
Explorations of Lifelong Learning Ethics

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ABSTRACT The methodological approaches that were used in this research were ethnographic, quantitative and analysis of post-compulsory education policy documents 1945-2007. The article aims to explore the issues of ethics in lifelong learning, and an alternative approach to the analysis of the impact of lifelong learning policy, by focusing research attention as follows: first, on the contests between the meaning of inclusion in lifelong learning to lifelong learners and the meaning of inclusion in lifelong learning to the state, and second on the ethical concerns facing lifelong learners. Finally, the ethics are explored of the practice of inclusion in lifelong learning through the ethical dilemmas that face teachers and advisers of lifelong learners.

Introduction

The focus of this article is on the meaning of inclusion in lifelong learning. It asks adult learners the following question: what does inclusion in lifelong learning mean? In the analysis of lifelong learning the assumption is that lifelong learning policy is appropriate, moral, good for the state, good for lifelong learners and good for skills renewals and the Labour Market. Underneath that assumption there are ethical issues. The aim is to try probe underneath the exterior assumptions of appropriateness, moral goodness and progress of lifelong learning by raising ethics issues in lifelong learning. In raising ethical issues the paper will explore alternative approach to the analysis of the impact of lifelong learning policy by focusing research attention as follows: first the paper will focus on the contests between the meaning of inclusion in lifelong learning to lifelong learners and the meaning of inclusion in lifelong learning to the state. Second the paper will focus on the ethics of the

practice of inclusion in lifelong learning through the ethical dilemmas that face teachers and advisers of lifelong learners.

O'Shea & Corrigan (1979) claim that adults, particularly working class adults are culturally and socially disengaged from post-compulsory education because the structure and the institutional arrangements of post-compulsory education are alienating. They conclude that working class disengagement is not because of poor 'motivation'; instead that disengagement is the consequence of 'cultural conflicts' flowing from the institutional contexts of post-compulsory education (O'Shea & Corrigan, 1979). In her review of the literature McGivney (1990) makes more or less the same claims. She argues that the middle class culture of further education colleges is intimidating to 'working class people, less well-educated people, people in lower social economic and occupational strata' (McGivney, 1990, pp. 14-15).

In the 1980s discourses began to examine inclusion in lifelong learning from the standpoint of the impact of international political economy on the economic competitiveness of the UK and the roles of inclusion in lifelong learning in the amelioration of that impact. Clarke (1996) argues that the change in technology and the increasingly integrated international economies will lead to change in 'division of labour, the contents of work, the types and levels of skills that will be demanded of the modern workforce' (Clarke, 1996, p. 59). Thus in order to meet the threats posed by international political economy lifelong learning must come to the aid British industries; it must ease the passing away of older work ethics and give birth to newer work ethics; it must create flexibility out of inflexibility, and it must help to shift a centralised 'Fordist' bureaucracy to a flexible 'Post-Fordist' system of productive organisation (Murray, 1989, pp. 38-53). Jansen & Van der Veen (1992) see lifelong learning in terms of the management of those social risks which they claim have been brought on by the way society has evolved in response to advances in science (Jansen & Van der Veen, 1992, p. 124). According to Jansen and Van der Veen the risks will come from the demise of traditional values and from the fragmentation of the community and their possible replacement by '*new forms of social inequality*' (their italics) brought on by the increasing individualisation of society in the wake of scientific and technological advances (op. cit. pp.126-128).

The Meaning of Inclusion in Lifelong Learning to Lifelong Learners

The Government's version of the meaning of inclusion has been contested by lifelong learners. The contest centred on the ethical problems raised by the Government's version of the meaning of inclusion. The Government's version of the meaning of inclusion in lifelong learning was set out in a series of White Paper as follows: The Percy Report, 1945, p. 5; DE/DES, 1981, p. 3; DfE/DE Group, 1991, pp. 25-26; Cabinet Office, 1999, p. 11; DfEE, 1999, p. 47.

