Proposal for a Symposium for the SRHE Conference 2009

Centre for Higher Education and Equity Research (CHEER), University of Sussex

Research Domain: Higher Education Policy

Convenor: Professor Louise Morley, University of Sussex
Respondent: Professor Penny Burke, Roehampton University

Caught Between the Inertia of Archaism and the Frenzy of Hypermodernisation: Exploring a Cultural Sociology of Higher Education

Rationale

Higher education today is often characterised by the techno-rationalism of hypermodernisation. However, this is often underpinned with archaic patterns of participation, employment practices, social processes and power relations.

The UK’s priorities for the next 15 years focus on innovation, impact, knowledge transfer/exchange and wealth creation. When inclusion and equalities are considered, they tend to relate to quantitative changes in the form of widening participation for different social groups. In the policy imaginary, there is less emphasis on social processes and power relations embedded in higher education itself. The dominant discourse of the knowledge economy privileges knowledge liquification and optimisation. It overlooks the complexities of the power/knowledge conjunction, the affective domain i.e. knowledge as pleasure and pain, or indeed the social implications of a possible knowledge recession.

The Centre for Higher Education and Equity Research (CHEER) is committed to developing a cultural sociology of higher education. We believe that we need to reinsert a sociological imagination into higher education studies as an analytical corrective to disembodied and socially de-contextualised policy discourses. This symposium will interrogate how power operates in identities, assessment and transitions.

1. Sex, Grades and Power: Gender Violence in African Higher Education

Professor Louise Morley and Dr Kattie Lussier

Abstract

The putative feminisation of higher education has become a global discourse. However, quantitative increases only tell a partial story about women’s participation. In some cases, this is impeded by symbolic violence in quotidian gender relations. Women students’ reporting of sexual harassment has been widespread in our study of widening participation in higher education in Ghana and Tanzania (www.sussex.ac.uk/education/wideningparticipation). The hierarchical power relations within universities appear to have naturalised a sexual contract in which some male academics consider it their right to demand sex for grades. These practices
are contributing to social pressures for women students to reflexively minimise their visibility and academic performance, and the construction of negative female learner identities. For example, if women fail, this is seen as evidence of their lack of academic abilities and preparedness for higher education. If they achieve academically, this is attributed to prostitution, and women’s ‘favoured’ position in the gendered academic market.

**Paper**

Globally, the Gender Parity Index (GPI) for higher education (HE) was 1.08 in 2007 suggesting that participation rates are slightly higher for women than for men (UNESCO, 2009: 15). While this is unevenly distributed across academic disciplines and geographical regions, gender equality gains have produced a crisis discourse of feminisation (Leathwood and Read, 2008). Women’s successes are recoded into problematisation of men’s underperformance (HEPI, 2009). Quantitative increases tell a partial story, and gendered power continues to be relayed via quotidian practices.

Our study of widening participation in HE in Ghana and Tanzania reveals sexual harassment as a discursive and actual practice in all case study universities (www.sussex.ac.uk/education/wideningparticipation). In addition to collecting statistical data on how gender intersects with poverty and age in four programmes of study in one public and one private university in Ghana and Tanzania (Morley and Lugg, 2009; Morley and Lussier, 2009), the project conducted 200 interviews with academic staff and policymakers and 200 life history interviews with students. An academic manager from the public Ghanaian university articulated the doxa of sexual harassment:

> Sexual harassment is a way of life at this university ... and people don’t like to talk about it ... the female students are very vulnerable to lecturers... and the girls think that’s a legitimate way to get marks. Boys think the girls have an advantage because they can get marks that way and the men think if the girl comes to me and she’s a grown up she’s asking for it ...

The Tanzanian public university has a policy context and committed feminists implementing gender mainstreaming. This is undermined by power relations that have naturalised a sexual contract in which some male academics consider it their entitlement to demand sex for grades. A female student reports a gender surcharge for women:

> Being a girl costs sometimes...There are some things in which people can take advantage of you because you are a girl...There are corrupt staffs... Certain staffs like if you want help they say you have to do this or that or somebody, it is not your fault but he does that so that he can get you... get sex.

A woman in the Tanzanian private university describes predatory behaviour:

> the problem is teachers.... they are not good.... So they are not good, they approach girls ...
Sexual harassment marks out the territory as male, and regulates female agency and visibility. Rumours of sexual exchanges also serve to denigrate women’s academic achievements. A female student from the private Ghanaian university constructed the exchange as women’s strategic agency:

We do have a lot of females who come to this place with a mind to learn do well, get their grades and go out. And we have those who have come with the mind that they are doing everything to get what they want. … so if you are the type of person who really wants to compromise positions in terms of having sex with lecturers to get grades, you will get it. The avenue is there, you will get it…if you want to compromise that much I would say it will definitely favour you.

A male in the same university attributed a woman’s success to favouritism:

Sometimes we, we marvel you know... Because I remember in level 100 we wrote certain exams and a particular lady was not in the class but when the results came she had an ‘A’ and you know some of us said we wished we were ladies, you know, it’s like they get special favours.

