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THEMATIC SECTION

Children’s rights at 21: policy, theory, practice
Liberating the Mind or Governing the Soul? Psychotherapeutic Education, Children’s Rights and the Disciplinary State

Vicki Coppock*

Abstract
This article draws on theoretical contributions from Michel Foucault, Nikolas Rose and from within the new sociology of childhood to open up for critical analysis and debate contemporary policy and practice initiatives involving the introduction of formal psychotherapeutic education programmes in schools. While the primary focus is the UK, the article also makes reference to wider European and international contexts. A children’s rights perspective is taken in considering the potential implications of such initiatives for children and young people. Specifically, the article challenges the assumption that formal psychotherapeutic education programmes are an unequivocal ‘good’ and it explores the possibility that they may undermine rather than promote children’s agency, hence their ‘emotional wellbeing’. It is concluded that intensified surveillance of children’s emotional lives is both related to, and contributes towards, wider governance practices of the late modern neo-liberal disciplinary state.

Keywords: emotional wellbeing, governmentality, surveillance, children’s rights

Introduction
Over the past decade contemporary discourses and debates have centred on the apparent deterioration in children’s mental health and social and emotional wellbeing in contemporary ‘western’ societies, provoking considerable anxiety amongst adults as to what to do about the “childhood problem” (Collishaw et al., 2004; DCSF, 2008a; Green et al., 2005; Layard and Dunn, 2009; Meltzer et al., 2000; NMHA, 2006; Palmer, 2006; Sawyer et al., 2000; UNICEF, 2007; Waddell et al., 2007; WHO, 2005; 2008). The focus has been overwhelmingly negative with an emphasis on the long-term consequences and cost of childhood mental health problems (Collishaw et al., 2004; Richards & Abbott, 2009). This is despite the fact that the majority of children and young people actually enjoy and report good mental health (European Commission SUPPORT Project, 2007; Madge, 2005; WHO, 2008). Nevertheless, fuelled by a sense of ‘crisis’, governments and agencies have invested heavily in policy initiatives and programmes aimed at the promotion of children’s mental health and emotional...
wellbeing and the early identification of mental disorder through the development of universal, preventive approaches. Largely driven by proactive networks of professional advocates such as the Collaborative for Academic, Social and Emotional Learning (CASEL, 2010); Schools for Health in Europe (SHE, 2010) and the International Alliance for Child and Adolescent Mental Health and Schools (INTERCAMHS, 2010), a widespread consensus has emerged suggesting that the school is the ‘natural’ setting for such intervention and therefore the best place to target resources and effort. Subsequently, a range of policies and programmes has emerged throughout the English-speaking educational world aimed at transforming the culture of schools into psychotherapeutic environments where individual children’s emotional lives are systematically targeted and nurtured (e.g. Social and Emotional Aspects of Learning/Development (SEAL/SEAD) in the UK (DfE, 2010); Social and Emotional Learning (SEL) in the United States (CASEL, 2010); MindMatters in Australia (Australian Government Department of Health and Ageing, 2010);and the international Families and Schools Together (FAST) programmes (FAST, 2010). Teachers are now routinely expected to identify and manage the individual mental health needs of children in schools and promote their mental health and emotional wellbeing through “whole school” approaches. This includes assessing children’s mental health against check-lists of learning outcomes and teaching children about their emotions in the formal context of the school curriculum. Given the scope and scale of these developments and the potential for accusations of mass ‘social engineering’ it is worrying that there is limited critical debate surrounding them.

During 2008-9 the author was invited to participate in a series of four seminars entitled The School as a Location for the Promotion and Support of Mental Health funded by the UK’s Economic and Social Research Council (see http://www.abdn.ac.uk/rowangroup/activities.shtml). My initial contribution to the debate centred on a critical examination of the ‘evidence’ for ‘the crisis’ in children’s mental health and the impact of this on policy and practice developments in UK schools (Coppock, 2010). This article seeks to extend that analysis more broadly, drawing on theoretical insights from the work of Michel Foucault, Nikolas Rose and from within the new sociology of childhood. The intention is to expose the complex and often contradictory relationship between official policy discourse/practice developments and their potential consequences for the lives of children and young people. The concepts of governmentality, surveillance, discourse and power will be central in informing a critical analysis of the implications for children’s rights of implementing systematic psychotherapeutic education programmes. It will be argued that the positive representation of developments in psychotherapeutic education as progressive must be read cautiously – that is as discourses that embrace techniques of governance (albeit cloaked in the language of rights and inclusion) and which constitute more subtle exercises of adult/State power. Moreover, the relative absence of dissenting voices on this issue is considered heavily problematic and is interpreted as a manifestation
The significance of ‘Psy’ – constructing the ‘child’ as ‘human becoming’

