

Kaleidoscope Postgraduate Conference 2010 University of Cambridge

Abstracts

Manzoorul Abedin

Poster: Deconstructing Binary Oppositions: An Exploration of Public / Private, City / Rural, Rich / Poor, Eastern / Western and Mother Tongue / Foreign Language Dichotomies in the English Education of Bangladesh

English is loved and loathed at the same time in Bangladesh. While there is a general attitude towards English as non-threatening to the national language or culture, at the same time, English is an increasing source of socioeconomic divisions. Languages are sensitive and sentimental issues in Bangladesh, which has a near-unique history of sacrificing lives for protecting its national language, Bangla (Bengali).

English, which came to Bangladesh in the wake of the British colonial rule (1757-1947), thus relates to Bengali in a complex, yet controversial way. Historically, government intervention has been characterised by a Bengali-English dichotomy in the public sector and a “laissez-faire” attitude in the private sector. Private English medium schools, colleges and universities in Bangladesh, almost entirely based in cities, are in general expensive, and much better resourced than their public counterparts.

Essentially the private institutions provide a globalised curriculum imported from / modelled after western curriculum. In effect, the rich elite receive a “western” education whereas the mass can only aspire to the national curriculum and a nationally ordered matriculation (SSC and HSC exams), with less global cachet. Yet another consistent finding is that students who fail in English in national exams are mostly from rural areas which constitute the majority of the country.

The poster, a pictorial contrastive analysis, synthesises references and statistics to provide insights on these complex dynamics that mediate students’ English proficiency achievement in Bangladesh.

Mellina Ferro Costa Aston

Poster: Teacher Training and Inclusive Education in England from 1970s to Nowadays

The poster presents the development of my research so far; with a succinct description of the methodology, aims and objectives, pilot interview and preliminary findings. The main objective of the project is to investigate the ways in which the training of teachers have impacted upon the education of children with special educational needs in England. The proposed methodology is in part developed through an awareness of a diminishing opportunity to gain access to those individuals who were engaged in teacher training during the 1970s and who were influential in moving the special educational needs agenda forward. Therefore, the main methodology chosen is life histories.

Lena Bahou

Students as Researchers (SAR) in One Lebanese School: A Pedagogical Tool to Engage Voices and Cultivate Agency

In the last 20 years, various attempts have been made internationally to increase and expand young people's active participation and influence within schools and the wider community (Flutter, 2007). One of such school initiatives has been the re-emergence of 'student voice' as an umbrella term to indicate a wide spectrum of activity ranging from merely having a say when asked without a necessary response to its most radical form of altering school structures and conventional relationships, and opening up spaces to the presence of students (Cook-Sather, 2006). Recently however, student voice as one aspect of participation has manifested predominantly as exclusive and 'tokenistic' within an adult arena of competing educational reform agendas with few opportunities to influence changes (Fielding, 2006). These limitations prompted me to explore ways in which to bridge voice to agency by supporting students to acquire and apply research skills in their community (Holdsworth, 2000; Bland and Atweh, 2007). This exploratory action research aims to investigate developing research skills with 13 grade 7 / 8 students in one Lebanese school over the course of 16 days in collaboration with the school director and their teachers' support. Students identified, designed, carried out and presented seven research-for-action projects to the school in order to make a difference to issues that mattered to them. Another aim was to create through SAR the kinds of relationships and spaces whereby students and teachers could experience a new kind of partnership. Evidence gathered from student, teacher and the director's interviews as well as my own observations, suggests that SAR served as a catalyst for teachers to rethink their own practices and relationships with students; for students to enact their 'voices' and to some extent their agency; and for the director to introduce fundamental changes into the school culture and structure.

Madeleine Brens

The Arts Award: Creating Young Artists and Arts Leaders

The ethos of the Young People's Arts Award is to develop adolescents into arts leaders and practising artists. The programme fosters this mandate by involving apprenticeships, mentoring, one on one attention and real world experiences. Research indicates the need for adolescent programmes to focus on establishing the young person as a valued individual, with the ability to make their own decisions. The ethos of the Arts Award provides young people with these opportunities and in doing so is able to foster positive youth development. As a result the programme motivates young people in their own development into artists through the curricula and structure of the programme. This presentation will focus on an exploratory case study I completed which examined the experiences of three young people participating in the Arts Award. The findings demonstrate the programme's ability to motivate young people to participate through their work with advisors, apprenticeships, and work experiences within their community. The combination of these factors also promotes positive youth development and motivates their continued involvement in the programme. These findings have influenced my current doctoral research investigating the experiences of female young offenders taking part in a court mandated art programme which implements similar programming elements as the Arts Award. An introduction to this research will conclude my presentation on arts programming for young people.