A male student in the Ghanaian public university also cast doubt on female entitlement to HE:

Sometime you will see a woman or a lady in a class or maybe in a group discussion...you wonder how she got admission? But when the paper comes she performs better than you. …Sometimes some women have been favoured.

The sex for grades exchange is a form of symbolic violence reported in other studies. Nwadigwe’s study of Nigeria (2007) codes it as a ‘phallic attack’, with serious consequences on the victim’s learning and health. Omale’s (2002) study of Kenya and South Africa identifies sexual harassment as a factor impeding women’s participation. Also researching in South Africa, Simelane (2001) confirms frequent incidences of sexual harassment on campus. A theme in the literature is fear - both of the violence itself and of reporting it (Eyre, 2000; Thomas and Kitzinger, 1997). In Zimbabwe, Zindi’s study (1998:46-47) discovered that every student surveyed knew lecturers who ‘use their influence to exploit female students sexually’, and 93 per cent of respondents reported that they ‘would not report sexual harassment to any authority’ fearing further victimisation. Bajpai (1999) notes that the taboo meant that many women refused to participate in her study on sexual harassment in Mumbai. One of the consequences of silence is data on the scale of the problem. Bacchi (1998) believes that institutions are inactive because they separate the institution from the problem of sexual harassment. A woman from the public university in Tanzania discussed this powerlessness:

It is personal stuff and so most of them do not talk but I guess there is a problem there?...There is nobody to be told. {The women staff} …They are not close to us students …people may fear going to them …These female lecturers …should show us the way and listen to our problems because at
At least we will know that there are people whom we can turn to when we have problems...Otherwise we are alone here; we do not have parents here.

Gender violence is undermining policy interventions for gender equity and making a nonsense out of feminisation discourses. Sexual harassment pressures women students to reflexively minimise their visibility and academic performance, and constructs negative female learner identities. The doxa of sexualised pedagogical relations means that if women fail, this is evidence of their lack of academic abilities and preparedness for HE. If they achieve, this is attributed to prostitution or feminisation, and women’s ‘favoured’ position in gendered academic markets.

References


2. Discipline and publish - doing the peer review.

Dr John Pryor

Abstract

This paper considers how the power of the academy is constituted through the practices of peer review both of journal articles and research funding proposals. Although debates about quality in social research and current manifestations of paradigm war are implicated, they are not the focus of the paper. Instead, it investigates how the complexities of power flow through the processes of reviewing. Data come from interviews with frequent reviewers for high impact journals and research funders and feedback sent to authors and applicants. However the paper is mainly an autoethnographic account of reviews that I have done myself, juxtaposed with responses to my own successful and unsuccessful attempts to gain funding and publication. By turning the analysis on myself I develop an argument about disciplining the self within academic discipline and attempt to deconstruct my positioning within the discourses of a collegial academy and a neoliberal higher education.

Paper

Background

I write this paper as a not-very-successful bidder and someone whose publishing hit rate is mediocre. I am a serial reviewer for journals nine in the last year and an editorial board member of two. I review for ESRC and have also served in a similar capacity internationally. I sometimes feel angry and aggrieved and conspired against by what I can perceive as a hyperrealist, literalist, neoliberal hegemony.

When we are chosen to review it is sometimes by authors / proposers themselves either with or without being asked in advance. Editors, mainly choose reviewers for journals based on how the paper’s substance of the paper relates to their reading of the (sub)field. They seem to look first to their perception of the inner circle, then to an outer circle and then, in desperation to anyone who may be qualified, including reliable reviewers who may be less well acquainted with the substance. The squeeze on reviewers means that who is chosen is less directly within their control, but this is counteracted by their role of intervening between reviewers. For grant applications a similar system seems to apply except that the final decision lies more within an inner circle which further polices the proposal.
Data

Reviewing a Research Proposal

Here I review my thought process during reviewing and later reflections on it. I consider the given guidelines and the questions they raise.

These relate first to why I am selected and how that positions me in relation to the paper and the field. They concern the extent to which I feel an insider and what the research council is seeking from me.

Issues are raised about how I conceptualize academic quality and what scientific and scholarly merit of the proposal means. These questions inevitably turn back on my own practice, whether it is like or unlike it and whether it is the sort of work I might want to see done. The complexity of social research means that its practicality and technical issues are almost always problematic and can be critiqued.

Appraising the suitability of the proposers and their institutions, how can personal experience of them as people not come into play?

In making a decision more questions arise such as how the Council reacted to me last time and what can be overlooked or seen as relatively less important. The rhetoric and persuasiveness of my own writing seems crucial.

Reviewing an article

Similar issues are played out in these data though differently, especially as the process is less prescribed by detailed criteria. My own previous form with the journal as author and reviewer cannot be discounted, including how well I know of the editor and my relationship with them.

