



URBAN CLASSROOM CULTURE

Realities, dilemmas, responses

Roxy Harris & Adam Lefstein

with Constant Leung & Ben Rampton

**Published by
Centre for Language, Discourse & Communication
King's College London**

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langue discours communication
llengua discurs comunicació
taal redevoering communicatie
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language discourse communication
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Centre for Language,
Discourse & Communication

Published by
Centre for Language, Discourse & Communication
King's College London

KING'S
College
LONDON

First published 2011 by Centre for Language, Discourse & Communication
King's College London, England

www.kcl.ac.uk/ldc

Text © The authors & the Centre for Language, Discourse & Communication
King's College London, 2011

DVD recordings © Economic and Social Research Council, 2011

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ISBN 978 0 9569305 0 7

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British Library Cataloguing in Publication Data.

A catalogue record for this book is available from the British Library.

Printed by Imprint Digital, England

Acknowledgements

We are extremely indebted to the exceptionally generous and co-operative London comprehensive school Headteacher and Assistant Headteacher, who welcomed us into their school and afforded us unfettered access to what we wanted to see and where we wanted to go, as we pursued our research. Ethnographic research in schools is impossible without such assistance. We would like to have been able to thank them by name, but we need to protect the anonymity of the school, and of the pupils and teachers who participated in the research. Their help was all the more remarkable in an era when the senior managements of schools in England have become increasingly nervous about allowing researchers into their institutions. We are also very grateful to the 9 focal pupils who agreed to wear radio-microphones to allow us to follow them through typical school days, and to the pupils in their friendship groups. They were amazingly accommodating. We also thank the teachers who agreed to allow us to audio-record and video record their classes with good humour and lack of complaint. We appreciate their kindness and understanding. We would, in addition, like to express our deep appreciation to scores of teachers for their participation and responses in the seminars we organised to trial the research materials at the centre of this book. Their voices are strongly and directly represented in the publication. Special thanks are due to Lauren Small who carried out the excellent ethnographic fieldwork from which the classroom recordings and participant details appearing in this book were drawn.

Finally, we would like to thank the Economic and Social Research Council for funding the two projects which made this publication possible – ‘Urban Classroom Culture and Interaction’ (RES-148-25-0042) & ‘Urban Classroom Culture and Interaction (2): From Research to Professional Practice’ (RES-189-25-0029).

Introduction

The aim of this book is to generate honest, informed debate about the complexities and realities of urban secondary comprehensive school culture. As academic researchers we do not pretend to propose answers to issues which we believe are not susceptible to easy solutions. However, we are confident that experienced teachers, through collective analysis and discussion, are capable of developing workable responses to rapid cultural change in classrooms and wider society.

Contemporary classrooms are a major focus of public debate, and have been subject to intense central government regulation in England since 1988. In recent times Government has sought to direct both curriculum and pedagogy, supporting and monitoring this with an extensive programme of assessment and inspection, linked to an ideal of teaching in which the teacher has a monopoly of knowledge in class and acts as the centre and arbiter of acceptable modes of communication. Within this scenario, perceived failings of urban comprehensive secondary schools have been routinely attributed, by politicians and media outlets, to bad teaching and bad teachers. However, surprisingly little of this popular opinion has been based on the systematic analysis and description of what urban secondary school classroom life is actually like based on naturally occurring data. In addition, little account has been taken of the effects of changes stimulated by the new globalisation including the ubiquity of digital culture and digital devices, the virtually universal dominance of popular culture and the increase in population mobility and ethnic plurality.

A team based at King's College London (Ben Rampton, Roxy Harris, Alexandra Georgakopoulou, Constant Leung, Caroline Dover and Lauren Small) with the support of funding from the Economic and Social Research Council (ESRC), carried out a 3 year research project (2005-2008), focusing mainly on classroom life in a comprehensive secondary school in London. The Project (RES-148-25-0042) was one of 25 national projects in the ESRC's *Identities & Social Action* Research Programme <www.identities.org.uk>.

The School (at the time of the research)

The school participating in the study was an inner London comprehensive secondary school and was attended by approximately 1000 students. Each year group was divided into eight classes of between 25-30 students and there was also a sixth form. The student population was extremely diverse and a large majority of pupils came from ethnic minority backgrounds, with South Asian and African-Caribbean ethnicities forming the two largest groups. The students also had a variety of social class backgrounds with both above average numbers on free school meals, and a recent increase in the number of middle class students entering the school. The school had received a positive Ofsted report and had seen steady improvements in its exam success rates. It also maintained close connections with the local community, often hosting evening performances and events for parents, allowing students to showcase their work and extra curricular talents.

Data Collection

The research involved two phases of data collection in two classes, following nine students from year nine and into year ten. During the study, the focal students, 5 female and 4 male, were 14-16 years old. These students were from a range of ethnicities and varied greatly in their academic performance. In total we had approximately 180+ hours of radio-microphone recordings, 8 focal student interviews, 10 (mainly group) playback

Introduction

interview sessions, 10+ hours video recordings, and an observational field diary covering, among other things, impromptu conversations with staff, and assembled supplementary documentation covering Year 9-10 demographics and school performance, staff and parent handbooks, lesson handouts and so on.

Teachers' responses to the research

As part of the research we conducted what we called a 'Teachers Project'. We brought together 7 groupings totalling 39 teachers with a combined 514 years of mainly urban classroom experience. We selected four 2-4 minute recordings of fairly routine classroom interaction, and played these to them asking them to indicate how recognisable the extracts were: 86% described the recordings as either very or fairly recognisable.

The recorded episodes we selected from our data, were chosen because we felt that they accurately reflected a range of important aspects of contemporary school experience. All the episodes reflected instances in which students may or may not be engaged with the curriculum. They served as examples of displays of a range of student behaviour, from cooperative to transgressive.

In open discussion, the first response of the teachers in the groups we assembled was to criticise the teachers in the recordings, referring frequently to fairly traditional teaching practices and ideals as the standard against which they were judging the recordings. But this soon gave way to the admission that episodes like these were familiar, and although traditional order could still be found, classroom relations in urban comprehensive secondary school contexts in London had changed. Nowadays, communication with pupils often relied on negotiation rather than authority, pupils knew their rights, lessons needed to be entertaining, and digital culture presented a continual challenge.

The original research project *Urban Classroom Culture and Interaction* was followed in 2009-2010 with a follow-on project funded by the ESRC entitled 'Urban Classroom Culture and Interaction (2): From Research to Professional Practice' (RES: 189-25-0029) – Team members (Roxy Harris, Constant Leung, Ben Rampton – King's College London & Adam Lefstein – Institute of Education, University of London). In this project additional groupings of teachers (39 teachers for a total of c. 40 hours) analysed (a) our recordings, (b) the reactions of their fellow teachers, (c) our researchers' interpretations, (d) additional materials relating to developments in the wider culture. These teachers were asked to make proposals which might serve as practical responses to the changing urban classroom culture suggested in the research. In total the materials in this book were trialled by 78 teachers with a combined teaching experience of 973 years.

How to use the book

The book is primarily designed to be used for the professional development of urban secondary school teachers either as part of continuing professional development or initial teacher education. Obviously, readers are free to use the materials in this book in any way they wish. However, they have been organised to be used with groups of teachers led by a Facilitator or Chair. All names in transcripts are pseudonyms

Introduction

Note to Facilitators or Chairs

The materials in this book have been deliberately presented in the sequence in which it is recommended they be used. Generally the recommended sequence is as follows:

- (i) Participants read background information about the school in which the research was conducted and information about the how the research was carried out and the data that was collected.
- (ii) Participants read the background information contextualising the focal recorded episode.
- (iii) They briefly skim read the transcript of the focal recorded episode.
- (iv) They listen twice to the recorded episode.
- (v) The facilitator elicits first oral responses from participants about the recorded episode.
- (vi) The facilitator uses the provided textual, audio and video materials to generate activities involving debate, analysis and proposals for feasible practical responses in participants' own school contexts.
- (vii) The facilitator directs those who are interested to the suggested supplementary readings.
- (viii) The materials in this book have been presented so as to facilitate photocopying.
- (ix) We strongly recommend that facilitators read in their entirety, the materials for each section, including the notes for facilitators, before using.
- (x) We plan to make this publication available through the Centre for Language, Discourse & Communication, online at <www.kcl.ac.uk/ldc>

Roxy Harris April 2011

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Episode A

Episode A

**Four
classroom
episodes**



Episode A – Contents

- Background notes
- Transcript
- Link to DFE video excerpt – IRE Sequence
- Edwards and Westgate quotation – IRE
- Summary of Episode A
- Assessing students' behaviour activity
- Bill Bryson text extract
- Frank Furedi quotation – Teachers' authority
- Goffman – Production formats

Background notes – Episode A

P2Herm1a 115.58-118.30 – (118.53)

Thursday 16th March 2006 Period 3 – English

Focal Student – Habibah

- Focal student– Habibah (wearing the radio-microphone).
- 15 years old at the time of the recording.
- She is of South Asian descent, born in India but has lived in the UK since her early years.
- Her mother-tongue is Urdu but she uses English as her primary language.
- She initially had trouble with bullying and was frequently absent.
- She is marginalised within her class and is often ridiculed by classmates.
- She achieved a level 5 at the end of Key Stage 3.
- She is close friends with a group of girls of South Asian descent from her class. These friends are more educationally focused than Habibah, who still continues with transgressive behaviour, such as ‘bunking’ off lessons.
- She tends to conduct private conversations, not paying attention to the lesson content, and as a result gets very little work done.
- She avoids being chosen to speak in lessons and is usually unable to respond when a teacher selects her to speak.

Episode context

- Year 10 GCSE English lesson.
- Thursday morning. Period 3.
- Students have five English lessons a week and are taught by two different teachers.
- At the time of recording, the lesson is being covered by a trainee teacher Mr Norman with their regular teacher Ms Mackenzie also in the classroom.
- The students were a few weeks away from their mock GCSE exams.
- The extract begins approximately 13 minutes into the lesson.
- Throughout the extract, Habibah is having a separate conversation with a boy, Unmesh, sitting opposite her.
- Habibah makes sporadic remarks about the lesson content, but for the most part she shows no interest in the curriculum subject matter.
- Two girls in particular, Laura and Nadia, are somewhat engaged in the lesson, though their comments are limited.

Prior to the start of the episode, the students have been asked to read through a passage from Bill Bryson’s ‘Travel Stories’. Mr Norman introduces the text by saying “I can’t guarantee that [your exam texts] are gonna be fascinating texts that you’re gonna be immediately interested in... and to that end I’ve found one with no pictures, just writing, about the Yorkshire Dales...” After asking for volunteers to read and receiving no response, Mr Norman offers to read the text to the class and subsequently does so. He stops intermittently trying to persuade some of the students to take over but is unsuccessful. After reading the text, Mr Norman turns to the questions on the board reminding the students that they must get some writing done in the lesson. In this extract he is trying to elicit responses to the first question, “What reason does the writer give for finding the Dales ‘captivating beyond words’?”

Episode A – Transcript

Participants in episode

Hbh – Habibah (Focal Student) Lra – Laura (Student participating in lesson)
 MrN – Mr Norman (Teacher) Nda – Nadia (Student participating in lesson)
 Unm – Unmesh (Habibah's interlocutor)

1.	MrN:	what we need to do this morning	0.00/115.58
2.		is you're gonna be assessed on:: (.)	
3.		following an argument (.)	
4.	Hbh:	((<i>tapping on desk a number of times</i>))	
5.	MrN:	now this writers: (.) argument	0.07
6.		this is Bill Bryson (.)	
7.		travel writer	
8.		his argument is that Yorkshire Dales is	
9.		captivating beyond words (.)	0.14
10.		that's his argument	
11.		that's what he's saying (.)	
12.		what we need to do	
13.		is to pull out the main points that he makes (.) to: (1)	
14.		back that up (.)	
15.		so for that first (.) question	
16.		we need to find (.)	0.27
17.		at least three reasons that he gives	
18.	Hbh	((<i>quietly</i>)): Miss changed her hair	
19.	MrN:	any ideas folks (.)	
20.	Lra:	what <u>is</u> the question (.)	0.33
21.	MrN:	what is the /first question	
22.	Lra:	((<i>reading</i>))()	
23.	MrN:	what reasons does the writer give	
24.		for finding the Dales (.) captivating beyond (.) words (.)	0.41
25.	Hbh:	((<i>quietly, in a stylised posh accent:</i>)) I don't know	
26.		(1.5) ((<i>does someone speak, hardly audibly on the recording?</i>))	
27.	MrN:	what reasons does he give	
28.		(3)	
29.	Lra:	>what's the question again< (.)	0.52
30.		what- (.)	
31.	MrN:	the question is:	
32.		right so he says (.)	
33.	Lra:	oh:: /ok	
34.	MrN:	this place the Yorkshire Dales	0.57
35.		up in the North of England (.)	
36.		((<i>student coughing?</i>))	
37.	MrN:	it's captivating beyond words	
38.		what- >what does that mean someone<	
39.		>what does that mean<	1.01
40.		it's captivating beyond words (.)	
41.	Boy:	((<i>whispers</i>)) captivat()	
42.	MrN:	captivating	

Transcript – Episode A

43.	Unm:	you ca/n't	
44.	Nda:	can't explain it	1.06
45.	Unm:	yeah you can't explain it (.)	
46.	MrN:	>yeah< (.) >yes it is<	
47.		like it was beyond words (.) um::	
48.		there ar- the words aren't there to describe (.)	
49.		how <u>captivating</u> it is	1.13
50.		what's captivating	
51.		>what does <i>that</i> mean<	
52.	Hbh:	((<i>tuts</i>))	
53.	Lra:	capturing	
54.	Unm:	/yeah (like)	1.17
55.		Hbh: ((<i>quietly:</i>)) >he just asked that<	
56.	MrN:	and what's it captured /captured	
57.		Hbh: ((<i>quietly:</i>)) didn't he (.) >didn't he just asked that<	
58.	Lra:	his: (.) his: um /attention	
59.		Unm: ((<i>to Hbh</i>)) you fat /()	1.22
60.	MrN:	yeah uh i-it's got his heart	
61.		it's got his love	
62.		it's uh:: yeah:: h- he adores the place	
63.		Hbh: (mm mm)	
64.	MrN:	there he's- he's captured by it	1.28
65.		it's stronger than- (.)	
66.	Nda:	small ()	
67.	Students:	((<i>laughter</i>))	
68.	Unm:	((<i>to Hbh</i>)) /what did you say (((<i>person's name?</i>)))	
69.	Nda:	/why the hell would you like (yeah)	1.33
70.		Hbh: (says) you're a rude	
71.		Unm: that you're fat (.) /(you) know that	
72.	Nda:	when 'ey- (.) poke their big 'eads	
73.		round your door every five minutes (1)	
74.	MrN:	all right well let's take that as a first reason	1.40
75.		Unm: (don't)	
76.	MrN:	guys (2)	
77.		he describes the Yorkshire dales (.)	
78.		Hbh: ((<i>quietly:</i>)) ()	
79.	MrN:	u:h and one of the things he says is that- (.) the people there (.)	1.47
80.		>what did you say ((<i>light laugh</i>))< poke their heads around	
81.	Nda:	poke their <u>big</u> heads	
82.	MrN:	poke their big /heads around	
83.		Hbh: ((<i>quietly:</i>)) fuck off	1.51
84.	MrN:	they don't- they don't knock	
85.		they just come into your house	
86.		(4)	
87.	MrN:	does he give that as a reason why he finds it captivating (.)	
88.	Lra:	um (.) um ((<i>reading</i>)) it's a exhilarating contrast between the high fields	2.03
89.		and the () view	
90.		Hbh: ((<i>to Unmesh</i>)) why you laughing	

Episode A – Transcript

91.	MrN:	right now we're dealing with two points simultaneously	
92.		hang on to that thought	
93.		because that's the first point /he makes	2.09
94.		Hbh: are you gonna finish (your t)	
95.		Girl: /(Mhmm)	
96.	MrN:	but what about (.) the people	
97.		in the Yorkshire Dales (.)	
98.		what does he say about them	2.14
99.	Lra:	oh they're () ((several others answering as well))	
100.		Hbh: Adam	
101.	MrN:	but /does he like it	
102.		Unm: ()	
103.	MrN:	is that part of what makes it-	2.18
104.	Lra:	yeah yeah	
105.	Nda:	yeah	
106.	MrN:	captivating	
107.	Lra:	yeah	
108.	MrN:	yeah (.) he goes on for quite a long time about-	2.21
109.		((murmuring from students))	
110.		(4)	
111.	MrN:	((louder:)) no not listening	
112.		you wanna just do this on your own in silence (.)	
113.	Boy:	yep	2.29
114.		(10) ((sounds of class sorting themselves for writing))	
115.		Hbh: I spelt that wrong () (.)	
116.	MrN:	all right well- (.)	
117.		you can do that bit on your own	
118.		he talks about the people=	2.45
119.		Hbh: /is it E R	
120.	MrN:	=and and how>how much he likes them<	
121.		how_friendly they are::	
122.		they don't- (.) they don't even knock	2.49
123.		they just come in and they chat (.)	
124.		a::nd he finds this kind of (.)	
125.		endearing he finds this captivating	2.54/118.53

Transcription conventions:

/	the point in an utterance where the utterance of the next speaker begins to overlap
=	two utterances closely connected without a noticeable overlap, or different parts of a single speaker's turn
()	speech that can't be deciphered
(text)	analyst's guess at speech that's hard to decipher
((text))	stage directions
(.)	short pause of less than a second
(1.)	approximate length of a pause in seconds
<u>text</u>	extra emphasis
>text<	faster than normal speech
te::xt	elongated/stretched word
text-	a word that is abruptly cut off

Activities – Episode A

ACTIVITY ONE

What are your first reactions to what you have heard in the recording and read in the classroom transcript?

ACTIVITY TWO

Watch the Department for Education National Strategies video clip showing teacher successfully conducting questioning using IRE/IRF procedures

http://nationalstrategies.standards.dcsf.gov.uk/node/85858?uc=force_uj

ACTIVITY THREE

Read the following quotation

The IRE/IRF ‘classroom ideal’

‘communication is centred on the teacher. It is he or she who talks and decides who else is to talk, asks the questions, evaluates the answers, and clearly manages the sequence as a whole ... (A)ppropriate participation requires of pupils that they listen or appear to listen, often and at length. They have to know how to bid properly for the right to speak themselves, often in competitive circumstances where a balance has to be found between striving so zealously to attract attention that the teacher is irritated, and volunteering to answer so modestly that their bid is ignored ... In orderly classrooms, the teacher takes turns at will, allocates turns to others, determines the topics, interrupts and reallocates turns judged to be irrelevant to those topics, and provides a running commentary on what is being said and meant which is the main source of cohesion within and between the various sequences of the lesson’ (Edwards and Westgate 1994:40 (cited in Rampton 2006:48)

QUESTIONS FOR DEBATE AND ANALYSIS

- How easy is it to conduct classroom interaction with students in the manner illustrated in the Department for Education National Strategies video and described in the quotation from Edwards and Westgate above?
- What are the benefits and/or disadvantages of using these IRE/IRF procedures. What are the alternatives?

Episode A – Activities

ACTIVITY FOUR

Read the following

A summary interpretation of what's happening in Episode A

This segment might be called “trouble getting started”. The teacher, Mr N, attempts to introduce a task for whole class discussion, but never manages to get the class to engage with it in any substantive way. Ultimately, after about three minutes of frustration, he gives up and instructs the pupils to do it on their own. The key events in this process are as follows:

1. Introduction of the task (lines 1-19). Mr N introduces the task – i.e. *following an argument* – reminding the class that this is something on which they will be assessed. He then explains that the writer’s argument is that the Yorkshire Dales are “captivating beyond words”, and poses the problem: finding at least three reasons that are given to back that up. He finishes with the elicitation (line 19): “any ideas, folks?”

2. “What is the question?” (lines 20-33). In what sounds like a delaying tactic (though perhaps she simply wasn’t attending) Laura asks what the question is. Mr N returns the question to her, and she reads the question off the board. Mr N repeats the question, and Habibah responds with a stylised “I don’t know”, which sounds to us like an “inappropriate” contribution.¹ Mr N does not directly respond to Habibah, though his two-second pause, followed by repetition of the question (in line 27), could be interpreted as a quiet rebuke. Laura again asks what’s the question, but this time MrN declines to continue playing this particular stalling game, and Laura backs down (line 33).

3. “What does that mean someone?” (lines 38-65). Having not received any topically relevant responses to his initial question, Mr N seeks to clarify the terms of the question – acting on what appears to be the assumption that the students haven’t answered his question because they haven’t understood it. So, he poses the question, what does “captivating beyond words” mean. Unmesh and Nadia cooperate to offer a partial answer (lines 43-5), and Mr N accepts their answer, and then continues the clarification exercise, asking what “captivating” means. Laura responds to this request, and also the question of what is captured, and MrN summarises the issue in lines 60-65.

