

“Answer your names please”: a small scale exploration of teachers  
technologically mediated ‘new lives’.

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Conducted over a three year period in an English secondary school, this study employs a distributional analysis across three scales to explore Real Time Attendance Registration (RTAR). Ethnographic data, Day and Gu’s teachers’ new lives, and Foucault’s normalisation, are mobilised to investigate how RTAR mediated the key informant’s work. I argue that the teacher in this study faced complex, demanding and normalised conditions emanating from register taking becoming a technology mediated and performativity led activity. I suggest that from examining RTAR, those interested in teachers’ new lives might gain an understanding of how, in the case in point, technology mediated the normalisation of the attendance registration process.

**Keywords:** new lives; normalisation; technology; attendance registration; scale

## **Introduction**

This paper explores technology and teachers’ ‘new lives’ (Day and Gu, 2010). The technology investigated here is Real Time Attendance Registration (RTAR), with the focus on how this technology plays out in the work of a teacher I call David Sharma, and in the registration process at a school I call Northport high. I present a distributional analysis across three scales: (i) the micro scale of RTAR and David’s day-to-day work; (ii), the meso institutional scale of RTAR and inspection; and (iii) the macro scale of RTAR and performativity.

I focus on the ‘very local of the local-global policy relationship’ (Thomson *et al*, 2010, 639). I am aware of the constraints of such a small-scale approach. However, I propose that for those with an interest in the sociology of technology, teachers work and what Ball *et al* (2012) call ‘policy enactments’, examining RTAR across scales might reveal meanings which resonate with other contexts through the ‘inward-outward relationship between scales’ (Thomson *et al*, 2010, 654).

RTAR mediated<sup>1</sup> Northport High's statutory obligation to complete attendance registers as set out in *The Education (Pupil Registration) (England) Regulations 2006* (DfES). English schools have a statutory obligation to complete an attendance register at the beginning of each morning session and once during the afternoon. Registration responds to the regulatory requirements for recording attendance, as well as to evidence parents' legal duty to ensure their children can access suitable education (DfE, 2011).

At the micro scale, attendance registration forms part of teachers' work as they are required to complete the statutory registrations. At the meso scale student attendance, and particularly instances of non-attendance, is a focus of school inspections carried out by the Office for Standards in Education (OfSTED). For the purpose of inspection, OfSTED (2007) make links between attendance, achievement and the quality of teaching and learning. Consequently, achieving high levels of student attendance is increasingly high stakes for schools, and the focus of Government policy (see for example Taylor, 2012). At the macro scale, national attendance statistics are used to inform international performative tools such as the Programme for International Student Assessment (PISA) – see Bradshaw *et al*, 2010.

### **RTAR toolkit**

This paper mobilises two key texts: Day and Gu's *The New Lives of Teachers* (2010) and Foucault's *Discipline and Punish: the Birth of the Prison* (1977). Day and Gu (2010, 2-4) identify two subsets of teachers' new lives, which they call 'new teaching

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<sup>1</sup> Mediation is the interaction between human beings, tools and historical, social and cultural environments (Kaptelinin & Nardi, 2006).

environments' and the 'person in the professional'. I examine how technology mediates new teaching environments and changes in workforce demands.

Foucault describes normalisation as the process through which ideas and actions become 'natural'. Within an organisation, normalisation results in the behaviour of its members becoming modified so as to reproduce socially acceptable standards. I examine how technology mediates normalisation of the registration process.

### ***Teachers' new lives***

Day and Gu (2010) have explored teachers' new lives to give insights into the interrelationship between teachers' personal 'everyday' lives and identities, and how these play out in the context of the school. The emphasis is that the social, economic and political forces which affect teachers' lives can only be understood by examining the intersection of teachers' personal experiences with the structures and processes of their work. Day and Gu (2-4) examine teachers' conditions of practice through three landscapes: the contexts of teaching; the professional lives of teachers; and conditions of success.

The context of teaching explores 'new teaching environments' (Day and Gu, 2010, 9) and the 'person in the professional' (26). New teaching environments reflect changes to the context of the school, and the teacher, through economic, social and technological changes, and how these affect teachers' work. The person in the professional explores how teachers' learning, identity and emotional wellbeing reflect the complex forces which support, or diminish, their working lives.

