

# Proceedings of the 2016 STORIES Conference

*i2i – Inquiry to Impact*



*Edited by Henriette L. Arndt, Stefania Gargioni,  
Anna-Maria Ramezanzadeh and Ashmita Randhawa*

Oxford: STORIES Conference

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Proceedings of the 2016 STORIES Conference: i2i – inquiry to impact  
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## *About the STORIES Conference*

STORIES (Students' Ongoing Research in Education Studies) is a conference for graduate students and early career researchers to discuss their ongoing research in education and education-related projects in other disciplines, such as linguistics, anthropology, social policy intervention, economics, and the wider social sciences. The conference is organised by graduate students and held annually at the Department of Education, University of Oxford. In 2016, the conference theme was 'i2i – inquiry to impact'. The participants were invited to reflect on the multi-faceted ways in which they create impact through their own research.

## *About the editors*

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# **The role of Private Further Education Colleges in the UK and their impact on international students' learning**

*Sushma Basnet, Brunel University London*

Britain has always attracted international students from all over the world. British universities are renowned for their excellence and high standards in delivering quality education in a diverse, creative and inviting environment. The purpose of this paper is to explore the relationship between international students' (Tier 4 students) approaches to the process of learning and the valuable contributions they make to the UK economy. It will also critically examine and evaluate the motives of international students, who come to the UK for their studies in private further education colleges and what strategies they employ to gain their objectives after completing their studies in line with the new immigration rules. Semi-structured interviews have been conducted with 23 international students who were recruited using the purposive sampling technique. Further data has been thematically analysed to give insights into the student's experiences.

## **Introduction**

Demand and expansion of higher education is growing rapidly around the world (Schofer and Meyer, 2005). Britain is no exception to this, with the number of university students increasing every year. The UK is the second most popular destination for international students, hosting 10.7 per cent of all international students worldwide in 2000 and 12.6 per cent in 2012 (Times Higher Education, 2012). The export earnings of higher education, including tuition fees and spending by international students have been estimated at £7.9 billion for 2009 with a projected growth of up to £16.9 billion by 2025 (Universities UK, 2012). International students are said to contribute up to £12.5 billion annually to the UK economy (Home Affairs Committee, 2011).

There is no doubt that Britain benefits from immigration. However, the growing concern over the number of migrants in the UK has become a political

and social issue that has prompted the government to propose changes to the way migration will be managed in the future (Achato, Eaton and Jones, 2010). The Points Based System (PBS), introduced by the previous Labour government in March 2009, was intended to address problems of ‘bogus’ colleges and students (The Home Affairs Committee Session, 2008-2009). In this system, non-EU, international students need a licensed sponsor to study in the UK and face many severe visa restrictions, such as stricter English language requirements, limitations on post study work (PSW) visas, restrictions on international students’ employment and their right to bring dependents into the country.

Private Further Education Colleges have been affected most by the introduction of this system, as they often did not comply with Home Office rules and regulations. They saw sponsored visa numbers drop by 46 per cent over the course of one year, while the overall number of sponsored visas issued via Higher Education Institutions (HEIs) actually rose by 5 per cent (Office for National Statistics, 2013). This has led to the closure of many private colleges while others, unable to recruit international students due to the new immigration rules have voluntarily shut down or gone into liquidation. These stringent immigration policies and new visa rules have also led to the damaging perception that the UK no longer welcomes international students (Lambert, 2012).

Against this background, the purpose of this paper is to critically evaluate and examine the impact of the UK government’s policy on non-EU international students studying in Private Further Education Colleges and the barriers and social implications which they face in light of these new policies.

## **Methodology**

This research used a qualitative research design, which may be said to provide a ‘better, enriched and more insightful’ approach to the topic of research under study (Green, 2005). Semi-structured interviews were conducted with 23 international students to find out how they have been affected by the aforementioned regulations while studying in British private further education colleges. They were recruited using the purposive sampling technique and the data was analysed using thematic analysis.

## **Preliminary Findings and Discussion**

From the data, the following themes and sub themes have emerged:

### ***Private Further Education (FE) colleges vs. Higher Education (HE) or Universities***

Most international students, especially those from developing countries, reported that they chose private further education colleges over universities mainly because of the comparably lower tuition fees. Another frequently cited reason was easy accessibility and provision of same standard and level of degree with similar infrastructure in private colleges as in universities:

‘One of the main reasons in choosing a private college over a university is its lower tuition fees. Another valid reason I think international students prefer private colleges is because the application procedure is less hectic and the entry requirements are tailored for international students... private institutions are aware of this fact and tailor their courses around this by offering extra modules in the course itself...’

However, one student expressed the view that his preference for private colleges was due to the cultural differences and adaptability which stood in contrast to what other students had to say:

‘When you are coming from the developing countries to the developed county like the UK, it takes time to adjust as we do not know the UK lifestyle and system. So if we come direct to UK private colleges then it will be easy for us to adjust to UK environment as there are already many students from our country or from similar culture studying there...it will be easy for us to understand and adjust UK education system and lifestyle. This way we will be more comfortable and develop our confidence level.’

### ***Barriers, choices and challenges international students face in the process of learning***

According to Evans and Stevenson (2011), the decision to study abroad often involves large personal, social, financial investments on the part of the student, their families and their employers. But the real concern for international students, according to the interviews, was the stringent immigration rules under the Points

Based System (PSB) introduced by the previous Labour government. Since the general election in 2010, the UK government has made a number of changes to student visas and the requirements on sponsoring institutions. This has adversely affected many international students, as many private colleges has been closed down either voluntarily or were shut down by the Home Office for not meeting the requirements. The closing of colleges during the middle of their studies has led to severe consequences for many students, as they were left with no support from the UK government:

‘...the government is taking action against all the students even the genuine ones who have to face so many problems for no fault of theirs but because of those few bogus ones. This is what UKBA is doing...but it is the genuine students who are facing problems as they have no idea what is going on and they cannot even raise their voice against the UKBA and prove them that they are genuine and as a result they are facing a lot of unnecessary immigration hassle and problem.’

Furthermore, immigration rules continue to change, making it difficult for the international students to abide by the rules. As one student points out:

‘...I came here in private institution and later change to some university... it is really difficult like you have to renew your visa and everything to continue your studies and the rules keep changing. You are not a lawyer that you can keep track of all these things unless you are studying law. So yeah, I mean it becomes really difficult when it comes to extending your stay or continuing your education it becomes really difficult.’

Thus, the government’s stringent and damaging visa policies are making Britain a ‘difficult and unattractive’ place to study for international students (Chartered Association of Business Schools, 2016). The Points Based System (PBS) may be an effective way to crack down bogus colleges, but as one student points out, it has severe, perhaps unintended, consequences for genuine students:

‘Yes, obviously the Points Based System is the best one to crack down bogus colleges and students in the present context... But on the other hand, most private colleges run only to make money in a short period of time and recruit students who are not genuine and have no progress

and because of them, genuine students whose intentions are to study and return back to their country with their qualification are affected as colleges are closing down and as such genuine students have to suffer.’

### ***Immigration and xenophobia***

There is no doubt that Britain benefits from immigration. International students contribute one-third of the total income of UK universities through their fees (Brown and Holloway, 2008), and it is estimated that by 2025 they will boost the UK economy by £26 billion (UKCISA, 2012). On the one hand, international students are treated as ‘cash-cows’ in order to boost UK economy and on the other hand, the government policies are so harsh that they leave very little room for many international students to gain valuable learning experiences. The data collected indicates that after the abolition of post study visa and tougher regulations on employment for during and after their study, they felt that they were treated very badly and that the government provided no support whatsoever when they had made such a huge contribution towards the UK economy. As one student notes:

‘At the moment, the UK government, um... I think because of the political situation they are very aggressive towards the international students and they are also saying that we are foreign criminals. So it is very harsh and negative attitude towards international students...which proves that international students are no longer welcomed or treated fairly these days in the UK’.

No doubt, the role of international students has always been crucial to UK universities and as such, the issues regarding immigration and international students should be treated fairly and carefully. The UK government may consider following the example of Australia and the US, where international students are removed from the calculations of net migration for policy purposes:

‘At the moment, they are not doing much because the thing is as I said earlier on they are just concentrating on cracking down bogus colleges and bogus students which is not helping.... I have to say that the UK government is not helping much with attracting the international students as they want to reduce the number of immigrants and want to cap so as to reach their target as per their election manifesto....’

## Conclusion

The preliminary results discussed above show how international students from developing countries perceive their learning experiences and the challenges with regard to immigration regulations while studying at UK private further education colleges. The research is still on-going and the final findings will be linked to the existing literature. Ideally, the government should review the long-term impact of the current visa regime on international student recruitment to the UK, as there is a need to work together to provide positive reinforcement for each other (Smith and Demjanenko, 2011). This, in turn, will encourage larger numbers of international students to study in the United Kingdom, which will benefit the country both economically and ideologically.

## About the Author

Sushma Basnet comes from Nepal and is a PhD student in her final year at Brunel University London working under the supervision of Prof Mike Watts and Prof Ian Rivers. Her areas of research interest are policy and practice, higher education, immigration, internationalisation and globalisation of education. She received her Master's Degree from Brunel University in 2009 and also holds a Master's degree in English Language and Literature from North Eastern Hill University (NEHU) Shillong, India and a Bachelor's Degree in Arts from St. Mary's College, Shillong, India.

Sushma began her career as a lecturer in a prestigious college in Nepal, after which she moved to the UK and began working as a senior administrator in the admissions of one of the private further education colleges in London. As a result of the time she spent there interacting with the international students, she developed an interest in student services and their role in UK. This motivated her to pursue her second Master's degree and her PhD.

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# **Smiles and challenges: Multi-dimensional perspectives of Thai post-graduate students in the UK**

*Angela M. Cleary, University of Birmingham*

The stereotypical image of smiling, passive Thai students masks the hidden depths of cultural conflict and academic challenges these students can encounter while studying in the West. This research was initiated in response to self-reporting by some academically gifted Thai students experiencing problems at their UK universities. Issues included stress related ailments, disappointing grades, illness and in serious cases having to return home without completing their studies. This study explores the influence of pedagogical and cultural backgrounds on the academic and social adaptation through data from four ethnographic case studies and 63 questionnaire respondents studying in the UK for a one-year Master's degree. An emergent theme of stereotype pervades the research areas of culture, language and pedagogy and challenges Geert Hofstede's (2013) essentialist portrayal of Thai national culture. Therein, this research emphasises the importance of recognising the individuality of international students and challenges assumptions about national identities. It augments existing research, and provides valuable pedagogic and cultural information for teachers and their Thai students.

## **Introduction**

Academically gifted Thai students studying abroad in the UK have self-reported experiencing a range of problems. Some requested deadline extensions because they were unable to complete their studies within the timescale, others experienced high levels of stress which affected their health or found the demands of the course and studying abroad very challenging. In some serious cases students did not complete their studies and returned home.

The present study aims to provide insight into challenges experienced by Thai students at UK universities in order to enable their teachers to better support

them during their studies. The following research questions emerged from the pilot study and self-reporting by students:

- How do Thai post-graduate students feel about their proficiency in academic English while studying in UK?
- How do Thai post-graduate students feel about their pedagogical experiences while studying in UK?
- How do Thai post-graduate students experience cultural challenges while studying in UK?

## **Research Design**

The pilot study conducted for this research identified three key areas, which were major challenges for Thai students:

- Proficiency in Academic English
- Differences in Teaching and Learning styles
- Differences in Culture.

Triangulated qualitative and quantitative methods were employed during the main study:

- Bilingual questionnaires (n=63)
- Interviews throughout the year with the 4 case study participants
- Observation of lessons and personal reflections by the researcher
- Interviews with 9 university teachers after observed lessons
- Field notes and student seating plans
- Student self-reflective journals

### ***Case study participants***

The four volunteer participants (see Table 1) studied different subjects at three UK Russell group universities.

Most lecturers interviewed were foreign nationals from a range of countries including Portugal, Germany, North America, Italy, Austria and the Middle East, who provided varying perspectives on pedagogy and teaching Thai students.

*Table 1: Thai student case study participants*

<u>Pseudonym</u>	<u>Gender</u>	<u>Age</u>	<u>Faculty in UK</u>	<u>IELTS Score</u>
Abe	Male	23	Physics	6.5
Plum	Female	25	Law	7.0
Sid	Male	25	Finance	8.0
Wendy	Female	24	History	7.0

## **Results**

Stereotypic views emerged across each of the three major research themes of Language, Pedagogy and Culture, which are discussed in turn below.

### ***Stereotypic views of accented English***

Lecturers and Thai students mentioned accent as an important factor but from different perspectives. Some lecturers had difficulty understanding the accents of some students. An Italian lecturer also commented on the mixture of accented English in his faculty:

‘I’m sure that when you are confronted with a faculty that comes from so many different backgrounds, we have Italians, French we have erm people from really all over, teaching all subjects ... So you are combining ... many dirty accents.’ [Interview, Lecturer 5 Italian]

This view is supported by one of the case study students, Wendy, who comments:

‘One of my my my friends say that she does she didn’t understand the lecture because she the the her lecturer is not native speaker.’ [Wendy, Reflections Term 3]

Abe, another case study student comments on regional British accents, which he finds amusing:

‘...their (UK students) accent it’s something else it’s not your accent; it’s not BBC accent. Some some people are from West London ...I been to Manchester and I’m going into to the the department store and and it’s not open yet and the security walk walk to me and said ‘It’s shoot’ ‘what? Oh ok ok. It’s shut ok’ (laugh).’ [Abe, Reflections Term 3]

Both students rated a non-regional pronunciation as more acceptable however, none of the students commented on their own accented English. Lippi-Green comments on how people judge or stereotype others because of the way they speak.

‘... accent becomes both manner and means for exclusion...when people reject an accent they also reject the identity of the person speaking: his or her race, ethnic heritage, national origin, regional affiliation or economic class’ (Lippi-Green,1994, p.165).

Accents can marginalise or even exclude. They can act as identifiers of social or economic class and cultural heritage. They can also prejudice listeners. Rubin & Smith found that some students rated teachers lower if they had non-native accents.

‘[students]... need to be disabused of the stereotype that teachers who speak with non-native accents are necessarily going to be poor instructors’ (Rubin & Smith, 1990, p. 350).

Nomnian noted how Thai Master’s students in the UK favoured the stereotypic portrayal of standard English.

‘...it is imperative for Thai students to develop optimistic attitudes towards multilingualism and varieties of spoken English inside and outside the classroom’ (Nomnian, 2008, p. 34).

### ***Stereotypic representation of national culture***

The Thai students identified Asian students in their social group by their individual nationalities (e.g. Malaysian, Hong Kong Chinese) and grouped the others as stereotypic Westerners or Europeans. Western lecturers, however, identified Western students by nationality (e.g. German, Italian, American, etc.) and referred to the Asian students as a stereotypic group.

However, the situation is more nuanced, as exemplified during an interview with this Western researcher. Plum employs the stereotypic appearance of ‘black hair’ to describe fellow Asians:

‘At first er oh so many Asians (laughter), entire class ... oh my god I saw black hair everywhere but you know after two weeks it feels like it’s only me.’ [Plum, Interview. Term 1]

Wendy was upset at the perspective taken by her North American teacher in relation to the Vietnam war. She demonstrated a generalised cultural stereotypic viewpoint when describing the Western philosophy of intervention.

‘... because they are Western, they think in a Western way. They never think about another side ...’ [Wendy, Interview Term 1]

Abe was upset by the stereotypic representation of Thai national culture in a Western film about Thai kick-boxing:

‘You know, when the [Thai] culture came to international level it’s kind of fake; it’s not true and every, every people in that country [Thailand] will know that that’s not our culture.’ [Abe, Reflections Term 3]

Angela Reyes has previously commented that cultural stereotypes can be perpetuated through media, concluding also that it is the responsibility of writers and film producers to represent national cultures in an authentic manner.

‘...stereotypes can circulate through various popular media, such as film, television...which can perpetuate the distribution of value’ (Reyes, 2009, p. 57).

Meanwhile, Brown noted that:

‘Thai students were seen [by other international students] to be the most entrenched and unapproachable’. (Brown, 2009, p. 187).

A comment by Sid challenges Brown’s findings and opens the area for further research:

‘...this term we had to ... select our own [work] groups and then somebody ...approached me ... and ask me if I wanted to join him. So I think erm well it’s not that big a deal but then I I still felt erm quite good about it ... so I’m not that bad to work with (laugh) after all!’ [Sid, Reflections Term 3]

Abe's observation also challenges Brown's findings:

'Chinese have this problem as well; they group, they clustering with their own Chinese people nationality and er people er that that usually come together is European because they they have same cultural.'  
[Abe, Reflections Term 3]

Reyes commented on how stereotypes can be an advantage to minority groups:

'...positioning the self and other...is part and parcel of how stereotypes are used to resist oppression and celebrate identities ...invoking the Asian stereotype foregrounds the potential for inhabiting this stereotype' (Reyes, 2009, p. 53).