The source of support for the introduction of systematic psychotherapeutic education in schools is derived within various professional discourses; most notably those around “mental health/disorder”, “emotional intelligence/literacy” and “emotional wellbeing”. These terms are often used interchangeably in policy documentation, academic literature and professional practice, however it is rarely acknowledged that this is a field “fraught with ontological, conceptual and methodological confusions and disagreements” (Watson & Emery, 2010: 771). The different terminology is informed by different philosophical and ideological perspectives, developed over time, within the theoretical/professional/institutional lineages of child education, health and welfare. However, notwithstanding the diverse, often antagonistic, nature of the language, concepts and theories that constitute psychotherapeutic education, they can be seen to converge at the site of discourse and knowledge about child development and socialisation derived within the powerful over-arching “psy” complex (Foucault, 1979; Rose, 1985; 1999).

“Psy” discourse and practice has constructed and governed the boundaries of what constitutes ‘normality’ and ‘abnormality’ in the intellectual, emotional and behavioural lives of children since the latter half of the 19th century. The establishment of compulsory schooling facilitated the practice of ‘child study’ – the positivistic tradition where children were for the first time routinely observed, weighed and measured, their interests and activities documented in copious detail. This not only provided a set of procedures for conducting research, but also a set of practices associated with the modern State in so far as individual developmental psychology was increasingly implicated in the classification and surveillance of its citizens (Burman, 2008). Rose (1999: 123) observes how childhood is “the most intensively governed sector of personal existence”. Common-sense assumptions about “the child” and “childhood” have been translated into scientific ‘truths’, creating developmental ‘norms’ and giving the context for and legitimacy to practices of social regulation and ‘reform’ of children and young people who ‘deviate’ from them. These developmental norms are operationalised through the myriad of social institutions and professional practices that make up the welfare State, forming complex “disciplinary networks” of governance (Foucault, 1979). So, under the seemingly benevolent gaze of State welfare professionals, the surveillance and monitoring of children and young people is routinised and contributes to the maintenance of social order.

A strong critique of developmentalism was a central focus of the new sociology of childhood that emerged in the late 1980s/early 1990s (Prout & James, 1997). Developmental discourses dictate that children can only aspire to achieve the same
status as adults as they progress through the life course – in this sense, they are not construed as human beings, rather humanbecomings (Qvortrup, 1994). Prout & James (1997) suggest that three themes underpin the construction of the ‘normal’ child within developmentalism – rationality, naturalness and universality. Rationality and competence are established as the hallmarks of adulthood, reinforced by assumed childhood irrationality and incompetence. In this, childhood is constructed as an inferior binary opposite to adulthood and the powerlessness of children is confirmed and legitimated by asserting their incapacity. Naturalness and universality provide the key ideological feature of inevitability, leaving little or no room for contradiction or conflict. Developmental discourses of childhood are so embedded in the general consciousness as the inevitable phase that all humans pass through on their journey to adulthood that they have entered the realm of common-sense and their taken-for-grantedness makes them almost impenetrable.

While ‘psy’ discourse has dominated the lives of children for well over a century there is a sense in which its influence has intensified in the late modern era – as evidenced by the contemporary obsession with children’s mental health and emotional wellbeing and the emergence of universal psychotherapeutic education programmes. Therefore, as Burman (2008: viii) suggests,

As the ‘psy’ complex comes to exercise an ever greater grip on our lives, we have an even greater need for critical resources to interrogate and resist its presumptions.

From mental health ‘problems’ to promoting ‘emotional intelligence/literacy’ and ‘social and emotional wellbeing’ in schools

