

Passion in Jamie's Kitchen: The Vital Ingredient in Education and Training for Young Workers?

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Abstract

In this paper we will sketch out and briefly analyse a recurring and central theme throughout the reality TV series *Jamie's Kitchen* – that of passion:

- Passion for food;
- Being passionate as you construct and present yourself;
- Being passionate about your work;
- Having a go, getting passionate in a training environment which compresses years of training into months of training.

In this series the high profile celebrity chef Jamie Oliver set out to transform a group of unemployed young Londoners into the enterprising, entrepreneurial, ideal worker of 21st century flexible capitalism. This series, and its figure of the entrepreneurial, risk taking, small businessman (who in this instance is also a global celebrity brand) seeking to develop similar dispositions and behaviours in a workforce that initially does not display such character features, illuminates, and provides a means to explore, key features of new work regimes. The emphasis on passion in the analysis – which draws on Foucault's later work on the care of the self - allows us to connect to discussions about education and training that highlight the passionate/pleasure dimensions of pedagogy. These elements of education and training very rarely get discussed in a vocational education and training environment which is largely driven by modules/competencies/outcomes.

Introduction

In this paper we identify and analyse a number of significant issues related to young people's transitions into work via an examination of the hugely successful TV series *Jamie's Kitchen*. In this series the high profile celebrity chef Jamie Oliver set out to transform a group of unemployed young Londoners into the enterprising, entrepreneurial, ideal worker of 21st century flexible capitalism. This series, and its figure of the entrepreneurial, risk taking, small businessman (who in this instance is also a global celebrity brand) seeking to develop similar dispositions and behaviours in a workforce that initially does not display such character features, might be dismissed as an ephemeral, lightweight, *reality* TV series that has little to offer by way of serious commentary on the new worlds of work, the new forms of work ethic required to be

successful under these regimes, and the education and training appropriate for young people under these circumstances.

We claim, however, that the narratives about work and an ethic of enterprise that underpin the entertainment value of this product; and the ways in which this entertainment value is enhanced by focusing on the drama and conflict, and possible failures as these young people negotiate their very public entry into a workplace structured by this ethic of enterprise, illuminates and provides a means to explore key features of new work regimes.

We have identified a recurring and central theme evident in the reality TV series *Jamie's Kitchen* – that of passion:

- Passion for food;
- Being passionate as you construct and present yourself;
- Being passionate about your work;
- Having a go, getting passionate in a training environment which compresses years of training into months of training.

Picking up on this theme in our analysis – which draws on Foucault's later work on the care of the self - allows us to connect to discussions about education and training that highlight the passion/pleasure dimensions of pedagogy. These elements of education and training very rarely get discussed in a vocational education and training environment which is largely driven by modules, competencies and outcomes.

Youth Transitions, Work and a Global Risk Society: The Demands to be Entrepreneurial and Passionate

When we take [a] larger view of what it means to be an entrepreneur, we realize that we are talking about skills, attitudes, and disciplines everybody needs nowadays - qualities it takes to succeed in every field of work... We need to apply entrepreneurial, self-directive, self-promoting, me-incorporated thinking to every aspect of our lives - our participation in learning activities, the way we manage our careers, our finances and investments, how we market ourselves, our ability to treat our lives as business enterprises. An entrepreneurial perspective can help us become more adept at the business of life. (Your Business Network 2000, *Are You a Career Entrepreneur?*)

I thought the people coming here were supposed to love food. They're just going through the motions. I am not even sure why they've come. I'm offering to do them a favour. You know what I mean. (Jamie Oliver, Episode One: Jamie's Kitchen, Broadcast in Australia on Channel 10, 21/7/03)

In the past 30 years or so processes of globalisation – characterised by increased competition, rapid technological change and economic uncertainty – have profoundly changed the world of work and the ways employers, trade unions and governments think about labour markets and workers. 'Flexibility', 'casualisation', 'upskilling', 'multi-

skilling', 'life long learning' 'core' and 'peripheral' workforces are the new realities and buzzwords in the global markets of 'fast capitalism' (Furlong and Kelly 2005). In a recent policy speech to sell new forms of workplace relations regulation Australia's Prime Minister John Howard described the rise of a new type of worker in this context of 'flexible capitalism', a type of worker with a more entrepreneurial disposition to work:

What unites our enterprise workers...is an attitude of mind. They recognise the economic logic and fairness of workplaces where initiative, performance and reward are linked together...They have a long-term focus, knowing that short-term gains without regard to productivity are illusory if the result is inflation and jobs at risk' (Howard 2005)

