

QUESTIONING LOCAL PARTICULARITIES IN AN ERA OF THE SUSPECT MANTRA OF GLOBAL «EXCELLENCE» EDUCATION BRANDING

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This study takes a hybrid and deliberately tentative approach to educational research. It incorporates a literary, not social scientific, reading of the verbal analytics of the student teachers that will be the first generation of a potentially radically new and different curriculum in Scotland. They are also the first generation of their (working-class) families to attend university. Through close observation, combined with ethnographic textual analysis, in our empirical-philosophically inclined study we aim to situate these students within a dominant imaginary of a global context and to contest the extent they are personally ready to embrace Bauman's fluid, mobile world of the 21st century. Given the reluctance of contemporary academia to judge other lifestyles, we aspire to a position of intellectual courage where, by exploring their personal constructions regarding the meanings of their own cultural and leisure pursuits, we necessarily judge. Our purpose is not to label or judge (without justification) but rather interrogate, and potentially celebrate how these student teachers relate to their own – and an imagined wider – world. We believe that the cultural capital inhering in the cultural activities they consume will inevitably condition the school's hidden curriculum through which a sense of place, socially and geographically speaking, will be conveyed to children. In reassuringly sociological nomenclature, our paper can then be understood as engaging with the subject of the reproduction of society through the mechanism of state schooling affiliating itself with neo-liberal values which are anathema to certain conceptions of education as personal liberation. We are arguing that the education of teachers ought to attend to a greater extent to their inherited «life worlds».

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Intr oduction

And then a queer thought came to her there in the drooked fields, that nothing endured at all, nothing but the land she passed across, tossed and turned and perpetually changed below the hands of the crofter folk since the oldest of them had set the Standing Stones by the loch of Blawearie and climbed there on their holy days and saw their terraced crops ride brave in the wind and sun. Sea and sky and the folk who wrote and fought and were learnéd, teaching and saying and praying, they lasted but as a breath, a mist of fog in the hills, but the land was forever, it moved and changed below you, but was forever, you were close to it and it to you, not at a bleak remove it held you and burted you.

Gibbon, 1988/1932: 119

This quotation from the Scottish novel *Sunset Song* evokes a connection between the people and land that is distinctly not 21st century. It is precisely this provocative stance that provides an apt beginning for a paper that aims to explore the impact of change and movement in student teachers in 21st century Scotland. The research we present in this paper is relevant to the social construction of the teacher and the school curriculum. Our critical research is aimed at illuminating the education, formal and informal, of the future teaching force and the factors constructing their sensibilities. Our purpose is to look into their national roots and theorise their implications for education. Our informants are soon to become educators working with the uniquely Scottish recently devised Curriculum for Excellence (CfE) whose delivery in the classroom relies heavily upon the creativity and agency of individual teachers (Priestley, 2010). Our argument is that the policy supposition that newly qualified teachers do have the capacity to educate through the CfE may not be entirely warranted in view of the type of cultural capital they bring to the classroom and which will undoubtedly also shape their own identity as professionals. Our paper explores this vexed and contested issue through the context of the notion of the hidden curriculum: an intellectual provenance of our paper is Paul Willis's 1970s Marxist analysis of schooling concerning why working-class lads get working-class jobs which explores class reproduction through schooling. Based on the Scottish Government's own account publicly available on its education policy website (Education Scotland, n.d.), the CfE aims to develop four generic capacities whose semantics, for us, conjures the globally flexible neoliberal citizen, but as our academic ambition in this paper indicates the actual realisation of these capacities hinge around the *de facto* nature of teacher agency – children are to be helped to become: successful learners, confident individuals, responsible citizens, effective contributors (Education Scotland, n.d.).

The notion of roots, real and metaphoric, as well as cultural and personal change are central to our interpretations and indeed the main questions tentatively addressed in this paper

exploit ethnography and close textual analysis as interpretative methodologies – common to the cultural turn in social anthropology (Wagner, 1981). These intellectual tools are amplified by the deeply reflective literary investigations of Kenneth White, the Scottish émigré geopoet, and Edouard Glissant, a poet from the French Caribbean.

We do not therefore pretend our analysis belongs with a conventionally normative contribution to the standard canon of positivist educational research knowledge. The link between these two poets, which deserves separate study in itself, is primarily the notion of the poet as nomad and wanderer. Both draw specifically on the politics and poetics of their native land to inform their literary analysis of a changing modernity. The lyricism of their «essays», which significantly originate from beyond the academy, evoke a world that is in movement, but also firmly in touch with the land, to which our informants themselves are deeply attached. We draw on Kenneth White's (2004) geopolitical reading of Scotland and its state education system as a starting point for our own cultural journey where the motifs of journey and change are foregrounded. Our study is thus forced to move away from the «myths» and even mechanisticics of a professionalised Scottish education and a possible cultural narrow-mindedness into new, putatively more open, less institutionalised perspective, whose final destination, we feel, while admittedly elusive, is more authentic.

Methodological engagement

Our research analysis focuses on a group of 20 students aged 22-40, all female and, with the exception of one English student, all Scottish born and raised who elected to converse with us both as researchers about their lives, histories, interests, and community. The similarity of their demographics enables us to focus on the «Scottish» perspective and, given the nature of our exploration, this sense of cultural identity matters. It was also one of the reasons for interviewing them in pairs, allowing them to negotiate questions together and trigger differences leading to more original meanings. The students chose their own partner, which also made the interviews relaxed as we were all familiar and at ease with one another.