Advocates for psychotherapeutic education frequently argue that it is less stigmatising and oppressive for children and young people in so far as it involves a move away from the identification and ‘treatment’ of ‘problem’ emotions and behaviours towards a holistic model of promoting individual ‘emotional wellbeing’ – that is it represents a paradigm shift from a ‘deficits’ to a ‘strengths’ model (Weare, 2004). This, in part, reflects a growing antagonism towards, and loss of faith in, the traditional medical model approach to conceptualizing and responding to children and young people’s mental health as epitomised in the practices of ‘psy’ professionals throughout the 20th century. The processes involved in defining, identifying, explaining and responding to ‘problem’ emotions and behaviours in children and young people have been governed by the development of formal classification and diagnostic systems. The diagnostic ‘labels’ derived within these systems have expanded exponentially enveloping more and more children and young people, as for example in the explosion of diagnoses of conduct disorders generally and attention deficit hyperactivity disorder particularly (Coppock, 2002; Timimi, 2005). However, the medical model draws artificial boundaries around ‘normality’ and ‘abnormality’, obscuring the influence of social
and political processes in the conceptualisation of ‘disorder’. Indeed, the diagnosis of emotional and behavioural problems in children and young people has been found to rely heavily on the subjective impressions of parents and professionals as much as on any objective, ‘scientific’ evidence (Coppock, 2002). Moreover, the therapeutic discourse of ‘illness’ and ‘cure’ has disguised the potency of the medical model as a means of social control. The power of adults to define the non-conforming behaviour of children and young people as problematic, and of the medical model to re-label that non-conformity as ‘illness’, has led to inappropriate and inconsistent institutional responses to children and young people that have had profound consequences for their lives (Coppock, 2005; Timimi, 2002).

From this it is possible to see the attractiveness of an emphasis on ‘normalising’ processes within the psychotherapeutic education literature where considerable efforts appear to have been made to adopt ‘non-clinical’ terminology and to embrace ‘alternative’ models for conceptualising and responding to children and young people’s mental health. This is, in part, reflected in the growth of interest in ‘emotional intelligence/literacy’ and ‘emotional wellbeing’.

‘Emotional intelligence/literacy’

Although the term “emotional literacy” was popularised in the 1990s, it was first used by Steiner in his book *Healing Alcoholism* in 1979. Again, it is easy to see the attraction of the concept since he envisioned emotional literacy as a tool of human emancipation:

To be emotionally literate is to be able to handle emotions in a way that improves your personal power and improves the quality of life for you and – equally importantly – the quality of life for the people around you (Steiner, 2002:15).

The term “emotional intelligence” was coined by the psychologists Salovey & Mayer (1989) in the context of their research linking the affective (emotions) and cognitive (intelligence) domains. Following this, other psychologists (Gardner, 1993; Goleman, 1996) expressed dissatisfaction with traditional definitions of ‘intelligence’ in ‘western’ culture, emphasising the positive value of emotional intelligence and emotional literacy in influencing concentration, memory, problem-solving and learning skills; in influencing relationships, enabling individuals to break out of ‘dysfunctional’ patterns; and in promoting creativity, innovation and leadership and the performance of organisations. In particular, Goleman drew attention to what he considered to be the detrimental consequences of neglecting children’s emotional intelligence and emotional literacy. Citing a worldwide survey of parents and teachers, he claimed that these children were “more troubled emotionally...more lonely and depressed, more angry and unruly, more nervous and prone to worry, more impulsive and aggressive” (Goleman, 1996: xiii).

Although controversial and contested (Carr, 2000), Goleman’s claims proved to be instantly popular and largely resistant to criticism; undoubtedly because his
conclusions resonated with wider expressions of adult anxiety about the deteriorating state of children’s mental health. Emotional literacy became the mantra of a progressive movement to reassert the importance of emotional development within education and beyond (see, for example, Antidote, 2010; Orbach, 1999). Bolstered by the lobbying of NGOs and the growing international constituency of emotional literacy ‘champions’, the theme of emotional literacy quickly gained currency in official policy documents and was identified as an important preventive strategy in the promotion of mentally healthy children and young people (see, for example, Weare & Gray, 2003; WHO, 2008).

‘Emotional wellbeing’

In recent years the concept of ‘emotional wellbeing’ has emerged as a prominent theme in ‘western’ societies in general and in children’s services arenas more specifically. The term is firmly established in popular discourse and permeates the realm of public policy nowhere more so than in relation to children and young people where its presence is ubiquitous (Ereaut & Whiting, 2008). The recent burgeoning focus on children’s ‘emotional wellbeing’ in UK government policy can in part be seen a response to the publication of the UNICEF Report (2007) on children’s wellbeing which placed the UK at the bottom of a league table of 21 industrialised countries, coupled with similar reports purportedly ‘evidencing’ the widespread anxious, unhappy state of British children (such as The Good Childhood Inquiry, Children’s Society, 2008).

