Citation:
Olusoga, Y (2016) The Testimony of Miss Carpenter: social construction of children in poverty in the Report of the 1861 Newcastle Commission. In: British Educational Research Association Annual Conference, 13 September 2016 - 15 September 2016, University of Leeds.

Link to Leeds Beckett Repository record:
https://eprints.leedsbeckett.ac.uk/id/eprint/3730/

Document Version:
Conference or Workshop Item (Presentation)

The aim of the Leeds Beckett Repository is to provide open access to our research, as required by funder policies and permitted by publishers and copyright law.

The Leeds Beckett repository holds a wide range of publications, each of which has been checked for copyright and the relevant embargo period has been applied by the Research Services team.

We operate on a standard take-down policy. If you are the author or publisher of an output and you would like it removed from the repository, please contact us and we will investigate on a case-by-case basis.

Each thesis in the repository has been cleared where necessary by the author for third party copyright. If you would like a thesis to be removed from the repository or believe there is an issue with copyright, please contact us on openaccess@leedsbeckett.ac.uk and we will investigate on a case-by-case basis.

The Testimony of Miss Carpenter: social construction of children in poverty in the Report of the 1861 Newcastle Commission

Yinka Olusoga

Centre for Research and Innovation in Childhood, Education and Society

Y.Olusoga@leedsbeckett.ac.uk

From PhD Study - 'Character Training' and 'Moral Instruction': Social Construction of the School-Child through Personal and Social Education

- Data drawn from the **1861 Report of the Newcastle Commission.**
- National commission (set up in 1858 and headed by Henry Pelham, Duke of Newcastle) tasked by Queen Victoria, on behalf of her government, to:

"Inquire into the Present State of Popular Education in England, and to Consider and Report what Measures, if any, are required for the Extension of Sound and Cheap Elementary Education to all Classes of the People."

(Great Britain, 1861, vol., 1, p. 1)

Interest in Personal and Social Education

1. Is it as wholly positive as is often perceived?
2. What is it doing, and is it what teachers think that it is doing?

"People know what they do; frequently they know why they do what they do; but what they don't know is what what they do does."

(Foucault, cited in Dreyfus and Rabinow, 1982, p. 187)

"There is no such thing as a 'neutral skill', nor is there a 'neutral education'."

Kozol (1980, p. 89, cited in Ward, 2004, p. 140)

Research questions:

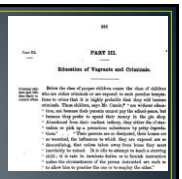
RQ1. What social construction of working class children is being presented?

RQ2. How is this social construction being achieved?

RQ3. What role is being advocated for schooling regarding the personal and social development of working class children?

"Education of Vagrants and Criminals"

- Discourse historical approach (DHA) (Wodak, 2015)
- DHA interrupts and examines narratives and their construction.
- Foucauldian concepts of the exercise of power and of discourse, including subjugated discourses.


PART III.

Education of Vagrants and Criminals.

Argumentation Theory

The dialogue of the inquiry paradigm is characterised by "*the property of cumulativeness*"

(Walton, 2014, p. 35).

Foucauldian Analysis

- "*In much of the work that purports to be Foucauldian in educational studies, power is reduced to domination and knowledge is detached from power.*"

(Ball, 2013, Loc. 327)

The Data

- Three key testimonies:

1. Mr Cumin – Assistant Commissioner to the Newcastle Commission
2. Miss Carpenter – called as an expert witness
3. Mr Crampton – head master of the Brentford National School

Fourth, inherent testimony is that of the report authors.

Discourse Historical Analysis

- Examines texts for five specific discursive strategies in order to uncover:
  - who and what is being constructed and represented in texts;
  - and how that is being achieved discursively .