4. Low-level disruptions / disengagement.² Mr N’s gloss on “captivating beyond words” is interrupted by an inaudible joke and student laughter in lines 66-67. But this isn’t the first interruption of course. Throughout the extract there are numerous student interjections, most by Habibah,³ none of which are topically relevant or “appropriate” in terms of traditional notions of student behaviour: When are students allowed to take the floor? What can they legitimately talk about in class? In what ways?

Examples include:

- line 18: Habibah mentions that “Miss changed her hair”.
- line 25: Habibah’s stylised “I don’t know”
- lines 55 and 57: Habibah comments on the teacher’s repetition of the question.
- line 63: Habibah mocks the Bryson’s adoration of the Dales (and/or the teacher’s animation of it)
- lines 66-67: Nadia jokes and student laughter.
- lines 59, 68, 70, 71, 75, 83, 90, 94, 100, 102, 115, 119: Habibah and Unmesh insult one another, carry on a private conversation.

Activities – Episode A

Mr N ignores most of these displays of disengagement, though many do disrupt the flow of his speech, until he very gently reprimands them in line 111.

5. **“Why the hell would you like [a place] ...?” (lines 69-87).** Nadia initiates a new topic, asking a question in response to the text (and only tangentially building on the preceding mention of how much Bryson loves the Dales): “Why do they actually like a place when people poke their big heads round your door every five minutes?” (In the text, Bryson recounts some funny anecdotes in which neighbours have unexpectedly entered his home without warning.) Mr N initially incorporates this question into his account of reasons why Bryson finds the Dales captivating (line 74), but then changes his mind and questions whether this is part of Bryson’s argument (line 87).

6. **“An exhilarating contrast” (lines 88-93).** After Mr N poses his question about the relationship between the neighbours poking heads and Bryson’s love of the Dales, Laura offers what is the first and only direct response to Mr N’s original question in line 19. Mr N accepts this response, but asks Laura to “hang on to that thought” in order to return to Nadia’s question.

7. **“What about the people... is that what makes it-...” (lines 96-108).** Mr N repeats his question, slightly elaborating, but trails off mid-sentence (line 108), apparently because of what he perceives to be increasing student restlessness.

8. **“No, not listening...” (lines 111-125).** Mr N stops his exposition and notes that the students are not attending (evidenced, apparently, by the low-level disruptions). He then asks, “you wanna just do this on your own in silence?” which we hear as a faltering in the teacher’s authority. A boy says, “yep”, following which there is a lengthy pause of ten seconds (line 114). Mr N then announces that indeed they will work on their own, and answers his own question about how Bryson’s view of his neighbours fits in with his argument.

QUESTIONS FOR DEBATE AND ANALYSIS

- To what extent do you agree with this summary interpretation of the sequence of events in Episode A?
- Where do you disagree?

When supporting your point of view stick as closely as you can to the evidence available in the transcripts and in the recordings.

Notes

1. Albeit perhaps said to herself rather than addressed at the teacher.
2. The terms “disruption” and “disengagement” are of course loaded with value judgements. The interpretation of these utterances is discussed below.
3. The focus on Habibah may be the result of her wearing the radio-microphone. There may have been many other sotto voce comments made by other students that were not picked up on the microphone.

Episode A – Activities

Researchers' comment:

'The rules of interaction between teachers and students has changed'

Our sense in viewing this and other episodes is that the tenor and patterns of communication between teachers and students have changed in urban comprehensive schools over time. Communication is now more relaxed and informal than in the past, and many student actions that might have once been characterised as deviant, resistant, or undisciplined are now routine.

ACTIVITY FIVE

Here are some words and phrases which might describe behaviours of the students in Episode A. Which one(s), if any, do you think describe their behaviours? When you make a choice base it on the evidence available in the transcript and recording.

- acting out ☐
- lively ☐
- cheeky ☐
- deviant ☐
- disengaged ☐
- insolent ☐
- odd ☐
- non-cooperative ☐
- playful ☐
- resistant ☐
- humorous ☐
- other ? _____ ☐

QUESTIONS FOR DEBATE AND ANALYSIS

- The teacher in Episode A does not audibly appear especially angry or even annoyed. So on what basis would you as an outside observer be able to describe the students' behaviour as deviant or resistant?
- It looks as if the behaviour of students and the teacher together in the classroom is normal for *them*. Indeed we might describe the students' behaviour as both non-deviant *and* non-cooperative? To what extent would you agree with that characterisation?

Activities – Episode A

Researchers' comment:

'Mr N. is unwilling to take responsibility for the text he is presenting'

The text has been introduced as uninteresting, which the teacher has identified as apt, since the students need to become accustomed to coping with boring texts in their examinations. More specifically, after reading the text aloud, Mr N explains that the students will be assessed on following an argument, and that this text will be used as an opportunity to practise that skill (lines 2-17).

We find this introduction somewhat puzzling. Firstly, rather than trying to drum up enthusiasm for reading this text, Mr N appears to go out of his way to downplay any intrinsic value or interest the text might have. Secondly, the text is taken from a bitingly funny best-seller 'Notes From a Small Island', which received rave reviews (*The Times*: "Not a book that should be read in public, for fear of emitting loud snorts") and was elected in 2003 as the book which best represented England (as part of World Book Day).

ACTIVITY SIX

Read the following

Extract from the relevant section of the Bill Bryson text

'And they do things differently in the Dales. For one thing, people come right into your house. Sometimes they knock once and shout "Hullo!" before sticking their heads in, but often they don't even do that. It's an unusual experience to be standing at the kitchen sink talking to yourself and doing emphatic raised-leg farts and then turning around to find a fresh pile of mail lying on the kitchen table. And I can't tell you the number of times I've had to dart half-clad into the pantry at the sound of someone's approach and stood in breathless silence while they've shouted, "Hullo! Hullo! Anyone t'home?" For a couple of minutes you can hear them moving about in the kitchen, reading the messages on the fridge, and holding the mail to the light. Then they come over to the pantry door and in a quiet voice they say, "Just taking six eggs, Bill. All right?"'

QUESTIONS FOR DEBATE AND ANALYSIS

- Why do you think Mr N doesn't take advantage of the status of Bryson's book as a comedy bestseller in presenting it to the students?
- How might Mr N's distancing of himself from the text he is presenting be explained? What, if any, forces and pressures generated within contemporary urban secondary school classroom culture might be affecting him?

Episode A – Activities

ACTIVITY SEVEN

Comment from the wider culture

Giving up on adult authority? – Frank Furedi (Sociology Professor)

‘But the self-evident nervousness of teachers about defining and asserting objective academic standards in the classroom goes to the heart of the educational crisis we face today. As a society, we are obsessed with education. But as a society we seem to have given up on adult authority and the idea that the person who knows best in the classroom is the teacher.

The crisis of education is intimately linked to that of authority. What is happening in our classrooms today reflects a far more fundamental problem about the confusion adults have with exercising authority inside and outside of schools.

Teachers are not immune to this confusion. Education requires the conscious and regular imposition of adult authority. Yet teachers often attempt to avoid acting authoritatively because they feel uncomfortable with this hierarchical role.

Consequently, teachers often adopt the affectation of a friend or a mate in their dealings with children ... Disastrously, with the reluctance of teachers to be the grown-up at the head of the class comes a mood of casual disrespect for what our children are taught ... tinkering with the curriculum will not fix the problem of adult authority at the heart of our education system.’

‘Give teachers authority or betray our children’ – 29.10.09 – *London Evening Standard*

QUESTIONS FOR DEBATE AND ANALYSIS

- What do you think of what Furedi has to say here?
- How far are his comments relevant to your own experience in secondary schools?

Activities – Episode A

ACTIVITY EIGHT

Comment from the wider culture

Erving Goffman's production formats – distancing yourself from what you say

Erving Goffman (1922-1982), a sociologist who studied the fine details of how people interact with one another suggested that whenever we speak we not only communicate some content, but also signal the social position from which the content was uttered and our stance toward that content. So, for example, when we report someone else's speech ("she said that...") we distinguish that person's ideas from our own. Moreover, in the details of how we report others' ideas, we can show our agreement, anger, humour, etc.

Goffman's analysis of "production formats" provides a useful framework for analysing these relationships. According to this framework there are three possible roles or positions subsumed in the term "speaker":

Animator: The person who "moves his lips up and down to the accompaniment of his own facial (and sometimes bodily) gesticulations, and words can be heard issuing from the locus of his mouth. His is the sounding box in use... in short, he is the talking machine... an individual active in the role of utterance production." (Goffman, 1981: 144)

Of course, sometimes the animator is not the author of the words she or he emits, nor the person responsible for them; consider, for example, reading a newspaper story aloud, or delivering a message on behalf of someone else. Hence, it is important to introduce two further roles:

Author: the person who selects the words and meanings – 'someone who has selected the [meanings] that are being expressed and the words in which they are encoded' (1981: 144)

Principal: the person who in a particular capacity/role takes/holds responsibility for the message – 'someone whose position is established by the words that are spoken, someone whose beliefs have been told, someone who is committed to what the words say' (1981: 144) In explaining the concept of the principal, Goffman gives the example of how "the same individual can rapidly alter the social role in which he is active, even though his capacity as animator and author remains constant – what in committee meetings is called 'changing hats'" (1981: 145).

These categories are a useful tool for analysing the way speakers position themselves in relation to their utterances, though note that in reality the boundaries between formats can be fuzzy, as we weave our own words with those of other authors, communicate ambivalence toward the social position we have adopted (as principal), or inflect the message we animate with personal style and intonational attitude markers (Goffman, 1974:518).

QUESTIONS FOR DEBATE AND ANALYSIS

- It seems as if although Mr N is willing to present the text to the students (Animator), he is not the author nor does he align himself with the author and he explicitly distances himself from taking responsibility (Principal) for having to present the text. What explains his choice of speaking stance from among those defined by Goffman?
- How common is it for urban secondary school teachers to adopt a similar speaking stance when presenting material to their students?
- Why?/Why not?

Episode A – Notes for Facilitators

Episode A – Notes for Facilitators

- Give participants an opportunity to quickly read through the general background notes for the episode, and sufficient time to read the transcript.
- Play the recording of the episode for participants to follow using the transcript.
- Play the recording a second time.

Ask participants for their first reactions to what they have heard and read. It is very important here to ask as many participants as possible for a brief response. Each person should be restricted to one initial observation. We want to encourage open discussion about complex issues. Part of this process involves participants being exposed to a range of perspectives on the same aspect of urban classroom culture, with the understanding that there is rarely one which is definitively **right**.

Video Clip

- Next play the Department for Education National Strategies video clip of a teacher conducting a model lesson involving the extensive use of IRE sequences. A key point to draw out is the extent to which participants regard the contents of the clip as an idealised version of classroom norms.

http://nationalstrategies.standards.dcsf.gov.uk/node/85858?uc=force_uj

- Play the video entitled Year 7, School A.

IRE/IRF

Sometimes the sequences led by the teacher are described as Initiation Response Evaluation (IRE) or Initiation Response Feedback (IRF).

The video is available as an attachment on the right hand side of the webpage and can be played directly from the site or is downloadable as a QuickTime movie or Windows Media Video file.

Questions for debate and analysis

Here try to elicit frank discussion from the participants about the value of this technique and how easy it is for teachers to execute in the everyday conditions in their own classrooms. It is important that the discussion is not allowed to become a boasting session with some teachers boasting about how well they can use IRE/IRF and others quiet because they have difficulties. The focus is on contemporary urban classroom culture and how well different approaches work in specific contexts.

Summary interpretation of Episode A & Characterising Student Behaviour Activity

Whereas the earlier invited discussions and debates relating to Episode A were broad in nature, these activities invite a narrower and more specific kind of discussion and debate. The intention here is to constrain participants to discipline their comments by insisting that any assertions they might want to make must be accompanied by specific supporting evidence available in the transcript.

Comment from the wider culture: Furedi

The aim of discussing Furedi's provocative comments is to direct attention away from personal criticism of Mr N. for not taking enthusiastic responsibility for the Bryson text he is presenting to the class: and to consider the extent to which his behaviour is better understood by reference to broader forces and pressures emanating from developments in the wider culture in society outside schools.

<http://www.thisislondon.co.uk/standard/article-23762093-give-teachers-authority-or-betray-our-children.do>

Notes for Facilitators – Episode A

Comment from the wider culture: Goffman

Looking at Goffman's concept of 'production formats' builds on the process of looking for alternative explanations for Mr N's behaviour. Goffman's concept is well established in a variety of academic arenas. So the purpose here is not to pull apart their validity, but to try to grasp their meaning in general terms and then apply them to Mr N's behaviour. The implication of Goffman's idea is that what is occurring is a universal phenomenon. That is, the utterances of all speakers – not just teachers – are subjected to the same moment-by-moment choices. The key is to understand more clearly what it is about the interactions between speakers and their interlocutors that induces one choice rather than another. There are no easy answers but one way to proceed is to look for and discuss possible imbalances of power in the interaction.

Episode B

Episode B

**Four
classroom
episodes**

Episode B – Contents

- Background notes
- Transcript
- Summary of Episode B – Sairah
- Summary of Episode B – Mr Maguire
- ‘Trouble getting started’ grid – Episodes A & B comparison
- Teachers’ comments on relevance
- Michael Young text – the relevance debate

Background notes – Episode B

P2SRrm2b:25.22 – 27.42

Thursday 25th June 2006 Period 3 – English

Focal Student

- Focal Student – Sairah (wearing the radio-microphone).
- 15 years old at the time of the recording.
- She is of Iraqi descent.
- She is classified by the school as an EAL (English as an Additional Language) student.
- She joined the school in April 2005, moving from Bradford where she had lived for two years after claiming asylum from Iraq.
- Her progress in English meant she was quickly integrated into mainstream classes.
- She initially suffered constant teasing and bullying from classmates and was seen as an outsider.
- She has recently become more accepted by her classmates, in particular by female peers.
- She achieved a Level 3 when she first joined the school but is now in the gifted and talented programme and is in the top set for science.
- She does not receive any extra tuition as she was doing so well in mainstream classes.
- She is extremely bright and a keen learner who enjoys classical music.

Episode Context

- Year 10 GCSE English lesson.
- Thursday morning. Period 3.
- In previous weeks, students have been simultaneously working on two pieces of coursework – literature coursework based on the novel 'Jekyll and Hyde', and creative writing coursework.
- They have handed in their first drafts for both, and have had them returned with comments from their teacher Mr Maguire.
- The extract begins approximately 8 minutes into the lesson.
- Students have been told to continue working individually on either piece of coursework, and have been reminded that the 'Jekyll and Hyde' coursework is due in the following day.
- Mr Maguire is going around the classroom assisting individuals in turn.
- Ms Wilson, an EAL support teacher, has been helping two other EAL students and approaches Sairah at the beginning of the extract offering assistance.

Throughout the episode, Ms Wilson assists Sairah with the improvements she needs to make on her coursework. About a quarter of the way through, Mr Maguire addresses the class, slightly annoyed that none of the students he has been working with so far have the essay plan he set out for them. He asks the students if it would be a better use of his time to go through the essay plan again with the entire class. After receiving a confirmatory response from six students, he opts to go ahead with reviewing the plan, advising the rest of the class to continue with their work. Sairah continues going through her own essay with Ms Wilson, paying close attention to the advice she is given. Taking a cue from a religious theme in the curriculum content, she develops a quite sophisticated and inquisitive discussion with the support teacher. Later on in the lesson, after the episode, she is able to respond to questions posed to the entire class by Mr Maguire, based on the conversation she has had with Ms Wilson.

Episode B – Transcript

Participants in episode

S – Sairah (Focal Student)

MsW – Ms Wilson (Support Teacher)

MrM – Mr Maguire (Class Teacher)

- | | | | |
|-----|----------|-----------------------------------------------------------------------------------|------------|
| 1. | MsW: | do you need any help (.) | 0.03/25.22 |
| 2. | Srh: | uh I just need to speak to sir about it (.) | |
| 3. | | about the improveme:nts I need to do (.) | |
| 4. | MsW: | do you want- to ask me about it at all or- | |
| 5. | Srh: | (no <i>or</i> >you know<) cos he he's /got- | 0.13 |
| 6. | MsW: | this is a:: ((<i>makes a correction to Sairah's work?</i>)) (3) | |
| 7. | Srh: | is it (.) | |
| 8. | MsW: | mhmm | |
| 9. | Srh: | he's got some comments and um:: (2) | |
| 10. | | yeah /but | 0.23 |
| 11. | MsW: | ((<i>reading?:</i>)) what is Stevenson- really saying about humans (.) | |
| 12. | | so- (.) what do you think he- | |
| 13. | Srh: | he's- (.) every human has a bad- a bad side and a good side | |
| 14. | MsW: | mm | |
| 15. | Srh: | yeah (.) a/n::d | 0.32 |
| 16. | MsW: | what is he saying about Victorian Christians | |
| 17. | | (4) | |
| 18. | | okay | |
| 19. | | (2) ((<i>reading from Sairah's essay?</i>)) at the time of the novel- novel (.) | |
| 20. | | most people that lived in London were Christians yeh | |
| 21. | | in />in in< in England as well | 0.47 |
| 22. | MrM: | ((<i>loudly, addressing the whole class:</i>)) right folks listen | |
| 23. | | ri/ght | |
| 24. | Srh: | yeah | |
| 25. | MsW: | ((<i>lowered voice</i>)) /() | 0.51 |
| 26. | MrM: | I- I did a lesson where I put up the Jekyll and Hyde essay plan right (.) | |
| 27. | | and we went through:: (.) if you remember (.) | |
| 28. | | >I mean< this this seems to be a waste of time to me (.) | |
| 29. | | do you remember that (.) | |
| 30. | | and we went through / and said what we need to write= | 1.02 |
| 31. | Girl: | / () | |
| 32. | MrM: | =in each section (.) | |
| 33. | | do you remember that (.) | |
| 34. | Boy: | (no) | |
| 35. | MrM: | it- would it help if I spend ten minutes | 1.07 |
| 36. | | /and do that with the whole class (.) | |
| 37. | MsW: | ((<i>low voice</i>)) use () | |
| 38. | MrM: | are there more people that need me to do that (.) | |
| 39. | Boy: | yeah (.) | |
| 40. | MrM: | how many how many would find that useful | 1.15 |
| 41. | | if I did that (.) | |
| 42. | Student: | ummmm:::: | |

Transcript – Episode B

43.	MrM:	one two (.) three four:: (.) five:: (.) six (.)	
44.		right (.) so if I go through that now	
45.		if I spend fi:ve: te:n minutes going through that	1.27
46.		I can address six people (.) um	
47.		(.) (like I said) rather than doing it one at a time	
48.		>because i-< we've done this in class	
49.		this is a waste of flaming time (.)	
50.	Boy:	(>no<) it's not	1.35
51.	MrM:	but	
52.		y-y-y you shouldn't- I shouldn't have to be doing this again	
53.		and I I'm disappointed	
54.		right (.)	
55.		those of you (1.)	
56.		those of you who are working and don't need this	1.44
57.		(folks) just crack on / with your own stuff ok yeah	
58.	MsW:	okay (.) so- /the theory=	
59.		((from now on MsW talks to Srh, while MrM talks loudly to a larger group))	
60.		MrM: and I I apologise	
61.		I shouldn't have to do this again	1.49
62.	MsW:	=of creation suggests that all men are created by God	
63.		MrM: I should be spending time in class	
64.		with individuals	
65.	MsW:	in his own image (.)	
66.	Srh:	okay	
67.		MrM: who have done a good job on the essay (.)	1.54
68.	MsW:	so people believed that	
69.		MrM: right okay (3)	
70.	MsW:	God looks like a human (.)	
71.		and so when you made i- (.) made human beings	
72.		MrM: right (.) it says (.)	1.59
73.	MsW:	they were- (.)	
74.		we are the image of God (.)	
75.		MrM: what you are answering is this folks right (.)	
76.	Srh:	is that what Christians believe	
77.		MrM: it's about the divided nature	
78.		of human personality	2.05
79.	MsW:	(that's what they believe)	
80.	Srh:	oh I thought (.) um (.)	
81.		MrM: and it's about Victorian society	
82.		being divided okay (.)	
83.	Srh:	I thought they believed	
84.		MrM: um (3)	2.09
85.	Srh:	that God created people as he wanted them to be (.)	
86.	MsW:	no as- in as the image of <u>him</u> (.)	
87.		MrM: divided nature of pers- uh uh	
88.	Srh:	oh::	
89.	MsW:	image can mean like reflection so-	2.16
90.		MrM: of human personality	

Episode B – Transcript

91. Srh: okay (.)
92. MrM: how is the human personality divided in-
93. MsW: so they believed that God is like- (.) humans
94. MrM: what's it divided into 2.18
95. Girl: good and bad (.)
96. MrM: good and bad ((noise of whiteboard writing))
97. Srh: okay okay
98. MsW: so he just made a copy
99. Srh: mhmm 2.23/27.42

Transcription conventions:

/	the point in an utterance where the utterance of the next speaker begins to overlap
=	two utterances closely connected without a noticeable overlap, or different parts of a single speaker's turn
()	speech that can't be deciphered
(text)	analyst's guess at speech that's hard to decipher
((text))	stage directions
(.)	short pause of less than a second
(1.)	approximate length of a pause in seconds
<u>text</u>	extra emphasis
>text<	faster than normal speech
te::xt	elongated/stretched word
text-	a word that is abruptly cut off

Activities – Episode B

ACTIVITY ONE

What are your first reactions to what you have heard in the recording and read in the classroom transcript?