However, despite its widespread use, there is very little consensus regarding what actually constitutes ‘wellbeing’ or how it can be fostered. It is often used interchangeably with notions of ‘happiness’ and ‘positive emotions’. Weare (2010: 6/7) observes that the attractiveness of the term “emotional wellbeing” rests on the possibility that “it can remove some of the anxieties aroused by the term ‘mental health’...and help it lose some of its medicalised and negative connotations”. She suggests that since it is a “generic, broad and all-encompassing term” it is acceptable to (and can therefore potentially bring together) a diverse constituency of stakeholders from education, health and social care contexts. However, she also acknowledges that the term is “rather soft, vague and woolly, and often needs defining more closely to be of practical use”.

Psychotherapeutic education – an exercise in the governance of souls?

The claim that the development of psychotherapeutic education programmes offers a more progressive, benign approach to children and young people’s mental health and emotional wellbeing clearly warrants critical scrutiny. Regardless of the apparent shift away from the traditional medical model, a closer examination reveals that psychotherapeutic education programmes are still underpinned by a positivistic methodology where it is assumed that the constituents of ‘mental health’, ‘emotional intelligence/literacy’ or ‘emotional wellbeing’ can be reduced to discrete elements that
are easily identifiable, measureable and subsequently capable of being developed or rectified. In this sense, they remain grounded in a construction of the child as passive ‘human becoming’ to be ‘acted upon’ by adults, failing to recognise that children are socially-situated ‘beings’ where the relationship between the child and the social, political and cultural contexts of their lives is transactional. Positive mental health is rooted in the relational, contradicting the notion that it can be mechanistically ‘taught’ or ‘built’ through the use of ‘toolkits’ (Bragg, 2007; Harris, 2008); however, such a model of mental health may be less popular since it is subjective, therefore ‘messy’. In addition, the assumption that a shift in emphasis from identifying and responding to emotional and behavioural ‘problems’ in children and young people towards promoting their ‘emotional wellbeing’ constitutes a more positive and less oppressive approach may prove to be naïve, over-optimistic and ultimately misleading, obscuring the more subtle ways in which adult power is exerted over children. The power and authority of ‘psy’ discourse is not diminished by the simple act of reframing of ‘mental health’ as ‘emotional wellbeing’. Indeed, given the imprecision surrounding the term ‘wellbeing’, it is possible that even more children and young people will become enveloped in the ‘therapeutic’ enterprise, with all that implies in terms of surveillance, regulation and control of their lives.

Foucault’s writings on governmentality provide a useful tool by which the latent meanings within contemporary discourses of psychotherapeutic education can be opened up for critical analysis. ‘Governmentality’, conceptualised as “the conduct of conduct” or “government at a distance” (Rose, 1999: xxii), refers to the contact between the technologies of power and the technologies of the self,

“which permit individuals to effect by their own means or with the help of others a certain number of operations on their own bodies and souls, thoughts, conduct and way of being, so as to transform themselves in order to attain a certain state of happiness, wisdom, perfection, or immortality” (Foucault, 1988:18).

This process is well-illustrated in an Early Years Social and Emotional Aspects of Development/Learning document (England) (DCSF, 2008) which instructs that “providers must ensure support for children’s emotional well-being to help them know themselves” (my emphasis). If we assume that psychotherapeutic education is intrinsically benign as a ‘liberating’ discourse and practice then there is ostensibly no difficulty. However, when we reinterpret the inculcation to help children to “know themselves” using the concept of governmentality, then that benevolence is problematised, revealing its potency as a form of social control of the lives of young children.

In similar vein, Rose locates psychotherapeutics “within a genealogy of political technologies of individuality” (1999: 221), emphasising the role of ‘psy’ discourse and expertise in constructing governable subjects in ways that are compatible with the principles of liberalism and democracy.
The shifting forms in which political power has come to bear upon subjects, and has sought to understand and govern them...the ways in which our authorities, in pursuing social objectives, have found it necessary and desirable to educate us in the techniques for governing ourselves (1999: 221).

Both Foucault and Rose emphasise the reflexive relationship between power and knowledge, alluding to the role of psychotherapeutic discourse and technologies in positioning children as objects of knowledge whereby their self-conduct can be fashioned in desired directions and their individual biographies shaped. As Rose comments, we all conduct our lives under the descriptions of ourselves that are produced via ‘psy’ knowledge and practices within a particular time and space – “the stories of the self that our culture makes available to us” (1999: xviii). However, a central attraction of their analyses is that they avoid any overly-simplistic or deterministic understanding of the operation of power since the concept of individualisation appears to open up the possibility of children’s agency. For example, Rose explains how within advanced liberalism,

these technologies for the government of the soul operate not through the crushing of subjectivity...but by seeking to align political, social and institutional goals with individual pleasures and desires, and with the happiness and fulfilment of self...They are, precisely, therapies of freedom (1999: 261).

