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Reflections in the Classroom: Learning to Market Education

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Abstract

Reflective practice has become a key trope within debates around teaching and learning in higher education. Yet, beneath this anodyne rhetoric, teachers and students are being disciplined in a manner that aligns so-called “standards” and professional development with the corporate strategies of educational institutions. Educational developers who seek to promote “standards” and “accountability” in the learning environment enforce the practice of “reflection” as a key educational experience and tool. Repetitive reflective exercises become the means and the monitoring of education.

How should anthropology, a discipline that focuses on dynamics of diversity and structure, respond to this discourse, and the generic teaching methods that it promotes. And what are the links between these initiatives and the marketing of higher education as a quality-assured educational product?

This article compares the author’s experience of teaching English to European teenagers in a small community centre to teaching anthropology to undergraduates in a large university. It uses the case of the HEA accredited teaching course that was meant to bridge these two, apparently distinct educational realms.

Introduction

This article considers how the regulation of “reflective” teaching practice can become entangled with institutional strategies developed to market and promote universities. The regulation of teaching in Higher Education (HE) is not confined to an individual university and is driven by government policy bodies that the university is accountable to, such as HEFCE and the QAA. Institutions are also increasingly defined by the expectations created around rankings league tables of media companies. HE in the UK is now part of a global HE market, producing research and graduates that are expected to contribute to national economies. The development of university Teaching and Learning (T&L) strategies is not independent of these forces. The article will show, using a T&L based concept of the “classroom as a laboratory,” how teaching and teachers can be separated from their own political context and deliver a form of education that is compatible with the expectations and demands of the current educational market.

In order to throw into relief this normalisation of regulation, the article will also consider an example of teaching in a less regulated educational sector. I compare my experiences of teaching anthropology as an Associate Tutor at Sussex University with those of teaching English to overseas students in a community centre outside of Brighton. I describe teaching at the community centre and attending a teacher-training course at Sussex University. The case demonstrates how externally directed and self-disciplining force is used to subjugate teachers to the modern teaching profession.

The contrast between the two forms of education might lead to conclusions that the *Other*, relatively unregulated sector is “amateur,” “bad” or “irresponsible.” Yet, as will be seen, both forms attempt to deliver an educational product to their respective markets. The value-laden distinction between the two implies that *our* form of education is “professional,” “better” and “responsible,” and obscures the political, social and economic relationships in Teaching and Learning. Regulated UK education requires teachers to be trained to a particular standard whereby these relationships are embodied, with a sense of individual responsibility, within the teacher.

Defining the Product

I woke up on 2nd August 2009 to the headlines

MPs deliver wake up call to higher education sector. Unfit standards system, “defensive complacency” from the top and discrimination against part-time and mature students.ⁱⁱ

The Parliamentary Committee for Innovation, Universities, Science and Skills had set out to answer to the question “Are students getting value for money out of higher education?” (IUSSC 2009: 5) or as a report for Universities UK more directly put it “...the contribution of higher education to the stock of human capital” (Bone 2006: 3).

The hottest point of contention was that, given the amount of economic investment in Higher Education (HE), vice-chancellors had been unable to provide an answer to the simple question as to whether a First Class degree from Oxford was the same as a First Class degree from Oxford Brookes University. In an exchange between the parliamentary committee and the Vice-Chancellors from the respective two universities the issue of equivalence became rather woolly and the argument heated up. Underlying this part of the debate was the taboo subject that everyone in the room, and around the world, already knew - a degree from Oxford University had more value than one from Oxford Brookes, and that this was not necessarily just a matter of ratios between students and teacher and the number of teaching hours.

The committee had difficulty understanding that teaching is not a fixed cost/benefit package and that different methods of teaching could produce different products. The Vice-Chancellors, for their part, found it hard to concede what was behind the committee’s incredulity, which was that in order for branches of HE in the UK to be a product on the market worthy of investment their output of human capital (students) had to be relatively quantifiable regardless of the consequences for the universities’ concepts of education.