Discussion

The public discourse of peer reviewing is based in STEM subjects where disciplines have a distinctive agreed ‘methodology’ and so review can be presented as a technical issue. However, even here this is not so straightforward since ethical issues, the codification of the political are also brought into play. Cases cited in the literature suggest that often the micropolitics of struggle between different research groups are played out in strong affect within the reviewing process where what constitutes ‘advance’ can often be an issue.

Reviewing may be seen in terms of Wenger’s (1998) community of practice where the positioning of reviewer and authors at the centre or periphery are important. They may also be considered in terms of Bourdieu’s (1988) notion of field where practice involves maintaining position. Within more methodologically heterodox areas especially with the social sciences, the field reading of the editor in allocating reviews can be crucial.

Reviewing may involve interpellating different reviewer identities, disciplinary gate keeper, readers’ / practitioners’ / academics champion, mentor, progressive, liberal, innovator, subversive, paradigm warrior (to name those identified in the data).
The research identified several fault lines, sources of turbulence in the reviewing process.

- Affinity / difference between reviewer and researcher.
- Competition: disagreement may be about agreement – who can be ahead in saying the same thing – or about disagreement, where the reviewer does not want the wrong thing published.
- Methodology includes especially epistemological positions where both certainty and uncertainty, when considered distasteful by the reviewer, can be portrayed as lack of criticality.
- Standards may be seen as technical and fixed or conversely require originality or advancement and raise the question of whether difference should be encouraged or punished.
- Ethics of anonymity and collegiality are also brought into play where authorship is often transparent to those in the know and the notion of disqualifying interests is unclear.
- The decision to accept or reject is a binary that cannot be avoided and the cover of anonymity changes the practice.
- Scarcity and abundance where ‘limiting the resource increases the likelihood of hegemonic processes systematically disadvantaging particular sectors of the community’ (Tobin & Roth 2002:270)

The implication of this for authors is that moves which are seen as subversive or educative within the field are dangerous, because hegemony is hegemonic. One way around this may be to write research which is very careful about its language. Adopting a linguistic analogy, it needs to use ‘monitoring black’ where a pose of the unconventional is struck or ‘monitoring white’ where the unconventional is packaged in familiar forms. In such cases a reviewer who is either an open minded dissenter or a supporter who ‘reads’ the authors’ language will stand the author in best stead.

Conclusions

Peer review is a kind collective self government but its promise of openness and equity often remains empty. We participate in it because we want to practise in the field. This participation offers desired flows of power but the contours of the field are uneven - it is a site of (macro-micro) political struggle. The policing of the field depends on the policing of the self as reviewer and as author. On the whole power flows in (anonymized) peer review produce a conservative - rational academy to sustain the discourse that calls the tune.

References

3. Destined for Success?: Who is made intelligible in the discursive configuration of class and background

Professor Valerie Hey and Dr Sarah Evans

Abstract

There is a complicated history of how intelligence and capacity is marked on different bodies by virtue of sexist, racist and classist assumptions about difference and the social (Gould, 1997). Caroline Pelletier’s (2009) recent exegesis of Rancière’s philosophical discourse traverses related epistemological ground. She notes how:

‘Rancière’s argument about education emerges from his critique of Bourdieu, which states that Bourdieu reinforces inequality by presuming it as the starting point of his analysis. What is at stake is the question of performativity, and the means by which discourse has effects’ (Pelletier, 2009: 137)

Using empirical data1, and theoretical discourse about the social positioning of educationally successful working-class young women (Evans, 2008; Hey, 2009) this paper scrutinizes how we might recast notions of social difference in (and outside) higher education/policy/discourse.

Paper

Destined for Success?: Who is made intelligible in the discursive configuration of class and background

‘[...] universities and colleges have a responsibility to identify the talent and the potential of applicants and to treat all applicants fairly and transparently. Institutions should also recognise that talent and potential may not be fully demonstrated by examination results [...] institutions should explicitly consider the background and context of applicants’ achievements.’

(Admissions to Higher Education Steering Group, 2004: 23)

The policy discourse of HE has been dominated by: ‘widening participation’ and ‘raising aspiration', targeted at non-traditional students. The question of equity is now further recast as a vague search for ‘fair’ access by taking ‘background’ into account. This suggests the triumph of hope over experience, given the persistence of classed patterns of exclusion from and access to HE (Reay et al, 2005).

Recent work reveals that there are educationally successful working-class young women (Evans, 2008; Hey, 2009). Understanding their ‘success’ would seem a fruitful point of departure, not least to leaven the tendency to assume lack in working class groups. The issue for us in this paper is who is made visible in this process – when is class recognised? Or, put another way, who is ‘classed’ and who is the

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1 Evans (2008) carried out an ethnography of progress through education in which she followed the experiences of 21 working-class girls (aged 17 and 18) in Year 12. All of the girls studied at a Sixth Form attached to a mixed secondary school in inner South-East London and were interviewed during the academic year 2005-2006.
classifier? Taking our cue from Rancière’s disruption of critical theory, we occupy the tension between thinking with and against Bourdieus. We show some of the ensuing fractious relations lived between ‘class’ and academic success. Firstly, in condensed snapshots of Jude and Beth’s narratives about aspiration and destination and secondly, in focussing on Mai, a young working class women of Anglo-Vietnamese ethnicity is rejected from her first preference University but has no way to decode why.