ACTIVITY TWO

Read the following

A summary interpretation of what's happening in Episode B – looking at Sairah

Sairah

Lines 1-23 Sairah begins this episode wanting to engage with Mr Maguire over written comments he has made on her work in response to her apparent completion of the written task set by him for the class. Sairah continues this orientation to Mr Maguire despite direct offers of help made by Ms Wilson the EAL support teacher. (lines 1-10).

Sairah without explicitly accepting MS Wilson's overtures cooperates with Ms Wilson's persistence in reading what she has written (and Mr Maguire's comments on it). Sairah begins to respond to questions that Ms Wilson seems to be articulating as she reads directly from what Sairah has written. (line 11).

Lines 26-58 Mr Maguire begins to address the whole class (line 26) having started to demand attention a little earlier (line 22). This seems to prompt Ms Wilson to continue addressing Sairah but now in a markedly lowered voice (lines 25, 37, 58). In this sequence Sairah makes no audible response.

Lines 59-99 Sairah engages with Ms Wilson in an intense discussion of religious matters arising from the Jekyll and Hyde text. It looks as if Ms Wilson is developing her comments from the text. There is a change of footing in the discussion (line 76) when Sairah adopts the stance of questioner about the beliefs of Christians. Ms Wilson attempts to answer Sairah's questions. It's not clear that these answers are enlightening for Sairah who offers surface tokens of acceptance (lines 88, 91, 97, 99).

This discussion continues in parallel with Mr Maguire's exasperated statements to the whole class about its failure to adequately complete,, or even be engaged with, the essay task that Sairah seems to have treated seriously.

QUESTIONS FOR DEBATE AND ANALYSIS

- To what extent do you agree with this summary interpretation of the sequence of events in Episode A?
- Where do you disagree?
- What can we learn about the relationship between the mainstream agenda for English and the EAL agenda?
- How do you assess the nature of the relationships – between EAL teacher-English teacher; EAL teacher-student; EAL student-English teacher; EAL student-other students; – which emerge here?

When supporting your point of view stick as closely as you can to the evidence available in the transcript and in the recording.

Episode B – Activities

ACTIVITY THREE

Read the following

A summary interpretation of what's happening in Episode B – looking at Mr Maguire

Mr Maguire

Lines 22-33 Mr Maguire requests the attention of the class (lines 22, 26). Then he begins a sequence in which he appears to be attempting to get the class re-started on the essay task by trying, unsuccessfully, to remind the students about the work that had previously been covered to initiate the task (26-27, 29-30, 32-33). This sequence, in which no student responds to confirm that the previous work has been remembered is completed when one student explicitly states (line 34) that he can't remember the previous work. Mixed in with his attempted reminders to the class Mr Maguire expresses exasperation about their apparent non-productive stance (line 28).

Lines 35-58 Mr Maguire attempts to revise his approach away from assisting students to build on a writing task previously developed. Now he starts again with a whole class approach by trying to ascertain which students need extra help (lines 35-36, 38, 40-41, 43-47). He expresses exasperation again (line 49). Curiously at least one boy (line 50) says that he doesn't think it's a waste of time for him to go over the work again. Could this indicate that the work is too difficult for them? Nevertheless Mr Maguire's continued exasperation (lines 52, 53) suggests that he doesn't think this is the reason. Mr Maguire's comments (lines 54-57) imply that some of the students are okay and on track but we can't be certain about this and can't assume that only 6 students (line 43) are having trouble. His very loud address to the whole class (line 60 to end) suggests that he is directing his comments to a much bigger group.

Lines 60-99 **lines 60-67** Mr Maguire apologises (who to? Line 60) about having to go over the work again. Is he apologising in advance to the individuals who're getting on with the work about the likely disruption to their concentration to be caused by his loud address to the others? Mr Maguire again expresses exasperation (line 61, 63-64, 67).

lines 69-96 In this sequence Mr Maguire explicitly initiates IRE interaction to get students focused on the work task and the key issues involved. He begins to elicit a promising response from one pupil (line 95).

QUESTIONS FOR DEBATE AND ANALYSIS

- How do you interpret the trouble Mr Maguire is encountering with this task? How common is such trouble?
- Based on Mr Maguire and the students' responses how do *they* seem to be interpreting what's happening?

When supporting your point of view stick as closely as you can to the evidence available in the transcripts and in the recordings.

Activities – Episode B

ACTIVITY FOUR

‘Trouble getting started’

It was suggested on Page 8 that the teacher in Episode A was having ‘trouble getting started’ in the face of a variety of ‘unhelpful’ responses from students. We provided exploratory activities to investigate how this occurred and why this state of affairs might be routine in contemporary urban classrooms. It could be argued that Episode B represents another instance of ‘trouble getting started’. Compare the similarities and differences in the way this happens across the transcripts of Episode A and Episode B.

	Episode A	Episode B
SIMILARITIES		
DIFFERENCES		

Episode B – Activities

Researchers' comment:

'The texts presented to the students and the work being done are not relevant to students in multiethnic urban secondary schools in London.'

This was the kind of sentiment expressed by many teachers in response to this episode and also to episodes A and C. We think they may be mistaken.

The perspective of such teachers seems to be that the disappointing response of the students in Episode A is because Bill Bryson's text is irrelevant because it is about the Yorkshire Dales which is far removed from the experience of the students; and that the Jekyll & Hyde text central to Episode B with its 19th century quasi religious themes is not relevant for similar reasons. Indeed debates about relevance regularly arise when teachers try to make sense of student detachment or indifference.

ACTIVITY FIVE

The question of relevance – what some teachers say ...

(i) That is a GCSE reading piece ... it is very inaccessible for inner city kids.

Caroline aged 40-50: EAL: 24 years of classroom experience

(ii) Teaching science is a subject that the same question I get is 'why do I need to learn this 'cos I don't see the **relevance**' and sometimes I have to look for examples to show them where the relevance comes into it.

Celia aged 30-40: Science: 2 years of classroom experience

(iii) You can't always start with what they want but what you can start with is something that is more **relevant** to you know world war two and rationing. Yes you have got to teach but how do you make that real for kids living in London now who have no concept of world war two and rationing you know it is how do you make the curriculum more interesting or **relevant** to the students that you are teaching.

Sadie aged 40-50: English EAL, Drama: 26 years of classroom experience

(iv) They [the students] don't like being challenged to do anything other than what they already can do and we are training them to do that because every time we talk down to them or help them or make a text more **relevant** we're making it easier for them I think and I don't think necessarily I don't think we should teach all the dead white guys or anything like that I think but I do think we should not be frightened of saying 'well this is hard'.

Saul aged 20-30: English & Media Studies: 4 years of classroom experience

QUESTIONS FOR DEBATE AND ANALYSIS

- What is your response to the views expressed by the four teachers above and why?

Activities – Episode B

ACTIVITY SIX

RELEVANCE – Comment from the wider culture

The Sociologist of Education Michael Young, who started as a chemistry teacher and is now a Professor at the Institute of Education, produced a much discussed book [Young, M. (2007) *Bringing Knowledge Back In: From social constructivism to social realism in the sociology of education*. London: Routledge.] concerning the contemporary purposes of education. The following extracts are taken from an interview about his ideas conducted on 8th May 2008.

‘I have come to realise a really important distinction between knowledge and experience. It’s happening a lot in the curriculum now, educationalists say you must make the curriculum more relevant, more in touch with the student’s experience. Whereas I would argue that the reason we have schools is to give an opportunity for people who have rather a narrow experience within their families and homes to go beyond their experience so they can actually see there are other ways of thinking about things. And that is a social justice issue’

‘The pedagogical challenge is faced best by placing confidence on the teacher’s professionalism. Just as you go to your doctor, who will make professional judgements about what’s wrong with you and what’s the best treatment — a teacher is going to make judgements about the level of the challenge for students at a particular stage in their learning. Teachers have got to make those decisions and we have to support them. An important debate has been started by the Institute of Ideas called what is science education for? It is deeply worried about what’s happening to the science curriculum in schools and the emphasis on experience, relevance and contemporary issues such as the environment and HIV/AIDS. Much of the old content of school science such as the periodic table, pattern, molecular formulae, is being phased out. The problem is that if you don’t have enough of the content knowledge of disciplines such as physics, chemistry and biology you aren’t going to be able to have a very informed debate about the environment or HIV/AIDS. The challenge for the teacher is that children have got many demands on their attentions such as mobile phones, Facebook and Bebo. So, the difficulty for the teacher is getting kids interested in things that they don’t immediately want to be involved in.’

‘I think that schools, colleges or universities are ‘time out’ places. Time out from the exigencies of everyday life, either the home or the family or the workplace. Time out to think and to develop your concepts. I’ve worked quite a lot in South Africa and if you go to the townships you see parents living in poverty and they send their kids to school with a confidence that those children will learn something that they can’t teach them. I think that is really important. A friend of mine is doing some research on Building Schools for the Future, he was taken around some of the new schools and he said the thing that struck him was that they were trying to be like a shopping mall. It was almost like saying ‘you’re still here in your everyday life, ok?’ Is that how we should be designing our schools? Now I’m not saying that schools should look like Oxford or Cambridge colleges, but I do think that kids need to get a sense that a school environment is ‘time out’ to actually think about the world.’

http://www.lkl.ac.uk/cms/index.php?option=com_content&task=view&id=280&Itemid=35

QUESTIONS FOR DEBATE AND ANALYSIS

- Michael Young strongly challenges the view that the key to engaging students is to seek to make the curriculum ‘relevant’. What do you think of the kinds of argument he makes? How useful is his stance in guiding practical actions in urban secondary comprehensive schools in the UK?

Episode B – Notes for Facilitators

Episode B – Notes for Facilitators

- Give participants an opportunity to quickly read through the general background notes for the episode, and the transcript.
- Play the recording of the episode for participants to follow using the transcript.
- Play the recording a second time.

Ask participants for their first reactions to what they have heard and read. It is very important here to ask as many participants as possible for a brief response. Each person should be restricted to one initial observation. We want to encourage open discussion about complex issues. Part of this process involves participants being exposed to a range of perspectives on the same aspect of urban classroom culture, with the understanding that there is rarely one which is definitively **right**.

A summary interpretation of what's happening in Episode B

One way of looking at what is going on in this episode is to trace the unfolding of the interaction between Sairah and the EAL (English as an Additional Language) teacher who is working with her. The other way is to follow through the pattern of interaction between Mr Maguire and the class as a whole. Examining the transcript as two separate tracks like this can be a powerful way of focusing attention on the step-by-step details of the communication between the different interlocutors.

Looking at Sairah & Looking at Mr Maguire

If the participants don't introduce the point in their discussions make sure that they address the general question of why Sairah the EAL student is so keenly engaged with her work while most of her class colleagues appear to be indifferent or unprepared.

Trouble getting started

Given the claim that there is trouble in trying to get the lesson started in both episodes A & B, encourage the participants to look for explanations beyond simply picking faults in the approach of the individual teachers involved. For instance, many teachers looking at Episode A attributed the 'Trouble getting started' to Mr Norman being a trainee teacher, but were then at a loss to explain why Mr Maguire was also having 'Trouble getting started' despite being an experienced and successful teacher who was well-liked by the students.

Relevance

Draw the participants' attention to the way in which Sairah subverts conventional arguments about the need for relevance when teaching 'inner-city' students. Two points of interest are salient here. (a) Though she migrated to the UK from Iraq claiming asylum, she lived in Bradford for 2 years and so is likely to be well aware of the Yorkshire Dales which featured in the Bryson text at the centre of the Episode A interactions. (b) She is a Muslim but nevertheless highly interested in, and engaged with, the Jekyll & Hyde text at the heart of Episode B which focuses on Christian themes.

Episode C



Episode C

Four
classroom
episodes

Episode C – Contents

- Background notes
- Transcript
- Summary of Episode C –
Mr Ross v Basheera
(table of sequence)
- Summary of Episode C –
Additional interpretation
- Characterising Basheera's behaviour
checklist
- Link to video clip of Beatles at Variety
Club of Great Britain (1964)
- Link to audio clip of John Prescott
(Deputy PM) BBC R4 Today (2006)
- Norman Fairclough text –
on a culture of informality
- Teachers' comments –
on a culture of informality

Background notes – Episode C

BI2a 131.44 – 136.36

Wednesday 22nd June Period 3: Humanities

Focal Student

- Focal student – Basheera (wearing the radio-microphone).
- 14 years old at the time of the recording.
- She is of Moroccan descent but has always lived in the UK.
- She received a level 5 at Key Stage 3 and is currently in the middle set for science.
- She is very outspoken and seen by her peers as a leader amongst the girls in her class.
- She has strong relationships with both boys and girls, dividing her time equally between her male and female friends.
- She works particularly well in English lessons and is usually the first person to volunteer to read.
- She is always ready to challenge teachers and teases them jokingly. Although she is often reprimanded for her behaviour she is usually able to appease teachers and avoid further punishment.
- She often attempts to rally the entire class, initiating rounds of applause for teachers after they have introduced the lesson. Her classmates often join in and she questions those who do not get behind her.

Episode Context

- Year nine single Humanities lesson.
- Wednesday morning. Period 3.
- The extract begins approximately half an hour into the lesson.
- The students have been doing a project on World War 2 for one lesson the previous week and are continuing with the project in this lesson.
- The lesson is being taught by Mr Ross, a long term supply teacher from Australia.
- At the beginning of the lesson, Mr Ross reminds the students about the groups of three they had divided themselves into the previous week, and each group has a topic to work on (Basheera's group has been given rationing).
- The students are talking very loudly and Mr Ross is forced to stop several times in order to get their attention.

The students are left to work in their groups while Mr Ross attends to each group individually. Basheera has been listening to music through her headphones and chatting to her friends while working. After about 10 minutes of the students working in their groups, Mr Ross stops the lesson realising that several students are unsure of what they are supposed to be doing. He makes several attempts to get quiet so he can go through the instructions again with the class. At the beginning of the extract, Mr Ross has taken Basheera's group as an example in order to explain the work the students should be doing. Basheera begins to antagonise him, making several derogatory comments and getting other students on her side.

Episode C – Transcript

Participants in episode

Bsra – Basheera (Focal Student)

MrR – Mr Ross (Class teacher)

Lola – Lola (Close friend of Basheera. In her group)

Zane – Zane (Classmate)

Joel – Joel (Classmate. Close friend of Basheera)

1.	MrR:	each girl here has a rationing workbook (.)	0.05/131.44
2.		so their (.) project is going to be entirely on rationing (.)	
3.		so what they need to do is discuss (.)	
4.		whose >going to be< looking at what part of rationing	
5.		(4)	0.15
6.		for their written and for their visual	
7.		(.)	
8.		um::	
9.		(1)	
10.		pieces	0.22
11.		(1)	
12.		so for instance (.)	
13.		Nita might be doing (.)	
14.		the need for rationing (.)	
15.		okay so she'll- (.)	0.27
16.		produce some sort of written piece of work (.)	
17.		and some sort of visual (.)	
18.	Student:	((<i>coughs</i>))	
19.	MrR:	/Lola might be doing-	
20.	Bsra:	do you get this boo-	0.35
21.	MrR:	/(healthy: and)=	
22.	Bsra:	do you get these assessments from Australia	
23.	MrR:	=can I finish speaking without having you interrupt me please Basheera	
24.		(3)	
25.	Bsra:	hhhh <u>yes</u>	0.44
26.	MrR:	((<i>louder:</i>)) is that unreasonable that I speak	
27.		without having you /interrupt	
28.	Bsra:	I said yeah	0.48/132.27

50.	MrR:	all right Nita might do her: (.)	0.03/133.44
51.		uh part of rationing (.)	
52.		through:: a diary entry	
53.	Girl:	((<i>giggles?</i>))	
54.	Bsra:	why::/ do we have to do that	
55.	MrR:	okay (.)	0.10
56.		shshsh:::	
57.	Bsra:	Ms Barrett- we had to do just like a normal essay	
58.		why do you keep making it harder for us	

Transcript – Episode C

59.	MrR:	this is what every other-	0.18
60.	Joel?:	>it's true<	
61.	MrR:	this is what every other /class is doing	
62.	Boy:	where's Mrs Barrett man	
63.		(.)	
64.	Zane:	she got pregnant	0.22
65.	Bsra:	((lau/ghs))	
66.	MrR:	thank you::	
67.	Bsra:	((laughing)) she had a /baby	
68.	Joel:	(oh my days) (.)	
69.	Bsra:	the baby's a boy (.)	0.27
70.	Girl:	what's his /name	
71.	MrR:	((louder:)) guys /I wanna=	
72.	Girl:	()	
73.	MrR:	=see some work actually done today	
74.		or you're not going to lunch	0.31
75.	Bsra:	it weighs a stone (.)	
76.	Lola:	you want it finished? (.)	
77.	Bsra:	it has blue eyes	
78.		blonde hair (.)	
79.	MrR:	((still louder:)) and again	0.38
80.		you're wasting my time	
81.		you're wasting your time	
82.		during the lesson (.)	
83.	Bsra:	((humming loudly)) hm hm hm hm hm (.) hm hm::::::	
84.	MrR:	Basheera you are seeing me /at lunch	0.49
85.	Bsra:	Sir no:: PLEASE PLEASE:: ((la/ughs))	
86.	MrR:	() detention (.)	
87.		right so /Lola uh::	
88.	Bsra:	((laughs))	
89.	MrR:	Nita might do it as a diary entry (.)	0.57
90.		Lola might do her part of rationing as a letter (.)	
91.		and Basheera might do hers /as a: (.) interview style or a cartoon strip (.)	
92.	Bsra:	/((loudly))Sir please: don't use my name in public ((laughs))	1.04
93.	MrR:	something different	
94.		each person has some sort of different (.)	
95.		writing style (.)	1.11
96.		are there any questions (.)	
97.	Boy:	(are)	
98.	Girl:	((very quietly to Basheera)) (gotta move your hand)	
99.	MrR:	yes	
100.	Bsra:	((very quietly:)) hm	1.17
101.	MrR:	that's why I've asked you to do it=	
102.	Girl:	((very quietly:)) (go round)	
103.	MrR:	=that's why I'd like you to do it	
104.	Boy:	this is long (.)	
105.	MrR:	it's lo:ng	1.21
106.		school is lo:ng (.)	

Episode C – Transcript

107. Bsra: it's a lo:ng (.)
108. MrR: it's /a long process
109. Bsra: thing
110. (3)
111. MrR: are there any questions with respects to this- (.) 1.30
112. Lola: no/::
113. MrR: this project
114. Lola: no::
115. MrR: right I wanna see some work being done
116. ((louder:)) I need you to produce for me (.) 1.35
117. Students: ((general noise, and a non-serious high pitched 'sir sir'))
118. MrR: ((very loudly:)) I HAVEN'T FINISHED SPEAKING YET
119. THANK YOU YEAR NINE
120. (9)
121. MrR: ((more quietly:)) you need to produce for me (.) 1.50
122. by the end of
123. (3)
124. this lesson
125. (1)
126. I wanna see (.) 1.57
127. a cover sheet f-for your groups work (.)
128. saying who's doing what- (.)
129. um: with respect to y-um:: (.)
130. with respect to your topic (.)
131. so for instance (.) 2.07
132. Bsra: sir we k/now::
133. MrR: if you look at-
134. excuse me Basheera (.)
135. Bsra: ((quietly:)) /hhhuh
136. MrR: if you look at the possible questions um::: section (.)
137. what was it (.) why did it happen when did it happen 2.17
138. and how were people affected (.)
139. how did people feel (.)
140. okay you need to tell me who's doing (.)
141. who's doing (.)
142. which of these questions (.) 2.24
143. and what style of writing they will be doing them in
144. (2)
145. okay=
146. Bsra: =((very loudly:)) thank you sir for explaining ((gives Mr R an extended /round of applause))
147. Boy: (one nine) 2.23
148. MrR: it's- it is quite ridiculous=
149. Bsra: ((giggles as she continues clapping))
150. MrR: =that I need to spend-
151. Bsra: Joel why didn't you join/ in
152. MrR: half an hour on this (.) 2.39
153. Lola: Sir

Transcript – Episode C

154. Bsra: Joel
155. Lola: is that what you want
156. Bsra: why didn't you join in (.)
157. MrR: yes 2.44
158. Lola: then we're done (.)
159. MrR: okay now you need to start working on it please (.)
160. Bsra: Sir when are you getting your hair cut (.)
161. your hair's kind of going into /a girls haircut
162. MrR: (yeah I know) 2.52
163. it's going berserk (.)
164. Boy: (group)
165. Lola: it (looks yucky) sir
166. Bsra: >why don't you just<-
167. if you can't afford it just go to the hospital
168. tell 'em you have nits ((others laugh)) 3.00/136.42

Transcription conventions:

/	the point in an utterance where the utterance of the next speaker begins to overlap
=	two utterances closely connected without a noticeable overlap, or different parts of a single speaker's turn
()	speech that can't be deciphered
(text)	analyst's guess at speech that's hard to decipher
((text))	stage directions
(.)	short pause of less than a second
(1.)	approximate length of a pause in seconds
<u>text</u>	extra emphasis
>text<	faster than normal speech
te::xt	elongated/stretched word
text-	a word that is abruptly cut off
TEXT	words spoken very loudly

Episode C – Activities

ACTIVITY ONE

What are your first reactions to what you have heard in the recording and read in the classroom transcript?

