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Editorial

This edition of R.Ed comes at a time of seemingly endless political and ideological changes taking place in all sectors of education. In the past two years we have witnessed the National Curriculum Review, the introduction of Teaching Schools, School Alliances and Free Schools, and the imminent introduction of increased fees for students; the list could go on. Such changes have led to schools, colleges and Higher Educational Institutions (HEIs) facing some uncertainty about what their future may look like. Within this rapidly changing context and with little certainty about how much further the educational landscape will alter in the coming years, or even months, what drives many of us in the education sector is the strong conviction and belief in knowing that in the work we do we are making a positive contribution to the lives and experiences of the students with whom we work. Each of the contributors within this issue draws on changes and developments which have influenced their roles and experiences within education.

Mark Rivers considers the impact that current policy frameworks, pedagogical demands and the shifting priority given to the position of ICT in the primary curriculum has upon the overall teaching and learning experience of the subject. Mel Gill offers an insight into the valuable role of the Student Support and Guidance Tutor (SSGT) and the positive impact of this on the welfare of some students, and Kerry Doyle shares with us some of the insights gained from a conference he attended which specifically acknowledged the complex world in which new further education trainees are placed by their teacher educators.

Within the School of Education, we continue to thrive in terms of research, publications and conference presentations, and within this edition of REd we learn about some of the wide and varied research activities in which staff have been involved over recent months.

Carol Robinson, David Stephens & Keith Turvey
Editors

Creativity cannot be spelt without an 'I' a 'C' or a 'T'

Mark Rivers

Mark graduated from the BA (Hons) Primary Education with QTS course in 2011. This article is developed from an essay he wrote for the Year 4 ICT Specialist Module, which Professor Avril Loveless and Pippa Totraku taught. In this module students experience the process of peer review to develop their thinking. Mark considers the question: How can we ensure that the integration of new technologies, pedagogy and educational philosophy promote originality and creativity in children's engagement with ICT?

Abstract

The recent release of 'The Importance of Teaching: The Schools White Paper 2010' (DfE) has initiated debate and instilled uncertainty amongst many educators in the profession through its proposed '... radical reform of our schools'. The planned restructure of the system is set to learn from, and promptly respond to, '...the lessons of other countries' success' to ensure that we are able to offer our young people a 'world-class' education that can contend with that of our competitors, who have been statistically shown to outperform our provision in a number of areas (OECD, 2010). The core intention for this critical response is to analyse the impact that current research evidence, policy frameworks, pedagogical demands and the shifting priority that is given to the position of ICT in the primary curriculum have upon the overall teaching and learning experience of the subject. The context for this exploration derives from the design and evaluation of an innovative learning experience that aimed to foster an authentic approach to creative learning through the medium of ICT: a theme that will be substantiated through select examples that have been extracted from influential research and literature. The conclusions of the piece will summarise, through an informed reflection on professional knowledge in practice, how an effective practitioner can instill balance between creativity and the technological understanding of teaching and learning with ICT.

Introduction

Sir Ken Robinson (2011), in his speech for the 'Learning without Frontiers' event, reminds us that the heart of an effective education system is formed by the relationship that develops between the learner and the teacher, which extends the idea of education beyond the narrow and simplistic perspective of academic ability and utility for work that has been offered by the coalition government. We can no longer afford to take for granted that an aptitude for learning how to think; how to apply difficult concepts; how to create something meaningful or provocative; and how to contribute to the development of the self, and that of society, is an inherent function of education that will innately respond to, as defined by Robinson, the three core needs of an expeditiously progressive society:

1. Personal; a learner must develop a genuine sense of possibility that values his or her own sense of capability, creativity and confidence.
2. Cultural; a learner must establish a secure cultural identity that establishes tolerance and mutuality towards others.
3. Economic; a learner must be equipped with the tools that will allow them to harness the new technologies that continue to revolutionise our culture and economy.

'Digital literacy' appears to be a prerequisite of contemporary life, as the development of new technology continues to influence how our society works.

If educational reform is to shape a more effective approach to teaching and learning, then it must be acknowledged that young people need opportunities to actively engage themselves in interacting with an eclectic range of critical and creative practices involving technology and media (Bennett et al., 2007). 'Digital literacy' appears to be a prerequisite of contemporary life, as the development of new technology continues to influence how our society works, socialises, communicates, and continues to share in the learning of new knowledge and information (Hague, 2010). It is essential that this proposed overhaul of the existing system addresses the complexities of 'digital literacy' through embedding an understanding amongst stakeholders that it is not only the role of the teaching profession to establish ICT as a vehicle to prepare children for a digital world, but that a sustained engagement with technology and media is an integral attribute in developing creativity and originality in the knowledge, skills and understanding across a breadth of disciplines and curriculum areas. A prime challenge that we face as practitioners, during this period of change and uncertainty, is to ascertain and manage the impact that an innovation might bring to our professional identity and to the holistic development of the children in our care, as an action or experience in one domain of education can stimulate a dramatic reaction or transformation in another.

The political landscape: a hindrance or help?

"In the...past the school had provided a curriculum...of tools for dealing with problems in a known world. As the world around the school has changed, so this curriculum has lost its utility: the world

to which the school could provide answers is a world with different demands.” (Kress & Pachler, 2007 p.22)

The use of technology in education has been said to date back for some 30 years, but it has been the last ten years that have seen the greatest momentum in government agenda to firmly secure and entrench ICT as a means to lead the future of learning and teaching (Al-Fudail & Mellar 2008). One of the most significant developments in the short history of ICT initiatives was set by the Labour government who, through their ‘National Grid for Learning’ strategy, strived to transform the system of education to harness new technology and ensure life-long learning for both teacher and pupil: Blair argued that an individual could not ‘...be effective in tomorrow’s world if they are trained in yesterday’s skills’ (DfEE, 1997). A subsequent review into the role of ICT was offered by the ‘Towards a Unified e-learning Strategy’ (DFES, 2003) which referred to an international perspective towards the use and potential of new technologies, or the now labelled ‘e-learning’, in schools. The document founded an ambitious set of standards to empower learners; instill creativity and innovation; offer flexibility; achieve better value; and generate a professional workforce and fulfilled citizens through the use of ICT. It was anticipated that this could be achieved through just seven action areas, and one of the most significant, in the context of this study, was:

“Teachers need to be able to innovate and take the lead in pedagogical developments, using, creating and sharing e-learning resources to offer more active and creative ways of learning.” (DFES, 2003, p.5)

The Labour government’s commitment to the exploitation of ICT in schools continued through an inconceivable influx of bureaucratic and relentlessly revised guidance, strategies and incentives: titles such as ‘ICT across the curriculum: ICT in...’ and ‘What the research says about...’ are just two examples from the expansive catalogue that was hurled towards practitioners in an effort to encourage the creative use of ICT across the curriculum (DfES, 2004; Becta, 2004). It has been revealed, in subsequent research conducted by Ofsted (2005) into the ‘embedding of ICT in schools’, that little progress has been made for the provision of the subject in recent years, as in no school was it seen to be embedded to the extent that it was an everyday aspect of learning: the predominant use of ICT appeared to support the teaching of English and Mathematics, but failed to be creatively applied or developed in any other area of learning across the curriculum. Therefore, it would seem that we, as practitioners, are left to question the effectiveness of government policy, and whether or not it truly benefits the embracement of innovative technologies, pedagogy and educational philosophy to cultivate originality and creativity in children’s engagement with ICT.

It could be argued that new technology will always be subservient to the educational tasks required and the societal values that surrounds it. Gardner (1999) outlines three main orientations for educational tasks: truth, beauty and goodness. Whereas Sternberg (1996) offers three other perspectives: analysis, creativity and practicality. Undoubtedly, numerous technologies will support these various educational aims differently, and it lies in the criticality and inclination of policy, pedagogy and curriculum to discern whether these innovations are relevant and beneficial for promoting creativity in children’s holistic learning and development. The Schools White Paper 2010 (DfE, 2010) has announced the need for rigorous educational reform, which will see crippling spending cuts and a disbandment of many non-departmental government bodies. This has instigated great debate for the future provision of ICT in UK schools, as a planned transformation of the existing curriculum threatens to reduce the ten core subject areas to just four, and, thus, make ICT vulnerable to relegation. The

lack of emphasis for ICT in education is a great ‘cause for concern’, as Gove appears ignorant of the 21st Century international vision towards the economic potential of new technologies (Hitchcock, 2011). However, there is some hope that less central control could provide the motivation and opportunities for practitioners to be more inventive and creative in their use of ICT, as less focus on buying new hardware and more pressure to exploit free open source software could weave ICT more genuinely into the wider curriculum.

“We were seen to be leading the world in ICT in education and we have the capability to continue to lead in this field. Now is the time to stand up and be counted. Educationalists know how ICT can impact on learner outcomes. Let’s make sure everyone else does too.” (Brooks, 2011)

Creativity: what is it, and how can it be fostered in ICT?