The professional lives of teachers (41) draws together some of the key factors which underpin teachers' identities. Day and Gu present portraits of teachers at three different stages of their career trajectory: beginning teachers; middle years teachers; and veteran teachers. They highlight how the foci for teachers at these different 'professional

life phase' (43) differ. Moreover, there is a detailed examination of how critical influences – personal, pupil workplace and policy - impact on teachers' commitment, resilience and professional identity.

In the conditions of success, Day and Gu discuss the relationship between teacher commitment and success (127), leadership and teachers' lives (140) and resilience (156). These areas support a detailed examination of what being a 'good' teacher means. The key focus examines how conditions of success affect the 'quality retention' (Day *et al*, 2007) of teachers.

Day and Gu (16) identify five challenges teachers face within new teaching environments. Of these, I mobilise changes in workforce demands. For Day and Gu (18), schools do not exist outside of dominant socio-economic values and contexts, nor do the demands upon teachers' work fall outside of these values and contexts. Changes in the demands placed upon the teaching workforce reflect the evolving socio-economic context within which teachers work.

In this socio-economic context, teachers are required to educate a workforce able to cope with the requirements of the changing world of work. The focus on the skills needed in this changing work context does not 'sit well with the still dominant model of academic knowledge, which is most highly valued in the curriculum of schools in England' (Day and Gu, 2010, 21). As a result, there is a reorientation of the curriculum, and with it teachers' work, a reorientation which impacts on their professional identity. The inward-outward relationship between changes in work force demands at the international macro level, and the reorientation of teachers' work and identity at the micro level, emerge from the increasingly dominant market driven values within education.

I also mobilise Day and Gu's examination of workforce demands to explore RTAR across three scales. The first of these scales examines whether the performative

structures which drive global changes to workforce demands at the macro scale, play out in the application of RTAR. The second scale explores whether meso institutional technologies such as inspection, are mediated by RTAR. Finally, the micro scale, explores whether RTAR has mediated changes in the demands David faces in his work.

### ***Performativity and normalisation***

A key tool mediating the reconfiguration of the English education system is performativity (Jeffery and Woods, 1998; Troman, 2000; Ball, 2001, 2003; Perryman, 2009; Jeffery and Troman, 2011, 2012). In performativity, there is a universal requirement to produce designated outcomes, which are imposed from within and outside organisations, which frame all activities (Lyotard, 1979). Performativity has given rise to what Ball (2003) calls post-professionalism, where teachers have to demonstrate success by conforming to the ways in which others – i.e. inspectors, governors, government, and the market – define their work.

Michel Foucault's work (1963, 1977, 1980) has been used to examine performativity in the English education system (Ball 2001; Perryman, 2009). I mobilise what Foucault calls normalisation as a sub-set of performativity. For Foucault (1977), those being judged within normalised conditions are also judges. In the context of this paper, I examine how far RTAR mediates judgements of teachers within increasingly normalised standards.

Such normalised standards are reflected through what Perryman (2009. 614) calls the 'rigid recipe', which prescribes how an effective school should be run. For schools, normalisation is linked to 'assessment, appraisal and evaluation, as teachers become agents and subjects of measurements' (Perryman, 2006, 152). Crucial here is Perryman's description of teachers as not only subjects of normalised conditions but also *agents* of these conditions. A situation where teachers are both subject to, and agents of,

normalisation is reflected in the increased surveillance culture in English schools (Ball, 2003; Perryman, 2006). For Foucault (1977), individuals are constantly subjected to surveillance and regulation in ways that are often subtle and seemingly invisible. Such surveillance leads to the normalisation and acceptance of ‘watching technologies’ such as the Panopticon (Foucault, 1977, 195).

Normalisation is interlinked with disciplinary power (Foucault, 1979). By disciplinary power, Foucault means there is a construction of rules and norms of conduct where individuals are rewarded, or punished, for conforming to or deviating from these norms. Crucially, those who are subjected to disciplinary power are also agents of disciplinary power. Disciplinary power results in those within a system modifying their behaviour ‘because the constant pressure acts even before the offences, mistakes or crimes have been committed, (Foucault, 1977, 206). Consequently, normalisation, and with it disciplinary power, is a tactic for exerting the maximum organisational control with the minimum of resources.