The exploration of these contests and the ethical problems they posed to adults was carried out using ethnographic interviews with forty adult learners, teachers, Co-ordinators, Curriculum Directors and College Senior Executives in three further education colleges in the London Area. And, as mentioned above, the summary of results in this paper is based entirely on analysis of a single question. The results of the interviews suggest that the meaning of inclusion in lifelong learning was at odds with the meaning defined by the Government. Instead of a single meaning which was irrevocably linked to 'working lives' lifelong learners had many meanings for inclusion in lifelong learning. And these meanings embraced issues including perception of College policies, class, cost, curricular programmes, teacher behaviour, student-teacher relations; the teachers' professional competence, classroom manners, ability to make learners feel emotional comfort, and the ability to accept and appreciate individual differences. Additionally the meanings included race and racism, diversity, equality and inequality, ethnicity, social justice and fairness. Above all, it was felt by the overwhelming majority of learners that the fundamental meaning of inclusion in lifelong learning embraced the question: inclusion and lifelong learning of what? That was to say that the fundamental meaning of inclusion in post-compulsory education was that it must offer access to curricular programmes which enabled individuals to meet current educational needs.

The Nature of the Contest and Ethical Concerns

There were four major contested terrains which caused ethical concerns within the ranks of adult learners. These contested terrains were as follows:

Primary Educational Goals: inclusion and lifelong learning of what?

Primary educational goals were inherent to individual inclusive decisions. The primary educational goals were the self-defined curricular programmes leading to the achievement of current educational needs. The primary educational needs and curricular options were irrevocably linked to the extent that any other meanings that sought to break the link were not only contested, but more importantly they rendered inclusion in lifelong learning meaningless. When the match between the preferred curricular programmes and current educational needs was achieved the meaning of inclusion was defined as of 'good education'.

The following extracts from the views of adult learners demonstrated the contests and ethical concerns over the Governments control of the curriculum

Inclusion means that you have a choice of what you want to do. Isn't it?

Individuals can use this opportunity to improve their educational level or meet their educational need through advice on higher education or whatever individuals want for themselves. With inclusion, individuals can get education according to their desire.

Once in College or in an ideal world I want to be included in certain things. I want to be included in [learning] things that allow me to develop my mind basically; that allows me to achieve my potential; allow me to go where I have never been before.

Something to do. I have made new friends. I have also learnt a little about business finance which I enjoyed because I liked doing the sums.

I have made new friends. I have met people from different parts of the world which is good. I like people.

What I have gained was meeting new people of different ethnic classes [groups?] as it is good to get a different perspective of life from people from other backgrounds. I have gained confidence in being with other people and have a more in-depth perspective of life. I have more knowledge and understanding of people.

For the older learners lifelong learning meant a way out of isolation and the mundane emptiness of adulthood, socialising and cultural awareness education. Based on the state's definition getting to learn and know the cultures of the people in your neighbourhood does not qualify for lifelong learning.

Primary Educational Factors

The primary educational factors were factors that were inherent facilitators of the primary educational goal. The main primary educational factor was the teacher. The teacher stood firmly at the centre of the primary educational goal. There was no evidence to support any argument that the physical conditions in the classroom, including the levels of technology and teaching aids, was important to how adults defined the meaning of inclusion and the ordering of the realities of 'what happened in the classroom'. The teacher stood at the head of that ordering of reality. The order of reality was defined in terms of four main behavioural expectations which have been designated as the **HOOD** which teachers of adult learners and adult learners must both wear in the practice of inclusion in lifelong learning.

HOOD stood for the following:

Honesty – teacher to tell lifelong learners the truth, even though that truth might be criticisms, provided that teacher meant good; truth about Government and College policy, even though the teacher had no part in the formulation of the policy and was in no position to effect change in the policy, and to tell the truth when things were not alright.

Order – Order had several levels. First, was that the teacher should 'control the class'. Second was the ethical behaviour of the teacher in terms of professional responsibility; social responsibility; upholding human decency and dignity and morality without fear or favour, and personal order in terms which related to Diligence and legality.

More importantly Order demanded that the teacher recognised and respected adulthood.

Obedience – Obedience meant that the teacher must uphold the law of natural and social justice, particularly the equality of people and equal opportunities legislation as enshrined in College policy and Codes of Behaviour.

Diligence – Diligence meant the professional competence of the teacher: competence in terms of planning; in terms of the Ordering of learning activities; in terms of behavioural management, and in terms of the Order of the human side of educational enterprise. A diligent teacher would be intuitive enough to know that every lifelong learner had the ability to achieve at the highest level, provided they were encouraged, treated humanely, guided and given what some learners called the ‘right kick’ and the ‘right push’.

Readers must make up their minds as to what they thought adult learners were saying in the following extracts:

It is not just what happens when the College provides access to facilities or what happens when I get to College that I am saying. Something like after I get into the College and get to the classroom: when I get to the classroom what happens in the classroom is the most important meaning of inclusion.