She explains further:

'...using the idea of stereotype as resource' it is interesting '...how people re-appropriate stereotypes of their ethnic grouping as a means through which to position themselves and others in socially meaningful ways' (Reyes, 2009, p. 44).

Thus, by 'inhabiting the stereotype', individuals from ethnic minority groups can position themselves as members of a larger group which can provide strength and identity. However, Spreckels and Kotthoff warn against the dangers of stereotyping:

'...we must categorize in order to make the world understandable, for categorization means simplification...it is precisely in this simplification that we find a danger of stereotyping and thereby as a consequence the danger of developing prejudices' (Spreckels & Kotthoff, 2009, p. 422).

### ***Stereotypic behaviour in the classroom***

Some lecturers generalised classroom behaviour according to national identities:

'Thai students are very quiet and it is difficult to know if they understand anything. Students from the US talk anyway and tend not to be embarrassed speaking in public. Students who respond the best in lectures tend to come from the UK, India and Germany.'  
[Lecturer 9, Punjabi / Sid]

Thai students in this study also employed stereotypic national descriptions of their peers and their own behaviour as Thai nationals.

‘We [Thai] we are modest, quite modest compared to European... American people is very, very show off! They would ask question, a lot. Sometimes it makes sense, sometime it doesn’t. ... I do ask if I think it’s worthwhile’. [Abe, Reflections Term 3]

Challenging the stereotypic view that Thai students are reluctant to participate in class, Abe (above) comments that he will not ask a question in class unless he ‘...thinks it’s worthwhile’. Wendy (below), comments on the fast-paced lectures and explains that it takes time to process the second language (L2), which delays her response even though she knows the correct answer.

‘Sometime [I] have the answer when he ask but ... I need time to think about it but he’s already gone (laugh) when I want to say something.... I need time to understand the question and then to think. I cannot answer quickly like other student but some time I can answer.’ [Wendy, Interview Term 2]

## **Discussion**

This research illuminates areas of language, culture and pedagogy which negatively impact the wellbeing and academic progress of Thai students. Adapting to an intense one-year UK Master’s course puts pressure on the students. It may be possible to address these pressures and anxieties by considering the Thai students’ very different pedagogic background and culture.

Brown, comments that students sharing the same nationality, driven by ‘...shame and the desire to avoid anxiety, retreat from English-speaking scenarios into the comfort of the mono-ethnic ghetto’ (Brown, 2009, p. 188). The present research does not support this observation. Thai students appreciated the teacher integrating the nationalities by altering seating arrangements before embarking on group discussions. This strategy provided opportunities to share views with others and is compatible with the preference of some Thai students towards working in groups. Some Thai students modified their behaviour as the year progressed. Sid began the year by participating in a multi-national student football team and a rock band. However, as the terminal exams approached he joined a study group of South-East Asian students to share the workload and

benefit from the diverse academic strengths of the group members. Chalmers and Volet also observed that South-East Asian students in Australia, formed ‘informal study groups’ which provided opportunities to ‘clarify their understanding of tutorials and course work’ as well as ‘social and emotional support...previously supplied by their communities and families’ (Chalmers & Volet, 1997, p. 92). This is a different interpretation to the observations made by Brown, illustrating that superficial stereotypic behaviour should be investigated, to obtain a true and enlightened understanding of the underlying motivation.

Stereotype is nuanced and subtle. Reyes, Spreckles and Kotthoff illustrate its diverse and complex nature. Whether one embraces the positive stereotype of a co-cultural group who provide support or a sense of belonging or use stereotypic language as a descriptor of an unfamiliar culture or nation, they underline how distress and misunderstanding can be an unintended outcome.

## **Conclusion**

This research shows that both Thai students and their teachers have stereotypic images of unfamiliar ‘others’. UK universities may wish to address the challenges arising from this by:

- Actively monitoring Inclusion Policies and challenging stereotypic views of ‘others’ at UK universities.
- Implementing practical support for international students and teachers throughout the academic year e.g. pedagogic mentors to maintain high quality teaching and learning, more access for international students to supervisors and EFL support, extra time in examinations and extended deadlines for assessments.
- Considering a two-year Master’s course for International students studying more language-based subjects
- Reviewing syllabus content and identifying potentially controversial areas to present balanced arguments and provide opportunities to air differing viewpoints within a multi-national classroom
- Employing the teacher-led strategy of mixed discussion groups within the classroom to encourage intercultural communication and sharing ideas.

## About the Author

Angela Cleary has been a Senior Teacher for many years both in the state and independent secondary school sectors. As an Assistant Head Teacher she achieved the NPQH qualification with the National College for School Leadership. Working full-time she then completed an MEd in Bilingualism in Education at the University of Birmingham and is currently a PhD student with the School of Education at the University of Birmingham.

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# Concrete tools for behaviour change: How to motivate pro-environmental behaviour

*Franziska J. Golenhofen, Amsterdam University College*

Raising environmental awareness and ensuring that it translates into tangible action is one of the largest tasks of the 21st century. Overall, problem solving effectiveness is key and should be contributed to by all relevant actors. The purpose of this study was to provide real-life applicable insights and recommendations on how to promote pro-environmental behaviour (PEB) through the application of specific tools for behavioural change. A review of transdisciplinary research served as a primary basis for the present study, which proposes that concrete tools make it easier for organisations and individuals alike to motivate and educate more dedicated, effective, environmentally committed change-makers. The goal was to inform individuals on how to facilitate breakthrough change by understanding what drives people and how individuals can be motivated towards action.

## Introduction

‘Of all the social issues that face us in this millennium, the most daunting are environmental problems’ (Zelezny & Schultz, 2000, p. 365). A major study (Rockstrom, Steffen, Noone et al., 2009) found that three out of nine of earth’s planetary boundaries (loss of biodiversity, climate change and effects on the nitrogen cycle) have already been exceeded, and crossing such biophysical thresholds could have disastrous consequences (Rockstrom et. al, 2009). With the profound impact of humans on the planet being ‘hard to deny’, an article published in *Nature* has even discussed whether we are entering a new epoch characterised by the human effects on the environment – the ‘Anthropocene’ (Jones, 2011).

Zelezny & Schulz (2000) argue that ‘the changes that are required to solve our environmental crisis involve changes in individual behaviour’ (p. 366). Rooted in human behaviour (cf. Gardner & Stern, 2002; Koger & Winter, 2004), environmental problems ‘can be managed by changing the relevant behaviours so as to promote environmental quality’ (Steg et. al, 2014, p. 104). Fatalism, the

idea that no action—individual or collective—could make a difference, is a significant barrier to any attempts to increase pro-environmental behaviour, and thus needs to be addressed by individuals who want to motivate such behaviour more effectively. The field of environmental psychology reflects a growing interest in the question of how to promote pro-environmental behaviour (for meta-reviews and meta-analyses, see Steg. et al, 2014; Osbaldiston & Schott, 2012; Kollmuss & Agyeman, 2010; Meinhold & Markus, 2005; Nolan et. Al, 2008; Stern, 2000). The insights thus deserve some attention in the unified efforts to mitigate environmental damages.

Pro-environmental behaviour refers to any human behaviour that tries to harm the environment as little as possible, or to benefit it (Steg & Vleg, 2009). Stern (2000) lists three major types of environmentally significant behaviours:

1. Environmentalism and non-activist public sphere behaviours, such as environmental citizenship and policy support.
2. Private-sphere environmentalism, referring to behaviours related to household, lifestyle, and consumer choices.
3. Other behaviours which can affect organizational decisions, such as decisions made by individuals in the workplace.

The bachelor thesis which forms the basis for the present article focused on providing concrete recommendations and practical *dos* and *don'ts* for promoting pro-environmental behaviour (PEB) by reviewing the current literature on this topic. It was concluded that individual action to address environmental problems is necessary, but that there is no 'silver bullet' for transforming poor environmental behaviour into pro-environmental behaviour (Babcock, 2009). Rather, some tools work better in some situations than others. Overall, this paper contains both a plea and a practical toolkit for individuals to actively create the change they want to see in this world. For now, more than ever, people need to live more in line with the boundaries posed by the natural environment (cf. Gifford, 2011; McKibben in King & McCarthy, 2003).

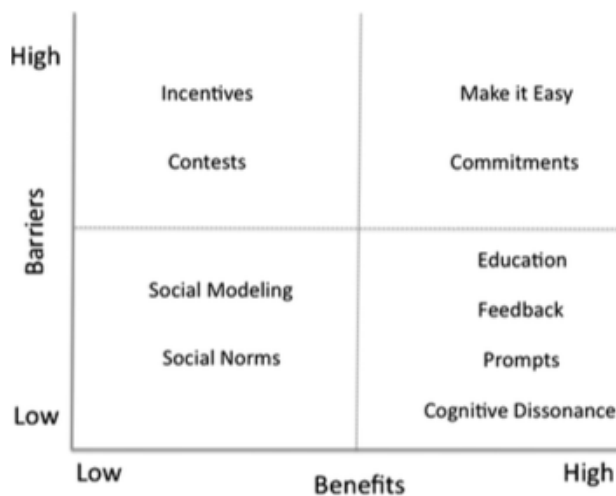
## Lessons and recommendations: The dos and don'ts of promoting pro-environmental behaviour

The focus of this section will be to explain and expand the conceptual framework for behaviour change tools created by Schultz (2014), which matches tools of behaviour change with different degrees of motivation and specific behaviours.

A short literature review shows that there are many different approaches to promoting PEB (Vining & Ebreo's 2002; Zelezny & Schultz, 2000; Stern, 2000; Ajzen, 1991; Steg & Vleg, 2009; Osbaldiston & Schott, 2012, Kollmuss & Agyeman, 2010). The most important insights were taken into consideration here, while avoiding complex, daunting and frankly less applicable models.

Figure 1 illustrates conditions under which various behaviour change tools work best, taking situational factors into account:

*Figure 1: Benefits and barriers to behavioural change tools (Schultz, 2014)*



When perceived barriers are high and benefits are low, individuals generally have low levels of motivation to take on a behaviour. When benefits are high, and barriers low, individuals are more likely to be motivated. When a target behaviour is relatively difficult and there are few perceived benefits, individuals will also usually have lower levels of motivation. Thus, the above schema can be understood easily by equating the boxes to the left with low levels of motivation, and those to the right with higher levels. Boundary conditions help to identify

when each tool<sup>1</sup> is the most effective, such as the ‘characteristics of a behaviour’ (e.g. barriers) and the target population (e.g. a variety of perceived benefits to the individual) (Schultz, 2014, p. 108).

### ***Low benefits and low barriers***

Social norms are important for allowing people to judge ‘how easy and beneficial the performance of a specific behavioural option would be’ (Bamberg, Moser, 2010, p. 22). Normative social influence, social comparison, and social learning are the most relevant when there is little motivation or few barriers to act pro-environmentally. When people perceive few benefits and few barriers for a PEB, they are not likely to take on the required effort, so the main target should be to use behaviour change tools to increase motivation (Schultz, 2014). *Social learning* is a useful tool when trying to promote PEB: a meta-review by Osbaldiston & Schott found that social learning was among the three ‘most effective’ behaviour change tools, with only *targeting cognitive dissonance* and *goal setting* being more effective (Osbaldiston & Schott, 2012: p. 279). Social learning is, however, context dependent: Kennedy (2010), for example, found that littering was more common in parks that were already dirty than in clean public spaces.

### ***Low benefits and high barriers***

The most challenging situation arises when there are few benefits to a behaviour and engaging in it is difficult. Most people will not attempt to take on such a PEB because there is little motivation or incentive to do so (Schultz, 2014). However, through the power of the masses, such behaviours may create an overall true benefit, which might not be noticeable as a result of individual efforts alone. In this case, an effective approach may be to increase the perceived benefits of a behaviour change. This may be done through the use of incentives and competitions. Public investments make sense in this scenario as it is the perceived benefits that are low, but the true benefits are much higher.

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<sup>1</sup> More information on each tool and practical considerations can be found on the website for Community Based Social Marketing (McKenzie-Mohr, 2016).

### ***High benefits and low barriers***

When the target behaviour has high perceived benefits and is relatively easy, individuals will be easier to motivate—for example using education, feedback, prompts, and by appealing to cognitive dissonance (Schultz, 2014). The latter aims to reduce the gap between conflicting cognitions and behaviour by bringing it to the individuals' awareness (Vining & Ebreo, 2002). Using prompts, priming, and feedback works best as a behaviour change tool when individuals already have a high level of motivation to take on a PEB (Schultz, 2010). One of the most common approaches to PEBs is the use of education, but it is mixed in terms of its effectiveness and by no means as effective as often believed (Kennedy, 2010; Schultz, 2014; Bodansky, 2011). Education here means increasing awareness about an issue or disseminating relevant information. Information tends to lead to higher knowledge levels, but does not necessarily lead to changes in behaviour (Abrahamse, Steg & Rothengatter, 2005; *ibid*, 2007). Although problem awareness does not always directly translate into pro-environmental behaviour, it can increase the probability that ideologies such as ecological citizenship are adopted. Education is thus highly valuable for shaping problem awareness and moral considerations.

### ***High benefits and high barriers***

When the target behaviour has high perceived benefits but also high barriers, individuals will be most effectively motivated using tools that try to reduce the perceived barriers (Schultz, 2014). The most effective tools make the PEB appear easy and ask for public commitments. One of the basic insights from environmental psychology is that 'context matters' (Gärling, 2014). For example, when structural changes in the environment which would make PEB easier are not feasible, research has shown that verbal pledges have the most promising effect on promoting PEB, especially when verbal commitments are made publicly and with the intention for long-term behaviour change (McKenzie-Mohr & Smith, 2011). For example, Pallak et al. (1984) found that public commitments to reduce energy consumption in Iowa led to a 10-20% decrease in energy consumption, while there was no decrease noted for individuals who made private pledges at home.

## Conclusion

*'The secret of change is to focus all your energy, not on fighting the old, but on building the new' – Socrates*

The objective of this paper was to review how to motivate pro-environmental behaviour through the use of concrete behaviour change tools. The focus on concrete behavioural tools was chosen to avoid complex, daunting models that carry little real-life applicability.

These tools serve as a recommendation to communities (governments, schools etc.) for how to incentivise certain behaviours in individuals. When barriers and benefits are low, the main target should be to use behavioural tools that increase motivation. Using social norms, social pressure, and social modelling can be highly effective, as individuals generally want to comply with social standards. When there are low benefits and high barriers, monetary incentives and competitions can be used, which work best for individuals with low levels of motivation. In cases where there are high benefits and low barriers, the most effective behaviour change tools are education, feedback, prompts, and raising awareness of cognitive dissonance. Finally, when benefits and barriers are high, the most effective tools try to reduce barriers, allowing already motivated individuals to act more easily.

These findings imply that it is possible for organisations and individuals to motivate and educate more dedicated, effective, environmentally committed change-makers. Future research may want to focus on discovering which changes to individuals' direct environment lead to the largest increases in PEB (cf. Kaiser, Midden, & Cervinka, 2008, p. 170). Notwithstanding, the most important message that the author wishes to convey is that action should not be postponed to wait for further research, but that current findings should be implemented promptly and by all relevant actors, for environmental problems truly are the most daunting social issues of the 21<sup>st</sup> century.

## About the Author

Franziska J. Golenhofen holds a BA (Hons) degree in Liberal Arts and Sciences from Amsterdam University College. While studying at the University of British Columbia (Canada) and working at THINK School of Creative Leadership (Netherlands), she developed an interest in researching how to make the process of tackling societal challenges (in environment and mindsets) tangible and achievable.

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# Public engagement in a sociolinguistic study on diasporic education: A Birmingham case

*Jing Huang, University of Birmingham*

This paper discusses *public engagement* in a sociolinguistic study on Chinese migration and multilingual education within the city of Birmingham. The research investigates Chinese adult migrants' multilingual practices within and around a large Birmingham Chinese complementary school (CCS), focusing on the changing constructions of ideology and identity in the diasporic educational context. The study applies dialogical, indexical, and historical perspectives from heteroglossia (Bakhtin, 1981a; 1981b; 1986) to document and interpret the impact of globalisation on the changing structure of Birmingham Chinese diaspora, the shifting dynamic in English-Chinese bilingualism, and the intra-Chinese diversity in transnational contexts. In the process of conducting the research, ethnographic researcher's reflexivity in researching sociolinguistics has proved to be very helpful for establishing different scopes of public engagement. The researcher has contributed to various domains and levels of public work for the Birmingham Chinese community, a large AHRC funded research project, and the UK-China comparison research symposium held by the Chinese embassy in London.

