

Positioning policy: explaining, framing and forming GIRFEC

Paul Adams

University of Strathclyde, United Kingdom

One of the most inclusive policies to come out of Scottish Legislation is 'Getting it Right for Every Child' (Scottish Government, 2012). This is a set of recommendations which seeks to ensure that the educational and welfare progress of all children and young people is prioritised. The proposals seek to identify ways in which a variety of agencies can work together to reduce exclusion and increase educational success.

This paper addresses some of the features of GIRFEC. Using an innovative framework for analysis, Policy as Positioning (Adams, 2015), the paper considers the way in which educational imperatives are 'framed' by wider socio-political Discourses, 'explained' by texts which seek to present such matters, and 'formed' by the very discursive acts that relate to the ways in which individuals and groups come together to understand and form the very policies of which they speak. To do this, the paper deploys Positioning Theory: a way of considering the interplay between the storylines that come together to form Discourses and discourses, the speech acts used to define and explain certain interactional features, and the positions offered and taken up or resisted by participants. Positioning Theory concerns itself with whom and what has the right to speak and how this gives rise to position calls for those involved. These position calls seek to orient individuals and groups through the rights, duties and obligations they convey. In turn such position calls can be taken up, modified or resisted.

The paper analyses the political frames and textual representations for GIRFEC and uses data gathered through interviews with teachers in one school that has yet to engage with GIRFEC training. The paper demonstrates the ways in which interaction at all three levels helps one to understand the formation of policy at the local level. Specifically, the paper addresses the ways in which policy is formed by the individuals concerned within the frames of Scottishness so prevalent within political Discourse and texts oriented towards integrated children's services. Accordingly, the paper identifies three position calls for ICS and GIRFEC in Scotland: the ways in which a discourse of Scottishness leads to distinct understandings of ICS; the post-bureaucratic reconceptualization of professionalism; and, the drive for inclusion and a respect for difference. The paper has relevance for other countries through the way in which the new methodological framework is applied and the fact that the integration of children's services is something that exists out with Scotland. Internationally, such approaches are evident and seek, amongst other things, to rationalise the various services that support the individual child and young person.

REFERENCES:

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