**Making Out: Class and Chance**

‘[…] I’m always having to contend with ‘oh, you’ll never get anywhere,’ and everything like that, but I thought well, ‘I die trying,’ because, you know, if you’ve got a dream then you should go for it.’

(Jude, white working-class)

Jude wants to ‘live the dream’, despite being aware that she is ‘looked down on’ whilst Beth’s view about mobility in her own wider family, involves her simultaneous disapproval of ‘faking’ middle class ‘pretentiousness’ but also contains a confirmatory respect for her cousin’s success in the employment market, gained via the combination of hard work and ‘chance’:

‘They never pretended that they was anything else.’

These young women offer what Sayer (2005) called lay moral norms. It is notable that achieving success is seen as a mixture of luck, talent and tenacity : an account blending serendipity and personality. Skeggs and Wood (2008) show that ‘Jordan’ and Jade were esteemed, having managed the move from ‘glamour modelling’ or Big Brother guest to becoming a ‘brand’. The polite classes view this form of ‘celebrity with contempt, (Hey, 2008) but it is perhaps how Jordan and Jade, lay claim to working-class forms of success without compromising their authenticity, which endears them to their fans. Being ‘authentic’ by ‘being oneself’ so rarely works in working class girls favour (Hey, 2008).

**The Performative Personal Statement: Making Mai Non-Intelligible**

The extent to which universities use the UCAS personal statement in assessing the ‘aptitude’ of university applicants remains subject to rumour. A recent article (Shephard, 2009) indicated that Cambridge does not use the personal statement to assess potential. Yet, the working-class girls whom Evans (2008) followed during their final A level year had been advised by teachers that getting the personal statement right was crucial. What ‘getting it right’ meant was difficult to untangle and they received conflicting advice about how best to demonstrate their capacity.

Mai had failed to get into Queen Mary’s College. The head of sixth form, reviewed her application with the researcher (SE) to suggest that the personal statement may well have been read negatively because Mai’s nominated extra-curricular activities for example, were not of the ‘right’ kind. She had not pursued a Duke of Edinburgh award, had not recorded extra-curricular sporting or musical success. Rather, she reported undertaking a beauty course in order to help at her father’s nail salon, as well as voluntary work helping Vietnamese refugees. This matched exactly Bourdieus’
(1974) thesis about the primacy of middle-class ‘values’ and ‘taste’ within the education system. Both of Mai’s activities were significant to maintaining important relationships and networks in the Vietnamese community but these were non-intelligible/non-transferable within dominant ideas about hobbies (and accomplishments) which go to create the ‘right’ kind of evidence about the ‘right’ type of student.

If aptitude and capacity is read from personal statements then the account of the self the applicant presents is likely to remain highly consequential, not least because it offers a ‘self’ to be read by an admission tutor. The text’s authenticity and readability is implicated. Yet, quite how extra-curricular activities come to indicate intelligence and aptitude is unclear. What is clear in this instance is that these activities can be used as proxies and symbolic markers that work against non-dominant class and ethnic positions.

**Conclusion**

Evans’ empirical data creates access to the symbolic orders of class taken from different power angles. The lay and institutional gaze show up difference in how and why ‘background’ is taken into account. One cannot make huge claims from such scant data but snapshots do open up a set of questions about the vested stakes in making class, background and merit intelligible. Policy requires that the Academy ‘takes class into account’ but it is in merely assuming class as that which is only marked on working class bodies that a metonymic effect of class is installed. This is to mistake a part for the whole. The issues for institutions is to denaturalise their own specific class cultural (privileges) and the bigger question for social policy and politics is to offer a different set of discourse for examining people’s pathways through the social – ones that do not mark incapacity as inherent in some groups.

**References**


Hey, V. (in press, 2009) 'Framing Girls in Girlhood Studies: Gender/Class/ifications in contemporary feminist representations' in *Girls and education 3-16: continuing*
4. Developing as a researcher: contradictions in policy and practice

Dr Barbara Crossouard

Abstract

Recent UK and EU policy texts reflect concern that research be seen as a sustainable, attractive career option. This paper reports on a mixed-method study supported by an SRHE award into the career trajectories of newly qualified researchers. Despite policy claims to attend to diversity and equality, respondents’ accounts suggest that a privileged identity remains that of the young, mobile, well-networked researcher, free of wider responsibilities and therefore able to absorb uncertainty and ill-defined workloads (c.f. Grummell et al, 2008). The research also illuminates the inadequacy of policy texts in understanding the identities and desires aroused within doctoral education, although this may paradoxically contribute to inequities and sustainability issues rather than the reverse.


