

FOUCAULT'S GENEALOGY OF EDUCATION POLICY: UNDERSTANDING OURSELVES AS EDUCATORS

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Abstract

The need for me to undertake a genealogy of education policy arose from my experience as a senior lecturer in social work teaching a diverse cohort of students. I intended to understand how the origins of where we were from and how I had been taught, affected our interactions with each other. I also wanted to teach using a relationship based approach. This involved using 'the self' as a teaching tool, therefore it was important to understand what had shaped my 'self'. Foucault's genealogy of education policy offered a method of self-study in understanding myself as an educator. Being part of the first generation of migrant children from the Caribbean to be educated in England, I was aware education policies at that time had espoused assimilation into British society. The genealogy was intended to help me identify the complexity of these policies and how they affected my 'self', identity and teaching.

Key words: assimilation, education, Foucault, genealogy, identity, relationship based approach, self, social work

1. INTRODUCTION: WHY UNDERSTAND OURSELVES?

Brookfield notes the value of autobiography in teachers re-visiting their education. He states 'the most significant and most deeply embedded influences that operate on us are the images, models, and conception of teaching derived from our own experience of learning', (1995:49). Brookfield goes on to say 'Our autobiographies as learners in childhood, adolescence and young adulthood frame our approach to teaching at the start of our careers' (1995:50). Although as educators we will go through a process of training, for me personally, at the end of completing my Post-Graduate Diploma in Higher Education and Learning, I felt there were some gaps in my teaching knowledge and skills. The Diploma had taught me about process's and even reflective practice, yet there was something about me: who I was, who I might be perceived to be and my world that would in some way become evident in my teaching practice. This became evident on my first day of teaching when I was confronted by what appeared to be a racial divide between the students, which I was unsure how to address (Walker, 2017 in press). Perhaps I did need to draw on my own embedded concept of teaching from my experience of learning as Brookfield stated. Yet, I had never had the experience of being taught in a cohort that was racially and culturally diverse – and divided. My own experience of education as a black child in England was of being in a school where the majority of children during my primary education were white, while the majority of children during my secondary education were black; I never observed a teacher managing a multi-racial cohort. However, Stillwaggon's discussion of teacher identity and the pedagogical relationship felt as though it was something I could draw on. Stillwaggon suggests that personal theories of teacher identity can account for connections between students and teachers, 'Accounting for the teacher's identity, therefore, is closely tied to an account of what role this identity plays in securing students' developing subjectivities within those practices and beliefs upon which their society is founded' (2008:68). It seemed an exploration of my identity and its emergence might help me to understand how best to approach this divided cohort. In a multi-cultural society with social work students would be working with service users from a diversity of backgrounds; I felt it was incumbent on me to challenge unhelpful or divisive beliefs about difference. I also wanted to apply a pedagogical method to my teaching, which was a relationship based approach and this was dependant on the students working collaboratively. I was at the start of my career as Brookfield refers to as the time when our autobiographies frame our teaching. Indeed, my experiences of learning, which was positive when my teachers were responsive, engaging and empathetic, inspired my interest in a relationship based approach to teaching. Edwards and Richards (2002) present

relational, relationship based approach to teaching social work students and suggest the goal of relational teaching is to 'provide a learning context that enables students to learn and grow, and incorporates the knowledge that emotions are involved in learning' (2002: 36). The key components of Relational Teaching are mutual engagement, mutual empathy, and mutual empowerment, which are created as the educator leads on building relationships with and between the students. The impact of race and culture on such relational experiences is recognised; contextual and socio-cultural factors are thought to help or hinder the opportunities for authentic, empowering and empathetic relationships to be developed. This type of relational teaching is far removed from a didactic, monological approach to teaching where there is an absence of interaction between the teacher and students; the 'patient, listening objects' (Freire, 1970: 53) With a relationship based approach, the use of self is needed. As such, I believe as the educator I would greatly benefit from understanding my "self", how it developed and its manifestation within the classroom.