What’s happening in Episode C?

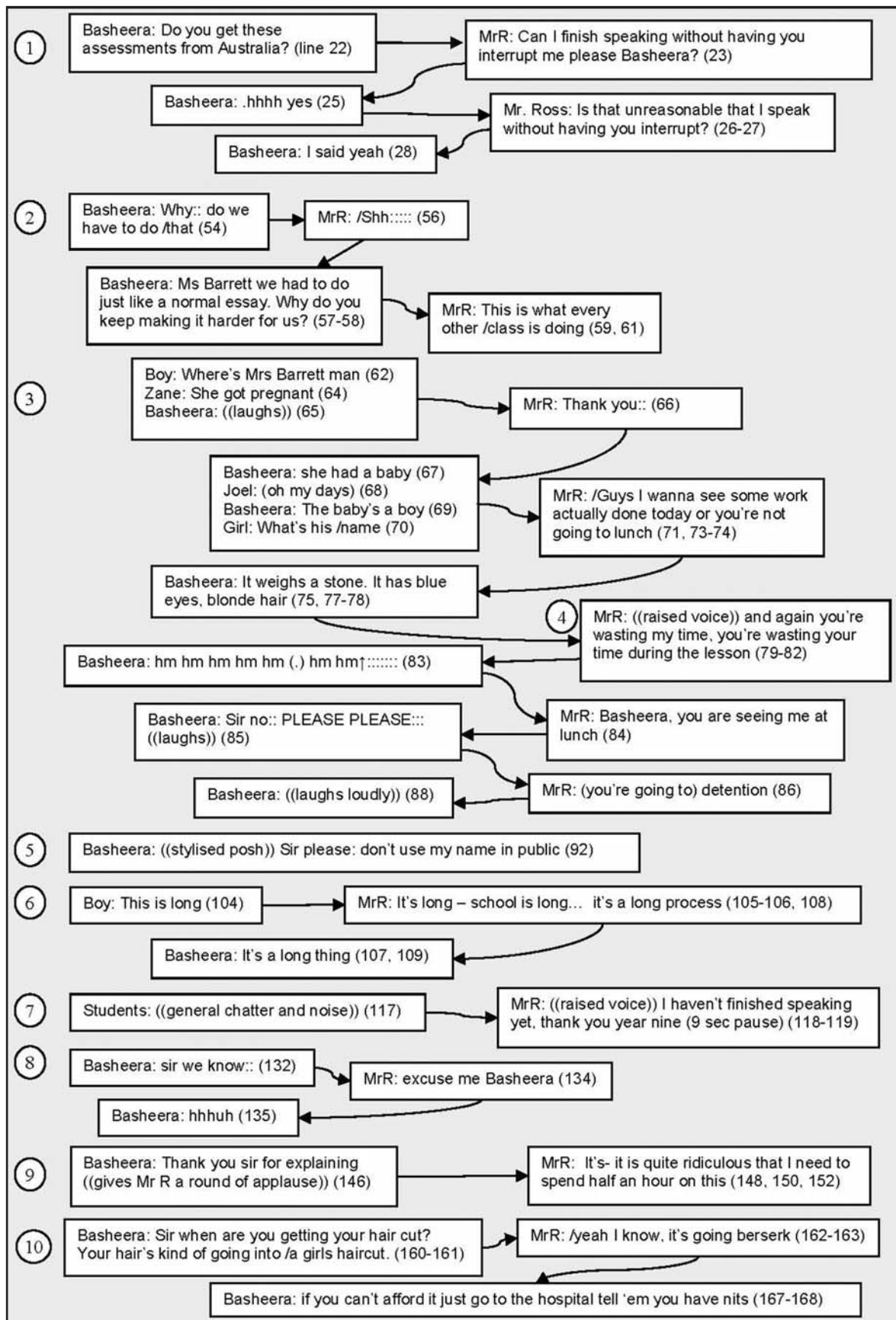
At the centre of this Episode are a series of exchanges between the class teacher, Mr. Ross, who attempts to explain the assigned task, and Basheera, a student who repeatedly interferes with his attempts to get students started on the task.

To a certain extent, the Episode is similar to Episode A, which we previously discussed: the teacher encounters trouble getting started (with a task rather than a lesson), largely due to student unwillingness to cooperate and moreover frequent distractions from the task at hand. However, our characterisation of student behaviour in Episode A as “non-deviant, non-cooperative” does not work well with Episode C, since Mr. Ross, at times, treats Basheera as deviant, reprimanding her and threatening her with sanctions. Nevertheless, there is an artfulness in Basheera’s contributions to the lesson that the term “deviance” does not really capture. Indeed, Mr. Ross treats her with some ambivalence: at the end of the episode he engages in friendly banter with her, suggesting perhaps that he felt a need to temper his anger and/or counter-balance his disciplinarian persona with a more friendly face.

ACTIVITY TWO

Read through the diagram on the next page depicting some key moves in the tussle we’ve called Mr. Ross v Basheera (and other students?)

Activities – Episode C



Episode C – Activities

ACTIVITY THREE

How does Basheera get away with it?

Investigate this question closely, consulting the Episode C transcript to assist and justify your analysis and interpretation.

ACTIVITY FOUR

Characterising Basheera's behaviour.

(i) Which of the following descriptors, if any, best describes Basheera's behaviour in Episode C? Give reasons for your choices using specific evidence in the transcript.

(ii) Are there any other characterisations of her behaviour you would want to add to those in the list of descriptors below? If so, justify your choice.

(iii) What evidence is there in the transcript that participants in Episode C subscribe to your interpretation?

- acting out ☐
- lively ☐
- cheeky ☐
- deviant ☐
- disengaged ☐
- insolent ☐
- odd ☐
- non-cooperative ☐
- playful ☐
- resistant ☐
- humorous ☐
- other ? _____ ☐

Activities – Episode C

Researchers' comment:

'Since the 1960s patterns of communication between ordinary individuals and authority figures and institutions in the UK has become increasingly marked by informality and a reduction in deference.'

ACTIVITY FIVE

Watch the video clip of the Beatles receiving an award from the Variety Club of Great Britain from the soon-to-be Prime Minister Harold Wilson 23/03/1964 "London. Beatles Get Show Biz Top Award". Dorchester Hotel, London. Variety Club Showbiz Dinner. GV The Dorchester Hotel (04.19.97 minutes)

[<http://www.britishpathe.com/record.php?id=43154>](http://www.britishpathe.com/record.php?id=43154)

Researchers' comment:

'We would argue that this was a very important moment in the marking of a new informality and a reduction of deference in public discourse. Note (a) John Lennon's reference to purple hearts (the ecstasy of its time) (b) his addressing of the Leader of the Opposition as "arold" (c) his generally 'cheeky' and 'playful' demeanour'.

ACTIVITY SIX

Listen to the audio recording of an interview between the then Deputy Prime Minister John Prescott on the BBC Radio 4 Programme 'Today' in 2006.

[<http://news.bbc.co.uk/1/hi/uk_politics/5153218.stm>](http://news.bbc.co.uk/1/hi/uk_politics/5153218.stm)

Researchers' comment:

'We suggest that this is an example of how an informal discourse style, lacking deference to authority is now dominant even in domains and contexts previously marked by relative formality and deference (i.e. a BBC current affairs journalist addressing the Deputy Prime Minister in one of the BBC's most serious current affairs programmes').

Episode C – Activities

ACTIVITY SEVEN

Comment from the wider culture

‘A Culture of Informality’? –

the linguist Norman Fairclough has made the following observations:

‘The tendency to eliminate overt power markers is closely associated with a tendency towards informality; it is in the more formal types of situation that asymmetries of power and status are sharpest. A central manifestation of increasing informality is the way in which conversational discourse has been and is being projected from its primary domain, in the personal interactions of the private sphere, into the public sphere. Conversation is colonizing the media, various types of professional/public discourse, education, and so forth: by this, I mean that their discourse is taking on an increasingly conversational character. This is a part of a major restructuring of the boundaries between the public and private domains ... contemporary cultural values place a high valuation on informality ... it is not only the printed media that are becoming more conversational, it is also the broadcast media, radio and television. Tolson (1990) has traced the process of conversationalization of interviews in the media. There is a great deal more conversation to listen to and watch in the media (the ‘chat shows’, for example), which reflects its valuation, but it is also the case that broadcasters extensively ‘converse’ with their mass audiences, as if they were chatting with individual members of them. And a variety of types of interview, and other sorts of encounter, between professionals and their ‘publics’ are tending to become more conversational, as I indicated above.’

Norman Fairclough 1992 *Discourse and Social Change*. pp. 204-205. Cambridge: Polity Press

‘Contemporary society is ‘post-traditional’ (Giddens 1991). This means that traditions have to be justified against alternative possibilities rather than being taken for granted; that relationships in public based automatically upon authority are in decline, and that people’s self-identity, rather than being a feature of given positions and roles, is reflexively built up through a process of negotiation. Relationships and identities therefore increasingly need to be negotiated through dialogue, an openness which entails greater possibilities than the fixed relationships and identities of traditional society, but also greater risks. A consequence of the increasingly negotiated nature of relationships is that contemporary social life demands highly developed dialogical capacities. This is so in work It is also true in contacts between professionals and publics (‘clients’), and in relationships with partners, kin and friends. These demands can be a major source of difficulty, for not everyone can easily meet them This provides a frame within which we can make sense of the process of ‘informalization’ which has taken place since the 1960s in its specifically discursive aspect, which I have called the ‘conversationalization’ of public discourse. Conversationalization is a striking and pervasive feature of contemporary orders of discourse it can be seen as a colonization of the public domain by the practices of the private domain, an opening up of public orders of discourse to discursive practices which we can all attain rather than the elite and exclusive traditional practices of the public domain, and thus a matter of more open access. On the other hand, it can be seen as an *appropriation* of private domain practices by the public domain: the infusion of practices which are needed in post-traditional public settings for the complex processes of negotiating relationships and identities alluded to above.’

Norman Fairclough 1995 *Critical Discourse Analysis: The Critical Study of Language*. pp. 137-138. London: Longman.

Activities – Episode C

QUESTIONS FOR DEBATE AND ANALYSIS

- **What is your response to Fairclough’s assertion that:**
‘Conversation is colonizing the media, various types of professional/public discourse, education, and so forth: by this, I mean that their discourse is taking on an increasingly conversational character’?

ACTIVITY EIGHT

‘A Culture of Informality’?– what some teachers say ...

(a) I think OFSTED almost demands singing and dancing shows now and I think certainly in the staff room we’re all aware of that um we do need to entertain them and it’s sometimes a matter of crowd control The kids and the system um generally the headmaster and Ofsted demand us to be entertaining and before you could be seen as being a good teacher if you I don’t know [were] strict got all your marking done on time – I saw teachers being quite different when even I was at school and it wasn’t that long ago you know, I didn’t expect them to entertain us I expected them to just, to get my work you know in, and you know them to hand it back marked, but now it seems we have to be a bit more flashy, we need to have our data projector working, we need it going we need everything going and it’s like it’s demanded of us.

Laura aged 20-30: English, Media & Drama: 3 years of classroom experience

(b) I think the idea of teachers as entertainers is kind of worrying but there is an onus on teachers certainly at this school you would be frowned upon if you were to take on a traditional role if you were at your desk for example.

Gethin aged 20-30: English: 3 years of classroom experience

(c) I think pupils come to school with the view that they’re there to be entertained and um and there’s an extent to which you um you can’t make everything they do in the classroom you know um whizz bang and high powered exciting. So sometimes you have to do, you have to be rigorous ... young people it’s something like deferred gratification. They don’t want to do that. It has to be immediate. The excitement and the buzz has to be now, and they will, and I’ve heard um them say, “oh well that wasn’t a very good lesson” or you know “you didn’t have a very good plenary” (laughter).

Olive age n/a: Science: 20+ years of classroom experience

QUESTIONS FOR DEBATE AND ANALYSIS

- How far, if at all, do you think that Basheera’s playful bantering style in the classroom and Mr Ross’s ambivalent response to it, are simple reflections of the development of the dominance of these modes of communication elsewhere in society?
- How possible is it for teachers to enforce formal modes of communication with their students in classrooms? If it is possible, is it desirable? How could it be done?

Episode C – Notes for Facilitators

Episode C Notes for Facilitators

- Give participants an opportunity to quickly read through the general background notes for the episode, and the transcript.
- Play the recording of the episode for participants to follow using the transcript.
- Play the recording a second time.
- Ask participants for their first reactions to what they have heard and read. It is very important here to ask as many participants as possible for a brief response. Each person should be restricted to one initial observation. The publication wants to encourage open discussion about complex issues. Part of this process involves participants being exposed to a range of perspectives on the same aspect of urban classroom culture, with the understanding that there is rarely one which is definitively **right**. **Please note the short break in the recording (lines 28-50)**

Mr. Ross v Basheera (and other students): some key moves

- Give the participants time to read through the graphic summarising the sequence of moves in the episode. The aim is to give them an opportunity to apprehend the episode as a sequence of specific exchanges rather than just a single broad undifferentiated episode.

Basheera and some other students appear to antagonise Mr. Ross throughout the Episode, interfering with his attempts to explain and focus the class on the task at hand. Guide the participants through the graphic summarising the episode to address questions such as – What strategies do they use? How does Mr. Ross cope with this trouble? And, how, ultimately, do they get away with it? You could use the following notes to offer participants additional interpretive commentary.

1. *“Do you get these assessments from Australia?”* (lines 22-28). Basheera interrupts Mr. Ross’s explanation, asking if he has imported the assessments from Australia. Superficially, this question is curriculum-relevant. However, the question goes “behind the scenes” to issues that are not normally shared with students, and moreover highlights Mr. Ross’s otherness (he is from Australia) and perhaps also questions the legitimacy of the task (if Australian, then perhaps irrelevant to an English class). Mr. Ross reprimands Basheera for her interruption (without commenting on its content), saying, “Can I finish speaking without having you interrupt me please Basheera?” (line 23). After a three second pause Basheera sighs, “yes” with audible annoyance. Mr. Ross continues (lines 26-7) to push Basheera, raising his voice and demanding, “Is that unreasonable that I speak without having you interrupt?” Basheera responds by emphatically interjecting, “I said yeah” in the middle of his utterance. Basheera’s interjection is ambivalent: its content communicates, “yes, I agreed not to interrupt”, but its form interrupts the teacher’s flow, and its tone conveys exasperation rather than contrition.

2. *“Why do we have to do that?”* (lines 54-61) A little over one minute later, Mr. Ross returns to his previously interrupted explanation and again Basheera interferes with his instructions, this time questioning why the students have to perform this task, which she contrasts unfavourably with the “normal essays” Mrs. Barrett assigned. (Mrs. Barrett is the class’s regular teacher, currently on maternity leave.) Another student supports this claim (“it’s true”, line 60), while Mr. Ross replies that this is what every other class is doing. (Note that both the students and Mr. Ross appeal to implicit notions of fairness as consistency: Basheera and the students claim that Mr. Ross is being unfair because his actions are inconsistent with those of other teachers, while he justifies his actions as being consistent across all the classes he teaches.)

3. *“Where’s Mrs. Barrett?”* (lines 62-78). A boy builds on Basheera’s mention of Mrs. Barrett by asking where she’s gone to – implying, in other words, why do we have to put up with Mr. Ross? This leads to a collaborative recounting of Mrs. Barrett’s pregnancy, giving birth to a baby, who is a boy, who weighs a stone, has blond hair, etc.

4. *“You’re wasting my time, you’re wasting your time”* (lines 79-91). Mr. Ross cuts off the gossip about Mrs. Barrett by raising his voice and saying, “you’re wasting my time... wasting your time in the lesson”. Basheera

Notes for Facilitators – Episode C

responds by humming loudly in what sounds to us like an exaggerated display of boredom. Again, Basheera's contribution is ambiguous: she could be seen to be building on Mr. Ross's assessment that this is a waste of time, or could be saying to Mr. Ross and the class that she finds his reprimands boring. He responds to her humming with the instruction to see him at lunch. Basheera pleads, "Sir no:: PLEASE PLEASE:::" This again sounds to us like an exaggerated display of distress, mocking Mr. Ross's power to punish her. And, indeed, she laughs loudly after Mr. Ross informs her that she's going to detention.

5. *"Sir please: don't use my name in public"* (lines 92-101). A few lines later, as part of his exemplification of how the task might be performed, Mr. Ross begins to suggest how Basheera might represent her perspective on rationing, but is interrupted by Basheera with the request that he please not use her name in public. We're not entirely sure what to make of this request, and we note that neither is Mr. Ross, who ignores it. A few comments are in order, however: first, Basheera once again talks over Mr. Ross's exposition, interjecting her request into his utterance, mid-sentence. Second, she again performs an exaggerated display of deference, with the stylised posh "please, Sir". Third, her request conveys a mock suggestion that she and Mr. Ross share a private relationship outside of the classroom, in which Mr. Ross appropriately uses her name, but that he has somehow transgressed by calling her by name in public. (We should emphasise that we are not suggesting that she and Mr. Ross do share such a relationship, but rather that her utterance flirtatiously suggests this. A number of teachers listening to the recording interpreted her behaviour as flirting with the teacher).

6. *"This is long"* (lines 104-109). An unidentified male student complains that the task is long, to which Mr. Ross replies that school is long, that it's a long process. Basheera echoes Mr. Ross, partially overlapping his retort, saying, "it's a long... thing".

7. *"I haven't finished speaking yet, thank you year nine"* (lines 118-120). Next, Mr. Ross asks if there are any questions and, after receiving a negative reply, says that he wants to "see some work being done" and then begins what sounds like a final reminder of what the students are supposed to do. There is a lot of general chatter and noise – the sound of getting started on the group work? – which Mr. Ross silences by raising his voice and reprimanding the class: "I haven't finished speaking yet thank you year nine". This reprimand is followed by a relatively long (nine second) pause, after which Mr. Ross returns to his previous utterance.

8. *"Sir we know"* (lines 132-135). Ten lines later Mr. Ross's explanation is again interrupted by Basheera, who interjects, "Sir, we know", into his explanation (immediately following his "for instance", which sounds like a return to exemplifying the tasks on Basheera's group). Note how Basheera draws out the final word (kno::w), signalling impatience with Mr. Ross's repetition of the explanation and seeming inability to finish introducing the task (due, in part at least, to her interferences). Mr. Ross, responds with "excuse me, Basheera", which is met by an audible sigh from Basheera.

9. *"Thank you sir for explaining"* (lines 146-151, 154, 156). Basheera attempts to initiate a class round of applause after Mr. Ross finally completes his explanation of the task. Note how once again Basheera derides Mr. Ross through a mocking show of support. Mr. Ross complains that it's ridiculous that he's needed "to spend half an hour on this" – in effect responding to her teasing by shifting the blame for the long duration of his explanation onto the students. Basheera giggles and reproaches Joel for not joining in the round of applause.

10. *"If you can't afford it just go to the hospital tell 'em you have nits"* (lines 160-168). As the class begin to get on with the task at hand, Basheera and Mr. Ross exchange friendly banter about Mr. Ross's hair cut. Basheera asks her teacher when he's going to get it cut. He confirms that his hair is going berserk, and Lola joins in, saying that his hair has "gone all fluffy, Sir." Basheera adds that if he can't afford paying for a haircut, Mr. Ross can "just go to the hospital tell 'em you have nits".

How does Basheera get away with it?/Characterising Basheera's behaviour

Typically, individual teachers engaging with these activities, find themselves involved in an intense debate with their colleagues about conflicting interpretations. The task of the facilitator is to encourage this debate but to insist on each interpretive claim being based on explicit evidence in the transcript. There need be no

Episode C – Notes for Facilitators

anxiety if participants find that they can't substantiate their initial claims or if the debates between participants appear to end inconclusively. The overall intention is to highlight how difficult it is to establish exactly what is going on in teacher-student interactions in contemporary classrooms. This is especially difficult when the demeanour of students is primarily jokey, friendly or bantering rather than hostile. One way of emphasising this would be for the facilitator to issue a challenge to participants in the following terms: 'point to any single utterance made by Basheera in the transcript which could form the basis of a disciplinary complaint to a third party such as the Head Teacher'.

