**The 2014 Special Educational Needs and Disability Code of Practice. Old ideology into new policy contexts?**

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This article reveals the Foucauldian docile body manufactured within the Department for Education’s Special Educational Needs and Disability Code of Practice 2014 (SEND CoP) (DfE, 2014) through employment of a theoretical lens of embodiment and an analytical focus on only three words. In problematizing the concepts of support, employment and independence, we seek to upend this docile body juxtaposing such against the active ‘non-productive’ disabled body. We conclude that the Code is riven with ideological assumptions which act as a constraint to the location, form and function of the body.  Everybody’s body is sorted and graded according to its ability to fulfil a Conservative work ethic and contribute positively to a society in which bodies are not equally valued. The authors suggest that critical discourse analysis, informed by the outlined conceptualisation of embodiment, could be usefully applied in the critiquing of many policy and guidance documents.

**Introduction**

In 2010 the then leader of the opposition in the U.K. parliament, David Cameron, announced that a fundamental change in the education for children labelled as having special educational needs and/or disabilities (SEND) was needed. Cameron believed that inclusion should no longer be the sole object of either educational policy or provision in our schools. Some four years later, on the 13th of March 2014, the Coalition government, led by David Cameron, received Royal Assent for its ‘landmark’ Children’s and Families Act. The Government stated that this legislation and its associated SEND CoP would offer greater protection and support for children. In addition, Cameron detailed that ideology would no longer dominate policy and that, therefore, educational provision would no longer be dominated by inclusive ideology.

In this article we want to analyse, problematize, explore and rematerialize this policy by examining its SEND CoP through the lens of a queer phenomenological approach to embodiment. We aim to interrogate and explore the ‘bodypolitics’ which are contained within this educational policy. Like Gale & Molla (2015) we believe this policy, like all government policies, cannot be read simply. It is multi-layered and in its folds, contours, cracks and crevices it contains, constrains and constructs privilege as well as dispossession through (re) enforcing marginality and exclusion. Contra Cameron, it seems, we suggest policies do not exist in a social vacuum but are always undergirded by ideology, assumptions, values and misrepresentations (Armstrong, 2000). Educational policies, we suggest, colonise practice with an over coding machine (see Hodkinson, 2013; Deleuze & Guattari, 1987) that collapses and closes down a ‘multitude of oscillations’ (Chiesa, 2009, p. 24) so bringing ‘homogeneity to the heterogeneous’ (Golberg, 2000, p. 84). Like Giroux (1993), we maintain that policies construct and re-construct master narratives by a sanctification of the dominant discourse. As such they are ‘linguistically, deployed panoptic technologies of power’ (Liasidou, 2008, p. 408) which concretalise ‘declarations of desirability’ (Gale & Molla, 2015).

To us, then, policy is taken to mean a ‘calculated deployment of techniques and artefacts to organise human forces and capabilities into functioning networks of power’ (Ball, 2003, p. 215). These ‘essential techniques’, as Foucault proposes in his book, *Discipline and Punish*, work to produce ‘subjected and practiced bodies, “docile bodies”’ (Foucault, 1991, p. 138). More specifically, Foucault outlines three techniques: *the art of distribution, the control of activity, and the organisation of geneses* in an attempt to articulate disciplinary techniques of the body. Foucault (1977) proposes that these techniques operate, in a number of institutions, prisons, asylums and schools alike as a matter of regulation, classification, and control. These techniques, according to Markula & Pringle (2006, p. 41), are concerned with ‘controlling the location of individuals and the production of work- via manipulation of space or architecture, theorganisation of time (e.g. rigid timetables) and the use of graduated, repetitive and systematised “exercises” to help produce docile but productive bodies’. Subject to such techniques, then, the body is ‘manipulated, shaped, [and] trained’, it ‘obeys, responds, becomes skilful and increases its forces’ (Foucault, 1977. P. 136). If one applies this premise to the Children and Families Act (DfE, 2014) and its SEND CoP, they function as master narratives which solidify a story that has spatial, temporal and historical dimensions. That is, this policy deploys the aforementioned techniques as an operation of disciplinary power, a means of distant yet highly regulated control. Within such narratives ‘linguistic predilections of single words [become] purveyors of subjugation’ (Liasidou, 2008, p. 488) and prescriptions of docility. Following Allan (2007), we recognise the political nature of language and how, in Foucauldian terms, policies work to fix ‘contemporaneous biopolitics [and] the politics of life itself’ (Done *et. al*, 2015, p. 867). In exploring these disciplinary relations of power, as they are deployed within the SEND CoP, we seek to bring forth a discussion space; believing that ‘where there is power, there is resistance’ (Foucault, 1990, p. 95).

This article aims to ‘focus on exploration of the use of language [and] the power of language’ through the employment of critical discourse analysis (CDA) as it is through the language of policy that the education of all our children is constructed (Runswick-Cole & Hodge, 2009, p. 198). We draw out the ways in which the 2014 SEND CoP details a political investment of the body (Foucault, 1991) by revealing the discursive ‘capitalisation of flesh’ that attempts to orientate the body into ‘a phenomenon that could be utilised, altered and developed, to best serve the economic interests of the state’ (Campbell, 2013, p. 28, 24). That is, we focus on how a master narrative of disability works to carve the flows and edges of the disabled body in order to fit with the Conservative work ethic. What we delineate is the resistance of disabled bodies as they push against this ‘bodypolitics’ thus creating opportunities for emancipation (Goodley & Runswick-Cole, 2013).