### ***Mobilising the toolkit***

New teaching environments are mobilised to examine if RTAR mediated:

- Changes in the work demands placed upon the key informant
- Performative conditions

Normalisation is mobilised to examine if RTAR mediated:

- Increased judgement of teachers by others and by themselves
- Increased surveillance
- Intensification of disciplinary power

From utilising the RTAR toolkit, I argue that this study reveals an understanding of how new teaching environments and normalisation might have been mediated by RTAR. I also suggest that glimpses are revealed as to how an activity as representative of ‘being’

a teacher as taking the attendance register might inform understanding as to how technology mediated this aspect of the key informant's new teaching environment.

### **The project**

For the project, I mobilised ethnographic fragments (Thomson *et al*, 2010, 640) which consisted of three texts - field notes (Hammersley and Atkinson, 1995), interviews (Kvale and Brinkman, 2009) and observations (Delamont, 1976). There were 11 interviews with the key informant which were triangulated with a further 22 interviews with other teachers. There were also 11 observations of the key informant using RTAR, which followed Delamont's (1976) model. These observations were triangulated with a further 12 observations of other teachers using RTAR. The analytical process employed grounded theory (Glaser and Strauss 1967) to identify concepts and categories as indicated in Table 1.

David Sharma is 49 years old and started his career as a chemist. He has taught for twelve years at Northport High, after three years at a large secondary school where he was second in the Science department. Before taking his current Assistant Principal role on the Senior Leadership Team (SLT) at Northport he was head of the Science faculty. Previous to this he taught for three years at a large secondary school where he was second in the Science department.

Northport High is located in an inner-city area of an English city which faces challenging socio-economic conditions. The school has 1623 students on roll, including 272 in the sixth form. The majority of the students who attend live within a one mile radius of the school. A small but increasing number of students are from families of asylum seekers or refugees; 15% of students at the school have English as Additional Language (EAL). The number of students eligible for Free School Meals is 36% and increasing. The proportion of students with EAL and Special Educational Needs (SEN)



is above the national and city average and increasing. Northport has a school population, which is over 50% non-white – despite the catchment area being 70% white - with the majority of non-white students being of Pakistani, Indian and black Caribbean ethnic origin.

### ***RTAR***

Teachers accessed RTAR via their tablet personal computer. RTAR displayed a photograph of each student in a teaching group and a box into which one of seven different attendance codes were checked. RTAR also contained data relating to students' academic performance and behaviour. RTAR mediated real time access to attendance data by SLT, the local Education Authority (LEA) and the Department for Education (DfE). RTAR was completed for every lesson of the day giving regular 50 minute updates as to the overall attendance picture. Only RTAR data generated for periods 1 and 5 contributed to the school's statutory attendance registers. RTAR had to be completed within 15 minute of the start of each lesson.

The introduction of RTAR mediated the removal of 'tutor time' where attendance registers were completed within a pastoral, i.e. non-academic, context. In tutor time, a teacher supports a specific group of students with regard to their pastoral care (Marland and Rogers, 1997). In the RTAR model, teachers were assigned the role of Significant Adult (SA) for a group of students. With the removal of the tutor time from the timetable, pastoral care issues were dealt with by email, from students to SA and vice versa. If a face-to-face meeting was required this was completed during break, lunch or after school. Removing registration periods increased curriculum time in a bid to boost examination grades. RTAR mediated an extra 30minutes of curriculum time per day.

In the following section, I present data indicating how RTAR mediated changes in workforce demands and normalisation through focusing on a prominent category in the analysis – RTAR and surveillance.

### **RTAR and surveillance**

As shown in Table 1, surveillance was a category which emerged from the RTAR data. There were three main concepts in the surveillance category: technological systems; context; and comparison which are now examined.

