

# Special Doctoral Issue

- > **Developing research students' academic confidence**
- > **Ethics of photo-elicitation with young people**
- > **Bricolage as a methodology**
- > **Three new Education research books published by Routledge**



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A very warm welcome to this special Doctoral issue of R.Ed. In May of this year the University of Brighton's School of Education organised and hosted a one-day conference, 'Engaging with methodology: Diversity, questions and challenges', for Professional Doctorate students. Almost 90 Professional Doctorate students from a range of disciplines and universities across the UK and Norway came together and engaged in lively dialogue about their doctoral study. We are delighted to include three of the conference papers in this edition of R.Ed, with the publication of further conference papers planned for future editions.

In tune with the theme of this special issue, the first article discusses findings from a research project conducted by Charlotte Morris and Gina Wisker, in which they explored factors which support the development of academic confidence in Masters and Doctoral Students within Education. The following three papers are contributions from doctoral students; Anna Lise Gordon writes with interest about her choice of bricolage as a methodological approach to explore the resilience of early career teachers; Hayley Allan's thought provoking paper focuses on the methodological challenges she faces as she investigates the area of tacit pedagogies in medical education; and Jenny Peddar's engaging paper considers the ethical and methodological challenges she faced in using photo-elicitation with children and young people to explore what it is like to be a sibling of a child with a disability.

A common element across all three conference papers is the passion the authors have for their chosen research areas. We hope this special issue will inspire and whet the appetite for all with an interest in practice based research.

**Carol Robinson, David Stephens and Keith Turvey**

Editors

# Developing academic confidence in research students in Education



**Charlotte Morris and Gina Wisker**

## Abstract

Data was collected as part of a 'wellbeing' themed research project funded by Escalate (Higher Education Academy). A number of interrelated themes emerged in connection with academic confidence development, including troublesome encounters or coping with 'troublesome knowledge' (Meyer and Land, 2003, 2006; Cousin, 2003); academic insecurity; the uncertain status of research students and conflicting identities; isolation and feelings of non-belonging; and issues around ownership of their work. Positive strategies were identified which supervisory teams, departments and institutions can play a role in supporting and enabling, and these included learning to embrace the troublesome nature of doctoral learning, through normalisation and dialoguing; acceptance of criticism as an essential aspect of academic work; developing an authoritative academic voice; opportunities to explore intellectual frameworks and to participate in and contribute to the wider research community.

## Introduction

The 'Troublesome Encounters' project investigated factors which impact on the wellbeing of masters and doctoral students in Education, with an emphasis on ways in which experiences of 'troublesome knowledge' (Meyer and Land, 2003, 2005; Cousin, 2003) or troublesomeness impact on their wellbeing. These terms refer to the profound ontological anxieties and uncertainty which may accompany encounters with unfamiliar concepts, ways of being and knowing (Wisker, Morris et.al., 2010). While postgraduate learning often involves positive transformation, encounters with new concepts

Charlotte and Gina explore interview data from research (masters and doctoral) students in Education in terms of what helps to facilitate the development of academic confidence

and ways of being can trigger anxiety and uncertainty. The project identified a range of factors which can profoundly affect academic confidence and impact on academic wellbeing. These included 'troublesome encounters'; academic insecurity; uncertain status and identities; non-belonging and isolation; and issues around ownership. It sought to identify enhancement strategies that students, supervisors, programme leaders and others can employ to enable academic confidence development, enhance wellbeing and emotional resilience, and enable a successful learning experience at this level.

## Literature and context

In research student learning in Education, intellectual boundaries, ways of seeing the world and teaching practices are tested and transformed which is likely to impact on personal, academic and professional confidence. Theories of threshold concepts (Meyer and Land, 2003; 2006), conceptual thresholds (Wisker, Morris et.al, 2010), and the accompanying notion of troublesome knowledge, provide a framework for approaching these challenges. Threshold concept theory highlighted discipline-specific transformative learning processes for undergraduates (Meyer and Land 2003; Cousin 2003; Meyer and Land 2005; Meyer and Land 2006). Their evidence suggests that a threshold concept may be 'transformative', leading to significant, and probably irreversible, shifts in perception; 'integrative', exposing previously hidden interrelatedness of something or 'bounded', bordering onto new conceptual areas (Cousin, 2003). In terms of research student learning, the concept of 'conceptual threshold crossing' was developed, referring to transformative ways in which research students begin to understand knowledge and themselves (Kiley and Wisker, 2008; Kiley and Wisker, 2009; Wisker, Morris et.al., 2010). As part of their learning, research students move beyond their comfort zones, begin to challenge the theories of others and their own established ways of seeing the world, and explore new unfamiliar theories and concepts, relating these to their own work. This process is often accompanied by the students beginning to see things in new ways which may be counter-intuitive at first. These

transformative shifts and changes in perception, new knowledge and understanding are, for Education research students, ultimately likely to impact on their practice.

Research suggests that doctoral students encounter troublesome knowledge in the form of perceptions, understandings and issues which are unfamiliar or problematic (Trafford and Leshem, 2009) while supervisors have observed in students moments of 'stuckness' or developmental blockages which impact negatively on self-esteem (Kiley, 2009). Further factors relating to wellbeing include academic isolation (Poyatos-Matas, 2009); role confusion (Jazvac-Martek, 2009); complexity of the doctoral experience (Beauchamp, Jazvac-Martek, and McAlpine, 2009) and the need for emotional support (Shacham, and Od-Cohen, 2009). However these links between wellbeing and learning have not previously been fully developed or sufficiently focused on student perspectives (Poyatos-Matas, 2009). The 'Doctoral Learning Journeys' project (Wisker, Morris et. al., 2010; Morris, Wisker et.al., 2011) began to identify factors which can impact on the wellbeing of research students. This level of study is extremely intensive and a major time and financial commitment. Supervisory relationships can be complex and challenging and doctoral students often reported feeling personally and academically isolated. Some research students experience issues around identity, struggling to fit into academic culture; many also experience academic insecurity, struggling to manage criticism, along with ontological insecurities. Research student learning contains a significant emotional dimension due to pushing personal and intellectual boundaries as part of their conceptual threshold crossing (Wisker, Morris et. al., 2010), grappling with ontological and epistemological issues and discovering academic limitations and potential. However, emotional dimensions are often ignored or seen as less important.

### Research Design

A mixed methods approach was adopted in order to elicit generalisable findings alongside in-depth, rich data. An online survey was distributed among research students in 20 UK institutions and attracted over 300 responses, producing quantitative and qualitative data. Through purposive sampling, a cross-section of students participated in further research. Focus groups of masters and doctoral students from two institutions explored the notion of 'academic wellbeing' further, while Focus groups with supervisors, programme leaders and other key staff provided staff perspectives. Semi-structured interviews with 20 students from participating institutions, including eight masters and twelve doctoral level (PhD and EdD) students enabled an in-depth exploration of learning experiences. Open questions captured experiences of learning processes which impact positively and negatively on wellbeing. Content analysis was undertaken for each data set, with data coded and organized into themes; findings were triangulated to draw out the main conclusions. This article focusses on data drawn from individual interviews with students at different stages of their studies, conducted in 2011.

### Findings

This section will provide an overview of the main themes pertaining to confidence development in masters and doctoral learners. It will firstly address issues around dealing with troublesome knowledge and experiences of 'troublesomeness' in learning, moving on to an exploration the closely related area of academic insecurity. The article will then highlight the centrality of the research community in enabling masters and doctoral students to overcome isolation and develop academic confidence. Further factors impacting on confidence include issues around status and ownership. Each section will outline positive strategies which students, those involved in their learning, Education departments, and institutions, can potentially employ to enable positive confidence development and contribute to overall wellbeing. The article will finally consider the potential for positive

confidence development inherent in the learning journeys of masters and doctoral students in Education and the benefits for their practice as educators as well as learners.

### Troublesomeness

Academic confidence is affected by a number of factors, including encounters with troublesome knowledge or troublesomeness. For Education research students, troublesomeness often occurs when they move beyond their comfort zone, encounter new theoretical perspectives and re-evaluate previously held ideas. They may have built up fixed notions of the world and their discipline through previous experiences and professional practice. Educational theories can therefore seem counter-intuitive and bring practices into question. Troublesomeness can be heightened where there are additional barriers to learning, experienced, for example, by those who have been out of Education for an extended period and those new to the discipline. Troublesomeness is a normal and necessary part of a successful learning journey and often precedes breakthroughs. A strong safety net of support and community can foster resilience, especially when students are experiencing additional wellbeing challenges. However, academic challenge is crucial to learning, particularly at critical stages in the journey. These include early stages when students are laying theoretical and methodological foundations for their thesis, the "upgrade" (transfer from MPhil to PhD level) process, and towards the end when finalizing their thesis and preparing for the viva.

“...troublesomeness often occurs when they move beyond their comfort zone..”

Troublesomeness closely relates to personal confidence, particularly apparent for mature professionals who may find it hard to grasp academic and theoretical discourses within the field where they are used to seeing themselves as experts in practice. International students often hold different understandings and perspectives as well as language and expression relating to topics of study, thus creating an additional layer of troublesomeness. Research students can initially feel overwhelmed by the amount of knowledge available and unsure "where to start. In one example, troublesomeness manifested itself with a student at masters level staying within their comfort zone and wanting to focus on theories he was familiar with from their undergraduate studies - a fear of the unknown was here preventing the student from moving forwards. In contrast, for this EdD student, learning is very much about embracing the difficulty and pushing the boundaries of knowledge – this may involve unfamiliar language and uncomfortable emotions. The student moved on from a position of feeling insecure, recognising the value of being open to learning and its intellectual and emotional discomforts:

'It's that thing about realising that if you're gonna get somewhere useful it's going to be difficult and if it's not it's probably not worth it, and if, and that it being difficult might involve things like having criticism or being forced to think about things that are difficult to think about, either coz they're... kind of an emotional level are difficult or just coz there's lots of long words involved, and so just... expecting it to be hard and relishing the difficulty rather than allowing yourself to feel insecure about it, and just seeing it as that's what happens when you're on the boundaries, when you're learning.'

Another EdD student discovered that their learning journey involved profound ontological and epistemological transformation where

previous ways of being in and knowing the world were fundamentally challenged. While this was initially uncomfortable, the student emerged into a new position of acknowledging uncertainty. This is an example of transformative conceptual threshold crossing (Wisker, Morris et al, 2010). It lies in contrast to the example of the masters student whose understanding of academic confidence related to 'comfort' in learning, as opposed to a more developed notion which allows for questioning, risk and uncertainty:

'I don't really make any significant progress until I find myself in an area of quite significant self-doubt... That's quite a discomfoting situation because the way I see the world is called into question and I've built up this way of seeing the world for many years... but then I think, you know, it's one of the beautiful things about doctoral study is how that pushes you to begin to question how you see the world. I find that emerging from the other side when you sort of realize that I'm still covered in doubt but ... I'm now but happy with that position and... actually I'm happier now being in the zone where everything's a little more uncertain than it was previously.'

Critical moments where experiences of troublesomeness are likely to take place include transitions to a new level such as 'transfer of status' and also completion. It flowed from wrestling with concepts of 'ontology' and 'epistemology' in terms of trying to understand these concepts and their relation to projects, establishing research frameworks and asking profound questions of themselves and the world. The challenge involved in traversing these periods of troublesomeness can entail anxiety. One student described the paradox of needing to care for wellbeing while at the same time putting themselves in an insecure position intellectually. It might be argued that the personal, professional, intellectual and emotional benefits of this intensive learning outweigh potential risks. Indeed for academic wellbeing, challenge and risk are essential, enabling the achievement of personal and intellectual potential. However, responses suggest that it is beneficial to start from a secure place in terms of having a support network and good overall wellbeing to enable resilience. Academic departments, programmes and institutions can support academic confidence development by creating safe spaces for the explicit exploration of epistemology and ontology; normalizing experiences of troublesomeness; through developmental activities and targeted support.