We conducted conversational semi-structured interviews (Emerson, Fretz, & Shaw, 1995; Flick, 1998), which further increased the informality of the setting and enabled the students to feel at ease. During these exchanges we drank coffee and shared a packet of biscuits. We were all relaxed and enjoyed presenting and arguing points of view together. It became clear to us all that this very interesting type of horizontal social exchange between staff and students was uncommon. In this way our research encounters had an intentionally ethnographic edge where both «parties» seemed to get to know the other for the first time. This informal interviewing

«procedure» was an attempt to counter any inhibitions the students may have felt discussing their sometimes personalised educational and cultural experiences with us. It was in this way a technique to undermine our own ascribed institutional power in the hope that our relations became less hierarchical. These observations with our sample were drawn over the course of a 12 week option on international education from notes taken after class. Perhaps because of the issues of personal and national identities, and the need to critique received representations of teachers whom they had encountered in texts and on school placements, meant that the same students were keen to be interviewed and make their own voices known and publicly recognised.

Following Duncan's (2000) ethnographic account of a study of BEd (Bachelor of Education) women, we recognise the importance of veracity and its contribution to analysis. That said we are aware they are likely to proffer interpretations whose truth value, in positivist terms cannot ever be fathomed, but then, as Ludwig Wittgenstein (1967) reminds us, paradigms contain their own distinctive truth values, and being incommensurable we ought not to try to judge one through another's reductive prism.

It is important to note that the constant need for reinvention in teacher identity is a much explored field in educational research (Beauchamp & Thomas, 2009), but our specific focus has been triggered by Biesta's refreshing point that we have forgotten to ask what a good education means (Biesta, 2006) within his broader outline of the connection between education, humanity and democracy. Given that these Scottish students are future educators of children, it seems important that part of their professional development involves encouraging probing insight into their own educational philosophies and supposed insights, even if this is not an explicit, or explicitly encouraged, part of their professional training taking place in the UK context of «customer satisfaction» which constrains attempts by academics to challenge inherited thinking patterns and their underlying values. We are interested in the implications for the identity of those already engaged in education in Scotland, particularly because the Scottish education system is on the threshold of a new curriculum that is «different in scale, scope and approach from any previous Scottish educational development» (Her Majesty's Inspectorate of Education, 2010: 10). This brings to the forefront questions about the sort of person who will indeed be «engaged in» education (Biesta, 2006), particularly because these student teachers are the first generation to use the CfE in their training and are therefore perhaps better acquainted with its terminology (and political rhetorics) than many of those practicing in the classroom.

Our student teachers are quite literally on the threshold of a whole putatively new vision of what learning in Scotland is about. Moreover, these students are involved in a dual process of both learning and teaching. Carneiro points to the connection between the two, suggesting

that «educating to learn and learning to educate are intertwined journeys» (Carneiro, 2003: 17). It is this metaphor of learning and teaching as a journey that provides the perfect starting point for this exploration. Metaphors, as Gobbo (2008) has so deftly portrayed, have long been used in education. Gobbo focuses on intercultural education and the metaphor of the migrant student as the «carrier» of culture. Student teachers are not «empty vessels» or «blank slates» since they already have a lifetime of immensely rich experiences behind them. Although the student teachers are not migrants in the sense used by Gobbo, they are nevertheless «carriers» of their own culture. Given the entwined nature of their role as both students and future educators of a curriculum, there is enormous emphasis on the personal qualities of the teacher. While the qualities of student teachers have been explored within cultural and postmodern contexts (Arthur, 2002; Malm, 2008), we are interested in the notion of journeys into and within education; it is the movement and dynamic – or lack thereof – that becomes our focus on identities and values.

Carneiro argues that educational contexts are the places in which «travellers in the world of knowledge – pupils and teachers alike – seek meaning and significance for their joint stories» (Carneiro, 2003: 14). Education then is a journey which looks to understand the other and relate to one another. The classroom then becomes a dynamic space charged with individual (hi)stories, each of which is in dialogue with another. We need to explore these stories, to read the students, in an attempt to understand the journey they will need to undertake to become teachers within the CfE. Of course, in an increasingly globalised world, the quest for «meaning and significance» becomes ever more problematic when there is little common linguistic or cultural ground.

Section 1: student life stories

The student teachers at the centre of our study share very similar (hi)stories; their sociocultural backgrounds are similar with the majority being the first generation of their family in higher education; many of their families are office workers or fathers and husbands are manual workers and their mothers and aunts are nurses and teachers themselves. This group of students have not travelled far geographically or socially. But they will no doubt have imaginatively and emotionally experienced an everyday notion of culture, the concept of culture as ordinary that Raymond Williams (1989) reminds us to respect as more authentic than prestigious «high-brow» forms. They continue to socialise with friends from school or home towns via social networks, but few live on campus or perceive their student colleagues to be their real peer group which many would frame through the concept of bonding social capital. This

is no doubt in part because around one quarter of our respondents are mature students with family responsibilities whose traditional domestic roles appeared to continue despite the demands of study and opportunities to encounter new friends and lifestyles.