Teachers should be competent. They should know what they are doing and be able to make lessons understandable otherwise inclusion will be meaningless and pointless.

I think teachers should know how control of the class is managed; of how the class should go on. So teachers need to be able to manage and control the class without being rude or making the class unbearable and annoying. Teachers should not be threatening to students or treat students like kids; otherwise there will students who will continuously challenge and disrupt the class.

If they [teachers] behave in a manner which makes students feel bad inclusion does not make sense because it is a learning environment. You can't learn in an environment in which you are not comfortable with the teacher. It is just not natural and practical. Inclusion makes no sense in that way because if you are comfortable you can sit down and learn.

Secondary Educational Factors

Secondary educational factors invested primary educational goals with richness. While these factors, which included family values, culture, ethnicity, identity and religion, equality and inequality, might have been important to the meaning of inclusion and to the enrichment of lifelong learning experience there was a spread of opinions that were based on rational arguments that these factors were fluid and modifiable by education. In other words there was a contest within a contest. Accordingly the degree to which secondary educational factors constituted a contest and caused ethical problems varied among adult learners, as the following extracts demonstrated:

What I can say is if inclusion in education means that individual values and culture are included, then religion should be included because everyone has different background and different religion. Religion is important to be added to inclusion in education because if you look for individual needs then it should be added because everyone has different needs. If you want to produce something to save individual needs you need to look at religion as well because religion also comes from individual needs.

Education can help reinforce and keep your identity. Already I have said that, culture, custom and tradition can be changed with civilisation or modernisation or acculturation or naturalisation. But we have different custom and culture and in history cultures have grown step-by-step. But at the moment if you want to impose someone's culture without educating them, tell them and explain to that person the reason and whether he believe or not there will problems.

But what I am saying is that culture will change with the environment of education because you may find that what you really believe to be important may not be. So you can pass from one culture to another, by that of course I mean without imposition, not forced on the person.

Circumstantial Educational Factors

Circumstantial factors were factors in the society that seeped into the context in which inclusion in lifelong learning was transacted. These factors introduced anger, resentment and moral arguments and dilemmas into the meaning of inclusion in lifelong learning. Circumstantial factors included race and racism, unfairness, injustice, and economic and social immobility and deprivation. The following extracts from ethnic minority learners demonstrated the ethical and moral issues in the cross-cultural contests of inclusion in lifelong learning:

It is not the kind of area where you can just go home and sit down and learn. It is a fight when you get home. It is a fight just to get

home. It is a fight when you get out of your car. It is a fight when you get on the bus. Anything, everything is a struggle and always distracting.

The Government can talk about inclusion, but yeah, so what? It wouldn't make any difference to black people. The Government needs to come to all these places to see what is happening. If you are black you have very limited opportunity. It does not matter whether the Government talks about inclusion or not. At the end of the day the people who make decisions that affect what we as black people have access to don't really care what the Government has said on paper.

You see I think the way black people are now in the UK black people are just considered as low. When it comes to employment the thing we are good for is retail shop assistant, cleaning up rubbish in the street or anything in the lower class of the sector. It is rare and unheard of that people from my background and area is a politician or something like that.

Current researches have not examined the possible nature of the ethical concerns facing lifelong learners. For if as Murray has claimed 'Post-Fordism' indicates adaptive process of progressive lifelong learning lest individuals are reduced to inflexible by-products of a technological age. Should not individuals be relieved and be liberated to the extent that they are in a position to define what, for them, constitute acceptable forms and methods of inclusion in lifelong learning? The fundamental questions that new researches and analyses of inclusive and lifelong learning policy must ask are as follows: inclusion in lifelong learning of what? Who owns lifelong learning? In a learning society should inclusion in lifelong learning be a civic duty or should it be a birthright, from the cradle to the grave, without the proviso that it must have anything whatsoever to do with 'working life'? Does inclusion in lifelong learning stop at the end of 'working life'? Do individuals cease to be members of a learning society at the end of their 'working lives'? Is it ethical for the Government to draw boundaries and designate some forms of education as 'leisure' which do not merit taxpayer's funds? Does this not create educational inequality?

The Practice of Inclusion in Lifelong Learning: the teacher and ethical dilemmas

The extracts I have reported here were based on only two of the questions I put to teachers and College leaders. The main question was as follows: what does inclusion in lifelong learning mean to them?