The whole report, and indeed the opening volleys in the committee hearing with the Vice-Chancellors, centered on levels of autonomy in education relative to their sources of funding (IUSSC 2009a and 2009b). The size of the HE sector in the UK is substantial receiving an estimated income of £16.9bn in 2003/4 of which 48% was received through funding council grants together with tuition fee payments from the public sector, and 51% of the £6.9bn was obtained for the purpose of teaching (Bone 2006). The regulation of education to satisfy these funders requires regulation of the people in education, the students, teachers and staff.

In writing this article, I found myself returning to fundamental questions: what are education, anthropology, the education of anthropology and the anthropology of education? Baty (2004:9) suggests that policy makers have “misconceived”...the “true nature of education” and that the market rhetoric and practice in HE does not correspond to “educational processes”. The current debate in education is caught between demands for sustainable economic contribution and the defence that there is something, almost pure, about learning that should transcend these economic functions. In the cut and thrust of political and managerial debate the former calls upon ideas of pragmatic realism within

wider economic forces, the latter on ideas of tradition and rights within the liberating project of a quest for knowledge.

The economic sector of contemporary education requires both economic returns for the institution and skills and knowledge investment for the nation. This is the view contained within the University of Sussex's latest Strategic Plan, which appears to align itself with the "vision for the next 20 years" in The Dearing Report (produced by the National Committee of Inquiry into Higher Education in 1997). The purpose and form of education veers between emancipatory and economic principles. For example, in point 8 of Dearing's plan, education is a custodian of democratic civilisation pursuing knowledge for its own sake respecting individuals and searching for the truth whilst point 9 refers to the inter-dependence between students, institutions, the economy, employers and the state. Here education is analysed almost exclusively on economic performance indicators in a contribution/benefit analysis.

Twelve years on, in 2009, Dearing's binary definition has been assimilated as the standard, as Professor Beer succinctly and spontaneously informed the Parliamentary Committee (IUSSC 2009:117):

There is a balance of benefit between the individual and society in terms of what universities are for. They are obviously to enable individuals to develop their full potential and to develop potential intellectually, but also to equip them for work, to equip them to make a contribution to society and also to achieve personal fulfillment, so there is the individual. In terms of wider society universities exist to increase knowledge, both for its own sake and for applied purposes. Obviously universities serve the needs of a knowledge-based economy and, probably finally, they play a vital role in fostering and shaping a democratic society.

The Browne Review (Browne 2010) and subsequent legislation, along with large-scale protest, have moved the debate further on but there was not a radical departure from previous trends. The content of publications demonstrated the progress of the new market economy in education. In 1999, the focus was on ways to comprehend this new market (e.g. de Weert 1999, Yorke 1999, Mok 1999, Kiviven and Ahola 1999), these gave way to later articles that considered how this market could be worked with (e.g. Ylijoki 2003, and Morey 2004). The latter were written against a background of increased numbers of students entering into a "mass" higher education that purported to invest in the knowledge economy and widen participation while questions concerning the actual implementation of these strategies and the problems associated with them were already starting to rise (Scott 2005; Elton 2006; Brown 2007).

In 2003 the then head of the Quality Assurance Agency for HE had expressed concern that "Higher education looks now as if it is to be mostly about jobs and money, efficiency and business principles: few other values are mentioned in the strategy" (Williams 2003). In the same vein, the Browne Review all but ignored education as anything other than a financial exercise. Chaired by a former CEO of British Petroleum who, unlike Dearing, had no previous experience in the education sector, the Browne Review set out to balance the books and recast students as "investors" who should expect an individual capital return on their individual educational expenditure. UK universities were to be made financially independent of government; anthropology in UK HE, like many other disciplines, was no longer subsidised by state funding. Moreover potential under-graduates were being encouraged to consider if anthropology was worth paying the price. Meanwhile the Minister of State for Universities and Science appointed in May 2010, David Willets has made frequent references to "good-teaching" as the site where he felt the eyes of the student consumers would fall.

