

# The Grammar of Governance

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**ABSTRACT** The increasing significance of ‘managerialism’ in contemporary forms of governance has been widely observed. This article demonstrates how this operates at the level of language. Specifically, the analysis postulates a new sociosemantic category of ‘Managing Actions’, encoding varying degrees of coerciveness. The paper discusses their salient role in texturing the ‘soft power’ of contemporary governance, constructing a form of ‘managed autonomy’ for the governed subject and helping to manage the complex networks of dispersed power through an indirect form of agency. The analysis combines a corpus-based approach to critical discourse analysis with a political economic theory of transformations in the capitalist state. Drawing evidence from a corpus of UK education policy discourse, the analysis illustrates the managerialist form that governance takes under New Labour, while at the same time highlighting the subtle hegemony underlying this new ‘enabling’ technique of governance, which works by assuming, rather than winning compliance. In terms of sociologically informed theories of language, this analysis goes some way towards formulating a possible ‘grammar of governance’.

**KEYWORDS** *governance, soft power, managing actions, education policy, critical discourse analysis, corpus linguistics, New Labour, managerialism, managed autonomy*

## ***Introduction***

The concept of ‘governance’ has come to occupy a prominent place in academic inquiry over the last two decades. In part this is a reflection of substantive changes in the way advanced liberal states predominantly organise their economic, political and social activities. We might characterise this as a move away from the rigid hierarchies of bureaucracy, towards a new form of ‘soft power’, partly involving the coordination of complex networks of self-governing actors. This paper draws evidence from a historical corpus of UK education policy documents to examine the precise linguistic form this new mode of governing takes. I postulate a novel sociosemantic category of ‘Managing Action’ that illustrates the regularity and the ‘subtle hegemony’ of this technique of governance. While the findings come from New Labour policy discourse I suggest that they are symptomatic of the increasing importance more generally of ‘soft’ forms of power across many fields of social organisation.

The findings presented in this paper stem from a much larger project that examined patterns of historical change in how government discourse represents and legitimates the distribution of power and institutional organisation (thus governance) of the education system. This applied a corpus linguistic-based approach to the critical discourse analysis of UK political discourse from the Heath government of 1972 to that of Blair in 2005 (Mulderrig, 2006; 2009). The whole study was framed within a

political economic theory of the capitalist state (Hay, 1996, 1999; Jessop, 1999; 2002). Within the field of linguistics, corpus linguistics and critical discourse analysis have until recently been kept relatively separate (although see the work of Koller and Mautner, 2004; Mautner, 2005; 2009; Mulderrig, 2003; 2009; 2011). The choice to combine them in this study was motivated partly by a wish to develop a systematic and thus *replicable* form of critical discourse analysis. Furthermore, I wished to investigate patterns of change over a significant period of time. Robust findings could thus only be generated by examining a very large corpus of data, which in turn requires the use of corpus software tools – in this case ‘Wordsmith’ (Scott, 1997). In their article assessing the merits of combining corpus linguistics (CL) and critical discourse analysis (CDA), Baker et al. (2008) observe that neither CDA nor CL need be subservient to one another. Indeed, their analysis illustrates their combined value, particularly in triangulating findings, whereby each of these branches of linguistics benefits from their ‘cross-pollination’. Furthermore, I have elsewhere argued (Mulderrig, 2008) that there are valuable insights to be gained from fully integrating sociological theory with this multi-method approach, thus taking the ‘cross-pollination’ beyond traditional disciplinary boundaries. I hope that this article provides further evidence, this time making a theoretical virtue out of a classificatory dilemma, illustrated in the novel insights about governance that arose when the methodology ‘hit a wall’.

### ***Governance and ‘Soft Power’***

The term ‘governance’ can be defined in a number of quite different and often ambiguous ways. Before proceeding further I should therefore offer my own definition. In the broadest terms ‘governance’ is a matter of coordinating and managing the collective actions of diverse actors. This may take different forms in different contexts, each involving a particular distribution of power relations. For example, hierarchical governance implies a greater centralisation of control than heterarchical governance, where leadership and power are dispersed (Fairtlough, 2007). Thus, we can distinguish governance in a ‘broad sense’<sup>1</sup>, meaning the modes and manner of governing (as opposed to the actual doing of it – ‘governing’), and governance in a ‘narrow sense’ of a particular model involving more flattened heterarchies, networks and self-organisation. This specific style of governing has gained prominence in recent years in response to the increasing diversity and functional differentiation of the objects of governance, which are less amenable to simple top-down (bureaucratic) steering (Jessop, 1999). In the last quarter of the C20<sup>th</sup>, the decline of the post-war bureaucratic regime and its centrally regulated industrial economy gave way to the gradual emergence of a new ‘diagram’ of relation between government, expert and citizen. It is characterised by technologies of self-governance, audit, and appraisal. A key figure in this new style of governing is the active citizen-consumer, empowered and responsabilised to make choices that further their own interests or those of the community within ‘socially sanctioned grammars of consumption’ (Rose, 1999: 166; see also Livingstone et al., 2007 on the discursive construction of the citizen-consumer). Importantly, this requires a shift in power relations: citizens must have greater agency over their own actions; the government less direct control. As Rose puts it, ‘the social state gives way to the enabling state’ (1999b: 142). For the sake of brevity, rather than theoretical cogency, I shall characterise this shift in the *mode and style* of governance in terms of a move from ‘government’ to ‘governance’. One question for empirical analysis is to probe the

specifics of what these new power relations actually involve within and across institutions of government.

In an analytical critique of American foreign policy, Nye (2004) developed the concept of 'soft power' (or persuasive power) to characterise political power that aims to attract rather than coerce. It is offered as a more viable alternative to 'hard power' (for example, armed force) whose failing lies in the fact that it has to manage all the challenges to it, and possibly generate more in the process. The general idea of 'soft' power (under various names and theoretical guises) has similarly been used to capture trends in governance across many different organisational contexts (e.g. Courpasson, 2000; du Gay, 1996; Levay and Waks, 2009; Thrift, 1997). The concept is similar to Lukes' (2005a) 'third dimension of power', where power lies in shaping others' beliefs and desires, and thereby securing compliance. From the perspective of the subjects involved we might say this form of power aims to *secure volition* rather than merely obedience. For Lukes (2005b) a key analytical question that follows is: exactly how is this achieved? One example comes from a study of technology policy. Graham observes that fundamental to the hortatory success of policy is its capacity to attract by creating 'perceptions of value for...some imagined future place and time' (2001: 765). In short, it creates utopian visions of the future that can be achieved through the recommended policy actions. From the perspective of soft power, these imagined policy futures thus carry their own 'powers of attraction'. His analysis shows how such imaginaries<sup>2</sup> are produced through the rhetorical mechanisms of *factuality* (thus allowing space for evidence-based rationality), *futurity* (textured through metaphors, modality and lexis), and *desirability* (through implicit and explicit evaluation).

In whatever context it operates 'soft power' would appear to be more capable (than coercion) of absorbing potential opposition by instead offering choice, opportunity, possibility, and so forth. For this reason soft power rests to a greater degree on individual volition, which in the context of policy-making would seem to be more intrinsically democratic. However, I will argue that some of the discursive forms this takes do not so much remove coercion as mask it in more subtle forms. Specifically I present a distinctive grammatical feature of New Labour discourse which I term 'Managing Actions'. I argue that these have become an important discursive resource for governing, through a less direct form of agency, potentially manifold actions and actors 'at a distance'. From the perspective of soft power I also show how they in fact *assume*, rather than *secure volition*.

I begin by presenting the methodological approach used in this study. I then discuss the grammatical and semantic features of Managing Actions, outlining the systemic-functional approach used to analyse them, based on their sociological significance and their diversity of surface form. Thus, following Van Leeuwen's (1999) proposal, I offer a sociosemantic typology of Managing Actions as a first step towards a 'grammar of management'. Finally, extracts from the corpus are used to illustrate how Managing Actions are used in New Labour discourse.

