



Religious Education

Thinking globally, acting locally

International symposium: Narratives, Context & Learning

School of Education links in Nepal



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Editorial

Jerome Bruner in his 1990 book, 'The Culture of Education' wrote that, 'it is through our own narratives we principally construct a version of ourselves in the world, and it is through its narrative that culture provides models of identity and agency to its members'. In this edition of R.Ed there are a number of narrative strands that echo Bruner's wise words.

Colin Lawlor and Yaa Asare - who have recently completed their doctorates - reflect upon the educational construction of Islam in British education, and relationships between learners' own identities and the teaching of cultural diversity respectively. Yaa also writes about her own 'unfolding identity' as a researcher, a theme taken up by Mike Hayler in his exploration of autoethnography and how he applied it to his doctoral research. These three doctoral journeys are interesting when contrasted with Avril Loveless' recent experience of 'opposing' a doctoral thesis in Sweden.

We also learn something of the reciprocal relationship between culture and agency in two schools, one local, one global. Emma Butterworth draws upon her recent MA dissertation to show how her classroom at Moulescoomb Primary is encouraging children to think globally and act locally, whilst Lorraine Harrison and Kevin Fossey tell the story of the recently inaugurated school in Malagiri, Nepal which is supported by staff and students of the School of Education.

Finally, Ivor Goodson reports upon a recent successful symposium held within the Education Research Centre which brought together local and global researchers investigating relationships between narrative, context and learning.

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The Construction of Islam in Religious Education



Colin Lawlor reflects on his recently completed EdD, the motives behind undertaking the research, and the context of the work. He summarises the main findings of the research project, along with some concluding remarks on what was learned from the EdD journey

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Introduction

In the summer of 2010 I happened to be walking along the seafront in Brighton. In front of me were a group of school-girls, probably Key Stage 4, who were engrossed in a conversation which I could not help but overhear. The girls were talking about Islam, and it was clear from their conversation that they had been studying Islam at school. They made good use of appropriate vocabulary, and were making some interesting and respectful observations about the Muslim faith. I was very impressed! But then, seemingly from nowhere, one of the girls stated emphatically: 'Yes, but they are all terrorists!' Another joined in: 'And they mistreat women!'

There followed a diatribe of negative stereotyping in which all of the girls became embroiled. It was almost as though they had two constructions of what Islam was. The first, an 'educational construction' enabled the girls to adopt appropriate vocabulary and speak respectfully about Islam and Muslims. But they did not really appear to accept this construction as 'true'. The second construction, perhaps fuelled from negative images of Islam current in the media and from stereotypes prevalent in the wider society, appeared to be more influential in these girls' understanding of Muslims and the Islamic faith.

The timing of this incident was, for me, apposite. I had recently submitted my EdD thesis and was awaiting my Viva. The conversation in which these girls were engaged, though anecdotal, struck at the heart of what I was trying to argue.

Motives

I have an academic interest in the history and development of Judaism, Christianity and Islam, in particular the way in which these monotheistic religions have interacted through history. In the School of Education at the University of Brighton I teach on modules in which these religions are the primary focus.

As an undergraduate I was taught by Professor Ninian Smart, whose phenomenological approach the study of religion became normative in education. Smart argued that whatever else religions may or may not be – whether theistic or non-theistic, they all possess certain phenomena or dimensions which can be studied. Although these dimensions may vary in importance from one religion to another, they are always present. The phenomenological approach examines religions through Smart's dimensions, of which there are seven (The Practical and Ritual Dimension; The Experiential and Emotional Dimension; The Narrative or Mythic Dimension; The Doctrinal and Philosophical Dimension; The Ethical and Legal Dimension; The Social and Institutional Dimension; The Material Dimension). As a PGCE student I was taught by John Hammond, whose experiential approach has also been popular in RE teaching. This approach begins with the experience of the pupil and reflects upon religious traditions in the light of that experience. My EdD enabled me to explore the ways in which Islam is constructed for educational purposes and how pedagogy affected construction. This has had a great influence on my own teaching style.

REonline providing information for all those working and interested in Religious Education in England

The Context

The Non-statutory National Framework for Religious Education, produced by Qualifications and Curriculum Authority (QCA) in 2004, highlights the important contribution that RE can make in the area of community cohesion by exploring how beliefs and practices vary between and within religious traditions, how they change over time and are influenced by cultural contexts. My EdD focussed on the teaching of Islam at Key Stages 3 and 4, and the way in which Islam is represented across schooling and teaching, both textually and pedagogically. A study of related literature raised a number of issues concerning the way in which Islam may be variably constructed for educational purposes in RE. The EdD project sought to investigate the sources of the construction of Islam in RE, and focussed upon the role of publishers, exam boards, curriculum mongers and teachers. In this regard consideration was given as to whether the specific construction constrains the practice of teachers or is accommodated or rejected by them.

The theoretical foundation of the study was Social Constructionism, the sociological theory of knowledge which considers how social phenomena arise in social contexts. In this context the aims of the research were to explore the extent to which the construction of Islam in the classroom is determined by outside influences such as exam syllabuses, text books and resources; to explore whether this leans towards a Western-Christian construction of Islam; and to assess whether a community cohesion agenda leads to a construction of Islam that is diverse and fluid, or one which is consensual and static. The research sought to examine whether, in a bid to dispel pre-existing negative stereotypes, a 'socially acceptable' Islam is constructed, and to explore whether this constrains teachers, or whether they willingly accommodate or reject this construction. Finally the research set out to investigate the extent to which pedagogy influences construction and whether the dominance of a phenomenological approach in RE leads to a consensual construction of Islam which ignores the controversial and disregards conflicting issues of truth.

Research Methods

The investigation was undertaken using a qualitative approach and consisted of semi-structured interviews with teachers, observations of lessons in which Islam was being taught, and a content analysis of a selection of documents associated with the teaching of Islam at the schools within the sample (which consisted of six schools). This included syllabuses, schemes of work, lesson plans, text books and audio visual materials.

Findings

The research findings can be broadly summarised under three headings: Constraints and Construction; Pedagogy and Construction; and Resources and Construction.

Constraints and Construction

Community Cohesion

Social or community cohesion is a term used in social policy and sociology to refer to the bonds which draw a community together, often used in the context of cultural diversity. The concept itself is diverse and is dependent on context, and it is difficult to give a precise definition.

Community cohesion became an important theme in British social policy after riots in Bradford, Oldham and Burnley in 2001. These riots, which had racial overtones, led to David Blunkett, then British Home Secretary, commissioning a report chaired by Ted Cantle which resulted in the publication of *Community Cohesion: A report of the Independent Review Team* (Home Office, 2001). The Runnymede Trust referred to 2002 as a year in which cohesion moved to the forefront of the race debate in the United Kingdom (Runnymede Trust, 2003). The impetus for community cohesion, therefore, came about in the context of a fear over the perceived fragmentation of society in Britain.

It is not surprising that the Government's imposition of a community cohesion agenda on schools from 2007, and its importance on the teaching of RE, came in the wake of the horrors of 9/11 and 7/7 and the view that Islamic extremism resulted from a perception among young Muslims that they were marginalised from society. This is implied in Ofsted (2007) in its acknowledgement that the emphasis on community cohesion reflected the changing social reality of religion in society (Ofsted, 2007, p. 39).

In the light of this it is difficult to regard the community cohesion agenda as being anything other than politically motivated and an attempt to create or enhance a sense of common belonging in a society that was believed to be fragmented, and designed to counteract the potential for extremism, not least among the Muslim community. If this analysis is correct there are clear implications for RE, and for the construction of Islam in an educational context.

In interviews teachers reacted to community cohesion in a variety of ways: from openly hostile to supportive. None of the teachers in the sample believed that 'community cohesion' was a priority for them. At one end of the extreme some teachers reacted against what they perceived to be a political agenda, which was not the purpose of RE. Even at the one school where the head of department was enthusiastic about community cohesion, she did not state this as a reason *why* RE should be taught. Nonetheless, teachers *did* acknowledge that they felt pressure to present an acceptable vision of Islam, in which controversial or difficult issues are ignored. Community cohesion was accepted as being one of these factors. Furthermore, whilst the community cohesion agenda was abandoned by the coalition government following the 2010 election, it had already found its way into Locally Agreed and Examination Syllabuses, as well as in text books, particularly those produced for the purposes of public examinations.

Syllabuses and Examinations

The Locally Agreed Syllabuses used in the sample schools all presupposed that a thematic approach would be taken in RE. It was, therefore, of no surprise that the teaching in the sample schools was dominated by a thematic and phenomenological approach. This presupposes a Western understanding of religions as phenomena that can be broken down into themes, and is a distortion. (l'Anson, 2010).

A thematic approach was even more glaring at Key Stage 4 in respect of the Edexcel GCSE, adopted at two of the schools in the sample. This syllabus requires students to study religious responses from Christianity and one other religion to a variety of issues. At both of the schools Islam is chosen as the second religion. However, Christianity dominates the course (and Western Christianity at that), and the themes clearly represent issues which might be considered important from a Western perspective. In respect of Islam, there is little scope for diversity; pupils are only expected to know the views of 'most Muslims' and 'some Muslims' (by which they mean conservative and liberal). At any event students are not learning about Islam, rather the response of Islam to certain issues. As such the Edexcel syllabus, and those of its kind, do not deal with sensitive or controversial issues within or between religions. The Edexcel syllabus construction of Islam in terms of its consensual responses to often non-religious issues is a distortion of the faith.