In this paper, I will provide a definition of "self" and self-study before going onto summarise Foucault's position on education and introduce the concept of the genealogy of education policy. I will provide an exploratory commentary on the policies, regulations and reports which were written or implemented during the period of my primary and secondary education and I will apply an interpretive look on the impact they appear to have had on my "self", my identity and what this might mean for my teaching. An interpretive process would be seen as acceptable as Foucault suggests 'Genealogies are therefore not positivistic returns to a more careful or exact form of science. They are precisely anti-sciences', (1980: 83).

2. THE USE OF SELF

'The term 'self' is often used as shorthand for a whole set of aspects of personality and identity, including our beliefs and values, our anxieties and 'constructs' - a combination of our rational and intuitive views on the way the world and other people operate, and therefore how we interact with the world and other people' (Ward, 2010: 52).

As early as 1936, Virginia Pollard Robinson recognised the use of self as essential to the successful teaching of social work students; a view supported throughout subsequent decades (Amacher, 1976; Reynolds, 1965; Sarri, 1989; Towle, 1954, Urdang, 2010). Mathews (1991) distinguishes between the relational self and the autonomous self. The relational self is influenced, moved and shaped by the people, places and things we are connected to. The autonomous self contains features which are more fixed, such as language or culture, which would need long term embedding in a new environment to enable those to change. Canevello and Croker (2010) suggest the quality of relationships is reliant upon the perception each person has of the others responsiveness and understanding of their self and their values. The quality of the relationship will potentially vary in depth at particular times when power, politics, policy and attributes of the self (such as the Social GRRRAACCEESS of gender, geography, race, religion, age, ability, appearance, culture, class, ethnicity, education, employment, spirituality and sexuality; Burnham, 2011) and the intersectionality of these impact on the relationship. However, bell hooks argues there are educators who maintain a notion of the educator whereby a dualism between body and mind exists. From this perspective, they assume the self is left outside the boundary of the classroom and what enters is an 'objective mind – free of experiences and bias's (1994: 16/17). She suggests there is a fear that the self would contaminate teaching. However, social work educators utilising a relationship based perspective share the belief that the use of self is woven into the process of forming relationships and will enhance teaching. In the process of building relationships with the students, I have been struck by the demand the role of educator has had on my 'self' particularly when attempting to address the issues of race, migration and difference in the student group (Walker, 2017). This was unexpected emotional labour (Hochschild, 1979) that led me to realise the *depth* needed of my emotional self and the need to review my identity. However, this reflects Wards definition of the use of self when he states 'The term 'self' is often used as shorthand for a whole set of aspects of personality and identity...'. (2010: 52). Burr suggests 'Peoples identities are achieved by a subtle interweaving of many different 'threads' (1995:51). According to Burnham (2011) the 'threads' of what I am defined by include my gender, ethnicity, race, age, culture, religion,

sexuality and my education. Burr argues that these threads are all socially constructed from discourses that surround them, which are historically and culturally situated. Dillard states 'Our definitions and identity, however powerful, have been developed against the backdrop of insidious racism, sexism, classism, and other 'isms' that, by their very nature are limiting, always about who we are not, versus about who we are.' (2006, p53). As an educator, the threads of my identity that I particularly wanted to explore was my education and the intersectionality of this with my race (as in colour), gender and status as a child of migrant parents.

3. SELF STUDY

Self-study is a methodological approach that seeks to enable the educator to understand and transform their practice, (Anderson-Patton and Bass, 2002). Samaras and Freese, (2009) suggest teachers conducting research into their own practice is a relatively new phenomenon. Prior to the 1980's it was not a recognised area of research, the emphasis on reflective practice began to influence the potential for studying one's own practice. However, action research was the method initially used and subsequently influenced the emergence of self-study. Feldman et al (2004) notes action research is intended to change the practice of the individual, community or institution of educators. Therefore 'the collection of data and analysis of data are used to guide the development of a plan of action or to articulate a critical analysis of the individual and institutional barriers (2004: 953). In self-study, the focus is about how the self and identity impacts on and is impacted by one's practice and how practice might be improved. Mitchell and Weber (2005) explore methods in self-study and note these have included the use of performance, photography, video documentary and dress stories. However, the self-study method that I intend to employ is somewhat different to these methods. Cannella and Viruru (2004) suggest there are realms of colonialist power hidden in knowledges that dominate the world and are taught and perpetuated throughout western education. I was interested in Foucault (1980) genealogy of education policy as a self-study method that might reveal the hidden sub-texts within assimilation policies and how they impacted on my-self and my identity.

