Learning, Teaching and Assessment in CBHE

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Chapter overview

This chapter pays attention to a series of micro encounters in teaching and learning in the CBHE sector to explore discourses of knowledge-making, identity building and student becoming. We bring together research vignettes drawn from collaborative and participatory research work we have undertaken with students and colleagues in CBHE contexts over the last decade to explore the themes and concepts about teaching and learning in CBHE that emerge when setting them side by side.

Rather than attempt to characterize CBHE we draw attention to the ways in which teaching and learning in CBHE is best seen as a set of socio-cultural practices deeply embedded in wider discourses of higher education. These are often framed by ideas about social and cultural capitals, vocationalism, employability and notions of skills acquisition and expertise. We argue that

these discourses tend to play out particular ways of being and doing (paradigms and ontologies) for teachers and students to create an 'institutional habitus' that structures 'the possible field of action' (Foucault, 1982:221in Dreyfus et al, 1983) and patterns (and limits/curtails) 'what might be played' (Foucault ibid). We consider the implications for social justice and the potential impacts and affects for students with little family experience of higher education. As an alternative framework we explore the potential of CBHE as a uniquely 'between'/other/third space within which new possibilities for the being and doing of teaching and learning (new paradigms and ontologies) might be imagined. Towards a conclusion we consider the conditions of possibility required to imagine new ways of playing.

Conceptual frameworks

In this section we sketch out the key ideas theories that we have plugged in to our research material and that opened up our thinking and provided the thinking tools for our analysis. Here we sketch out an account of Bourdieu's concepts of 'field' and 'habitus' and how they have been taken up to develop nuanced ideas about 'vocational habitus' (REF), 'institutional habitus' (REF) and 'educentricity' (Wilson REF).

Thinking with Field and Habitus

Bourdieu's key concepts of 'field' and' habitus' provide useful conceptual strategies for exploring the environment of CBHE. A Bourdieusian field constitutes "…a meaningful world, a world endowed with sense or with value… "(Bourdieu, in Wacquant, 1989:44). Bourdieusian fields often embody

rules or taken-for-granted practices that are imposed (without necessarily being explicitly identified) on those who seek to enter or remain within them. They therefore structure social and professional practices by defining the range of possible and acceptable actions and behaviours available to those operating within any given field (Grenfell, 2004). Bourdieu (1984) argues that the artifice of social practices then become invisible because they are, 'obscured by the realities of ordinary sense-experience' (ibid 22). Bourdieu uses the classic metaphor of 'a fish in water' to describe the embodied experience of living with practices that are appropriated as 'common sense'. As we suggest later in the chapter for example, a student's identification with a particular type of academic higher education institution may be reinforced or marginalised by their own, or their family or community's previous experiences of learning and membership of educational institutions and networks, so they may feel more or less like a 'fish in water'.

Within the context of this chapter, what affects this identification is often due to the positioning of CBHE as a field between HE and FE. This presents students with a particular type of capital that is relevant to the environment, which in turn produces particular ways of thinking, being and doing. (Bathmaker, 2015). It is this position within a particular field, that of CBHE, in relation to others, between HE and FE that is of importance in terms of the wider field of power, i.e. the influences, choices and restrictions that might apply to such students, and the way in which they interact with their environment.

Such personal learning experiences and identification with different educational communities are constituting of what Bourdieu calls 'habitus'

(1985) the collection of ways of being, doing, thinking and acting that comprise our 'social inheritance' (Grenfell and James, 1998:16). For Reay Habitus is both inward and outward facing, "a person's individual history is constitutive of habitus, but so also is the whole collective history of family and class that the individual is a member of" (Reay, 2004: 434) and manifests as a "complex interplay between past and present" that is not only thought but embodied, as present in how we move and hold ourselves, as it is in the ideas we express about our commitments and our 'people like us' affiliations. However Habitus is for Bourdieu more than simply a reproducing impulse as Reay explains:

> "While it is important to view individuals as actively engaged in creating their social worlds, Bourdieu's method emphasizes the way in which `the structure of those worlds is already predefined by broader racial, gender and class relations' (Bourdieu & Wacquant, 1992, p. 144). Habitus, then, is a means of viewing structure as occurring within small-scale interactions and activity within large-scale settings. (Reay, 2004, 439)

As such Habitus might be described as a 'system of dispositions'. These dispositions emerge out of participation in and exposure to wider social settings and discursive environments. They are moreover, characterised by a "…vagueness...the more-or-less, which define(s) one's ordinary relation to the world. (Bourdieu1990: 54). Within Bourdieu's theory of dispositions, there are

potentially limitless individual "…possibilities and impossibilities, freedoms and necessities, opportunities and prohibitions…"(1990: 54)

Reay's (2004) nuanced take on habitus suggests that it can function to exclude some practices as unthinkable, whilst predisposing individuals towards other 'certain, predictable ways of behaving' (2004: 432) producing "…an internalised framework that makes some possibilities inconceivable, others improbable and a limited range acceptable." (2004: 434) Crucially, for this discussion, Habitus provides us with a way in to theorising individual responses to, and choices about, HE transition that are not 'free' but expressive of habitus as a "complex, internalized core from which everyday experiences emanate" (Reay, 2004: 435).