**SEN and disability policy**

The developments and regressions of SEND policy are chaotically sketched, detailing a journey that has no definitive beginning or end. Like all education policy, the aims and aspirations for SEND provision is subject to the volatility of political ideology as it responds to the needs and demands of a modern world (Furlong, 2013).

 However, when SEND policy is levied against competing ideologies and imagined within medicalized political responses, its rhizomatic development is halted, supplanted by a system of categorization (See Deleuze & Guattari, 1987). As a culture, it is perhaps comforting to buy into the belief that our education system has moved far beyond the exclusion of children based upon the categories of ‘educationally sub-normal’ and ‘maladjusted’ (See Hodkinson, 2016a). However, there is a wealth of literature suggesting that the progression of educational provision is not as advanced as we like to think (See Armstrong, 2005; Penketh, 2014; Runswick-Cole, 2011). While these specific labels no longer exist in educational discourse, we now have a system built upon the categorisation of ‘special educational needs’. For many, this linguistic replacement continues a structure of education that locates difficulty and deficit within the individual (Slee, 2001; Vlachou, 2004). Moreover, the expression of SEN is argued to have taken on the negative assumptions (Norwich, 2012) that were prominent in its ancestral discourses. Now broken down into the areas of ‘communication and interaction’, ‘cognition and learning’, ‘social, emotional and mental health difficulties (SEMH)’, and ‘sensory and/or physical needs’, such categorization is inherently problematic. According to Penketh (2014, p. 1488), these categories ‘give little to inspire teachers to celebrate diversity with children described via paragraphs of deficit’ and bring into to question how effectively ‘radical’ the coalition’s education policy really is.

In addition to a system based upon individual deficit, misdirected conceptions of inclusion have resulted in a highly segregated education system, simply coated under the rhetorical guise of inclusive practice. Since the election of a New Labour government in 1997, inclusion has become part of an education agenda towards equality and opportunity (Armstrong, 2005), most notably associated with the inclusion of children labelled with SEND in the mainstream classroom (See DfEE, 1998; DfES, 2001a). For Bines (2000), while this political shift was a welcome development, it was burdened by traditional assumptions of deficit in addition to raising conflicts in New Labour’s education agenda. Alongside inclusion, New Labour committed to a series of education policies they intended would create a ‘Britain equipped to prosper in a global economy of technological changes’ (Labour Party, 1997, p. 3) via the transformation of Britain’s knowledge and skills (DfES, 2001). For Smithers (2001), New Labour’s commitment to make inclusion a twin goal alongside competition in education was a credulous attempt, and swiftly undermined any commitment to inclusive educational provision (Ainscow *et al*, 2006; Hodkinson, 2010). As explained by Runswick-Cole (2011), New Labour’s agenda for inclusion very quickly perished under the strains and pressures of the standards agenda. Since David Cameron’s call to ‘prevent the unnecessary closure of special schools and remove the bias towards inclusion’ (HM Government, 2010, p. 29) this conflict has been further diminished and a practical and discursive move away from inclusion confirmed. We may therefore be sceptical of claims that ‘the most vulnerable children deserve the very highest quality of care’ (HM Government, 2010, p. 29) when such a claim is positioned within an educational climate devoted to changing the individual, not the damaged system.

The 2014 Children and Families Act legislated, in their words, to ‘improve services for vulnerable children and to support strong families’ (DfE, 2014, p. 1). The legislation’s central aim was to ‘underpin wider reforms to ensure that all children and young people can succeed, no matter what their background’ (DfE, 2014, p. 1). Coupled with this legislation, a revised SEND CoP provided statutory guidance of how the duties, policies and procedures contained in Part 3 of the Children and Families Bill should be operationalised. The Code’s guiding principle was an ‘increased expectation of effective partnerships with parents’ (DfE, 2014, p. 67) and that the views, wishes and feelings of the child and their parents were taken into account. Speaking in relation to these new measures, Timpson, the Children’s minister, stated: ‘It’s a radical overhaul that breaks down artificial barriers, and that champions children with SEN as never before from birth right through to adulthood’ (see Hodkinson, 2016a). Whilst Cameron determined that policy and provision should, quite rightly, not be driven by ideology we argue that in championing ‘children with SEN as never before’ this government had returned to an entrenched Conservative ideology. This master narrative had implications for what was observed to be ‘body perfect’ and was one we believe attempted to embody the disabled body within an ideological constraint.