4. EDUCATION POLICY AS A METHOD OF CONTROL

Foucault (1979) argues that education policy is used as an instrument of control; classifying, disciplining, regulating and excluding children, which positions them to access a particular socio-economic standing in adult life. Foucault suggests underlying the process of classification is normalisation, which is associated with individual ability, requiring testing and examination to assess which classification of ability each child belongs to. He notes 'the age of the 'examining school' marks the beginnings of a pedagogy that functions as a science' (1979: 187). He posits what emerges is an individual that is of political and scientific interest; an assurance to those in power and governance that a prerequisite number of children are taught knowledge that is required for the future society to run efficiently. If children are deemed unable to achieve a standard where they are considered to have the ability to contribute to society in adulthood, they are likely to be disciplined and excluded from school. Children with a disability, migrant or poor are located 'at the heart of the discipline of schooling' (Foucault 1979:31). Foucault notes this type of control can be managed and legitimised through education policy. He suggests there are education policies that marginalise and control specific groups and these policies are not known to the general public; these knowledges are subjugated, which Foucault explains:

By subjugated knowledges I mean two things: on the one hand, I am referring to the historical contents that have been buried and disguised in a functionalist coherence or formal systemisation.... Subjugated knowledges are thus those blocs of historical knowledge which were present but disguised within the body of functionalist and systematising theory and which criticism - which obviously draws upon scholarship-has been able to reveal. On the other hand, I believe that by subjugated knowledges ... have been disqualified as inadequate to their task or insufficiently elaborated: naive knowledges, located low down on the hierarchy, beneath the required level of cognition or scientificity. (Foucault, 1980: 81/82).

Foucault goes on to state the process of unearthing the subjugated knowledges ‘is something one might call a genealogy, or rather a multiplicity of genealogical researches, a painstaking rediscovery of struggles, together with the rude memory of their conflicts’ (1980: 83). In the course of my self-study I intend to unearth the historical contents of educational policies related to me that have been ‘buried and disguised in a functionalist coherence’.

5. MY GENEALOGY OF EDUCATION POLICY

‘Using both historical and marginalised voices, we can reconstruct the history of the major acts of power and knowledge in our society and of the rules that justify them. In other words, we can construct a genealogy’ (Foucault, 1980: 83). I will now construct mine.

When my parents migrated from Jamaica, I became part of the first generation of Caribbean migrant children to be educated in England. I was taught in both mainstream school and the Home and Hospital Tuition Services for children physically unable to attend school due to a medium or long-term condition. This located me in what Ball (2013), summarising Foucault (1984), suggests are the educational policies introduced by government which have ‘three, interrelated vectors – ‘abnormality’, ‘race’ and social class’ (2013: 45). I fell into the “abnormality” category as I could no longer be educated in mainstream school and had to attend a Tuition Centre. My race led me to be categorised as a non- white child, and I would have been categorised as (lower) working class because my parents were migrants who came to England to address the shortage of manual labour. Thus, I was centred at the heart of education policies for children who were politicised and constructed as being unable to achieve a standard considered to contribute to society in adulthood.

Hidden Assimilation Policies

Gillard (2011) suggests that debates about how to educate migrant children began in the 1960’s. The political discourse traversed between assimilation and integration positions with assimilationist vying for an educational system whereby migrant children like myself would be absorbed into British education, culture and language. This whilst our own culture, language or dialect became eroded, losing all that was part of our identity of origin. Conversely, the integrationist approach would enable us to adopt the values of British society while retaining the uniqueness of our culture. Race (2005) suggests Eastern European children had integrated into post war British education systems, however Lynch (1986) argues the assimilationist position was adopted in relation to migrant children from the Commonwealth to address the growing resistance from white British people to the presence of Black people in the UK. As the presence of Eastern Europeans was not as visible of Black and Asians from the Commonwealth, a different political response was required.