As indicated within McKenzie and Schofield's (2018) discussion on transition from Foundation Degree to Top-Up, transitioning between CBHE and HE, "students prefer the continuity of educational experience that the college offers, rather than moving on to pastures new. Continuity of place, being close to home, but also the familiarity of staff and facilities" (2018: 321) are hugely influential in decision making, operating as an 'internalized framework' of how students consider their progression.

'Educentricity', 'Institutional Habitus', 'Vocational Habitus'

Through her work on prison education Wilson provides a nuanced account of the way habitus orientates an individual towards a particular 'world view' about education, which she calls 'educentricity'. For Wilson educentricity captures,

the way in which certain groups or individuals position education within the parameters of their own personal and professional experiences which then go on to influence the opinions, perceptions and understandings of the education of others – who are of course doing the same thing! From this position each group or person compares and contrasts, judges and assesses the position and meaning of education in other worlds, using their own experience as a yardstick by which to measure others. (Wilson 2007: 192)

Thinking with educentricity enables an exploration of how habitus plays out more precisely within the contexts of education by illuminating the ways in which prior experience can impact on students' perceptions of their experience and their decision as well as the ways in which educational contexts work to constitute educentricities through (re)production of institutional habitus (Reay, David and Ball 2001). Reay et al define institutional habitus as "the impact of a cultural group or social class on an individual's behaviour as it is mediated through an organization" (Reay et al., 2001:127) drawing attention to the idea that "organisations, like individuals, internalise the social world and form powerful dispositions which are shared by those working within the organization" (Walker 2015:52). Institutional habitus are, moreover, linked and indexed to wider socio-economic and geographical/demographic communities and discourses through schools/colleges shape and inform their pupil/student communities (Reay 1998).

Colley et al use the term 'vocational habitus' to describe an active process of orientation towards the dominant identities of the workplace or vocational group which may be equally important in educational contexts that have a vocational focus. They describe by way of example a vocational habitus of 'loving care' in Early Years practitioner education programmes to which students must orientate themselves in both idealised and realised ways, "without aspiring to the idealized habitus, students might become too harsh and the student may become 'unsuitable'. Without the tempering effects of the realized habitus, students might be overwhelmed by the emotional demands of the work." (2003: 489). Rejection of or resistance to the vocational habitus is likely, they suggest, to result in exclusion. Vocational habitus, they continue, "does encourage 'a reflexive project of the self' but…this… is often tightly bounded, both in relation to one's existing habitus and in accordance with a disciplinary discourse about the self one has to become" (ibid).

While CBHE students are often academically able and well-prepared for higher study (i.e. transition between CBHE and HEIs), courses focused around a more vocational subject area, often attract students "for whom the transition to an HEI with a different institutional ethos has been shown to be problematic" (Mckenzie and Schofield, 2018: 317), thus the orientation towards vocational habitus affects how students might perceive their potential opportunities in choice of course and location.

It is important to note that concepts like institutional and vocational habitus are not uncontested and critics such as Atkinson (2011) and Walker (2015) draw attention to institutions as sites of discursive dissonance as well convergence.

This dissonance might also affect more than the students themselves, relating as it does to lecturers whose provision within CBHE courses is required to fit in to systems developed to cater for FE provision, having inadequate resources to teach and feeling misunderstood in their role "not supported in their role" (McKenzie and Schofield, 2018: 318). While libraries and study spaces may assert the HE environment within the FE setting, along with their connections between HE courses on offer, this may only offer an outward appearance of the HE experience which may themselves contribute unknowingly to the dissonance of the institutional habitus it attempts to represent (Lea and Simmons, 2012).

For the purposes of this chapter howeve we use the idea simply as a way of opening up for exploration the institutional context as a structuring site for the organization of discourse about being and doing in both educational and vocational ways that impacts on students' meaning and decision making and thus their educentricities.

Crucially the nature of interactions between educentricity and institutional habitus can have tangible, material affect with research indicating that students from non-traditional backgroundsoften experience HE as a hostile environment which uses unfamiliar language, requiring disorientating practices informed by tacit expectations that many students find bewildering and alien (Askham, 2008). McGivney's (2003) work on non-traditional students' experience of academic writing draws attention to what she calls the 'mystique of unfamiliarity and remoteness' non-traditional students experience as they encounter a new social world (institutional habitus) of which they are not a product causing them to feel, to borrow Bourdieu's words, not like 'fish in

water' but instead to feel the weight of the water around them (Bourdieu in interview with Wacquant in Bourdieu, 1989:43).