If history teaches us anything about SEN and disability policy it is that it is always complex and it centres on entrenched societal views which ‘compare, contrast and normalise children’ (Liasidou, 2008, p. 488). Education policy, we suggest, has become inculcated with a master narrative of disability that is premised upon medicalised characterisations of individual deficit and hierarchical categorisation (Arduin, 2015). It is this master narrative we seek to explore and problematise within SEND CoP as it possible that this policy has likewise been, ‘susceptible to the normalising technologies of power’ (Liasidou, 2008, p. 488). We, though, do not necessarily take such normalisation as wholly negative. Rather, we accept Ball’s premise that policy solidifies ‘meanings, values and assumptions’ of those who hold power (Ball, 2003, p. 215). Policies, therefore, are not ‘simple instruments’ but usefully offer frames of reference for questions of who we, as the subjects of policy narrative, are or what *They*, the narrators of policy, would like us to become (Dean, 1995, p. 581). Like Pels (1997, p. 168), we want to ‘better understand the relevant context of specific utterings and symbols’. By analysing and ‘ironizing these master narratives’ (Funari *et. al.,* 1999, p. 17) we want to reveal conceptual incongruities, linguistic traps and how the dynamics of these work within the classical economy of language, representation and institutional structure (Liadisou, 2008).In our ironicising of master narratives we ground our analysis, therefore, on the active formulation of identity thereby focuses surveillance back onto the, “dominant groups sense of ‘self’” (see Chapman, 1989, p. 19). As such, we attempt to develop alternate means of exploring the identity construction of marginalized groups**.** We examine policy, therefore, through its dominant discourse and interrogate how their codification selects and constructs some children as the Other (Giroux, 1993). To put it simply, we seek to ‘focus surveillance [back] onto the dominant groups sense of self’ and reveal their notions of what body ‘types’ educational systems should produce for the future ‘good’ of society (Chapman *et. al*., 1989, p. 19). As these ideological brandings scold and sculpt docile bodies, the disabled body, we suggest, becomes a site of possible resistance.

**Embodiment**

Within westernised industrialised societies, everybody, indeed everybody’s body, is manufactured within and orientated (Ahmed, 2006) by, varying but distinct regimes (Foucault, 1971). The catalyst to such processes may be defined by power and its relationship to the individual’s body, its orientation and it extension into a given space (Ahmed, 2006). It is argued, following Foucault (1971 & 1978) that such power is woven into every individual inserting ‘itself into actions, attitudes, discourses, learning processes and everyday lives’ (Foucault 1978, p. 31). For Gramsci (1971) and Marx & Engels (1968), power in such processes should be read simply as capitalism - capitalist relations of production which seek to produce a docile labouring and controlled body. A body whose ‘social skin’ (Low, 2003, p. 70) is a surface upon which society impresses its bigotry, stereotypes, ideologies, values and assumptions thereby reshaping it (Ahmed, 2006). The body then becomes an ‘intellectual text’ in which we might read the ‘ideological assumptions of social systems’ (Meekosha, 1998, p. 122). Reading of these ‘lived through experiences’ and meanings (Iwakuma, 2002, p. 78) brings us to the place of a socially constructed embodied space (Ahmed, 2006). In this space, the body is reformed as an object of intellectual inquiry (Iwakuma, 2002). Here its surface, its skin, becomes a frontier, a mirror (see Hodkinson, 2016b) to society, reflecting a contested boundary between the *Them*, the *They* and *Their* representations of the Other. In such spaces bodies acquire orientations, they are ‘gendered, sexualised… raced’ and disabled (Ahmed, 2006, p.5). Within such border disputes queer phenomenology offers a useful definition and operationalisation of the concept of embodiment. In summary, Ahmed (2006, p. 17) details that embodied space contain social pressures that forces bodies ‘to follow a certain course, to live a certain kind of life’. From this perspective, embodiment becomes a repetitive straightening device which orientates and lines bodies up to “taken for granted” social conventions. Such orientation, though, is not neutral but rather is driven by ‘political requirements that [bodies] turn in some ways rather than others’ (Ahmed, 2006, p. 12). In our employment of embodiment, therefore, we are mindful, of queer phenomenology as well as Giddens (1991, p. 40) perspective that individuals also protect their own ‘ontological security’. Bodies are not always rendered as ‘passive entities upon which power brands its own images’ (Meekosha, 1998, p. 172). Indeed, we wish to argue against such simplistic formulations which pitch docile bodies against ‘disabled’ bodies, inscribing them as ‘without agency’. To this end we also find utility in Low’s (2000, p. 70) definition of embodied space. Here space is occupied by a body that has ‘perceptions and experiences . . . [which] contract and expand in relationships [between] a person’s emotion and state of mind [and] sense of self, social relations and cultural predispositions’. Through the employment of embodied space, in this form, we seek to demonstrate how policies such as the SEND CoP re awakens age old controversies between ‘productive’ and ‘non-productive’ bodies (Mitchell & Synder, 2015) and how such past histories make surface impressions on the social construction of the ‘disabled body’ (Ahmed, 2006). Such constructions, then, are not innocent as they seek to make bodies ‘available as resources to be used’ (Ahmed, 2006, p. 118). We wish to analyse how shifts in policy discourse appear to sanction the creation of a perfect body; a docile compliant and productive body, and thereby diminish the location and rights of some ‘disabled bodies’. By first revealing and then problematizing such ablest discourses we wish to highlight unresolved issues which constitute the boundary between the *Them*, the *They* and the Other. The question we ask, therefore, is what sort of body do *They* wish to create and how, if at all, does the disabled body- an active, beautiful and powerful body fit with the manufactured docile and seemingly powerless body exemplified by technological, capitalist and commodified societies? The ‘disabled body’ we employ here then, is not individualised in terms of impairment, age, ethnicity or gender but rather refers to a body which is not constrained by the mould of the master narrative.

