

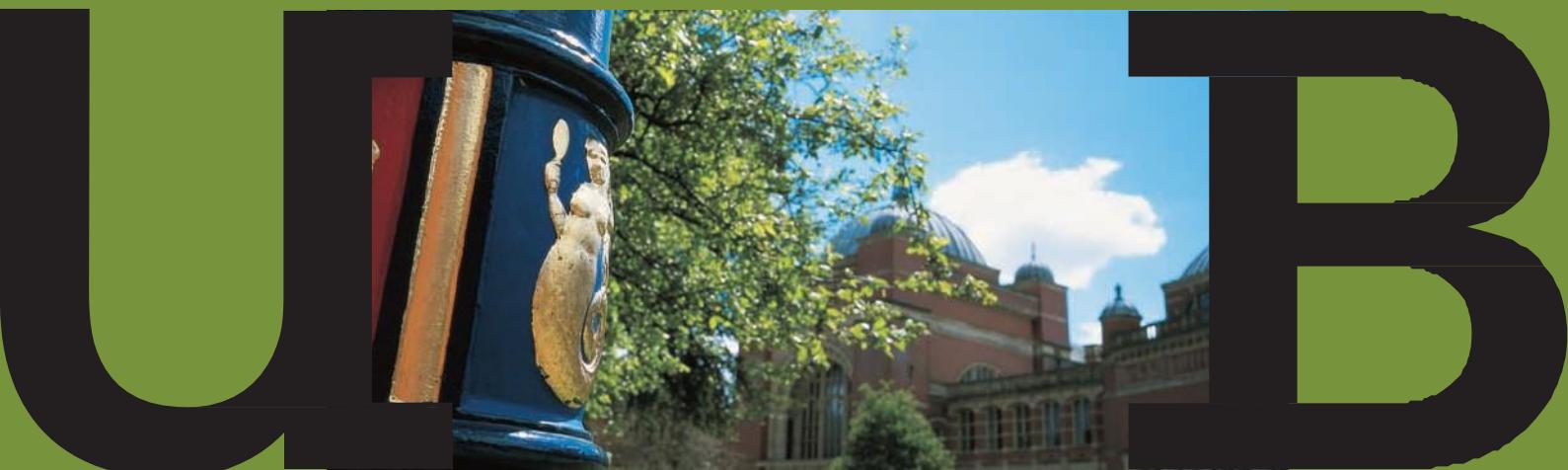


UNIVERSITY OF  
BIRMINGHAM

SCHOOL OF  
EDUCATION

15th Annual Conference

# Papers from the Education Doctoral Research Conference Saturday 26 November 2016



Edited by  
Holly Henderson, April-Louise Pennant and  
Professor Michael Hand

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## CONTENTS

	<b>PAGE</b>
1 <b>Foreword</b> by the Professor Michael Hand, Holly Henderson and April-Louise Pennant	3
2 <b>Keynote Speaker: Professor Kalwant Bhopal:</b> Understanding Minority Ethnic Flight From UK Higher Education	4
3 <b>Ambreen Alam &amp; Muhammad Zubair:</b> Contradiction between streaming and setting strategy and equality policy	5
4 <b>Panagiota Joulie Axelithioti:</b> Critical thinking in the secondary school classroom: What the curriculum states, what the teachers teach	12
5 <b>Nicole Brown:</b> The construction of academic identity under the influence of fibromyalgia	18
6 <b>Fouzia Choudry:</b> An investigation into the barriers to participation in education and employment for female Muslim ESOL learners	26
7 <b>Heather Cockayne:</b> 'I should work harder, just work harder to make sure I get my MA degree: An exploratory study of the lived experience of Chinese postgraduates in a UK university	34
8 <b>Belinda Ferguson:</b> Using student voice to develop feedback to enhance learning	40
9 <b>Alexandra Georgiou:</b> An ethnographic case study of the linguistic practices of newly arrived migrant children in a Cypriot primary school	47
10 <b>Jon Harrison:</b> Making connections in workplace learning: Why we should take humour seriously	54
11 <b>Joshua Heyes:</b> 'I liked it but I was also disgusted': Challenging British sex and relationships education through Christian young people's experiences of romantic relationships	62
12 <b>Aray Ilyassova:</b> The applicability of the policy transfer framework to understanding Higher Education reforms in Kazakhstan: the case of the Bologna Process	69
13 <b>Jenny Lewin-Jones:</b> Getting to grips with Critical Discourse Analysis: Shedding light on an HE policy document	76
14 <b>Anna Lockley-Scott:</b> What is the impact of UK government strategies preventing non-violent extremism on Muslim pupils in schools?	83
15 <b>Jesvir Mahil:</b> Exploring the role of an Ofsted inspector in the development of creativity skills	91
16 <b>Misrah Mohamed:</b> Researching MOOCs for practitioners: A preliminary study	98

17	<b>Natasha O'Donnell:</b> Inclusive education for children with special educational needs in Ireland – policy, practice and impact	106
18	<b>Julie Prentice:</b> Autism diagnosis and impact: in their own words	117
19	<b>Elizabeth Stevenson:</b> Enquiry-based learning: Plasticity, metamorphosis and transformation	126
20	<b>Nicholas Stock:</b> Deconstructing the divergence: Unravelling the 2013-2015 reforms in GCSE English Language and Literature	134
21	<b>Jennifer Swinehart:</b> How we teach approaches to learning: student perspectives on the instruction of learning skills	143
22	<b>David Vauclair:</b> The ambiguous understandings of 'laicite' at a French International Relations Institute (ILERI)	152
23	<b>Eirini Veroni:</b> Parenting a Child with Autism Spectrum Disorders (ASD) in Greece	159
24	<b>Budi Waluyo:</b> Making Dual Accounting Standards Work: Cases of the Indonesian Higher Education	169
25	<b>Maxine Watkins:</b> Who am I? Why am I here? Teachers losing their professional identity during challenging times.	185

## **FOREWORD**

The 15th annual School of Education Doctoral Research Conference was held on 26<sup>th</sup> November 2016. The conference was attended by 80 delegates, bringing together doctoral researchers, academics and practitioners to explore key issues and developments in educational research, theory, policy and practice.

The conference featured a keynote presentation from Professor Kalwant Bhopal who explored the phenomenon of minority ethnic flight from UK higher education. Her thought-provoking and informative keynote presentation set a high standard that continued throughout the day. Also, to launch the conference Research Fellow (BCU) and Poet Dr Kate Carruthers Thomas read two of her poems, (1) Station Piano and (2) Poisson.

There were around 50 stimulating paper presentations covering a diverse range of education research topics, an excellent poster exhibition and an expert panel debate examining the role of theory in teacher education, attended by a panel with a wealth of academic and practical expertise.

It is our great pleasure to introduce some of this collection of proceeding papers from the conference. These papers demonstrate some of the interesting and innovative research being undertaken here at the University of Birmingham and further afield. We are delighted to see so many examples of topical, international and inter-disciplinary research and hope you enjoy reading the collection as much as we have.

We would sincerely like to thank all conference presenters, panellists and delegates as well as the numerous people who helped organise what was a stimulating and enjoyable day.

**Holly Henderson and April-Louise Pennant  
Co-chairs of the Doctoral Research Conference Committee**

The Doctoral Research Conference is the jewel in the crown of the School of Education's postgraduate research calendar. Organised by a committee of exceptionally hard-working doctoral students, the conference routinely draws a large audience from across the University and beyond and showcases outstanding postgraduate research projects in the School. The 2016 conference was no exception, with an unprecedented number of student paper presentations and an impressive array of research posters.

I'd like to echo Holly and April-Louise's thanks to all involved – and in particular to thank Holly and April-Louise themselves, whose efficient and good-humoured chairing of the conference committee ensured the success of the conference and the timely publication of these proceedings. A special debt of gratitude is owed to Denise Lees and Anthea Hall, the School's PGR administrators.

Readers are warmly invited to join us for the 2017 Doctoral Research Conference in November.

**Professor Michael Hand  
Acting Director of Professional Doctorates**

## **KEYNOTE SPEAKER**

### **UNDERSTANDING MINORITY ETHNIC FLIGHT FROM UK HIGHER EDUCATION**

#### **Kalwant Bhopal**

This presentation explores inequalities in higher education for those from Black and Minority Ethnic (BME) backgrounds. It examines the experiences of BME academics who consider moving overseas for career opportunities. It explores the barriers that BME academics report in UK higher education, which affect their decisions for overseas higher education migration. The presentation draws on research funded by the Equality Challenge Unit which found that BME academics were significantly more likely than White academics to have considered moving overseas to work. Many respondents reported various barriers to career progression, such as processes of racism, exclusion and marginalisation. The study suggests that significant change is needed in the UK higher education sector in order to retain BME academics who consider moving overseas.

#### **About Kalwant Bhopal**

Kalwant is Professor of Education and Social Justice and Bridge Professorial Research Fellow in the Centre for Research in Race and Education in the School of Education, University of Birmingham.

Kalwant's research focuses on the achievements and experiences of minority ethnic groups in education. She has conducted research on exploring discourses of identity and intersectionality examining the lives of Black minority ethnic groups as well as examining the marginal position of Gypsies and Travellers. Her research specifically explores how processes of racism, exclusion and marginalisation operate in predominantly White spaces with a focus on social justice and inclusion. More recently she has conducted research focussing on the position of minority ethnic academics in higher education. Her research on this area has been used to inform policy making in higher education, particularly the development of the Race Equality Charter mark. She has published 6 books, 10 edited collections and various journal articles.

She is Visiting Professor at the University of Wisconsin-Madison and Kings College London (Department of Education and Professional Studies). She has been Visiting Professor at Queens University, Belfast and Visiting Scholar at the UCL Institute of Education, London.

# **CONTRADICTION BETWEEN STREAMING AND SETTING STRATEGY AND EQUALITY POLICY**

**Ambreen Alam & Muhammad Zubair**

## **Abstract**

Maximising educational standards in schools has become a global phenomenon. Schools establish inspirational aims and objectives to elevate the educational standards of pupils possessing heterogeneous abilities, known as mixed ability grouping. To account for the diverse needs and skills of pupils, streaming and setting is considered as a customary ability-based strategy. Schools in England stratify pupils depending on academic achievements, behaviour, cognitive skills, aptitudes and maturity.

In 1930s the foundation of ability-based grouping concept laid on the principles of distinguishing between high class and low class children, and therefore literature highlights that ability grouping contradicts with the promotion of equity and inclusion policies in schools in the UK.

The first section in this paper provide the historical underpinning of ability grouping followed by the section focuses on the understanding of the concept of ability grouping, it's criteria and its connection with inequalities. It is likely that this study will be an addition to the body of knowledge from a perspective of inequality schools knowingly or unknowingly offer to the pupils of disadvantaged family.

## **Introduction**

The worldwide well reputed education system of the UK faces reforms, questioning its stability. Various activated government policies cultivate the grains of advancement - unknowing – it's damaging effects on pupils' future. Politically zooming into the lens of educational standards and practice, the repeated mantra of "all inclusive" and "equality" to pupils breach the ideologies like ability grouping is advocated. These contradictions in testify inequalities contrary to repressing them (Armstrong, 2005 p.5).

## **Literature review**

An insight to historical background allow to examine the purpose of introducing, segregating pupils in schools which is compiled by Derek Gillard. The industrial development, commerce and international trade pressurized government to educate their people. Countries like USA has engaged to offer education to "all its citizens" through public schooling but England's participation was nil. Through 1867 representation of the People Act, the 'provision of education for all' emphasised and finally received acceptance of government officials but with the clear message of "ensuring social classes".

The provision of schooling was restricted to extent church attendees until 1891 when compulsory free education system became widespread. The policy to offer schools through selection to various classes of schools, maintain its agenda of assigning schools on social class. The selection policy to assign pupils school on the rational of 'intelligence testing' and 'test scores' was the criterion to offer grammar schools and comprehensive schools. This suggested that selection procedure come under scrutiny when average pupils allocated to "appalling, low quality schools". Those who were opposing the idea of educating low social class children with other (high) class children there from, instrument the device of "segregating pupils per their academic abilities" (Gillard, 2008).

Gillard 2008 has made a reference to Hadows report that highlight the origin of ability grouping practice. It suggests that pupils “below the age of 11, should be classified to their natural gifts and abilities” (Hadow, 1931, 77, originally cited in Gillard, 2008). This underline the message that the government approve the endorsement of dividing primary pupils per their abilities and interests which contrasts with many other educational systems worldwide. For instance, in Japan, a case study of two public schools analysed the comments of their teachers explaining that Japanese education system offers stability and teachers conceive the idea that every pupil is capable of everything. This belief promote equality in schooling system and permit pupils to grow together “mentally, physically and intellectually” (Yiu, 2001). In the same way, Swedish education system does not implement ability grouping practice as it is an illegal act that “produces inequality” (Boaler, 2005, p.1). In next section, brief review to global literature will support the understanding of Ability Grouping Practice, Criterion of ability grouping and its contraction with schools’ equality policy.

### **Ability grouping**

Many schools in the UK and across the globe divide pupils into sets or streams, to best match their academic needs (Kyriacou, 1995, p.42). This policy is viewed as an effective mechanism to generate positive academic outcomes with the consideration that “dividing pupils into ability groups” aid pupils to achieve in a small pond, which they are not capable of achieving in an ocean. The researchers conclude ‘ability grouping practice as suitable’, several findings emerge from the various studies that report “ability grouping policy restricts pupils’ achievement in low sets when teachers’ expectations are low” (Kerckhof, 1986; Lichevski, 1995; Boaler 1987 a,b). Similarly, high sets as the expectations are high.

It is an unfortunate reality that many schools practice ability grouping from early years means at age 4 and the irony of this situation is these pupils remain in the same grouping until they leave school” (Boaler, 2005, p.1). In this context Boaler further illustrates that ability grouping practice authorise teachers to decide children’s future when their journey of learning and development has just commenced. Regardless of admitting that children develop on various rates. The irony of ability grouping practice has great variations in every dimension. Assigning a set or the stream, considering the behaviour and test scores-each school and country remedies low achievement groups in a non-identical manner. It may be interpreted that ability grouping strategy underlines the inequality and dominate this practice with many flaw in its consistency and approach.

### **Grouping criteria**

The strategy of ability grouping - streaming and setting - has various determinants: as Jackson highlights, segregating students into higher or lower groups was based on distinct components rather than an established process, for example, peer relationship, gender, attitude, class behaviour, physical aspects of the classroom and class size, poor classroom behaviour, despite performing academically (1964). In his detailed examination, Jackson concluded the complexity of streaming and setting process due to its indefinite measures in dividing pupils into streams and sets.

Francis and Mills (2012) point out that the English schooling system put pupils through “standardized forms of assessment” with examinations from the age of 7. This process of examining informs the parents about the academic achievements of their children, as well as incorporating streaming and setting practices at an early age. Literature also underlines streaming and setting as an academic distinction where low sets are mainly made up of working-class pupils and certain ethnic minorities (Dunne et al., 2007; Cassen and Kingdon). Earlier studies have further emphasized that pupil allocation to ability groups can also be based on social class (Jackson, 1964; Baker-Lunn, 1970) and ethnic background (Esposito,

1973) however, little evidence supports the misconception that students' performance increases when allocated to ability grouping rather than heterogeneous grouping.

In the UK, some schools used inconsistent measures to allocate children in different groups (Sukhnandan and Lee, 1998). One key finding was that the academic abilities of pupils were identified incorrectly and thus children were assigned to mismatched groups. This lack of a clear approach to grouping resulted in some children not being facilitated in their education and reduced the impact of the ability grouping strategy for supporting children's needs. Ofsted (1998) reported "few schools have documentation to support setting, such as the criteria for the allocation of pupils to particular sets" (*ibid*, p.13). One important factor that could support effective ability grouping is proposed to be approaches to measuring attainment.

It is evident that scholars who study ability grouping (e.g. Francis et al., 2005) question the adequacy of ability grouping as a means of raising academic achievements. Teachers acknowledge the complexity of ability grouping whereas the politicians have yet to gain this confidence that ability grouping is not the best solution. Francis et al. (2015) argue:

"grouping students by ability is a topic of long contention in English education policy, research and practice. While policy makers have frequently advocated the practice as reflecting educational standards, researchers consistently failed to find significant benefits of ability grouping; and indeed, have identified disadvantages for some (low attaining) pupil groups" (p.1). This underlines ability grouping as a debatable issue where research has failed to identify the positive outcomes of dividing children into streams and sets, without generating positive outcomes".

Research findings such as those by Davies et al. (2004) have suggested that ability grouping has not proved effective: instead it leads to negative impacts on pupils, particularly those who are placed in a low stream. Douglas (1964) reports that pupils' progress in streamed schools is much lower than the non-streamed schools. Similarly, scholars have highlighted that streaming has little impact on pupils' attainment (Slavin, 1997; Kulik, 1991; Kulik and Kulik, 1987, 1992). These studies have considered important factors such as "differentiation of curriculum, teacher's expectations, expertise of teachers, and dominance of pupils from low socio-economic status" (Schofield, 2010). In this context, it is important to view government guidelines on ability grouping.

Ability grouping is encouraged by the government in England and Wales as a tool to deal with pupils of low academic potential (Boaler, 1997a, p.77). It is proposed that the Government's "achievement-based priorities" strengthen ability grouping as a "panacea to underachievement" (Boaler, 1997a, p.77). Wilkinson (2014) states that ability grouping is advocated by the policy makers with the assumption that the classification of pupils in terms of their academic capabilities will bring "motivation, social skills and independence" thus raising educational standards as it is believed that the relevant opportunities for learning on offer can engage pupils effectively (DfES, 2005, p.58). This may mean that ability grouping leads to educational equalities.

However, ability grouping also promotes educational inequalities. These inequalities are proposed to be in terms of "allocation of students' roles, positions and identities, the distribution of resources and attention, predicted futures and esteem" (Ball, 2003, p.10). Numerous scholars have identified the bias in setting and streaming, and have repeatedly drawn the same patterns of outcomes. Ball (2003) reports that "most schools and teachers came to accept that the social damage done to children in bottom streams and sets far outweighed any difficulties they themselves may have confronted in managing mixed-ability classes" (Ball, 2003, p.10).

Wilkinson (2014) refers to setting as a facility where homogenous ability groups form, “enabling teachers to differentiate content, learning outcomes, teaching methods and pace more precisely to the aptitudes of the students” (Cahan et al., 1996). Ball argues states, “in the bringing into existence of ability groups we ignore the reality of the social world” (Ball, 2003, p.12). It is to say that the indicators prescribed demonstrate the educational inequalities. Therefore, diverse scholars call setting and streaming a “long standing and vociferous debate” (Wilkinson, 2014, p.412) in educational research.

Takako Nomi questions “whether grouping pupils into various sets and streams leads to high achievement for all or whether it is unfairly limits educational opportunities for disadvantaged students, thus exacerbating existing educational and social inequalities” (Nomi, 2010, p.56). Hamilton and O’Hara (2011) further support that, schools’ promoting inclusion and equality and promoting streaming and setting strategies, contradicts with inclusion, safeguarding and equal opportunity policies. Therefore, Loveless declares that the grouping of pupils has been a “controversial educational issue for years” (Loveless, 1998, p.23) Hamilton and O’Hara (2011) stress that schools must have a mechanism of raising educational standards while practising and implementing “inclusion policy”. This finding proposes that schools which engage in the segregation of pupils do not comply with their policies and procedures of inclusion where every child deserves equal opportunities. For this purpose, it is significant to view the most essential factor of ability grouping on the academic achievement.

Many scholars believe that ability grouping has limited impact on the performance of high ability pupils (Rudd, 1956) which is further strengthened by Slavin, (1987); Kulik and Kulik, (1987, 1992); and Kulik, (1991), explaining that streaming has little impact on pupils’ academic achievements and research (Harlen and Malcolm, 1997, p.40) did not confirm the presumption of success through ability grouping. There was no clear and reliable evidence of any positive effects of setting and streaming academically. Instead it was proposed that ability grouping demotivated the low ability pupils and curtailed learning and development opportunities due to the low quality of education offered (Harlen and Malcolm, 1997, p.41).

“Little difference was found in the academic progress made during their junior school careers by pupils in different school environments under study. An analysis of pupils’ attitudes, however, revealed that children were influenced in their feelings about themselves and about the school by both the organizational policy of the school and the approach of the teachers” (Ferri, 1971, p.13).

This suggests that ability grouping leads to many serious negative aspects individually and academically, such effects can include issues related to the child’s self-esteem.

Some pupils’ exhibit positive attitudes towards ability grouping and therefore it cannot be assumed that ability grouping is a negative experience for all the pupils (Boaler, 1997). In fact, pupils in the lower sets displayed enthusiasm and eagerness to improve sets and rejected the school hierarchy for being in lower sets. The motivation to move to upper sets was identified as learning, willingness to work hard and status (Hallam and Ireson, 2007, p.32). Despite the positive aspects highlighted in the literature, research by Baker-Lunn suggest that ability grouping leads to “social alienation and self-esteem” (Baker-Lunn, 1970).

Teachers do not expect very high performance from low ability groups and eventually teach limited and lower ability contents of the curriculum to pupils. In support of this practice, teachers present the argument of matching pupils’ low ability with limited curriculum contents (Hallam et al., 2002, 2004a). On the contrary, pupils perceive it as a mismatch to their academic potential and thus pupils’ attainment suffers (Hallam et al., 2002, 2004a). Furthermore, it is proposed that pupils in the low ability groups “are also most likely to be taught by non-specialist teachers and to have frequent changes of teacher” (Boaler et al,

2000, p.637). The widely-held view about pupils being taught by less-experienced teachers and offered less challenging contents of curriculum may lead to behavioural issues.

Hallam and Ireson found that children in streamed schools establish negative attitudes towards learning and exhibited more aggressive attitudes as compared to the non-streamed setting (2013, p.518). Some researchers suggest that better learning and development of low ability children in mixed classes were studied as compared to the streamed classes (Jackson, 1964 and Barker-Lunn, 1970). It is suggested that streaming manifested stronger negative attitudes in lower ability groups as compared to the mixed ability schools. Therefore, pupils in the lower ability group regarded themselves as stigmatised and behaved in a more negative way (Barker-Lunn, 1970; Ferri, 1971).

In some cases, it was found that grouping was exercised to acquire better classroom control dealing with disruptive and challenging children to improve control and monitor behaviour (Davies et al., 2003 and Hallam et al., 2001). This led to "inappropriate grouping" (MacIntyre and Ireson, 2002) which should be interpreted as an irrational and unjustifiable approach as it did not reward the children academically, socially or psychologically (MacIntyre and Ireson, 2002, p.342).

### **Inequality and Ability grouping**

Armstrong et al. (2000, p. 20) explain that the "social and cultural functions" of the schools in the UK are responsible for generating diverse "educational participation and attainment". They press that it is a "significant factor in the production and maintenance of inequality in society". These researchers also offer the view of schools that deny ordinary treatment for children of different abilities, as stamping their exclusion through grouping practice. They also admit the fact that policies are not formulated and implemented in a vacuum, and are underlined ideologies of policy makers. Similarly, Clarke (2014, p.188) perceives ability grouping as an adverse strategy "to the twin policy goals of equity and quality", and therefore considers ability grouping policy as unintentional, 'unsanctioned' or 'unconscious' practice.

Investigations and understanding of the "promotion of ability grouping through streaming and setting - contradicting with equality policy" is yet to be inspected (Armstrong et al., 2000, p. 28). Lynch and Lodge (2002, p. 7) assume that equality is attained when "marginalised" groups or "disadvantaged" groups are increasing their entry rates to advance or honour "tracks" (degrees) to prestigious universities or to high-status jobs. Indeed, they detail that ideal education systems "distribute educational credentials - higher education credentials – more fairly among working class people and ethnic minorities."

Gameron (1992) unveils the findings of his investigation into grouped and ungrouped schools. In schools with ability grouping, higher group pupils show better progress than those in homogeneous groups. However, pupils allocated to low groups drop their standard substantially. Gameron evaluates these results as the high gains of higher ability groups and the no gains of low ability groups that indicated overall zero productivity. Therefore, this demonstrates inequality of learning opportunities to the already disadvantaged pupils.

In the same context, Weinstein (1976), Halliran and Sorensen (1983), and Gameron, (1986) who studied elementary schools' ability practice, highlight the escalation of numerous aspects of inequalities and conclude that the more ability grouping strategy use rises, the more the inequality widens. This is attested by Gameron (1987) who refers to the National Survey in the United States, in which 2000 pupils from Grades 10 to 12 were examined. The Survey reports that academic track (high ability group) pupils displayed significant performance in Civics, Vocabulary, Science, Writing, Reading, and Mathematics, in contrary to pupils in general and vocational tracks (low ability groups). It acknowledged that the

generation of inequality is not precisely established through one source. It ties in with various factors like political and socio-cultural factors (Lynch and Lodge, 2002).

## **Conclusion**

Beresford (2014) identifies that many schools deal with streaming in a distinct manner, for instance, lowering the class size of low ability group and assigning them an experienced and result-oriented teacher. To adopt this strategy, schools' resources and budget are very significant. Contemporarily, the efficient teachers are allocated to high ability groups to generate the competitive results.

Critically illustrating the aspect of streaming, the educationalist should be acquainted with the fact that low ability pupils should be capacitated with the required professional skills, opportunities and exposures to face the world, as the 'real world' is not set or streamed to accommodate people in terms of their academic proficiency. Therefore, ability grouping practice needs further investigations to devise a mechanism that offers equality and match diverse academic needs of pupils.

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#### About Authors

Ambreen Alam has been working in education for twenty years and currently studying in the University of Lincoln. Her doctoral project is to explore the impacts of streaming and setting in the English schooling system when it is embedded in inequalities

Muhammad Zubair is a PGDipEd student at University of Birmingham, School of Education. He has completed his MBA with research theme "Education Leadership". He is interested in extending this research concept in PhD to unfold effectiveness of leadership in secondary schools.

# **CRITICAL THINKING IN THE SECONDARY SCHOOL CLASSROOM: WHAT THE CURRICULUM STATES, WHAT THE TEACHERS TEACH**

**Panagiota Joulie Axelithioti, Tonie Stolberg & Sandy Wilkinson**

## **Abstract**

The study is based on an analysis of the scientific competency parameters of Key Stage 3 and Key Stage 4 science curricula in England. It is examined whether the curricula guide towards critical thinking (CT) practices in Year 9 and Year 10 chemistry. The study also includes the views of three teacher participants on critical thinking in chemistry. The study aims to discover teachers' views on critical thinking and practices that would encourage students towards it. Interviews with teachers show their views on critical thinking as a teaching practice as well as the influence of personal views concerning critical thinking. The results of the study show that opinions about critical thinking are very diverse. Even the small number of teacher participants in this study had a range of opinions about critical thinking. The results also show that the school philosophy and ethos influences teachers' practices to different degrees. There are very versatile opinions about the importance of critical thinking in the students' educational career before entering tertiary education.

## **Introduction**

Critical thinking has been considered an important educational objective in modern educational reforms since Dewey's work on reflective thinking (1933). Though the author did not use the term critical, his book influenced a great number of educationists and scholars towards studying and defining critical thinking and producing lists of aims for students to achieve in the domain of critical thinking through their formal education. The definition that encapsulates the idea of critical thinking in a holistic way is provided by Facione on behalf of the American Philosophical Association (1990):

### **CONSENSUS STATEMENT REGARDING CRITICAL THINKING AND THE IDEAL CRITICAL THINKER**

We understand critical thinking to be purposeful, self-regulatory judgment which results in interpretation, analysis, evaluation, and inference, as well as explanation of the evidential, conceptual, methodological, criteriological, or contextual considerations upon which that judgment is based. CT is essential as a tool of inquiry. As such, CT is a liberating force in education and a powerful resource in one's personal and civic life. While not synonymous with good thinking, CT is a pervasive and self-rectifying human phenomenon. The ideal critical thinker is habitually inquisitive, well-informed, trustful of reason, open-minded, flexible, fair-minded in evaluation, honest in facing personal biases, prudent in making judgments, willing to reconsider, clear about issues, orderly in complex matters, diligent in seeking relevant information, reasonable in the selection of criteria, focused in inquiry, and persistent in seeking results which are as precise as the subject and the circumstances of inquiry permit. Thus, educating good critical thinkers means working toward this ideal. It combines developing CT skills with nurturing those dispositions which consistently yield useful insights and which are the basis of a rational and democratic society.

This statement explicitly connects CT to inquiry while providing examples of skills and innate attitudes that are expected from the critical thinker. It also renders the achievement of mastering the skills as an educational goal. Much literature is dedicated in providing exercises for teachers and their students to practice critical thinking. Siegel mentions "education for critical thinking" (1988), Ennis goes to the extent of providing a voluminous guide on how to become a critical thinker (1996). What is interesting in the perspective that

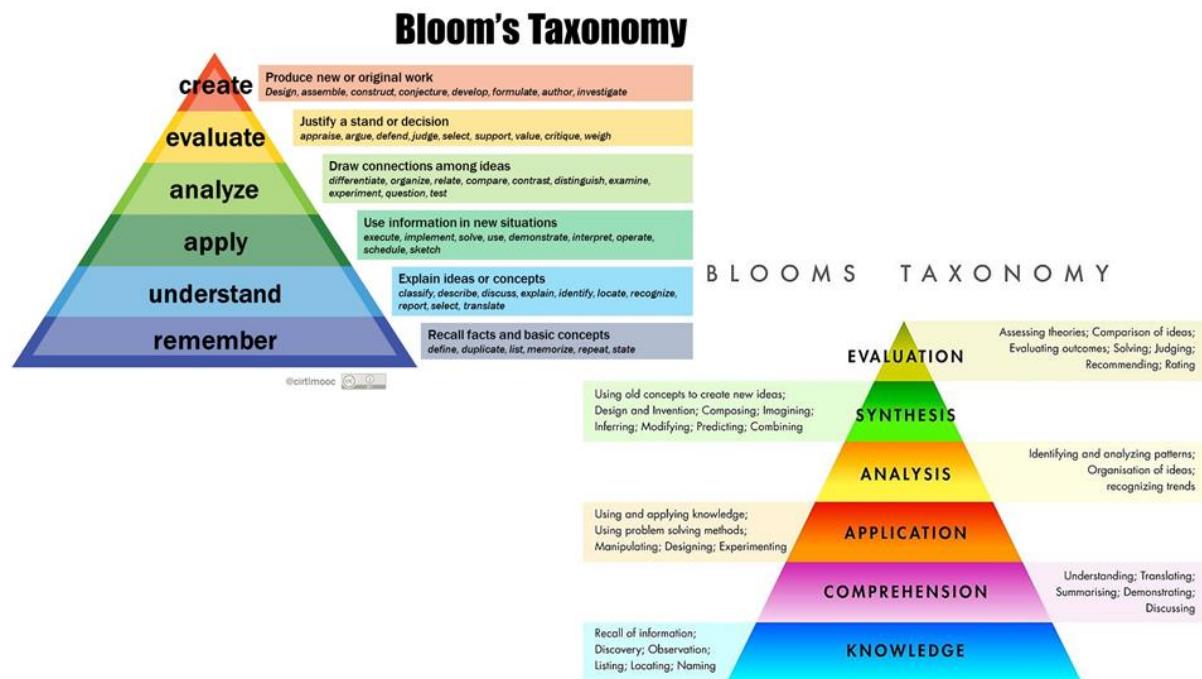
CT scholars analyse critical thinking and the thinker, is the confidence of the authors in their audiences to understand the meanings they intend to convey. CT literature can be described as foggy territory with meaning and language creating occasions for negotiation, debate and doubt. It, therefore, becomes difficult to implement CT in classroom chemistry teaching when there is not clear practical approach to it. This paper explores how teachers view critical thinking and whether their views and teaching practices change through a study designed for it.

### Description of the study

The paper is part of a study that undertook to examine the science curricula for Key Stage 3 and Key Stage 4 chemistry and translate the content of the curricula in order to answer two research questions:

- (1) How do the curricula include teaching of critical thinking?
- (2) Do teacher incorporate critical thinking in their teaching practices based on the curricula and how could that be improved?

The definition of CT for this paper is taken from the schematic of Bloom's taxonomy (Figure 1). In the two pyramids the skills that many CT scholars view as basic for a critical thinker are given in a specific order that shows how a lower level is a prerequisite for a higher one. The most basic level in the pyramid is the knowledge that is acquired before it has been thought. It is often the case that chemistry learning begins in memorising some information, which brings understanding, the recognition of patterns, the laying of basic model formation and conception of theory. Application follows which in chemistry translates to experiments, lab records that trace back the process, analysis of results, comparison, evaluation and repetition for verification of results. Competence in these processes lead to the top level at which the critical thinker is able to create theory, conceptualise an innovative pathway to discovery.



**Figure 1: Bloom's Taxonomy as a guide for the development of critical thinking**

In answer to the first research question, science curricula encompass CT as an aim for Year 9 and Year 10 students by way of description of skills. Table 1 juxtaposes the list of critical thinking skills on one side and the references in the aims of the Key Stage 3 curriculum (Department for Education 2014).

*Table 1: CT Skills in comparison to KS3 Science Curriculum*

Critical Thinking Skills	Goals/Aims in curriculum KS3
Observation	<b>Analysis and evaluation</b> § present observations and data using appropriate methods, including tables and graphs
Evaluation	§ apply mathematical concepts and calculate results § interpret observations and data, including identifying patterns and using observations, measurements and data to draw conclusions
Developing an explanation	§ present reasoned explanations, including explaining data in relation to predictions and hypotheses
Building an argument	§ evaluate data, showing awareness of potential sources of random and systematic error
Creation of innovative theories	§ identify further questions arising from their results.

The approach of the study was based on exploring critical thinking as a series of trainable qualities as they are presented in Table 1. The latter were deemed necessary for the comprehension of school chemistry and mastery of the skills was considered to promote the competency in the subject. Chemistry, in the study, was viewed as a procedural science that is based on observations, comparison of results, reflection on prior knowledge (for evaluation) and combination of knowledge and results to find a plausible explanations for occurring phenomena. Occurring phenomena were either experiments conducted in the classroom (Year 10) or the understanding of the atomic model, theory and the patterns of the periodic table (Year 9).

## **Methodology**

The methodology that was used for the collection of data followed the qualitative tradition. Interpretivism as a philosophy allows for personal interpretations to define meaning and provide explanations of actions. This was the philosophy that advised the qualitative research that concerned teachers' views. There were three teacher participants in the study; two participated with their classes of Year 9 and one with his Year 10 students. In this paper only the teachers' views are discussed in juxtaposition with the science curriculum aims. The teachers and their students came from two different schools, School 1 and School 2. The three cohorts were named Group 1, Group 2 and Group 3, as shown in Table 2.

**Table 2: Description of participants**

<b>Groups</b>	<b>Schools and teachers</b>
Group 1	School 1 – Year 9 cohort, female teacher, biologist with 15+ years of experience
Group 2	School 2 – Year 9, female teacher, chemist with 5+ years of experience
Group 3	School 1 – Year 10 cohort, male teacher, chemistry with 6+ years of experience

Then followed a series of semi-structured interviews with the teacher participants that revolved around the teaching practices they used and the level of critical thinking that was cultivated through them. Another part of the study that is not elaborated in this paper explored the way teaching practices were influenced by inserting critical thinking as an idea and discussing adjustments to the methods the teachers were accustomed to using. The study lasted for six weeks with the teacher of Group 1, four weeks with the teacher for Group 2 and four weeks with Year 10 teacher and Group 3. The interviews were analysed based on content and theme of teachers answers when asked to reflect on their practice after the lessons.

## **Results**

In the first interview, the Group 1 teacher referred to logic and the logical transition from Year 9 chemistry to Year 10 chemistry. In her view, Year 9 was an ideal time for the students to be introduced to the atomic theory and the periodic table, the presence of electrons in orbits and protons in the nucleus and how the exchanges of electrons differentiated the elements and substances. Her response to the study was very positive because she felt she was “getting a lot out of” the interviews and the study even at that early stage. Throughout the interviews, Group 1 teacher felt that the reflection on the lessons and study was helping her be a more critical thinker and more reflective about her practice.

In the first interview with the teacher of Group 3, he revealed that it is easy for him to follow the order of lessons as they are given in the textbook. Group 3 was observed in the unit of rates of reactions and the factors that influence the rates. For instance, temperature is a factor that has an impact in the rate of many reactions. Often, a reaction happens faster in an environment of temperature higher than the room temperature. The teacher explained that students first did a series of experiments checking several factors’ impact on the rate of reaction. He mentioned that during the experiments students would often turn to classmates to compare their results. But the time of the lesson did not often allow time for a second experiment to verify the findings of the first try. The teacher described the experimental lesson in three parts: part one he demonstrated the experiment providing a chance for students to ask questions about the procedure; part two which lasted for half an hour was the time the students set up their apparatuses and conducted the experiment; part three was the time the students were asked questions on what they had learned and observed during the lesson. His trust in the students’ competence to conduct the experiment lay in the fact that he trusted them to follow the instructions. This teacher was also positive towards the

project, but he was sure that all the suggestions in study were already implemented. He also was hesitant that his students could be triggered to ask each other questions as they were a mixed-abilities group.

At the last interview with the teacher of Group 3, he explained that his aim of having his students perform experiments was to give them the opportunity to explore the factors that influenced the experiment and give them the time to think about the explanations. His views from the beginning of the study were not changed. His confidence that he was already the type of teacher that enabled critical thinking via his teaching also had not changed and participating in the study did not change his view.

## **Conclusion**

The three teacher participants of the study had each a different approach to the study. The teacher of Group 1 was an enthusiastic participant. She took every opportunity to do things differently in her teaching and persevered even on the occasions that the study suggestions made her feel unsure of the results. During the study, the teacher, who was a biologist teaching chemistry, engaged with the suggestions, tried new approaches, critiqued some of them that she felt were not harmonising with her style and overall gave positive feedback on how the study affected both her teaching and the group's learning.

The teacher of Group 2 was not convinced of the value of critical thinking at the Year 9 or Year 10 level of students. The level of competence of students and her personal opinion that students that are weak in science would find critical thinking challenging. That dissuade her from considering a change in her teaching style. In her class her teaching style maintained controlled of all activities at all times and all student actions were included in detail in the lesson plan. She chose not to try any of the suggestions of the study. However, there were occasions that her students provided critical comments on an exercise or an experiment.

The teacher of Group 3 was also different to the other two participants. He was willing to participate, he felt he did not have the strongest group of students, so he felt convinced that the impact of the study would have little impact as his teaching already covered most of the study suggestions. In reality, his lesson was well-structured and he allowed a controlled chaos while the experiments were conducted, but that only had a positive impact when the students were given the time to reflect on the knowledge and explore. The questions that were asked to the students were content-based and often did not require elaborate explanations. There was some impact of the study in the teaching style, but without long-lasting effect.

In conclusion, the science teachers that participated were deeply committed to the job they had been assigned to do. As the study was designed to progress with their input and collaboration, they had the chance to keep to their principles which allowed them embrace the study at different levels. The overall view about the teacher participants from this particular study shows that although in the pedagogical context of science teachers use different modes of teaching to enhance learning, teaching chemistry remains largely structured and inflexible, content-focused and intensive towards the goals of good exam results. From the three teachers who got involved in this study, one chose to try to a new approach of thinking and teaching.

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# **THE CONSTRUCTION OF ACADEMIC IDENTITY UNDER THE INFLUENCE OF FIBROMYALGIA**

**Nicole Brown**

## **Abstract**

Fibromyalgia is a complex condition that is characterised by chronic, wide-spread pain, fatigue, sleep disturbances, cognitive dysfunctions, increased sensitivity and psychological disorders (White and Harth, 2001). Existing fibromyalgia research focuses on individual aspects rather than seeking a holistic view of experiences with fibromyalgia. My approach to researching the lived experience of academics with fibromyalgia is guided by four principles: (1) openness, (2) responsiveness, (3) the imprecision of words and power of metaphors and (4) participatory meaning-making process. My data collection therefore relies on physical representations and metaphors, and I use Interpretative Phenomenological Analysis (Smith et al., 2012) to analyse data. The indicative findings demonstrate the participants' engagement with the research process and outline the generalizable relevance of individual items. I conclude this paper with a look to the future, where representations will be linked to the wider stories within academic identity research and illness narratives.

## **Keywords**

fibromyalgia, participatory research, phenomenology, hermeneutics, idiography, metaphors, representations, academic identity.

## **Introduction**

Fibromyalgia is a complex condition of unknown cause. It is characterised by chronic, wide-spread pain, fatigue, sleep disturbances, cognitive dysfunctions, increased sensitivity and psychological disorders (White and Harth, 2001). Fibromyalgia is a contested diagnosis and many health professionals believe it does not exist as a true disease, but is in the patients' minds, thus psychological or psycho-somatic in nature (Wainwright et al., 2006). In 1990 the American College of Rheumatology identified clear diagnostic criteria, which were then revised in 2010. So fibromyalgia is formally diagnosed if a patient is in pain for more than 3 months, shows painful reactions to 11 out of 18 tender points and/or if there is sufficient evidence for other somatic symptoms being present in addition to pain (Wolfe et al., 2010). The somatic symptoms under consideration include, amongst numerous others, conditions such as "irritable bowel syndrome, fatigue/tiredness, thinking or remembering problems, dizziness, insomnia, depression" (p. 607). According to Yunus (2009) the listed conditions are part and parcel of what he calls the "central sensitivity syndrome", which includes fibromyalgia as one of several contested or unexplained conditions.

Between 0.66% and 10.5% of the general population suffer from fibromyalgia (Queiroz, 2013). There is a high representation of students, teachers, medical staff and doctors amongst sufferers of illnesses related to fibromyalgia (Wessely, 1994). Although there is no conclusive reason for higher levels of diagnoses amongst the more educated, it is argued that this socio-economic group would have easier access to the extensive and prolonged medical care required to arrive at a fibromyalgia diagnosis. Traditionally, fibromyalgia research focuses on the pain fibromyalgia patients from lower socioeconomic status suffer from. This is probably because those patients with higher levels of education and from higher socioeconomic backgrounds tend to have developed better coping strategies (Hagen et al., 2005). However, pain is not the only symptom and for some patients not the most intrusive one. This is why I am interested in how fibromyalgia with all its symptoms shapes identity amongst academics.

## **Research approach**

Most fibromyalgia research relies on interviews, surveys, pain scales, questionnaires (e.g. Hagen et al., 2005; Linares et al., 2008; Hammond and Freeman, 2006) and more recently narrative approaches (McMahon et al., 2012). Due to the wide variety of symptoms in fibromyalgia, as well as their variability in severity and locations, fibromyalgia research needs to be more nuanced.

First and foremost, my approach is characterised by the attempt to get as close to and as immersed in the detailed, true lived experiences of academics with fibromyalgia as possible. The experience of living with fibromyalgia is very unique and particular, and so any investigation needs to recognise and do justice to this individuality by adopting what Dahlberg et al. (2011) refer to as "an open attitude" (p. 97 ff.) in reference to Heidegger's (1998) "curiosity" and "desire" (p. 214 f.). Being open, curious and desiring refers to the researcher's work towards truly understanding and being attuned to the participants' lifeworlds in all its expected and unexpected, predictable and unpredictable facets.

Secondly, in order to get as immersed in the respondents' experience as possible, the researcher needs to be "responsive" (Todres, 2011, p.30 ff.). Language and bodily experiences cannot be separated from one another, in fact, need each other for humans to be able to make sense of experiences. Consequently, true understanding, embodied and shared knowledge between researchers and participants can only be achieved through responsiveness, an attitude of bodily awareness and the reflexive exploration of a narrative's bodily impact. This does not mean that the researcher feels the same bodily sensations and experiences as the participant. But by accepting embodied and bodily sensations the researcher is able to follow and make sense of the respondent's lifeworld.

A third aspect is the unreliability and untrustworthiness of words. It has long been acknowledged that embodied sensations and pain and illness experiences, in particular, can often not be explained easily (Sontag, 2003; Eccleston, 2016), because words are too imprecise (Scarry, 1985; Eccleston, 2016). Pain could be described as "throbbing, pulsating, beating, or stinging", which all have different connotations. In the context of a contested and complex condition like fibromyalgia, where symptoms relate to experiences of fatigue, cognitive dysfunctions, psychological disorders in addition to the pain, research can therefore not solely rely on the functionality and meaningfulness of individual words. On the other hand, understanding and knowledge are based on conceptual thoughts, which as humans we are not necessarily consciously aware of (Lakoff and Johnson, 2003). Our common use of metaphors as units of language provides evidence for conceptual systems, but also demonstrates that subconsciously we are aware of the limits of language and speech in its factual form. In their work, Lakoff and Johnson (2003) exemplify how oppositions such as "up versus down" or "in versus out" connote levels of positivity, happiness, closeness. These orientational metaphors are so commonly used that the speakers would not even consider them as metaphors.

The fourth and final pillar to my research approach is the participatory nature of interpretation and meaning-making processes. Researchers' positionality and reflexivity are not new concepts within qualitative research (e.g. Garfinkel, 1984; Lee, 1993; Hammersley and Atkinson, 1983). Debates often revolve around ethical considerations and the power differential between researchers and the researched. For me, involving participants in analytical and interpretative processes adds a layer of knowledge that could not otherwise be achieved. It is the researcher's duty to make sense of data and the researched, but by involving the researched, data will be enriched and validated at the same time (Byrne et al., 2009; Nind, 2011).

## **Data collection methods**

In line with the four basic principles to my research approach, my data collection methods are anchored in physical, material and metaphorical representations in the form of identity boxes. Identity boxes are used with dementia patients in order to trigger memories or with terminal cancer patients to provide means to be remembered by (Nolan et al., 2001; Hagens et al., 2003; Macmillan, 2014).

Participants are asked to find items to represent aspects of their lives and feelings in response to four questions: Who are you?, What affects you?, Which role does fibromyalgia play in your life? and How do others see you?.

Participants identify and arrange the relevant items in their identity box, then take a photograph and explain the meanings of the individual items before the next question is released. Participants' explanations take the form of conversations or written communication as per their preferences, which offers them "an opportunity to tell their stories, to speak freely and reflectively, and to develop their ideas and express their concerns at some length" (Smith et al., 2012, p.56). Once the entire project is completed I conduct semi-structured interviews in the form of an interaction, an inter-view between two nearly equally positioned participants in a conversation (Brinkmann and Kvæle, 2015). This specific form of interviews allows for me as a researcher to make sense of participants' meaning-making processes (Smith et al., 2012).

