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Perform or else: the performative enhancement of teacher professionalism

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The Singapore Ministry of Education's Enhanced Performance Management System (EPMS) was instituted in 2005 as a system of professional accountability to enhance the standards and stakes of teacher professionalism in schools. This essay explores how the EPMS, with its underlying paradigm of performance management, functions as a "technology of discipline" (Foucault, 1977) within the political economy of teacher professionalization in Singapore. The analysis centres on the discursive mechanisms of a standardised appraisal instrument known as the Work Review Form. Applying speech act theory via the insights of Austin (1962) and Butler (1993, 1997), I argue that teachers' professional qualities are not only described and prescribed but also produced by the appraisal protocols of the EPMS – a process contingent on the discursive performativity of the Work Review Form. Implicated in this notion of performativity are the rhetorical manoeuvres by which teachers perform "on paper" under the pressure to perform. Such performance pressures point to a range of ethical ambiguities surrounding the "enhanced management" of teachers' work under the profit-motive of performance excellence.

Keywords: teacher professionalization; performance management; Enhanced Performance Management System; Singapore; speech act theory; performativity

Introduction: performance management in the neoliberal economy

Educational reforms around the world have engendered programmatic efforts to improve teacher quality for the demands of the 21st century. Such projects in human capital formation are built on the premise that high-performing teachers produce high-performing students for a high-performing economy. Under a regime of global economic competition, the demands of "high-performance schooling" (McKenzie, 2004) have raised the stakes and standards for the performance of teacher professionalism. In turn, teacher professionalization efforts raise urgent questions for systems administrators: How might teachers' performances be measured, managed

and motivated? What performance indicators should evaluations of teacher professionalism rely on? Can performance evaluations enhance the performances of teachers and schools?

This essay examines these questions in connection with the neoliberal paradigm of politico-economic administration known as *performance management*. A product of late 20th-century global capitalism, *neoliberalism* designates a range of politico-economic practices associated with the tenets of economic rationalism, monetarism and neoconservatism. At its ideological heart is the belief that market principles can provide the structural impetus for enhancing performance accountability across the sectors of business, government and education (Gaffikin & Perry, 2009; Harvey, 2005; Ranson, 2003/2007; Rizvi & Lingard, 2010; Whitty, 1997). Performance management's instrumental-rationalist logic encompasses organisational strategies geared toward ends, results and targets. Its goal: to improve systems productivity. Its means: to measure, manage and motivate performance at the level of individuals, departments and organisations.

Performance management entered the global arena of management science in the late 1980s (McKenzie, 2001). Among its familiar corporate strategies are the practices of outsourcing, downsizing, performance-based merit pay, systems thinking and total quality management. More recently, the emergence of performance management discourses within educational settings has seen an increasing emphasis on efficiency, autonomy, competition, consumer choice and decentralized governance as drivers of teacher professionalism and accountability (Burbules & Torres, 2000; Clarke & Newman, 1997; Kirkpatrick & Lucio, 1995). Such changes betoken a significant cultural shift. Indeed, the structural reforms wrought by these "new managerialist" practices have been accompanied by a "transformation of cultural assets:

from trusteeship to entrepreneurship, procedural to market bureaucracy, and collective to individual association” (Robertson, 2000, p. 28).

Performance management is the *modus operandi* of an accountability regime, known as the Enhanced Performance Management System (EPMS), that governs the administration of schools, institutions and offices throughout the Singapore Ministry of Education (MOE). Instituted in 2005 as part of larger structural and cultural reforms throughout the educational system (Gopinathan, 1999; Sharpe & Gopinathan, 2002), the EPMS provides a standardised framework of performance standards by which teachers, school leaders and administrators are routinely evaluated. The system not only oversees the reward of promotions, tenure, salary increases and performance bonuses, but also underscores the importance of reflective practice among teachers. According to Teo Chee Hean, the former Minister of Education:

The EPMS is designed so that supervisors can help teachers develop into better teachers. By providing our officers with greater clarity in the competencies and behaviours expected of them, EPMS will help them to actively reflect on their capabilities and achievements, and chart their own professional development. (Teo, 2002)

How does “actively reflect[ing] on their capabilities and achievements” enhance teachers’ responsibility for their own professional development? How does this formative assessment process contribute to the means and ends of summative assessment? How does the EPMS distribute the burden of assessment between the assessors and the assessed? To answer these questions is to undertake a theoretical and empirical investigation of the paradigmatic practices of performance management.

This paper explores the forms and functions of performance management in relation to the goals of teacher professionalization in Singapore. Specifically, I analyse the procedures and protocols of the EPMS through by which teachers’ performances are identified, codified and ratified. At the centre of these operations is the Work Review Form (MOE, n.d.[a]), which uses a

standardized matrix of “performance indicators” to document the professional work of MOE personnel including teachers and school leaders. Crucially, the completion of the Work Review entails a process of textualization – namely, the translation of teachers’ work into a set of formal records that become the evidentiary basis upon which teachers are rated, ranked and rewarded. Such administrations rely for their operational effectiveness on the *performative* effects of written appraisals. By “performative” I refer to the productive effects of textual “practices that systematically form the objects of which they speak” (Foucault, 1972, p. 205). A linguistic-philosophical concept based in speech act theory, performativity delineates the material consequences effected in and through the act of speaking or writing. In J. L. Austin’s (1962) terms, performativity is less about referring to things with words than about “doing things with words”. Applying speech act theory via the insights of Austin and Judith Butler (1993, 1997), I argue that the function of discursive instruments such as work reviews, resumes and teacher portfolios do not simply “review” or “represent” the work of teachers; more trenchantly, these instruments *constitute* the very qualities and qualifications by which teachers’ professional identities are affirmed. A rhetorical exercise in the art of self-representation, the written script substitutes for the embodied performance itself.

