ofsted story' (Bradbury and Roberts-Holmes 2016) and what, with  
46  
47 reference to DfE (2014) and DoH / DfE (2015) statutory guidance, we might dub 'creating a  
48  
49 SEND-management story'. The issue then is no longer one of confidence and skills but,  
50  
51 rather, it is a question of hearing the dissenting voices of such early years teachers and  
52  
53  
54  
55  
56  
57  
58  
59  
60



1  
2  
3 affording them a role in policy formation. Regrettably, this seems unlikely given the global  
4 reach of educational performativity and the prevailing political discourse around national  
5 economic priorities that supports numerous and varied accountability practices.  
6  
7

### 8 9 **Intuitive practice**

10  
11 To return to the suggestion that teaching, as an intuitive practice, involves a certain  
12 'surrendering to' and 'following of' the singularities of the child in question, Deleuze and  
13 Guattari (2004, 451) conceive this process as the 'connecting of operations to a materiality,  
14 instead of imposing a form upon a matter':  
15  
16  
17  
18

19  
20 Of course, it is always possible to 'translate' into a model that which escapes the  
21 model; thus, one may link the materiality's power of variation to laws adapting a  
22 fixed form and a constant matter to one another. But this cannot be done without a  
23 distortion that consists in uprooting variables from the state of continuous variation, in  
24 order to extract from them fixed points and constant relations. (Deleuze and Guattari  
25  
26  
27  
28  
29  
30  
31 2004, 451)  
32

33 In contrast to the assumption of linear and predictable child development, Deleuze and  
34 Guattari (2004, 451) suggest that materiality possesses a '*nomos*' (an unstructured or  
35 nomadic distribution). This concept of *nomos* speaks to the contingent and often  
36 unpredictable character of learning and child psycho-emotional development, but also to the  
37 intuitive aspect of early years teaching practice. *Nomos*, unlike *logos* (regular distributions  
38 structured according to some law), implies something that defies articulation or codification  
39 according to predefined schemas. When we refer to intuitive professional judgements, we are  
40 suggesting that this is not simply a matter of applying a demarcated knowledge base as in  
41 Campbell-Barr's (2018) sociological model of practice. Exactly how knowledge informs  
42 practice depends on the teacher's reading of the singularities of a particular child which, in  
43 turn, will influence decisions about how to proceed. The teaching and learning process has a  
44  
45  
46  
47  
48  
49  
50  
51  
52  
53  
54  
55  
56  
57  
58  
59  
60

1  
2  
3 pre-conscious or unconscious and affective dimension; and, as Massumi (2002) argues, we  
4 are looking in the wrong place if we look for thought in the head.  
5  
6

7 The intuitive professional practice that child-centred ‘following’ assumes can be  
8 conceived in poststructuralist terms as the negotiation of complexes of complexity, where  
9 these complexes include: pedagogic theories and loyalties, educational values and ethics,  
10 varied and conflicting governmental imperatives and policies, prior professional experiences  
11 and the children themselves (*removed for review purposes*). The term ‘negotiation’ is  
12 sufficiently non-specific to embrace the concept of ‘operations’ as *nomos*, i.e. of practice as  
13 something irreducible to existing and politically sanctioned schema. The ‘know and fix’  
14 strategies referred to by Campbell-Barr (2018, 76), and exemplified in demands for the early  
15 identification of SEND when stipulated degrees of progress are not achieved, work to  
16 foreclose discussion around the caring dimension of EYE and diminish the scope for the  
17 exercising of professional judgement. We would also argue that there is nothing ‘bold’ or  
18 novel about Ofsted’s (2017) attempt to effectively eliminate a traditionally defining feature of  
19 EYE. Rather, its recommendations assume that such education should serve a political  
20 standards agenda to the potential detriment of young children, just as the pressures on early  
21 years professionals to identify special or additional needs neglects their concerns about the  
22 effect of labelling through standardised testing and SEN identification at a very early age.  
23 Proposals for a single statutory baseline test in Reception similarly erode the scope for  
24 professional judgement and the freedom of schools to evolve their own strategies to support  
25 learning and well-being in diverse student populations.  
26  
27  
28  
29  
30  
31  
32  
33  
34  
35  
36  
37  
38  
39  
40  
41  
42  
43  
44  
45  
46  
47