Public examinations and the pressure to achieve good grades represented a major constraint on teachers. This led to a construction of Islam which was dominated by the set text books for the exam, endorsed by the exam board, and written by the chief examiner. In these texts Islam is generally presented as consensual, and Shi'a and Sunni Islam are not even mentioned.

Pedagogy and Construction

The dominance of the phenomenological approach

Analysis of schemes of work and lesson plans, in addition to lesson observation, confirmed the dominance of the phenomenological approach to the teaching of RE. I would argue that the phenomenological approach seeks to understand "the other" from one's own perspective, a perspective which is a Western-Christian construct (I'Anson, 2010). A Muslim might argue that Islam cannot be constructed by means of a series of phenomena, or understood alongside other religions by way of a thematic approach, because to do so is to limit Islam which is both a noun and a verb. The understanding of Islam from the Western perspective, and the sharp division between the secular and sacred in Western thought, does not take account of Islam's self-understanding in which this dichotomy does not exist (Zaki, 1982).

My research indicated that the phenomenological approach contributed to confusion among pupils, particularly in those schools where six or more religions were studied. Teachers consistently acknowledged that pupils often became confused about which major beliefs belonged to which religion.

Barnes (2001) argues that the phenomenological approach implies that all religions are essentially the same, and ignores competing issues of truth. In my own study teachers acknowledged that competing issues of truth were largely ignored, partly as a result of the pedagogical approach that dominated, and partly to prevent controversy or conflict. This latter point was particularly pertinent in respect of Islam and in the construction of a consensual Islam, devoid of controversy or conflict. Hayward (2006) demonstrates that RE often plays the role of apologetic, showing all religions as a safe and good thing. My own study clearly indicated that this was true in the teaching of Islam. Teachers felt constrained by pressure to play down the controversial, and they felt that this was doing pupils a disservice. This pressure came from the community cohesion agenda (and the emphasis on shared values); syllabuses (which gave little scope for divergent issues of truth); and from schools and parents.

'Curriculum Islam'

Hayward had suggested that in RE religions were portrayed as though they were homogeneous, devoid of conflict and controversy, and often deferred to the dominant tradition. In her analysis, in the context of Christianity, she named the construction 'Curriculum

Christianity'. My research concluded that 'Curriculum Islam' also exists. Curriculum Islam presents the faith as being consensual, and homogeneous. It also ignores the potentially controversial so as to present an 'acceptable face' of Islam. An analysis of schemes of work and lesson plans suggests that Islam is perceived from the viewpoint of the dominant Sunni tradition. There is little, in some cases no, discussion of diversity, and one is left with the impression that all Muslims believe the same thing and act in the same way. All of the teachers in the sample indicted that they 'overcompensated' when teaching Islam in order to present it as 'safe' and 'a good thing', even, on occasion, acknowledging that they were more likely to show negative aspects of Christianity than they were of Islam.

Text-based learning and word based activities

The research revealed that text based learning was a common activity in the teaching of Islam at Key Stages 3 and 4. Whilst a variety of teaching methods tended to be used at Key Stage 3, including some experiential work, the schemes of work indicated that across the sample, text books were widely employed in most lessons. At Key Stage 4 the text books dominated the teaching, particularly those books endorsed by the examination board. Lesson observations indicated that pupils were more engaged in those lessons where a variety of methods were employed, and appeared bored when the lesson was dominated by the text book. Of equal concern was the emphasis on learning key words, often simple definitions to complex concepts, which was preponderant across the board, but which was particularly prevalent at Key Stage 4, for the purpose of the examination.

The lack of attention afforded to primary sources, other than a few quotations in text books (often de-contextualised), was surprising given the centrality in Islam of the Qur'an, as the final word of God, and the Hadith, the Sunnah of the Prophet. Teachers argued that at Key Stage 3 this would be too complex for the pupils, and at Key Stage 4 it was not necessary for the examination!

Resources and Construction

An analysis of text books and audiovisual materials used for the teaching of Islam merely exacerbated the issues above, constructing Islam as consensual, homogeneous and devoid of contradiction. Diversity often entailed no more than a brief mention of Sunni and Shi'a, and the construction was from the dominant Sunni tradition. Furthermore, the text books in the sample presented a largely superficial construction of Islam which ignores potentially contentious issues and portrays Islam in a positive light, often to the detriment of other religious traditions.

A positive account of Islamic history

The origin of Islam is regarded very much from the perspective of the Muslim believer, indeed on this point it cannot be said that a Western understanding of Islam is being presented. There are inherent problems with constructing the origins of Islam, not least because written accounts of pre-Islamic and early-Islamic history do not appear for the first 150 years of Islamic history, further compounded by the fact that they were compiled by Muslim believers (Berkey, 2003, p. 39-40). The accounts of the origin of Islam given in the text books treat Islamic tradition as though it were fact. The conventional account of the rise of Islam is presented without question, and we are told that Muhammad definitely had visions of the Archangel Jibril, that he was God's final messenger, and so forth. Rarely is this prefixed with 'Muslims believe that ...' other than, interestingly, in the one book co-written by a Muslim! No account is made of much contemporary scholarship which debates the emergence and formation of Islam, a construction which takes place over a long period of time, and which is dependent upon the cultures and religious beliefs in and around the Arabian Peninsula. (Berkey, 2003; Hodgson, 1974; Lapidus, 1982).

The research revealed that the history of Islam in the text books gave a particularly positive spin on Islamic history and the controversial was often ignored or given superficial treatment (for example the military conquests of the early Islamic community), or where Islam is seen in a positive light (in its treatment of the Crusades where merciful Islam is compared with brutal Christianity).

Islamic values and Western values

The text books have a tendency to portray Islamic values in a positive light in contrast to Western values, particularly in areas such as family, charity, and sexual ethics. Potentially controversial issues like women's rights are generally ignored, or given superficial treatment. Indeed, difficult or controversial issues are largely omitted from text books. The positive presentation of Islam, along with the avoidance of controversial issues, could be regarded as 'overcompensating' in order to dispel negative stereotyping of Islam.

Concluding Remarks

The research enabled me to understand the tremendous pressure that is placed upon RE teachers and the factors that constrain them, and which leads to an educational construction of religions (in this case Islam). This construction presents religions as being consensual and static, and seeks to ignore controversy and conflict. The purpose of this construction is to engender respect, understanding, empathy, and community cohesion. Ironically, my research concluded that such a construction will lead to the opposite outcome. All religions need to be understood as complex and loose phenomena which are not homogeneous but diverse, conflicting, and dynamic. Conflicting issues of truth, both within and between religions, are at the heart of religious belief and doctrine and should not be sacrificed on the altar of social cohesion and toleration.

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Thinking Globally, Acting Locally

Emma Butterworth, local teacher at Moulsecoomb Primary School in Brighton, writes about her recently completed Masters in Education

Emma Butterworth

An important characteristic of the Masters in Education offered by the School of Education is the opportunity for local teachers, like myself, to research an aspect of my own teaching. I teach at Moulsecoomb Primary and have recently completed my dissertation which was a case study on introducing the global dimension into the curriculum. My school is situated in East Brighton in an area of social and economic deprivation. The school has high levels of Free School Meals and SEN. My dissertation attempted to find answers to four research questions.

The first question was concerned with defining the global dimension, and secondly, how this could be addressed through our primary curriculum. Thirdly I looked at the levels of support for the global dimension at various layers of administration, and lastly tried to assess whether or not the British Council's *International Schools Award* is generally a 'fit for purpose' vehicle for the global dimension in schools. My first finding was that attempting to determine one resolute definition for the term 'global dimension' is a complex task. Even deciding upon the term 'global dimension' above the available alternatives such as 'international dimension/education', 'development education' or 'global citizenship' can cause issues for institutions.

As many schools are working with the British Council towards one of the three levels of the International Schools Award, I first looked at the British Council's definition. They use the following definition: "The global dimension explores our connections with the rest of

the world. With a global dimension to their education, learners can engage with complex global issues and explore the links between their own lives and people, places and issues throughout the world." <http://www.globaldimension.org.uk/aboutus/?id=98>

The Development Education Association's (DEA) website provides a more succinct definition of what they refer to as "global learning", i.e. "global learning as education that puts learning in a global context". <http://www.think-global.org.uk/>

Both definitions provided here, with one referring to "connections" and the other to "context", indicate that a consensus can be reached that the global dimension is concerned with providing learning opportunities that allow pupils to develop an awareness of their own place in the world. A more complex and holistic explanation is provided by the Department for International Development (DFID, 2005) when they suggest, "The global dimension incorporates the key concepts of global citizenship, conflict resolution, diversity, human rights, interdependence, social justice, sustainable development and values and perceptions. It explores the interconnections between the global and the local. It builds knowledge and understanding, as well as developing skills and attitudes." (DFID, 2005, p. 3).