To examine the relationship between performance, performance appraisals and performativity, I begin by examining the principle of participative self-management implicit in the EPMS. I then analyse the workings of the EPMS with reference to the contents and intents of the Work Review Form for teachers. Specifically, I adopt the lens of Austinian speech act theory to examine the ways in which these written appraisal forms *performatively* construct the facts and figures by which teachers’ performances are framed. In conclusion, I consider the ethics of

performativity in relation to the pragmatic responses of school teachers compelled to perform “on paper” under the pressures of performance management regimes.

The qualitative data presented in this paper belong to a larger ethnographic study that examined the thematic of “teaching as performance” within the performance cultures of schooling in Singapore (Liew, 2010). For the purposes of my argument, I draw on semi-structured and informal interviews conducted between 2008 and 2010 with six teachers (including one department head and a former school principal) from a range of primary and secondary schools. All names of individuals and schools have been replaced by pseudonyms, and the details of Work Review data selectively edited to mask all identifying information.

Performance evaluation as participative management

Performance appraisals constitute a principal methodology for human resource accounting in many private and public sector organisations. Such performance management tools underwrite a model of accountability that calls teachers to account for their performances through a process of self-evaluation. Within the MOE, this project of “self-management” is conducted within a hierarchical relationship between the “Jobholder” (e.g., the teacher being assessed) and his/her “Reporting Officer” (RO). The latter is usually an immediate superior whose role is to monitor, review and assess the Jobholder’s performance at the end of each academic year (*Performance Management Guide*, n.d., p. 3).

[Figure 1]

The EPMS consists of three phases (Figure 1). In the Performance Planning phase, teachers meet with their ROs to negotiate in writing a set of performance targets and professional development plans. During the second phase of Performance Coaching, ROs support their teachers in achieving these performance targets. Finally, the Performance Evaluation process that

teachers undergo in the third phase consists of both criterion-based and ipsative assessments: not only are their competencies rated on an official rubric of key performance indicators (or “Key Result Areas”), their achievements are also evaluated against the very targets set during the Performance Planning phase.

Central to the Performance Evaluation process is the Performance Appraisal Interview, during which ROs “discuss specific ways the Jobholder could demonstrate competencies to further enhance performance results” (*Performance Management Guide*, n.d., pp. 11-12). The interview invites teachers to reflect on their goals, strengths and “areas for improvement” as part of a participatory process of self-assessment:

Reporting Officers should conduct the Performance Appraisal Interview before making any final evaluation. This gives Jobholders an opportunity to account for their performance. When the Performance Appraisal Interview relates to and influences the outcome of the final performance and potential assessment, *the officers will feel that they have control of this outcome and will accept the results better.* (p. 31; my emphasis)

The ideological underpinnings of this model of participatory self-management can be traced through the history of Western industrial development. Performance management gained ascendancy in the latter half of the 20th century as a paradigm shift in organisational management, replacing the older model of *scientific management* that was the brainchild of American mechanical engineer Frederick Winslow Taylor (1911/1967). Engineered on the principles of economic efficiency and productivity, scientific management envisaged a machine model of industrial efficiency built on assembly lines, production quotas and tightly-calibrated activity schedules. Underpinning Taylor’s system of performance standards/standardization was the enforcement of subordination and supervision:

It is only through *enforced* standardisation of methods, *enforced* adoption of the best implements and working conditions, and *enforced* cooperation that this faster work can be assured. And the duty of *enforcing* the adoption of standards and enforcing this cooperation rests with *management* alone. (p. 83; emphasis in original)

If scientific management relies on the oversight of sovereign control over systems efficiency, performance management resides in the balance of top-down power and ground-up empowerment, whereby “[t]he challenge of efficiency extends from measuring and evaluating performance to creating and developing it” (McKenzie, 2001, p. 59). By thus “empowering” teachers to clarify and qualify their own professional achievements, the EPMS aims to induce a principled commitment to the goals of teacher professionalism. Implicit in this logic of worker empowerment are the twin imperatives of *management* (i.e. measuring and evaluating performance effectiveness) and *production* (i.e. creating and developing performance capacity). Accordingly, the key to teacher professionalization is to engage teachers in a participatory process that establishes their dual agency as independent *and* dependent subjects. One becomes a professional subject to the extent that one becomes subject to the laws of one’s profession. As Foucault (1982) explains:

There are two meanings of the word subject: subject to someone else by control and dependence, and tied to his own identity by a conscience or self-knowledge. Both meanings suggest a form of power which subjugates and makes subject to. (p. 212)

By performing their roles in accord with the official script of performance standards and expectations, teachers cooperate in legitimizing their identities as professional subjects. This process of subjectification operates, moreover, at the level of discursive recognition, for to be appraised by the EPMS is to be “hailed” or “interpellated” (Althusser, 1971) as a salaried employee of the education service. The interpellation of the teacher-subject through the use of formal protocols enacts a reflexive interplay of power: not only does the appraisal process entitle teachers to the powers and privileges accruing to their positions as professional subjects, it also subjects them to the disciplinary norms of these subject-positions.

Working in mutual isolation within their own classrooms, teachers are ordinarily the chief arbiters of their own professional practices. Shielded by the walls of cellular classrooms,

teaching has often been characterized by a high degree of “role performance invisibility” (Miles, 1969, p. 383). The EPMS appraisals function in part to overcome the limits of supervisory surveillance, for its bureaucratic intent is to render “transparent” the performances expected of teachers through an optic of objective measures by which teachers can then judge themselves. These measures allocate visibility to teachers’ performances by locating them within a matrix of *discursive* descriptors. By “discursive” I refer to the textualization of performances in the form of written records – a means of translating qualitative experiences and processes into a set of legible documents for the purposes of “human resource management”. Performance management, in effect, requires a discursive technology designed to codify the nature of teachers’ work in and outside the classroom. Within the EPMS, the primary instrument of codification is the Work Review Form, the form and functions of which are explored in the following sections.