### **Academic insecurity**

The transition to research learning can involve a significant change from previous educational experiences where students may have become used to being a 'top student' and are now 'on the bottom rung' of the ladder again with little in the way of praise and external validation - described by one participant as 'small fish-big pond syndrome'. Many participants reported feeling fraudulent and living in fear of being 'found out' as imposters. One doctoral student related this to a constant comparison with academics, forgetting that they have had many more years of experience of articulating their arguments. Often Education research students are new to educational theories through having previously studied in different fields - sometimes practically orientated - where they are unused to the different learning processes involved. Many have been in practice for long periods of time so the demands of reading, writing and using new technologies can seem daunting. For one part-time masters student, who had originally studied in a different field and had been practising for a significant period of time, failing a module early in the course proved to be emotionally devastating. However, it was also a turning point in terms of their learning journey, enabling more resilience and self-awareness and deeper engagement in learning: '...so the dive then was really, really massive and took me a while. I was learning I suppose about managing time, but managing emotions, managing reactions, managing a sense of self that

previously I had been very, very happy for that sense, that academic sense just had to be validated by passing things and getting the bits of paper and now I had to find a new way into that and to value the learning process.'

As well as coping with failure or fear of failure, one potential trigger of insecurity is an academic culture of critique which students may find it difficult to adapt to. Research students' work can seem personal to them, containing deeply held beliefs which may have become ingrained in their lives and practice. It is important that students are prepared to cope with criticism and not take it personally but see it as a crucial aspect of their learning. It can be particularly difficult to experience failure or negative feedback when students are already vulnerable through heavy workloads, family responsibilities, health or personal issues. Internal and external pressures to achieve can also engender high levels of 'academic performance anxiety'. The development of confidence which enables positive responses to criticism and feedback can be an ongoing process of familiarisation and enculturation which is not always apparent to the student until they become aware of a change.

Opportunities to recognise and celebrate achievement and to become more reflective as a learner can contribute to this confidence development and help address academic insecurity. An important step in this journey is recognizing that it is not necessary to know everything but that you do have knowledge of one specific area within your field. Expectation management is therefore essential. Coming through the journey with all its difficulties and developing more self-awareness of limitations as well as possibilities can enhance overall personal wellbeing and resilience as well as professionalism. Strategies participants employed included keeping perspective and remembering that their postgraduate study is only the beginning of an academic journey, they will develop confidence and the ability to vocalize ideas as they continue, managing their own expectations and recognizing that their work may have a limited impact at this stage. Rather, they are participating in a discussion; becoming part of their wider academic community; communicating with other research students going through similar experiences and celebrating successes such as conference presentations; embracing the difficulty and noticing increasing familiarity with the language and topic within their discipline. Supervisors can support this process through providing the necessary challenge and critique, ensuring that students are prepared, that they are supported at times of vulnerability, and that feedback is sensitive and constructive, especially towards the beginning of the journey while the student becomes used to the academic environment.

Engagement with the wider academic community was an essential component of academic confidence development, comprising formal and informal opportunities to discuss work and overcome feelings of academic insecurity. Ongoing dialogue helps to foster a sense of ownership over research and aids focus and clarity as research students establish their position within wider theoretical frameworks and methodologies. Opportunities for discussion within their disciplines expose them to further relevant ideas and interdisciplinary discussion enables the development of clarity in justifying their work - essential skills for viva and for future careers. As well as enhancing overall confidence, academic engagement enables students to overcome troublesomeness and 'stuck places' in their learning.

### **Community belonging**

A sense of belonging to community a of peers, to their institution and the wider academic community was the main factor identified as contributing to academic wellbeing and confidence. This included a sense of being valued and having a clear status as a research student. Collegiality, opportunities to contribute and inter-disciplinary

discussion helped to contribute to this. Awareness of the diverse needs of part-time, mature, International and student parents by university staff helped to underpin a sense of belonging. However, some research students struggled to fit in to their academic community and experienced a sense of isolation and non-belonging. One mature professional described the difficulty of fitting in with other students who have recently completed undergraduate degrees and adjusting to academic discourse after operating in a professional sphere.

Responses challenged the “ivory tower” concept of research, academia and the inevitability of the isolated research student. Participants highlighted the shared nature of knowledge creation and exchange and the importance of interaction with others in the production of the thesis. This doctoral student suggested that there was a need for a culture change to reflect the importance of community in the research student learning experience:

‘It’s my belief that a PhD involves a collective offering of knowledge... [there should be] recognition that through your data, selection, through your conferences you attend, through your correspondence with other people, through your supervision sessions that it is not a solo act, a PhD, it’s a collective [offering] of knowledge... I think that kind of cultural issue is at the heart of why a lot of students do experience social isolation and a lack of a sense of belonging to community.’

Educational professionals may be used to teamwork and so this can be negatively contrasted with their experience of academia and the relative isolation of doctoral study. Some participants were involved in initiating peer support groups to mitigate against potential isolation, although sometimes experienced a lack of institutional support for this process. Where community building was successful, research student participants reported profound benefits of this and the potential impact on academic wellbeing through nurturing a sense of belonging, positive identification, informal learning experiences, opportunities to contribute, knowledge sharing and discussion, academic development, and support from those who experience similar issues.

Alongside the support and stimulation that can be gained from being part of an academic community, opportunities for supervisory dialogue are invaluable in enabling academic confidence development and supervisors play a central role in facilitating the development of wider networks. An International student recognised the importance of her supervisor supporting her attendance at conferences and helping her to establish internal and external networks. For another student this facilitative process started while they were still an undergraduate interested in undertaking postgraduate study. They found the consistent “open door” policy of their supervisors invaluable and felt that early development of academic and support networks enabled much a deeper, more enriching learning experience to take place.

### **Status of doctoral students within institutions**

The status of being a ‘doctoral student’ can be uncertain, with learners being unclear as to how far they are part of the student body and academic community, leading to some students questioning whether they are valued by their institutions. Participants often reported a sense of low status in comparison with academic colleagues and this can create feelings of isolation and not being ‘part of an academic establishment’. These factors particularly affect the confidence of those who have been used to being perceived as high achieving individuals in education and / or employment and for those who find the standard of work required is very high in contrast to previous educational experiences.

Participants felt that a positive academic culture which nurtured confidence through collegiality and valuing of research students contributed to their sense of belonging and wellbeing. It was important to participants that they felt their voices were heard and that they had some control over their environment. For some the identity shift to becoming a student, having been a professional, was particularly challenging, as described here, because of the perception that there is less scope for making an impact or effecting change as a student: ‘You’ve got quite lot of work experience and you’ve got this ambition, like I’m shaping it but you’re, that’s not always possible [in this environment].’

Lack of clarity regarding research students’ status may be an area which could usefully be discussed at institutional level. Solutions offered by participants included reconsidering language around research learning – using the term ‘doctoral researcher’ rather than ‘student’ – and providing opportunities for the research student voice to be heard; instilling a sense that their rights will be upheld; providing non-judgmental support and enabling student-led initiatives. Initiatives around develop research student development should take place in consultation - participants strongly voiced the importance of student-led initiatives. Ultimately it is essential that research students feel valued and visible in their institution.

### **Ownership**

Ownership emerged as a further theme relating to academic confidence. A sense of ownership of the research tended to develop over time as research students gained confidence and supervisors drew back from a directive approach. While a ‘hands-on’ approach was seen as helpful initially, as students develop it is important to become independent and make their own decisions. This process was described as ‘developing a PhD voice’, speaking with authority and challenging existing ideas. This is something which supervisors can helpfully recognize and encourage. Ownership can be more problematic in cases where the research student joins a pre-existing research team or undertakes a studentship, and there were instances where this was challenging and affected students’ confidence and motivation. However, in one instance the participant went on to develop a sense of ownership as the research progressed, enabled by a sensitive and supportive team who gave them the freedom to shape the work and find their own voice.

### **Positive academic confidence development**

The process of coming through the challenges of doctoral study was found to be personally beneficial in enhancing confidence as research students realized their abilities both intellectually and personally to overcome difficulties. Alongside the personal, emotional and intellectual gains of engaging in the learning process, research students reported positive impacts on practice. One participant described enhanced professional practice, modelling positive supervision strategies of questioning, encouraging and ultimately building academic confidence. Teachers often experienced heightened awareness, reflexivity and creativity around their professional practice resulting from their studies and were able to share insights about learning with their students. This final extract reflects the importance of ‘learning how to learn’ and becoming confident in the learning process, with positive benefits for educational practice:

‘Underlying everything I’m saying or asking them to do is this kind of concept that yes you have to take responsibility and you do need to engage and reflect and do all these other bits and pieces and be a master of your own journey really, but if you do do that, you can be as successful as you want to be, you can achieve almost anything you want, and that’s where I’m coming from. So, it’s not about learning subject knowledge, subject matter, although of course that’s part of

it, it's more about learning how to learn I s'pose that's the easiest way to say it and that's such a catchphrase but it's about learning how to learn and how to deal with the process of learning I think.'

### Conclusions

Higher level study ideally entails academic challenge which can potentially test research students' potential and limitations. Research students often experience troublesomeness in their learning but this is often necessary, if at times intellectually and emotionally demanding. The confidence research students develop through opportunities to explore difficult concepts in a safe space, normalisation of the 'troublesome' nature of learning at this level, community belonging and participation, the opportunity to dialogue and make a positive contribution, provision of a strong safety net for times of vulnerability, and above all the sense that they and their research are valued, provides the best basis for engaging and coping with academic challenges. Students, supervisory teams, departments and institutions all have a role in enabling positive learning experiences, which enable academic confidence development. This research, and the positive strategies it has identified, offers a sustainable approach to the personal and learning development of Education professionals – enabling them to cope and engage with the many intellectual and professional challenges that arise, and to enhance and to further their contribution in their field.

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# Metaphors for engaging with bricolage



Anna Lise asks if using bricolage is like DIY, patchwork quilting or even bungee-jumping!

**Anna Lise Gordon**

## Abstract

This article traces one aspect of my personal journey as a professional doctoral student so far – engaging with methodology. As I began to focus on the resilience of early career teachers, I was faced with a dilemma about the choice of methodological approach to best meet the needs of the research inquiry. I have become increasingly captivated by the potential of bricolage as a methodology and this article explores my attempts to grasp the concepts behind bricolage and the potential of bricolage to inform my research practice in a concrete way.

## The methodological dilemma in context

The focus for my research inquiry concerns the resilience of early career teachers, what challenges their resilience as they embark on a career in teaching, and what supports and nurtures their resilience to ensure professional growth and positive well-being. This is very closely linked to my everyday work as I am involved in initial teacher education as a 'researching professional' (Bourner, Bowden and Laing, 2001, p.71). I set off on my professional doctoral journey with enthusiasm, mainly because I really care about the people and contexts that are central to my inquiry and want my research to inform practice in initial teacher education. The starting point for the overall inquiry is the notion that educational research has the capacity to influence change at many levels, including policy, practice, professional development and possible further research (Clough and Nutbrown, 2002), but the choice of methodology proved less straightforward than anticipated.

I am concerned with the lived experiences of participants and how their everyday worlds are constructed, so the overriding concern in the choice of methodology has to be to embrace the inevitable complexity that I am likely to encounter in the social, psychological and educational spheres, particularly as the experiences of resilience by the various early career teachers may change in different contexts. As such, I know that a single qualitative method is unlikely to adequately meet the varied demands of my research, particularly as this research inquiry is likely to be the opening part of a longitudinal study into early career teachers extending far beyond the professional doctorate.

## So, what is bricolage?

At the outset, bricolage was nothing more to me than the French word for DIY. However, as I researched possible approaches to my research inquiry, it became clear that bricolage suits both my research interest and my personality as a researcher, in spite of Kincheloe's (2004, p.51) comment about bricolage that 'such a daunting task cannot be accomplished in the timespan of a doctoral programme'.

The unfolding of bricolage as a research concept, from its origins in Lévi-Strauss (1962), through Denzin and Lincoln (2003), to Kincheloe (2001, p. 2005) and Kincheloe and Berry (2004) and beyond, has hugely influenced my thinking, as my journey takes me deeper into critical theory. In brief, bricolage involves a multi-perspectival approach to research, combining diverse theoretical traditions as needed, to lead to insights into sociological and educational phenomena. For this reason, the metaphors of collage-making or patchwork quilting are sometimes used to describe bricolage. I admit freely that the exact design of my approach to bricolage is still emerging, but I have made the initial leap of faith in what feels more like a bungee jump than any kind of needlework activity.