## **Research participants**

This paper reports on the indicative findings from phase 1 of my research, which works with 10 female non-academics with fibromyalgia. Initially, 13 participants were recruited from various fibromyalgia support groups but only 5 participants, 4 females and 1 male, responded regularly to emails. After I changed my means of communication to social media messaging services, 8 female participants reengaged with the research process, but a total of 3 participants, 2 females and 1 male withdrew from the study. The drop-out rate is due to the severity of the illness experience amongst the participants. The participants who dropped out were suffering from severe pain and used walking aids, such as crutches or wheelchairs on their "best" days. With temperatures dropping and more humid weather setting in during the autumn and winter months participants' illness deteriorated even further and they felt they could not focus on the creative tasks.

## **Analysis of identity boxes**

The photographs, emails and transcripts were subjected to Interpretative Phenomenological Analysis (Smith et al., 2012), an analytical process that focuses on individuals' experiences and acknowledges the meaning-making process on the part of the individual and the researcher. Analysis therefore is an iterative process of several stages and layers of interpretation. Due to the interconnectedness of the visual and textual data from the identity boxes, my analysis regularly moved between the different elements. Initially, the texts were read and the photographs considered in isolation. At this stage, I noted descriptive, linguistic and organisational elements. Next, I brought the texts and photographs together and repeated the analytical process. Once individual stages of the creative process had been considered, the analysis explored the development of the creative process in its entirety. This approach was repeated for each individual participant before the common themes were clustered, organised, reviewed and reported. All names in the findings section are pseudonyms.

## **Findings**

Enthusiasm regarding the research

Participants highlight how positive they feel about participating in the study:

*"I am very excited to a part of your study." (Lara, in writing)*

Considering Lara's email, her positivity and enthusiasm are palpable, especially if this statement is considered in connection with her other writings. This sentence has the verb "to be" missing, but all of her other writings are grammatically flawless. It is as if she got so carried away in her enthusiasm when composing her email that she dropped the verb.

For other participants their positivity is clearly linked to their wider illness experience. For once they feel that they are not a burden to others but are able to give back. So their optimism relates to being able to support what they feel is a worthy cause, particularly as they feel misunderstood by health care professionals:

*"They don't get it, they don't have time either." (Louise, in conversation)*

Feelings of guilt

Once the creative metaphors project got under way many participants struggled with the demands in their lives and the fluctuating illness patterns. This meant that they were not able to communicate with me as regularly as they would have wanted to:

*"So much once again has gone on." (Louise, in writing)*

Participants apologised for their limited communication and engagement:

*"I am sorry for the lack of response." (Ron, in writing)*

*"sorry I am late have not been too well" (Vicky, in writing)*

More drastically, Louise expressed her concerns regarding the direct impact on the research process, as she would not be able to continue with the project:

*"I am not ready in my mind to carry on with this task. I hope I haven't let you down" (Louise, in writing)*

By entering the research participants feel that they have entered a relationship, for which they take on certain responsibilities. Due to the reality of the changeable severity of symptoms and illness experience, participants may commit at a time where they feel comfortable, but then think they have to withdraw if they are no longer able to meet their commitments. Their ensuing overriding emotion is sheer guilt. Suddenly, they are no longer able to support the good cause or give back, but again take on the role of someone who is a burden to others. This guilt is probably acerbated as participants are aware of the nature of the research as a doctoral thesis.

Uniqueness of the items

It is worth noting that participants enjoy the tasks and the reflectivity involved in finding items to represent their responses to the questions set. This means that the participants generally

find objects that are meaningful to them. However, participants are concerned for the relevance of their objects to the wider purposes of the doctoral research:

*"All of this might not be what you had in mind...It is what it is." (Lindsay, in writing)*

*"I am not sure what this is going to tell you." (Ron, in conversation)*

Because the participants' chosen items are very specific, the individual identity boxes are consequently very different from one another. As can be seen in Lindsay's and Ron's statements, participants are considering how their unique experiences and specific circumstances may be providing generalizable concepts and ideas. In reality, however, despite the uniqueness in the objects, there common threads can be found. In the following I discuss the theme of comfort and spirituality.

### Comfort and spirituality

Lindsay put a prayer book and prayer beads into her box. Interpreted in isolation, the prayer book and prayer beads would represent spirituality and the role of faith within a participant's life. This interpretation is supported by the journal in Lindsay's box. Her maintaining a journal proves that Lindsay is involved in reflective practices, which are related to concepts of mindfulness and spirituality. The journal is covered with spiritual, devotional and motivational statements, and a family photocard in the box also contains a spiritual note. The combination of these details lets us think that Lindsay is faithful and believing.

Once her identity box is seen in connection with her own interpretation it becomes clear that spirituality and faith are indeed important to her:

*"The Episcopal Church is important. I was there this morning for All Saints service." (Lindsay, in writing)*

However, she also refers to what she liked about attending the service on that specific day:

*"the sun shining [sic] through the stain [sic] glass, the traditional service." (Lindsay, in writing)*

Lindsay clearly appreciates the beauty of the light and the stained glass, and the routine of the traditional service. She finds comfort in regularity and routine of the services, in attending church and getting involved in her church community by doing altar service. In this respect, the prayer book and prayer beads are no longer merely a symbol for faith and spirituality, but take on the meaning of comfort.

The concept of comfort is one that Lara represents with the use of a scarf. On its own the photo suggests that one of Lara's objects is a blanket. Comfort objects like security blankets and their relevance in relation to mental and emotional well-being are used widely and commonly known. However, Lara clarifies that the item is a giraffe-print scarf and while the function of a scarf itself symbolises warmth and comfort, for Lara the giraffe-print is more significant:

*"The Giraffe [sic] is my animal. They have a knowing in their eyes that spans lifetimes and centuries. Truly the window to all souls. They began to appear in my life at a time when I needed healing." (Lara, in writing)*

When asked about the role of the scarf as opposed to a toy giraffe or giraffe model, Lara highlights the spiritual aspect in her life:

*"I don't have a toy giraffe. I have tons of other giraffes throughout my home and I've got a lot of giraffe print strewn about. The truth is there wasn't much I could bear to place in a box. Everything is sort of feng shui'd in a way the [sic] soothes me." (Lara, in writing)*

### **Levels of importance**

What is interesting to observe with this creative task, is how participants organise their items within their individual boxes. Initially, it may appear that participants merely put the items together into a box randomly. However, the arrangements may not be as random after all. In response to "who are you?" in week 1 Lindsay put a photo-card of her children and grandchildren into her box. The card is lying down face up so that the faces of Lindsay's loved ones are clearly visible. In week 2 she was asked to add more items in response to "what affects you?". At this stage Lindsay added objects and put some on top of others. However, she rearranged the photograph with her children and grandchildren in such a way that the card is not covered up. As the photo-card is in a standing up position the faces are no longer as clearly visible when looking into the box as after week 1, but the photograph is given a special status by comparison to other items, such as her journal.

### **Looking to the future**

As this study is at an early stage it is posing questions more than answering them. Considering the emerging individual themes it is evident that the identity boxes yield rich data relating to participants' experiences. However, the actual identity work is not yet well established. By combining the physical portrayals and metaphorical representations from the identity boxes with participants' timelines and diary extracts a more holistic view of academics' lives with fibromyalgia will emerge

In their research relating to academic identity Ylijoki and Ursin (2013) identified three overarching narratives: regressive, stability and progressive storylines. This research relates to the way identity is experienced in the context of higher education as a changeable environment. In my research, the higher education environment will be relevant, but I also expect that Bury's (1982) concept of biographical disruption and Frank's (2013) chaos, quest and restitution narratives will play an important role. All three concepts describe processes according to which changes – related to working environments or brought about by the illness experience of fibromyalgia – are reflected in identities. Frank's (2013) and Ylijoki and Ursin's (2013) concept are similar in that they explore negative outlooks, neutral views and positive perspectives, while Bury's (1982) biographical disruption refers to acute phases, but does not take into account the long-term effect of chronic illness.

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## **Biography**

Nicole Brown is a Lecturer in Education at University College London Institute of Education and doctoral researcher at the University of Kent. Her research interests are improving the generation of knowledge and advancing learning and teaching within higher education and teacher education. Contact details: [nicole.brown@ucl.ac.uk](mailto:nicole.brown@ucl.ac.uk) Web site: [www.nicole-brown.co.uk](http://www.nicole-brown.co.uk) Twitter: @ncjbrown and @Fibroldentity

# **AN INVESTIGATION INTO THE BARRIERS TO PARTICIPATION IN EDUCATION AND EMPLOYMENT FOR FEMALE MUSLIM ESOL LEARNERS**

**Fouzia Choudry**

## **Abstract**

This paper draws on 16 in-depth interviews with adult female ESOL (English Speakers of Other Languages) learners from a Muslim, South Asian background, who are in education in the West Midlands. Research, particularly in the UK, confirms that South Asian women have the highest level of economic inactivity due to family and home commitments, and that husbands and in-laws have an influence in restricting their access to education. Many husbands who allow their wives to participate in education do so on a condition that their daily responsibilities are not affected, indicating that these daily chores have priority over the wife's education. This gender divide in domestic responsibility is most common amongst Muslim communities, influenced by culturally embedded attitudes towards women, where there is a perception about what constitutes male and female roles. The women in these cases are almost exclusively responsible for domestic duties.

## **Introduction**

Education continues to be a dream for a large population of women in numerous countries globally (Micklos, 1996). Yet, education is a human right, which is a route one can take to accomplish freedom (Caetano, 2006). In addition, education is the formula to women and girls empowerment (Call to Action, 2013; Global Campaign to Education, 2005). The United Nations Educational, Scientific, and Cultural Organisation (UNESCO) statistics indicate that the gender gap in education is a global issue. "Two thirds of the world's 880 million illiterates are women" Girls Globe (2014). However, within the poorer countries the gender gap is greater (UNESCO, 2012). For the purpose of this study, in the UK, 'two thirds of ESOL learners are women' (Action for ESOL, 2016). Recent Census (2011) findings indicate, that Muslims are the second largest faith in England and Wales, with a population of 2.7 million citizens, and this has increased in the last ten years. The UK has seen significant improvement in womens' empowerment in the last century and internationally women have proved to be as successful. Firth states (2012) that societies, within which women and girls are offered equal rights, are prosperous and developing countries. Similarly, yet focusing specifically on Muslim women, Azam (1997:1) argues that 'Muslim women are role models to their western sisters' and that no society can develop without them as they secure prime roles in 'education, medicine and government'. Moreover, educating girls and women is the 'key to ending poverty' (McCarthy, 2015:1).

In 1948, education was universally announced as the 'basic human right for every person' (Global Campaign for Education, 2016:1) and many policy initiatives have been produced to achieve this. Over the years, there has been a greater emphasis on girls' education. In 2002, the world governments committed to remove 'gender inequality in basic education provision' and agreed to the goal of achieving 'gender equality in education by the year 2015, with a focus on ensuring girls' full and equal access to, and achievement in, basic good quality education' (Global Campaign for Education, 2005:1). When in fact, a decade later, Firth (2012) emphasises that in many countries, women still experience discrimination. Similarly, Call to Action (2013) indicates that the set Global Millennium Development Goals to gain gender equality in education have not been met, though there has been some improvement. The Global Campaign for Education (2005:2) stresses that as a result of these goals not been met, other Millennium goals such as those to decrease world poverty are affected. They predict that this could be a result of the limitations in research available in gender inequality. Global Campaign for Education (2005:7) describe researching in gender inequality amongst primary and secondary education a challenging investigation due to the

insufficient ‘quality and coverage’ of data available in numerous nations. For example they acknowledge the data not being current and to a large extent the data collected from questionnaires is of a low standard. By way of contrast, Firth (2012) points out that although government policies can be reviewed to fight gender discrimination, societal attitudes, traditions and cultural beliefs will still be followed, which makes this challenging.

### **Feminist domestic roles**

Basit (1997) and Gerda and Anne (1992) contend that British Asian Muslim families value education. A more recent study (Ward, 2008) with female participants from similar ethnic groups including Pakistani, Bangladeshi and Somalian women, confirms that few husbands allowed women to participate in education on a condition that their daily duties were not affected. This highlights that the daily duties prioritise over the wife’s education. Similarly, in a fairly recent study, Raynolds and Birdwell’s (2015:1) identified that Muslims were the only religious group, which greatly agreed to the following statement: ‘husbands should work, wives should stay at home’. They argue that a gender divide is more common amongst Muslim communities (not British Muslim), in comparison to any other community and this is lead by ‘culturally embedded attitudes towards women’. However, the key stakeholders in the study pointed out that although circumstances amongst ‘some more traditional parents’ had ‘improved’ in the last era, further ‘improvements’ are required.

These improvements have been acknowledged by Firth (2012), though not focusing specifically on Muslim women. She points out that although the gender gap in feminist chores has been declining from approximately 6 hours a day in the UK and US, to an average of 280 minutes per day in the early 2000s. On the other hand men’s contribution to housework and childcare has increased from about 90 minutes per day in the 1960s to on an average a 150 minutes per day in the early part of this millennium. The above data was retrieved from the analysis of 348,000 diaries from participants aged from 20-59 in 16 different countries, though the demographics are not clearly specified. While, Raynolds and Birdwell (2015) see this issue from a different view. They suggest there is notably a generational difference in opinions towards the role of the woman and whether they should stay at home. Surveys conducted in the UK, indicated that fewer (24%) Muslim women from the younger generation (aged 16-24) agree with wives position being in the house, in comparison to the older generation (aged 55-40) where 50% of the participants agreed to this.

### **Mothering and caring responsibilities**

Hashem and Aspinall’s (2010) study on Bangladeshis in London highlighted that female learners prefer to learn at local institutions due to childcare. The male and female participants had different motivations to learn English. The women wanted to support their children’s education and be able to access welfare services whilst the men wanted career progression. The barriers experienced in accessing ESOL provision were also different. One female participant stated that other Bangladeshi women are unable to access ESOL classes due to husbands not permitting them from leaving the house. Patter (2009) carried out a study in London, during a similar time, researching Bangladeshi and Somali women. Similar, to Hashem and Aspinall’s (2010) findings, the Bangladeshi participants in Patter’s (2009:8) study also pointed out that their husbands and in-laws restricted them to access education. They further stated loosing their identity as a result of their change of roles since they immigrated. Their new roles of being a wife, a mother and a daughter-in-law resulted in their prime identities becoming ‘non-existent’. This supports Oplatka and Lapidot’s (2012) argument, that within the British Muslim families, traditionally the husband has a great influence in the wife’s future aspirations.

Similar to Hashem and Aspinall's (2010) study, the participants in Patter's (2009) study also points out the their motivations to learning English is to support their children's education development. Family commitments, childcare and domestic duties were the reported barriers. On the other hand, the men reported family commitments and employment as their reasons for not having enough time to learn English (Hashem and Aspinall, 2010). Although, Hashem and Aspinall (2010:20) point out that childcare and family responsibilities are barriers that affect all women despite their ethnicity. They also argue that the situation amongst the Bangladeshi community is 'acute' as they are unemployed and heavily rely upon free childcare, whether that is 'state-funded' childcare provision or through 'extended families.' However, following the Census (2011) statistics on economic inactivity, the data suggests a 2% difference between women within the Bangladeshi in comparison to the Pakistani community. Furthermore, the summary indicates that Bangladeshi (54%) and Pakistani (52%) women have the greatest economical inactivity due to family home commitments. This links to Firths (2012) work around feminism as she determines issues of gender as distinct in the division of roles between men and women.

The division of roles of men working and women looking after children is still the norm (Park et al. 2013). Mothering responsibilities have been seen as a challenge to access education for mature women (Lister, 2003). A recent study, based in the Northern Ireland, (Potter's, 2014:20) expresses concerns of childcare being 'gendered'. However, McLaughlin (2009:8), also researching in the same geographical region, points out that the inadequacy of childcare is distinctively the largest barrier preventing women from committing to all aspects of life including education and employment. Other barriers indicated include 'poverty; gendered career paths; low levels of skills, qualifications, confidence, flexibility, choice; health; travel' and many more. She argues that all the barriers are interlinked and the elimination of one will not resolve the issue and enable women to fully engage with education and employment. Although the study does not focus on a particular ethnic or religious group, it concludes that the barriers are 'repeated and multiplied' (*ibid*, 2009:27), despite their demographics, which does include women from 'ethnic minority backgrounds'.

Action foundation (2015) acknowledges the difficulties BME (Black and Minority Ethnic) women face due to cultural norms, religious beliefs and family support in accessing ESOL classes. The case study revealed the lack of free childcare as the main barrier to accessing the provision. Whilst, Whaley (2002) contends that although the lack of 'good' childcare is seen as the most recognised barrier in the last 20 years, once the children are school-aged, other duties such as caring for relatives become the next barrier. This links to Ward's (2008) argument that Bangladeshi, Pakistani and Somali womens' participation in education, is dramatically less in comparison to their population. In her research, domestic and caring responsibilities were identified as the most significant aspects that contribute to their exclusion. More importantly, Ward (2008) identified an additional theme of domestic abuse. The study highlighted that one in 4 women experienced domestic abuse and this was one of the personal aspects affecting their access to education and success.

## **Methodology**

This study adopts a qualitative approach. The main objective of the study was to investigate how the learners' perceived barriers had influenced their choice to access education. Triangulation was met through the methods of data collection, which utilised three tools. The prime approach was the semi-structured interviews. To support these there was a tick sheet, presenting a list of roles and a reflective diary.

A key feature of this study is the research design. It uses a creative research approach, which is the reflective diary. The purpose of the research diary was for the participants to take home and use to demonstrate chronicle experiences such as memorable objects, photos of, for example, marriage, prior to marriage, children or family photos. Participants

were also given the option to make notes in their preferred language, draw images, cut out pictures, to highlight any moments in their life which have either helped them or restricted them from accessing education. The research diaries were not used as data. Instead they were used as elicitation material used to reflect upon during the interview. Categories and codes selected from the interview transcripts formed an emergent coding frame. Emergent themes relational to the barriers experienced by Muslim ESOL learners included marriage, finance, caring responsibilities and daily routines.

## **Findings**

The interviews revealed that managing daily routines and attending ESOL classes was challenging for students. These include childcare, household chores and marital responsibilities.

One participant stated both childcare and housework as being the barrier to having any time to themselves:

“Due to the children and the house I was unable to go out to do something and make time for myself.” (P13)

Childcare appeared as the main challenge for mothers attending ESOL classes, and progression between courses. This echoes the finding of McLaughlin (2009) and her concept of barriers being interlinked. The constraints of staying at home and the housework proved to be boring for one participant, who had aspirations to become a professional:

“If I stay at home, I feel tired, I feel bored. I hate my life if I stay at home. I don’t have nothing benefit to do at home myself. Like if I college, I benefit myself, my English. I improve myself. But if I stay at home, nothing I do, just clean and wait my husband to come. Is nothing for me.”(P8)

Barriers to attending ESOL classes also included attending appointments:

“...because of the kids, there is always something to do. Like a child might have an appointment at the school or at the doctors. “

When asked about what their role of being a wife involved. One participant’s response included having the responsibility for both indoor and outdoor jobs for the husband:

“I might need to go somewhere to a job for my husband. I have thought to leave all

the jobs for Friday, Saturday or Sunday. Not Monday, Tuesday, Wednesday." (P16)

For being a wife, you need to do all the housework and do it outside like pay the bills.

Do the shopping, cook at home, clean the house, wash the clothes. Need to do all this.

(P4)

Other participants reported the extensive domestic chores, as being part of the

role of being a wife:

"Well, wife is not an easy job anyway. Well, I don't know. Just I'll wake up, I clean for him, my husband, for my daughter. And, to be happy, smiling, no stress, no nervous." (P8)

"I make my husband breakfast in the morning, iron his clothes, everything that's needed, his and my bedding, ironing, his dishes, make him tea, give him medicine." (P9)

"Caring for your husband in a nice manner. A nice manner for example, I need to wake up before he goes to work to get things ready for my husband. For food, need to make him a nice breakfast, quickly iron his shirt, immediately find his socks and quickly put them in front of him. Quickly, quickly get him ready, open the door and send him out and say goodbye. That's how it is. A wife's responsibility is to always support him. That's the main thing. That is important because my husband

goes to work. He works. As a wife, I need to complete my own responsibilities, need to be home on time. When its time for home, set off to work or come back from, it is important for me to be home." (P7)

Similar to Hashem and Aspinall's (2010) findings, one participant reported restrictions of leaving the house without her husband's permission:

"By being a wife, obviously I cannot go anywhere without my husband's permission. I go after taking his permission. At home I need to do all my husband's jobs. (P3)

Most participants mentioned the heavy load of responsibilities of being a daughter-in-law. These included visiting in-laws if they did not live together, domestic chores and driving them for shopping and to medical services:

"Mother-in-law this country with me. She's quite old. Everything look after to her. Make her food, wash clothes, making bed, take her GP".

One participant spoke about her difficulty in adjusting to the change of lifestyle, when she arrived in the UK. Other participants pointed indicated the benefits of learning ESOL. These mainly include not relying on husbands to take them to medical appointments. One of the observations arising from this study is that studying ESOL has enabled the students beyond simply learning language and given them freedom and a sense of belief and empowerment.

## **Conclusion**

Despite the implementation of global policies to reduce gender inequality, the findings of this study reveal that heavy cultural expectations of being a wife, daughter-in-law and solely responsible for childcare duties, act as a barrier to participation in education. Furthermore, marriage and immigration to the UK have proven to result in many women losing their prime identities. Key findings indicate how the women juggle to manage both attending ESOL classes and their daily domestic duties, with lack of support from their husband.

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## **Biography**

Fouzia is a doctoral student, researching gender equality in education and employment. She has enjoyed and benefited from her own education and strives to ensure that all learners experience and value the joy of learning so that they continue to be life-long learners who are proud of their achievements.

# **'I SHOULD WORK HARDER, JUST WORK HARDER TO MAKE SURE I GET MY MA DEGREE: AN EXPLORATORY STUDY OF THE LIVED EXPERIENCE OF CHINESE POSTGRADUATES IN A UK UNIVERSITY**

**Heather Cockayne**

## **Abstract**

This paper focuses on how learning outside of the curriculum takes place amongst a group of postgraduate students from China at a UK Higher education institution (HEI). This social learning situation has been likened to the development of a Community of Practice (Wenger 1998).

Whilst teaching teams and other resources are provided by the HEI, students seem to transition from one education system to another choosing peer support and forming study groups of like-minded individuals rather than tapping into the resources provided by institutions.

Developed throughout the course of a year student experiences were explored through dialogical narratives. Hofstede's cultural dimensions and discussions of power distance within societies and the educational environment has helped to highlight gaps that existed between the host institution and the learners'. It is these gaps that have seemingly been overcome through the development of a Community of Practice (CoP). These students' journeys are explored and possible professional recommendations for change are proposed.

## **Introduction**

In the academic year 2014-15 20.5% of the total number of international students in the UK were from China (Universities UK 2016), this translates to 89,540 students. This number far exceeds the number of students coming to the UK from anywhere else in the world (UKCISA 2016). With large numbers of students from China and universities working hard to ensure students achieve good results it is important that this significant group of students are achieving the best results possible.

This increase in numbers of students from China coupled with many of them now choosing a one year postgraduate programme can create difficulties in adapting to the new UK study environment. These conditions led to an exploratory study in order to investigate the experiences of this student group and how they attempted to overcome their transition into the UK education environment in just one year.

## **The Context and Rationale**

Despite over a decade of research focusing on students from China studying in the UK, the majority of the research focuses on undergraduate students (Wang & Byram 2011). Undergraduate students are likely to be in the UK for a period of at least three years, however for students working on postgraduate degrees in the UK they would only be spending one year at the university and it is a short time to be able to adapt to this new environment. Short term sojourners, such as international students, often aim to orientate themselves in order to achieve their academic goals, rather than seek full acculturation, as a more longer-term sojourner might do (Wu & Hammond 2011).

This research focuses on postgraduate students from China that are working on a one year programme. As this student group are unlikely to seek acculturation, but orientation into the

UK system, how they transition from China, one cultural system, into a different system within the UK, will be considered.

Cross-cultural learning situations for both students and academic staff could also be problematic as teacher/student interactions can be deep-rooted in the culture of a society (Hofstede 1986). Finding out what issues these students may be facing could help universities and course providers determine what additional support provisions could be implemented.

### **Research design**

The research was designed as an emergent study based on Lincoln & Guba's (1985) Naturalistic Inquiry. Naturalistic Inquiry considers that all aspects of reality are interrelated and to isolate one aspect from its context may destroy its meaning (Erlandson et al. 1993:11). So, rather than decide the main focus of the study at the beginning the research was designed to be able to uncover 'many idiosyncratic, but nonetheless important stories told by real people about real events' (Guba 1978:3).

The aim of the research was to explore the experiences of international student experiences and to provide a Chinese postgraduate student perspective of UKHE. In order to achieve this aim focus groups were used to gather general ideas, thoughts and opinions of this student group and these were followed up by in-depth interviews in order to gain details and to explore experiences further.

Seven participants were part of the research and they were each interviewed three times throughout their year of study in the UK. They were interviewed shortly after starting their chosen course. They were asked about their motivations for choosing the UK as a destination for postgraduate education and about their initial thoughts and experiences of their programme and life in the UK.

The second interview was early into the second semester when all assessed work for the previous semester had been completed and they were considering their progress to date. Participants were also asked to bring photographs with them that would represent something they felt happy, sad, worried or surprised about whilst being in the UK. This photo elicitation technique was used in order to try to increase the stimulus and discuss topics most relevant to the participants (Silverman 2013:258). Participants selected / took the photographs for themselves which also prevented me from imposing my own categories for discussion.

The final interview, conducted at the end of semester two when students had completed everything bar their dissertation, focused on how they viewed their study year abroad and what they were planning to move onto. In order to facilitate the discussion, a questionnaire based on the Inventory of the Dimensions of Emerging Adulthood (IDEA) (Reifman et al. 2007) was completed by all students prior to the interview. The IDEA is an instrument designed by Reifman et al. (2007) and it is designed as a 'Views of Life Survey'. Participants are asked to consider 'this time in their life' which refers to the present and the next few years. There were 31 statements in the questionnaire and participants were asked how strongly they agreed or disagreed with them. All statements centred around the following topics; Identity exploration; experimentation/possibilities; negativity/Instability; other-focused; self-focused and feeling "in-between". The responses to the questions were used as a platform to encourage discussion in the final interviews.

## Social learning

After collecting and analysing the interview data one of the main themes focused on how the students were learning and working together during their course of study. Comments such as;

*'...I will just speak with my classmates if I have questions...'*

*'...I ask classmates who are really good at this...'*

*'...I often work in the university rooms with my classmates...'*

highlight the working together and the social activities throughout their learning. This learning and working together could be likened to social learning theory Communities of Practice (CoP), which considers learning to be achieved through social participation within the practices of a community (Lave & Wenger 1991, Wenger 1998).

CoPs can be characterised by three dimensions; mutual engagement; joint enterprise and a shared repertoire, all of which are associated by practice which is described as the source of coherence of a community (Wenger 1998:72). Mutual engagement refers to a group of people with a shared interest. For the participants in this study, all of whom are working towards a postgraduate degree within the same field, this mutual engagement allows them to engage in similar actions and negotiate meanings with one another (Wenger 1998:73).

Having a 'joint enterprise' or a common goal of self-improvement is the second dimension of a CoP (Wenger 1998:77). For these participants they are all working towards their postgraduate degree and wanting to improve their knowledge of their subject to allow them to go onto further study or gain employment within their sector. However the common goal is not just stated, but it can create relations of mutual accountability among the group and become an integral part of the practice, thus encouraging those within the group to continue further with self-improvement than they might had they been working in isolation.

The third dimension that would determine a CoP is described by Wenger (1998:82) as a 'shared repertoire'. Over time the group have shared experiences, which can create resources for negotiating meaning. These participants are all from China, they completed their undergraduate study in China and now they are negotiating their way through a postgraduate degree at a UK university.

## Overcoming Cultural Differences

China has been described to be a more collectivist society whilst the UK more individual (Hofstede 2016) and whilst societal differences exist within virtually all human societies the pairs of unequal, but complementary roles; the family, the school, the job and the community and the way these pairs interact could create confusion when moving from one society to another, or indeed one education system to another Hofstede (1986).

With the role of the student / teacher being different in one society, to that in another, it is not surprising that confusion could occur for these participants when moving from China to then study in the UK. Potential problems could include; different social positions of teachers within the two societies; difference in the relevance of the curriculum; difference in profiles of the cognitive abilities of the students and differences in the expected patterns of teacher / students and student / student interactions.

Constellations within a CoP can occur when a grouping of like-minded people who may have a similar perspective, share historical roots, or face similar conditions (Wenger 1998:127). Rather than speaking with the university staff the participants in this study showed preference for discussing things with their peers. People who have a shared language, culture and background and can therefore sympathise with their situation;

*'...I often work in the university rooms with my classmates...'*

*'...in class I will ask for advice to my Chinese classmate so when I don't understand the teacher I ask them nearby in Chinese and they will explain to me in Chinese.'*

As well as in class, this also seemed to apply outside of class,

*'...I have already asked my good friend for her assignment and if I can read to see why she got such a high mark...'*

Perhaps these actions and were due to the interaction patterns these participants were used to within their previous study environment. China can be described as a society with a large power distance, whilst the UK has a small power distance society. These differences will impact on the roles and the expectations of the roles of both teachers and students (Hofstede 1986).

*Table 3 - Aspects of independent learning between Small and Large Power distance societies*

Small power distance societies (e.g. the UK)	Large power distance societies (e.g. China)
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Student-centred education</li> <li>• A teacher should respect the independence of his/her students</li> <li>• Teacher expects students to find their own path.</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Teacher-centred education</li> <li>• A teacher merits the respect of his / her students</li> <li>• Students expect the teacher to outline paths to follow</li> </ul>

Adapted from Hofstede (1986)

As well as favouring working with peers, the participants seemed to express feelings of bothering the teachers, or that the teachers were probably too busy to answer questions

*'...I know the teachers are very busy so I ask my classmates'.*

*'Ask them [the tutors]? I never think about it because I don't know why but sometimes I am a little afraid of communicating with my tutors maybe it is also a problem that when I grow up in the Chinese schools tutors or the teachers are a little strict and we really not good at asking questions.'*

There also seemed to be unfamiliar differences in the way in which the academic staff could be contacted for help;

*'...I have to email my teacher for an appointment?'*

*'the tutors in here are more likely to connect via the email and I think it is hard, but I don't like email things. I like maybe chat online or maybe face to face, but they are more likely to use email and sometimes they reply maybe a little slow or late and it will make me a little unclear.'*

With the students from China more accustomed to teacher-centred education and the teachers playing a more dominant role, the transition from the teacher-centred education to

student-centred education in the UK requires the students to make a greater adjustment to fit in to the UK education system (Chang & Chin 1999).

Forming CoPs, with like-minded individuals who share the same historical roots, similar perceptions and understanding can help this group of people to make this transition easier. Through working together they can progress and learn how to navigate the UK education system as well as achieve their postgraduate degree certificate.

### **Conclusion and recommendations**

With these thoughts in mind there are several professional recommendations that could be made to try and facilitate the CoPs or indeed aid the transition from one education system to another.

Students from China need to know what the UK society expects from them as a student and teachers need to be more sensitive to the needs of this student group. Providing spaces for peer group activities, or group reading activities could be a way to help facilitate the CoP development.

HEIs need to provide assistance to students from all cultural backgrounds to help them transition into a new educational environment and this may require further investment in staff training or similar activities.

With ever increasing numbers of students from China choosing one year postgraduate programs it is within everyone's interest that their transition to the UK educational environment is a smooth and successful one.

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## **Biography**

Heather Cockayne

After working as a teacher in South Korea, Spain, the UK and China, I returned to the UK to pursue a PhD in Education. My main research interests include, but are not limited to student experience, cross-cultural learning, transnational education, the internationalisation of HE and international student mobility.

# **USING STUDENT VOICE TO DEVELOP FEEDBACK TO ENHANCE LEARNING**

**Belinda Ferguson**

## **Abstract**

The concept of Assessment for Learning has been established within education and is recognised a valuable process for improving student learning. This research focuses on the process of providing feedback to students. It involved gaining the perception of secondary school students on the feedback they receive for a number of subjects in the curriculum. The data identified whilst students recognised the mechanism of feedback, its usefulness and opportunities to use it were limited. Student views were further used to review and redesign feedback in one subject and following an evaluation of this, they reported how the changes had improved the quality of the feedback, and their motivation had increased.

This research has been valuable in establishing students' views on the feedback they receive through questionnaires and interviews and have revealed valuable insights into the minds of the students which have been pivotal in influencing change to practice in the classroom.

Key words: feedback, assessment for learning.

## **Introduction**

The education sector is highly influenced by political policy placing pressure on schools to raise students' achievement measured through external testing (Charteris and Smardon 2015). Previous work by Black et al (2003) identified formative assessment as a valuable tool in assessing student performance resulting in significant and substantial improvements in learning and achievement. The seminal research by Black and Wiliam (1998) has led to the phrase Assessment for Learning which remains widely recognised in education today. The principle of Assessment for Learning is centred around the design and development of learning strategies that provide opportunities for formative assessment of student learning and feedback by teachers.

Whilst Assessment for Learning is embedded in schools' curricula and enables teachers to consider a variety of mechanisms to assess student learning, the way that student feedback is presented is vital to promote success. Hattie and Timperley (2007) describe feedback as being a process of steps, but the effectiveness of these is dependent on how it is positioned and received by the students. Peterson and Irving (2008) recognised there was limited research on the student perceptions of feedback, with much being written about it from a teacher perspective. This research project centres around the use of students' views of their feedback as a platform to improve its design, and to examine the impact it has on student learning. Using a combination of questionnaires and interviews with students and staff in a secondary school, data was collected and used to review the role of feedback in student learning.

## **Method**

Research location: The school, in which this research was undertaken, is located in a rural area in the East Midlands. It was placed in Special Measures by Ofsted in April 2014, who judged the quality of teaching and the achievement of pupils to be inadequate. The development of more robust mechanisms to assess student learning and provide support for students to improve their performance became a priority. Further analysis of recent Ofsted reports for East Midlands schools identifies that effective feedback strategies is an area that

all schools need to develop further, suggesting a wider problem. Furthermore, the importance of developing effective and appropriate feedback strategies is timely since national curriculum levels previously used to assess student performance have been removed, requiring schools to develop their own assessment systems to determine learning and progress (DfE 2014).

Research approach: The research centred around gaining student perception, locating it within a qualitative paradigm as it focused on understanding the students' experiences and feelings (Newby 2010). An action research approach was developed which sought to identify the problem, seek a solution and evaluate the effectiveness of this on student learning (Cohen, Manion & Morrison 2007). The research was carried out in situ and was collaborative by involving 2 of the teachers in the school (Opie 2004). Through this, the teachers could benefit from the experience and make use of the findings to develop their practice (Koshy 2005). This involved a series of steps:

- Year 8 pupils were consulted on their perceptions of feedback, initially through the use of a questionnaire. The questionnaire sought to explore the student views on feedback generally – whether they liked receiving feedback, what they found valuable and what would improve the feedback they received. It then captured their views on the feedback in 8 subjects: English, maths, science, geography, history, French, technology and art. These subjects were chosen to represent the broad curriculum that students followed. For these subjects, the questions focused on the use of written, verbal and peer feedback, the main areas of feedback determined by the Assessment Reform Group (Gardner 2006). The questions explored whether students felt they received feedback in these subjects, how they valued it and whether they were able to use it. The students gave their views using a likert scale with 4 options of response (Always, Mostly, Sometimes, Never). 4 points were chosen to avoid students from selecting the mid option. 152 pupils participated in the survey.
- 3 months after the questionnaire, interviews were carried out with 8 pupils (4 male, 4 female) to discuss their feedback specifically in art as the teacher was reviewing the strategies that she currently used and saw this as an opportunity to engage the pupils in this review. Although the pupils were in year 9, they had been in the year 8 cohort when the questionnaire was completed.
- Further data was collected from pupils in years 7, 8, 9, 10 and 11 to gain their views on the feedback they receive from just one teacher who taught English and Law. This was done at the teacher's request. 111 students completed questionnaires for English, 47 students completed the questionnaire for law. Students only undertake law in year 10 and 11, some of these students were also taught English by the same teacher so could have completed the questionnaire twice.
- To follow this up, interviews were then carried up with 7 of the students (2 males year 10, 2 females year 10 and 3 females year 7) to explore their views in more detail. A greater number of students were invited to participate but did not attend.
- Nine months after the original interviews took place with the art students, the same students were interviewed again to ascertain their views of the changes that had been implemented.
- Both the art and English/Law teacher were interviewed to explore how the research had influenced their practice.

The data from the year 8 questionnaires was presented to teaching staff in the school and the implications were discussed with them, and they were presented with an opportunity to use this data to inform their practice. However, only the art and English/law teacher participated in further research.

Student perception has been used as a platform to inform a review of feedback processes as it is an area that is under-researched and needed (Peterson and Irving 2008). Teachers are familiar with the subject and know what needs to be done to close the gap in the learning (Sadler 1989). Gaining the student view enabled teachers to review feedback from a students' perspective and thereby design feedback that helps students to close this gap.

The data was analysed manually, looking at common and recurring themes and trends and comparing male and female responses and the similarities and differences between subjects. The questionnaire data was used to inform the questions for the subsequent student interviews. Initial analysis suggested that the perceptions between males and females differed, therefore it was decided to interview them separately. Interviews were undertaken with the students with the aim to gain a greater understanding of the student perceptions, building on their previous responses in the questionnaires (Opie 2004). These were done as groups to reduce any intimidation the students may have felt if they were interviewed alone, giving them more confidence to speak when they were with their peers (Efron & Ravid 2013). The students who were invited to the interview were drawn from a range of students to be representative of the cohort. This was achieved by inviting student who were at differing attainment levels for the subjects.

## **Discussion**

The data from the year 8 questionnaires identified that students liked to receive feedback on their work and that they considered that the purpose of the feedback was to improve their performance, to know that they had improved and identify how to progress to the next level. This suggests that students understood the importance of the role that feedback could have in their learning, but further data reveals that the feedback was not necessarily fulfilling this role. More males than females identified that feedback was helpful to show that they have improved (51% of males compared with 28% of females). This was also evident in the interviews with the 2 male English year 10 students who said that feedback was important "so they knew what they were doing well and then did not have to worry about it". Students were not generally motivated by their feedback as only 27% of students said that they found their feedback motivating. When asked what would make their feedback more useful, both males and females felt that having examples and time to do improvements would be the most helpful. The data from the questionnaires revealed there was a split between the responses from students for the questions, as some students chose 'Always' for a question, with others choosing 'Never' for the same question. This variance in the same question may be explained by different teacher's approaches, but even when the teacher was consistent (English/law teacher), there was still a split for some questions. This may be due to lower achieving students taking a more passive approach to their feedback and therefore not valuing it in the same way as higher achieving students (Havnes et al 2012). There were differences to the extent in which students regarded their feedback in the different subjects, with English being recognised as having good approaches to feedback which was then borne out in the subsequent English questionnaires and student interviews and has also since been confirmed by Ofsted. Technology and science showed a regular occurrence of feedback that was not valued. However, across all the subjects, peer feedback was not regarded highly as a useful mechanism. Similarly, across most of the subjects, even when students recognised that they received verbal and written feedback, they felt that they did not always have opportunities to use it. This could have influenced their perception of the usefulness of feedback. Wiliam (2011) argues that without feedback, assessment loses its value: 'the best designed feedback is useless if it is not acted upon: without a system to use

feedback, it is just information' (p.12). Blanchard (2009) states action is required to prevent feedback from being ignored and more recently, Hattie (2014) identified that the effectiveness of feedback is limited if it is provided in a vacuum and students are not given the opportunities to use it. This position was confirmed by the questionnaire data which appeared to indicate that even though students could identify why and when they received feedback, they did not tend to find it useful. Although it was school policy for students to be required give a response to their feedback, when the data was presented to them, teachers reported that students gave inappropriate responses, or the teachers did not have time to revisit the responses. This is similar to Black et al's findings in 2003 when they reported feedback was rarely re-visited in subsequent work. It emerged from discussions with the teachers that in some cases the responses were required from the students were closed questions enabling students to easily provide a 'yes' or 'no' to. To make the feedback more useful, it was recommended teachers stipulate an action that students should undertake to engage with the feedback. Blanchard (2009) suggests that action can include students re-working or making specified changes to their work. The English/law teacher already used this system in her approach, which had been highly regarded by Ofsted and the student views showed that they valued the feedback they received and were able to use it. This supports Wiliam's (2011) assertion in order to be effective and have value, feedback must be acted on.

If students are given the opportunity to use their feedback, they could be more motivated by it. For the English/law questionnaires, a greater proportion of students considered their feedback was useful than in the year 8 questionnaires. Correspondingly, a greater proportion of students were motivated by their feedback, although females consistently reported a higher level of motivation than males across all year groups for the English/law teacher. For males, feedback was more important to provide re-assurance that they were improving or good at their work. This suggests that the role of feedback for males and females differs to some extent. In the interviews with the English students, males reported that they liked more detailed comments from the teacher but to receive them less often, whilst the females liked feedback to be more instant and frequent. However, the numbers of students who were interviewed was low, so conclusions cannot be drawn from this data.

Most of the students identified feedback to be in the form of written comments in their workbooks. A low proportion of students recognised feedback through questions in class. Males recognised the teacher answering questions as a form of feedback slightly more than the females (28% compared with 12%), however, the responses from males and females on whether verbal feedback is explained and if they were able to use it was similar for both sexes. During the interviews for both English and art, students were asked what factors influenced how they received their feedback, they identified the classroom environment as having a big influence as a noisy room makes it more difficult to engage with the feedback, and they also identified that the end of the day is not a good time. They also identified that the relationship with the teacher is important – they are more likely to receive the feedback well if they trusted the teacher. This could be another explanation as to why there is a variation in the views of the students, the relationship and trust with the teacher could be influential in how the feedback is regarded and valued. The students also reported they are more likely to accept the teacher's comments if they are in line with the students' own views. This suggests the students may actively disregard the feedback if they did not agree with it. Developing students' abilities in self-evaluation would seem to be important in helping students align their thinking with that of their teacher. The art teacher had embedded this in her revised design which was received well by the students.

In the first interview with the art students, which occurred when students were now at the beginning of year 9, students said that they felt their written feedback was useful but were not always able to apply it to other projects. Most were motivated by the feedback, one female stated 'it makes me feel happy' but students then made suggestions as to how it

could be improved, including a process of self-evaluation. When questioned about the requirement to respond to their feedback, students could identify why this was included, and noted that it did make them think about their work, with the higher attaining students showing the greatest enthusiasm. Some students felt the question was too generic and one student said that he did not like the pressure to 'have to write a response all the time, but just wanted time to think'. The students made additional comments and recommendations about the process which the art teacher then incorporated into revisions of the process. When re-interviewed 9 months later, students reported the changes were helpful and it was easier to identify what they could do to improve their work. The format used by the teacher was clear and the self-evaluation students were required to complete made them all think about their work in more depth. They all reported that the feedback that they currently received was motivating as it was easy to understand, it clearly identified positive achievements. These responses given by the students demonstrated how the student perception has been used effectively to inform the teacher's practice and improve student learning (Charteris & Smardon 2015, Flutter and Rudduck 2004). When interviewing the art teacher, she commented the student views were valuable in her re-design of the feedback. She had wanted to make changes and the student perception had given her the information she needed, and when added to her own knowledge and experience, provided a research-informed and practice based process.

## **Impact**

The student perception has enabled teachers to see how feedback is viewed from a student perspective. It has highlighted the importance of requiring an action with feedback giving students the opportunity to actively engage with, and use, the feedback. The teachers are now required to state an action rather than a question, which has been amended in the school policy.

Gaining the student views has been pivotal for the art teacher to re-design her process and has improved the motivation and engagement of the students. This teacher has also been personally inspired by this research and intends to continue with educational research in the form of a master's degree. The English/law teacher who has since been appointed as a lead practitioner explained the students' views were reassuring that she was 'getting it right'. They correspond with the views of Ofsted and of senior management so she felt they provided her with a full picture. She also said that it 'made it worthwhile spending the time on generating the feedback as it was clear the students valued it'. In her role as lead practitioner, the teacher has shared the data obtained from the questionnaires and interviews with colleagues to illustrate that students want the feedback and why it is important to provide it effectively.

## **Conclusion**

This research has produced data which has enabled teachers to gain an insight into student views of their feedback, it has identified students are receptive to feedback and understand its role, but there are a number of factors influencing how the feedback is valued and received. To have value, the feedback needs to be used and applied so students can benefit from it. Even though the best feedback may be carefully designed, there are other factors which can impact on how it is received, such as the relationship with the teacher and when it is delivered. Whilst these factors cannot always be controlled it is worth considering these when exploring feedback for learning. Gaining the student views has increased the confidence of the teachers involved, and been reassuring that the processes they adopt are valued and help students improve their learning (Flutter and Rudduck 2004, Flutter 2007). Further research will explore if the student views change as the students progress through the school by gaining their views in year 10.

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### **Biography**

Belinda Ferguson is a Principal Lecturer in Education Studies at Nottingham Trent University. She has a background of teacher education in both further and higher education. She values exploring the student academic experiences to inform and influence practice. She has also researched and written about adult learners.

# **AN ETHNOGRAPHIC CASE STUDY OF THE LINGUISTIC PRACTICES OF NEWLY ARRIVED MIGRANT CHILDREN IN A CYPRIOT PRIMARY SCHOOL**

**Alexandra Georgiou**

## **Abstract**

The paper focuses on the linguistic practices of migrant children who are in transition in the Cypriot primary sector. It will emphasize on the ways the educational sector in Cyprus tries to grapple with the challenges posed by waves of migration into Western Europe provoked by ongoing war in the Middle East. The paper will present how the international literature informs this phenomenon and will draw on concepts of the sociocultural theory of learning (Vygotsky, 1987) to uncover how children's practices are mediated and used as tools for language learning. The paper will present the ethnographic approach for classroom research (Allwright, and Bailey, 1991) and will give some outline on some approaches of data analysis.