Alka Seghal Cuthbert**The Incredibly Shrinking Teacher**

This paper explores how and why it is the case that often a 'good' teacher is considered to be one who minimises his / her presence – who facilitates rather than instructs. My argument is that:

1. This is a common occurrence, codified in policy and curriculum documents. It assumes authoritative knowledge is secondary to pupils' inner potentialities.
2. The popularity of this view owes more to wider socio-cultural changes than to the strength of any philosophical underpinnings or theories of learning. The role and status afforded to subject knowledge expresses a wider, collective belief in the intrinsic worth of knowledge, and of shared ideas and values.
3. That the shift from teacher to learner, from teaching to learning, can be interpreted broadly in two ways. Contrary to the popular positive interpretation that sees this as emancipatory for pupils, I argue that these developments are highly problematic in education because they devalue the status and role of subject knowledge.
4. In the specific area of education, subject knowledge has a crucial role in providing a source of professional authority upon which teachers can make claims to public trust and accountability. If formal knowledge is either decentred, or redefined as the same as experiential or tacit knowledge, then an important source of authority is undermined, as these types of knowledge are not specific to education.
5. This new element of instability in education is, I argue, creating a situation where teachers are encouraged to 'shrink' themselves as a central source of authority.

Nitu Duggal**The Reading Comprehension Strategy Instruction Programme (RCSIP) in Two Primary Schools**

Explicit instruction of strategies during the primary years has been proved effective for fostering reading comprehension of pupils. However, classroom observations in UK and USA have shown that explicit strategy instruction seldom takes place in classrooms. This problem raised questions of feasibility of explicit instruction of reading comprehension strategies in naturalistic classroom settings. Hence a Reading Comprehension Strategy Instruction Programme (RCSIP) was developed to examine teachers' views about feasibility of strategy instruction and impact on pupils' reading comprehension. RCSIP combined four strategies identified as effective by the National Reading Panel namely question generation, graphic organisers, summarisation and cooperative learning with the Pearson and Gallagher (1986) seminal model of explicit instruction.

It was carried out by two primary school teachers in England during shared and guided reading sessions. Data was collected through classroom observations, interviews of teachers, standardised reading test scores and verbal protocols of pupils to develop a case study of RCSIP. The findings showed that strategy instruction can be feasibly implemented in classrooms. There was also evidence that different outcomes of pupils' learning were achieved through prescriptive or exploratory approaches during strategy instruction. Further questions are raised about role of teacher pupil interaction for improving reading comprehension.

Veronica Hanke

Researching with Children: A Co-Authored Visual Methodology on Literacy Teaching Perspective

Researching 'with' young children and accessing their particular kinds of tacit expertise presents methodological difficulties which include: mutual comprehension, age appropriate concentration span, reading ability, memory span and the influence of unequal power. In spite of the challenges there are good reasons to value young pupil's perspectives on their education. First their right to have their views represented (United Nations Convention on the Rights of the Child, 1989); second, the value of their perspectives on their learning, in view of the limited amount of evidence and data available (Robinson and Fielding 2007). Visual methodologies can sidestep many of the methodological difficulties. This presentation will describe and explain the development of a co-authored drawings' methodology, a form of graphic elicitation, with KS1 children (aged 5-7 years). The method has enabled young pupils to communicate empathetic and cognitive perspectives on, and understandings of, literacy teaching.

Key Words

Pupil perspectives, co-authored drawings, visual methodology, Key Stage 1.