Exploring habitus in context: micro-encounters in CBHE

In this section we share two research vignettes that look back at some of the teaching and learning research work we have done in two quite different CBHE teaching and learning contexts. We put to work the ideas about habitus and set the findings from each project alongside each to mobilise new opportunities for looking forwards and thinking about CBHE as a unique, pedagogical 'third space' of possibility between college education and higher education. By 'third space' we mean a hybrid space that sits productively betwixt and between the more easily recognizable and describable spaces of college and university. Elsewhere in this book Eliot describes (see Chapter 1) the paradox between CBHE as a significant vehicle for both personal transformation and massification of higher education and the absence of a clear exterior structural identity that generates "lack of recognition; lack of professional identity; lack of salary equity with school teachers; lack of time due to very heavy FE teaching loads; lack of research culture in FE colleges; lack of job security in an increasingly casualised sector of education;" (Eliot, 2020: <mark>see page ADD REF</mark>). We draw on the combined analysis of the empirical material generated through our two vignettes to wonder whether this paradox in fact creates a productive opportunity to re-frame CBHE, to mobilise the 'un-structure' of 'absence', towards a purposeful and *self-conscious* third space learning and teaching environment that generates a

uniquely dynamic, dialogic ('productively between') environment for students and teachers.

Vignette 1: Developing research capability on an early years foundation degree

Our first vignette draws on work undertaken as part of an HEA funded project '*Creative Research Methods in a College Based Higher Education Setting'.* This project aimed to generate new starting points for research in practitioner education in CBHE by putting student practitioners' stories at the centre of teaching about research processes. Taking an Early Years Foundation Degree as a context for the work the project drew on auto-ethnographic, investigative approaches to pedagogy. This approach engaged students in a range of data collection, including visual and sensory approaches, analysis and presentation activities to position themselves thoughtfully and reflexively in relation to their field of study. This means that students learned about research through doing rather than as a set of abstracted concepts, as such learning was embodied and experiential. This approach facilitated easy access to primary data for novice researchers since they came to see themselves as 'data' worthy of study, opening opportunities for tutors and students to co-construct meanings around identity, purpose and processes. Development of research skills, such as writing development were organically embedded in the process as the production of early personal narratives liberated new researchers from impersonal writing, enabling them to build confidence as they worked to find their 'academic voice'. Through an on-going

process of reflection and refinement this approach helped students and tutors expand their understanding of qualitative research in a way that is practical, accessible and creative. At the same time through sharing of the texts and artefacts generated students as novice researchers are introduced to the complex processes and dynamics of peer review in the social sciences. Two workshops were undertaken with second year students studying a Research Methods module on the second year of their programme. In this phase we introduced the project, taught key concepts, generated data and undertook analysis process. We introduced the idea that learning about research would be experiential and structured around a piece of collaborative research about *becoming* an early years practitioner. We explored the idea of turning research in on 'ourselves' as students/subjects always already entangled in practice and 'becoming' and auto-ethnography as a strategy for the production of empirical material. A qualification of how we want auto-ethnography to mean in this context is important here. We turn in on itself the criticism from writers like Delamont (2007) that auto-ethnography is too experiential, cannot fight familiarity, and that it focuses on the wrong side of the power divide (2007: 3) and instead positively embrace these characteristics as driving motivations for putting it to work. Auto-ethnography here *is* mobilized as an act of subjective story-telling through which the student constructs an autobiographical personal narrative – 'a petit récit '. This narrative is not understood to be 'truthful' in any totalising sense but is of interest because it represents a temporary projection or moment of textualised identity. Taking post-structuralist notions of 'self' as a starting point where 'self identity is bound up with a capacity to keep a particular narrative going'

(Gauntlett, 2002: 54) these narratives articulate the expressed trajectories of 'individual identities' in relation to the possible textual field. What is important here is not the realities or truth of experience or action but the process, the selection and mobilisation of particular discursive positions to do particular sorts of identity work.

Through our discussion of auto-ethnography we opened up and expanded definitions what might be 'counted' as data and the curatorial, productive role of the researcher as an agent of, rather than conduit or receptacle for, meaning making and taking. We would we suggested: make objects; tell stories; listen to stories; discuss our object and story making; curate and share symbolic objects; take pictures and audio recordings; and discuss our thoughts and feelings uninhibited by research conventions, interviews, structure or systematization, along the way. We would 'count' all of this as empirical material offering ways in to grappling with our own entanglement.

We read Nutbrown's (2012) *A Box of Childhood: small stories at the roots of a career* and explored the work of a range of academics and practitioners that plays self-consciously/reflexively with issues of identity and representation: Kelly Clarke-Keefe's on visual arts, poetics and subjectivities (2008); David Gauntlett's (2006) work on the use of 'identity boxes'; Bonnie , Sorkoe's (2004, 2013) 'zipper' workshops; and Kendall's work (Bennett et al 2011) on the use of artefacts in professional education.

We then held two workshop sessions. In the first, the group produced and shared identity boxes to explore their trajectory towards the foundation degree programme and *becoming an academic*.

This was followed by face to face discussion about conceptualizing and doing research and being researched and was followed up by further discussion on the (pre-existing) group blog. In the second workshop students chose symbolic objects around/through which to assemble their own stories of/about *becoming a practitioner*.

Again this was followed by face to face reflection and discussion and a consideration of how these methods could be put to work in the project proposals they were producing for their module assessment and the projects they would go on to do in the BA 'top up' most were going on to complete.

Collaborative writing phase

The final 'writing about stage' of the project was voluntary and an open invitation was issued to students and teachers to come together to 'plug-in' theory to the amassed empirical material.. A full account of this process and the outcomes of the work is offered in the project report 'Creative research methods in a CBHE context', (Kendall and Perkins 2013) and follow up paper 'Listening to old wives tales: small stories and the (re)making and (re)telling of research in HE/FE practitioner education' (Kendall et al, 2016). Here we select key moments that focus upon the nature of the CBHE experience for students and teachers.