The responses to the above questions proved that the multiplicity, variability and the contested meanings I have described earlier in connection

with learners were also manifested in the meanings teachers gave to inclusion in lifelong learning. Thus for some teachers inclusion had a political meaning. The political meaning was derived from the politics of the social, economic and class analysis of the population characteristics of lifelong learners. For another group of teachers the meaning of inclusion was linked to issues about the roles of race and ethnicity in the predominance of certain groups of learners in certain curricular areas. Some teachers saw the meaning of inclusion in terms of post-compulsory education market and the dominant position of the LSC (Learning and Skills Council for England and Wales). Yet other teachers argued that inclusion meant a contest of their professional autonomy. For yet other teachers the definition of the meaning of inclusion was derived from the consequences of the population characteristics of lifelong learners on their professional practice, particularly in terms of teaching and learning. For some other teachers the meaning of inclusion was related to the implications of population characteristics for the quality of learning and the steps they claimed they have had to take in order to ensure quality.

The Nature of the Ethical Dilemmas Facing Teachers

As I have mentioned above there were three main ethical dilemmas teachers faced in the practice of inclusion in lifelong learning. The three dilemmas were ethics in finance, ethics in production and marketing and ethics in human resource management. The classification I have resorted to was simply a matter of expediency because these dilemmas have a common LSC root, be that root finance, recruitment, achievement, retention and progression targets.

Ethics in Finance

Ethics in finance were the result of the methods used by the Learning and Skills Council (LSC) to exert control over the funding of lifelong learning. The following extracts will shed some light on the nature of the dilemma facing teachers as a consequence of ethics in finance.

I think inevitably there are background effects. I like to say that I am not affected but for instance there are circumstances in which a student, who might very well, in my view, not be totally suited to going down the route of getting level 3 qualification. One has to consider that instead of advising him to leave the College one is thinking of several thousand pounds going out of the establishment. I think that may very well affect the way we counsel some learners.
(Team Manager)

We have a model of teaching in this country which I have been used to. I think it presupposes that there is an optimum number in a classroom although no one has defined to me what that optimum is but from my own experience I would have said that for a level three

class the optimum would be fifteen. Any less than that diversity isn't there. Many more than that then clearly there is that element of crowd control in lesson which can be a bit difficult. (Teacher)

I have had to make adjustments in terms of large numbers. The establishment as a whole has raised the level of what is considered to be a full class. To put the rise in terms of numbers it was considered that twenty-five students is a full class. At the beginning of this year the numbers were raised so that thirty was the figure given for a full class. (Teacher)

Now obviously you know from our point of view that was rather uncomfortable because primarily the rooms were not suited for that sort of number. It also true to say that the basis of good teaching is getting to know the students you have; their diversity; their basic grades; their interests [and] their personalities. For large numbers in the class that is going to take a long time and more demanding. (Curriculum Manager and Teacher)

The issues raised in the above extracts have been designated ethics in the funding of lifelong learning. These teachers were telling us about the exterior mechanisms of funding adopted by the LSC. However beneath that exterior they were telling us about the ethical dilemmas they faced as a result of perceptive distortion of professional identity. Perceptive distortion of professional identity was the outcome of the subordination of the professional conscience of the teacher, par excellence, to mundane economics of consumption. The teachers were saying that they were professionally conscious that the sizes of their classes were too large but they have had to accept the condition because to contest it will inevitably lead to loss of funding and as it would be mentioned later it was 'a job' which you took or left.

Ethics in Production and Marketing

Ethics in production and marketing again derived from the funding regime of the LSC. However in this instance the funding regime distorted the professional identity of teachers by placing product liability on teachers. In this regime individual lifelong learner was a product and their retention, achievement and progression were a measure of teachers' productivity. The following extracts will shed light on the dilemmas teachers faced as a result of ethics in production and marketing:

To me it is no longer about including people in this educational process. It is about inclusion in a framework. We have a framework and that is measured by achievement, completion and progression. (Deputy Principal).