Hicks and Holden (2007) are more critical. Referring to the preceding thirty years from the time of writing, they claim that the introduction of a National Curriculum is to blame for a halt in progress with the

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“ The world we have created is a product of our thinking; it cannot be changed without changing our thinking. ”
Albert Einstein

Home page of The Development Education Association

development of the global dimension in the curriculum and that expertise has become 'marginalised' (Hicks and Holden, 2007, p. 24). Further explanation from the authors reveals their view that the wealth of information that has been generated has led to a multitude of frameworks, and therefore looking for commonalities on the frameworks will facilitate the construction of a list of, 'core elements that are required for any endeavour to be labelled as global education' (Hicks and Holden, 2007, p. 24).

Hicks and Holden acknowledge that the terminology used to discuss the global dimension is not set and the terms are often used interchangeably. Whilst this provides a wide vocabulary for practitioners to utilise - and the authors claim that there are subtle nuances in meaning between the terms - it does however introduce a distinct lack of clarity. But bearing all this in mind, for me the best course of action was to adopt the term 'global curriculum' for the work I was doing in my school. The overriding thread that winds through all of these sources is that pupils are being ever-increasingly exposed to a wide variety of international influences and they will need to be equipped with a correspondingly wide variety of skills and knowledge to allow them to function effectively in world-wide society. Communities are becoming increasingly diverse and the internet opens up channels of communication that were hard to access previously. Statistically, according to the DFID one in four future jobs will relate to international trade. It is this fact and a desire to adequately prepare pupils for an ever-changing global future that drives schools to include a global dimension.

In summary, my decision to use the term 'global dimension' over the available alternatives seems to be most appropriate as it is concerned with a cross-curricular and integrated approach to the curriculum. In this study, my colleagues agreed that the 'global dimension' was the most appropriate term for what I planned to do. They recognised that the definition may adjust to the setting to which it is being applied, and the flexibility in the definition can work as a strength and a weakness. The strengths are that institutions are able to adapt the definition to their own circumstances and to satisfy their own aims. The weaknesses are that it may be adapted to such an extent that the initial purpose is lost or staff could become disengaged from the definition. There were three main themes that emerged from what I had read and from the staff questionnaires that were completed for this research.

1. A sense of linking with other cultures and countries.
2. Providing all pupils with a wider view of the world.
3. Providing all pupils with the skills to allow them to become tolerant and accepting global citizens.

Incorporating these aspects into the curriculum was the next area of concern. It was important for my colleagues at this school that the global dimension should be an integral part of the daily learning and not a separate 'add on' to an already crowded curriculum. At Moulsecomb, planning is structured around topics, and overwhelmingly staff found that it was easiest to use this as a starting point for threading the global dimension into the learning. An example of this is the Year 1 topic about food. Previously there was very little learning about international food and food customs, but staff were able to incorporate this and the feedback was that this was very successful. During this academic year, Moulsecomb Primary School was visited by OfSTED. They gave praise for the international work that was being undertaken and the contribution that this gave to community cohesion. Although this praise is readily welcomed, it must be remembered that both a global dimension and community cohesion work are out of the legal remit of a school. OfSTED's acknowledgement and approval of the global dimension in the curriculum is significant for schools and it provides a quandary for schools about where to place their priorities. I feel that a balance has



Children with their pen-pal letters

to be struck between providing the National Curriculum requirements and embellishing this curriculum with optional extras such as the global dimension.

Throughout the research period, Moulsecomb Primary School was working towards achieving the International Schools Award that is operated by the British Council. To attain this award, schools have to submit a portfolio that documents their international activities. These activities have to satisfy certain criteria that appear to me to be constructed out of sound principles such as linking with other schools, involving all children and threading the activities through the existing curriculum. Reflecting on the process of achieving this award at an "outstanding level", I can conclude that the International Schools Award provides an effective framework for schools that wish to have a global dimension in their curriculum. The success of the initiative was dependent on all staff striving for a successful inclusion of a global dimension, and my role as co-ordinator was also pivotal to advise staff, and to co-ordinate budgets, resources and contacts and the paperwork.

More importantly than achieving a new award for our school, the International Schools Award provided opportunities for our pupils to gain new experiences and enjoy their learning. We try to make this key to everything we do at Moulsecomb Primary School. Staff reported that children that had been previously hard to motivate were enthused by the global dimension work that they were involved in.

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Using Autoethnography



Mike Hayler continues his exploration of autoethnography, explaining how he applied it to his own doctoral research

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In the previous issue of R.Ed I explored the theoretical perspectives of autoethnography and its foundations as a methodological approach in the social sciences. In this article I explore some of the issues I had in applying this approach to my own doctoral research and reflect on how this has influenced my own professional and pedagogical approaches to Initial Teacher Education (ITE).

I began the research by writing a self-narrative of my own memories of learning; a process Bochner describes as using one's own experience to examine a culture or sub-culture where the author deploys their own experiences to 'bend back on the self and look more deeply at the self-other interactions' (in Ellis and Bochner, 2000, p740). Here the researcher's own memories of experience illuminate and allow access to the sub-culture under study in my case the sub-culture of teacher educators. Through this method of enquiry (Richardson, 1994) I produced a piece of writing that was shared with six university-based teacher educators for them to read as a way of examining their own memories after reading mine, before I met each of them for a recorded interview discussion. These participants are colleagues, friends and associates who expressed an interest in being involved in the study. Following each interview I began transcription of the recording with some simultaneous note-taking and early analysis which initially considered 'turning point moments,' commonalities, and differences.

Anderson (2006) sees full membership in the research group or setting as a key element of analytic autoethnography. Sharing the self-narrative with six people who work as teacher educators in university schools of education was the way in which I attempted to situate and contextualise the narrative alongside others. I wanted to draw out some commonalities as well as stimulate contrary perspectives. Because of its direct and unfettered character, self-narrative can be used to develop and refine understandings of social processes and situations while taking the reader to the depths of personal feeling in a way that no other research method can. But, we should heed Anderson's (2006) warning against self-absorbed digression and insist on the 'ethnographic imperative of dialogic engagement with

others in the social worlds we seek to understand' (p 385).

While my own story forms a central part of the investigation because that is the story of teacher education that I think I know best, I was always keen to engage the voices of others as a way of questioning and developing that understanding, and to share and compare experiences so as to extend that understanding further. Distinctions between the personal and the cultural are easily and deliberately blurred by such a process. Indeed the blurring seems to me to be a central aspect of the relationship between the individual and the culture which they contribute towards as they are shaped by it. Ethnographic reflexivity itself is, as Davies (1999) observes, most appropriately seen as a relational rather than a purely subjective activity where 'interrelationships between the researcher and other inform and change social knowledge' (Davies, 1999, p. 184).

Analysis: Making meaning from stories of experience

How can the data gathered by the inevitably messy personal experience methods of autoethnography be analysed in an attempt to bring news of one world to another? While Denzin (2001) has stated that there is only interpretation in social science and criticises both Goffman (1959) and Garfinkel (1967) for attempting to extract abstract generalisations from auto/biographical data, he recommends Sartre's (1963) progressive/ regressive method of analysis which he reframes as 'critical interpretive method' (Denzin, 2001, p.41).

The concept of the individual, defined as a praxis that both produces and is produced by social structures (Sartre, 1982) forms the basis of the progressive/regressive method as it combines psychological and sociological explanations of human action.

Here narrative is located in a particular historical situation. Sartre (1963) structured an analysis that first looks forward from a particular point towards a conclusion of sorts as well as back to the historical, cultural and biographical conditions that moved the narrator.

This situates the memory and interpretation of actions in time and space, illuminating the uniqueness of the individual while revealing commonalities of the sub-culture.

This is clearly not an approach that attempts to capture the totality of an individual or a group's way of life. The focus here is upon interpreted slices and glimpses of interaction that display cultural practice experienced at particular times and places by interacting individuals.

I selected sites for interpretation and presentation that constitute points at which the narrative texts of our stories intersect and interact. This is a model that works upward and outward from the individual self-narratives gathered through writing and through interviews, towards the larger set of meanings that operate in the particular context of teacher education within university schools of education, offering a picture of what Fiske (1994 p195) describes as 'culture in practice' within teacher education by placing one set of experiences and perspectives alongside others.

Employing a version of Sartre's (1963) progressive/ regressive method of analysis allowed me to remain within the framework of analytic autoethnography without turning the stories told by me and the other participants into merely stories analysed and sacrificing meaning for particular notions of analytic rigor. These ethnographies are empirical in the classical sense of the word as they are based upon the articulated experiences of the participants in real and particular situations and places (Denzin, 1997). While not known as an ethnographer Sartre (1963, pp. 85-166) constructs a method that emphasises memories and the consequences of particular decisions and actions by looking first forward to the conclusion of a set of acts and then working back through the "subjects'" interpretations of the conditions and situations that shaped the decisions and actions in question. In his famous biography of Flaubert, for example, Sartre (1993) uses this method to demonstrate how individuals internalise and express social events and values by illuminating those structures, firstly from the lived perspective of Flaubert (from his private and published writing) and then by investigating and describing the relevant social structures such as class, family and era themselves.

“The accounts in my thesis are subjective versions of becoming and being a teacher educator.”

