What the Foucault?
In defence of theory
OR
Whatever happened to Lesson Evaluations?

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“Science without epistemology is—insofar as it is thinkable at all—primitive and muddled.”

(Einstein, 1949 p.683-684)

What the Foucault? – In defence of theory OR Whatever happened to Lesson Evaluations?

In the midst of the rising popularity of evidence informed practice, and the epistemological argy-bargy between #WhatWorks, #NoBestWay, and #JustTellThem, I seek to present an argument in favour of theory and ontology. I question the presumed authority and certainty of empirical scientific “method”, and challenge the “gold standard” of RCT, emphasising the value of qualitative research and self-research in the work of ‘the teacher’. I draw upon Foucault’s technologies of the self, particularly his Self-Writing as a model for reflective practice via engagement with Twitter and blogging.
Working title:

**Rise of the Tweacher: Towards a critical ontology of the self**

Research Questions

• RQ1: How does Twitter operate as a discursive space for teachers and others involved in education?

• RQ2: How has Twitter shaped educational discourse and practice?

• RQ3: How does use of Twitter form and reform the Self?

*So what?*
Rise of the Tweacher: Towards a critical ontology of the self

Main elements:

• Foucault’s Mirror – a framing of EduTwitter
  – EduTwitter as heterotopia
  – The tweet and the Statement
  – The Author Function
• Twitter and blogging as Self-Writing
• The impact of EduTwitter
  - ResearchED
  - Ofsted and DfE
  - Individuals, including me
Definition of *ontology* in English:

**ontology**

**NOUN**

1. *[mass noun]* The branch of metaphysics dealing with the nature of being.

2. A set of concepts and categories in a subject area or domain that shows their properties and the relations between them.

   ‘*what's new about our ontology is that it is created automatically from large datasets*’

   ‘*we're using ontologies to capture and analyse some of the knowledge in our department*’
Medicine = Education?

**medicine**

*/ˈmed(ə)n, ˈmedsən/ ♂

noun
noun: medicine; plural noun: medicines

1. the science or practice of the diagnosis, treatment, and prevention of disease (in technical use often taken to exclude surgery).
   - the science of the prevention, diagnosis, and treatment of disease.
   - the practice of medicine.
   - *he made distinguished contributions to pathology and medicine* 
   *synonyms*: medical science, practice of medicine, healing, therapeutics, therapy, treatment, 
   - *the remarkable achievements of modern medicine*

2. a drug or other preparation for the treatment or prevention of disease.
   - *give her some medicine*
   *synonyms*: medication, medicament, remedy, cure, nostrum, patent medicine, quack remedy, 
   - panacea, cure-all, placebo, drug, prescription, dose, treatment; More

3. (among North American Indians and some other peoples) a spell, charm, or fetish believed to have healing, protective, or other power.
   - *Fleur was murdering him by use of bad medicine*

**education**

*/ˌɛdjuˈkeʃ(ə)n/ ♂

noun
noun: education; noun: an education

1. the process of receiving or giving systematic instruction, especially at a school or university.
   - a course of education
   *synonyms*: teaching, schooling, tuition, tutoring, instruction, pedagogy, andragogy, coaching, 
   - training, tutelage, drilling, preparation, guidance, indoctrination, inoculation, 
   - enlightenment, edification, cultivation, development, improvement, bettering
   - *the education of children with special needs*

   - the theory and practice of teaching.
   - *colleges of education*

   - a body of knowledge acquired while being educated.
   - *his education is encyclopedic and eclectic*
   *synonyms*: learning, knowledge, literacy, schooling, scholarship, enlightenment, cultivation, 
   - culture, refinement; *archaic* letters
   - *a young woman of some education*
   *antonyms*: ignorance

   - information about or training in a particular subject.
   - *health education*

2. an enlightening experience.
   - *Petrus is a good workman—it is an education to watch him*

**Origin**

**medicus** → **medicina** → medicine
physician → Middle English

Middle English: via Old French from Latin *medicina*, from *medicus* ‘physician’.