Education of Immigrants Policy 1965 & The Local Government Act 1966

Race posits that the Education of Immigrants Policy (DES, 1965) appeared to support the significance of assimilation. Indeed, it stated ‘as the proportion of immigrant children in a school or class increases, the problems will become more difficult to solve, and the chances of assimilation more remote’. Therefore, there was an agenda of assimilation and the expectation that this would decrease ‘problems’. Race argues that problems in schools were perceived as being inherent in the children from the Commonwealth, fuelled by stereotypes within the policy about Black and Asian families rather than identifying issues within the education system itself. Section 11 of The Local Government Act 1966, followed the Education of Immigration Policy. It made provisions for additional funding to Local Authorities who had ‘substantial numbers of immigrants from the Commonwealth whose language or customs differ from those of the community.’ This included funding to teach children to speak English. Gillard (2011) suggests apart from language, the only other consideration that was made was the dispersal of migrant pupils. A policy was introduced to disperse migrant children to schools in various geographical areas. The aim was firstly, to avert specific schools from having to manage large amounts of migrant children and secondly, it was felt a smaller concentration of numbers could be more easily assimilated into British society. As a result, migrant children were ‘bussed’ to schools in different areas to ensure there were no more than one third of migrant children

in a school or in one class. I was never aware of this policy. My own experience did not involve being bussed to school (I attended a school next door to my home). Nevertheless, my lived experience would have been similar to other migrant children having to navigate between two opposing contexts; home where I was surrounded by black people, their values and cultural norms and school where I was surrounded by white people and their associated norms and values. Bell hooks (1994) speaks of the dualism she experienced between school and home; 'school was the place of ecstasy – pleasure and danger. To be changed by ideas that ran counter to values and beliefs learned at home was to place oneself at risk, to enter the danger zone' (1994:3).

Effects of dispersal

Like bell hooks I had a sense of different beliefs and values coming from divergent environments which seemed to contest aspects of my cultural identity; an identity struggling to emerge under the opposing influences of home and school. To know which values and beliefs to embrace and which ones to reject, involved a process of inner negotiation, self-examination, confusion and turmoil. The risk bell hooks refers to was potentially enduring the anger or disdain from the society whose particular values or belief I decided to reject in favour of the other. Policy makers evidently had not appreciated the impact and importance of the cultural identity already developed and reinforced at home and in our cultural community, which would slow the process of assimilation down or prevent assimilation from taking place at all. Davies and Harre (1990) suggests the development of our sense of who we are and how we interpret the world can involve positioning ourselves as belonging in one category and not in the other. In terms of assimilation, this would mean taking a position to assimilate into the British culture while rejecting ones' culture of origin or vice versa. However, Davies and Harre offer a further position which was more aligned to how I was beginning to formulate my identity. They suggest we can develop a sense of who we are from being members of sub-classes of dichotomous categories and not others. From this position, there needs to be an emotional commitment to the category membership you choose to embrace. This theory legitimises the choices I was forced to make when taking aspects from the British Culture and Jamaican/Caribbean culture that I was equally emotionally committed to. Yet, it appeared policy makers assumed there was one position - assimilation - which would take place within ten years despite the contesting factors of ones' original culture and community. In 1966 the Department of Education and Science began collecting statistics to look at the forthcoming ten-year period for pupils who were subject to the dispersal policy and Section 11 funding. Also, section 11 funding was prohibited from being allocated to children who had been in England for more than ten years. Gillborn (2011) suggests these directives allude to the assumption that the assimilation process would occur within the ten-year period. Gillborn (1990) notes the assimilation policies also assumed that once children from the Commonwealth had mastered the English language, traditions and values, there would be no further conflict between Black/Asian and White communities. However, the conflict not only continued within the community (Scarmen, 1982), but *within* migrant children like myself. Yet, the policy makers might be forgiven for their optimism as the assimilation process was supported not only by the policies but also by the educators. Williams (1967) found teachers saw their role was to teach the curriculum *and* to support assimilation by 'putting over a certain set of values (Christian) a code of behaviour (middle class), and a set of academic and job aspirations in which white collar jobs have a higher prestige than manual', (1967: 237). It appeared my childhood education was shrouded in socially constructed discourses of me being inferior, object, native, with the need to be assimilated, absorbed and marginalised into the lower ranks of British society. However, the profile of school changed once I transferred to secondary education, eliminating the possibility of assimilation. By then the dispersal policy was prohibited by the Race Relations Act 1976, 'An Act to make fresh provision with respect to discrimination on racial grounds and relations between people of different racial group' (1976, chapter 74). This period saw the introduction of integrationist education policies to replace assimilation.