Sense of place

Most chose to study at this particular institution because of its physical proximity, often for family reasons, such as Hannah:

I, basically, for me I could do teacher training here and it's only 20 minutes from X, I couldn't travel to Y every day. If it was the only place I could go I'm sure I would have went [sic] but the location, fitting in with the kids, was why I chose here.

The formal grammatical errors in speech and in writing are typical of the speaking and writing of many students who favour the local dialect and could be considered as part of their cultural make-up resonating with Basil Bernstein's (contested) notion of a sociolinguistic restricted as opposed to elaborated code. They are certainly representative of the local Scottish dialect and thus embed our students and future educators firmly in their geographical and symbolic local idiolect. This alone could merit a sociolinguistic study of these student teachers, but for us, this frequent and common use of non-standard English again firmly locates this study within a specific Scottish context where the stories are being told in the same language and from similar local community mores perspectives. Language encodes values and its usage identifies membership of particular identities, class and national. As anthropologists remind us, we «invent» cultures and languages almost literally «talk» them (Wagner, 1981).

Many of our interviewees also expressed a fear of moving away from home to train as teachers, such as Joanne:

I got into a few in Glasgow, but I would have had to have moved away for first year so that's why I just chose here, 'cause I didn't want to move up to Glasgow, so it's pretty close for me.

This connection and strong sense of place, perhaps surprising in the 21st century Western world, corresponds to Bob Lingard's pejorative reading of Scotland and Scottishness to a vague parochialism or even inward-looking nature (Lingard, 2008). Indeed, although there is much focus of academics on the fluidity and even rootlessness of 21st century Western living (Bauman, 2000; Ingold, 2007), the students in this particular study revealed on the contrary

intense personal connections to the land (physical and symbolic) of their birth and a desire to stay there. We could say their bonding social capital to their place or origin was immensely strong and remarkably at odds with academic urban discourses conjuring fluid and indeterminate projects of the self. Giddens remarks:

What to do? How to act? Who to be? These are focal questions for everyone living in circumstances of late modernity – and ones which, on some level or another, all of us answer, either discursively or through day-to-day social behaviour. (1991: 70)

Returning to our metaphor of journeys into education, there is a clear sense that the physical travelling is limited and typically highly conventional in terms of «package holiday» destinations to «the sun». The majority of the students are learning on home territory – it is the «local university» according to its own market branding analytics – where they are not, we believe, greatly challenged by a new physical or more crucially symbolically alternative cultural landscape. We believe these geographic and cultural cartographies also conjure their interior desire to venture only within known individual limits setting out their locally inherited «sense of place». Our «natives» are unlike those Scots characterised by the renowned Scottish historian Tom Devine whose courage in literally making a perilous journey over the Atlantic Ocean as merely the beginning of a life of adversity underpinned the now questionable colonial ambitions of the earlier, hugely wealthy, British state.

Interestingly, there is specific reference to local landscape as Jane talks about her reason for choosing this higher education institution, telling us: «Mine was psychological – driving to the seaside every day was much better than driving into the city centre. It is a much better drive, that was my thinking». Jane's pragmatic comments reinforce the sense that an urban journey does not have to involve real physical movement, but can take place on other levels. Her feelings of driving into the open space away from urban settings, but still in control of her own transportation are perhaps not surprising for a student choosing to attend a local academic campus, but they also evoke the lyricism of the Scottish location. We feel her account conveys a sense of belonging and personal safety with resonances of a childhood spent playing happily on the beach to which she re-visits as a successful adult person on her drive. It is important to remember that this sea is no calm Mediterranean, but can unleash fury and rage. For some, it is dull and grey. Before the advent of package holidays to the sun in the 1970s, most working-class people took their «trade holidays» in what were classified then as resorts dotted along this coastline.

This banal, but endearing focus on the local landscape correlates to White's imaginative rendering geopolitics and his belief of the specific influence of the Scottish landscape on its

people and their thinking. He argues that: «We're in a new epistemological landscape. It's like a complex, moving seascape with a headland of conceptual possibility, and poetry in the air like the wings of an albatross» (White, 2004: 16).

His optimistic language is embedded in the landscape and its constant tumultuous movement. Is the Scottish state's adumbration of a global identity manifested in its corporately branded CfE part of this «conceptual possibility» which would allow Scotland to escape from «The idealistic structures [which] have collapsed and crumbled – leaving in their wake, most of the time, only confusion, fantasy, horror or irony? (*ibidem*: 24). The emphasis on rupture on the past, on the openness of the future and a changing meaning and role for knowledge itself is similar. The difference lies in the poetics of course yet ultimately it all hinges upon those supposed agents of social change: the future teachers who may merely continue to express profoundly local affiliations. The state's educational discourse of excellence is a signifier with global resonance coupled with capitalist sensibility. It, the trope of «excellence», conjures a neo-liberal world where ambition and striving count over local community collectivist affiliation. It belongs with the impersonal and disengaged habitus characterising Ulrich Beck's (1992) risk society. We believe it privileges economic goals rather than humanistic. It belongs therefore with the UK's New Labour self-help language of «opportunities» designed to ameliorated cultures of state benefit dependency and child poverty (Piachaud, 2012).