## ***Methodology***

It is important to state that this study was not a strategic search for textual evidence of a shift from 'government' to 'governance' in the senses used above. Rather, it was an exploration of how the UK government represents its own 'acts of governing', as well as how it represents education and its actors (Mulderrig, 2003, 2007), during a period of major socioeconomic change and state restructuring. The focus of my discussion in this paper is the New Labour government under Tony Blair, since it was in this period

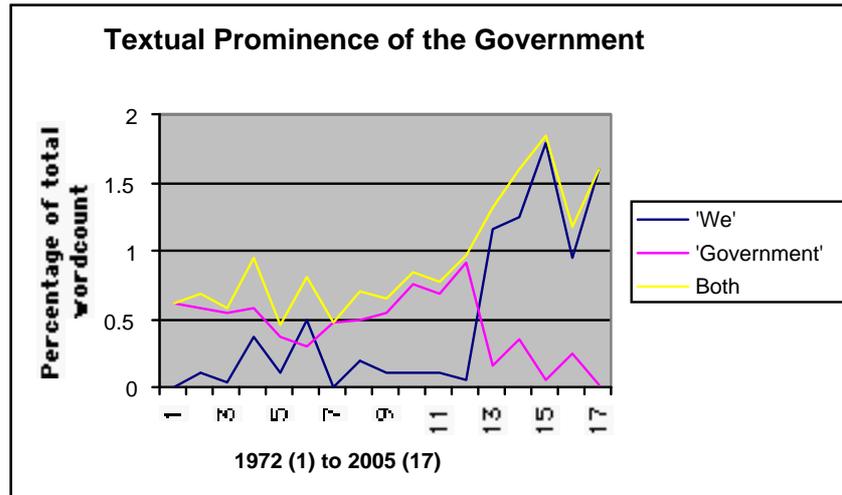
that the linguistic feature of ‘Managing Actions’ rose to prominence in education policy. However, this discovery arose from analysing a large corpus comprising several governments. Therefore I begin by explaining how the larger corpus was compiled and analysed.

### *Description of the Corpus*

In order to investigate historical change in the discourse of educational governance I required textual data from a genre that was relatively constant throughout the whole period and whose primary function forms part of the social practice of governing education. The texts which best matched these criteria were public policy consultation papers, known as Command papers or more typically ‘White Papers’. These constitute the final public stage of policy-making before entering the parliamentary legislative process. This genre inherently involves a persuasive and legitimatory form of dialogue with the public, in which the government presents the rationale for policy proposals, thereby revealing the basis on which educational change is deemed necessary. From the point of view of political rhetoric, the preceding stage of public consultation known as ‘Green Papers’ are an even more useful resource in investigating how the government attempts to ‘sell’ its policy ideas to the public (see Mulderrig, 2003). Unfortunately these are a more recent genre than White papers and are not archived, so could not be used in this historical study. Each command (‘Cm’) paper is given a prefix and number<sup>3</sup> and then archived and sold by The Stationery Office (<http://www.tso.co.uk/>); papers can also be viewed in libraries. For this study I included all educational White papers issued between 1972 and 2005 that deal with mainstream, school-level education provided by the state in England and Wales<sup>4</sup>. Thus the corpus comprised seventeen documents, spanning thirty-three years and five different prime ministers, from 1972 to 2005. These are listed in the table in Appendix 1. This study required a digitised corpus in plain text format. Documents from 1995 onwards were available to download from the internet; those predating this were first scanned, checked and converted to the appropriate format. The resulting corpus totalled 433, 876 words. In order to capture broad trajectories of historical change I divided the data into four blocks, indicated by the shading in the table<sup>5</sup>. These represent the three main administrations that were the focus of this study (those of the Prime Ministers Margaret Thatcher, John Major, and Tony Blair), and a fourth, earlier block used for comparison.

### *Corpus-aided Analysis*

I began by using Wordsmith corpus software tools as a heuristic device to pick up recurrent linguistic patterns in the corpus, later drawing on Fairclough’s (systemic grammar-based) model of critical discourse analysis (in particular Fairclough, 1992; 2000; 2003) in order to progressively add layers of interpretation to the findings. Firstly, I ran concordance searches throughout the whole corpus for what I found to be the two most prominent (in terms of ‘keyness<sup>6</sup>’) forms of self-representation used by the government: *we* and *government*. Together these totalled around 4500 occurrences (1% of the entire wordcount), each one representing a particular form of action and agency for the government. The textual prominence of the government’s self-representation in each block was then compared. The results indicated a huge increase under Blair in the textual prominence of the government (almost double the figure under Major) as shown in the graph below:



As this graph indicates, there is also a dramatic shift in the form of self-representation used in this period. Under Blair the personal pronoun ‘we’ almost completely displaces the more authoritative, third-person referential form ‘the government’ (in the last document there were only 16 instances of the term ‘government’ in a text totalling over 30,000 words). For a discussion of this phenomenon, which I term ‘personalisation’, in relation to New Labour rhetorical style see Mulderrig (2011), and for a critical account of its hegemonic role in the democratic process, see Mulderrig (forthcoming).

### ***Analysing Patterns of Self-representation: SFG and beyond***

In the next stage I compared the distribution and function of these self-representational forms across the corpus. To this end I used systemic functional grammar (Halliday, 1994; Halliday and Mattiessen, 2004) to code each instance according to the *action-type* and the *degree of agency* it represented for the government. The purpose of doing this was to gain a picture across the corpus of what types of activity textually construe the practice of governing, what types of role and identity these construct for the government, and what sort of power relations with other actors. Following Halliday’s social semiotic approach (1978; 1994; Halliday and Mattiessen, 2004) we can classify the elements of a clause according to the participants, processes and circumstances it represents. Generally realised as verbs, processes are divided into sub-types, which map onto the three main realms of human activity - doing, being, and sensing. Thus, they can be categorised as Material, Existential, Relational, Verbal, Mental, or Behavioural. The representation of the government’s actions in the data is frequently through complex structures (for example modalisation, nominalisation, metaphor) and - particularly relevant to the present analysis - abstract verbs. Such language is in fact typical of bureaucratic (and academic) genres because argument predominates over description (Halliday and Martin, 1993). Unlike descriptive statements pointing to concrete objects or events, argument requires comment on propositions. Thus abstract verbs often signal relations between propositions (e.g. *bring about, cause, induce, derive from, launch, evoke, elicit, help, facilitate, enable, terminate, finalise* etc.). Such verbs may be substitutes for a range of discourse connectives of various kinds (*because, as a result, therefore, consequently, in order to, for the sake of, with the aid of*). Alternatively, abstract verbs

may highlight the role performed by participants (for example as actor, goal, beneficiary etc.), as illustrated in the following alternatives to the statement ‘*Ofsted inspected the school*’<sup>7</sup>:

*Ofsted carried out an inspection (of the school)*  
*The school underwent an inspection (by Ofsted)*

Despite the prevalence of abstract verbs there is comparatively little literature exploring their rhetorical function, although they have recently received some attention in computational linguistics, for example Danlos (2006) proposes the label ‘discourse verbs’ for examples such as those above which show relations between propositions. In terms of rhetorical function they are in fact more dynamic and explicit than discourse connectives, encoding a greater range of meanings; consider the following example from Power (2007) in which he illustrates the range of possible verbal alternatives to the discourse connector ‘because’: ‘*John was drowsy because he took antihistamines*’

*Taking antihistamines made John drowsy*  
*Taking antihistamines kept John drowsy*  
*Taking antihistamines enabled John to be drowsy*  
*Taking antihistamines helped make John drowsy*  
*Taking antihistamines triggered John’s drowsiness*

Power’s point here is that these abstract ‘discourse verbs’ permit the writer to represent a much more diverse range of rhetorical relations between propositions. My purpose in devising a typology of Managing Actions is similarly to draw out the rhetorical richness of the linguistic resources for ‘getting people to do things’ that appear in New Labour policy discourse. Given the abstract nature of the representations in the data, the analysis process itself fed back into the development of descriptive tools, with additional models of description overlaid onto the analysis as it progressed. Thus, as I encountered classificatory problems using systemic functional tools (for example in handling more abstract verbs or complex structures), I drew additionally on Van Leeuwen’s alternative model of representation (1995, 1996), Graham’s treatment of process metaphors in policy discourse (2001), Lemke’s study of evaluative meaning (1998), and the work of Muntigl et al. (2000a) on European Union policy discourse.