## The Study

This research is a sociolinguistic study with a critical ethnographic approach in a large Chinese complementary school (CCS) in Birmingham, England. Viewing 'multilingualism not simply as a product of migration but as a critical part of the process of constructing the diaspora discourses and identities' (Li, 2016, p. 1), this study investigates the local multilingual practices of teachers and other adult participants within and around the CCS, focusing on how changing constructions of ideology and identity are being reflected in local multilingual practices. Rooted in the interpretative tradition, this research takes an epistemological stance of seeing Chinese diaspora and the CCS in globalisation as intrinsically

‘heteroglossic’ (Bakhtin, 1981a; 1981b; 1986) with both internally and externally evolving complexity. To investigate this heteroglossia in the CCS context, Linguistic Ethnography (LE) with the emic/etic dialectic has been adopted as the research methodology to collect and analyse data. Research questions for the study are: (1) What language ideologies are constructed, negotiated, and developed by the adult participants in the Chinese complementary school? (2) How do Chinese language teachers perform and negotiate their professional identities in complementary school teaching practices? (3) How do local multilingual practices reflect the ethnic identification of ‘*Chineseness*’ in and around the Chinese complementary school? This essay focuses on discussing public engagement in the study on the following three aspects: a) the researcher’s voice in the local community; b) mediating the local neighbourhood and the academia; c) contribution to the UK-China transnational communication.

## **Research Context**

Complementary schools have a long history in Britain (Creese & Martin, 2006; Li, 2006; Francis, Archer & Mau, 2010). Initially, they were formed by the Black and Muslim communities to maintain their heritage languages, cultures, religions, and to aid in tackling racism in the 1950s and 1960s (Li, 2006; Francis, Archer & Mau, 2010; Li, 2011). These schools usually have been established as a result of anxieties over the potential loss of community languages and cultural knowledge over generations (Lytra & Martin, 2010). As a supplement to mainstream education, these community-based language and culture schools usually run sessions outside the hours of mainstream schools (e.g. a few hours on a weekend morning or afternoon), contributing both to heritage language and culture educational achievements of students coming from minority communities, and to the negotiation of their ethnic identity (Creese & Martin, 2006; Creese et al. 2006; Archer & Francis, 2007; Li & Wu, 2009; Blackledge & Creese, 2010). They serve as important educational sites for the acquisition of minority linguistic, cultural, and literacy knowledge; as well as unique social spaces for minority ethnic identification.

The Chinese Complementary Schools (CCSs) form one group of these minority educational institutions with all of the above characteristics. Even though in recent years some of the big CCSs have received support from the home country (e.g. free textbooks) and the local government (e.g. registration as charity

for tax exemption), on the whole there still is a lack of awareness of these schools with both mainstream school educators and the general public. For historical and political reasons (see Lytra & Martin, 2010; Archer, Francis & Mau, 2010; Benton & Gomez, 2014; Li, 2016 for recent discussions), most of the early CCSs in the UK were originally set up with only Cantonese Chinese (as one of the most influential dialects with speakers mainly live in the South-eastern Province called Guangdong and the Hong Kong Special administrative Region in China) being the target Chinese variety (Li, 2006, 2013). Nevertheless, in the last two decades, because of the economic growth in Mainland China and the increasing population of Chinese immigrants from Mainland China to Britain, Putonghua (which literally means ‘common speech’ - the standard official language in P. R. China, and in many discussions is replaced by another term, Mandarin, for the same variety) has become the major target variety in most of the Chinese complementary schools, especially in the new CCSs established during the last two decades.

Because Putonghua is fast gaining currency in Chinese diasporas and CCSs, new issues about the complexities of different modalities in teaching Chinese in CCSs are raised (Li, 2013). Many early-established Cantonese-dominant CCSs have switched their institutional language from Cantonese to Putonghua in over the past ten to fifteen years. Due to this language shift, new norms of CCS practices are being generated. For example, the ideology of teaching Chinese for ‘pride’ (e.g. heritage maintenance and the enhancement of cultural identity) is interweaved with another ideology of teaching Chinese for ‘profit’ (e.g. better oral communication with Chinese-speaking-only friends and relatives, a higher score in the GCSE examination, or an opportunity of getting a job with good payment in China), forming a complex ideological ecology in the CCS context. Also the dynamic coexistence of a ‘Chinese-only’ pedagogy and a flexible use of all bi/multilingual resources in teaching and learning are also part and parcel of the complexity in the CCS context. Furthermore, recent research and discussions (e.g. Archer, Francis & Mau, 2010; Lytra & Martin, 2010; Li & Zhu, 2013a; 2013b) also suggest that CCSs are not only just educational and socialising spaces, but also politically important. Li (2006; 2013), for instance, states that the Chinese school community in England is constantly evolving due to such factors as population make-up, social-political events and global markets changes.

## **Methodology**

Methodologically, the study is featured with ethnographic fieldwork and participant observations in and around a selected Birmingham CCS. The chosen CCS was established in 1964 by a leading member of the Birmingham Chinese community to teach a small number of children Cantonese. After three generations of development, it has developed into a large Chinese school with the longest history and the biggest enrolment of students in the West Midlands, England. At the time of my fieldwork during the 2013-2014 academic year, there were 394 registered students studying in 7 Cantonese classes and 18 Putonghua classes every Sunday afternoon from 1 to 3pm. The school is a dynamic social ecology within which four language varieties (English, Chinese Putonghua, Chinese Cantonese, and Chinese Hakka) are used among different generations and groups of Chinese migrants, negotiating all kinds of social meanings. The data collection procedure of the study compounded 10 months of fieldwork within the school, and a number of extended participant observations of the Birmingham Chinese community around and beyond the school. A dataset including field notes, audio-recorded classroom interactions, audio-recorded interview narratives, documentary and photographs was collected. Under an interpretative epistemology, data analysis of this study focused on adopting critically-informed ethnographic discourse analysis (Coplands & Creese, 2016) to capture and understand the small local semiotic (including linguistic) signs in relation to globalisation and diasporic shifting. Throughout the process of conducting the research, an on-going ethnographic reflexivity has strengthened the researcher's capability to cope with emergent dilemmas and to establish important public engagement.

## **Public Engagement in the Study**

With the emphasis on looking at the local signs globally in linguistic ethnography, the study underlines the cross-boundary connectedness of spaces and places under the globalising condition, such as linking the CCS, the city of Birmingham, the wider Chinese community in England, and the political and economic forces back in China. Public engagement at different levels and in various domains was established during and after the conduct of this research.

Provided next is a brief discussion on three aspects of the topic of public engagement:

- The researcher's voice in the local community
- Mediating the local neighbourhood and academia
- Contribution to UK-China transnational communication

### ***The researcher's voice in the local community***

In 2014 the researcher had been invited to take part in the Birmingham Chinese community's meetings on 'Creating a new Chinese voice in the West Midlands', to join a group of 17 leading Chinese migrants from a wide variety of backgrounds and social statuses for discussions on the new image and voice of Chinese migrants in the West Midlands. Together with voices from Chinatown business people, educators, heritage maintainers and political figures, the researcher's perspective on the meetings provided another voice from the academic domain, which was valued as an important part of the Chinese voice in the diverse Chinese diasporic context.

### ***Mediating local neighbourhood and academia***

With her expertise on the Chinese diasporic community in Birmingham and the transnational connections generated from the local diaspora, the researcher was also invited to take part in a large AHRC granted research project ([www.birmingham.ac.uk/generic/tlang/index.aspx](http://www.birmingham.ac.uk/generic/tlang/index.aspx)) as a local advisor for the Birmingham case. In the role of local advisor, the researcher contributed to mediating between the research project and the Birmingham Chinese neighbourhood. The researcher provided the research team with knowledge on the local China town, the intra-complexity of Birmingham Chinese community, also introduced potential research participants to the project. At the local advisor meetings the researcher gave comments on the progress of the research project and took part in discussions on the research data. In addition, the researcher's knowledge and experience on cross-boundary communication also brought her the opportunity to work for the University of Birmingham's CLAD project as a student researcher. She conducted interviews and data analysis for the project, providing an important account on the transition experiences of Chinese undergraduate students in the University of Birmingham and the city.

### ***Contributing to UK-China transnational communication***

Apart from public engagement in the local community and the city, the researcher has also contributed to a symposium held by the Chinese embassy in London calling for comparison studies and discussions on British and Chinese educational systems. The researcher was invited to the London Chinese embassy for a discussion on China-UK educational communication and exchange, providing critical reports for advising its further development. In April 2016, the researcher was awarded a first prize by the London Chinese embassy for an earlier essay she wrote for the symposium. The event opened up transnational discussions on the British and Chinese educational practices with instructional knowledge and information generated to inform further policy making in China's education reform.

### **Conclusion**

During the process of undertaking this doctoral research, the researcher has witnessed and experienced the opening of a new era for applied linguists with interests in global mobility and migration settlement to further extend academia to practice for public engagement and wider benefits. Her engagement with various levels of public sectors has not only reinforced the data collection and analysis procedure of this research on language ideology and identity in a superdiverse migration context, but also made expertise and knowledge from academic research transformative in public discussions and practices. This public engagement comes into light as an important component in the discussion on teaching and learning Chinese as a minority language in England.

### **About the Author**

Dr. Jing Huang has recently completed her funded doctorate research on educational multilingualism at the School of Education, University of Birmingham. Before her PhD study, Jing has worked as a college-level English tutor and a Chinese language tutor in China and England. From 2014 to 2016, Jing also worked as a part-time project researcher and a local advisor for two different research projects in the University of Birmingham. Jing's research interests cover the areas of linguistic anthropology, bi/multilingual education, migration identity and education, and intercultural communication.

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# **Students' perceptions of teacher effectiveness in rural Western China: An empirical mixed methods study**

*Dini Jiang, University of Bristol*

This paper presents the findings of an empirical study that explored the ways in which 15 year-old students at one junior secondary school perceive teacher effectiveness in rural Western China. A mixed methods approach was employed in the study by using a student questionnaire survey (first phase) and follow-up focus group interviews (second phase). All the Grade 9 students at the junior secondary school were surveyed and three semi-structured focus group interviews were conducted. The results identified 'Challenge' and 'Control' as key factors of effective teaching associated with teacher effectiveness in rural Western China. Factors of 'Control' and 'Captive' were most statistically significantly correlated with students' test results, and 'Captive' was complemented by the interview findings as an important factor. Evidence from the focus group interviews indicated that the perceptions of students within higher and lower achieving classes varied considerably.

## **Introduction**

In the last few decades, studies on teacher effectiveness have been considered a major research strand in the field of educational effectiveness. They are closely related to a wide range of research into effective teaching (Muijs et al., 2014; Coe et al., 2014), teaching effectiveness (Seidel & Shavelson, 2007), quality of teaching (van de Grift, 2007) and effective classroom practices (Day et al., 2008). One of the key rationales of researching teacher effectiveness is that the classroom effect is significantly higher than the school effect in predicting student learning outcomes (Kyriakides et al., 2000).

The main challenges of researching teacher effectiveness lie in how to define and measure this construct. Theoretically, the definition of teacher effectiveness is challenged. There is a need to adopt a broader definition that

emphasises both cognitive and non-cognitive outcomes (Ko & Sammons, 2013). Traditionally, teacher effectiveness research underlines effective teaching behaviours associated with students' cognitive outcomes, but arguably needs to include other factors in relation to students' non-cognitive outcomes, such as creativity, critical thinking and problem solving (Ko & Sammons, 2013). Methodologically, measuring teacher effectiveness is challenging. Mixed-method approaches (e.g. teacher or student surveys, student ratings, interviews, and classroom observations) are needed for more context-specific research (Muijs, 2006).

Alongside the traditional context of mainland Europe, it has been reported that between-school variances in developing countries are much larger than those in industrialised countries and that resource input factors appear to have a larger impact in developing countries (Scheerens, 2001). Research findings have also indicated that factors associated with community support, teacher supervision, textbooks and materials, facilities, school leadership, flexibility and autonomy, student assessments and examinations, school climate, and teaching/learning processes are cited most commonly in developing countries (Heneveld & Craig, 1996). Therefore, it can be argued that the field of teacher effectiveness research is complex and dynamic and that further research needs to be conducted in more new and emerging contexts (e.g. China, South America and Africa) (Thomas et al., 2015).

At this point in time, it is particularly crucial to understand teacher effectiveness and teachers' work in mainland China. The Chinese educational system has been undergoing major systematic reforms and teachers have had to stretch their professional capacity to satisfy the competing demands (Law, 2014; Lo et al., 2013; Thomas et al., 2012). Improving the quality of teaching and learning has been put forward as a national priority for the Chinese educational reform. The government document of *The Decision concerning the Deepening of Educational Reform and the Full-scale Promotion of Quality-oriented Education* has highlighted the importance of nurturing a high quality teaching force in China for national revival goals (Communist Party of China Central Committee & State Council, 1999). Another government document of *The Decision concerning Basic Education Reform and Development* has focused on the primary and secondary levels of education provision and has addressed how to further reform the teacher education system to produce more qualified primary and secondary

teachers (State Council, 2001). The Chinese Ministry of Education has also initiated national curriculum reform concerning course structures and standards and teacher training (Chinese Ministry of Education, 2001).

It is clear that improving teacher effectiveness in China has become a national policy priority. Research findings have indicated that the particular importance of equity, in relation to reducing east/west and urban/rural differences, needs to be emphasised in terms of understanding education quality in China (Thomas et al., 2012; Thomas et al., 2011). Schools designated as more effective will have teachers who exhibit more effective teaching practices than schools designated as less effective. Urban areas will have teachers who are more effective than schools from rural areas (Teddlie & Liu, 2008). Nevertheless, even though studies on teacher effectiveness (e.g. Teddlie & Liu, 2008; Peng et al., 2014; Miao et al., 2015) have begun to emerge in mainland China, the research in this field would still benefit from more systematic and robust evidence.

## Methodology

A mixed methods approach was employed in the study using a student questionnaire survey (first phase) and follow-up focus group interviews (second phase). The questionnaire was informed by the Tripod survey in the USA (Tripod Project, 2011), comprising seven headings called the Seven Cs (Care, Confer, Captivate, Clarify, Consolidate, Challenge and Control).

*Table 1: Tripod's 7Cs Framework of Effective Teaching (Tripod Project, 2011)*

Care	Show concern and commitment
Confer	Invite ideas and promote discussion
Captivate	Inspire curiosity and interest
Clarify	Cultivate understanding and overcome confusion
Consolidate	Integrate ideas and check for understanding
Challenge	Press for rigour and persistence
Control	Sustain order, respect, and focus

The Tripod student perceptions assessment is based upon classroom-level surveys developed by the Tripod Project for School Improvement (Ferguson, 2010). Each construct is supported by research in peer-reviewed publications that

have appeared in education books and journals over the past several decades and the logic of the conceptual model is validated by analysing responses from participating schools across twenty-five districts (Tripod Project, 2011).

The questions for the semi-structured focus group interviews were informed and designed on the basis of the questionnaire survey results. All the Grade 9 students (N=179) at the junior secondary school were surveyed and focus group interviews (N=3) were conducted. The data collected were analysed as follows:

- Means and standard deviations of students' responses to the questionnaire were used to identify key factors associated with teacher effectiveness in rural Western China.
- One-way ANOVA was used to compare the means of the factors associated with teacher effectiveness between higher achieving and lower achieving classes.
- Correlation coefficients were used to assess the strength of the linear relationship between the factors and students' test results.
- Thematic analyses were used to interpret the qualitative data.

## **Research Findings**

A mixed methods approach was employed in the study using a student questionnaire survey (first phase) and follow-up focus group interviews (second phase). The questionnaire was informed by the Tripod survey in the USA (Tripod Project, 2011), comprising seven headings called the Seven Cs (Care, Confer, Captivate, Clarify, Consolidate, Challenge and Control).

### ***Research Question 1: What are 15 year-old students' perceptions of teacher effectiveness at one junior secondary school in rural Western China?***

Evidence from the questionnaire survey indicates that all the Year 9 students' responses to each item were generally more positive than negative ( $M > 2.5$ ) and that students' positive responses are more related to the factors of 'Challenge' and 'Control'. Evidence from the focus group interviews indicates that 'Captivate' is perceived as the most important factor for effective teachers.

Table 2 shows the three questionnaire items with the highest and lowest mean and standard deviations.

*Table 2: Three items with the highest/lowest mean and standard deviations*

<u>Highest Mean</u>	<u>M</u>	<u>SD</u>	<u>n</u>
Item 20 (Challenge): My teacher wants us to use our thinking skills, not just memorise things.	4.06	1.03	160
Item 9 (Control): Students in class treat the teacher with respect.	3.85	1.09	155
Item 19 (Challenge): My teacher doesn't let people give up when the work gets hard.	3.79	1.15	161
<u>Lowest Mean</u>	<u>M</u>	<u>SD</u>	<u>n</u>
Item 6 (Control): Student behaviour in class makes the teacher angry.	2.71	1.05	158
Item 13 (Clarity): When s/he is teaching us, my teacher thinks we understand even when we don't.	2.71	1.31	161
Item 29 (Confer): Students get to decide how activities are done in class.	2.21	1.11	156
<u>Highest Standard Deviation</u>	<u>M</u>	<u>SD</u>	<u>n</u>
Item 13 (Clarity): When s/he is teaching us, my teacher thinks we understand even when we don't.	2.71	1.31	161
Item 11 (Clarity): If you don't understand something, my teacher explains it another way.	3.51	1.30	160
Item 35 (Consolidate): We get helpful comments to let us know what we did wrong on assignments.	3.43	1.23	152
<u>Lowest Standard Deviation</u>	<u>M</u>	<u>SD</u>	<u>n</u>
Item 21 (Challenge): My teacher wants me to explain my answers—why I think what I think.	3.58	1.02	159
Item 23 (Challenge): We learn to correct our mistakes in class.	3.39	1.01	155
Item 34 (Consolidate): My teacher checks to make sure we understand what s/he is teaching us.	3.25	1.01	151

*Note: Students with missing data excluded*

Students' responses to 10 items (out of 36) of the questionnaire indicate that statistically significant differences (at the  $p < 0.05$  level) were found between higher and lower achieving classes in terms of their responses to each questionnaire item (see Table 3).