- You could use the following questions to direct the attention of participants to some pertinent questions:
 - a. How did Basheera manage to get away with all the trouble she causes? How far is it with the assistance of the following strategies?: (i) the quasi-relevance of some of her comments; (ii) ambiguity, plausible deniability; (iii) a cheerful informality; (iv) recruiting the rest of the class; (v) other strategies?
 - b. What could Mr. Ross have done differently at the various points in which he engaged with (or chose to ignore) Basheera's comments? How, if at all, might this have changed the outcomes? Pay close attention to how his actions might have been constrained by the ways in which schools work as institutions.
 - c. What were Basheera (and some of the other students in Episode C doing?) (i) Delaying getting on with the work? (ii) Negotiating the task and its difficulty? (iii) Undermining Mr. Ross's legitimacy? (e.g. '*from Australia*'; '*different from Mrs. Barrett*').
 - e. Does the informal way that many teachers and students address each other in the classroom invite a proliferation of the kind of banter which Basheera initiates and tries to maintain (e.g. hair and nits lines 160-168; sarcastic use of the formal "Sir" and "Thank you" line 146).

Beatles video clip & John Prescott audio clip

- Play these clips as a prelude to the following discussion about 'A Culture of Informality'? The clips should be absorbed by the participants without embarking on immediate discussion and debate. Before playing the clips simply state that their purpose is to open an argument that the 1960s marked the beginning of a new era of informality and irreverence in previously formal public spheres; and that this process has intensified and perhaps accelerated up to the present day. The audio clip, for example, shows the then Deputy Prime Minister John Prescott being questioned disrespectfully about his sexual proclivities on BBC Radio 4's Today Programme – the flagship 'serious' current affairs programme on their most 'serious' and formal internal radio station. However, draw the attention of participants to two highly significant points – 1. The interview had been pursuing a 'serious' political topic before sliding directly to this somewhat frivolous, perhaps cheeky style and topic. 2. John Prescott doesn't explicitly object to being questioned like this about his personal life but joins in with a general wrangle with his questioner maintaining an informal and familiar style with him throughout.
- On the Prescott audio clip you will find the relevant sections 11.20 mins into the 19.50 mins recording. A full transcript is also available at the same webpage.

'A Culture of Informality'?

- Move directly to reading the Fairclough texts after playing the video and audio clips. Draw the attention of participants to the dates (1992 & 1995) of Fairclough's remarks. Participants should be asked to consider whether it is possible for school classrooms to be immune from trends in oral communication in the wider culture detected by academic research so long ago.

Episode D

Episode D

**Four
classroom
episodes**



Episode D – Contents

- Background notes
- Transcript
- Summary of Episode D
- ‘Trouble getting started’ grid – Comparisons Episodes A,B,C,D.
- Teachers’ comments – digital culture in the classroom (mobile phones etc)
- ‘Blurred Boundaries for teachers’ (*Guardian* 23.3.09)
- Teachers’ comments – students as consumers with rights
- Parents’ fear of their children (*Daily Mail*)

Background notes – Episode D

60.15 – 62.15

Thursday 9th March 2006 Period 2 – Maths

Focal Student

- Focal student – Otis (wearing the radio-microphone).
- 15 years old at the time of the recording.
- He is African-Caribbean and was born in Jamaica. He came to the UK at the age of ten.
- He is the lowest achiever in his class, only achieving a level 2 at the end of Key Stage 3 and currently receives learning support.
- He is often frustrated and feels he is treated unfairly, which causes him to react angrily when challenged.
- He is well liked by his classmates, but often provoked by his male peers, particularly his friend Jerome.
- He was often engaged in social activity unrelated to the curriculum focus of the lesson with Jerome and another boy, Jermaine. The boys often discuss or utilise computer games, hardware, software and websites in class.
- More recently, Otis has distanced himself from the other boys and shown a greater interest in learning. Although he still has confrontational moments, he has become calmer and more focused.

Episode context

- Year 10 GCSE maths class.
- Thursday morning. Period 2.
- The students have five maths lessons per week and are taught by two different teachers.
- This lesson is being taken by his regular teacher Miss Hunter (white British) who is the head of the maths department, and a trainee teacher Mr Graves (black African/Caribbean).
- The lesson began 10 minutes prior to the extract and Otis entered the classroom 4 minutes ago.
- Upon entering, he sits at a desk in front of Jerome and Jermaine who have both recently purchased Sony PSP (Play Station Portable) games consoles.
- They have been talking in low voices and Otis is especially aware of the teachers' presence, repeatedly reminding the boys to keep the machine well hidden.
- Otis is particularly interested here as he has plans to purchase a PSP and is trying to gather information about how the machine works from the two boys.

At the beginning of the episode Otis, Jerome and Jermaine are gathered around looking at an image of the fictional serial killer character, Michael Myers, from the film *Halloween*, on Jermaine's PSP, discussing how to use a computer programme called Photoshop⁴ to import images to the console. Otis is particularly keen to learn how to import images for his own website. The boys are so engrossed in the machine that none of them has taken his workbook or equipment out of his schoolbag. After about five minutes they are interrupted by Mr Graves, who reminds them that they are supposed to have their coursework out, as he had advised students at the beginning of the lesson that they were to continue with the assignment they had been given by their other teacher earlier in the week. As the episode continues, Otis and the other boys, most notably Jerome, come up with several excuses as to why they do not have their coursework. There is an escalation towards the end of the episode as Mr Graves becomes increasingly frustrated by Otis and his colleagues' lack of focus on their work, but he avoids a potentially serious incident by regaining his composure, and walking away.

Episode D – Transcript

Participants in episode

Otis- Otis (Focal student)

MrG- Mr Graves (Trainee teacher)

JA – Jerome (classmate and friend of Otis)

JW – Jermaine (classmate and friend of Otis)

Unm – Unmesh (another classmate)

1. *((Otis, Jerome and Jermaine gather around looking a picture/video?? On Jordan W's PSP))*
- 2.
3. JA: urgh: (.) 0.00/60.15
4. Otis: >let me see< *((some feedback noise as Otis shifts to look at image??))*
5. JA: urgh::: that's scary (boy)
6. Otis?: >let me see< *((O shifting in chair))*
7. JW: ()
8. JA: /Michael Myers
9. JW: but he looks better when it's /on the computer *((Otis shiftig in chair))* 0.07
10. JA: (want that guy) (.) yeah innit (.) () shit look at dat picture (.)
11. look at dat picture of (Michael)
12. (3)
13. JW: yeah I think we should /(plug it in)
14. *((background: conversation between two classmates Nadia and Shonelle))* 0.17
15. Otis: what *((shifts again??))*
16. JA: ()
17. (2)
18. JA: >how d' you do- how d' you /do that
19. Boy: *((side conversation??))* yeah he's () group
20. JW: *((smiling:))* ghetto innit 0.23
21. JA: how d' you do that
22. Unm: (how d' you) make it
23. Otis: so you didn't put my name you shit'ead
24. JW: you don't hang round with us no more 0.28
25. /naa I'm jokin' I'm jokin'
- J26. A: innit you don't even h-
27. you don't hang around with us no more
28. why not
29. JW: I didn't know your name that's the thing 0.32
30. I couldn't have just called you Otis
31. ()
32. Otis: *((shifts))* >when did you do that< (.)
33. >when did you do that< (.)
34. >when did you do that< (.) 0.38
35. MrG: shsh::: guys (.)
36. get your coursework out please
37. ()
38. Otis: *((shifts as he looks in his bag for his work??))* coursework? (.)
39. but we done it though (.) 0.47
40. JW: >yeah I know< we done it

Transcript – Episode D

41.		but we gotta do the next part	
42.	Otis:	<i>((kisses his teeth. Zips up bag))</i> where do yo-	
43.		where do you do that (.)	
44.	JW:	huh?	0.53
45.		where did you do that Photoshop	
46.		(1)	
47.	JW:	Photoshop?	
48.	Otis:	yeah where did you-	
49.	JW:	I done it /()	0.58
50.		<i>((mobile phone reception noise))</i>	
51.	MrG:	<i>((loudly. To whole class))</i> Oh guys I wanna sign where you've got to today (.)	
52.		<i>((some side comments from students))</i>	
53.		Student: (writing)	
54.		Shonelle: it's coursework sir	1.03
55.		how you meant to sign anything ()	
56.	Otis:	I wanna do Photoshop	
57.		d- do some graffiti writing on my thing innit	
58.		(2) for my- (1)	
59.	MrG:	guys (.)	1.12
60.		/I've asked you (.) <i>((moving closer to Otis and co))</i>	
61.	JW:	(if we can get in your website we can sort it out)	
62.	MrG:	three times now to get your coursework out	
63.		if you don't you'll all be staying behind at break okay?	
64.	JA:	Sir-/()	1.18
65.	Otis:	oh:: shsh- don't tell me I lost my coursewo-	
66.		Nadia: <i>((background))</i> urgh::::: (she cheated on me)	
67.		<i>((as Otis rifles through his bag looking for his coursework, Mr</i>	
68.		<i>Graves approaches Jerome whose voice is mostly inaudible))</i>	
69.		JA: ()	1.26
70.		MrG: >I just said I said I've asked you three times	
71.		to get your coursework out<	
72.		JA: I don't have my coursework (out)	
73.		Mr G: you're always making excuses	
74.		JA: <u>you're</u> making ex/cuses	1.36
75.		MrG: <u>you're</u> making excuses	
76.		JW: stop arguing you two	
77.	MrG:	<i>((coming closer to Otis but still talking to JA))</i> js stop	
78.		/just stop just carry on	1.40
79.		I'm not gonna carry this on any further	
80.	JW/JA:	<i>((burst into laughter))</i>	
81.	Otis:	I don't have my coursework (.)	
82.		I don't have my coursework	
83.		you're not supposed to go in my bag Sir: (.)	1.45
84.		<i>((Rustling noise as Otis snatches bag back from Mr Graves??))</i>	
85.		<u>my</u> property: (.)	
86.	JW:	stop (pitching) on him	
87.	MrG:	<i>((quietly:))</i> where is your coursework (.)	
88.	Otis:	I don't have it	1.51

Episode D – Transcript

89. MrG: why
90. Otis: I don't know
91. MrG: S-
92. Otis: Oi Jermaine did Mr::: (.) Lizimba took my coursework? (.)
93. JW: (Mr who) 1.57
94. Otis: Mr Lizimba (1)
95. Unm: ((*in another conversation:*))Wait man
96. Otis: I don't have it 2.00/62.15

Transcription conventions:

/	the point in an utterance where the utterance of the next speaker begins to overlap
=	two utterances closely connected without a noticeable overlap, or different parts of a single speaker's turn
()	speech that can't be deciphered
(text)	analyst's guess at speech that's hard to decipher
((text))	stage directions
(.)	short pause of less than a second
(1.)	approximate length of a pause in seconds
<u>text</u>	extra emphasis
>text<	faster than normal speech
te::xt	elongated/stretched word
text-	a word that is abruptly cut off

Activities – Episode D

ACTIVITY ONE

What are your first reactions to what you have heard in the recording and read in the classroom transcript?

ACTIVITY TWO

What's happening in Episode D?

Read the following

This episode, like Episodes A, B & C represents another instance of what we've called 'Trouble getting started'. The earlier part of the episode is dominated by the preoccupation of three students (Jerome, Jermaine and the focal student Otis) with digital and popular culture – a PSP device; personal websites; digital imaging software; a fictional character from a popular Hollywood film. The latter part of the episode involves a confrontation between Otis and the teacher Mr Graves concerning Otis' failure to orient himself to his coursework or even to find it.

Lines 1-35 'Let me see' ... 'when did you do that?' ... In this sequence Jerome, Jermaine and Otis are entirely engrossed with their digital and popular cultural interests. This process also involves some minor conflict as they re-negotiate the basis of their previously close friendship. Their intense concentration on these matters is temporarily broken (lines 35-36) by Mr Graves' intervention – 'Shh:::::guys(.) get your coursework out'.

Lines 38-42 'Coursework?' ... At least 2 of the 3 students temporarily become aware of, and focused on, the question of their coursework before returning in line 42 to their previous concerns with Photoshop etc.

Lines 42-59 'Where do you do that?' ... The resumption of the Photoshop discussion might have been interrupted by Mr Graves' loud address to the whole class about their coursework (line 51 'Oh guys I wanna sign where you've got to today'). However, there is no sign in the recording that the 3 students are paying attention to this teacher intervention.

Lines 60-82 'I've asked you three times now to get your coursework out' In this sequence the three students, especially Otis (the focal student) are forced to orient themselves to their coursework by Mr Graves' direct demands on them to do so. Otis (line 65 becomes sharply aware of his coursework problem 'Oh:: sh- don't tell me I lost my coursewo- '. In the following sequence (lines 72-79) Jerome openly tells the teacher that he hasn't got his coursework, shows some argumentative defiance towards the teacher, then combines with Jermaine to jokily outmanoeuvre the teacher who appears to back down (line 79 'I'm not going to carry this on any further').

Lines 81-96 'I don't have it' When Mr Graves turns his attention to Otis, Otis is adamant that he hasn't got any coursework. He then tussles, egged on by Jermaine, with Mr Graves over Mr Graves' attempts to look in Otis' bag for his coursework (lines 83-86). Otis then flatly tells the teacher that he has no coursework with him and doesn't know where it is and is clearly not offering to take any steps to resolve the problem and ends with a conclusive 'I don't have it'.

Episode D – Activities

ACTIVITY THREE

Trouble getting started

You've now had the chance to look closely at four classroom episodes in which it could be said that teachers are having trouble getting their students started on the prescribed programmes of work. Compare and contrast these episodes

Episode D		
Episode C		
Episode B		
Episode A		
	SIMILARITIES	DIFFERENCES

Activities – Episode D

Issue 1 from Episode D – Digital culture in the classroom

Researchers' comment:

'When we conducted our classroom research in 2005 and 2006 we noticed that the presence of digital cultural devices in the classroom (e.g. mobile phones with multiple functions, computers with internet access, mp3 players, psp devices etc) were beginning to have an effect on the nature of classroom culture. Since then both wider society and schools have become saturated with the influences of digital culture. There has been surprisingly little debate on the consequences of these developments for teachers and their life everyday life in the classroom'.

ACTIVITY FOUR

DIGITAL CULTURE – what some teachers say ...

Mobile Phones

(a) It is the issue of us playing catch up with young people today realising that they inhabit a world in which we are always uh playing catch up with you know the mobile phones. Five six years ago it was clear cut mobile phones were not allowed but they are so ubiquitous that we have to give in and we haven't accommodated them properly. So every now and then the school takes a hard line on it and everybody's singing from the same hymn sheet all members of staff and they know that it's gonna to be okay for a while. Then you know priorities shift cos we've got other things to do and then like Daryl's [boy refusing to hand over his phone] saying no to me what, a couple of weeks after, and I was instrumental in putting this policy forward (laughing). So I feel a right idiot uh to some degree we've just gotta learn how to accommodate it.

Tom aged 40-50: MFL (Asst. Head): 17 years of classroom experience

(b) I have seen situations where teachers have confiscated where parents have come into school irate and given the teachers a hard time for taking their phones blah blah blah despite the fact that they weren't supposed to have them in the first place.

Carol aged 40-50: MFL & English: 10 years of classroom experience

(c) The parents have to come and actually collect them they are not allowed to have them unless the parents come in. But you see parents argue with us. They go 'there are security reasons why they should have them they need to be contacted urgently'. So we tend to turn a blind eye because if we don't see them we don't know.

Deborah aged 50-60: RE & Humanities: 20 years of classroom experience

(d) I just wanted to say how it is supposed to work. You know if you produce mobile phones in the lesson and you're using it or it is visible to the teacher the teacher then asks the child for the mobile phone. The child is then supposed to hand over the mobile phone to the teacher because that is the rule. And you are then supposed to give it to the school secretary for the parents to collect it. That is what is supposed to happen. It is often a point of confrontation – of conflict. In some cases the kid will

Episode D – Activities

become threatening and abusive and will protect his or her right as they see it to keep that and not to obey that particular rule.

Isaac aged 30-40: Maths: 9 years of classroom experience

(e) They are allowed to have mobile phones in the school. They have to be switched off in the classroom. Try and take the phone of the student? – some teachers usually heads of year and senior teachers are successful and other teachers don't always succeed. What's the scenario [for other teachers]? a little bit of you know argument then either call the head of department to do it or give up.

Caroline aged 40-50: EAL: 24 years of classroom experience

Other effects of digital culture

(f) My partner's constantly going on about you know the kids go off to the ICT suite ... to do their coursework and really what they're doing is surfing and or playing an online game ... and they've got it down to a fine art that they click and er one window goes down and they minimise one window, maximise another, so they kind of have got those kind of movements down to an absolute er slick trick.

Aaron aged 50-60: English & Drama: 25 years of classroom experience

(g) If they have to have them [mp3 players] they must be turned off in the classroom that is sometimes breached and occasionally they are sometimes allowed to listen to music when they are working on writing. Once the teachers [have] stopped talking you know the kids say 'can I listen to my music sir?' Some teachers say yes.

Ruby aged 30-40: English EAL: 9 years of classroom experience

(h) I know teachers in this school who are quite happy for students to work while they are listening to music. Personally I would never allow that because it just creates a grey area where you create conflict.

Gethin aged 20-30: English: 3 years of classroom experience

(i) I had a class today and the deal was they'd been working really well quite a low ability group but working really well. I got them into the IT room. The deal was that they could work but on French websites playing French games. And I mean the struggle to keep them on those websites was just exhausting [they were going] everywhere – you know MSN. But we do learn and I see the little bars at the bottom [of the screen]. I said 'I see that, I see that, I see that. Get 'em off or you'll sit in the middle and I'm gonna get you something to write out. But at the end you could just feel this is a struggle I was not winning, so I gave them ten minutes at the end on their own whatever they wanted to do. Luckily most of the websites were on the filters. You could tell anything bad but it's that battle again.

Tom aged 40-50: MFL (Asst. Head): 17 years of classroom experience

(j) Particularly if, and you see that happening, teachers permit [students] as they are writing their coursework essay and they are allowed to listen quietly – they can put their headphones in.

Caroline aged 40-50: EAL: 24 years of classroom experience

QUESTIONS FOR DEBATE AND ANALYSIS

- To what extent do your experiences match those of these teachers?

Activities – Episode D

ACTIVITY FIVE

MOBILE PHONES

Very many schools have found it essential to develop workable policies regulating mobile phones and their use. Read the following examples.

POLICY A

Mobile phones, MP3 players and other electronic equipment

The School understands students may wish to carry MP3 players and personal electronic equipment. However, they must be turned off and earpieces hidden away under sweatshirts or in pockets during lessons, tutor time and assemblies. MP3 players may only be switched on and used by students during breakfast and lunchtime.

Students are allowed to bring to, and carry around school mobile phones should their parents wish. The following rules must be followed by all students:

- Mobile phones should remain switched off during lessons, tutor time and assemblies. Should a teacher wish students to use mobile phones during a lesson, that is the only time when they may be switched on at lesson time
- Mobile phones may only be switched on and used by students during breakfast and lunchtime
- Mobile phones must never be used either to photograph a student, a member of staff or visitor to the school without their express permission
- Incidences of mobile phones being used in school to bully, intimidate or harass anyone will be dealt with severely
- Students should never carry material on their phone which they would be unhappy about an adult or parent viewing. Teachers may request to look at a student's phone and content at any time

Failure to keep to the Code for Mobile Phone Use is likely to result in exclusion and a meeting between the student, parent and senior member of staff to discuss the student's future at the school

POLICY B

Mobile Phone Policy

The school recognises that mobile phones can detract from learning and have the potential to be used as a tool in bullying. Therefore we do not tolerate the use of mobile phones in school and any mobile phone that is seen, heard or used, will be confiscated by a member of staff. Parents who wish to contact their child in an emergency should telephone the school reception and children can contact their parents in the same way.

POLICY C

Mobile Phone Policy

The College recognises that mobile phones are now an important aspect of everyone's life and have considerable value, particularly in relation to individual safety. The College therefore accepts that students are permitted to bring mobiles to the College but that use is limited and restricted.

The College aims to educate students in the responsible use of technology:

- I. Students must ensure that files stored on their phones do not contain violent, degrading or

Episode D – Activities

pornographic images. The transmission of some information is a criminal offence. Students found to be responsible for this will have their phone confiscated; it will be returned to their parent / carer, or passed to the Police.

2. Cyber-bullying is completely unacceptable, students found to be responsible for this will have their phone confiscated; it will be returned to their parent / carer, or passed to the Police.