Bricolage begins with a POET (a point of entry text) and, for me, the POET is the language that my research participants use to share their experiences and the language that surrounds them in their various contexts as early career teachers. As I explore the various technical distinctions within bricolage, the focus for my research remains the same, but I am beginning to view some of the related language with new eyes and this is taking me into uncharted territory. For example, early career teachers are not a defined group, but rather individuals who cope with different situations in a variety of ways. Does resilience really ensure professional growth and how do we



know? And, if it does contribute to professional growth, how might it be measured? Indeed, does it even need to be measured? And, of course, the perennial question of who I am and what part I play in this research continue to confront me. I would argue that bricolage is allowing me to adopt an ontologically grounded and socially constructivist approach to my research, as I will explore later in this article.

### Why bricolage rather than mixed method research?

Given my desire to use different approaches, I initially considered mixed method research, as this would also allow me the freedom to use a variety of methods to engage with the research focus, often combining both quantitative and qualitative methods (Lichtman, 2013). However, the standpoint of mixed method research is very different to that of bricolage, in that it is based on the premise that mixed methods enable the researcher to ensure greater reliability and validity by using a variety of methods to arrive at some assumed truth. Although there is a neatness to such a notion, I realise that it runs counter to the whole ethos of my research, both philosophically and methodologically. This is because the underlying presupposition behind mixed methods research is the move towards a claim to truth about reality.

Like mixed methods, I acknowledge that bricolage is also located within epistemologically structured framings of research, but it is far removed from the assumptions that an absolute truth will emerge for the researcher who simply looks hard enough. The premise of bricolage is not to create grounds for justifying a supposedly truthful account of a phenomenon, but rather to enable different and complementary understandings of a phenomenon to emerge through the research activities, only ever as a basis for reflection and to inform the next steps in the investigation. As such, bricolage serves to provide an alternative and challenging perspective on the possible hubris of power knowledge generation through research that seeks to find the so-called truth as it relates to some particular claim to knowledge.

The theories that underpin bricolage are 'far more complex than a simple eclectic approach' (Rogers, 2012, p.1) and, from a philosophical viewpoint, I tentatively suggest that bricolage encourages the researcher to combine some attempt at theoretical coherence and epistemological innovation. Kincheloe (2005) refers to bricolage as an important way of blending the empirical and the philosophical to enhance the insights of the researcher. This is significant for my research, as I am seeking to explore things which cannot be measured and which relate to our socially-constructed and temporal worlds as humans.

Bricolage 'is grounded on an epistemology of complexity' (Kincheloe and Berry, 2004, p.2) and, in many ways, my research seeks to illuminate the complexity of the processes and relationships in which the early career teachers are variously involved. My research with these individuals relies on an understanding of personal narratives, including prior personal and professional experiences, as they converge with the educational landscape which confronts them in their new career. Indeed, this social construction of being lies at the heart of my motivation for this research and, like Clandinin and Connelly (2000), I challenge any reductionist method to exploring lived experience. Bricolage, it seems to me, does not aim (nor even desire) to create order out of complex human experience, but rather seeks only to understand it more.

I recognise that people (like early career teachers) and phenomena (like resilience) do not exist in isolation, but rather in multiple, diverse, parallel and interconnecting ways and this is in line with my understanding of bricolage as an ontological approach to research.



Image: pilgrimgirl Flickr

Bricoleurs draw on the notion that theory is not an explanation of the world, but focuses more on our relationship with the world. I am interested in how early career teachers strive to make sense of the educational contexts they encounter, for example, and this is in line with Lock and Strong (2010) who refer to people as self-defining and participants in socially constructed lives.

My current understanding is that bricolage values an evolving rigorous approach to research, rather than following a set course, and that it is an active approach, as I construct my research methods in response to the emerging evidence, rather than adhering to any prescriptive and pre-ordained approach. Who knows where I will bounce next on my bungee jump? This is in line with my position as a social constructivist (Lock and Strong, 2010) and, given the complex nature of resilience and the range of participants in my research, I need to work within a paradigm that allows me the freedom to pro-actively change direction and approach as needed, viewing method as more than procedure.

### Bricolage in practice

The literature around bricolage offers many conceptual insights (Kincheloe and Berry, 2004; Denzin and Lincoln, 2003) but there are relatively limited examples of bricolage in practice for other researchers to draw upon (Rogers, 2012). However, reading an article by Markham (2005) in which she describes her research using bricolage has proven to be a defining moment on my doctoral journey, as I clearly saw the potential for my own research. Suffice it to say that Markham presented a variety of viewpoints, gathered in different ways, about a particular issue 'because our lives are inextricably linked in a dense tapestry of interconnected threads' (Markham, 2005, p.825) which can reveal the ever unfolding possibilities in people and in people's lives. It is this open-ended nature of bricolage which feels less like DIY or patchwork quilting and

more like bungee-jumping to me, as I hang by a strong central thread, but bounce around in all directions.

So far, in practical terms, my research journey has involved questionnaires with early career teachers at four key points in their training year, followed by interviews with some, but also various creative writing activities (such as haiku poetry and story-telling) at the same points, and this has provided some useful complementary evidence.

Having been given a gentle 'push' on my bungee jump by a dedicated and thought-provoking supervisor, I am not entirely sure in which direction I will bounce next, but draw strength from Kincheloe and Berry's (2004, p.39) comment that 'new knowledge is created in the collision of diverse perspectives'. Future steps in my research journey will be informed by the analysis of the data gathered so far and might possibly involve a 'day in the life of an early career teacher' style case study (Hitchcock and Hughes, 1995), as the context in which learning happens is crucial (Brockbank and McGill, 2007). The benefit of this approach is that observation would take place in the unfolding temporal and contextual space of the participant, thereby allowing deeper insights, including some nuances (non-verbal behaviour, for example) that may not have been possible through the questionnaires and interviews, or indeed the creative writing activities, to date (Bailey, 1994). Another example of how the data so far might inform the future direction of the research is a possible analysis of an online resilience test for some quantitative data to complement the otherwise wholly qualitative stance. As in a bungee jump, I can proceed freely, with only the elastic of the professional doctorate to keep me swinging in place.

As an early career researcher, I am nervous about breaking out of the more generally accepted approaches to research (Cohen, Manion and Morrison, 2007). Bearing in mind Denzin and Lincoln's (2003) description of the bricoleur as intellectually informed and widely read, I am only too aware of the need to develop my knowledge of multiple research methodologies. However, as suggested by Wibberley (2012, p.1), 'the emergent nature of bricolage allows for bite-size chunks of research to be carried out that have individual meaning for practice, but which can then be pieced together to create a more meaningful whole'. This is reassuring for the part-time research student like me, with a full-time demanding job, who is able to benefit from the way in which bricolage enables the plurality of the research to take shape over time. I also feel a need to challenge some of the widely-practised reductionist approaches to research, particularly given the focus of my research inquiry which is unlikely to lead to a neatly finished DIY project, but will more likely resemble the unpredictability and exhilaration of a successful bungee jump with, hopefully, some positive outcomes for future generations of early career teachers and a small contribution to future directions for educational research.

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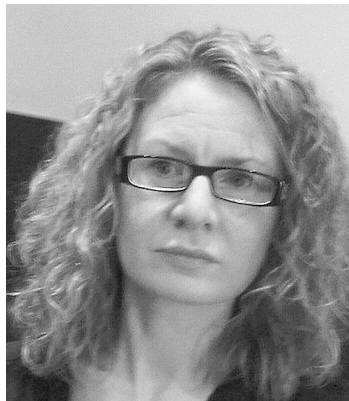
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## About Anna Lise

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# Tacit pedagogies in medical education



Hayley Allan

## Hayley investigates the methodological conundrum surrounding the research of tacit pedagogies

### Abstract

The recognition of tacit pedagogies by clinicians who act as medical educators of doctors in postgraduate training, could add a different dimension to the support and development of these trainers. Trainer development courses focus on espoused pedagogy consistent with contemporary views of professional education, but take little if any account of the philosophies, assumptions and beliefs of those who enact the curriculum in the workplace setting. The introduction of new standards for trainers by the General Medical Council (GMC) and of revalidation would seem an appropriate point at which to consider alternative ways to support and develop educators in the medical field.

A relativist, interpretivist position is adopted in working with medical educators to reflect on the cultural, biological and cognitive influences which constitute tacit pedagogies. However, a methodological conundrum occurred when narrative interviews appeared to focus on espoused rather than tacit theory.

Personal construct theory and repertory grid techniques were piloted to elicit tacit beliefs. Feedback from research participants acknowledged the utility of such an approach in enabling discovery of hitherto implicit, unacknowledged thoughts.

### Background: Tacit Knowledge in Medical Education

Clinicians involved in medical education hold intuitive (tacit) principles which guide their educational philosophy and practice (Torff, 1999). An expert teacher draws on a considerable fund of knowledge about teaching, in addition to the knowledge of the subject matter (Shulman, 1990). Even those who are not necessarily trained in education, such as doctors who train novice colleagues, hold “powerful intuitive/tacit conceptions about teaching and learning” (Torff, 1999) which exert a great deal of influence on the way they think and act as trainers.

‘Tacit knowledge’ refers to the pre-logical phase of knowing through which we “know more than we can tell” (Polanyi, 1966, p.4). Underlying beliefs and influences which characterise tacit knowledge are thought to be the results of experiences, often culturally related to the context in which the practice is carried out (Wright 2008; Collins 2001a; Patel 1999; Herbig et. al., 2001). Tacit knowledge incorporates habits and cultures of organisations but also includes that which is only known to individuals. Much tacit knowledge is without boundaries and has rarely been formulated or formalised (Wright, 2008).

Torff focuses on the cognitive developmental processes of prospective teachers and claims to show a “troubling view of the origins, development and implications of these preconceptions.” He refers to folk pedagogy – “commonsense ideas about teaching and learning that grow out of our species’ ‘Theory of mind’ (Astington 1993) and our culture’s ‘folk psychology’ (Bruner 1990, 1996)” (Torff, 1999 p.196). Folk pedagogy predisposes “individuals to think and teach in particular ways, some of which are inconsistent with the concepts and practices characteristic of expert teaching” (Torff, 1999 p.196).

Strauss (1993, 1996) found that teachers’ preconceptions stem not from inadequate knowledge, but from a deeper level – from deeply held cultural forces guiding the development of thought. Folk pedagogies are therefore likely to be robust and resistant to change. He reported that both espoused and in-use pedagogical content knowledge are similar in teachers with one year’s and ten years’ experience and that pedagogical content knowledge can be quite persistent. After all, people remain members of their culture even following teacher training interventions. “Folk pedagogy is strongly enculturated before teacher training begins, and its logic and practices remain in the background, even among the most educated and experienced teachers. As such, folk conceptions function as a largely tacit ‘default mode’ for teachers reasoning about education” (Torff, 1999, p.205).

In developing educators and their teaching and learning practices, we need to challenge “uncritically held beliefs,” that teachers should be “encouraged to confront the scope and import of intuitive conception about education” (Torff, 1999 p.196). My research focuses on experienced and responsible clinicians who facilitate and oversee postgraduate medical education for a large number of

doctors in training. Whilst knowledge and understanding of their tacit pedagogies would be useful for the development of new medical educators, my work also seeks to support and develop experienced medical educators through the discovery, construction and discussion of their implicit, educational practices. If we are to support and develop those who are responsible for tomorrow's doctors, we must work with them and their highly evolved pedagogical perspectives.

Blumenfeld et. al., (1996) believe that by "making explicit what often remains implicit, pre-service teachers can confront and re-examine their assumptions and understanding about educational psychology" (p.51). A key goal in teacher education is to put teachers into close contact with their own intuitive conceptions about education, to encounter, reflect on, critique and evaluate their folk pedagogy, and to maintain awareness of folk pedagogy as the backdrop against which educational decisions are made, even by expert teachers (Torff, 1999 p.207). This is not something which happens in the current development and support of medical educators, but is something which may be beneficial to them in the current climate of competence-based trainer development and accreditation which focuses on what they have to do and not on where their influences originate.