## **Introduction**

The most significant change in migration patterns in Cyprus in recent times is the arrival of new migrants. Over the last four years, Cyprus has experienced a new wave of migration. This arrival is highly associated with Middle East's conflicts, poverty and persecution. After the entrance in the European Union in 2004, Cyprus has developed a multicultural character in civic life, job market and of course in education. While the Ministry of Education in Cyprus tries to support minorities under the framework of multicultural education, it fails to critically address the multilingual challenges created by the arrival of the new migrants. The newly arrived migrant children are most of the times marginalized and struggle to learn the new language not only because of the linguistic differences but because of the difficulties of their life journey. This paper will emphasize on the multicultural character of Cyprus and especially in primary sector. It will give an overview of the current literature investigating linguistic practices of minority children when acquiring a new language through sociocultural lenses. Drawing on concepts from the sociocultural theory of learning (Vygotsky, 1987), this case study aims to uncover how children's practices are mediated and used as tools for language learning. The paper follows an ethnographic approach as it aims to understand participants' experiences from their point of view (*emic perspective*) through the use of: participant observations, interviews with the focus children and teachers, extensive fieldnotes, collection of physical artifacts and one or two classroom recordings. Some of the proposed approaches for analysis will also be introduced.

## **Setting the scene**

The Greek-Cypriot community comprises the largest ethnic community of the island's population. They are thought to have strong linguistic bonds with Ancient Greeks, who settled on the island during the second half of the second millennium B.C. Horrocks (2010) in his book mentions that during the 15th century the educated Cypriots used a variation between the vernacular, but with 'assimilated elements from written Greek' (*ibid*, p. 362). The linguistic situation in Cyprus is bidialectal (Pavlou and Papapavlou, 1998) and due to this situation and the encouragement from the Ministry of Education and Culture (MoEC) for systematic use of Standard Modern Greek (SMG) (Ioannidou and Sophocleous, 2010), many studies in Cyprus have focused on the use of Greek Cypriot Dialect (GCD) and SMG in classroom setting (Papapavlou 1998; Ioannidou, 2009). In contrast, due to the growing number of bilingual and bicultural children in Cyprus, Fincham-Louis's thesis (2012) examined bilingual speaking children's perceptions on language and identity. These children had one Cypriot and one non-Cypriot parent and therefore, they already had some idea of what to expect when they arrived at school. Whilst these studies have been very influential in

the field of language learning in Cyprus, there seems to be a gap in the examination of the linguistic practices of not settled children. The European Commission (2013, p. 28) defines Newly Arrived Migrant children as 'first-generation migrants' and in contrast to settled children, they have more difficulties when it comes to language, culture and educational experience. This means it will take time for these children to be able to express themselves in any code they feel comfortable with.

Migration and colonisation led to a multilingual environment to which individuals have become increasingly exposed. As a result, the Russian, Lebanese, Filipino, Bulgarian, Polish, Syrian and Pakistani languages are now visible in schools and in society. However, SMG is the state's official language to be followed in the mainstream education. If the children do not speak it, then their different linguistic repertoires become visible. Consequently, it is important to examine newly arrived migrants' linguistic practices within the school domain so as to understand how children learn the new language and thus, be able to support them effectively.

### **Educational context for linguistic minorities in Cyprus**

The educational system of Cyprus is highly centralised, with the Ministry of Education and Culture (MoEC) controlling all educational and administrative matters. With all strategies monitored by the MoEC, the responsibility and authority of school head-teachers and local school boards to develop effective changes in school practice seems to be less developed in Cyprus in comparison to other countries (Angelides and Leigh, 2004). These changes are especially needed at this period of time due to the new waves of migration. Shortly before Cyprus' accession to the EU (2001-2002), MoEC used for the first time the rhetoric of multicultural education to acknowledge the diversity within Cypriot society (Philippou, 2007). Multicultural education, therefore, became the predominant framework through which schools in Cyprus would be reformed in response to educational provision for foreign students (Angelides, Stylianou and Leigh, 2003). Despite the Ministry arguing for the need to implement new strategies, migrant children remain marginalised within mainstream school settings (Papamichael, 2011). A study of the European Commission (2013) stated that in Cyprus, teachers, parents and local communities are largely left without clear guidance regarding the integration of migrant children. The evidence suggests that those policies that have been put forward have simply to satisfy the European Union's language policy remit, rather than being wholeheartedly supported by the government.

Consequently, language policies still need to be reshaped in order to protect minority languages, as these children after their traumatic ordeals now need to learn the language of their host country.

### **Research Aims and Questions**

The aim of this study is to fill a gap in the existing literature by critically reviewing previous studies and contributing with empirical data. Also, I aim to provide evidence that would stimulate new thinking around policies regarding learning support for newly arrived migrant children.

The following questions will guide this study:

1. What are the migrant children's linguistic repertoires?
2. What are the linguistic/communicative practices of migrant children as Greek language learners in the classroom domain?

3. How are these communicative resources used by children and their teachers to facilitate migrant children's learning of Standard Modern Greek and the Greek Cypriot dialect in the classroom?

### **Taking a sociocultural approach to language learning**

According to Sociocultural Theory (SCT), 'all human-made objects (material and symbolic) are artifacts' (Swain, Kinnear and Steinman, 2010, p.2). Language, among other symbolic tools, such as music, arithmetic systems and art (Lantolf, 2000), is used as a mediation tool for the learning process. Considering language as a culturally, socially and historically constructed tool, provides a useful framework to approach language learning with an emic perspective. That is, a perspective that places emphasis on participants' values and behaviours and allows them to construct their own learning. Kohler's (2015) case study investigated the role of three teachers as mediators in children's language learning. Some of their mediating practices were the use of open ended questioning, interpretation, comparison and reflection. The results showed that the more the teachers perceived language as a cultural social practice the more they were building connections between the known and the new language. Vygotsky (1978), in his work *Mind in Society*, referred to the social element of learning, which occurs through interaction and specifically, when assistance is given. Moreover, when teachers provide information to children it means they use a range of tools to mediate the learning process. That is, mediation occurs during a dialogic interaction. The next paragraph explains Vygotsky's (1978) concept of the zone of proximal development.

### **Assistance in language learning**

Vygotsky (1978) defines the Zone of Proximal Development as follows: 'the distance between the actual developmental level as determined by independent problem solving and the level of potential development as determined through problem solving under adult guidance or in collaboration with more capable peers' (*ibid*, p. 86). According to Vygotsky, the area where children explore knowledge according to their abilities but still require support, is the zone of proximal development (ZPD). When children have benefited from the assistance provided in the ZPD, they can become independent, being able to construct their knowledge. Wood, Bruner and Ross (1976) refer to this process as scaffolding. This occurs when 'an adult or expert helps somebody who is less adult or less expert' (*ibid* p. 89). In their paper, these researchers explained how this notion of assistance could be put into practice for teachers, by describing how young children could solve a block reconstruction problem when guided. In a classroom setting, the teacher's role is to assist students to refine their thinking and make it more effective. However, not only does the teacher have the access to the knowledge, the role of the other students participating in the classroom is of equal importance (Toohey, 2000).

Toohey (2000) also reported the social element of learning given that some of the children in her study successfully managed to grasp the 'knowledge', in this case pertaining to the learning of a new language, through their interaction with their teachers and the other students. Consequently, her study is an example of how learning is linked with the establishment of social relations that children create with each other in order to participate actively in classroom practices. Despite Toohey's goal being to study how children of minority backgrounds learn a new language, she did not provide data relating to newly arrived migrants.

### **Linguistic repertoires and linguistic practices of minority children**

The terms linguistic repertoire, code repertoire, and verbal repertoire are used more or less identically to refer to the total range of codes which members of a speech community have available for their linguistic interaction' (Kachru, 1982, p. 25). This sociolinguistic concept of

repertoire is associated with the work of John Gumperz, first, in his work *Linguistic and social interaction in two communities* (1964) and then in *Language in Social Groups* (1971), where he used it to describe the practices of code switching among bilinguals in North India and Norway. Consequently, repertoire is a wider term than the term language as it describes the various ways that a user can draw on for meaning making. In this paper, by linguistic repertoire, I refer to the different codes that children rely on for meaning making.

Pennycook's (2010, p.11) definition of practices is that they are 'bundles of activities that are the central organization of social life' and when it comes to capturing the different ways that language is used among a community, we refer to linguistic practices.

### **Qualitative approach for research**

In social research there are two main paradigms that distinguish the research that will be conducted: the normative and interpretive paradigms. 'The interpretive paradigm in contrast to its normative counterpart is characterized by a concern for the individual' (Cohen, Manion and Morrison, 2011, p.17). By which I mean that qualitative research follows the interpretive paradigm, which according to Denzin and Lincoln (2005) 'is a situated activity that locates the observer in the world' (*ibid*, p.3). My study is located within the qualitative approach as this will allow me to interpret my participants lived experiences and practices in a classroom setting in a way that a quantitative approach would not enable me to do. The ethos that lies behind a qualitative approach is that the analysis of the data is based on the researcher's interpretation, whereby she/he will use her/his own values and positions in relation to the social phenomenon being studied (Dornyei, 2007; Stake, 1995). Qualitative researchers seek to address questions regarding how social reality is created and constructed by considering their participants' perspective in the analysis. In this case, this study meets the characteristics of a qualitative approach of research as it seeks to interpret the practices of a group of newly arrived migrant children as these occur naturally in a classroom context.

### **Ethnography in practice**

Delamont and Atkinson (1995, p.15) define ethnography in education as 'research on and in educational institutions based on participant observation and/or permanent recordings of everyday life in naturally occurring settings'. Originally, educational ethnography started from the discipline of cultural anthropology focusing on the ethnic differences in classroom (Gordon, Holland and Lahelma, 2007). However this study will follow the ethnographic approach applied in educational settings (Hammersley, 1993) with a concern on language learning in the classroom, especially for the bilingual children. This kind of ethnographic work will allow me to obtain an insider view by observing and describing the daily routines and language practices of a group of children. Also, ethnography follows the interpretive paradigm, which aims to map the phenomenon and present its different realities by providing thick descriptions. As Harklau (2005) pointed out, culture can be found in any bounded unit, such as a classroom (Toohey, 2000; Lytra, 2007; Spotti, 2007) organisations (Gillham, 2000) and families (Heath, 2000). Consequently, we can refer to 'the ethnography of the language classroom' (Dornyei, 2007, p. 130), through which the aim is to provide thick descriptions of the children's multiple meanings regarding their learning during school time. Drawing on multiple meanings, my study follows the ethnographers' route of the emic perspective (Delamont and Atkinson, 1995) on language learning.

I intend to visit the school on an everyday basis for 6 to 8 weeks in the classrooms where the majority of newly arrived migrant children will be, as a classroom helper. I intend to spend time in the playground chatting with the children to develop a comprehensive understanding of their personalities and friendships. I believe that this kind of observation will make me cognisant of the context and consequently, of their learning process. At this stage, I am proposing to employ five data collection tools: participant observation, field notes, recorded

interactions in the classroom, interviews with the teachers as well as the focal children and finally, the collection of physical artifacts from the setting.

### **Approaches on data analysis**

The form of analysis that I am planning to use in this study is based on the sociological discourse analysis approach. This means that the discourse that will be produced within the classroom context will be seen as a product of communicative interaction. Following a more sociological analysis on language learning will allow me to understand in which ways knowledge is perceived and any patterns that the children develop to foster their language learning. There is a need of looking beyond the linguistic features of the language of the learner and focus on the ways the learner develops practices and strategies so as to be able to learn and communicate through a new medium of instruction (Duff, 2007).

### **Conclusion**

In this paper I have presented the multicultural situation of Cyprus and specifically the situation in the primary sector, which is the focus of this study. The participants of this study will be children who recently arrived in Cyprus and aim to learn the new language, which in this case is Greek. Taking a sociocultural approach on language learning, this paper has briefly shown what the international literature has to say on the language learning of newly arrived migrant children. Through this literature review I have shown that there is a gap in the examination of the linguistic practices of not settled children. Therefore, I aim to provide evidence that would stimulate new thinking around policies regarding learning support for newly arrived migrant children through this ethnographic case study.

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## **Biography**

I am a PhD student at UCL researching the linguistic practices of refugee children in a Cypriot primary school. My study draws on the sociocultural theory of learning and it is ethnographically oriented. Since 2016 I have been working at the University of Westminster as a Research Assistant for a project investigating how new forms of language emerge among urban minorities with Cypriot Greek in London.

# **MAKING CONNECTIONS IN WORKPLACE LEARNING: WHY WE SHOULD TAKE HUMOUR SERIOUSLY**

**Jon Harrison**

## **Abstract**

The success of the students' learning experiences within practice learning settings has been found to be heavily dependent on communication and the formation of effective relationships between the students and their mentors (Spouse, 2001). One aspect of communication that may influence the formation of successful relationships and occurs every day across a variety of practice learning settings, is that of humour.

This paper considers the nature and function of humour in educational settings and explores the current knowledge about the contribution that humour may make to students' learning. Despite the recognition that humour can influence learning, both socially, as well as psychologically, it has been found that there is very little research into the contribution that humour may have to the student nurse's learning within the mentor-student relationship. The paper therefore concludes that humour should be taken seriously and that further research is needed in this area.

## **Introduction**

After first considering the definition of humour, this paper will briefly outline the main theories that exist in relation to humour. Next, a review of humour within educational settings will be conducted, exploring the direct and indirect links between humour and learning. Finally, the discussion will turn to consider more specifically, the nature of nurse education and the contribution that humour may have for those student nurses who are learning to nurse within the practice setting.

## **Definition of Humour**

Humour is known to be an innate and universal aspect of human experience, across all ages and cultures. Indeed, Martin (2007) recognises that laughter is indistinguishable from one culture to another and others, such as Provine (2000), have found that children who are born both deaf and blind are reported to laugh, despite the fact that they may have never seen or heard others laugh. Laughter, though, is not the only component of humour; humour is an enormously complex and difficult to define phenomenon. Martin (2007) recognises the broad nature of the term and notes that the definition of humour does not just relate to the humorous behaviour of laughter. Instead, Martin (2007) proposes that the nature of humour can be divided into four essential psychological components: the social context, the cognitive-perceptual process, an emotional response and finally the vocal-behavioural expression of laughter. When these components culminate together, humour can be defined as 'an emotional response of mirth in a social context that is elicited by a perception of playful incongruity and is expressed through smiling and laughter' (Martin 2007).

## **Theories of Humour**

The concept of humour has been much discussed and debated over centuries and Foot and McCreadie (2006) note that over one hundred theories have been developed in relation to the phenomenon. Critchley (2002: 2) recognises the difficulty in exploring the underpinning philosophy of humour, stating 'the fact remains that humour is a nicely impossible object for a philosopher'.

Nonetheless, consideration of the main theories in relation to humour can help to bring some order to our understanding of the phenomena, both in relation to the nature of humour, as well as to the general functions it serves. Despite the number of theories recognised to exist in relation to this complex phenomenon, there is general agreement within the literature that are three theories at the forefront of the debate. See table one for an overview of these theories.

#### Incongruity theory (Kant 1724-1804)

The punchline or resolution is at odds with the set up – an incongruity. The humour is understood when the incongruity is resolved. More of an emphasis on the cognitive component, rather than the social or emotional functions.

#### Superiority theory (Plato, Aristotle and later, Thomas Hobbes 1588-1679)

“A sudden glory of some eminency in ourselves, compared with infirmity of others” (Hobbes). We laugh at the misfortunes of others as this allows us to assert our superiority in relation to the shortcomings of others.

#### Release/relief/psychoanalytic theory (Freud 1856-1938)

A way in which people can release ‘excess’ nervous, pent up energy in a socially acceptable way. A way of relief, a way of coping with issues that may be embarrassing or that we are reluctant to discuss – masking other motives and desires.

Table one – An Overview of the Main Humour Theories

### **Humour in the Classroom Setting**

The overwhelming majority of literature found in relation to the use of humour in education, considers learning that takes place within ‘the classroom’ setting. The majority of this literature highlights the positive outcomes that result when humour is used in the classroom setting, such as the positive relationship between the use of humour and student learning (Ziv 1988, Gorham and Christophe 1990, Wanzer and Frymier 1999, Wanzer, Frymier and Irwin 2010) as well as teacher evaluations (Bryant et al. 1980, Wanzer and Frymier 1999, Torok, McMorris and Lin 2004). Furthermore, the use of humour in the class room has been found to create an enjoyable learning environment (Ulloth 2002), where students are less anxious and stressed (Chabeli 2008) and more willing to participate.

Others though, such as Martin (2007), have noted the paradoxical nature of humour where it is recognised that although the appropriate use may have positive outcomes within education, the inappropriate use may result in derision and social exclusion, thereby damaging the learning experience. Indeed, Torok et al. (2004), as well as many others such as Wanzer and Frymier (1999) and Wanzer et al. (2010), have recognised that not all forms of humour appear to be appropriate for the classroom. Torok et al. (2004) for example, addressed the limitations to using humour in their survey, with the students in this sample most commonly stating that the main limitation was the potential to be offensive, especially when the humour is of a sexual or ethnic nature.

### **The Direct Link between Humour and Learning**

A number of studies have attempted to demonstrate a direct link, or a causal relationship, between humour and learning. Indeed within educational settings, Wanzer et al. (2010: 2) states that ‘many would argue that the most important reason to use humour is to enhance

learning'. The main hypothesis within these studies is that when teaching material is accompanied by humour of some sort, it is better learned and remembered than information that is presented in a more serious manner. In an attempt to demonstrate the correlation between humour and learning, a number of early studies such as those Gruner (1967 and 1976), Kennedy (1972), Kilpela (1961) and Taylor (1964), cited in Gorham and Cristophel (1990), therefore undertook experimental research designs in order to test this hypothesis. Gorham and Christophel (1990) note how these experimental studies followed similar procedures, whereby students were taught with various types of humour and then subsequently tested in order to determine whether there was any difference in retention and recall of information. Interestingly though, the large majority of these early studies failed to show a positive relationship between humour and learning.

Several researchers have however recognised the equivocal nature of these studies and they have been criticised by researchers such as Ziv (1988), Gorham and Christophel (1990) and Wanzer and Frymier (1999) for a number of reasons. For example, Ziv (1988) argued that the duration of the humorous interaction was often of too short a duration to be effective, with some studies having a duration of 10 minutes or less. Furthermore, some of these studies were not conducted within a classroom setting and therefore the artificial experimental setting did not reflect the reality of an academic situation (Wanzer and Frymier 1999). Ziv (1988) also notes that the majority of these studies did not determine whether the receivers verified the humorous stimuli as being humorous or not. There are also difficulties in comparing and generalising the results of these studies due to a number of factors relating to both the type, as well as the way in which the humour was presented. For example, Wanzer and Frymier (1999) note that different levels of retention could have been a result of the different types of humour used within the experiment as well as differences in the point at which the humour was used. Additionally, the variety of teaching formats used within these studies may have had an influence of the retention of information, rather than the use of humour itself.

Later studies have since found more compelling evidence that humour positively influences learning. For example, Ziv's (1988) undertook a randomised controlled trial in which students undertaking a statistics course were randomly allocated into two groups, one that received a course using humorous interventions and the other allocated as the control group. On subsequent testing, it was found that the humour group performed better in the exam when compared to the control group, by approximately 10%. Another study by Wanzer and Frymier (1999) found that students perceptions of effective learning and teaching behaviours was positively related to students perceptions of teacher humour orientation. Later, Wanzer et al. (2010: 13) also found that instructional related humour correlated positively with student learning. The explanation that is given for this positive correlation is that instructional related humour enhances 'student's motivation by being relevant and increasing students' ability to process information in clarifying the content'.

### **The Indirect Links between Humour and Learning**

Whilst several studies appear to have shown a direct causal link between humour and learning, overall the empirical evidence remains mixed and the findings equivocal. This is mainly due to methodological discrepancies between studies. Due to the difficulties in demonstrating a direct link between humour and learning, a number of other studies have adopted a more qualitative approach within their studies, in order to explore further students' experiences of humour when learning. The findings from these studies suggest that learning is more likely to be enhanced as a result of a complex range of factors, of which humour may be just one element. Instead then, it is suggested that the psycho-social influences or functions of humour alluded to within the humour theories table above may in-directly account for enhanced learning experiences.

## **Social Influences**

A number of studies have recognised the role humour has on the context or environment in which learning occurs, especially in relation to the social nature of learning (Chabeli, 2008). For example, participants in Ulloth's (2002) and Chabeli's (2008) studies recognised that humour helped create a more sociable and relaxed atmosphere, which helped encourage group cohesion and dialogue. Participants also identified that humour strengthens the social relationship between the learner and the teacher, resulting in a learning experience which becomes a collaborative and cooperative venture and one in which 'both the teacher and the learner become jointly responsible for a process in which they all grow' (Chabeli 2008: 55). This finding corroborates that of Torok et al. (2004), who also recognised the way in which the use of humour made the teacher appear to be more appealing and approachable to students. The participants in Chabeli's (2008: 54) study gave an example of this by stating: 'the more laughing, the smaller distance between the learners and the teacher'.

A number of researchers, such as Torok et al. (2004) and Gorham and Christophel (1990) have recognised the relationship between the use of humour in the classroom and the feelings that students have about their learning experience. These studies found that those teachers who used humour within their teaching tended to be evaluated more positively by students as they were rated as being more effective and have better delivery. Gorham and Christophel (1990) recognised humour as an important immediacy behaviour that results in positive perception of instructors and that may in turn, facilitate learning. Those teachers with higher levels of immediacy, were associated with higher levels of enjoyment, positive attitudes and levels of perceived learning. Interestingly though, where the use of humour has been seen to motivate student learning, the converse has also been found in that students become demotivated when teachers lack humour use in the classroom (Gorham and Christophel, 1992).

## **Psychological Influences**

The participants in Chabeli's (2008) study, as well as many others such as Ulloth (2002) discussed the positive influence that humour had on alleviating tension and anxiety that may occur within the learning environment, thereby helping to enhance students' learning. Chabeli's (2008) study recognised, on a number of occasions, the ways in which humour 'creates a relaxed atmosphere', 'reduces anxiety and tension', whereby 'learners feel safe, at ease and secure' and do not feel 'intimidated or threatened'. Whilst Chabeli's (2008) is not the first to recognise the relationship between the use of humour and reduction in stress and anxiety, this is an important consideration in nurse education due to the stressful nature of the course. Chabeli's (2008) argues that the creation of a relaxed, non-threatening environment, in which students are free from intimidation and fear, is vital in enabling essential learning skills such as critical thinking.

## **Learning to Nurse in the Practice Setting**

The review of the literature has so far focussed on the contribution that humour may have to learning in the more general education and often classroom based environment, rather than that of learning to nurse in practice. However, the complexities of learning to nurse in the practice setting are recognised by Spouse (1998: 345, 2001) as being very different to that of classroom learning and proposes that learning to nurse involves 'a complex interaction of affective, practical and cognitive factors'.

Furthermore, there also appears to be agreement in the literature that nursing and learning to nurse is stressful. Although it is recognised that students on other courses do experience stress, it has been found that nursing students experience far greater levels of stress in comparison (Jones and Johnston 1997). Whilst not only having to fulfil the academic

requirements of the course, nursing students also have to simultaneously overcome the complex and stressful demands of learning and working in the clinical practice environment. Whilst studies have found that there are a number of different causes of stress for nursing students, the most common reason cited is the relationship between students and their mentors (Gibbons, Dempster and Moutray 2008, Timmins et al. 2011)

This finding is even perhaps more pertinent, when considered in relation to findings from other studies such as Spouse (1998) and Levett-Jones et al. (2009) which explored the influence of the mentor-student relationship on the student's learning experience. Both of these studies found that the mentor-student relationship is indeed, one of the most important factors in determining the success of the student nurse's learning experience.

When these findings are considered in relation to the stressful and challenging nature of learning to nurse in practice, coupled with the recognition of the importance of the mentor student relationship, the potential benefits of humour when learning in practice are brought into light. Indeed, this is even more notable, when considering the widespread recognition within the previous studies reviewed, of the positive impact that humour may have of on student's level of stress and anxiety, as well as the social role humour may have in facilitating positive teacher-student relationships.

However, whilst having a sense of humour and using humour has been identified as being an important character attribute of a good mentor Gray and Smith (2000) it is surprising that very few empirical studies have explored specifically, the contribution that humour may have to the student nurse's learning within the mentor-student relationship.

Indeed, there appear to only be two, those of Nahas (1998) and Hayden-Miles (2002), that have undertaken this exploration and interestingly, both started with the same premise; the clinical educational environment is stressful and that humour may in some way influence the ability of students to cope with their learning experience whilst in clinical practice. Both and Hayden-Miles (2002) wished to explore this insight further and therefore they both used phenomenological approaches in order to explore the meaning and experiences of the use of humour for the nursing students whilst in practice.

Nahas (1998) undertook semi-structured interviews with a purposive sample of 48 Australian undergraduate nursing students. Five theme clusters from Nahas (1998) study were: being human, creating a positive clinical environment, connecting with students, facilitating learning in the clinical area and respecting personal nature of humour. It is clear that there are some similar themes here, to those of Ulloth and Chabelli. In much the same way as Ulloth (2002) and Chabelli (2008) found in the classroom, the use of humour by the clinical teachers helped create a positive learning environment, aid the formation of an effective learning relationship and helped to facilitate the student's learning. It is also unsurprising therefore, that Nahas's (1998) findings also corroborate those of Torok (2004), in that the majority of the students preferred to be supervised by mentors who had a sense of humour.

The participants in Nahas (1998) study particularly valued the use of humour by their clinical teachers, as it showed them that their clinical teacher was 'only human' and therefore had vulnerabilities and weaknesses like themselves. Nahas (1998) also notes how the students would often watch their clinical teachers' behaviours towards others in practice and they would gain a sense of the clinical teacher's genuineness and humanity from these observations. As Ulloth and Chabelli found in respect to the use of humour in the nursing classroom, the use of humour by the clinical teacher in practice helped to alleviate the student's anxieties and stress, thereby creating an environment which was conducive to the student's learning.

The use of humour by the clinical teacher led to a decrease in the social distancing between the clinical teacher and the student which, in turn, helped enable the formation of a friendship. The informants in Nahas' (1998: 669) study felt that the use of humour could lead to the development of the 'ability to relate in a warm and human way with others', although they also recognised that this friendship might only be short in duration.

The findings from Hayden-Miles (2002) study complement those of Nahas (1998). Hayden-Miles (2002) not only recognised the significant influence that humour has in fostering the mentor-student relationship, but further, identified the way in which the use of humour can be instrumental in changing the fundamental nature of this relationship. Humour, according to Hayden-Miles (2002: 423), is key to the formation of this relationship as she states: 'humour helped students and (clinical) teachers progress from merely relating to each other, to being in a relationship with one another'.

## **Conclusion**

This review of the literature on the purpose and function of humour in education suggests that humour has both direct and indirect links to learning. However, despite the recognition that humour can influence learning, both socially, as well as psychologically, it has been found that there is very little research into the contribution that humour may have to the student nurse's learning within the mentor-student relationship. This is all the more surprising when the social and psychological nature of nursing courses are considered. Furthermore, those studies that have investigated this area have all done so from the student nurse's perspective (Nahas, 1998, Hayden-Miles, 2002) and as such, none have sought to explore the nurse mentor's perspective of this phenomenon.

It is therefore proposed that further research is needed in order address these limitations and further add to this knowledge. It is also hoped that the knowledge gained from further research will help those in education and clinical practice, better understand the contribution that humour has to students' learning. It is also clear that further studies should explore the role of the clinical mentor in supporting student's learning, as this may help to enhance the mentoring experience and help inform future mentor training.

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## **Biography**

Jon Harrison is a Senior Lecturer in Children's Nursing at Birmingham City University where he co-ordinates a Nursing Practice module, on the BSc Children's Nursing Programme. In addition, Jon is also undertaking a PhD in Education at the University of Birmingham and his study is using a phenomenological approach to explore the experiences that nurse mentors and student nurses have of humour, whilst learning in practice.

# **'I LIKED IT BUT I WAS ALSO DISGUSTED': CHALLENGING BRITISH SEX AND RELATIONSHIPS EDUCATION THROUGH CHRISTIAN YOUNG PEOPLE'S EXPERIENCES OF ROMANTIC RELATIONSHIPS**

**Joshua Heyes**

## **Abstract**

The current debates in England concerning SRE (sex and relationships education) centre on the possible introduction of a compulsory curriculum, posed as a solution to a variety of issues from the spread of STIs to sexual abuse. However, evidence for the effectiveness of SRE in making positive change and mitigating negative sexual behaviours remains inconclusive. Research has been dominated by a sexual health approach that uses quantitative methods to measure health-behavioural outcomes. Education in these cases is imagined to work as an experimental 'intervention' to reduce risky actions, with little regard for the subjective meanings of various elements of sexuality. Furthermore, despite continued calls for more of an emphasis on healthy relationships as well as healthy sexuality, SRE programmes remain predominantly biological in nature with little attention given to discussions of love, commitment and communication in relationships. Finally, there is a significant lack in understandings of how SRE might relate to religious young people, whose concerns may diverge significantly from those assumed by the majority of SRE curriculum providers. In this paper I present the results of a research project on Christian young men's experiences of romantic relationships, using interpretive phenomenological analysis to build an understanding of how the faith of Christian young people shapes their romantic relationships and thus their experience of sexuality within those relational contexts. I show how the meanings created by Christians in their relationships problematize the sexual health approach to SRE and its focus on risk prevention. I also show how SRE programmes could be well-supported by holistic research that gives priority to relationships over individual actions. Finally, I suggest how, the peculiarity of the Christian faith as it applies to the challenges these young people face, presents unique and powerful challenges for the ethical frameworks underlying the contemporary debates concerning SRE.

## **Introduction**

The issues that my research engages with lie at the intersection of many difficult and controversial topics - sex, politics and religion. These controversies are hardly surprising given that discussions about sex education tend to bring to light deeply conflicting ethical frameworks. Throughout the debates about schools teaching of sexuality run deep seated beliefs about what childhood is, how society should be, and even the very purpose and meaning of sex. It is a fascination with these sorts of questions that provoked this research project.

School-based SRE in Britain has, for many years, been concerned with correcting adolescent risky sexual behaviour (Ingham, 2016). Although significant progress has been made since the introduction of the teenage pregnancy strategy in 2001, within the UK there is very limited evidence that school-based SRE itself has any kind of significant behavioural or attitudinal impact on young people (Mason-Jones et al., 2016). Daniel Wight says "The evaluations of three different sex education programmes in Britain suggest that improved sex education of a kind that can be readily sustained in British schools, whether teacher-delivered, peer-delivered, or multi-component, is unlikely to have a greater impact on sexual behaviour than that already achieved by current health promotion initiatives. The broader social factors shaping behaviour seem too influential." (Wight, 2011, 73) Elsewhere Rebecca Cameron Lewis has said that "If sexuality education is to be relevant to, and reflect the real lives of young people, then it needs to canvass all aspects of their experiences, i.e. the good, the bad, the ambivalent and shades in between" (Cameron-Lewis and Allen, 2013,

130). One repeated idea emerged from my initial literature review - that to be effective, SRE should acknowledge young people's wider socio-cultural contexts and thus be relevant to their lived experiences.

Following this, I became interested in how responding to this need might necessitate engagement with young people's religious outlook as one potentially very significant influence within this wider network of concerns. I also agreed with the findings of the recent Education Select committee report into PSHE and SRE in the UK that current SRE focuses too much on the mechanics and biology of sexuality and that a priority should be given to relationships (Parliament and Commons, 2015). As such, a qualitative focus on young people's relationships (allowing sexuality to take its place within those relationship contexts) seemed fitting.

This in brief is how I arrived at my decision to research Christian young men's experiences of romantic relationships. The question I then faced was how information of this kind could practically make a difference to addressing the question of what should be taught about sex and relationships in schools. One important debate about what should be taught concerns the teaching of both sexual pleasure and sexual risk. Pleasure as a possible pedagogical strategy has brought into question what it even means for SRE to be effective (Fine, 1988). Much of the recent scholarship in SRE has pointed out the overwhelming focus on 'sex-negative' disease and pregnancy prevention and argues for SRE that educates first for pleasure and enjoyment in sexuality (Sundaram and Sauntson, 2015; Hirst, 2013; Ma, 2016). However, Cameron-Lewis and Louisa Allen have recently challenged this dichotomy, and along with a number of scholars they have shown the importance of teaching both pleasure and risk (Cameron-Lewis and Allen, 2013). My findings will directly deal with this supposed conflict of pleasure over and against risk in SRE, suggesting a number of ways that current suggestions about teaching pleasure should be challenged and expanded by listening to the experiences of Christian young people.

This link between better contextual knowledge and SRE teaching is not just asking how we can include the concerns of a somewhat excluded minority in school-based SRE, but is about integrating these findings into current debates about what should be taught in SRE to everyone (Haggis and Mulholland, 2014; Riggs and Due, 2013). Research of this kind will expand the scope of this discussion by answering the call for knowledge about young people's lived experience of relationships and sexuality for the purposes of SRE.

With regards to my specific research, I want to argue from my findings firstly that SRE would benefit from a focus on relationships before sexuality, and that this should be approached through a broad pedagogy of sexual ethics. Secondly, I argue that current notions of pleasure (sex-positivity) and risk (sex-negativity) should be expanded to include notions of relational pleasure and relational risk. Further, for these Christian young people I show that pleasure and risk take on dimensions that go beyond the sensual and even beyond the relational to the ethical, spiritual and theological.

The research project began with an intuitive sense that the Christian faith of young people would "colour" their experiences in a unique way. So what I wanted to do was to find out specifically what it was specifically about their Christian faith that affected the way they thought about and experienced romantic relationships. So my research question was "how do Christian young people experience romantic relationships?". The methodology I used was interpretive phenomenological analysis and the method in-depth, semi structured interviews (Smith et al., 2010). I interviewed three young men aged 17-18 from the youth group I help lead, part of a large evangelical church in the Midlands. To briefly introduce my participants: Chris is a quiet and very confident young person who has a keen interest in the academic and intellectual side of his faith. Chris talks about his relationship with Ellie, which was never official yet continued over a period of two years up until Chris was 16. Phil is an enthusiastic,

sporty person with a very light hearted attitude, articulate with a keen interest in politics. He is from a committed Christian family. Phil talks about his relationship with Liz, whom he never 'officially' dated, was attracted to for a period of couple of months and has, as of about a month ago, decided not to take it further. Steve is a quiet, steady individual who is very mature in his attitudes and behaviour in comparison to his peers. He has just recently started coming to our church, although he is from a committed Christian family and has been going to church all his life. Steve talks about both his past relationship with Florence 2 years ago, and also his current relationship with Olivia, a girl who goes to our church youth group.

This data set was rich and there is much more that can be said besides this tiny snapshot, as you can see from the full analytical table below. The table depicts super-ordinate themes (lettered) and sub-ordinate themes (numbered) within each box. However, because of the limits on this piece of writing I'm going to selectively highlight what I think are some of the most significant quotations that illustrate the argument I am making here.

**A. Relationships shaped by Christian faith**

- 1) Interpreting and applying Christian (sexual) ethics**
- 2) Faith producing conformity and differentiation from social groups**
- 3) Importance of faith compatibility**

**B. Relationships as difficult**

- 1) Interpersonal difficulty**
- 2) Intrapsychic difficulty**

**C. Relationships as a way of making sense of the past**

- 1) Life narrative significance of relationships**

*Table 1*

Interestingly, in his interview Chris repeatedly resisted the idea that the Christian view of sex had affected his life, seeing as sexual matters did not especially occupy his attention. He says

I don't think I've ever actually gone out seeking sex, or a sexual relationship so... I think... I don't think that [Christian view of sexuality] in particular has affected it, but the way I've heard people speak about treating people in general - that's affected me. So talking about loving your neighbour, treating you, someone as if they are a child of God, they are... it sounds so cliché but to say a girl is a princess, and in a sense it's true.

In this way, what was more important to Chris than abstinence was a more general relational morality derived from a theological view of human dignity, applied in this case to the way he treats girls. However, while describing his relationship with Ellie he admits that he had, to some extent "led her on". He looks back on what he did in this way:

I don't know I think I have a stronger faith now, and because of that, I know that if I was to come into contact with her again, I wouldn't see her in the same sense that I do. I don't know

if I knew this before, but I can look at her and say that she is a daughter of God and he died on a cross for her. So I do not have the right to treat her as... as... a toy.

Both here and at a number of other points in the interview Chris is engaged in a deep process of ethical reflexivity, thinking about what he did and what it means for him now. This process is saturated by the language of faith – being a child of God, Jesus' death on a cross as a sign of human value and worth, and elsewhere the expression of the need for God's forgiveness for his mistreatment of Ellie, and his sense of spiritual and religious growth into a new 'way of seeing' others since that day.

With Phil we can see analogously a profound sense of inner struggle as he struggles to work out which relational choices to make, both with Liz and also more generally, and whether the values and principles that determine his choices are still valid and applicable to certain situations.

I think, wouldn't it be great to have sex with this girl, I'd really enjoy it, but then the next thing I think is along the lines of is that what God would want slash does that match up with your faith or it's like that question of, as someone said, does it bring you closer to God? But then you have like the mini debate over it, where you think yes it's not bringing me closer but is it taking me further or not and you're just kind of left ... unsure.

"Unsure" is a key word and a recurring theme in Phil's experience of relationships as places where "inner debates" happen, as he tries to work out whether a certain action or feeling will bring him closer or take him further away from God. In this way the ambiguity and hesitation that Phil feels over how to apply what he knows about his faith transfers directly to the ambiguity experienced in his "inner debates". This tension and difficulty in knowing what the right decision is is what Phil attributes his decision not to enter into an inevitably sexual relationship to – he says:

The thing is I don't want to risk doing it with someone doing it with someone and then later regretting it.

Unlike Phil, Steve's concerns are more with comparing his past and present relationships. Steve, looking back on his past relationship with Florence, sees a number of ways in which that relationship created tension in his sense of identity with and participation in his Christian faith. With Florence, there was a general sense of a loss of focus and a prioritizing of his romantic relationship over God, articulated in terms of time spent thinking about these two subjects:

"So that was... it was kind of weird looking back on it, because it was almost like this relationship and it was like God was there in my thoughts but not at the forefront of it, I was kind of more focused on the relationship side of things" (302-305)

This negative effect on his faith is an important way that Steve presents his past relational experience. It reveals something important about what makes a relationship "good" and validates it – that there be not only a shared faith (which he did indeed have with Florence!) but that that shared faith be given its appropriate place in the relationship – i.e. as central.

When he talks about his relationship with Olivia, it is clear that the relationship includes sexual attraction and desire but that predominantly the relationship is so good because they are united in their faith being more central to their lives than their relationship:

It's like sort of, the relationship is not detracted from my faith in a way, is what I'm trying to get at. It's like I am at a point where I am happy with my faith. And I'd say more than anything its encouraged me sort of in my faith.

The fact that this relationship has actually helped rather than hindered his faith is another sense in which the relationships is experienced as pleasurable. Steve also feels his faith gives the relationship a foundation and a purpose.

I mean it helps, relationships have ups and downs and stuff and you can rely on God in that time, like even if it isn't the relationship coming to an end completely, even if it's just a down you can both fall back on your faith.

Steve finds his relationship enjoyable because there is a security to it that is afforded by his faith as a "fall-back", in contrast to the turbulence of his previous relationship in which this foundation was not in place.

So now to summarize what I found. Chris is an example of someone who is indeed interested in sex and has experiences of sexual desire (evidenced by his response to Ellie's advances), but is far more engaged and concerned with relational ethics around the ideas of "leading someone on" and "treating them like a toy". It shows how these relational ethical thought processes are saturated with the language and meaning derived from faith, drawing heavily on explicitly theological discourses and narratives. The same is the case for Steve, who gives far more weight to the comparative dynamics of his relationships than about the sexual dimension therein.

For Phil sexual intercourse always either would be or could very possibly be a negative outcome (this is also the case for Phil and Chris though I haven't had time to show it in quotes). It is conceived as risky not in terms of contracting an STI, becoming pregnant, or experiencing abuse and exploitation. Rather, the concept of risk is extended to include the risk of violating strongly held moral principles and the subsequent sense of creating a distance between himself and God. In this sense Phil is negotiating a kind of "relationship between relationships" – one's relationship with another person, and one's relationship with God. Indeed, for all participants there is a gravitas to relational and sexual decisions that comes directly from a sense of being beholden to obey God's commands, and that there would be direct consequences of violating these commands that might even extend to affecting one's spiritual sense of "closeness" to God.

Finally, In Steve's case, great pleasure is taken from the sense of mutuality that his current relationship creates in contrast to his previous relationship. The comparison turns most significantly on how both relationships affected his faith. The enjoyment of mutuality and the difficulty of its absence is obviously a universal experience of anyone who has even been in a romantic relationship! What's important here however is that Steve's faith gives a unique colour to the way that the relationship is experienced as enjoyable thus extending the concept of pleasure to include faith-formed feelings about relational dynamics.

There are three practical applications that I think can be drawn from my research. First, this research provides further understanding about Christian young people that advances the need for contextually aware SRE. Crucially, for these young people, the role of faith is not peripheral but central to their sexual and relational thought processes. The relational experiences of these young people reveal the continued ascription of faith-formed ethical meaning to behaviours, feelings and relationships.

Secondly, this research shows that where pleasure and risk are being taught there must be the recognition that pleasure goes beyond physical and extends to the relational, ethical and

even to the spiritual and religious. Furthermore, it should be emphasized that both Christian young people and those of other religions and even of no religion are quite possibly experiencing and thinking about risk and pleasure in profoundly different ways from their peers.

Finally, and following on from the first two applications, I think this research also shows the need for a focus on good relationships before good sex. Along with other SRE thinkers such as Sharon Lamb, I recommend centralizing the ethics of relationships in SRE as a first priority above contraception and STIs and before desire and pleasure (Lamb, 2010). Undoubtedly, SRE will include discussion of contraception, disease, etc. and pleasure, but without an undue focus on it that may exclude those who are abstaining for whatever reason. The two major SRE agendas (pleasure and risk) need to be expanded beyond the current focus on sexual pleasure and risk to include relational pleasure and risk. As Lamb makes clear, this will benefit all young people regardless of religious commitment by opening up space for critical discussion of a much wider range of issues such as citizenship, gender and exploitation (Lamb, 2010).

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# THE APPLICABILITY OF THE POLICY TRANSFER FRAMEWORK TO UNDERSTANDING HIGHER EDUCATION REFORMS IN KAZAKHSTAN: THE CASE OF THE BOLOGNA PROCESS<sup>3</sup>

Aray Ilyassova

## Abstract

This paper outlines the theoretical framework of the doctoral research and its findings. The Bologna Process is an initiative of European countries that affects the higher education sector within and outside of Europe. Kazakhstan signed the Bologna Declaration in 2010 and became the first Central Asian country in the Bologna Process. The aims of the research are to explain why Kazakhstan as a non-European country signed the Bologna Declaration and to apply the international policy transfer framework to a post-communist transition country.

## Introduction

The lack of the industrial production caused by the collapse of the Soviet Union and the breakdown of the command economy, led to the need to retain high level employees. There was the need for training high level professionals that pushed higher education on the agenda. In order to integrate into the international education space, Kazakhstan searched for the ideas and took lessons from the education systems of developed countries such as the United States and Europe. Kazakhstan initiated its entrance to the Bologna Process. The adoption of the Bologna Process followed the active participation of Kazakhstani universities in the integration process.

In transition post-communist country the models or lessons from the West could not be mechanically copied. Kazakhstan had different education system compared to the West, consequently, the matter of history and culture could not be ignored. It could be introduced and implemented only through modifying or adaptation to the local conditions and national peculiarities.

## Theory and Methodology

This research concentrates on why and how policy transfer has occurred in one specific transition country - Kazakhstan. The concept of international policy transfer is particularly suitable for analysing the influence of the Bologna Process on higher education reforms in Kazakhstan. The reason is that most studies concentrate on policy transfer between or within countries. In contrast to policy transfer, which suggests a direct exchange process between exporting and importing countries, international policy transfer transcends bilateral exchange between countries and entails transnational transfer networks (Stone 2012). Consequently, instead of bilateral horizontal transfers between countries, international policy transfers occur vertically between countries, international or transnational organisations and non-state actors (Stone 2004).

This thesis focuses on policy transfer, with a particular emphasis upon the international policy transfer approach (Carroll 2013; Evans 2004). The current research provides the combination of three approaches of policy transfer: the multi-level approach; the ideational approach; and the process-centred approach. The use of the combination of these three mentioned approaches is appropriate to this study because, firstly, a multi-level approach provides various lenses with which to view and explore the issues involved in policy transfer. Secondly, this hybrid approach provides an explanation of the relationship between the supranational/international level (the Bologna Process is an intergovernmental policy

process), the national level (Kazakhstan), and the subnational level, comprised of interaction between the country and its internal actors (local level/institutional level; universities). The multilevel approach was used in combination with the ideational and process-centred approaches of policy transfer. The research applied a process-centred approach by focusing on the explanation as to why policy transfer has occurred within the system of higher education in Kazakhstan, why the Bologna Process has been adopted by the Kazakhstan government, and who or what actors were directly or indirectly involved in the decision making.

The thesis is based upon primary and secondary research. The secondary research comprised the literature review on theory from Western sources. The selection of the relevant literature was based on its importance to examining the concepts of policy transfer, policy learning, lesson drawing and path dependency, respectively. The Kazakhstan education system during the Soviet time in local official publications was reviewed. Publications from local experts such as Vlasov and Philippov; Syzdykov (2010) Sagintayeva (2013); Sadykova (2012); Pak (2010); Nurbek (2013) Naribayev (2013) Abazov (2011), Baidenko (2006; 2010) were reviewed from the Russian and Kazakh-language literature sources.

The primary research for the case study was in the form of qualitative research consisting of semi-structured interviews. There were a total of 41 interviews. Seven interviews were conducted in English. 34 interviews were conducted in the Russian language. All interviews conducted in Russian have been translated into English for purposes of the analysis contained in the finding chapters. Three interviews were conducted via Skype as participants were located in Germany, France and the United Kingdom. The interview data collection was divided into two phases: the first phase was conducted in Kazakhstan; while the second phase was conducted in Armenia, where the Bologna Secretariat was based. Accordingly, the interview sample consisted of senior civil servants from the Ministry of Education, members of the Parliament; a representative of the Bologna Follow-Up Group in Kazakhstan that were engaged directly in discussions with the Bologna experts; representatives from international organisations; student and universities have been interviewed.