*Table 3: Items that indicate statistically significant differences between the three classes*

<u>Items</u>	<u>Class 1 vs.</u> <u>Class 2</u>	<u>Class 1 vs.</u> <u>Class 3</u>	<u>Class 2 vs.</u> <u>Class 3</u>
Item 6 (Control): Student behaviour in class makes the teacher angry.	Yes	Yes	—
Item 7 (Control): Student behaviour in class is a problem.	Yes	Yes	—
Item 9 (Control): Students in class treat the teacher with respect.	Yes	Yes	—
Item 10 (Control): Our class stays busy and doesn't waste time.	—	Yes	—
Item 22 (Challenge): We learn a lot almost every day in class.	—	Yes	—
Item 27 (Captivate): I like the ways we learn in class.	—	Yes	—
Item 28 (Confer): My teacher wants us to share our thoughts.	—	Yes	—
Item 29 (Confer): Students get to decide how activities are done in class.	—	—	Yes
Item 30 (Confer): My teacher gives us time to explain our ideas.	—	—	Yes
Item 31 (Confer): Students speak up and share their ideas about class work.	—	—	Yes

***Research Question 2: Which factors associated with teacher effectiveness are most statistically significantly correlated with the academic exam results of students? How do students perceive them?***

Evidence from the questionnaire survey indicates that the factors ‘Control’ and ‘Captivate’ are most statistically significantly correlated with the academic exam results of students (see Table 4). Items 10, 27 and 9 were statistically significantly positively correlated with students’ academic exam results (with Spearman correlation coefficient  $r$ -values of 0.252 for item 10, 0.211 for item 27 and 0.210 for item 9; significant at the  $p < 0.01$  level).

*Table 4: Correlations with the academic exam results of students*

<u>Rank</u>	<u>Items</u>	<u>Category</u>
1	Item 7: Student behaviour in class is a problem.	Control
2	Item 6: Student behaviour in class makes the teacher angry.	Control
3	Item 10: Our class stays busy and doesn't waste time.	Control
4	Item 27: I like the ways we learn in class.	Captivate
5	Item 9: Students in class treat the teacher with respect.	Control

Evidence from the focus group interviews indicates that ‘Captivate’ is perceived as the most important factor for effective teachers by focus group interviewees. As one student emphasised, ‘I think Captivate is the most important one as it can stimulate students’ interest in learning and make students more interested’. The evidence also indicates that the perceptions of students from higher and lower achieving classes vary considerably. With regard to item 10 (Our class stays busy and doesn't waste time), one student in class 1 said, ‘Our class is not *very* busy, but it is true that it doesn’t waste time...[and]...basically it is enriched, anyway’. One student in class 2 explained, ‘I would not say that we are busy. We are not busier than class 1. We are only busy when we have our English lessons’. One student in class 3 commented, ‘For some students, the class stays busy, but for some other students, the time has been totally wasted’.

## **Discussion and Conclusion**

In general, it can be concluded that teachers need to know how to challenge their students intellectually, manage the classroom appropriately and make their classes captivating. The results showed that ‘Challenge’ and ‘Control’ were identified as key factors of effective teaching associated with teacher effectiveness in rural China. Significant differences (at the  $p < 0.05$  level) were found amongst the three classes in students’ responses to 10 items (out of 36) of the questionnaire. Factors of ‘Control’ and ‘Captivate’ were most statistically significantly correlated with students’ test results, and ‘Captivate’ was complemented by the interview findings as an important factor. Evidence from the focus group interviews also indicated that the perceptions of students within

higher and lower achieving classes varied considerably. Nevertheless, with the recognition of the limited nature of the data in both scale and scope, this study only revealed some common understandings and concerns that arose spontaneously in the questionnaire survey and focus group interviews. All the understandings could be fed into future research.

## About the Author

Dini Jiang is a PhD student at the University of Bristol. His research interests include educational and teacher quality and school improvement. His PhD project of teacher professionalism and professional development in China is fully funded by the China Scholarship Council. Prior to his current studies, Dini taught English in a language school and also worked in an educational consultancy in China. Dini holds a master's degree in Educational Leadership, Policy and Development from the University of Bristol and a bachelor's degree in English from Chengdu University, China.

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# **Intercultural school development in Mexico City: How to deal with cultural diversity in public primary schools?**

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This research project focusses on interculturalisation processes within public primary schools in Mexico City. The qualitative analysis of expert interviews and participatory observations in schools is framed by Luhmanns' systems theory (1991), adapted by Fend (2008) in order to fit the research into the context of schools. The study demonstrates that successful intercultural development at the school level depends on concurrent interculturalisation processes concerned with the administrative, educational, political and legal system. Interculturalisation processes in Mexican multi-ethnic schools are evaluated by using the concept of intercultural school development designed by Karakaşoğlu et al. (2011) and based on Rolff's school development model (2010). The research aims to understand how actors within schools deal with cultural and linguistic diversity in their daily work. This article is an exploration of practices of intercultural pedagogy, and concludes by providing recommendations for educational staff.

## **Introduction**

In its second paragraph, the constitution of Mexico states that it considers the Mexican society to be pluricultural. This multi-ethnic reality is due to the 68 national ethnic minority groups living in the country, which speak 364 different sociolinguistic variations of indigenous languages (INALI, 2008, pp. 36-38). As a consequence of this linguistic variety, Mexico is ranked as the 6th most culturally diverse country worldwide (Lewis, 2009, table 1). In the 2010 census, 15.7 million or 14.9 % of Mexicans aged 3 years or older considered themselves indigenous (INEGI, 2013, p. 85).

In 2001, the Coordinación General de Educación Intercultural y Bilingüe (CGEIB), a sub-institution of the Secretary of Education, was established in order

to interculturalise the educational system (macro-level), its school district administrations (meso-level) and schools (micro-level) (CGEIB, 2015, 2014, pp. 8-9). CGEIB's aim is to achieve full compliance with human rights (UN, 1948) as well as with the cultural and linguistic rights of the national indigenous people (Mexican government, 2003). It also seeks to provide them with a so-called '4-A-education': an education that is available (free of charge), accessible (without exclusion and discrimination), acceptable (according to set minimum quality standards) and adaptable (to the cultures, languages and specific necessities of the children) (UN, 2006).

Such interculturalisation processes are needed especially in Mexico City where, due to recent migration, pupils from various different indigenous groups are now present in classrooms. In 2010, 5.2 % of the city's inhabitants aged 3 years or older self-identified as indigenous in the census (INEGI, 2013, p. 81). The Assembly of Indigenous Migrants of Mexico City even estimates that 11.3 % of its population are indigenous (Olivares Díaz, 2010, p. 299) Dealing with this new diversity and realising the interculturalisation processes that are now required is challenging for the actors within schools because many of them lack the necessary knowledge, competences, strategies and experiences.

This research project deals with the question of how interculturalisation is realised in public primary schools in Mexico City in order to deal with cultural and linguistic diversity. It also analyses the ways in which these interculturalisation processes depend on the conditions, structures and functionalities of the Mexican school district administrations as well as the broader educational system, which is regulated by educational policies and laws. The aim of the research is to analyse and explain schools' interculturalisation processes, to inductively generate hypotheses and to deduce recommendations for decision-makers in schools as well as at the administrative, political and legal level.

This paper will present parts of the research results, focusing on one of the four fields of intercultural school development, namely the intercultural pedagogic development. It shows how teachers attend to their culturally and linguistically diverse pupils on a micro-level in their classrooms in public primary schools located in Mexico City.

## **Methodological and Theoretical Framework**

The research employed a mixed method approach, consisting of an evaluation of empirical data collected in Mexico City including legal and political texts, statistics, participatory observations in 7 primary schools and 32 expert interviews with Mexican key actors in different fields of intercultural education such as educational politics, scientific research, school district administration, school leadership and pedagogic practice.

The evaluation of the empirical data was conducted according to procedures of a qualitative content analysis suggested by Mayring (2015). The analytical categories for this analysis are drawn from a theoretical framework that includes: a) Fend's School Theory (2008), based on Luhmann's Systems Theory (1991); and b) the concept of Intercultural School Development designed by Karakaşoğlu et al. (2011) and based on the School Development Model by Rolff (2010). The research findings arrived at by combining these theoretical approaches suggest that there are four areas in which schools undergo interculturalisation processes: the organisation, staffing, pedagogy and communication.

## **Results**

Since Mexico City is not among the 24 federal entities with an established parallel indigenous educational system (DGEI, 2009, p. 2), indigenous parents have to send their children to a public school that is part of the general educational system. In these schools, the indigenous population does not have access to a '4-A-education' adapted specifically to their culture and language. Instead, they have to adapt to an education that is exclusively designed for the culturally dominant group of mestizos, whose mother tongue is Spanish. As a consequence of experiencing exclusion, stigmatisation and vilification, the indigenous pupils who are originally based in or migrated to urban areas such as Mexico City tend to hide or deny their ethnicity and try to assimilate to the culture and language of the mestizos.

The interviewed political experts of the CGEIB state that a contextualised model of intercultural school development, individually designed and implemented by actors in each of the multi-ethnic public primary school in Mexico City, would support the equal participation of the indigenous people in educational processes. They also underline, the schools lack of awareness and

willingness to implement these practices. On the other hand, teachers argue that the national curriculum Acuerdo 592 (SEP, 2011) does not contain sufficient intercultural elements and that they do not have enough flexibility and knowledge about practical pedagogic strategies to enable interculturalisation of the curriculum and their teaching methods.

Currently, there are no systematic intercultural school development strategies modelled and realised in public primary schools in Mexico City. Nonetheless, some teachers have independently realised intercultural pedagogic interventions in their multi-ethnic classrooms. Examples of this practice are: the encouragement of indigenous language use, the interculturalisation of curricular elements, the application of intercultural didactic material, and the realisation of intercultural learning projects. More detailed examples of these practices will be given in the following sections of this paper.

To encourage the use of indigenous languages in the classroom, primary school teachers make the indigenous pupils experts of their languages and refer to them on a regular basis, by asking them to translate newly learned vocabulary or expressions from Spanish to their languages and to look for the correct spelling and pronunciation of these words. They also encourage them to explain the origin and meaning of certain words in their language to their Spanish speaking classmates, thereby continually enriching their individual vocabulary with indigenous words. Teachers also involve indigenous language assistants to support indigenous pupils in increasing their literacy in their mother tongue as well as in learning Spanish as their second language.

To interculturalise the curricular content, teachers raise awareness among pupils in their Spanish classes about the indigenous origins of words that are commonly used by the Spanish speaking mestizos. In art classes, they invite family members of the indigenous pupils or representatives of indigenous communities located in the schools' district to teach their pupils how to produce indigenous art and handicrafts. In music classes, they integrate songs in indigenous languages, as well as traditional instruments, which are used during musical rituals performed in indigenous communities.

To visualise the existing cultural and linguistic diversity of their country, primary school teachers located in Mexico City interdisciplinarily integrate didactic videos from an online channel called Ventana a mi Comunidad (2004-

2007). The videos show indigenous children who give an insight into their ways of life in their rural environments, by explaining the traditions and habits of their communities. This makes knowledge about indigenous culture accessible and fosters its appreciation. These short videos (between 2 and 10 minutes in length) are categorised according to the ethnic groups, the geographical locations and the different topics (i.e. food, clothes or celebrations).

Another intercultural teaching material is the nepohualtzintzin, which is a calculator developed by the Mayas. It is based on the vigesimal, a base-twenty numeral system. It is used in combination with a didactic manual (CGEIB, 2009) by math teachers to instruct Mexican pupils in solving the same assignment in a non-conventional manner. Calculating with the nepohualtzintzin helps pupils to understand that different numeric systems and calculating paradigms exist, and serve as well to train their creative thinking and mathematical problem solving skills.

Intercultural learning projects realised by teachers in multi-ethnic primary schools in Mexico City also include theatre plays about Mexican history, such as *la Leyenda de la Llorona*, replications of indigenous dances and ceremonies, and the preparation of an intercultural food buffet with pre-Hispanic dishes from different parts of Mexico. During an intercultural and interdisciplinary project month, pupils learn both individually and in small teams about freely chosen topics linked to cultural diversity. Teachers also encourage pupils to convert the school into an intercultural space by exposing the visual results of workshop sessions on cultural diversity in the hallways.

## **Discussion**

The results of this research on intercultural pedagogic development in multi-ethnic, public primary schools in Mexico City show that teachers already design and realise certain interventions. Numerous activities remain on the level of folklorising, in the sense of stereotypically displaying the Mexican indigenous cultures. Even though, these intercultural pedagogic measures foster the pupils' awareness of the existing cultural and linguistic diversity in their country. This sensitisation represents a first step in creating a positive, anti-discriminatory, inclusive and non-violent learning culture. It also helps to foster the equal access of indigenous pupils to a '4-A-education'. However, the aforementioned examples of intercultural pedagogic practices are singular cases. Their area-wide

application in all the schools that serve indigenous pupils still needs to be enabled and promoted at the administrative, educational, political and legal level that schools are structurally linked to and functionally dependent on.

## **Conclusion**

This research sought to show how cultural and linguistic diversity is attended by teachers in multi-ethnic classrooms of public primary schools in Mexico City.

The study suggests that actors within schools design, plan and realise these kinds of practical interventions in a more systematic and aligned way and integrate them into an overall intercultural school development concept with strategies that would not only address pedagogical models, but also organisation, staffing and communication. Such a concept would need to include on the one hand an agreement on the vision and aims in regards to dealing with cultural and linguistic diversity in school, and on the other hand indicators as well as a respective agenda for action. The effective realisation of interculturalisation strategies at the school level should be frequently evaluated by a monitoring system.

It would be helpful to establish an intercultural school development team that involves all staff at schools in the interculturalisation process. It should be accompanied both by a participative leadership model and the employment of indigenous language speakers as experts in these multi-ethnic schools in Mexico City.

## **About the Author**

Anne Julia Köster holds a B.A. in Cultural and Social Studies and an M.A. in Intercultural Communication Studies. She is currently a Ph.D. candidate at the European University Viadrina in Frankfurt (Oder). She has studied and researched in France, Argentina, New Zealand, India, Mexico, Germany and the USA. In cooperation with the Institute of Educational Research at the Veracruz University in Xalapa, Mexico she is conducting a comparative multi-level mixed method analysis on the changed influence of intercultural educational policies on pedagogic practice in primary schools in Mexico City between 2012 and 2016.

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# History teaching and literacy: A design-based research historical case study proposal

*Dale Martelli, Simon Fraser University*

The British Columbia K-12 (meaning both elementary and secondary) Social Studies curriculum has been redesigned to place inquiry in the core competencies. While strategies exist for teaching historical literacy, discipline-specific literacy tools are missing. Using a sequential application of action research and design-based research, this study will investigate one intervention that will be used to delineate a discipline-specific empirical-hermeneutic sequence of inquiry for interpreting primary and secondary historical sources assessed through a variety of methods. The anticipated contributions are both theoretical and practical. This study will offer teachers a tool to assist in the historical interpretation of primary and secondary sources, and a way to understand multiple methods of investigating historical evidence in increasingly complex, sophisticated ways.

## Introduction

Historical inquiry, especially the act of interpreting the traces of the past, presents a complex teaching challenge. In the 1970s, Denis Shemilt's evaluation of The Schools Council History 13-16 Project resonated with theorists across the western world and opened up the challenge of teaching history (Shemilt, 1980). Beginning in the 1990s, Peter Seixas developed a set of historical inquiry skills he termed the 'Big Six' (Seixas & Morton, 2013). These are essentially a useful packaging of what, for the most part, constitutes historical thinking: *historical significance, primary source evidence, continuity and change, cause and consequence, historical perspectives, and ethical dimensions*. Since 2012, the Ministry of Education, the British Columbia Teacher's Association, and the British Columbia Social Studies Teacher's Association have collaborated in the transformation of the provincial social studies curriculum based on the work of the Historical Thinking Project. The 'Big Six' became the basis for what the Ministry termed 'core competencies', which function as the primary drivers of the curriculum. In the course of delivering implementation workshops across the

province, the BCSSTA curriculum team relied on basic language arts literacy skills when connecting the competencies to content. What is missing are discipline-specific literacy methods or tools which need to be constructed to provide students with a way to really make sense of *doing* history.