### 48 **Technologies of rectification**

49

50 The teachers in EYE that we encounter in university-based training for the SENCo role do  
51 not oppose all forms of assessment but follow Cooper (2008) in recognising the importance  
52 of relationships within educational settings which, by definition, take time to establish.  
53  
54  
55  
56  
57  
58  
59  
60

1  
2  
3 Writing of pupils designated as having SEBD (social, emotional and behavioural difficulties),  
4  
5 Cooper states: 'Positive adult-pupil relationships often act as protective and remedial factors  
6  
7 in the lives of young people with SEBD' (2008: 18). The latest SEND Code of Practice (DoH  
8  
9 / DfE 2015) replaces the category of SEBD with that of SEMH (social, emotional, mental  
10  
11 health) which is interpreted as implying wider concern for the well-being of all pupils. These  
12  
13 teachers also suggest that special needs tend to become apparent over time once relationships  
14  
15 with students have been established. Student-centredness is understood as compassionate  
16  
17 attention to the individual needs of those students rather than the orchestration of what Slee  
18  
19 (2015, p.10), following Rose (1990), describes as 'technologies of optimisation' and we  
20  
21 would dub technologies of rectification.  
22  
23

24 The type of interventions critiqued by MacNaughton (2004), and which claim to be  
25  
26 informed by neuro-science, rely on a familiar and prescriptive linear concept of age-related  
27  
28 psycho-emotional development and 'progress' such that remediation is deemed necessary for  
29  
30 children falling short of age-related expectations in this area. These interventions can be  
31  
32 extended to a whole school approach and this tends to occur in schools based in areas of high  
33  
34 socio-economic deprivation, suggesting a selective logic of remediation that functions as a  
35  
36 form of social management and control, and diverts attention away from social and  
37  
38 educational inequalities. The scant content devoted to interventions in the aforementioned  
39  
40 Ofsted (2017) report and proposed statutory single baseline test in Reception (DfE 2017)  
41  
42 suggest that a more transmissional pedagogy is to be introduced to EYE as an alternative to  
43  
44 student-centredness and the compassionate pedagogy and professional judgement that it  
45  
46 facilitates. It is widely accepted that transmissional pedagogy, which assumes that children  
47  
48 learn through passively absorbing knowledge imparted in pre-planned lessons, is no longer fit  
49  
50 for purpose; evidence suggests that alternative pedagogic models, including personalised and  
51  
52  
53  
54  
55  
56  
57  
58  
59  
60

collaborative learning, will ‘better support acquisition of twenty-first century skills’ (Scott 2015, 1).

### ***Ethical statement***

Prior to our concluding remarks, it can be noted that all of the research undertaken by teachers on the National Award for Special Educational Needs Coordination at the university in question was conducted following British Educational Research Association (BERA 2011) ethical guidelines. We have referred to research in this article only where consent was given to share findings and comments in an anonymised manner.

### **Conclusions**

EYE can now be read as a key site in which a ‘politics of logic’ (MacNaughton 2004), theories of child development and pedagogic theory and practice are brought into sharp relief. The technicist view of EYE teaching promoted through varied policies and in existing and proposed statutory guidance has been conceptualised here, following Deleuze and Guattari (2004), as evidencing a Platonic hylomorphism in which both teachers and children are conceived as passive recipients of pre-determined and prescribed educational models. An alternative conceptualisation of EYE teaching as ‘following’ (Deleuze and Guattari 2004, 450) has been outlined which recognises both the intuitive dimension of teaching and the positive contribution of children to the teaching and learning process. Poststructuralist theory affords a space in which a child-centred EYE pedagogy can be considered outside of governmental agendas and the technologies of rectification associated with Platonic ‘arche-thinking’ (Protevi 2001, 8). The ‘reification of progress’ posited by Bradbury and Roberts-Holmes (2017, 943) within national school inspection and pupil performance monitoring frameworks is now also evidenced in interventions directed at children with special needs; the latter are judged against similarly reified and linear notions of age-appropriate psycho-emotional development.