How does the market of HE in the UK compare to other educational markets? Moreover, what if those markets had far greater independence from regulation? The debate on education in the UK is mainly concerned with state funded institutions, but there is a large market outside of these sites that are represented by businesses that provide teaching for students. The following section briefly describes one of these businesses in order to help demonstrate that university teaching standards and their quality assurance targets are designed for a particular educational market and are not primarily to do with enhancing student experience and learning.

A Different Educational Market

In a 1950s seaside satellite development, the Old Barn Community Centreⁱⁱⁱ welcomes, on average, 100 overseas students every week to learn English and up to 150 students in the summer leading to the sharing of classrooms and outdoor lessons. The children are usually between 13 and 17 years old, typically from France, Spain and Austria. They stay for between one and three weeks. Class sizes are between 10 and 16 students. In the afternoon there are excursions to a historic and commercial city, a castle, or the local leisure centre. Room hire at the Old Barn costs £25,000 per annum, coach hire another £25,000. The teachers are paid about £15 per hour. Nearly all the teachers are divorced women in their late forties and early fifties.

Brenda, who has run the school for twenty-two years, also organises “mini-stays” where the children come over and stay with a family (often four of them to a room) but without the lessons. She gets a lot of repeat business. She thinks that between schools and mini-stays she gets about 200 children per week and makes £15 profit per child per week. She reckons that she contributes about £100,000 to the local economy but has no real idea. The local council occasionally say that they want the figures but she has never produced them, and the council have not pursued it. Brenda began doing this as a small holiday job but now thinks she might be the biggest operator working the area. I began working for Brenda six years ago, a year after completing a one-month CELTA course that provided me with a qualification to teach English as a foreign language. Brenda says that student numbers, and therefore income, have grown by just under 10% a year for the last 8 years.

Whilst she believes that the teachers are qualified she has no exact idea – except for her friends who work there and the information she picks up in casual conversation. Brenda rarely checks for teaching qualifications in a consistent manner. There are no observed lessons, no submission of lesson plans, no monitoring of the students’ standards, and no collecting of any data of any kind (other than to make bus passes). However she is careful to put teachers who appear more professional or she knows have a higher level of training or education with groups that are preparing for exams. Brenda told me that the organisations that send the children over are regulated in their own country but as soon as they arrive here regulation stops. Teachers can do what they want. If no one complains then everything is ok. If they do complain, which is unusual, she will resolve it by swapping teachers between organisations.

Some people run lessons from books, others run projects for the whole week that do not actually require much English to be spoken. Personally, I play a lot of language-based games. I often do not have a set plan of what I am going to teach beforehand and respond to what the kids want to do. Somewhere along the line they seem to pick up some English. A familiar phrase you hear amongst the staff is the “time waster” – a lesson with little educational value that is popular with the kids and takes up the lesson time with little effort. When I am tired or the kids are particularly disruptive I will resort to an enormous word search puzzle that pretends to be about vocabulary but is probably just about the shape of words and letters. It works – they love it and I can take it easy. For Brenda their education in England comes from living with an English family, having lessons and what she calls “whole package” learning - referring to things like driving on the other side of the road. “If the kids are happy then they’ll keep coming back,” says Brenda and that is the bottom line of her business.

This approach to teaching would be unacceptable in most contemporary university systems, lacking formal peer review, accountability, transparency and management knowledge. However it is a very successful educational business that has seen annual growth rates in revenue that would please most Vice Chancellors. Furthermore the tuition of teenagers, who almost all prefer to be on holiday with their friends than studying English, requires greater teaching skills than for a relatively mature and interested university audience.