#### INSERT TABLE 1

Table 1 – surveillance category analysis

#### *Technological systems*

David acknowledged that RTAR was a powerful tool which resulted in implications for his working practices. Foremost amongst these were the high levels of RTAR data and the analysis of this data. Whilst David was clear that RTAR analysis was in many cases extremely helpful, it did put an increase strain on his workload. The following field note catalogues an instance of David's RTAR use:

Kyle was not in school after lunch. During the lesson, David used RTAR to check Kyle's history of absences after lunch on Tuesdays, and then cross checked this with the absence records of Kyle's close friends. RTAR did not indicate any pattern. The process took around 5 minutes. As David said, "RTAR is so powerful that I can do this. But where does the time come from? I don't have any time to follow this up...I'm supposed to be teaching now. So I'll do it at break, lunch or after school".  
(Field note)

RTAR was becoming a norm in David's work, a norm not acknowledged by an increase in time in which to complete analysis of data and follow up incidents. David was concerned with what he considered to be an increase in the importance of technological systems such as RTAR. The high stakes placed on attendance data by the school's SLT, and by OfSTED, resulted in what David suggested was RTAR mediating meta-level surveillance:

I use RTAR to check up on the kids' attendance...SLT use RTAR to check up on me.  
OfSTED use RTAR to check up on all of us. (David - Interview)

David was adamant that he was not a technophobe. He embraced technology in his teaching and acknowledged the many benefits of RTAR. However, technological production and analysis of data had become the focus of much of what he, and the school, did. The school's focus on students' attendance was driven by the demands of inspection at the meso level and, ultimately, performativity at the macro level and mediated by technological systems.

David maintained he was spending more time completing RTAR analysis which detracted from the time he had available to complete other duties:

...when a kid's away I do an RTAR analysis. And that's a good thing. But I don't then have time to go and talk to teachers about what might have happened during the day...was the kid upset, did something happen? (David - Interview)

The upshot of these time pressures was that the greater levels of data production and analysis afforded by RTAR, detracted from what David called "one-to-one work" which was previously central to his role. RTAR had the effect of reducing the importance of day-to-day narratives which made sense of the hard statistical data. The drive for RTAR data and analysis which reflected the school's focus on OfSTED inspection diminished

the professional conversation teachers used to have and, with it, a fundamental part of David's professional identity.

The capability for data production and analysis mediated by RTAR resulted in an increased need, and prevalence for such data and analysis. Technological systems such as RTAR had deep consequences for the systems, norms and practices already in place. Ultimately, the greater the capabilities mediated by technologies such as RTAR, the greater the importance and frequency of use given to those technologies. The consequence of this was that with no increase in time available to conduct RTAR activities, something in David's work had to give way. The focus on technological, and performative, systems had a detrimental impact on the school's, and David's, ability to care for their students.

### ***Context***

RTAR mediated regular 50 minute updates on the presence, or absence, of students throughout the day with this data used across the micro and meso scales. RTAR data positioned individual students within school wide patterns of attendance. This data also positioned the school within the landscape of local inspection and national attendance statistics.

For David, 'hard' RTAR data had become the prime indicator of students' attendance. His concern was that RTAR did not paint the whole picture; indeed RTAR came at the expense of context. Although RTAR was efficient in identifying student attendance patterns, David's concern was that micro level contextual data was discounted.

David used an incident with a student, Shelly, to illustrate this:

Shelly's probably in school 50% of the time she should be. She has a really tough home life. And yes she's missed some school today. But she's come in after lunch. That's a huge achievement. RTAR doesn't acknowledge this though...all that

happens is that there are more unauthorised absences for Shelly Evans. (David - Interview)

David's disquiet was that the fundamental questions asking "Why's Shelly not coming to school? How is Shelley today?" were not being asked. Neither were the occasions when she did come to school celebrated. He was worried that RTAR only indicated statistical data representing attendance patterns, and this detracted from the crucial contextual data:

RTAR is really powerful. But it only gives statistics...it doesn't explore why Shelly's not in. We're all spending so much time completing the hard analysis that no one's got the time or energy left to ask why she's away. The thing is, asking questions like this is what I do. It's why I'm a teacher. It's who I am as a teacher. Technology is taking this part [of being a teacher] away...I don't know what's left...other than to just produce statistics. (David – Interview)

RTAR had become ubiquitous in David's work. However, the time and energy he expended analysing and using RTAR data detracted from what he called "staffroom chats" about students' attendance. RTAR data replaced contextual narrative in the increasingly prevalent performative culture at the school.