Michael Hast

Conceptual Change in Young Children's Explicit and Tacit Understanding of Object Speed and Acceleration

There is consensus among the existing literature that many students display a resistance to conceptual change within science education, notably within the domain of physics. The current research aimed to investigate whether at an earlier age alternative knowledge that might facilitate conceptual change could be tapped into. 144 children aged 4 to 11 years were assessed on their understanding of naturally induced object speed and acceleration along a horizontal, down an incline, and in free fall. Study 1 assessed the children's explicit conceptions of such motion using everyday objects. Their conceptions were further assessed in Study 2 within a more scientific frame using a tube and balls. Study 3 was a computer-presented quasi-replication of the tube-and-balls study. The results from all three studies suggest that while the children's understanding does not comply with accepted scientific views there is change in explanations over age. Study 4 aimed to assess the same children's tacit understanding of object motion. They were shown short video clips of the same set-up but with motion occurring, either correctly or incorrectly. The children were asked to decide whether the motion looked correct or not. The results indicate a mismatch between the tasks requiring explicit understanding and a task relying on tacit knowledge. It is hoped that the overall findings may contribute towards facilitating conceptual change within early science education.

Janine Hayward

An Investigation of Adolescents' Metacognitive Awareness of Self Belief: A Small Scale, Explorative Study with UK 12 and 13 Year Olds

The aim of this study was threefold. First, to understand if youth think about the nature of their self beliefs and if so, to identify what they think. Second, to utilise an active participation research approach by fully informing participants of the purpose of the research and gaining their input in to how the research could be designed. Third, factors for consideration in the development of an instrument to measure adolescent self belief metacognition were sought.

This explorative study is the first step on a journey to determine if there is a relationship between self belief metacognitive awareness and self discrepancy related depression, all of which can inhibit optimum learning and academic performance.

29 participants aged 12 and 13 years old from a popular, diverse Cambridgeshire secondary school were engaged. The qualitative research comprised of three phases including a classroom presentation and online interview, 12 one to one semi-structured interviews and group workshops. Overall consent was obtained from the school and parents while all participants provided consent for each phase of data collection and were aware of their right to withdraw at any stage.

Analysis is expected to involve a multi layered, inductive, grounded theory approach to coding (without saturation due to time constraints). In addition *a priori* codes relating to perceptions of self belief longevity, malleability, control and impact will be considered.

Results and conclusions are in progress and will be drafted by the time of this conference. Educational implications and SEAL recommendations will be highlighted as appropriate.

' "Thinking about thinking" has to be a principal ingredient of any empowering practice of education' (Bruner, 1996, p 19).

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Roxana Herescu

An Investigation into the Views and Practices of Teachers of Content and Language Integrated Learning (CLIL) in Romania

The aim of the presentation is to report findings from an empirical research project carried out in Romania which set out to explore teachers' views of CLIL. Specifically, the proposed study will gauge teachers' views on *the integration* of content and language aspect of the CLIL methodology and will identify whether these views correspond to their classroom practice.

As CLIL is contextually bound and hence there is no single blueprint that could successfully be applied across the board in Europe, the study will focus on the match / mismatch between teacher views and practice in the Romanian context. It is the way the teachers construe the term 'integration' that is bound to have implications on the development of their CLIL pedagogy.

Sonia Ilie**Does the Headteacher Matter? Educational Leadership Effects on Student Academic Achievement**

Within a school, educational leadership can take many shapes and can have a multitude of consequences for teachers and students. This project focused on one head teacher from a high-achieving urban Romanian upper-secondary school and aimed at discovering in which way the school leadership has influenced the practices of teachers and the academic results of students. The indirect effects of leadership on achievement were construed as mediated by teacher practices. A sample of 52 teachers was achieved, each teacher responding to a questionnaire concerning their perception of the headteacher's leadership activity, as well as their own practices within the school.

The analysis of the data aims to connect them with student achievement in the form of national, standardised school-leaving exam scores in a statistical analysis. While the connection between same-level data is less cumbersome and has indicated that some of the teacher practices can be significantly predicted by leadership activities, the multi-level modelling of effects, to include student achievement, raises a series of theoretical and methodological questions.

Ruth Levine**Researching Children's Languages and Identities: An Imaginative Approach**

Learning a second language has the potential to engage a learner's identity in profound and transformative ways. There are, however, few studies into the ways children's experiences of classroom-based language learning interplay with their understandings of themselves. Exploring the ways eight Key Stage 2 language learners with a range of home language profiles make sense of their identities as speakers of different languages required a creative approach to data collection. This paper focuses on three imaginative strategies for gathering data relating to children's perceptions of themselves and their languages. It provides the rationale behind taking this approach and examines one participant's engagement to illustrate how the activities can enable children to open up, explore and articulate their understandings of themselves as a speaker of their different languages.