When I was invited to teach as an Associate Tutor at Sussex University I was told that I would have to go on a specialised course run by the University as I didn't have three years teaching experience. I explained that I in fact I had more than 3 years teaching experience. The university argued that teaching in Higher Education was substantially different. However as the policy didn't specify this exact point, for that year, I was able to teach unhindered. The next year they changed the policy to include the provision about teaching in Higher Education and my assertion that "if you can teach Austrian teenagers you can teach anybody" now fell on deaf ears. Kicking and screaming, I was taken on a five-week Higher Education Academy (HEA) accredited course for two hours a week. It was somehow meant to bridge my skills gap in ten hours. My encounter with educational developers had not started off well. Although the course was useful to new teachers for the other person on the course, who had also taught TEFL for many years, the course was an administrative rather than an educational process. Nevertheless, the university needed to demonstrate that their teachers were of an externally defined professional standard.

Bridging the Gap: Five Assignments

We were told from day one that it was impossible to "fail" the course but that in order to "pass" and get the certificate we would have to successfully complete the following five assignments.

Assignment 1 read: "To get you started on reflective practice ... contribute some experience of learning and/or teaching to the online common room." Later down the document it told me that this addressed "UK Professional Standards PV3 Commitment to development of learning communities." But what did they really mean by reflective practice and why did I have to commit to developing learning communities in order to pass the course – in order to teach? In the Old Barn discussing lessons was a spontaneous but private process that emerged as part of social interaction amongst teachers. Certification obliged me to sign up to a "community" that had been designed and constructed to expose discussion to continual peer and teacher review. In comparison with the Old Barn it was an exercise in transparency that bordered on the naked. After a couple of weeks, I found a discussion on dyslexia, made my contribution and moved on to assignment two.

Assignment 2 introduced me to the world of SoTL (the Scholarship of Learning and Teaching) in order to address UK Professional Standards: AA5 Integration of scholarship, research and professional activities with teaching and learning. SoTL was a vast arena of knowledge but it was largely concerned with analysing classroom technique. Lesson plans were made again with Intended Learning Outcomes (ILOs), timings, groups or pairs, and whiteboard options. I learnt that the classroom could be a laboratory for experimentation and learning, a concept that I will return to later. We were asked to be "critical," but with reference to how SoTL was applicable to our practice as teachers. In reality, as session one had shown us, this was about delivering quantifiable learning outcomes within a given timeframe using a lesson plan.

Assignment 3 directed me to test and apply what I had learnt. This was an opportunity to reflect on what had gone well and what had not gone well in the classroom. In the Old Barn, these spontaneous discussions had frequently been hilarious and we had never been asked to submit a written account of what was an everyday conversation between teachers. During assignment 3, I began honing skills in obstinate reticence. Some people might call that resistance but those who know me saw it as a continuation of my normal weary grumpiness.

Assignment 4 was about subject specific learning. I was directed towards information resources on teaching anthropology, rather than any anthropological literature about teaching and education. I only discovered this literature subsequently. Although the course proclaimed that standard T&L practice was universal to all disciplines it acknowledged that each discipline had stores of knowledge that could be brought into the classroom and that sometimes there were some innovative subject-based lessons available. At the time, I did not consider this contentious and I appreciated doing some research on

anthropological data sources. In retrospect, however, I think that anthropological perspectives present challenges to educational practice that impact on the delivery of the subject inside the classroom. The positioning of that classroom within a range of social, political, economic and subjective representations denies the neutrality of the place and the educational content. The teaching of anthropology does not simply benefit from the inclusion of these dynamics but by excluding them transforms itself into a rarefied, encyclopaedia of puzzles.

In assignment 5, I was told to “Reflect on how you have used, or could use, peer observation and student feedback to address issues of Quality Assurance and Enhancement. This should include some reference to university strategy or policy in this area.”

At that point *this* article started.

The Old Barn had neither a strategy nor a policy to refer to, nor for that matter did it engage with Quality Assurance audits. The university did and as I was to discover they formed part of a grander plan of which this HEA accredited course was an integral part. All I wanted to do was teach, like I did for Brenda, now it felt as though I was being aligned with a Corporate Strategy. And I was.