Constructing teacher professionalism: the Work Review Form

Under the auspices of the EPMS, promotions, pay increments and other performance-based awards are meted out as part of a formal system of professionalization incentives. The evidentiary basis of these award decisions is the Work Review Form, a standardized protocol that documents and evaluates the work of Jobholders in the MOE. Embedded in a hierarchical chain of inspection, the Work Review enables heads of department, principals and ministry officials to “track” teachers’ performances throughout their professional careers. Consistent with the filing systems of bureaucratic organisations, these performance records, along with teachers’ educational histories and resumes, are stored in centralized databases as textual embodiments of teachers’ professional identities. Each set of records becomes, in sum, the “body of work” on which a teacher’s career is built within the education service.

There are currently three customized versions of the Work Review Form which correspond to the three career tracks or “fields of excellence” identified by the MOE’s Education Service Professional Development And Career Plan (Edu-Pac). Launched in 2001, the Edu-Pac allows Education Officers to embark on one of three career tracks: the Teaching track, the Leadership track, and the Senior Specialist track. An attempt to honour the different interests, abilities and aspirations of MOE professionals, “[t]he 3 career tracks under the Edu-Pac career structure aim to nurture and motivate all teachers to achieve superior performance” (MOE, 2011). The professional expectations specific to each career track are amply reflected in a range of documents, including the Work Review Form. The following analysis will focus on the Work Review Form for Teachers, while recognising that there are some differences between the three forms.

[Table 1]

The Work Review Form for teachers is divided into seven sections. Each section, apart from Section Two (“Teaching Competencies”), consists of boxes and columns that the Jobholder is expected to fill in with self-reported details of work targets, accomplishments, improvements, development plans and innovations (Table 1). For example, Section One asks teachers to “[s]tate briefly the targets for the period under review” and to list both mid-year and year-end “Achievements and Progress” with respect to four Key Result Areas: (1) Holistic Development of Students; (2) Contribution to School; (3) Collaboration with Parents; and (4) Professional Developments. For illustrative purposes, Tables 2a and 2b feature an edited extract of Section One excerpted from a research participant’s Work Review Form.

Section Two of the Form consists of six pages of multi-columned tables delineating the qualities, actions and dispositions expected of effective teachers. The Form designates a total of

five “Competency Clusters” (including one “Core Competency”), each comprising a discrete set of competency descriptors (Tables 3a and 3b). For example, the Competency Cluster titled “Cultivating Knowledge” features five competency descriptors; one of these, titled “Teaching Creatively,” contains the following performance indicators: (1) Uses routine methods; (2) Appeals to interest; (3) Uses a range of techniques; (4) Teaches a range of concepts simultaneously; and (5) Inspires learning beyond the curriculum. Taken together, the five Competency Clusters comprise an impressive suite of 45 performance indicators. Each indicator is pegged to a four-point rating scale with the Likert-type categories *Exceeding*, *Competent*, *Developing*, or *Not Observed* (Table 4). For each performance indicator, mid-year and year-end scores are entered in adjacent columns to provide comparative scores for the purposes of formative assessment.

At the end of the evaluation process, the RO assigns the teacher a Performance Grade of *A*, *B*, *C*, or *D* that takes into account not only the quantitative mean of year-end scores across all competency items in Section Two, but also the qualitative sum of the “Achievements & Progress” enumerated in Sections One, Three and Four. During the annual staff-ranking exercise, this recommended grade may be “moderated” as a consequence of being “ranked” against the scores of other teachers holding the same substantive grade. The final performance grade becomes the basis for the allotment of one-time annual performance bonuses, which range from one to more than three times the teacher’s monthly salary. Other incentives based on the Work Review process include grade promotions and annual pay increments.

[Insert Tables 2a & 2b, Tables 3a & 3b, and Table 4 here **or elsewhere**]

Striking is the extent to which the will to itemize and atomize is writ large throughout these official documents. Accompanying the Work Review Form is the *Performance*

Management Guide (n.d.), a 36-page manual that explicates in painstaking detail the procedural requirements for each phase of the Performance Management Cycle, as well as the performance standards expected of each “field of excellence”. Companion to this guide are three separate manuals subtitled “Role profile, Competency Dictionary, Development Advisor”, each comprising more than 70 pages of bullet points, diagrams and tables specifying the respective roles, competencies and career-development pathways for Teachers, Leaders and Senior Specialists (MOE, n.d.[b, c, d]). Especially meticulous is the Competency Dictionary for teachers, which features ten columns corresponding to the ten “substantive grades” based on a teacher’s educational qualifications and years of experience,¹ with each grade carefully matched to an individualized repertoire of desired competencies.

Taken together, the meticulous differentiation of standards and expectations furnishes an elaborate taxonomy that identifies key performance indicators at every level of the organisational hierarchy. The burden of this “project of legibility” (Scott, 1998) is the translation of complex practices into a schema of succinct descriptors, with the aim of rendering visible in “high-resolution” the hidden labours of teachers’ role performance invisibility. What emerges from this formal attention to detail, nonetheless, is a synoptic view of a selective reality – one that aims not only to define the generalizable attributes of teacher professionals, but also to confine their specifics within a discursive order of represent-ability. Central to the methodology of bureaucratic administration, “[c]ompartimentalisation defines the limits of relevancy; it brackets our definitions of context and content, and imposes measures of credibility that determine what we accept and reject as true and as false” (Britzman, 2003, p. 35).

¹ In ascending rank order, these ten substantive grades are: Beginning Teacher, General Education Officer 2A1, General Education Officer 2A2, General Education Officer 2A3, General Education Officer 1A1, General Education Officer 1A2, General Education Officer 1A3, Senior Teacher, Master Teacher 1 and Master Teacher 2.

In sum, these competency matrices establish a descriptive and prescriptive framework for the legitimation of teachers' professional identities (Table 1). What defines its objective contents is an "anatomy of detail" (Foucault, 1977, p. 139), to be dissected on the Work Review's operating table of performance indices. While Section Two of the Work Review Form is structured on the specifications of the EPMS's Role Profiles and Competency Dictionaries, the other sections of the Form consist of empty fields to be populated by qualitative data that can attest to the scope and specifics of the Jobholder's professional contributions. Consequently, the primary goal of completing the Work Review Form – beyond that of facilitating teachers' reflective practice – is to validate one's professional accomplishments. To what extent, then, does the Work Review Form function as a *rhetorical* document that conflates the art of representation with the act of legitimation? To examine the implications of this claim in theory and practice, an invocation of speech act theory is in order.