I think there is a tension between the push for further inclusion and the push for increased measurements and measuring and comparison of colleges with each other and colleges and schools...Most of the students we have for level three are on the margins of being able to succeed there...We have to do everything right in order for more students not to fall off the scale... I think there is a tension. I wouldn't want to say there is a problem. It's a problem to be resolved. It's a problem to be worked through, but there is certainly a tension between the way we are measured in one way in terms of inclusion and participation and in another way in terms of raw outcomes. (Deputy Principal)

There are too many black and Asian learners in vocational areas. Vocational areas such as Admin, Health and Social Care and Travel and Tourism have a hundred percent blacks and Asians. So we need to begin to question whether the processes that certain curricular managers used to advise, interview and select learners do not lead to curricular exclusion areas and enclaves which are in fact operated in manners that ideologically to shut our blacks and Asian learners because they might become a curricular liability. (Teacher)

Beneath the LSC funding regime this teacher was arguing that the mobilisation of the productive capacity of the College pressurised her into distorted perception of professional identity; that it pressurised her into accepting eugenic thesis and exclude certain groups from designated curricular areas because they might not achieve and hence bring down the productivity of the Department.

The issues raised by these teachers were put to a Curriculum Director and Deputy Chief Executive of Hampden College. This was what she had to say:

What we are doing is to see which kinds of provision are more likely to enable our student population to achieve their potential. The provision is partly a matter of policy and partly because of the need to meet our commitments to our external stakeholders...It was just a policy statement about learning next academic year that there is going to be a reduction in certain areas, particularly academic route, and that there is going to be expansion of vocational area. What this means was to keep the level of academic provision and expand vocational area...We still be taking students to the levels we have usually done with respect to academic, while we increase vocational provision. This enables us as a College to improve the chances of achievement, given our student population. (Deputy Principal and Curriculum Director)

The Deputy Principal and Curriculum Director more-or-less confirmed the dilemmas facing their teachers. The current population was sixty-three percent black and Asian. The colleges were actively engaged in subtle eugenic practice

according to which blacks were less genetically endowed and were suited to Level 1 education involving 'simpler abilities [vocational education] of memory and association' (Jensen, 1969, cited in Tucker, 1998, p. 98).

Ethics in Human Resources

Ethics in Human resources again derived from LSC funding regimes. Ethics in human resources was a new pattern of control over and the suppression of the professional judgement of teachers of lifelong learners by making job security conditional on compliance. The following extracts from an interview with a group teacher demonstrated the ethical dilemmas facing teachers as a consequence of ethics in human resources.

Political in the sense that our influence [was diminished] we have very little influence on what should happen. So we are passed on. We receive things which probably under normal conditions we would have given serious thoughts and consideration and rejected on the basis of professional judgement ... For example we are forced to teach groups, not that we would refuse to teach them which otherwise in terms of our approach would have been quite different. However we are faced with a situation whereby we have to accept it because it is a job and the more political decision [there] has been [the] more is forced on us. (Teacher)

As has been argued in the main paper from which sections of this paper have been adapted research attention needs to be directed at lifelong learners and practitioners. Ball (1990) wrote of how a 'discourse of derision acted to debunk and displace specific words and meanings' (p. 18). Part of what has been displaced is what Schon (1983) described as 'reflection in action', 'knowing in action' and how professionals have 'a feel for their material' (pp. 19-22). The consequences of the displacement and how they influence the way further education colleges allocate students to curricular programmes have already been analysed by (Benn & Chitty, 1997, p. 358).

There should now be paradigm shift. The shift calls for new order of discourses as followed: first the new order of discourses should no longer simply be about how teachers 'feel for their' profession. Instead it should be about professional identity and about identifying with the job as the jobholder. Because in identifying with the job teachers develop professional conscience. They define what is appropriate or inappropriate; what is moral or immoral; what is acceptable and unacceptable and what is just and unjust. Second it is no longer enough to just have a 'discourse of derision'. The new order of discourses should be discourses of counter derision. Fundamentally the new discourses must focus attention on the way ethics in finance; production and human resource management have posed ethical dilemmas to teachers; have led to perceptive distortion of teachers' professional identity and have undermined the quality of educational management of the types carried out by teachers in

their interactions with adult students in the classroom. The new discourses must focus on policy ethics and ethics of policy. And they must focus on and raise questions about Governmental Social and Cultural Responsibility.

Conclusion

This article has merely scratched the underside of the ethics of lifelong learning. It has tried, first, to direct attention towards the contests between the meanings of inclusion in lifelong learning to lifelong learners and the meaning of inclusion to the Government. Second the article has highlighted the ethical dilemmas that faced teachers in the practice of inclusion. Third the article has highlighted certain areas where current researches have failed to address issues that are of concern to learners and teachers. The article also suggests possible new discourses to move forward the 'discourse of derision'.

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