**Methods**

In this paper we employ critical discourse analysis (CDA) to analyse and explore the political and contextual messages and values hidden beneath the fabrications contained in SEND CoP (Fairclough, 2013; Rogers, 2004; Taylor, 2004). CDA is an interrogative, problem-oriented and interdisciplinary method that offers a space for a systematic critical analysis which examines how ‘language *works* within [the] power relations’ of policy discourse (Taylor, 2004, p. 436). Moving beyond a description of linguistic structure and towards an exploration and problematization of the power relations inherent to specific discourse (Fairlcough, 1992), CDA focuses on the dialectical relationship between discourse, society and culture (Fairclough & Wodak, 1997). Our starting point, then, is an exploration and problematization, through the lens of embodiment, which we suggest may reveal the entrenched control, judgement and regulation of populations hidden within this policy (Ball, 2012). By employing CDA to tease out linguistic entrapments we seek to draw out the use and abuse of power that may reside within this policy discourse (Grue, 2015; Van Dijk, 1995). We seek to problematize education policy, suggesting it, ‘has become the instrument through which knowledgeable experts manage the lives of disabled people’ (Slee, 2001, p. 389). We argue that policy steers the behaviour and actions of those that it oversees (Razvi & Lingard, 2010) so that subjected bodies are but a constructed existence of *being;* inhabiting an agonistic space between the discursive and non-discursive (Kendall, 2011). We aim to break through the textual surface of this policy and dismantle the intersectional tensions that *They* attempt to disguise. In so doing we will, through the specific themes of support, independence and employment, seek to explore and problematize the symbolic orientation of bodies that places disability and productivity as dichotomous beings. We seek, therefore, to reconceptualise what types of bodies the Code is striving to create, and open up a space for discussion as to the ways in which disabled bodies are able to actively resist such strict impositions of docility and subservience.

This article, therefore, focuses on making visible and problematizing the marginalizing processes implicit in policy production, particularly in relation to the hidden forms of discrimination and exclusion that operationalise SEN within the applied educational setting (Liasidou, 2012, p.9). However, we are mindful that CDA requires a sense of self-consciousness (Fairclough, 2015). It is important to state therefore that our positionality is inculcated within the field of disability studies. To be specific, both authors hold a commitment to the removal of disabling barriers in the education of children labelled with SEND, and share an interest in the developing arena of critical disability studies. Occupying a space within the broader field of disability studies, critical disability studies offers new perspectives and new possibilities for the development of effective education policy. The premise for this thinking, is that disability poses new ways of considering humanity, the self, and Other (Runswick-Cole, 2016) and can trouble and re-fashion normative notions of citizenship (Goodley & Runswick-Cole, 2016) outside of the constrained docile body that is the subject of master narratives. Thus, our reading of policy will be achieved through such theoretical and conceptual frameworks and the ideological standpoint which the developing field of critical disability studies offers. Hence, while this article must be read within the boundaries of its interpretative style, we specifically intend to challenge the assemblage of bodies that are produced, and indeed, not produced by this policy. We aim to do this by focusing our analysis on how just three words, ‘support, independence, and employment’, constitute a discourse and signify a relationship that manifests larger relations of power (Fairclough, 1992).

**Just three words . . .**

Our interpretative approach centred on three words during which our reading of the SEND CoP developed from ‘naïve understandings through quantitative structural analysis to comprehensive understandings’ (see Stoltz *et. al*., 2016). Our reading constantly moved between examined sections and the totality of the text itself. Our thoughts, therefore, moved from interrogation, through explanation to understanding. Our first read, ‘our naïve understandings’, identified key sections of text that we felt related to the principles laid out by SEND CoP. In our second ‘read’ we employed more quantitative methods through the employment of computer analytical software to highlight words that appeared to form the bedrock of the document in that they appeared consistently throughout the document. In the final phase we sought to form deeper meanings of the Code through the employment of critical discourse analysis of such words. This analysis sought to explore whether this policy had a master narrative, a message continually reinforced through dominating themes. In summary, we sought to analyse the SEND CoP to reveal the underpinning aspirations of this policy text, exploring how such aspirations are predicated upon the deployment of disciplinary techniques, which call for children labelled with SEND to engage with regulated, disciplined and controlled behaviour.

The words that held our analytical focus both in our first read and in the second more quantitative analysis were ‘support, independence and employment’. In our first exploration of the text it was apparent that these words appeared very early in the document and continually and consistently surfaced from the denseness of the text. For example, at the beginning of SEND CoP in the ministerial forward it states:

‘Children and young people . . . will be fully involved in decisions about their support and what they want to achieve. Importantly the aspirations for children and young people will be raised through an increased focus on life outcomes, including employment and greater independence.’ (DfE, 2014, p. 11)

Employment of analytic software confirmed the significance of the three words to this document. To be specific, support is employed 775 times and was one of the top ten words used by SEND CoP. Employment/work/ training was employed on 431 occasions and independence was detailed 122 times. Our discussion aims to demonstrate that whatever SEND CoP professes about listening to pupils and parent voices and working to fulfil their aspirations, an alternative narrative is hidden within the text. For example:

‘a local authority in England must have regard to the following matters in particular— (a) the views, wishes and feelings of the child and his or her parent, or the young person’ (DfE, 2014, p. 35)

This policy really aims to support children to develop bodies that are independent and capable of work. Note for example:

 ‘When agreeing the aspirations, consideration should be given to the child or young person’s aspirations for paid employment, independent living and community participation.’ (D*f*E, 2014, p. 164)