From performance to performativity

In the William James Lectures delivered at Harvard University in 1955, the English philosopher J. L. Austin initiated a theory of speech acts that sought to examine the relationship between language and reality. Austin (1962) postulated an initial distinction between *constative* and *performative* speech acts. While constatives are statements that can be understood as either true or false (p. 15), performatives are utterances (such as naming, betrothing, sentencing and confessing) that execute the very actions they name. For example, the sentence, "I pronounce you man and wife", uttered in a specific ritual context, legally effects the consummation of a wedding. A performative, then, is one in which "the issuing of the utterance is the performing of an action" (p. 163).

If constatives can be said to refer passively to objects, states and events in reality, performatives can be seen to accomplish their meanings by actively *transforming* reality. This distinction, however, turns out to be spurious: Austin himself collapsed his initial dichotomy of constatives and performatives, conceding that “truth” is itself the performative effect of any persuasive utterance. To the extent that a statement of fact engenders belief in its veracity, such a statement becomes performative in its rhetorical ability to combine “make-belief” with “make-believe”. The performative force behind any “factual” statement, then, lies in its capacity to *produce* the impression of its facticity. To assert, in this sense, is to persuade.

Although speech act theory is concerned primarily with *spoken* utterances, it can be argued that *written* texts function as speech acts of an equally consequential nature. The exemplar at hand is the EPMS’s Work Review Form. While the form’s constative function is to provide the school with a “truthful” account of a teacher’s professional knowledge, skills and dispositions, its performative force endorses and enforces the very standards it spells out. The injunctions behind these accountability metrics are articulated in the descriptive clauses for each performance indicator. For instance, to judge whether a teacher is “Teaching Creatively” (a sub-competency of “Cultivating Knowledge”) is to ascertain the degree to which s/he “Uses routine methods”, “Appeals to interest”, “Uses a range of techniques”, “Teaches a range of concepts simultaneously” and “Inspires learning beyond the curriculum” (see Cluster 2d in Table 2a). From a discourse-analytic perspective, at least three rhetorical effects can be discerned in the syntax and semantics of such descriptors:

(1) In terms of tense and aspect, the repeated use of the third-person singular indicative present (e.g., “*Inspires* learning beyond the curriculum”) situates these actions or competencies in an “eternal present”, as if to suggest their perpetuity beyond the contextual specificities of time and

place. By implication, the teacher who “Teaches Creatively” should *consistently* do so as part of a tireless professional ethic.

(2) The elision of the grammatical subject (i.e., *Name of teacher/He/She/I*) nominates in its place an anonymous subject who is at once the specific teacher being appraised and the generic teacher-professional. Subsumed by this rubric of generalized anonymity, the individual teacher who “Uses a range of techniques” is by implication no different from any other teacher who is stated to have done the same.

(3) Also strategic is the referentially imprecise nature of such statements as “Uses a range of techniques” (how wide a range?), “Uses routine methods” (is “routine” preferred to “unusual” or “exceptional”?) and “Appeals to interest” (whose interests?). The vagueness of these descriptors functions precisely to widen the horizon of possible interpretations, as if to invite dialogic negotiations between the Jobholder and the RO in line with the “democratic” tenets of participatory self-management.

In the final analysis, what these performance descriptors supply is a standardized coding scheme that selectively identifies the knowledge, skills and dispositions against which teachers are required to rate themselves. Indeed, the power of such rubrics to objectify the work of teaching in terms of observable competencies reveals the nexus of discourse and legitimation that undergirds the performative construction of teacher professionalism. As Michael Apple (1986) has observed: “The continuing attempt by administrators and state bureaucrats to define the skills of teaching as a set of objectively determined competencies ... documents exactly this continuing connection between skill and power” (p. 187). In a word, those who write the law wield the right to judge.

Performance as performative enhancement

Researchers have often raised concerns over the negative consequences of new managerialist practices in educational settings. A common criticism centres on the ideology of technical-rationality that underpins performance-based systems of human resource management – in particular, the system’s pretence to “objectivity” and “meritocracy” in the name of productive efficiency (Ball, 2003; Clark & Newman, 1997; Popkewitz, 1998; Welch, 1998). Similar objections were gleaned from my interviews with Singaporean schoolteachers. One teacher challenged the assumption that the qualitative sum of teachers’ work can be approximated by its quantitative summation:

How do you measure effort in terms of, say, talking to students after class, or counselling them? How do you quantify students’ learning and teachers’ caring for students? Is bringing students on an excursion a point that should be listed on a score sheet? It’s essentially about listing and counting the things you do, more about quantity than quality. (Gavin, September 21, 2008, interview)

Paralleling the equation of quantity with quality is the conflation of countability with accountability. In their critical assessment of educational reforms in Hong Kong and Singapore, Jan Currie, Lesley Vidovich and Rui Yang (2008) contend that the display-function of performance measures threatens to displace its reform mission:

A major tension present in the accountability/quality literature is between improving an organization and proving to others that the organization is accountable for its processes and outcomes.... there has been a shift towards the prove (QA) dimension of accountability at the expense of the improve (QI) dimension. (p. 68)

Accordingly, the point is less to improve one’s teaching than to *prove* one’s worth as a teacher. As one teacher argued, the Work Review Form places the burden of proof on words that purport to represent the facts of a teacher’s competence:

It’s basically show-and-tell, about showing your supervisors what you’ve done to prove that you’re good at what you’re doing. Whether or not you’re really that good is of course a subjective matter. If you satisfy all the standards stated in the Work Review, does it really mean that you’re a good teacher? (Adrian, December 14, 2008, interview)

Recording one's accomplishments accurately is not as important as representing them adroitly.