'Being' an early years worker

Colley contends that vocational habitus in the early years is infused with a commitment to motherly love arguing that in such conditions the education of early years workers is an act of "symbolic violence…likely to continue as long as capitalist edubusiness has an interest in making profits by offering motherly love for sale in the nursery"(2006:6). Skeggs has argued that "the institutional organisation of the caring curriculum provides frameworks, hierarchies and subject positions which bear specific ideological and cultural meanings associated with femininity and household structures" (Skeggs, 1988:132) and that as a consequence take up of courses leading to caring occupations such as early years work, is most likely to be by women. In her own work Skeggs observed that many women "had previous experience of caring, either through their own families, similar courses at school or through paid caring such as babysitting...[and]...therefore feel caring is something they are capable of" (Skeggs 1988:138). Osgood (2005) suggests that a combination of this sort of notion of work-of-the-home with a National Childcare strategy

designed to enable women to re-enter the labour market works to position childcare as "not 'real' work but a mechanism to enable others to participate in careers that are afforded status, prestige and relative wealth" (ibid, 290). This dimension to childcare work is, she argues, largely absent from public debates.

However Osgood refuses to accede to the oppression of structuration, the regulatory gaze, and draws on Francis' (2001, cited in Osgood 2006) notion of 'new agency', which "incorporates both deterministic structural arguments and human agency" (ibid, 10) and contends that we are not only positioned within structures that are beyond our control but also simultaneously positioning ourselves and others. This complex dialectic, Osgood suggests, opens up space for alternative ways of understanding identity construction within the context of an increasingly highly-regularised working context drawing on Judith Butler's (1990) notion of identity and performance to describe a more active, agentive professionalism that is performatively constructed. This reading allows her to recognize a mobile, strategic ambitious and confident EYT who mobilises EY work advantageously to achieve particular personal, social, economic and cultural functions. She notices "the self-assured and wise ECEC professional who challenges the status quo…can muddy the water and offer the chance of a reconfigured professional identity and counter-discourse" (2006:12). Osgood's analysis opens up the opportunity to imagine the subversive worker able to confront and resist "prevailing and dominant understandings of professionalism" (2006:14) towards a "transformative agency" (ibid) that might imagine new possibilities for the being and doing of early years work.

What emerged for us from our readings is the significance of the dialectic of structure and agency to interpretations of early years workers' experience, the constant push and pull against which childcare becomes both "a site of agency and a site of boundaries" for workers (Vincent and Braun 2010). What was obscured for us was the entanglement of the writers in the being and doing of their work. Whilst we glimpsed momentary surfacings of researchers "secret selves"

> I related to the students in the classroom as a teacher, and in the nightclubs, pubs, sports centres and homes, eventually as a friend. Sometimes I participated, often I observed. Many interviews, individual and group, open and closed were used. More often than not general conversations raised interesting points. (Skeggs 1988: 133),

these material, affective 'I's that *wrote, interacted, saw, felt* and *noticed*, were rapidly obfuscated by the illusory, yet seductive, appeal of the systematic and scientific. "Indefinite triangulation" fixed the meaning tight and the authority of "the study" replaced the fluidity of I, we are reassured. In this respect empirical analysis provided the means for firstly, capturing the structural and cultural phenomena at the level of everydayness (Apple, 1982); secondly, by researching the students within a college, the study was able to analyse the structure and dynamics of the institutional parameters of FE; (Skeggs 1988: 133).

***Feeling for* hotspots in our material**

Our empirical material yielded easily, passively even, to the dominant codes that emerged through our reading. We were able to count examples of, to us by now familiar (REDACTED et al 2012), narratives of mothers and grandmothers re-tracing the patterns drawn by Skeggs of moving tentatively from private, un-paid caring responsibilities in to the casualised but more formal context of 'third sector' voluntary work and finally in to the public sphere of care as paid work. We were able to interpret the role of different actors, agents and networks, personal, social and educational, that played in to our journeys of 'becoming', in Colley's (2003) sense, professional. And we recognised the familiar contours of the structural barriers that seemed to frustrate or play against aspiration, commitment and ambition – metaphors of physical barriers, walls, staircases and caves standing in for institutions, classed and gendered positionings and the intricacies and contingencies of everyday life, relationships and experience.

***Feeling for* hotspots in our material**
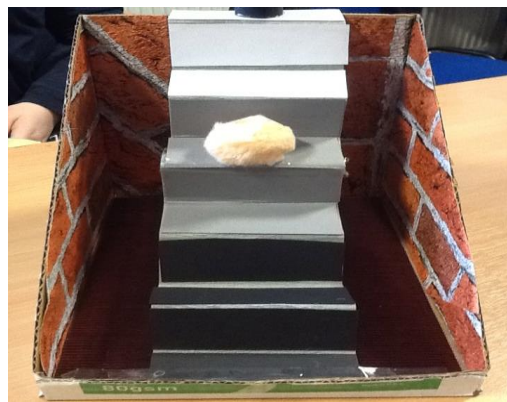
We were cheered by ladders, ropes and parachutes that affected us as expressions of determination, movement and mobility facilitating moves between, beyond and through, and forcing new perspectives on and new relations with people and points of departure. We suggested at subjects and identities in transition, on the move, in flux and told stories of progression, transformation and realisation of goals, a playing out of the kind of dialectics discussed above; we were both positioned and positioning at the site of early years work. How then to make it all mean? We looked for 'hot spots' (Maclure 2013: 172) in our readings and materials. That is to say moments of recognition, 'movement, singularity, emergence' (ibid 171) 'gut feelings [that] point to the existence of embodied connections with other people, things and thoughts.' (ibid: 172).