### ***Managerial Discourse***

Having classified each action-type a comparison across the corpus was then made. The findings showed evidence of a strongly managerial identity constructed for the government (steadily increasing from the Major government onwards) through a variety of surface forms and process types (for example activities like *auditing, setting targets, benchmarking progress, offering leadership*). Additionally the number of military metaphors increased (e.g. *combat, target, tackle, spearhead*), particularly under New Labour; a linguistic pattern also found in its discourse of social exclusion (Fairclough, 2000). The public sector rise in managerialism or ‘New Public Management’ has been well-documented (Chandler et al., 2002; Clarke and Newman, 1997; Clarke, Gerwitz, McLaughlin, 2000; Davies, 2003; Ferlie et al., 1996; Lingard and Garrick, 1997; Pollitt, 1990). The importance of discourse in enacting this mode

of governance has also been discussed in relation to a range of organisational contexts (Costea et al., 2008; Fairclough and Thomas, 2004; Heracleous and Hendry, 2000; Salskov-Iversen et al., 2000; Thrift, 1997; Trowler, 2001). Indeed, Hancock and Tyler (2004) argue that the contemporary dominance of the logic of managerialism is manifest in its colonisation of everyday life. The findings from my own longitudinal study showing a marked increase, particularly since Major, in the use of such managerial discourse certainly demonstrates its hold on education policy (Mulderigg, 2008; 2009). Indeed, given the wealth of literature offering evidence of a shift towards managerialism in the public sector in recent decades, it would perhaps be surprising if such discourse patterns were not found in what was, after all, New Labour's flagship domain of policy. However, in this paper I attempt to go beyond merely documenting examples of managerial discourse, by taking a preliminary step towards formulating a 'grammar of governance'. Rose (1999: 97) observed that advanced liberal models of governance rely on two key forms of morality: 'obedience' (in order to gain compliance with stipulated procedures and required outcomes) and 'personal responsibility' (disguising the coercive element of governing). The grammatical structure discussed in this paper textually combines these by allowing the government to specify the outcomes it desires while simultaneously 'taking a step back' in agency (both grammatically and socially), recasting it as an enabling, rather than coercive, force.

### ***'Managing Actions': a sociosemantic analysis***

The term 'Managing Actions' was devised as a way of capturing the linguistic and sociological characteristics of a set of actions found in the data which were not amenable to classification according to process type. This is always a matter of interpretation and the boundaries between process types may sometimes blur, but many cases are relatively simple:

*John hit the ball* (material process)

*Yuko says 'hello'* (verbal process)

*Those colourless green ideas are sleeping furiously* (behavioural process).

However, many of the actions represented for the government were less straightforward. The reason for this is, reflecting the nature of the social activities they represent, Managing Actions involve complex lines of agency and are frequently highly abstract (in the sense discussed above).

Managing Actions involve more than one participant, whether represented explicitly or more obliquely through nominalisations. In the data, *we* (or *the government*) is the participant who somehow instigates the activities of others. Thus, we have two types of agent: the 'direct' agent of an actual activity, and the one instigating it. Sometimes this line of causation extends to several participants in a complex 'layering' of management, with the following structure: [*We helped Olga encourage Desmond to improve his tidiness*]. Mapping these grammatical patterns onto the social world, Managing Actions help construct particular relations of power between the government and other social actors. Compared with simple imperatives, **Managing Actions construe a reduced or 'softened' agency for the government and a corresponding increase in agency (and autonomy) for others.** This example from the data illustrates the basic grammatical structure involved in more 'prototypical' Managing Actions:

[We... will allow] [schools greater freedoms to innovate] (Cm 5230)<sup>8</sup>.

The square brackets mark off the two verbal groups involved. Following Halliday and Matthiessen (2004), this example would be classified as a type of hypotactic<sup>9</sup> expansion of the verbal group, where the primary verb is a causative. That is, where the agent in the primary verbal group is instigating the actions of others. Examples of such causative-type managing verbs include *have*, *let*, *allow*, *help*, *enable*, *require*, *expect* (also *make* and *force* fall into this category, but do not occur in the data). This analysis highlights the hypotactic dependency of the secondary clause (it cannot stand alone or make sense without the first part). This grammatical dependency usefully captures some sense of the reduced agency being represented for the other (managed) actors involved. However, using Halliday and Matthiessen's approach does have some drawbacks. Firstly, analysing the above extract as a hypotactic verbal group expansion necessarily involves interpreting the sequence as representing a single event or action, the one instigated by the causative. This misses the essential complexity of the reality being represented, where highly abstract actions are represented for the government, allowing it to steer the potentially manifold activities of others across large stretches of time and space. Thus, far from there being 'only one happening' the power of these forms of representation is their capacity to condense or 'collect' (Muntigl, 2000a) a vast range of time-space distantiated happenings. Thus **the abstractness of Managing Actions allows for greater complexity in modes of governance, facilitating control at a distance of manifold activities**. Secondly, restricting our account of managing to examples of causatives misses the variety of other forms that occur in actual texts. For example,

- the Managing Action may be nominalised (*choice and control*) and realised as the goal of a direct material process (*give*):  
*we will give businesses greater choice and control over the content and delivery of training programmes*
- the nominalisation may suppress the managed actors involved:  
*we will continue to encourage the transfer of new ideas* [by whom? to whom?]
- the Managing Action may be prefaced by a modulation<sup>10</sup>: *we want to ensure*
- or it may be prefaced by a phrase representing the government in partnership with other actors: *we will work with employers to ensure*.

In short, there is no simple, unitary form-function relationship when it comes to the discursive construal of managing. While such grammatical patterns in text are seen as socially meaningful choices, their sociological significance (and ideological potential) must be interpreted in relation to the social context (Fowler et al., 1979; Kress and Hodge, 1979).

Theo Van Leeuwen comes the closest to a sociological discussion of this type of grammatical structure. In his (1999) study of the Chancellor's budget speech he observes a preponderance of such Managing Actions, which he attributes to the immense importance of the idea of 'management' in contemporary society (see also Wodak and Van Leeuwen, 2002). Extending this interpretation further, I would argue such actions are a key discursive resource in contemporary governance. Far from

being merely 'in vogue' rhetoric, these forms help organise lines of obligation and responsibility in quite systematic ways. This calls for a description of 'Managing Actions' that is capable of capturing their linguistic properties and social functions. I therefore follow Van Leeuwen's sociosemantic alternative to causatives. Indeed, Van Leeuwen postulates the possibility of constructing a 'grammar of management', encompassing a range of linguistic realisations of different types of managing. His proposal illustrates the degree of complexity and diversity in the linguistic representation of managing activities. Their classification is itself a process of interpretation, conflating both sociological and grammatical factors. What follows is a first step towards constructing such a grammar, albeit one that is restricted to those instances occurring in the data, and only those instances where *we* or *the government* is the agent of the Managing Action.

### *Managing Actions as a Technique of 'Soft Power'*

We have seen that soft power operates through attraction and persuasion rather than coercion. It is manifest in the 'responsibilising' trend of managerialism, wherein centralised hierarchical control is relinquished (at least partially<sup>11</sup>) in favour of heterarchies of dispersed power and what Fairtlough (2007) calls 'responsible autonomy'. With the dispersal of power comes greater emphasis on individual responsibility and autonomy. However, as Davies (2003) observes, this is not a responsibility founded on trust, because this is eroded by the pervasive checks of audit, appraisal and accountability. In the context of schooling in the UK, Dale (1989) calls this encroachment on professional sovereignty 'regulated autonomy'. Similarly, in Sweden the notion of 'soft autonomy' has been used to describe moves by health care professionals to appropriate managerial controls (appraisal) in order to at least exert some influence over their form (Levay and Waks, 2009). In the context of the professions, therefore, trust has been replaced by a highly circumscribed form of autonomy in which required outcomes are clearly specified and monitoring mechanisms used to ensure they are met (Davies, 2003; Power, 1997; Schmelzer, 1993; Shore and Wright, 2000).