Indeed, psychotherapeutic education is predicated on the assumption that its goals align with the aspirations of individual children as future adults – “the selves each of us want to be” (Rose, 1999: 217). The individual child is invited to ‘self-actualise’, however, this is always within the constraints of the image of the adult s/he is expected to become. In this sense, psychotherapeutic education is heavily implicated in securing future adult docile bodies (Foucault, 1979). Rose’s insights would suggest that it is precisely because the discourses of personal ‘health’ and ‘wellbeing’ within psychotherapeutic education are premised on the aspiration for self-knowledge and personal liberation that the ‘child’ is bound “to a subjection that is all the more profound” (1999: 260) since “the self that is liberated is obliged to live its life tied to the project of its own identity” (1999: 258).

**Psychotherapeutic education – managing the child as a ‘risky’ subject?**

The sense of anxiety that surrounds discourses of ‘childhood’ in general, and children’s mental health and emotional wellbeing in particular, is intimately related to broader processes of social change impacting on the nature of social relationships and how individuals experience the world. Social theorists and social commentators have identified how the overlapping and interrelated changes arising from the twin processes of globalisation and individualisation have disrupted traditional roles and relationships in society; undermining certainty, heightening risk and provoking
‘ontological insecurity’ (Beck, 1992; Garland, 2001; Giddens, 1991). The burgeoning focus on the ‘childhood problem’ can be understood as characteristic of the crisis of late modernity where the institution of ‘childhood’ itself is perceived to be ‘at risk’ as traditional certainties about its meaning and status are undermined. Reflecting on the media-fuelled moral panic that followed the publication of the Cambridge Review of Primary Education in England in 2007, Robin Alexander observes that it is most noticeably adults who are worried. He states,

what we may well be witnessing at the moment, therefore, is in part a justified concern about the condition of childhood today...and in part a projection onto children of adult fears and anxieties, not least about the kind of society and world which adults have created (2008: 5).

Similarly, Hendrick (2009: 20) suggests that “in a world of ontological insecurity, social anxiety and emotional disarray, governing children is made to seem preferable to feeling at the mercy of unseen and impenetrable forces: risk in all its manifest forms”.

In this sense, the emergence and rapid growth of psychotherapeutic education may be understood as an adaptive response to significant political issues and concerns of the early twenty-first century; namely the management of ‘risky’ childhoods. This is epitomised in the persistence of discourses, both lay and official, that pathologise children and young people as ‘vulnerable’, ‘at risk’, emotionally damaged and in need of therapeutic help as opposed to strong, creative and resilient (Ecclestone & Hayes, 2008; Shucksmith, 2008).

While State policies and professional practices directed at children have always had the scope for oppressive social control, unprecedented structural changes characteristic of late modern neo-liberal States have intensified the governance of children and young people’s lives and in turn the scope for inhibiting their agency. Hendrick (2009) notes how early intervention and surveillance have come to characterise the neo-liberal ‘disciplinary state’. The obsession with controlling ‘risky’ childhoods has shifted the emphasis from a focus on ‘problems’ to a focus on the prevention of potential ‘problems’; promoting the dispersal of discipline through the ‘universal’ approach to child welfare. The development of psychotherapeutic education is clearly indicative of this trend. Moreover, as Morrow and Mayall (2009: 219) observe, the State “tends to value children in terms of future human capital (becoming) over the present (being)”. Thus investment in the governance and ‘disciplining’ of children is considered essential for securing the adult citizen-workers of the future:

advanced liberalism...believes that the ‘crisis’ of late modernity since the 1960s has so ruptured ‘traditional’ socialisation that it needs to be redesigned along with a restructuring of the processes of internalisation...‘discipline’ and ‘social investment’ are held to be the necessary means whereby children can be instructed in how to make themselves (whilst also being made) appropriately in the present, and in so doing learn to govern their own souls...as adults in the future (Hendrick, 2009: 24-25).
This theme is evident in a recent policy document published by the European Commission which talks up the child and young person’s ‘right’ to good mental health and the central role of education in achieving it, but clearly aligns this aspiration with the interests of neo-liberalism:

The European economy will require highly skilled labour in future decades, yet many children still leave education without complete secondary education qualifications. The attainment of general skills, educational qualifications, and gainful and productive employment thereafter are facilitated by good mental health (Jane-Llopis and Braddock, 2008: 9).