1  
2  
3 A recent Ofsted (2017) report which appears to be dismissive of interventions in the event  
4 of unacceptable age-related academic progress simply advises that content is broken down  
5 into smaller steps for such children in a recommended curriculum that focuses on literacy and  
6 is to be delivered through more direct transmissional whole class instruction. Simultaneously,  
7 teachers in EYE in England are charged with early identification of SEN and the introduction  
8 of appropriate interventions to address progress deficits (DfE 2014; DoH / DfE 2015).  
9  
10 Research undertaken in university-based accreditation programmes for EYE teachers  
11 becoming SENCOs suggests that the reported lack of confidence amongst teachers in  
12 applying their awareness of statutory guidance and specific needs, despite repeated training  
13 exercises, may in fact be a form of resistance to this confused policy landscape. It is a  
14 landscape which threatens to diminish professional autonomy (Thompson and Cook 2013,  
15 244) and the freedom of schools to select the methods of assessment that they deem  
16 appropriate; and one in which the concepts of child-centredness (UNESCO 1994) or  
17 personalised learning (Scott 2015) may be replaced in response to governmental pressures on  
18 EYE teachers to adopt a traditionally conservative model of whole class direct teaching in a  
19 narrowed curriculum.

### 20 21 22 23 24 25 26 27 28 29 30 31 32 33 34 35 36 37 **Acknowledgements**

38 We would like to thank teachers on the National Award for Special Educational Needs  
39 Coordination Programme (*removed for review purposes* University, U.K.) who consented to  
40 their research findings and comments being referred to in this article. We would also like to  
41 thank the reviewers of the article for their constructive and helpful feedback.

### 42 43 44 45 46 47 48 **References**

49 Apple, M. 2005. Education, Markets and an Audit Culture. *Critical Quarterly* 47 (1-2): 11  
50  
51  
52 29.  
53  
54  
55  
56  
57  
58  
59  
60

1  
2  
3 Biesta, G.J.J. 2010. Why 'What Works' Still Won't Work: From Evidence-based Education  
4 to Value-based Education. *Studies in Philosophy and Education* 29 (5): 491-503.  
5  
6  
7

8  
9 Bradbury, A. and Roberts-Holmes, G. 2016. *They Are Children... Not Robots, Not Machines:  
10 The Introduction of Reception Baseline Assessment* National Union of Teachers.  
11  
12 <http://www.teachers.org.uk/files/baseline-assessment--final-10404.pdf>  
13  
14

15  
16 Bradbury, A. and Roberts-Holmes, G. 2017. Creating an Ofsted Story: The Role of Early  
17 Years Assessment Data in Schools' Narratives of Progress. *British Journal of Sociology of  
18 Education* 38 (7): 943-955.  
19  
20

21  
22 British Educational Research Association (2011) *Ethical Guidelines for Educational  
23 Research*. London: BERA.  
24  
25

26  
27 Campbell-Barr, V. 2018. The Silencing of the Knowledge-base in Early Childhood Education  
28 and Care Professionalism. *International Journal of Early Years Education* 26 (1): 75-89. doi:  
29 10.1080/09669760.2017.1414689  
30  
31

32  
33 Cooper, P. 2008. Nurturing Attachment to School: Contemporary Perspectives on Social,  
34 Emotional and Behavioural Difficulties. *Pastoral Care in Education* 26 (1): 13-22. doi:  
35 10.1080/02643940701848570  
36  
37

38  
39  
40 Davies, B. 2005. The (Im)possibility of Intellectual Work in Neoliberal Regimes. *Discourse:  
41 Studies in the Cultural Politics of Education* 26 (1): 1-14.  
42  
43  
44

45  
46  
47 Deleuze, G. 1995. *Negotiations. 1975-1990*. New York: Columbia University Press.  
48  
49

50  
51 Deleuze, G. and Guattari, F. 1994. *What is Philosophy?* London: Verso.  
52  
53

54  
55  
56 Deleuze, G. and Guattari, F. 2004. *A Thousand Plateaus*. London: Continuum.  
57  
58