This new 'soft' mode of governance thus requires a two-fold move: the government must step back from direct control over actions (while retaining the power to specify outcomes), allowing the responsible individual to step forward. In short, 'enabling' individuals has become a key feature of governance. I propose that Managing Actions are a salient textual mechanism for achieving this. 'Managing Actions' 1) **render government control apparently more indirect**, and yet retain control by 2) **specifying outcomes** (the managed action), 3) **presupposing Necessity**, and in some cases 4) **assuming volition**. Thus, Managing Actions are the textual manifestation of a new 'enabling' form of governance. Their linguistic structure reveals how this creates a 'managed autonomy' rather than genuine freedoms. In terms of 'soft power', they assume, rather than secure, volition.

The function of policy discourse is intrinsically hortatory - its purpose is to get people to do things (Muntigl, 2000a). The same is true of Managing Actions. As discussed in the preceding section on *Governance and Soft Power*, Graham (2001; 2002) has shown how policy discourse achieves this coercive function by texturing utopian visions of policy futures in highly abstract propositions, thereby implying the Necessity of the actions proposed to achieve those outcomes. In the case of Managing Actions the Necessity is presupposed. Moreover, in many cases evaluative meanings encoded in the semantics of the Managing Action strengthen its hortatory impetus.

Following Lemke's categories of evaluative meanings for propositions and proposals (1998), 'Desirability' is the most commonly evoked value. This is especially true of those actions I categorise as 'Facilitator' types, in which the Managing Action is always pre-evaluated, thus making this a more hegemonic construction (e.g. *enable, allow, help*). This is coercion through attraction by *assuming volition* on the part of the managed actor.

The introduction of more 'soft' techniques of governance necessarily involves the renegotiation of power relations. Existing relations of power fundamentally intersect with the discursive enactment of soft governance and must be taken into account. In the example *We will take powers to allow schools greater freedom to innovate*, power relations are semantically encoded in the lexical forms *allow* and *freedom*. In other cases, they are assumed, as in examples representing the government's expectations of others, where the successful instigation of others' actions is vested in its institutional authority (e.g. *we expect schools to introduce this programme as soon as possible*). Thus, I would add two further comments to Van Leeuwen's proposals for a 'grammar of management'. Firstly, forms of managing vary along a cline of coercion (tendentially outlined below), and secondly, they intersect with the power relations that exist between the participants. It follows, moreover, that power relations can potentially be reproduced and transformed through differing degrees of coercion. For example, in the data there is a tendency for more explicitly coercive forms of management, as encoded in the semantics of the verb (*expect, require*) to be textured with institutional actors whose power and influence we know to be in decline, namely Local Education Authorities (Dale, 1989; Trowler, 2003). Conversely, actions which semantically encode greater freedom and/or less coercion (*enable, allow, encourage*) tend to be textured with schools, which accords with the principle of school autonomy in the creation of an educational market of 'independent state schools' (Blair, 2005; West and Pennell, 2002).

One implication of this important role of social power relations is the contingency of success in management. That is, whether or not a managed action actually takes place depends on both the discursive construal of obligation and the power relations of the actors involved.

### ***Typology of Managing Actions***

I adopt a sociosemantic approach in classifying types of Managing Action, based on the represented power relations between the manager and managed actor, as well as the type of managing role represented. This is necessarily a matter of interpretation, drawing on native speaker intuition in order to classify the type of managing activity involved as well as the degree of coercion it involves. This classificatory judgment was arrived at having examined each verb in context. These are set out in the order I would place them on a 'cline of coercion', starting with the most coercive. In all cases, it is suggested that the construction implies the government's judgment about the ability or willingness of the managed actor to engage in the represented activity. In turn, this implies a particular role for the government. I identified three main types of role which I label '**Overseer**', '**Leader**', and '**Facilitator**' in order to capture subtle differences in the types of managerial activity being represented for the government in each case. There emerged from this, clear linkages with the literature on governance. In his analysis of state power under New Labour, Alexander argues that a crucial role for this managerial state is as the 'enforcer of outcomes... making possible and monitoring the delivery of social services' (1997: 96). In terms of the

shifting flows of power in the managerial state (Newman, 2001), this translates into three key roles. The 'Overseer' role is one that tightens control from the centre, in order to guarantee particular goals. Then, in order to secure these goals, social roles must be formalised (often as partnerships) and responsibilities clearly assigned. This is the job of the 'Leader' - the classic middle manager role - delegating tasks in a collaborative project. In a partnership model of 'joined up' governance involving collective action across different sectors of government<sup>12</sup> (Jessop, 2003) both economic and social success are construed through the logic of competitive advantage through continual innovation and improvement. This requires flexibility, freedom, and continual negotiation of participation and membership. Such activities require the greatest freedoms for managed actors. Here, I characterise the government's role as a 'Facilitator'. Nevertheless, the representation of this role is strongly inflected with a parental gaze, concerned with individual dispositions and capacities. In the next section I set out the rationale for the classification, explaining why certain examples whose surface form is similar to those I have classified as Managing Actions were *not* included in the typology. I then present the typology of Managing Actions followed by a description of the criteria used to group them together a) by type of managing role, and b) in order of coerciveness.

### *The Classification*

It is important to observe the limitations to this classificatory scheme. As discussed above, there are many different linguistic forms that could potentially form part of a comprehensive grammar of management. For example, the Managing Action may be suppressed from the representation, as in the following examples:

*we will strengthen support for individual learners*  
*we must support learners in different ways*

However, the corpus-based method used in this case narrowed the search parameters. Thus the analysis focussed on the main verbal collocates of *we/the government*, meaning many other potential examples were not included in the classification of Managing Actions.

The classification includes only the most transparent examples of Managing Actions. In the majority of cases, this meant examples where the managing actor, action, and managed actor are all clearly identifiable. I also included those examples where a clear case of a Managing Action is prefaced by an \*activity facilitating it, as in the following example: *we will \*legislate to free school governors to run* (Cm 5230). There is no constant correlation between surface verb form and function as Managing Action. This is illustrated by the verb *expect*, which often functions in the data as a Managing Action, but can equally be a prediction or a modulation of the main verb. The following examples (from Cm 5810) illustrate the distinction:

*we will expect all LEAs<sup>13</sup> to include such information* [Managing Action]  
*we expect that large employers will play a key role in developing the sector skills agreements* [prediction]  
*we expect to introduce the entitlement on a partial basis in 2004-05*  
[modulation]

Moreover, the distinction between a Managing Action and prediction is not always clear-cut, but also a matter of interpretation, drawing on both speaker intuition and knowledge of the historical context of education reforms and the flows of power they have entailed. Consider the following:

*Given the quality of the programme, we expect that most schools will want to embark on it as early as possible (Cm 5230)*

This was classified as a prediction. The surface grammar underscores the optionality of this process through *expect* and *want*. Nevertheless, a certain degree of coercion is involved. The programme referred to is the Key Stage 3 strategy, a key element of the policy proposals in this document. Embarking on the strategy was not, in fact, an optional matter. However, schools could choose to ‘phase in’ its implementation over time and were allowed discretion in this matter.

***Types of Managing Action: overseeing, leading, facilitating***

Below I list the main surface forms classified as Managing Actions in the data. They are presented in the following format:

*Managing Action*      [MA] (managed actor)      (managed action)  
 e.g.: *Ensure that*      *pupils*      *work hard*

As stated earlier, the categories are listed in descending order, as I would place them on a cline of coercion (the same applies to examples within each category). In constructing such a cline, I draw selectively on Givon’s discussion of modal verbs (1993), although my interpretation is not based entirely on questions of modality. The typology aims to capture the range of subtle additional meanings each action conveys (and the social/rhetorical functions they perform) over and above the basic notion of causation. Such meanings include the degree of obligation to carry out the activity, the extent of the manager’s control, and whether the activity is seen through to completion. Both the typology and analysis of how these verbs are used suggest that the choice of one Managing Action over another is quite a complex rhetorical act.