At the micro scale, Shelly's absence was a single student missing one day's school. At the meso scale however, this absence fed into Shelly's overall attendance record which, if remaining unauthorised, would have a negative impact on the school's attendance figures. The context of Shelly's absences, and the school's desire to support her education by keeping her on role, were not part of the RTAR data.

### ***Comparison***

RTAR mediated surveillance fed into a culture of comparison which played out across the micro, meso and macro scales. At the micro scale student was compared with student and teacher with teacher. At the meso scale, inspection compared school against schools.

At the macro scale, PISA compared country with country. David claimed that the prevalence of comparison reflected the normalisation of both the expectations of his work, and the positioning of the school's RTAR data within tenuous normalised metrics:

Data is used to analyse the school's performance, and my performance, against the norm. You know...the norm for performance, the norm for attendance, the norm for punctuality. But...it's like comparing apples with pears. The norms here don't map across to every school in the country. (David – Interview)

RTAR represented an increasingly performative climate which was reflected in teachers' use of data as an indicator of their own performance. David was concerned that RTAR appeared to be increasingly pivotal in teachers' assessment of their own work:

I've been working more with teachers who are tearing themselves apart because of things like RTAR data. They make a direct link between how good they are as a teacher and what the data says. (David – Interview)

David's comments were borne out in the following observation I made of David's colleague, Sam:

Sam was looking at her RTAR data. She was making comparisons between the punctuality of a particular student, Liam, in her class against his punctuality across the whole school. She was unhappy that Liam had frequently been late to her lesson. David pointed out that Liam was late for Sam's lesson mostly after lunch because he had to go home to check on his elderly grandfather. As David told Sam, "Liam comes back to your lesson". (Field note).

The introduction of RTAR mediated opportunities for attendance data analysis and comparison. There was an undercurrent to this comparison. David was alarmed that RTAR was being used as an indicator of teacher effectiveness:

...some groups have more problems with attendance than others. And yes sometimes it's because of poor lessons. But that's not always the case. Lots of times poor

attendance has nothing to do with how good the lessons are. It's about the baggage the kids have to face, but this isn't acknowledged...a normal level of attendance in one school isn't normal in another. (David - Interview)

For David, the discourse regarding attendance had shifted. The onus remained upon the school to address proactively challenges regarding student attendance, a requirement David wholeheartedly agreed with. The shift however, was that the school, and teachers, were *solely* held to account with regard to student attendance, without acknowledgement of factors outside the school's control. David again referred to Shelly:

Shelly misses a lot of school. She's in a position in her home life that I, as an adult, wouldn't know how to handle. She's 14. But she still comes to school! Of course we want her here more...she's safe here. I really worry about her though. (David – Interview)

Shelly's missing school was as likely to be linked to what had happened in her home life, as to the absence being a result of the effectiveness of her teachers. RTAR analysis indicated a lack of a pattern to Shelly's absences. There was no single lesson which she consistently missed, although she frequently missed entire Fridays. There were no single teacher's lessons which Shelly truanted from. Within the climate of accountability however, Shelly's non attendance reflected not only on the school but upon individual teachers and David's concern was that this had become a normalised condition:

When a kid is away [from school] I've changed how I think. I used to think "what's happened to so and so today" and then I'd do some investigations about their home life...Now, I have to check myself, because the culture is to think "what have I done, what was my last lesson like"...the culture is "so and so is away" and implicit is that it's something to do with how good a teacher you are. (Field note)

Whilst ostensibly RTAR was introduced to support, and improve, student attendance it had become a performative tool used to make comparisons between teachers.

### **Technologically mediated normalisation**

I outlined earlier how I would mobilise a RTAR toolkit. Day and Gu's new lives of teachers was employed to explore whether RTAR mediated changes in the workforce demands, and if these changes supported performative conditions. Foucault's normalisation was utilised to examine whether RTAR mediated judgement of teachers, by others and by themselves, and if so, whether this increased levels of surveillance and an intensification of disciplinary power.