Key Discursive Strategies relate to:

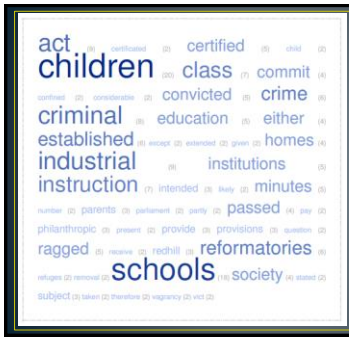
1. Nomination
2. Characterisation
3. Perspectivation
4. Argumentation
5. Intensification/Mitigation

Argumentation Strategies

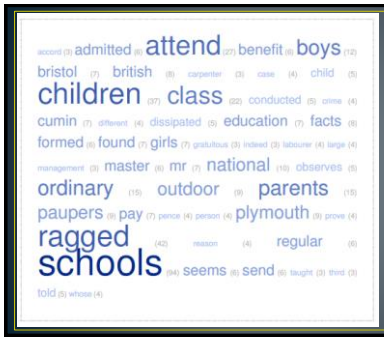
Topos – A line of argument based on certain predicates, used to construct the case for a particular viewpoint and, therefore, course of action

a. **Topos of Burdening**
b. **Topos of Reality**
c. **Topos of Numbers**
d. **Topos of History**
e. **Topos of Authority**
f. **Topos of Threat**
g. **Topos of Definition**
h. **Topos of Justice**
i. **Topos of Urgency**

(Wodak, 2015, p. 11)



RNC: Introduction to Part III
pp. 386-388



RNC: Mr Cumin's Evidence
pp. 388-392

Nomination	Establishing the children and their families as a criminal underclass - ragged, vagrants, criminals, "dissipated"

The Report
"vagrants and criminals" (p. 386)
"highly probable that they will become criminals" (p. 386)

Mr Cumin
"Their parents are so dissipated, their homes are so wretched, the influences to which they are exposed are so demoralizing, that unless taken away from home they must inevitably be ruined." (p. 386).

Characterisation	• Parents – disinterested; spending money on alcohol; creating own poor living conditions, bad moral influence • Children: contaminated; demonstrating their own undesirable agency

"These children…are without education, not because their parents cannot pay the school-pence, but because they prefer to spend their money in the gin shop." (. 386)

"The boy or girl may attend when he pleases, he may be regular or irregular, and may come with filthy hands, undressed hair, and a costume no matter how odoriferous." (p. 390)

Perspectivation	• Intertextuality - drawing on texts, language and discourses from other relevant fields of action (legal, criminal provision)
	• Establishes the 'in-group' as those who run industrial schools and reformatories and the 'out-groups' of:
	  • those running and
	  • those attending non-industrial ragged schools

"Public attention having been directed to the subject…" (p. 386)
"Reformatory Acts"… "The Industrial Schools Act of 1857" … "Minutes of Committee of Council of June 1866 and Dec. 1857" (p. 387)
"The statistical facts which we have collected respecting ragged schools are as follows…" (p. 388)

Perspectivation	• Sets perspectives of those running and managing British and National day schools, against those running ragged schools; implies that the evidence of the latter was suspect • Perspectives of people of higher social standing who visit the poor are acknowledged – silence of the perspectives of the poor themselves

"Thus, the master of one [National or British] school told me that he had suffered very severely from the action of the ragged school… (p. 391)

"the dissipated character of their parents… is strikingly confirmed by the evidence of the master or mistress, or any lady or gentleman who is in the habit of visiting the homes of the children…" (p. 390)

Perspectivation	• Perspectives of authority figures in key institutions of the police and the church • Reported perspective of working class children/parents cited as an example of the undermining of the authority of the school master

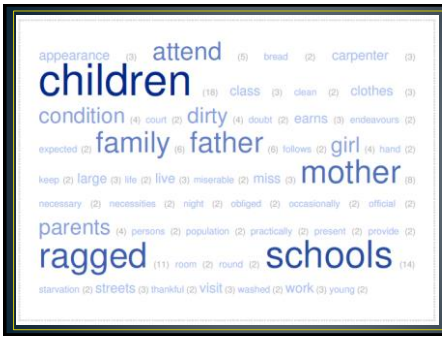
"upon inquiring at the police, I found that they had a list of 13 in attendance at the ragged school who were under the guidance of a certain notorious young thief..." (p. 392)

"I may add that one clergyman told me he lost one boy a month at least, for, he said, "if my master inflicts a punishment of which the boy or his parents do not approve, he is at once told that the child will not come back, but will betake himself to the ragged school.""(p. 391)

Argumentation	
Report • Burdening • History • Authority • Threat • Justice	**Mr Cumin** • Reality • Numbers • Authority • Threat • Justice
Intensification/Mitigation: *"facts"; "observes"; "told"; "I myself saw"*	

Discourse underpinning the role of education re. personal and social education:	Counteracting immoral influence of home Redirecting of children's agency along approved lines A link is made between physical cleanliness and mental/moral discipline Implication is that ragged schools by overlooking the former, fail to develop the latter.