Section 2: potential change?

2.1. Looking inwards

The emphasis on the innovative nature of this new CfE suggests the need to break with the previous traditional book learning system, and its cultural rootedness within a profession and its uniquely national mores, although it does make one query to what extent any education can ever be said to be that different from before (Holligan, 2010). Indeed, as the following quote from the 16th century Philip Seymour demonstrates, educational aspirations for successful learning to cater for an aspirational subjectivity are far from new: «For who will be taught if he bee not moved with desire to be taught. And what so much good doth that teaching bring forth... as that it moveth one to doe that which it doth teach» (Seymour, as cited in White, 2004: 33, *sic*).

The desire for teaching and learning is intertwined and enriching and, again, emphasis is upon the dynamic movement between the two. The introduction of the CfE has been, perhaps inevitably, met with criticism from the media and academics alike. Priestley and Humes (2010)

argue that the initial potential for real change has been lost and that the current form of CfE instead paradoxically limits creativity and freedom for teachers as the four capacities may inevitably impose a definitive cultural straightjacket oriented to the mores of business and neoliberal driven economic growth. Indeed, throughout the rationale for CfE the word «change», as opposed to progress, is repeated in terms of changing society, but also the changes needed to create an education system that will enable people to be global citizens, whose meaning is not developed. The focus on change, on an apparent rupture with the past points to revolution and sets this new curriculum up as a mechanism that will somehow return Scotland an (imagined) former affluent self, but in retrospect, it resonates with a morally highly dubious colonial triumphalism. Scotland has always prided itself on the centrality of education to its very identity, vital as Lingard argues to the very sense of «Scottish self-perception» (Lingard, 2008: 976) and so perhaps rather than a break with the old, this emphasis on change represents a desire for a reconnection with the past when Scotland was a subject part of a British Empire and now it is being «sold» as a commodity to drive a global business order. Indeed, the word «mechanism» seems to evoke the sense of repetition, as if the student were indeed cogs moving in similar ways upon well-treaded ground whose outcomes are clearly specified by the CfE boundaries.

There is however also a dominant econometric rationale provided for the need for a new curriculum. Graham Donaldson, the former Chief Inspector of Scotland's schools and now Professor of Education at the University of Glasgow, provides justification for change, arguing, as we have intimated several times, that:

Scotland's future economic prosperity requires an education system within which the population as a whole will develop the kind of knowledge, skills and attributes which will equip them personally, socially and economically to thrive in the 21st century. It also demands standards of attainment and achievement which match these needs and strengthen Scotland's position internationally. (Donaldson, 2009: 2)

This quotation is provided in full to give a sense of the rhetoric and of the language used. The use of the word «strengthen» implies that Scotland is already a strong nation with international weight and is thus tapping into one of the «myths» about Scottish education (Munn & Arnott, 2009). There is emphasis on both the vocational and the academic achievements that will be met. The imperialistic tone seems to be incongruous with the image of 21st century life where the global citizen is one who can move freely and with ease amongst fellow humanity, regardless of language or culture. Indeed, one of the most striking features of the CfE language is its inclusive nature: «the population as a whole» will be armed with this knowledge and skills, and yet this analytic ignores Scotland as a deeply class ridden society associated with a powerful

private education system strategically networked with prestigious professions and elite universities. It also contains a west/east social and geographical divide whose meaning connects with Italy's very marked north/south social and economic divide.

Although lacking the poetics of White, the hegemonic dogma, a mantra of capital accumulation through quantitative attainment and measurement, he expresses is not dissimilar for the suggestion is that there is a need to look outwards, beyond the sea, rather than inward. This need to look outwards is not only geographical but is also cultural (the trope of the commercial entrepreneur is implicitly evident), for of course the two are intertwined. Leading Scottish educationalists go further, it is an admittedly different political trajectory from Donaldson's, and suggest that the demise of social critique and strong corporate tendencies in UK universities (Collini, 2012), and indeed education at large, is due to the anti-intellectualism of the education system as a whole being insular and demanding of ultimate ideological conformity (Humes, 1986; Humes & Bryce, 2003).

In this case, a lack of critique in higher education is cultural (and political) and, for these authors, carefully policed by a historically powerful civil service cadre, as Professor Walter Humes has publicly recounted being subjected to intimidation by a senior education inspector in the light of his critique of official power. With specific reference to education, he argues that it is «*ironic that the institution charged with opening the minds of the young should seek to narrow the thinking of the main agents of change*» (Humes, 1986: 20). Higher education itself is charged by Humes with collusion, self-aggrandisement elitism and a cultural entrenchment in values that correspond to a questionable corporate managerialism. The only solution, according to Humes, is to completely rethink the process of learning as we know it. This observation is also made by White, who makes acute, if damning, assertions about the refusal of Scottish people themselves to engage with material deemed to be intellectual. Indeed, he is raging against, like Collini (2008), and also Furedi (2004) what the modern materialistic world has done to our culture, and people:

Hustled hither and thither between bureaucracies and circuses, between boredom and distraction, unable to get his bearings in a civilization which, having no deep culture, tries to camouflage its fundamental lack by making a lot of noise and flashing lots of images, the citizen ends up (...) more or less satisfied, but knowing little real joyance, lives on complacently in a well-filled mediocrity. (White, 2004: 59)

This image of the Scottish citizen is very different from the confident individual, responsible citizen, successful learner and effective contributor that the CfE states as its four core «*capacities*» and upon which it wants to create new Scottish types, or habitus, in Pierre Bourdieu's concept, the global economically motivated citizen. Instead, there is the implication that we have

produced generations of the mediocre who know not the pleasure or jouissance of learning and enjoying ideas, but are instead passive consumers of a fast-moving world popular culture which dazzles, but does not nourish critical or political faculties.