Creativity in education has experienced unprecedented resurgence in recent years as an area of scholarship, policy-making and classroom practice. An ongoing examination into the conceptual frameworks, pupil and teacher perspectives, classroom practicalities, and, scrutiny of purpose, have embedded creativity as a necessary and feasible factor of life-long teaching and learning (Craft, 2005; Craft et al., 2007). An international survey, conducted by IBM (2010), asked 3000 corporate leaders, educationists and other leading professionals to explore the complex issue of ‘future success’ in society. The outcome of the study identified three main components that were considered to be central to an education system that would equip children with the range of skills to respond to the challenges of a contemporary world:

1. How to cope with complexity; a curriculum must infuse continuity and appreciate the interrelationship between subjects and ideas, for example, appreciating ICT as a tool to inspire creativity.
2. Resilience and adaptability; a broad and balanced view that cannot be achieved through a rigid and narrow curriculum, as children must be given the opportunities to demonstrate responsibility, adaptability and creativity.
3. A genuine sense of creativity; the centre of our education system must prepare pupils for the complexities of a modern world through encouraging them to develop their unique powers of imagination and creativity.

The overriding theme of the survey indicated that - more than rigour, discipline, integrity or vision - creativity was central to successfully navigate the increasingly complex demands of a modern world. However, an understanding of how to integrate an authentically ‘creative’ approach into the classroom with ICT appears to have been hindered by the ambiguity and complexities that surround the subject. There has been much research to argue that the design of creativity is primarily shaped by the ‘...interaction between characteristics of people and communities, creative processes, subject domains and wider social and cultural contexts’ (Loveless, 2005). Creativity is seen to be an innate and universal feature of human existence, where images, actions and/or experiences are collected, recalled and collated to innovate or invent something new (Vygotsky, 2004). It is essential that we, as educators, establish a clear philosophy that ‘creativity’ is not simply an attribute that is exclusive to the gifted few, but something that is embedded in each and every learner and must be developed through an inclusive, stimulating and relevant curriculum.

A report produced by the National Advisory Committee on Creative and Cultural Education (1999) has recommended that ‘creativity’ is an active process that can be fostered in learning through the application of five interdependent areas: using imagination; a fashioning process; pursuing purpose; being original; and judging value. A ‘rationalist’ view

of learning, which attributes creative thinking to a specific subject, appears to reflect how many children are currently led to experience learning through the segregated subject domains of the National Curriculum. However, it is important to note that the acquisition of new knowledge can also be attributed to the 'empiricist', 'elitist' or 'interactionist' view of learning, which recognises the influence of the social dimension. A broad and balanced approach must discriminate between these four areas in order to create the 'experts' that will be able to access the 'tools and technologies' to support their ongoing exploration into the creative process (Loveless, 2005). The Cambridge Primary Review advocates the creative capabilities of ICT, particularly when it is placed within the language dimension of the curriculum (Alexander, 2010). The report argues that the uncritically fostered and semi-detached understanding of ICT as a neo-basic skill for learning for life, as offered by the Rose Review, will constrain children's creativity and originality through failing to recognise ICT as a culturally pertinent mode of communication, language and literacy.

Rethinking pedagogy: the design of a learning activity

"...A clear understanding of the relationship between 'learning things' and 'learning what can be done with them' may help us to understand better both the nature of the learning process, and the most appropriate foundations for curriculum and pedagogical development." (Siraj-Blatchford, 2007)

The terminology that surrounds a pedagogy for teaching ICT creatively, with expressions such as 'digital literacy', have been reported to cause confusion amongst many in the profession: when Becta asked what digital literacy meant to them, teachers tended to give a tentative definition that ranged across a number of possible interpretations. Some focused on the functional; some concentrated on using technology to just teach literacy; and others towards an emphasis on pupils' active and critical engagement with multi-modal forms of technology and media to create and share meaning and knowledge (Hague, 2010). The complex relationship between learner, teacher, knowledge and digital technologies can often challenge the notion of pedagogy, as the provision to monitor control, motivation, access, and choice can conflict with the initial intention for a creative use of ICT. A metaphorical model for ICT and pedagogy, presented by Stevenson (2008), outlines four common considerations for the use of ICT in teaching and learning:

1. As a 'resource' to embellish practice in a non-digital curriculum
2. As a 'tutor' to scaffold the autonomous needs of the learner
3. As the 'environment' to explore, develop and present knowledge online
4. As a 'tool' to support and shape planned learning experiences (Loveless, in press)

A generic pedagogy, that has been inculcated through initial teacher training and continued professional development, would seem to be largely insufficient in equipping practitioners with the multifaceted knowledge, skills and understanding that is required for the confident and effective teaching of ICT. When planning a creative ICT activity it is vital that a teacher actively considers the interrelationship between the what, the how and the why: a process that is conceptualised by Mishra & Koehler (2006) as 'Technological Pedagogical Content Knowledge' (Figure 1). Their model stresses the complex interplay between content, pedagogy, and technology in the preparation to teach ICT, which supersedes the earlier theory of Shulman by grouping each component in pairs: pedagogical content knowledge (PCK), technological content knowledge (TCK), technological pedagogical knowledge (TPK), and a culmination of all three as technological pedagogical content knowledge (TPCK).

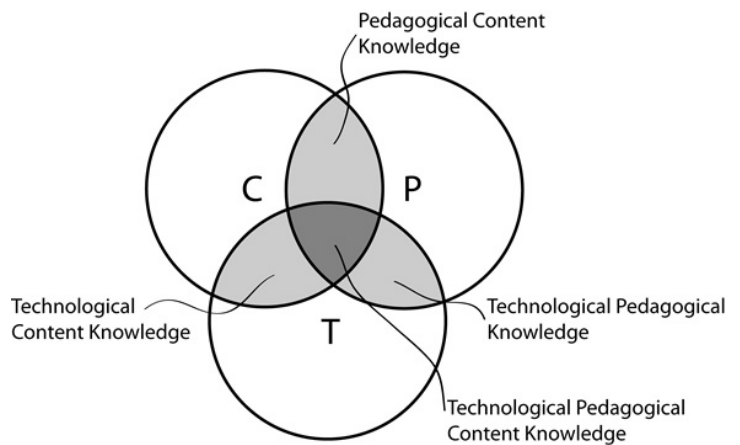


Figure 1: Mishra & Koehler's theoretical model 2006

The learning activity: The what... The how... The why...

The design of the activity was set around the cross-curricular theme of 'A Sense of Place': the objective was to devise and produce a three-minute movie that would communicate a 'sense of place' through a decipherable layer of people, time and space in a chosen location. The intention of the project was to capitalise on the phenomenal library of events, creatures and objects that can be brought to life through the moving image: a phenomenon that has fuelled an increasingly high expectation for learning across the curriculum (Meek, 1991). A representative from the Screen Archive South East was introduced to share some footage that would model the range of outcomes that could be achieved, and this set a clear benchmark for the assignment's success criteria. A range of hardware and software was made available to each group throughout the exercise, such as mobile recording devices and laptops installed with editing software. Independence from a didactic method of teaching was a core philosophy of the learning experience, as the core responsibility to plan, prepare and finish the activity was bequeathed unequivocally to the students.

"It seems to make sense...not to carry on down the road of having a 'standard' set of equipment in a classroom, but allowing some degree of personal choice in what equipment...will have the most impact." (Sutton, 2011)

The following sections in this discussion will explore the rationale behind the design and execution of this innovative learning experience, which aimed to foster originality and creativity in students' engagement with ICT. This examination will discuss the complexities of the pedagogic demands of the activity, and reflect on some of the implications that were encountered through the limitations of personal and professional knowledge, skills and understanding in striving to harness the full potential of the integrated technologies. The conceptual framework, provided by Mishra & Koehler (2006), will be used to contextualise this critical and analytical exploration into some of the complex pedagogical, curriculum and technological constraints that might challenge a practitioner's identity and professionalism in striving to achieve such a contemporary approach to teaching and learning.

The what...

The idea of what children should learn can be paralleled with a 'pedagogical content knowledge' (PCK), which relates the process of knowing what teaching approaches will be most appropriate to the content or context of the activity, and how these can be orchestrated to ensure an effective and creative learning experience (Mishra & Koehler, 2006). The first task for the design of the activity was to



Undergraduate education students working with digital animation

examine the content of what was to be taught and how it might relate to other areas of learning within the National Curriculum's programme of study, a characteristic of pedagogy defined by Shulman (1987) as 'comprehension'. The outcome of the procedure revealed that the learning activity correlated with an overwhelming breadth of knowledge, skills and understanding in a range of curriculum subjects, which spanned from physical processes in Science to exploring and developing ideas in Art (DfEE, 1999). After much deliberation, it was decided that the ICT phase of the activity should not be ascribed to any one subject, but instead made available as a tool to communicate learning and encourage creativity throughout the topic. It would appear that this is a common area of difficulty that can challenge even the most proficient and dynamic teachers, as studies have shown that there is very little available guidance to explain how digital literacy and digital participation can be effectively integrated into the daily school routine (Hague & Williamson, 2009).