Reintegration

The Integrationist phase signified diversity was to be embraced rather than ignored and teaching materials sought to examine and raise awareness between different cultures. This is not as positive as it seems as Gillborn argues that the materials often 'reinforced crude stereotypes of ethnic minorities

as, at best exotic and strange, and at worst, backward and primitive' (1990:146). Mullard (1982) states that although there was rhetoric of tolerance and diversity, the basic aim of policies was to still protect the fabric of British culture. Mullard argued 'It is assumed within the framework of the (integrationist) model that blacks will be more likely to accept than reject outright those values and beliefs which actually shape our society' (1982:128). I was not able to reject the values from either culture outright; for me it was more complex because of the consequences of what was rejected; a backlash from the opposing culture. However, some aspects of British culture that I had accepted began to be undermined when once dispersal had ended I was exposed to a school environment with predominantly black children.

Denigration

In the post dispersal era, I was beginning to learn that British culture was constructed for the benefit of the white privileged in society. This ideology was reinforced for me when comparing the style of teaching in the majority white school as opposed to that in the majority black school. In the majority white school, I felt I had a relationship with my primary school teacher; she knew me, she knew what I enjoyed, what I was good at and I trusted her. Whereas in secondary school, the teachers seemed disinterested and distant; impossible to form relationships with. They had managed to create the dichotomy between their cognitive self and their "self" as a whole person. Gillborn (1988) looked at black male pupil/white teacher relationships at school. He found 'conflictual teacher-pupil relations which culminated in academic failure', (1988:371). Green (1985) also found black boys experienced pupil-teacher relationships that were characterised by 'criticism, questions and directives', (1985:5). My relationships with teachers was not one of conflict; it was of nothingness. Green (1985) found that despite being in the same class, the pupils experience will be dependent on both gender and ethnicity. I was typical of black girls in that I did not have conflictual relationships; yet the similarity between me and other black girls seemed to end there. Fuller (1980) found some black girls were driven to do well in school as they saw academic success as a means to an end. She suggests they reacted against the 'dual subordination of their gender and ethnicity by striving towards, and eventually attaining, high levels of educational achievement', (1980:81) However, the "nothingness" from my teachers served to stifle the passion for learning that I had developed in primary school. The teachers appeared to have no interest in the subject they taught, let alone any interest in me or my learning. I did not see how academic success could be a means to anything other than nothingness. On reflection, the impact on teachers moving from teaching only a few Black and Asian children to teaching the majority of Black and Asian children must have been filled with challenges they were unprepared for. Bell hooks discusses her struggle work with a multi-cultural class, 'When I first entered the multicultural multi-ethnic classroom setting I was unprepared. I did not know how to cope effectively with so much "difference"', (1994:41). This lack of unpreparedness may have been compounded by what Tomlinson (1983) notes as confusion about what integrationist education meant as there was no centrally defined policy. For the educators who had been committed to assimilation approaches, with the change to integration and no guidance on what that meant, might have led them to become disillusioned and detached.

Although I was unaware at the time of the change in policy from assimilation to integration, my identity and impression of education was being shaped and constructed by one policy then redefined by a new policy. I was politicised to assimilate and reject my culture and then expected to integrate, rediscover and embrace the same culture that I had been taught was inferior. My authentic self was being deconstructed to be reformed within the expectations of a White British society. Murray cited by Collins (1990) states 'For women to speak in a unique and authentic voice, women must 'jump outside' the frame and systems authorities provide and create their own frame' (1990: 110). I felt I could not remain in the "frame" of the secondary education system that seemed to create ongoing uncertainty for me about who I was, where I belonged, how to relate to the teachers and how they related to me. Additionally, there were growing discourses about what was happening to young black people who had gone through the education system and left feeling hopeless, disconnected and without qualifications to join the growing numbers of unemployed on the fringes of society, (Bagley, 1979; Banks, 1981; Phillips, 1979; Taylor, 1981; Tomlinson, 1980). Coinciding with the ten-year period when the Department of Education and Science began collecting statistics for pupils who

