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EDUCATIONAL CO-CREATION THROUGH ACTION RESEARCH ON EDUCATIONAL INEQUALITY

PROFESSOR KAZ STUART
DIRECTOR, CENTRE OF RESEARCH IN HEALTH AND SOCIETY
UNIVERSITY OF CUMBRIA
OVERVIEW OF THE PROJECT

• Erasmus+ funded for three years
• Three countries – Norway, Denmark, UK
• Co-created with BA and MA students
• Year long project (1 week online, 2 weeks residential)
• Aimed to investigate the marginalization of ‘ESL’ and ‘drop out’ in each country
• An ‘Indirect Approach’ (Bunting and Moshuus, 2017)
• An ‘Equalities Literacy’ framework (Stuart et al., 2019)
ESL CONTEXT

• Characterised by “flawed and intolerable” language (Fine, 2017) – negative, deficit, blaming

• Three different school systems – between 13% and 27% ESL in secondary and between 6.2% and 40% ESL in higher education

• Invisible / accepted issue in society

• Educational inequality thriving in neoliberal meritocracy (Reay, 2017; Giroux, 2011; Wiederkehr et al., 2015)
EQUALITIES LITERACY FRAMEWORK

• Marginalisation and disadvantage exist in relation with inclusion and privilege, they are intertwined

• Investigating ESL and drop out also therefore, involves investigation of educational success
Lived experiences

 Positioned by others

 Context
Lived experiences

Technologies of oppression or liberation

Positioned by others

Context
Lived experiences

Self-position

Technologies of oppression or liberation

Positioned by others

Context
Lived experiences

Self-position

Technologies of oppression or liberation

Positioned by others

Trajectories

Context

Stuart et al., 2019
METHODS

- 40 academics, BA and MA students
- Sampled any young person willing to speak with us – overcame labelling through open sampling (100 participants)
- Ethical approval and consent organizational, parental, individual
- Indirect approach – a conversation without an agenda or questions
- Relaxed settings
- Transcribed, coded and abductively analysed by each member of the team
FINDINGS

- Drawn from the findings of the academics and researchers rather than a meta-analysis of all 100 interviews
NORWAY

- A range of personal issues affect young people’s ability to thrive and feel secure in school
- Young people with mental health issues are not adequately supported in schools
- Young people with additional needs e.g. dyslexia are not adequately supported in schools
- Teachers are judgmental of pupils and pressure them to achieve highly this can negatively affect performance
- Boys who enjoy aesthetic experiences at home also enjoy these subjects at school unless bullying or bad relationships with teachers puts them off these studies
DENMARK

- A range of personal issues affect young people’s ability to thrive and feel secure in school
- This led to isolation and adoption of an identity as a ‘failure’
- Cycles of disadvantage are triggered by one school failure
- Pressure to achieve but no support to achieve
- Indirect approach could be useful as social work tool
- There are ethical issues to be managed with the indirect approach
UK

- A range of personal factors mitigate against school success but these can be overcome
- Young people feel commodified, education a ‘machine’
- Teachers perceptions of the young people significantly influence the young person’s self-image. Teacher expectations were often at odds with the young person’s expectations and interests
- Education reproduces social inequalities, however, an innate health approach may ameliorate these effects
- Relationships with teachers have a profound impact on pupils achievements
- Young people experience extreme bullying and oppression in schools (peers and teachers)
- Issues dealt with in the short term – ‘sticking plasters’
# A Spectrum of Welfarism

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Politics</th>
<th>Liberal</th>
<th>Neo-liberal</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Country</td>
<td>Norway</td>
<td>Denmark</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Welfare approach</td>
<td>Most social issues addressed – welfarist approach</td>
<td>Support for welfare but eroded funding</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Impact on ESL</td>
<td>Considered unusual / impossible, high social stigma, high support to reintegrate</td>
<td>Unusual and unacceptable, some support to reintegrate</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>
RECOMMENDATIONS
THEME 1: MAKE ENVIRONMENTS STUDENT-CENTRED

- A meaningful and relevant teaching and learning environment – co created
- Matched to the strengths and needs of pupils / students / young people
- Grounded in pupils / students / young people’s passions and interests
- Flexible to pupils / students / young people’s changing needs
THEME 2: EMBED A RELATIONAL APPROACH

- Create wide and rich support networks
- Improve the value and quality of relationships
- Give time for pupils / students / young people to be themselves and to talk
- Allow teachers / practitioners to be ‘human’
- Treat all people with equal respect through equitable practice
- Enable individuality and collectivity

Photo: Diku/Bjørn Harry Schønhaug
THEME 3: RADICAL PEDAGOGY

• Practical, experiential, informal
• Culturally sensitive and relevant
• Balance social and academic needs with opportunities for play and mixing
• Appropriate levels of support
• Equitable practice
• Tackle inequality, oppression, marginalisation explicitly
• Provide time for critical exploration of the world
• Promote questioning and challenge
• Appropriate skilled use of technology
• Fun!
THEME 4: GOVERNANCE

- Reduce new public management and control and increase professionalism
- Decrease focus on statistics and evidence based practice and increase qualitative and practice based evidence paradigms
- Increase funding for resources and research with students
- Re-dress the site of blame to consider organisational aspects, not ‘what is wrong with the young person / student’
- Pursue / sue people who use education / youth for their own goals
• Email: Kaz.stuart@cumbria.ac.uk
• Linkedin: Kaz Stuart
• Twitter: @kazstuart480
• Twitter: @CentreCrihs
• Facebook: Practitioner Action Research and Creative Methods