University policy on Quality Assurance and Enhancement, I discovered, was incorporated within an “overarching” “Teaching and Learning Strategy,” which was described as the “main driver for change and for systematic enhancement.” However this “main driver” was “revised on an annual basis in order to align with the University's Mission, its Corporate Strategy and as new institutional priorities are determined.”^{iv}

The course was part of the Teaching and Learning strategy that was “aligned” to the corporate strategy. So, what had I been reflecting on all that time – was it really about my professional development and improving my teaching or, as I had suspected, was I forced onto the course in order to fulfil wider, audited criteria? Without the experience of the Old Barn I would have readily accepted that these assignments were teaching me to teach. However comparing the position of these two distinct educational businesses it felt that the course was teaching me to teach in a particular manner. The Old Barn monitored its operation through informal feedback or the odd incident; the teacher reported back problems. The university turned teaching into a self-critical, impact-dependent performance that could deliver whatever data collection or performance targets were handed to it; the teacher was the problem.

Reflexive Discipline

Reflective practice in this context differs from other reflexive projects that seek to incorporate the individual yet simultaneously widen the investigative and analytical arena. Examples of this range from Shore and Wright's political reflexivity (1999), Usher and Edwards' epistemic reflexivity or Bleakley's holistic reflexivity (Bleakley 1999) to Shøn's (1983) highly influential concept of empowering people to change entire processes and challenge existing orthodoxies.

The reflexive process in much modern teacher training is instead a disciplining procedure to constrain reflexive practice. Reflexive practice in the classroom narrows the critical analysis of learning to the classroom-contained point of delivery to a student. It also only seeks to challenge conventional teaching methods rather than what is taught, why it is taught or what that means within a wider educational context.

Currently the delivery of “evidence-based” performance indicators across a range of economic markers is politically and financially imperative for organisations that rely on funding. For a university, the Times Good University Guide and league tables like it influence student numbers, funding and contracts and they create a powerful language and representation of good practice. The leagues help the

university define its own performance together with other economic indicators. Teaching practice has to be quantified, there are targets to be met, and others to be achieved over a set period of time. The learnt experience must be relevant to performance in the national economy and the students and staff are being taught to understand that this is what education can deliver. If you learn something you also need to learn that you have learnt it and what it is good for.

I was being taught to provide an education that matched performance indicators. This is hardly surprising as the discipline that contributed towards devising those indicators is the same one teaching me how to deliver against them. “Teaching and Learning” strategies along with Professional Development programmes facilitate the delivery of these indicators, as they develop theories and courses to provide “solutions” to a narrow enquiry into identifying “problems.” An institution’s positioning in the educational markets that continually define a “good” education and its value, are situated alongside an organisation’s management and financial sustainability. The “good teaching” that Willets refers to is teaching that is quantifiably successful. It reduces the market dynamics of an educational sector into classroom auditing processes. However teachers are not encouraged to demonstrate “professionalism” by reflecting whether they should be held responsible for factors beyond the scope of their influence.

Shore and Wright (1999) wrote a comprehensive critique of the “audit culture” and neo-liberalism in Higher Education in 1999 that is still relevant today. They show how an organisation needs to transform itself to conform to this monitoring through political technologies that, firstly, police an organisation’s own systems of control; secondly, introduce intermediaries, apparently independent of government, that provide experts with knowledge to reform people; thirdly, these political technologies necessitate disciplines to be accountable through audits; and, fourthly, they use “ techniques of the self that render political subjects governable by requiring they behave as responsible, self-activating, free agents who have internalised the new normative framework” (1999: 566).

The ideals of SoTL, to improve teaching and learning were susceptible to managerial needs to assess the performance deliverers, the teachers, as the new economy brought greater turnover and higher demands for accountability: “SoTL also offers faculty a means other than student or peer evaluations to document their teaching and their students’ learning for merit, tenure and promotion applications” (Dewar 2008: 20). SoTL and the reflective practice it encouraged had become a political and managerial tool.