This forwards and backwards movement in time, characteristic of so much oral history and life history interviews and writing (e.g. Thompson, 1978; Goodson, 1992; Thomson, 1994) locates the participants and their actions ('subjects' and their 'projects' in Sartre's terms) within culture as a set of interpretive practices. The uniqueness of participants' experience is illuminated in the episodes revealed alongside similarities and commonalities with others. In my thesis my own memories of being threatened with the 'special school' by my head teacher when I was ten, my co-participant Jan's recall of her feelings of disillusionment as a teacher of English or Brian's recollection of his Father's pride in him as a learner, all illuminate social structures and behaviours through our individual perspectives. While the parallel review and discussion situates and connects those experiences within the wider context of the relevant structures such as family and the education system, the fact that we have chosen to tell these stories in the way we do is equally telling. The presentation and discussion of the data begins, as it were, in the future by

considering the experiences of being a teacher educator through a number of themes or 'sites'. Subsequent sections move backwards in time through our perspectives on being teachers and being learners. While my own story presents a more chronologically conventional narrative it too follows this forwards and backwards perspective through my own narration. Whether they are collected by others or we record them ourselves, if the researcher remains visibly central the tales are always autoethnographic.

Affordances and limitations

The advantage of access to and familiarity with the field that being a complete member researcher affords autoethnography is clearly one of its strengths.

Access to my own and others teacher educators' 'insider meanings' allowed me to provide perspectives of a culture in action that would have been unavailable through other approaches. Analytic autoethnography specifically addresses the risk of author saturation and solipsism by situating and engaging others in the field. There are also practical and opportunistic advantages of being in the field for long periods of time and linking research aims with other activities such as teaching. I was able to combine and meld my research with part-time work activities in schools and universities during my study. However my earlier attempts at research foundered as I was overwhelmed by work commitments and began to associate the research itself with that stress. As well as being a way of understanding your own practice, there is always the potential danger that when things go badly the research can become just one more problem to face for complete member researchers.

The accounts reported in my thesis are subjective versions of becoming and being a teacher educator. I am conscious that multiple readings and interpretations can be made of the accounts I have organised through the themes that emerged from the writing and sharing of self-narratives and interviews. My central concern has been upon what Bruner (1990, p.137) calls 'meaning-making' and how it connects with what he terms 'folk psychology', within initial teacher education.

These glimpses and patches demonstrate how experience is continually construed and re-construed as our lives are constructed, not recorded, through the different forms of self-narrative. The telling of the tale itself becomes part of our experience informing who we think we are. Thus we remain in the middle of these stories which develop in a relational dialogue with our developing understanding of the context within which they are set. The critical moments, conversions, awakenings, turning points, emerge in the process of writing self-narrative and form key passages that are recognised by and stimulate responses in others. Meaning emerging as narrative can be one means of opposing institutional power and a way in which teacher educators can speak back to educational policy initiatives that narrow our understanding of professional development.

While sharing my story with the other participants had an influence by design, and notwithstanding significant individual differences, I was surprised by how similar many aspects of our stories appeared to be, and how many values and beliefs about teaching and learning and the education of teachers we share with each other. On reflection this is of course not surprising at all given that our experiences have been shaped within a broadly similar era of education policy. Many of our common experiences as learners, for example, relate closely to the policy contexts of the time such as the long post-war 'consensus' on education as a means of social improvement, the Eleven Plus, the comprehensive system, the first and second waves of widening participation in Higher Education, and what can be fairly described as the ideologically/theoretically-informed teacher education policies of



Autobiographical collage

the 1970s and 80s, at least as compared to more recent policy. While our length of professional experience varies, we were all learners at points within that era as we were teachers within the turbulent and often personally shredding era of school reform that began in the late 1980s. Our experiences differ but we were all part of that time. When considered from this perspective it is the differences between us that seem surprising.

Our individual stories and, what Goodson (1992, 2003) calls our 'genealogies of context' blend and mix here to make the larger picture where our unique shades of identity can be drawn from the palettes of experience that we often share.

Autoethnography offers opportunities to examine and analyse the connections between self-narrative and social structures in distinctively grounded ways. The narrative analysis of this approach traces the ways in which the participants draw upon our personal experiences and perceptions to develop and describe our professional selves, while simultaneously drawing on our social and professional understandings to enrich our understanding of our selves. These methods have allowed me to consider the connection and character of teacher educators' biography and pedagogy in a new and illuminating way.

In some ways the limitations of autoethnography are closely related to its virtues. We clearly cannot only and always research and describe that in which we are personally or professionally entwined. Ethnographers will sometimes plan their research as professional strangers in order to research beyond direct biographical involvement, although I would argue that this connection is made when research begins and needs to be considered and made transparent as part of the research itself from that point on. While I now believe that autoethnographic thinking should influence all qualitative research, I recognise that autoethnography is not the only toolbox in the workshop.

Impact on my learning and professional practice

My speculation and hope that the process of structuring and writing a thesis based upon this research would make me more resilient to the difficulties and challenges of working in teacher education has been realised to some extent over the past two years. I would like to be able to claim that there has been a sea-change and that the process has given me a new un-shakeable confidence drawn from my newly developed perspectives of Initial Teacher Education. There has been a change but the truth is that I have occasionally felt undone by the job and that I have not quite managed to live consistently comfortably with uncertainty through the academic year. Working in Initial Teacher Education remains a challenging, stressful although often rewarding job. Knowing why can help, but not always. Perhaps that is just the way this work, or all work, is. I should really know that by now.

The research experience has helped me to work in new ways with students. I have used versions of self-narrative with students in getting them to reflect upon and analyse their own experiences of learning and teaching and to consider how this informs and will inform their practice. I worked with final year students as they used the progressive/regressive method to identify events from the course that they were about to complete, considered the significance of these for their work in schools and then made links with corresponding educational policies and initiatives. This brought a number of things to the surface including areas where students felt less prepared. The biggest response was in supporting the soon to be teachers to recognise how far they had come and what the key events were for them. The students were able to share their responses and analysis with each other in small groups allowing them to consider shared and differing perspectives in relation to their own analysis.

Autoethnography as a tool for teaching and reflective practice.

I remain convinced that autoethnography can be used in a number of ways in teacher education. I see autoethnography as a way to

employ reflection in study and practice with significantly enhanced self-visibility. Understanding how what we know, what we feel and what we do informs, makes and remakes our pedagogy allows us to understand, adapt, respond and remake again. Autoethnography offers a way to situate the self within the teaching process as it allows us to situate the self in the research and writing process. This combines an individual's personal story with his or her scholarly story in an attempt as Burnier (2006) puts it to erase the false dichotomy between the scholarly and the personal where 'the actual scholar is embodied and present, as he or she examines closely the personal, political and scholarly situations that have shaped his or her life' (p412).

I have been developing a serial writing assignment with the focus upon reflective practice where students will examine their own educational and life experiences in response to course readings, concepts and educational policy. I now more often let students know how my own views and practice have changed over time and how I think these have been influenced by experiences within the context of particular situations and relevant policies. I might for example talk about my own experiences of assessment as a pupil in the 1960s and as a teacher in the 1990s as a way of discussing the development of both assessment policy and my own beliefs about and approach towards assessment in my practice as a school teacher and now in ITE. I see that as part of the self-narrative character of this teacher educators' pedagogy.

Blending the personal and the scholarly may be easier in the seminar room than on the published scholarly page within ITE but it is the combination of the personal and scholarly, or indeed the evocative and the analytical, that appeals to me as both teacher and researcher.

Central to analytic autoethnography as proposed by Anderson (2006) is the notion that the personal story is subordinate to the larger empirical-theoretical story. While I attempted to follow this approach I remain torn on this point. Anderson's characterisation of two types of autoethnography can be seen as an attempt to contain, limit and silence the personal or the self. I do share the view that social science writing should not slip into narcissistic self-absorption. We clearly cannot learn only from the particular events of our own lives. One of the defining features of analytic autoethnography whether used for teaching or in research is that it requires dialogue with others. This enables the researcher, teacher and/or student to identify a range of cognitive, emotional and behavioural understandings within the phenomena they are seeking to understand. Dialogue with others also provides a site for reflective engagement where different perspectives can challenge and enrich the researcher/teacher/student's own perspective and deepen analytic insights.

Clearly the most effective way to demonstrate the value of analytic autoethnography is to exemplify it in actual practice. This applies to its use in teaching and learning as well as research and writing. This research project was my first attempt to exemplify a version of this approach which now continues as part of my work in the education of those who wish to teach.

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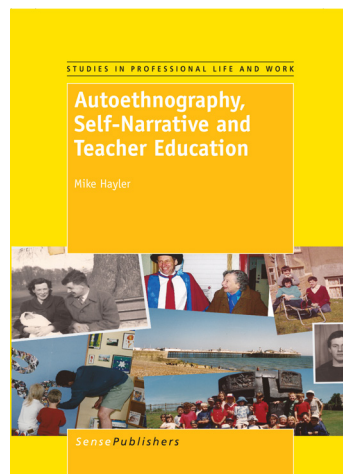
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Unfolding Identity



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There are two intertwining threads to this article. The first thread is my proposal that in teaching about cultural diversity, be it to student teachers or to school pupils, there needs to be an exploration of the learners' own identities and experiences, as they are encouraged to simultaneously explore the perspectives of other people. This is the rationale underlying the Unfolding Identities resource (See link at end) from which this article claims its title.