3. The college is a workplace, phones must be switched off and kept in bags during and between lessons.

Note: All points in the policy apply to phones, Ipods, MP3, MP4 players and any similar devices.

Rules

1. Whilst the Governors give permission for phones to be brought to the College, responsibility for the phone rests with the student and the College will take no financial responsibility for loss. The college bears no responsibility for confiscated items.

2. Students must not use phones during or between lessons. This means that phones must not be used for example, for making calls, checking the time, texting or used as a calculator. Phones etc must not be visible during or between lessons, they must be switched off and stored in the student's bag.

3. Head phones must not be worn during or between lessons

4. Students must not use phones or MP3 players to broadcast music.

5. If phones are used at incorrect times students will be challenged, phones will be confiscated, and will be returned at the end of the day. If students dispute this, or offend persistently, parents will be asked to collect the phone from reception.

6. If there is an emergency which requires communication with home, students must speak to a member of staff who will deal with the matter. Personal mobile phones must not be used in lesson time. Parents / carers should only phone students at breaktime (10.50-11.10am) or lunchtime (1.00-1.45pm). In an emergency parents / carers should phone Reception and a message will be taken to the student.

7. Mobile phones cannot under any circumstances be taken into examination rooms. Breach of this rule will lead to invalidation of that examination and potentially other examinations.

8. Students need to acknowledge that it is a privilege to be permitted to bring mobile phones to College and abuse of this policy may lead to a curtailment of this privilege.

POLICY D

Mobile Phone Policy

Rationale

Mobile phones are now a feature of modern society and most of our pupils own one. Increasing sophistication of mobile phone technology presents a number of issues for schools:

- The high value of many phones
- The integration of cameras into phones leading to potential child protection and data protection issues
- The potential to use the phone e.g. for texting whilst on silent mode.

It is not realistic to prohibit phones being brought to school, nor is it logistically possible for schools to collect phones in each morning and return them in the afternoon. It is our policy to allow pupils to have a mobile phone with them in school under the conditions outlined in the policy below.

Activities – Episode D

Policy

1. Phones must not be used for any purpose (eg Phoning, texting, surfing the internet, taking photos, taking videos).
2. Phones must always be switched off (not on silent mode) and kept out of view
3. If a pupil breaches these rules the phone will be confiscated and given in to the office. It will be returned to the pupil the following day on receipt of a letter from parents.
4. Phones must not be taken into examinations

This policy should be read in conjunction with the school's other policies in particular the Behaviour Policy.

QUESTIONS FOR DEBATE AND ANALYSIS

- What do the different policies reveal about the underlying philosophies of the school authorities with regard to regulating pupil behaviour, digital culture and the purposes of schooling?
- Which policy or policies do you consider are most likely to be successful in your school? Why?
- Describe any mobile phone policies not mentioned above which you have seen being successful, or think would be successful. Why were they/would they be successful?

Episode D – Activities

ACTIVITY SIX

Comment from the wider culture

A special feature in the *Guardian* Newspaper has suggested that one of the effects of the spread of digital culture has been a blurring of previous social boundaries between teachers and school students.

Read the following extracts

From: Blurred Boundaries for teachers (*Guardian* 23.09.09)

1. '... Maggie, an English teacher at a private girls's school in the east Midlands, found her initiation on a popular teens' social networking site. "Someone," she says, "must have taken a photo of me in class with a camera phone, a close-up, horrible, while I was bending over to pick something up. Then they put it online and basically had a guess-the-bum competition. All quite innocent, you know, but very, very personal. The girls were all wildly apologetic afterwards, but I'm not at all sure they thought they'd really done anything wrong...'

2. '... in parallel with the steady erosion of formality in society as a whole, new ways of communicating including email, text messaging and social networking sites are radically altering the relationship between pupils and teachers. Once upon a time, teachers simply did not exist outside school. There was a fixed distance; a clear definition of roles; lines that should not and, more often than not, could not be crossed. Now, contact outside the classroom is not only easier but, in many schools, actively encouraged – school web portals on which teachers and students can upload and download assignments, email each other questions and answers, post announcements and sometimes even chat in real time, are increasingly becoming the norm. That fixed distance is shortening; those old boundaries – between professional and private, home and school, formal and informal – are blurring...'

3. '...The NAS/UWT, Britain's second-largest teachers' union, takes cyberbullying very seriously. It has called for any school policy that requests or requires teachers to disclose their mobile numbers or email addresses to pupils to be banned; wants new legislation to outlaw teachers being named on websites; would like strategies to prevent all use of mobile phones when school is in session...'

4. '...A lot of the union's casework involves the use of mobile phones in schools, particularly in the classroom. "There's a lot of taking of inappropriate photos, down teachers' cleavages, that kind of thing," Keates says. "We've even had cases of attacks being staged, things being thrown at teachers, so their reaction can be filmed and then posted on Facebook or YouTube." The internet, and particularly social networking sites, are all too often "vehicles for false allegations, and exposing teachers to ridicule and humiliation...'

5. '... "I don't agree with creating a separation between the real and the online world," says Alison, who teaches at a girls' school in London. "My school bars Facebook contact between teachers and pupils. But I think teachers should be active online; it might even help prevent some of the things children can get up to, the very sexualised pictures they post of themselves online, for example. Banning us is almost insulting; it's like saying: 'You can't be trusted.' And texting is a far better way of getting hold of a child when you need them than a note in the register. Schools have enough absurd rules. We should be in that cyberspace arena..."'

<<http://www.guardian.co.uk/education/2009/sep/23/teacher-pupil-sexual-relationship>>

Activities – Episode D

QUESTIONS FOR DEBATE AND ANALYSIS

- **What is your response to the examples cited above? How much do they reflect your own experiences? What other examples have you come across?**
- **How far do you agree with the proposition that the digital technologies have induced a blurring of boundaries between teachers and students?**
- **Some people think that teachers should wholeheartedly embrace all the potential of digital devices and technologies (e.g. social networking of various kinds) to assist the learning process and to remove boundaries between teachers and students. Do you agree? If so how should this be done? If you don't agree give your reasons.**

Episode D – Activities

Issue 2 from Episode D – Are students consumers with rights?

Researchers' comment:

'The majority of teachers who participated in our research seminars expressed the view that in very many schools, communication with pupils now relies on negotiation rather than on the natural authority of, and deference to, teachers; in this emerging classroom culture pupils increasingly see themselves as consumers who know their rights'.

ACTIVITY SEVEN

Read the following comments from teachers

Student identities (consumers with rights?)

Student Identities –
what some teachers say...

Children are bright now. You know we have got a whole different climate now. Children know what they are entitled to. Children will tell you "that was a crap lesson, it was boring, you read that story with no feeling". But they are right to do that if we are crap you know whereas I wouldn't have dreamed of saying anything. I would have sat and be bored.

Deborah aged 50-60: R.E., Humanities: 20 years of classroom experience

There's been a shift um from when I was at school when the teacher had complete authority I think there is a shift in the way in which um young people perceive themselves in relation to adults and they'll all tell you what their rights are.

Olive age n/a: Science: 20+ years of classroom experience

It's become more acceptable for a child to say no ... 'no I'm not doing it'. And then you know twenty, thirty years ago it was almost unheard of. That would be the one child that basically spent the rest of the year outside the class. But now you have a class of thirty children and twenty of them are telling you no. And it's acceptable. You know I shouldn't hear people being defiant every day every lesson (murmurs of agreement) and it's the norm.

Carmen aged 40-50: Supplementary School: 16 years of classroom experience

I don't think that we can have discipline um we can maintain discipline in schools any longer simply by us keeping you know laying down the law and you know keeping them under the thumb I think it is consensual (murmurs of agreement) there is a negotiation that has to happen.

Olive age n/a: Science: 20+ years of classroom experience

This is a cliché that teachers go through again and again and again because they think they are there to teach what they do not realise is they are to negotiate a complex minefield of adult-teenage relationships. Naturally if you (laughter) walk into the classroom [and say] 'well we are going to negotiate relationships today' and give the lesson instead of saying 'you are going to learn world war two' then maybe it would be a bit more honest yes because actually teachers are spending at least

Activities – Episode D

half of their time negotiating relationships and not actually teaching content.

Sadie aged 40-50: English EAL & Drama: 26 years of classroom experience

I think it [the relationship between adults and children] has become far less formal you know the idea that you know the adult is right and the students do what they are told has broken down in wide areas of society certainly in my little bit.

Caroline aged 40-50: EAL: 24 years of classroom experience

[The relationship between] staff and students is so different than it was ten years ago the difference is that you can't get in their faces. I remember when I started teaching ... seventeen years ago and you got in that kid's face and that was accepted as the norm and you could not do that here and I'm so glad. They would be, they'd be quite entitled to go and complain about you. You would lose respect you would lose all you know, that would spread and you would be seen as this person and would stand out amongst this school as this, as someone who tried to rule by fear and we cannot do that again.

Tom aged 40-50: MFL (Asst. Head): 17 years of classroom experience

You can't take it out of their hand if they don't give it to you. So if you say 'can I have your mobile phone' – [they say] 'no'. And then you say, they go 'you can't touch me you know, you know better than that. Hello?' um so you can't take it from them, so you're not gonna get it.

Harriet aged 20-30: English: 3 years of classroom experience

QUESTIONS FOR DEBATE AND ANALYSIS

- How much, and in what ways, do your own experiences in classrooms resemble those of the teachers above?

Researchers' comment:

'It is noticeable that in Episode D the teacher Mr Graves first tries to challenge Otis then appears to give up and walk away. One or two teachers told us that some of the difficulties with pupils experienced by the teachers in Episodes C and D mirrored those they experienced with their own children at home'.

Episode D – Activities

ACTIVITY EIGHT

Comment from the wider culture

Read the following newspaper extract

‘Quarter of parents avoid disciplining their children for fear of upsetting them’

(Daily Mail 17.2.10)

‘One in four parents won’t discipline their children for fear of upsetting them, a study revealed today. Researchers found that both mothers and fathers shy away from telling off their children because they don’t want to be seen as unfair or too strict.

A third of parents admitted avoiding keeping their child in check in public because they didn’t want others to think they were being too harsh.

And more than half (55 per cent) of those polled said they dished out less discipline than their own parents did.

Three in ten parents admitted they were a “pushover”. ...

Our survey suggests mums and dads tend to avoid ticking off their children because it’s easier than having to deal with them kicking up more of a fuss.

They don’t want to be seen as too strict and not enough of a friend their kids feel comfortable talking to. The survey questioned 2,000 parents on their attitudes towards discipline. ...

Ninety-three per cent said they grew up respecting their elders and feared a telling off from their fathers, mothers and teachers, and eight in ten said one scolding was enough to stop them from misbehaving again.

But the poll found that today’s kids have a much easier ride, with one in four parents openly avoiding disciplining their children because they wanted “an easy life”.

Just three in ten said they had sent their child to bed early while one in three had taken away an iPod or mobile phone or reduced time allowed on computer games.

More than half of parents felt they were seen more as a friend than a parent and would rather sit down and talk things through than discipline them, and a quarter said they wished they were more strict with their kids because their children were “tearaways” now.

The study revealed that the average child is told off at least twice a day, but four in ten parents reckon the lecture falls on deaf ears. ...’

<<http://www.dailymail.co.uk/news/article-1251426/Modern-parents-avoid-discipline-fear-upsetting-children.html#>>

QUESTIONS FOR DEBATE AND ANALYSIS

Comment on the suggestion that difficulties experienced by teachers in asserting their right to direct pupil behaviour reflect a weakening of adult authority vis-à-vis young people which is increasingly evident in social life away from schools.

Notes for Facilitators – Episode D

Episode D. Notes for Facilitators

- Give participants an opportunity to quickly read through the general background notes for the episode, and the transcript.
- Play the recording of the episode for participants to follow using the transcript.
- Play the recording a second time.

Ask participants for their first reactions to what they have heard and read. It is very important here to ask as many participants as possible for a brief response. Each person should be restricted to one initial observation. The publication wants to encourage open discussion about complex issues. Part of this process involves participants being exposed to a range of perspectives on the same aspect of urban classroom culture, with the understanding that there is rarely one which is definitively **right**.

What's happening in Episode D?

As with previous episodes in this book, direct the participants' attention to the idea of looking at the transcript as a series of interactional exchanges. If any individuals strongly disagree with the summary interpretation offered, do encourage a discussion about this. However, the central purpose is for participants to read through the summary referring to the transcript as necessary.

Trouble getting started

- If at all possible try to link this exercise with those conducted in relation to Episodes A, B, and C. See if participants can reach any overall conclusions about the notion that it is a common condition of contemporary urban classroom life to have trouble getting lessons or tasks started. In particular participants should be asked to account for why these difficulties appear to arise in the episodes (a) with different kinds of teacher, (b) whether the class as a whole is being addressed or the students are working in groups, (c) whether new topics or tasks are being introduced or whether students are being asked to resume ongoing, previously well established work tasks.

Issue 1 Digital culture in the classroom

The policies presented here are all drawn from genuine policy texts used in real schools.

- Try to broaden the discussion at the end of this section beyond the issues surrounding mobile phones. Since the research was conducted in 2005 and 2006 there has been a huge expansion in the ownership of multi-function digital devices (ipod touches, ipads etc, mp3 players etc). Their use everywhere has been normalised; for instance in 2011, after a period of confusion, the use of ipads and other hand held digital devices in the UK Parliament chambers during debates has been approved.

<<http://services.parliament.uk/hansard/Commons/bydate/20110330/mainchamberdebates/part003.html>>

The discussion here can be supplemented by use of the quotations of teachers' voices about their experiences of/stances towards mobile phones and other effects of digital culture which can be found in the section Teachers' Voices On ... beginning on page 77.

Issue 2 Are students consumers with rights?

- At the end of this discussion, if the matter hasn't already been dealt with, ask the participants to concentrate on addressing the following conundrum: if relationships in our culture between adolescents and parents, and adolescents and society have shifted decisively in favour of the rights and wants of young people in all encounters with adults, how should teachers in urban comprehensive schools respond? Should they, for instance, (a) try to reverse these trends, (b) try to work with the grain of these trends by attempting to defer to students' rights and wants at all times, (c) try to achieve

Episode D – Notes for Facilitators

a hybrid of (a) and (b). Whatever the response, ask that the key implications for everyday policies and practices in schools and classrooms be spelled out explicitly. In focusing the discussion make sure that participants take account of the significance and confidence of Otis' indignant comment to the teacher (lines 83-85) 'You're not supposed to go in my bag Sir ... My property'.

Again, the discussion here can be supplemented by use of the quotations of teachers' voices on these matters which can be found in the section Teachers' Voices On ... beginning on page 75.

Notes (p. 47)

4. Adobe Photoshop. Described as, "the professional standard in desktop digital imaging"

Public Debates about classroom and school culture



**Public Debates
about classroom and
school culture**

- ‘We are traditional here and make no apologies for it’ & link to article (*Guardian* 5.1.10)
- ‘In class, I have to power down’ & link to article (*Guardian* 8.5.07)
- ‘System Re-design at school level, System Re-design at local system level, System Re-design at national system level’ & link to website
- ‘System Redesign – How to Transform Your School’ link to video

Researchers' comment:

'Our extensive discussions with scores of experienced teachers about contemporary urban classroom culture in comprehensive schools centred on how to respond to the complexities emerging from Episodes A, B, C & D. We considered three different suggestions concerning how schools might respond to the perceived dilemmas generated by cultural change in schools'

SUGGESTION ONE

'We are traditional here and make no apologies for it'

(statement made by Sir Michael Wilshaw head of Mossbourne Community Academy in the London Borough of Hackney – quoted in *The Guardian* newspaper 5.01.10)

Message: Turn secondary schools into academies and re-impose 'traditional' practices.

Suggested actions: introduce –

- *strict enforcement of school uniform, and lining up in corridors teaching of Latin*
- *rigid discipline*
- *no mixed-ability classes*
- *teaching of traditional subjects*
- *no visits to nearby fast-food shops*
- *chanting of school mantras*
- *detentions till 6 pm and on Saturdays*

ACTIVITY ONE

Read the article by Peter Wilby entitled,

'Is Mossbourne academy's success down to its traditionalist headteacher'? published in *The Guardian* (Tuesday 5th January 2010)

<<http://www.guardian.co.uk/education/2010/jan/05/mossbourne-academy-wilby-profile>>

QUESTIONS FOR DEBATE AND ANALYSIS

- What is your response to the reported approach to school and classroom culture at Mossbourne Community Academy?
- Assuming that the approach at Mossbourne is successful, why do you think that's the case?
- Imagine this approach being implemented in a school with which you are familiar. How successful would it be there? Why? Why not?
- What are the *educational* implications of the Mossbourne approach? What room is there for a range of definitions of what constitutes success in secondary schools?

SUGGESTION TWO

‘In class, I have to power down’

(statement made by a child at a digital conference in San Francisco, cited in *The Guardian* 8.05.07))

‘At school, you do all this boring stuff, really basic stuff, PowerPoint and spreadsheets and things. It only gets interesting and exciting when you come home and really use your computer. You’re free, you’re in control, it’s your own world.’

(statement made by a 12 year old child known to Lord David Puttnam, the film producer)

Message: Outside school, young people are using much more advanced skills, doing many more interesting things, operating in a far more sophisticated way than schools, as presently constituted, embrace or even care about.

Suggested actions:

Schools should enthusiastically engage with digital culture, so as to capture the attention of pupils and their energetic and creative participation in learning.

ACTIVITY ONE

Read the article ‘In class, I have to power down’

<<http://www.guardian.co.uk/education/2007/may/08/elearning.schools>>

QUESTIONS FOR DEBATE AND ANALYSIS

- How far do you sympathise with the perspectives expressed by Lord Puttnam and the young people he cites?
- If you have worked in a school which has attempted to wholeheartedly embrace digital technology, how well did it work? What were the benefits? What were the problems?

SUGGESTION THREE

‘System Re-design at school level, System Re-design at local system level, System Re-design at national system level’

(statement made by Professor David Hargreaves – a renowned sociologist of education)

http://schools.norfolk.gov.uk/myportal/custom/files_uploaded/uploaded_resources/3611/Norfolk_Hargreaves_presentation.pdf

Message: The school system as a whole, and individual schools, have made very limited changes to the methods of organisation and everyday practices that emerged in the late 19th century and became routine during the 20th century. These no longer work for pupils or teachers in the 21st century.

Suggested actions: Schools should be completely re-designed organisationally and culturally in democratic consultation with teachers, pupils, parents and other interested parties in local communities.

ACTIVITY ONE

Watch the video

‘System Redesign – How to Transform Your School’

<http://www.tes.co.uk/teaching-resource/System-Redesign-How-to-Transform-Your-School-6046517/>

QUESTIONS FOR DEBATE AND ANALYSIS

- Which, if any, of the proposals for system redesign do you think is worth pursuing? Why?
- What criticisms do you have of any of David Hargreaves’ proposals?
- Describe any experiences you have had of attempts to completely redesign the life of a school? How well did this work?

Public Debates about classroom and school culture – Notes for Facilitators

Public Debates about classroom and school culture – Notes for Facilitators

Suggestions One, Two, Three

Ask participants for their first reactions to what they have read, heard and seen. It is very important here to ask as many participants as possible for a brief response. Each person should be restricted to one initial observation. This publication wants to encourage open discussion about complex issues. Part of this process involves participants being exposed to a range of perspectives on the same aspect of urban classroom culture, with the understanding that there is rarely one which is definitively **right**.

It is suggested that you stimulate the discussion by following the indicated internet links which will take you to substantive statements of 3 different suggestions for changes in secondary school culture. In addition to these texts ask participants to watch the video 'System Redesign – How to Transform Your School' which showcases some of David Hargreaves' work proposing a variety of ways in which school cultures might be changed. You can find this video on the CD/DVD accompanying this book. The video lasts for approximately 25 mins. It was originally produced by Teachers TV which closed at the end of April 2011. Agreements have been made for the resources formerly distributed by Teachers TV including video resources to be distributed free of charge to educational institutions by a number of organisations:

The video clip can be retrieved, for instance, from TSL Education Ltd

[<http://www.tes.co.uk/teaching-resource/System-Redesign-How-to-Transform-Your-School-6046517/>](http://www.tes.co.uk/teaching-resource/System-Redesign-How-to-Transform-Your-School-6046517/)

You may need to go through a simple registration procedure to access it.

It is also available from Teach Pro Limited [<http://www.schoolsworld.tv>](http://www.schoolsworld.tv), and Phoenix TTV Limited [<www.teachersmedia.co.uk>](http://www.teachersmedia.co.uk).

It would be possible to build a single session around the Hargreaves video which shows a number of different proposals for change. However, it is recommended that, first of all, the 3 suggestions for change as represented in the provided textual statements should be fully explored.

You should try to ensure, as far as possible, that when participants support one or more of the proposals for change they should (i) be asked to indicate some of the practical implications for implementation (ii) be put under some pressure to address the potential problems and disadvantages of their favoured proposals.