The primary research was complemented by a detailed review of the official documentation produced by the Kazakhstan government, the Bologna Secretariat and other international agencies. Of major importance are the reports entitled Trends which are periodically prepared by the Bologna Process in order to monitor the progress towards the realisation of the Bologna principles. Other official documents utilised in the research includes, evaluations by international organisations such as the Organisation for Economic Co-operation and Development (OECD); United Nations Development Program (UNDP); European Commission; Benelux Bologna Secretariat; Delegation of the European Union to Kazakhstan, European Association for Quality Assurance in Higher Education, European Higher Education Area. The Kazakhstani strategic and other official documents such as The Strategy for Development of the Republic of Kazakhstan until the year 2030 (1997); The State Programme for the Development and Functioning of Languages in the Republic of Kazakhstan (2010); The State Programme of Education Development in the Republic of Kazakhstan for 2011-2020 (2010); Strategy Kazakhstan-2050: New Political Course of the Established State (2012); The National Report on the Status and Development of Education of the Republic of Kazakhstan (2011); State Programme: Path to Europe 2009 – 2011 (2008) which were produced by the Kazakhstan government and published in official websites of the Presidential office Akorda, Ministry of Education and Science and the Ministry of Foreign Affairs of the Republic of Kazakhstan.

## **Discussion**

The Education Ministers of European countries adopted and signed the Bologna Process, they would not have been able to expect that this process would become popular and encompass other parts of the world. According to their original plans, it was expected that by 2010, the Declaration would achieve all of its objectives and would terminate. The trends that were established during the implementation of the Bologna Process were globalised by extending the boundaries of the process by including non-EU countries. Almost all universities, including non-European HEIs began to be involved in this process. Central Asia would not be an exception. Like other countries, Kazakhstan was interested in the Declaration and would not stay outside of this process. Although Kazakhstan has problems that need to be solved along the way, it has started to promote the principles of the Bologna Process within its educational system.

From 1991, the Kazakhstan's higher education system has been steered through a transition period. Developing higher education and improving its quality have been the main priorities of Kazakhstan as articulated that stated in official documents. The educational reforms in Kazakhstan, including changes in the structure and content of education, were issued in laws. These changes established academic mobility, a credit system, a three- level degree system, a diploma supplement and lifelong education; all of which are major principles of the Bologna Process.

Kazakhstan attempted to integrate into the common European educational space and to compete in the global economy and the globalisation process after the collapse of the Soviet Union (OECD 2001). From an international expert's point of view:

"... if you're a national higher education system, you want to be a part of the wider world community, you want to have recognition, you want to have transferability – well, the Bologna Process and the Bologna conference of other countries, is the party to join, because that's the best way to do it and the easiest way to do it. It's hard work, but it's the best framework to date" (Interviewee №18).

The changes of higher education occurred because Kazakhstan government sought to align the system of Kazakhstan higher education with Western European standards. To achieve this objective, policymakers committed themselves to raise the international legitimacy of higher education system through the Bologna Process. Thus, Kazakhstan has ambitions to make the country's higher education system a part of the world higher education system. This has manifested itself in a strategy in which the State's educational programme and the Bologna Process became the framework in which to achieve that ambition.

## **Findings**

After the independence, Kazakhstan was implementing the North American model. The reason was that the USA allocated funds to different projects to Kazakhstan. This cooperation considered as a source of external pressure through integration processes and globalisation. The same external influence occurred from European countries via an EU Political Strategy for Central Asia (2007). The country cannot just copy the system or the policy. The success of policy transfer or its failure is analysed through an examination of path dependency. What is best for one country, may not work in the same way elsewhere. Therefore, Kazakhstan critically analysed and explored different educational models. It occurred through the pre-decision learning. For example, Kazakhstan started to participate in European educational programmes such as Tempus and Erasmus. It was found that Kazakhstan had more in common with European countries rather than the USA. The reason why Kazakhstan was interested in European system is that the European system focused on learning outcomes, it has similar structure in learning and academic mobility (Interviewee

No6). The European education system is more centralised as opposed to the United States system that based upon decentralised governance. Therefore, the European system for Kazakhstan was easier to implement. That was the reason why Kazakhstan decided to look towards Europe, in particular the Bologna Process.

Globalisation and international integration are amongst the external pressures that influenced Kazakhstan to adopt the Bologna Process. For Kazakhstan, it was a matter of survival after the collapse of its command economy. There was also the question of competitiveness. Since independence, Kazakhstan conducted the so-called the 'multi vector' international policy which is an international policy towards different countries. In the country's strategic documents, Kazakhstan envisioned of being among the top 50 and later at the top 30 competitive countries.

Kazakhstan and Western countries have relations in many areas such as trade, education and energy. For example, in the document Path to Europe 2009-2011, the Kazakhstan government expressed its main policy goal to develop a deepened cooperation between Kazakhstan and the European countries, in areas such as technology, energy, transport, economic, trade and welfare. In order to reform its higher education system and to be closely tied to Europe, Kazakhstan initiated its entrance into the Bologna Process. The reason was that the West, and in particular, Europe was a central source for borrowing lessons and political ideas for Kazakhstan. The Bologna Process for Kazakhstan was very important because it did not want to get lost and left behind its neighbours and strategic partners. The participation of Kazakhstan in this Process was expected to increase a positive image of the country at the international level. Here is evidence when voluntary and coercive transfer elements are combined. In particular, it was the case when the elements of the 'voluntary but necessary' transfer occurred.

To integrate into the European educational space was the Kazakhstan government's aim. The decision to adopt the Bologna Process was prepared and presented by professionals and experts that were invited to Kazakhstan by the Ministry of Education. There are state bodies and analytical centres that analyse the effects of the various reform decisions that were taken. The final decision was made by the Government and by the Ministry responsible for education, along with the support and instruction of the President. The country chose its future education prospects towards Europe.

One participant mentioned that from the outside point of view it looks as all reforms in Kazakhstan are top-down. This research shows that this was not the case. The universities of Kazakhstan pushed the Ministry to the decision of joining the Bologna Process. The role of the state and the government was crucial in that progress as well as the initiative of the HEIs in signing the Magna Charter. There had been bottom-up initiatives, when the universities were persuading the Ministry of Education to adopt decisions at the national level. Thus, this research argues that national and institutional levels equally were involved in the process of decision-making in Kazakhstan. There were various actors who played crucial roles at both levels. There was also an active outside influence exercised through certain grants and projects that were financed by the United States and the EU such as Tempus or Erasmus. The result of these initiatives helped to shape the environment for Kazakhstan to integrate into the international educational community by signing the Bologna Declaration in 2010. Thus, the initiative was driven by the bottom-up, which shows an example when the decisions-making process in post-communist country not always occurs within the top-down model.

## **Conclusion**

International policy transfer was appropriate for understanding the case of the adoption of the Bologna Process in Kazakhstan. There are different reasons. Firstly, policy transfer

helped to show that many transfers involve a combination of voluntary and coercive elements (Hulme 2000). Secondly, the type of policy transfer ‘voluntary but necessary’ is very applicable in the case of Kazakhstan. This type of policy transfer was introduced by Ivanova and Evans 2004. The policy transfer type helped to explain why Kazakhstan signed the Bologna Process. The reason is that it was a reaction to changes within the economy, public policy, and the globalisation process, which were considered in this study as external pressures. Thirdly, this research argues that the policy transfer process in higher education occurred through learning. One of the functions of the Bologna Process is the exchange of information and experience. Countries are willing to help each other by sharing experience and sharing information. Lesson drawing and lesson learning occurred in the example of countries where the higher education and science were advanced and well developed, such as the United States and European countries. The faculty and administration staff from Kazakhstani universities initially learned about the United States’ educational system by mechanical copying of the credit system to implement the American system. After the introduction of the credit system, it became clear that Kazakhstan’s universities have similar criteria in most segments and levels with European countries. Fourthly, path dependency is present with the process of policy transfer. This research argues that policy transfer depends on such variables as time and legacy. The mechanisms of the old system remain while implementing the Bologna Process. There has not been enough change in the old system in order to facilitate the new requirements. In considering policy transfer, it is important to take into account the national peculiarities and reforms which lead to the adaptation process. In a developing post-communist transition country, the models or lessons from the West could not be mechanically copied. Between countries that have strong historical ties and a common language, the policy transfer process occurs more easily as opposed to countries that have no historical and/or cultural linkages. Kazakhstan historically and culturally is not associated with Western Europe. It inherited a Soviet system of higher education. Kazakhstan, as a post-communist country faces with challenges, one of them the Soviet legacy. Therefore, path dependency cannot be ignored in the process of policy transfer; history and culture have to be taken into account. Fifthly, it was useful to combine a process-centred approach with ideational approaches and multi-level approaches focusing on the explanation for reasons of policy transfer that occurred within the system of higher education in Kazakhstan. The process-centred approach was applied in order to understand the relationship between actors of transfer and explain the voluntary or coercive transformation of ideas and policies (Evans 2009). By using the ideational approach, this thesis identified how policy makers and HEIs have been influenced by the external pressures such as integration process, globalisation and internationalisation. Policy makers were seeking ‘new’ knowledge and policy ideas from other systems that were well-suited with the ideological and cultural perspective. It was done voluntarily. At the same time they were coerced into responding to changing social and economic circumstances due to the collapse of the country. All these changes ‘forced’ policy makers to engage in policy transfer. Thus, to transfer policies from other systems were used by policy makers in order to cope with international external pressures such as globalisation and international integration. Finally, to apply the different levels of European, national and institutional, the multi-level approach helps the researcher to focus and discuss the challenges and problems of the Bologna Process. It was useful to apply this multi-level analytical tool in order to study international policy transfer in replying the research questions of the current study. Thus, the model of international policy transfer was suitable and applicable for analysing the case of the Bologna Process in the developing post-communist country Kazakhstan.

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## **Biography**

Aray Ilyassova is a PhD student at the School of Sociology and Social Policy, University of Nottingham. Her area of interest and research is in Higher education and public policy.

# **GETTING TO GRIPS WITH CRITICAL DISCOURSE ANALYSIS: SHEDDING LIGHT ON AN HE POLICY DOCUMENT**

**Jenny Lewin-Jones**

## **Abstract**

This paper discusses advantages of taking a Critical Discourse Analysis (CDA) approach to examine a policy document: “Born Global: implications for Higher Education” (British Academy, 2016). An adaptation of Hyatt’s (2013) CDA framework is useful for analysing the document’s linguistic features. This paper gives examples of the use of Hyatt’s categories to show that the document encapsulates a particular discourse, the justification of language learning through economic considerations. Linguistic features of the report – the choices of verbs, nouns and adjectives, use of tenses and passive voice, unheralded removal of hedging, and definite articles – all give the impression of factual evidence, whereas they disguise unresolved contradictions. CDA shows that the economic rationale in the document is tenuous.

## **Introduction**

This paper explores policy for Higher Education Modern Language provision in the UK. I am currently doing a professional doctorate involving non-specialist Institution-Wide Language Programmes in Higher Education. The paper outlines the case for taking a Critical Discourse Analysis (CDA) approach to examine a policy report. The report discussed, “Born Global: implications for Higher Education” (British Academy, 2016), or BGHE for short, was generated by a British Academy ‘Born Global’ (BG) research project on languages and employability. A framework designed by Hyatt (2013) is adapted to micro-analyse the report’s linguistic features and reveal rhetorical devices underpinning its discourse. The CDA shows how the HE language learning policy discourse reflects education’s dominant economic model and wider neoliberal discourse. The paper’s conclusion is that the policy evidenced by the report is not fully coherent, and that the restricted discourse matters.

## **Taking a Critical Discourse Analysis approach: the advantages**

CDA is a well established approach for scrutinising texts in the field of education policy (e.g. Taylor, 2004), and Higher Education in particular (e.g. Fairclough, 1993; Askehave, 2007; Saarinen, 2008; Mautner, 2012). Using CDA recognises that policy texts are “a resource for analysis in terms of the messages they convey” (Ozga, 1999, p.94).

There are different definitions of discourse (Bacchi, 2000, p.55), yet CDA always focuses on how language is an organising force in society (Farrelly, 2010, p. 99). It “sets out to capture the dynamic relationships between discourse and society, between the micropolitics of everyday texts and the macropolitical landscape of ideological forces and power relations” (Luke, 2002, p.100). This has also been described as the relationship between small d discourse and big D discourse (Gee, 2014, pp. 24-25). In short, focussing on discourse “enables us to conceptualize and comprehend the relations between the individual policy text and the wider relations of the social structure and political system” (Olssen, Codd and O’Neill, 2004, p. 71).

One aspect of questioning the dominant economic rationale for language learning is “loosening the grip of the narrow concepts... that have been circulated by neoliberals” (Apple, 2009, p. 250). This emancipatory belief was adopted by Fairclough, a key figure in the development of CDA, who said “it would seem vital that people should become more aware and more self-aware about language and discourse” (Fairclough, 1993, p. 142). In

particular, Fairclough wished to establish a “social, critical and historical turn” (Fairclough, 1993, p. 138) in language studies, referring to the “struggle” of those working in HE and the need for alternatives to both the traditional and the newly dominant discourses which seem to have supplanted them.

### Pitfalls of CDA and responses to them

Before applying CDA as an approach, it is worth considering potential pitfalls that the analyst may encounter. One possible criticism of CDA is that the analyst ‘cherry-picks’ texts. What is sometimes seen as ‘cherry-picking’ is however often deliberate selectivity or “purposive sampling”; such methods “expose more directly the nature of the transaction between investigator and respondent (or object) and hence make easier an assessment of the extent to which the phenomenon is described in terms of (is biased by) the investigator’s own posture” (Lincoln and Guba, 1985, p. 40). In a seminal paper using CDA, Norman Fairclough, an early CDA advocate, explicitly made his subjectivity transparent by using phrases such as “I think” and “I would predict that” (Fairclough, 1993, p. 149). Thus, in CDA one can “choose cherries from an informed position” (Baker and Levon, 2015, p. 222).

Another potential pitfall of CDA is that findings may not be generalisable (Baker and Levon, 2015, p. 233). Researchers such as Fairclough acknowledge this: “It would be premature to draw sweeping conclusions... on the basis of such a limited range of illustrative examples” (Fairclough, 1993, p. 158). He also counters possible criticism by indicating the need to investigate from other angles. Baker and Levon (2015) echo this in recommending triangulation, combining “close qualitative readings with a corpus linguistics approach that uses computer software to identify frequent and salient linguistic patterns over large amounts of data” (p. 223). However, producing findings generalisable to other areas of policy is not the aim of this paper, which uses CDA to analyse a text to understand the logic of the policy.

It could be argued that close reading of a small number of texts by an individual analyst is an obsolete methodology in these days of big data and sophisticated digital tools. However, researchers who have at their disposal state-of-the-art computer-based analytical tools, able to handle vast databases of text, are still convinced of the merits of close scrutiny of a text or a small set of texts. The researcher “is able to identify more subtle social and linguistic patterns in the texts and to situate... interpretations of these patterns within a multi-level understanding of the broader ideological context” (Baker and Levon, 2015, p. 233). Nonetheless, the mention of texts (plural) suggests that even if one particular text is being scrutinised in detail, the analyst must look at the bigger picture, particularly in view of intertextuality and interdiscursivity (Wodak, 2006, p.177). An intuition-based approach can thus be combined with a corpus-based approach: “The two are complementary and must be so if as broad a range of research questions are to be addressed” (McEnery, Xiao and Tono, 2006, p. 7).

Doing CDA is not easy. Poor quality work gives discourse analysis an unfair reputation as a methodology in which “anything goes” (Antaki et al., 2003, p. 2). Claims are sometimes made that discourse analysis has been undertaken, when the work merely superficially appears to be discourse analysis. Antaki et al. give a useful definition of real discourse analysis: “...a close engagement with one’s text or transcripts, and the illumination of their meaning and significance through insightful and technically sophisticated work. In a word, Discourse Analysis means Doing Analysis” (Antaki et al., 2003, p.10).

The C in CDA is crucial: it must feature the “critical” element. CDA justifies its usefulness by revealing what is “opaque” or “disguised”, as it tends to “... open up for critical examination aspects of practice that might otherwise be taken for granted” (Farrelly, 2010, p. 100). It means analysing policy processes “not simply at the level of wanting or resisting a particular

policy initiative, but...constituting the shape of the issues to be considered" (Bacchi, 2000, p. 50). CDA should therefore "map out the connection between a close textual analysis and wider discursive and political structures" (Mills, 2004, p.140), bringing political concerns to the linguistic analysis.

Paradoxically, CDA analysts have to use language to analyse language, and so must be self-critical as well as critical: "If critical analysts use the same forms of language whose ideological biases they are exposing in others, then they might be uncritically and unselfconsciously instantiating those very biases" (Billig, 2008, p. 784). Billig, for example, draws attention to the preponderance of nominalisations and instances of reification in the very writings that criticise the use of these stylistic features. Fairclough refutes some of Billig's criticism, but agrees "that as critical discourse analysts we should be careful about how we write ourselves, and make the question of how we write more of an issue than we have done" (Fairclough, 2008, p. 208).

A final observation is that CDA is not a single method, but rather a programme or set of principles (Wodak and Meyer, 2009, p. 5), consisting of various methodologies (Mulderrig, 2012, p. 702). It is therefore important to identify the specific method to be used, and analytic frameworks are available to guide the researcher (Shaw, 2010, p.202). The method chosen should enable analysis of the specific linguistic choices made in the text (Taylor, 2004, p. 437) and make presuppositions visible (Saarinen, 2008, p. 722).

### **Using Hyatt's (2013) frame**

BGHE is here analysed using a CDA frame based on the one devised by Hyatt. His frame focuses on both macro and micro aspects of discourse, and thus enables the "principled shunting back and forth between analyses of the text and the social" (Luke, 2002, p.103), fundamental to CDA. Hyatt's frame is not an "all-encompassing, universal tool" (Hyatt, 2013, p. 837), and so, following his suggestion, it has been taken as a starting-point, grasping his invitation to "appropriate and take ownership of" aspects of the frame (Hyatt, 2013, p. 843).

Hyatt does not tell the researcher how to apply the frame, for most discourse analytic frameworks are "not concerned with following a series of pre-defined steps" (Shaw, 2010, p.205), leaving the analyst to make the choices. Although not all analysts give details of how they conducted their analysis (e.g.Taylor, 2004; Askehave, 2007), others see doing so as important (Shaw, 2010, p.205). I developed a three-stage way of using Hyatt's framework: 1) the entire document was read to get the gist and overall impression, and features of initial interest were noted; 2) Hyatt's headings were used to classify those features; 3) Hyatt's headings were used in further close readings of the document and any additional features were identified. Though not suggested by Hyatt, the first stage of pre-framework reading was important because some features were identified which might otherwise have been missed. The classification stage involved some modification of Hyatt's headings, in particular incorporating analysis of lexico-grammatical features under the other headings. In the examples from the document that follow, Hyatt's categories are italicised.

Interdiscursivity and intertextuality are apparent from the start of the document. The title "Born Global", accompanied by cover images such as a globe, aeroplanes, and figures representing a mobile professional graduate workforce, conveys an immediate signal of what students studying languages should aspire to. The emphasis on the workplace and employability is immediately clear. The document contains 42 numbered references to other documents listed as endnotes, designed to convey an impression of authority, although close scrutiny reveals that many of these refer to one and the same source.

Rationalisation of the importance of the document during a time of crisis in language learning is shown through lexis (vocabulary) which carries strong negative connotations. Different

word classes come into play: adjectives ('under-appreciated', 'alarming', 'lost', 'unmet'), nouns ('struggle', 'decline'), and verbs ('undervalue', 'fall'). One striking feature is the use of the present continuous tense in the passive voice with a negative ('is not currently being met', 'is not currently being satisfied', 'are clearly not receiving'). Continuous tenses often carry the meaning of temporariness, so although the lexical choices create a sense of crisis, the tense (coupled with the temporal adverb 'currently') emphasises that something can be done about this. The crisis in language learning is framed as the failure of 'young people' to recognise the career benefits of language learning. This places emphasis on the responsibility of the individual and the "commodification of oneself" (Blacker, 2013, p. 144). It is hard for the analyst not to fall into the trap of using the words of this discourse, for example the "value" that languages bring the individual.

Authorisation is given through reference to 'employers', 'businesses' and 'companies' (i.e. supposed authorities), often with the quantifier 'many', for example "...many businesses have a need for the qualities that language graduates can bring to their workforces" (BGHE p.3). However, the terms 'businesses' and 'employers' are often used loosely, and some of the apparent 'employers' are actually respondents to a survey who may not be in any position to determine who gets employed. This makes some of the claims in the document highly questionable.

Legitimation through narratives takes the form of direct quotation from survey respondents, in the first person, for example "I think...", "I believe...", and "I work...". These narratives seem to give substance to the claims made in the document, and are introduced as being "direct evidence" (BGHE, p.14), but are actually a way of injecting opinion in the guise of authority. The quotations are, under closer scrutiny of the sources, largely from respondents to a survey who all had language skills and were thus likely to be enthusiastic about the benefits of languages in their own careers.

Moral evaluation (ideological desirability) comes across in different parts of speech: nouns such as 'reinvigoration', verbs such as 'advocate' and 'open doors' and adjectives such as 'encouraging' and 'positive'. They all display "attitudinal judgment" (Hyatt, 2013, p.840), conveying the overt evaluative stance that more HE language learning is desirable and reinforcing the dominant rationale.

Presupposition is somewhat more difficult to trace, as it occurs through a process of the disappearance of hedging expressions. For example, the statement "These figures suggest that ... recruitment onto IWLP courses generally appears to be relatively buoyant" (BGHE, p. 6) has hedging not only in the verb 'suggest' but also the adverbs 'generally' and 'relatively'. However, this later becomes "... the success of IWLP" (BGHE, p. 14). Here the hedging has disappeared, and the definite article "the" implies the factuality of "success". This brings into question the use of statistics within the document.

Other lexico-grammatical constructions are treated by Hyatt as a separate category. However, in my analysis they were largely incorporated under the other headings. Moreover, my initial reading had highlighted some features which did not fit into Hyatt's other categories. Other lexico-grammatical constructions I considered noteworthy were the constructions that remove agency and audience, namely the use of passive voice and nominalisations. An example of passive voice is: "these positive developments have to be seen" (BGHE, p. 7), with no indication of who is supposed to implement the recommendations. Similarly, nominalisations (verbs turned into nouns) remove any agency. For example, in the sentence "findings from Born Global could help to bring about...a reversal of some of the more alarming trends... and a realisation of the potential of language learning..." (BGHE, p. 3), it is unclear who will do the reversing or realising. The lack of agency avoids making any demands on employers or government, and thus makes the document's conclusions vague.

## **Conclusions**

Hyatt's (2013) framework proved to be both workable and adaptable. The document analysed reflects a discourse which centres on an economic rationale for language learning. Using Hyatt's CDA framework revealed how dominant this discourse is, and showed that the argument in the document is tenuous. The policy document is designed to persuade, and is not supported by authoritative rigour or with genuinely hard evidence.

Using CDA, and Hyatt's framework in particular, helps expose the weaknesses in arguments, and thus throws up questions for further consideration. This paper is envisaged as a stepping-stone towards analysis of connected themes in my EdD thesis. Issues I now need to consider are whether language teachers are critically aware of such a dominant/hegemonic discourse, and to what extent they are able, individually or collectively, to develop alternative practices which subvert the dominant discourse. Language teachers are part of the policy process, and their voices matter (Lo Bianco, 2010, p. 170); their stance on the predominance of the economic rationalisation for language learning needs exploration. Ball (2015) points us towards "critical work, destabilising accustomed ways of doing and being, and positive work, opening spaces in which it is possible to be otherwise" (Ball, 2015, p. 7). For language teachers in HE, this may involve seeking alternatives to the economic rationale that is the basis of the current discourse of language learning and teaching in HE. In that case CDA will have fulfilled what is arguably its key role, that of empowering people to challenge dominant discourses.

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## **Biography**

I have been a lecturer at the University of Worcester since 1997, and currently teach German, English for Academic Purposes (EAP), and English Language teacher-training courses (CELTA). I am also a part-time professional doctorate student at the University of Birmingham. I tweet on language, linguistics, and education @JennyLewinJones

# **WHAT IS THE IMPACT OF UK GOVERNMENT STRATEGIES PREVENTING NON-VIOLENT EXTREMISM ON MUSLIM PUPILS IN SCHOOLS?**

**Anna Lockley-Scott**

## **Abstract**

One of the most significant challenges facing schools today is the securitisation of education. The Prevent Strategy and other Government Strategies preventing non-violent extremism are impacting teaching, learning and school experience. Since July 2015, the Counter Terrorism and Security Act (CTS) has given schools a statutory twofold duty to prevent and identify extremism. Due to scrutiny by both Ofsted and the media, schools have sought to rapidly implement policies and strategies in response to this Act. This article will examine what kind of change this pedagogical and safeguarding development has had on pupils and their school experience. Through questionnaires, individual interviews and focus groups, pupils and teachers have been sensitively questioned concerning a range of issues such as whether school feels like a safe space to explore views and ideas, whether controversial issues can be discussed and whether Muslim pupils feel restricted in their expression of self and faith.

## **Introduction**

On 11th November 2016, the Guardian newspaper ran a story... ‘Prevent Strategy to be ramped up despite ‘big brother’ concerns....’. This is one of the many news stories concerning the term ‘Prevent’ which occupy our media regularly. ‘Prevent’, refers to an aspect of Contest, the Government’s Counter-terrorism strategy. Despite sounding abstract to the everyday, and assumed to be the traditional remit of the police and MI5, the Prevent strategy has become an unacknowledged element of daily life for many caring professions, such as social care, health or education. This shift of security tactics into everyday life is referred to by Stuart Croft as ‘the securitization of daily life’ (2012:13) which transforms day to day routines and behaviours (5). In this article, I argue that one space in which this transformation is occurring is education, most significantly in the environment of schools and the day-to-day experience of Muslim pupils. This increasing emphasis on education has been rising steadily with the Prevent strategies of 2008 and 2011, but the statutory duty to prevent and identify non-violent extremism was only introduced in the Counter Terrorism and Security (CTS) Act (2015). This means that educational institutions have a statutory duty ‘to prevent people from being drawn into terrorism’ (DfE,2015) This significant legal requirement on staff in schools, universities and nurseries, forms the backdrop to the changes experienced by teachers and particularly Muslim pupils.

Under this Act, the role of the teacher is substantially transformed in routine and behaviour; as is their relationship with the pupil. The teacher is tasked with two responsibilities; the first is to identify any pupil at risk of radicalisation. The second is to prevent students from being radicalized. The CTS Act refers to all types of radicalisation including far right, it is most commonly associated with preventing Islamic extremism. (2015) Extremism is defined as words and actions in opposition to British Values (HM Government,2013). To ensure this duty is enacted, the Ofsted inspection Framework from 2015 requires overt demonstration by schools of the duty in their success criteria.

Within this seeming ‘securitization’ of education’, Muslim pupils are significantly affected. Yet the impact this increasing emphasis of regulation has had on their experience of education has not been examined. Arshad Ali’s observed that ‘Young Muslims are some of the most discussed people in our society,’...but he also identifies that they are ‘rarely included in the conversation.’ (2014:1258) This study intends to explore this impact, by hearing the voices of those affected by these changes in policy.

## **Method and Methodology**

This desire to ‘hear’ the pupils’ experience, significantly influenced the selection of methods and methodology for this research. In order to hear these voices, empirical research gathered through interviews and questionnaires in three schools with teachers and pupils allow discovery of what transformations are already taking place in their experiences.

In terms of the sensitivity of the research and its previously unexplored territory, I selected to use the methodology of Grounded Theory (Strauss and Glaser, 1967), however this study is particularly influenced by the more recent versions of Grounded Theory by Anselm Strauss in partnership with Juliet Corbin (1998).

The use of Grounded Theory has a precedent for addressing sensitive issues, and has repeatedly been used in topics concerning consideration and confidentiality, such as nursing and patient experience (Chenitz, 1986, Chesnay, 2014). Furthermore, it does not require a theoretical framework to be placed a priori on the research subject, but rather allows for the data to emerge, and speak for itself, without fitting a pre-defined theory. Therefore, the actual voices and experiences of the pupils and teachers can be heard, albeit acknowledging an element of undeniable interpretation by the researcher.

However, the challenges Grounded Theory places upon the researcher must be acknowledged too. Firstly, as Braun and Clarke (2006:67), identify, data does not ‘emerge’ or ‘speak’ as if it is an animate object. The raw data is immediately interpreted by the researcher. All researchers have their pre-conceived assumptions about an issue, to some extent; that is what drives the desire to do the research. Claiming the researcher can completely avoid prior assumption or theoretical framework is challenging. All the same, Grounded Theory does demand the researcher pays close attention to their own positioning and subjectivity, and as far as possible acknowledge and minimize it.

The study and findings:

In this article, empirical research illustrates that the Counter Terrorism and Security Act and its implications have three affects on Education and Muslim pupils. These three themes, which will be discussed below, are:

1. ‘The Muslim Pupil’ has become a figure of securitization.
2. Training teachers in identifying radicalisation is based on a flawed conveyor belt model
3. Whether Muslim pupils experience schools as a safe-space

### **1. The Muslim Pupil as a figure of securitization**

The first implication of the Act is ‘The Muslim Pupil’ is perceived as a latent threat to national security, and thus becomes a figure of securitization as constructed by policy and media. The role of education is seen through the Prevent policy as fundamental for averting this potential threat and preventing home-grown plots such as 7/7. From the research, this ‘securitized figure’ could be perceived as an ‘imagined identity’ of The Muslim Pupil. That is to say, it is a construct, not representative of ordinary, individual children found in UK classrooms.

In my thesis, the term ‘imagined identity’ is drawn from original use of imagined by Benedict Anderson (1983) and has been used by researchers such as Louise Archer (2003:64) and Aminul Hoque (2015) in the area of minority education. In this particular study, ‘imagined identities’ refers to how the pupils are perceived and how they perceive themselves by

others, specifically, how Muslim pupils are perceived by policy and staff in secondary schools. Interestingly from my research, the securitized figure also forms how the pupils view themselves as perceived by others, this is through a prism of suspicion, which is shown in the empirical responses; as an ‘extremist’, as someone supportive of ISIS (Pupil responses (P) 27&36). It is important to note at this point, that the pupils focused on in my research were all born after 9/11 and consequently were since birth, members of a seemingly suspect community, as Nadiyah Ali highlights (Baker-Beall et al, 2014:141). This I argue has a significant affect on how the pupils perceive themselves and how they sense they are perceived by others.

## 2. Training teachers in identifying radicalisation is based on a flawed conveyor-belt model

As part of the CTS statutory framework, all school staff in the UK must receive some form of Prevent Training (WRAP), delivered by local authorities or the police (DfE:2015). This training is based on the philosophy of radicalisation outlined by Marc Sageman (2004) and Quintan Wiktorowicz (2005), and is accepted by the Home Office and even adhered to by the New York Police Department (Kundnani,2012:14). This is the ‘conveyor-belt’ model of radicalisation which forms the theoretical basis of Prevent. To illustrate its theoretical prominence, David Cameron’s speech in response to the Woolwich attack of 2013 referred directly to the ‘elements of the conveyor-belt of radicalisation’ (Telegraph:03/06/2013). By this, he meant radicalisation is a process in which young Muslims, vulnerable to theological and psychological factors are set on the course to extremism. Based on Sageman’s (2004/2008) theoretical narrative, the argument is that education must be used as a tool to disrupt or undo the factors that drive this process.

However, the assumed validity of this model used as the basis of training for every member of school staff must be questioned. The model has received heavy criticism by Arun Kundnani (2014) and Charlotte Heath-Kelly among others (Baker-Beall et al:2015); firstly, for its empirical basis only on the studied paths of convicted terrorists and secondly for its assumption that a linear narrative actually exists and radicalizing factors can be identified. When examined, the Prevent guidance itself is vague on these identifiers claiming:

‘There is no single way of identifying an individual who is likely to be susceptible to a terrorist ideology, promoting instead ‘professional judgement...to identify children who might be at risk of radicalisation and act proportionately....’ (DfE,2015:5)

The immediate question to raise here is what is meant by ‘professional judgment’? ‘Professional judgment’ is seen as based on Prevent training and ideas of safeguarding. To clarify this vagueness, many local authorities have sought to be more prescriptive. For example, in the case of the London Borough of Merton, the definition of identifiers for spotting radicalisation is provided more specifically, echoing the conveyor-belt model;

‘Those in the process of being radicalized may become involved with a new group of friends, search for answers to questions about identity, faith and belonging, possess extremist literature or advocate violent actions, change their behaviour and language, or may seek to recruit others to an extremist ideology.’ (London Borough of Merton, 2015,6)

However, many of these ‘so called’ identifiers could lead to questions and concerns relating to a range of teenage behaviours. Furthermore, the risk here, as pointed out by Paul Thomas (2012), is the danger of identifying conservative religious practice as extremism. Consequently, professional judgement risks framing all actions within the outline of suspicion. Despite these flaws and criticisms, the conveyor-belt model remains the narrative by which teachers are trained nationally to identify the signs of radicalisation.

### 3. Whether Muslim pupils experience schools as a safe-space

The third tangible impact of the CTS Act emerging from the research refers to the Muslim pupils' experience of safe space in school. Safe space is regarded as a place in which pupils feel comfortable enough to discuss issues both personal and social with their classmates and / or their teachers. The immediate contradiction raised by the CTS Act emerges from whether schools and teachers can provide a 'safe space' at the same time as being charged with the statutory duty to 'prevent'. The policy itself tries to overcome this by stating that:

'it is not intended to stop pupils debating controversial issues. On the contrary, schools should provide a safe space in which children...can understand the risks associated with terrorism and develop the knowledge and skills to be able to challenge extremist arguments' (DfE Prevent Guidance,2015).

The Prevent strategy therefore focuses on harnessing education to prevent radicalisation. It emphasizes the development of knowledge and skills through education as a way to combat extremism. It seeks to educate to develop a child, to create a citizen, and build pupils' resilience to radicalisation through the curriculum. Pedagogically speaking, the skills of critical thinking and information evaluation are crucial for discernment in an information age, whether it be to identify extremist propaganda, be aware of risks of grooming or to respond assertively to other online dangers.

However, as the definition of extremism is to 'go against fundamental British Values' (HM Government: 2013), then it must be questioned as to whether the classroom can really be an open, safe space for debate. For example, a pupil might want to challenge the validity of 'democracy', one of the named British Values (HM Government: 2013). This is something many in a post-Brexit and post-Trump world, may also wish to question. Similarly, it must be questioned whether a pupil would be free to discuss whether cartoons of the Prophet Muhammad justified the killings at the Charlie Hebdo office (2015). The obligation of the teacher would be most likely to 'identify' them under the statutory duty. As one interviewed teacher respondent said 'by suggesting that someone that agrees with that...they must have some kind of links to extremism or radicalisation...then you are basically killing the ability to be able to discuss things' (T:4) This conflict between duty to identify and freedom to explore controversial topics, causes a significant challenge to the possibility and potential of creating a truly safe space. This requires a delicate balance of trust and confidence on behalf of both the teachers and the pupils. If there is any risk to the creation of this space, the potential for its existence is lost. In light of this jeopardy to open discussion, the direction of education becomes a matter of instilling values rather than developing critical thinking and analytical skills.

In my empirical research, responses from the pupil questionnaires indicated that the safe space is not always experienced. One Muslim student described, school...'is not always a safe place as ignorant people will associate you with Isis'.(Pupil (P):27) Another student wrote '...you don't know who's listening' (P:34) indicating an anxious concern and an active self-censoring of her words. Others raised concerns about how students or staff may react to their ideas or beliefs in a 'bad way' (P:9, P:26) All these quotes show an anxiety underlying ordinary classroom discussion and encounters.

It is here the that concept of 'imagined identities' come into play. The pupils perceive themselves as 'normal' (P:14), and 'just like every other secondary school kid' (P:21). However, they are constantly calculating how others might perceive them, trying to predict it and respond or react. This strongly suggests that within the pupils' own sense of themselves as perceived by others, there is arguably an 'imagined identity' visible. Although one pupil sees herself as an 'average girl', she describes others' perception of her as a 'Muslim girl,

oppressed, terrorist', (p30). Some Muslim pupils' replies identify their clothing as a factor of others' perception. Responses such as. ... 'My headscarf makes society view me as a terrorist' (P:27) and 'I think people are intimidated because I wear a headscarf' (P:9). This suggests the Muslim pupils always perceive themselves as seen by others in a suspect way, as identified by Ali (Baker-Beall,2014:141). The pupils' responses seem to indicate a constant negotiating of these perceptions, a weighing up of their identity in the eyes of others. This also suggests a lack of trust as to how they are seen and how their words might be taken. Consequently, creating a fully safe space where pupils feel they can speak openly and honestly is significantly hindered. However, it cannot be concluded that this is simply a matter of the CTS Act (2015). Rather, this experience must be acknowledged to be the result of ongoing media and political rhetoric. As Muslim pupils experience being perceived as part of a suspect community from many different angles, this challenge for creating a safe space must be acknowledged.

However, the pressure on teachers, under the CTS Act has made this anxiety a matter experienced by both sides. The teachers perceive the Muslim pupils with caution. Responses from the teacher questionnaires indicated concern about Muslim pupils in their care: 'Muslim students do seem very wary' (Teacher (T):10) and 'Muslim pupils may feel as if they are in the spotlight during PSHE sessions' (T:6) Furthermore, concern was raised that the policy might make Muslim pupils feel 'alienated and attacked' (T:18). However, this caution is not, from my research evidence, a matter of the teachers uncritically absorbing the Prevent's message and unconsciously accepting Muslim pupils and families as suspect, as Pal suggests (2014:192). Instead, the Prevent training seemed to have made staff feel uncomfortable for numerous reasons including the 'poor' delivery (T:3), and referred to students who were struggling with their religious identity or getting intensely into their religion as at risk of radicalisation (T:1) The training raised the issue of tackling controversial issues but did not give them the tools or confidence to do so which echoes Pal's (2011) observation that that 'Prevent has dominated all training agendas in school, including on tolerance or race equality' (194) and has left no opportunity for the actual teaching skills to be developed. Teachers already have anxiety towards creating a safe space for many topics they must address, particularly if the teachers were trained in Maths or Science, but are still expected to deliver these topics in Citizenship and PSHE without any training. (T: 3,4) My research also echoed Pal's findings concerning the idea that teachers struggle to identify what is 'extreme' (192) as shown by interview 4 in my research: 'it worries me that there is not enough being done to try ...to help teachers understand.... more realistically what might count....' 'who don't necessarily have information, knowledge or experience...to then be able to say...this is radicalised' (T:4)

Early conclusions drawn from initial analysis suggest teachers are struggling to have confidence to address issues and open a safe space for discussion in their classrooms. Therefore, instead of a safe space being able to be opened up, it has perhaps instead been curtailed by anxiety both on the part of the teachers and pupils. The creation of a 'safe space' is such a delicate balance that can easily be jeopardized. The constraints of Ofsted, the pressure of the media, alongside the duty to Prevent, arguably results in the possibility of safe space in schools closing down. It is important to note however, that in Grounded theory, analysis is an ongoing process that is added to, and informed by each stage of the development of the study. Consequently, until a point of saturation, which means no additional categories or properties can be found in the data analysis (Glaser and Strauss,1967:61), the analysis cannot be conclusive enough to draw out a theory as yet.

## Conclusion

From the early findings of my research, it can be concluded that Stuart Croft's (2012) claim about the 'securitization of daily life' transforming behaviours and routines is demonstrable in education. The increasing use of the tools of education to disrupt and avert the latent threat

of 'The Muslim Pupil', is particularly clear in the wake of the Counter Terrorism and Security Act (2015). The obligation for teachers to identify and prevent extremism has changed their role in the classroom, their relationship with the pupils and the school environment. However, this 'imagined identity' of the Securitized Pupil, is a construct bearing little resemblance to the ordinary Muslim pupils in the class. This dual image, the imagined and the real, results in a struggle by teachers to create or maintain a safe space. The palpable element of anxiety in what the duty requires is only increased with the pressure of Ofsted inspection criteria and media attention. Ultimately, Muslim pupils too are experiencing this space as potentially threatening and are clearly self-censoring for fear of being labelled extremist or perceived within this rhetoric of suspicion. Although a correlation between the CTS Act and the experience of pupils and teachers, cannot be proven as directly causal, arguably the triangulating of the data from the questionnaires and interviews, alongside policy examination, can show there is a significant environment of change and pressure. Against a backdrop of media and international politics emphasizing the Islamic threat, this research raises concern that more consideration should be given to how schools can truly become those safe spaces for Muslim pupils and whether schools are actually aware and sufficiently capable of tackling this crucial challenge.

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## **Biography**

Anna Lockley-Scott is currently a PhD candidate in the Centre for Education Studies, and the Religions and Education Research Unit, (WRERU) University of Warwick. For the previous eight years, she has been a Religious Studies and Philosophy teacher in secondary schools.

# **EXPLORING THE ROLE OF AN OFSTED INSPECTOR IN THE DEVELOPMENT OF CREATIVITY SKILLS**

**Jesvir Mahil**

## **Abstract**

The purpose of this research was to explore the role of gatekeepers, through the eyes of an Ofsted inspector, in development of creativity skills in the vocational business curriculum in Further Education (FE) colleges, illuminating gaps, areas of confusion and pressures that potentially undermine development of creativity skills. I used a case study research design, using qualitative data from multiple sources including interviews, Ofsted reports, FE college websites and personal reflections on my own experience as an Ofsted inspector. I used document, content, thematic and discourse analysis to identify the links between individual, society and culture, using a systems thinking framework based on the work of a leading researcher in creativity, Csikszentmihalyi (2013). My overall conclusion is that our current education culture, publicly expressed through vision, mission and value statements, and the societal role of Ofsted inspectors as gatekeepers for creativity in education, does not explicitly promote development of creativity skills.

## **Introduction**

Our cultural ideologies influence our perception of the purpose of education and cultural hegemony (the dominant cultural discourse) leads us to believe that a primary purpose of education is to socialise an individual to take their place in society and in the workplace. Based on an analysis of documents, interviews and public engagement activities through social media, I found that the level of cultural interest in development of creativity skills in the vocational business curriculum, is low. Instead, we seem to be steering towards a culture of high surveillance which demands performativity, normalisation, standardisation, efficiency and competitiveness. In this paper, I argue that development of creativity skills requires diversity, trust, shared language, and a systems thinking perspective, valuing the whole rather than its fragmented parts.

## **Surveillance**

We are experiencing an education culture with an increasing level of surveillance which, according to existing research on development of creativity skills, for example Amabile (1996) seems to be inimical to development of creativity skills.

The overt and implicit power of surveillance can be explained using the metaphor of the Panopticon which Foucault (1980) explained, is an architectural design used for prisons, with a glass tower in the centre, surrounded by multi-storey circular rows of prison cells with glass walls, at its perimeter. The dramatic power of this architectural design is that prisoners believe they are being watched even when they are not. This Panopticon metaphor is relevant to the process of Ofsted inspections which exert what Foucault (1980) called the power to 'discipline and punish' even when they are not physically present. As Foucault suggests, the metaphoric glass tower of Ofsted, exerts a controlling "eye of power" which is pervasive in its influence through members of staff, managers, peers, students and external stakeholders of FE colleges.

## **Normalisation**

Through its surveillance, Ofsted seeks to normalise education using benchmarks to compare the performance of each college with the 'norm' which is usually the published 'national

averages'. These are statistics reporting the outcomes of each publicly funded college in terms of qualifications completed and the number of students retained on courses. Falling below the national averages is generally 'bad' or 'wrong' and may cause critically reflective teachers to experience what (Brookfield, 1995: 2) calls demoralisation and self-laceration'. It is only by being significantly above national averages that staff and managers have cause for celebration. These national averages are an 'apparatus of control' as described by Foucault (1980) and they exert power through what Foucault calls 'regimes of truth' in which 100% success rate is the desired objective. Even without the physical presence of Ofsted inspectors, these national average statistics are used to normalise the productivity of each college in terms of accredited qualifications.

Normalisation is contrary to personalisation. For example, rather than measuring the performance and achievement of students in relation to other members of the group, let alone strangers from very different socio-cultural contexts around the country, Greenwood and Gaunt (1994: 150) suggest that each student should be assessed against their own personal targets. Moreover, normalisation marginalises development of skills such as creativity which is not considered to be the norm.

### **Standardisation**

Promotion of 'best practice' teaching strategies has led to standardisation in lesson planning and use of teaching tools and techniques. For example, teachers are expected to set SMART (specific, measurable, achievable, realistic & timed) goals although the value of such goals is limited to tangible, evidence based outcomes.

Learning which is invisible, creative and likely to express itself in the long term rather than the short term, is very difficult to evaluate through SMART goals so it becomes incidental rather than a priority.

Standardisation of feedback given to students, pressurises teachers to ensure that it is prompt, detailed and inherently useful even if it wastes hours of teachers' time writing comments that students will likely ignore. The standard approach to giving feedback does not take into account that neither the teacher nor the student may be ready to give or receive prompt feedback and that detail is not always as useful as sincere applause or non-verbal criticism or praise.

Close monitoring of group work to supervise and give feedback is another example of standardisation which ignores research suggesting that such overbearing presence of the teacher may inhibit development of creativity skills.

Standardisation based on behaviourist pedagogy favours "stimulus > response > reinforcement" attainment of tangible outcomes based on behaviourist ideology (Skinner, 1974) and it overlooks the important role played by humanist pedagogy (Rogers, 1983) in creating learning environments that generate trust, freedom of choice and deep dialogue which may not lead to tangible short term outcomes but may be pivotal in stimulating insights and causing transformation at a broader spectrum than could be measured by SMART goals.

Standardisation may be inimical to development of creativity when it does not recognise the value of learning experiences which do not lead to outcomes recognised by gatekeepers in education such as Ofsted.

## **Performativity**

One of the themes I identified in my research data is that Ofsted creates fear, stress, pressure and anxiety; emotional states that are not conducive to creativity (Martindale, 1999). This fear and anxiety is often related to the high stakes involved in receiving a favourable inspection judgment.