We perhaps should not be surprised by the control placed upon children’s aspirations by this government. Although the government claimed that special needs and disability provision should not be governed by ideology, we contend that the SEND CoP merely replaces one ideology, inclusion, with another centred upon employment and independence. An analysis of the last six Conservative party manifestos clearly reveals *Their* ideological stance:

*On independence . . .*

‘I believe strongly that you not the Government should be in charge of your life’ (1992)

‘Conservatives believe that a healthy society encourages people to accept responsibility for their own life’ (1997)

 ‘We will encourage people to take responsibility for themselves and their families’(2001)

 ‘a more engaged nation is one in which we take more responsibility for ourselves…’ (2015)

*And on employment . . .*

‘we have already brought the world of work and the world of schools into closer harmony’ (1992)

‘Although governments cannot create jobs they can help people train and find work’(1997)

‘The best way of helping unemployed people is to get them back to work as quickly as possible’ (2001)

 ‘we welcome people who want to work hard and make a positive contribution’ (2005)

 ‘A Conservative government will not accept another generation being consigned to an uncertain future of worklessness and dependency’ (2010)

 ‘And we will make our economy more inclusive by removing barriers that stop women and disabled people from participating in our workforce’ (2015)

It is with a certain irony that one reads the last quote from the 2015 Conservative Manifesto but it does rather highlight how the ideology of inclusion has literally been substituted by one that is Conservative in nature. Indeed, the Conservative’s own coining of independence presents an ‘uncritical assumptions about independence, such as the idea that disabled people should aspire to physical independence or self-reliance’ (Garabedian, 2014, p. 81). These manifesto statements therefore do little to acknowledge the value of interdependency that is held within the Independent Living Movement (Brisenden, 1986), they rather sing to the tune of responsibility that undergirds a system of ‘steering and regulating’ (Rose, 2000, p. 324).

**Support: a false promise and hidden deceit?**

Analysis of SEND CoP leaves one in no doubt that for this government ‘support’ is an important component of education of children labelled with SEND. A review of this support reveals that it is subject to conceptual confusion, bizarre usage and, whilst we are supposed to believe it is always positive, it does have a much darker side. The SEND CoP though is not alone in its (over) use of the word support. As Stolz *et. al.* (2006) maintain, support is not a concept in its infancy but is one that from the 1970s (Cohen & June, 1983) has observed its employment dramatically increased (Wordsworth, 2014). The question that surfaces here is what does support mean in general parlance and in the specificity of this policy?

Etymologically speaking support may be traced back to the Latin ‘*supportatre*’ from sub (below) and *portare* to carry (Oxford Dictionary, 2016). As a verb it arrived in the English language in the late 14th Century as ‘*to hold or prop up’* or from the old French ‘*to tolerate’* (Oxford Dictionary 2016). From the early 15th century its use expanded to become an act of assistance, or of giving aid. Of interest is that from the early 1950s in general parlance it became a concept in which a service ‘*enabled something to fulfil its function and remain in operation*’ (Oxford Dictionary). Whatever may be said about its origin it is clear that there is a current ‘craze’, ‘urge’ and ‘need’ to support ‘people to do something’ or support people ‘into something’ (Wordsworth, 2014). Support, then, is a word that like ‘President Putin or the late Furher is expanding its empire’ (Wordsworth, 2014) and is one that is frequently employed in family care-giving literature (Stolz *et. al.,* 2006). Although we are all born into this ‘world of support’ and as Wordsworth (2014) states whilst we might ‘expect support from sports bras’ there is a difference between this support and that which is ‘a notional asset’. Our analysis starts with the premise that we cannot take support in SEND CoP literally but that we must make sense of its syntactical wranglings (Berkley, 2010) as a normalising technique that employs a double system of gratification and punishment (Markula & Pringle, 2006). As we exemplify below, in terms of the employment of support, SEND CoP simultaneously approves and punishes. It becomes a tool of discipline as children labelled with SEND are expected to regulate their bodies according to their desire to be supported.

Support is introduced early in SEND CoP, indeed, it forms part of its title and apparently it is ‘Early Support [which] supports the delivery . . . of services for disabled children’ (DfE, 2014, p. 82). Furthermore, support lies upon a graduated continuum in that whilst some children will require ‘Additional support’ (p. 67), others will have ‘significant needs for support’ (p. 72) and some will encounter ‘specialised longer term support’ (p. 67) provided by ‘specialised support services’. Interestingly, we are told for children to ‘participate in decisions about their support’ (p. 21) they will need support to do so. If things go wrong with their support they may also need support from Independent Supporters (DfE, 2014). Moreover, children could be supported by ‘supported employment services’ (p. 73), ‘supported internship, or have support to set up their own businesses’ (p. 125), ‘housing support or careers or advice support’ (p. 134). Children must have support, it seems, to develop ‘supported relationships’ that prepare them effectively for adulthood (p. 28). However, whatever the support needed it must be ‘evidenced based’ (p. 115) and SEND CoP assures us that with the ‘right support’ and ‘advice and support’ or ‘planning and support’ ‘enormous benefits will be brought to individual children’ (p. 123). According to the National Audit Office, quoted in the document, if support is effective and avoids people living in ‘fully supported housing’ and reduces ‘life time support costs,’ we can as a nation save around one million pounds per ‘supported’ person. It does seem rather that SEND CoP encourages professionals to support children so that long term support costs can be reduced. Support in this context then becomes a law of diminishing returns that attends to the organisation of geneses that attempts to regulate time, bodies and forces (Foucault, 1978). The more *They* give the more *They* aim to take away.