The first was acknowledgement of our very visceral response to our own entanglement in research processes. We no longer saw research as a 'surface' activity and described new sensitivities towards 'the researched', expressed by one of us as 'honour' and 'respect', that prompted a new disquiet about our own positionality within the reading we'd done. We were in the words of one of our colleagues 'humbled' by listening to the sometimes 'very intimate stories' of others and interested in the differences as well as similarities in the stories we told. We shared 'phases of emotions' in our stories, visualised shades of light, dark and colour in our own stories and noticed them in the stories of others. We were part perplexed, part stimulated by how 'making and doing enabled stories to be shared without just words'. We paused at length to consider the differences in telling stories 'cold' through identity boxes, we'd come to this activity without advance warning other than

'bring a box' to the session, and what we perceived as the more measured, considered, rehearsed stories we told through the objects we'd selected and charged as we made them with our projected meanings and those pressed and infused by others. We wondered about the different kinds of performances we were giving and the different reactions and responses (annoyance v honouring, respect v mistrust) we had to them. For us, the physical, embodied, material experience of telling our stories and listening to our stories opened up an important hot-spot, a point of wonder in our material.

The second hot spot in our material was the description by one of us of what it felt like to read Nutbrown's *A Box of Childhood*. She'd read, enjoyed and felt she'd 'got it' but had begun to mistrust it's worth and value because of its perceived accessibility 'if you read something hard you feel you're reading something academic…this felt less academic because it was easier to read'. It seemed like a number of ideas were at play here about relationality, positionality but also about the grappling nature of 'becoming' (again in Colley's 2003 sense).

These hotspots marked points of departure in our conversation, points at which we wondered not what does academic professional education mean but what does it *do*. How does it work with a sense of the rational/irrational and how does it make us 'know' and 'feel'? What kind of 'human' subject (Briadotti 2012) does it make of us? We began to wonder how do contemporary discussions about EYTs – the what 'they' do, what 'they' know, how 'they' mean, that we have noticed in the literature. What, we asked, if instead professional education stopped listening to conversations and instead was constituted and constituting of conversation? A conversation that we might

imagine moving us beyond the dialectic of structure and agency towards something more nebulous, entangled and provisional?

Vignette 2: Good Transitions: Re-imagining FE/HE 'transitions' as collaborative identity work

The Transitions West Midlands project aimed to offer new insights into the first hand experiences of students who'd made the move or were preparing to make the move from FE to Higher HE within the West Midlands region. Working with one FE college the study followed the 'diaspora' of the college's students planning to move, or reflecting back on a move, into higher education either at the college or at one of three modern universities within the region. The project, which sought to build new knowledge about transition within the locality and to produce practical outcomes for the partnership of participating institutions, was driven by three key questions:

How do prospective students from under-represented groups in higher education understand/perceive their support needs prior to transition?

How do HE students from under-represented groups self-define the enablers and barriers to effective transition?

How do HE and FE institutions best support students from under-represented groups as they progress through the various different stages of transition from further to higher education? Students were invited to participate in a cross-institutional e-survey and attend focus groups at each location.

In total 270 students participated in the e-survey, 82% were female and 18% male. Of these 5% were studying an FE course in an FE college, 15% were

studying an HE course in an FE college and 80% were studying HE in HE.
Although the bulk of participants (41%) were aged between 20 and 25, the
whole group varied significantly in age from 16-19 (15%) and 50+ (3%). Only
256 participants self-reported ethnic group (in a free text box) of these the
majority, 59%, identified as 'white' with the next largest groups Black African,
British Asian and 'multiple ethic group' all at 4% and Black British and Black
Caribbean at 3% and 2.7% respectively.

Two semi-structured focus groups and two paired interviews were undertaken
with self-selecting e-survey participants. In total 19 students participated in the
focus groups, 15 female and 4 male. They were grouped as follows: FE
students preparing for next steps into HE or employment; HE students
studying in an FE institution; HE students who had progressed from FE
studying in an HE institution. The outcomes of this work are explored
comprehensively in Kendall et al (2015) 'Good Transitions, Lessons from the
'Transitions West Midlands' Project' and Kendall **et al** (2018a) "How will I
know when I'm ready?" Re-imagining FE/HE 'transitions' as collaborative
identity work. For the purpose of this vignette we focus particularly on
encounters between individual and institutional habitus as transition narratives
are played out within an FE context noticing students' projections of their own
habitus and the characterisations of the institutional habitus that framed their
encounters with their courses.