This somewhat lengthy quotation is so important for our study because he describes with such poignancy the students we encountered. Their hobbies consist mainly of watching television soaps and reading emotional moving novels, yet, as the students themselves laughingly tell us, not to be taken seriously either. They expressed guilt, but manifestly endorsed the social and emotional pleasures of participating in a popular commercialised culture which proved as focal point for their daily conversations. Several tell us how embarrassed they are by the programmes they watch on television (*Glee*, *Come Dine With Me*) or the books they enjoy (*Cecelia Ahern*, *Jackie Collins*), because they consider them to be «lowbrow», which they demonstrably are in terms of Bourdieu's classist theory of cultural consumption. Their personal discomfort we observed at talking about what they like is interesting. There is a sense that they «should» as upwardly socially mobile future teachers be watching and reading different material which implies they are aware of conventions around class tastes. This apparent chasm could be read as a sociological phenomenon of the relationship between the consumer, goods and the construction of the self within society (Bauman, 2000). However, we read it against the context of an anti-intellectualism prevalent in Scotland outlined by Humes (1986) and White (2004). There is not only a fear of moving elsewhere and of uprooting oneself, but also a fear of *being seen* to be too clever. We must remember the depth of their sense of belonging to their communities of origin and families where most have not attended university, and whom they aim to remain attached to and cared for by. These layers of social complexity also embrace their bonding social capital which their cultural inclinations reflect as well as reinforce at home: several informants shared with us how they typically watched TV with friends and partners discussing it as they watched the show. Raymond Williams, the Marxist literary critic, coined the term «culture as ordinary» to denote an emotional sense involving attachment to real places as sites of community life which he opposes to what he calls disdainfully «tea shop» culture in the middle-class Cambridge university town. Our informants however reveal attachments to local places and simultaneously consume a globalised media culture which homogenises and privileges personal conformity.

It is significant (and consistent) that none of our informants mentioned the intellect or intellectual qualities when discussing important teacher qualities, or what attracted them to their own leisure interests and pastimes. This point is made effectively by one of our informants who think that, in Scotland, there is a suspicion of clever people as the Other, as a critical observation from Anne reveals: «I suppose some people are intimidated by what they perceive to be intellectual people». Academics such as Stefan Collini (2008) have traced the figure of the intel-

lectual in the UK and acknowledge that there is not the same tradition of the intellectual, nor the same positive connotations that exists in other European countries where, especially in France, they are more public figures routinely taking part in televised debate. However, the complete absence of the word «clever» or «intellect» from the image of teacher traits in Scotland is significant and, we feel, concerning. It may be one of several values which they convey as teachers through the hidden curriculum helping to reproduce what they found reassuring as they grew up. Moreover, any sign of cleverness is perceived to be a negative trait:

My daughter, my oldest daughter, has probably went [sic] the other way because she was quite clever at school and a lot of people wouldn't speak to her because she was clever at school. But now she can be out in the club and they'll speak to her and she doesn't know how that has changed. (Anne)

The hostility displayed towards a child perceived to be clever is telling and gets to the crux of what Humes (1986) and White (2004) describe. White blames the «mediocrity» of the Scottish education system which is based on an apparently (democratic) egalitarian principle. When discussing their cultural habits, the students were conscious that they were not «intellectuals» but ironically are what makes it cultural or at least culturally specific. The prevalent lack of what White (2004) calls a «deep culture» is inevitably going to inhibit students from being able to engage with the apparent openness of the CfE and become the successful learners they are in turn meant to «create». These students are products of a system which favours the immediate thrill of the surface, but which fails to probe and unravel assumptions and so liberating children from inherited questionable values. An individual who is seen to be «different» is then ostracised by others, including themselves potentially given the meanings of their particular cultural capital. Raymond Williams, judged from this perspective, may be guilty of sentimentalising the working-class communities he so fondly describes in Wales.

White argues, quite explicitly, that culture is «absent from our world-thinking» (2004: 197), a statement of fact that is certainly substantiated by the majority of our students *on one level at least*. His diagnosis of a «historic-cultural paralysis» (*ibidem*: 201) with all its implications of arrested development is even more damning. The sense of petrifaction, though, is certainly in line with the refusal of the majority of our informants to venture far from their familiar cultural and national territory.

As the life stories of our students have revealed above, there is a tendency to remain close to geographical roots rather than seeking adventure beyond the comfort of a home environment. If we step back from the CfE and focus on our national teacher training university providers and follow Biesta's (2006) examination of what constitutes 21st century education, we can begin to question the kind of education our undergraduates receive, and significantly seem

to accept as denoting high quality. It is possible that the limitations of our education system come in part from the limitations of our students and indeed ourselves to position ourselves elsewhere, or as Barnett puts it, «the capacity to become an Other, to inhabit, if only briefly, a cognitive perspective that is unfamiliar» (Barnett, 1997: 19).