Funding, reputation and community support may be enhanced or diminished by the content of an Ofsted inspection report so it is natural that not only members of staff but students too, feel obliged to perform to the best of their ability. Research, for example that of (Amabile, 1996) illustrates that pressure to perform blocks creativity, so it is not surprising that during an inspection week, there is likely to be less creativity than may occur under conditions of more subtle surveillance with less pressure to perform.

Over the past two decades, there has been a growing emphasis on measuring the performance of teachers through graded lesson observations and linking their performance, albeit implicitly, to the outcomes achieved by their students in terms of qualifications and grades (O'Leary, 2014). Although it may seem reasonable to measure the success of the teacher in terms of how well their students achieve, this culture of performativity, pressurises teachers to focus on exam preparation or a narrow curriculum aimed at completion of essential course assignments. With so much emphasis on performativity, there may be little incentive for teachers to take risks in developing creativity skills especially when there are others priorities competing for the limited time available.

Evidence required for measurement and evaluation of performativity relies heavily on behaviourist approaches to collection and analysis of such information. Even though Ofsted overtly claim that the inspection process does not favour any particular approach or teaching methodology, during my years as an Ofsted inspector, I felt implicit pressures to favour a behaviourist approach and teaching methodology. In practice, I found it very difficult to find and record the evidence of learning required when a humanist approach or teaching style was being adopted.

The inspection instruments, for example the Common Inspection Framework (Ofsted, 2012a) and the Handbook for Inspection (Ofsted, 2012b) emphasised the need to focus on outcomes rather than the process and the quality of extrinsic rather than intrinsic feedback and evaluations, for example. These are much easier to record, witness and measure with a behaviourist frame of reference than a humanist frame of reference. This meant that important aspects of teaching and learning that were too difficult to measure and provide hard evidence for, for example intrinsic learning, intrinsic feedback and intrinsic evaluation, remained unrecorded and therefore unreported.

## **Efficiency**

Government pressure to prioritise efficiency in education, making maximum use of existing resources, has been apparent through the decades, for example, the speech made by Prime Minister Callaghan in (1976) stating that “a challenge in education is to examine its priorities and to secure as high efficiency as possible by the skilful use of existing resources” is just as relevant today.

In an effort to make maximum use of time available, many teachers resort to over-use of text books and pre-planned materials when they feel too over worked or too short of time to be creative. It is often much more efficient to tell students what they need to know rather than guiding them to find out for themselves even though the latter may lead to deeper understanding of what they are learning.

Shortage of time is the foe of most contemporary teachers, working full-time in FE colleges and under such circumstances, efficiency is deemed to be the best solution in the struggle for survival. Behaviourism is an ally of efficiency, saving time and therefore alleviating the stressful panic that you may not have time to cover the course content which will undermine your performativity scores.

## **Competition**

Business in a capitalist society thrives on competition so it is ‘common sense’ that we teach our business students to be competitive. However, Ausubel et al. (1978: 471) have noted that pedagogically, competition may inhibit learning if it stimulates too much fear, anxiety and stress. In a competitive environment, the relatively small number of students who always win will gain in confidence. This must be outweighed by the relatively large number of students who don’t win, are often at the lowest rungs of the ladder and therefore lose confidence in their own skills and abilities or learn to continuously compare themselves unfavourably with their peers. Ironically, in setting up activities designed to teach competitiveness, we may inadvertently be setting our students up for failure if we have taught them to become accustomed to not winning most of the time.

Whereas the heightened surveillance and pressures towards normalisation, standardisation, performativity, efficiency and competition, most probably undermine creativity, based on existing research, it seems that diversity (Florida, 2015) trust (Rogers, 1983), shared language (Chomsky, 1988) and a systems thinking perspective (Capra and Luisi, 2014) are likely to provide an appropriate environment in which creativity can be generated and cultivated.

## **Diversity**

Society and its gatekeepers are an essential aspect of creativity in the systems thinking model. In addition to being socialised to take up our role in society, we need to be aware that in a diverse society, the way we are perceived in that role is dependent on our relationship to the somatic norm (Puwar, 2004). For example, a person who does not look like the kind of person who is associated with being creative may be accused of not fitting in whereas someone who fits the somatic norm of a creative person may be praised for being independent.

In FE colleges, I expected to find a high level of sensitivity and awareness of diversity. However, I was surprised to find that although 83 out of the 89 reports contained at least one sentence about diversity, only around half of these references to diversity were positive references. In other words, according to the Ofsted reports, the likelihood of being in a classroom environment sensitive to a diverse range of needs is around 50:50

## **Trust**

There is ample research evidence, springing from the humanist psychology approach, suggesting that creative students in particular, require an environment where there is a high level of trust between peers, teachers and other important stakeholders. An individual needs to have a high level of confidence and courage to take the risks associated with development of creativity skills.

Based on his research into the impact of graded classroom observations and the role of Ofsted inspections, O’Leary (2014: 155) highlights “the need to re-establish professional trust and autonomy for teachers to allow them to take ownership of their professional learning and development rather than having priorities imposed on them by others. What

teachers need is more collaboration and less coercion when it comes to interventions in classrooms and a greater trust in their professionalism and professional capabilities to steer change and improvement." (O'Leary, 2014: 155)

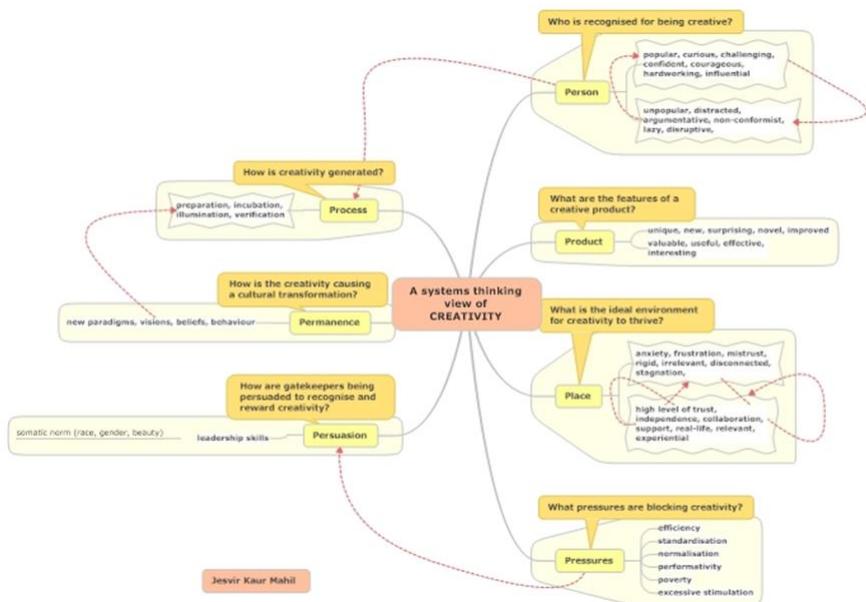
My research analysis of 89 Ofsted inspection reports showed insufficient reference to the level of trust in class. I found only 47 Ofsted reports out of the 89 (which is only around 53%) confirming that equality and diversity were being promoted well in the business curriculum for the period from September 2012 to August 2015. Around 42% of the Ofsted reports I analysed stated that Equality & Diversity was \*not\* being promoted well enough which I consider to be an alarmingly high proportion. From the point of view of a creative student, the chance of being in a business classroom environment where there is a sufficient level of trust, conducive to development of creativity skills, is too low based on an analysis of recent Ofsted inspection reports.

The apparent lack of evidence that trust is featured highly in the business curricula across the country, may merely be a weakness in the way the Ofsted reports are written rather than a true indicator of the importance given to trust in providing a classroom environment in which creativity is likely to thrive.

## Language

When I was teaching English, I always considered myself to be a creative teacher, producing interesting resources that stimulated inspirational conversations where students were allowed to practise and freely experiment with their linguistic skills. The lack of a clear definition of creativity did not cause any concerns. In contrast, when I started to teach business studies to native English speaker teenagers in London, I noticed that what I meant by creativity was not the same as how they interpreted my request for creativity. For many of my students, adding pictures and colourful titles using WordArt to their work was creativity. What I was expecting was an element of surprise, originality and what they call a "unique selling point" in business jargon.

I realised that this lack of clarity about what we mean by creativity in a business context was one of the challenges in development of creativity skills. So I synthesised some of the existing research on the subject, most of which is based in Arts and Sciences rather than business, and I found 7 attributes of creativity which I have illustrated in the diagram below:



These 7 attributes are: process, person, place, pressures, product, persuasion and permanence.

The lack of a comprehensive definition of creativity that can be used in a business context may be one of the reasons this skill is overlooked and fails to be recognised in Ofsted inspection reports for the business curriculum.

### **Systems thinking**

One of the weaknesses in the systems thinking approach is that it does not clearly consider relationships of power. In fact, the approach suggests that if we position different people at a location in the system, they will invariably behave in the same way. In other words, it is the system that invokes our behaviour and to change our behaviour, we need to change the system. This is reminiscent of Skinner's behaviourist ideology (Skinner, 1974). However, we must bear in mind that the systems thinking framework would see power dynamics in relationships as circular rather than linear. Even Foucault, whose philosophy is quite distinct from systems thinking, did not see power in linear terms. He believed that the traditional, centralised system of power in monarchic societies was largely outdated in favour of more dispersed systems of power expressed through cultures of surveillance for example. In contemporary society, many of us are privileged to take on multiple roles, in different spaces in society, with varying degrees of power. For example, my own roles as a student, teacher, inspector and education consultant allowed me to experience power and influence from multiple positions; each position stimulated its own patterns of behaviour which were not only distinct according to the role and position but also distinct from the behaviour patterns of others in similar roles and positions due to our unique identities and prior experiences influencing our patterns of behaviour.

Although the power struggles caused by inequalities of power distribution is seen to be a weakness in systems thinking, in my experience, this weakness can be overcome when there is flexibility in the system for individuals to adopt multiple roles and occupy a variety of spaces. Using a systems thinking approach, being prepared to see each situation from multiple perspectives situated in different roles and occupying a variety of spaces, provides us with opportunities to be critically self-reflective in questioning the assumptions that we consider to be 'common sense'. For example, my own self reflections uncovered the contradictions between the pedagogy I advocate as a humanist teacher which is in fact a pedagogy that I dislike when I am at the receiving end of it as a student, and I find it difficult to evaluate it fairly as an inspector. If I had read Sotto (1994) 20 years ago, and reflected on his question wondering 'why so many of us teach in ways that we hate to be at the receiving end of as students ourselves', with a circular, systems thinking approach, I may have experienced more clarity, integrity and a higher degree of confidence in expressing my pedagogical values.

Instead of relying on international league tables such as PISA that promote ultra-competitiveness, it may be wiser to use a systems thinking approach, synthesising Eastern and Western approaches to creativity; the former focusing on collective harmony and the latter focusing on individual self-expression and fulfilment of potential. This synthesis may in fact lead to the desired outcome, survival and growth in a competitive business environment, with less effort and more reward.

In order to promote development of creativity skills in education, it is the culture that needs to be changed rather than the gatekeepers who are merely implementing the policies and procedures constructed in compliance with the contextual hegemonic discourse.

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## **Biography**

Jesvir Mahil is the Director of University for Life [www.universityforlife.com](http://www.universityforlife.com) an Education Consultancy for Lifelong Learning. Following a 30-year teaching career, Jesvir worked as an Ofsted Inspector in Further Education Colleges in England, until 2015. She has been researching for a PhD in Education & Creativity and is a Fellow of the Society for Education and Training.

# **RESEARCHING MOOCS FOR PRACTITIONERS: A PRELIMINARY STUDY**

**Misrah Mohamed**

## **Abstract**

Massive Open Online Courses (MOOCs) can be very convenient for teachers because they are often offered as online self-paced courses. However, whether or not MOOCs can provide support and enable professional learning among teachers is still unknown. Thus, current study aims to analyse how MOOCs are organised and if they benefit English teachers for their professional development. The data collection involved a ten-week observation of four MOOCs from different popular providers; NovoEd, Coursera, FutureLearn and Canvas. The study found that all courses provided teachers with relevant content related to pedagogy. In addition, constructive discussions and peer grading assessments were very helpful for teachers because they had opportunities to share experiences with others and learn from them. Nevertheless, findings point to the need for future studies on the extent MOOCs may impact upon teachers' professional roles and teaching outcomes.

Keywords: Continuing professional development, teachers' professional learning, MOOC

## **Introduction**

Continuing Professional Development (CPD) programme allows teachers to enhance their skill set and stay informed of the latest developments in pedagogy. In Malaysia, CPD programmes for teachers have been transformed into self-initiated or school-based, allowing the school management to organise activities appropriate for its teachers whenever they need them. It is believed that the school-based programmes such as classroom observations and lesson planning are more effective than the ones organised by the MOE because teachers can get involved in real classroom activities.

Teachers, in general, are expected to carry out instructional activities, run co-curricular activities and engage parents and the community in various school programmes. Quite often, teachers are also expected to engage in administrative duties related to teaching and learning such as filling out student report cards and tracking students' attendance in class. With all these responsibilities teachers have to shoulder, requiring them to attend and facilitate school-based programmes, either during or after school, affect their current working schedule. Consequently, teachers have to work overtime and they had to spend time at school more often than at home. This is even worse for teachers who teach Mathematics, Science and English. Since the subjects they teach are considered critical subjects among many schools in Malaysia, these teachers have to work twice harder than others so that they can help students to get flying colour results. There were times when these teachers can not even enjoy their holidays for they have to be in school.

In order to lessen teachers' burden, offering CPD courses online seems to be a possible solution. This is because online-based CPD courses also have the potential to provide teachers with formal or informal training. In fact, it will be more convenient for teachers because they no longer need to be physically present in a face-to-face session on a specific day and time. Instead, teachers will be able to attend any courses at their finger clicks. However, whether or not online-based CPD courses will provide teachers with the support they need for professional learning and development is not known. Thus, current study aims to address two research questions; 1) how are the MOOCs organised? and 2) what opportunities do MOOCs provide for teachers' CPD? It is hoped that this study can provide

some insights to CPD providers, allowing them to come up with alternatives that can help to lessen teachers' burden yet continue develop themselves professionally.

## Literature Review

### CPD Courses in Malaysia

CPD for teachers is commonly associated with attending courses and formal training events among teachers. However, relevant literature provides quite a number of different perspectives. For example, Villegas-Reimers (2003, p.12) claims that CPD "is a long-term process that includes regular opportunities and experiences planned systematically to promote growth and development in the profession." Somewhat taken by this, Friedman and Philips (2004) point out that CPD is no longer a practice of attending courses and training, but a lifelong learning process. In the education field, CPD is defined as "processes and activities designed to enhance the professional knowledge, skills, and attitudes of educators so that they might, in turn, improve the learning of students" (Guskey 2000, p.16). Consistent with this definition, Craft (2002) states that CPD is often used interchangeably with the term professional development and in-service training to describe activities that contribute to teachers' learning after their early training.

Given that CPD is any action undertaken by teachers through a set of activities which develop their skills and knowledge to promote successful teaching outcomes, the MOE in Malaysia has mandated a policy that requires teachers to participate in CPD programmes for at least seven days a year. A study by Pang and Wray (2016) demonstrates that teachers had positive views about attending CPD courses because they could discuss problems with other colleagues who had a vast range of teaching experience. However, majority programmes are off-site training, which provide teachers with CPD experiences that are disconnected from the classroom. Due to this reason, the MOE introduces the CPD Masterplan (Pelan Pembangunan Professionalisme Berterusan) which is to be implemented together with the shifts outlined in the Malaysia Education Blueprint. The plan includes a reshaping of the type of courses and the delivery mode for CPD on a national level. Thus, teachers are now expected to attend self-initiated or school-based CPD rather than the ones organised by the MOE. This gives the school management some freedom to decide on and organise CPD programmes suitable for teachers' needs. However, organising, facilitating and attending CPD programmes require a lot of effort from many teachers who are already occupied with other responsibilities such as lesson planning, classroom teaching, co-curricular activities and the community programmes.

In order to lessen the burdens teachers have to shoulder, organising an online CPD seems to be promising because teachers no longer have to skip their current duties. Instead, they can spend time to attend the online CPD course when they are free, leave the course when they need to and come back to where they left and continue doing the course. Nevertheless, CPD courses should embed a full range of professional activities which also involve teachers learning in collaboration (Bolam et al. 2005). CPD courses should also provide teachers with opportunities to focus on subject matter which include experiencing hands-on practices that can be applied in their daily teaching (Day & Leitch 2007).

### MOOCs for CPD

MOOCs, as many other online-based learning, is a mode of delivery that connects participants across diverse geographical distances. MOOCs can be categorised into two categories which are connectivist MOOC (cMOOC) and extended MOOC (xMOOC) (Rodriguez 2013). CMOOC is based on a more open-learning principle in which learners interact with an open network and share openly their contributions, facilitating collaboration in knowledge forming. On the other hand, so-called xMOOC adopts a more traditional

pedagogy and relies on a tutor-centered approach. In whatever way they are categorized, MOOCs are widely known to exhibit two core features; (1) open access where anyone can participate in an online course (Levy, 2011; Martin, 2012; Pappano, 2012; O’Prey, 2013; Chen, 2015; Bates, 2014; Czerniewicz, Deacon, Fife, Small & Walji, 2015; Terras & Ramsay, 2015; Conole, 2015; Robinson, Kerski, Long, Luo, DiBiase & Lee, 2015), and (2) scalability in which courses are designed to support an indefinite number of participants (Chen, 2013; Conole, 2015; Robinson et al., 2015; Stokes, Towers, Jinks & Symington, 2015; Agrawal, Kumar & Agrawal, 2015; Czerniewicz et al., 2015).

In line with the above, some scholars suggest the key features of MOOC are represented in its name. For example, “massive” refers to the number of the course participants, which can literally reach over hundreds of thousands of people (Tschofen & Mackness, 2012). It can also be referred to the opportunity to allow access to a large number of activities (Blagojević & Milošević, 2015). “Open” usually refers to free access to individual courses and participants can openly share resources, ideas and experiences without any specific requirement (Tschofen & Mackness, 2012). Sometimes, open also applies to the open content platform (Blagojević & Milošević, 2015). “Online”, on the other hand, refers to access to the Internet in the course delivery and “course” speaks of the curriculum presented with clearly defined learning objectives and outcomes (Blagojević & Milošević, 2015; Hossain, Islam, Glinsky, Lowe, Lowe & Harvey, 2015).

Martin (2012) added that MOOCs have no prerequisites other than interest, no predefined expectations for participation and no formal accreditation. Thus, anyone with an Internet connection can join a MOOC. MOOCs also come in various formats, but mostly involve listening to online lectures, completing tasks, reading articles and completing self-assessments. Not only that, MOOCs provide interactive user forums to support community interactions between students, professors and teaching assistants (Agrawal, 2015). These forums help participants to engage with others. Pioneered by elite US universities including Massachusetts Institute of Technology (MIT), Harvard University and Stanford University, MOOCs are now becoming increasingly widespread and offer immense learning opportunities to millions of learners across the world.

Recently, MOOCs are becoming more popular among practitioners because they are often offered as online self-paced courses (Littlejohn et al., 2016; Schulze, 2014). Despite their busy schedules, opportunities to build new knowledge and draw upon existing knowledge across disciplines have become easier for them. Besides, MOOCs have the potential to support and enable professional learning because practitioners are provided with opportunities to connect to formal and informal learning. This is evident in a study carried out by Milligan and Littlejohn (2014) which looks into self-regulatory ability among health practitioners who participated in a MOOC. However, whether or not MOOCs will enable teachers to gain the same opportunities to connect to professional learning is not known. Therefore, it is believed that studying the way MOOCs are organised and structured will contribute some insights on the kind of opportunities teachers may gain out of their participation in MOOCs.

## **Methodology**

This study employed a qualitative research method involving observations of four MOOCs from different popular providers namely NovoEd, Coursera, FutureLearn and Canvas. The researcher went through three phases of data collection: 1) course search, 2) course selection and 3) course observation. In the first phase, the researcher searched relevant courses using terms she established such as ‘Teacher Training’, ‘Teacher Education’, ‘Teacher Professional Development’ and ‘Professional Learning in Education’. Since the researcher was major in English, thus looking into courses which targeted teachers of English seemed more convenient than other type of courses because she knows of its

nature pedagogically. Hence, she narrowed the search into English courses only and the terms used were 'English Course for Teachers' and English Language'. The search was carried out using the internet browser, at <http://www.mooc.ca/providers.htm>. The search period was limited to the period this study was undertaken from May to August 2016. There were about 126 education-related courses found, and 27 of them were for teachers of English.

In the second phase, the researcher selected courses for current study. The process was limited to three criteria which helped manual filtering of irrelevant courses become less time-consuming. These criteria include course titles and objectives, course start date and open access. Of 27 courses found for teachers of English, there were only 12 new courses accessible for registration while the rest were ongoing or finishing and no longer available for sign up. Since the 12 courses came from only four providers, the researcher decided to choose the course based on its provider. At this stage, the four courses selected for the observation were chosen randomly. In the final phase, the researcher observed the courses as a participant-observer. The observation was carried out for about ten weeks with a period of four to five hours a week for each course. All data collected were analysed and compared in a Matrix to recognise the trend in each course.

## **Results and Discussion**

In addressing the first research question, findings gained from the observations were gathered in a matrix table for comparison. There were three common features found during the observation; 1) course information, 2) structure/organisation and 3) assessments. For the first feature, findings revealed that all of the courses were open courses and offered for free by different universities (see Table 1). However, the courses were carried out for different durations and had different learning objectives and outcomes to be achieved. Despite the differences they had, all courses aimed to provide teachers or potential teachers with knowledge, methods and strategies to develop teaching skills.

Table 1: Extract from the matrix: aspects of the course information of the MOOCs

Platform	NovoEd	Canvas	Coursera	FutureLearn
University	Stanford University	Oregon University	Universitat Autònoma de Barcelona	Cambridge University
Access	Open & Free	Open & Free	Open & Free	Open & Free
Length	20 Weeks	4 Weeks	4 Weeks	6 Weeks
Course Info	This course was for teachers and others who work with linguistically and culturally diverse English learners and aimed to help teachers to develop students' language, literacy, and thinking skills through	This course provided English language teachers with key methods for encouraging student engagement and deeper learning. It also offered teachers with strategies to keep their students engaged and	This course on English and teaching methodology aimed to help university lecturers to teach in English, in line with university internationalisation policies.	This course was designed for anyone with an interest in Teaching English as a Foreign Language (TEFL), either in own country or abroad. No prior knowledge was required to take part in the course.
Content Summary				

		conversations.	focused on learning.		
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In terms of structure and the way they were organised, only three courses provided videos for teaching and learning (see Table 2). The odd one (Canvas) did not have any lecture video and most of the time, its participants had to gather information through reading materials. It did, however, provide badges to its participants as a means of encouragement to complete the course. Similarly, other courses also offered statements of accomplishment and certificates of achievement and completion. Apart from videos and reading materials, Canvas and FutureLearn provided participants with opportunities to discuss and share knowledge among each other through discussion threads. Additionally, the FutureLearn also integrated the use of Facebook to encourage its participants to participate actively.

Table 2: Extract from the matrix: aspects of the structure/organisation of the MOOCs

	Providers	NovoEd	Canvas	Coursera	FutureLearn
Structure/Organisation	Main Medium for Lecture	Video	-	Video	Video and Notes
	Main Medium for Learning	Video	Documents and Discussion thread	Video and Other Websites	Video, Discussion Threads and Other Websites
	Learning Materials	Videos and Articles	Articles	Videos and Articles	Videos, Articles
	Social Media	-	-	-	Facebook
	Certification/Badges	Statement of Accomplishment	7 different badges: 1. Module 1 2. Module 2 3. Module 3a & 3b 4. Module 4 5. 2 Course Overall Badges	Certificate of Completion	Certificate of Achievement and Statement of Participation

Even though the structure of each course was different, they were very similar in one respect; they all provided assessments for participants to test their understanding of what they had learnt. Table 3 shows that all courses offered formative assessments, in which participants were assessed every time they covered certain topics. Nevertheless, only two courses (NovoEd and Coursera) provided peer assessments and grading.

Table 3: Extract from the matrix: aspects of the assessments of the four MOOCs

	Providers	NovoEd	Canvas	Coursera	FutureLearn
Assessments	Types	Formative (Teaching Assignment)	Formative (Module Quiz)	Formative (Quiz)	Formative (Quiz)
	Frequency	Weekly, after lesson learned	Weekly, before each module	Weekly, before each module	Random, no specific

	(3 Teaching Assignments)	ended (4 Quizzes)	ended (4 Quizzes)	structure (Might depend on topics covered)
<b>Auto generated answer</b>	-	✓	✓	✓
<b>Number of Learner Attempts</b>	-	3	3	Many
<b>Peer Assessments</b>	✓	-	✓	-
<b>Peer grading</b>	✓	-	✓	-

It is important to bear in mind that a good CPD course should embed a full range of professional activities which also involve teachers learning in collaboration (Bolam et al. 2005). As the findings revealed, all four courses provided teachers with knowledge, methods and strategies to develop teaching skills. They also offered opportunities for teachers to collaborate among each other through discussion threads (Canvas and FutureLearn) and peer assessments (NovoEd and Coursera). Peer grading which was provided by NovoEd and Coursera also helped teachers to experience hands-on practices, thus gave them opportunities to apply the skills they were to use in their daily teaching. Therefore, in addressing the second research question, MOOCs do provide opportunities for teachers' CPD through a various range of professional activities and collaboration.

## Conclusion

Findings of current study reveal that the four selected MOOCs are suitable for teachers who aim to develop key methods of teaching and their skill set as teachers. The courses provide teachers with appropriate content and assessments. Thus, the four MOOCs have the potential to support and enable professional learning, allowing opportunities for teachers to experience hands-on practices and collaboration. However, the current study shows that there is a lack of understanding whether MOOCs are effective and able to give a positive impact on teachers' CPD. Therefore, future research should aim at finding out the extent MOOCs may influence upon teachers' professional role and teaching outcomes.

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## **Biography**

The author used to be a secondary school teacher for three years before she embarked on a somewhat similar journey and started teaching university students in 2011. She is currently on a study leave, and has been involved with studies related to teacher education in massive open online courses.

# **INCLUSIVE EDUCATION FOR CHILDREN WITH SPECIAL EDUCATIONAL NEEDS IN IRELAND – POLICY, PRACTICE AND IMPACT**

**Natasha O'Donnell**

## **Abstract**

In Ireland, we currently embrace the idea of inclusive education for children with special educational needs (SEN), but what measures are being taken to actively ensure successful implementation of inclusion? The aim of this paper is to create greater understanding of inclusion for children with SEN in Ireland by exploring initiatives around “inclusion”, considering the reason it is so topical in the contemporary Irish context and examining why “inclusion” is a contested context. Information provided includes a brief history of inclusion movements and questions the tensions around the very definition of “inclusion” as it pertains to SEN. Policy design and policy enactment regarding inclusion are explored, and areas for potential improvement are identified. The issues of social justice and equality are considered through identifying recent policy and considering how it is designed to create a level playing field for all children. This paper concludes by discussing the impact of inclusion on both children with SEN and their peers.

## **Introduction**

To provide a socially just system of education we must provide all children with the necessary support for them to achieve their fullest potential, adjusting the system to the child rather than expecting the child to adjust to the existing system. Indeed, Ainscow (1999) described inclusion as a process of reaching out to all children, to enable full participate in education, whilst UNESCO (2008) believed inclusion to be the most effective approach to meet the needs of all children, but stressed it must be implemented as a whole school development plan.

Article 42 of the Constitution of Ireland (1937) states the right of all children in Ireland to receive free primary education however, in 1993 the Special Education Review Committee (SERC) reported Ireland as lacking legislation regarding provision for children with SEN. The definition of SEN presented here is that established in the Education for Persons with Special Educational Needs (ESPEN) Act (2004). It identifies SEN as a restriction in the capacity to benefit from education due to enduring physical, sensory, mental health or learning disability, or any other condition deemed to alter how an individual learns. The ESPEN Act was created to provide a framework for the development of SEN services, and expected to be fully implemented by 2010, but was ultimately suspended in 2008 due to economic circumstances. Failure to fully implement the ESPEN Act runs contrary to the UN Convention on the Rights of Persons with a Disability (CRPD) (2007), which states the government must ensure disability does not result in exclusion from the general education system. We have finally entered a time when children with SEN are recognised as having much in common with their peers, therefore benefitting from a shared educational setting, yet there remains a shortfall regarding enabling children with SEN to fully participate and succeed, not just at primary level but beyond.

In 2015, a report by the Economic and Social Research Institute (ESRI) revealed startling statistics. Their analysis of the National Disability Survey showed only 29% of people with a disability in current employment, with 7% of those in possession of a third level qualification having never been employed. Furthermore, 45% are at risk of poverty, compared with 13% of the general population (Watson, Banks and Lyons, 2015). If we examine one particular area of SEN, those diagnosed on the autism spectrum, it highlights a potentially bleak future. It is estimated that 80% of those on the autism spectrum whom have obtained a third level qualification remain unemployed (MacCraith, 2016). Dublin City University (DCU) recently

made headlines with their plan to open Ireland's first autism-friendly campus, with an emphasis being placed on job preparation and access to internships, but will these students be educated with their peers and attend seminars designed to address their needs, or will this ultimately lead to segregation? What of children with other SEN? If our aim, as a society, is to provide inclusion for children with SEN, the onus is on us to support full participation and ensure equality of opportunity for all. We must also recognise that needs may not lie solely in academia. The value of a Leaving Certificate or third level qualification is greatly diminished if it does not improve quality of life. If children with SEN become adults unable to present their skills in an interview, and remain at greater risk of poverty, the education system has failed them. If we are to successfully transform our education system, to implement inclusion effectively, Nind (2005) suggested we must reflect and act on social justice, making changes at institutional level, believing in the learning potential of all children, and redesigning both the national curriculum and learning support. Although with change comes challenge. The DES assigns support services nationwide, but distribution of support fall to individual schools, assisting children with SEN deemed in greatest need, simply not having the resources to assist them all. At a time when we are promoting a policy of inclusion in Ireland, class sizes continue to increase, with 24% of children in a class of 30 or more, and resource hours continue to be reduced. Approximately 48% of national schools in Dublin alone commenced this academic year with fewer resource hours than the 2014-2015 academic year. As schools continue to struggle to meet the academic needs of their students, there is little room to support non-academic skills, a vital component of education for many children with SEN.

### **A brief history of inclusion**

During the 19th Century, pioneers of special education helped develop provision for children who were excluded from education and argued for their inclusion (Reynolds and Ainscow, 1994), with governments not taking responsibility for provisions until much later. The 20th Century saw the emergence of special education, with special schools being a widely accepted approach. This segregation was considered best practice as it was believed children with SEN could not benefit from mainstream schooling and ordinary methods of instruction (Thomas, Walker and Webb, 1997). It wasn't until the 1960's civil rights movement that people with disabilities voiced their anger regarding the limitations and stigmatisation associated with segregated education, giving rise to integration. In the 1980's children with SEN were offered integration, providing them with support to attend mainstream schooling, the expectation being the children would manage without any adjustment to the school system. As Farrell and Ainscow (2002) discussed, integration was defined with regards to the physical placement of children with SEN, lacking consideration for the quality of the educational experience. This approach was supported by the medical model of disability, which suggested learning barriers existed within the child rather than the school system. Pijl and Meijer (1997) intimated that this became widely accepted as the most effective way to meet the needs of a minority whilst safeguarding the education of the majority, whilst Cline and Fredrickson (2009) believed this placed the responsibility to "fit in" on children with SEN. McDonnell (2003) argued that our failure to address these embedded inequalities minimised the ability of legislation to enable equal participation in education. Integration saw children with SEN being placed in mainstream classes, receiving learning support via a "withdrawing" model, thus taking place away from peers and the general classroom, the emphasis firmly on the placement rather than the rights of children with SEN.

According to Thomas, Walker and Webb (1997), it wasn't until the end of the 20th Century that we saw the development of the framework for inclusion, shifting from the medical model to the social model of disability, examining the learning barriers within the school system, with the emphasis placed on institutional change to meet the requirements of increasingly diverse learners (Barton, 1997). Lloyd (2008) described inclusion as the process of enabling all children to fully participate in mainstream education. By replacing integration with

inclusion we identified the rights of all children to fully participate in all aspects of school life, placing a duty on the school to adapt. Mittler (2007) recommended a radical change of the educational system, but according to Ainscow and César (2006) these institutional changes exceeded pedagogy, raising the issue of rights, enabling full participation of all children.

## **Defining inclusion**

Florian (2008) believed the idea of inclusion to be generally accepted as part of the human rights agenda, demanding access to, and equality in, education. To understand our current position on inclusion we must examine the historical development, both in conceptual terms and in terms of policy and practice. Farrell and Ainscow (2002) inferred UNESCO's Salamanca Statement (1994) introduced a significant linguistic change, establishing inclusion as the accepted descriptor regarding policies and action, and giving international endorsement to the inclusive education movement, reflecting the United Nation's Education for All (2005) strategy. Pijl, Meijer and Hegarty (1997) believed it to be a "global agenda", seeking increased participation and the removal of barriers for children with SEN. Education of children with SEN is now an established key policy objective in many countries (Lindsay, 2007), the underpinning desire being the right of all children to be educated together, yet inclusion remains elusive (Ainscow, 1999; Ballard, 1997, Slee 2011). One reason for this may be that we lack one single universally accepted definition (Clough, 1999; Florian, 2008; Slee 2001). Abbott (2007) suggested inclusion signalled a shift from the medical model to the social model view, examining learning barriers posed by school systems, while Ainscow (1998) proposed inclusion as a means of transforming school systems. Stubbs (2008) recommended we define inclusion by highlighting commonalities between concepts and assumptions underpinning such movements as Education for All, which is worth reflecting upon. Guidelines are grey and we remain in need of direction. Nind (2005) even questioned the existence of a common inclusion, and with such variation of interpretation it appears futile to speak of inclusion as a single entity, the difference between our words and our actions raising questions regarding the effectiveness with which inclusion can be implemented.

## **Recent policy in Ireland**

The development of provisions for children with SEN in Ireland can be traced back to the 1993 SERC Report, which recommended a substantial increase in resources. Ireland adopted the recommendations of SERC, as much integration as possible alongside as little segregation as possible, further endorsing this approach in the Education Act of 1998, which established the right of all children to an appropriate education. Legislation to support development of these provisions was provided by the 2004 ESPEN Act, which was designed to ensure children with SEN are educated alongside their peers in an inclusive environment. In 2005, the National Council for Special Education (NCSE) was created to support the development and implementation of inclusion, but what definition of inclusion? Whilst this is the very foundation for successful inclusion it proves more problematic than imagined. Identifying a clear definition of inclusive education poses quite a challenge, despite legislation throughout all EU countries to promote inclusion. The NCSE, tasked with establishing a definition of inclusion relevant in a contemporary Irish society, set about reviewing existing definitions, ultimately combining the definition used by UNESCO (2005) and the description provided by the DES (2007) Post-Primary guidelines. Whilst the definition addressed removing barriers to enable children with SEN to fully participate, responding to the diversity of learners, and maximising the benefits of attending a mainstream setting, both the definition and the guidelines for implementation remained vague, leaving much open to individual interpretation. Bailey (1998) described inclusion as taking place in an ordinary school with a level of acceptance ensuring children with SEN feel no different to any other children. Farrell, Frankham, Gallannaugh, Howes and Smith (2007) suggested defining inclusion crucial in order to assess it correctly, yet Vaughn and Schumm

(1995) believed a single definition to simplistic, proposing “responsible inclusion”, but this would lack consistency of delivery.

We established a shift from integration, where children with SEN were expected to adapt to the school system, to inclusion, where the school system was expected to adapt for a diverse student population, as examined by Rouse and Florian (1997) and Blamiers (1999). Carrington (1999) proposed a change in school culture was required, with Farrell (2001) further clarifying this, suggesting changes to curriculum, assessment, pedagogy and grouping of pupils as critical components. Booth and Ainscow (2002) designed an Index for Inclusion: producing inclusive policies; evolving inclusive practices; and creating inclusive school systems. This appeared to be the stance adopted by the NCSE (2006). Whilst they acknowledged inclusive education invokes strong views regarding meaning, they suggested the core issue is what occurs in the classroom and wider school system, as this is the source for future outcomes for children with SEN. In 2007 the DES endorsed this notion, stating inclusive education may benefit all children, helping them overcome misconceptions and providing them with an opportunity to learn to appreciate and value difference. In 2007, UNESCO stated inclusive education must include the whole school system, and cannot be developed in isolation. Nind and Cochrane (2002) argued this change exceeded the platform of education, believing it to also be a rights issue. We must aim to create an educational system which is rights-based, in a learning environment which is child-centred, flexible and enables all children to fulfil their potential by providing a teaching style conducive to their learning style. This gives weight to Skrtic's (1995) belief that by providing equality we will achieve excellence. In fact, despite lacking clear definition, the introduction of acts, and subsequently amendments, such as the Individuals with Disabilities Acts (IDEA) (1990; 1997), remain determined in their promotion of ‘whole-school’ approaches to inclusion, as examined by Evans and Lunt (2002).

### **Policy into practice**

We have established the aim of inclusive education, to consider the rights of children, and how best to transform education systems to meet the requirements of teaching diverse groups, emphasising the need for opportunities for equal participation in mainstream school systems, and thus attempting to ensure such opportunities are presented in a more equal manner. So, whilst a clear definition remains elusive, the Irish government seems determined to create policies and provide funding for inclusive education, but have we succeeded in having these policies filter into the classroom? Whilst the DES (2007) advocated inclusive education as a means to create an inclusive society in the future, believing inclusion could benefit all children, a 2006 NCSE report, pertaining to the implementation of the ESPEN Act, identified several key deficits in current Irish provision: early identification, intervention and pre-school provision was found to be inadequate; delays in assessment were frequent; the curriculum remained inaccessible for many children with SEN; outcomes lacked structure; educational planning was deemed poor; schools remained under-resourced; inappropriate, inefficient and inequitable allocation of resources; training was deemed insufficient and there remained inadequate institutional and systemic supports for inclusive education.

In 2011 the NCSE recommended the majority of children with SEN be educated with their peers whilst recognising that, for some children with complex or severe needs, mainstream education may not be in everybody's best interests. The DES currently operates a policy of maximum inclusion, ensuring continued provision for students in need of specialist education and special classes to facilitate integration. Enrolment in special classes within mainstream schools and in special schools requires an assessment leading to the belief that these settings are best suited to meet individual needs, with over 500 special classes in mainstream schools. Mainstream inclusion continues to be supported by Special Needs Assistants (SNA) and Resource Teaching (RT) hours. In October 2015 1,904 SNAs were

employed and 21,779 hours of RT allocated (NCSE 2015). There has also been an expansion of support bodies, such as National Educational Psychological Service (NEPS) and the Special Education Support Service (SESS).

### **The path to improvement**

Not only did the Education Act (1998) establish the right of all children to an appropriate education, it influenced thinking, policies and practices around inclusion, impacting on the Employment Equality Acts (1998; 2004), the Equal Status Acts (2000; 2004), the Education Welfare Act 2000 and the Disability Act (2005), suggesting we are seeking a societal change to address equality. It is also encouraging to see provisions for inclusion at pre-school level, such as the Early Childhood Care and Education scheme (ECCE) (Department of Children and Youth Affairs, 2015) entitling children to two years of government funded pre-school.

McGee (2004) intimated the learning of children with SEN is dependent on the expertise of teachers, but Avramidis and Norwich (2002) suggested teachers lack confidence regarding knowledge and competence in teaching children with SEN, highlighting the need to improve access to Continuing Professional Development (CPD), as intimated by Carrington (1999), Loreman, Deppler and Harvey (2005), Forlin, Keen and Barrett (2008), O'Gorman, Drudy, Winter, Smith and Barry (2009) and Shevlin, Kenny and Loxley (2008). There also remains concern regarding overemphasis on academic results (Daly, 2008; Drury and Kinsella, 2009), and time management concerns have been researched extensively (Horne and Timmons, 2009; Smith and Lenord, 2005; Talmor, Reiter and Feigin, 2005), with Harty (2007) identifying non-teaching time as a major barrier to inclusion.

We must also consider the position in which children with SEN find themselves. Hall and McGregor (2000) conducted a study of peer relationships, from which they deemed by the end of primary education children with SEN were no longer viewed as a part of the class. Kemp and Carter (2006) indicated this may be due to successful inclusion being dependent on the social skills of children with SEN. Indeed, social exclusion has been examined by many researchers, such as Dyson, Farrell, Polat and Hutcheson (2004). Furthermore, this social exclusion may lead to feelings of loneliness, unhappiness and rejection, as reported by McVilly, Stancliffe, Parmenter and Burton-Smith (2006). Research also indicates children with SEN are at greater risk of isolation and bullying (Gibb, Tunbridge, Chua and Frederickson, 2007; Nabuzoka, 2003). A case study by Ring and Travers (2005) suggested social exclusion may be, in part, down to a lack of knowledge on the part of typically developing peers. The relationships between children with SEN and their peers may differ significantly from the relationship between typically developing peers. Norwich and Kelly (2004) suggested typically developing peers took on a role of caring and helping, while Rose and Shevlin (2004) indicated a relationship based on pity and sympathy rather than reciprocal friendship.

Clearly there is work to be done, an acceptance of the commitment to substantial long-term change required (Croll and Moses, 2000). We must create a model of inclusion which enhances the knowledge and experience of teachers, ensuring positive staff attitudes, the importance of which was researched by Avramidis and Kalyva (2007), Pearce and Forlin (2005) and Forlin, Loreman, Sharma and Earle (2007). Whilst we continue to search for a model of inclusion which may be successfully implemented, Nind (2005) suggested we remain far from a good collective understanding of inclusion. Maybe we should consider the recommendations of Thomas, Walker and Webb (1997), that rather than examining if inclusion works we need to research ways in which we can ensure it works, attempting to establish the uncompromising commitment required (Kugelmass and Ainscow, 2004).

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## **Biography**

The author teaches in a Primary Montessori school in Ireland. She has twenty years teaching experience in both Montessori and special education. She has a Diploma in Montessori Education (birth-twelve years), a B.Phil. in autism (children), and an M.Ed. in Special Education. She is currently working towards her EdD.

## AUTISM DIAGNOSIS AND IMPACT: IN THEIR OWN WORDS

Julie Prentice

### Abstract

Although understanding and coming to terms with a diagnosis is likely to have psychological ramifications (Ruberman, 2002), there is little research related to good practice in supporting young people to understand their diagnosis (National Institute of Clinical Excellence, 2011). Qualitative responses from an online survey from seven young people with autism were analysed using systematic narrative analysis. This analysis has been undertaken as part of a larger mixed methods study, which is underpinned by a critical realist philosophical perspective (McEvoy and Richards, 2006). As such, it is accepted there are scientifically observable truths about the nature of the world which provide a point of reference, against which theories can be tested (Bhaskar, 1978); while also recognising that it is impossible to fully understand this reality because perceptions of reality are shaped through the discourses experienced. A number of themes were identified, which revealed underlying 'critical disability narratives' including elements that reflect both the social and medical view of disability (Oliver, 1996; Thomas, 1999). Influences from the medical and social model of disability are evident in the views of young people with autism, which could negatively impact upon their self-efficacy. Greater consideration from the perspective of young people with autism into the processes surrounding diagnosis is required. Outcome In line with a critical realist framework, this research aimed to identify the views of young people with autism. Their experiences of an autism diagnosis were intertwined and closely linked to their experiences of the process, and to practices related to social and institutional processes. Understanding the impact upon young people could contribute to the planning of approaches, strategies and dialogues that professional and parents might employ when helping young people to understand an autism diagnosis in the future.

**Background:** A range of possible reactions to an autism diagnosis have been suggested, with psychological ramifications ranging from potential improvements in self-esteem (Whitaker, 2006), through to suicidal feelings (MacLeod and Johnston, 2007). Research related to good practice in supporting young people to understand their diagnosis is scarce (National Institute for Health and Clinical Excellence, 2011).

**Methods:** As part of a larger mixed methods study underpinned by a critical realist perspective (McEvoy and Richards, 2006), qualitative responses from an online survey from seven young people with autism were analysed using systematic narrative analysis.

**Conclusion:** Participants revealed influences that link with disability discourses, intertwined with social experiences, which could negatively impact upon self-efficacy. Greater consideration from the perspective of young people with autism into the processes surrounding diagnosis is required.

**Outcome:** Understanding the impact upon young people could contribute to the planning of approaches, strategies and dialogues that might be employed in future.

### Introduction

While working as an advisory teacher, the researcher was often asked for advice about approaches to support young people to understand their autism diagnosis. Educators, parents, and carers regularly indicated feeling that they lacked the skills and knowledge to support the young person through this process. They also voiced concerns about the potential impact of the diagnosis upon the young person concerned. Murray (2006, p.6)

highlighted that diagnosis involves more than simple provision of knowledge, it is complex and makes a difference to perceptions of past experiences, possibilities for the future and therefore to the self-image of the person receiving it. The psychological impact of the diagnosis has been suggested to vary from potential improvements in self-esteem (Whitaker, 2006), self-awareness and self-efficacy (Gerland, 2003), happiness (Holliday-Willey, 2006), relief (Lawson, 2004) through to anxiety, depression (Tantum, 1991) and suicidal feelings (MacLeod and Johnston, 2007). While research evidence relating to many aspects of autism continues to grow, research evidence related to good practice in supporting young people to understand their autism diagnosis remains scarce (National Institute of Health and Clinical Excellence, 2011).

## Background

The diagnostic criteria used by the National Health Service (NHS) within the United Kingdom is the World Health Organisation's (WHO) International Classification of Diseases- 10th Edition (ICD-10) (WHO, 2016). ICD-10 Version: 2016 defines Childhood Autism under the umbrella of pervasive developmental disorder, which is present prior to the age of three, with abnormal functioning in the three areas of reciprocal social interaction, communication, and restricted, stereotyped, repetitive behaviours (WHO, 2016, section 84:0). The ICD is currently being revised; the ICD-11 Beta Draft version uses the term Autism Spectrum Disorder to define the condition (WHO, 2017). The Autism Education Trust (2016) suggest that the diagnostic terms used in relation to autism can be considered stigmatising by some people on the spectrum. This paper therefore follows the approach they suggest by using the terms autism or the autism spectrum, unless quoting from others.