These labour market changes in many industrialised nations have resulted in young people being over-represented in less secure forms of employment. They are more likely to hold temporary contracts, work in the casual sectors of the labour market, in areas where their education or skills are not fully utilised or obtain fewer hours employment than they would ideally like. These processes have rendered youth transitions into paid work uncertain and risky – in many respects the life course has become more fluid, flexible and unpredictable. In Australia the Australian Bureau of Statistics (ABS 1998 a&b) argues that the youth labour market is characterised by 'higher levels of job mobility, lower average incomes and a different occupational profile to the rest of the working population' (1998a, p.1). Casual and part-time work, periodic unemployment, complex education and employment pathways, and a concentration of young workers in the retail and food service industries are other key characteristics of the youth labour market (Furlong and Kelly 2005, Lewis and Mclean 1999).

These changes have provoked much community, policy and academic debate about Youth – as a population, as a time in the lifecourse, as a central figure in discussions about education, employment, transitions, identity, values and beliefs. A central empirical concern and claim in much of these discussions is that today's young people lack a work ethic, or have a different work ethic to prior generations. These different dispositions towards work, its value and purpose are claimed to negatively impact on young people's attitudes to work and learning, their to commitment to an employer, or to joining a trade union.

Most sociological interpretations of youth, education and work imagine youth as being a key staging point facilitating the more or less successful entry into the adult world of autonomy, responsibility and work (Kelly 2000, a,b&c). A report prepared for the OECD, for example, identifies youth as a 'stage of life between childhood and adulthood'. Childhood is identified with 'physiological immaturity, emotional and economic dependence and primary ties with parents and siblings'. Adulthood, in this view, is framed in terms of 'physiological maturity, emotional and economic autonomy, and by primary ties with the adult partner and children' (cited in Freeland 1996, p.7). In this sense youth should be a transition from *normal* childhood to *normal* adulthood. These normative portrayals of childhood, youth and adulthood frame much of the pervasive policy and academic discussion of youth at-risk – where risk is associated with the

differing, largely individualised, capacities of young people to effect a secure transition into the labour market (Kelly 2000, a,b&c).

The problem of young peoples' transition into, and participation in, various labour markets is understood differently from different points of view (Wyn 2004, Wyn and White 1997, Sweet 1995, Bessant & Cook 1998, Furlong et al 2003). The community, policy and academic debates about these issues are significant influences on the ways in which employers, trade unions and government and non government agencies respond to, educate and train, and manage young workers. For example, Tony Abbott, then Australia's Federal Minister for Employment Services, argued on ABC TV's 7.30 Report on 7/5/1999 that; '*Skills are important but attitude is everything. Work for the dole is about inculcating the right attitude. It is about creating that work culture. That's the most important thing*'. Tricia Robinson (a marketing executive for a software developer) argues that young workers are 'smart', 'ambitious', 'collaborate well' and 'aren't afraid to stand up to an idea'. However, she questions their work ethic, arguing that, '*My parents gave me a very, very strong work ethic – that the person you blame is yourself when things don't go right at work...I don't know whether they've necessarily got that*' (cited in Neusner et al 2001, p. 28). While John Healy – at that time the Trades Unions Congress (UK) head of campaigns and communications – claims that: '*There isn't an ideological hostility to unions among young people, just ignorance*' (cited in Gallagher 1996, pp. 30-31).

Much of these stories about young workers focus heavily on the ethical dimensions of personhood: a focus that tends to emphasise a *poor*, or *different* work ethic – and avoid any discussion of the obligations and costs that might accompany a positive identification as being *passionate*, or *entrepreneurial*, or a *team player* in the individualised labour markets of a globalised risk society.

From this perspective the question of identity is one that can be explored and analysed via the variety of behaviours and dispositions that young people are encouraged to develop in order to be identified as a 'good' worker, a 'teammaker', a 'crew member', 'enterprising'. What identity choices are available in these contexts? What obligations attach to them? What consequences flow from making different choices?

When young people enter labour markets these various rationalities, and the work practices they structure, are important in creating the spaces in which young workers are managed and regulated, and manage and regulate themselves. They frame the spaces in which the ethical dimensions of work related identities intersect with ideas about relationships with families, peers and partners, and consumption, debt and leisure.