Lisha Liu**Taught Master's Students' Curricular Engagement in the UK: A Conceptual Framework**

As a result of the rapid growth in the number of taught master's students over the past five years (HESA, 2009), various debates on the issues of taught master's curriculum and student engagement have become significant in academia (Knight, 1997; McEwen *et al*, 2005; Xue, 2008). In order to explore the taught master's students' curricular engagement in the context of UK higher education, this presentation will show a conceptual framework based on a synthesis of literature about the postmodern view of knowledge, curriculum, student engagement, learner identity and learning environment. The conceptual framework is an experiential enquiry-based engaging process which involves master's students' intellectual strategies, practical techniques and emotional applications. Each aspect has interaction with one another. In addition, theories of postmodern curriculum, taught master's

pedagogical characteristics, student learning styles, as well as staff and facility support are also analysed to further contextualise such engagement at master's level. Finally, a model of the expected taught master's students' curricular engagement is provided. It will be open for further revisions according to my empirical investigation into the actual students' curricular engagement.

Jane Murray

Knock, Knock! Who's there? Gaining Access to Children as Researchers

In research with children, challenges of gaining access to data in ethically appropriate ways are well documented (Hood, Kelley and Mayall, 1996; Lewis and Porter, 2004). Within an educational research context, studies engaging with children younger than 8 years as researchers in their own lives are less well documented (Clark and Moss, 2001), despite evidence suggesting the feasibility of this (Gelman and Wellman, 1991; Gopnik and Meltzoff, 1998). Addressing the conference theme of *Doing Research, Becoming an Educational Researcher* within the *Methodology and Theory* section, this presentation focuses on several challenges encountered when accessing data during a critical ethnographic study (Carspecken, 1996) located within a constructivist grounded theory approach (Charmaz, 2006). Conducted according to the British Educational Research Association's ethical guidelines (2004) and adopting observations and interview conversations, this participatory enquiry explored perspectives of professional educational researchers, children 4-8 years, their practitioners and primary carers on the nature and potential of children younger than 8 years as researchers. The presentation reflects on access challenges encountered when gathering data, including negotiating gatekeepers, securing consent and gathering material for analysis. It also discusses how the study developed in response to these challenges.

Key Words

Access; participatory enquiry; early childhood research; ethnographic case study; ethical considerations.

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Judy Sayers

Poster

There are many different stories a research student can tell about his or her experiences in analysing research data. This poster offers an account of one researcher's journey in developing a framework through which a teacher's story about his or her teaching of primary mathematics can be told (Guba and Lincoln, 1994). Initial analyses of primary teachers' practice drew on existing descriptive and analytical frameworks (eg, Askew *et al*, 1997; Kilpatrick *et al*, 2001; Andrews *et al*, 2004) and Government guidance and training documentation (DfES, 1999; 2003). However, these frameworks were only ever able to offer incomplete pictures. If the data are to tell their own stories alternative lenses needed to be developed. In my poster I outline the development of those lenses.

Key Words

Qualitative, interpretivist, naturalistic, constant comparison approach, Teacher practice, pedagogy, mathematical learning and teaching.

Moritz Sowada

Evaluative Judgements in the School Inspection Process: The Known, the Unknown and the Unknowable

School inspection is one of the major means for evaluation-based steering of the education sector. It can be characterised as a continuous large-scale policy intervention into a school system and has considerable financial costs attached to it. Judgements and recommendations for action resulting from school inspections with its attached regulations may significantly impact on the future development of schools such as the recruitment and retention of staff and pupils. Yet, it is surprisingly little known on how those judgements are reached. This raises questions about the confidence one can place in these judgements.

My paper will provide a critical overview of previous research addressing inspection methodology and the practice of judging. I will show that the researcher's own epistemological stance (eg, positivist, interpretivist) informs their assessment of the appropriateness of the judgement procedures applied and that this leads to different conclusions as to how the judgement process could be 'improved'. Nevertheless these studies are a useful source of information regarding the approach of the English inspectorate Ofsted, the consequences of this approach and the problems arising from it.

Lastly, I will point out gaps in the research literature which require attention by academics, inspectors and school representatives alike.