The brief analysis of the tone and language of the CfE is not to denigrate its philosophy but rather to question how the development of an education system can have taken place in the 21st century without attempting to *also* critically define and systematically interrogate the identity and values of those at the heart of the educating profession – teachers. One is forced to ask, as this article explores, who or what emerges as the educator equipped to implement these «changes». The educational theorist Biesta – himself tellingly an outsider to Scotland being from continental Europe – refers to the educational ideal and argues that what is «central to this tradition is the question of what constitutes an *educated or cultivated human being*» (2006: 2-3, our emphasis). Having established the need to explore the identity of a new teacher in Scotland at the birth of the CfE and in our global world, how does our education system then engage with the international aspect which is mentioned throughout the corporate inspired promotional literature for CfE?

2.2 Looking outwards

On the one hand, we have a new curriculum that represents openness towards the international stage. On the other, one is forced to wonder how an «inward-looking nation» such as Scotland with its limited international education can create 21st century global citizens. However, in line with other higher education establishments, university based Education Faculties in Scotland are beginning to recognise these lacunae and are trying to forge international links which may be necessary, but not sufficient conditions for challenging the limitations we controversially highlight in this paper. There is indeed a national and political recognition that international exchange is a necessary part of all education. The infamous «Grand Tour» of the European upper-classes was itself of course an integral part of their education being a broadening of their mind and outlooks. The Quality Assurance Agency for higher education (QAA) was responsible for the signing of the Bologna Agreement in 1999 which aimed to create a European Higher Education Area and enable students to move freely across universities in this zone. It is more challenging to include vocational courses in this kind of exchange, because of the constraints of professional placements. However, it is clear that professional bodies such as the General Council Teaching Scotland (GCTS) are actively encouraging international placements for students. Given the changing profile of the Scottish classroom with an increasing

multicultural dimension, it is important that education students are aware of these changes and have the skills to be able to deal with cultural and linguistic differences in the classroom. Many of the BEd students have little experience of encounters compared with those from other countries and cultures, who may also, of course, be from a different social class.

All students in Languages in higher education must spend time in another culture as an essential part of their undergraduate university degree. Students are therefore trained in intercultural competence and have become accustomed to thinking about encounters with Others and of the importance of considering the world from another perspective. While some research has been carried out on the intercultural and even ethical implications of these extended stays abroad as part of an academic qualification (Phipps, 2007; Phipps & Gonzalez, 2004; Werry, 2008), we know that the same kind of international experience is not as widely available for Education students in Scotland. This means that many students have little international experience and are unlikely to have the financial or cultural background to enable them to spend part of their degree abroad. However, from our perspective of the «other», this lack of international education has serious implications for any educator of children in the 21st century, especially if their sensibilities are akin to those we have described. The lack of intercultural exchange experienced by these BEd students (our informants) is potentially professionally challenging, as the following quote from King demonstrates:

The new watchwords in education, «celebrating diversity», imply the democratic ethic that all students, regardless of their sociocultural backgrounds, should be educated equitably. What this ethic means in practice, particularly for teachers with little personal experience of diversity and limited understanding of inequity, is problematic. (2004: 71)

King brings to the forefront the diversity amongst the population and, rightly, the determination to make sure that all children are given the same opportunities. However, how can teachers do this if they have little understanding of difference? Our observational notes also express our own surprise at the level of monoculturalism in these students in 21st century Britain. By this stage in their university career, all of the students have had four school placements and many of them spend or have spent additional time in schools working in After-care clubs or even volunteering as classroom assistants. However, all of them said they would not know how to engage with a child from a different cultural or linguistic background. Two students had been in classrooms where there had been a Polish child, but they both said that it had been difficult to communicate with because the child «didn't speak English». From their interviews, it is clear that these students perceive the most important traits in a teacher to be empathy and kindness, yet there was a sense of disbelief that they would have to «cope with»

pupils who did not «even speak English». The fear of the foreign is flagrant, but remediable through dedicated training.

Indeed it was interesting to be part of a selection process for the students where one student was rejected on the grounds that, although she had been teaching English abroad for a year, her knowledge of the Scottish school system was too weak. The implication is that her own school experience would somehow have been contaminated with external factors from «other», «foreign» systems. The rejection of this particular student hints again at a particular hostility to anything that interferes with an essential «Scottishness» that will endanger the children in a teacher's care. Surely one could argue that those who have the intercultural experience of living and working abroad and overcoming precisely the communication barriers encountered by the BEd students mentioned above are the ideal candidates to deliver the CfE. This suspicion of the Other is therefore not only cultural but also institutional.

Moreover, in discussion on the same topic of multiculturalism in the classroom with teachers already in post, a similar fear emerged. One teacher spoke of a recent trip to France where she had been shocked by the «rudeness» of the French where she had felt the children in her care were roughly treated linguistically but also even physically. She voiced a number of stereotypes about the food and her general perception was distinctly negative. It felt as though, while drawn to the «exoticism» of the foreign experience, this same teacher seemed threatened by it and returned to the safety of French stereotypes of aggression and frog legs. Surely one of the challenges of CfE then is to overcome the narrow monoculturalism amongst Scottish trainee teachers and teachers too. If teachers have no intercultural understanding, it is harder to communicate cross-culturally.