We can identify and analyse these concerns about being *passionate* and *entrepreneurial* via Michel Foucault's (1978, 1985, 1986, 1991) later work on the care of the self. This work provides a framework for analysing 'the manner in which one ought to form oneself as an ethical subject acting in reference' to elements of a particular code of conduct (1985, p.26). Foucault (1985) argued that with regard to specific *types* and *codes* of action there are various 'ways to "conduct oneself" morally...not just as an agent but as

an ethical subject of this action' (p.26). This framework offers an innovative approach to discovering and analysing the ways in which young people are encouraged to act as 'adults', 'team players', members of a 'crew' or as participants in a particular workplace culture such as *Jamie's Kitchen*. This framework also permits an analysis of the ways in which young people imagine themselves in relation to these injunctions to develop a particular work ethic, to become a particular type of person in settings that are fundamentally shaped by the productive play of power.

The Fifteen Foundation and Jamie's Kitchen: Making Up Passionate Workers

I believe that you have to have a passion for what you do. Now I want to run my own restaurant. Fifteen has helped me believe that I could actually achieve this. I also want to learn by example and use my restaurant to help other young people and give them the opportunities I've been given (Georgina, Fifteen trainee 2004, [Fifteen 2005]).

The TV show *Jamie's Kitchen* was televised on Channel 4 in Britain in 2002 and appeared on Channel 10 in Australia the following year. This series capitalized on the phenomenal success of Jamie Oliver, one of a new breed of entrepreneurial celebrity chefs. The by now familiar 'reality' TV format offered us a bird's eye view of the trials, tribulations and eventual successes, experienced by Jamie and his crew as he recruited and then trained a group of disadvantaged young people to be chefs for a new restaurant. The restaurant was named *Fifteen*, mirroring the number of trainees in the first intake. Since this initial series there have been larger yearly cohorts of students and in 2004 *Fifteen Foundation* was established as a charitable organisation. The Foundation's web site refers to the importance of Jamie's continued support while pointing out that it is 'independent of him' (Fifteen 2005). The list of partners and sponsors of the Foundation is long and distinguished and includes Barclays Bank, Birkenstock, Motorola and Thomas Cook Travel to name a few. It is clear that Fifteen is a training concept, and brand, that big business wants to be associated with.

This TV series provides us with a vehicle for the examination of practices of the self related to 'making up' the passionate entrepreneurial worker in an environment where normal training regimes are necessarily compressed. We would also argue that the performance aspects of this genre, while they could be easily dismissed as 'unreal', should be viewed as concentrated and hyper-real.

Michael Pizzey: Too much passion?

Erica McWilliam, in her book *Pedagogical Pleasures*, uses Foucault, amongst others, to theorise practices of the self related to pleasure and teaching which are apposite for our discussion on passion. For Foucault 'experience is historically constituted out of games of truth and error' (McWilliam, 1999, p. 8) and part of his project is to understand how particular techniques of the self, related to sexuality come to be seen as problematic while others are not. What he describes as 'prescriptive texts' written by philosophers such as Plato and Aristotle 'serve as important ways of training a population in knowledge about

the limits beyond which certain attitudes or acts may be considered excessive' (p. 9). Proper pleasure therefore is to be had through work and moderation, not 'excessive or immoderate behaviour' (p. 9). Thus the ethical subject 'deliberately chooses reasonable principles of action that he is capable of following and applying them' (Foucault, 1985, p. 64).

These notions of proper pleasurable pedagogy, 'pleasure *within reason*' (McWilliam 1999, p. 10) involving hard work and restraint and its coupling with a view of training as inculcating proper moral conduct is evident everywhere in *Jamie's Kitchen*. Even the premise for the series, training up disadvantaged youth to be successful chefs, is saturated with these techniques of the self. What is particularly interesting is how these manifest in practice when Jamie's and his team come up hard against a group of young people who display excessive and immoderate behaviour.

Passion, as you would guess from our title, is a feeling given a lot of air time on *Jamie's Kitchen*. The following excerpts come from the first program in the series;

Jamie: None are formally trained as far as we know. They are all unemployed and not in education. So all we can look for really is a bit of passion with food.

One of Jamie's team to the students: *Be passionate. This is your chance.*

and the following advertising blurb was shown in a radio interview included in the program:

*Jamie Oliver
Set to train top chefs of the future
Unique opportunity for young people to develop
careers in catering as part of an innovative new TV series
Looking for 10 passionate and energetic young people*

It soon becomes clear however that the passion they are all talking about is heavily circumscribed. This may be best illustrated by looking in more depth at one of the trainees.