Standards for trainers in postgraduate medical education have only recently been published (GMCa) although courses in the area of trainer development have been in existence for at least 15 years through the various royal colleges of medicine and regionally placed postgraduate deaneries. However, such initiatives arguably operate at espoused (Argyris & Schon, 1974) levels and there has been little if any account taken of the role of tacit pedagogies in trainer development in postgraduate medical education in the UK.

My research into this area looks at the influences of tacit pedagogies upon those who hold central roles in hospital training and education, at where these pedagogies originate, and how they could be used in development and support of trainers as we move inevitably towards more structured processes of regulation, following the introduction of revalidation in 2013 (GMCb).

### **A Methodological conundrum: how to construct 'tacit' data?**

Tacit pedagogies include the multiple influences of culture, education, life and work experience, family background and upbringing, and personality upon the "preconceptions" (Torff, 1999), beliefs, values and assumptions brought to the understanding and provision of education and training within the postgraduate medical arena. With such a range of individually mediated factors involved in constituting tacit pedagogies, a methodological approach was required which would allow individuals to explore both the pedagogies of which they were consciously aware and those they may not be aware that they held. Thus, traditionally quantitative approaches were dismissed in favour of ways that participants could construct their understanding through discussion and storytelling. I did not merely wish to uncover tacit pedagogies in the assumption that they were static, objective phenomena that I could list or capture; rather I assumed that they would emerge from stories about practice, accompanied by a participant acknowledgement that these thoughts or attitudes were hitherto not perhaps within their explicit or acknowledged set of beliefs.

Narrative enquiry was used initially to elicit the philosophies, principles, beliefs, values and assumptions which were thought to underpin participants' approaches to and attitudes around their involvement in medical training and education.

Narrative enquiry rests on the epistemological assumption that we as human beings make sense of random experiences by the imposition of story structures (Webster & Mertova, 2007). There is a constructivist dimension to narrative as the stories told are individual productions of knowledge shaped by social and cultural environments, and also affected by the relationship between story teller and researcher. Indeed stories can reveal much about the social, cultural and historical context in which the story teller lives. The construction and reconstruction of personal stories addresses issues of complexity as well as those of cultural and human centeredness, which is why narrative appeals as a way of exploring the effect of the influence of the cultural world upon the tacit pedagogies of those who work within medical education (Dyson & Genishi, 1994).

Benefits of narrative approaches afford the researcher the opportunity to understand the experience of the participant through their stories. Process is as important as product in narrative enquiry; stories become the objects of as well as the medium for the research and can also contribute to the professional development of the participants.

### **Limitations of narrative enquiry in exploring tacit pedagogies**

However, there are several acknowledged limitations of narrative enquiry. Whilst story relies on the tacit knowledge of the researcher to be understood (Elbaz, 1990) much can be assumed by both participant and researcher, and similarly much can be left out. In analysing the narrative data constructed, I found I had no way of identifying the taken-for-granted assumptions and understandings that occurred between myself and the participants. Overridingly, my concern focused on what they were not saying or about which they were not aware. Tacit pedagogy, by its very definition, does not lend itself to easy articulation.

Another limitation concerns the participants and the extent to which their role in the conversation is planned or is as a genuine response to the questions and contributions of the researcher. "Hardened stories" or "narratives that become context free, portable and ready to be used anywhere and anytime for illustrative purposes" jeopardise narrative enquiry by "killing the spirit" of enquiry and freezing the story in time (Webster & Mertova, 2007).

Whilst narrative enquiry provided some useful data around the espoused pedagogical positions of the participants interviewed, my concern around its facility to enable recognition of tacit thoughts and attitudes was growing. Participants were sharing what I already knew about them. Whilst I was perhaps able to understand a little more about their positions, they were not discovering anything novel about themselves. The more I read their transcripts, the more I suspected they were reconstructing already rehearsed, explicit pedagogies rather than developing new awareness around previously tacit perspectives.

The methodological conundrum centred around the use of qualitative data construction techniques which I had hoped would facilitate reflections upon tacit pedagogies. I realised that if an educator knows more than they can tell (Polyani, 1966) how can they be involved in the construction and exploration of that of which they were not consciously aware? Was there a methodological approach which would facilitate the exploration of the tacit?

### **Personal Construct Theory and the Repertory Grid Technique**

George Kelly's Repertory Grid technique (1955) was employed to elicit personal constructs around roles and responsibilities of medical

educators. Kelly initially used the repertory grid technique with therapy clients, to help them to uncover their personal constructs around problem areas with minimum intervention or interpretation from him, the therapist.

The Repertory Grid technique is an interviewing system which uses factor analysis to present an idiographic view of a participant's personality at a given time. Based on George Kelly's (1955) Personal Construct theory of personality, it identifies how an individual construes – that is how he or she makes meaning from – experiences. The data it yields, in terms of factors, can help to present inferences about personality, preferences and attitudes but it is not a personality test in the conventional sense.

The grid, which is constructed during the interview, by the participant, has certain features. Firstly it has a topic or subject focus which is made clear to participants at the outset and which usually focuses on an area of their experience in a specific area. From the topic are developed a set of 'elements' which constitute examples of the topic. Once the elements have been defined, collaboratively by researcher and participant, a set of 'constructs' is elicited. Constructs are the frames that participants use to make sense of their elements and are expressed as a contrast, or a pole. Once constructs have been elicited the participant is asked to rate the elements according to each construct pole, often, but not always, on a 5 point scale.

Analysis of repertory grids can focus on content and structure, which includes cluster analysis, principal component analysis and other structural approaches. Narrative enquiry was used to analyse the voice recordings of the participants both in constructing the grid and in discussing the content and principal component analysis following the processing of the grids through a computer programme (WEBGRID 5).

The repertory grid technique was piloted with the medical educator participants to allow discussion of personal constructs. Kelly's personal construct theory held that we construe our reality through the formulation of constructs which can be deeply seated (core constructs) or which can change depending upon experience. Constructs colour the way we interpret the world, and are integral to the ways in which we anticipate events. Our construct system is very often not apparent to us and emerges through a process of critical reflection and discussion around a small area of focus. Could the structured repertory grid technique facilitate such a process for tacit pedagogies?

Interviews were conducted with the participants, during which the repertory grid technique was used to construct elements of practice around roles and responsibilities within medical education. Comparison of the elements led to the construction of polar constructs, against which the elements were then rated on a 5 point scale. Analysis of the completed grid showed a strong position which illustrated the participants' pedagogical perspectives.

Given that my concern at this stage of my work focused on finding a qualitative methodology which would allow reflection on tacit pedagogical perspectives, personal construct theory would seem to offer not only a lens through which to view the tacit pedagogies of medical educators, but the repertory grid technique would appear to provide a structure for the elicitation of at least some of those pedagogical assumptions and beliefs which had hitherto been unspoken.

### Explorations of the tacit

Participants were asked their thoughts on the repertory grid process and both expressed satisfaction with its reflective facility, as well as

some surprise in terms of what it enabled them to recognise. One participant spoke of his thoughts on the process of grid elicitation and the following separate conversation we had about the meaning of the constructs for him:

"I think it's a powerful reflective tool – because when you're trying to find objective words to describe alignment in your role, it forces critical thinking that you don't engage with naturally and I think that in itself is helpful for me as a way of interrogating myself – define what my role is, where my responsibilities should lie, and I think listening to myself, even particularly in that polarity about organisation and individuality..... if that's the way I operate, I don't think I have articulated it like that before – and just makes me realise why it's often easier to reconcile, that is, unspoken rule is the trainee needs me and the organisation needs me and I said the trainee first – I think – just like we do in the Myers Briggs Type indicator where you force yourself down the dichotomies, it forces a bit of critical thinking – that self critique if you like that you don't engage with naturally, So I think its been a very useful exercise, an eye-opening exercise....."

### Moving forward

In the context of an ever more accountable and controlled NHS, and with the introduction of revalidation, trainer standards and annual educator appraisal, the tension remains between tacit pedagogies and the espoused philosophy of contemporary perspectives in medical education. Enabling experienced medical educators to reflect upon their tacit pedagogies, to identify the assumptions and beliefs they bring to their roles, as well as the influences and perspectives they develop over years of immersion in the medical world, could have a very different effect on trainer development programmes. If the GMC standards for trainers (GMCa) are to be meaningful to those whom they set out to regulate, account needs to be taken of where medical educators are coming from as well as the direction in which the Government wishes them to go.

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## About Hayley

Hayley Allan BA (Hons) Dip.Ed., M.Ed., Cert. Couns. Skills., FHEA. Hayley Allan has over twenty years' expertise in a range of educational contexts. With the Royal College of Surgeons of England since 1996 and the Open University for 9 years, Hayley now works as a consultant with a range of medical education providers to support trainers, trainees and students in the teaching and learning arena.

# Using photo-elicitation with children and young people

Jenny considers the ethical and methodological issues of photo-elicitation

Jenny Peddar

## Abstract

This paper relates to research being undertaken as part of a Professional Doctorate in Social Work. The study title is 'What is it like to be a sibling of a child with a disability? An exploration involving photo-elicitation'. One strand of this study involves the use of photo-elicitation with children and young people aged 8 to 17 years of age. This methodology is not new having been used by Collier in 1957 but remains a lesser known system. Photo-elicitation has a number of advantages in research that would be advantageous in this current study. It is known to assist with balancing the power and allowing the interviewee to determine the nature of the material brought into the interview and also allows for deep interviews (Van Auken, Frisvoll, & Stewart, 2010). Within the field of Social Work there is an imperative that the views of children should be sought, and this is enshrined in good practice and statute (Children Acts 1989/2004, Human Rights Act 1998, and the Convention for the Rights of the Child 1989). In practice, whilst there is a considerable amount of research into the needs of children with disabilities, there is less about the needs of their siblings, and some of this research was undertaken with the parents and/or professionals involved with families rather than the siblings themselves (Burton, 2010; Petalas, Hastings, Nash, Dowey, & Reilly, 2009; Taylor, Fuggle, & Charman, 2001). This paper considers the ethical and methodological issues of undertaking research with children with the aim of rebalancing these conflicts between the practice and research arenas.

## Introduction and background

There are a number of methodological and ethical issues pertinent to this research project as part of a Professional Doctorate in Social Work. The aim is to determine what it is like to be a sibling of a child with a disability. There has been a considerable amount of research into the needs of children with disabilities and their families (Neely-Barnes, Graff, Roberts, Hall, & Hankins, 2010; Wodehouse & McGill, 2009), but less into the needs of siblings of these children, and much of this has focussed on their role as young carers (Rose & Cohen, 2010).

The aims of the research are as follows:

- To extend understanding of qualitative research techniques and specifically the use of photo-elicitation in research with siblings.

- To 'hear the child's voice' – what is their understanding of their experience as a sibling of a child with a disability?
- To evaluate the experience of siblings of a child with a disability using photo-elicitation.
- To critically analyse the data written in the 'sibling' box of the assessment format by Family Fund Advisers over a 1-2 month period.
- To undertake thematic analysis of the data from the photo-elicitation study and the materials from the assessment documents.
- To explore the similarities and differences in siblings taking account of factors such as order, age, number of siblings etc.
- To identify areas that would provide support for siblings ensuring best practice in the allocation of Sibling Grants.

It has been estimated that there are 0.7 million children with a disability in the UK, which equates to approximately 0.5% of the total child population (Office for National Statistics 2007). A child is diagnosed with a severe disability every 25 minutes and 99% of these children are cared for at home by a family member (Contact a family, 2012). Research has estimated that 80% of children with a disability will have one or more siblings (Atkinson & Crawford, 1995; Burke, 2004).