Garth Stahl**White Working-Class Boys' Educational Disaffection: Evidence from a High-Achieving Secondary School in London**

The disaffection of white working-class boys has been a major concern in the British education system since the 18th century. While the quality and provision of education for the working-classes has increased disaffection remains a persistent – and alarming – problem for educators and policy makers. Although the work in the area is diverse in terms of theoretical perspectives (Marxist, Foucauldian, psychological, etc), methodologies (participant observation, interviews, focus groups, etc) and foci (literacy, subcultures, laddish behaviour, hegemonic masculinity), my research will concentrate on the heterogeneity of white working-class boys educational experience in a high-achieving secondary school in London in which white working-class boys are consistently the lowest performing group. Specifically, what can we learn from white working-class boys' educational experiences and attitudes today? What does their experience tell us about white working-class education failure? In the gendered and classed identity construction of white working-class boys, what makes them engage or disengage with education and with learning? The study includes close analysis of where identity formation is a barrier to academic engagement. Utilising an ethnographic approach, a combination of methodologies was used: classroom observation, one-on-one semi-structured interviews (in which participants commented on video-recordings of themselves in lesson) and focus groups. Data from the cohort of fifteen participants – identified through FSM (Free School Meals) status – was analysed using Bourdieu's concepts of habitus, field, agency, structure and capital. The findings show the diversity of white working-class boys' experiences. Through my dialogues with participants, I was able to see how the peer group contributed to identity construction and how attributes consistently associated with white working-class boys – such as arrogance, idleness, rebellion – were largely facades masking high levels of anxiety over a lack of power. Additionally, through my qualitative approach I saw that while white working-class boys were the lowest performing ethnic group, they were still doing quite well, “getting on,” working to “maintain command of their own lives” (ibid), whether it was socially or academically.

Romy Trigg-Smith**Poster**

This research project investigated the impact of headteachers on grouping policies, practices and strategies for students in Key Stage 2. The investigation aimed to: ascertain the extent to which headteachers impact grouping policies, practices and decisions; determine how headteachers in schools with diverse pupil intake frame or understand problems concerning grouping; and identify the extent to which and how headteachers and schools strive to promote equity in grouping practices. Pursuing these research aims has practical significance as no found study has focused on how headteachers in challenging school contexts might indirectly or directly impact their schools' organisational strategies and practices with regards to pupil grouping.

Furthermore, current knowledge of leadership in relation to social justice is limited, particularly in relation to the role headteachers can play in expanding ideals of equal opportunity and equity. The researcher undertook an epistemological and ontological position aligned with interpretivism and a qualitative case study methodological approach. The study was conducted by using documentary analysis to construct a purposive sample of comprehensive secondary schools with diverse pupil intake and by using semi-structured

interviews to glean information from nine headteachers. A process of inductive and deductive coding of the interview transcripts revealed that headteachers impacted on grouping practices by instigating new overall strategies, initiating practices in the context of pre-existing strategies, asserting certain principles for staff to follow and capitalising on external and internal resources.

Preliminary analysis also suggests that headteachers considered problems in relation to grouping through multiple frames—human, political, symbolic and structural—but often their adherence to a particular frame affected how they approached issues and impacted on grouping. (Bolman and Deal, 1991) Furthermore, headteachers considered and operationalised equity in relation to grouping most often through a distributional lens rather than a relational lens. Although the size of the sample limits the findings' generalisability, the results do suggest that headteachers in diverse comprehensive schools can play a significant role in the formation of grouping strategies or practices and the ways that schools work towards social justice and equity with regard to grouping practices.

Constantinos Xenofontos

Poster

In mathematics education, pre- and in-service teachers' beliefs have been extensively examined, based on the assumption that beliefs are a significant determiner of what actually happens in classrooms. With regards to teacher education, many studies report that students enter their teacher training programmes with well-formulated views about teaching and learning, which are very difficult to change during coursework. In addition, results from comparative studies suggest that teachers' beliefs are culturally located and vary significantly across countries. In my project, I investigate (a) the cultural similarities and differences of elementary pre-service teachers about mathematical problem solving in Cyprus and England, and (b) any possible changes / shifts / developments of trainees' beliefs after three or four years as undergraduate students in Primary Education.