Teachers' Voices on ...



**Teachers'
Voices on ...**

Teachers' Voices on ...

- The teacher's job now
- Student identities (consumers with rights?)
- Digital Culture in schools
 - Mobile Phones
 - Other effects of digital culture
- Relevance
- Teachers, students and classroom communication
 - Teachers as entertainers
 - Whole-class teaching
 - Authority or negotiation
- On changing the culture of schools

Teachers' Voices on ...

The teacher's job now

(a) when I started teaching, late 70s, early 80s, ... [teachers] still caned then, so there was a lot of ruling by fear and a lot of the classes ... The simmering violence in some schools and the way in which I think – okay, some kids did behave better because they were scared, or because they got kicked out, and now we have to contain behaviours whereas previously, perhaps it was easier for us to just chuck them on the scrapheap, we've got more subtle at managing behaviours. Because I think there were lots of lessons that got entirely lost [in those days].

Deirdre aged 40-50: English & Media: 25 years of classroom experience

(b) so, I mean, everywhere, the marketisation of education is focusing on teachers as the one factor that has to be driven harder, because we're not going to drive the pupils harder, the thing we can change is the teachers. That's the whole thing about urban schools, we drill the teachers to drill the kids, because we can't deal with the problem of the kids. We can't deal with all the social issues and the social problems. We don't want to discuss them. And we don't even really want to discuss the intellectual potential of these children. And that's the thing that really drives me potty that, actually, you know, the governments and the school improvers don't really care about whether these children learn. Or they just want to seem like the results say they learn more.

Victoria aged 50-60: English, Sociology: 24 years of classroom experience

(c) teachers have an anxiety about ICT, from another point of view, which is that ICT is an excuse to replace them. It's the means for a massification of education, at whatever level, and replacing them. There's always that fear that if you got the computers there with the pre-ordained packages of education, that you can do without the teachers ... And I think that's being evidenced in the EAL field. As English as an Additional Language is being phased out everywhere in advance of a national report ... there are lots of colleagues who are not being reappointed in schools for EAL, where they're being replaced by teaching assistants, and where there are some shrewd operators marketing packages of electronic translation and that sort of thing, which, in many schools, they will think, "why not do this, rather than have an EAL teacher instead?"

Stephen aged 50-60: English, EAL: 8 years of classroom experience

(d) around the culture of coursework and delivering coursework in schools, ... I think a lot of teachers almost expect this sort of battle with coursework, because in every school coursework is due on the fifth. Nobody does it so you extend the deadline to the twelfth. Nobody does it again, then you have after school sessions for a month, and by that time the coursework's due; that's when you start putting them in one to one and taking them out of Maths, Science, whatever, other subjects.

Jessie age n/a: Drama, English: 15 years of classroom experience

(e) I think that more emphasis should be put on the student to do the coursework, because there are many teachers who do before school coursework, lunchtime coursework, after school coursework, and catch-up sessions ... some time ago I went through a stage where I refused to do it. I mean I said I wasn't going to do catch-up, I was going to do keep-up, and I told them that at the start. And for that year I didn't do a lot of catch-up sessions, and I felt other people tried to make me feel guilty, because they were doing it after school, before school, at lunchtime, and in the holidays as well.

Matthew aged 40-50: P.E.: 11 years of classroom experience

Teachers' Voices on ...

(f) the coursework question ... it's just a nightmare, and you think, "Well what do you need to do?" Do you have to have a year that you sacrifice, a year that you say, "If it's not in by Christmas we are not accepting it," and that year the results will go down ... you will always have those students who by the deadline have not got it handed in. They might have missed school, they might have... you know, for whatever reason they just haven't done it.

Rachel aged 30-40: MFL: 6 years of classroom experience

(g) I think there's a cultural practice now of teachers being told what to do so much, that they very rarely have the opportunity to use their intellectual enthusiasm for their subject themselves ... disempowered teachers is a strong feeling, with teachers' approach to teaching sort of internalised – there's this idea of strategic compliance and lack of public opposition to what's going on, because they know it's useless to protest, because there's some consultant coming in and saying, "this is the new gimmick and we've got to do it." And they're weary that they can't openly protest, so they comply strategically and then they kind of, they're cynical, they're cynical about what they have to do ... I think teachers are more cynical with the children and more kind of, they're driven by the targets that they have, impose targets on the children, to teach in a way that doesn't seek a process of intellectual engagement in the classroom as the priority. And it's not their fault, I'm not blaming teachers for this.

Victoria aged 50-60: English, Sociology: 24 years of classroom experience

(h) I know of one school where a student was caught with a knife concealed in his shoe, and he wasn't suspended, because it would have taken the school over the quota for that year.

Stephen aged 50-60: English, EAL: 8 years of classroom experience

(i) if you hand kids' work back, they don't read your comments unless you make them, half the time. You sit there for hours writing, give them the bit of paper, they go, "oh yeah." They don't necessarily read it, unless you say, "read what I have said. There are four numbered things you actually do in this paragraph."

Deirdre aged 40-50: English & Media: 25 years of classroom experience

(j) [pupils] are safe ... hopefully safe – because of bullying policies, child protection issues ... the school is no longer just from nine in the morning until three in the afternoon, I mean, we have breakfast clubs, after school clubs, we have child protection officers on our staff. We never had those when we were at school. So, I think [it's no longer] having home in a box, and having school in a box, I think they've come together more.

Caron aged 40-50: History: 5 years of classroom experience

(k) this is the other feature, of course, the new selection, the backdoor selection, the rise of the city technology college and then the rise of the specialised schools and the academies, and the church primary school and the church secondary school, and ... we've got the rise of girls' schools, particularly in London, as a form of protection. Middle-class girls often go into the girls' school and the boys sometimes go into the private school, [or]selective comprehensive schools. So, there's this whole problem of the fact that some of these schools are forced into dealing with children with a lot more problems than other schools, for different reasons; and that accumulation of problems in the classroom being so great, that it overwhelms the teacher and makes the teacher cynical.

Victoria aged 50-60: English, Sociology: 24 years of classroom experience

Teachers' Voices on ...

Student identities (consumers with rights?)

(a) [my daughter] when she was going to look at secondary schools, she had a tick-box. I was horrified when she produced this clipboard, and then I looked and said, “what are you doing?” She said, “I’m marking off what I think is right and wrong.” I was like, “oh God.” And then I looked at it, and she’d got things on there like, “are the classrooms nice and bright? What are the staff like to talk to? Are they friendly, are they approachable or not? What was the head’s talk like? ... and she kind of did it almost like a tickbox thing ... my daughter, even as a 10/11 year old, was looking as a consumer of education, for what she wanted out of a school, as well.

Caron aged 40-50: History: 5 years of classroom experience

(b) I think there’s a couple of factors that might need to be considered. One is the shift from the school being part of a community, part of a community, that seems to have been jettisoned in many places, to an emphasis on consumerism and the sort of X Factor celebrity stuff that we were talking about with David Beckham ... underpins it. And we can’t reverse the consumerism. And consumer rights seem to be being posited over the rights of the teachers.

Stephen aged 50-60: English, EAL: 8 years of classroom experience

(c) children are bright now. You know we have got a whole different climate now. Children know what they are entitled to. Children will tell you “that was a crap lesson, it was boring, you read that story with no feeling”. But they are right to do that if we are crap you know whereas I wouldn’t have dreamed of saying anything. I would have sat and be bored.

Deborah aged 50-60: R.E., Humanities: 20 years of classroom experience

(d) there’s been a shift um from when I was at school when the teacher had complete authority I think there is a shift in the way in which um young people perceive themselves in relation to adults and they’ll all tell you what their rights are.

Olive age n/a: Science: 20+ years of classroom experience

(e) it’s become more acceptable for a child to say no ... ‘no I’m not doing it’ and then you know twenty thirty years ago it was almost unheard of. That would be the one child that basically spent the rest of the year outside the class but now you have a class of thirty children and twenty of them are telling you no and it’s acceptable you know. I shouldn’t hear people being defiant every day every lesson (murmurs of agreement) and it’s the norm.

Carmen aged 40-50: Supplementary School: 16 years of classroom experience

(f) you can’t take it out of their hand if they don’t give it to you so if you say ‘can I have your mobile phone’ – [they say] ‘no’ and then ... they go ‘you can’t touch me ... you know better than that – hello?’ um so you can’t take it from them so you’re not gonna get it.

Harriet aged 20-30: English: 3 years of classroom experience

(g) there has also been a raising of ... the democratisation of education, whereby everybody has lots of rights and the students have lots of rights, which is absolutely correct, but we don’t seem to have balanced that with responsibilities, maybe, that go with that. You know, you have all these rights to say that [the] teacher is this, that and the other and that you [don’t] have to be responsible for coming to a lesson with what you’re prepared to give to it as well.

Rachel aged 30-40: MFL: 6 years of classroom experience

Teachers' Voices on ...

(h) it's like tying in with watching on television, everyone can be a judge of how people dance or garden or cook, whatever. But now it's like teachers as well; it's like everyone's got a comment as to how good a lesson was. I'm not saying it's necessarily bad but it does put extra demands on you, doesn't it, because everyone has got a voice.

Kirsten aged 50-60: Art: 29 years of classroom experience

(i) it's not students who are being tested, it's consumer-customers.

Stephen aged 50-60: English, EAL: 8 years of classroom experience

Digital Culture in schools

MOBILE PHONES

(a) it is the issue of us playing catch up with young people today realising that they inhabit a world in which we are always uh playing catch up with you know the mobile phones. Five six years ago it was clear cut mobile phones were not allowed but they are so ubiquitous that we have to give in and we haven't accommodated them properly so every now and then the school takes a hard line on it and everybody's singing from the same hymn sheet all members of staff. And they know that it's gonna be okay for a while then you know priorities shift cos we've got other things to do and then like Daryl's [boy refusing to hand over his phone] saying no to me ... a couple of weeks after, and I was instrumental in putting this policy forward (laughing) so I feel a right idiot uh to some degree we've just gotta learn how to accommodate it.

Tom aged 40-50: MFL (Asst. Head): 17 years of classroom experience

(b) the Afghan refugee students that I was dealing with, 15, 16 years old, probably a bit older, whenever they got their mobile phones confiscated, that was traumatic for them, it caused huge ruptures, because that's their lifeline. Unaccompanied minors, it's a way of getting in touch with everybody else. If it was going to be confiscated for two weeks, which is the school policy, they went absolutely berserk about it. Well, in three or four instances, they would go berserk, they'd push the school furniture over and that sort of thing, storm off the premises, slamming doors and that sort of thing, they would not accept it. They'd try and get their carers in, foster carers in to try and deal with it, but the head was obdurate about it. If a phone was confiscated, it can't be given back unless he allows it to be done, and it has to be the parent coming in. And yet we all knew, as teachers, you would see kids using the mobile phones in the playground, and so long as they weren't too overt about it and too in your face about it, you let it go, because it was too much hassle to do anything else with it.

Stephen aged 50-60: English, EAL: 8 years of classroom experience

(c) as far as I'm concerned, if they've got their phone and it's not on and it doesn't go off, then it's not a problem. I had a situation last term where someone confiscated a phone and gave it to me ... and the boy wanted the phone back, the year 8 boy came straight down to the office, demanded his phone, put his foot in the door, wouldn't let me shut the door, so, I just told him to come in and sit down, and I phoned his dad. His dad spoke to him and told him to leave the office and all the rest of it. By the end of the day, the dad was up the school wanting the chip off the phone. If he could have the chip and then I'd keep the phone, and he'll put the chip in the boy's other phone, because it was the boy's birthday at the weekend, and etcetera. So, I said to the father, "you either take the whole phone, or you support me – no, I'm not going to give you the chip and I keep the phone. Take the whole phone, or I keep the phone and you support the school." And he did, in the end, we kept the phone and he supported us.

Matthew aged 40-50: P.E.: 11 years of classroom experience

(d) I have seen situations where teachers have confiscated where parents have come into school irate and given the teachers a hard time [for]taking their phones blah blah blah despite the fact that they weren't supposed to have them in the first place.

Carol aged 40-50: MFL & English: 10 years of classroom experience

Teachers' Voices on ...

(e) I do remember, again, going back years, the one time when I had a cleaner ... and she was only there for a couple of hours, and I came in and she was on the phone, and I was a bit surprised, and I said, "don't you turn your phone off when you're working for me? Because I'm paying you by the hour." And she said, "but it might be important." And I've still never got over it, because the notion that you might not sometimes be out of contact and other things just have to wait. I think that is generational. It seems to me extraordinary that people want to be in contact all the time. But it works two ways for schools ... I think schools have an expectation of parents to be in contact very easily, as well. If your child is ill, and they can't get hold of you, and you say, "well, I was at work, so I didn't answer the phone," then often the office can be quite shirty with you that you aren't available, kind of, that second, to come and collect your ill child because they're a nuisance. So, I think it's mixed messages everywhere, basically ... We've completely lost the idea that there would ever be a kind of walled, ring fenced place, when you're out of communication.

Deirdre aged 40-50: English & Media: 25 years of classroom experience

(f) the parents have to come and actually collect them they are not allowed to have them unless the parents come in. But you see parents argue with us. They go 'there are security reasons why they should have them they need to be contacted urgently'. So we tend to turn a blind eye because if we don't see them we don't know.

Deborah aged 50-60: R.E., & Humanities: 20 years of classroom experience

(g) I just wanted to say how it is supposed to work. You know if you produce mobile phones in the lesson and you're using it or it is visible to the teacher the teacher then asks the child for the mobile phone. The child is then supposed to hand over the mobile phone to the teacher because that is the rule. And you are then supposed to give it to the school secretary for the parents to collect it. That is what is supposed to happen. It is often a point of confrontation of conflict. In some cases the kid will become threatening and abusive and will protect his or her right as they see it to keep that and not to obey that particular rule.

Isaac aged 30-40: Maths: 9 years of classroom experience

(h) they are allowed to have mobile phones in the school [but] they have to be switched off in the classroom ... try and take the phone off the student – some teachers usually heads of year and senior teachers are successful and other teachers don't always succeed – what's the scenario? [for other teachers] a little bit of you know argument then either call the head of department to do it or give up.

Caroline aged 40-50: EAL: 24 years of classroom experience

(i) but my problem was I only confiscated them twice and I locked them in the cupboard in my room and when I came back the cupboard had been burst open ... but I wouldn't confiscate again for the same reason and then you're personally liable again for the money and the school I work at has made it very clear that if we confiscate something and it goes missing it's our personal money so I wouldn't confiscate.

Harriet aged 20-30: English: 3 years of classroom experience

(j) I was covering a maths lesson, and this kid said, "I need a calculator, Miss." And a voice behind me, before I could even say anything, said, "well, you've got one on your phone, haven't you?" And 27 mobile phones came out ... But then they got angry, because the calculator on the phone wouldn't do the maths function that they wanted it to do.

Caron aged 40-50: History: 5 years of classroom experience

Teachers' Voices on ...

(k) I'm really, really wary, as a teacher, I am really, really on edge, if I suspect that a mobile phone is out, because I could be saying something in context with my lesson, and that could be recorded and blown totally out of context, and then I'll have to face a disciplinary panel and answer to that statement I would make. And quite often, you forget things you say in the classroom, because the whole day you're blathering on so you forget what you think.

Selena aged 40-50: English, Psychology: 20 years of classroom experience

(l) recently with a year 10 student I put an event down that she hadn't done her homework, and she was in trouble because she was wearing earrings, blah, blah, blah. At the end of the lesson, as soon as she got out of my room, I was following behind, she was, like, on the phone to her dad. "You know what, she's only given me a detention, because she says I haven't done my homework, and she's taken my earrings." And already she's made the contact with the parents to justify her behaviour, to make it look bad that I was following through the policies ... And the same thing occurs if something's happened in the classroom between a student and another student, and then they're immediately on the phone, passing that information on in the school, which can cause terrible situations, fights or whatever. I don't think the phone should be available in the classroom. Why do they need the phone apart from when they're going home? During the school day, they don't actually need the phone, they're not using it in any educational way, it's not enhancing their learning, so, the phone should not be there, like, I feel quite strongly about it.

Kirsten aged 50-60: Art: 29 years of classroom experience

(m) we had an incident where a member of staff, basically, like, he had an altercation with a student. The student ended up ringing his parents, his parents came into the school, kicked down the staff room door, and we had police on site and the school was shut down, we had to lock the kids in rooms and stuff. That was caused by a kid on a mobile phone, and that was caused by digital culture, if you like. And I think a lot of this comes from the parents, because the parent says to the kids, "you've got a right to have a phone."

Philip aged 20-30: Geography, History: 1 years of classroom experience

(n) so, the reality of your place ... and many hundreds of other institutions [is], 'no mobile phones allowed'. The last five schools that I've visited or been into, 'no mobile phones allowed,' but not everyone is taking them. Otherwise, you'd end up – I would have ended up with pockets full of mobile phones.

Kirk aged 30-40: English, Media Studies: 13 years of classroom experience

(o) I had a pupil this week who I found literally wedged between two lockers, sobbing her heart out, poor girl, and she was actually being bullied by her boyfriend, or ex-boyfriend, who was at another school, and she said, "he sent me really nasty texts, ma'am, and what do I do?"

Caron aged 40-50: History: 5 years of classroom experience

(p) the guys that are really clued in about it, had what are called 'sacrificial phones.' So, if you came up to them and said, "give me that phone I've seen you using," they'd pull out from another pocket an old model that was worthless, really, but sacrifice, and that sort of thing.

Stephen aged 50-60: English, EAL: 8 years of classroom experience

(q) some parents actually [feel] quite annoyed when schools confiscate mobile phones, because, you know, from their point of view, they want to know where their children are, they want to be able to contact them and to know that they're safe, there's a kind of whole area of issues around that.

Andrea age n/a: English: 20 years of classroom experience

Teachers' Voices on ...

Other effects of digital culture

(a) I was covering a lesson the other day, and it was a computer lesson, and I didn't know how to block the screens, but the minute your back's turned, they're downloading some games instructions or something. So, it's in their mind the whole time. So, it's almost an obsession, I would say, about that sort of fantasy world. It is a fantasy world, I think, playing computer games. So, I think some of our year 10 boys in particular are distracted by that, and it's also affecting their education to the extent that they will go home and the first thing they do is go on to games, so they're not actually doing their homework, they're not stretching themselves, academically. So, I think that's a huge thing.

Kirsten aged 50-60: Art: 29 years of classroom experience

(b) my partner's constantly going on about you know the kids go off to the ICT suite ... to do their coursework and really what they're doing is surfing and or playing an online game ... and they've got it down to a fine art that they click and er one window goes down and they minimise one window maximise another so they kind of have got those kind of movements down to an absolute er slick trick.

Aaron aged 50-60: English & Drama: 25 years of classroom experience

(c) we've just gone onto this VLE at school, where the assignments and things are put on the school web, kids – the children do assignments at home, on the computer, post it back to their tutor and it's done. And if they miss the deadline, if they tutor says, "well, it has to be in by Friday, 28th May, ten o'clock," they cannot post it past that date. That's okay for a majority of the kids in our school, but not for the likes of – I'll call her Jane, who, at home, does not have a computer.

Caron aged 40-50: History: 5 years of classroom experience

(d) I teach Media A Level in a school that has a very – a real old guard approach, so, lots of sites are blocked, YouTube is blocked, you can do Gatekeeper, but it doesn't always work, obviously, it depends on how things are embedded. No blogs. Now, if you try teaching Media when you're not allowed access to Blogspot, it's incredibly difficult. You try teaching – and, in fact, I know the Geography Department have mentioned that, actually, it's in their guidance for GCSE, that you need to get onto YouTube and show certain things, on the one hand – so you've got these constant difficulties in just creating – in delivering anything to the children.

Deirdre aged 40-50: English & Media: 25 years of classroom experience

(e) they're listening to music or they're texting, as soon as you get out of the classroom. And if you stand in the corridors, almost every student has got something that they're looking at, talking into.

Jessie age n/a: Drama, English & Media Studies: 15 years of classroom experience

(f) a few weeks ago, there was another incident, someone got the boy down on his knees, and he had to say these things to these other boys, and then it was filmed and it was going to be posted on YouTube ... I think a lot of the cyber-bullying ... started outside of school, so it would be like, you know, this MSN and all that sort of bullying, that we had to deal with, like, things posted on Facebook and that kind of cyber-bullying.

Matthew aged 40-50: P.E.: 11 years of classroom experience

Teachers' Voices on ...

(g) there's a teacher from our school that has been dismissed. He was dismissed because kids had taken a photograph of him in a lesson, when they provoked him in a lesson ... recorded the whole incident, as such, placed it on Facebook.

Stephen aged 50-60: English, EAL: 8 years of classroom experience

(h) if they have to have them [mp3 players] they must be turned off in the classroom. That is sometimes breached and occasionally they are sometimes allowed to listen to music when they are working on writing once the teachers [have] stopped talking you know the kids say 'can I listen to my music sir' some teachers say yes.