The second thread to this article is the sharing of my own unfolding identity. I discuss shifts and key points in my awareness of my professional self, my values, and my identity, framing this discussion under the themed headings of the Unfolding Identities resource. In this way, simultaneously to sharing my career narrative, I am also indicating how the Unfolding Identities resource can be used to encourage students, and to motivate ourselves as educators, to explore personal identity as a starting point for reflecting on social and political justice in the context of cultural diversity.

This article emerges therefore from my interest in how to approach teaching about cultural diversity, particularly in majority white schools in which there may be less everyday experience of cultural difference than in inner city schools. This was an area of interest in my recent doctoral thesis in which I argue that by investigating our personal identities we can better understand our own social positions. Furthermore such self-reflection is a first step in being able to consider the positioning of other people in relation to the impact and implications of this country's cultural diversity.

The challenge of exploring identities in the classroom

Several theorists have stressed the centrality of exploring students' identity and personal values to teaching about cultural diversity in the classroom. Aluffi-Pentini makes a significant claim for the importance of discussing identity, as the basis for all classroom engagement:

Yaa Asare discusses her recent EdD research and her approach to issues of cultural and ethnic diversity in education

"one of the most important educational conditions in schools and in other learning contexts ... is that a place should be provided for a dialogue with and between young people on questions of identity and of values." (Aluffi-Pentini, 1996, p.55)

The pedagogic approach to cultural diversity of investigating identity, based on bringing life experience into the classroom and listening to the voices of the cultural 'other', is also valued by Sleeter and Montecinos who nevertheless recognise that this approach is challenging for teachers:

"Most educators find it hard to acknowledge that we rarely understand a culture or community to which we do not belong as well as we might believe that we do. As teachers we are used to knowing more than our students and are often very threatened by the fact that students or their parents might know more than we do." (Sleeter and Montecinos, 1999, p.118)

The principle expressed by Sleeter and Montecinos (*ibid*) suggests that teaching about diversity, or difference, is a unique moment in which the roles of teacher and learner become blurred, as experience rather than knowledge becomes central. In classrooms in majority white schools, the task of identifying lived experiences that are different to the cultural norm may not be as straightforward as in a multicultural classroom, but my suggestion is that the principles of locating learning within lived experiences, must be seen as necessary in framing cultural diversity teaching to avoid the accusations so frequently levelled at a multicultural approach, of tokenism, stereotyping, irrelevance or of being ethno-centric.

The question of how we can most effectively teach about cultural diversity in schools in 'majority white' areas, that do not experience the taken-for-granted mix of cultures that Hewitt names 'polyculture', (Hewitt, 1991) that constitutes the everyday experience of inner-city schools, was the focus of my research study (Asare, 2010). In analysing interviews with PSHE secondary school teachers, I suggest in my thesis that there is a correlation between their personal life experiences and their commitment to ensure that their teaching approach and curriculum plans offer opportunities for students to address and explore cultural diversity. Our life experiences in determining our identities may also determine our approach as educators to 'what matters' in the curriculum.

Starting point: Key themes

The themes that I use to consider my own career identity development are the same as those suggested in the Unfolding Identities resource, as being ideas through which we can reflect on our own experience and make links with the experiences of others. By so doing the connection between identity and wider social and cultural constructs is made apparent. The themes through which I explore these links are:

Terminology
 Passions
 Prejudice and stereotyping
 Britishness and belonging

The suggestion is that there is a universal applicability to these themes, be they employed in the school classroom with pupils, in universities with student teachers, or used to consider how we, as educators, can analyse our own identities; these same themes are addressed by the diverse group of young people in the Unfolding Identity resource films as they discuss their own identities.

In exploring terminology we can consider how we name and define ourselves and other people as well as looking at how key terms and principles continue to evolve. Exploring our passions allows us to identify what we love and what makes us feel alive and energised. Passion may seem to define the essence of who we are but on closer inspection our passions are also culturally defined and this too can be explored in the context of our own identities and those of others. Looking at experiences of prejudice and stereotyping can enable us to explore how prevailing social attitudes can determine our experiences, how others may imagine us, and the impact that experiences of injustice may have on our identities. By opening up to how we relate to the idea of Britishness, links can be made to how diverse experiences and positionings determine our own and other people's relationships to this country. Exploring where and when we feel that we belong enables us to identify where and with whom we feel comfortable, what determines this, and what might prevent it. These lenses through which to consider identity are suggested as a way to make the exploration of diversity meaningful and relevant to our students and to ourselves by investigating difference from the standpoint of our own experiences. It is important to consider how the positioning of self in relation to these themes is always a fluid process. This sense of flux is made explicit by Bhavnani and Phoenix in their suggestion that:

“the notion of identity as a static or unitary trait which lies within human beings, rather than as an interactional and contextual feature of social relationships, has been laid to rest. Identity as a dynamic aspect of social relationships, is forged and reproduced through the agency/structure dyad, and is inscribed within unequal power relationships.” (Bhavnani and Phoenix, 1994, p.9)

As such, the exploration of identity needs to incorporate a political and social awareness as well as personal investigations. The above themes are now explored in the context of my own unfolding identity in my career progression.

Terminology: A personal and political journey

The naming of who we are in career terms is a key indicator of our identity. I am now a part-time lecturer, before that I was a community development worker, a return-to-study tutor and an antiracist activist. How do these career shifts impact on my own unfolding identity? In considering the terms under which cultural diversity is discussed, it is interesting to notice the shifts used to formulate strategic interventions around 'race', culture and ethnicity that have taken place since the early 1980s. In citing some of the jobs in which I have worked since

1983 it becomes possible to reflect on the changes of emphasis and terminology that have occurred in positioning and describing work-related racialised interventions. My work experience parallels significant social changes from the early 1980s, when community activist groups in the third sector were mobilising to draw attention to institutional racism, to today's climate in which teachers are obliged by equalities policies and legislation to approach cultural diversity through the curriculum.

In the early 1980s 'Black' was used as a political rather than a descriptive term, uniting people on this basis. Rattansi suggests:

“The category 'Black' became...an important focus...for mobilizing the growing communities of Afro-Caribbean and Asian descent. 'Black', here, denotes not simply an often successful political alliance against racism. It operates as a profoundly cultural category, an attempted representation of particular experiences and a particular construction of unity around those experiences.” (Rattansi, 1992, p.40)

When I coordinated the Black Working Party of the National Childcare Campaign in 1983, the term 'Black' referred, not only to skin colour, but also to a political identification as Rattansi suggests. Hall too effectively illustrates his own process of adopting a Black identity, he states:

“My son, who was two and a half, was learning the colours. I said to him, transmitting the message at last, 'You're Black.' And he said, 'No. I'm brown.' And I said, 'Wrong referent. Mistaken concreteness, philosophical mistake. I'm not talking about your paintbox, I'm talking about your head.' That is something different. The question of learning, learning to be Black. Learning to come into an identification.” (Hall, 2000, p.150)

Working for the National Childcare Campaign (1983-1985) and then as coordinator of a mobile crèche (1984 -1987), my identity was of a Black antiracist activist. My colleagues and I felt that it was important to offer resources to children reflective of diverse cultures, with books, puzzles and toys that featured children of different races and showing different cultural norms. In the context of living and working in London, this multicultural dimension was a part of everyday life, yet at this time, such a multicultural ideal was not yet the norm in Early Years settings, and many establishments presented a white-only world in terms of resources offered to young children. As well as campaigning for multicultural resources, our aim was also to promote an antiracist approach, which critiqued childcare and educational structures as institutionally racist, and put forward alternative approaches to childcare and early years education to directly challenge this racism.

The 'Working with People' course at Goldsmiths College, Lewisham, on which I taught between 1989 and 1991, was a 'return to study' course for Black women only and as such occurred in a political climate in which such a clearly segregated 'Black only', and 'women only' initiative was seen as a legitimate way to address structurally determined under-achievement. In this way structures such as educational institutions were beginning to embrace theoretical constructs of Black deprivation and to initiate strategies to address this issue on a localised basis. By the early 1990s, service providers outside the inner cities were also addressing issues of race equality. In 1992, having moved from London, I was employed by Brighton Council as a race equality officer. Within this position, I was responsible for carrying out 'race awareness training' for Council staff which later became known as 'race equality training'; the recognition of Black social and economic disadvantage had become instituted in local authority policy initiatives on a nationwide scale to include majority white areas (Bhavnani, 2001, p.85).

By 1995 when I was commissioned to carry out action-research in Lewes district, the term used in much official discourse to describe those who were not white British was Black Minority Ethnic (BME). By this time, the term 'Black' to describe any individual or group of non-white ethnicity was being used less by service providers. As the acknowledgement of institutional racism became integral to official racialised discourse, the community-led impetus of the antiracist debate that had been so powerful in the early 1980's had been taken over by local authorities and had become separated from on-the-ground activism. In discussing local authority antiracism, Gilroy claims,

"There has been little support from independent black defence organisations and authentic community groups whose actions go far beyond the narrow categories in which antiracism can operate." (Gilroy, 1992, p. 49)

The trend of a growing political acknowledgment of institutional racism (largely as a result of the Stephen Lawrence Inquiry Report) led to the passing of the Race Relations Amendment Act in 2000 by the Labour Government, with duties for public bodies, including schools, to provide documented evidence that they were enforcing race equality through the implementation of policies and schemes. My own interest in how this legal obligation would be implemented in majority white schools led to my initial enrolment to carry out a research degree in this area.