All of the students interviewed travel abroad on an annual basis and indeed two of the students had worked abroad. Their work experience was not in any educational setting but both were keen to go back and teach in schools abroad once they graduated. Four other students expressed an interest in teaching abroad when they qualified, but more said they could not leave their parents. Even after several years of undergraduate study, the students felt unable to leave the comfort of home territory. International experience then is mainly about two weeks holiday abroad in to a sun destination, Spain is popular, where there is little interaction either linguistically or culturally with the indigenous population. Many comment on the «importance of the warm sun» once a year. A couple of students evoked the pleasure of weekend breaks rather than a long haul holiday, such as Diana below:

Bulgaria we went to for a week's holiday because it was really cheap. I didn't want to go, I didn't fancy it, it just sounded a bit like Bulgaria no thank you, but the travel agent assured me, and I thought it was all I could afford, and I went and I absolutely loved it, it was great, it really was. It was, like, a Spanish resort. It was great, the people were dead friendly, it was cheap and it was dead clean.

What makes it so enjoyable for the student are the same things that so alienated the Continuous Professional Development (CPD) teacher: food, hygiene, perceived friendliness of the locals. In other words, it is the familiar points of cultural reference that put the students at ease. There is no mention by any of the students of the excitement of new discoveries or engaging passionately with different cultures. Indeed, it is arguably the fear of difference that is most alienating of all, particularly sensory differences.

The travel habits of the students are perhaps most easily summarised by the terms used in tourism of the difference between the tourist (as consumer) and the traveller (who wants to learn about different cultures and language) that has emerged in the explosion of recent travel writing. The latter positions him/herself firmly in the ethnographic position – s/he is an observer of culture. In this type of travel writing, the «traveller» protagonist undergoes some kind of transformation from which there is no return. A classic literary example of personal transformation being what took place in the caves to an upper middle class English character in E. M. Foster's novel *Passage to India*. There are many problematic concerns to be raised by this kind of transformational journey, not least the often self-aggrandizing or imperial aspects of these journeys (Pratt). Nevertheless, surely it is indeed the international encounter that encourages reflection on and movement towards understanding difference that is so necessary for our students in a global world. This kind of experience is surely what we want our students to undergo on their educational journeys? For, what is the purpose of movement and of travel if not to encounter other cultures and to learn how to communicate – linguistically but also perhaps more importantly interculturally – with others? Encountering difference and Otherness has to be one of the key skills needed by all young people in our global world.

It is clear from the above literary inspired research analysis that despite the changing profile of our schools, our students and qualified teachers are at best unaware and at worst scared of different cultures. Recent media articles draw attention to particular schools who are embracing their newly-found multiculturalism, but there is no coherent approach in Scotland. This lack of vision for the future is illustrated in the lack of provision in trainee teacher programmes across Scotland, where future teachers are ill-prepared for the reality of the so-called global classroom.

We can conclude this section by noting that the internationalisation of the education system within Scotland as a whole is pregnant with exciting possibilities. However, as Luxon and Peelo (2009) explain, it has to be more than vague policy outlines and political mantras. Although the higher education system in the Western world would pride itself on its internationalisation with its international networks and global communities, Barnett identifies the superficial nature of this supposed internationalisation: The university system and its heritage

likes to think of itself as cosmopolitan with its worldwide connections, its array of languages and lifestyles (across the disciplines) and its vision beyond the ordinary. In fact the university has been a thoroughly rural community. Its international connections, forming so-called invisible colleges, are simply the rural community of a discipline writ large. (Barnett, 1997: 57)

This perspective highlights the exclusive, rather than the inclusive nature of higher education, a point that is reinforced by postcolonial ruminations on the scholar as a predominantly western figure (Kumar, 2006). We therefore have universities that are unable to move beyond Western norms trying to implement an internationalised and globalised education.

Nevertheless, by aligning the internationalisation agenda with global citizenship and intercultural skills, then schools and universities can examine the society in which they live with the critical gaze necessary if they are going to move freely within it. It is an agenda that can only be brought to fruition if it is aligned with a cultural shift. It is the role of educational establishments – primary, secondary, further and higher – to enable young people to begin that process. However, we still have not fully identified what sort of teacher is needed for this – what is this cultural identity and why is it important? How can teaching embody learning about difference? The students are in the business of learning about teaching, it is clear they are often unaware of Otherness and of the intercultural skills necessary for our «knowledge society» in the global world? This section demonstrates that our students and future educators do not have the international awareness to enable such encounters and arguably may even be hostile to the global world that removes them from the safety of their roots.

Section 3: shifting perspective

From the previous sections, a chasm has emerged between educational desires and aspirations in Scotland and the international contexts. We have tried to account for these macro level tensions by a focus on the qualities of the teacher. If Scotland is seeking to create global citizens then it has to move beyond the current mould of teacher formation and identity. We argue that the postcolonial world offers a very possible way to begin overcoming some of the «obstacles» identified above.