Ruby aged 30-40: English EAL: 9 years of classroom experience

(i) I know teachers in this school who are quite happy for students to work while they are listening to music. Personally I would never allow that because it just creates a grey area where you create conflict.

Gethin aged 20-30: English: 3 years of classroom experience

(j) they just use their phones or they'll have um one earpiece which will go up one side and through their jumper and it will just be up here (murmurs of agreement) and um their hair will cover it.

Jonathan aged 50-60: English & Media Studies: 25 years of classroom experience

(k) I had a class today and the deal was they'd been working really well, quite a low ability group, but working really well. I got them into the IT room. The deal was that they could work but on French websites playing French games. And I mean the struggle to keep them on those websites was just exhausting [they were going] everywhere you know– MSN. But we do learn and I see the little bars at the bottom [of the screen]. I said 'I see that ... get 'em off or you'll sit in the middle and I'm gonna get you something to write out'. But at the end you could just feel this is a struggle I was not winning. So I gave them ten minutes at the end on their own whatever they wanted to do. Luckily most of the websites were on the filters you could tell anything bad but it's that battle again.

Tom aged 40-50: MFL (Asst. Head): 17 years of classroom experience

(l) we've also been having a lot of problem with Facebook, massive problems ... Things that are being spread on Facebook are coming into school, like people talking about people and saying things that aren't true. Someone will read it, someone will come back in, someone will talk to the person it's about. And there's been – it's like cyber bullying, but then we've had so many arguments that we've had to deal with that are down to Facebook, things that are happening outside of school ... So, it will end up between perhaps two girls and then a load of other people get drawn in, and then we end up having sort of a group – it's almost like counselling, sometimes we've had about 12 or 13 girls sitting around, in a circle, we call it circle time, to try and sort [it out].

Kirsten aged 50-60: Art: 29 years of classroom experience

(m) you see that happening teachers permit [students] as they are writing their coursework essay and they are allowed to listen quietly. They can put their headphones in.

Caroline aged 40-50: EAL: 24 years of classroom experience

Teachers' Voices on ...

Relevance

(a) that is a GCSE reading piece ... it is very inaccessible for inner city kids.

Caroline aged 40-50: EAL: 24 years of classroom experience

(b) teaching science is a subject that the same question I get is 'why do I need to learn this 'cos I don't see the **relevance**' and sometimes I have to look for examples to show them where the relevance comes into it.

Celia aged 30-40: Science: 2 years of classroom experience

(c) you can't always start with what they want but what you can start with is something that is more **relevant** to you know world war two and rationing. Yes you have got to teach but how do you make that real for kids living in London now who have no concept of world war two and rationing you know it is how do you make the curriculum more interesting or **relevant** to the students that you are teaching.

Sadie aged 40-50: English EAL, Drama: 26 years of classroom experience

(d) they [the students] don't like being challenged to do anything other than what they already can do and we are training them to do that because every time we talk down to them or help them or make a text more **relevant** we're making it easier for them I think and I don't think necessarily I don't think we should teach all the dead white guys or anything like that I think but I do think we should not be frightened of saying 'well this is hard'.

Saul aged 20-30: English & Media Studies: 4 years of classroom experience

(e) it's a pointless exercise 'cos I mean the kids don't even know the first thing about the Yorkshire Dales for a start they've never been there probably and they don't know where it is and as far as we know there's no sort of background no reason why they should care about the Yorkshire Dales.

Paul aged 60+: English: 18 years of classroom experience

(f) I very much doubt from my own experience of inner London teaching that children will know where the North the Yorkshire Dales are or what they look like.

Harriet aged 20-30: English :3 years of classroom experience

(g) it feels completely alien to them and again they've never been to the Yorkshire Dales never seen writers from the country or anything it's a bit too distant a bit too remote for some children I think.

Catherine aged 30-40: English & Music: 12 years of classroom experience

(h) you can't learn something if you can't make an emotional connection to it.

Olive age n/a: Science: 20+ years of classroom experience

(i) some [of my students] struggle so you know even jotting something behind me on the board just so they have something to identify with and making it relevant ... um talking about global warming making it relevant.

Kitty aged 20-30: Science: 6 months' classroom experience

Teachers' Voices on ...

(j) so [I took] a hundred kids on the train, a hundred kids [to] the Portrait Gallery and then the National Gallery. And they'd never seen anything like it before in their life. They were so well behaved, they were drawing the Tudor portraits, they had a talk in the National Gallery about the execution of Lady Jane Gray, all these things ... And then we had lunch in Trafalgar Square, and they'd never done anything like that. I'm not saying all, it's just like the majority wouldn't have done that ... Well, I think they were surprised at how much they liked it. I spoke to one little girl ... she said she [had actually taken] her mum to the National Gallery [at the] weekend, and she showed her all the paintings that she'd been lectured about. And I said, "what did your mum say?" And she said, "oh, she loved it." So, I think that's fantastic, sort of opening up someone's experience of life, but then they were actually taking their mum along ... Because some people would say ... the children that you're teaching, why would they want to be looking at Tudor and Stuart portraits in the Portrait Gallery? Like, how boring, it's not relevant at all, culturally, historically, socially, to those particular students. But that issue didn't come up ... So, I don't think things have to be relevant, all the time.

Kirsten aged 50-60: Art: 29 years of classroom experience

(k) I think it's a false polarity to say there's a distinction between knowledge and experience. And part of what we're trying to do, as educators, is to give children an experience, proxy experience of scenarios, of worlds that they don't inhabit. That's a very important aspect of what we do from a social justice perspective, amongst others. I think there's a danger in talking about, sort of, wider knowledge, and getting that confused with the canon.

Stephen aged 50-60: English, EAL: 8 years of classroom experience

(l) surely education is more interesting if you haven't experienced it. You know, you're finding out new things, that's what's magic about it. But I also agree, to a certain extent, sometimes you need... you need to put the relevance in right at the beginning so that the kids get a hook on it and they get interested in it ... You know, we have students that do not step out of South East London. I took a student up to the V&A the other day, they have never, ever, been to a museum in their life. She said, "This is the first museum I've ever been to." This is a year 10 student. Watching the students in the V&A, just the kind of not even the objects, it was just the richness of the space, the tiles going up the stairs, the marble, it was like, "Where am I?" you know, it was like going into a palace. It was really exciting for them, you could see it on their faces.

Moira aged 40-50: Graphics, Art Graphics: 8 years of classroom experience

Teachers' Voices on ...

Teachers, students and classroom communication

TEACHERS AS ENTERTAINERS

(a) as a teacher, you have to be “all singing and all dancing,” to be successful. Because we’ve had lots of observations here, and to get an outstanding observation, you’ve got to have done this, you’ve got to have done that, you’ve got to have everything perfectly prepared, resources, you could take a day planning for that lesson, and then the person might go, “oh, that was good, it could have been better if you had done da-da-da.” So, I think, now, you have to be a super person. Because, it’s almost as if you’ve got to entertain the students, and if you’re not a good entertainer and they haven’t come on board with what you’re doing, you’re a failure. So, it’s almost like, you’ve just got to get the ball rolling whereas the student, if they don’t like what they’re doing, it’s because you’re not teaching it properly.

Kirsten aged 50-60: Art: 29 years of classroom experience

(b) I think OFSTED almost demands singing and dancing shows now and I think certainly in the staff room we’re all aware of that um we do need to entertain them and it’s sometimes a matter of crowd control The kids and the system um generally the headmaster and Ofsted demand us to be entertaining and before you could be seen as being a good teacher if you I don’t know [were] strict got all your marking done on time – I saw teachers being quite different when even I was at school and it wasn’t that long ago you know I didn’t expect them to entertain us I expected them to just to get my work you know in and you know them to hand it back marked but now it seems we have to be a bit more flashy we need to have our data projector working we need it going we need everything going and it’s like it’s demanded of us.

Laura aged 20-30: English, Media & Drama: 3 years of classroom experience

(c) I think the idea of teachers as entertainers is kind of worrying but there is an onus on teachers certainly at this school you would be frowned upon if you were to take on a traditional role if you were at your desk for example.

Gethin aged 20-30: English: 3 years of classroom experience

(e) there is a great elision between teaching and learning, entertainment and advertising, they’re all mashed together in ways that are not very encouraging ... there seems to be wanting to be spoon-fed in some ways, and expecting the teacher to be there to entertain sufficiently, to provide slide shows or video of stuff.

Stephen aged 50-60: English, EAL: 8 years of classroom experience

(d) I think pupils come to school with the view that they’re there to be entertained and um and there’s an extent to which you um you can’t make everything they do in the classroom you know um whizz bang and high powered exciting. So sometimes you have to do, you have to be rigorous ... young people it’s something like deferred gratification. They don’t want to do that. It has to be immediate the excitement and the buzz has to be now and they will, and I’ve heard um them say, “oh well that wasn’t a very good lesson” or you know, “you didn’t have a very good plenary” (laughter).

Olive age n/a: Science: 20+ years of classroom experience

Teachers' Voices on ...

(e) when I trained, which was seven years ago, the general ethos was that because your lessons would be so exciting you will have no behavioural issues and you don't really need to be trained in pastoral issues because your lessons are going to be so exciting ... then... you know when we landed in classrooms we had the shock of our lives because you can have the most exciting lesson in the world and it can still go completely wrong.

Rachel aged 30-40: MFL: 6 years of classroom experience

WHOLE-CLASS TEACHING

(a) you get to a certain stage with certain classes where you where you have such a good relationship with them and they trust you enough for you to be able to stand up in front of them and talk at them for 10 minutes and they will do exactly what you want them to but that is rare and that has only happened a couple of times to me with a couple of classes in my time here.

Samantha aged 30-40: English & Media Studies: 5 years of classroom experience

(b) I have seen a lot of teacher directed lessons which for a lot of or at least part of the lessons the students are sitting there in rows riveted ... well in the last school I was in was a Grammar school we did have lessons whole lessons like that but my expectations would be that if I was addressing the class there would be silence ... it is not feasible in all schools and not desirable because you have to build up the relationship with children in different ways in different schools.

Samuel aged 40-50: MFL: 18 years of classroom experience

(c) we have gone through a movement haven't we in education? Where I mean when I was educated it was talk and chalk you were silent ... then we moved through that and we went to talk and learning. Talk [as] something accepted in the classroom as a learning device, paired talk, group talk, silence. God knows what else. I think for a good lesson you need a balance. You need times where [there] are both don't you? You know I mean now, some of our students when there are exams, they find it very very difficult to actually sit in an exam because they are totally unprepared for individual working in silence.

Deborah aged 50-60: RE & Humanities: 20 years of classroom experience

(d) yes, in an ideal situation, I would love to stand there and fire away at the kids, but then you're going to lose 90% of your class.

Selena aged 40-50: English, Psychology: 20 years of classroom experience

(e) that image comes back from some 29 years of experience when we were at school. That's where our politicians are at. You know, we had to sit there in our rows and you never spoke to the teacher and sometimes you were in fear of it all. That's not our society as it is now; the children want to ask questions, want to be engaged and they're encouraged to do that, they're active learners.

Jill aged 50-60: Food Technology: 29 years of classroom experience

AUTHORITY OR NEGOTIATION

(a) when a teacher asks a question, in the past there was an expectation you made some kind of response. If it's true that our students don't know what the expectations are then we need to lay it out very explicitly, so that they do know. And then if they're not responding in the way that we set out, there are other issues there; it isn't because they don't know.

Andrea age n/a: English: 20 years of classroom experience

Teachers' Voices on ...

(b) I think teachers are sometimes afraid to show a passion for what they're teaching, and why is that? Is it not cool to be somebody that has got that level of knowledge and skills to be that authoritative person in the classroom?

Kirsten aged 50-60: Art: 29 years of classroom experience

(c) I don't think that we can have discipline um we can maintain discipline in schools any longer simply by us keeping you know laying down the law and you know keeping them under the thumb. I think it is consensual (murmurs of agreement) there is a negotiation that has to happen.

Olive age n/a: Science 20+: years of classroom experience

(d) this is a cliché that teachers go through again and again and again because they think they are there to teach. What they do not realise is they are [there] to negotiate a complex minefield of adult-teenage relationships. Naturally if you (laughter) walk into the classroom [and say] 'well we are going to negotiate relationships today' and give the lesson instead of saying 'you are going to learn world war two' then maybe it would be a bit more honest. Yes because actually teachers are spending at least half of their time negotiating relationships and not actually teaching content.

Sadie aged 40-50: English EAL & Drama: 26 years of classroom experience

(e) I think it [the relationship between adults and children] has become far less formal you know the idea that you know the adult is right and the students do what they are told has broken down in wide areas of society certainly in my little bit.

Caroline aged 40-50: EAL: 24 years of classroom experience

(f) [the relationship between] staff and students is so different than it was ten years ago the difference is that you can't get in their faces. I remember when I started teaching ... seventeen years ago and you got in that kid's face and that was accepted as the norm and you could not do that here and I'm so glad they would be they'd be quite entitled to go and complain about you. You would lose respect you would lose all- you know that would spread and you would be seen as this person and would stand out amongst this school as this as someone who tried to rule by fear and we cannot do that again.

Tom aged 40-50: MFL (Asst. Head): 17 years of classroom experience

(g) I've got kids who are disruptive, wouldn't let a lesson go on, I got them to stand up, to say to them, "this is my classroom, this is what you do in my lesson, this is what I expect of you and you should be doing it." And then I get rapped on the knuckle for doing that. So, I think it's the interference and the role that different levels of authority play.

Selena aged 40-50: English, Psychology: 20 years of classroom experience

(h) I went to visit a school in rural Norfolk some time ago and what struck me was actually the pupils that chose to disengage did so very silently and sullenly, and it just was a very stark contrast to our students, who are much more vocal in their... if they don't like something.

Andrea age n/a: English: 20 years of classroom experience

Teachers' Voices on ...

(i) at our school we are trying to establish these protocols and when you enter into the classroom you stand behind your chairs, you put your journals out, and ... you indicate to the teacher that you are ready to learn. And you need to put in these kinds of boundaries, you know, 'now it's time to stop the socialising and this is when we're going to learn'. You know, because ... you have to convey information at some point, and it can't be that kind of, you know, all students chipping in all the time, which is what you do tend to get a lot of, this chipping in comments all the time.

Jill aged 50-60: Food Technology: 29 years of classroom experience

(j) here, when parents send their children here in the first year, they have to sign a contract, so they have to say that they're going to support the school fully, and they read through the rules and they know what we expect. And if they don't support us, we do say, "I'm sorry, if you don't agree with what we're doing here, these are our basic rules, you have to look for another school." ... But I think most parents are supportive. I just think parents find it incredibly difficult to manage their children, they look to us for advice as to how to manage situations at home more. It's because schools have the rules, but parents don't always have the rules at home, do they? And if they do have a rule, they're not always as able to carry it through, as a school would be, as an institution.

Kirsten aged 50-60: Art: 29 years of classroom experience

(k) there's no point me being a teacher if all I'm going to do is just take soundings from the kids about what they do or don't want to do.

Muriel aged 50-60: Geography: 24 years of classroom experience

Teachers' Voices on ...

On changing the culture of schools

(a) the senior team wear a gown – which, at first, I was like, “oh, I really do not want to wear an academic gown every day at school, you know, the kids will laugh, and how ridiculous.” Now, I think it’s quite an important thing. The students are coming to worship, and are perfectly behaved, and they sing and they take part in the prayers. And that’s like a grounding thing, it’s like a real ceremony every day. And I think that’s important for our students, because their lives are pretty mad ... And I was thinking, “okay, the gown is a bit silly, but let’s try it.” But then they respect you, they know you’re part of that group. So, it’s all tradition and formality. And the head’s really strong on that, and all the students must have their top buttons up, they must have their tie with seven stripes. It’s a nightmare enforcing it. But now students automatically do all that ... I know a lot of the teachers thought it was absolutely ridiculous, the gown thing, and then visitors come in and, oh, it’s interesting, because not many inner city schools ... have your staff walking around in academic gowns, it’s stuff like private schools. But it’s part of the whole package of making [the] school, leading it to being an outstanding school and being formal and traditional.

Kirsten aged 50-60: Art: 29 years of classroom experience

(b) I think that a combination of embracing digital culture and having a more cross-curricula approach, would be the kind of things that I think schools should think about.

Victoria aged 50-60: English, Sociology: 24 years of classroom experience

(c) Democratic Education – The strongest arguments, fully explored [should] determine one’s course of action. This might entail challenges to [schools’] notions of hierarchy. Decisions about what should happen in schools [should not be] taken simply by senior leaders. Children [should be] involved and taught how to decide, reflect etc. from an early age.

Kirk aged 30-40: English, Media Studies: 13 years of classroom experience

(d) our year 11s have been asked to wear suits to be more business-like. The prefects are actually walking round in gowns in our school, so looking very – well, we called it Harry Potter at first.

Jill aged 50-60: Food Technology: 29 years of classroom experience

(e) some places have gone down the learning to learn route, and it’s all generic stuff and it hasn’t been based on any kind of content, so it’s been sort of meaningless and fragmented for kids.

Muriel aged 50-60: Geography: 24 years of classroom experience

(f) classrooms [are] old-fashioned, I think they’re so difficult to manage now. I like the idea of freeing up students, having a less structured day, and ... I read an article the other day, I can’t remember what model it was, but students [are] going to school and choosing what they’re doing for the day, picking subjects that they like and developing their own individual learning throughout the day. I think we’ve got to be a bit more flexible. I like the idea of team teaching, across [the] curriculum.

Kirsten aged 50-60: Art: 29 years of classroom experience

(g) is the classroom the best place to learn? ... [school could be] Open University style where the teacher is a mentor and schools are places to meet for tutorials/mentoring.

Jill aged 50-60: Food Technology: 29 years of classroom experience

(h) we need to shift the balance of talk from teachers to students so the ratio is more like 70:30 student to teacher.

Andrea aged n/a: English: 20 years of classroom experience

Teachers' Voices on ...

(i) we are preparing young people for a digital world, but seem to be fighting to keep it out of schools unless it can be controlled.

Jessie (age n/a: Drama, English Media Studies: 15 years of classroom experience)

Notes for Facilitators – Teachers’ Voices on ...

Teachers’ voices on ... – Notes for Facilitators

Nearly all the quotations from teachers in this section are taken from audio recordings made at the many seminar sessions we held to trial the classroom and other materials which appear in this book. A few came from additional audio-recorded individual interviews with a small number of the seminar participants. One or two came from additional written comments submitted by seminar participants.

You will have noticed that some of the quotations of teachers’ voices appear in the main body of the text within the material on the classroom episodes i.e. Teachers’ comments on: ‘Relevance’ (Episode B, page 26); ‘a culture of informality’ (Episode C, page 41); ‘digital culture in the classroom’ (Episode D, page 53); ‘students as consumers with rights?’ (Episode D, page 60).

You could use additional quotations from this section to supplement the earlier material on a given theme.

Alternatively, you could use this whole section as the basis of a series of discussion sessions. Each themed area contains enough direct quotations from teachers to stimulate a full session of debate.

Ideally, debate around these statements might provide the grounds on which proposals for practical responses within their school might well be developed by participating teachers.

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Further reading – Bibliography

Further reading

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The aim of this book is to generate honest, informed debate about the complexities and realities of urban secondary comprehensive school culture. The book does not pretend to propose answers to issues which are not susceptible to easy solutions. However, it is driven by a confidence that experienced teachers, through collective analysis and discussion, are capable of developing workable responses to rapid cultural change in classrooms and wider society.

Contemporary classrooms are a major focus of public debate, and have been subject to intense central government regulation in England since 1988. In recent times Government has sought to direct both curriculum and pedagogy, supporting this with an extensive programme of assessment and inspection, linked to an ideal of teaching in which the teacher has a monopoly of knowledge in class; and acts as the centre and arbiter of acceptable modes of communication. Within this scenario, perceived failings of urban comprehensive secondary schools have been routinely attributed, by politicians and media outlets, to bad teaching and bad teachers. However, surprisingly little of this popular opinion has been based on any kind of systematic analysis and description of what urban secondary school classroom life is actually like, based on naturally occurring data. In addition, little account has been taken of the effects of some of the changes stimulated by the new globalization including the ubiquity of digital culture and digital devices, the virtually universal dominance of popular culture and the increase in population mobility and ethnic plurality.

The original research, upon which this book was based, was carried out by a team based at King's College London (Ben Rampton, Roxy Harris, Alexandra Georgakopoulou, Constant Leung, Caroline Dover and Lauren Small) with the support of funding from the Economic and Social Research Council (ESRC). The research project entitled 'Urban Classroom Culture & Interaction' (2005-2008) (RES-148-25-0042), was one of 25 national projects in the ESRC's *Identities & Social Action* Research Programme <www.identities.org.uk>.