Using a qualitative-dominant mixed-method approach involving a sequential application of action research and design-based research, this study will investigate a historical case study intervention that will be used to delineate a discipline-specific empirical-hermeneutic sequence of inquiry for the interpretation of primary and secondary historical sources assessed through interviews, questionnaires, classroom observations, and the Historical Accounts Survey (O'Neill, Kevin, Guloy, Sheryl, Sensoy, 2014).

## **Theoretical Background**

Since the 19th century creation of a distinct discipline of history, two methodological approaches have evolved: history as an empirical study, and history as a hermeneutic study. Outside of history, in various guises, there has been a philosophical debate about the meaning of doing history informed by the divide between analytical and phenomenological philosophical approaches and essentially aimed at the degree that historical interpretation has any claim to objectivity. Because it has been primarily a debate amongst philosophers of history, many practicing historians tended to ignore it. Only when an actual historian began sounding alarm bells about interpretation were historians quick to respond, denying the charge that any historical interpretation is inherently and primarily subjective (Carr, 1964; Elton, 2002; Evans, 1999; Jenkins, 1991). These accounts are important to relate because what this study is attempting to do is to construct a tool that will, in part, be informed by the debates in both trenches, critically selecting aspects of much of the theoretical wrangling and trying to synthesize these methodological and philosophical aspects, with the aim of helping students negotiate the act (or acts) of historical interpretation. This may mean multiple approaches given the complexity inherent in the notions of interpreting and explaining history (Gadamer, 1978; Pinar, 2004; Ricoeur, 1983; Rorty, Richard, Schneewind, J. B., and Skinner, 1984; Rorty, 1980; Slattery, 1995; Thomas & James, 2006).

## **The Intervention Instrument:**

## **Process Constructs as Mechanisms of Meaning**

The socio-linguist Alan Bell, in his work on Paul Ricoeur, presents an imaginative re-gluing of traces and phenomena as part and parcel of a relational critical: ‘The engaged and critical stance is a dimension of both the Interpretive Arc and of discourse analysis, as is ultimately a concern to warrant the interpretations we arrive at with the best textual evidence available’ (Bell, 2011, p. 560). This essence of the empirical hermeneutic is not directly related to any form of a scientific method. This method, at least in its historicist form, has its roots in the pragmatist theory of Charles Sanders Peirce and in the work of Fredrich Schleiermacher, Wilhelm Dilthey and others that has unfolded in Gadamer, Rorty, Davidson, and Ricoeur. In 2011, Bell restructured Ricoeur's methodological stages into six stages of an interpretive arc. The interpretive arc provides both the teacher and the historian with a detailed, philosophical grounded mechanism of meaning. In effect, the arc provides detailed steps to follow when seeking to uncover meaning in any sort of text, artifact, movement, or relation. This philosophical ground is, in effect, the basis for detailing historiographic literacy tools for the classroom.

## **Methodology**

Design-Based Research (DBR) is the overall context for this study's proposed research design. It has the virtues of pragmatic application and neatly echoes the empirical-hermeneutic frame of process constructs and the theoretical frame for historical interpretation that this study is attempting to construct. DBR is a mixed methods approach and as Burke Johnson, Onwuegbuize, and Turner concluded, ‘Mixed methods research (MMR) is an intellectual and practical synthesis based on qualitative and quantitative research’ (2007, p. 129). The four rationales for conducting MMR identified in Collins, Onwuegbuize, and Sutton (2006) of participant enrichment, instrument fidelity, treatment integrity, and significant enhancement provide the justification for each step of the proposed DBR model to be used in the proposed historical thinking research. The specific methodology that will be employed is a staged transition from Action Research to Design-Based Research that will be outlined by a qualitative-dominant mixed-method approach (Burke Johnson, et al., 2007, p. 124). The DBR will involve the implementation of a historical case study in 4 History 12 classrooms in 4 different schools involving approximately 120 students. The case study is based on

multiple interpretation of the dropping of the atomic bomb on Hiroshima and Nagasaki. The case study will explore the contrasting past and present perspectives, ethical dimensions, and causes and consequences using primary and secondary sources in a transliterative-critique format model that I have developed to guide student inquiry. This model consists of what I have termed “Process Constructs” and these literacy tools have been developed in collaboration with grade 10 philosophy students and grade 12 history students. Process constructs, as historical literacy tools, are designed to both guide student inquiry and provide a basis for student self-assessment (see Appendix).

### **Discussion of Anticipated Contributions**

There are two anticipated contributions. This study will reconfigure empirical-hermeneutics for historical interpretation. The hope and intent in this will be to bridge the objective standards of empirical methodology with Gadamer’s and Ricoeur’s refashioning of the hermeneutic nature of discourse. This study will also offer the field of teaching history a tool to delineate an empirical-hermeneutic approach for the historical interpretation of traces in the secondary school classroom. In history education, there is a clear lack of tools for teachers and students to use when working with source evidence. As the new social studies curriculum is now centered on historical inquiry, both teachers and students need tools to uncover meaning in the traces of the past.

### **About the Author**

Dale Martelli is a PhD student at Simon Fraser University, in Curriculum Theory and Implementation - Philosophy of Education, exploring the philosophy of history education. His work is focused on the philosophy of historical literacy, building history-specific literacy tools for both secondary and post-secondary students. As President of the British Columbia Social Studies Teacher's Association and the Department Head at Vancouver Technical Secondary, he currently teaches History, Philosophy, Economics, and Literature.

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## **Appendix: Historical Thinking Process Constructs**

### ***HISTORICAL SIGNIFICANCE: How do we decide what is important?***

1. Show how the event, people, or development had deep and abiding consequences.
2. Show how the event, people, or development sheds light on enduring or emerging issues in history and contemporary life.
3. Show how the event, people, or development constructs meaning for us.
4. Show how the event varies over time and over group(s).

### ***EVIDENCE: How do we ‘know’ what we know?***

1. Analyze/interpret primary sources based on historical context, accuracy, and bias (author’s purposes, values, worldview).

2. Provide a sophisticated analysis of points of view and usefulness of several primary sources.
3. Provide a breadth of primary sources (includes traces, relics, oral, or records) to construct an argument or narrative checked (corroborated) against other primary and/or secondary sources.

***CONTINUITY & CHANGE: How do we make sense of the complexity of historical narrative?***

1. Provide a sophisticated analysis of how some things continue and others change; show turning points, discontinuities, patterns.
2. Evaluate perceptions of progress and decline to the extent that if there might be positive and negative change “seen”, does either mean the same for all.
3. Provide an argument if there is or is not sufficient conditions to categorize events or developments as historical periods.

***CAUSE & CONSEQUENCE: Why do events happen, what are their impacts, and are there multiple accounts?***

1. Provide an analysis of the complexities and layers of multiple causes and consequences of historical events and issues both in the long and short terms.
2. Provide arguments why some causes might be more important than others.
3. Analyze to the degree events may result from the interplay of individuals or groups with the social, economic, political, intellectual, and cultural conditions.
4. Explain, if any, the unintended consequences of events.
5. Show how there may be multiple explanations of cause and consequences and that none of the events were necessary or inevitable.

***HISTORICAL PERSPECTIVES: How do we understand the beliefs, values, actions, and ideas of people in the past?***

1. Examine the social, cultural, intellectual, and emotional settings that shaped people’s lives and actions in the past.

2. Provide an account of the differences and similarities between the present and those in the past in the historical context without presentism; imposing contemporary ideas, beliefs, or values.
3. Provide sufficient evidence for inferring the perspectives of people in the past.
4. Examine the diversity in situational perspectives.

***ETHICAL DIMENSION: Can history help us to cope with contemporary issues?***

1. Examine the differences between our contemporary ethical milieu and the ethical standards of the historical period.
2. Assess the ethical implications that can inform us of responsibility to remember and respond to contributions, sacrifices, and injustices of the past.
3. Do not impose any anachronistic standards on the past. Provide well-supported ethical judgements based on the standards of the day when there was contemporary condemnation and/or an alternative courses of action (do not judge on the basis of hindsight).
4. Recognize the limitations of “lessons” from the past.

***Rating scale***

6	Exceeds expectations	Exemplary, coherent, and precise analysis and detail
5	Fully meets expectations	Proficient, coherent, and accurate analysis and detail
4	Meets expectations	Competent, fairly coherent, and appropriate analysis and detail
3	Meets minimal expectations	Adequate, minimally coherent, and simplistic analysis and detail
< 3	Does not meet expectations	Limited or deficient analysis and detail

# **An exploratory study of instructional practice in three Nigerian secondary schools, given student-centred recommendations in curriculum reform**

*Abi'odun Oyewole, University of Bristol*

Recent reforms of secondary education in Nigeria advocate for student-centred approaches in instructional practice (IP) (Awofala & Sopekan, 2013). Student-centred instruction (SCI) is defined as an approach, which reflects a shift from teacher-centred pedagogy, in which the learner becomes the centre of the learning process and creative methods are employed (Collins & O'Brien, 2011; Vavrus, Thomas, & Bartlett, 2011). However, increasing evidence of problematic implementation within developing countries reflects the need to be critical of SCI/learner-centred policy transfer (Schweisfurth, 2011). This study addresses an exposed lack of detailed research around education reforms in Nigeria by exploring the changes in IP since its implementation and stakeholders' dispositions towards IP. Qualitative data collection and analysis generated two themes: teachers' positioning as the expert and activity leader, and positive views of existing IP. These findings suggest that teacher and students' preferences have more influence on IP than the availability of resources.

## **Background**

Floating discourses around education in Nigeria have generated and sustained various notions about IP in secondary schools over the past decade. 'Floating discourses' is a cover term for research reports and opinion pieces that periodically assess and contribute to changes within the education system. The problem is that these discourses often comprise inadequate research and misconceptions transmitted by individuals deemed as 'experts' of the education system (Moja, 2000). Such problematic discourses have contributed to a number of trending notions about secondary education. Firstly, that existing IP in

secondary schools is teacher-centred in the sense that it denies opportunity for student engagement and activities in classroom learning (Akinbobola & Afolabi, 2010; Bimbola & Daniel, 2010). Secondly, that private schools are better placed to implement SCI by having small class sizes, more learning resources and constant teacher training (Adebayo, 2009; Akinsolu & Fadokun, 2009).

The first notion emerged through Nigeria's participation in world conferences and subscription to global agendas for education during the past decades (Chisholm & Leyendecker, 2008; Obioma & Ajagun, 2006). World conferences on education promoted SCI/learner-centred pedagogies within aims to improve the quality of education in developing countries (Vavrus et al., 2011). IP in Nigerian secondary schools was problematized in response to this trend, rather than via an in-depth analysis of current realities and context-relevant solutions. In other words, advocacy for SCI, within floating discourses, has been primarily informed by the desire to match international standards for education (Ahmadi & Lukman, 2015; Chimezie, 2011). The second notion emerged through the influence of national events on education in Nigeria. Especially the push for privatisation and decentralisation of public institutions through structural adjustment programmes in the 1990s (Anyanwu, 1992; Geo-Jaja, 2004). Advocacy for privatisation in floating discourses encouraged the view that private schools are better resourced and equipped to deliver quality education than most public schools (Agi, 2013; Omede, 2015).

Changes to the secondary school curriculum were introduced in 2011, and supposedly featured a 'learner-centred and competence-based approach to education' (Awofala & Sopekan, 2013, p. 102). This introduction of SCI was supposedly indicated by adding sections on performance objectives and students' activities to the syllabus of various subjects (Igbokwe, 2015; Omosewo & Akanmu, 2013). Overall, the aforementioned notions about IP and the highly reduced application of SCI, motivated attempts in this study to explore changes in, and influences on IP.

## **Methods**

This study was set within post-positivist and interpretive paradigms and adopted a qualitative approach to research design. Three secondary schools were purposively selected within a city in the south-west region of Nigeria. Lavender, the first school is a private school, funded and managed by a university. It is

located in an urban area, and has better resources compared to the two other schools. Cobalt, the second school is a public school, funded and managed by the state government. It is also located in an urban area but has poorer resources compared to Lavender. Jade, the third school is also a public school but is located in a very remote area. It has the least and poorest resources compared to Lavender and Cobalt.

Three participants were interviewed in each of the schools – the principal, vice principal and a civic education teacher. Civic education was chosen over other subjects, because it is compulsory and the syllabus supposedly provides more opportunities for SCI (Jekayinfa, Mofoluwawo, & Oladiran, 2011; Okobia, 2012). In Nigerian secondary schools, students are divided into three disciplines, the science students, social science students and arts students; each of these groups have their own classrooms (Omosewo & Akanmu, 2013). Lesson observations were conducted in the classrooms of science and social science students at each school, and the lessons were taught by the same civic education teacher. Six students were selected from each of the observed lessons and brought together in one focus group. This means that two focus groups were conducted in each school. The focus groups were conducted to save time and acquire a wide but collective range of views on IP (Mertens, 1998). The interviews and focus groups were also conducted in a semi-structured format to ensure that the main themes were covered while generating flexible responses (Stewart & Shamdasani, 1990).

## **Findings**

Thematic data analysis was conducted using the six phases of analysis as suggested by Braun and Clarke (2006). Findings revealed that the teacher was mainly positioned as the expert and activity leader in the classroom. Data analysis also indicated that both students and teachers had positive views about existing IP in their civic education lessons.

### ***Theme I: Teacher as the expert and activity leader in instructional practice***

Lesson observations revealed that there were relatively similar approaches to IP across the civic education lessons. All three teachers stated in their interviews that they were expected to follow the syllabus as strictly as possible. However,

none of the teachers covered the sections of recommended SCI activities during the observed lessons. Instead, most of the lesson was spent explaining subject content to the students and giving various examples. The teachers also asked questions repeatedly and gave comments on students' answers. Recitations were also prevalent; students completed their civic education teacher's statements and sometimes answered their teacher's questions in chorus. The following extract is taken from lesson observations in Jade:

9:05: Teacher continues to ask questions and the students participate in the recurring recitations.

9:09: Teacher shares his personal views on an issue, then cites an example.

9:13: Teacher asks another question. Students are still responding in chorus.

9:15: Teacher introduces a problem-solving question to the class.

9:16: Students respond in excitement.

9:17: A whole class discussion follows.

9:18: The class discussion continues.

In Lavender and Jade, the civic education teachers and students stated that recommended SCI activities like whole-class discussions, class presentations and drama were conducted in their lessons. However, the most frequent occurrence of these activities was confirmed in Jade. As illustrated in the extract above, whole-class discussions occurred for a few minutes during observed lessons in Jade. In Lavender, SCI activities occurred less frequently. Students in the focus groups noted that it was more typical for the teacher to explain subject content and ask questions during lessons. The following extract illustrates these views:

Researcher: Can you talk about when you are allowed to work on your own during a civic class?

F2<sup>2</sup>: Like drama?

...

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<sup>2</sup> Note that F refers to female students while M refers to male students

F3: I think the only time we work alone is during projects and tests, personal projects and tests. Then, that work together is just during drama and it's only once for the past presentation. It's only once that we've done that.

F1: Yes, it could be different for other classes like the arts class.

F3: And we are in science class, so just once. During our normal class, she will just come, explain and interact.

M1: It's just once in a while actually.

Even though the civic education teacher in Cobalt claimed that whole-class discussions and other activities were held frequently during lessons, her students disputed this claim. This suggested that Cobalt had the least frequent records of SCI activities in civic education lessons.

### ***Theme II: Positive views of existing instructional practice***

Most participants shared positive views about existing IP in their civic education lessons. All three teachers stated that they were content with the usual approach because it enabled them to achieve lesson objectives. Their students shared similarly positive views. During focus groups, students from Jade agreed that existing IP in their civic education lessons was adequate and satisfied their preferences for learning. They also highlighted the teacher's explanations and examples as efficient methods of teaching. The following extract illustrates these views:

(Discussing thoughts on teaching methods)

M1: I think it's preferable and good. The reason is that these methods enable the students to understand what he has taught the students.

M2: It really make sense to us like when he gives examples. The examples are just like he explained the definition itself. So students go over the examples and they will be able to put it in their own words. They will be able to say the definition. So that is why the use of examples is good.

Students from Lavender also shared positive views about the existing IP in their civic education lessons. They agreed that the usual practice was enjoyable and sufficient. Students from Cobalt expressed different levels of satisfaction with

the IP in their civic education lessons, then generally agreed that it was beneficial. For instance, the science group stated that they would prefer more opportunities for student engagement in IP. However, they also stated, like their peers from the social science class that existing IP helped them to grasp subject content.

## **Discussion**

Research findings showed that the SCI recommendations in the syllabus were not followed with precision during civic education lessons in the three schools. Instead, teachers retained expertise on subject knowledge, and the control of knowledge transmission. These findings resonate with pre-existing literature, which reports that teachers' dominance in IP is often sustained in the face of SCI recommendations in developing countries (Croft, 2002; Sikoyo, 2010). Findings also revealed some degree of student engagement in the civic education lessons through recitations, answers to the teachers' questions and occasional participation in class activities. Such findings, especially in Jade and Lavender contest notions that existing IP is completely lacking in opportunities for student engagement. Moreover, findings revealed that the most frequent opportunities for student engagement occurred in Jade, which is the least resourced among the three schools. This finding also contests notions that the IP in Nigerian schools is resource-dependent. Finally, positive dispositions to existing IP across the three schools, resonate with pre-existing accounts that teachers and students can be content with IP that remains largely controlled by teachers (Tabulawa, 1997).