The Science of Education: the Classroom as a Laboratory

The “expert knowledge” that Shore and Wright (1999) refer to is contained within educational development. It became popular through the works of, for example, Elton (1987) and Boyce (1990) from the late 1980’s onwards, at the same time that neo-liberal agendas also started to establish themselves. It has now become the portal through which all other disciplines in my university must teach. So how did it manage to win that contract?

The development of teaching and learning strategies has been borne through psychological modelling of learning environments (Mills 2004). It identifies teacher and student types and ways to make them learn; seeing “people as species”, to use Tonkin’s description of psychology (2005). The classroom as a laboratory that I had learnt about in my classes about SoTL was just another way of enacting the model. The classroom was not referred to as the field, or for that matter the courtroom, or the kitchen. For anthropologists is the classroom a laboratory or is it the field - or is it simply a classroom? Does the subject necessitate an anthropological approach when teaching or is that something to be reserved for research? As I argued earlier, the decision on how to approach the classroom is politicised because it situates the knowledge being taught.

This is how one practitioner used the concept of “laboratory”:

Fishman has reconfigured his classroom as a laboratory site and opened his teaching practice to the scrutiny that empirical data and critical reflection enable. Together the two gather and analyze a rich array of qualitative data that shed light on what Fishman is doing and whether he ought to keep on doing it that way. (Stengel 2005: 110)

The laboratory presents itself as an independent space, the field as an inter-dependent space. The laboratory denotes a somewhat sterile environment away from the outside world and experiments bring together different variables in accordance with pre-arranged hypothesis and methods, the results of this are then reflected on. For the field, a lot of emphasis is put on defining what that field is; how it is the amalgamation of many fields. The researcher rather than attempting to scrub themselves down of their own concepts uses them in juxtaposition to other existing concepts in the field. Experimentation in this context is not to bring together different variables in a particular manner, but to consider how pre-existing configurations of variables have been brought together in a particular manner.

In the laboratory, the teacher conducts the experiment and reflection takes place in an attempt to assess what happened. Reflective practice in the teaching lab means examining how you applied the techniques of teaching – how well they worked for you and what you could do to improve the learner's experience. Reflective practice here, is, in fact: "If I knew then what I know now I would have done it differently." It is hardly something people start only when they train to be a teacher. I sometimes teach it to Austrian teenagers, grammatically its called the 3rd conditional - we use it all the time.

When educational developers talk about reflective practice it is not the same as anthropological uses. This is not reflection on what the classroom is to different people and how it relates to a wider socio-economic picture and more importantly how you bridge that gap; your life outside the classroom. It only does this with respect to performance indicators that are part of the university strategy, for instance, on equal opportunities and learner disabilities. Rather than reflect on the overall process trainees must critically assess their teaching performance in accordance with a narrow debate about what is normal teaching practice. Furthermore it conflates this performance with one of personal development, failure to take on the educationalists discourse is to fail in other ways too and it can rapidly deteriorate into a soul-searching confessional.

The educational developers won the contract to legislate, market, and police education because the laboratory fulfilled both parts of the education tender. The sterile environment enabled a pure educational product to exist alongside the production and recording of evidence-based performance indicators. Furthermore, in the lab, this could be done within an economic strategy without politicising the process. The teacher trains to look at his or herself in the lab and no further.

The Disciplining Process

Kim who is a very popular teacher at the Old Barn, tried to further her prospects by doing the Graduate Diploma in TESOL (Teaching English to Speakers of Other Languages) at a respected University. At the time that I interviewed her she still had not passed her exam.

She described her profile as a 48-year-old woman, divorced, middle class from an aspiring upper-middle class background. She has spent the last ten years teaching English, and earns about £20,000 a year from teaching and having students in her house. In addition to this she receives £850/month maintenance from her ex-husband.