A knowledge of the what, or 'PCK', must guide the formation of concepts and techniques that will respond to the aspects of learning that might prove challenging, and address inclusion through ascertaining prior knowledge, learning styles and potential barriers to learning. The second phase of planning considered how the activity would support the growth of subject knowledge, foster digital literacy and ICT capability and result in the production of a quality outcome. A trial run of the task enabled us, as active participants, to experience what it would be like if children were to undertake the activity, and we were able to contemplate how to best facilitate arising difficulties or misconceptions in order to foster meaning-making and understanding. It is recommended that when 'trailing an activity' we, as conscientious practitioners, strive to plan in collaboration with others, as this interaction will enable us to 'bounce ideas around' and learn from the contributions and experiences of our colleagues (Payton & Hague, 2010). However, the outcome of this collaborative exercise highlighted some of the difficulties that can be encountered when trying to negotiate 'creative differences', as

the prior knowledge and experience that each member brought to the group shaped a uniquely different vision of how an outcome could be achieved.

The how...

The how phase of planning an ICT oriented project must always identify the relationship between how we intend children to learn and how we intend to teach them through balancing the reciprocal connection that links technology with the content: a process defined by Mishra & Koehler (2006) as 'technological content knowledge' (TCK). The preparatory design of the learning activity quickly exposed a number of potential constraints that could be encountered when using new technologies, as the provision and basic usability of the available hardware and software imposed some significant limitations on how our creative vision might be accomplished: the issue of device compatibility and a restriction in internet security are just two of the examples from the numerous technical difficulties that challenged the ongoing creativity and capability of the group. A central purpose of the task was to harness the use of a digital camcorder to record a three-minute movie that would communicate a sense of place to a wider audience: the process of selecting and modifying a rudimentary vision through our individual interpretations of camera position, light source and audio clips proved a distinct collaborative and 'cognitive challenge'. The outcome of the activity led the group to use, apply and develop many indispensable skills such as decision-making, critical-thinking and problem-solving, which set an example of how a problematic learning experience can be used to encourage a more coherent and informed knowledge, understanding and skill across a breadth of subjects and areas of learning (Burn & Durran, 2007; Bennett et al., 2007).

It is fundamental to the success of creativity that these often exigent circumstances do not deter the ambitious introduction of new technologies into the classroom, as acknowledging the more advanced expertise of some children can contribute to the whole-class understanding and skills-development in the use of ICT (Allen

The integration and use of the chosen technologies allowed us the freedom to experiment with our ideas without the exerted pressure of permanence, a fear that can be instilled when using more traditional methods of pedagogy.

et al. 2007). It is important to set aside time for both teacher and pupil to explore, play and experiment with the available devices and software, as it is through these rehearsal opportunities that the capability of the 'tools' can be fully exploited to produce the most effective and creative outcomes. A considerable factor of the exercise was communication, as each member of the group would feed back their findings from 'playing' with each device to form a joint bank of knowledge that the whole group was able to draw upon. The 'affordance' of ICT, through the collaborative activity of experiential and explorative learning, is a unique characteristic of the subject that reconfigures the role and assumed need for additional or explicitly defined scaffolds (Laurillard et al., 2000). Contrary to a teacher's position becoming redundant in such activities, the process of independent and collaborative learning will invoke a more proactive role: a consideration of appropriate input and skilled questioning is essential to ensure that learning is on track, and to provide support for pupils to reflect on their progress and identify areas for future development.

The why...

Finally, it is imperative that when planning any learning experience that we, as responsible practitioners, consider why we have chosen to facilitate learning in the classroom this way. A process that has been defined as 'technological pedagogical knowledge (TPK), which should encourage a critical understanding of the existence, components, capabilities and use of technologies, and respond to how the practice of teaching and learning might be transformed as a result (Mishra & Koehler, 2006). The critical selection of hardware and software was an elemental feature of the learning activity, as we were led to select the most suitable tools that would most effectively support the creative realisation of our collective vision: it was pivotal that we were able to draw on our knowledge of affordances and pedagogical strategies to inform our selection from the range of available technological devices. The integration and use of the chosen technologies allowed us the freedom to experiment with our ideas without the exerted pressure of permanence, a fear that can be instilled when using more traditional methods of pedagogy, as when editing endless video footage we were able to wield our creativity to test, modify and revise our ideas in conjunction with the core learning objective, and in light of new and spontaneous developments.

'A conceptual framework for creativity and ICT must describe not only the interaction in the activities themselves, but also the interactions between the activities and the wider contexts of policy and practice.' (Loveless, 2005, p.14)

The constraints that can be imposed through timetabled access to equipment, curriculum expectations and assessment targets could deter a teacher from adopting an ICT approach into the classroom.

The inherent freedom of the activity may challenge the confidence of some practitioners, as the experience demonstrated that it was only when the experts 'took a step back' that the group's creativity was released to consider how best to use the technology to complete the task. There is much research to suggest that many teachers feel compelled to 'do the teaching part' rather than adopt a less didactic approach that does not hinder children's creativity by 'spoon-feeding' (Hague, 2010). It is in these circumstances that we, as teachers, must exert our professional judgment to observe and assess initial ideas and understanding by allowing children the time to engage with the technologies before we intervene. A balance between policy and practice must guide an understanding of knowing when and how to take action to allow every child the opportunity to think more deeply, exert autonomous creativity, and make meaningful connections between different ideas and information.

Conclusion and recommendations

The development of this critique into the creative teaching and learning potential of ICT has highlighted the unequivocal relationship between the what, the how and the why in a teacher's pedagogical knowledge: an exemplification of 'technological pedagogical content knowledge' (TPCK), which distinguishes an informed understanding of how to represent concepts through ICT, use technologies constructively, make concepts challenging, respond to pupils' prior knowledge and learning preferences, and integrate ICT as a tool to reflect the digital culture (Mishra & Koehler, 2006). The design and execution of the learning activity would appear to support an argument for adopting a new pedagogical approach that responds to a 21st Century way of learning: an approach that will transform the hierarchy of traditional practice through establishing a more equal partnership between teacher and learner that shares new knowledge, skills and understanding in the extensive domain of ICT:

- Digital tools: hardware/software awareness and competence
- Critical skills: evaluation and contextualisation
- Social awareness: understanding identity, collaboration and communication

It is proposed, by Prensky (2011), that this pedagogy must plan the division of responsibilities to engage learning in ICT by allowing children to find and follow their passions in different subject areas; consider the capability of digital media and functionality of ICT; question the validity of research and information; answer questions and share in the development of subject knowledge; and use multimodal methods to produce more original and creative outcomes. Finally, it is in this approach that we, as educators, will be guided to ask the right questions; give guidance and support; position materials in context; create rigour; and ensure challenge, progression and quality in children's creative engagement with ICT.

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Two years on: Student Support & Guidance in the School of Education



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Setting the scene

This is my third year as the Student Support & Guidance Tutor (SSGT) for the School of Education. This is a 0.5 post and my time is split between offering individual one-to-one support and guidance, and facilitating academic practice support for cohort-specific groups.

The definition of the role is a result of talking to colleagues, particularly programme leaders, and responding directly to student needs. Students engage with me on a voluntary basis.

It is important to evaluate and reflect on the impact of the role. I have collected both quantitative and qualitative data to support this evaluation, and research areas for future development. This article summarises the key points from the data collected and suggests possible ways forward for the role.

The broader context

In 2002 national targets were set for widening participation (WP) in Higher Education and responding to non-completion (National Audit Office, 2002). Research conducted in recent years focussing on HE

retention, progression and student support, (eg. McChery and Wilkie, 2009; Quinn et al, 2009; Trotter, 2004; Thomas, 2002) has highlighted the need for pastoral and personal support, alongside academic guidance, if students are to be successful on their courses and complete their studies.

The first part-time SSGT role was developed in the School of Applied Social Science (SASS) in 2002 as a response to increased student numbers and rates of non-continuation (Wilcox et al, 2005.) It was part funded from the University of Brighton's Student Retention and Widening Participation funding and monitored by the then Student Retention Review Group. It was deemed a success and in 2008 an event was held to inform other Schools and encourage them to take up and adapt the model to suit their Schools. A number of Schools did this and some limited short-term funding was made available to help develop the role across the University.

The School of Education piloted the role in 2008/09 with an existing year leader, and following the success of the pilot, appointed the first 0.5 SSGT in September 2009. Not all Schools have retained an SSGT post. This may be due to Schools now having to wholly fund these posts. It will be interesting to see what develops over the coming years with the University aiming to raise retention rates and ensure 'satisfied customers' in the light of fee rises and new access agreements. I believe eight Schools currently have an SSGT.