The research is linked with the Family Fund Trust who provide support to families of a child with a disability. In 2011 the Family Fund was given a one-off grant to support siblings of a child with a disability. This research links with their aim which is 'to acknowledge the impact of disability on siblings within a family' (The Family Fund - Siblings Matter Too, 2011, p 10) and the siblings for this strand of the study were recruited from siblings who had been given a Sibling Grant. The start point for this study stemmed from a strong personal stance linked to the professional ethics and imperatives that any work looking at the views and needs of children should start with asking the children themselves. There is an absolute requirement within the practice setting of social work for any child to be fully consulted regarding any assessment or plan for their needs. This is enshrined in statute nationally and internationally through legislation including the Convention for the Rights of the Child (1989), the Human Rights Act 1998, and the Children Acts of 1989 and 2004. The Children Act 1989 made it clear that workers need to consult, listen to and involve all children including those with a disability (Department of Health, 1989). This practice has been supported by government developments such as the Children and Young People's Unit document on 'Learning to Listen: Core Principles for the involvement of children and young people' (Children's Workforce Development Council, 2001). The imperative on professional practice also informs practice within the research setting, and this was a very important factor in the design of the study as the young people are the experts on their own experiences, views, hopes and aspirations. Despite this guidance, many still feel that participation in the development of policies, or the participation of children in research, is 'patchy' and inconsistent. Uprichard (2010, p4) found when examining the existing research that there is a discrepancy between theory and research practice in this arena, with children only being involved in a small sphere of social research. Fleming (2010, p1) has also noted that young people's involvement in research has changed very little, and makes suggestions about the changes that need to happen to promote development.

### Photo-elicitation

Photo-elicitation has been used in research for many years mainly within the field of social science. It has been selected for use in this study as it has particular qualities as defined by Van Auken et. al., (2010, p.374):

'photo-elicitation is thought to have three particular qualities: the photographs it generates provide the stimuli for "deep" interviews; it can produce different types of information than other social science techniques; and it addresses concerns about power relations between the researcher and subject.'

There are a number of methodological approaches involving the use of pictures and these vary. For example, photovoice, originally developed by Wang, Yi, Tao and Carovana (1998) placed an emphasis on the content of the pictures and the chosen title, with participants encouraged to photograph the issues of greatest significance.

Photo-elicitation for the purpose of this study is participant-driven; the children will choose, by using a camera to capture a series of images, the pictures that will become the foundation of an interview. This will place the control of the interview into the child's hands allowing them to select the areas they wish to portray and therefore bring in to the domain of the interview. Research has shown that for many children it is easier to gain information outside of a formal interview even when the work is semi structured (Beresford, Tozer, Rabiee, & Sloper, 2004; Mitchell, 2010). It has been noted that children are more able to discuss issues when these are not the sole focus of attention,

and this has been used by the Government in their adverts aimed at encouraging people to enter the social work/social care professions. The use of photographs taken by the children and young people will take the focus away from face to face discussion, reducing any potential discomfort whilst allowing an in depth interview.

Drew, Duncan and Sawyer (2010) used photo-elicitation as part of a study in health research with young people aged 10-18 years old with a number of health problems. They aimed for the camera to be returned within 2-4 weeks but found that it took longer for a number of participants. A main finding was that the young people enjoyed the process and that for many it influenced their decision to participate in the study. They summarise, 'it engages adolescents in reflection about their experiences prior to the research interview, which facilitates their expression and communication during the interview.' (Drew et al., 2010, p.165). Clark (1999) described a study they undertook using an 'autodriven interview' through the use of photographs taken by the children aged 5-8, and found that 'in an autodriven interview, photographs of the child's experiences serve as the basis for a child-directed interview' (p.39).

### Study design

The study design involved sending a disposable camera to the siblings (aged 8 -17) who have agreed to participate in the study. They were asked to take as many photos as they chose of things that represent to them being a sibling. (The cameras have 27 exposures). The camera was returned to the researcher for developing. Two sets of prints were ordered, one set plus the negatives to be given to the sibling at the subsequent interview for them to keep, and the second set being available for the researcher. Should the sibling decide that any photo should not be held by the researcher, the second copy of that photo was left with the sibling at the interview, or destroyed by the researcher if this decision was reached at a later date. Throughout the research informed consent was sought from both the parent and the sibling for participation in the study. Once the photos had been developed an interview followed with the sibling around the photos and their contents. The questions covered the reason for selection of pictures, what these mean to the sibling, and whether any aspects have a particular meaning. At the start of the interview all photographs were numbered as in the negative sequence for future reference. Should any of the photographs include pictures of people who have not consented, or would be unable to consent to their use, these will either be described, or a similar picture used in the thesis or any other material produced from the research, from a publicly available photo bank.

### Ethical and Methodological Issues and progress to date

There have been a number of ethical and methodological issues within this study and these have fallen into a number of categories.

#### 1. Ethical dilemmas

The ethical approval process took longer than initially expected and this related to the expected initial unease with a new methodology and work with children and young people. Contact was made with the professional ethics committees. The Social Care Research Ethics Council (SCREC-operated through the Social Care Institute for excellence (SCIE)) indicated that approval within the University would be adequate due to the link to a doctoral study. The SCREC would review work with adults (ie those aged 16 and over). What was of greater interest was the fact that at present there is no similar body for research within Social Care for those aged under 16.

This was a relatively new methodology within the University and another researcher with previous experience with this methodology



had completed a full review application several months earlier, which was expected to ease the process as the Ethics committee would have had the opportunity to consider the issues of the methodology. The initial responses from the ethics committee indicated some ongoing discomfort with the methodology, with comments such as 'did the work have to involve photos' and 'did the work have to include disabilities'. It had been anticipated that the main areas of discomfort would be around the use of pictures/photos and working with children and young people. This has been the experience of other researchers including Aldridge (2012) and Joanou (2009). Aldridge states, 'Our overriding intention was to ensure that the vulnerable children and young people in our study would not be excluded from the research process simply on the basis of regulatory procedures. It is all too easy to imagine how research governance matters, particularly relating to ethical concerns, could lead to ready justifications for the exclusion of vulnerable children from research investigations.' (p.55).

Many ethics committees have a small pool of reviewers who may not have experience in a similar field, and within a science faculty not all research involves work with people. Some greater detail was needed for aspects of the methodology, such as giving an increase in power to the sibling therefore allowing them to control what they may or may not wish to disclose to the researcher and how the consent of the child with the disability would be covered.

## **2. Safety of the young people**

One issue at the ethical approval stage was a suggestion that the information sheet should provide more guidance regarding safety of the sibling. This was a particular concern as practice evidence and experience show that this can increase the risk of some activities rather than minimizing them. The information sheet asks siblings not to go anywhere they would not normally go and to have a discussion with parents about any concerns. The copy sent to the parent asks them to discuss this more fully with their child as they will know them much better and can ensure the pertinent issues are covered. There is some adjustment to the information sheet depending on the age of the child/young person concerned. There are considerably different issues for those at the younger age of the group as it is unlikely that an 8 year old would be anywhere without being accompanied by an adult whilst a 17 year old would make very different decisions.

## **3. Photo-elicitation**

Photo-elicitation and other visual methodologies create a concern for many ethics committees, the issues of what pictures may be taken and ensuring the consent of those included in the pictures being a main concern. Numerous authors have written about these issues. It would seem that for many the discomfort lies in the area of what is acceptable and what may be potentially harmful (Pauwels, 2008). This has been explored under separate headings in this article. It has also been acknowledged that the 'rights' approach of involvement needs to be balanced against any potential harm. Wiles, Coffey, Robinson and Heath (2012), state that 'proponents of the 'rights' approach observe that researchers and research ethics committees are often overly cautious about the potential for harm...' (p.46).

Within the current study it has become apparent that although disposable cameras are not new, they are to some of the siblings that are taking part in the study. The move to digital photography and cameras within mobile phones has meant that a disposable camera involving film is a new experience. The experience of having to wind on the camera in order to take more photographs is new to some. Young people are also used to being able to take limitless numbers of photos and having instant access to the results. With this study, they have to give more consideration to what pictures they may wish to take and have to wait until the interview to see the outcome of their pictures.

This has also created a debate about the process of looking at the photos. Initially it had been planned that the photos would first be looked at with the sibling at the interview, but due to the risk of all pictures failing to come out and the distance involved in travelling to the interviews, check of the images will be undertaken prior to travelling to the interview to ensure that the pictures have come out.

## **4. Consent**

The process of consent has started with a letter to the family/main carer. Whilst some of the children, young people with disabilities, and their siblings would be able to give consent in their own right it was felt important to have whole family consent in the process. This has facilitated the issue of having to determine the ability to consent of the sibling and the child in the family with a disability, as the parent/guardian has also given consent. All the siblings will also be giving informed consent, and if it emerges that although a parent has consented the individual is not comfortable with the research, they will be excluded from inclusion in the final study/report. Gillick competence is used within the child care setting as a means of determining the ability to give consent and this has been taken into consideration in this study. A 'Gillick competent child' is a child who is old enough and mature enough to make an informed choice (Kate & Davies, 2013, p.210). This also impacts on the professional arena, enhancing the need to ensure that the views of the child and young person are taken into consideration in all aspects of their lives.

## **5. Timings**

The study involves interviews across Great Britain with children and young people. In practice this places the opportunity for interview after school or within school holiday dates and imposes a large amount of travel. This has a major impact and needs consideration in planning the timescales and appropriate times to send out cameras. The experience of Drew, Duncan and Sawyer (2010) has been taken into consideration to allow space for extended delays in the return of cameras, which also has an impact on the plan to link interviews together. For some more distant families it had been anticipated that these interviews could be undertaken within one trip. Varying times for the return of the cameras led to a change in this plan to avoid delays for siblings who returned their cameras more quickly.

## **6. Sample**

The sample was drawn from those siblings who have been provided with Sibling Grants. There was some expectation that the sample would include a number of siblings from some of the major conurbations of the country. The families who gave initial agreement appear to be from what may be described as 'middle England' - coming from small towns, none are from major conurbations. This raises a number of issues and will need to be taken into consideration when looking at the transferability of the findings. It raises questions about why people have agreed or not. Some families with a child with a disability manage very difficult situations and the time required to discuss and return the initial agreement may have deterred some from participating in the study.

## **Conclusions**

There are a number of methodological and ethical issues involved in this study. The key requirement was to ensure that the voice of the child/young person was paramount, and that was achieved in a way that left the control, as far as possible, in their hands. Many of the other issues are collateral to this. It would have been possible to achieve a study with greatly reduced difficulties and complexities, but the paramount need to gain the views of the siblings was felt to be of greater importance than any other issues.

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## About Jenny

Having started with a Biology (mainly genetics) degree I have worked in Social Work since graduation, gaining a professional qualification in 1985. I have worked as a practitioner, manager and educator. I remain in touch with practice through my work with the Family Fund.'

# Far from 'just stories'

Review by Keith Turvey

**Goodson, Ivor F. (2013) *Developing Narrative Theory: Life histories and personal representation*, London & New York: Taylor & Francis, Routledge. pp.147, Paperback £22.99**

Chase (2005, p.651) notes that those coming to the field of narrative methodologies for the first time 'will find a rich but diffuse tradition' of 'multiple methodologies in various stages of development, and plenty of opportunities for exploring new ideas, methods and questions.' Ivor Goodson's latest book, *Developing Narrative Theory: Life histories and personal representation*, certainly explores new ideas and questions to which I will turn shortly, but most significantly it reflects the advanced state of the art one might expect from an educationist and scholar who has spent a lifetime researching life history, and in the process making a world-leading contribution to the development of the field of narrative theory.

A central issue that Goodson explores and addresses in his book is how life histories can be used to 'understand stories alongside their historical and cultural backgrounds' (p.6).