**[1] Overseer**

Coerciveness Level	Managing Action	
1	<i>Ensure (that)</i> [MA]	<i>Make sure (that)</i> [MA]

Example: *we will...ensure that Further Education colleges can play a full part with schools and LEAs (Cm 3681).*

In these cases the manager (M) is in control of the managed actor’s (MA) behaviour. In other words, they encode the meaning ‘without M, MA wouldn’t do it’. Completion of the activity is assumed semantically. In managerial terms, actions are instigated and their enactment monitored, thus construing an ‘overseer’ role for the government. I see this role as involving relatively tight central control by the government. Graham (2002) observes that in cases where a predication (representing desirable outcomes) follows a verb like *ensure* (for example *investment in skills will*

*ensure greater competitiveness in a knowledge economy*), it elides the future orientation of the predicate, thereby construing it as the unquestionable result of the government's actions, rather than a possible future effect. As a result, the state of affairs it represents takes on the appearance of inevitability. Applying Graham's argument to the present case of Managing Actions, we can say that the managed action is represented as if it were already accomplished, rather than being a possible future outcome, thereby reducing room for negotiation over the matter. Thus in these cases the independence of the managed actor is comparatively limited and the agency of the manager (the government) is rather more foregrounded. For this reason, it is ranked highest in terms of coerciveness. While still an indirect form of government control, this type of Managing Action semantically encodes less freedom for the manipulee. Within an interpretation of Managing Actions as a form of soft power, we might therefore say that, where the power of the managing actor is clearly greater than that of the managed actor, the coercive element is most apparent in 'Overseer' types.

## [2] Leader

Coercive Level	Managing Action			
1	<i>Require [MA] to [A]</i>			
2	<i>Expect [MA] to</i>	<i>Look to [MA] to</i>	<i>Want [MA] to</i>	<i>Envisage that [MA] should</i>
3	<i>Urge [MA] to</i>	<i>Encourage [MA] to</i>		
4	<i>Ask [MA] to</i>	<i>Invite [MA] to</i>		
5	<i>Promote [+ nominalisation meaning 'the doing of X by MA']</i>			

Examples: *we will expect all LEAs to draw up an action plan* (Cm 3681)  
*we encourage schools to work together in local 'families' to help share [best practice]* (Cm 5230)

Here the manager (M) has authority to instigate others' actions, but the future orientation encoded semantically means there is no assumption of their completion. This future orientation is particularly apparent in *expect* which can be either a command or a simple prediction. It therefore involves greater spatial and temporal distance between the manager and the managed than in the previous examples. In terms of power relations these types also encode the meaning 'without M, MA wouldn't do it'. The degree of coercion semantically encoded is actually comparable to that of Overseer actions, although this applies to the instigation, rather than completion, of the activity. The reason for the hortatory aspect of these examples lies partly in assumptions about the particular social (power) relations involved. In some cases it also lies in the possible blurring of epistemic and deontic meanings (modifying truth and obligation respectively). For example *expect* can be either a prediction or a command (compare *I expect it will rain tomorrow* and *I expect you to tidy your room before bed*). In some cases the distinction between the two may only be clear because of contextual factors like the power relations between the participants: *I expect you will rethink your plans to climb Ben Nevis alone* may be variously interpreted as a command, warning or prediction, depending on the relationship between the addresser and addressee.

The degree of coercion actually implied depends on pragmatic inferences about the likelihood of compliance, which in turn depend partly on socio-personal

factors like power, status, authority, and obligation. Givon (1993: 13) observes that when it comes to assessing the degree of coercion expressed, what is at issue is not the agentivity of the manipulator, but the agentivity and independence of the manipulee. For our purposes, it is more helpful to express this in terms of the *power relation between* these two. The measure of this independence is the ability of the manipulee to mount resistance, which logically implies that the greater this independence, the greater the coercive force required. In turn, this suggests that the degree of coercive force the government is represented as exerting over other social actors tells us about the government's perception of the power relation that holds between them, as well as not only the manipulee's capacity for resistance, but - importantly, in a politically turbulent context - the likelihood of them resisting.

Beyond this point I find it unhelpful to rank these actions along a coercive cline based on an account of modality, since it does not take into account other, contextual factors I consider to be important. For instance, unlike Givon (1993: 274), in this study I rank *expect* and *want* as being more coercive than *ask* and *invite*. I believe that when the speaker is a socially powerful actor like the government, addressing institutions like local education authorities and state schools over whom it has considerable authority, its expectations and desires can be taken to be more coercive than its invitations. Further, an account drawing purely on questions of modality misses other socially significant actions performed in the discourse representations. Consider the examples *urge* and *encourage*. In contrast with the other examples in this category, they also encode not only degrees of coercion, but also greater attention to dispositional factors like motivation, conveying the sense 'without M, MA would lack the desire to do it'. When such forms are textured, for instance, with exhortations that young people engage in preparing themselves for the 'uncertainties' (i.e. insecurities) of a 'flexible' (i.e. under-regulated) labour market, their use is of potential ideological significance. It therefore demands attention to the role of such discourse patterns in shaping and naturalising certain 'preferred' identities and roles; for example the active, responsible, lifelong learning citizen of the workfare era. In relation to the concept of soft power Leader actions semantically encode a softer coercive force than Overseer types, introducing an evaluative dimension to the representation (of desirability, importance, attraction).

### [3] Facilitator

	Managing Action			
<b>Ability</b>	<i>Support [MA] to/in doing</i>	<i>Help [MA] to</i>	<i>Facilitate [MA] to</i>	<i>Let [MA] do</i>
	<i>Enable [MA] to</i>	<i>Transform/Enhance the capacity of [MA] to</i>	<i>Make it easier for [MA] to</i>	<i>Allow [MA] to</i>
<b>Opportunity</b>	<i>Free [MA] to</i>	<i>Give [MA] (greater/more) freedom(s) to</i>	<i>Provide for [MA] to</i>	<i>Provide/Increase/widen the opportunities for [MA] to</i>

Example: *The government is concerned to enable the ethnic minority communities to play their full part in contributing to the education of ethnic minority pupils*<sup>14</sup> (Cm 9469)

Here the manager's authority over MA is assumed, but completion of the action is not necessarily assumed. They encode the meaning 'without M, MA couldn't do it', for want of either ability or permission. In managerial terms, we might characterise this as a facilitating role. Here, the coercion works through the assumption of volition and as such is a particularly hegemonic formulation. In sociological terms, the objects of facilitating interventions are structural (e.g.: *provide opportunities*) and dispositional, where the government attempts to address the capacities of managed actors (e.g.: help, support). This is similar to those Leader activities in which the government attempts to incite individuals to action through encouraging and urging. I have classified them separately however, because of the different assumptions they trigger about volition on the part of the managed actor. The surface form of Facilitator actions comes closest to the 'enabling' force associated with the soft power of contemporary governance. The semantic realms they occupy are concerned with autonomy, freedom, space and flexibility. Here, the agency of the government seems the most indirect and the manipulee seemingly quite independent. However, as I have argued, it is not the case that the coercion is removed in these cases; simply that it is masked by the *assumption of volition*.

While I find this 'cline of coercion' a useful tool in understanding the sorts of relations construed between the government and other social actions, this can only be a tendential framework. The exercise of power over others is never guaranteed, and is subject to multifarious social and psychological factors. While these contextual factors remain unknown variables, I can only base my interpretation on the degree of coercion I believe to be encoded in the semantics of the verb.