Paper

Global interest in doctoral education has burgeoned. Supporting the development of highly qualified researchers has become a priority in the UK as in Europe. EC (2005) is a clear policy statement calling for greater professional recognition of researchers at EU level, while The Concordat to Support the Development of Researchers recognizes similar issues in the UK context. They have also generated new differentiations in academic hierarchies. EC texts have spawned the concept of the
Early-Stage Researcher’, while the UK notion of ‘early career researcher’ (ECR) conflates doctoral and postdoctoral phases as a research training period spanning the first ten years of postgraduate research. While many critiques of these notions are possible, for this paper’s purposes, both are significant for encompassing both doctoral and postdoctoral research phases and for their aspirations to address diversity and equality.

All the same, research data on newly qualified researchers’ responses to such initiatives remain thin. This small-scale study was positioned in this gap. Supported by the 2008-09 SRHE Newer Researcher award, it explored the characteristics of postdoctoral career trajectories. The researcher was therefore an ‘ECR’ herself, engaged in research on doctoral education while this concept was emerging, making the researcher’s identity a resource that was drawn upon and revisited through participant objectification. The study combined an online questionnaire that was distributed to doctoral graduates from all disciplines who had qualified over a three year period (2006-08) from an English pre-1992 university, as well as newer researchers who now worked at this university (N=164, c. 30% of doctoral alumni). Many responses to open questions were critical of the uncertainties that surround the transition from the doctorate and early career conditions within HE. This data was then illuminated through semi-structured interviews conducted with fifteen respondents selected to maximize diversity across aspects such as disciplinary affiliation, professional location, employment status, age, gender, and ethnicity. Illustrative quotations from interviews are reported using pseudonyms.

This paper focuses on two areas of concern from an equity perspective, arising firstly in the transition out of the doctorate, and secondly from higher education working conditions. These suggest considerable tensions between policy and practice.

The interview data illuminated the challenging nature of the doctorate. However at the end of this intensely challenging experience, respondents were often experiencing funding difficulties (54% reported external funding coming to an end before completion). Interview data confirmed the material stress around completion, allied with emotional or physical costs for the researcher and their wider diasporas. Respondents often described relying on family or friends to support them through completion, sometimes taking low-paid work to survive financially. After completion, some respondents had to take up non-professional work, or professional work they could have fulfilled without a doctorate. Equity issues were raised by respondents at several levels, firstly in how doctorates are represented to potential candidates, secondly over the wastage in public funds when research training was not built upon. Furthermore, factors contributing to gaining appropriate employment went well beyond having a good doctorate (e.g. networking, consultancy, publications, funding gained by wider research groups, but also ‘blind chance and whether you fit’). The notion of ‘fit’ was specifically related to social class by another respondent. Equity issues clearly arise over assumptions that individuals are equally placed to ride out the uncertainties of this period.

Respondents working in HE were also critical of its employment conditions. Half of respondents were on fixed-term contracts, with the HE sector having the highest percentage. Different disciplinary cultures had different demographic characteristics and initial career pathways, but overall half of the respondents were aged 31-40, with
one fifth 41 or over. This challenges the perception of the researcher as the young graduate, with little experience outside academia and with few wider responsibilities within society. Fixed term contract research was strongly critiqued by respondents. In one instance, fatherhood combined with lack of career progression in the projects he was running led Frederick to move to permanent private sector employment (you can not live in limbo your life. If you are a freelance or you are a single person yes, but when you have a family, everything changes). It seemed that employment structures in HE assumed ECRs to be mobile and carefree however.

However those in lecturing positions were also critical. For example, one questioned how the label ‘researcher’ applied to them, given their high teaching load. Many respondents felt teaching was under-scoped, accompanied by undue administration. Others highlighted academic contributions that were unpaid (e.g. organising conferences, evaluating doctoral proposals, completing research reporting after contract expiry), but were accepted as ‘good citizenship’. However, securing advantage from such activities requires disposable time. Another respondent with family responsibilities illuminated the inequities that the level of unpaid or under-scoped work produced. Although desiring a more interesting position, both intellectually and financially, she had ‘self-excluded’ from pursuing a lecturer position as she knew the teaching load was higher than advertised. Paradoxically, the attractiveness of working in HE seemed linked to the porosity of its work boundaries, i.e. not being a ‘9-5 job’ and having some freedom and autonomy in one’s research (even if this was ‘challenged on all sides’ and other workload aspects were ‘completely out of control’) generated acceptance of such working conditions, so producing a rather double-edged ‘flexibility’.

In conclusion, this data confirm the importance of further research into the repositioning of doctoral education in society, as well as the inequities in HE structures, many of which have gendered dimensions (c.f. Grummell et al, 2008). It remains to be seen if policy shifts might produce more equitable and sustainable working practices, or responsabilise individual knowledge workers to accommodate uncertainties and porous, ill-defined work boundaries.