What SEND CoP also reveals is that, whilst support is articulated as positive, it also has a much darker side; a side perhaps veiled in neoliberalism, normalcy and the biopolitics of the Victorian work ethic. For example, as early as page 24 SEND CoP details that support is only positive if it is of the ‘right kind’. The right kind is that which has the outcomes of ‘getting a job, living independently as possible’ (DfE, 2014, p. 24) and that which prepares children ‘effectively for adulthood’ (DfE, 2014, p. 19). Support, we are told, must be ‘family centred’ and should ‘consider the individual family needs’ (DfE, 2014, p. 85). However, SEND CoP advises professionals that children from the earliest of ages needing support must be prepared for adulthood. Whilst children are encouraged to share their aspirations for their future, these must be agreed before support can be put in place. This agreement might only be given if they have considered ‘paid employment, independent living or community participation’ (DfE, 2014, p. 14). Children then might have a dream of what their future might hold but even their dreams are constrained by Conservative work ideology. Professionals therefore become the jailers to children’s aspirations, reforming them to ensure that all make a positive contribution to society (DfE, 2014). Support, then, in this law of diminishing returns cannot be family centred or based entirely on individual needs. Dreams controlled, Orwellian fashion, are surveilled by an over coding machine powered by a Victorian work ethic set to produce docile, normalised units of production. Support here is constrained, curtailed and limited in its outlook and as a master narrative it serves only one Master. Support then is inculcated in docile servitude; managed, reduced and controlled in an organised time-space. But what about those children whose bodies do not, or cannot, fit the Master’s normalising mould?

For children given the label of SEMH, support becomes altogether much darker. Lexically, metaphorically and literally it is rendered down to ‘holding or propping up, or being carried out’. As the children are psychically held down so the regime is also propped up and supported. Support here then is not a symbiotic relationship, but a gruelling response to the body that does not assist in the control of activity. To be specific, SEND CoP details ‘clear processes to support children and how to manage children’s disruptive behaviours so they do not adversely affect other pupils’ education’ (DfE, 2014). If a child has an ‘outburst’ in class they may need support from a ‘key helper’ (DfE, 2014, p. 171). It is interesting here how support transmutes itself as the workers’ designation changes. This ‘helper’ will support the removal of the child from the class or engage in ‘positive handling techniques’ to ‘prevent injury …. or damage to property (DfE 2014, p. 176). Support/ help here perhaps does not serve the individual but a ‘greater good’ of conformity, servitude and normalcy. In effect, you may have our support but if you disturb normality you will be supported to be excluded. In this incarnation, support might be considered as nothing less than common assault. This control of the individual through ‘positive support’ is also further highlighted, without irony, later in the document. On page 184, whilst support is detailed as promoting liberty, it is also there ‘where appropriate’ to ‘set out restraint procedures’. How is it possible that ‘liberty’ and ‘restraint’ can be coupled together in the same sentence? It becomes plain what SEND CoP intends to achieve for children labelled with SEND through support and help. In this law of diminishing returns there is a hidden deceit, a false promise that support will be supportive of the child.

By casting our gaze outside of the current legislation we solidify our argument- an argument that questions the positivity of support or indeed that it is a ‘magic bullet’ (Cohen & Syme, 1985, p. 9). Like Cohen & Syme (1985, p. 9) we wish to problematize such positivity, deeming it to be ‘more an illusion than a reality’. Whilst everyone in their lives utilises the support of others, children labelled as having SEND are more likely to have support thrust on them (Cohen & Syme, 1985). This support though can be negative leading to segregation (Lord & Hutchinson, 2003) and perceptions that the supported is incompetent. Support is also always defined within power relations and traditions of practice which serve to delimit (Clough, 1991). Moreover, support can be unresponsive, disrespectful and destructive in terms of cultural diversity (see Ratamae *et.al.,* 1995). Furthermore, throughout history but especially in the present (as we shall evidence later) punitive reduction or removal of support has often been over painted with the rhetoric of independence and empowerment (Manzurul, 2009).

So we call into question the positivity of support for all children labelled as having SEND (Webster *et. al.,* 2010). Interestingly, Webster *et. al.* (2010) suggest that whilst SEND support has a positive influence on teacher stress and workload there appears to be little evidence that it has any significant influence on academic progress (see also Mahmoud & Farrell 2003; Humphry & Symes, 2011). Indeed, support in some instances actually leads to less direct support from the classroom teacher.

SEND CoP, then, contains a hidden deceit and a false promise of positivity. Support here is not supportive of liberty and independence nor of dreams and aspirations of an individualised future. It is about ensuring Foucauldian conformity and servitude to the ideology of employment and of making a positive contribution to society. The docile body here is cast in a mould of productivity and conformity and then cast out to work and to make a positive contribution by being employable. The disabled body, in contrast, troubles this casting, and as such, does not fit the mould. Rather, it refutes the normalizing master narrative and instead opens up possibilities of resistance (Goodley, 2007).