'Transition'

Thinking with field, habitus and educentricity helped us to understand that
Transition is a complex phenomena that might be more helpfully described as

a spectrum of experiences that play out differently for different students joining different institutions. As such it is a highly contested idea (Gale and Parker, 2012). What researchers do agree on however is that flexible and responsive strategies where 'exporting' and 'importing' institutions work collaboratively to support transition are likely to be most effective (Knox, 2005, Leese, 2010). Crucially, it is argued, transition models need to challenge the kinds of deficit models or 'derogatory discourses' (Burke, 2009; French, 2013) that often inform discussions around non-traditional students' transition by contextualising some of the ways in which choice about HE institution and programme are influenced and framed by wider considerations and discourses. This re-conceptualisation of transition requires it to be reinterpreted as the means by which first year undergraduates negotiate the 'local spaces' within which they operate as learners and how they exercise 'choices' around their learning in the knowledge economy of HE (Ball, 1998; Lingard, 2000).

In the *Transitions* project we explored FE students' talk about 'confidence' and 'risk' to explore concept making about transitions. These moments draw attention to points in our material where we encountered most tension and contradiction as the apparently resilient, resourceful 'juggling' identities that students brought to their transition experience were back-grounded and diminished by their encounters with institutional habitus. Institutional habitus manifests through a notion of 'readiness' and what we want to draw attention to here is the striking role that teachers play as projectors, protectors and perpetuators of institutional habitus.

Managing complexity

It was clear from the data that for many participants 'being a student' is one aspect of a complex load of personal responsibilities and priorities. Many participants, 47%, reported that they worked part-time in addition to their studies. Time spent in paid work varied significantly with for example 8% of these working in excess of 20 hours per week, 13% working 11-15 hours and 13% working 6-10 hours per week. Time spent in work also varied considerably between the three groups of students (FE, HE in FE, HE). Students following FE and HE programmes in college were more likely to work part-time than their university counterparts and were significantly more likely to work longer hours, over 40% of HE in FE students reported working in excess of 16 hours a week, compared with 23% of FE students and 13% of University students with a staggering 30% undertaking in excess of 20 hours of paid work per week in addition to their course of study.

A significant number of respondents also had caring responsibilities with 34% reporting that they cared for a child/ren and 6.5% for an adult/s. Those identifying as carers of adults were also more likely to also have a part-time job than non-carers or carers with children. Those who identified as carers were generally older than those who did not, however it was notable that just under 44% of those who reported caring for an adult were in the 20-25 age range.

Although our data bears out Hutchings and Archer's (2001) and Reay et al's (2008, 2009) assertion that non-traditional students transition experience is characterised by difficult choices and conflicting responsibilities, as one participant shared "*I actually split up with my boyfriend to come and do this...*", participants presented themselves as competent and adept negotiators and

time managers, accepting complexity and the necessity of learning to 'juggle' efficiently as an inevitable, sometimes difficult, aspect of their everyday experience as students who needed to work or care as well as study.

> *It's [attending FE college] like putting a different head on it, my learning head hopefully...If I've got to pick the kids up from school and I've got an hour or so before I've got to pick them up...it's a different head and you just switch between it...*

However FE participants' narratives suggested that the complexities of their lives and the capacities they developed in response did not always find recognition within the frame of institutional habitus as it surfaces through interactions with their tutors:

> *Tutors do not appreciate the step we have made*

> *Teachers in college, they sometimes forget that we have a life outside college. We all have jobs to do and we've got families and they just see it as coursework full stop and they don't see the bigger picture.*

> *Yeah, they don't see that sometimes you might actually go and do family stuff rather than sitting and doing coursework 24/7.*

Sometimes the tutors will be like 'well you know you need to put your coursework first', but no, if you're living on your own...

Working with the artist to explore metaphorical representations of these tensions produced a rather startling account of what was at stake for students with commitments to college weighing heavily and singularly against more fundamental needs as this focus extract from the focus group illustrates:

We need scales!

On one side you can have coursework, so loads of paper, and then on the other a house...

...and money

...yeah, and money

And a heart

Artist: Why a heart?

Because that represents family and friends...people that you love.

However these responses also drew out 'educentric' assumptions about participants' self-perceived other-ness to a projected idea of the 'proper student', "*because you've got more responsibilities you can't be a proper student*" with the proper student being free to prioritise their studies above other

commitments and dedicate time, energy and focus. This notion of the 'correct' way to be a student was not just confined to time and activity management but also manifested, through the idea of 'ready-ness', which was seen to be a feature of academic aptitude/capability.

Risk and 'Ready-ness'

The need to be diagnostic, flexible and adaptable in order to succeed were taken for granted ways of *being* (or habitus as discussed above) that FE students were unselfconscious, non-congratulatory and matter of fact about, hence their surprise at what they saw as the realities of their lives not always being recognised or valued, *"sometimes college forget that we have a life outside college, they see it as just being about coursework*" or "*if I don't work, I don't eat"*, within the prevailing habitus of the institutional environment. And interestingly it is the teacher, "they" as agent (of 'college') who is implicated as (re)producer of this viewpoint.