Before examining in more detail how Managing Actions are used in New Labour discourse it is worth observing a peculiarity of these linguistic forms. If we examine Managing Actions in relation to process type, an interesting pattern emerges in which processes become more materialized as their coerciveness declines. Thus, the most coercive 'overseer' role involves highly abstract semiotic actions (*ensure, make sure*). Those median range actions representing a 'leader' role are also semiotic, but less abstract. Within this category, moreover, there is movement towards the material realm as the coercion decreases, thus from mental processes (*expect, require*) to verbal processes (*ask, urge*). Finally, the 'facilitator' role involves mainly abstract material processes (*help, support, enable*). This suggests that, in the context of governing education, the contemporary exercise of power lies very much in the realm of the psychological rather than the physical. This would accord with a governmentality understanding of advanced liberalism, which emphasises the role of the semiotic and the interpersonal in political rule (Rose, 1999a)<sup>15</sup>.

### ***Managing Actions: their use under New Labour***

As stated earlier, Managing Actions emerged from this longitudinal study as a distinctive feature of New Labour policy discourse. The data for the governments prior to New Labour contain very few Managing Actions (only 5, 9, and 43 instances in the first three blocks of data respectively, thus constituting a tiny percentage of the actions represented for the government<sup>16</sup>), which primarily construct a 'leader' role for the government in delegating responsibilities to various actors. Under Blair, not only is there a huge surge in the use of Managing Actions (358 instances out of 2728 instances of *we* or *the government*), but their use steadily increases, rising from 14% in 1997 to 20% of the actions represented for the government in 2005. They are also realised by a greater variety of surface forms, and collocate primarily with *we* rather

than *the government* (10 cases). The surface forms used most frequently are set out in the table below.

<b>Verb</b>	<i>Ensure</i>	<i>Expect</i>	<i>Support</i>	<i>Want</i>	<i>Ask</i>	<i>Encourage</i>
<b>Number</b>	48	43	41	34	31	29
<b>Role</b>	Overseer	Leader	Facilitator	Leader	Leader	Leader

<b>Verb</b>	<i>Help</i>	<i>Make sure</i>	<i>Invite</i>	<i>Allow</i>	<i>Enable</i>	<i>Urge</i>
<b>Number</b>	23	21	18	9	8	3
<b>Role</b>	Facilitator	Overseer	Leader	Facilitator	Facilitator	Leader

### *General Patterns of Use: leader first, enabler last*

Despite the government's claims to *offer an active, enabling government*, it is interesting to note that its most textually prominent role, and by some margin, is actually that of the traditional manager. The 'Leader' role, delegating tasks and using managerial techniques of control to monitor progress, accounts for around half of all the Managing Actions represented, with the remaining cases roughly divided between the overseer and facilitator roles. When we examine the cluster findings for each of these verbs, we find that the most textually prominent Leader role construed for the government is typically managerial, delegating tasks and assigning responsibilities. The verbs realising the leader role thus construe a manager of a highly complex system, orchestrating diverse activities and creating new networks in the 'tangled hierarchies' of contemporary governance (Jessop, 1996). In its Overseer role, the government has the long-term vision, and engages in strategic planning on the basis of this expert knowledge and broader view. It then sets targets for others to meet, monitoring and benchmarking progress along the way. Finally we have the Facilitator, helping various actors participate effectively in the new economy. This role is about spreading the neoliberal vision of flexibility, specialisation, choice and diversity in a competitive market. Here, primarily educational<sup>17</sup> actors are helped and enabled to diversify and innovate. Thus, where greater autonomy is encoded in the type of Managing Action, there is a greater emphasis on success and survival in a competitive market. Where the managing role is more coercive, making specific requests of others, the emphasis is rather more on organisational matters.

### *The Leader: managing networked governance*

New Labour's most prominent managerial role is, perhaps unsurprisingly, that of the Leader, institutionalising and orchestrating 'joined up' governance. It thus manages a diverse set of 'partners' who are represented in terms of their organisational properties or functional remit. These include middle-tier governmental and non-governmental organisations, partnerships and other more-or-less abstract networks of actors: Education Action Zones, Regional Development Agencies, Learning and Skills Council, Sector Skills Development Agency, Local Forums, Local Strategic Partnerships, and the Skills for Business Networks. Such institutional actors are *expected // asked* and *invited* to engage in predominantly semiotic middle-management activities (*draw up plans // put forward proposals // review // consider // consult // look at the evidence // advise // devise a set of national standards // work in*

*partnership with*). Additional partners of this ‘joined up’ governance are more familiar apparatuses in the governance of education: LEAs.

Considering the historical development of power relations in the state, LEAs are an interesting case. Following the 1988 Reform Act there has been a progressive erosion of their powers (Trowler, 2003). This is also evident in policies issued under previous governments which, for instance, *required* them to devolve powers to schools (Mulderrig, 2011). Under New Labour, their power relation has evolved into one of partnership with the government, which is commensurate with a governance-oriented dispersal of power (Ling, 2000). Compared with many educational actors they are still afforded less autonomy. Nevertheless, they are assigned new roles and operational tasks that position them in the role of middle managers, themselves planning, consulting and delegating. For example, *we expect LEAs:*

*to include such information (league tables)*

*to draw up an action plan*

*to invite proposals from external partners to turn around a failing school*

At the same time the government expects the Sector Skills Council ‘*to deliver top quality analysis of international, national and regional trends in labour, skills and productivity in their sector*’. This example is typical of the research and development role assigned to the Sector Skills Council. Similarly, ‘*we expect an independent review team to produce wide-ranging and detailed proposals*’. Alongside the exploitation of external partnerships advocated for LEAs, such information gathering can be understood in relation to governance, in which central bodies are seen to be unable to collect adequate information about the outside world, so that the government solicits support and research from others in the pursuit of evidence-based policies (Ling, 2000).

Similar representational patterns are textured with the other main forms representing the Leader role: *want*, *ask*, and *invite*. Thus, institutional actors are asked to engage in predominantly semiotic middle-management activities: *draw up plans // put forward proposals // review // consider // consult // look at the evidence // advise // devise a set of national standards // partnership-working*. Constructing complex tiers of managing, they are also asked to manage others.

Also classified in the Leader role is the action *encourage*, which is used rather differently. It manages mainly schools and partnerships rather than organisations. Moreover, the managed activities are rather different, frequently construing a discourse of social inclusion, with its active citizenship emphasis on participation and partnership. This model of social inclusion is linked to the labour market, with emphasis in some cases on preparation for work. The government thus encourages schools to:

*involve family learning in early years and primary education*

*work together in local ‘families’ to help share (best practice)*

*offer high quality work-related learning*

*offer high quality work experience*

*develop educational programmes (on ‘parenting skills’)*

*adopt a consistent whole-school approach to food and nutrition*

*help to develop rounded individuals*

*choose to establish new partnerships with other successful schools*

Thus *encourage* appears to be the exception to the Leader role, which more frequently represents classical managerial activities like delegating tasks and measuring effectiveness in achieving them. Here, by contrast, it manages activities more concerned with citizenship and collaboration. It would appear that Managing Actions also provide a conduit for the discourse of social inclusion. In this case through the verb *encourage*. It allows neoliberal market-modelled elements of educational organisation to remain, while inflecting them with a so-called ‘Third Way’<sup>18</sup> concern with inclusion, participation and social renewal.

### ***The Overseer: strategic economic planning and modelling***

The single most frequently used managing verb is *ensure*, which constructs a steering role over both economic and educational practices. It does so by guaranteeing an abstract vision of excellence and success in both spheres. In an expansive, positively affective discourse, the government offers ever-widening opportunities for improvement, access, information, and participation. Examples include: *we will ensure that young people:*

*develop knowledge and skills to take their place in society*  
*achieve National Curriculum level 5*  
*have some good quality engagement with employment*  
*obtain the learning and skills they need to take on new challenges at work*  
*learn how to be creative and enterprising to generate ideas, products and innovations.*

In these examples we see how *ensure* also plays a role in New Labour’s active labour market policy. The most frequently managed actors are young people or people generally, both of whom are steered into lifelong learning practices. These are construed as the keys to full participation in both work and society, illustrating the central role of educational practices in New Labour’s Third Way alignment of social justice with economic participation. In fact a particularly wide range of actors and actions are managed by *ensure*, ranging from securing competitiveness in UK businesses to guaranteeing the rights of school governors to dismiss incompetent staff. In terms of contemporary governance, *ensure* thus appears to be a prominent textual mechanism for coordinating increasingly complex networks of activity across larger political and social spaces.