## **Conclusion**

This study captured accounts of classroom realities in Nigerian secondary schools in view of SCI recommendations. Its findings contest notions that IP is mostly resource-dependent and lacks student engagement. Findings also revealed sustained teacher's dominance in IP, and positive reactions to this among students. These themes suggested that students and teachers' preferences had more influence on existing IP in the observed classrooms, than the availability of learning resources (Clarke, 2003; Tabulawa, 1998).

## About the Author

Abi'odun Oyewole is a final year PhD student at the Graduate school of Education, University of Bristol. Her research interests include curriculum reform, teacher education and links between culture and pedagogy in classroom learning. She has assisted in teaching postgraduate research students at the Graduate school of Education, over the past three years. She also worked with a colleague to initiate a voluntary mentoring programme for doctoral students at the Graduate school.

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# **The representation of play within the home learning environment of children from South Asian families**

*Tanya Paes, University of Oxford*

This study aims to examine the representation of play within the home learning environment (HLE) of children from South Asian (SA) families. More specifically, the study explores whether SA mothers utilize the ideas about play as outlined by the Peep Learning Together Programme to support the HLE they create for their children. Three measures were employed: (i) observations of children's play activities; (ii) the Home Observation for Measurement of the Environment inventory; and (iii) a questionnaire that inquired about the frequency of children's exposure to various activities, and mothers' beliefs about their degree of playfulness and contribution to their children's HLE. The findings reveal that children experienced a moderate or high quality of the HLE. With regards to the mothers' beliefs about the degree of playfulness and the learning value of different activities, mothers tend to regard play and learning as two separate concepts that do not necessarily overlap.

## **Introduction**

There are numerous definitions of play that arise from the broad range of beliefs about its nature held by play theorists (Fisher, Hirsh-Pasek, Golinkoff, & Gryfe, 2008). Most commonly, play includes activities that are marked by their flexibility, non-literal nature, the positive affect that they induce, and can take many forms (Wood, 2008). Research has demonstrated that play, irrespective of its form, is encouraged because it allows children to develop their cognitive skills. It also helps children to make connections between various areas of learning and experience. Play is especially important in early childhood because at this stage development occurs most rapidly, and timely interventions could result in favourable long-term child outcomes (Singer, Golinkoff, & Hirsh-Pasek, 2006).

In recent years, empirical research has investigated how the HLE that every family creates supports children's play. The support for play in the HLE is dependent upon three factors: (i) the level of stimulation, often considered in terms of the availability of play materials and toys; (ii) the quality of the interaction with adults; and (iii) the degree of independence the child is afforded (Toy Industries of Europe, 2012). The HLE is highly influenced by parents, and based on Bruner's recommendation that learning and thinking should be examined within the cultural milieu, it is important to explore the influence of parents' beliefs and culture on play and the HLE (Bruner, 1996). Hence, this study chose to focus on the representation of play within the HLE of 2-and-a-half year-olds to 5 year-olds from South Asian (SA) families, as there appears to be limited research in this area with this population (Harkness, Super, & Parmar, 2004; Nadeem, Rafique, Khowaja, & Yameen, 2014).

More specifically, this study focussed on whether mothers use the ideas about play described in the Peep Learning Together Programme, developed by the UK-based charity known as Peeple, to support the HLE they create for their children. The Peep Learning Together programme underpins all the services that the organisation provides for families. It is intended to support the interaction between parents and children (Peeple, n.d.-a). There are a variety of peep sessions offered that range from outreach to home visits for children of various ages (Peeple, n.d.-b). Peeple also holds sessions specifically for SA women, which are run in local venues by at least one practitioner who has undergone the Peep Learning Together programme training (Peeple, n.d.-b).

The role of play in children's learning receives prominence in every PEEP session. The programme ensures that parents and children are exposed to and understand the benefits of the diverse types of play (Peeple, n.d.-c-e). Practitioners also convey the notion that play practices should be linked to children's age and developmental stages, and provide practical examples of how play can be utilized to enhance the children's HLE (Peeple, n.d.-f). Given the basis of the Peep Learning together programme, the study was centred on the following two research questions:

1. What does the HLE of children between the ages of 32 months and 59 months from SA families consist of?
2. How do SA mothers from India, Nepal and Pakistan conceptualize play with regard to the degree of playfulness of various activities and their perceived learning value?

## **Sample**

All the participants in the study had attended sessions held by the People intervention for at least one term. The study comprised of 11 mothers and 11 of their children from India, Nepal and Pakistan who resided in an area of low socio-economic status in a university city in England. All of the mothers included in the study were married, and their level of education was high, with 73% of mothers having obtained a university degree. The socio-economic statuses of the families however, were low throughout the sample with 91% of the parents working in either lower supervisory or routine occupations. All the children were multilingual; they were able to speak a combination of English and other SA languages such as Gujarati, Hindi, Nepali and Urdu. In terms of childcare arrangements, only a minority, three of children in the sample attended either a playgroup or part-time nursery, with most of the children remaining at home with their mothers or another relative.

## **Method**

Each family was visited once at their home. During the visits three measures were utilized: (i) 30 minute observations of the child's play activities; (ii) the Early Childhood Home Observation for Measurement of the Environment (HOME) inventory; and (iii) a questionnaire based on the study conducted by Fisher et al. (2008). The questionnaire was concerned with the frequency of the child's engagement in 24 activities, the mothers' perceived degree of playfulness in the activities and their contribution to the learning environment of their children. Due to the families wish for privacy, the home visits were not video-recorded. However, detailed hand-written notes were taken on both the verbal and non-verbal interactions between the target child and the other people in the house. After the home visit the children's play activities were coded using the

Play in Early Childhood Evaluation System (PIECES) (Kelly-Vance & Ryalls, 2014).

In addition to PIECES, the concept of repeating ideas and themes as presented by Auerbach and Silverstein (2003) was used to examine the data collected from the observation of the children's play activities. The researcher's handwritten notes about the observations of children's play activities were read, re-read and analysed one by one ensuring to note the repeating ideas that arose during each of the children's observations. Next, a master list of repeating ideas was generated that involved thoroughly examining the repeating ideas from each of the children's observations and noting similar words or phrases that conveyed the same idea about a particular subject. The frequency of similar words or phrases that conveyed the same idea about a particular subject was also recorded. Then, the master list of repeating ideas was inspected comprehensively and interconnections between repeating ideas were identified. Finally, the related repeating ideas from the master list were clustered into themes.

## **Results**

Overall, the children in the sample experienced a moderate or high quality HLE as exhibited by the HOME scores that ranged from 37 to 52, out of a possible total score of 55. The mean frequency for the different kinds of play activities noted on the questionnaire was very similar. On average the mothers reported that their children were engaged in these different activities for "about once a week". In connection with the mother's perceived degree of playfulness for the various activities, on average mothers regarded all the activities to be "somewhat a form of play". In regards to the contributions of the various activities to the learning environment of the children, on average the mothers noted that the different activities "somewhat improve" the learning environment. Nevertheless, for all three questions, there was a wide range of mothers' responses in relation to the majority of the activities, ranging from "definitely does not improve" to "definitely improves" the child's learning environment.

Data from all three measures was analysed and triangulated, resulting in the emergence of the following three themes:

***1. The role of the mother and its contributions towards the children's play behaviour***

The mothers adopted a dynamic role: they were both observers and initiators in children's play activities. When the mothers took on the role of the observers, they were effectively able to capitalize on the children's play pursuits and develop their learning without formally teaching the children. The children also appeared favourable to this approach, as they tended to prefer initiating the activities themselves.

***2. Activities and skills that are encouraged by mothers***

A large variety of activities and skills were encouraged by the mothers, including playing outdoors, arts and crafts, music, reading, counting, identifying shapes or colours, using one's imagination, and small scale construction. Additionally, the frequency of these activities ranged widely, from 100% of mothers encouraging their children to participate in play outdoors to 36.3% of mothers who promoted their children engaging in small-scale construction.

***3. Activities that contributed to children's learning of the alphabet, colours, numbers and shapes***

The two most popular responses, as noted in the semi-structured interview with the mothers as part of the HOME inventory, were watching television or videos, and the influence of older siblings. All of the mothers mentioned television or videos, and interaction with older siblings as being effective resources for their children's learning in these areas. The influence of older siblings on the children's learning was also seen first-hand by the researcher during the home visits.

## **Discussion and Conclusion**

This study sought to explore the representation of play within the HLE of SA families. It is clear that although all the families in the sample originate from SA, there is still considerable variation in their perceptions. The findings of the study are consistent with previous research as the children engaged in a variety of play activities, but the range of activities varied depending on the individual family. Similar to previous research, the family's perceptions of play and learning had a large role in the children's exposure to activities. In regard to the mothers' beliefs about the degree of playfulness and the learning value of different activities, mothers tend to consider play and learning as two separate concepts that do not necessarily overlap. Nevertheless, due to the small sample size it is not possible to generalize the findings of the present study to the SA population, but further research concerned with a larger sample would investigate how parental play beliefs influence children's play patterns in SA families.

In terms of the study's practical implications, the Peep Learning Together programme could be further developed to increase support for mothers' understanding of play and its role in the HLE. Given the results from all three measures, particularly the responses from the HOME interviews and the questionnaire, the mothers may require additional information about how less formal activities such as the different forms of play can support children's development, and that the concepts of play and the HLE are interconnected.

## **About the Author**

Tanya Paes obtained her MSc in Education (Child Development and Education) from the University of Oxford. Her project focused on exploring the representation of play with the home learning environment of pre-schoolers from South Asian families. Building on her Masters, Tanya is currently pursuing her PhD in Education at the University of Cambridge, during which she aims to examine the efficacy of a pretend play intervention on the self-regulation, language, and pre-literacy skills of pre-schoolers from families with English as an additional language.

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# **Teacher judgment, student agency, and the computing classroom: How teaching professionals translate policy into practice**

*Laura R. Pinkerton, University of Oxford*

This article presents a qualitative embedded case study of how the new computing standards of England's National Curriculum are being implemented in one primary school. It aims to reveal the process by which educational policy is translated into teaching practice. It also seeks to clarify whether civic computing skills such as student agency – while not explicitly included in the computing standards – are being unknowingly taught by primary school teachers as a natural by-product of a well-taught computing lesson. This study's research questions are motivated by an interest in teachers as professionals making judgments within educational structures based on their own philosophies of education.

## **Introduction**

With the introduction of the National Curriculum in England by the Education Reform Act of 1988, the old autonomy of English schools was replaced by a program of curriculum standards and standardized assessments. Many decried that the new regulations had been developed with little input from teachers and other education professionals, and that they were 'overcomplicated', 'over-prescriptive', and lacking in coherence that even those teachers who favored having national standards found them impossible to implement (Hughes, 1997, p. 194).

One subject area, Information and Communication Technology (ICT), has a history of being so 'tightly constrained' by the National Curriculum standards that teachers were unable to teach it effectively (Leach & Moon, 2010, p. 402), with the British government later admitting that ICT 'carries strong negative connotations of a dated and unchallenging curriculum that does not serve the needs and ambitions of pupils' (Department for Education, 2013b, p. 1). Following pressure from industry groups, the Department for Education – in

partnership with working group Computing At School – voted to disapply the ICT National Curriculum standards beginning in 2012 whilst they formulated a new, more rigorous set of standards that met both industry and state needs (Department for Education, 2013a). In 2014, the Department for Education updated the National Curriculum to replace ICT with computing (Department for Education, 2015). Designed to cover more than just the basic computer literacy and e-safety offered by the old curriculum, computing is intended to teach students in all year groups how computers work (i.e. algorithmic and computational thinking) and how to program computers to perform certain tasks (i.e. ‘coding’) in order to prepare them for post-secondary computer science training and a more digitally inclined workforce.

A teacher’s ‘professional responsibility does not begin and end with the National Curriculum’ (Ball & Bowe, 1992, p. 109) and there is tension as teachers balance the academic requirements as set by national policies with the educational, socio-emotional, organizational, and special needs (e.g. learners of English as an additional language, children in care) of their students. As professionals, they may choose to enact (or not enact) the curricular standards in a way that they believe will best benefit their students, but which does not meet the expectations of the policymakers who created those standards (Biesta, 2012). The ways in which teachers translate the standards into practice appropriate for their students and situation – not the intentions of those who created the standards – will be the final deciding factor in what change is created in schools (Knip & van der Vegt, 1991). In this way, the National Curriculum exists in three different states: the ‘intended policy’ (the ‘official’ ideologies of government and private sector groups who played a role in the development of the standards), the ‘actual policy’ (as written into law), and the ‘policy-in-use’ (as implemented and experienced in schools) (Ball & Bowe, 1992, p. 100).

A teacher’s approach to teaching computing will be shaped by their beliefs regarding the purpose of computing education specifically and of education as a whole generally (Cuban, 2002). Those who ascribe to a more traditional theory of education, with the teacher in an authoritarian role, will structure their classroom for the top-down dissemination of knowledge from teacher to student. Conversely, teachers who have a learner-centered view of schooling and see themselves solely as a facilitator of learning will play a less direct role in shaping

their students' education by avoiding decisive judgment and allowing students to direct their own learning instead (Biesta, 2012). In the middle are teachers who are leaders, but not 'dictators'. They acknowledge that education is a social process made up of educative experiences and do not hesitate to – in their wisdom as teaching professionals – design those experiences and engage in that social, experiential dialogue with students (Dewey, 1963).

While all three types of teachers may be successful at teaching specific knowledge and skills, it is these middle-ground teachers who also provide the positive 'collateral learning' (Dewey, 1963) not permitted by the socially restrictive authoritarian or the socially absent 'guide on the side' styles (King, 1993). This collateral learning – including the cognitive skills important to computing and called out by Anderson (2008) and others as critical for participating in the knowledge society – is where students can develop agency, even though it is not explicitly outlined in the National Curriculum standards.

In the computing classroom, a sophisticated teacher looks beyond teaching the 'mere' mechanics of technology to develop as well their students' ability and willingness to drive their own learning (Brennan, 2014). This agentic engagement of students in their own education is crucial in computing. Digital devices change and advance at an exponential rate, so students must be able and willing to learn how to use these devices independently, as their initial training in technology is likely to be soon outpaced by its advancement. Computing activities involve engaging in a 'conversation' with oftentimes sophisticated machines, using computational thinking, and sometimes an explicit programming language as well; these conversations require the student to position themselves within the discourse as a user actively communicating with the computer.

Agency is important outside of computing as well. Students with a strong sense of agency are able to access 'discursive practices' through which they can express their desires, be heard by teachers and their peers, and shape the world around them (Davies, 1990, p. 345). Agentic students have a voice and that voice can provide civic power. In a networked and interconnected world, agency is needed to shape one's 'personal destiny' (Bandura, 2006), lest that destiny be shaped by the interests of the increasing number of people to which one is connected.

## **Methodology**

If education is a complex set of processes shaped by the highly contextual space in which it occurs, then the case study is easily the most appropriate choice for identifying the relationship between a particular context and the processes that occur therein. Given that these processes – and, to a lesser extent, these contexts – are not quantifiable, this case study will be of an exclusively qualitative nature.

A state-funded primary school in rural South East England, serving an economically diverse catchment area, was selected for this study. Naturalistic observations – those that occur in the participants' usual environment for a particular activity – are 'pre-eminently the appropriate technique for getting at 'real life' in the real world' (Robson, 2011, p. 311) as they are sensitive to contexts and demonstrate strong ecological validity (Moyles, 2002), capturing information that might otherwise not be revealed by other methods, either due to limitations of the method or the participants. Naturalistic observations are arguably better suited to capturing and analyzing when and how classroom processes occur than other methods (Guilloteaux & Dornyei, 2008), which is why I chose to use them as one of my two primary means of data collection.

In addition to observing classroom practice, I decided to interview teachers in order to better identify those processes occurring in the classroom but not immediately apparent to myself (the observer), to clarify the processes that I did observe, and to provide contextual information regarding the school and community, as well as the histories of the classroom and those within it.

## **Findings**

1. It is clear that the teachers at the school site are facing several serious obstacles to teaching computing to the 'actual policy' standards as well as to their own professional standards. It is also clear that contextual factors can easily be so constraining that a teacher finds it impossible to make what they believe to be an appropriate educational judgment, such as in the case of one teacher who declined to teach computing at all the year it was introduced. The teachers at this school felt this poignantly in the face of the new computing standards and the distress they felt did impact how and what they taught, especially in the case of one teacher who was so overwhelmed by the new standards that she chose not to teach any computing lessons at all.