As such, many students felt the 'risk' of pursuing their studies very keenly, "*you're taking a risk*", "*you're betting aren't you…literally it is a gamble*", "*if you have children think very carefully.*" It was such moments of dislocation in the narratives that animated the most fervent accounts of struggle beyond the more tangible (physical, practical, emotional) labour of juggling per se as one HE student remarked in retrospect "*my college made it sound impossible like I wasn't ready, which made me scared. I've fitted in [*at university*] quite well.*" Once again the choice of the term 'college' to infer a personal message about individual performance is an interesting one, whilst evoking the pervasive

nature of institutional habitus, it simultaneously takes for granted the tutor as message carrier.

Ideas about 'ready-ness' surfaced an educentric perspective on HE identities that worked to background capability (managing complexity for example) and foreground a deficit discourse. We noticed that references to ideas about, and discussions of, 'readiness' permeate participants' narratives, with 'readiness' a proxy marker, a sort of 'identity tipping point', signalling that the student is primed and poised for successful transition. 'Readiness' seemed to represent an idealised point of complicity or coming together of institutional habitus and educentricity, but it is simultaneously a site of antagonism, prompting feelings of lack and deep felt anxiety "*you need to know that you're ready*", "*they think you're ready but what if you're not ready?*" For these participants 'readiness' although an apparently fixed, and crucially desirable, point, a 'something' tangible that one needed to become, remained entirely opaque and elusive, a something ill-defined, externalised and endowed rather than a way of being they might choose to take up or take ownership of (or not).

With FE participants' educentricities often developed outside first hand experiences of HE the risk of falling short of 'ready-ness' for university life has significant implications. Ball (2003) and Lingard (2005) argue that a lack of proximity to HE knowledge economies impedes the non-traditional student's access to limitless 'choice' about their higher education entry options. As such these FE students feel that the pressure of making a 'correct' choice of university course is both unavoidable because the decision they are confronted

with is entirely a binary one (right or wrong) and solely their responsibility and that, as such, they singularly 'owned' the risk:

> *It's the risk of, if you do it and you only do it for half a year, and here you don't have to pay nothing, but there you lose out on nine thousand pounds...that's why I'm leaving a gap, to make sure...there's no way of doing a trial thing either.*
>
> *I am nervous about it because everyone says it's going to be different*
>
> *Pressure*

What is absent from participants' reckonings is a counter narrative offering any kind of alternative to the fixed, apparently pre-determined dilemmas, they must wrestle with as some form of necessary 'rite of passage'. As such we see that Institutional habitus works, through the micro-interactions between teachers and students to naturalise the grammar of a limiting paradigm, in which transition is mono-dimensional, individualised one-off, high stakes and consequently immensely high risk.

Re-imagining CBHE teaching and learning as a dynamic 'third space'?
Reading these vignettes together helps us to see how institutional and vocational habitus are mobilized across quite different dimensions of CBHE to pattern the way students self-identify and understand themselves in relation to

both their learning experiences and the wider context of Education as a socio-cultural space.

In vignette one our work drew attention to the ways in which early years practitioners become the *object* of both the researcher's gaze and the curriculum as an instrument or technology of institutional and vocational habitus that understands, clarifies, marks and shapes students. In vignette two the version of 'HE student' projected by institutional habitus, that is to say the common sense or grammar of what it means to be, do, think, feel as an HE student, serves not only to pattern self-identification and expectation but also paradoxically to diminish the value of the non-traditional assets and resources (financial management, complex juggling of responsibilities and priorities) that first in family higher education students bring to their learning. Crucially what our vignettes also help to illuminate is the ways in which teachers (and of course researchers) are implicated in the work of institutional habitus: as gatekeepers of epistemology and ontology, how knowledge *about* and knowledge *of* are represented and organized through curriculum design and structure; and gatekeepers of 'ready-ness' through the (re)production and assessment of 'ready' identities.

As identified through the vignettes, notions of a caring curriculum (Skeggs, 1988) are strong within the CBHE environment, linking to Webber's (2015) description of the transformative impact of higher education for mature females as impacting upon their wider self-confidence and self-image. Stotten (2015) found that CBHE students emphasized the high levels of support and small class sizes within college settings, offering a more personalized and caring environment for learning and identity formation. This notion of extended

support is furthered through Feather's (2010) findings from teachers delivering HE within FE settings, while identifying the high levels of teaching required within the FE curriculum, teachers 'exhibited a high degree of loyalty towards these students and their learning' (2010, p.200). While this does not suggest HE tutors are not equally loyal to students, it comes from a position of understanding that CBHE lecturers work to an FE timetable schedule, with limited time (in comparison to HE) and support from FE management structures (McKenzie & Schofield, 2018).

A further example of this connection to the unique third space suggested within this chapter, is positioned within the suggestion that CBHE tutors operate as dual professionals, operating within liminal spaces (Wilkins et al, 2012; Winstone & Moore, 2017; Machin, 2018) of professional and academic (Wood et al. 2016), between Higher and Further Education cultures (Springbett, 2018). This indicates a difference in provision offered by FE and HE delivery, a difference that relates to the perceived needs of students and the environment in which interaction with tutors occurs.

However what we'd like to suggest here is that the positionality of CBHE as a space that is neither FE or HE, means that it is uniquely based to 're-set' the reproducing effects of institutional habitus by working the dialogic possibilities of the 'between-ness' of it's 'third space'.