The overseer role is also represented through *make sure*, in which schools and teachers are the most frequently managed actors. Where teachers are the managed actors, an interesting pattern occurs with the modalisation of *make sure*. Simple direct future commitments, signalling the government’s control over future events, are used to manage and monitor teachers’ professional development: *we will make sure that:*

*headteachers can assess teachers’ performance for pay purposes*  
*teachers are equipped to make the most of opportunities to improve their skills*

There is even less room for negotiation in managing teachers’ competence and effectiveness, the necessity of which is construed through modalisation: *we must make sure that:*

*all teachers...understand the best methods of teaching*

*that teachers can use them as effectively as possible.*

By contrast, when it comes to rewarding teachers' work or addressing the realities of difficult working conditions, epistemic modality distances the government from the commitments it makes: *we want to make sure that:*

*teachers who work in challenging circumstances are properly recognised and supported  
teachers are rewarded for these efforts*

This applies even in cases where it proposes a redistribution of the elite tier of the profession: *we want to make sure that more Fast Track and Advanced Skills Teachers work in challenging schools so that our very best teachers work in the schools that need them most.* The softening of the government's commitment to this outcome is perhaps necessary, given that where teachers work is ultimately their own choice. However, it may also be a tacit recognition that schools are often challenged partly because of lack of resources, both within the school and the surrounding community. Such schools are unlikely to be able to afford 'A-list' teachers. The document (Cm 3681) goes on to elaborate how it will help challenged schools. The emphasis throughout is on improving teachers' skills and learning from successful schools' strategies.

### ***The Facilitator: enabling neoliberal change***

The facilitated actors are institutions (*schools, universities, colleges*) occupationally represented actors (*learners, heads, teachers, workers, employers, parents, trainers*) or the sectorally defined *business*. The most frequent form of facilitating is *support*. While a variety of actions is managed by it, a recurrent theme is that of skills. Businesses are helped to succeed by focussing on the skills of their workforce, while learners and young people are supported in developing them, as are heads and middle managers. Thus, the government *supports* a variety of actors to: *upgrade // acquire // develop // renew (key // core // basic // advanced // professional // work-related) skills*. Also textured with the Facilitator role are two examples of an elliptical phrase typical of managerial discourse: *we will support the workforce to deliver*. No further specification is given. When used without a complement noun phrase in this way, the verb *deliver* is sufficiently abstract to encompass a wide range of possible activities, while ideologically conveying the importance placed on outputs. This example illustrates how Managing Actions help organise the increasing complexity of power-dispersal by specifying and monitoring targets while at the same time using highly abstract language and more complex lines of agency in order to 'take a step back' in terms of control.

Meanwhile schools are helped to take on an increased range of responsibilities for securing both excellence and social inclusion. The government's facilitation of schools is textured with both a discourse of competitive marketisation and a more pastoral discourse of needs and social problems, construing a central role for schools in securing social inclusion. Thus on the one hand they will be helped to:

*raise the quality of teaching and learning  
deliver greater flexibility  
meet the needs of talented and gifted children*

*develop further to become Centres of Excellence*

While on the other hand, they will be helped to *become healthy schools* (this refers to *pressing public health problems* including smoking, drug and alcohol abuse) and *meet the needs of children with special educational needs*. Finally, we have an example that textures together elements of a pastoral discourse [P] and the managerial [M], so that support and social inclusion become a matter of meeting external targets, even while still at school: *we will [P] help schools [M] deliver this [M] focused [P] support* (for young people who are struggling to reach, by age 14, the required standard set for them in government targets).

In the remaining cases of facilitation an uneasy conjunction of competitive and collaborative models of activity is construed for schools. This is particularly the case for *allow*. It was observed above that the positively affective meaning encoded in certain facilitator verbs has a potentially hegemonic effect. This is the case because they trigger or 'propagate' (Graham, 2002) a positive evaluation of the predicated element (the facilitated action), thereby assuming a desire on the part of the managed actor to perform the action. The positively evaluated activities represented for schools are concerned with the organisation of a successful educational market. They are thus *allowed greater freedom, flexibility, autonomy* to innovate, and share both *best practice* and the *best teachers* with other schools, deciding teachers' pay and conditions, and expanding when successful. The verb *enable* is similarly textured with such a neoliberal 'survival of the fittest' model, for example: *we will enable successful and popular schools to expand*. By texturing this with a Facilitator Managing Action an assumed consensus is created on the desirability and inevitability of a 'markets' model of educational governance. Throughout the corpus those actions managed by the Facilitator are the most abstract and vague. They often texture a general vision of a Desirable but ill-defined educational landscape of excellence. Meanwhile the most clearly-defined activity to help us arrive there is New Labour's social policy panacea: skills, skills, skills (Mulderigg, 2008).

## **Conclusion**

An essential function of the policy genre is hortatory; it is about 'getting people to do things'. This is a matter of governance. It has been argued that in recent decades governance in numerous domains has come to rely increasingly on the dispersal of power across networks of actors (Fairtlough, 2007). As part of the reconstitution of organisations, the hierarchical controls of bureaucracies have given way to an emphasis on leadership and partnership (Clegg, 2008). Part of this move entails a refiguring of subjectivities (Costea et al., 2008) as increasing emphasis is placed on individual 'responsibility' and 'autonomy' (Rose, 1999). Broadly, this reconfiguration of power relations is characterised as a shift towards 'soft' governance, which aims to secure the compliance of self-governing individuals. This paper has presented evidence for a particular linguistic form through which this is enacted.

The findings from this longitudinal study of UK policy discourse have demonstrated a sharp increase under New Labour of a type of verbal process called 'Managing Actions', which discursively enact a more subtle or 'soft' coercive force in contemporary governance. They do so by: a) constructing a more indirect form of agency, recasting the government as an 'enabling' force, which b) assigns greater autonomy and direct agency to a diverse range of actors, while at the same time c) specifying desired outcomes and in some cases d) securing compliance by *assuming*

*volition* on the part of managed actors. Despite their rhetorical emphasis on ‘enabling’ Managing Actions do entail some coercive force which varies depending on the surface form of the verb, the context, and the power relations that hold between the social actors in question. Thus the freedom afforded through this type of soft power I characterise as ‘managed autonomy’. Managing Actions also construct different managerial roles for the government which map onto the key roles of the ‘enabler’ state (Alexander, 1997). Thus the most coercive ‘Overseer’ role involves setting goals and enforcing outcomes; the ‘Leader’ assigns roles and responsibilities to diverse partners of governance, and the ‘Facilitator’ assigns the greatest degree of autonomy to actors, albeit in a subtly hegemonic form.

Managing Actions highlight the policy reality behind the rhetoric of autonomy and empowerment associated with the ‘enabling’ state (Gilbert, 2005). In the New Labour corpus by far the most prominent governance roles are that of Leader and Overseer. Managing Actions thus help New Labour institute ‘Distributed Leadership’ as a governance paradigm for the UK education system (Currie et al., 2009) by acting:

indirectly upon the actions of these autonomous entities [partnerships, steering groups, professional bodies, schools, principals, teachers, pupils...], by focussing upon results: setting targets, promulgating standards, monitoring outputs, allocating budgets, undertaking audits (Rose, 1999b: 146).

Despite the discursive emphasis on empowerment and enabling, this paper illustrates that governance involves not so much the reduction of (governmental) power as its reinvention in a more subtle, affective, ‘soft’, but no less coercive form. In particular Facilitator actions construct a subtly hegemonic form of soft power by semantically *assuming* volition on the part of the manipulee. These are most frequently textured with the desirable ‘new, unexplored, unknowable spaces’ (Graham, 2001: 765) that are to be created through the government’s proposals. These policy ‘imaginaries’ are strongly inflected with the logic of market competitiveness, which throughout the data sits in tension with a discourse of inclusion and collaboration. I propose that the hegemonic potential of Managing Actions lies partly in their capacity to elide such contradictions in policy by assuming a consensus on the desirability of the specified outcomes.