2. One teacher's belief in the existence of innate interest and ability in children, and the view of computing as a niche subject, has led him to use technology in the diluted way of the old ICT curriculum and keeps him from attempting to foster computing interest and ability across all of his students. This demonstrates that teachers don't automatically accept shifts in education policy and tend to be skeptical of outsiders attempting to change how they work. Teachers trust other teachers the most regarding 'what works in classrooms' (Hargreaves, 2001, p. 17), but given the lack of communication between teachers at this particular school and the absence of an ICT coordinator, the aforementioned teacher has been left with a curriculum he doesn't trust and un-counteracted beliefs that powerfully shape his computing lessons.
3. What one teacher lacked in computing knowledge she has made up for in pedagogical knowledge (e.g. knowing what outside resources were available to her; knowing how to keep students on task while allowing for behaviors [e.g. talking with neighbors] that are traditionally considered disruptive but are in fact agentic; providing just-in-time guidance). She is focused on teaching the cognitive skills necessary for computing and fostering comfort and familiarity with computing through technology use and skills use. As a result, her lessons tend to enable student agency and follow the National Curriculum standards with fidelity, in spite of her lack of experience or training in the subject of computing.

## **Conclusion**

This study found that, while both external factors, such as government-sponsored training, and internal factors, such as the absence of an ICT coordinator, did have an impact on teacher perceptions of computing and constrained their lessons in some ways, ultimately it was teacher beliefs and judgments that dictated whether a computing lesson would be taught in a rigorous (if not wholly fidelitous) way. Teachers who actively shaped the learning experiences in their classroom while also allowing room for student-directed learning – including some behaviors typically considered disruptive – taught computing lessons that had the most

actual computing content (as opposed to ICT content) and also best facilitated the development of student agency.

## About the Author

Laura Pinkerton is a DPhil Candidate in Education at the University of Oxford's Department of Education. She holds an MSc in Education (Learning and Technology) from Oxford and a BA in Sociology from the University of California, Santa Cruz. She has worked on a number of research projects in the US and UK centered on the use of technology in education. Her research interests include the role of formal education in social inequality, computing, class, and power.

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# **The voice of young people in care: Perspectives on successful foster placements**

*Vânia S. Pinto, University of Oxford*

In some families, the wellbeing and safety of children and young people are not safeguarded. These conditions require the use of interventions or alternative placements to ensure the best interests of the children and young people. As part of the alternative placement process, foster carers are particularly important, since the integration of children and young people in a family environment will promote their full development. Knowing what makes a placement ‘successful’ can aid in the design and use of instruments that purport to measure foster carers’ skills and potential, and in the provision of appropriate care. The main goal of this paper is therefore to understand how ‘successful’ foster placements are defined by young people in care in Portugal and in the UK. Focus groups were conducted, and, based on manifest and latent content analysis, it was noted that the discourses of the English and Portuguese young people in care were almost equally focused on social and emotional outcomes. These and other findings will be discussed as well as their implications for practice.

## **Introduction**

In situations where children and young people are exposed to abusive or neglectful family environments, the State intervenes and, if need be, will remove the child or young person from their family to safeguard their wellbeing and development. The intervention should be based on a specialised, diversified, and integrative model, with the aim to meet the specific needs of each child, and to act in their best interests (article 3, Convention on the Rights of the Child - CRC).

It is essential, in this situation, to understand the past experiences of children and young people (Craven & Lee, 2006) and the ways in which these experiences have influenced the current state in different areas of their development, such as physical, emotional, education, and social (Osborn, Delfabbro, & Barber, 2008; Pears, Fisher, Bruce, Kim, & Yoerger, 2010). Furthermore, it is urgent to integrate the child or young person in a placement

that meets their individual needs (George, Oudenhoven, & Wazir, 2003). Foster placement is considered, for the majority of the children or young people, as the best type of placement, since it provides a family setting (Children and Young Persons Act 2008; Smyke, Zeanah, Fox, Nelson, & Guthrie, 2010) when permanent solutions, such as reintegration into the family of origin or adoption, are not possible (article 20, CRC).

Fisher, Gibbs, Sinclair and Wilson (2000) consider that the characteristics of the child or young person, the attributes of foster carer, and the effective combination of both, are crucial for the placement success. Considering the urgency of providing a safe and nurturing environment to children and young people who have been removed from their family, it is important to understand how placement success can be measured and promoted. For these reasons, this study analyses the perspectives of young people in care on what makes a foster care placement 'successful'. Therein, the perspectives of young people in care in England (a country that favours and promotes foster care) and in Portugal (a country that only has a small proportion of children and young people placed in foster care) will be compared, which will allow this study to analyse the similarities and differences of young people in different child protection systems.

## **Method**

Two focus groups were conducted with a total of seven young people in care, who were between 16 and 17 years old. These took place in July and August of 2015. The young people in care were recruited through different entities in both countries: an independent fostering agency in Portugal and a Children in Care Council in England.

The focus groups were conducted at the young people's own pace and ample opportunities were provided for them to share their views, with the aim of reducing the likelihood of discomfort or distress.

The data was analysed using the software MAXQDA version 11.0. The focus group transcripts were analysed and coded in terms of the characteristics which the participants felt a good foster carer should have, and what they identified as the positive outcomes of children and young people in care. Thematic dimensions were identified through content analysis.

## **Results**

The coding system used to identify the most relevant characteristics of foster carers to young people in care took into account the definition of the fostering role, which is composed of 12 domains as identified by Buehler, Rhodes, Orme, & Cuddeback (2006):

1. Providing a safe and secure environment
2. Providing a nurturing environment
3. Promoting educational attainment and success
4. Meeting physical and mental healthcare needs
5. Promoting social and emotional development
6. Valuing diversity and supporting children's cultural needs
7. Supporting permanency planning
8. Managing ambiguity and loss
9. Growing as a foster parent
10. Managing the demands of fostering
11. Supporting relationships between children and their families
12. Working as a team member of a professional team

There were some similarities between the responses of the English and Portuguese focus groups. Both groups attributed similar importance to the contact between children and their families, cultural needs support, and educational attainments and success. With regard to the remaining dimensions, there were some differences between the two groups. The Portuguese young people in care stressed a nurturing environment and supporting permanency as important elements of foster care, whereas the English ones highlighted social and emotional development and physical and mental health care needs. Below, some examples will be given of responses, which highlight these dimensions.

### ***Nurturing environment***

‘A good foster carer is someone who nurtures you, one that fosters without prejudice. Who is a loving person, and is caring.’ [Portuguese participant]

### ***Supporting permanency***

‘The bond should always be there.’ [Portuguese participant]

### ***Social and emotional development***

‘I think that a good foster carer is when you get accepted into the family so you feel like that you are their own daughter or you are their own son and you don't feel like outcast. And I believe that every foster carer or most foster carers should be able to be like that.’ [English participant]

### ***Physical and mental health care needs***

‘Because, yeah, there is quite a few of foster children that have forms of autism that will actually come into that, where any resistance, any change, will stress them out.’ [English participant]

The coding system for the outcomes of children and young people in care was created based on Maslow’s Hierarchy of Needs (1954), which identifies five dimensions: physiological or basic needs (sleep, warmth, shelter, food, drink), safety (health, stability, and protection), love/belonging (designated in this study as social, as it is based on affection, belonging, friendship and love), esteem (respect, achievement, self-esteem), and self-fulfillment (personal growth and full development).

In both groups there was a clear focus on social outcomes. By comparison, the Portuguese young people were slightly more focused on esteem and self-fulfillment outcomes, whereas the English young people were more focused on physiological or basic needs and safety outcomes. Below are some examples:

### ***Physiological or basic needs***

‘If you are well fed.’ [English participant]

### ***Safety***

‘And plus location. If you live in a bad location, then I would put a lot more concerns on the viability of the foster placement.’ [English participant]

### ***Social needs***

‘If they have like particular traits and quotes of the foster parents have, that they didn't have, that the children didn't have when they come into foster care, if they take them on then you know that is perfect and that they are getting along really well and the child is getting along really well. That also comes back to the foster parent is treating the foster child as their own.’ [English participant]

### ***Self-esteem***

‘If we end up with a good perception of ourselves.’ [Portuguese participant]

### ***Self-fulfillment***

‘If we are able to stand out in society’ [Portuguese participant]

## **Discussion**

Drawing on the findings of the focus groups, it is possible to conclude that the majority of participants identified social and emotional attributes of foster carers and outcomes of children and young people in care as significant for the placement success, along with the creation of long term relationships. Other relevant factors also emerged, such as physical and mental health care needs and educational attainments and success. These results are similar to those from other studies that have focused on the children and young people’s voice (Randle, 2013; Wilson & Conroy, 1999).

Other researchers, such as Sinclair, Wilson, & Gibbs (2005), have stressed that foster carers need to have good parenting skills, invest in and be committed to the children in care in order to promote the success of the placement. Placement success is commonly measured through outcomes such as the positive

development of the child or young person, and the stability of the placement (Berridge, 1997), both of which were highlighted as important by the different groups.

## **Conclusion**

Considering that knowledge is developed through people's actions, relationships, and social building of meaning (Biesta & Burbules, 2003; Pring, 2007), this research found that it was necessary to understand the perspectives on placement success of young people in care in different child protection systems.

The findings were concordant with previous studies, which found that foster carers should focus on providing a caring and safe family environment and contribute to the children and young people's full development. However, it was also evident that some differences existed between the two groups, which could be contextualised by the different pathways of each participant the two different child protection systems. These relationships are important, although the limited sample size of this study must be kept in mind. Therefore, these themes should be examined in more detail in future research, where a similar design could be used with a larger and randomly selected sample.

## **About the Author**

Vânia S. Pinto holds an undergraduate degree in Psychological Sciences and a master's degree in Clinical Psychology from ISPA University Institute in Portugal. She has also completed postgraduate programmes on the 'Protection of Minors' at the Faculty of Law - University of Coimbra, and on 'Data Analysis in the Social Science' at ISCTE University Institute of Lisbon. She is currently a DPhil Candidate in Education at the Rees Centre, Department of Education, University of Oxford, conducting research in the field of placement success. Vânia is also a collaborator researcher at InEd-Center for Research and Innovation in Education, School of Education of the Polytechnic Institute of Porto. Her main areas of research are child protection systems, foster care, indicators of placement success.

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## **Legislation**

- Children and Young Persons Act 2008.
- Convention on the Rights of the Child.

# Understanding school teachers' perceptions of expertise: Impact on Initial Teacher Education programmes

*Marc Turu, Leeds Beckett University*

In 2015-16, for the first time, school-centred Initial Teacher Education (ITE) recruited more student teachers than universities did. It seems that schools and teachers are gaining more power to decide the future of ITE and to shape teachers' practice. Eliciting teachers' perceptions of Newly Qualified Teachers' (NQT) readiness and their own understandings of teaching could raise awareness among school-centred programmes and teachers about their teaching positions and potential areas of improvement, and also help universities to reposition themselves as providers and ITE, particularly in school-university partnerships. This study aims to explore teachers' perceptions of NQTs' preparedness for two reasons: First, to explore the perceived level of preparedness among colleagues, and second, to gain understanding of teachers' conceptions of expertise.

## Context

In the last 30 years in England, Initial Teacher Education (ITE) has been the target of substantial policy-driven reforms (Evans, 2011; Menter, Brisard, & Smith, 2006; Murray, 2014). The reform of ITE was high on the political agenda from the 1979-1997, a period of conservative government. Higher Education Institutions' (HEIs) 'liberal views' were held responsible for educational problems and student failure (Ellis & McNicholl, 2015). Teacher quality is seen as a major factor influencing pupil learning, and teacher education was claimed to be too theoretical and not practical enough for the everyday work in schools (John Patten, radio interview, LBC/IRN, 1993). For these reasons several changes were introduced, which aimed to shift teacher education to a more practical approach and force schools to adopt more responsibilities in preparing teachers, while relegating HEIs to the background (Furlong, 2013b). The underlying assumption behind this shift was that 'teaching is a craft and it is best

learnt as an apprentice observing a master craftsman or woman. Watching others, and being rigorously observed yourself as you develop, is the best route to acquiring mastery in the classroom' (Michael Gove, National College Annual Conference, 16 June 2010, reported in: DfE, 2010). It is suggested that workplace experience is the best way to offer to trainees the knowledge, skills and professional identity that are more valued by policy makers to be better prepared for practice.

Successive governments opened the ITE market to other providers, particularly those favouring school-based approaches. Since then, not only have HEIs been allowed to run ITE programs but consortiums of schools were also accredited to deliver them. Besides the traditional university-based PGCE and other undergraduate degrees leading to qualified teacher status (QTS), the School-Centred Initial Teacher Training (SCITT) program was established, allowing schools to take more control over ITE and only externalising a few processes to HEIs or consortiums of schools. Teach First was also implemented, following its success in the US, as a way of recruiting high achieving graduate students to teach at schools in challenging circumstances after a few weeks of training. In 2012, the government went a step further, introducing School Direct (SD), in which individual schools were allowed to select their trainees and take complete control over their education. In the 2015-2016 academic year, school-based ITE recruited 51% of new student teachers (DfE, 2015). SCITTs accounted for 9% and SD reached 37% of the total only four years after its implementation. Teach First accounted for 6% of the trainees. The current government is convinced that school-centred ITE, especially SD, is the best way to prepare teachers, and is pushing for its increased uptake. The Secretary of State for Education stated that, 'these new teachers are getting the right training to prepare them to succeed in the classroom through School Direct, Teach First and school-centred initial teacher training - teachers in our best schools are now in the driving seat to train the next generation of their profession' (Nicky Morgan, Teaching Awards, 26 October 2014, reported in: DfE, 2014). This will lead schools to have an even stronger position in the recruitment of student teachers. Thus, it seems increasingly important to explore how well prepared NQTs are, how schools understand their position as leaders in ITE programmes, how they understand teacher education and development, and how and why they conceptualise

teaching and the role of a teacher in order to explore the consequences of the shift towards a School Based ITE.

### **Inquiry to Impact**

The current ITE landscape in which schools and teachers seem to have gained more power to shape teachers' education, and therefore the profession, at the expense of HEIs has led to a repositioning of both of their roles. Schools are still discovering how to deal with their new responsibilities and Schools of Education desperately need to find a new way to contribute to ITE (Brown, Rowley, & Smith, n.d.). It is claimed that HEIs have not been able to explicitly and decisively defend their contribution as distinctive and worthwhile (Furlong, 2013a). Furthermore, in the current school-HEI partnerships, there remain fundamental cultural and logistical barriers to effective partnerships, compounded by a lack of understanding of how each contributing institution works (Handscomb, Gu, & Varley, 2014). There are substantial differences about how ITE programmes are structured and designed among schools and providers, particularly in relation to subject knowledge, pedagogical subject knowledge, behaviour management, assessment and special education needs. Thus it is argued that a better shared understanding of what the essential elements of good ITE content should look like is needed (Carter, 2015). The way practice is conceptualised is also vital for ITE. Learning to be a teacher involves engagement with established professional knowledge and practice which are traditionally seen as different aspects of the same activity (Ellis & McNicholl, 2015). The challenge is to reject this dualism, understanding the interwoven relationship between theory and practice, each mutually feeding each other.

### **Measuring Preparedness: A Different Perspective?**

Cochran-Smith (2001) identified three widely used approaches to explore ITE outcomes. Firstly, through evidence from teacher test scores as a predictor of teachers' competence (D'Agostino & Powers, 2009). Darling-Hammond (2006), however, argued that teacher tests have a major flaw - they are unable to discern between novice and experienced teachers. Secondly, evidence of pupils' learning. However, examination raw scores and grades are found to be correlated to socioeconomic status, ethnicity or gender (Higgs, Bellin, Farrell, & White, 1997;

Patterson, Kupersmidt, & Vaden, 1990), and value added models that take these factors into account are claimed to be too 'volatile' (Gorard, 2011, p. 14) and therefore 'of little value' (Gorard, 2006, p. 235). And thirdly, evidence of professional performance, which pretends to capture what teachers know during a lesson and are able to do. This last point is discussed below.

Measuring professional performance assumes that there is a consensus about what it is to be a teacher (Cochran-Smith, 2001). Newly qualified teachers in England are expected to fulfil the Teacher Standards (TS) in order to gain qualification for practice (DfE, 2011). The standards are a list of behaviours that teachers must demonstrate to show that they are able to perform, with the understanding that these standards are what constitute excellent teaching practice. Therefore, they are related to what it is physically done in the classroom, to the practical aspects of teaching. However, some sub-descriptors also include propositional knowledge (i.e. have a secure knowledge of the relevant subject and curriculum areas or have a secure understanding of how a range of factors can inhibit pupils' ability to learn). As it is argued elsewhere (Evans, 2011; Goepel, 2012), in England, teaching is conceptualised as process knowledge alone with some subject knowledge. However, this idea of teaching as a practice that can be instrumentally rationalised is criticised by critical theorists because it is more interested in the 'how' than in the 'why'. This approach to teaching emphasises elements as method, procedure and technique rather than the humanistic purpose of teaching practice (Kincheloe & McLaren, 2005). According to this, teaching is not an occupation that can be only defined by technical rationality, and therefore any list of facts and behaviours will be deemed incomplete (Winch & Gingell, 2004). If part of a teacher's knowledge is contextually learnt and its enactment depends on future teachers' situational perceptions of their salient characteristics, a list of facts and rules describing them would be limitless (Dreyfus & Dreyfus, 1986).