Although many clinicians and researchers have achieved consensus on the validity of the autism spectrum diagnostic category and the diagnostic features (Volkmar, Chawarska and Klin, 2005, p. 5), this view is not shared by all commentators (Mandy and Skuse, 2008; Goldberg, 2011). There is no single biological or medical test that can support a diagnosis of autism. The lack of such a test also means that a diagnosis can be delayed, especially for those with autism but without additional learning needs, who are frequently not diagnosed until late childhood when their self-identity is already established (Howlin and Asgharian, 1999). Simons (2007) identified considerable confusion about autism by the general public, many respondents though it could be cured and others did not think that autism was a disability. Whitaker (2006) highlighted several difficulties to consider when discussing a diagnosis with a young person, these include: the 'autistic way of thinking'; the continuing debate about the name of the condition; and the medical model of autism which describes it as a disease, disability, or difference. Despite wide ranging research about the nature of autism, the debate within the literature continues, suggesting the potential for differing professional interpretations by those working with young people with autism. Rhodes et al. (2008) highlight that following a diagnosis, an individual may have to accept that other people view them as 'disabled', while continuing to refuse to accept it as part of their own self-identity. The indistinct biological evidence has led some people on the autism spectrum to find the very concept of the autism diagnosis as problematic (Armstrong, 2011), and to suggest that an approach that is much wider than provision of information specifically related to understanding the diagnosis is important (Jack 2011; Timimi 2011). Narrative research, exploring the views of a small group of young people, found that while some young people felt the diagnosis useful to make sense of earlier experiences, participants who identified a delay occurring between diagnosis, and being told about the diagnosis, identified feelings of 'shock, disappointment and disbelief' (Huws and Jones, 2008, p.104).

Thomson (1997) highlights that society's attitudes are passed on through the media and 'codes of literary convention, these codes construct the image of 'the disabled' (p. 9). The concept of the norm has been suggested to be strongly embedded and inability to meet the "normal" standards of health and functioning to have a negative impact on the individual

(Becker, 1997). Bagatell (2010) highlights that the identities of people with autism are not an underlying element to be exposed, they are also constructed through interaction in the social world. Parents of children with autism, and adults with autism, report feelings of relief following diagnosis (Brogan and Knussen, 2003; Williams, 2004). The findings of Huws and Jones (2008), however, highlighted how young people's views can differ significantly to those of parents, therefore emphasising the importance of seeking their views.

## Methods

A critical realist approach has been adopted for this research because it accepts that reality exists independently of thoughts, while also recognising that reality is developed and described through language and interpretation within social contexts (Robson 2002). Acknowledging the 'autistic way of thinking' (Whitaker, 2006) and putting this at the centre of the research process was considered essential to understand the diagnostic experiences. Evidence has therefore been sought from the population whose views it seeks to explore (Huws and Jones, 2008). Systematic analysis has been undertaken to enable interpretation to be developed around the participants' experiences while also taking account of the complexity of such experiential data (Strauss and Corbin, 1998).

## Participants

The accounts of seven young people with autism, who had shared their views about the diagnostic processes within the open questions section of the online questionnaire were explored. The sample included four males and three females.

## Data collection and analysis

Participants' answers were analysed in detail and significant points, connections and interpretations annotated. The emerging themes and the initial notes were condensed, possible connections identified, clustered together and a master-list of themes produced (Figure 1). To avoid preconceptions the researcher progressively reanalysed and linked codes to enable identification of themes, which were selected by both prevalence and upon the richness of the accounts and how themes connected with the account (Smith, 1999; Corbin and Strauss, 2008).

## Results

Several converging themes and broad topics relevant to perceptions of autism emerged from the analysis, including diagnostic as a catalyst for change which was often linked to others awareness of the diagnosis as a trigger for support. Participants also made links between their identity and their feelings of self-efficacy. The converging themes were identified through the richness of the accounts and the insight offered into perceptions of autism, themes are presented below with excerpts from the transcriptions as exemplars of the views in context.

**Figure 1: Selection of Summary Table Showing Analysis of Themes and Topics**

Themes	Converging Themes				Broad Topics
• Difficulty establishing friendships	A	A. Social difficulties (7) -i			i. Self-efficacy
• Social anxiety	I	B. School issues (2)-ii			
• School is difficult	C	C. Self-efficacy(8)-i			
• Challenge to self-efficacy	B	D. The diagnostic catalyst (4)-ii			ii. Diagnostic catalyst
• Increased support post diagnosis	D	E. Difficulty accessing support (1) -iii			
	E	F. Developing own			iii. Awareness equalling support

<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Access to support problematic</li> <li>• Self help <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>◦ Study</li> <li>◦ Internet</li> </ul> </li> <li>• Autism-family trait</li> <li>• Improved self-awareness &amp; happier</li> <li>• Lack of support</li> <li>• Social anxiety impacting upon self-efficacy</li> <li>• Phobia</li> <li>• Lack of control</li> <li>• Importance of routine and tidiness</li> <li>• Reliance on others/lack of control</li> <li>• Ability and self-efficacy</li> <li>• Lack of social understanding</li> <li>• Coping strategies and self-efficacy</li> <li>• Diagnostic conversation with parent</li> <li>• Autism linked to Identity</li> <li>• Diagnosis leading to support</li> <li>• Peer awareness enabling strategy implementation</li> <li>• Diagnosis unexpected</li> <li>• Poor social understanding overcome by cognitive strategies</li> <li>• Feeling different</li> <li>• Diagnostic conversation with parent</li> <li>• Diagnosis is not a problem</li> </ul>	F G H E A I J K L M N O C A U V W X Y	understanding (3)-i G. Autism traits (1)-iv H. Post diagnostic improvements (1)-ii I. Emotional disequilibrium/mental health (6)-v J. Lack of control (1)-i K. Support strategies (2) iii L. Finding out (6)-iii M. Identity (7)iv N. Awareness and understanding=support (8)-iii O. Strategies and self-efficacy (9)-i P. Diagnosis acceptance (3)-ii Q. Poor awareness: lack of support (2)-iii S. Acceptance (2)-ii T. Diagnosis and confusion (2)-ii U. Language of deficit (2)-iv V. Feeling different (4)-iv W. Disclosure and perceptions (3)- ii X. Diagnostic delay (2)-iii Y. No change (1)-iii	iv. Identity
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## Identity and Self-efficacy

As indicated in the research of Rhodes et al. (2008), the accounts revealed that the diagnosis was a challenge to the self-perceptions of some participants, impacting negatively upon self-efficacy; while for others it was before the diagnosis that their awareness of feeling different from peers was a challenge. Some participants accounts revealed underlying elements that reflected negative influences from what might be considered a medical view of disability (Morris, 1996; Oliver, 1996; Thomas, 1996), thus highlighting the influence of the negatively focused language used to describe autism and its related features (Whitaker, 2006):

I haven't accepted my diagnosis yet so I'm unsure of how to feel... As I get older I am finding some differences between my friends... (Brogan)

...I thought I was unintelligent and slightly insane... (Carl)

I have extremely poor social skills at all times, in particular with large groups of people. Public transport is a phobia that I have ... (Regan)

As found by Huws and Jones (2008), the views shared by young people with autism were varied, including awareness of the challenge to their identity alongside resulting increases in positive support from others:

... She pointed out that it doesn't change who I am but meant I could get support. (Regan)

...I was happy because I knew it would allow my parents to understand me better, but sad for myself because it didn't make me feel better about being different ... (Carl)

For some participants, the reactions of others to the diagnosis had an impact upon their own perception of the diagnosis:

... I remember looking at both my parents, and thinking my mother might have been relieved. I don't think she was shocked. I looked to my father second. I just remember thinking he looked disappointed. I wanted to cry... (Donna)

Other participants had a strong sense of their own identity and wrote confidently and positively about the relationship between this and their diagnosis:

How I think is who I am- how I interpretation memories and react to events, which thoughts make up my consciousness. Asperger's is part of this- I find it indispensable in how I exist and react to the world. (Kai)

I feel like I belong somewhere even if to others it is a weird place I have one. (Willow)

Developing their understanding of the diagnosis either through support from others, or through searching out information themselves, was identified to support acceptance of the diagnosis and to lead to increased self-efficacy, as also described by Gerland (2003). This was equally evident in accounts from participants who had experienced a negative reaction to the diagnosis as for those for whom it had been positive:

I spent the next few weeks finding out everything I could about autism ... I think maybe those few weeks helped... you have to take a deep breath, accept things are not what you thought or hoped they would be and start over. I'm getting better at that. I make sure to do things I enjoy, and I'm learning to talk about my problems. It's going to be OK. (Donna)

### **A catalyst for change and support**

Some participants revealed the diagnosis to be a catalyst for change, including increased support and understanding. As suggested by Bagatell (2010), a link between participant's self-efficacy and identity could be linked to interaction in the social world, with positive understanding of others leading to increases in self-confidence:

... I have finally made a group of friends who all know I have Asperger's and they are super sweet about it... (Willow)

... my friends leave me alone and when I feel calm, they let me join back in playing as if I didn't even leave. I am very lucky and we came up with this ourselves. My mum knows about this and so do my friends parents and they were all very happy about it as it means we can all stay friends and have fewer arguments now. (Brogan)

...I have made friends with ASD and also I have finally made a group of friends who all know I have Asperger's and they are super sweet about it. All of us have our own issues which makes it easy to be honest and open about things which is useful. I don't hide away from my Asperger's; I don't blurt it out instantly but I feel fine to

mention it. Sometimes I worry about how others will feel rather than myself though. (Willow)

## Conclusion

This study aimed to analyse young people's views to both inform ongoing research and to identify the impact of diagnosis in order to inform the planning of approaches, strategies and dialogues that might be employed with young people with autism in future. The analysis revealed negatively phrased language within some of the young people's narratives, which suggested that their self-perceptions were influenced by both the language used during the diagnostic revelation and through interaction in the social world (Bagatell, 2010; Thompson, 1997). These perceptions appeared to negatively influence the self-esteem of some participants. However, the narratives also revealed positive experiences and outcomes that could influence greater resilience, these positive features included a focus upon their own abilities and achievements, support and understanding from others and involvement in activities that are valued by others. Greater consideration from the perspective of young people with autism, into the processes surrounding diagnosis, is required to understand factors that influence their views upon their diagnosis both negatively and positively (NICE, 2011).

## Outcome

As part of a concurrent, embedded mixed methods approach (Creswell, 2009), interpretations from the analysis will be used to inform forthcoming in-depth interviews which are planned as part of the wider research. The understanding gained will also support analysis of links between the processes and impact identified within the scaled responses during the next phase of the research and subsequent analysis. It is anticipated that this complementary approach will support the reliability and validity of the process, and enable greater confidence in the positive approaches identified which could be used to support understanding of an autism diagnosis.

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## **Biography**

Julie Prentice is a Senior Lecturer within the School of Childhood and Education Sciences at Canterbury Christ Church University, where she teaches on a number of Special Educational Needs Programmes. Prior to this, Julie has worked as a Specialist Advisory Teacher in three different local authorities.

## **ENQUIRY-BASED LEARNING: PLASTICITY, METAMORPHOSIS AND TRANSFORMATION**

**Elizabeth Stevenson**

### **Abstract**

Learning is a transformative event or it has the potential to be. It can be life changing and some of the powerful ideas about learning, in particular enquiry based learning (EBL) are discussed within this paper. EBL can be transformative in that it is predicated on shifting the nature of learning from an instructionist approach to one that demands learner discovery, problem solving and creativity; characteristics that are commensurate with meaningful learning. EBL is 'different' it opens up a detour, another path that is unexpected and unpredictable. It challenges the way we think about learning, its episteme and ontology. It has the potential to create the conditions for transforming the raw materials of the learner through two competing types of plasticity; destructive plasticity which throws the learning out of their being and unties their identity, and positive plasticity that enables the learner to give and receive form. Both illustrate the experiential dimensions of EBL's ontology and the gains and losses in 'becoming' through metamorphosis. These transformative powers are not always visible, rather they are held in some sort of ontological reserve without the status of 'being there' but they have the potential to become integrated into the history of the learner.

### **Introduction**

"Come to the edge" he said  
"We can't we're afraid" they replied  
"Come to the edge" he said  
"We can't we will fall!"  
"Come to edge" he beckoned  
And they came, he pushed them and they flew

Christopher Logue (1926-2011)

I stumbled across 'Come to the edge' quite serendipitously when I began my professional teaching career. As a newly appointed nurse teacher it struck me how the ethos of 'Come to the Edge' represented not only my philosophy of nursing but my philosophy of teaching; to nurture and to care but also to foster resourcefulness, independence and self-sufficiency. And it is this philosophy that first brought about my interest in EBL as an emerging pedagogy in higher education (HE); a pedagogy that has become the focus for my evolving doctoral thesis.

This paper sets out to convey the central tenets of my thesis whose intent is to explore the experiences of post graduate professional teaching students engaging with EBL. The paper begins by offering a brief outline of what makes EBL different to traditional instructionism before going on to analyse some of its perceived benefits and challenges. The paper concludes by offering a visual representation of my developing research project at the time of writing.

### **What is EBL and how does it differ from traditional instructionism?**

As Jones (2011, p997) reminds us anyone who has ever learned to skate or swim will tell you that learning isn't simply a matter of outputs and inputs. And arguably it is from this perspective that newer approaches like EBL have emerged that move away from the more traditional instructionist approaches. Jones (2011) describes the latter as 'catch and toss'

models so called because the teacher pitches, the learner catches and in return tosses something back in the way of an assignment or exam paper.

As an emerging pedagogy whose discourses appear nationally and internationally EBL has earned a well-established reputation (Stacey Oxley and Aubeeluck, 2015; Cleaver, Lintern and McLinden, 2014; Higher Education Academy, 2008). Yet its discourses reveal no commonly agreed definition (Stevenson, 2015; Aldridge, 2013; McLinden and Edwards, 2011). However, a series of key features are noted by several commentators who agree that EBL positions the learner in an environment where they are self-directed but importantly supported, they are actively engaged in learning and in which they collaborate with their peers (Cleaver, Lintern and McLinden, 2014; University of Birmingham, 2010; Spronken-Smith, 2008; Hutchings, 2007; Khan and O'Rourke, 2005; Price, 2003). The teacher, whose aim is to foster a spirit of critical reflection through self-direction and empowerment, adopts the role of facilitator. Facilitation literally means 'easing' and reflects the teacher's goal of helping learners to get in touch with their internal capacities and to make sense of their experiences (Gregory, 2002 cited in Tosey, 2006. p1).

EBL's origins can be traced back to the concept of problem based learning (PBL) born from Canadian research undertaken by Barrows and Tamblyn (1980) concerning the education of medical students. PBL was found to be a much more effective way of creating in the medical student's mind, a more useable body of knowledge than that of memory based learning. However, unlike PBL, EBL is much broader and significantly different. The goal is not solely to problem solve; rather it is to engage the learner in deep, critically reflective thinking by offering a process for exploring a question or real life scenario where there is no solution or answer (Stacey Oxley and Aubeeluck, 2015; Rush and Barker, 2006).

Aside from having no commonly agreed definition there are also a number of hybrid models noted within EBL's discourse and this further compounds the business of determining its precise nature. However, these hybrid models reveal a number of commonalities that position the learner in a constructivist environment that is student-led but significantly scaffolded (University of Birmingham, 2010, Hutchings). Given the emergence of hybrid models the elements of EBL are as Hutchings (2006, p3) notes, "multiple, variable and open to selection" but typically comprises the formulation of a question, identification of key issues, the search for valid evidence and the interpretation of this evidence in relation to a real world issue. The EBL process usually draws together with a presentation of coherent conclusions and a reflection on the learning process (Hutchings, 2006).

### **Why employ EBL with post graduate professional teaching students?**

There are a number of reasons why EBL is felt to be appropriate for this group. Firstly, there is an increasing opinion that student-centred learning is beneficial and EBL has earned a well-established reputation in HE (Stacey, Oxley and Aubeeluck, 2015; Cleaver, Lintern and McLinden, 2014). Secondly, within the current context of an increasing graduate workforce and the resulting development of postgraduate provision for continuing professional development (CPD) there is a general understanding in higher education (HE) that postgraduate learners should aim to be independent and self-directed learners (Casey, Clark and Hayes, 2013, p.xii). And this has particular resonance for health care professionals whose preparation for professional teacher status must be at minimum postgraduate level (Nursing and Midwifery Council (NMC), 2008, p39). Thirdly, professional teacher students should be exposed to a range of pedagogies to enable them to plan for learning and teaching effectively. And finally, as potential educational leaders, professional teaching students should embrace the teaching-research nexus that EBL affords.

But despite having considerable practice experience, post graduate professional teaching students often embark upon their course after a prolonged period away from any formal

academic study. Moreover, although they have some experience of studying within higher education (HE) this experience is usually at undergraduate level and in an environment that is often teacher-led.

### **Is EBL a panacea?**

Arguably EBL is not a panacea for this particular group of learners for the reasons stated above. EBL is therefore employed in the final module of their twelve month course and this acknowledge two things; firstly, the potential challenges of returning to formal academic study, and secondly; the transition anticipated from each learner in adopting a different role and relationship with their teacher than previously experienced in a teacher-led environment. EBL is employed alongside other approaches that reflect the broad principles of constructivism where the learner makes connections between past learning and current experiences and has a certain curiosity about an issue of real world value (University of Birmingham. 2010). Approaching EBL from this basis enables professional teaching students to progress steadily towards increasingly complex levels of cognitive activity.

### **Perceived benefits of using EBL**

EBL acknowledges that we live in a continually changing world where there is no definitive knowledge or truth; it thrives by generating uncertainties. It opens up detours and paths to knowledge that are unexpected and unpredictable (Hutchings, 2007) and it does this by encouraging students to gather an assemblage of epistemological and ontological truths and to debate their contested meanings.

But EBL can be troublesome and Herbert Simon's (1981) topographical ant, cited in Jones (2011, p1004) offers a useful analogy to describe this experience;

"Simon plotted the ant's path as it navigated its way across a beach and noted how it weaved, halted, negotiated ripples of wind and wave and detoured pebbles. Not quite a random walk for it had an underlying sense of direction, of aiming towards a goal".

Anecdotally this is how professional teaching students initially respond to EBL; their goal as they see it is to pursue an enquiry but the onus of responsibility rests with them. This places them on uncertain ground; they are quite literally 'let loose to learn' and this may deviate from their previous experiences of learning particularly if teacher-led. But something happens as the EBL process unfolds and students undergo an 'epistemic and ontological shift'. Their confidence grows and they are not afraid to bring a wide range of materials to the table for critical discussion. This is often described by students as a very different approach to that previously encountered where the materials were determined largely by their teacher. They become progressively more independent requiring less scaffolding.

### **Challenges of using EBL**

Learners can feel 'thrown out of their being'; they are forced into a state of reorientation in order to adopt a new relationship with their teacher as facilitator. Some feel uncomfortable in engaging with sometimes difficult or contentious discussions that force them to deviate from their usual thought patterns, or that question their beliefs in order to see something from multiple perspectives. To this end EBL can be challenging for some and liberating for others. The former is particularly noticeable in those students who are quieter and more reserved whereas the latter is often observed in relation to the more loquacious student. Despite these mixed observations students generally develop a number of desirable skills during the process of EBL through having a real sense of purpose and direction. They are able to synthesise evidence into their own practice development. They value working collaboratively

and coordinating one another, they value making action plans and creating new ways of presenting their findings.

### **Students Views about EBL**

Recent embryonic thematic analysis of students' views communicated through an end of module evaluation revealed three broad themes:

1. EBL as a Janus-faced activity. EBL was felt to be enabling, exciting and new for some offering a broader scope of knowledge but for others EBL was too challenging, more demanding and students felt vulnerable.
2. EBL as an opportunity to collaborate. Students liked working together to develop action plans, collect evidence and hold discussions.
3. EBL as a way of achieving personal growth and development. Despite the initial period of 'holding on while letting go' students felt a sense of personal growth and intellectual development though having a sense of purpose and learning in a new way.

### **Key thinkers**

In the usual order of things, lives run their course like rivers...one eventually becomes who one is"

#### **Catherine Malabou (2009)**

Using the works of contemporary French philosophers Jacques Derrida and Catherine Malabou have helped to further contemplate the concept of EBL. Derrida's deconstruction was particularly useful in working towards a grammatology of EBL (Stevenson, unpublished, 2015) while Malabou's thinking about brain plasticity and metamorphosis provide the fulcrum to my thesis.

In her work 'what should we do with our brain?' Malabou (2004) introduces the concept of 'brain plasticity' a concept that shatters previously perceived ideas in the world of neuroscience that the brain is a machine with the associated rigidity of an entirely genetic determination. Rather, Malabou (2004, p1) suggests that through plasticity humans can "make their own brains but they do not know it" through neuronal liberation. The brain, argues Malabou, is therefore 'plastic' not 'wired' and able to give and receive form. Malabou elaborates; plasticity has omnipresence and although it is invisible it forms part of our world. Plasticity enables the gradual moulding of the brain throughout life through learning new skills and by engaging with the history of the learner. However, plasticity can also be destructive and in her later work 'Ontology of the Accident' Malabou (2009) uses life changing traumas such as stroke or brain lesion to illustrate how one's very being can change in a negative way, a way in which one becomes a stranger to oneself. And although the concepts of EBL and brain plasticity as defined by Malabou seem unlikely bed mates, I argue that Malabou's thinking about plasticity is entirely germane to the attendant gains and losses that are associated with EBL.

EBL can enable the learner to be creative and to invent by enabling the learner to develop the power to 'style' as Malabou describes. In this sense through EBL the brain is capable of a gradual moulding through collaboration and hands-on, minds-on experience. EBL enables the learner to drive forward their enquiry through discovery and problem solving in relation to

a real-world scenario. They are able to generate new ways of thinking and this enables the learner to give and receive form through neuronal liberation.

Conversely like plasticity EBL can be destructive by ‘throwing the learner out of their being’. In this sense the learner may become a stranger to themselves through a kind of existential incline particularly if their previous learning was teacher-led. EBL demands high levels of self-direction, engagement, discussion and debate which can be liberating or challenging and in either case capable of bringing about a metamorphosis.

It therefore seems that EBL is capable of bringing about a transformation, a change, a qualitatively new structure or capacity within the learner as described by Mezirow (1978) and latterly Illeris (2014). We know that change can be temporary or permanent in the usual course of life’s events but implicit in the concept of plasticity is something more permanent and this is significant to EBL which can give form. And this is correspondent with two types of transformative learning; ‘collective’ where the leaner is able to acquire and develop their understanding of the real world through peer discourse, and ‘progressive’ where the learner is able to move forward which is rewarding. According to Illeris (2014, p33) “learning should be sufficiently broad enough to include all that a human being can acquire and become able to know, beyond the maturation of inborn disposition”. And this is a clear acknowledgement of the learner’s capacity to develop beyond the parameters of their genetic predisposition as Malabou (2004) suggested. Through EBL the identity of the leaner is untied by engaging learners ‘with’ knowledge rather than subjecting them ‘to it’.

### **How to investigate EBL in relation to these ideas?**

A flow through developed by Thomas (2013) has been used to illustrate my evolving research project (see figure 1 below). Each section of the flow-through is now discussed.

Figure1: A visual representation of my evolving research project



#### **Broad Purpose**

The broad purpose of my research is to understand the phenomenon of EL based upon students’ experiences.

#### **Kind of Question**

My research questions ask “what is going on here?” as Thomas (2013) describes. The aim of my research is to explore post graduate professional teaching students experiences of

EBL. I want to find out if EBL is a philosophy that has the potential to bring about a transformation, and this was my initial question.

## **Literature Review**

To date the literature systematically reviewed has revealed nothing specifically in relation to EBL as an approach used with professional teaching students at post graduate level. Some literature provides context in relation to EBL within Nursing and Midwifery practice but this is at undergraduate level (Snow and Torney, 2015; Hamilton, 2013; Levy and Petrulis, 2011; Tully, 2010; Horne et al, 2007; Rush and Barker, 2006; Brown et al, 2008; Kirwan and Adams, 2008; Ashby, et al, 2005; Fisher and Moore, 2005; Bebb, 2004; Morris and Turnbull, 2004; Glasper, 2001) Other literature explores EBL as a trigger for transformative learning within a mental health nursing context (Stacey and Aubeeluck, 2015) and more generally EBL literature tends to be placed within more generic HE disciplines (Spronken-Smith and Walker, 2010; Justice et al, 2007) whilst the Universities of Manchester (date) and Sheffield (date) provide guidance on how to use EBL as centres of excellence.

Following review the following three questions emerged:

1. What are the experiences of post graduate professional teaching students when engaging with EBL?
2. Do these experiences suggest that EBL has the potential to bring about plasticity and metamorphosis?
3. Do these experiences indicate a transformation?

## **Kind of Analysis (paradigm)**

My research is situated within the interpretivist paradigm because I want to understand the social world of the students through their interpretations and meanings of the EBL experience. I intend to analyse individual written accounts and interview transcripts. Addressing these questions is not therefore simply an existential matter but one that fully embraces the subjective nature of the students' worlds as well as my own as a researcher insider. For these reasons I propose to use Gadamerian or philosophical hermeneutics for which there are no rules but conditions in which understanding takes place (Gadamer, 1975). Humans, who are constructed by the world in which they live, should thus be understood within a sociocultural context.

## **Design Frame**

My intended design frame is case study which according to Simons (2009) cited in Thomas (2015, p5) will enable me to pursue "an in-depth exploration from multiple perspectives of the complexity and uniqueness of a particular project in a real life context". As Thomas (2015, p15) observes, case study is about "viewing and studying something in its completeness", and this will enable me to look at EBL from many different angles in attempting to understand it and the students' experiences of it.

## **Data Collection**

Fleming, Gaidys and Robb (2003) observe that to talk of data collection or gaining information is arguably at odds with the language used by Gadamer (1975). Therefore to gain understanding through 'dialogue' I shall ask students to 'bring their ideas into the open' by developing

- Individual accounts of how they perceive EBL before using it.
- Personal blogs of their experiences while engaging with EBL
- Written reflections on their experiences of using EBL

I also intend to interview each student on a one-to-one basis at the end of the course to gain personal perspectives about their experiences of using EBL.

## **Summary**

The thinking within this paper represents the current status of my evolving doctoral research project. In sharing this thinking I am hopeful to engage with external ideas to further develop this thinking. Interpreting learners' experiences of using EBL might reveal something of what their stories 'tell but do not say' and this may help to determine whether EBL does indeed have the potential to be transformative. In contemplating the bond between brain and plasticity as Malabou (2004) suggests and the transformative potential of learning as defined by Mezirow (1978) and Illeris (2014) then perhaps EBL is capable of contributing to the structural connections that shape a learner's identity. After all as Oliver Wendell Holmes, American physician once said "a mind once stretched can never regain its original dimensions".

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### **Biography**

Liz has over twenty years' experience as a senior lecturer in the UK. Her current role is learning and teaching catalyst. She has led courses leading to professional registration (nursing), specialist community nursing (district nursing) and professional teaching practice (Nursing and Midwifery Council approved). Liz is undertaking an Educational Doctorate at the School of Education, University of Birmingham.

# **DECONSTRUCTING THE DIVERGENCE: UNRAVELLING THE 2013-2015 REFORMS IN GCSE ENGLISH LANGUAGE AND LITERATURE**

**Nicholas Stock**

## **Abstract**

Since 2013, GCSE English Language and Literature have experienced reforms to assessment and curriculum that have ushered them in a supposedly new direction. This divergence has included the abolition of controlled assessment and the concurrent resurgence of academic courses being assessed only by examination. Alongside these changes have been wider reforms to the GCSE system in its totality, with a switch from the typical A\* to G grading system to 9 to 1. This paper is a consideration of these changes from the perspective of my own position as an English teacher.

My position of inquiry switches from teacher to poststructuralist philosopher and uses deconstruction to scrutinise the language in some of the reform documents. Deconstruction is a mode of inquiry pioneered by French philosopher Jacques Derrida, which problematises the language in question and the signified meanings and oppositions that operate within this language. In the deconstruction I have conducted, some of the governmental agenda of the reform is uncovered, demonstrating an archaism to the ‘new’ direction of the GCSE and the hierarchizing of the academic elite in the oppositions presented.

## **The Divergence**

In 2013, Michael Gove, the face of the Conservative/Liberal Democrat Coalition Government, declared an Educational Reform that would again alter the shape of schooling. These changes were to affect both whole-school and departmental levels, as a string of documents followed the 2013 announcement to rebrand the GCSE curriculum and assessment processes. These documents are both numerous and verbose, thus I am focusing only on key elements that have had the most notable impact (Brennan, 2013a; Brennan 2013b; Department for Education et al. 2013; HMG, 2015): the abolition of controlled assessment, the concurrent resurgence of 100% examinations that would be ‘closed-book’ and a switch from the well-known A\*to G grading system to 9 to 1 (although this was not a modification only for English, it was the first subject – alongside maths – to implement this change). The DfE stated that the reform in its entirety, was in the name of creating “rigorous and robust” qualifications (DfE et al., 2013). I am exploring the nature of these documents from the nominalist perspective of an English teacher in a secondary school, whilst also employing deconstruction.

## **A Brief Overview of Deconstruction**

Deconstruction, by nature, is not definable by any singular statement, but there are particular elements of this poststructuralist theory that are most applicable to this paper. In an overarching sense, deconstruction is an attitude towards philosophy, metaphysics and thinking. Philosophy, the scholarly study of problems, is historically pursued through the exploration and exploitation of metaphysics-concepts that exist abstractly beyond us and complete us (are meta)-concepts such as space, time or existence. Derrida speaks of metaphysics as a history of “metaphors and metonymies” (2001, p.353), suggesting that metaphysics are signified meanings from signs and not in fact “present” as we linguistically assume them to be; they are supplements of one sign for another in an endless process. To displace this presence of metaphysics is part of deconstruction. But Derrida also viewed our thinking to be indissolubly shackled to signs, and therefore to metaphysics. Deconstruction cannot, in its greatest irony, escape the systems which it unravels.

At a more reductive and methodological level, deconstruction considers how signified meanings of language defer and differ from one another, thus revealing claims of truth and linguistic paradoxes dwelling within texts. Culler defines deconstruction as a system that “undermines the philosophy it asserts, or the hierarchical oppositions on which it relies, by identifying in the text the rhetorical operations that produce the supposed ground of argument, the key concept or premise” (Culler, 2008, p.86). Loosely, we can see that by examining the language and significations of a text, we can reveal the metaphysics of the writer and reader, and explore how it marginalises ideas and groups.

I am employing the deconstructive language of Derrida: opposition, trace, difference and graft (Culler, 2008), whilst also utilising the Lacanian concept of symbolic exchange through meta-choices of language (Žižek, 2006). I believe deconstruction of this reform can illuminate some of the darkest corners that lurk inside its tricky and endless maze. Deconstruction may not reveal a new truth, but the navigation of its junctions and dead-ends is revealing enough in itself to open claims of truth for analysis.

## **Examination**

In 2009, coursework, a mainstay of English education since 1986, transformed into ‘controlled assessments’. This puzzling hybrid of coursework and examination demanded a full class working towards a topic, but was written up in controlled conditions. “86 per cent” of teachers stated in a review they “thought that controlled assessment [gave] a fair assessment of student performance” (HMG, 2013, p.19). Although these figures are vague, it seems as if they demonstrated a majority support from teachers for controlled assessments. This numerical voice was ignored though, as there were wider concerns from the DfE: “marks for controlled assessment units tend to be skewed towards the higher marks” (HMG, 2013, p.19). The insinuation was that teachers were over-awarding in their marking. Accordingly, reform documents (Brennan, 2013a; Brennan 2013b; DfE et al. 2013) had no mention of coursework, nor controlled assessment. The ‘100%’ that I have cited thus far was signified only by an absence of alternative assessment jargon. Yet, this silent admission holds great signification; by giving them no sign at all, coursework (or indeed other assessment method) has been marginalised, erased even. Examination now holds total dominance.

Examinations are comprised of the opposing concepts of knowledge and skill; knowledge is a black hole of a term, and to try and extract any real substance from it would only run us in epistemological circles. Lyotard’s (1984) examination of knowledge notably explores some of these circles, as he discusses knowledge to have taken the form of metanarratives – universal answers that are forged with metaphysics. Skill is little better, as it presupposes the nature of human competency and indeed the ontical question of ‘being’ a person itself (Heidegger, 2010). English examination is a combination of both knowledge and skill, but it is incredibly difficult to set a bar of proficiency in these elusive concepts. On one hand, the said bar is a symbol of personal completeness, the signal that the truth has been learnt by an individual. This is, however, flagrant metaphysics. The bar that students aspire to in this interpretation is a transcendental ideal received from the DfE, which cannot be given any concrete certainty to what determines it (this is most notable in the constant alteration of marking guidelines and grade boundaries in English examination). Often, on the other hand, the bar is determined by comparison to other individuals sitting the same examination. In this instance, the bar is highly concrete: it is the percentage of individuals chosen to reach the pass mark and thus deemed to be correct. Yet, what is the correct analysis, say, of human nature in Lord of the Flies? There are common interpretations, but there is no correct. Barthes (1993) did declare the “death of the author” after all, proclaiming that only nominal interpretations of a text matter.

Still, there is a further curiosity here, as although examination, coursework and controlled assessment may all be variations in assessment method, they are all fundamentally and semantically very similar. It seems the problem is not that the language of other assessment methods has been abandoned, but that little other language of assessment exists to evaluate success in English. Derrida, for example, stated that within Western thought, words exist within binary opposition to one another, with a dominant term and a marginalised one. But what is the opposition to examination that has been marginalised? Only non-examination, a system that chooses not to examine its students at all, encourages them to learn in both breadth and depth, and demands openness and freedom. Many would dismiss this as a nonsense idyll, and indeed in our society's current formation, it is. We cannot ignore the irony, though, that we use the narrowness of an exam to supposedly encourage students to be with freedom of thought.

### **Sans-Book Assessment**

Within the total-examination system was the reintroduction of closed-book assessment, a decision made by exam boards after the DfE demanded "whole texts" (Brennan, 2013b) need to be studied. This means that all exams around a set text would require students to memorise quotations and quote them throughout the exam. Although exam boards state "textual references" (AQA, 2014, p.13) are to be accepted, there is still a dominant need for students to "criticise and analyse what they read" (AQA, 2014, p.12), generally with focus on language, thus quotations would surely need to be learned properly to ensure this. The concern is that students would either struggle to remember quotations, or be consumed by this antiquated skill.

Examination, we have so far determined, has become an educational symbol that reigns supreme, although as I have argued, that is no great historic change. The reintroduction of closed-book examinations, however, is a massive change for many teachers, and a gross anachronism for others. Closed-book is inappropriate, as the examinations this refers to are in fact without any book at all; they are sans-book; although the word closed does perhaps signify the narrowness of examination philosophy. Why choose to call the book 'closed' then? Why introduce the change at all? The statement of the book being closed leaves a trace of it being opened, and thus read, then understood. If the expectation here is that the student has read and understood the book, then I do not desire to deconstruct it any further (I have after all witnessed students congratulating each other on passing an exam without having read the set text). The change itself is oddly archaic though, and there may be more in the signification than just an expectation the book has been read. The change may be to restore venerability to the vocabulary of assessment. By grafting this sort of terminology back into education, a sense of traditionalism occurs, encouraging teachers and students alike to think of their school as a classically reputable Grammar, rather than the fading array of comprehensives that exist today (and it is no surprise that May's 2016 Government voiced intentions to reinstate the opening of new Grammar schools (Stewart H. and Walker P., 2016)). Considering the reform's language this way implies a desire to conserve values of potentially elitist education<sup>1</sup>, rather than the arguably more inclusive and progressive routes we have witnessed over the last couple of decades, a sentiment that echoes throughout the reform.

### **Nine to One**

Finally, from 2017, exams "will be graded from 9 to 1, instead of A\* to G" (HMG, 2015, p.2), therefore incurring a redistribution of grade boundaries within. With this change, there are some additional caveats:

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<sup>1</sup> "Just 2.6% of grammar pupils are from poor backgrounds" claims a study by Labour MP Powell (Boffey, 2016).

broadly the same proportion of students will achieve a grade 4 and above as currently achieve a grade C and above

broadly the same proportion of students will achieve a grade 7 and above as currently achieve a grade A and above

the bottom of grade 1 will be aligned with the bottom of grade G

grade 5 will be awarded to around the top third of students gaining the equivalent of a grade C and bottom third of a grade B. This has been defined as a good pass by the Department for Education. (HMG, 2015, p.2)

Two major facets present themselves: the addition of a new ‘top-grade’, with a 9 being numerically higher than the classic A\*, and the increase in difficulty to achieve a “good pass” in the switch from a C to a 5 (bearing in mind a 4 is representative of a C in terms of percentage of marks obtained in a given assessment, and assessments were likely to be more difficult due to being closed-book). The impetus would be, inevitably, on English teachers, to grind results out of students that may be completely insufficient in the sorts of skills required to pass a GCSE in English, results that would be wholly more unachievable than ever before owing to the list of other aforementioned changes. Meanwhile, the students across the country who do indeed possess the particular skill set appropriate for high achievement in English were to have a new goal to aim for: the elusive ‘Grade 9’. English teachers would be the ones to facilitate these grades for the ‘best’ of students, and surely would feel the backlash of parents, departments, and government if this is not achieved.

But beyond the practical implications on English teacher’s workload and pressures, there is a further curiosity to this grade reform. There is absolutely no reason why A\* to U was a suitable measurement for student success, and is no better than any other numerical minimizing of a student’s achievements. But the modification of these letters into similarly corresponding numbers is surely no remedy. It seems as if a metachoice, a choice to make a choice of change, has been made. Imagine a blackjack dealer has suddenly declared you need twenty two to win. It seems arbitrary enough, but the simple changing of the rules means that any method for playing the game is immediately inadequate and your hand is now potentially bust. It is also signified that a new plateau of achievement is created to aim for, which begins to divide the academic elite of our society into the best, and the very best. Underneath them exists the aspirational, desperate to meet the Grade 9, but for them it will always be unobtainable. It is also not difficult to imagine which sort of students will reach these very top grades; with exam questions tailored towards those of high cultural capital, as explored in a paper by Morby (2014), it is yet again the white, middle-class that will succeed. After all, the house always wins.

But this hegemonic divide is not only incurred by the change in grading at the top. The editing of the good pass percentage and the continued usage of the phrase ‘good pass’ will surely have wider detrimental effects. If the good pass becomes that much harder to achieve, the amount of unqualified individuals will largely increase; some will not be deemed ‘good’ by society, thus creating a new host of the bad, the uneducated masses. Those that have passed, but only badly, are therefore failures, not passeurs. Plainly, a good pass and a bad pass are merely deferrals from another omnipresent opposition: pass versus fail, and as a society we have always celebrated the passeurs, ferrying themselves across the educational lake, and derided the failures for foolishly drowning in the water. The passeurs have passed the necessary point and left it in the past, whilst the failures must dwell in the past resitting the exams until they, of course, pass.

## Diverging Backwards

It was openly stated, that underpinning the rationale for the entire reform was the notion of “rigorous[ness]” (DfE, et al., 2013). ‘Rigour’ is now the primary term to determine the worth of a subject. This is often used as a label to disguise the Governmental intention of abandoning non-classical subjects, another potential linguistic move used to cover the elitist views held by the reformers, views that some subjects are not worth studying, but using a word that is convincing enough to seem legitimate in its usage. But English is surely already a subject of great ‘rigour’? The meta-choice made here to seem to need harshness in an already widely deemed rigorous subject – a core subject in fact – is a clear signal of alternative agenda. Laughably, the word rigour in its Latin root signifies stiffness, perhaps an appropriate term for the reform or the reformers.

To summarise, let me refer to an example Žižek uses in his writings about poststructuralist Lacan, in which he discusses the words of Ulysses in Shakespeare’s Troilus and Cressida, speaking to the great hero Achilles:

*[Ulysses] restates his argumentation about the necessity of ‘degrees’ (ordered social hierarchy), and portrays time as the corrosive force that undermines old true values – an arch-conservative motif. However, on a closer reading, it becomes clear that Ulysses gives to his argumentation a singular cynical twist: how are we to fight against time, to keep old values alive? [...] by supplementing them with the obscene Realpolitik of cruel manipulation, of cheating, of playing one here off against another. It is only this dirty underside, this hidden disharmony, that can sustain harmony... (Žižek, 2006, p. 87)*

What a powerful allegory of the reform can be drawn of Žižek’s reading of Shakespeare. Within the discourse of the reform lies the ‘singular cynical twist’ that fights against the corrosive nature of education’s steady progression towards inclusion and social mobility. The heroes – the academic elite, gaining too many top grades, and the working-class hero, catching up too closely to the elite – are cruelly manipulated by the reform, and all to maintain the apparent picture of harmony. By making the exams more difficult through implementing closed-book, offering a lack of alternative assessment method and changing grade boundaries, the students are privately sent into a tougher battle against one another than ever before. Although the DfE may have made a wide set of claims for the reasoning behind the reforms, the problematisation of the language used reveals intimations of elitism and conservatism that surely need further stringent deconstruction. There are indeed other elements to still be investigated also, such as the abandonment of speaking and listening, the hierarchizing of British literature and the change in skills focus.

We are left then with the same argument as Ulysses’ provocation of Achilles: a surreptitious manipulation of the system to stop education’s progression, to halt the great thief Time snatching away from the traditionalists’ status quo. It is no divergence at all, then, that has been issued here. Instead, the reform may be a cloaked stumble into education’s past, reigniting forgotten ideas and systems for the supposed betterment of our students and rigour of our subjects.

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## **Biography**

I have been teaching in an all-girls, state comprehensive secondary school for the last six years in Birmingham. I hold a position of responsibility in my department in which I monitor GCSE English Language and Literature results and implement planning to support them. Alongside my teaching I am studying for a part-time PhD in Philosophy of Education, in which I am interested in exploring ironic readings of education as a being.

# **HOW WE TEACH APPROACHES TO LEARNING: STUDENT PERSPECTIVES ON THE INSTRUCTION OF LEARNING SKILLS**

**Jennifer Swinehart**

## **Abstract**

The purpose of this research is to collect a range of student perceptions about stand-alone Approaches to Learning (ATL) skill (International Baccalaureate, 2014) instruction in a secondary school and how confident students are with applying these skills in academic contexts.

Habermas' theory of communicative action (1987) suggests that ego development should be actively supported and that providing adolescents with self-directed opportunities to solve complex problems and engage in metacognitive thinking routines are essential aspects of human cognitive and ego development (Habermas, 2001).

Questionnaire responses showed that students placed strong importance on enjoyment, choice, accountability and relevance when considering the value of skill instruction. The findings provide insight into how students view their journeys as learners and the extent to which they feel skill instruction is a social experience (Farnsworth, Kleanthous and Wenger-Trayner, 2016); in future, these findings can contribute to the design of ATL skill instruction situated in self-identified student communities of practice.

## **Introduction**

The teaching of generic transferable skills in secondary school curricula is problematic. Trilling and Fadel (2009) suggest that there is tension in today's pre-kindergarten to grade 12 (PK-12) schools between maintaining traditional curriculum and instruction models that focus primarily on content retention and shifting to more progressive frameworks that prioritise the acquisition of 21st century skills and dispositions in conjunction with contextualised content. Whilst Dede (2009) and Voogt and Roblin (2010) have found that there has been a convergence of similar skills identified to be essential for students entering the work force in the next 20 years, "the little attention given to the positioning of 21st century skills within the existing curriculum shows that this is perhaps one of the most complex and controversial issues of its implementation" (Voogt and Roblin 2010, i).

This paper focuses on Approaches to Learning (ATL) instruction in a secondary school context by exploring the question: What are student perceptions about a dedicated cognitive, affective and effective skills course in Grades 6-10? I will provide an overview of the context and literature that comprises the foundation of the study, present findings and begin to consider their implications for current educational practice.

## **Contextual Discussion**

The theory of communicative proposed by Habermas (1987) defines parameters within with an individual understands his or her lifeworld. In an educational context, this lifeworld is influenced by teachers, peers, or socio-economic conditions of the school community. As the lifeworld of a learner changes, the learner ultimately changes as well (Habermas 1991; 1987). This learning journey is unique to each individual and as such informs the identity with which every learner eventually leaves his or her school context.

The impetus for this research is my belief that PK-12 schooling should teach students the types of skills that will help them develop their Habermasian egos intellectually, reflexively

and socially (Kaufman 2013; Pring 2013). This can help motivate adolescents (Hattie, Biggs and Purdie 1996) and has the potential to positively and significantly impact learners (Tishman, Jay and Perkins 1993), giving students the best chance to finish PK-12 school with an individuated ego intact.

## Literature Review

There is relative consensus that certain skills should be considered as a part of the sets of skills that schools teach to students (Voogt and Roblin 2010; Dede 2009). Metacognitive thinking, a learner's ability to think about his or her own thinking, is a fundamental skill included in nearly all suggested lists. Flavell (1979: 907) states that "metacognitive knowledge consists primarily of knowledge or beliefs about what factors or variables act and interact in what ways to affect the course and outcome of cognitive enterprises". Metacognitive regulation also encourages students to better and more effectively apply other skills in various subject areas and make connections between these different learning contexts (Schraw 1998).

Affective skills, or those skills related to student attitudes and dispositions towards learning, are also cited by most of the organisations that have identified ATL skills. Habits of mind regarding student value, inclination, sensitivity, capability and commitment towards the application of affective skills encourage students to create patterns of thinking to respond to their emotional states as learners (Costa and Kallick 2009). The explicit teaching of mindfulness to adolescents is one way to teach students strategies for reducing stress, developing attention and regulating emotions (Weare 2013).

Solving problems, thinking critically and demonstrating creativity are commonly identified cognitive skills, the third skills set in the ATL framework. Cognitive skills are those most closely related to the traditional focus on content acquisition in schools. Gardner (1999: 21) identified at least eight areas of intelligence in humans: "linguistic and logical-mathematical (the two most prized in school and the ones central to success on standard intelligence tests), musical, spatial, bodily-kinesthetic, naturalists, interpersonal, and intrapersonal". Intelligence is something that is not fixed but malleable (Dweck 2007; Blackwell, Trzesniewski and Dweck 2007); teaching strategies for the improvement and development of cognitive skills might encourage secondary students to view cognition as a skill that can be learned rather than an ability that is inherent.