In proposing a *sociosemantic* account of Managing Actions, I attempt to go beyond a purely grammatical analysis of this linguistic regularity in order to capture its sociological significance in instituting contemporary forms of ‘soft’ governance. The outlined typology does not constitute a comprehensive ‘grammar of management’ of the kind called for by Van Leeuwen (1999). It does, however, offer substantive empirical insights into how New Labour governance is systematically inflected with the logic of managerialism, and how this uses more oblique and subtle forms of agency to secure compliance. In a recent speech in Liverpool the current UK Prime Minister recently promised a ‘dramatic redistribution of power from elites in Whitehall to the man and woman on the street’ (Cameron, 2010). In this speech he placed liberalism, empowerment, freedom and responsibility at the heart of his vision for the ‘Big Society’. Cameron’s rhetoric, at least, suggests that ‘enabling’ forms of governance are set to endure beyond New Labour. Further longitudinal studies of policy trajectories (e.g. Lingard and Garrick, 1997) alongside analysis of governance in UK schools (e.g. Currie et al., 2009) would help establish whether this really does entail greater freedoms and genuine empowerment, or instead the type of ‘managed autonomy’ we have seen under New Labour.

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### ***Appendix 1: Data Sources***

The asterisk\* indicates a White Paper that was jointly published by the Department of Education and one or more other government departments.

Command (Cm) No. & Year	Title	Prime Minister
Cm 5174 (1972)	Education: A Framework for expansion	Heath (Con)
Cm 7231 (1978) *	Industrial Democracy (education section only)	Callaghan (Lab)
Cm 7368 (1978)	Secondary School Examinations: a single system at 16 plus	
Cm 8455 (1981) *	A New Training Initiative: a programme for action	Thatcher (Con)
Cm 8836 (1983)	Teaching Quality	
Cm 9135 (1984) *	Training for Jobs	
Cm 9469 (1985)	Better Schools	
Cm 9482 (1985) *	Education and Training for Young People	
Cm 2021 (1992)	Choice and Diversity: a framework for schools	Major (Con)
Cm 2867 (1995) *	Competitiveness: forging ahead (education section only)	
Cm 3300 (1996) *	Competitiveness: creating the enterprise centre for Europe	
Cm 3315 (1996)	Self-government for schools (summary version)	
Cm 3681 (1997)	Excellence in Schools	Blair (Lab)
Cm 5052 (2001) *	Opportunity for All in a World of Change	
Cm 5230 (2001)	Schools Achieving success	
Cm 5810 (2003) *	21 <sup>st</sup> Century Skills: realising our potential	
Cm 6476 (2005)	14 - 19 Education and Skills	

<sup>1</sup> Here I am extrapolating from Jessop's account of governance in which he makes this twofold distinction, although I am simplifying the discussion by confining it to the activities of the government. Clearly governance in both senses applies to other spheres of social life; public and private, economic and extra-economic. See Jessop 1999 for a more detailed definition; also Jessop 2002 for a full account of typical transformations in the mode of governance in the capitalist state during the latter part of the C20th.

<sup>2</sup> I deliberately use 'imaginaries' as a noun in the sense of discursively construed economic and political 'imaginaries'; understandings of the politico-economic conditions and possibilities of action at a particular historical moment (see Jessop, 2002).

<sup>3</sup> Prior to 1986 the prefix 'Cmnd' was used, and after 'Cm.'. For simplicity I use the latter throughout.

<sup>4</sup> Thus consultations dealing with special schools, further and higher education institutions and so forth were not included in the corpus. Schools in Northern Ireland and Scotland come under separate jurisdiction.

<sup>5</sup> The first block contains documents from both the Heath and Callaghan governments. Despite the different political colours of these two administrations they are grouped together because they are used in the analysis largely as a point of comparison. These blocks were close but not equal in terms of wordcount (the first one was the smallest and the last was the largest). The textual prominence of

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particular linguistic features was calculated as a percentage of the total wordcount for each block in order that comparisons of relative frequency could be made between periods.

<sup>6</sup> In corpus linguistics, ‘concordance’ lines display in a vertical list all occurrences of a particular search word in their textual environment. ‘Keyness’ refers to a word’s unusual frequency relative to some norm. It is calculated by comparing one’s data with a comparison corpus (comprising a range of different text-types) – in this study the Freiburg LOB *Corpus* of British English (‘FLOB’) was used. All words in a corpus can be ranked for keyness.

<sup>7</sup> ‘Ofsted’ stands for ‘Office for Standards in Education’, an organisation which is empowered to drop in on schools with very little notice, inspect their activities, then assign them a rating which in turn affects their standing in the national league tables. Consequently teachers fear such inspections.

<sup>8</sup> A minor element has been omitted from the original extract for the sake of clarity. The original read ‘we take powers to allow schools greater freedoms to innovate’. The omission does not affect the analysis.

<sup>9</sup> In which the two elements do not stand alone, but each is dependent on the other.

<sup>10</sup> In terms of the interpersonal meaning conveyed in language, it is possible to distinguish intermediary stages between positive and negative propositions or proposals. In the case of proposals (commands or offers) these can be modified to express degrees of obligation (commands) or inclination (offers). This type of modification of the commitment to act is called ‘modulation’. In this extract ‘want to’ expresses a particular degree of inclination to engage in the managing action ‘ensure’.

<sup>11</sup> Courpasson (2000) demonstrates how the hierarchical controls of bureaucracy have not in fact been displaced by ‘soft governance’, but survive by drawing on these techniques as new and important means by which (centralised) authority is legitimated.

<sup>12</sup> For example the Social Exclusion Unit of the Cabinet Office was established in 1997 under New Labour with a brief to use such a ‘joined-up’ approach to develop a range of integrated strategies for tackling the multiplex problems of unemployment, drugs, illiteracy, crime, poor housing etc. in some of Britain’s most deprived communities. Its early work placed a heavy emphasis on educational issues rather than social security.

<sup>13</sup> The acronym ‘LEA’ refers to Local Education Authority

<sup>14</sup> Although from an earlier part of the corpus (under Major), this example is included since it illustrates well the formulation in question. Notice how presupposition here creates the implication that these communities are currently *not* playing their full part in the education of their children.

<sup>15</sup> My argument here is about the *choices* made in the representation, rather than the range of systemic functional resources for ‘getting people to do things’. For example, the concrete material processes *make* and *force* encode an even higher degree of coercion than *ensure*, marking the power relations quite explicitly and non-psychologically. However, the point is that these forms were not used in the data.

<sup>16</sup> The percentages are 2% under Heath and Callaghan, 1.8% under Thatcher and 4% under Major. While these suggest a steady increase in Managing Actions, there is an undoubted surge under Blair with the figure jumping to 14% in the first document – which was issued less than a year after the last document under Major.

<sup>17</sup> Surprisingly, economic actors figure most significantly in the more organisation-oriented leader role. An exception is in the case of *help*, where businesses are helped as frequently as schools.

<sup>18</sup> This term was frequently used by Prime Minister Tony Blair himself as a means of marking New Labour’s ideological dissociation with the neoliberalism of the preceding Conservative governments. Derived from the work of Anthony Giddens (1998), the concept the ‘Third Way’ claims to offer a solution to the divisive effects of unchecked neoliberalism. It represents a rethinking of social democracy so as to incorporate a fundamental acceptance of globalised neoliberalism while addressing the need for social justice (Hay, 1999). In his analysis of New Labour language, Fairclough (2000) demonstrates how Third Way political discourse consistently attempts to bring together as equivalent or at least compatible, contradictory concepts and ideological principles. After its initial influence on New Labour politics, it is interesting to note the term seems to have disappeared from New Labour discourse, particularly falling out of use under Gordon Brown’s premiership.