In May 2011, the Academic Standards Committee approved the development and implementation of a University-wide Student Retention and Success Framework from October 2011. The Framework has been developed by the University's Student Retention Improvement Team to assist in improving the University's focus on enhancing the transition, retention and achievement of all of its students (SPO, 2011.)

It is worth noting that the School of Education has maintained high retention rates and has been consistently below the benchmark for the University overall (SPO, 2011.)

Introducing myself

I was first involved with the School of Education as a mentor and placement supervisor for part time Youth Work students from 2000. At that time I was the training and development co-ordinator for East Sussex Youth Service, following a 20 year career as a youth worker in London, Herts and East Sussex. Before that I had been a primary

teacher in King's Cross in London, having completed my B.Ed at Trent Polytechnic, Nottingham.

I took over as FdA Youth Work course leader in 2005 and then took on course leadership for the BA (Hons) Professional Studies in Learning & Development (PSLD) in 2008. I have always been interested in student welfare and pastoral/informal learning, and had no hesitation in applying for the first School of Education 0.5 Student Support & Guidance Tutor (SSGT) post in 2009. Over the past two years I have developed the role, alongside my other 0.5 senior lecturer responsibilities.

What do the data show?

Between September 2009 and July 2010 I had contact with 126 individual students and between September 2010 and July 2011 I had contact with 180 individual students (some, more than once). This represents a 42% increase overall (when the student population had declined by 0.01%) most likely due to being known to more students. At the beginning of each year I introduce myself as the SSGT during induction sessions for all new Year 1 students and my leaflets are distributed to all students across all year groups.

I have always been interested in student welfare and pastoral/informal learning, and had no hesitation in applying for the first School of Education 0.5 Student Support & Guidance Tutor (SSGT) post in 2009. Over the past two years I have developed the role, alongside my other 0.5 senior lecturer responsibilities.

In 2010/11, I saw 140 (78%) females, 40 (22%) males and 10 (6%) BME students. The total population across the School was 2461 so I saw 7.3% of the whole cohort. These figures are similar across the two years. In 2010/11, in the School of Education student population as a whole, there were 1903 (77%) females, 558 (23%) males and 186 (8%) BME. This implies that the breakdown of students I saw was very representative of the School of Education population as a whole.

Table 1 shows the type of contact I had with students. There was an overall increase of 8% in face-to-face contacts in 2010/11. The majority of students self-refer, but 54 (29%) were referred to me by someone else such as a course, route or module tutor. I also followed up 12 students with Occupational Health issues or where disabilities were declared on application but no Variation of Assessment Methods (VOAM) was in place, and followed up 52 students issued with VOAMs. Some of these students did not require any additional support but feedback suggests that they were pleased to have been contacted.

Table 1: Type of contact

09/10 (Total =126)	As %age of those who made contact	10/11 (Total = 180)	As %age of those who made contact	Type of contact
52	41	91	49	Face to Face appointment
63	50	79	43	Email
9	7	10	5	Phone
2	2	6	3	Non-attendance
		54	29	(Referred by other - not self)

In both 09/10 and 10/11, students from all but one of our 16 courses (BA /Dip HE RE) made individual contact with me, and Table 2 shows contacts from each course. Although support was focused primarily on new students, I did have contact with students from all year groups, including MA students. In 2010/11 out of the 180 student contacts, 97 were in Yr 1, 35 in Yr 2, 35 in Yr 3 and 13 in Yr 4. In 2009/10 out of the 126 student contacts, there were 92 students in Yr 1, 21 in Yr 2, 10 in Yr 3, and 3 in Yr 4.

As mentioned above, it might suggest that students are more likely to make contact with me if they have seen me at a 1st Year induction session, although it might also imply that first year students just have more issues to deal with. Increased numbers of students in Yr 2 and above in 2010/11 may have resulted as students generally get to know of my existence and role.

Table 2: Contacts across courses

No. from total contacts of 126 against number on course	As %age of course total	No. from total contacts of 180 against number on course	As %age of course total	Course
2009/10		2010/11		
44/ 545	8	68/545	12.5	BA (Hons) Primary Ed QTS
14/152	9	11/160	7	BA (Hons) KS 2/3 Ed QTS
9/99	9	12/113	11	2 Yr BA (Hons) Sec QTS/SKE
9/137	6.5	15/148	10	PGCE Primary
18/248	7	24/256	9	PGCE Secondary
5/72	7	6/72	8	BA (Hons) Education
1/15	7	2/15	13	BA (Hons) English & Education
6/230	3	12/230	5	BA (Hons) PSLD / EYPS
0/20	0	0/20	0	BA (Hons) / Dip HE RE
4/19	21	4/16	25	Cert. Ed / Post Comp Ed
3/40	7.5	10/40	25	BA (Hons) FdA Youth Work
1/32	3	2/32	6	FdA WYP / WYPYPS
5/71	7	13/71	18	FdA EYCE
2/18	11	1/18	5.5	FdA Playwork
4/55	7	3/55	5	FdA PSPE
1/58	2	3/40	7.5	MA Ed / Learning & Dev

In 2009/10 the students who were most likely to seek support and guidance were from the PGCE Post Compulsory course. In 2010/11 again the PGCE Post Compulsory course ranked highly, with increased contacts from the BA Primary, BA English & Education, FdA /BA Youth Work, FdA Early Years and the MA courses. There was also an increase in PGCE Primary contacts, but not as marked. The Youth Work numbers may have been higher than expected as I was the course leader as well as the SSGT, so there was a cross-over of roles here, which was not always helpful. From Sept 2011 I no longer have course leader responsibility, and will not have this issue arising. I plan to talk to course leaders to further explore why certain students may have made more use of me than others. I also need to explore why some courses have seen an increase from one year to the next (eg. FdA EYCE.)

This could be due to changes in course structure, or other factors. On courses with small cohorts (eg. BA Eng & Ed) where there are only 15 students, an increase of just 1 student results in a large percentage increase, so this should also be taken into consideration when interpreting data.

Table 3 shows that most students' issues are focused on course/ placement concerns, stress and mental health, or learning support/ dyslexia. There has been an increased need across the two years for specific assignment/academic writing support. Also, the number of students I have seen with mental health concerns rose in the second year. I saw fewer students in 2010/11 with 'course and placement' concerns, but I think this may have been because I was clearer in induction sessions to explain when I could help, and when it was best to go directly to the programme, year or route leader. I saw more students in 2010/11 who wanted advice about claims for mitigating circumstances and worked closely with the relevant School of Education administration officer to give the right advice and guidance in these matters.

Table 3: Student issues

09/10 (Total =126)	As %age of those who made contact	10/11 (Total = 180)	As %age of those who made contact	Issue
11	9	5	3	Financial matters
26	21	11	6	Course related, inc placements
17	13	24	13	Thinking of leaving/intermittent
3	2	17	9	Mitigating circumstances
3	2	0	0	Homesick
23	18	45	24	Stress and Mental Health
4	3	8	4	Not attending
2	2	4	2	Not submitting course work
14	11	16	9	Health issues (not mental health)
3	2	4	2	Time management
5	4	9	5	Accommodation
28	22	19	10	Learning support/Dyslexia
5	4	3	2	Career/post-course enquiry
17	13	46	25	Assignment support
10	8	9	5	Other

In most cases I have been able to offer support and guidance myself, but for others I have found it necessary to suggest referrals to Student Services, and I gave more 1:1 support for assignment writing last year. See table 4 for more information about the specific action taken.

Table 4: Action taken by SSGT

09/10 (Total =126)	As %age of those who made con- tact	10/11 (Total = 180)	As %age of those who made con- tact	Action taken
6	5	6	3	Referral to Personal Tutor/Route Leader
26	21	32	17	Referral to Course Leader/Year leader
4	3	4	2	Referral to Careers Service
17	13	33	18	Referral to Counselling Service
11	9	8	4	Referral to Student Advice/Health Finance
0	0	0	0	Referral to Student Union
0	0	2	1	Referral to Mental Wellbeing team
20	16	28	15	Referral to Disability and Dyslexia
2	2	5	3	Referral to GP
37	29	41	22	Info given (student handbook, website)
1	1	8	4	Mitigating circumstance
4	3	5	3	Accommodation Office
3	2	4	2	Withdrawn/transferred/intermittent
27	21	26	14	Reassurance/general advice given
2	2	0	0	Partnership Office
43	34	9	5	Emailed student to make contact
8	6	30	16	Ref to assignment support session
4	3	0	0	Other

Feedback from students who sought individual support was collected via an anonymous electronic evaluation form. Comments from students would suggest that those who responded were very satisfied with the support and guidance they received. (There was only a 10% return rate for the questionnaires but I also received emails offering feedback.)