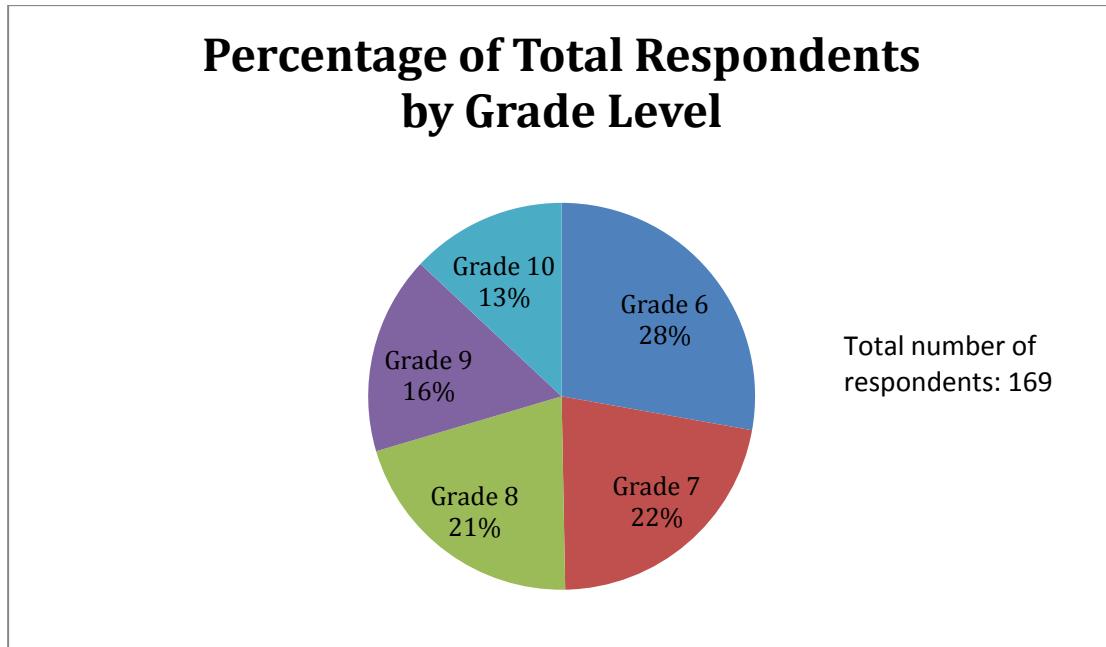
## Data Collection Tool: The Questionnaire

Denscombe (2014: 169) offers five criteria to consider when designing a research questionnaire: "feasibility, response rate, full information, accurate information and ethical stance". Feasibility was addressed through the decision to conduct research within my own school context as an insider researcher (Greene 2014; Dwyer and Buckle 2009). The response rate was also in part addressed by the distribution to a single-school student population, and the design, pilot and redesign of the questionnaire addressed my ability to meet both the full and accurate information criteria. Ethically, the involvement of minors meant that I had to be aware of the vulnerability of this group and that parental consent was sought prior to the administration of the questionnaire (BERA 2011).

Developing a questionnaire as a data collection tool provided me with the ability to gather large-scale data from respondents and collect quantitative and qualitative data that I could then process in a variety of ways and through multiple lenses (Creswell 2014; Cohen, Manion and Morrison 2011). As is the case with any data collection tool, the choice of a questionnaire comes with its own drawbacks and limitations to the research process. In particular, it limited my ability to follow up and clarify responses provided by participants in the study, potentially impacting aspects of reliability (Cohen, Manion and Morrison 2001).

## Findings

In total, 169 out of a possible 212 students in grades 6-10 during the 2014-2015 school year completed the questionnaire (Graph 1).



*Graph 1: Percentage of Total Respondents by Grade Level*

In this paper, the qualitative data are the focus of the analysis and findings. Students were asked to respond to a pair of questions, “How do you feel about ATL class?” and “What makes you choose that answer?” Nearly every response provided could be attributed to one of the following themes: student enjoyment of the course (54 responses), student choice allowed in the course (38 responses), student accountability in the course (16 responses) and the relevance of the course to students (81 responses). Several responses touched on two or more of the themes in explaining the respondent’s choice of scaled answer. These themes are value-neutral in that accountability, for example, could be perceived by a student as a positive or negative feature of the course, or different students could perceive the extent to which the course offers choice in different ways.

According to Quaglia and Corso (2014), fun and excitement relate to a students emotional investment in what they are learning and together form one of the guiding principles of engagement. By reducing stress and increasing intrinsic motivation, students become more inclined to engage in their learning in a positive way, taking measured risks because they feel safe and secure (Quaglia and Corso 2014).

Particularly for students in Grades 6 to 8, the theme of enjoyment was reflected in the open-ended responses to Question 6. The words “fun” and “boring” were mentioned 45 times and 17 times, respectively, and almost exclusively in the responses given by students in these three grades. Other words such as “like”, “love” and “interesting” also appeared in multiple answers.

*It can be really boring sometimes, but the 20 time project makes it more interesting (Respondent 5).*

*Other classe (sic) are always doing fun things but we do fun things rarely (Respondent 56).*

*Because some of the time I get really bored but when I don't it's when we do something fun and I have a low attention span for talking (Respondent 64).*

*Because it really depends what we're doing. Before we did 20 time, I hated ATL because I thought it was a waste of time. But 20 Time is really fun and made me love ATL. Although, I am still a bit of both (Respondent 68).*

*Sometimes, some of the things done in class are fun for example 20 time project (Respondent 122).*

Enjoyment was a theme that could be depicted as a feature that did as well as did not for students; fun could be used to describe conditions that did exist in an ATL class as well as conditions that did not exist in an ATL class; the widest range of scaled responses were accompanied by comments related to course enjoyment. As well, the indication of student neutrality towards the course was further explained with terms related to enjoyment of the course used in a variety of ways.

Providing students with choice to engage in enquiry that is driven by personal passion and interest positively contributes to their learning experiences and leads to greater empowerment, motivation and self-directedness (Littlefield 2012; Deci, Ryan and Williams 1996). Secondary school subject-area teachers often feel that requirements with regard to content coverage require them to sacrifice student choice when planning lessons (McWilliam 2008). There is constant pressure in secondary schools for teachers to cover extensive amounts of content; evidence shows, however, that when teachers do combine contextualized skill instruction with application to student-selected content, student engagement with and use of skills can improve (Littlefield 2012). These findings suggest that situated cognition, the understanding that physiological and social factors affect the learner as elements of the learning context (Aydede and Robbins 2009), should be taken into account when designing and executing learning experiences for students.

*I love atl because it is a very fun but simple subject. I especially love doing the 20 time project because I get to do something I love in school. I think we should have more atl classes (Respondent 18).*

*Because in ATL we have 20 time and we can learn more about something we are passionate about (Respondent 53).*

*I like to not learn some typical subject and also in ATL class we will be able to do a project where we can choose what to do! (20 time) (Respondent 76).*

*There are somethings (sic) that could be improved to make the class more interesting but I like how it helps with organisation and I especially like the freedom we get in 20 time as I usually wouldn't have time to do a project like this (Respondent 99).*

Choice in learning was seen as both novel and valuable; participants viewed this opportunity to direct their own learning as something they would like to do more of in their other classes, supporting the idea that by providing self-determined learning experiences, teachers can encourage students to become more intrinsically motivated and more invested in their learning (Brooks and Young 2011).

Whilst accountability was mentioned the fewest times of the four themes, the comments provided by students raised an interesting question with regard to one of the design premises of the ATL course. The design was intended to establish a formative learning environment in which self-regulation was supported by dialogue evaluation was predominantly self-evaluative and reflective in nature (Black and Wiliam 2009).

Two respondents specifically commented on the lack of grades as a component of increased motivation, both of whom rated their feelings about the class as “I like it very much”:

*I really like ATL because you get to learn and work on project's (sic) of your choice in class. I also like it because you don't get graded so it is easier to do projects (Respondent 42).*

*I think it's really helpful to have a class that is just about learning and not about grades and I like 20 time because we can do our own thing (Respondent 76).*

This was in sharp contrast to another student who, despite finding the concept of the course interesting, was neutral towards the ATL class and cited the lack of grades as an element that seemed to decrease his motivation to engage in the content of the course:

*It is an interesting class, learning how to approach learning, but I find having a non-graded class a bit like wasting time (Respondent 48).*

Another interpretation of accountability came through the perception that this student had about the expectations the teacher had set as a part of the course:

*I feel that it depends on the teacher. The class is taken as seriously as the teacher makes it. If Approaches to Learning was taken more seriously, I would definitely like it more as it teaches skills important everywhere! (Respondent 109).*

There is an expectation from this participant that the active development of a culture of accountability from the teacher will directly impact the motivation to learn on the part of a student. “Seriously” here could refer to the use of grades, to the quality of the feedback or even to the clarity of structures and systems in the classroom; even without resolution, this comment provides an opportunity for dialogue about how teachers can help to shift the emphasis on establishing importance away from them and onto the students who feel empowered to take that level of ownership for their learning (Deci, Ryan and Williams 1996).

The theme that appeared most frequently of the four identified was relevance; whilst students in Grades 9 and 10 tended to include relevance as at least a part of their open-ended responses to the question more than students in Grades 6 to 8, students from each grade level commented on how relevance featured in their attitude towards the ATL course.

As evident in Table 1, students had a myriad of perspectives on the extent to which they find the focus of ATL skills in a stand-alone course relevant to their own lives, both now and in the future. Several provided specific reasons as to why they felt that explicit ATL skill instruction was or was not relevant to them as learners, and Respondent 165 even offered suggestions as to how instruction of ATL skills might be improved. For Respondent 117, the lack of opportunities to apply ATL skills demonstrates disconnection between the assertion that these skills are embedded in every learning opportunity and the perception that students have about their relevance. Respondent 138 echoed this perception by citing the lack of

motivation some students have, from his perspective those who are lacking in an ability to use these skills independently, for acquiring and practicing using ATL skills.

<b>Respondent</b>	<b>Q6a: How do you feel about ATL class?</b>	<b>Q6b: What makes you choose that answer?</b>
26	I like it somewhat	<i>I am not sure if I like ATL or not, but it is very useful in my daily life.</i>
165	I like it somewhat	<i>The skills obtained from this class are beneficial for our future in that regard I am thankful. However the class is fast-paced and a bit hurried so I would appreciate more time spent of in-depth skill training and exemplars.</i>
57	I am neutral	<i>I choose (sic) this answer because I personally do not like learning about new skills but I really think it is important to learn about this.</i>
123	I am neutral	<i>I do not dislike ATL, but I don't enjoy it very much either. The tools/skills we learn in ATL are more useful when in the upper grades like 11 and 12, and I feel like the way they are taught is not very exciting and easy to apply.</i>
160	I am neutral	<i>I chose neutral for the ATL class because I do not really get what ATL is exactly about but at the same time I like ATL because I feel like I'm improving my self management skill as well as communication skill.</i>
117	I dislike it somewhat	<i>I'm not quite sure what the point is, and we never use the skills in class.</i>
138	I dislike it somewhat	<i>Because some people already have the basic ATL skills, and for the people who have trouble with organization, self management, etc don't take it seriously. I would say that it would be better to have a</i>

		<i>study time to meet w/ teachers, do HW, work on projects and assessments.</i>
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*Table 1: Sample of Student Responses Related to Relevance of ATL Class*

Overall, the comments regarding relevance reflect a general level of self-awareness and a commitment to self-advocacy on the part of students, indicating that many are prepared to engage in dialogue about how to make the teaching and learning of ATL skills more relevant; this suggests that further opportunities for inviting and acting upon student voice would be valuable (Quaglia and Corso 2014) and could result both in increased student empowerment as well as an improved ATL curriculum.

### **Conclusions and Recommendations**

Enjoyment, choice, accountability and relevance are the themes that arose for me when analysing student responses to the open-ended questions; further consideration of these suggest that taken in concert, they might provide some insight into how students understand and describe their own levels of engagement in learning of ATL skills.

Identifying how to best engage students in their own learning remains one of the true moral imperatives of PK-12 schooling: to empower the individual to understand him or herself best as a learner. When we imagine classrooms filled with the most highly engaged learners, we picture self-regulating individuals who are motivated to make informed choices about learning based on a clear understanding of their goals and who are able to apply cognitive, metacognitive and affective skills appropriately and effectively.

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## **Biography**

Jennifer Swinehart is the Director of Research and Development at Hong Kong Academy. She has taught Secondary English and done curriculum coordination in the United States, Philippines and Hong Kong; she also consults and facilitates workshops worldwide. Jennifer's doctoral thesis explores Secondary student perceptions of cognitive, metacognitive and affective skills.

# THE AMBIGUOUS UNDERSTANDINGS OF ‘LAÏCITÉ’ AT A FRENCH INTERNATIONAL RELATIONS INSTITUTE (ILERI)

David Vauclair

## Abstract

French secularism (*laïcité*) has been at the heart of the French Republic since the 1905 law on the separation of Church and State. This law precludes any government organization (including public schools) from promoting religious dogma of any kind. As part of the French Constitution, this principle is considered central to French humanistic values. But the media in the Anglophone world and part of the left in France now often see secularist values in a negative light. This paper examines how those values are perceived in a private French institute of higher education (ILERI); how different understandings of *laïcité* are used ambiguously, albeit quite positively by the institute’s administration, teaching staff and students alike. It also discusses how – though criticized – *laïcité* tends to be adopted by all as a fundamental value of a harmonious common life, and as an episteme (Foucault) of the French Republic.

## Introduction

*Laïcité* can be a tricky word to use in English. It is often seen as an incomprehensible, untranslatable and unpronounceable French term, thinly veiling unjustifiable and racist persecution of France’s religious minorities (see for instance Fernando, 2015). In many ways, *laïcité* might epitomise France’s fear of the “Other”,

“France’s zeal for maintaining the racial superiority of the non-Muslim French; France’s enduring imperialist and colonialist hatred for native peoples; France’s obsession with telling women what to do; and generally France’s urge to be parochial, petty, ultraconservative, and intolerant.” (Berman, 2016)

But as Berman himself stresses, the situation is far more nuanced. Both the French State and its citizens have grounds not to perceive themselves to be as hopelessly racist as some academic and media commentators argue them to be. First, *laïcité* may remain hard to pronounce for a British or North American palate, but is far more translatable than originally thought. It is very much the French version of the Jeffersonian principle of secularism: there is a necessary and mandatory separation between Church(es) and State, as it allows for greater freedom of choice and neutrality from the State. Or this is at least the principle, and when it isn’t the practice, citizens have the right to march, campaign, lobby and vote to bring positive changes to the system. Though imperfect, this Republican ideal brings a lot more that is positive than negative to French society. It states that the “rights of man and the citizen” are the rights of every citizen, regardless of their gender or race, or of what a church might have to say. It is what most French people want, even if some of them are racists or bigots, and even if racism is very much an important contemporary issue. As such, *laïcité* has been widely promoted in education, even if according to the two main, and arguably best, experts on *laïcité* (Jean Baubérot and Henri Pena Ruiz), there isn’t a singular understanding of the concept, but much more a debate on up to seven types of *laïcité* (Baubérot, *Les sept laïcités françaises*, 2015). Regardless of the misunderstandings or polemics around the term, it is today at the heart of French Republican values.

This paper will discuss perceptions of *laïcité* in a specific French institute of higher education, the ILERI (Institut Libre d’Etudes en Relations Internationales), with a view to broadening insight into how the term is understood. The literature both in English and French shows that the question of secularism is both historical and contemporary, with surges of

interest usually linked to political and social crisis: during the third Republic, especially around 1905 when France passed the law separating churches and states; between 1946 and 1958 when laïcité was included in the constitution of the Fourth and Fifth Republic; in the late 1970s and early 1980s, when the French government attempted to respond to transformations in French society from new waves of immigrants from former colonies and their children; in 2004, with the redefinition of laïcité, and today in the wake of the various terrorist attacks that France has undergone.

This paper will therefore look to contextualize, describe and define laïcité today in the context of the ILERI. The ILERI is a private higher education International Relations institute, founded in 1948. It offers two kinds of qualification: a Bachelors degree (3 years) and two Masters degrees (2 years). It prepares students for various careers, including in international organizations, NGOs, international companies, European institutions, public service (defence, environment...), diplomacy, local and regional authorities, think tanks, journalism, lobbying and consulting. It is a relatively small school with 250 to 280 students.

Qualitative interviews were used to draw out a definition (or lack thereof) of laïcité among students, administrative and teaching staff, and how they assess it. Thirteen interviews were conducted: two with teaching staff, three with administrative staff, and nine with students. The interviews raised three key questions:

- What do students, management and faculty mean by laïcité?
- How do they think laïcité should inform learning and teaching at the ILERI?
- Where do the students, management and faculty think laïcité should be situated?

## **Methodology**

Qualitative methods, a “flexible design” seemed to be the most helpful in this type of situation. After sampling the population found at ILERI, conducting a series of semi-structured interviews emerged as the least imperfect model to explore the concept and fully grasp understandings of laïcité. The sampling was heterogeneous and made by quota, meaning that the idea was to cover as efficiently as possible the variations offered by the different populations studied. As Robson indicates, “the strategy is to obtain representatives of the various elements of a population” (p. 274). It has to be carefully planned to mitigate the biases of the researcher, but it usually allows to purposefully draw out the different dimensions of a situation.

Limitations to the research and ethical considerations:

One of the first issues at the heart of this study is that the concept of laïcité has multiple criteria, just as Max Weber didn’t define bureaucracy by one criterion, or Foucault madness. It consists of shared understandings, of coherent propositions that embody basic values, but it won’t be possible to define each and every value unambiguously. Quarrels over definitions are central as words are seldom neutral, especially in the case of laïcité. This is perceived as a good thing in France – the former Prime Minister Manuel Valls for instance called it “a practical philosophy”, “the extra touch of soul” of the Republic, “it’s France!” (2016). In the Anglo-Saxon world, by contrast, and amongst the non-Communist radical left and ultra-Catholic extreme right, laïcité usually attracts bad press. For instance, the Marxist French philosopher, now professor at Irvine University in California, USA, Etienne Balibar talks about the “monster of identitarian laïcité” (2016). As 12 of the 13 interviewees readily acknowledged, laïcité isn’t the clearest of concepts, even if, for most of them, it had both importance and depth.

Beyond this question of language and of definition, it is necessary to tackle the question of translation. The focus remained on French words and French references and the wider frame of reference was clearly French. Translating any kind of research affects the precision of the answers, as all translations are, to a point, interpretations. The validity of moving across languages has received considerable attention in cross-cultural studies (Squires, 2009), as examples of studies in different languages than one own appeared with the globalization of education. Nevertheless, qualitative research is considered valid when the distance between the meanings as experienced by the participants and the meanings as interpreted in the findings are as close as possible (Polkinghorne, 2007). The meaning is not lost in translation as long as participants and the main researcher have the same non-English native language (Van Nes et al., 2010), which was the case.

While the panel sample was designed with care, it was another clear limitation to the project. Thirteen is a small number. While it was satisfactory for the time frame and the ambitions of the study, it remains modest. Though it makes for a purposeful sample, it will always be somewhat difficult to seek to make generalisations out of such a small sample. Moreover, some degree of bias stems from the necessity to narrow-down the most appropriate candidates for interview. It should be also acknowledged that while the findings might prove to be representative of French society in general, they are more likely not to be. The ILERI is not a perfect representation of France on the micro-level. As stressed by all three categories, the students tend to come from the middle class or above, and lower classes are not well represented.

Finally, interviewing the administrative staff and some of my colleagues brings up the classic issue of what it means to be an insider researcher (informed consent and institutional permission, questions of confidentiality for the teaching and administrative staff). However, the main ethical questions related to the 9 students interviewed in Year 1 and Year 3 and Year 5. Making sure of their wellbeing was key.

## **Expectations**

My expectations were very similar to a previous work for my doctorate, in which I explored what “humanistic values” meant for the ILERI, and I found that they were mostly vague, if not misunderstood (Vauclair, 2015). I also expected to find much clearer-cut differences to how they are encountered in public debate on laïcité in France and around the world. To my surprise, while the participants indeed understood laïcité differently and at times ambiguously, it was a much more positive and unifying value than I had expected. In many ways, it was more than a value, perceived by the majority as being one of the core elements of French collective life. This is all the more encouragement to delve further into, and contextualise, these understandings of laïcité.

## **Analysis and interpretation of data**

What was fascinating during the interactions I had with my thirteen participants was the themes that very quickly emerged within a few minutes of beginning the interviews. Many of the issues discussed above were raised without much prompting from my part, and were explored, often without initial knowledge of the debate itself. As confusing or foreign as laïcité might have appeared at first, it rapidly became an important element of the general philosophy and, to a point, the identity of my interviewees.

### **Administrative laïcité**

Laïcité was more central a concern to the administrative staff than to the other interviewees. This is maybe because they have a legal responsibility to offer a secular frame to all the

students and also feel a moral responsibility to maintain the ethos of the Institute, which they see as open, diversity oriented and peaceful. They desire harmony, respect and tolerance in the school and are well aware of the disastrous publicity that religious tensions could bring the institution. The director twice repeated a statement from a student that she now often uses as a motto: "At the ILERI, we disagree with each other, but we love each other".

Overall, laïcité was clearly seen as a tool for social harmony. All three interviewees stated that laïcité helped allow students to be more free, to cast aside a religious "uniform" and that it gave a neutral space that students could then more peacefully inhabit, with many more possibilities for exchanges than otherwise. Positively stated, the idea is to prevent overly extremist points of views to be exposed and debated as it could harm the welcoming atmosphere of the ILERI. Moreover, one can also see the administration staff's viewpoint as a defence of the status quo and a use of laïcité as a tool of domination and standardization (as described by Bourdieu).

The administrative staff brought up many issues. On the one hand, the will to accommodate, discuss, listen and make the institute a haven of tolerance was raised. "To be benevolent is important". But on the other hand the postulate was made that religion, while an indispensable part of some people's identity, might lead to more tensions and impositions and create more barriers than political or economic ones. Laïcité appears as a guarantee against radicalization, but also as a bait for radicals. Yet religion has not been an issue to date, and questions of politics or racism might prove more problematic.

### **Academic laïcité**

For the professors (2) and students (9), the lawful-unlawful elements of laïcité didn't seem to matter as much as an acceptance or rejection of the term as a value. The concept of the separation of Church and State was neither central, nor very much analyzed by the interviewees. The answers given by the professors, were usually more informed but not greatly different to those the students gave. Out of the eleven interviews, only one perceived French laïcité as problematic and France as grossly intolerant with its religious population. When asked about how free he felt in expressing his religious beliefs, on a scale from one to ten, one being the most free and 10 the least, only the Franco-American professor felt at 7.5 or 8.

Both professors followed two different understandings of laïcité. The Franco-American one, a more Jeffersonian one, or "soft laïcité" and the other a "hard" one, but neither rejected the notion, or thought France or the ILERI should do without it. The Anglo-Saxon professor could understand the attraction of communitarianism with the idea of several groups closely alongside one another without necessarily blending, while the other saw this interaction as key. This represented rather well the contrast between French and American society, where communities don't mix as much as those in France.

The students' answers mostly mirrored their professors' understandings. They had different understandings of laïcité, some as "soft" laïcité, at times called "positive", which was mostly by people in agreement with this understanding, and the other as "hard" (or "negative") laïcité. The difference between the two was along conventional political lines. Out of the 9 students interviewed, one was from the radical left, two from the left, two were centre-left, two centre-right, one from the right and one from the radical right.

The divide was not religious or ethnic, but mostly left / right with the supporters of soft laïcité being the two leftist students, and the others being more in favour of hard laïcité, with the exception of the radical rightist student who was both fond of the idea of hard laïcité for all religions, with the exception of Catholicism, which should be treated more softly as the

founding religion of France. When talking about the ILERI, none of the students saw the school as anything but a place of debate.

## Conclusion

The three main questions that I asked at first were:

- What do students, management and faculty mean by laïcité?
- How do they think laïcité should inform learning and teaching at the ILERI?
- Where do the students, management and faculty think laïcité should be situated?

Not all thirteen respondents were quite sure what laïcité was, but all went in the same direction: freedom of religion for all, tolerance and benevolence between believers and non-believers, and some added the neutrality of the State concerning religious affairs. While none of them truly used the concept on a daily basis or were, if not obsessed, aware of laïcité, each interviewee believed that it was important, even central to the achievement of societal harmony in France. Almost all the participants thought that laïcité was the embodiment and the shield of liberty, equality, and some added fraternity or solidarity, at first unaware they were completing France's motto. The similarities across the interviews were truly striking and everyone expressed the conviction that laïcité is a cornerstone of the French Republic, and a central component of peaceful life in society.

Everyone was aware of some shortcomings of course, and a line between left and right, politically speaking, was observable. While, from the right to the centre, a "hard", less accommodating laïcité seemed to be favoured, being in a way closer to the anticlerical values that led to the 1905 Act, on the left a "softer" version, closer to the original concept, which is the one enshrined in French law, tended to be advocated for.

Overall, laïcité was expected to be adopted rather than adapted, and to be an element of ILERI's culture. As we saw previously, laïcité can be understood as a concept, a value and the core element of collective life. In terms of the concept, interviewees able to precisely define the legal separation of Church and State and the neutrality of the State and of the different faiths in the public sphere were few and far apart. On the other hand, in terms of values, laïcité emerged as a debated yet strong and positive ideology. It has become the core element of collective life in France and, more modestly, at the ILERI. Laïcité, in these interviews, has become the culture of general society, a foundational pervasive idea which feeds the values and objectives of the institution, guiding everyday practice and, somewhat, the comprehension of the self.

The ILERI is not representative of France as a whole. As previously discussed, it is not representative of every social class. Moreover, in terms of culture and erudition, it is an institute of higher education. This said, and maybe on account of this, laïcité might be perceived as an episteme (Foucault, 1970) of the French Republic, or as being at the heart of an epistemic community.

In 1975, the International Relations theorist John Gerard Ruggie used Foucault's 1970 concept to forge the notion of epistemic community. This is used to describe a dominant mode for the perception of societal and social reality. The episteme becomes an ensemble of shared symbols and references, of common and predictable expectations and intentions. These epistemic communities delineate for their members the most appropriate construction of a common social reality (Ruggie, 1975). It seems that laïcité is used as such by the different members of the ILERI, as a common thread, and a common understanding of what

are the limits of tolerance and the place of religion in a society. The questions of the limits of the law isn't central, but what is, is the acknowledgement of a founding block for a larger acceptance of the beliefs and ideas of a diverse yet homogeneous community (common objectives, shared experience, shared age group, relative shared economic background) for the construction of an appropriate social reality.

As such, laïcité is seen as already informing classes, learning and teaching and while the administration, teachers and students see the necessity to teach laïcité before beginning at the ILERI, the idea is that a single annual lecture might at best answer questions about the concept, but classes on religions seem more appropriate, as laïcité is taken as a prior basic element of shared experiences allowing "humanistic values" to be given to students. The unity and coherence of the institution and of a common "Ilerian" identity is given by a value reflecting common aspirations rather than an intellectual, legal or social reality.

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### **Biography**

David Vauclair teaches International Relations in several institutes of Higher Education in Paris, including the ILERI. He is an EdD candidate at the Institute of Education, University College London. He authored various books in French, including on Charlie Hebdo and on the Abrahamic religions.

# PARENTING A CHILD WITH AUTISM SPECTRUM DISORDERS (ASD) IN GREECE

Eirini Veroni

## Abstract

Increasingly, many families in Greece face serious challenges in supporting their children with autism spectrum disorders (ASD) principally in terms of overcoming current financial difficulties and handling the lack of appropriate educational provision and services. Seventy-four parents of children with ASD were asked to complete an open-ended questionnaire and twenty of them interviewed, in order to obtain an in-depth understanding of their daily experiences to raise their child. This study adopts a mixed methods approach, using open-ended questionnaires and semi-structured interviews. The findings of this study suggest that parenting a child with ASD is a complex and evolving process in which parents struggle to find the right balance for themselves and their child with ASD, as well as blame and stigma, negatively affected them. These findings will enable further exploration of issues related to ASD and potentially contribute to the provision and expansion of services and supports available in recent times of austerity, in Greece.

**Keywords:** autism spectrum disorders (ASD), Greek parents, challenging behaviours, austerity, prejudice, open-ended questionnaire

## Introduction

Over the past two decades, policy regarding the education of children with disabilities has changed dramatically, and several countries have implemented policies that foster the integration, and more recently, the inclusion of these students into mainstream environments (Booth and Ainscow, 1998; Vislie, 2003).

Hartas (2014) has pointed out that many Western countries (i.e., the U.K., the U.S. and Canada) are facing difficulties that hinder the provision of quality services to children, in particular, austerity, severe cuts to public spending and the crumbling of the welfare state.

The reduction of state support services for children with special education needs (SEN) has impacted most heavily on those families which encountering the severest depths of poverty. Moreover, according to Ridge (2013), social care services are overwhelmed, and the poorest children and families are bearing the brunt of the recession, and of austerity measures.

To exemplify further, Greece, the context of this research study, has been influenced by the serious financial and economic crisis, which has in turn left a mark on the services provided to children with ASD (Kalyva, 2013; Stampolis et al., 2012; Syriopoulou - Deli et al., 2012). Moreover, the reduced economic capacities that now prevail, post-crisis, at both state and family levels continue to prevent these children from fully enjoying their constitutional right to inclusive education, access to quality health services and effective social care support structures (Policy Department C, 2013). A number of scholars have described social services as being unavailable, difficult to obtain, inappropriate as well as inaccessible (Kalyva, 2011; Stampolis et al., 2012; Syriopoulou - Deli et al., 2012). Previous studies (i.e. Gena, 2006; Mavropoulou, 2007; Papageorgiou and Kalyva, 2010) have pinpointed on the essential difficulties that Greek parents of children with ASD are likely to confront. Nonetheless, there is limited information in these studies regarding the nature of the support services available for families with children with ASD, along with the potential of fostering partnerships between professionals and parents. This study aims to fill this gap by investigating the parents' experiences of raising children with ASD and their perceptions

about their interactions with a variety of professionals (i.e. teachers, educators, service providers).

It is anticipated that this study will shed light on the challenges that parents and families face in supporting children with disabilities in an age of austerity when welfare services are curtailed. Some researchers (i.e. Karim et al., 2012; Ridge, 2013) have argued that families with disabilities and children are worst hit when resources are reduced. Hartas (2014) goes further, contending that neoliberal policies have made parenting harder because the legitimacy of the state in tackling structural inequality is questionable. In fact, it has been contended that the responsibility for overcoming structural problems and the inequality in providing adequate services to children has rested upon the family itself (Hartas, 2014). Living with a child diagnosed with ASD poses many challenges for a family. Generally, parents are told to leave interventions with their child to the professionals. However, insufficient resources and training, as well as lack of science-based practice approaches have left many parents dissatisfied with the services provided, children not achieving their full potential, and families exposed to tremendous stress.

### **Autism in the Greek educational context**

A plethora of research in the field of special educational needs (e.g. Gray, 2002; Hutton and Caron, 2005; Montes and Halterman, 2007; Tomanik, Harris and Hawkins, 2004) has discussed the difficulties that parents of children with ASD often face in their daily lives. Glover-Graf (2011), for instance, postulates that parents of children with ASD are likely to experience strained marital and extended family relationships, social isolation, challenging educational arrangements, and a sense of grief related to the restricted opportunities for their children. In this regard, a diagnosis of ASD affects not only the diagnosed individual, but extends to the entire family. In fact, parental participation in terms of their advocating effectively on behalf of their children entails the expectation that parents will identify their needs, recognize their strengths, challenge practices and negotiate in decision making as well as be willing to express dissent with providers, and reach a resolution regarding all these issues.

Given that parents are often seen as the most influential agents on their children with ASD (Wang, 2008, Singer et al., 2012), some researchers (i.e. Beckman, 2002; Prelock et al., 2003; Beatson, 2008) have accentuated the salience of providing family-centred care by taking into account the ongoing interactions between families and professionals. Prompted by the increase in the prevalence of ASD, autism was recognized as a special needs category under educational laws numbers 1566 and 2817, enacted by the Greek parliament in 1985 and 2000 respectively. In 2008, a new educational law (number 3699) was introduced specifying that educational placements for children with autism should be determined according to their cognitive, language and social development (Syriopoulou-Deli, 2010). However, even though this shows that the government is aware of the needs of ASD children, there are no comprehensive official statistics on the exact number of Greek people with ASD (Centre for Education Research, 2009).

According to Keenan et al., (2015, p. 173) the paucity and lack of quality of behaviour-analytic services (ABA) feeds the debate about whether different individual needs are taken into account. Interestingly, the Greek Law 3699/2008 explicitly sets the state responsible for safe-guarding and improving the mandatory character of special education as an integral part of mandatory, free of charge and public education and for caring for the provision of free public special education and training to individuals with disabilities of any age and for all the stages and education levels. The state also commits to provide all citizens with disability and proven special education need with equal opportunities for full participation and contribution to the society, independent living, economic self-sufficiency and autonomy, full guarantee of their rights to education and social as well as professional inclusion does not include any

mention on how scientific evidence will lead the pathway to meeting these aims for individuals with disabilities and autism more specifically. Given that legislation in Greece does not accommodate ASD separately, but instead describes the necessary education and treatment for all children with special needs, ABA is not even mentioned in any official documents. Instead, traditional eclectic interventions delivered by psychiatrists, psychologists, speech and language therapists, special educators and occupational therapists are often prescribed and partly funded by the public health system in educational or home settings (Ministry of Interior et al. 2007).

With regard to previous empirical studies that have explored the needs of children with ASD in Greece, almost all of them (i.e. Gena et al., 2006; Hitoglou et al., 2010; Kalyva, 2013; Makrygianni and Reed, 2010; Stampoltzis et al. 2012) were conducted quantitatively, and examined the difficulties that Greek parents of children with ASD encountered without seeking to offer practical steps to overcome the identified difficulties, and failed to explore parental working relationships with professionals. However, the findings of studies carried out by Kalyva (2013) and Stampoltzis et al. (2012) showed that there was a noticeable lack of services offered to children with ASD in Greece, especially in terms of the quality of education and care. They argued that the Greek government did not offer sufficient financial support to parents of children with ASD or to professionals in the form of training and professional development. It is noteworthy that very few schools in secondary education in Greece were found to be appropriate for children with ASD in terms of the curriculum content and the lack of appropriate teaching accommodation as well as adequately trained personnel (Kalyva, 2013, Stampoltzis et al., 2012).

Thus far, few empirical studies have been conducted in Greece to examine the impact of contextual factors such as parents' involvement with children's learning, parent – professional co-operation, types of services offered in special education settings, the lack of public services and the generally limited resources upon children with ASD's educational provision. A small number of studies ( i.e. Avramidis and Kalyva, 2007; Konstantareas and Homatidis, 1989; Mavropoulou, 2007; Papageorgiou and Kalyva, 2010) have examined parents' needs but paid scant attention to the nature of the support services available for families with ASD children as well as the challenges the parents face with regard to the care and education of their children. The diagnosis of ASD requires the existence of a multi-disciplinary team within the centres for differential diagnosis and support of special educational needs (K.E.D.D.Y) . The diagnosis has to help the child to achieve his/her potential by leading to the development of individualised special educational support and guiding parents on how to encourage children to fulfil their potential.

With the above in mind, the current study has to some extent redressed the balance by disentangling the difficulties of parents to support their children with ASD and to find resources that improve their resilience, especially in an era of austerity. In this inquiry study, the following research question needs to be answered:

- What are the Greek parents' challenges raising their children with ASD?

## **Methodological Design**

### **Research Design**

A purposive sampling strategy (Patton, 2002) was adopted with the sample comprising seventy-four parents of children with ASD. The fieldwork took place in three special schools for children with ASD: one urban and two suburban of mixed socioeconomic-status (SES) and also three Centers for Differential Diagnosis and Support of Special Educational Needs (K EDDY) located within Attika region of Greece both in Athens and in suburbs. All these

settings were selected because they had multidisciplinary teams that conducted assessments and supported children with ASD.

The parents deemed eligible to participate in the study were the biological parents of a child diagnosed with ASD, excluded adoptive parents, aged 7 to 17 years and enrolled in the state school system at either primary or secondary level. The main group of respondents have been included in the total sample, reflecting the relationship with the child who has an ASD.

These comprised 53 mothers (71.6%) and 21 fathers (28.4%). Most of the children with ASD were male. In all this totalled 58 boys (78.4%), while 16 children (21.6%) were female. In total, 74 children aged from 8 months to 18.6 years ( $M=11.23$ ,  $S.D.=3.39$ ) were included.

All the parents of children with ASD were asked to complete a questionnaire aimed at acquiring general background information about their experiences regarding ASD. This was adapted from the Impact on Family Scale (Stein and Jessop, 2003) and Family Needs Questionnaire (Siklos and Kems, 2006) (see Keenan et al., 2007). Furthermore, these parents completed the Social Stigma Scale which was devised for this study. The questionnaire paper based copies were delivered to the participants by hand in order to maximize the return rate. In addition to the battery of closed questions, some open-ended ones were included to this questionnaire in order to provide opportunities for the participants to introduce relevant anticipated issues that then included for the semi - structured interviews (Creswell 2009; Kumar, 2011) that carried out as part of the qualitative stage of this study. The Social stigma Scale was measured with five items (e.g. prejudice, stereotyping, bullying, public awareness of ASD, society labeling the child as 'disobedient') and the participants were asked to tick with 'yes' or 'no' for each.

This research complies with the guidelines of the British Educational Research Association (BERA, 2011). In the first place, an official approval was sought from the Special Education Department of Ministry of Education in Greece. The participants were also informed that their involvement was optional and they could withdraw at any time. Prior to the research the participants provided written consent and were made aware of the nature of the research and the adopted approach. The participants were also informed that their cultural values would be met with respect and that their responses would be kept anonymous.

## **Results**

### **Social stigma**

With regard to Social Stigma Scale, around half of the parents have experienced negative stereotyping and prejudice. About 36.5% of parents referred to the stigmatization of their child as "disobedient" and 18.9% of them stated that their children experienced bullying. However, 64.9% of parents noted that the level of public awareness of ASD is high. Most parents faced challenging behaviours (i.e. aggression, tantrums, stereotyped behaviours, self-injurious behaviour, socially inappropriate behaviour, withdrawn) while only 13 out of 100 parents reporting no such challenges (See Table 1).

**Table 1*****Frequencies regarding social stigma***

Experience of social stigma	Yes	
	f	%
Public awareness of ASD	48	64.9
Prejudice	42	56.8
Stereotyping	36	48.6
Society labeling your child as 'disobedient'	27	36.5
Bullying	14	18.9

N=74 Parents of children with ASD

Note: f = frequency

**Discussion and Implications**

Although this research is work in progress, the main purpose of examining basic parental difficulties experienced in supporting children with ASD has been achieved. The presence of a child with ASD creates challenges to family life but it also impacts specific inter-familial relationships.

Many Greek parents have experienced negative stereotyping and prejudice, reporting that they feel that public awareness levels about autism are low. The most challenging social stigma pertains to the nature of the condition while more than half of the parents state that prejudice is the major obstacle that they have to handle, noting that there are challenges to fight. It is important to acknowledge that acceptance and understanding have steep ongoing learning curves and are not an ultimate end result (Klar-Wolfond, 2006). Acceptance and understanding in the community can be enhanced by advocacy for inclusion in the classroom with the necessary adaptations to meet the needs of each child. Klar-Wolfond (2006) maintains that an increased knowledge and understanding about ASD in society will lead to greater respect, dignity, tolerance and support from the community. The stigma attached to autism and the lack of understanding about it shared by the public has been shown to put parents under considerable levels of stress (Ming, 2006, pp. 47- 49). The parents reported that sometimes it felt that others were blaming them for their child's difficult behaviour, or perceived the child's behaviour as a reflection of their parenting abilities (Lubetsky et al., 2011, p. 133). Cosser (2005, pp. 124-126) also found that parents felt people blamed them for their child's behaviour and some parents had even blamed themselves for it before they were given the diagnosis. These findings are consistent with other studies (i.e. Gray, 1993; Gray, 2002; Green, 2003; Green et al., 2005; Broady et al., 2015; Kinnear et al., 2016) that indicated the majority of parents experienced felt stigma. Stigma certainly plays a major and significant role in making lives difficult for parents of children with ASD. It including worrying about being treated differently, feeling ashamed or embarrassed about their child's condition, making an effort to keep their child's condition a secret and explaining to others that their child does not fit stereotypical conceptions of mental illness, are common among parents of children with ASD.

This study revealed parents' voices for better services for children with ASD that meet their educational and social needs. Parents struggle to obtain quality in education and services

while faced with the absence of necessary technical infrastructure, understaffing in schools, lack of funding, covert or overt practices of acceptance and/or rejection of people with disabilities in the educational system (Loukisas and Papoudi, 2016).

Remarkably, the study highlighted the challenge that several Greek parents of children with ASD tend to face in relation to securing a suitable school for their child. This challenge is likely to be ascribed to the implementation of Law 3699, which permits these parents to opt for between sending their children with ASD to special or mainstream educational settings. Some empirical studies (i.e. Makrygiani and Reed, 2010; Papageorgiou and Kalyva, 2010; Syriopoulou - Deli et al., 2012) pinpointed the inaccuracy of the policy of the Greek education system in terms of allowing pupils with ASD to attend public schools, owing to the scarcity of trained staff and material teaching resources together with the demanding curriculum content in both primary and secondary schools. In the present study, the parents called for attaining better educational and social services to their children with ASD. This is consistent with Ridge's (2013) study, which showed that cuts in social security benefits had a severe financial impact on most families, in particular, those with children with (SEN) , who have been losing out in relation to having their educational, social and physical needs met. Interventions to improve awareness about ASD, to decrease stigma, and improve access to appropriate education and support for parents are warranted.

Another outstanding finding of this study was related to the financial burden of care for a child with ASD. This finding might be attributed to the fact that the Greek National Insurance Service covers merely a small part of intervention expenses. Parents' need for financial support has also been reported in a number of other studies (i.e. Makrygiani and Reed, 2010; Miller et al., 2013; Syriopoulou - Deli et al., 2012).

There is an urgent need for a better understanding of the effectiveness and cost effectiveness of interventions and support arrangements that address the needs and respond to the preferences of individuals with ASDs and their families. Comprehensive policies are needed to ensure that funds are allocated to meet the needs of these children, and future cost-effectiveness analyses should inform how these funds are spent to ensure the best possible outcomes for children with ASD (Buesher et al., 2014). Given the dramatic increase in ASD in recent years, the need for advisors skilled in helping families with the financial aspects of having a child with ASD can only grow.

Parents of children with ASD in Greece face many challenges, including high levels of stigma and a lack of appropriate provision for their child. The findings of this research found that many Greek parents appear to face an uncertain future in an uncharted territory. More precisely, the difficulties of these parents are often kept private due to the societal rejection and prejudice within the family and without having an external outlet. Raising a child with ASD has been found stressful and anxiety provoking because parents do not know what the future holds. «If I pass away, will my son be able to stay alone? » (a mother's worry)

Parents present themselves as victims of a situation that they alone need to deal with. They carry the emotional load that is not shared with others outside the immediate family. The difficulties of parents are kept in the private sphere of the family because they face societal rejection and prejudice. «It was the first shock when the private kindergarten did not allow my child to participate in school celebration, not to spoil and not to offend other parents of normal children » (a dad's comment). According to Hartas (2014) the privacy of family life should be guarded because it may be the last refuge where parents and other family members can still function as a 'buffer' between children and the state to protect them from exploitation and oppression (p. 135).

Ultimately, then, there is a need for a comprehensive state-maintained support system in Greece that caters for parents' expectations for their children with ASD. This system could

consist of a variety of professionals collaborating within multidisciplinary teams (i.e. teachers, services providers, educators, financial advisors) that could meet the individual needs of families struggling to help their children with ASD. The work of multidisciplinary ASD teams can be enhanced by a common scientific basis focusing on effective evidence-based treatments for ASD. Future studies must examine issues related to cost and efficiency, given the broader sociopolitical and economic context of service provision.

There is great need for professionals within the financial counselling and planning community to reach out to families struggling to help a child with ASD. They will guide the parents who have a child with ASD through difficult but necessary financial decisions and help them to sort out options and financial consequences of their decisions. Furthermore, they will assist the parents in making financial plans for the future even in the face of immediate and urgent financial needs. It is a basic need to support increasingly families and their limited access to multidisciplinary services for ASD.

Overall, this study, suggests that parenting a child with ASD is a challenge for parents. More empirical studies clarify the salience of partnership and communication between professionals and parents as a benchmark to improve the services offered to children with ASD. There is a need to build awareness of ASD and its impact on families in order to facilitate early detection and help seeking to combat stigma and prejudice.

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# **MAKING DUAL ACCOUNTING STANDARDS WORK: CASES OF THE INDONESIAN HIGHER EDUCATION**

**Budi Waluyo**

## **Abstract**

The adoption and the importance of accrual accounting for government have expanded over in almost all countries. Following the global trend, the Indonesian administration has implemented the Government Accounting Standard since 2005. This paper examines accounting practices in the higher education from the agencification perspective, by exploring the distinctive topics consisting of background of standard formulation, process of standard setting, design of accounting standard, and single standard dilemma. It focuses on examining the use of dual accounting standard in supporting agencification by employing case study, which is supported by descriptive statistical analysis, through an exploration in four different higher educations in Indonesia. The result shows that the central feature of accounting in the selected public service agency is unnecessary dual standards. Furthermore, there are serious constraints that could hinder the higher education to improve their reporting as some existing mechanisms make the accounting system unable to be maximally implemented. The weaknesses and the hindrances are particularly in the accounting system design. **Keywords** — accrual accounting; agencification; government accounting; higher education; public service agency

## **Introduction**

Public sector management reform is implemented upon principles such as competition, decentralizing authority, and “catalyzing all sectors” (Osborne and Gaebler, 1992) for its goal is to improve the efficiency of economy, to promote competition, and to protect the consumers and citizens (Christensen et al., 2008). It also has experienced a shift in the balance between bureaucratic autonomy and bureaucratic integration, marked by ‘agencification’ (Thynne, 2003). The financial inflexibility encourages the civil service organization to become autonomous, called ‘agency’ or quasi autonomous non-governmental bodies – quangos (Flinders and Smith, 1999; Pollit et al., 2004; Kickert, 2010; Jung, 2014).