"In good schools discipline and cleanliness are considered essentials, and the gross neglect of these lead to rejection, punishment, or expulsion. But the ragged schools overlook these essentials." (p. 390)



RNC: Miss Carpenter's Testimony pp. 392-394

Miss Mary Carpenter

- An educational reformer
- Author
- Her evidence relates to the arguments for the existence of 'non-industrial ragged schools', i.e. schools offering free education to the poor and (unlike ordinary day schools) willing to admit children dressed in rags and with no shoes.
- Not cited in the later section on reformatories despite her considerable experience

Nomination	Named: • as a 'large' population (establishing a sense of numbers/threat/urgency) • as family members - family/father/mother • in relation to their employment

"until there is a very great change in the social condition of our country, there is and must be a large proportion of the population who are, from whatever cause, barely above starvation, and whose precarious means scarcely suffice for their daily bread, without the power of providing decent clothing or other necessaries" (p. 392)

"Father a flyman earning about 5s or 6s per week; mother a shoe binder. This family live in a wretchedly dirty room; it almost sickens one to enter it." (p. 393)

Characterisation	Parents
	• Living precariously but as working people
	• Lack of money and of clean and 'decent' clothing ascribed to a lack of economic 'power' and resources
	• Though initially more sympathetic, draws on the same kind of discourse regarding the very poor:
	  • a lack of morality due to 'poverty and ignorance'
	  • the presumption of low intellect
	  • parents corrupting the very 'nature' of the children

"the low moral, intellectual, and often physical condition of this class necessarily perpetuates the same state of things... This poverty and ignorance of the parents has a very lowering effect on the nature and actual condition of the children" (p. 392)

Characterisation	• Physical toll of poverty on development acknowledged • When children have agency it can be moulded Women • Having to manage their domestic work and paid work

"From being denied the proper necessities of infant life the children are stunted, and present the appearance of large sized dolls more than children." (p. 393)
"at first very unruly and dull, but after a time presented quite a different aspect, and though still ragged there was a quiet attentive manner that pleased me very much, and occasionally gave proofs of intelligence that I had little expected." (p.393)

"The parents work at tailoring, and are employed by a wholesale clothes shop in Bristol….they tell me that they are often compelled to work two or three nights a week to keep themselves and their children from starvation….The mother keeps the children clean by washing their clothes after they are in bed at night." (p. 393)

Perspectivation	• Challenges the claims to truth of the inspectorate/ commissioners - limited scope of their knowledge and therefore limited reliability of their conclusions • Those running ragged schools become the 'in-group' and those inspecting/judging them become the 'out-group' • Gender? – inspectors all male • Perspectives of poor themselves is still missing

"The existence of such a class has, I am aware, been doubted by many official persons… if they would examine persons practically connected with the ragged schools, instead of being satisfied with the reports of those who only officially and occasionally visit them, they would no longer doubt." (p. 392)

"She appears very thankful to be allowed to send her little ones to school." (p.393)

Argumentation	Reality History Authority Threat Urgency
Intensification/ Mitigation	**Intensification** Case studies – examples of specific people's lives Own responses to the lived conditions of others **Mitigation** Location in the text Positioning of Miss Carpenter as linked to ragged schools rather than reformatories/industrial schools

RNC: Commentary on Miss Carpenter's Testimony, pp. 394-96

	• Lack of access to ordinary day schools is depicted as the results of parental indifference • Each case has its validity dismissed • Perspective of those in authority is once more established

"All our evidence shows that where the children are unobjectionable they are never refused admission into the paying schools merely because their parents cannot pay the school pence. In the rare cases in which the managers refuse to receive them without payment, benevolent persons are found to pay for them." (p. 394)

"The last two cases seem to be cases of misconduct. The parents are obviously either indifferent to the welfare of their children, or care for it so little that they give themselves no trouble about it. They like to get their children out of their way, but will not take the care of their persons which is necessary to their reception in a paying school." (p. 394)