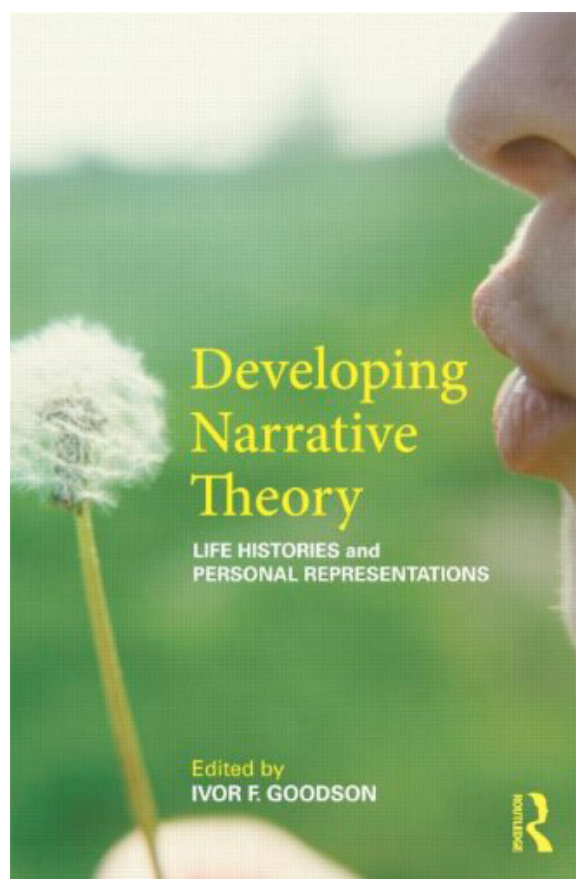
He makes a clear distinction between life stories and life histories; the former 'individualizes and personalizes' whereas the latter enables us to locate stories within their wider socio-cultural contexts. Thus, the power of narrative methodologies lies in connecting these two distinct but connected aspects to give voice to individual 'stories of action within theories of context' (p.5).

Goodson argues that life politics - the way that identities are both created and shaped - has shifted significantly in the modern era, characterised by globalisation, flexibility and disruption of selfhood on a number of fronts. Working life and specifically, careers, are far more amorphous and unpredictable offering less continuity or stability. Professional identity formation in the modern era is more a longitudinal process of becoming, in which different facets of our life stories intermingle, but Goodson argues powerfully that of themselves they are only a starting point for the development of deeper 'understandings of the social construction of each person's subjectivity' (p.30). An important contribution of this book is a real insight into Goodson's developed methodology for locating life stories within their wider socio-cultural life histories, through what he describes as a process of periodization thereby avoiding the methodological pitfall of under-contextualising when employing narrative methodologies.

This book is invaluable reading for those engaged in or interested in narrative methodology. It provides an in-depth discussion of the development of narrative portrayals and the significance of different patterns of narrative. The process of narrative portrayal is also exemplified through examples drawn from the repertoire of Goodson's various life history projects, which he uses to provide the reader with insights into how people employ different patterns and forms of narrativity and action to 'provide an anchor, a sense of stability, continuity and coherence in a world of fast and often bemusing change' (p.115). But Goodson is not positing a utopian vision here, rather he suggests that the meta-narratives of modern life will pose 'seismic challenges for people's identity projects and life politics' (p.120) and perhaps most acutely for the youngest generations coming through. The final chapters of this book will leave readers in no doubt of the significance of narrative in modern life, and provide a fitting antithesis to critics of narrative methodologies tempted to discard them as 'just stories.'

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# A genealogy of the digital age

Review by Sara Bragg

**Loveless, A. & Williamson, B. (2013). *Learning identities in a digital age: rethinking creativity, education and technology*, London: Routledge.**

This book works on several different levels. It's an enlightening introduction to, and application of, recent (broadly postmodern) theory, which should be of interest to a readership well beyond the field of new technology. It exemplifies a critically reflexive research approach. It's a genealogy of how we have come to view the so-called digital age and an exploration of what these perspectives mean for teachers, students and pedagogies. And finally, it enacts intellectual collaboration and dialogue within its pages between different disciplines, research approaches and theoretical orientations.

By describing it as reflexive, I mean that it keeps a measured distance from claims about what is 'really' going on in relation to the digital. It doesn't set out to persuade us that we now live in a 'cybernetic' or 'networked' society, as much as it invites us to consider what it means to read the present moment through such (all too-neat) epochal coinings. It does so by using the more postmodern concept of 'styles of thinking'. Styles of thinking within a given field, the authors argue, develop shared terms, concepts, assertions, references and relations that do not just explain things but equally shape and establish those objects of explanation (pp.11-21). The contemporary 'cybernetic' style of thinking, for example, does not necessarily identify a measurable difference from previous societies: but it does mean that we increasingly conceive ourselves, society and education through cybernetic metaphors of information, nodes, dynamics, flexibility, simulation, rhizomes, connections, and above all, networks. And these conceptions in turn are being built into policy and practice, into pedagogies, curricula and theories of learning.

(One example of the – almost magical - power of 'styles of thinking', although the authors don't mention it, might be the 'hole in the wall' experiment, which garnered Sugata Mitra prizes from the TED Foundation and is still cited around the world as a resounding success. The fantasy of 'digital native' kids abandoning schools to learn spontaneously from computers on the streets apparently chimes better with our social imaginaries than any academic research exposing the many fallacies and flaws of this initiative. See <http://donaldclarkplanb.blogspot.co.uk/2013/03/sugata-mitra-slum-chic-7-reasons-for.html>).

The cybernetic style of thinking is increasingly seen as common sense and just 'the way things are'. However, as the book points out, a few years ago it would have seemed alien and other, and no doubt will do so again in years to come, as do the metaphors of engines, mechanics and hydraulics that shaped Victorian thought, and as is becoming true now of 1980s constructionist thinking, or 1990s interactionism and notions of the 'knowledge economy'. We also don't get – and don't need – yet another account of how new technologies have been introduced in schools and with what impacts. Instead the book is more deft and subtle, tracing how



Learning  
Identities in a  
Digital Age

RETHINKING CREATIVITY, EDUCATION AND TECHNOLOGY

Avril Loveless and  
Ben Williamson



ideas and values such as 'lifelong learning', 'creativity', 'communities of practice', 'connected learning', 'networked communities', personalization and so on, have come to seem intelligible, plausible, transparent and legitimate; how they interpellate young people as active, creative, autonomous and self-responsible subjects, and develop norms that are increasingly embedded in institutional practices. In recuperating the 'memory politics' of these ideas (that is, what they exclude or repress) and rendering them more opaque and graspable in contexts of socio-economic shifts – especially towards neoliberalism - the book opens up a space to challenge them or as it puts it, for 'thinking otherwise'. The first chapters of the book are more genealogical in this sense.

The second half of the book explores practice and pedagogy, with overviews of 'creativity' including Creative Partnerships, and a chapter exploring how 'prospective learner identities' in the digital age can be fostered in terms of 'agency, tools, context, improvisation'. We get a sharp critique of how think-tanks, NGOs and organisations such as the MacArthur Foundation (much of whose work is funded by media corporations), by recasting education in terms of 'learning', have facilitated the caricaturing of schools as marginal, irrelevant monoliths from a bygone age and the promotion of more market-oriented alternatives. Perhaps partly in response, this part of the book insists on the continuing relevance of more conventional understandings of the 'school', 'curriculum', 'students' and 'teachers'.

I was left wanting to know more about the authors' views on the debates about (for example) 'Education 2.0' and MOOCs; about how different schools are responding to the challenges of a 'post-teaching', 'peer to peer' era in education; and about how digital learning identities relate to other mundane but pervasive uses of digital technologies in schools - to record attendance and achievement, to profile student intakes, to draw up league tables, to control behaviour through CCTV, and so on. These other means through which schools are becoming 'digitalised spaces' may not be expressly designed as tools for learning, but they undeniably have significant lessons for all of us about the kinds of futures we face.

# A marriage of narrative & ecological theories

Review by David Stephens

**Turvey, Keith (2013) *Narrative Ecologies: Teachers as Pedagogical Toolmakers*, London: Routledge, pp.162**

The playwright David Mamet once said, 'Narrative always wins out over statistics'. Keith Turvey's new book – which is developed from his doctoral thesis – promotes a teacher-centred model of professional development and practice, in which teachers, as active agents, 'draw upon a range of factors within a Narrative Ecology framework to inform their development of pedagogical tools'. What we have here then is a marriage between narrative methodologies and ecological theories, which Turvey suggests, can be employed by teachers who want to not just change the way they teach but as Clandinin and colleagues (2006:10) suggest 'imagine themselves in new ways'.

So how does it work?

**'Narrative always wins out over statistics.'** Playwright David Mamet.

I was once described, a little unkindly, as 'BBC' or 'born before computers' and am occasionally faced with challenges in using new online technologies, for example, in my teaching. If I am to apply Turvey's model I must approach these challenges in a holistic and narrative manner bearing in mind a number of 'ecological variables' such as my previous experience of e-learning, my learners' needs, or the level of my own subject knowledge - variables that will shape both my understanding of the challenge and how I will act when it comes to developing what he calls the pedagogic keystone or a new approach to using the technology in the classroom. In some senses though it is less about I and more about we, Turvey making a strong case for this iterative model of understanding and action to be used as part of a community of practice of teachers – and student teachers – in bringing together the isolated but constituent factors that affect teachers' professional development with technologies.

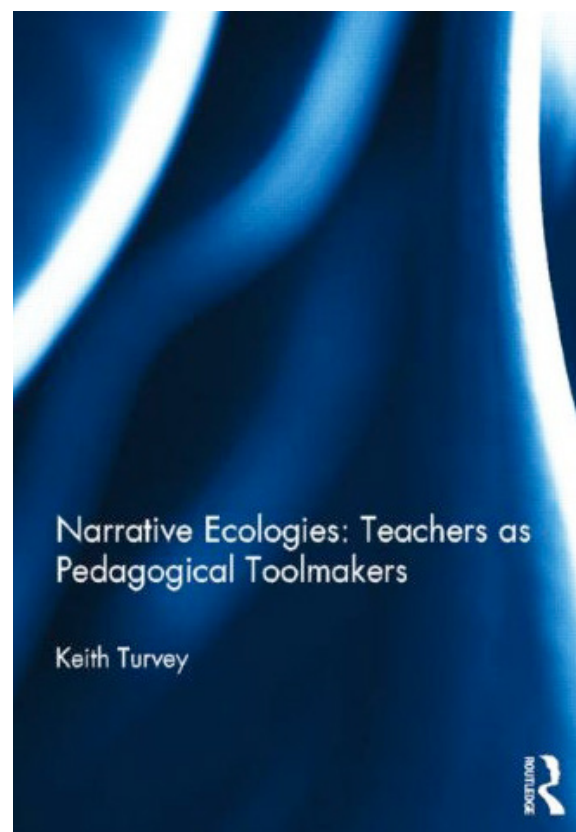
Interestingly he devotes five chapters to the narratives of individual student teachers as they engage with e-learning interventions with primary school children. The model really comes to life here when we learn that it is Laura, one of the teachers, whose prior experiences of e-learning tools including those of her mother, propel her to the view that using these tools will empower her pupils. For another teacher, Heather, the primary mediating factors were pragmatic i.e. the use of the most appropriate tools in relation to the subject matter that ensure a successful keystone.

This book wins out over others in its holistic and nuanced approach to a number of key educational issues, namely the potential of technological tools to transform learning. More importantly, however, Turvey reminds us that for such tools to be harnessed effectively we need to put the teacher, not the tools, at the centre of this enterprise. For new technologies to work we must develop new models of interaction between the technology, the user and the pedagogic and biographical contexts in which they are to be used. Turvey has done this.

The rich array of ideas and applications presented in this very usable book also demonstrate the important contribution university research and theory play in the education of pre- and in-service teachers.

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# Research Active

## Conferences at the School of Education

Last term, **Dr Carol Robinson** organised and led two very successful conferences here in the School of Education. In May, approximately 90 doctoral students from a range of disciplines and universities, including Haugesund University in Norway, attended conference, specifically for doctoral students 'Engaging with methodology: diversity, questions and challenges'. Many of our doctoral students presented fabulous papers at this conference.

In July, the 'Ethics and student engagement: Exploring practices in higher education' conference attracted a range of expertise in this field from the UK and Australia. The inputs from the two keynote speakers, **Professor Ron Barnett** (IoE) and **Colin Bryson** (University of Newcastle), and from the conference presentations, stimulated thought provoking discussions.