The legitimation and intensification of surveillance practices has also been bolstered through the language of children’s rights and social inclusion (Hendrick, 2009; Parton, 2006). Children’s rights discourses blossomed following the introduction of the UNCRC (UN, 1989). In particular, much was made of the obligation placed on its signatories to ascertain the views of children and young people in a variety of contexts (derived within article 12 of the Convention). This led to a strong emphasis in policy documentation on the idea of ‘listening to children’s voices’, premised on the fundamental principle of ‘participation’. However, while the rhetorical commitment to children and young people’s right to ‘be heard’ and ‘participate’ may be strong, this is not always evidenced in day to day practice. The rhetoric/reality divide between rights in discourse and rights in practice is indicative of the failure to acknowledge the persistence of those structures of power that lie at the heart of adult-child relations. Rose (1986) argues that rights-based strategies do not, of themselves, transform the relations of dominance between professionals and those subject to them since oppressive systems are capable of skilfully hijacking the language of rights to convey a powerful illusion of inclusivity, participation and empowerment.

In the context of mental health and emotional wellbeing in schools, evidence suggests that adults continue to exclude the views of children and young people and treat them as passive objects rather than active social agents. On the rare occasions that children are asked what they consider important in relation to their mental health and emotional wellbeing and who they trust with their emotional lives, their views are often at variance with adult-centred thinking (Hallett et al., 2003; Newman, 2004; Rothi & Leavey, 2006; Sargeant, 2010). Significantly, children and young people frequently report the school as a source of emotional distress rather than a context for emotional ‘growth’ and support, undermining the uncritical assumption that schools should be at the forefront of developments in policy and practice (Rothi & Leavey, 2006; Spratt et al., 2006; The Children’s Society, 2007; Young Minds, 2007). Some recent studies have begun to advocate for the ‘co-construction’ of an understanding of children’s social and emotional learning in educational contexts, acknowledging that “professional advocacy is not a sufficient vehicle for the minoritarian voices of children and young people to be brought to visibility” (Watson & Emery, 2010: 780). Similarly Harris (2008: 378/9) advocates for the development of co-creative, dialogistic relationships between children.
and teachers where “student voice’ is an end in itself rather than a tool of school improvement”. She illustrates how children and young people benefit from experiencing autonomy, agency and democracy in action and makes the case for “re-establishing schools as humane centres of inclusive people development” (p367). However, such perspectives are themselves ‘minoritarian’ and it remains to be seen whether the scope for challenge and change can move beyond rhetoric towards reality.

**Conclusion**

This article has critically examined the complex relationship between official policy discourse and practice developments in psychotherapeutic education and their implications for the lives of children and young people. It has sought to demonstrate how what might ostensibly appear to be benign interventions can, without critical analysis, obscure the operation of adult, professional power in constructing children and young people as ‘human becomings’, thereby constraining their agency. In so doing, it has revealed the ways in which school-based psychotherapeutic education programmes constitute technologies of the self that extend the scope and reach of the late modern neo-liberal disciplinary state in the governance of children and young people both as ‘risky’ subjects and as social investment for the future. The post-structural analyses of Foucault and Rose provide a means of disturbing taken-for-granted assumptions and opening up what is hidden in conventional accounts of policy developments in psychotherapeutic education. Moreover, their theoretical and methodological contributions facilitate an analysis of the ways in which, during periods of historical ‘flux’, sites of control (such as educational institutions) are subjected to new mechanisms and technologies to facilitate adaptation and transition.

Contemporary developments in psychotherapeutic education, rather than embracing ways in which the voices of children can emerge, be heard and responded to, may in effect do no more than serve to reorganise and consolidate adult/professional hegemony, contributing to the long history of policy and practice in this field which has served to strengthen adult control. In the final analysis, such developments may offer very little in the way of agency for children and young people. The invitation extended to the child to ‘make themselves’ is always constrained by the image of the future adult they are expected to become – the image that present adults create for them, making the promise of personal liberation no more than an illusion. As Bauman (reflecting on identity) observes, “asking ‘who you are’ makes sense to you only once you believe that you can be someone other than you are; only if you have a choice...” (2004: 19).

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