We draw on Bhabha's (1994) characterisation of third space as 'interruptive, interrogative, and enunciative'. More than just reflective Bhabha's third space is a "space that engenders new possibility....new forms of cultural meaning and production, blurring the limitations of existing boundaries and calling into question established categorisations of culture and identity"(Meredith, 1998).

Potter and McDougall (2018) see such spaces existing with fluid hierarchies where there is potential to be more open to learner's skills and dispositions arising out of practices which are representative of wider culture and lived experience allowing learners to build new social identities that are both meaningful to, and useful for, them. For the purposes of this chapter we would like to open up a conversation about the possibilities that CBHE offers teachers and learners *because of* its third space identity squeezed as it is between the institutional orthodoxies of higher and college education, "thatcan and do transform lives by opening up fields of knowledge that may explain and enhance experience" (Avis & Orr, 2016: 61).

This 'third-space' environment offers flexible modes of study, adding opportunities for part-time study and distance learning, often features that attract students that would not traditionally follow the three year traditional university route. This allows for study to often fit around work and family commitments, offering flexibility that meets the needs of widening participation for students and offering social justice in providing those often excluded from the more traditional HE route. This flexible approach attracts often more female, mature and ethnic minority students, who may have lacked confidence to enter a HEI environment, contributed to by the importance placed on "the locality and familiarity of the institution" (Mckenzie and Schofield, 2018: 323). Teachers also demonstrate this interest in the development and delivery of social justice within CBHE, in spite of restrictions commented on earlier in the chapter around the constraints of delivering HE within the FE setting, illustrating their "concern to provide enhanced opportunities for non-traditional learners" (Avis & Orr, 2016: 51).

Working third space: provocations?

What could it mean to play differently in CBHE as third space to create space, for students and teachers to work in partnership on a curriculum that is 'interruptive, interrogative, and enunciative' (Bhabha, ibid)? We begin to imagine this space as a '*becoming*' space, a space within which students are *in-the-making* rather than made, the subjects rather than the objects of learning and teaching experiences. Within this dynamic student as subject becomes "fluid… ambivalent and polyvalent, open to change, continually being made, unmade and remade" (Tuhiwai Smith 2006, 52) educentricity and institutional habitus become objects of study, open to investigation and interrogation rather a taken for granted common sense of 'the way things are'. This approach has much in common with Neary's student as producer which

> emphasises the role of the student as collaborators in the production of knowledge. The capacity for Student as Producer is grounded in the human attributes of creativity and desire, so that students can recognise themselves in a world of their own design. (Neary 2010)

This approach welcomes a new paradigm of teaching and learning that requires both a shift in ontology, *what it means to be and do*, and epistemology, *what it means to know*. Elsewhere we have referred to this as 'rhizo-curriculum' (Kendall et al 2016), a learning and teaching experience that is process orientated and where "truths are always partial and

provisional"(Maclure 2010:1).

The table below begins to articulate the shifts we might see in a third space approach to CBHE.

Orthodox CBHE	Third Space CBHE
Objective/neutral	Ontological
Student prior experience is contextual	Student prior experience provides empirical material for study and analysis
Teachers are subject experts	Teaching is becoming
Students are inexpert	Learning is becoming
Teaching and Learning are distinct from research	Curriculum is enquiry led, teachers and students are collaborators in meaning making
Knowledge is fixed and universal	Knowledge is fluid, in flux and situated
Teaching and Learning is a-historical, situated, gendered, classes, racialised	Teaching and Learning is historically situated, gendered, classed, racialised
Teaching and learning imagines a naturalistic, humanist subject	Ontological subject

Neoliberal driver	Social justice impulse
Critical incidents	Hot Spots
Linear	Rhizomic
Quality led	Experiential
Product focussed	Process based
Norm referenced	Relative
Individual	Social
Generic	Context-bound
Individual	Collaborative
Reflective	Reflexive

And so we finish with a series of provocations that might be posed as starting points for the kind of conversations we might imagine in third space CBHE.

How did you come to be in this CBHE space?

What representations of higher education have you encountered along the way? How have you positioned yourself/been positioned in relation to these?

What are the markers or 'hot spots' in your narrative?

How does your narrative compare to the narrative/s of others? What are the

points of difference? Consensus?

What does it mean to be a researcher, teacher, student in your context? Where are the boundaries? Who occupies these different positions? Who decides? Whose interests do these definitions serve?

What different kinds of spaces, places and opportunities are there for making and taking meanings about what it means to be a higher education student in your area?

What does it mean to be a producer or consumer of meanings in these spaces and places?

What different kinds of associations and affiliations do you make? With whom?

For what purposes?

What does it mean to be a rule-maker or rule-breaker in higher education practice? What relationships with risk do learners have? Teachers have?

Who or what does higher education serve in your context? How do you feel about this?

What different identities do you take up in different spaces and places? What role/s do these perform? How are they similar? Competing?

Students might engage with and respond to these through a range of representational methods (making/talking/writing/performing), some of which we have explored elsewhere (see Kendall, 2012, Kendall et al 2016, Kendall et al 2018).