References

5. Why Study Abroad at all? Informal Learning and International Experiences in Irish Higher Education

Katherine Nielsen

Abstract
Discourses examining international study experiences have tended to focus on the cultural impact of exchange and the value of organised educational activities with enriching academic experiences, contributing to the overall development of the student and their international careers in the fields of business, science, and academe. This presents formal educational opportunities provided through institutions. In most cases, the students themselves create their own, informal, international education experiences through friendship networks, which they can rely upon to facilitate leisure aspects of their studies abroad, such as small excursions, providing a different kind of enrichment as the organised educational setting, equally important. By examining North American student experiences in Ireland, with seemingly few cultural or linguistic differences, and where students may already have family connections, we see how significant these individually organised experiences come to develop confident, international citizens in contrast to the impact of study within formal education settings.

**Paper**

This research project challenges conventional understandings of international student experiences by highlighting the activities which students organise themselves, autonomous from their institutional and controlled educational settings, especially through self-organised tourism outside of the study activities designed by faculty. It examines how students become educational tourists, and how universities capitalise on this growing educational market in an attempt to provide authoritative and comprehensive tourist experiences through educational practices. Students can use short-term study abroad programmes for a variety of purposes, for example, while undergraduate students may experience temporary mobility during their summer school programmes as an example of temporal mobility, it does not suggest that the student is necessarily mobile from an academic standpoint. The postgraduate student uses educational tourism in order to access faculty and resources unavailable at home. The increasing criticism of neo-liberal universities as consumer driven is well-founded, but based on the premise that current curricula is necessarily insufficient for proper education. Students themselves are demonstrating a desire to choose from several academic providers, for their own interests, and necessitating higher education to fully understand this growing market if it is to meet increasing student demand for international education.

This research project aims to deconstruct the nature of these activities by contrasting the student and the tourist in order to demonstrate how these two terms cannot be compartmentalised in the discussion relating to the activities and motivations of international students. I conducted my fieldwork primarily at the University of Limerick, founded in 1972. Data used in this analysis was derived from several sources: online questionnaires completed by previous international students, participant observation amongst students pursuing their studies at the Centre for European Studies at the University of Limerick where I was a Visiting Research Fellow, interviews with international students, programme coordinators and faculty administrators at the University of Limerick, National University of Ireland, Galway (NUIG), University College Dublin, the Irish American University in Dublin, and the Queen’s University, Belfast between July 2007 and April 2009. The data used in this analysis is based upon an online survey of international students studying in Ireland, conducted between April 1st and June 30th, 2009 using the ‘Survey Methods’ online
survey software. This survey received 107 responses, of which 28 were selected for this analysis based on their nationality. Only North American responses from the United States and Canada were selected for inclusion due to participant consent to the use of information once the survey was completed.

Certain themes repeat throughout these responses: growth, learning, confidence, independence, self-reliance, discovery, self-sufficient, experience. Educational tourism offers students the opportunity to engage in an activity which they might otherwise find overwhelming or distressing through the provision of organised structure and supervision within a travel experience. Universities have been characterised as ‘safe spaces’ not only where students can share ideas, make mistakes and learn in a controlled environment, but also because there is a continuity among these environments. I would argue that while educational tourism is the consumption of education abroad through recognised and seemingly safe space, it is the experiences which students organise themselves, outside of the classroom, which has the greatest impact on students. These peer interactions allow students to consider alternative social models not as theoretical possibilities but rather as lived experiences through the eyes of those who lived communism, apartheid, dictatorships, and democracies.

Students now feel a sense of self-reliance which they did not believe possible before hand, where they learned about themselves, their preconceived ideas about the world, and what they are capable of accomplishing without outside support. This process of self-discovery is the greatest impact of educational tourism of the student, and is brought about outside of the formal, academic environment. It is precisely through the interaction with the other, whether they are students, local residents, or further travels, which offer initial challenges for students to overcome, and indeed the development of self-confidence after persevering in spite of these adversities independent of familiar support structures. It should be noted that these responses reflect a gendered experience of educational tourism as well, as 93% of the respondents included in this study are female, reflecting the unequal participation of women as educational tourists in Ireland, which is often their first independent foray into the world without direct family support.

In conclusion, many discourses examining international study experiences neglect the impact peers have on the overall development of the student. Their focus on educational outcomes, the transferability of credentials, and the development of international careers obscures the human, lived experience of international education. It is the experience, only possible through peer-interaction and successive trial and error that students develop their self-confidence, independence, and begin to become international citizens. As the market for educational tourism expands into lifelong learning strategies, higher education institutions, alumni associations, and tourism companies, international educators must take this into account, and develop strategies which foster independent student development. Through the creation of their own, informal experiences through friendship networks, they can rely upon peers to facilitate more social or leisure aspects of their lives, such as travel, which provide the same kind of enrichment as the organised educational setting. Students then use these informal networks of association to further their leisure and academic tourism throughout their lives. In light of this, educators must ask a difficult question as to the
real value of educational tourism: should the emphasis be on the education or the tourism? Most critics of consumer higher education and the provision of international education would argue the students are getting something which they cannot obtain domestically in relation to their education. The findings of this study clearly indicate, however, that it is the personal experiences of the sojourn, the self-confidence and independence which students develop while they are educational tourists, which is the most valuable commodity which they take home with them.