Agency is defined as a set of institution, or structure, for delivering public services proposed by government actors (James, 2001) and has certain degree of autonomy from their respective ministry in policy decision making and over personnel, financial and managerial matters (Christensen et al., 2008) including business plan and budget (Waluyo, 2006a), accounting system (Waluyo, 2006b), costing system (Biswan and Waluyo, 2014) and organization structure (Overman and Van Thiel, 2015). Many have claimed that the idea of agencification would trigger the agency to be more professional, their management would be more business-like, and they would offer higher quality services compared to traditional government bureaucracy (Osborne and Gaebler, 1992; Pollitt et al., 2001) as they have a minimum standard of service delivery (Waluyo, 2007). Apart from providing better output quality, agencies are also expected to be more efficient public service providers (e.g. Bach, 2012; Pollitt et al., 2001). On the other hand, a recent study found a negative effect of agencification on both public sector output and efficiency (Overman and Van Thiel, 2015).

For many of the same reasons, agencification has also taken place in Indonesia since 2005 by the establishment of a financial management model of Public Service Agency (Badan Layanan Umum, BLU) for the particular government institution which primarily responsible for providing public services (Waluyo, 2013a). The main trend regarding public service organizations from 2005 is the use of agencification implying establishment of BLU as semi-autonomous agency at arm length distance from bureaucracy. In the period 2005 to 2014,

there were 689 autonomous agencies established which consisted of 150 central agencies and 539 local agencies.

In the context of accounting, autonomous agencies in Indonesia have to comply with both Government Accounting Standards (Standar Akuntansi Pemerintahan, SAP) employing cash-towards-accrual (CTA) basis issued by Committee of Government Accounting Standards (Komite Standar Akuntansi Pemerintahan, KSAP) for all government institutions and Financial Accounting Standards (Standar Akuntansi Keuangan, SAK) employing accrual basis issued by Accounting Association for private companies. Consequently, higher educations have to prepare two different financial statements in accordance with each standard.

The effort of the Indonesian government in reforming public sector accounting was initiated at the beginning of 1980s. The initiative of donors and spirit of democratization, and decentralization became the major drivers (Ika and Widagdo, 2013). The implementation of accounting reforms introduced accruals reporting in the traditional budgetary accounting system to enhance accountability and transparency in the overall modernization process. A survey conducted in Italian local government showed the importance of cash- and commitment-based accounting in the overall system was overwhelming, whereas the marginality of the 'new' accrual-based reporting was evident. In the opinions of preparers, accruals accounting was not seen as a useful tool and the link with internal needs and managerial control systems was absent (Nasi and Steccolini, 2008).

Meanwhile, the decision of the Indonesian Government to adopt accrual accounting in 2003 was part of greater political and economic reforms following the financial and political crisis that occurred in 1998. Idealized in the early 1980s by technocrats in the Ministry of Finance, accrual accounting practices were deferred and then enabled by a series of national political events. The ultimate internalization of municipality was led by new legislation but also influenced by the habits and histories of the Indonesian local context and was as a result decoupled in many respects from ideals, discourses and techniques established for it (Harun, Peursem, and Eggleton, 2012).

At the beginning of 2015, Indonesian Government started to implement accrual-based accounting. Some identified issues in implementing the accrual-based accounting in government accounting including inadequate human resources capability, information technology, funds, and government support (Kasim, 2015). At the end of 2015, the KSAP issued a new Statement of Government Accounting Standard (Pernyataan Standar Akuntansi Pemerintahan, PSAP) Number 13 Concerning Financial Reporting for Public Service Agency which has to be referred for preparing financial statement as of 2016 onwards.

These developments have been accompanied by a rapidly growing scholarly literature on agencification applying theoretical and empirical research. So far scholars mostly have focused on administrative history, reform and change (e.g. Pollitt et al., 2004) and what effects agencification might cause on actual political-administrative behavior, organization structures, procedures and legal capacities (Thynne, 2003; Yesilkagit and van Thiel, 2008; Egeberg and Trondal, 2009).

But, little has been done to explore the deep accounting and financial reporting aspects of the agency. The emergence, the spread and the debates on them are scarce, less discussed, based on single case (e.g. Waluyo, 2013b), and conducted at the macro level (e.g. Overman and van Thiel, 2015). Agencification has scarcely been researched from the viewpoint of accounting and financial reporting (Waluyo, 2014a).

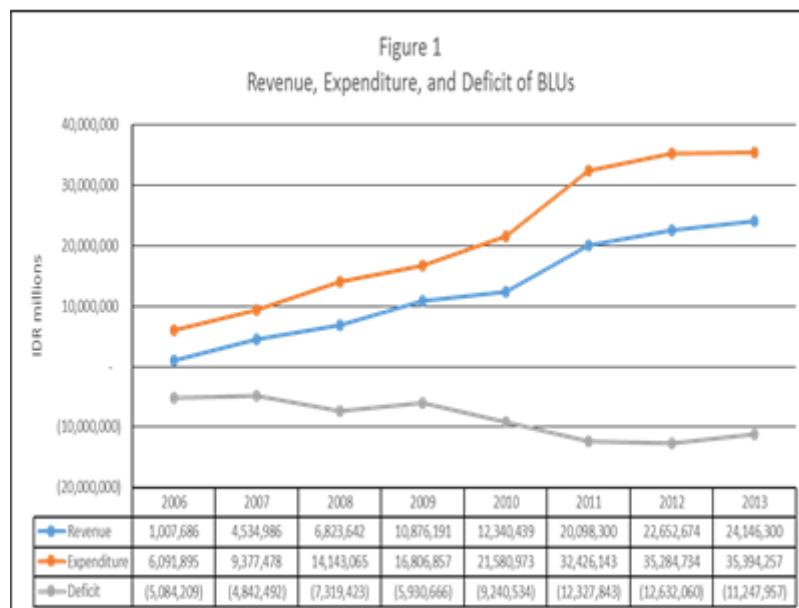
Hence, this study deeply looks at the micro level on how the dual accounting standards are implemented in the context of agencification in Indonesia. It endeavours to explore the distinctive accounting and reporting aspects implemented at the agency; and moreover it assesses whether or not the new accounting standard has been properly designed to meet the financial model at the agency. Furthermore, this study also looks for the use of financial reporting in supporting the agencies to improve their financial performance.

In Indonesian context, the higher education model is so diverse. Thus, there may be considerable within-group variability in relation to the implementation of dual accounting standards. A similar change model and purpose may result different outcome depending on the circumstances in which it is applied. In order to address the issue of possible variability, this study examines and assesses the accounting and financial reporting aspects of higher educations.

The research used cases in the Indonesian Higher Educations. The working thesis of the research is that Indonesian Higher Educations who have begun to work with bureaucratic approach in accounting and financial reporting, are driven to implement the business-like approach by adopting accounting standard for private sector.

Furthermore, BLUs financial performance reveals a large and growing deficit over prolonged periods of time as shown in Figure 1. The trend of rapidly growing expenditures is consistently not accompanied by an adequate increase in revenues (Waluyo and Sulaeman, 2014). Thus the government has to subsidize BLUs, financing deficits every year which indicates the financial management in BLU is merely meant no deal with financial performance.

This research is well placed at the junction of several academic, philosophical, public sector and international debates on accounting and financial reporting for the agency. By approaching the issue from accounting perspective, a deep view on agencification will be taken so that more will be known. It contributes to the research literature, especially on explaining the accounting practice in the context of agencification.



Source: Ministry of Finance, 2014

**Fig. 1. Revenue, expenditure, and deficit of BLUs**

The case studies attempt to look for the limitations of the theoretical perspectives in order to address the gaps in the findings, which have not explored how accounting works in the agency. Various readily applicable theoretical perspectives exist to analyze the use of accounting standards at different agencies in order to further theory development.

### **Research Questions and Purposes**

This research explores the overarching question: have dual accounting standards in the Indonesian higher educations facilitated effective agencification? Further related sub questions are: (1) How did the formulation of accounting standards work in the period and how was the fundamental change in accounting? (2) How was the accounting principles implemented at the agency? (3) What is the likely course of future developments in the implementation of accounting standard for the agency?

The purpose of this research is to contribute to both theoretical areas and practical fields. It focuses on examining the use of dual accounting standard in supporting agencification through an exploration of the experience of Indonesia. Accounting discussion includes government accounting reform, process of standard formulation, reason of standard formulation, design of accounting standard, design of consolidation, single standard dilemma, transition period, and future developments.

### **Research Methods**

The project employs qualitative case study which is supported by descriptive statistical analysis. According to Yin (2003), a case study is 'an empirical inquiry that investigates a contemporary phenomenon with its real-life context' and 'examines the operational of causal mechanisms in individual cases in detail' (George and Bennet, 2005; Jung, 2014).

This method is the most appropriate due to the exploration of dual accounting standard in the agency cannot be considered without the context of agencification. It is only in these agencies that dual accounting standards are developed and utilized. Cases are useful to understand how the standards are developed in the process of implementing agencification. They are also used in order to gain a detail understanding of accounting process in the agencies.

The research uses cases in Indonesia as the most current rapidly growing countries in implementing agencification. Research objects of the thesis include four of the Indonesian Higher Education.

As a corollary of the comprehensiveness, this study slightly describes government accounting reform in the country, in order to show the broader picture and to understand the process of changes and their backgrounds. More profoundly, similarities and differences between the two accounting standards are compared from both macro and micro level.

At the same time, the results are analysed through the comparison of accounting standards, before and after these changes, with a view to explore whether their rationales are appropriate or not. Furthermore, it also examines the factors which influence the successful implementation of the accounting standards.

The four cases in this research were carefully selected based on variation sampling to enable the researcher to explore how different higher educations with different education model implement dual accounting standards and how these different characteristics were affecting implementation result. As such, the selection of the cases focused mainly on differences in the education model of each institution as shown in Figure 2.

<b>Method</b>	<b>University / Unit</b>	<b>Job Description/title</b>
<b>Focus Groups</b>	Directorate PPK-BLU	Head Information Division Head of Regulation Division
	KSAP	KSAP Member (2)
<b>Interviews</b>	Padjadjaran University	Director of Finance
	Udayana University	Head of Finance Division
	State Islamic University of Jakarta	Head of Accounting Division
	Polytechnic of Health Jakarta III	Supervisor of Accounting
<b>Expert Interviews</b>	Expert	Former Team Member for formulation of Public Service Agency regulations

**Fig. 2. Sample Overview of Higher Education, Regulator, and Expert**

Data collection methods include documentary analysis and interviews. The main data is documentary analysis which involves the study of many official documents, government papers, committee reports, and other documents from the Ministry of Finance, related ministries, and the agencies themselves. It includes data and information of general profile of BLUs, budget documents, accounting procedures, financial statements, financial procedures, performance measurement tools, and accounting and control systems.

In general terms, secondary data are the most easily available sources in the case of agencies. However, they have a relatively low degree of reliability, albeit its validity is the other way round; thus they need to be supplemented with methods such as interview (Jung, 2014). In this research, a number of interviews were conducted on people who played a key role at the agencies, mainly including head of financial division. Interview is aimed to delve deep beneath the surface of superficial responses to obtain true meanings that key person assigns to the dual accounting standards in the agencies. Semi-structured interviews were adopted and all questions were open-ended to provide the interviewees with the flexibility necessary to express their personal experiences and perceptions of the most important issues.

## Findings

BLU is a government unit which has special characteristic in financial management aspects. The business and the transaction are different to the other government units. For instance, it has autonomy to directly manage revenue, manage cash, it has flexible budget, and it implements distinctive expenditure process. On the other side, BLU is strictly controlled in the area of planning, budgeting, and reporting.

### A. Government Accounting Reform

Starting government accounting reform, Minister of Finance (MoF) established KSAP in 2002. Based on the Law of State Finance 17/2003, government shall implement accrual accounting within 5 years. Then, the existence of this committee had been legally strengthened since 2004 by Presidential Decree and replaced the function of the Agency of State Finance Accounting (Badan Akuntansi Keuangan Negara) at the MoF.

The main duty of KSAP is to set government accounting standards as the principle for preparing government financial statements. In implementing this task, the committee is separated into two divisions: consultative committee and working committee.

Consultative committee provides consultations and opinions in formulating concept of the SAP, while working committee prepares, formulates and drafts the SAP. Both have to report their activities to the MoF. Members of KSAP consist of representatives from the Ministry of

Finance, the Ministry of Home Affairs, Finance and Development Supervisory Agency (Badan Pengawasan Keuangan dan Pembangunan), the Indonesian Institute of Accountants (Ikatan Akuntan Indonesia), local government's representative, and higher education's representative.

In 2008, KSAP began compiling accrual-based accounting standards. Unfortunately, government was not ready yet and the standards had not been finished. Therefore, the administration consulted the Parliament to delay the implementation of accrual-based accounting. Government had been given the extension within 5 years since 2009.

## **B. Process of Standard Formulation**

In the process of standard formulation, arrangement, and development, KSAP follows international standard setting due process which has been modified in accordance to Indonesia's regulation as follows. (Ika and Widagdo, 2013)

- 1) Identifying topic that will be developed as accounting standard draft
- 2) Consulting this topic to consultative committee
- 3) Doing limited research
- 4) Writing the draft of standard
- 5) Discussing the draft among members of committee
- 6) Preparing draft of standard for publication
- 7) Consulting the draft to consultative committee
- 8) Sending the publication draft to the stakeholders
- 9) Public hearings
- 10) Discussion based on the comments from public hearing
- 11) Requesting consideration from Financial Audit Agency (Badan Pemeriksa Keuangan, BPK)
- 12) Discussing the input from BPK
- 13) Consulting to working committee and consultative committee
- 14) Finalizing the draft
- 15) Proposing the draft to be legally released.

KSAP refers the general guidelines for preparing accounting standards. In preparing SAP for BLU, as well as other standards, KSAP undertook standardized process according to the guidelines. KSAP has a grand design for development of SAP. Annually, KSAP specifies priority topics to be prepared as accounting standards. Initially, KSAP assesses of which topic will be considered. Afterwards, a Working Committee is formed to make initial research by studying related regulations and financial problems of BLU.

The Committee will appoint a Working Team for analysing the issues which will be prepared for standard setting. The Team considers whether a topic should be released as an accounting standard or simply described in technical bulletin (Buletin Teknis, Bultek). Not all issues can be continued to formulate accounting standards.

KSAP generally refers to international accounting standards, best practices, and standards in the similar industries. In addition, KSAP also considers other references in accordance with the conditions and regulations in Indonesia. SAP is not a translation of international standards as well as not a full adoption. The international standards are referred, but are not fully adopted and translated, due to the different conditions.

In the adoption of agencification model, comparative study had been done to New Zealand, Netherlands, United Kingdom, and Canada. In terms of accounting, most of the countries use private sector accounting standards.

Preparing SAP for BLU needs longer time since specific transactions in BLU significantly different to the other government units. KSAP does not only develop accounting standards, but also prepares simulations ascertaining the principles can be implemented.

In the stage of exposure draft, KSAP held focus group discussion (FGD) and limited hearing. FGD invited stakeholders to provide feedback, opinion, and correction to the draft. Meanwhile, limited hearing included BLU representatives to discuss the draft, resulting second exposure draft. The last, was public hearing by uploading the draft to the website and inviting all of the stakeholders, academics, and society.

After public hearing, then KSAP requested consideration to BPK. This consideration is required by the Law, that BPK is assigned to provide consideration to SAP. The considerations were discussed in the plenary KSAP meeting.

The final draft of SAP for BLU was submitted to the Minister of Finance to be legally released. Legal drafting involved the Legal Bureau and Directorate of Treasury System. KSAP monitored the drafting to ensure there is no change in accounting substance.

### **C. Reason of Standard Formulation**

The Indonesia government has adopted agencification concept as stated in the Law of State Treasury 2004. Government Regulation on BLU Financial Management and Government Regulation on Government Accounting Standards were prepared at the same period in 2004 to 2005. KSAP decided that for the first time, SAP employed CTA basis for transition period.

KSAP issued PSAP Number 1 to 12, enabling all government entity to prepare financial statements based on accrual basis. At that time, KSAP had not identified any special entity, such as BLU which have different characteristics in financial management. Unfortunately, CTA-based SAP could not accommodate the information needed by BLU since it could not facilitate the complexity of transactions.

Government Regulation 23/2005 stated that as an accounting entity that manages the state budget, BLU must refer to CTA-based SAP. But, as a reporting entity having semi business characteristic and running good business practice, the information need is not sufficiently provided by presenting CTA-based financial statements. So, BLU has implemented accrual-based SAK. In short, BLU applies dual accounting standards due to the difference in accounting basis.

Another reason, in a semi-business entity, is a need of performance measurements, particularly financial performance and services performance. The reporting format considered to measure the financial performance is income statement or similar report such as statement of activities or statement of operational. Meanwhile, SAP provides only Statement of Budget Realization (Laporan Realisasi Anggaran, LRA) which is unable to measure financial performance. Therefore, BLU prepares financial statements based on SAK.

The ideal accounting for semi-business organization is accrual-based in which rights and obligations are recognized when incurred rather than when cash disbursed. Accrual-based financial statements provide more complete information. In addition, the BLU is expected to be a role model in implementing accrual-based accounting.

On the other hand, these days SAP and SAK are equally accrual-based resulting no difference in the basis of accounting. Also, in practice, BLU experiences problems of implementing dual accounting standards. Therefore, KSAP released PSAP Number 13 as the single accounting standard.

PSAP 13 is a reference in preparing financial statements for accountability, managerial, and decision making purpose. For BLU, this is a vital accounting standard as needed. So KSAP is acknowledged and there is no resistance by stakeholders. The unification of standards is expected to increase the use of financial statements for decision making. For instance, cash flow statement can describe more specific transaction including operating, investing, and financing activities.

#### **D. Design of Accounting Standard**

KSAP experienced difficulties in formulating accounting standards for BLU, especially in selecting the approach. There are some methods for preparing the standards including “by account” and “by financial statements element” approach. After considering the most effective method, finally KSAP chose the presentation of financial statements approach.

The basic concept of this approach is that when there is no requirement for special regulation in the PSAP for BLU, so BLU uses the PSAP 1 to 12. The PSAP for BLU is only arrange the topics that are not stated yet in the existing PSAP. In conclusion, the general rules are provided in PSAP 1 to 12, while PSAP 13 regulates exceptions only. The complete structure of PSAP is provided in Figure 3.

Components
Conceptual Framework
PSAP 01 Presentation of Financial Statements
PSAP 02 Statement of Budget Realization
PSAP 03 Statement of Cash Flow
PSAP 04 Notes to the Financial Statements
PSAP 05 Accounting for Inventory
PSAP 06 Accounting for Investment
PSAP 07 Accounting for Fixed Assets
PSAP 08 Accounting for Construction in Progress
PSAP 09 Accounting for Liabilities
PSAP 10 Correction of Errors, Change in Accounting Policy, and Extraordinary Events
PSAP 11 Consolidated Financial Statements
PSAP 12 Statement of Operational

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**PSAP 13 Presentation of Financial Statements for  
Public Service Agency**

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**Fig. 3. Structure of PSAP** Source: KSAP, 2016

PSAP 13 is exceptional for BLU, not for general government units. The PSAP is prepared for considering the needs of BLU due to the complexity of the transaction and different organisation characteristics. BLU as a reporting entity means having the same position as the local government or central government, so it must have specific PSAP.

PSAP is accompanied with conceptual framework. In case a transaction is not regulated in the PSAP and cannot refer to the existing PSAP, it will be referred back to the conceptual framework.

Accounting for BLU is different from the other government units. In the government accounting structure, they are generally positioned as accounting entity. Meanwhile, BLU holds the position of accounting entity as well as reporting entity. These positions are consequence of implementing semi-autonomous agency model. Reporting entity is obliged to prepare complete financial statements, including Statement of Cash Flow and Statement of Changes in Budget Balance (Saldo Anggaran Lebih, SAL). See Figure 4.

Accounting Entity	Reporting Entity
1. Statement of Budget Realization	1. Statement of Budget Realization
2. Balance Sheet	2. Balance Sheet
3. Statement of Operational	3. Statement of Operational
4. Statement of Changes in Equity	4. Statement of Changes in Equity
	5. Statement of Cash Flow
	6. Statement of Changes in Budget Balance
5. Notes to Financial Statements	7. Notes to Financial Statements

**Fig. 4. Comparison of reports for Accounting Entity and Reporting Entity**

Government Regulation 23/2005 stated that BLU has to prepare financial statements based on SAK since SAP was CTA-based, while the BLU business character needs accrual-based accounting standards. Recently, with the PSAP 13 employing accrual basis, BLU needs only to prepare single financial statement.

In the process of preparing PSAP 13, the main constraint was how to consider high accountability for BLU. It means, how PSAP 13 facilitated the resulted financial statements to provide information as well as tool of accountability for decision-making by stakeholders. So the focus was how to facilitate the financial statements as accountability report and provide useful information for decision-making purpose.

The challenge for KSAP was how to prepare SAP to be easily understood and easily implemented. Hence, KSAP held public hearing so that SAP can be understood by users. It was a process to ensure that users understand the SAP.

There were difficult topics in preparing SAP, such as accounting for investment, due to complex regulations which should be considered. Meanwhile, from the managerial view, the service provider BLU had more complex topics in accounting due to variety of services.

Officials and managers of BLU are generally having same qualification with others and they do not fully understand about the concept of BLU. The main purpose of preparing financial statements is accountability rather than tools for decision-making.

## **E. Design of Consolidation**

Direktorat of Supervision on BLU Financial Management (Pembinaan Pengelolaan Keuangan BLU, PPK-BLU) administers, processes, and uses SAK-generated financial statements. It means, the financial statements are maintained in a database to be analyzed in the context of measuring financial performance. Directorate PPK-BLU never manages and analyzes SAP-generated financial statements. It considers that components of SAP's financial statements are incomplete, while many performance assessment points come from the statement of operational, which does not exist in SAP. Likewise, performance assessment at the management level uses the data from the SAK financial statements.

Direktorat PPK-BLU performs a review of synchronization between SAP and SAK financial statements. The SAP financial statement is standardized based on budget document. There are some points that are tested to ensure that the SAK is in accordance with SAP. There are connected accounts that, for example depreciation, should be equal between SAK and SAP.

As the accounting entity, financial statements of BLU must be consolidated to the parent ministry. Meanwhile, as the reporting entity, it has to be consolidated to the State Treasury. For consolidation to the parent ministry, BLU holds the Cash Flow Statement and Statement of Changes in SAL. Thus, the two reports should exist at the ministry, although it only comes from BLU.

For consolidation to State Treasury, BLU should observe particular transaction in order to avoid double counting. For example, as the reporting entity, the revenues from state budget are recorded as operational revenue. Meanwhile, as the accounting entity, this revenue has been consolidated to parent ministry. It needs to be facilitated by accounting system so that the transaction is not recorded twice.

Cash flow at State Treasury is different to the cash flow at BLU as the reporting entity. Differences may occur since not all of the revenues or expenses are recognized at the State Treasury. Balance Sheet of BLU presents cash, including those unrecognized. Thus, the cash flow statement of government should directly take the cash amount of BLU, including those unrecognized.

Consolidation has to validate whether all the transactions have been recorded. Because, transaction which is yet unrecognized will not appear at the cash flow statement in State Treasury. Transactions appear in cash flow statement is only those already approved by the recognition mechanism.

BLU make recognition of revenue and expenditure to the State Treasury. The recognition can be used as a mechanism to consolidate cash flow in BLU to cash flow in State Treasury. This means, the recognition mechanism automatically consolidates both cash flows. Design of consolidation should accommodate the automatic process of cash transactions.

## **F. Single Standard Dilemma**

Ideally, BLU should prepare single financial report since the purpose of presenting accrual reporting is achieved by SAP. But, when SAK was replaced by SAP, possibly it setbacks the existing reporting.

Design of SAP system seems assuming that the accounting officers do not understand accounting. SAP only compiles data quarterly for preparing financial reports. It retrieves data at the end of the period, so there is no ideal accounting process. Accounting officers only need to post a transaction in order to generate financial reports. This means that the

financial statements are only prepared for compliance purpose and formal obligation. The report is compiled for formal purposes at national level.

Preferably, BLU should use accounting as a management tool for decision making. In BLU, accounting should be part of organization control. For instance, in the hospital which uses voucher system. The relevant authorities make a request for payment in the process of disbursing fund. They send the complete supporting documents such as contract and invoice to the verification unit. Next, the documents are forwarded to the accounting division, to be issued as a voucher.

These documents will go through verification process. Voucher and other documents will be submitted to the authorized official of payments (usually based on the nominal). Afterward, it will be sent back to the accounting and journal as the source document. Accounting division analyzes the journal, to be finally signed by the Head of Accounting. These processes are found in SAK because it is not designed in the SAP.

Thus, accounting becomes part of internal control. When the auditors want to examine a transaction, they simply take the reference number of journal and request the supporting documents. By this control system, auditors are ensured that there is no unrecorded revenue. When they do a test of transaction, for example is revenue as the billing system corresponding the document flow, they can proof that all of the revenue collection processes have been done. All revenues have been recorded by the system. Auditors are sure that all revenue has been collected since the cashier is located at the bank. They are also assured that all the collected revenues are recorded since there is a verification function.

All the transactions have already been recorded. The documents flow the billing system and it ends in the journal. Voucher is carried into accounting division and there is no possibility to losing revenues since all of them are recorded. These processes are not implemented in SAP.

The expected accounting model for BLU is accounting as a part of internal control. It becomes input for management to make a decision. SAK can simply provide billing information. It is unfortunate when SAK is replaced with SAP that could not provide this information.

Meanwhile, financial statements of BLU is not only for accountability purpose but also for part of the flexibility. SAK financial statements aim to examine the achievement of business plan (Rencana Bisnis dan Anggaran, RBA). In RBA, BLU determines the account and its detail components. Financial statements of SAP cannot be used to examine it since it is bounded by the provided application.

Another perspective from the presented information is that the critical information that previously presented by SAK could not be provided by SAP. For example, for the majority of government unit, revenue from renting facilities is classified as non-services revenue, which is a component of "other income". However, it will not be appropriate when BLU whose core business is renting facilities uses SAP with the same account.

SAK should be maintained due to some considerations. First, there are needs of making specific template of financial statements for each individual BLU group. For example, BLU whose core business of rent, should use different template to the core business of education. Secondly, there is need for a flexible account. For example, when there is a change in strategic objectives, it needs a different account. If a new account needs to be made through a formal process, it would be an obstacle.

The main role of SAP applies for consolidation purpose, when BLU require information of consolidation. But, as a semi business unit, reports generated from the existing accounting system are still required. It can be labelled as managerial reports.

Ideally, BLU only needs to prepare single financial statements, based on SAP. However, it should be tested whether SAP is able to accommodate the existing accounting system or not. When the accounting process was eliminated, it will be a setback since the real accounting is the existing one.

Both SAP and SAK are accrual-based. Consequently, it will produce similar reports. When SAP is implemented, while BLU still generates SAK reports, possible difference of presented information might appear. BLU may simply use SAP generating consolidated financial statements to Central Government Financial Statements (Laporan Keuangan Pemerintah Pusat, LKPP). However, it should not cut the existing accounting system which is required to determine the future business of BLU.

Direktorat PPK-BLU may plan to remain asking BLU to submit the two statements in order to fulfill the needs of performance measurement. To avoid different interpretation, the SAK statements can be labelled managerial or special purpose statements instead of financial statements.

Basically, the information need and the output can be adjusted. When it can be adjusted based on the categories of the BLU, then the government just need to change the chart of accounts.

## **G. Transition Period**

PSAP 13 effective date is 2016. Meanwhile, the supporting regulation including Bultek and the accounting system are not yet fully ready. Moreover, it has not been disseminated to BLU. Therefore, 2016 can be considered as a transition period.

Government Regulation 23/2005 stated that accounting standards for BLU is issued by the Indonesian Institute of Accountants. However, after PSAP 13 is released, the regulation has not been revised. Thus, legally it is still valid. Consequently, in 2016 BLU still has to prepare financial statements based on two equally accrual basis.

The two standards resulting similar reports. For example, SAK generates Statement of Activity while SAP provides Statement of Operational. Format of the financial statements will be different although holds the same accounting basis.

In certain circumstances, the government may prepare the accounting policies as long as it does not contradict to PSAP. For example, the government postponed the implementation of amortization in 2015. The government needs to prepare a policy when PSAP 13 will not be implemented purely in 2016. The policy needs to be discussed with the stakeholders, especially the BLU and BPK.

## **H. Future Development**

Government Accounting System is being updated to accommodate the PSAP 13, which means that the government have no intention to delay the implementation of PSAP 13. Therefore, Government Regulation 23/2005 should be revised to adjust PSAP 13 that BLU uses a single accounting standard.

There are several key factors that must be considered to implement PSAP 13 successfully. Firstly, the accounting system developer must understand the standards and the characteristics of BLU. It is important since BLU is different from the other government unit. Secondly, the accounting system must be tested first. It should not be directly implemented, there must be a piloting period. Thirdly, KSAP and the Directorate PPK-BLU should disseminate PSAP 13 to all stakeholders, especially the government accounting system developers and the BLU, including local BLU.

### **Conclusion and Implication**

This research shows that the central feature of accounting in the selected public service agency is unnecessary dual standard. Furthermore, there are serious constraints that could hinder the higher education to improve their reporting as some existing mechanisms contribute the accounting system unable to be maximally implemented. The weaknesses and the hindrances are particularly in the accounting system design.

Government needs to release further supporting regulation about accounting for BLU governing technical accounting system. For central BLU, the system is developed by the Ministry of Finance. Meanwhile, Regulation of Minister of Finance 76/2008 should be withdrawn since the concept is different to the PSAP 13. The regulation was made due to lack of reference. Whereas, recently there is PSAP 13 for BLU.

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## **Biography**

Budi Waluyo was a lecturer at the Polytechnic of State Finance STAN Jakarta, Indonesia. He also served as the Head of Diploma I Program of State Treasury in the Department of Financial Management. His research focuses on agencification and public sector financial management. Budi is also a PhD student at School of Business, University of Leicester, the United Kingdom.

# **WHO AM I? WHY AM I HERE? TEACHERS LOSING THEIR PROFESSIONAL IDENTITY DURING CHALLENGING TIMES.**

**Maxine Watkins**

## **Abstract**

With ongoing concerns in England regarding teacher recruitment and retention, one challenge for government and school leaders is to foster commitment to the profession.

Professional identities and career phases influence teacher commitment, and while previous studies have focused on developing a professional identity in early career, relatively fewer studies examine how teachers sustain their professional identity and commitment over time. Stemming from a PhD study, which explores the development of identity across a teaching career, this paper explores the experiences of three teachers working in different career phases and the relationship between times when they have lost their sense of identity and the ensuing decline in commitment.

Analysis reveals that, during challenging times, teachers in all three stages of their career teachers can lose their sense of identity and experience a decline in their commitment to the school they are working in or to the teaching profession as a whole.

## **Introduction**

The importance of individual teachers in raising standards in schools is increasingly acknowledged by researchers and policy makers (Johansson et al. 2014; Nye et al. 2004; Rivkin et al. 2005; Department for Education, 2010), and with ongoing concerns in England regarding teacher recruitment (Ross and Hutchings, 2003) and retention (National Audit Office, 2016), it would be prudent for policy makers to consider factors associated with teacher commitment.

A large scale study conducted by Day et al. (2007), explored teacher identity in relation to teacher effectiveness, and discovered that teachers' identities and career phases influence their sense of wellbeing and their commitment to the profession. Most previous research concerning professional identity (Alsup 2006; Kelchtermans and Ballet 2002; Pillen et al. 2013) and commitment (Christopherson et al. 2016, Darling-Hammond 2003, Smethem 2007) primarily focuses on early career while relatively fewer studies have considered the span of a teaching career.

Stemming from a PhD study, which explores the development of a professional identity across a teaching career, this paper foregrounds the perspective of three primary school teachers to gain an understanding of key factors across their career which have had a negative influence on sustaining a positive professional identity and to what extent these factors impact upon teachers' commitment.

## **Method**

### **Participants**

Participants were primary school teachers working in England, who were in early career phase (0 – 7 years), mid-career phase (8 – 23 years) and late career phase (24+ years).

## **Data Collection and Analysis**

Informal life history interviews (Goodson, 2008) were conducted with each participant to explore their individual beliefs about teaching and education. In an unstructured conversation teachers talked freely about their own experiences of being at school, and their journey into teaching. Teachers then indicated fluctuations in their professional identity over time by mapping critical incidents on a professional timeline (Day et al., 2006) with particular attention being paid to peaks and troughs, and the circumstances which influenced professional identity and commitment in a positive or a negative way. Finally, semi structured interviews were conducted which included questions uniquely tailored to individual participants to develop and refine emerging themes and ideas. In line with the constructivist grounded theory approach data was analysed through coding, constant comparison, and theoretical conceptualizing (Charmaz, 2014).

## **Findings**

Analysis revealed that during challenging times, teachers working in different phases of their career can lose their sense of identity. Each teacher either experienced a decline in their commitment to their role as teacher, the school they were working in or to the teaching profession.

### **Anna – Early Career Phase – Age 25 – NQT – Losing confidence**

Having enjoyed working as a teaching assistant for three years, Anna took the decision to train to be a teacher. She had enjoyed all of her teaching placements during her B.Ed. and by the time she qualified she had received regular positive feedback from her tutors and felt confident in her own ability to teach. In contrast, she felt that the feedback she received during her NQT year had more of a focus on negative aspects of her teaching practice.

**Because during university they say ‘we want you to do this, this and this’ and if you do it they go ‘brilliant’ and ‘you could do this a little bit next time’. Whereas here it’s ‘Oh my goodness, you’re rubbish at everything!’**

Anna was made to feel incompetent when the leadership team observed her lessons and the previous positive self-image she held turned into doubt and frustration. Where she had enjoyed showing off her teaching practice to her university tutors, she began to dread being observed in her own classroom.

**They just weren’t encouraging at all. They were very negative. Every observation I’ve ever had I’ve enjoyed. I’ve loved to show off. But there, I dreaded it. Because I just didn’t know what random thing they would decide to say was wrong.**

During Anna’s NQT year, the previous positive self-image she held diminished and was replaced by self-doubt and frustration.

**I felt like I was a terrible teacher in that school, all the time I was there. And there’s nothing that I could pinpoint, they never said to me that I was rubbish. But they said things like ‘Your marking’s not good enough.’**

Anna felt that her professionalism was being questioned, and although she was working within the schools marking policy guidelines, she felt that her word was not trusted.

**So I'm marking ninety books each night, and they'd say 'You've not marked every piece of work.' And I said 'I only have to mark one in depth. The others I've given verbal feedback on.' And they'd say 'Have you actually given verbal feedback?'**

Although Anna was still committed to a career in teaching, the lack of support from the leadership team meant that she was not committed to the school. As the end of her NQT year approached she made a successful application to teach in another school, and was relieved to reach the end of her first year.

**I got to my last day and I thought 'I've survived.'**

In retrospect Anna feels annoyed that she was treated unfairly, and that because she was the new teacher in school she had nobody that she could trust to speak to, and no opportunity to voice her concerns. She realised that future career opportunities could potentially be affected if she had complained.

**But I'm still angry. I'm angry because I didn't stand up for myself. It's not like me to not say anything. But there was nobody to go to. There was nothing I could do. And professionally it wouldn't have benefitted me at all to say anything.**

Anna felt that she lost her own identity while she was working at the school, but was optimistic that her new school would enable her to go forward and develop her teaching practice.

**It was a real change of character for me. I just didn't feel like me for the whole year, all the time I was working there, I wasn't me. You know? So now I'm trying to let go.**

#### **Katie – MCP – Age 40 - 11 years in teaching – Struggling with work/life balance**

When Katie started her family she worked part time for the first few years. Preferring to have complete responsibility for her own class, along with the financial pressures of a young family and a mortgage, she has now returned to work full time. Katie's two young sons are both primary school age. Although she loves being a teacher, she feels that she is missing out on valuable time with them, and that the demands of planning, marking and other paperwork which has to be done outside of the classroom are invading what should be her family time.

**It is really tough. I leave the house at 7am, so I don't even get to take them to school, because it's a forty minute drive to work. And I get back home between half past five and six normally. And then I'm straight on the computer. And at least one of my weekend days I'll spend working. It's really hard going.**

Whilst Katie is working hard to ensure the children in her class benefit from interesting and engaging lessons, she is faced with feelings of guilt knowing that she is unable to give as much attention to her own children's schoolwork. The feeling that the parents of the children in her class don't value her efforts adds to her frustration.

**I already feel that I neglect a lot of their school stuff, and I do spend a lot of my time working. All day Saturday, normally. And all day Sunday, maybe...It is hard. Because I feel like I'm doing really good stuff for thirty parents who don't actually appreciate what I'm doing, and my own kids are missing out. And that's hard.**

Katie thinks that her children would benefit from seeing her as part of their own school community if she was able to drop her children off and pick them up occasionally.

**I would like to do one pick up and one drop off, because my kids are always saying 'Why do you never come to our school?'**

Katie's relationships outside of school have suffered as she feels a pressure to be seen to be coping with the multiple roles which she has to juggle. Although she realises that perfection in any family home is likely to be a façade, it is clear that she is experiencing a sense of failure.

**I don't go out. I just don't have the energy to go out any more, and I've let a lot of friendships go. Which is sad, but I can't do everything, and I do think there is the expectation on women to be able to have a perfect relationship, and a perfect family, with the perfect job, and the perfect house....and my house gets cleaned properly every six weeks. Like once a half term, because I just think (shrugs).**

There is also a clear impact on her relationship with her husband.

**We just never spend any time together. I'm just so tired. We might make plans, and get my mum to babysit, and then I'll cancel, two hours before. Because I can't be bothered to get in [from work] on a Friday night to get dressed and go out again.**

Although Katie acknowledges that she has no time for other activities outside of school, even those she feels would improve her wellbeing, she accepts the unmanageable workload as being integral to the doing a good job for the children in her class.

**I don't even have time to exercise or anything. And I know that would probably really help with my stress levels, but I just can't be bothered. I work so hard, and I want to work hard, because I enjoy my job, and being with the [school] kids.**

Having no time for the other roles means that Katie is losing any identity which does not relate to being a teacher.

**But I just don't know where Miss stops and where Katie begins. It all bleeds in too much really.**

As Katie finds it increasingly difficult to find the time to be a parent, a friend, and a partner, she considers a career change, but she feels that she has limited options. Her commitment is reduced but it seems likely that, for now at least, she will remain in the profession.

**I keep saying I won't stick it out, and that I'm going to leave and find something else, but I think I'm trapped in a way now.**

#### **Alan – Late Career Phase – Age 51 – 28 years in teaching – Challenges of headship**

Throughout Alan's teaching career his confidence had continued to grow, and he had progressed through various leadership roles, from classroom teacher to phase leader, into deputy headship. Alan had positive relationships with his own head teacher and it was her support that had encouraged him to embark on the National Professional Qualification for Headship (NPQH).

Alan was excited to embark on his first headship, which was in an area transitioning from three tier to two tier education, and meant that he would oversee the shift from a First School to a Primary School system. For the first two years he was leading the existing first school, along with the appointment of a staff team for the new primary school, while overseeing the construction of a school building.

**I got the headship. I started, and obviously I had to be involved in everyone reapplying for their jobs again...Then the roller coaster ride here over the next few years, was the build up to preparation for the action on site, and working with architects and all of that, so we had lots of consultation with the staff about what they wanted on a wish list and things.**

A change of government meant that Alan's careful planning and his vision for a new school were unexpectedly quashed.

**And then everything got held up, because the local authority froze all of the new builds, because the Building Schools for the Future program was frozen by the [new] government. So they just stopped all movement.**

Following an intensely stressful period of negotiation during which the future of the school was unknown, the school was granted a reprieve, and the build was allowed to continue.

With the responsibility of an existing and a new school Alan found it increasingly difficult to relax, and as project manager for the new build he felt a responsibility to ensure that things were progressing throughout the summer months.

**Even on holidays my mind would always be somewhere else, and particularly when we were building up towards the new school build etc... I was taking phone calls on the campsite. I had to be contactable, because if I wasn't everything would've stopped until I was back after two weeks. And that wasn't something that I was prepared to let happen for the staff.**

During this period, one high point for Alan was his first Ofsted inspection as a head teacher, in which he felt his hard work was rewarded.

**Everybody was ready for it, the data was good, and we came out as a Good and Outstanding school. So it was a high to build on, alongside the constant up and downs of building a new school.**

Once the new school was up and running Alan had to take leave from school, as he recovered from undergoing hip surgery. During this period the chair of governors stepped down from his role, resulting in a new chair and a different leadership body. Alan immediately felt the relationship between him and the governing body change. Where he had previously felt supported he began to feel that all of his decisions were being questioned and undermined and he was constantly having to justify each decision with written reports and presenting relevant data.

**And things went wrong then. In one form or another, and I had...I had a breakdown really...And I had been under constant pressure from these new governors, and I felt that all I was doing was writing reports for them. I wasn't leading the school forward, I was generating reports. And I was being questioned on leadership etcetera.**

This turn in events marked a critical point in Alan's head ship. Where previously he had a clear vision for the school, the staff, and the pupils, he began to questioning his own ability to lead a school.

**And I got onto the carpark one Monday morning, and I just thought 'What am I doing? I don't even know why I'm here anymore. I'm not doing headship, I'm doing something else, but I don't know what that is.'**

The relentless pressures of headship had left Alan exhausted. His resilience was ebbing and his confidence receded. He began to question his role. His sense of identity, along with his commitment to the profession, was lost. Alan made the decision to leave the school.

**On reflection I was probably approaching burnout, because it had been such an intense period. But there hadn't been a slow regression, it was just BAM! And it just hit me. ...And then my whole identity had gone. Anyway, the trust had gone. And I decided that I could no longer work there.**

**I'd lost my faith in the teaching profession. I'd lost my own identity.**

### **Discussion**

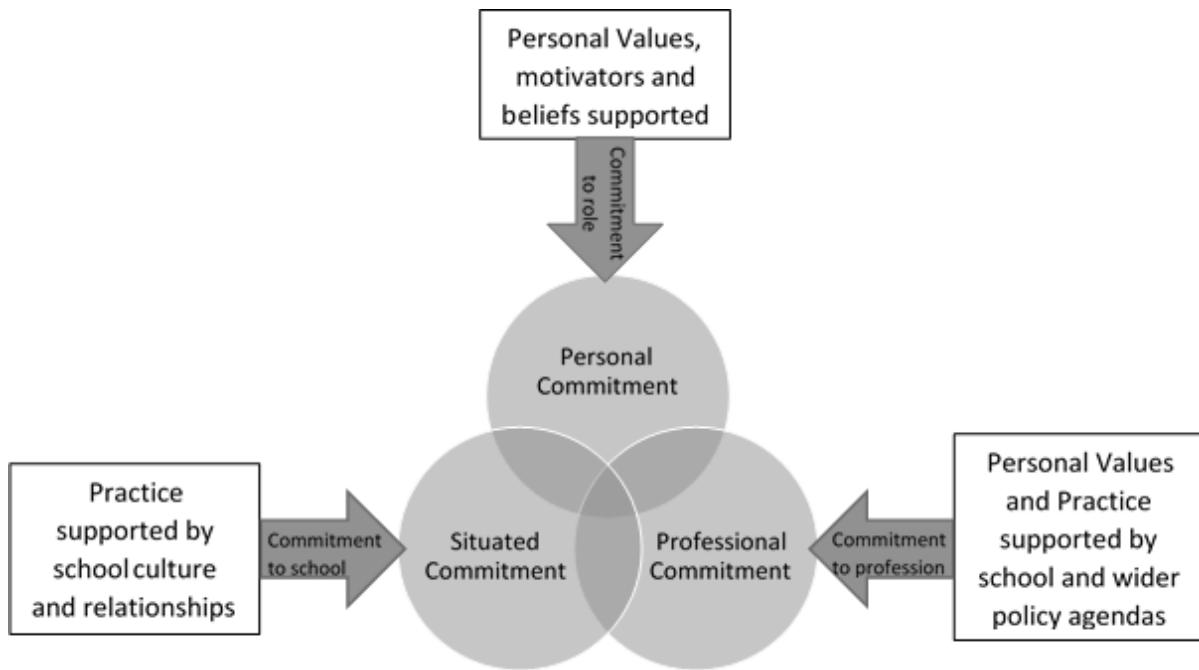
As an early career phase teacher, Anna was losing self-confidence due to constant negative feedback for the leadership team. The positive comments she had received during her university placements continued to motivate her to develop and become more effective in her practice. Anna decided to transfer to a different school, in the hope that she will receive the support and encouragement she needs, as she still feels committed to becoming a good teacher even though she is not committed to the school (situated commitment).

As an established and successful late career phase teacher, leading an existing first school, while having sole responsibility for the build of a new primary school, proved to be all consuming and the strain meant that Alan's resilience was low. When an overzealous governor began to undermine and question his leadership decisions he felt too exhausted to defend his actions against the constant criticism. He began to feel self-doubt, and to question the role he would play in his vision for the school. As a result he lost his professional identity, and along with it his commitment to the profession (professional commitment).

Katie still enjoys her work and wants to be the best she can be for the children she teaches. Working in her mid-career phase she considers the time she spends at home working to be essential if she wants to remain as an effective practitioner. Having no time to nurture the important relationships which Katie values outside of school means that being a teacher and having a family may not be sustainable long term. Although she is likely to remain in the profession in the foreseeable future she is losing her identity as an individual and her commitment to teaching is eroding (personal commitment).

The experience of these three teachers suggests that while it is important to consider the professional identity development of beginning teachers, it is equally important to recognise that, during times of challenge, established teachers working in mid and later career phases can also experience difficulties in sustaining a positive professional identity, which has a negative influence on their personal, situated or professional commitment (Figure 1).

Figure 1. Personal, Situated and Professional Commitment



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## **Biography**

My research interest stems from personal experience of working in many different schools, combined with a curiosity about human development and behaviour across a life span. It explores the development of a teachers' professional identity across a whole career, and its influence on commitment to teaching, within different school contexts.