Kim's failure to understand the course led her to challenge fundamental assumptions about teacher training. The failure of the course to transform her attitudes and interpretations allowed Kim, who has no social science background, to provide a clear account of the technologies forced upon her. When I asked her about the course and reflective practice she was still angry.

The last year has been a long dark tunnel.... They take all sorts of people from different educational backgrounds and try to push them through the same hole but good teaching is dependent on who you are teaching.... I think they wanted to see teaching the way they wanted it done. There are so many ways of teaching but they have this set idea in their heads.... I was told there was no wrong answer, but clearly there was because I kept failing.... You need to reflect on why you failed without being told why – so what were you meant to reflect on? it's ripping yourself to bloody pieces even if you've done nothing wrong - and then you're meant to do it to your friends in peer observation...when I asked what they wanted I was told it was “unethical” to provide advice – she was lucky to have any bloody teeth left after she said that.... I was told that I needed more “tricks” in the class and when I asked what she meant she told me to reflect on it.... If I wrote about the lesson I was told it was description not reflection. Reflection is just criticism, it only works if you rip yourself to pieces.

Kim said that she deliberately made mistakes in order to confess them. Her friend on the course, who was experiencing similar difficulties, cynically wrote a “supercilious vomit inducing confession” of how she had seen the error of her ways and how wonderful the course was; it got her a merit.

Kim's account concurs with Foucault's (1991: 238-9) accounts of 19th century prisons and that leaves the educational developers today with ideological, methodological and ethical concerns that need addressing:

Rather than keep the convicts “under lock and key like wild beasts in their cages,” they must be brought together, made to join together in useful exercises, forced together to adopt good habits, preventing moral contagion by active surveillance, maintaining reflection by the rule of silence'. [...] It is not, therefore, an external respect for the law or fear of punishment alone that will act upon the convict but the workings of the conscience itself. A profound submission, rather than a superficial training; a change of “morality,” rather than of attitude.

Yet the influence of this “transformative” form of education based upon critical intra-subjectivity is widespread and mostly considered beneficial. Within the anthropological debate on education Mascarenhas-Keyes (2004: 157) writes about the liberating potential of educational contrition and reports that a

...factor which needs to be guarded against is the resistance to engage in reflection. Such resistance can emanate from both participants and staff. Critical self-reflection can be painful and threatening for participants, as it requires a personal acknowledgement of weakness. Furthermore, as individual reflection in the course is part of a staged process towards group reflection, further pain may be experienced in sharing thoughts and feelings with others. This is not to say that many do not find the process ultimately emancipatory...

Although it has become widely accepted that painful psychological change can be part of the learning process this tortuous aspect should be engaged with critically. Unfortunately, the Gods of education are currently looking over their balance sheets rather than their students. As we, the teachers, attempt everyday to punish ourselves in order to get closer to an educational ideal it is worth remembering that our educational heaven is firmly located in a competitive global HE market.

This perspective does not deny agency but tries to remind us that teacher-training disciplines the teacher through forceful techniques to use that agency to develop creative and enjoyable lesson plans through questioning their own ability to deliver the educational goods. The attempt to control the educational product is also an attempt to restrict the field for imaginative manoeuvre and change in Teaching and Learning.

What I love about the Old Barn is that I just turn up teach, drink a cup of tea, have a chat, teach some more and go home – that is the complete package; it does not require me to feel much pain. When I taught at the university, it felt like I was back at the Old Barn, the point of delivery of the lesson in the classroom was pretty much the same except classroom management was easier. Most of my students got good results and gave good feedback. Therefore the only discernable difference to me is contextual, and that is of course laden with power dynamics and values. The basic teacher training course at Sussex, that was supposed to orientate me to the specific needs of Higher Education students, presented a generic model for all types of teaching, something that is very common within theories about teaching and education, but by attending the course, I am now a teacher who has met the

university's current teaching standard. In a tick-box education - I'm back on board! However, I have yet to pass the optional certificate that comes with the course, furthermore a bad combination of my intransigence and too many pointless hoops to jump also mean that I'm unlikely to get this certificate in the near future.