6. From upper secondary to higher education?: conceptualising transition trajectories

Dr Sarah Aynsley and Dr Angela Jacklin

Abstract

Our research focuses on the transition trajectories of learners who are under-represented within higher education (HE), and includes learners from lower socio-economic groups and low-participation neighbourhoods, disabled students and those who have been 'looked-after' (HEFCE 2008). Viewing transitions as shaped by a range of social and cultural factors, we address the challenge of understanding the transition trajectories of Advanced level learners as they complete upper secondary education and either progress to HE, or not. Moving away from deficit approaches to widening participation (Thomas and Quinn 2007) the project considers the effects of shifts in identity and agency, and the significance of a sense of 'belonging' and how this intersects with notions of 'persistence' (Yorke 2000).


Thomas, L. and Quinn, J. (2007) First Generation Entry into HE. Maidenhead: OUP

Paper

Context

This research focuses on the transition trajectories of learners who have traditionally been under-represented within higher education (HE), by which we mean learners from lower socio-economic groups, disadvantaged learners from low-participation neighbourhoods, disabled students and those who have previously been ‘looked-after’ (National Audit Office 2008; HEFCE 2008). It addresses the challenge of understanding the transition trajectories of Advanced level learners as they complete upper secondary education and either progress to HE, or not. Viewing transitions as shaped by a range of social and cultural factors (Bathmaker and Thomas 2007, the research explores these students’ experiences, aspirations and motivations during their last two terms in FE. The research moves away from deficit approaches to widening participation (Thomas and Quinn 2007) and aims to consider the effects of shifts in identity and agency, as well as the significance of a sense of ‘belonging’ and how this
intersects with notions of ‘persistence’ (Yorke 2004). This is timely given the recent prediction from the Office for National Statistics for significant demographic change within the HE sector over the next 20 years, with a predicted increase of entrants from non-traditional backgrounds and fewer full-time 18 year-olds (Ramsden and Brown 2008). Despite this, evidence points to increasing inequity of participation for under-represented groups and raises questions about the success of their experience (Riddell et al. 2005; Brown 2007; Jacklin et al. 2007). The NFER points to the importance of school ethos and on-going Aimhigher activities in pupil aspirations for HE (Morris et al. 2005). However, there is evidence of confusion in government policy between widening access and increasing numbers (Hayward et al. 2006:158). Differential participation rates between socio-economic groups continue: whilst there is some progress in changing the ‘social mix’ of HE, there is concern about its recent ‘levelling off’. Unintended consequences of policy to widen participation are now emerging, from an increased stratification within the HE sector to and concerns with questions such as the purpose of HE (Brown 2007).

**Research Design**

This paper focuses on the first stage of a longer study, based within two diverse FE colleges, one located near the south coast of England and one in London. This initial ‘pre-transition/college’ stage was designed to capture Advanced level FE students’ perspectives prior to possible transfer to HE to explore aspirations and the effects of school/life experiences. Data were gathered through focus groups and individual interviews.

Further stages in the research will progressively focus on these non-traditional students’ experiences of transition from college. The research design meant that data could be collected during transition, enabling the capture of processes of transition as they occurred rather than retrospectively. The ‘post-college’ stage will cover the period pre-HE-entry/(un)employment/further training, as part of which, the project will explore reasons for (non)-progression to HE through in-depth case studies of transition trajectories. An additional focus will be on early experiences of HE.

**Conceptualising Transition Trajectories**

This paper focuses on the following factors.

*The nature of student decision-making in relation to transition from FE.* Family and friendship networks have been shown to affect transition and decision-making processes, in terms of (non)-progression to HE (Morris et al. 2005). By taking a longer-term view, transition is seen as highly complex, involving a longer, more fractured process than the traditional, linear trajectory, with a number of structural and individual factors interacting to influence patterns of access (Aynsley 2008; Reay et al 2005).

*The effect of financial considerations and debt aversion:* acknowledging the importance of concerns about student debt as a key factor affecting students’ aspirations (Aynsley 2008, Callender 2003). Earlier research into student loan repayments also suggests gender differences in the graduate premium, where a higher
percentage of females (21%) than males (2%) are projected to have their student debt cancelled (Dearden et al 2008).

The nature of articulation between the 14-19 phase and HE (the continuum from ‘clear pathway’ to ‘obstacle course’) (Aynsley 2008, Hayward et al 2006)

The construction of learning: drawing on student experiences of learning in FE, how students perceive learning in HE, and how this impacts on their transition trajectories.