A sample of responses from follow up emails and evaluation questionnaires from both years follows. They represent the range of responses, and focus on levels of confidence and stress, academic practice, taking up referrals to other services, and deciding not to withdraw from the course.

Confidence

Several students reported that their confidence levels had been raised, and one commented:

“Thank you for your support this year. Just to let you know what I have been doing to try to raise my confidence in speaking and my essay writing too. I have been enjoying placement and have increased my confidence with new and large groups of children from year 3s to year 8s and large groups of teachers, TAs and parents too. I have been joining in with staff meetings on placement, giving my own input too and have been asked to write an article for the news letter. Have taken up karaoke again, am joining a dance class with some friends and chosen performing arts for my optional module. Been trying very hard. Thank you again for your support this year, it has made a big

difference already and I plan to continue working on my issues with confidence and essay writing.”

Academic practice

Many students gave feedback on how their academic practice had improved following intervention from me, such as:

“Thanks to your help and support last term I got myself back on track and haven’t failed a single assignment so far, so this is good news. Really looking forward to placement now. Will email if I need guidance in the future. Thanks again.”

Stress levels

Students reported that talking to me in my SSGT role had a positive impact on decreasing stress levels, for example:

“I’m really good thank you and much less stressed since I spoke to you and made the decision not to apply for jobs for September, thanks for your advice; it was much needed and appreciated!”

“Mel was extremely quick getting back to me, and was very approachable, she made me feel as if my problem was important and helped me find the right direction quickly. The support I received was excellent.”

Referrals

Some students offered specific feedback about whether they had taken up referrals to other services, such as:

“Gave me good advice on what I could do in relation to handing in assignments whilst I am working through other personal issues. I took up the counselling referral.”

“Hello, good to hear from you. I have moved on very well since our talk. I decided not to go for counselling as my questions were not beyond me, simply they could not all be answered at once and time has really helped to sort things out.”

Improvements overall

In many cases it seems that various issues are inextricably linked, and increased confidence in one area has a direct impact on another, as indicated by the quote below:

“This has been my most successful year so far and I have even raised the level at which I am writing, my essays have been coming back to me with more positive feedback and about 5-10% better marks. This is what has led me to feel that students who show concerns should be referred to Mel straight away. The one small chat that I had with Mel improved my whole university experience holistically. I gained confidence in myself, pushed myself harder to succeed by arranging more challenging experiences for myself in and out of university, raised my level of writing and study, improved my social life and I started to really enjoy my year at uni.”

Retention

I specifically asked a question in the evaluation questionnaires about whether students had considered withdrawal. It is worth noting that over the two years, of the 10 students who stated that they had considered withdrawing from their course, 7 stated that support from the SSGT had enabled them to re-consider and continue, for example:

“Looking back to last year before I got help from Mel I can see that I may have eventually thought about leaving my course. After talking to one of my tutors I felt that I had struggled into year three by accident and that I probably wouldn’t have got through the year. I felt that I

would become a bad teacher and that it wasn’t fair on the children I would eventually be teaching. Mel managed to stop me feeling like this and encouraged me to find ways of overcoming my weaknesses. This raised my confidence in myself and resulted in me completing the year with no worries. I felt so much more relaxed and I even noticed that I was less stressed about my work load than I had been the year before.”

Other feedback

I also sought some more general feedback to help me find out if my approach was suitable and to establish ways to improve and develop the role. All respondents ticked ‘strongly agree’ or ‘agree’ when asked if they found the SSGT friendly and approachable, knowledgeable and helpful, and prompt at responding and dealing with enquiry. Equally, the same positive response was given when asked if the information/guidance received was relevant, up to date and useful and whether they would seek support from the SSGT again.

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As well as one-to-one contacts, each year I also saw about 200 students in total in six separate group assignment support sessions. In 2010/11 some of these sessions were run in conjunction with Peter Coyne from Information Services, and this ‘double-act’ arrangement went down very well, evidenced by feedback from students and programme leaders. I provided a focus on writing at the appropriate academic level and Peter provided an input on journal searching and using the online library effectively. These sessions were arranged with course or route leaders and were targeted at students across all our provision from ITE to CPD.

One student commented as follows, after attending one of these sessions:

“I failed my first assignment and thought it would be beneficial to go to this session. It really was helpful as it clarified references clearly. I think it covered everything we wanted to know. Thank you Mel you cleared up my concerns.”

Tutor feedback

The data shows that many students contacted me as a result of being urged to do so by their course or module tutor. At the end of my first year (2009/10) I also asked course tutors for feedback and many commented that they had referred students to me and felt that my role was a positive and useful one, for example:

"I have referred students to you mainly for issues about whether they are on the right course or for assignment support. I think your major impact has been that you have really developed the trust and openness amongst the students you have seen. The students I have spoken to have been incredibly complimentary about your approach and your support."

Reflections on the impact and development of my SSGT role

This data suggests that over the two years the SSGT role has been needed and well used. I often form a bridge or link between students and academic staff and have been able to support students in making decisions about what to do next, or how to respond to certain situations. I try to always be non-judgemental and sometimes offer a sounding board.

I often refer students back to their course, route or year leader, or refer on to Student Services, so in those cases I take on more of a 'signposting' role. It is useful being 'one step removed' from most courses, but having a good knowledge of all our provision and procedures, to be able to offer impartial advice.

Being non-judgemental raises an interesting dilemma at times. I always try to advise students honestly and decisions are always theirs, but I am also mindful of the retention agenda, and the University's need to encourage students to stay on their course. However, from my own ethical perspective, I would never encourage a student to stay if they are sure they want to leave.

Another dilemma arises over the issue of me delivering sessions about writing at the correct academic level. I need to be careful that my role does not 'absolve' programme leaders from the responsibility of ensuring that all students receive the appropriate academic practice guidance. I should only be offering guidance 'over and above' that which all students receive.

One of the issues raised in 2009-2010 was the need for a dedicated SSGT room. In several cases I had to meet with students in public areas which were not suitable, and evaluation comments reflected this. In 2010-2011 I was able to use one of the small meeting rooms (A203) as the SSGT room, and furnished it with low, easy chairs, a small coffee table and displayed relevant leaflets and other information. I still did not have exclusive use of this room, and admissions interviews took precedence over the needs of students wanting to talk to the SSGT, but this was an improvement on 2009-2010 when there was no facility to book the room at all. From September 2011 I have had priority use of this room and no block bookings for recruitment interviews have been made, which has really helped enormously.

Another action following feedback from 2009-2010, was that in 2010-2011 I sent a follow up email to all students a month or so after initial contact with them, to see how they were doing and to offer further support if needed. I had a number of replies to these emails saying that the follow up was appreciated.

"Receiving this request for feedback has reminded me that there is support available and as a part-time student with other demands and priorities to consider, it is reassuring to know that there is a source of help as sometimes you can feel a bit alone and lost."

Some students needed the prompt of the follow up email before taking action, such as making an appointment for dyslexia screening, or to see a counsellor. This strategy also allowed me to see if suggested referrals or actions had been followed through.

"Very prompt response and follow up email to check everything was ok. She helped me in referring me to a person who could help and also provided me with useful information to help me understand possible implications of my problem."

In 2010/11 I also sent an email to all School of Education students via Studentcentral in January (after the Xmas break) and in April (after the Easter break) reminding them I was available and able to offer support. These times have been identified by Student Services (as shown on the new Student Timeline on Studentcentral) as particular 'crunch' points when students may feel quite low and worried about assignments, etc. This was also a positive strategy, as there was an immediate response from students asking for an appointment, often indicating that they were pleased to have been reminded about the support available.

In the 2010-2011 academic year I was actively involved in clarifying and improving the system for the follow up of students with VOAMs and Occupational Health issues. This is an ongoing process but the School of Education systems and procedures are well ahead of some other Schools, and are being used as a model of good practice. I am copied into all School of Education VOAM notifications, and forward these to programme leaders requesting that they meet with each student to discuss the implications of the VOAM recommendations, and notify Student Services accordingly. I then contact the student about a month later to check that this meeting has taken place and that support has been agreed and put in place. I have also continued to develop relationships with staff from Student Services this year to help improve our structures and our ability to respond to student needs.

Ways forward for the SSGT and the School of Education

I see the role continuing to developing in 2011/12. The emphasis will remain on individual one-to-one support and guidance meetings with students. Having made a small meeting room (A203) a more conducive environment, it will have priority for use as the SSGT room in 2011-2012.

As the role becomes established, there is a need for greater clarity about the role and the academic support provided by staff and the pastoral support provided by the SSGT. For example, whilst I am offering academic writing sessions these need to be additional to the academic support provided by the programme, module or route leaders as part of their role. A session for tutors has been arranged, to discuss these issues.

I will continue to facilitate a session during the induction weeks and my leaflets will also be distributed to all new students. I will also aim to re-visit Yr 2, 3 and 4 cohorts to remind them that I am available to them. One comment from an evaluation form was:

"Perhaps it would be useful if students were reminded of the service throughout their courses. Although we were given a talk about it during our induction week in year 1, it is easy to forget that this service is available and what it is there for."