This reflective sketched journey through key moments of my career in the 'race industry' illustrates changes in the way that 'race' is talked about and acted on in the public sphere as well as to changes in my own positioning which has led to a continuous re-imagining of my position in the discourse of 'race', culture and ethnicity.

Passion: Bringing personal motivation into classroom discourse

"Those of us who have been intimately engaged as students and/or teachers with feminist theory have always recognized the legitimacy of a pedagogy that dares to subvert the mind/body split and allows us to be whole in the classroom, and, as a consequence, wholehearted." (Hooks, 1994, p.114)

Hooks is referring to passion here, the passion to bring our whole selves into what we teach and the passion to challenge the barriers between the academy and the outside world. May refers to a similar split between passion and practice when he discusses how theory taught in the academy may not correlate with what goes on in the school classroom. If the academic theory that we teach to students lacks the passion to engage them as future educators in 'mind and body' then will it be able to stay with them during the transition of their entry into the classroom as teachers? For example as May states:

"While various educational theories are regularly expounded, and regularly replaced in academic circles, they often bear little relevance to or have little impact on classroom life." (May, 1994, p.1)

In my own role as a lecturer and a tutor here at Brighton University, I have struggled with whether I should reveal to students my life-long passion for engaging others in exploring cultural diversity or present a less passionate but a more theoretical approach which focuses on policies and standards. My doctoral research has investigated the relation between official discourse (what the policy guidelines and standard documents stipulate) and the motivation of teachers and pupils in relation to engaging with cultural diversity. To what extent should drawing attention to legal and policy guidelines and theoretical positions on cultural diversity as a tutor, take precedence

over revealing the underlying experience of a lifetime of passionate engagement with these issues?

The very act of devising and working on *Unfolding Identities* with my friend and colleague Irene Mensah, derives from our shared passion of wanting to bring into the classroom and the lecture theatre (particularly in those areas where people say 'still no problem here' (Gaine, 1995)) an engagement with cultural and racial difference through a resource to which all students can relate. My emerging identity as a university lecturer since 2004 has been made possible from a personal conviction to engage intellectually with the lived experience of 'race' in the UK. This impetus to explore racial and cultural experience through education, rather than through community development is an important aspect of my unfolding identity. The educational context of the university setting seems to me now where my lifelong passion of negotiating, noticing and opening up to debate, how difference is imagined and perceived, is coming to fruition, but this identity too may evolve.

Prejudice and Stereotyping: An awareness of injustice

A great deal of my personal identity has been centred on the concept of (in)justice which has a direct link to the idea of prejudice and stereotyping explored in the *Unfolding Identities* resource. Working as a tutor at Goldsmiths College from 1989 to 1991 I co-ordinated and taught on a return-to-study course for Black women. Working with women at Goldsmiths offered me a new perspective on injustice as they disclosed their life-stories in seminar discussions. Having read theories about the unfairness of 'the system' while studying for my sociology degree in the late 1970's, I was now offered a face-to-face opportunity to learn about the lived reality of intelligent and feisty women who had been denied those same educational opportunities that I had benefited from. Working as a tutor with these women and enabling them to access work placements in the community was an experience that showed me the transformative power of education. Since this time, I continue to see how exposure to education and ideas influences many students' experiences, including those on the foundation degree in youth work that I have taught on in the School of Education. Access to further and higher education raises confidence levels and makes positive changes in students' identities. Having access to ideas, especially those ideas around injustice in society, opens up students' ability to engage with learning in a way that is totally relevant and empowering (Giroux, 1994).

This reflection on the influence of educational opportunities to challenging injustice relates also to my work with Aimhigher Sussex since 2004 as Mentoring Manager. I lament the government's decision to withdraw funding, not only for the selfish reason of having lost my job, but also because Aimhigher has worked effectively to offer opportunities to young people who do not have a family culture of university education. The mentoring scheme was able to employ university students to go into schools and colleges to demystify university and to encourage bright young pupils to develop the self-confidence and motivation to see themselves as potential university students. The confidence-inspiring process of engaging in continued learning, not only as a means to an end, but also as an end in itself, is something that directly confronts social injustice and dismantles social stereotypes.

Although much injustice is based on the effect of racial and cultural stereotyping, I would endorse Gilroy's insistence that it is important for the development of healthy identities, not be lulled into a sense of victimhood. He makes the suggestion that official discourse objectifies Black (sic) people in:



Image from the Unfolding Identities resource

“the ideological circuit which makes us visible in two complementary roles – the problem and the victim.” (Gilroy, 1992, p.60)

The view that the presence of Black people in this country constitutes either a social problem or a victimised community is indeed a position, that continues to shape social policy. An engagement with direct experience, may be both a curriculum and a policy strategy to open up opportunities for new ways of thinking about racial and cultural difference, rather than to continue to make racialised assumptions about how to imagine ‘the Other’. In Gilroy’s polemic he is brutally critical of the New Left’s use of antiracist rhetoric. For example:

“Antiracist activities encapsulate one final problem which may outlive them. This is the disastrous way in which they have trivialized the rich complexity of black life by reducing it to nothing more than a response to racism.” (Gilroy, 1992, p. 60)

There is indeed as Gilroy suggests, more to my life and to my identity as a woman of colour, than a reaction to racism. This idea also underlies the Unfolding Identities resource; the conviction that in teaching about cultural diversity, while needing to address prejudice, injustice and racism, there needs also to be a creative exploration of the possibilities to make connections across cultures.

Britishness and Belonging: The impact of life experience

I do not identify as being British, although I have a British passport. My reluctance to internalise a British identity may stem from this repeated question that has been posed throughout my life, ‘where are you from?’ often followed by ‘where are you really from?’ if I claim to come from any place in the UK. This non-identification with Britishness may also stem from my childhood experiences. However, today Black Britishness is a taken-for-granted position for many young people and my own children self-identify as being British regardless of their racial identification. Having a German/Ghanaian heritage I can personally better identify with the following statement of Gloria Anzaldúa, who as a woman of mixed-race claims:

“I, a mestiza, continually walk out of one culture and into another, because I am in all cultures at the same time.” (Anzaldúa, 1987, p.76)

This idea of a drifting identity is exemplified by some of the young people in the Unfolding Identities films, particularly Sarah, a young woman of Pakistani heritage who suggests that identity is never reached, never complete, always in flux thus:

“I think that every identity is flexible. I believe that everyone changes over time whether it be for better or worse. People change as often as fashion.” (Sarah Rahman, ‘Unfolding Identities’)

This idea liberates us from being reduced by the question ‘where are you really from?’ It blurs the boundary-lines within which we place other people. Hall speaks of the illusory notion of a fixed identity. He suggests that identity is a concept that we are always moving towards, describing identity as:

“The continuous, self-sufficient, developmental, unfolding, inner dialectic of selfhood. We are never quite there but always on our way to it.” (Hall, 2000, p.145)

Hall suggests that the grand theories of Marx, Freud, Saussure and feminism have shaken the foundations of certainty on which we can lay claim to a clearly defined identity. Our identities have become contingent on social, historical and psychological processes outside of our control. This contingency of identity is a challenge for educators because we can no longer employ the old certainties of a multicultural curriculum to discuss diversity. Fixed notions of cultural or national differences will no longer suffice in a context in which young people in particular, continually play with different representations of who they are, experimenting with cultural representations that are not bounded by ethnic and racial categories (Hewitt, 1985, 1991: Back, 1996).

The further limitation of multiculturalism as an educational agenda, has been to overlook Whiteness as being an ethnicity. As suggested, cultural and ethnic diversity is often envisaged in educational

contexts as being solely an exploration of the 'Other' rather than a simultaneous conversation with the self, including the white self. Giroux recognises the importance of revealing this taken-for-granted whiteness in calling for a 'representational pedagogy that makes Whiteness visible as an ethnic category' (1994, p. 51). Our relationships with our racialised selves, as well as our unfolding identities as teachers and as learners, need to inform our classroom work about diversity. This deeper exploration of identity, based on life experience, is an exciting challenge for cultural diversity teaching, inviting us to become 'critical educators' (Giroux, 1994, pp. 50-52) in our approach. This is the challenge of Unfolding Identities:

"We (teachers) need to use our authority, mobilised through a pedagogy of risk and experimentation, to discover what the questions can be in the everyday lives of our students, and what political positions such questions open up." (Grossberg, 1992, p. 20)

Concluding remarks

So how can the intertwining threads alluded to at the beginning of this piece be understood? In what way does this exploration of my own unfolding identity relate to the teaching of cultural diversity? In this discussion, I am suggesting that exploring others' identities needs to be take place alongside the exploration of our own in the context of discussing discrimination and social justice. In particular, in highlighting the use of the Unfolding Identities resource, and in discussing key moments in my own professional identity, I am advocating that a pedagogy that makes connections between people's experience should replace a traditional multicultural approach that teaches about different cultures as being fixed and traditional. My argument is that pupils and students should be encouraged to personally engage with diverse identities and life experiences. Thomas, in endorsing the principle of community cohesion suggests that this approach allows young people to explore difference while simultaneously appreciating what is held in common. It is notable that Thomas also forefronts identity as the lens through which such explorations can best be made thus:

"It is suggested that cohesion in practice is working with and inspecting existing ethnic and other identities, augmenting them, rather than replacing them in an assimilationist sense, with an overwhelming focus on common identities and experiences." (Thomas, 2011, p.10)

This possibility of making profound connections with others, simultaneously to exploring differences of experiences and perspectives, is the approach that underlies the Unfolding Identities resource. The showing of the Unfolding Identities films in university classes that I have taught, has evidenced the readiness of our students to engage with and relate to the identities of others in the context of exploring diversity, (in)equality and cohesion.