Michael Pizzey is one of the 'stars' of this series mainly because he manifests techniques of the self that are particularly at odds with Jamie's. These produce tensions and contradictions in expectations and training practices. As the voice-over for the series informs viewers:

...Michael Pizzey is finding it hardest of all. Dyslexic – he's also got an attention deficit disorder. He should be on medication to help him concentrate but he's not taking it.

Zoe Collins, one of Jamie's team, made the following observations about Michael in a team debrief:

He's obsessed with food. I spent 20 minutes on the phone with him talking about the perfect pizza crust so I really think we should put him through.
(Episode One: Jamie's Kitchen, Broadcast in Australia on Channel 10, 21/7/03)

Despite Michael's learning difficulties it appears that he does exhibit the required passion for the job.

Hotelier and food writer Ruth Watson is helping Jamie with the judging and discusses some of the attributes they require of trainees.

Ruth: *What do you want? What kind of people are you looking for?*

Jamie: *I just want people that are observing what is happening. If the food is burning I want them to take it off. We are looking for an inner instinctiveness about food. They don't have to be able to cook. They just have to feel it. Do you know what I mean?*
(Episode One: Jamie's Kitchen, Broadcast in Australia on Channel 10, 21/7/03)

Not only do the trainees have to be passionate they also have to be instinctive. The interesting thing from a training perspective is that these two things are not necessarily amenable to 'training' – they do not talk about these qualities as if they can actually instil them into these young people. Instead they are seen as somehow innate and something they would have expected them to come to Jamie with already. Because they do not arrive with these dispositions they are *all* already lacking.

Later the group return to talking about Michael:

Jamie: *Very, very enthusiastic. Really wants to make it.*

Ruth: *He worries me because he was so desperate. It's really good but it's also quite frightening. I kind of worry about him as a person. His heart was really into it he really wanted to do it*
(Episode One: Jamie's Kitchen, Broadcast in Australia on Channel 10, 21/7/03).

Genero: *I think this boy will make it. I think we should give him a chance. Let's do it.*

Ruth: *The danger areas and the one you have to really question is how much commitment you can make to them and how much this is just this occasion*

and it's you and you're famous and they want to work with you and how much it's real life

(Episode One: *Jamie's Kitchen*, Broadcast in Australia on Channel 10, 21/7/03).

In this excerpt the passion exhibited by Michael starts to become worrying. He is seen as *desperate* and this is seen as *quite frightening*. There are other examples where Michael does things in the kitchen that are not consistent with safety procedures and puts himself and others in danger. Drawing on the work of Foucault it could be said that Michael is exhibiting the wrong kind of passion; a passion of an immoderate and excessive kind. This is a kind of passion that needs to be reigned in, well regulated and governed; initially by others, eventually by the Self, in order to create an autonomous, self-fashioning, entrepreneurial, passionate worker.

Pedagogy as training¹

McWilliam also wants to recapture the notion of 'good training' as part of 'proper' pleasurable pedagogy. She is aware that the word 'training' has been rendered problematic by its modern association with narrow technical skills stripped of context in an era of child-centred pedagogy. As she asserts:

Training is understood to focus on the narrow qualities of technique rather than broader issues of style, flair, or whose interests are being served. So the idea that we, as good teachers, spend much of our time training our students in proper moral conduct (be a good listener; think globally, act locally; feel free to express your true feelings) is disturbing because, in the language we use to speak good pedagogy, training is framed as insufficient... definitions of good pedagogy have for some time insisted that training is an emaciated subset of the bigger and more important project of education (1999, p. 5)

In this way rethinking training involves refusing to see the term as '*necessarily tainted*' (1999, p. 7).

Jamie's view of cooking as a passionate exercise sits alongside more traditional views of training as a set of skills, stripped of context. In episode two Jamie talks in voice over to the audience about the trainees:

All I know is that they're not employed and not in education. But I'm not sure I need to know too much about them really – I think this is about spending quality time and a bit of inspiration and encouragement really. They could go tits up. It's not going to be easy. It's going to be very, very hard work and I'm not asking them to do like a normal chef's job. I'm

¹ This is borrowed from a title by Erica McWilliam in her book *Pedagogical Pleasures*.

actually asking them to work their real butts off and I don't know if they know that. So they might be a bit shocked.