Several authors have addressed the narrow conceptualisation of rational knowledge. Polanyi (2009) coined the term 'tacit knowledge' to describe what we do and know but cannot express in words. Schön (1987) describes 'knowing-in-action' as the intelligent and skilled know-how that is openly observable, like cooking, or private mental processes, such as quick analysis of diagrams. He argues that '[humans] reveal knowing-in-action by our spontaneous, skilful execution of the performance; and [humans] are characteristically unable to make

it verbally explicit' (ibid., p. 25). Similarly, Dreyfus and Dreyfus (1986) call this kind of 'impression' or 'knowing-in-action' intuition, a way of using past experiences (consciously or unconsciously) to achieve the intended goals, even though this means breaking the rules and established techniques of the field of practice. This intuition (ibid), is what differentiates competent practitioners from those who are proficient or expert. While a competent practitioner is an expert in rule following, proficient and expert practitioners use their knowledge from past experiences in order to consider the best approach in the present situations. Therefore, teachers' expertise involve far more than what can be described in any standards list.

Capturing teachers' professional performance from a colleague standpoint seems a complementary perspective worth exploring. Following a rationalistic approach, how can a tool capture the sub-standards (DfE, 2011) 'demonstrate positive attitudes' or 'make a positive contribution to the wider life of the school' including all potential variations? Teachers share a professional environment far beyond individual classrooms. They share practices and challenges in meetings or over lunch, they plan lessons and design curricula together, share educational ends, and talk to each other. This affords teachers a distinctive position through which they can understand both the school system and their colleagues. Teachers' understanding of their colleagues could capture preparedness and expertise from a perspective that it is very difficult, if not impossible, to capture by other means.

## **Capturing Perceptions**

This ongoing investigation follows a mixed-methods approach. It involves a two phase explanatory sequential design (Creswell & Plano Clark, 2007) including primary and secondary teachers from the North of England. Phase one employs a survey on teachers' perceptions about NQTs' preparedness using a newly designed questionnaire. The idea of unitising particular aspects of teachers' knowledge and practice helps to broadly explore the idea of preparedness, and open the dialogue around what constitutes preparedness for other teachers in terms of propositional, practical, and tacit knowledge, by providing insights from an axiological perspective. For these reasons, three elements were selected in order to structure the construct of preparedness: a) 'Related to process knowledge', b) 'Related to propositional knowledge', c) 'Related to a critical

attitude'. 'Related to process knowledge' deals with those aspects concerned with teachers' instructional practices. 'Related to propositional knowledge' refers to the propositional knowledge that can be gained in and outside the classroom. It could be used to inform practice, not only related to the content of a specific subject, but also to pedagogy and learner's development. Finally, 'Related to a critical attitude' includes aspects referring to teachers' reflection on teaching and potential improvements for practice. Phase two consists of follow-up interviews that can further investigate the different conceptualisations of expertise. Tacit knowledge and values attached to practices, which seem problematic to explore with a questionnaire due to their personally constructed nature, are also explored during these interviews.

## About the Author

Marc Turu is a school teacher and educational psychologist. He has experience in primary and secondary education in Catalonia and further education in England. Marc's research interests lie in teacher education, alternative forms of education and communities of practice. After gaining a MA in School Improvement and Educational Leadership at the University of Birmingham, he started a PhD research at Leeds Beckett University focusing on newly qualified teachers' preparedness for practice.

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# Supportive relationships in primary schools for teachers working in early, mid and late career phases

*Maxine Watkins, University of Worcester*

Teachers' identities and career phases influence their commitment and resilience. Most previous studies have focused on developing a professional identity in early years while relatively fewer studies have focused on how teachers maintain their professional identity throughout their careers. This study reports on the initial data collection for a PhD project exploring teacher identity across the chosen career path. Using a constructivist grounded theory design as outlined by Charmaz (2014), teachers working in their early, mid, and late career phases were interviewed three times with the purpose of developing an identity based theory to a teaching career. Early analysis of the initial data collected from six primary school teachers (2 in the early, 2 in mid, and 2 in the late career phases) working in different school contexts, indicates that teachers benefit from relationships with school leaders, mentors and peers in different ways depending on their career and life phase.

## **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).

Influenced by the work of Huberman (1993) which suggested that teachers progress through five phases in their career, Day et al. (2007) conducted a large scale study exploring the work and lives of 300 teachers, and discovered that teachers' identities and the career phase in which they work influence their commitment to the profession, and that professional identities are mediated by the contexts in which they work and live.

Although much of the exploration surrounding conditions in developing a professional identity relates to the period of transition from student to teacher

(Alsup 2006; Kelchtermans & Ballet 2002; Lamote & Engels, 2010; Olsen 2008; Pillen et al. 2013), there is a growing body of research which suggests that teachers in later stages of their career also experience tensions between recognising the personal needs and circumstances of individual children in their classes and meeting the objectives of the school and curriculum (Day et al. 2005).

## **The Present Study**

This study reports on the initial data collection for a PhD project which aims to further our understanding of why and how primary school teachers sustain positive professional identities in different phases of their career and working in different school contexts. The specific aims of the PhD project are:

- To *identify* key positive influences on primary teachers' professional identity, commitment and resilience in different career phases and different school contexts.
- To *discover* how and why primary teachers sustain positive professional identities at different phases of their careers and in different school contexts.
- To *develop* a theoretical model which illustrates the development of a positive professional identity across a teaching career.

## **Method**

### ***Participants***

The participants in this study (n = 6) were primary school teachers with Qualified Teacher Status (QTS) working in England. Purposeful sampling identified initial participants through personal contacts and subsequently a snowballing technique was employed. Of the participants, 2 were early career phase teachers, 2 were mid-career phase teachers, and 2 were late career phase teachers.

### ***Data collection and analysis***

Informal life history interviews (Goodson, 2008) were conducted with each participant. These unstructured conversations provided an opportunity to explore each participant's individual beliefs about teaching and education, their own experiences of being at school, and their personal values. Teachers were also asked to complete a professional timeline (Day et al., 2006), which involved

drawing a line on a chart to indicate fluctuations in their professional identity over time. A discussion followed, with particular attention being paid to peaks and troughs, and the circumstances or contexts 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.

## Findings

As illustrated in *Table 1*, one strong and overarching category which emerged from within the data was *Supportive relationships in different phases of career*. Codes which represent this category presented themselves across all career phases. The section below discusses this category further, giving examples of where related codes emerged in the data during analysis and coding.

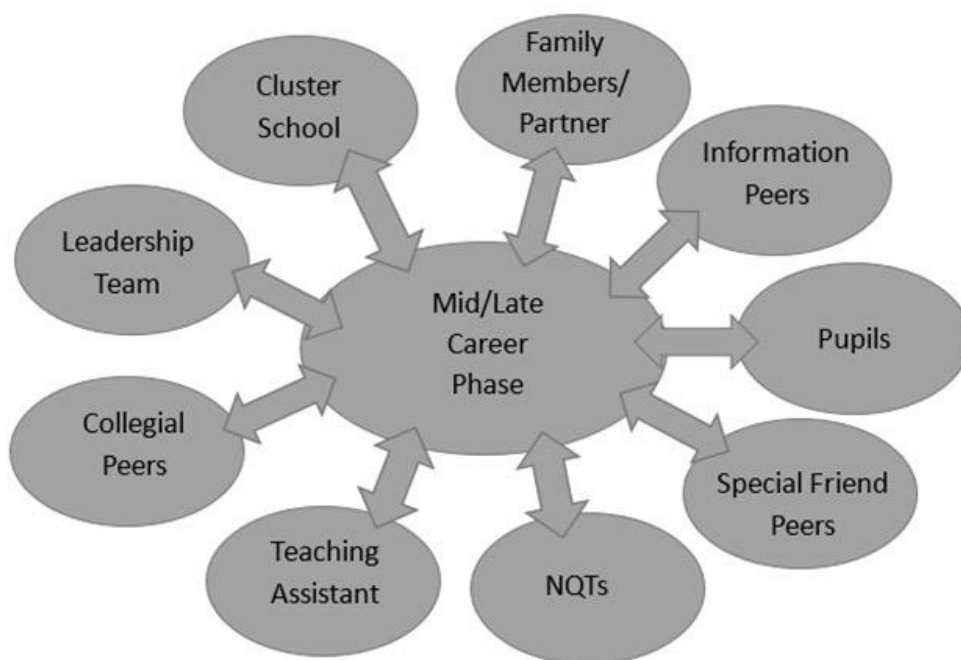
*Table 1: Emergent category and related codes*

<u>Category</u>	<u>Focused Codes</u>
Supportive relationships in different phases of career	Colleagues as friends Colleagues as information providers Mentoring Supportive senior leadership team

### *Supportive relationships in mid and late career phase*

As teachers told their stories it became apparent that the mid and late career teachers benefitted from relationships across the school which supported them in positive ways. The nature of the support was both role focused and included emotional support. The two way arrows in *Diagram 1* indicate that teachers talked of not only being supported by leadership, teaching assistants, pupils and peers, but they also had a strong sense that they supported these people in return. Each teacher talked positively about these two way dyadic relationships.

*Diagram 1: Relationships in a primary school community in mid and late career phase. Adapted from Kram's Relationship Constellation (1988, p. 149)*



Both mid and late career teachers talked often about their peers.

### *Collegial peers*

‘We have over sixty staff, so there’s no way that they’re all my friend. Yes they are in terms of they’re all my colleagues, and there isn’t anybody in that school who I wouldn’t say ‘good morning’ or ‘hi’ to. And I do value the fact that I have that way of, I hope, being friendly to everybody...But there’s obviously people that I’ve known longer, like the deputy and a few members of staff...And we know when we’ve got...I mean, we had a huge incident last week, it was huge...And as, you just know that when you’re dealing with that it’s like there’s somebody right behind you. And you turn round, and there is. And there always is. And you can’t afford to take that too much for granted.’ [Mid Career Phase Teacher]

### *Information peers*

‘And over time you realise... Well, if it’s science then I go to [name], or if it’s maths then I talk to somebody else. And if they don’t know what to do about RE, then hopefully they would come to me. Which they do sometimes. ‘Do you know where?..’ ‘No...but give me a moment and I will find out for you.’ That’s really important. And also the fact that we share about the children, amongst ourselves. So I’ll often go back to their previous teacher and go ‘Right, we did this...’ And that gives you the support mechanism.’

[Mid Career Phase Teacher]

### *Special friend peers*

‘Because I could ring them any time of day, and that’s when they’re friends and not just colleagues if you know what I mean. And they know the family, from those that have been there’s a good handful that know [son and daughter] they know [husband], and that makes it friendship then doesn’t it, rather than just a colleague.’

[Mid Career Phase Teacher]

### *Family members or partner*

‘He’s wonderful! He doesn’t think so, but he is. And you know, he’s very...he could see that I needed to do these things, and he never says ‘Oh you’ve not got to bring your marking with you again?’ You know. We went out last night, my son was playing in a band, at a supermarket. So we didn’t need to be there, but we couldn’t go off and leave him. So I said ‘I’ll do a bit of shopping, and then I’ll sit in the coffee shop and do some work.’ And I took a bit of marking with me, and that was fine. Then we had a cup of coffee, and it was fine.’

[Late Career Phase Teacher]

### *Leadership team*

‘I think it was because she believed in me. And if I had some ideas, she would run with them, and she’d give me the responsibility, without over burdening me. Or she’d come and say ‘I had a case study review with so and so today, what do you think about this?’ So she wasn’t like

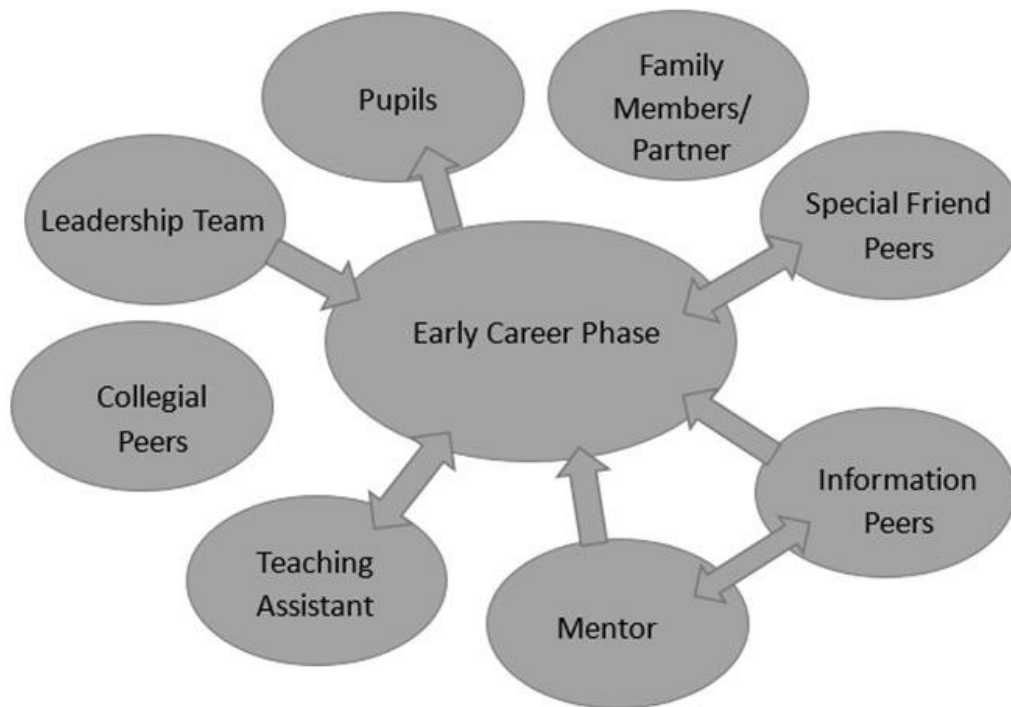
‘I know everything’.’ [Late Career Phase Teacher]

It is of interest to note that these extracts all relate to high points on the teachers’ professional timelines.

***Supportive relationships in early career phase***

In comparison, the data from my early career phase (ECP) teachers told a different story. *Diagram 2* illustrates that early career phase teachers received support from fewer people, and support received was more role focused than emotional.

*Diagram 2: Relationships in a primary school community in early career phase. Adapted from Kram’s Relationship Constellation (1988, p. 149)*



### *Leadership team*

One teacher felt that although she was supported by the leadership team, her own ideas and potential input were not valued. This negative experience with them resulted in a dip on her professional timeline.

‘I went to them with...You go with ideas and they just shoot you down. It’s their way or no way.’ [Early Career Phase Teacher]

### *Teaching assistant*

The ECP teachers didn’t talk much about relationships with family, but they had formed supportive relationships with their teaching assistant.

‘And my teaching assistant luckily, comes into work early and stays late often, she doesn’t get paid for it, but if she didn’t do that I don’t know what we’d do, because I would have no opportunity to talk to her about stuff, and she sees things in a different way to me, obviously...’ [Early Career Phase Teacher]

### *Special Friend Peers*

One special friend spends time to help this teacher understand the schools aims and ethos.

‘We have a key stage meeting on a Wednesday, it that tends to be like therapy. Myself and the Year One teacher are new, so we tend to just talk about all the ways that this school does things and we both try to get our heads around it.’ [Early Career Phase Teacher]

### *Information Peers*

After a terrible maths observation her mentor introduced her to the maths coordinator, who helped her to plan the next lesson. This resulted in a dip in her professional timeline turning into a peak following a really successful lesson.

‘But from that real low point with the maths observation, I then got a really good relationship with the maths coordinator who came to help me, and we did some planning together.’ [Early Career Phase Teacher]

## Discussion

The category and codes which emerged from the transcripts seem to suggest that supportive relationships which develop across the school community have a positive influence on professional identity in all phases of a teaching career.

It is of interest to note that the extracts from the data which are concerned with supportive relationships each relate to peaks on the teachers' professional timelines. Each time there was a trough, due to feelings of isolation in early career, pressures of work/life balance in mid-career, or a change of school, it was always supportive relationships that returned the line to a peak.

The positive influence seems to be increased further if teachers feel that they also are given the opportunity to offer support and ideas, enabling a reciprocal process and the feeling of being valued. The notion of mutually supportive relationships in identity formation will be explored further during the remainder of this PhD project, and will be central to building an identity based theory of a teaching career.

## About the Author

Maxine Watkins has a keen interest in primary education and teaching which originated while working for the Worcestershire County Council Behaviour Support Team, a role which presented the opportunity to work with diverse teaching staff in numerous school settings. Pursuing a growing interest in human development across a life span, Maxine gained her first degree in psychology as a mature student at University of Worcester. Her research brings together two areas of personal interest and explores the dynamic nature of a teachers' professional identity, considering the interactions between their personal and professional lives across early, mid and late career phases.

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