My analysis suggests that RTAR mediated changes to the teaching environment and workforce demands. The normalisation of attendance registration through RTAR at the micro scale was shaped by the demands of inspection at the meso scale, and performativity at the macro scale. RTAR appeared to increase surveillance, comparison and judgement of teachers, by themselves and by others, which underpinned an intensification of normalisation, performativity and disciplinary power.

Surveillance was both overtly and covertly mediated by RTAR. SLT, OfSTED, and ultimately the Secretary of State for Education, had the opportunity to access real time attendance data, updated at least every 50 minutes, for every class at Northport High. The high stakes nature of attendance data, its importance in ranking the effectiveness of teachers and schools, and the reconfiguring of RTAR as a performative tool, had implications for teachers' professional identity.

RTAR mediated overt surveillance through the regular detailed discussions regarding attendance data which took place. RTAR also mediated covert, and Panoptic, surveillance. At any one time, anyone of a number of stakeholders could be accessing and analysing real time RTAR data without the teacher whose class was under observation being informed this was taking place. This potential for omnipresent surveillance, and the covert nature of RTAR mediating the watcher, resonates with increasing conditions of Panoptic surveillance (Perryman, 2006).



The three concepts which underpinned the surveillance category suggest that RTAR was a performative tool which reflected reformed demands upon teachers' work. As Day and Gu (2010, 25) indicate, there are consequences for such reforms:

There can be no doubt that reforms...at least temporarily disturb the relative stability of teachers' work, the conditions for teaching and learning, their own development and, in some cases, their beliefs, practices and self-efficacy.

The notion of disturbance resonates with the first of the three concepts in the surveillance category: technological systems. The importance placed on technological systems such as RTAR has mediated fundamental changes to teachers' work demands. RTAR increased the amount of data analysis teachers were expected to complete, as well as the amount of surveillance of, and by, them. The subsequent increase in demands on teachers' time appeared to reduce the importance in, and their capability to explore, day-to-day narratives. This had the outcome of redefining some of the key prerequisites of teachers' professional identity, and with it, their well being. As Day and Gu (25) continue:

Teachers' sense of wellbeing is deeply connected with how they define themselves as professionals, and how they see their professionalism being defined by others.  
(Day and Gu, 2010, 25)

The almost blind faith placed in RTAR, was part of a redefinition of how David saw his professional identity. Technological systems designed to increase efficiency had the consequence of reducing key elements which constituted David's sense of professionalism. For him, RTAR had diminished the caring, emotional and human face of being a teacher and replaced these with a hard, statistical and data focussed view.

The second concept was context. The contextual fabric of the school was negated through RTAR data being the primary source of representing attendance. The 'back story' was missing due to the RTRA normalising the attendance process. The redundancy of

contextual understanding through RTAR again chimed with the linkage between teachers' working environments, professionalism, identity and wellbeing.

RTAR had clearly increased the efficiency of the attendance registration process. However, in doing so, the needs of the school seemed to have outweighed the needs of the students. Because of attendance becoming focussed upon the data used for inspection, the school had lost sight of attendance being about children as individuals rather than as statistics. Consequently, there was an impact on the key informant's wellbeing. For Day and Gu (2010), the functional needs of an organisation need to be more than the primary consideration when teacher, and students', wellbeing is of concern. RTAR seemed to be a system which focussed on mediating the school's functional needs at the expense of student and teacher wellbeing.

The last of the three concepts in the surveillance category was comparison. RTAR mediated teachers' self-surveillance of their effectiveness and was used to inform comparison between teachers. Brennan (1996, 22) describes the new age of professionalism as one where teachers need to meet goals which reflect the corporate nature of their role. In this model the successful professional:

...is one who works efficiently and effectively in meeting the standardised criteria set for the accomplishment of both students and teachers, as well as contributing to the school's formal accountability processes. (Brennan, 1996, 22)

RTAR mediated performative conditions where attendance data was positioned as an indicator of school and teacher effectiveness. What Brennan calls 'standardised criteria' was, in the case of Northport High, the contribution of RTAR toward successful, or indeed unsuccessful, OfSTED inspection. RTAR became a performative tool with which to compare students and teachers as part of the school's formal accountability processes.