According to another teacher, when completing the Work Review Form it is better to err on the side of immodesty than humility:

Now in EPMS, you must show that you are being innovative every year. So long as you do something differently from last year, it's called "innovation". I had to pad my Work Review with a detailed account of how many different "innovative" things I had done last year. (Hilda, January 14, 2010, interview)

What this amounts to is a rhetorical exercise in argumentation, weighted with the evidence of descriptive details. One secondary school teacher spoke of how his RO had advised him to "dress up" his Work Review by

listing literally everything, and making some things sound more important. For example, instead of "marking", I would write "correcting students' work and giving them quality feedback". Just because I called one parent one time, that became a point for "Collaboration with Parents". And just because I happened to introduce two students to my friend's law firm for an internship, I was given points for "Collaboration with External Organisations". (Gilbert, January 14, 2010, email interview)

Asked if they had "inflated" their Work Reviews, two teachers replied:

The EPMS is not so much fabrication as self-aggrandizement where you will try to represent things better than they are. For example, write it in such a way that the committee sounds really special. (Adrian, December 14, 2008, interview)

It [the Work Review Form] allows them to inflate their performance, or to put more emphasis on the things that are more likely to be seen by the administrators as important, for example, the time you spend marking or preparing work. But does someone who puts in ten hours do more than someone who puts in more but puts down less on paper? (Gavin, September 21, 2008, email interview)

These criticisms were echoed by another teacher in exasperated tones:

Some people put down every single thing they do, some don't. How do you ensure that it's done properly? Some people state they photocopy notes for students, some don't. Some go on for 12, 13 pages, some go for three. But does that mean that those who have more to list do a lot more? (Nick, October 8, 2008, interview)

According to these testimonies, the aim of performance reviews is not simply to represent the efforts of one's professional input, but to present the evidence of one's productive output with the aim of impressing one's superiors. As a compendium of performative statements, the discursive records on a Work Review Form do not simply fulfil a referential function; rather,

teachers are *ascribed* the very qualities and accomplishments described therein. Consequently, to represent one's self in laudatory terms is to be credited accordingly by one's appraisers.

Tellingly, a Head of Department who had previously served in the capacity of RO stated candidly that to excel in the performance appraisal was to "play the game right":

I know that from a teacher's perspective, filling up the Work Review is more laborious than anything else. But it's necessary to play the game right. So I actually tell my staff that how you state your achievements has to do with how you stage yourself. (Linda, February 22, 2010, email interview)

The competent actor on the professional stage, then, is one who can play the game of rhetorical self-fashioning. More philosophically, to adduce evidence of one's professionalism is to participate in a "language game" (Wittgenstein, 1953/2001), where the "truth" of one's professionalism is legitimated by its representation. An Austinian notion of discursive performativity, moreover, discloses the linguistic basis on which the veracity of teachers' performances are constructed. The facts and figures that appear in the Work Review Form, informed by a working language of "Role Profiles" and "Competency Dictionaries", establish the defining categories within which teacher-subjects attain legitimacy as professionals. As written speech acts, these appraisal texts wield a performative power to grant their subjects professional legibility: not only do they "speak" on behalf of their subjects, they also *write* their subjects into professional existence.

A number of studies (e.g., Gleeson & Husbands, 2001) have adverted to the insidious effects of performance validations through audits, inspections and other "rituals of verification" (Power, 1999). With "performance" as the overriding measure of teacher quality and school effectiveness, schools and individuals are under pressure to compete for recognition on the basis of annual reviews, appraisals and ranking tables. Such performance pressures have reportedly resulted in unethical attempts to fabricate results and achievements – unintended consequences,

perhaps, of the accountability mandates of neoliberal doctrine. According to Stephen Ball (2003):

Fabrications are versions of an organization (or person) which does not exist – they are not “outside the truth” but neither do they render simply true or direct accounts – they are produced purposefully in order “to be accountable”. Truthfulness is not the point – the point is their effectiveness, both in the market or for inspection or appraisal, and in the “work” they do “on” and “in” the organisation – their transformational and disciplinary impact. (p. 224).

Effective performances are, in effect, justified by the truth immanent in the effectiveness of lies – a point trenchantly explicated by the philosopher Jean-François Lyotard (1979/1984). For Lyotard, the “performativity principle” defines the legitimation rules of what he calls “the postmodern condition”, according to which performances are judged by the totalizing criteria of efficiency and productivity. Insofar as personal ambitions are subordinated to the corporate intentions of systems efficiency, “the goal is no longer truth, but performativity – that is, the best possible input/output equation” (p. 46). The excellent performer is s/he who reaps the most in net profits.

Performativity, as a “true” reflector of excellence in performance, implicates the discursive instruments of performance management in the productive effects of power. In Foucault’s (1977) formulation, “power produces; it produces reality; it produces domains of objects and rituals of truth” (p. 194). Contrary to the “repressive hypothesis” (Foucault, 1978), teacher-professionals are “produced” in the institutional realm not by repression but through *expression*. Central to this “expressive” administration of the self is the labour of compiling annual lists of targets, results and achievements for the EPMS. Becoming a successful teacher-professional, therefore, entails not so much the actual attainment of performance standards, but the *performative* act of indexing, illustrating and justifying one’s attainments according to these standards.

I want to suggest further that these performative enhancements of performance are complicit in teachers' resistance against the accountability mandates of education reform movements (e.g., Achinstein & Ogawa, 2006; Gitlin & Margonis, 1995; Kerr, 2006; Picower, 2011). Artful in their attempts to "play the game right", such acts of resistance disclose the ways in which teachers collude agentively in the administration of their professional lives. In a study of the impact of educational reforms on British schoolteachers' practices and perceptions, Alex Moore, Gwyn Edwards, David Halpin and Rosalyn George (2002) described how teachers adapted to the pressures of work intensification by accommodating to those mandates most congruent with their cherished beliefs and practices, or else appropriating those they disagreed with. These conciliatory and oppositional responses were described as "principled pragmatism" and "contingent pragmatism" respectively. Moore (2005) has further suggested that some teachers justify any kind of pragmatic action "as an appropriate and virtuous professional orientation" (p. 197) – a stance he calls *ideological pragmatism*. The notion of ideological pragmatism offers a compelling utilitarian justification for teachers' adaptive performances according to the script of rating and ranking systems. On this account, the EPMS can be understood as a facilitative mechanism through which Jobholders can strategically maintain their professional identities through the performative effects of performance appraisals.