My Studentcentral page on the 'my school: Education' site will continue to be developed. It currently contains all the information relevant to assignment support, and I am now tracking 'hits' to my folders to see what usage is made of them.

Other SSGTs are involved in facilitating the national PASS (peer assisted study sessions) scheme in their Schools, and I will be investigating this further, and attending PASS supervisor training, with a view to rolling this out in the School of Education for 2012/13. This involves final year students running group sessions for first years, to support their study skills.

This year I will also take the lead in co-ordinating an audit of Personal Academic Tutoring across the School, in line with University-wide initiatives to enhance the student experience and ensure that support is in place, especially from Sep 2012 when the new fee structure comes into place. We already have some well-developed systems and procedures in place for our students, but what we offer needs to be more explicit, and of course, improvements can always be made. A recent BBC News article (Jeffreys, 2011) reported that psychiatrists are warning that students' mental health is at risk and focuses on the need for Universities to provide counselling and support services.

The SSGT is a worthwhile and needed role to enhance the learning and social experience for our students and I hope to see the role develop in the coming year and beyond. With the current University-wide focus on student retention and personal tutoring, the role of the SSGT should become ever more relevant to enhance student experience and ensure that students successfully complete their courses.

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Lifelong Learning Sector: Teacher Education & Research Identity



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Introduction

Post-compulsory education, further education, lifelong learning: three terms which variously describe one sector of the British education system. Does this broad nomenclature reflect the sector's diversity or its indistinct identity? There is little doubt that the sector is complex with a range of providers and regulatory bodies. Foster (2005, p.58) pointedly described it as 'the neglected middle child between universities and schools'. In 1992, following a long period of local authority control, and as a direct result of the Further and Higher Education Act, the sector became dominated by self-governing institutions and, depending on one's ideological viewpoint, was liberated from town hall bureaucracy or subjected to the vagaries of market. The underpinning belief was that the change would raise standards and more effectively tie further education to economic development and success.

In 1997 New Labour promoted the concept of lifelong learning and defined it as a means of driving the economy. Individuals were to take control of their own learning in order to gain greater autonomy within a global context. Such a perspective is simplistic and neglects the diversity of the post-compulsory landscape. Colleges are often complex entities, responding to a wide range of interests. Even the term itself is sub-divided with general FE colleges, sixth form colleges and specialist institutions such as agricultural colleges covering the provision.

The new coalition government has continued the tinkering and the recent Wolf Report (2011), commissioned by the Education Secretary, Michael Gove, has identified three clear principles for reform: further education courses, whether vocational or academic should provide for labour market and educational progress; provide the students with appropriate information; and the sector should be simplified to enable better development of resources for teaching and learning, and to encourage innovation and efficiency. It is into this complex world that new further education trainees are

placed by their teacher educators who grapple with the constant regulatory changes and the ideological whims of each political administration. These educators are either based in university schools of education or in the colleges themselves. There is little time for these professionals to reflect on these changes and their impact, or to pursue research inquiries that could support their practice.

On April 8th a conference identified as 'TELLing our Story' (sic) was held in Corsham Court, a former home of the Bath Academy of Art but now leased by Bath Spa University and used for postgraduate study and research.

The aim of the conference was to establish a research community with a focus on teacher education in the post-compulsory sector network incorporating representatives of all those involved in this work, which would include professionals at both colleges of further education and HEIs.

What is the story?

The opening presentation from Jim Crawley, the event organiser, was an attempt to identify the distinctive nature of teacher education in the post-compulsory sector. Like colleges in the sector, which have long been regarded as the 'Cinderella' element of the education domain as a whole, teacher educators have often sensed that they are somehow less significant than their primary and secondary colleagues. Many factors have contributed to this adopted characterisation, including the lack of a professional body until the emergence of the Institute for Learning in 2002 and the absence of a distinctive set of teaching standards until 2007. However there was a clear expression of solidarity and shared values amongst those gathered in Corsham Hall and this was reflected in Crawley's assertions that post-compulsory teacher educators were committed to developing the teaching workforce, creating a teaching community and modelling values of critical autonomy.

As previously signalled, the post-compulsory teacher educator inhabits a world that is constantly changing and contends with three consistently used classifications: post-compulsory education, further education and lifelong learning. To the outsider this could simply be a case of synonymic excess but those experienced in the field recognise that each carries a different ideological slant and scope for interpretation to suit economic or political values. For example, depending on one's view of the education that follows compulsory schooling, lifelong learning is an opportunity to continue one's intellectual or vocational development through collective participation (even Plato's Republic speaks of learning through life) or a means of gaining access to the knowledge community and being identified as a viable economic unit. The teacher educator, as Crawley explained, works in a complex setting that presents long and short courses, staged qualifications - Preparation to Teach in the Lifelong Learning

Sector (PTLLS), Certificate to Teach in the Lifelong Learning Sector, (CTLLS) and the Diploma in Teaching in the Lifelong Learning Sector (DTLLS), mostly part-time trainees. It is a challenging environment and for those colleagues who work in further education colleges one that offers limited remuneration and agency.

Crawley finished with an interesting fact. The FENTO (Further Education and National Training Organisation) standards which preceded the aforementioned LLUK framework referred to the word 'teaching' 112 times; the parallel LLUK documentation (which I should add has now ceased to exist following the coalition government's review, although the Standards remain) has only 39 references to the word. Possibly of no consequence but I tend to think that the language one chooses, no matter how many times it is revised, reflects a constructed value system that simultaneously prioritises and devalues.

Reclaiming the story

Alison Barton followed Crawley, and described a research exercise at the University of Central Lancashire that has become a published journal: a collection of action research projects primarily conducted by part-time PGCE or Cert Ed. Trainees. Her premise was that "research undertaken within FE tends to focus on the 'outcome' or product of the research and its value is often measured by the impact that the research has in practice. As the focus is on activity and 'outcomes' the knowledge generated from the research stays within the boundary of FE." (Barton, 2011) She believes that the journal gives a voice to colleagues in the post-compulsory sector and added that the journal was established with the principle that the design and content would emerge from colleagues in the FE sector, raising the profile of how the sector was perceived as academically credible both internally and externally. She argued that "new trainees undertaking research valued the journal as an up to date resource that had particular currency within their teaching context, and equally, teacher educators used the journal as a reference and selected suitable readings to generate discussion and reflection around the research process." (ibid)

Great interest was expressed in the journal and there was a consensus that this was a good example of how colleges could confront the belief often cited in further education settings that the creation and tenure of knowledge lies exclusively within the higher education domain. Clearly there is an opportunity here to not only encourage teacher educators to follow a similar research route, but also to establish a network that embraces thinking from colleges and HEIs.

The final presentation was from Barton's colleague, Yvon Appleby. Her chosen title was "It's Just Like being a Student: Making Space for Teachers to Think," and was derived from two one-day workshops that were designed to help teacher educators become authors; to find an appropriate voice; to share their thoughts about what matters in their practice. Appleby identified a number of benefits that could arise from such gatherings:

- A space to think outside the continual pressure to 'always be doing' at work
 - The chance to engage in a community with ideas and beliefs not just about curriculum discussion
 - The space to reassert being a professional educator – becoming a 'producer' rather than 'consumer'
 - Having a voice and having influence rather than being a passive recipient
 - Growing in confidence and self esteem
- (Appleby, 2011)

Such ideas present a robustly positive view of the possible but Yvon is a realist and made it clear to us that many challenges could be faced when embarking on this journey. Sufficient time would be a major barrier; the danger of critical discussion exposing disparities could undermine any notion of a community of practice; one's professional identity might need to be reviewed as the role of novice writer was adopted; and college colleagues in particular could face indifference or worse from their managers. So how to proceed and overcome or at least battle against, the adversity?

Yvon was in no doubt that the opportunity to write could be liberating in a number of ways. It could remind us of what matters in our practice, enabling us to become more critically engaged and to express our story and hear the stories of others. I would add that it also has the potential to allow us to better appreciate the work and reflections of our own trainees – to cross the borderland that sometimes separates us from their reception of what we deliver. Our professional identities will become exposed but also diversified, developing a broader repertoire that can use collaborative thinking and research findings to move forward.