1  
2  
3  
4  
5 DfCSF (Department for Children, Schools and Families) 2009. *Achievement For All:*  
6  
7 *Guidance for Schools*. Nottingham: DfCSF Publications.  
8  
9

10  
11 DfE (Department for Education) 2011. *Support and Aspiration: A New Approach to Special*  
12  
13 *Educational Needs and Disabilities: A Consultation (The Green Paper)*. London: DfE.  
14  
15

16  
17  
18 DfE (Department for Education) 2014. *Early Years: Guide to the 0 to 25 SEND Code of*  
19  
20 *Practice*. London: DfE.  
21  
22

23  
24 DfE (Department for Education) 2016. *Educational Excellence Everywhere*. London: DfE.  
25  
26

27  
28  
29 DfE (Department for Education) 2017. *Primary Assessment in England Government*  
30  
31 *Consultation Response: September 2017*.  
32 [https://www.gov.uk/government/uploads/system/uploads/attachment\\_data/file/644871/Primar](https://www.gov.uk/government/uploads/system/uploads/attachment_data/file/644871/Primary_assessment_consultation_response.pdf)  
33 [y\\_assessment\\_consultation\\_response.pdf](https://www.gov.uk/government/uploads/system/uploads/attachment_data/file/644871/Primary_assessment_consultation_response.pdf)  
34  
35

36  
37 DoH / DfE (Department of Health and Department for Education) 2015. *SEND Code of*  
38  
39 *Practice 0 – 25 Years*. London: DfE.  
40  
41

42  
43  
44 *Removed for review purposes 2015*.  
45  
46

47  
48 Foucault, M. 1977. *Discipline and Punish*. London: Allen Lane.  
49  
50

51  
52 Foucault, M. 1982. The Subject and Power. *Critical Inquiry* 8 (Summer 1982): 777-795.  
53  
54  
55  
56  
57  
58  
59  
60

1  
2  
3 Humphrey, N. and Squires, G. 2011. Achievement For All: National Evaluation: Final  
4 Report. DFE-RR176. London: DfE.  
5  
6

7  
8  
9 Magnusson, M. and Pramling, N. 2018. In 'Numberland': Play-based Pedagogy in Response  
10 to Imaginative Numeracy. *International Journal of Early Years Education* 26 (1): 24-41. doi:  
11 10.1080/09669760.2017.1368369  
12  
13  
14

15  
16  
17 Marshall, J., Ralph, S. and Palmer, S. 2002. 'I Wasn't Trained to Work With Them':  
18 Mainstream teachers' Attitudes to Children with Speech and Language Difficulties.  
19  
20  
21  
22 *International Journal of Inclusive Education* 6(3): 199-215.  
23  
24

25  
26 Massumi, B. 2002. *Parables for the Virtual: Movement, Affect, Sensation*. Durham: Duke  
27 University Press.  
28  
29

30  
31  
32 MacNaughton, G. 2004. The Politics of Logic in Early Childhood Research: A Case of the  
33 Brain, Hard Facts, Trees and Rhizomes. <http://files.eric.ed.gov/fulltext/EJ689638.pdf>  
34  
35  
36

37  
38  
39 Mroz, M. and Hall, E. 2003. Not Yet Identified: The Knowledge, Skills and Training Needs  
40 of Early Years Professionals in Relation to Children's Speech and Language Development.  
41  
42  
43  
44 *Early Years* 23 (2): 117-130.  
45

46  
47  
48 *Removed for review purposes* 2016.  
49  
50



1  
2  
3 Nolan, A. and Paatsch, L. 2018. (Re)affirming Identities: Implementing a Play-based  
4 Approach to Learning in the Early Years of Schooling. *International Journal of Early Years*  
5 *Education* 26 (1): 42-55. doi: 10.1080/09669760.2017.1369397  
6  
7  
8  
9

10  
11 Ofsted 2010. *The Special Educational Needs and Disability Review: A Statement is Not*  
12 *Enough*. Manchester: Ofsted.  
13  
14

15  
16  
17  
18 Ofsted 2017. *Bold Beginnings: The Reception Curriculum in a Sample of Good and*  
19 *Outstanding Primary Schools*. Manchester: Ofsted.  
20  
21  
22