RTAR appeared to increase judgement, surveillance of, and by, teachers and intensified disciplinary power. These factors reflected what Foucault (1977, 177) called normalising judgement, where judgement is a tool which identifies the levels to which normalised behaviour has been achieved, whilst also normalising that behaviour.

Concurrent with judgement were examination and comparison. At the micro scale, teachers' RTAR data was examined in relation to classes, faculties, year groups, ethnicity and gender. This examination fed into meso scale examination of schools and Education Authorities through OfSTED inspection and formed a national picture which was used to rank countries at the macro scale. Of course, comparison has been in place in English schools pre RTAR. However, the fundamental difference post RTAR, was the omnipresent technological mediation of examination and comparison. The school's attendance data was open for real time examination at any time, and by any of an increasingly large number of stakeholders<sup>2</sup>. Consequently the school, and its teachers, were constantly subjected to what Foucault calls panoptic examination.

This leads to disciplinary power (Foucault, 1980). Through mobilising Foucault's work at the micro and meso scales some of the macro scale conditions of disciplinary power are revealed. The normalisation of RTAR data as an indicator of the effectiveness of schools and teachers, and its analysis through Panoptic surveillance, underpinned a culture based upon disciplinary power. In this culture, those teachers and schools who are unable to conform to normalised conditions are judged as non-normalised and therefore

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<sup>2</sup> RTAR was later configured to mediate parents and carers real-time access to their child's attendance records.

in need of ‘support’ - but which in practice is disciplinary power. Ultimately, teachers can lose their jobs and schools closed<sup>3</sup>.

### **Conclusion: Registering attention**

The focus of this paper has been on how RTAR mediated macro scale conditions of disciplinary power, performativity and normalisation, and meso scale technologies of inspection, through the micro scale act of a teacher completing attendance registers. Foucault (1977, 184) is clear with regard to the power of normalisation when he says ‘like surveillance, and with it, normalization becomes one of the great instruments of power’. I imagine that those who designed and manufactured RTAR did not do so for it to mediate normalisation, performativity and disciplinary power. However, at least in the case of Northport High, this appears to have been the case.

I have attempted to demonstrate how normalisation and the mediation of normalised conditions by RTAR have reflected the wider mandate of performativity in English schools. Thomson *et al* (2010) talk of such conditions transmogrifying students into data. This project has revealed that, at Northport High, students appeared to become just that, data. Central to the key informant’s disquiet with this transmogrification, was the effect of reducing in importance the day-to-day contextual story underpinning statistical data and with it part of his professional identity.

This investigation of RTAR might well have resonances beyond the case in question through the ‘inward-outward relationship between scales’ (Thomson *et al*, 2010, 654). Normalisation can be seen manifest in a task as synonymous with schools and

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<sup>3</sup> During the duration of this project Northport High’s head teacher, and a number of teaching and support staff, were replaced during a restructuring process triggered by the result of an OfSTED inspection.

teachers as taking the attendance register. Positioning the attendance register within normalised conditions reconfigures the data from that of merely representing who is present and who is not.

Day and Gu (2010, 6) identify 5 areas of focus for raising learning and teaching standards with the first of these being that 'Attention needs to be paid to the physical, psychological, emotional and social conditions of teachers' work'. Whilst agreeing with this sentiment, this project suggests that a further condition might be added to this list – the technological. Examining how technology mediates normalised conditions reveals some of the complex challenges facing schools and teachers. Moreover, in the case in point, the attendance register, so long a part of what teachers 'do', has become a tool shaped by technology and policy, and which mediates normalised conditions.

I hope to have illustrated to some extent the importance in investigating the work of schools such as Northport High, and teachers such as David Sharma. From examining this case, calling names at the beginning and end of each school day has become representative of normalised and performative conditions. Conditions which appear increasingly omnipresent in much of what teachers are expected to do in their new working lives.

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