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Yaa has accepted a lecturing post at the University of Winneba in Ghana. She will be taking up her post in September 2011. The Unfolding Identities resource can be found at the following link:

<http://www.brighton.ac.uk/education/environment/resources.php?Pageld=310>

Narratives International Symposium

Professor Ivor Goodson

In early 2011 the Education Research Centre had a research proposal funded under the University's 'Research Challenges' scheme.

This proposal sought to establish an international research network which will articulate theoretical positions and practices, and facilitate activities to realise and promote innovative approaches to narrative and learning. The funding will support the setting up of the network and the first year of national activity. The Education Research Centre, within the School of Education, is currently refocusing and building its research activity around four key research areas. 'Narrative and Learning' is one of these. The purpose of this proposal is to establish an innovative international research network in narrative and learning, to convene research seminars, present a national conference, develop a high quality research proposal, support a publishing programme, and build research capacity for early career researchers.

At Brighton we have established a recognised group of world-leading and international researchers at the cutting edge of this field. The importance of narrative as social phenomena is now well established (Atkinson, 1995; Cortazzi 1993). Researchers, particularly in education and anthropology have long recognised the important role stories play in constructing and communicating reflective and evaluative experiences and feelings about the world (Goodson, et. al. 2010). Narrative and life history have also developed as a systematic and rigorous method of qualitative enquiries (Goodson & Sikes 2001, Stephens, 2009) employed across the social sciences and more recently in the health and allied professions.

However, whereas narrative approaches have been developed and come to fruition in a range of disciplines – including education, political science, sociology, economics and the health and allied professions – there has been relatively little attention paid to the dialogical relationship of narrative and learning, particularly in the professional development and training of teachers, health workers and so on. Jerome Bruner (1996) has argued that human beings fundamentally learn by developing two modes of thought or types of cognition: paradigmatic (or logico-scientific) cognition and narrative cognition. Whereas the former is concerned with an individual establishing connections between events by means of established codes and categories, the latter starts from the recognition that human action is the outcome of the interaction between a person's previous learning and experiences, their present and situated pressures, and their proposed goals and purposes (Goodson, et.al 2010). Such a view of the relationship between narrative and learning has enormous potential for both the generation of educational research but also for the development of *well-learned* professionals.

A major focus of the proposal was to run a symposium on 'narratives and learning'. This 'Narratives, Context and Learning' symposium took place on the 16–17 May 2011, hosted by Professors Ivor Goodson, Avril Loveless and David Stephens. Leading academics

from Asia, Latin America, Northern Europe, Ireland and the UK participated.

The main frame of reference for the symposium was to discuss a series of papers that will come out under the theme of a book to be published by Sense Publishers called *New Directions in Narrative Research*. As a result the symposium participants were invited to discuss their own work, which is often of a cutting edge quality and in the light of its capacity to develop new perspectives and directions for the burgeoning field of narrative research. The Centre at Brighton is developing a major focus of interest in narrative work with a particular emphasis on its relationship to pedagogy and learning. This invitational symposium is the first of a series of annual international invitational meetings which will focus on new work using new narrative and life history methods. It is hoped that in due course an international network of researchers will coalesce around this annual event and bring together new work and new scholarship around the theme of narrative research.

The next international symposium will be held in 2012 at the University of Brighton and this will coincide with the network's forthcoming book published by Sense Publishers.

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A conversation: David Stephens and Sheila Trahar

Opposing a Doctoral Thesis in Sweden

Professor Avril Loveless
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Nailing the thesis to a tree stump in the library

The formal examination of a doctoral thesis in Sweden is very different from our own practice of the viva voce examination of a candidate by two examiners. In May I was invited to be an 'Opponent' of a doctoral thesis at a university in northern Sweden, and found it a demanding and fascinating experience.

Carina Granburg is a teacher educator at the University of Umea, whose work has focused on the use of digital technologies to support teacher learning. Her thesis was entitled 'ICT and learning in teacher education: the social construction of pedagogical ICT discourse and design' and was similar to our UK system of 'PhD by publication'. It consisted of four research articles published in international peer-reviewed journals, accompanied by a commentary, which linked and drew them together theoretically. After scrutiny by an internal university thesis committee, the final thesis was submitted by a ritual of 'nailing' it to a tree stump in the university library, before nailing it to a screen and

distributing soft-backed copies of the thesis to university libraries throughout Sweden. Copies were also sent to three Examiners and to me as an 'Opponent'.

The viva was conducted in public before an audience of about 100

The final thesis was submitted by a ritual of 'nailing' it to a tree stump in the university library

colleagues, friends and family. The three Examiners sat on the front row and witnessed the conversation between Carina, the Candidate, and myself as the Opponent. My role was to spend about 20 minutes presenting a summary of the thesis to the audience, describing the research focus, methodology

and theoretical framework underpinning the analysis. I was then required to ask a series of questions which enabled Carina to respond more fully to explain her approach, research design, findings and analysis. This question and answer session lasted about an hour, before the audience was invited to ask any further questions. The Examiners were then invited to ask their own questions and take the discussion further. At the end of the examination, the Examiners, the Opponent and the Supervisors retired to another room to discuss their decision as to the award of the PhD. We announced Carina's success, congratulated her - and then spent the next six hours in a series of parties and celebrations which included singing, dancing and poems composed in her honour!

The aim of the thesis was to scrutinise the process in which ICT for learning is introduced into teacher education. Carina posed two main research questions:

- How can the process of change in relation to discourse, design and dissemination of ICT-supported methods for teaching and learning be described and understood?
- How can the roles of students, teachers, leaders and the context inside and outside teacher education in this process be described and understood?

These questions had emerged in her practice as a teacher educator, where she challenged some of the assertions being made about 'low take up' of ICT by teacher educators, and illuminated the complex nature of change in ICT use in teacher education. Her work

drew upon understandings of pedagogical discourse, rather than focusing on the technology – although she was interested in using ICT-supported methods in the 'foreground' to help us to recognise and think about what might be going on in the background of many technology focused initiatives. She researched how her colleagues and students used e-portfolios, blogs and blended learning. She explored a number of theoretical frameworks to help her describe and explain what was going on, and finally used Bernstein's concept of 'recontextualisation' as a theoretical tool to help to analyse the research problem. Her work drew attention to the ways in which initiatives such as ICT-supported methods of teaching and learning might help to 'reveal' some of the discourses which might be taken for granted or hidden at different levels of our practice and our contexts. For example, some assumptions about 'academic freedom' in Swedish universities might mask a conservatism and lack of innovation as well as opportunities for change. Her work encourages us to see our practices as constructions in progress, rather than failed implementations and reminds us of the need to recognise, hold and practice in complexity. Carina's thesis can be accessed at:

<http://umu.diva-portal.org/smash/record.jsf?pid=diva2:414445>

Professor David Stephens

also wrote in the Times Higher Education Supplement about his own experience of opposing a doctoral thesis back in 2001. You can read about this at the following link:

<http://www.timeshighereducation.co.uk/story.asp?storycode=159302>

A School for Malagiri

Lorraine Harrison, Head of School of Education, talks to Professor David Stephens about her recent visit to Nepal. Kevin Fossey, Senior Lecturer, also talks about the School for Malagiri.

Introduction

A School for Malagiri is a charity that is supporting the construction of a new school in Malagiri, Nepal, for local children aged 3 to 8. Many young children in this rural area do not receive an education and are in urgent need of schooling.

The charity was started as a fund raising project within the School of Education and is led by senior lecturer, Kevin Fossey. The project is also supported by Kevin's colleague and friend, Pema Dorjee who is a Tibetan monk and educationalist. Lorraine Harrison has just returned from participating in the inauguration of the school

The interview

DS: Lorraine, what were your reasons for going to the inauguration?

LH: Well, first to represent the School of Education on behalf of all the staff, students and friends, who had raised money for the school, and to commemorate and celebrate the life of our colleague Janet Clemence who was a great supporter of the school. I also wanted and to accompany our 'unsung hero' Kevin Fossey who has worked tirelessly on behalf of the school, raising funds, developing a sustainable long-term strategy for the institution, and building links between the university and Malagiri.

DS: Could you tell me something about your impressions of the place: the country, culture and people?

LH: I had read a lot about Nepal before and so there weren't any great surprises. I did notice the contrasts in the lives of those living in Kathmandu and the more rural areas where the school is situated. I found it a very spiritual place but also a culture in which people work extremely hard in often very challenging circumstances. Poverty is clearly still a big issue. In Kathmandu for example, which has a real problem with smog, we noticed the street children working when they should have been in school.