One might argue, then, that to denounce teachers' "fictional" constructions of performance excellence as unethical is to discount the ethical validity of pragmatic resistance. Instigated by the neoliberal pursuit of market competitiveness, fabrications of performance may be justifiable to the extent that they contribute to the visible success of a high-performing school. For the ideological pragmatist committed to maximizing the greatest benefits in the face of competing interests (see Bentham, 1789/1961), the individual dividends of such calculated

performances may be seen to vindicate the competitive pursuit of profit at the cost of ethical compromises. Performativity's ethical calculus for decision-making substitutes deontological questions of truth, duty and integrity with the utilitarian quest for self-preservation. Teachers that thrive and survive must perform, or else perish.

Conclusion

The last two decades have witnessed a growing number of government and non-governmental organisations dedicated to the promulgation of performance management techniques and principles. Premised on the logic of human-resource optimization, performance management has been touted as neoliberalism's definitive effort to "engineer human competence" for "worthy performance" (Gilbert, 1978, p. 1). At its core is a model of professional accountability and control that has come to dominate not only the operations of business and corporate-industrial management, but also the discourses and practices of educational reform.

This paper has provided a critical perspective on the disciplinary technologies of performance management in the context of teacher professionalization in Singapore. Applying an Austinian conception of performativity to the analysis of the MOE's Enhanced Performance Management System, I have tried to show how the discursive technologies of performance management leverage both regulative and productive effects via the operational nexus of *performance* and *performativity*. A critical insight is that teachers' knowledge, skills and dispositions do not exist independently of their discursive realizations; rather, teachers' performances are decisively framed by the categorical constructs of institutionally sanctioned performance indicators. These indicators do not so much describe as inscribe the truth of their referents; their accountability effects reside less in their referential functions than in their performative constructions of teacher professionalism. By reducing the live and lived

performances of teachers to the textualized records on an appraisal document, a teacher's professional identity may be read as a kind of "discursive performance" (Butler, 1993). The documentation of a performance, in effect, is the mark of its accomplishment.

As the evidential basis for an organisation's "meritocratic" decisions regarding promotions, tenure and merit pay, the EPMS embodies a disciplinary technology for the production of teacher competency. The linchpin of this device is the administration of the Work Review Form, a discursive instrument designed to record, rate and ratify the evidence of a teacher's professional competency. Astonishing in their scope and specificity, the appraisal rubrics contained in this form and the companion Performance Management Guide discharge a vital disciplinary role: they enumerate and elaborate, in order to legitimate, the very standards by which teachers' performances are judged. That these scoring devices furnish a selective, if not reductive, account of the complexities of teachers' work is hardly taken to undermine their purported reliability and validity. In a system built on performance ratings and rankings, what counts is what ultimately gets counted.

That teachers might learn to "beat the system" by playing the game for profit need not seem an unseemly compromise. In the midst of unrelenting performance pressures, we might instead applaud teachers for seeking recourse to an ideology of pragmatism. To adapt one's values to the system's demands, after all, is to be committed to what Foucault (1988) has called the "care of the self". Such techniques of the self "permit individuals to effect by their own means or with the help of others a certain number of operations ... so as to transform themselves in order to attain a certain state of happiness" (p. 18). Ultimately, the teacher who cares enough for himself/herself must learn to excel performatively in the interests of professional advancement, for "[t]he new performative worker is a promiscuous self, an enterprising self,

with a passion for excellence” (Ball, 2003, p. 215). Why, then, should teachers of the neoliberal economy not promiscuously seek out “unethical” solutions for their enterprising passions? In the pursuit of excellence, performance management couples the admonition to perform or perish with the injunction: *perform to prosper!*

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Figure 1. The Enhanced Performance Management Process (*Performance Management Guide*, n.d., p. 3).