RNC: Mr Crampton's Statement p. 396

Nomination Characterisation	Named as "this pariah class" Children characterised as outcast; an abjection; too untidy, unclean and bad mannered to mix freely with other children (threat) and thus in need of exile/containment; susceptible to the positive influence of 'better class children' (and to the negative influence of the other children in the ragged schools)

"I believe that very superior advantages would accrue to "ragged" scholars from being sent to mix with and be taught along with better class children than being collected in "ragged schools." The course habits, untidiness, and want of cleanliness on the part of the poor "ragged" boys, is doubtless an obstacle to their partaking, at present, as much as they might do of the educational advantages of British and National schools: but by a separate classroom or two, used as introductory room, in which this pariah class might be kept till made clean, neat, and orderly enough to be drafted off into the main school, these objections would be obviated." (p.396)

Argumentation

- Burdening
- Reality
- Numbers
- Authority
- Threat
- Definition
- Justice

Intensification/Mitigation

- Mitigates preceding testimony of Miss Carpenter by:
  - the systematic dismissal and disavowal of each of the case studies
  - its location within the text (testimony of two male figures frames the introduction and adds to the concluding commentary of the commission authors)

RQ1. What social construction of working class children is being presented?

- A criminal and unclean threat (actual or potential); in need of quarantine from their parents/communities
- The deserving/the undeserving; hard-working versus 'dissipated'
- Lacking agency or misusing it

RQ2. How is this social construction being achieved?

- Repeated attribution of negative traits to parents (via tropes , collocations, etc.) - drunks, opportunists taking advantage of the 'wrong' kind of charity
- Dismissal of evidence that demonstrates positive traits.
- Deployment of argumentation strategies that privilege perspectives and testimony along class and gender lines.

RQ3. What role is being advocated for schooling regarding the personal and social development of working class children?

- Cleanliness, morality and discipline inherently linked and the main focus of education for personal and social development
- Need for schooling to tame working class and child agency

Writing about education in New York in the mid-19th century:

"…the school's mission…was to inculcate cooperative attitudes among the city's children whatever the vicissitudes of urban life might bring them. Acculturation is thus a more accurate term for the school's intention than assimilation…schools reflected the attitude of the general native public, who wished to Americanise the habits, not the status of the immigrant."

(Kaestle, 1973, p. 141-2, cited in Apple, 2004, p. 64)

- RNC presenting education as a means to 'middle-classise' the habits, not the status of the working class child and family?

"Effective' history deprives the self of the reassuring stability of life and nature…"

Foucault (1984, p. 88)

Are our modern discourses about education for the poor creating the same/similar social constructions of working class children, but in more 'palatable' ways?

- Resilience?
- SEAL (Social and Emotional Aspects of Learning)?

References

- Ball, S. (2013) **Foucault, Power and Education**. London: Routledge.
- Great Britain: Education Commission (1861) **Report of the Commissioners on the state of popular education in England**. Vols. I to VI. London: HMSO.
- Foucault, M. (1982) The Subject and Power. In: Dreyfus, H. and Rabinow, P. Michel Foucault: Beyond Structuralism and Hermeneutics. Brighton: The Harvester Press. Pp. 208 – 226.
- Foucault, M. (1984). Nietzsche, Genealogy, History. In, Rabinow, P. (Ed). **The Foucault Reader**. New York: Pantheon.
- Kaestle, C. (1973) The Evolution of an Urban School System. Cambridge, Mass: Harvard University Press). Cited in Apple, M. (2004) Ideology and Curriculum. (3rd Ed). New York: RoutledgeFalmer.
- Kozol, J. (1980) The Night is Dark and I am Far from Home. New York: Continuum. Cited in: Ward, S. (Ed) (2004) **Education Studies: A Student Guide**. London: Routledge.
- Walton, D (2014) **Burden of Proof, Presumption and Argumentation**. New York: Cambridge University Press.
- Wodak R. (2015) Critical Discourse Analysis, Discourse-Historical Approach. In, Karen Tracy, K., Ilie, C. and Sandel, T. (Eds). **The International Encyclopaedia of Language and Social Interaction**, First Edition. USA: JohnWiley & Sons, Inc.