**education**

*English* → *educare* → *educatio* → education

*Latin* → *med 16th century*
medicine

/ˈmɛds(ə)n, ˈmɛdɪsɪn/ 🎧

noun
noun: medicine; plural noun: medicines

1. the science or practice of the diagnosis, treatment, and prevention of disease (in technical use often taken to exclude surgery).
   "he made distinguished contributions to pathology and medicine"
   synonyms: medical science, practice of medicine, healing, therapeutics, therapy, treatment, healing art
   "the remarkable achievements of modern medicine"

2. a drug or other preparation for the treatment or prevention of disease.
   "give her some medicine"
   synonyms: medication, medicament, remedy, cure, nostrum, patent medicine, quack remedy, panacea, cure-all, placebo, drug, prescription, dose, treatment;  More

3. (among North American Indians and some other peoples) a spell, charm, or fetish believed to have healing, protective, or other power.
   "Fleur was murdering him by use of bad medicine"

Origin

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>LATIN</th>
<th>LATIN</th>
<th>OLD FRENCH</th>
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<tbody>
<tr>
<td>medicus</td>
<td>medicina</td>
<td>medicine</td>
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Middle English: via Old French from Latin medicina, from medicus 'physician'.
education

noun
noun: education; noun: an education

1. the process of receiving or giving systematic instruction, especially at a school or university.
   "a course of education"
   synonyms: teaching, schooling, tuition, tutoring, instruction, pedagogy, andragogy, coaching, training, tutelage, drilling, preparation, guidance, indoctrination, inculcation, enlightenment, edification, cultivation, development, improvement, bettering
   "the education of children with special needs"

   • the theory and practice of teaching.
     "colleges of education"

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   "Petrus is a good workman—it is an education to watch him"

Origin

LATIN  
educare  

LATIN  
educatio

ENGLISH  
educate

education

mid 16th century
“The Scientific Method”

• “... the use of the definite article ‘The’ in the label “The Scientific Method” implies that there is a single method that scientists use. But, introductory presentations do not agree in detail on what that one method is and neither have historians and philosophers of science.” (Woodcock, 2014, p.2075)

Science or Sciences

[Google Books Ngram Viewer graph showing the usage of "science" and "sciences" over time from 1700 to 2000.]
Foucault’s Self Writing

“It is well known that Foucault wrote in order to transform himself” (Rayner, 2006, p.27)

• “[writing] offers what one has done or thought to a possible gaze; the fact of obliging oneself to write plays the role of a companion by giving rise to the fear of disapproval and to shame” (Foucault, 1997, p.207)

• “weapon in spiritual combat” (p.208)

• “training of the self by oneself” (p.208)
Foucault’s *Self Writing*

Hupomnemata

Correspondence
Hupomnemata

• “a material record of things read, heard, or thought, thus offering them up as a kind of accumulated treasure for subsequent rereading and meditation” (Foucault, 1997, p.210)
• “an equipment of helpful discourses” that are “deeply lodged in the soul”, for “the soul must make them not merely its own but itself” (Foucault, 1997, p.210)
• “to capture the already-said, to collect what one has managed to hear or read, and for a purpose that is nothing less than the shaping of the self” (p.210).
• “the hupomnemata of the Greco-Roman era are not unlike some of the processes we engage with in contemporary social media sites, considering that these sites provide the technology to create digital records of the things we read, hear, or think” (Weisgerber and Butler, 2015, p.1341).
• Curating the Soul: Foucault's concept of hupomnemata and the digital technology of self- care (Weisgerber and Butler, 2015)
Correspondence

• “constitutes a certain way of manifesting oneself to oneself and to others. The letter makes the writer "present" to the one to whom he addresses it” (Foucault, 1997, p.215)

• “constitutes for the writer a kind of training” (p. 215)

• “becomes more capable, in his turn, of giving opinions, exhortations, words of comfort to the one who has undertaken to help him” (p.215)

• “inspector of oneself” (p.219)
Self Writing

Hupomnemata

Correspondence
Self Tweeting

• “becoming oneself through self-care” (Weisgerber and Butler, 2015, p.1353)
• “I tweet therefore I become” (Rayner, 2012a)
So What?

“When researchers do autoethnography, they retrospectively and selectively write about epiphanies that stem from, or are made possible by, being part of a culture and/or by possessing a particular cultural identity” (Ellis et al., 2011).
So What?

• “Thus, one’s identity as a teacher is formed by our response to, and opinion of, such things as policy, professional standards, the inspectorate, and emergent entities such as the College of Teachers.” – @sputniksteve

• Engagement with and within EduTwitter – through tweeting and blogging – could become a powerful CPD tool
Self Writing For Teachers

• Teachers as researchers of their own practice
  – Critical ontology of the self
  – Engagement with theory
  – Informed reflective practice
  – Autoethnography as professional development
  – Professional development as autoethnography
References