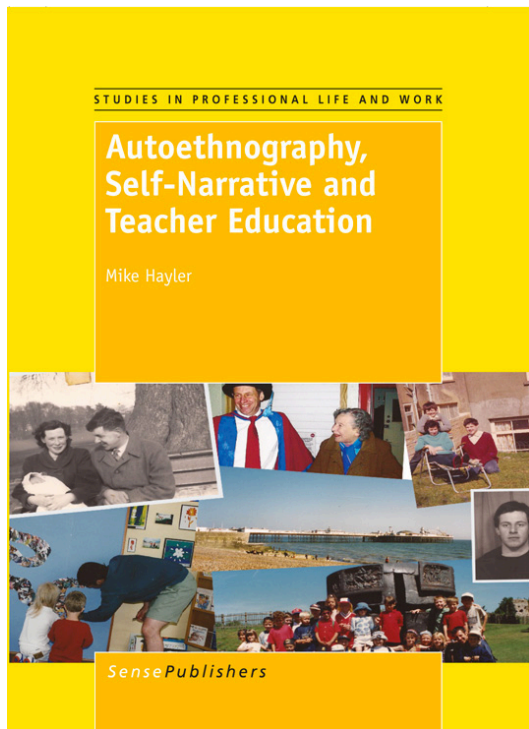
Closing thoughts

What quickly emerged from the discussion seminars that followed the presentations was the disparity between the HEI and the college environment: the former generally encouraging (although occasionally demanding) and enabling research projects, the latter not. Thus by the end of the day the idea of a research network evolving was embraced by the majority. Some realistic concerns remained amongst the college colleagues who, in recent years, have experienced punishing contracts that have increased teaching contact hours generally but reduced specific course delivery hours. It has made them justifiably wary but this was just the beginning of the story and there was enough optimism in the room to carry it to the next chapter. The value of conferences in bringing people together to achieve such progress was recognized. Of course this is a small part of the diverse world of post-compulsory education already preoccupied with the need to reflect on the broader issues of legislative change, national strategy, funding reallocation and professionalization but this gathering has now highlighted the importance of research and its potential to inform and influence such issues. The story that has started will focus on collaborative research between HE and FE and on the development of teachers' professional identities.

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From baker days to Baker days



This book offers something to both a young teacher and an educational researcher interested in learning about the twists and turns of teacher education over the lifetime of the author.

the biographical: comparative narratives of half a dozen fellow teacher educators; and third, the theoretical: an application of Satre's progressive-regressive method and Norman Denzin's critical interpretive framework. These two conceptual frameworks help turn life stories into life histories – what Goodson & Walker (1991) call 'genealogies in context' – redolent with culture and setting.

Hayler points out in his concluding chapter that his approach has been to 'deliberately focus on individuals and to engage in an intensely personal type of research process'. If I had been throwing my narratives into the ring I would have liked more understanding of the cultural and contextual narratives that provide interpretation and meaning for our own and others lives. There is an argument to be had about the extent to which autoethnography and self-narratives are a product of a particular Western research culture that privileges the individual over the communal.

Autoethnography has been criticised by some as sentimental, unscientific and a product of the excesses of post modernity (Ellis & Bochner, op.cit.). Hayler deftly navigates around these obstacles with a clear-sighted reflexive exploration – forensic in places – of the challenges facing many teacher educators caught between working with children (an initial motivation for many of us?) and believing that the preparation of new teachers requires experience of teaching, wisdom and an ability and willingness to challenge technicist views of 'training'.

But that's another story.

Professor David Stephens

A review of 'Autoethnography, Self-Narrative and Teacher Education' (2011) by Mike Hayler. Rotterdam: Sense Publishers

Ellis & Bochner (2000) advocate autoethnography as a form of writing that 'makes the researcher's own experience a topic of investigation in its own right (p.733) rather than seeming 'as if they're written from nowhere by nobody' (p.734).

Mike Hayler, who is 'somebody' and very much 'here', has written an engaging and valuable contribution to Sense Publishers Studies in Professional Life and Work – an appropriate series to be joining – which develops, as the blurb says, 'a theoretically informed discussion of how the professional identity of teacher educators is both formed and represented by narratives of experience'.

Drawn from his recently completed doctoral dissertation, it interweaves a number of meta-narratives: first, the autobiographical that traces Mike's life journey from school, to the bakery and then to a career as a successful primary school teacher and university teacher educator; second

Perhaps the most important role autoethnography can play is to remind us of the value of experience and experiential learning in the process of becoming? With a current school culture that tends to value product over process and knowledge over knowing, this book has a few salient lessons for us all.

This book offers something to both a young teacher and an educational researcher interested in learning about the twists and turns of teacher education over the lifetime of the author, and how educational research can be carried out in a person-centred way.

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- Goodson, I.F. & Walker, R. (1991) *Biography, Identity and Schooling*, London, New York and Philadelphia: Falmer Press

Research Active

Shanghai, Japan, South Africa

Dr Nadia Edmond presented a paper entitled "Work-based Higher Education and skill utilisation: Examining the interaction between the Academy and the Workplace" at the 7th International Conference on Researching Work and Learning, in Shanghai in December 2011. The International Conference on Researching Work and Learning is held biennially.

This conference drew on the participation of over 200 researchers and practitioners from 20 different countries including some prestigious names in the field of researching work and learning (Stephen Billett and David Boud from Australia, David Livingstone and Peter Sawchuck from Canada and Miriam Zukas and Alison Fuller from the UK). Over three days the conference enabled a rich sharing of research and theory development relating to pedagogy, policy and practice in learning at, through, and for, work.

Professor Avril Loveless recently undertook a Knowledge Exchange visit to discuss ICT in classrooms in Japan. In early February she visited Japan to see a range of schools and classrooms using ICT to support learning and teaching. Funded by the Japanese Science Research Council, this was part of a wider international comparative project over four years, looking at ICT use in Japan, Korea, Singapore and the UK. Japanese educators and policy makers have adapted the model of ICT use developed by BECTA, and appropriated it for Japanese pedagogy and school cultures. There is great interest in the developing of ICT in UK schools over the past 12 years, as not all Japanese classrooms have a high profile for ICT. Avril writes 'I saw some astonishing examples of ICT being used to support sophisticated interactive and dialogic classroom practice, as well as more familiar use of IWB and tablet computers mimicking traditional pedagogies.' Japan ranked 4th in the OECD PISA 2009 Results: Students On Line: Digital Technologies and Performance (the UK did not participate!).

Professor David Stephens is currently in South Africa on sabbatical leave as Visiting Research Fellow at Rhodes University. He is working on two inter-related research projects, one - Conceptualising Narrative Research: Geographies of Self-hood with Ivor Goodson - is exploring issues of individual life stories and national contexts undergoing dramatic change i.e. South Africa and China; and second - research for a book to be published by Routledge, entitled 'International Education: A Narrative Approach,' which will describe and critique both the 'grand narratives' of International Education and the micro narratives of teachers in the field.

David also recently acted as discussant together with Professor Michael Crossley, Lizzi Milligan, George Kahangwa and Mohd Asri Mohd Noor, at an event



Shanghai Skyline by Keith Marshall

organised by the Centre for International and Comparative Studies (ICS) at the Graduate School of Education, Bristol University. The focus of the event was "Critiquing 'one-size-fits-all' approaches from a comparative and International Education perspective."

Projects and Bids

Unbox 21 Project

Brighton University have been selected as the research and evaluation partners for the British Council's 'Unbox 21 Project'. The project seeks to explore the value of commercial off-the-shelf computer games for education and will involve 45 schools from both India and the UK. Other partners include Imagine Education and the Science Learning Centre South West. For a little more information, read journalist Dan McKeown's report of the event for 'Merlin John Online'.

<http://www.agent4change.net/innovation/innovation/1455-use-computer-games-not-edutainment-unbox21.html>

RIAPE/ALFA

Ivor Goodson, Professor of Learning Theory, and Dr Tim Rudd, Principal Lecturer, are currently working on RIAPE III (ALFA), 'The Inter-University Framework Program for Equity and Social Cohesion Policies In Higher Education In Latin America. The three year project (now in its second year) is funded by the European Commission (2.8 million Euros). Working on the project are universities from 13 Latin American countries and

six EU countries, with associates from the University of Bologna (Italy), La Universidad de la Republica (Uruguay) and the Organization of Ibero-American States (OEI). The project's main objective is the reformation and modernization of higher education systems and institutions in the participating countries from Latin America, paying special attention to the disadvantaged and vulnerable groups and to the poorest countries in the region. Ivor Goodson and Tim Rudd have been drawing on the current UK Higher Education context in terms of potential ramifications in relation to inequality, disadvantage and social injustice arising from policy decisions and changes to the organisation, form and structures of Higher Education.

Technological enhancement of pedagogy and partnerships TEPP

This project is just beginning, and will focus on the current use of technology and pedagogical practice, and outline potential new developments, possibilities and approaches that may be built upon across the University.

FP7 Bid

Tim Rudd also writes: 'We are part of a consortium led by the University of Porto, who have just submitted a proposal under the FP7 framework. The research focuses on the implications of policy in secondary schools and classroom practice and programmes, especially with regard to disaffected pupils and those in danger of exclusion. It seeks to develop a rich

theoretical and conceptual methodology exploring different responses, programmes and approaches, and examine the broader contextual factors that underpin such approaches.