**Dr Tim Rudd** has organised a day's research symposium focusing on *Critical Perspectives on Educational Technology*. The symposium will be held at Grand Parade, University of Brighton (Boardroom M2) on Tuesday 15th October, 2013, 10.00 – 4.00pm. Places are limited and will be allocated on a first come, first served basis. Lunch and refreshments will be provided. Please email Elizabeth Briggs at [E.F.Briggs@brighton.ac.uk](mailto:E.F.Briggs@brighton.ac.uk). The speakers include:

**Professor Richard Hall**, Head of Enhancing Learning Through Technology, Professor of Education and Technology, De Montfort University

**Professor Dennis Hayes**, Professor of Education, University of Derby

**Dr Carlo Perotta**, Childhood and Youth Institute, Anglia Ruskin University

**Dr Tim Rudd**, Education Research Centre, University of Brighton

**Dr Keith Turvey**, Education Research Centre, University of Brighton

**Professor Avril Loveless**, Head of Education Research Centre, University of Brighton

Short provocation papers will be produced by speakers to accompany the event. We intend to video presentations and collect information from discussions to utilise as freely available learning resources.



### Creativity

*"I think my concept of creativity is that it's embodied or expressed in an interaction... I see it as something very interactive... I don't think you can be creative on thin air... I think there has to be some substance to the creativity."*

**Professor Loveless in conversation with Dr Sudicky**

## Keynotes, Presentations, Workshops and Symposia

*Research Reflections in Brno, Czech Republic*. In April, **Professor Avril Loveless**

was invited to present two keynotes to doctoral and postgraduate students in the Department of Educational Sciences in the Faculty of Arts, Masaryk University, Brno. The first focused on reflections on the research approaches to three decades of digital technologies in education. The second addressed key questions emerging from the 'styles of thought' discussed in her recent book with **Dr Ben Williamson**, 'Learning Identities in a Digital Age'. **Professor Jiri Zounek** and **Dr Petr Sudicky** are engaged in research in e-learning in schools and Higher Education. An interview between Avril and Petr can be seen at <http://vimeo.com/65997332>.

**Dr Sandra Williams** was helpful in preparing for the visit, as she had worked in the University of Masaryk, and offered some useful tips and phrases!

*'It's just a tool: theories of learning in digital learning identities in teacher education -*

This presentation at BERA in September focused on the making of digital learning identities in teacher education. The paper considered traditions of enacting sociocultural approaches in the use of digital technologies in education, and discussed some discourses of learning identities in a digital age. It made a case for revisiting understandings of agency, tools, context and improvisation in teaching. Focusing particularly on improvisation, it discussed the work of Holland et al (1998)

Identity and Agency in Cultural Worlds' and argued that digital technologies are not 'just tools' in learning environments, but have powerful effects in shaping and 'making up' prospective learning identities which influence both the curriculum and pedagogy.

Several other members of the School of Education and Education Research Centre also presented their research at BERA held at the University of Sussex.

**Jane Melvin** presented a paper from her doctoral research entitled "From 'paralysing myths' to curriculum expansion: equipping youth & community work students to meet the needs of young people today", which posed questions about whether professional youth and community degrees are equipping graduates to work with the holistic needs of young people in the 21st century.

**Dr Jen Colwell** presented a paper; 'Facilitating Group Reflective Thinking Using a Shared Reflective Journal'. The paper was based on research conducted with staff at One World Nursery, who are working with Jen on the forthcoming 'Reflective Teaching in the Early Years' book to be Published by Bloomsbury.

**Dr Carol Robinson** was invited to be a discussant at a symposium at the BERA conference. The symposium comprised four papers focusing on theorising, enacting, and assessing personalised learning in schools. In June, Carol Robinson gave a keynote address entitled 'Listening to the voices

of young people: working towards the genuine participation of young people in discussions about school transformation' at The International Conference on Reimagining Schools at the University of Macedonia, Thessaloniki, Greece.

Carol also presented a paper at the ECER conference in September: 'Developing professional knowledge through doctoral study and its enactment in practice: studies of doctoral graduates in Sweden and England'. Her paper drew on findings from a small scale research project which she has conducted in collaboration with the education doctorate programme leader at Karlstad University, Sweden.

**Dr Brian Marsh** presented two papers at BERA, namely; 'The professional development of teachers: using mediated video to enhance teacher performance,' and 'University-school partnerships: complexity, roles and power.'

**Dr Sara Bragg** also organised a panel at ECER in Istanbul, on 'Beyond advocacy and evaluation: new theoretical and conceptual approaches for analyzing participatory pedagogies and practices' with colleagues from Spain and the Netherlands. Sara's paper focused on participatory pedagogies as social practices with Helen Manchester (University of Bristol).

In May 2013, **Dr Keith Turvey** and **Professor David Stephens** led a well-attended workshop focusing on the cross-disciplinary application of the narrative ecology framework at the Higher Education Academy, Arts and Humanities conference Storyville 2013. During the workshop participants used the framework via a prototype iPad app to explore its application to the development of professional identities. The workshop was well received by participants from a range of disciplines.

In July 2013 Keith Turvey also organised and chaired a panel discussion at the World Conference on Computers in Education, Torun, Poland with **Professor Mick Hammond** (University of Warwick) and **Dr Sarah Younie** (De Montfort University). The panel discussion titled 'Helping educators to help themselves in an age of digital eclecticism: Professional learning with new technologies' led to a lively debate concerning technology-enhanced learning amongst an international audience of academics.

**Dr Vicky Johnson** recently presented case study research that she carried out in Nepal for the International Planned Parenthood Federation through Panos London, at two

conferences: The European Sociological Association (ESA) and the British Education Research Association (BERA). IPPF are currently feeding the analysis across countries and theory into their re-conceptualisation of youth programming in realising sexual and reproductive health and rights. The research results are available from IPPF, alongside a guide on the youth-led participatory methodology applied. The multi-media output can be found at the following web address: <http://www.ippf.org/resource/Love-sex-and-young-people-learning-our-peer-educators>.

Vicky Johnson has also been involved with Participatory Action Research, funded by CUPP, on lifelong learning in Coldean. The study has been carried out by a team of elderly researchers and students and is now complete. The local report will be available soon from the ERC and the Trust for Developing Communities in Brighton and Hove who are partners in this research.

### Children's Literature and Media Cultures

*21st Biennial Congress of the International Research Society for Children's Literature in Maastricht August 2013 - Dr Sandra Williams*

attended the IRSCL conference which sought to address the exchanges between children's literature and adjacent newer and older media (oral narrative, theatre, film, radio, TV, digital media). The aim of the conference was to strengthen the ever closer ties between children's literature scholars and media experts, and to bridge the gap between hermeneutic methods from

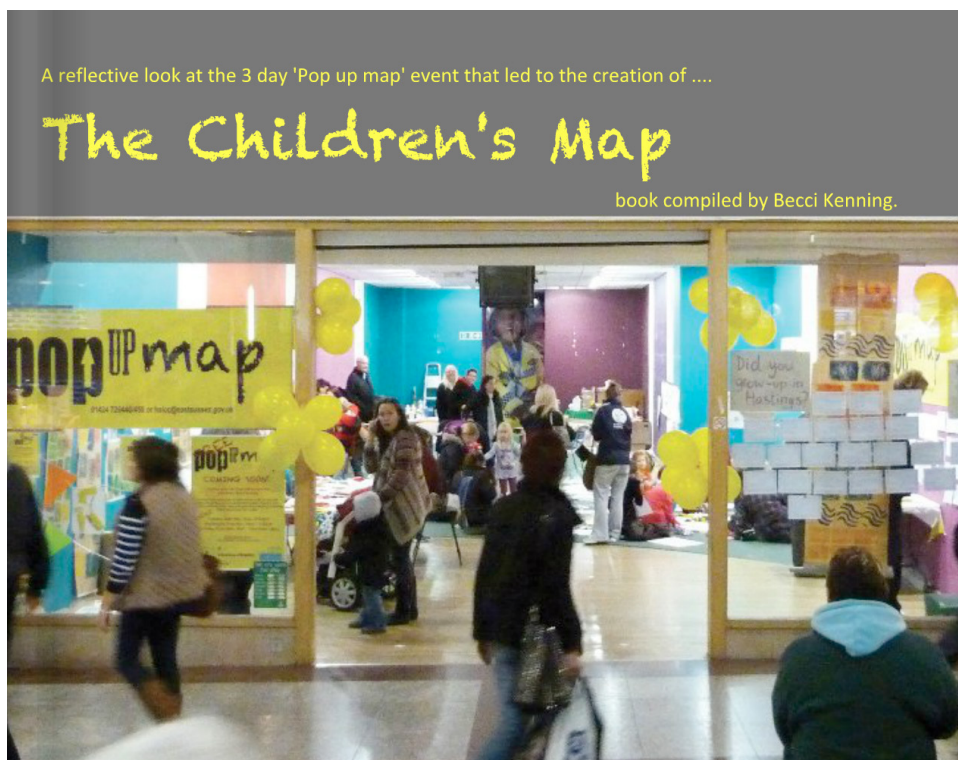
the humanities, and empirical, experimental methods from the social sciences. In her paper *Old Wine in New Bottles? The Phenomenon of the Ologies Series*, Sandra focused on the multi-modal nature of the texts, inviting discussion about whether Templar Publications were producing something completely new. It was argued that the series, which includes *Dragonology*, *Monsterology* and *Piratology*, combines nostalgic elements of the Victorian pop-up book with an invitation to engage in a playful post-modern ironic reading through a variety of platforms. The analysis referred to Mackey's (2002) research on multi-modal texts with reference to alternative terms for 'reading' such as 'playing the text', the notion of 'performance', and 'engaging with the rules of the game'. It was concluded that while debate continues about the innovative nature of the series, Mackey and others are providing the necessary new vocabulary required when analysing engagement between traditional book and electronic media.

Sandra is currently planning the next stage of the research which will concern actual readers as they engage with an Ologies text.

Mackey, M. (2002) *Literacies Across Media: Playing the Text*, London: Routledge/Falmer

### Projects Update

**Annie Richardson** recently worked on a collaborative project with Hastings Children's Centres borrowing ideas from the Reggio Emilia Approach. This approach recognises the child as a member of a family and a



community, learning through interaction with peers, adults, objects and symbols with educators and artists (atelierista) facilitating the child's explorations. The team employed artist Becci Kenning (below) to help create and publish a children's map for Hastings and St Leonards: not a map that promoted places to go, but instead a map that documented 'children's' views and experiences of play in the town. A 'Pop up Shop' was set up for 3 days in Priory Meadow Shopping Centre. As well as creating a 3D model of the town, babies and young children made prints of the textures and patterns they saw where they played, and collected found objects talking about the personal associations they had. Adults and young people wrote postcards of their childhood memories of play in the town – the oldest memory being from 1936. These contributions were later merged to create a visual map of Hastings and St Leonards with copies handed out as leaflets within the community.

There is a copy of the map displayed in the Priory Square building (Hastings Campus), with a book (See below) celebrating the map's creation available in the Hastings Campus library.

<http://www.blurb.co.uk/books/4206198-the-children-s-map#>

**Dr Sara Bragg** is a Co-Investigator, along with colleagues **Professor Rachel Thomson** and **Dr Kate Howland** from Sussex University and **Dr Mary Jane Kehily** from the Open University, on a new ESRC NCRM project on methodological innovation in qualitative longitudinal research. It starts in September and runs for a year, the grant value is £156K. 'Face 2 Face: tracing the real and the mediated in children and young people's cultural worlds'. This is a research project exploring the everyday role of screens in young people's lives and the lives of their families.

It involves developing qualitative longitudinal (QL) research through integrating new data from a long term project on modern motherhood, with data from a new panel of young people aged 12-14, over a period of 9 months. It will use and develop three emergent QL methodological tools ('day in a life' observations, object-based interviews, and recursive workbooks), evaluating their suitability for use with children aged between 8-14, their value within a fast-changing digital landscape for empirical social research, and their potential to generate psychosocial insight into children's emotional lives.

It aims to make an empirical contribution to knowledge on movement between the face to face and mediated forms of relating in children's everyday lives.

### Bernard Van Leer Foundation

In June 2013, **Dr Vicky Johnson**, **Dr Jen Colwell**, and **Dr Xenia Carvalho** ran an international expert meeting in The Hague at the offices of the Bernard Van Leer Foundation. Participants came from Uganda, South Africa, India, Malaysia, Portugal, Iceland, Canada and the US. The group also worked with a Professor from New York City University called Roger Hart to research the different pedagogies and methods for including children aged 5-8 years in research. They will be adding to this and writing it up over the next few months.