Conclusion

In the current HE market, universities competitively position themselves. This requires delivering to a range of audits and market expectations. Educational developers provide psychology-based models that assist in the standardisation of teaching practice and are equated with quality through their focus on a teacher performance aligned with institutional demands. These models enforce standards through training in a reflexive methodology that limits the teacher to critically look at and transform themselves within a neutral teaching space. Teaching that is a part of a market strategy is separated from the politicised economics of educational markets through the regulation and discipline of teachers as independent educational performers. Yet, the construction of this independence is illusory because the teacher, who is the frontline provider of education, is expected to contribute to market position. As teachers innovate in order to fulfil these requirements and students learn to expect individual capital returns on their education what else is lost?

For academic institutions like Sussex to survive, they have to be a successful player in the academic market. The tension between teaching and research as a means of funding appears to have fallen, at least for the moment, on developing research whilst improving teaching standards and following trends in "new teaching and learning paradigms" (University of Sussex 2008: 7). At least this way staff views on what should be taught are less likely to be idealized views of the subject and more inclined to reflect their own discipline's need to deliver practical research for business, commerce, industry and the arts. Research is tied to what the market will pay for, that in turn defines the discipline and what will be taught. Where is the student in this, with Professor Beer's vision to develop their full potential and individual fulfillment? As long as those individual aspirations are perceived by the student to be directly tied to their practical market potential then they should gain the maximum from Higher Education. Even if they don't think that their education should increase their value as the stock of human capital by the time they've come through the system, the education that they will have received will be so entangled with a market provision that it might be hard for them, or anyone else for that matter, to discern the difference.

Everyone at the Old Barn is worried that regulation is on its way, and doing further teacher training is the only way to survive that sort of development. I am more worried that in the course of regulation, despite the possibility of creativity and resistance (Standish 2005; Cote et al. 2007) valuable lessons will be unthinkable and lost. One day, I played dead lions with a group of Spanish students. It was the first sunny day in ages and they were lethargic so we all lay down on the adjoining playing field, in silence, for an hour. At the time I did not see any educational value in it, it was simply a compromised response to the students' wishes to have a break and enjoy the day rather than the class that their parents who were funding their trip probably wanted. Then, in the course of writing this article, a memory returned to me from when I was about 6 years old and the teacher spontaneously took us out of the classroom on a hot sunny day. We sat on this enormous tree stump, I cannot remember what the lesson was about or if we did anything but I can still remember feeling the warmth of the sun and a quiet sense of freedom.

Why should people learning a skill, like teaching, seek to understand the multifarious relations of power within which their subject exists? Yet, for anthropologists who study similar relations elsewhere there is an imperative to understand their own position in the education system. If it is important for students to understand the subject through debates about its socio-economic colonial history, then how, where and what sort of knowledge it produces is surely essential in understanding their own participation in the subject and the socio-economic context of their own position in the Higher Education system. If

students are being taught to examine why anthropologists produce their product then a key component in this is the academic industry that they work within. Should students start learning about anthropology 100 years ago in the Trobriand Islands or today in their own classroom?

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Notes

ⁱ I am also writing in the style that I was encouraged to use on the teacher training course, that of using a form of reflective practice and making use of journaling my experiences in order to understand what I am doing and to improve my performance. However rather than constrain myself by focusing my reflection on my performance against narrow "Intended Learning Outcomes" of other students I have tried to incorporate a more anthropologically inclined reflexivity such that "Reflexivity becomes a continuing mode of self-analysis and political awareness" (Callaway 1992: 33).

ⁱⁱ <http://www.parliament.uk/business/committees/committees-archive/ius/ius-020809/> (last accessed 27.10.11).

ⁱⁱⁱ Names and some details have been changed in order to protect confidentiality.

^{iv} <http://www.sussex.ac.uk/academicoffice/1-3-15.html> (revised Feb 2008) (last accessed 27.10.11).