Dr Carol Robinson (University of Brighton) and **Professor Robin Banerjee** (University of Sussex) have been awarded £15,000 to investigate and analyse the impact of the Brighton & Hove City Council's 'Raising Aspirations' programme. The aim of the Raising Aspirations programme is to provide a range of out-of-school activities for 8-13 year olds in Brighton and Hove, including empowering young people to develop community projects, providing mentoring places and a mentoring programme aimed at increasing the young people's confidence and to raise their long term aspirations.

Preparing for the Research Exercise Framework (REF)

The pace of the preparations is increasing! The Education research across the University will be submitted for a quality grading in 2013, and we are undertaking a 'mock REF' with external reviewers during this year. Our submission will include 'pedagogic research' across all Faculties, as well as in the School of Education. Avril Loveless is an external reviewer for the preparations of Dundee University. The national Education Panel is chaired by Professor Andrew Pollard. The preparations in the University are being supported by the development of a new Computer Research Information Database (CRIS) and the University Repository for electronic versions of published research. We are preparing to report on 3 aspects of our research:

- **Research Outputs:** each active researcher submits 4 examples of their research work of international quality published between 2008 and 2013;
- **Impact Case Studies:** we will submit 3 case studies of the impact of education research which has been conducted here at Brighton over the past 15 years. Jen Colwell is supporting us in researching the evidence of this impact, and is currently working on the developments emerging from the SPRING project which focused on pedagogy for children's working in groups and led to the Working With Others initiative which is still active in local schools and Canada.
- **Research environment:** we will report on research strategy; staffing and staff development; research students; income, infrastructure and facilities; and our contribution to the discipline of Education.

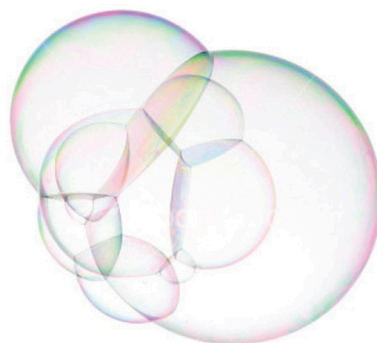
David Spehens is the Unit of Assessment leader for Education.

Publications

Featuring chapters by **Erica Evans, Denise Kingston, Jane Melvin, Deborah Price** and **Sarah Wilkins**, "Integrated Working with Children and Young People" edited by **Dr Nadia Edmond** and **Mark Price**, is due to be published by Sage in March

Integrated Working with Children and Young People

Supporting Development from Birth to Nineteen



Edited by Nadia Edmond and Mark Price

2012. The book builds on the work of the Foundation Degree team in the School of Education and reflects the integrated and collaborative approach to practice with children and young people which forms the basis of the FdA programme and associated pedagogy.

Dr Keith Turvey is currently writing a book for the Routledge Research Monograph Series, based upon his PhD Thesis. The book, "Narrative Ecologies: Teachers as Pedagogical Toolmakers," will explore the evolution of his Narrative Ecology conceptual model of professional learning through the narrative cases of five student teachers. He has also recently published an article outlining his narrative conceptual model in the international journal *E-learning and Digital Media*, titled "Constructing Narrative Ecologies as a Site for Teachers' Professional Learning with New Technologies and Media in Primary Education." The article can be accessed at http://www.words.co.uk/elea/content/pdfs/9/issue9_1.asp

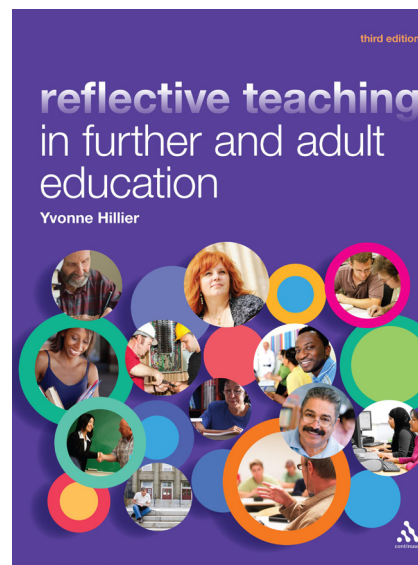
Professor Avril Loveless is currently writing a book with **Dr Ben Williamson** from Exeter University called 'Learning identities in a digital age'. The book is part of a Routledge Series about Education in New Times. The first part offers a framework for thinking about the digital age in the wider context of neoliberalism and globalization in the early 21st century. It then considers how identities of learners are being constructed in these times, and how alternatives might be shaped. The 'pivotal' chapter discusses our understandings of creativity in a digital age. The second part of the book then discusses the implications for our theories of learning; making curriculum; and pedagogy.

Avril also says 'A theme that we hope to develop in the book is the "intergenerational conversation" between Avril and Ben – who are 25 years apart in age and have very different experiences as teachers and researchers. The book is due in June and there's still a lot for us to do!'

Dr Carol Robinson and a colleague, **Dr Carol Taylor**, at Sheffield Hallam University, ran a symposium 'Engaging Voices: participation and the student experience'. Following this, and drawing on contributions from the symposium, they are now in the process of co-editing a special edition of the Journal of Applied Research in Higher Education which is due to be published later this year. The special edition will be entitled: "Exploring Student Engagement in Higher Education: theory, context and practice"

Dr Robinson also gave the keynote talk at the University of Brighton Pedagogic Research Conference earlier this month. The title was 'Student Voice: What does this mean in practice in the context of Higher Educational Institutions?'

Professor Yvonne Hillier's book *Reflective Teaching in Further and Adult Education* has recently been published in its 3rd Edition. It is widely acclaimed. Jim Crawley, Leader of the Lifelong Learning Programme and Fellow of the School of Education, Bath Spa University, UK comments "A highly readable and authoritative book to support reflective teaching, and one of the best available in its field."



Dr Melanie Norman has taken on the job of Editor of the journal for secondary geography teachers entitled 'Teaching Geography'

Conferences

Higher Education Academy STEM Annual Conference 2012

12 - 13 April

[Imperial College London](http://www.heacademy.ac.uk/events/detail/2012/academyevents/STEM_annual_conf)

http://www.heacademy.ac.uk/events/detail/2012/academyevents/STEM_annual_conf

Teacher Education Policy in Europe Annual Conference 2012

17 - 19 May

Warsaw, Poland

<http://www.tepe2012.uni.lodz.pl/>

Learning Conference 2012

14 - 16 August

Institute of Education, London

<http://thelearner.com/conference-2012/>

British Educational Research Association (BERA)

4 - 6 September, 2012

Manchester University

<http://www.bera.ac.uk/events/bera-annual-conference-2012>

European Conference on Educational Research (ECER)

17- 21 September

University of Cadiz, Spain

<http://www.eera.de/ecer2012/>

London International Conference on Education (LICE 2012)

19 - 22 November

Thistle Hotel, Heathrow

<http://www.liceducation.org/Home.html>

Congratulations

Congratulations to Yvonne Hillier, Mike Hayler, Nadia Edmond and Mark Price (with Erica Evans, Denise Kingston, Deborah Price, Jane Melvin, Sarah Wilkins) who have all had book publications this year

A celebration event will be arranged on the 29th March after the whole-school event.

Congratulations are also due to Dr Lynne Caladine, Dr Jane Morris, Dr Janice Malcolm, Dr Cristina Briani and Dr Keith Turvey, who all completed their doctorates recently.



ERC Seminars

21 March 12 - 1pm, Falmer Checkland Building Room E512

“Girls’ narratives of bullying in schools”
Professor Marie Karlsson of Karlstad University, Sweden.

The seminar presents the findings from a project involving the exploration of identity making in narrative interaction in preadolescent girls’ friendship groups. The data draw on focus group discussions with three groups of preadolescent girls who, in the presence of a moderator, narrate different versions of an incident that was recognized as bullying by the authorities at their school.

21 March 5 - 6.30pm Mayfield House, Falmer, Room M101.

“STEM - passing fad, yesterday’s news, or a useful construct for coherent learning?” with Dr David Barlex.

This seminar will consider the justifications for STEM in the secondary school curriculum, and discuss with examples how science, mathematics, and design & technology can be taught “in the light of STEM”. The presenter will call upon work carried out both in England and abroad in the context of a changing educational landscape

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Research in Education

University of Brighton

July 2011 Vol. 3 No.2



Religious Education
Thinking globally, acting locally
International symposium: Narratives, Context & Learning
School of Education links in Nepal

Notes for contributors

We are now looking for contributions for the next issue Vol.4 No.2, which will be published in July 2012. Contributions should be sent to Sylvia Willis by 19 June, 2012 at:

sylvia.willis@brighton.ac.uk

Short pieces should be approximately 1500 words, and longer pieces between 2500 - 3500 words. Further author guidelines can be downloaded from: <http://www.brighton.ac.uk/education/research/red/red.php?PageId=1045>

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.

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