### Writing collaborations

In 2011 **Dr Mike Hayler** and **Dr Nadia Edmond** started to collaborate in reflecting on and developing their shared interest in professional identities in education. Nadia's work on the development of 'professional' identity amongst teaching assistants undertaking undergraduate study, and Mike's examination of the professional identity of teacher educators, provided them with complementary perspectives on professional identities "either side of the teacher". In 2013 this collaboration bore fruit in the publication of two jointly authored articles.

'On either side of the teacher: perspectives on professionalism in education' (Edmond & Hayler, 2013) brought together their two studies to contribute to the examination of the nature of professionalism in education. In the article, Nadia and Mike examine the formation and representation of professional identity in education through the discourses of 'professionalism' of teaching assistants and teacher educators. 'Professionalism' is articulated through three themes in the accounts; 'non-standard' professional transformations, role ambiguity, and the role of classroom experience and higher education in the development of professional identities. Through these themes the perspectives of teaching assistants and teacher educators locate the notion of 'teacher professionalism' within a broader concept of professionalism in education, providing alternatives to the discourse of imposed policy. The authors reflect upon the ways in which these voices contribute to the wider international debate on professionalism in education.

In a second article, "Telling tales on either side of the teacher: methods of researching professional and biographical transformations in the context of Education" (Hayler and Edmond, 2013) Mike and Nadia discussed the approaches and research methods used in their two projects to consider how the projects drew upon the different yet potentially complementary methodological approaches of discourse analysis and

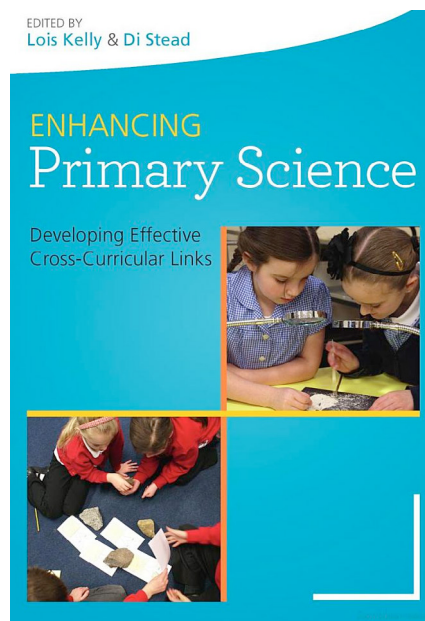
autoethnography in the examination of professional identity. The approaches were compared and contrasted and discussed in terms of the wider discussion of quality and rigour in qualitative research, and the article provides a contribution to the debates on the complementarity of different qualitative approaches.

Edmond, N. & Hayler, M. (2013) On either side of the teacher: perspectives on professionalism in education, *Journal of Education for Teaching: International research and pedagogy*, 39:2, 209-221.

Hayler, M. & Edmond, N. (2013) Telling tales on either side of the teacher: methods of researching professional and biographical transformations in the context of Education, *Reconceptualizing Educational Research Methodology* (RERM) Vol 4, No 1.

**Sharon Harris** and **Alison Hermon** have recently published a chapter in a book which explores the cross curricular links between science and other subjects in primary education. It arose from their interest in, and research concerning, links between art and science as explored with Y3 and Y4 undergraduate students on the BA Primary (Hons) with QTS course optional module, *SciArt: Creative Collaborations*.

The chapter explores the unique identities and natural links between art and science, with an emphasis on enquiry, exploration and creativity generated through investigating a variety of materials, processes and ideas. The next step is to follow up some case studies with NQTs who are planning to use approaches in their teaching inspired by the module. The chapter can be found in Kelly, L. and Stead, D. (2013) Enhancing





Primary Science: Developing effective cross-curricular links, Maidenhead: McGraw-Hill Education. See [www.mcgraw-hill.co.uk/html/0335247040.html](http://www.mcgraw-hill.co.uk/html/0335247040.html).

### News from overseas

In March, **Dr Mike Hayler** visited Monash University, Melbourne, Australia to present a paper, lead a workshop, and collaborate with colleagues and students within the Faculty of Education and local primary schools.

Mike initiated a joint paper with colleagues at Monash and received an invitation to co-edit a book about international perspectives on university/school relationships within teacher education with **Dr Judy Williams**, who came to Brighton in May to meet colleagues and carry out research interviews.

### Publications



**Dr Mike Hayler and Dr Judy Williams**  
Monash University, Melbourne

**Dr Tim Rudd** has published a number of articles and research reports lately including:

Rudd, T. (2013). The Ideological Construction of a New Form of Digital Exclusion: Computer Science as Latin or Total Deus Ex Machina? *Journal for Critical Education Policy Studies*, 11(3).

Rudd, T. (forthcoming). The Buying and Selling of the Transformation Fallacy. A Critique of New Labour's Educational Technology Policies. In Selwyn, N. and Facer, K. The Politics of Educational Technology  
Rudd, T. P. (2013) Teachers as Agents

of Change: Blending Research and Practice and Thoughts on Future Teacher Professional Development Opportunities, in Tay, L. Y. & Lim, C. P. [Eds.]. *Creating Holistic Technology Enhanced Learning Experiences: Tales from a Future School in Singapore*. Rotterdam: Sense.

Rudd, T. & Goodson, I. F. (2012) Developing a Concept of Refraction: Exploring Educational Change and Oppositional Practice. *Educational Practice and Theory* 34(1).

Rudd, T. (2012). Re-addressing the Challenges Facing Young People: New and Emerging Technologies for Education and Employment. The Nominet Trust. Available from [www.nominettrust.org.uk/sites/default/files/NT%20IP%202%20-%20Re-addressing%20the%20challenges%20facing%20young%20people\\_FINAL.pdf](http://www.nominettrust.org.uk/sites/default/files/NT%20IP%202%20-%20Re-addressing%20the%20challenges%20facing%20young%20people_FINAL.pdf).

**Jane Melvin** has recently published a chapter in the 2nd edition of the Open University's 'Working with Young People' publication (Curran, Harrison & MacKinnon (Eds), 2013, London, Sage) called 'Youth Work in a Digital Age'.

**Dr Mike Hayler** has contributed a chapter entitled 'When we got to the top of Elm Grove' to the Contemporary British Autoethnography book to be published by Sense in October. The particular focus of the chapter is the sharing of stories as a way of developing dialogue with informants beyond the self as part, as well as product, of the research process. Mike encourages the reader to further consider how narrative is developed collaboratively in differing contexts. All contributors to the book will be leading workshops in Brighton at the The Inaugural Conference of British Autoethnography on Saturday 22nd February, 2014.

**Dr Vicky Johnson** has a chapter coming out soon which may be of interest to those working on children and young people's participation:

Johnson, V. (2013), Changescape theory: applications in participatory practice, in Westwood, J., Larkins, C., Moxon, D., Perry, Y, and Thomas, N., (eds), *Citizenship and Intergenerational Relations in Children and Young People's Lives: Children and Adults in Conversation*. (Forthcoming), Palgrave Pivot, Basingstoke

**Professor John Pratt** has published a Book Review: Pratt, J. Policy and purpose in higher education, (review of Shattock, M, Making Policy in British Higher Education 1945-2011, Open University Press, 2012), *Higher Education Review*, 45(3), 91-95,

In response to the review of the Primary National Curriculum for England **Dr Keith Turvey** is currently working with **Dr John Potter** (IoE), as editor-in-chief on the 6th Edition of the practice-based textbook Primary ICT, Knowledge, Understanding and Practice; a practical guide to computing London: Sage. This will be published in 2014. On Tuesday 12th November 5-6.30pm (Falmer): Dr John Potter, will be giving a seminar in the Education Research Centre series on the theme of 'Digital media and learner identity: the new curatorship' which is also the title of his research monograph:

Potter, J. (2012) *Digital Media and Learner Identity: The New Curatorship*. New York: Palgrave MacMillan.

**Dr Carol Robinson** has two book chapters which will be published in the near future:

Robinson, C. (2013), Listening to the voices of young people in schools, in *Learning to Teach in Primary School*, Arthir, J., Grainger, T & Wray, D. (Eds). London: Routledge.

Robinson, C. and Taylor, C. (2013), 'What matters in the end is to act well': Student engagement and ethics, in *Understanding and Developing Student Engagement*, Bryson, C. (Ed), London" SEDA/Routledge.

### Congratulations

Congratulations to **Dr Hilary Ferries**, **Dr Jen Colwell**, **Dr Jess Moriarty** and **Dr Eric Tyrer** who, after successful vivas last year, have completed their doctoral studies and received their awards.

### Conferences

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#### Society for Research into Higher Education (SRHE)

##### Annual Conference 10\*, 11 - 12

December 2013, Celtic Manor Resort, Newport, Wales, UK. \* New Researchers' Conference

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#### Teacher Education Advancement Network

5th Annual Conference 16 May 2014, Conference Aston, Birmingham. For details see <http://www.bera.ac.uk/news/5th-teacher-education-advancement-network-annual-conference>

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#### Key Competences in Informatics and ICT

Conference July 1- 4, 2014, Potsdam, Germany. See [www.informatikdidaktik.de/ifip2014](http://www.informatikdidaktik.de/ifip2014)

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#### British Educational Research Association (BERA)

Annual Conference 23 - 25 September 2014 Institute of Education, London.

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#### European Conference on Educational Research (ECER)

1 - 5 September, 2014 Porto, Portugal.

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### University of Brighton

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#### Centre for Learning & Teaching

News of forthcoming events on a range of themes relating to research and pedagogy can be viewed at the following link <http://www.brighton.ac.uk/clt/events/>.

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#### Doctoral College

More information about the University of Brighton Doctoral College, including the range of research degrees and how to apply, can be found at the following link <http://www.brighton.ac.uk/researchstudy/doctoral-college/>.

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### Education Research Centre

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#### Lunchtime Research Conversations

These will be held fortnightly on Wednesdays between 1 - 2 pm. Further information to follow.

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#### Research Initiatives, Reading and Writing

Further news to follow.

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**31 October 2013:** Informal Pecha Kucha to share 'Big Ideas' encountered at conferences and events in the past year. Also welcome to new doctoral students in Education field. 4pm Room TBC.

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**5 November 2013:** Lunchtime session by Dr Sandra Williams speaking on children's literature research, and the place of her work in the gap between the study of the text, and the study of the emergent child reader. 12.30pm, Mayfield House, M114.

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**12 November 2013:** Research Seminar. Dr John Potter, Institute of Education, on the theme of 'Digital media and learner identity: the new curatorship' Mayfield M101, 5 - 6.30pm.

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#### 11 December, 2013

Research Seminar Professor David Stephens and Xenia Carvalho (UoB) – Title and abstract TBC – Mayfield House M101, 5 - 6.30pm

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#### 4 February, 2014

Mayfield House, M101, 5 - 6.30pm. Professor Julian Sefton Green (LSE) 'The Class: dis/connected learning and the social worlds of young people in the digital age.'

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#### 4 March, 2014

Emily Pringle from the Tate Gallery.(Tate Education) 5 - 6.30pm, Mayfield House, M101.

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### Back copies

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Back copies of R.Ed can be viewed online at:

[www.brighton.ac.uk/education/red](http://www.brighton.ac.uk/education/red)



### Notes for contributors

We are now looking for contributions for the next issue Vol.6 No.1, which will be published in March 2014. Contributions for consideration should be sent to Sylvia Willis by Friday 17 January, 2014 at:

[sylvia.willis@brighton.ac.uk](mailto:sylvia.willis@brighton.ac.uk)

Short pieces should be approximately 1500 words, and longer pieces between 2500 - 3500 words.

If any article contains photographic images of people or children please ensure that you have their consent for publication on the web.

Harvard referencing conventions should be followed.

Copyright for all published articles remains with the author. By submitting to R.Ed authors acknowledge that all submissions are their own work and that all sources have been acknowledged.

“Being ‘ready willing and able’ to teach, calls for a reading of the world in which content, context and tools can be orchestrated with skill and purpose which go beyond immediate competence in teaching strategies and offer a deeper sounding of depth, scope and reach.”

Avril Loveless  
Professor of Education  
University of Brighton