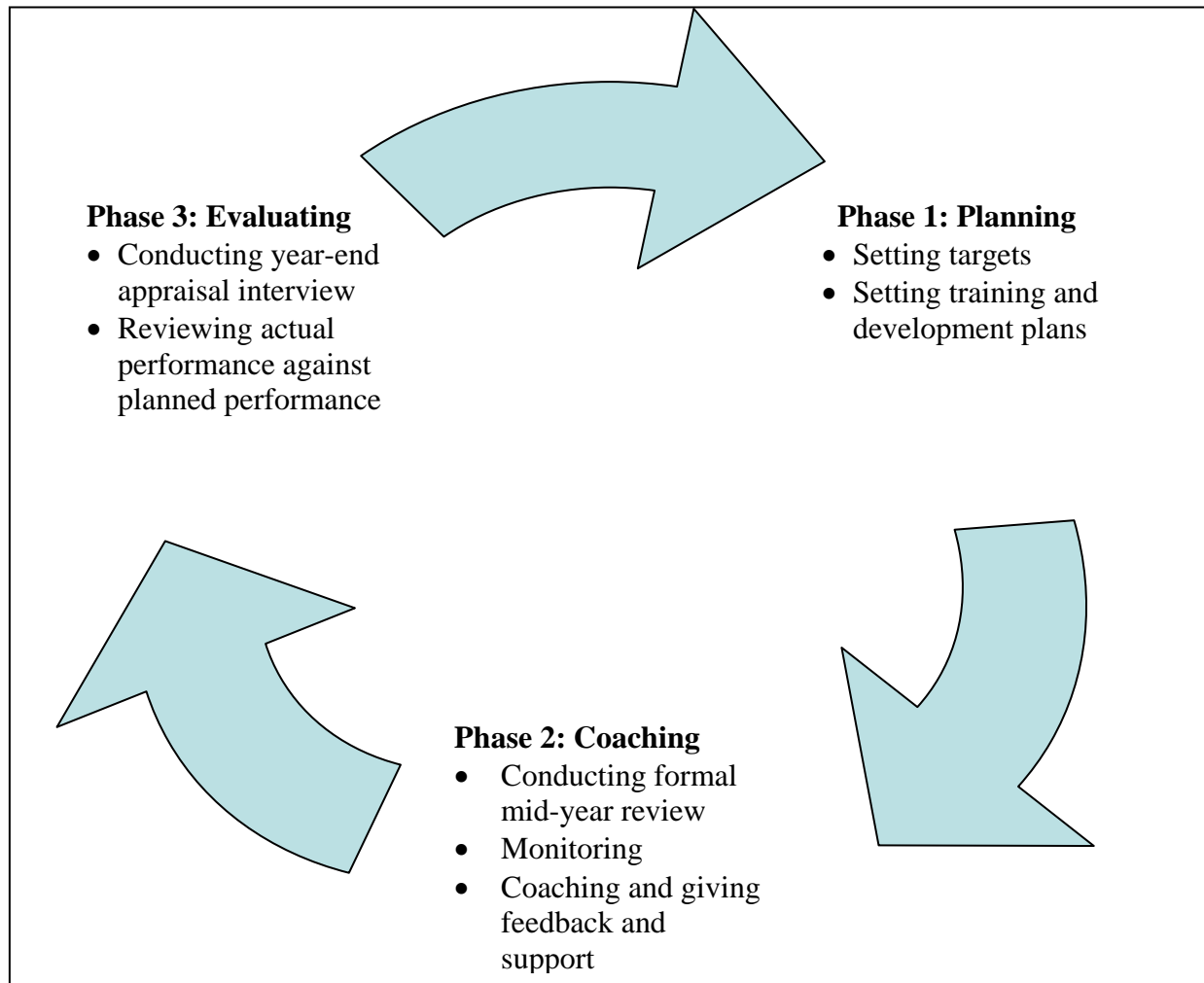


Table 1. Contents of the Education Service Work Review Form for Teachers (MOE, n.d.[a]).

Section	Heading	Terms of Assessment
1	Key Result Areas (KRA) for Period Under Review	Descriptive self-reports
2	Teaching Competencies	Qualitative descriptors pegged to a four-point Rating Scale.
3	Improvement & Innovation for Period Under Review	Descriptive self-reports
4	Training and Development Plans during Period Under Review	Description of professional development programmes, courses, and seminars (drawn up in consultation with RO).
5	Targets for Next Assessment Year	Predicted achievements in KRAs.
6	Training & Development Plans for Next Assessment Year	Description of professional development programs, courses, and seminars (decided in consultation with RO).
7	Review and Comments	Jobholder's and RO's concluding comments.

Table 2a. Extract of Section 1 of the Work Review Form submitted by one teacher.

SECTION 1: KEY RESULT AREAS (KRA)		
INSTRUCTIONS:		
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> You and your Reporting Officer should use this section to set your targets and review your achievements and progress at mid-year and year-end. In the setting of the targets, you should refer to the relevant Role Profile for your job level and your School / Department’s Annual Work Plan. Please refer to the Performance Management Guide for the guidelines on how to do this. You should periodically reflect on your progress and record your observations for the mid-year and year-end reviews under the columns marked ‘Achievement & Progress’. <p>When reviewing the achievements and progress for each KRA, consider:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> How far have targets /objectives been met? What are the areas of strength and areas for improvement? 		
Targets State briefly the targets for the period under review. Please highlight no more than five key areas of responsibilities.	Achievements & Progress	
	Mid-Year	Year-End
I. Holistic Development of Students through:		
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Quality Learning of Students 		
Provide clear objectives for each lesson/lecture; draw connections between lessons and learning outcomes; review learning outcomes at the end of lesson.	Goals for each lesson clearly explained to students. Administered oral and written assessments regularly to test content & skills.	Same
Ensure that lessons are tailored to meet the needs and abilities of students.	Differentiated teaching to meet the needs of 1A (a quiet and studious class) and 1B (a less motivated but highly spirited class).	Lessons adjusted to suit class’s learning pace.
Reflect on and evaluate teaching based on student feedback.	Collected student feedback on reading package as part of self-directed action research. Shared with students my follow-up actions on their feedback.	Same
Track weaker students’ progress early & to start consultations early	Held consultations with failures from mid-year exam with periodic checks on their progress.	Done

Table 2b. Extract of Section 1 of the “Work Review Form for Teachers” (cont’d).

<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Pastoral Care & Well-being of Students 		
Encourage weaker students and counsel at-risk students	Counseled student suffering from anxiety disorder	Same
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Co-Curricular Activities 		
Advisor to Student Well-Being Department	Liaised with external organizations to arrange internships. Interviewed students for internships.	Done
Find partners in arts & legal circles for Internships.	Found internship with media organization and law firm	Done
2. Contribution to School		
Vetting for SGC.	Vetting and editing SGC drafts for one class.	Done
3. Collabouration with Parents		
Conference with Principal to handle parents.	Obtained feedback from parents of students in three classes.	Received positive feedback from five parents
4. Professional Developments		
Weekly Professional Development sessions. In-house training for Project Work (PW) during June holidays.	Attended and participated actively in these sessions.	Done
5. Others		
Member of exam-setting team for Common Tests and Mid-year Exams for General Paper and Project Work	Set test and exam questions and answer schemes, and vetted marking of projects.	Done
Mentor new teacher Mr John Yang for Project Work	Guided John on improving his pedagogy and assessment techniques.	John showed greater ability and confidence in designing tests and exams.

Table 3a. Performance Indicators of the EPMS Teacher Competency Model.