*Independence and employment*

Accountable then to a Conservative government, SEND CoP is ideologically saturated by the values, assumptions and expectations of the economy that resonate with the production of docile and productive bodies that abide by the demands of independence, independent living and to employment. By unravelling the discursive veil of ‘independent living’ we wish to show how this politically imagined configuration of the body rejects the humanness of dependence in favour of the mythical existence of the independent body. That is, a political commitment to independence actually provides no more than a safety net for people that are deemed unable to meet a normative set of needs (Shipley & Upton, 1992, cited in Lawrence, 2009). Employability becomes the straightjacket, a normalising technique that appeals to the conditions of neoliberal citizenship (Lakes, 2011), as work is ‘promoted ideologically as a fundamentally good thing’ (Bambra, 2011, p. 4) for all children to aspire to.

For example, SEND CoP details that ‘being supported toward greater independence and employability can be life-transforming for children and young people with SEN’ (DfE, 2014, p. 122). Like Elder-Woodward (2013), we do not oppose the philosophy of and right to independence and to employment; however, we critically contest the framing of such within the discourse of the Code. Recurrently, independence and employability is contextualised through a normative framework that accords with the preparation and/or successful transition to adulthood. According to the Code, the preparation for successful life outcomes include;

* Higher education and/or employment- this includes **exploring different employment options**,
* Independent living- this means young people **having choice, control and freedom** over their lives and the support they have, their accommodation and living arrangements,
* Participation in society, including having friends and supportive relationships, and participating in and **contributing to the local community**

 (D*f*E, 2014, p. 122; *emphasis added*)

Considering the definition of ‘independent living’ only, SEND CoP resonates with an understanding at the heart of the Independent Living Movement. Within this movement, ‘we do not use the term “independent” to mean someone who can do everything for themselves, but to indicate someone who has taken control of their life and is choosing how that life is led’ (Brisenden, 1986, p. 178). Grounded in a history of struggles and activism, the fight for independent living was integral to the disabled people’s movement which demanded an innovative policy response (Barnes & Mercer, 2005). However, as this trajectory of independence entered the political world, a new master narrative for independent living emerged; bound to the normative expectations of adulthood within the boundaries of ableism. As stated in SEND CoP, independence entails the assumption that all disabled people will take full control of ‘their health, where they will live, their relationships, control their finances, how they will participate in the community and achieve greater independence’ (DfE, 2014, p. 21). Reduced to a normative expectation, this framework assumes that all ‘disabled people want to be self-reliant without help; or that we did not wish to be dependent or to rely on other people; or that we wanted to think and do things for ourselves’ (Davis, 1984, cited in Morris, 2011). Thus, to dismantle the surrounding framework, the political undertone of independent living is misunderstood at best, if not a corrupt expression of neoliberal intentions to mould a population of docile and self-reliant workers.

As a recurrent theme throughout SEND CoP, independent living and employability is entrenched by political concerns toward wider financial instability. For the policy, ‘the best possible educational and other outcomes’ is defined by the ability for ‘getting a job’ and ‘living as independently as possible’ (DfE, 2014, p. 24). Directed by a climate of austerity then, we suggest that educational policy plays a key role in the aim of shifting the welfare burden onto individuals (Yuang, 2014) as ‘supported, semi-supported or independent accommodation’ (DfE, 2014, p. 75) is repeatedly uttered throughout the Code. Paradoxically, then, independence is redefined within the rigid confinement of fiscal savagery; a utilitarian approach in favour of neoliberalism (Elder-Woodard, 2013). Politically invigorated, this discourse works to express the neoliberal premise of minimal welfare spending (Roulstone & Hwang, 2015) by providing an evidential account that supports the winding back of benefits (Goodley, Lawthom & Runswick-Cole, 2014). Within these narrow parameters, SEND CoP endorses independence through employability as the primary goal of adult life (Ashby *et al*, 2015) while dependency takes the form of a ‘defective fail’ to match the independent ideal (Davidson, 2007 cited in Herzl-Betz, 2015; Hughes, 2007). Rhetorically, a vocabulary of ‘disability’ and ‘dependence’ are inextricably bound together by a history of Western culture (Davidson, 2007) which assumes ‘the need for help from others as a bad thing’ (Mason, 2000, p.64). This synonymous pairing is taken advantage of by SEND CoP in its tactful presentation of the financial benefits associated with independent living; concomitantly degrading the state of dependency. Thus, the policy’s endorsement of independence through employability maintains a view of ‘the disabled person’ as a figure of alterity; proof of the superior existence of the non-disabled, ‘normal’ human being (Holt, 2012; Peuravaara, 2013; Ware, 2001). Here, disciplinary techniques attempt to ‘normalise’ the distribution of bodies within a grueling employment regime. As Foucault (1978, p. 139) states, such techniques focus on the ‘optimization of its capabilities, the extortion of its forces, the parallel increase of its usefulness and its docility, its integration into systems of efficient and economic controls’.

The dichotomous positioning of an independent and dependent body takes centre stage in an ideological plot, a discursive entrapment that presents disability as a drain on society (Yeo & Moore, 2003). As a rhetoric of ‘us’ and ‘them’ unfolds through the explicit utterance of ‘the public purse’ (DfE, 2014, p. 123) independence is imagined as a normalised entity of being, that must be upheld at all times. SEND CoP continues this regimental subjectification predicated upon the assumption that to be independent, you must be economically productive (Morris, 2011). This is particularly evident when we consider the recent Conservative commitment to ‘stopping benefit cheats and ending welfare’ and their promise to ‘reward work’ (Conservative Party, 2015, p. 28). Rhetorically captured by the Conservative slogan ‘we are all in this together’ the docile body becomes contracted to neoliberal citizenship; it embodies the expectation that overcoming economic downturn is a personal responsibility (Goodley, Lawthom & Runswick-Cole, 2014). Disabled bodies, on the contrary, trouble this contracted relation, and resist the mould that is sculpted by the deployment of disciplinary techniques.