DS: What value does a visit like yours have for our School of Education?

LH: It's primarily a social engagement issue. The university, as you know, is committed to working with local schools in Brighton, developing a partnership that delivers high quality teacher education. Location is less important than need, so with Nepal we are reminding ourselves of the rights and entitlements of all children wherever they live. And I should add

that going there was a deeply humbling and moving experience, to witness the success of teachers and community leaders enabling local children to receive an excellent education.

DS: And lessons for us?

LH: Watching the enthusiasm and motivation of children, so desperate to learn. Whilst we were there we visited the SOS school and met with the head of that school – his charisma and drive was inspirational! SOS Children is the world's largest orphan charity which directly helps over 70,000 children in family-based SOS Children's Villages in 124 countries around the world. It aims to give children who have nothing and no-one, a family, a home, an education, and a future.

DS: And personally for you? I know you're a geographer...?

LH: I think for me remembering the importance of being able to read a culture, being sensitive to what is around you.

DS: Thank you.



The inaugural event

Kevin Fossey's Story

“The vision is to make the school self-sustaining and also create educational opportunities for parents.”

I have been visiting Nepal and working there on a voluntary basis during some summer holidays for nearly 20 years and I have developed a real interest in the country. The School in Malagiri is very close to my heart and the hope is that it will provide children with a broad and relevant education, and also teach them about issues such as negotiating fair prices for crops. It is also hoped in time that it may be possible to build a handicraft room so that adults can make and sell goods on a fair trade basis. The vision is to make the school self-sustaining and also create educational opportunities for parents. There is a history of exploitation in villages like Malagiri, with traffickers persuading such communities to allow their children to work as maids, nannies, cooks or even worse in India or the Gulf countries. Education has an important role to play in addressing these issues. This is an aspect of the project that will require further research in the future.

It has been a real challenge to build the school thousands of feet up a mountainside but the community at Malagiri are most grateful to all supporters who have worked so hard to make this happen. The students and staff at the University of Brighton have been so kind and generous and the project has provoked enormous interest amongst the student body in the School of Education. Students from Brighton University have been to visit the school. However, the possibility of placements will have to wait for some years. The

school needs time to stabilise, to develop and the staff need to ‘find their feet’ before students will be able to undertake placements there.

Despite this, an increasing number of our students do go to Nepal to undertake their third year complementary placement. Students currently training to become primary school teachers undertake a complementary placement in their third year. The students work in a variety of settings and some of them go overseas to work in schools or orphanages. I have also developed links with LIVE NEPAL,



and Om and Priti Yogi, who are the coordinators in Kathmandu, provide a wonderful service. They meet the students at the airport, immerse them in Nepali culture, teach them some of the language and find suitable placements for them. On their return the students’ rich experiences are the focus of an extended research-based assignment. This year,

as in the previous year, the students found working in Nepal immensely challenging. However, they have all returned saying how much it has developed not only their teaching skills but also their professionalism, personal skills and cultural awareness. As one student put it, “I think I will be really able to empathise with children from an English as an Additional Language (EAL) background when I am back working in a UK classroom”. A parent also wrote thanking me for offering the placement remarking about her daughter “when she spoke to me on the phone last week she said it was proving to be a life changing experience, causing her to question all her previously held beliefs and assumptions. The wonderful experience will broaden her outlook and encourage a flexible and tolerant attitude.”

Finally the three students who were the first students to undertake complementary placements in Nepal wrote “we are so grateful for the experience of going to Nepal. We will remember it forever and it has shaped and inspired our teaching”.

So I am pleased with the links we have developed in Nepal. It is a challenging placement and the students meet linguistic and cultural differences which they sometimes find difficult. But surely this is what we need in our teachers – the ability to be adaptable, flexible and to begin to understand the global dimension. We are all inter-connected and as global citizens we have responsibilities to work with others, to understand ourselves and others better, to be open, and to genuinely learn from each other.

“She said it was proving to be a life-changing experience causing her to question all of her previously held beliefs and assumptions.”

Conferences

British Educational Research Association (BERA)

6-8 September
Institute of Education, London

European Conference on Educational Research (ECER)

12-16 September
Freie University, Berlin

Society for Research into Higher Education (SRHE)

Annual Research Conference 7-9 December 2011, Celtic Manor, South Wales
Newer Researchers Conference, 6-7 December 2011

ERC Seminar Series

A series of seminars is currently being planned with invited speakers for 2011-2012. The programme will be confirmed shortly. For information on forthcoming events and seminars visit the Research Events page of the School of Education website at:

<http://www.brighton.ac.uk/education/research/events/index.php?PageId=1020>

Carol Robinson gave a keynote presentation in April at the Mauritius Institute of Education Post Graduate Conference. The presentation was entitled 'Student voice as a contested practice' and focused on recent writing Carol has been doing relating to the theorisation of student voice work.

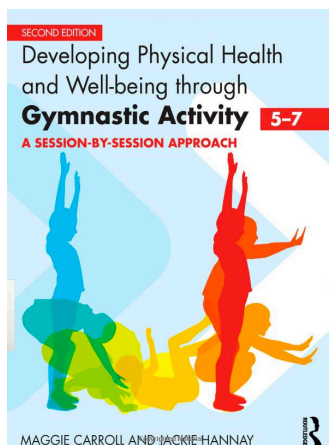
Carol will be also leading a symposium at the British Educational Research Association (BERA) conference in September. The symposium is entitled 'Evidenced on the Convention of the Rights of the Child (CRC) as a values framework for schooling and Children and Young People's Services'. Her input will be based on findings from the UNICEF project 'Evaluation of UNICEF UK's Rights Respecting Schools Award.'

Carol Robinson will also be presenting a paper 'Empowering pupils through increasing their understanding of their rights: Evidence from an evaluation of UNICEF UK's Rights Respecting Schools Award' within the 'Research on Children's Rights in Education' network of the European Conference on Educational Research in Berlin in September.

The South Central Cambridge Primary Review Regional Network (CPR)

which is led by Carol Robinson has hosted three twilight seminars this term. The first seminar, 'CPD: A case for teacher learning communities' was led by Soo Sturrock; the second seminar 'An alternative approach to school improvement' was led by Allison Peacock, Headteacher and CPR National Network Leader; and the third seminar, 'Learning Journeys at Middle Street', was led by Julie Aldous, head teacher of Middle Street Primary School in Brighton. All were attended by local teachers who have an interest in taking forward work in their schools in the spirit of the CPR.

Maggie Carroll and Jackie Hannay's new book *Developing Physical Health and Well-being through Gymnastic Activity*, was published in July 2011 by Routledge.



David Stephens is presenting a paper, 'A critical overview of Education for Sustainable development (ESD) with a particular focus upon sub-Saharan Africa' at the 11th UKFIET International Conference on Education and Development, Global Challenges for Education: Economics, Environment & Emergency, in Oxford 13-15 September 2011.

Nadia Edmond was one of a group of staff who took part in the VRU ProposalNet programme from January 2009 to December 2010. Following this, Nadia, supported by Professor Yvonne Hillier has been working with colleagues, Brenda Little and Dr Fiona Reeve from the Open University on preparing a bid for the ESRC standard grant which was finally submitted in June 2011.

This Open University/University of Brighton collaboration is interested in exploring how existing processes of learning at work are re-shaped by the introduction of HE supported work-based learning programmes.

This collaboration has also resulted in a number of joint conference papers, with Nadia and Open University colleagues presenting a paper to the SRHE conference in December 2010, Newport Cardiff and the Critical Perspectives on Professional Learning Fifth Annual Conference, 13 June 2011 at the University of Leeds. The team will also be presenting a paper at the prestigious 7th International Conference on Researching Work and Learning, December 2011 in Shanghai.

Mark Price and Nadia Edmond are co-editing a Modular text book for Sage publishers. The book is aimed at supporting the commonly taught aspect of courses on undergraduate programmes for a range of roles supporting children and young people's learning. It is entitled: "Integrated working with children and young people". The author team, Erica Evans, Denise Kingston, Jane Melvin, Deborah Price and Sarah Wilkins alongside Mark and Nadia have drawn on their experience of teaching and research across the Foundation Degrees in the School of Education.

John Pratt has been invited to be honorary Dean of the Institute of Intercultural Communication and Management, which has just been created in the National Academy of the Chinese Theatre Arts. **Yvonne Hillier** has also been asked to accept an honorary Chair.

EdD Congratulations to Brian Marsh, Lynne Caladine, Carolyn Jacobs and Jane Morris who have all recently completed their doctorates.

Notes for contributors

We are now looking for contributions for the next issue Vol.4 No.1, which will be published in Nov 2011. Contributions should be sent to Sylvia Willis by 30 September, 2011 at:

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. See current issue for house style.

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.



University of Brighton

School of Education

“A parent also wrote thanking me for offering the placement remarking about her daughter: ‘When she spoke to me on the phone last week she said it was proving to be a life changing experience, causing her to question all her previously held beliefs and assumptions. The wonderful experience will broaden her outlook and encourage a flexible and tolerant attitude.’”

Kevin Fossey relaying a mother’s response to her daughter’s experiences in Nepal.