References
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7. Pakistanis as Muslims in UK higher education

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Abstract

The past year has seen further alarms and excursions in the UK about the connections and involvements of certain groups of Pakistanis-domiciled postgraduate students, alongside the launch of PMI2 to build higher education partnerships with selected countries, including Pakistan. This paper will draw on a small study of Pakistani residents who had studied for doctoral and masters degrees in the UK in the period
immediately prior to and post 9/11 and 7/7. It will discuss their views on the relevance of the curriculum content and pedagogy of the courses they attended; their social interactions with British and other international students; and the substantial differences in the experiences of men and women. It will focus particularly on if, when and how they were positioned as 'Muslims' and any resultant changes in their identities and feelings towards the West, in the context of changing British HE and other policies.

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The paper will explore some of the contradictions between UK government policy aimed at increasing the numbers of international students coming to study in Britain, and its counter concerns around immigration and combating terrorism. It will set these against the changing experiences of postgraduate students from Muslim countries, both when they are in the UK and after their return home, using the critical case of Pakistan.

The history of the increasing distance between earlier concerns to encourage, particularly Commonwealth, students to study here as part of post colonial ties and support (Williams 1981; Williams 1987) and later, more commercial views of international students, especially those who pay ‘overseas’ fees, is well know. More recently there has been work on how different HEIs are developing their international links and postgraduate recruitment (Middlehurst and Woodfield 2007), together with an increasing recognition of the importance of international students at doctoral level in shortage subject areas such as physics and economics (Kemp, Archer et al. 2009).

We therefore now find most UK universities have specialist International Offices focusing on increasing recruitment, support for international students, and consultancy. There have in addition been two Prime Minister’s Initiatives for International Education, bringing in bigger guns to market an overall UK brand and build higher education partnerships with selected countries. The first was launched by Tony Blair in 1999 to achieve an overall increase of 50,000 students in HE and 25,000 in FE by 2005; and a second, PMI 2, started in 2006 to run for five years. Both included Pakistan, which by 2006 was one of the UK’s most strategically important allies.

PMI 2 has broad and positive motives:

International education … is not merely an export industry. It helps us to build friendships with people from around the world, enabling us to understand more about each others’ cultures and opening the doors to greater trade, investment and political influence. By internationalising its education provision, the UK is able to attract intellectual capital – enriching the UK's capacity for research, technological growth and innovation (PMI 2 website).

However, alongside this, though not usually considered in any of the discussions of international education mentioned above, nor forming any part of the annual survey on the postgraduate experience in Britain (Kulej and Park 2008), there are equally important concerns about the connections and involvements of certain groups of
international students, especially Pakistan-domiciled and British Pakistani students. These have escalated through the eight years since the start of ‘the War on Terror’, the invasion of Iraq, and the PM Initiatives.

For instance,

- There have been attempts to get British universities to keep ‘a watchful eye’ on Muslim students since 2006 and some have been asked to report (Muslim) students whose work shows signs of ‘radicalisation’ - particularly now that some of those involved in violent events in the UK have been found to have attended militant Islamist political groups at university (see Glees and Pope, 2005; and by contrast Malik 2009).
- Following the arrest of an MA student and clerical assistant at the University of Nottingham in 2008 under anti-terrorism laws for possessing copies of an Al Quaida training manual (both released without charge), its School of Politics and International Relations is inspecting reading lists for material ‘with the capacity to incite violence’.
- Four Pakistani students at Liverpool Hope and Liverpool John Moore’s universities were arrested as terrorism suspects, along with six other Pakistani men on student visas from the bogus Manchester College of Professional Studies. (As at Nottingham, all were released without charge but here they were immediately served with deportation orders and bail refused.)
- Finally, the issuing of UK visas has been tightened up and their costs raised from April 2009. Overseas students must now also have ID cards with biometric details, register with the police, and show they have money to pay their fees and maintain themselves in the UK. Since most visitors to the UK from Pakistan are relatives seeing their families, this has had severe effects also on British Pakistanis’ everyday life.

These ‘inexorable, irresistible demands for ever-tighter security measures’ (see Castagnera 2009 for similar events in the US) produce a hostile atmosphere of suspicion and alienation - especially when they are reported in the media in Pakistan. This leaves us some way away from building the ‘friendships with people from around the world, enabling us to understand more about each others' cultures’ aspired to above.

As some corrective to this, and in the spirit of the Symposium – viz looking at social processes and power relations embedded in higher education itself, the power/knowledge conjunction, and the affective domain - this paper will consider these policy and practice changes in higher education in the light of some accounts by Pakistani residents who studied for doctoral and masters degrees in the UK between 2001-2008 (i.e. in the periods immediately prior to 9/11, 7/7 and subsequently). It will discuss their views on the relevance of the curriculum and pedagogy of the courses they attended; their social interactions with British and other international students; and focus particularly on if, when and how they were positioned as 'Muslims' and any suspicions of terrorism they encountered. It will also analyse their substantially different experiences as men and women, and any resultant changes in their identities and feelings towards the West.
References