Much is made of the process of globalisation and the way in which it is changing the economic and social world. Its impact on education is increasingly tangible and is seen as important in the development of comparative and international education (Tikly, 1999). However, as educational researchers such as Tikly (*ibidem*) and Lavia (2007) have pointed out, the points of reference in this area are centred around the Western world. We propose that, in order to

reconfigure our education system to meet the needs of the 21st century, our perspectives must be adapted accordingly. Rather than considering the Western world as the norm (a practice critiqued since the «birth» of postcolonial studies), there needs to be a seismic shift of perspective. In our increasingly globalised world, it has now become impossible to talk of «identity» in the singular as individuals search for a place they can call «home». As we travel more, the notion of rooting ourselves in permanence has become increasingly problematic as we in the West are still in search of a «dwelling place» (Ingold, 2007). In the French Caribbean, where multiple roots, languages and identities have always wrestled with one another for dominance, contemporary writers have attempted to find a voice that expresses this plurality. Edouard Glissant, a Martinican thinker and poet, argues that the occidental world can look to the Creole world to learn how to live in this changing world. This is an interesting shift of perspective: the West, the previous «norm» (Said, 1978) can look to the Caribbean to understand its own shifting culture. There are many uncomfortable and challenging issues raised by this notion, not least the ethics of attempting to compare the journeys made by contemporary Westerners to the transatlantic «rupture» that was the original journey of many Martinicans. Nevertheless, it is only by turning norms and expectations upside down that we can begin to understand the plural world identity of young people.

Édouard Glissant uses the word «tout-monde» (whole world) to describe precisely this kind of perspective. He argues that for those who cannot trace their roots, who speak several languages and «belong» to different cultures, there is always necessarily an element of opacity. Rather than fight against this opacity and attempt to unravel the strands that shape our identity, we have to accept the plural dimensions and explore the options this diversity throws up. It seems that this definition of identity is more relevant to the global society in which we live where very few places remain monocultural. A Creole perspective opens a new way of considering the world as a place in flux, where there are no clear-cut definitions about where we come from or where we are going. Given the «uncertainty» identified by Barnett of the era in which we live and particularly about an education system that demands flexibility and fluidity, this Creole identity seems particularly apt. It also forces the Western world to move beyond a somewhat limited view of the world where the West is the centre. It is the only perspective which enables students in Scotland to become global citizen because it does not rely on specific economic or cultural capital but requires a different way of thinking.

The other defining aspect of «Creoleness» is its refusal to be completely and finitely defined. Glissant argues in favour of the «*étant*» as opposed to the «*être*», making the point that we are always in the process of becoming, of being (Glissant, 1990). This is also closely aligned to Biesta's (2006) call to leave education open and stop attempting to define it too carefully. Indeed this fluidity and sense of identity being a constant work-in-progress is something that

emerged from the interviews with the students. Many of them acknowledge the limited nature of their existence so far and expressed a desire to travel more and learn more about other cultures in order to improve their personal and professional self-worth despite a fear and a reluctance to do so.

Indeed, given the demography of many students, perhaps one of the ways to initiate them into other worlds and different perspectives is through virtual travel such as through the medium of film, as suggested by Giroux (1994). This practice has been used with some success in the US and Australia and we also found that the students responded well to the material and it made them reflect on difference.

In a session on multiculturalism, we discussed an extract from *The Class*, a French film set in the classroom which focuses on the dynamic between the mainly second generation immigrant students and the metropolitan French teacher. The majority of our students highlighted the benefits of using film to represent situations and encounters they may not experience otherwise. This is especially relevant in the context of our study because the students have little personal experience of the multicultural environment and remain at large seemingly indifferent to the changing demographic profile of the classroom in many urban schools.

The very title of Glissant's (1990) text, *Poétique de la relation* (Poetics of the Relation) also provides a key with which to unlock and overcome the difference. The French verb «relier» which can mean «to relate or to bind together again» gives us the language with which we can begin to relate to one another and find the common points of reference. It is about shifting perspectives but does not have to involve the physical travel advocated by White. It can instead be simply about sharing stories, entering in dialogue, relating to the Other as a way of overcoming the fear of difference rather than of overcoming difference itself.

Next steps

In guise of an ending, following our study we argue that in Scotland we can, and even must, shift perspective if we are to deliver what the new curriculum demands. A clear way to enable student teachers to engage with the global world as an imaginary and actuality is by removing localised Scottish monocles and adopting bifocals that enable them to consider the world, especially themselves as persons with unique agency, as a political construction whose claims to naturalness they should aim to deconstruct not passively consume and uncritically.

Rather than teacher education assigning them formulaic «professional values» and enclosing them in a normalising system, bolstered by hegemonic neo-liberal values, a postcolonial perspective opens up the profession to the 21st century because it enables them to consider the

world as a historically produced entity and their local positionality within it. As comparative education demonstrates, it is only by inhabiting other perspectives and associated identifications that an individual can then critically appraise her/himself to begin the uncertain journey into an alternative critical awareness and a different sense of the unique impact they are capable of achieving during their professional lives. Creoleness and Glissant's vision of a «whole world view» can help begin this journey away from the safe roots of the nurturing bonds of a «compelling embrace of the profoundly reassuring warm, possibly mentally and philosophically stultifying bonds of local homelands».

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