(Episode Two: *Jamie's Kitchen*, Broadcast in Australia on Channel 10, 29/7/03)

In the first part of the excerpt Jamie echoes the view of many teachers who want their students to leave their lives outside of school in a bag at the door; to be picked up on their way out. He thinks that spending quality time and being inspiring and encouraging is enough while acknowledging that the task ahead of the trainees, compressed into a short space of time, will be difficult for them. One of Jamie's trainers, a German chef Herr Bosey, exemplifies this view:

Our standards are high and if I show you now a certain kind of standard that I expect you to repeat. There is no middle way, there are no short cuts. There is only one way, the way I've been showing you.

(Episode Two: *Jamie's Kitchen*, Broadcast in Australia on Channel 10, 29/7/03)

The series voice-over tells us that: *The chef does not mince his words with Michael Pizzey either.*

There is no such thing as 'Oh chef I no can do it. You can do it'. But you need your head screwed on and your brain going.

(Episode Two: *Jamie's Kitchen*, Broadcast in Australia on Channel 10, 29/7/03)

In these two excerpts there is no mention of passion. For Herr Bosey this is about technical skills and the one right way. Because of the compressed time frame this is necessarily fast and furious stuff and if you can't keep up then you are out (*if you can't stand the heat, get out of the kitchen*). However, not all of the trainers take this approach. Later on in this episode Michael is talking to Jamie's former college tutor Peter Richards:

Michael: *Some of the stuff you say and do I just don't understand.*

Peter: *Just come down the front with me. Stand next to me. What I don't want to do is single you out but at the same time I want to give you as much support as I can.*

(Episode Two: *Jamie's Kitchen*, Broadcast in Australia on Channel 10, 29/7/03)

Peter Richards' response to Michael is of a different sort; more akin to a master/apprentice model of pedagogy and one that acknowledges that Michael is struggling to keep up. The dilemma Peter faces in 'singling' Michael out is the classic dilemma of difference faced by classroom teachers, and trainers the world over.

Concluding Discussion: Post-compulsory and Vocational Education: An Absence of Passion?

In our introduction we suggested that an examination of *Jamie's Kitchen* allowed us to connect to the passion/pleasure dimensions of pedagogy rarely discussed in a vocational education and training environment driven largely by modules, competencies and outcomes (Biemans et al 2004, Hager & Smith 2004, Ball 2003, Hunter 2001).

Carolyn Williams, for example, examines the forms of worker identities that are embedded in a number of key documents on competencies in the VET sector in Australia. She suggests that a 'nature/nurture dichotomy haunts past and present discussions about the personal attributes of learner-workers' (2005, p. 33). Williams argues that the focus in contemporary education and training is on the 'construction of the competent learner-worker' and that discourses of generic skills constitute 'a normative-regulatory ideal' (2005, p. 34). For Williams, key policy documents such as that generated by the Mayer Committee (1992) deploy a nature vs nurture dualism, which produces distinct and separate 'domains of 'innate predispositions' and learnable competencies' (2005, p. 34). This dualism plays out across a range of policy documents in arguments about whether attitudes and values are learnable or innate. Despite evident disagreement on this there is a consensus that personal attributes need to be included in any reformulation of key workplace competencies (p. 38). The personal attributes listed in these reports include: 'loyalty, commitment, honesty and integrity, enthusiasm, reliability, personal presentation, commonsense, positive self-esteem, sense of humour, balanced attitude to work and home life, ability to deal with pressure, motivation and adaptability' (ACCI/BCA, 2002, p. 8, cited in Williams, 2005, p. 38).

These attributes characterise a particular 'ideal' learner-worker in the new economy; an identity that many of Jamie's trainees struggle to exhibit – at least initially. In *Jamie's Kitchen* there are tensions and contradictions between a view of passion as an innate quality on the one hand and one that can be developed, incited, or learned on the other. Mixed up in this is the unbridled passion exhibited by Michael, and a more measured, controlled version adhered to by the trainers (and the likes of Aristotle and Socrates according to Foucault). This passion also rubs up against a privileging by some trainers of skills that it is assumed can be learned, albeit in a compressed time frame.

Our brief discussion of *the passion of Jamie*, and of his trainees, gives some weight to a range of questions raised by Williams – questions that make problematic the development of a passionate, entrepreneurial ethics of the self that would facilitate the transition of young people into work: 'What of learner-workers assessed as 'not yet competent' against benchmarks of acceptable performance of personal attributes when these attributes are understood as innate? If personal attributes are not understood as learnable, how are those learner-workers to become competent?' (Williams, 2005, p. 47) Does *Jamie's Kitchen* point to some ways to answer these questions? Are there lessons for post-compulsory vocational education and training in *Jamie's Kitchen*?

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