23  
24 Peters, M. and Tesar, M. 2017. The Philosophy of Early Childhood: Examining the Cradle of  
25 the Evil, Rational and Free Child. In *Troubling the Changing Paradigms: An Educational*  
26 *and Philosophy and Theory Early Childhood Reader*, Volume IV, edited by Peters, M. and  
27 Tesar, M., 2-15. Abingdon: Routledge.  
28  
29  
30  
31  
32

33  
34  
35 Protevi, J. 2001. *Political Physics: Deleuze, Derrida and the Body Politic*. London: Athlone.  
36  
37

38  
39 Rose, N. S. 1990. *Governing the Soul: The Shaping of the Private Self*. London: Routledge.  
40  
41

42  
43  
44 Rose, N. 2007. *The Politics of Life Itself. Biomedicine, Power and Subjectivity in the Twenty-*  
45 *First Century*. Princeton, NJ: Princeton University Press.  
46  
47

48  
49  
50 Scott, C.L. (2015) *The Futures of Learning 3: What Kind of Pedagogies For The Twenty-*  
51 *First Century?* Paris: UNESCO.  
52  
53  
54

1  
2  
3 Slee, R. 2015. Beyond a Psychology of Student Behaviour. *Emotional and Behavioural*  
4  
5 *Difficulties* 20(1): 3-19. doi: 10.1080/13632752.2014.947100  
6  
7

8  
9 Standards and Testing Agency 2016. *Early Years Foundation Stage Profile: 2017 Handbook*.  
10  
11 www.gov.uk/government/publications/early-years-foundation-stage-profile-handbook.  
12  
13

14  
15 Standards and Testing Agency 2017. *14 September 2017: Schools*.  
16

17  
18 [https://www.gov.uk/government/publications/sta-assessment-update-14-september-2017/14-](https://www.gov.uk/government/publications/sta-assessment-update-14-september-2017/14-september-2017-schools)  
19  
20 [september-2017-schools](https://www.gov.uk/government/publications/sta-assessment-update-14-september-2017/14-september-2017-schools)  
21  
22

23  
24 Thompson, G. and Cook, I. 2012. Spinning in the NAPLAN Ether: 'Postscript on the Control  
25  
26 Societies' and the Seduction of Education in Australia. *Deleuze Studies* 6 (4): 564-584  
27  
28

29  
30 Thompson, G. and Cook, I. 2013. The Logics of Good Teaching in an Audit Culture: A  
31  
32 Deleuzian Analysis. *Educational Philosophy and Theory* 43 (3): 243-258.  
33  
34

35  
36 Thompson, G. and Cook, I. 2014. Manipulating the Data: Teaching and NAPLAN in the  
37  
38 Control Society. *Discourse: Studies in the Cultural Politics of Education* 35(1)|: 129-142.  
39  
40  
41

42  
43 TSO (The Stationary Office) 2014. *Children and Families Act 2014*. Norwich: TSO.  
44  
45  
46

47  
48 UNESCO 1994. *The Salamanca statement and Framework on Action for Special Needs*  
49  
50 *Education*. Paris: UNESCO.  
51  
52

1  
2  
3 Ward, H. 2016. Baseline Assessments Dropped as Accountability Measures in Major DfE U-  
4  
5 turn. *Times Educational Supplement*, 7 April 2016. [https://www.tes.com/news/school-  
10  
11 news/breaking-news/baseline-assessments-dropped-accountability-measures-major-dfe-u-  
12  
13 turn](https://www.tes.com/news/school-<br/>6<br/>7 news/breaking-news/baseline-assessments-dropped-accountability-measures-major-dfe-u-<br/>8<br/>9 turn)

14 Ward, H. 2017. DfE Planning to Spend £10 million on Reception Baseline Test. *Times*  
15  
16 *Educational Supplement*, 21 November 2017. [https://www.tes.com/news/school-  
19  
20 news/breaking-news/dfe-planning-spend-ps10m-reception-baseline-test](https://www.tes.com/news/school-<br/>17<br/>18 news/breaking-news/dfe-planning-spend-ps10m-reception-baseline-test)