Competency Clusters (5)	Competencies (13)	Performance Indicators (45)
1. Nurturing the Whole Child (Core Competency)	The passion and commitment to nurture the whole child.	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> (i) Shares values. (ii) Takes actions. (iii) Strives for the best possible provision. (iv) Encourages others to act in the best interest of the child. (v) Influences policies, programmes and procedures.
2. Cultivating Knowledge	<i>a) Subject Mastery:</i> The drive to find out more and stay abreast of developments in one's field of excellence.	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> (i) Has knowledge in subject area and awareness of educational issues. (ii) Keeps abreast with trends and developments in own subject area. (iii) Applies knowledge of trends and developments into lessons. (iv) Develops innovative approaches. (v) Provides thought leadership.
	<i>b) Analytical Thinking:</i> The ability to think logically, break things down and recognize cause and effect.	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> (i) Breaks down problems. (ii) Sees basic relationships. (iii) Sees multiple relationships. (iv) Analyses complex problems. (v) Develops solutions to multi-dimensional problems.
	<i>c) Initiative:</i> The drive and ability to think ahead of the present and act on future needs and opportunities.	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> (i) Addresses current opportunities or problems. (ii) Acts decisively. (iii) Thinks and acts ahead. (iv) Prepares for future opportunities. (v) Creates opportunities to achieve long-term payoffs.
	<i>d) Teaching Creatively:</i> The ability to use creative techniques to help students learn.	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> (i) Uses routine methods. (ii) Appeals to interest. (iii) Uses a range of techniques. (iv) Teaches a range of concepts simultaneously. (v) Inspires learning beyond the curriculum.

Table 3b. Performance Indicators of the EPMS Teacher Competency Model (cont'd).

Competency Cluster (5)	Competencies (13)	Performance Indicators (45)
3. Winning Hearts & Minds	<i>a) Understanding the Environment:</i> The ability to understand the wider Education Service and to positively use one's understanding of the school.	(i) Knows policies and procedures. (ii) Recognises organisational capabilities. (iii) Understands the rationale for existing policies. (iv) Applies understanding of school-related issues. (v) Applies understanding of socio-economic forces.
	<i>b) Developing Others:</i> The drive and ability to develop the capabilities of others and help them realize their full potential.	(i) Provides suggestions. (ii) Gives guidance. (iii) Provides feedback & encouragement. (iv) Stretches potential. (v) Influences professional development of others.
4. Working with Others	<i>a) Partnering Parents:</i> The ability to work effectively with parents to meet the needs of students.	(i) Keeps parents informed. (ii) Treats parents as partners. (iii) Encourages parental involvement. (iv) Works collaboratively with parents. (v) Builds long-term relationships with parents.
	<i>b) Working in Teams:</i> The ability to work with others to accomplish shared goals.	(i) Shares willingly. (ii) Expresses positive attitudes. (iii) Learns from others. (iv) Encourages and empowers team. (v) Builds team commitment.
5. Knowing Self & Others	<p><i>a) Tuning into Self:</i> The ability to know one's strengths and limitations, and how they impact on one's performance and interactions with others.</p> <p><i>b) Personal Integrity:</i> The quality of being honest and upright in character, in one's work and dealings with people.</p> <p><i>c) Understanding Others:</i> The drive and ability to understand the thoughts, feelings and concerns of others.</p> <p><i>d) Respecting Others:</i> The underlying belief that individuals matter and deserve respect.</p>	

Table 4. Excerpt of the Work Review Form for Teachers featuring the Competency Cluster “Working in Teams.”

WORKING IN TEAMS: The ability to work with others to accomplish shared goals.	Appointment Level	Competency Rating	
		Mid-Year	Year-End
1. Shares willingly Willingly helps others. Co-operates with and supports colleagues. Shares information and good ideas.	GEO 1/2	<input type="checkbox"/> Not Observed <input type="checkbox"/> Developing <input type="checkbox"/> Competent <input type="checkbox"/> Exceeding	<input type="checkbox"/> Not Observed <input type="checkbox"/> Developing <input type="checkbox"/> Competent <input type="checkbox"/> Exceeding
2. Expresses positive attitudes Expresses positive expectations of others. Speaks positively of team members.		<input type="checkbox"/> Not Observed <input type="checkbox"/> Developing <input type="checkbox"/> Competent <input type="checkbox"/> Exceeding	<input type="checkbox"/> Not Observed <input type="checkbox"/> Developing <input type="checkbox"/> Competent <input type="checkbox"/> Exceeding
3. Learns from others Displays a willingness to learn. Gathers ideas, opinions, suggestions and advice from others to achieve work objectives. Seeks feedback from colleagues on his/ her own work.	GEO 1A1/ 2A1, 1A2/ 2A2	<input type="checkbox"/> Not Observed <input type="checkbox"/> Developing <input type="checkbox"/> Competent <input type="checkbox"/> Exceeding	<input type="checkbox"/> Not Observed <input type="checkbox"/> Developing <input type="checkbox"/> Competent <input type="checkbox"/> Exceeding
4. Encourages and empowers team Publicly credits team members who have performed well. Empowers team members to achieve shared goals.	GEO 1A3 / 2A3 / ST	<input type="checkbox"/> Not Observed <input type="checkbox"/> Developing <input type="checkbox"/> Competent <input type="checkbox"/> Exceeding	<input type="checkbox"/> Not Observed <input type="checkbox"/> Developing <input type="checkbox"/> Competent <input type="checkbox"/> Exceeding
5. Builds team commitment Brings people together and evokes pride in being part of the team.	MTT1, MTT2	<input type="checkbox"/> Not Observed <input type="checkbox"/> Developing	<input type="checkbox"/> Not Observed <input type="checkbox"/> Developing

<p>Speaks positively about the team and its achievements to others and stands by the team. Highlights issues that hamper team effectiveness and helps the team overcome these.</p>		<input type="checkbox"/> Competent <input type="checkbox"/> Exceeding	<input type="checkbox"/> Competent <input type="checkbox"/> Exceeding
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