were subject to the dispersal policy and Section 11 funding, the Government Commons Select Committee on Race Relations and Immigration produced a report. The 1977 report on the “West Indian Community” identified the poor school performance among West Indian children and recommended a high-level government report to be commissioned. I was on the margins of an education system where black children like myself were failing. My response to this situation was to become a perpetual truant. I was eventually taken out of mainstream education and placed out of sight into the Hospital and Home Tuition Services. Yet, being placed in an educational resource that in Foucauldian terms was designed for children deemed to be unable to contribute effectively in society provided me with the experience that was transformative in changing the direction of myself and my education. I found myself in a space where being taught largely on an individual basis, the teacher sought to understand me and my interests in order to weave that into my learning. Being away from the formal school environment and the subtleties of assimilation and integration policies gave me the opportunity to explore my identity in a safe environment (my tutors home). Hill-Collins (1990) argues that for individual black women to resolve the contradictions surrounding their identity, black women require a ‘collective, self-defined voice’ and these voices need a safe space to come together to be heard. (1990: 111). Despite the lack of a collective voice, I began to experience my own voice becoming audible. This enabled me to start a journey of self-exploration, embracing my identity as Black British and re-claiming my interest in education. With this reclamation came the recognition that unless I began to embrace my education, I would continue to be located on the margins of the education system and ultimately society. My relationship with this teacher was transformative; she put her “self” into my teaching and expected me to put my “self” into my learning. This was what ultimately motivated me in adulthood as an educator to want to teach from a relationship based approach and understand myself.

6. LESSONS LEARNED FROM THE GENEALOGY

Prior to undertaking the genealogy, I had a vague notion that assimilation policies existed during my education. However, I did not know of the dispersal policy and how that all but segregated black and white children in schools. I did not know that (some) teachers felt it was their role to assimilate me into British society. I am left wondering if they were aware of the dispersal policy or if this was a subjugated knowledge for them. I had no idea that my secondary school was dominated by black children and white teachers that appeared to care less, as a result of the end of the dispersal system. I was also unaware that subsequent integrationist approach were introduced with negative stereotypes of my culture. These knowledges were subjugated yet impacted critically on the development of my identity as a young black female growing up and being educated in England. I spent many years contemplating who I was and how I should behave while traversing black and white cultures. However, this process enabled me to make conscious decisions about what ethics, values, customs and norms I have embraced and am committed to. As well as unearthing subjugated policies, I importantly learned lessons that will support me in my teaching. Firstly, the importance of relationship and the use of self as an educator, I already knew but was reminded of how through the relationship with my primary school teacher, she made learning exciting. However, the genealogy left me to question if the relationship she developed with me was intended to maximise the potential for me to assimilate. If this was the case, it at least led me to be interested in learning. The relationship developed with my home tutor was transformative, yet she may have developed this relationship with me because I was being taught in her home; her personal space. Regardless of the motivation for either relationship, they felt genuine, engaging, empathetic and particularly with my home tutor, empowering. These were not black teachers and therefore not role models from a cultural perspective, but role models in terms of their pedagogical approaches. I understood that my segregated experiences at school, being taught on the margins of the Home and Hospital Services and in adulthood attending highly ranked Universities meant that my learning experiences lacked many multi-cultural influences for me to draw on. However, what I could draw on was the challenges I faced when developing my Black British identity and how students who have migrated to England might be experiencing similar challenges. Equally, British students newly exposed to multiculturalism might feel their identity is under threat and need to surround themselves with students who look the same – until they are re-assured that a positive

identity can be created and maintained even when surrounded by difference. Ultimately, the genealogy reminded me of the power of education and how it can be used as an instrument of control and oppression. Furthermore, I have an obligation to reflect on my role as an educator and critically appraise policies and education practices to minimise the risk of me becoming an instrument to be used in the control and oppression of students or concede to one group of students to expose control or privilege over another.

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