‘I am not a “good” teacher; I don’t do all their paperwork’: Teacher resistance to accountability demands in the English Skills for Life strategy

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ABSTRACT

In 2000, Skills for Life, a new strategy for literacy, numeracy and language education was introduced in England. It included new core curricula, tough new targets for learner achievement, and significantly increased accountability requirements for teachers and colleges. Many teachers found aspects of this new system difficult. This paper analyses interviews carried out with teachers in 2002 to identify the reasons underlying their resistance. In the interviews, teachers consistently drew on a well-defined discourse which defined ‘good’ teaching as teaching that is responsive to the learner, negotiating teaching in response to learners’ goals and characteristics, and flexible in the teaching moment. Resistance arose when aspects of the centralised strategy were perceived to constrain teachers’ ability to respond to learners in this way, being driven more by external demands and advance planning than by responsiveness to learners. Teachers attempted to develop strategies to maintain responsiveness while working within the new strategy.

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REFERENCES


Development Centre for Adult Literacy and Numeracy, London.


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