The reduction of independence to a fixed and consistent state is rejected by the authors as a presumptuous misunderstanding of the flexibly-unstable and beautifully diverse human body. Like Patsavas (2014), we refuse to accept the assumption that the human body will occupy the same position one moment that it will in the next. Our life journeys, stories and narratives are rarely tidy, they cannot be straightened, instead they follow twisted, unstable and often unforeseeable paths. As such, the continuous state of independence through employability that SEND CoP endorses is, in fact, just another deceit. Rather, built upon a neo-liberal discourse of bodily formality, the state of independency becomes an ideal; simply an illusion of the ableist imagination. Thus, the static embodiment of either independence or dependence is a binary construction that cannot be upheld. Instead, we propose the inseparable fluidity from one state to another as the human body interacts, engages, orientates and evolves with its surrounding world and the systems of power that this world deploys. That is, we live in a modern world that requires a sense of partnership (Reindal, 1999). By reframing the way in which humans interact in the world, disabled bodies offer the possibility to reframe the independent/dependent - productive/ non-productive dichotomy within the natural state of human interdependence (Herzl-Betz, 2015). To put it in other terms, children and young people labelled with SEND trouble the policy’s attempt to distribute, manage, and organise due to their unruly, leaky, and quirky bodies. The disabled body resilience challenges ‘the norms and goals associated with expected child development and psychological standards of what counts as a maturing body’ (Goodley & Runswick-Cole, 2013, p. 2).

**Conclusion**

Within this article, we have examined a policy text and revealed the regimental twists and turns of an extant controlling ideology. Despite being named as a movement away from ideology, our analysis revealed SEND CoP to be constrained by a Conservative ideological history that has served to preserve a master narrative of SEND. This history, we contend straightjackets the form and function of the body locating such on a continuum of productive and ‘non-productive’ bodies; between the docile able body and what we name as the active disabled body (Mitchel & Synder, 2015). Through analysis of ‘three words’ we have attempted to shift the discourse away from the non-recognition of some disabled bodies by questioning what does educational support actually do and who do the agencies of support really support. Within these restrictions, the production of independent employable bodies is exposed as a cynical attempt to control the population. Independence stands here then in direct contradiction to the etymological value of Independent Living Movement. We suggest that the activism and commitment of individuals that fought for the Independent Living Movement has, in effect, been trampled on by political ideologies and master narratives surrounding normative, neoliberal notions of independence.

The policy’s overt positioning of productivity within these three words is therefore, an unhelpful framework that creates a dichotomous illusion of disabled bodies as un-productive and ‘in need’ of support against a mythical being that is non-disabled, docile, independent and productive. The ‘landmark’ Children and Families Act and associated SEND CoP in its attempt to ‘underpin wider reforms to ensure that all children and young people can succeed, no matter what their background’ (DfE, 2014, p. 1) becomes saturated by a neoliberal desire that reduces adulthood to values of economic productivity and fiscal savagery. To return to Marx (Harvey, 2000), this policy transforms a population into future workers and is nothing more than a measure of capital. Educational ‘support’ therefore becomes but an entrapment of this ideology and an embodiment of the ‘linguistically, deployed panoptic technologies of power’ that this policy enforces (Liasidou, 2008, p. 408).

In its inherent pursuit of neoliberal intentions of the production of specific adulthoods, this education policy has created an ideological vacuum of complications, contradictions and naiveties. In particular, we have worked within an understanding of embodiment, revealed through queer phenomenology, to highlight the confusion within neoliberal ideologies, whereby the drive to produce a population of so-called ‘independent bodies’ becomes futile. In reality, the regimented ‘straightening’ discourse of policy recommendations, expectations and assumptions creates bodies that are docile, but also ones that are dependent upon political doctrine. Indeed, while it is our contention that the process of embodiment should be self-defined, the disciplined manner of policy prohibits any such process. In this way, the values and aims of policy are ideologically impure (Norwich, 1996), leaving the sense of true embodiment unstable and untenable as *Their* ‘independent’ body is made wholly dependent. In contrast, the disabled body is liberated through its inherent interdependence and active resistance to a coalition regime of support, employment and independence. To this end, we are reminded of Foucault’s conceptualisation of power, that is, as a productive relation that would not be possible without resistance (Foucault, 1982, 2007). It is this resistance that we would like to put forward as scope for further discussion. Resistance, as proposed by Beckett *et al* (2016, p. 6) ‘is a transgenerational creative force… allowing for the enlargement of the possibilities of self-determination and new economies of power’. We conclude therefore that disabled bodies should actively resist the discursive powers, of docility and independence, and offer new ways of bodily interpretations and expressions which ‘communicate, transform, and contest existing social structures’ (Low, 2003, p. 16). Children labelled with SEND, we suggest present an opportunity for re-fashioning education policy, by challenging and ‘wriggling out from the pincer-like hierarchical grips of modernity’ (Goodley, 2009, p. 260) and sculpting an alternative reality that acts in opposition to the master narrative of disability traditionally adopted by policy discourse.

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