Classroom behaviour: perspectives on learning over 30 years in the Education and Training sector.

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Abstract

This abstract provides a brief synopsis of my submission for a doctorate by retrospective practice. The issues that have been central to my practice over the last thirty years have involved supporting student, trainee and teacher learning in a variety of Education and Training Sector (ETS) institutional contexts. The central issue associated with much of the material posited within these documents is that of learning taking place or not in many different circumstances within the ETS. My interventions into the discourse within this sector have been through a wide variety of vehicles, such as newspaper and academic articles, peer-reviewed research-based studies, a peer-reviewed book, moderated assessment and inter alia student-based research and its impact on ETS classrooms.

My approaches have been critical responses to a wide range of teaching and learning situations, mostly qualitative research impacting on individuals, classes, institutions and the sector at large. The overall findings could be said to demonstrate a complex understanding of many teaching and learning situations where learning is embraced and/or rejected in many ETS contexts. Recommendations are multifarious and embedded into the texts of my book, articles and my own and student research, generally showing ways in which learning can be supported in many different ETS contexts. However, three specific strategies for dealing with violence in the sector are recommended at the end of this commentary.
This doctorate by practice offers a retrospective ascription of interventions regarding learning, suggesting changes and insights as evidenced in my portfolio and this critical commentary.
1. Introductory overview

I have worked teaching, managing and assessing Further and Higher Education Courses since 1976 in many different contexts, institutions, colleges, universities and disciplines. My practice is as a teacher educator. Although I only started working formally in this role in 2008, my published work prior to this date here discussed was all concerned with intervening in teaching and learning in the ETS. This doctorate by practice offers a retrospective ascription, showing evidence of a series of interventions mostly through publication on several issues regarding learning, suggesting changes, development or insights as evidenced in my portfolio and this critical commentary.

The commentary builds a trajectory towards the production of my book (2017) where I have evolved a matrix of perspectives for exploring issues of classroom behaviour from the point of view of different stakeholders. It also includes a prospective module in classroom behaviour for teacher trainees on all Cert Ed and PGCE courses particularly in the Education and Training sector where most of my experience has been located.

In the first part of this critical commentary I start by explaining how I wrote a range of pieces (1993-2011) in response to issues of practice as a teacher, assessor and manager. The second part focuses on six peer-reviewed articles, a report and some dialogues all focussed on classroom behaviour, which I wrote in role as a teachers’ trainer and researcher (2013-2015). The third part centrally explores the strengths and weaknesses of my practice as demonstrated in my book published with Macmillan (2017) and a recent
chapter published by Bloomsbury (2019). The fourth part focuses on the module I developed on behaviour management firstly with Teesside and then with the Open University, but also includes trainee responses to issues that developed in their own contexts. I include the specifications, trainee case studies, trainee feedback, assessment documents and relevant letters, showing how my practice has impacted on others in the college and beyond. This section demonstrates the impact of developing trainees as researchers working out solutions to practice problems in their contexts through their assignments, but also evidences the readership and the considerable impact of my work at national level.

2.1. The title

I call this commentary ‘Classroom behaviour: perspectives on learning in the Education and Training sector.’ This is because the central series of texts, the commentary and the practice on which they are all based, including the module invented and the trainee work assessed and their research, plus the impact of their strategies have all been in the sphere of what could be called classroom behaviour (Doyle, 1977). However, I can also evidence my engagement in trying to modify practice through making suggestions for changing teachers’ perceptions and understanding on a range of issues concerning learning, often comparing what has been said in documents, texts and theory with the practice contexts within which I worked (Biesta, 2010). This context has been thoroughly described in Curzon and Tummons (2013), Avis, Fisher and Thompson (2015, 2018) and, for example, in Simmons (2009). Nevertheless, the commentary’s title reflects part of the title of my book, which is the central document of this commentary, but also offers a
range of critical perspectives on issues of practice and learning in classrooms within the ETS. The coherence of the accompanying portfolio is concerned with my interventions, often at national level, on issues of learning in the ETS.

2.2. Directions for reading

There are a substantial number of documents in this portfolio and these are mostly ordered in terms of dates and themes. However, in terms of reading sequence, I would suggest that you read:

1. This commentary

2. Articles from the TES and Guardian = E3- E13

3. Book published by Macmillan = E32

4. Letters of support, particularly by Prof. Roy Fisher, Dr. David Powell, Dr. Denise Robinson and Prof. Jennifer Rowley (E47)

5. My CV = E50

6. Timeline = E51

After reading these documents, then I would suggest you read any of the publications or supporting documents in an order that is convenient for you or you feel is appropriate.
2.3. Meeting the regulations

In this section I will briefly outline how I have met the University of Bolton Regulations for a PhD by Retrospective Practice Route A.

1. There is a substantial body of work in this portfolio, evidencing involvement in various projects, focussing on teaching and learning in the ETS which develop and introduce innovative, professional and creative practice.

2. There is a critical commentary of “at least 10,000 words” (University of Bolton, 2017, p4); in fact this commentary is 30,000 + words.

3. This commentary contextualises, analyses and discusses this portfolio, showing how it can be considered as a series of original, independent contributions or interventions into current practice and knowledge.

4. I have submitted an application for registration to the Board of Studies for Research Degrees on Form R1 (PW) which included agreement to follow University of Bolton ethical practice already embedded via BERA (2018) and this has been accepted.

5. I have included some collaborative work which demonstrates my ability to work with other researchers/tutors and become involved in public discussions, influencing individuals’ practice and the institutions where they were situated. In most cases the collaboration was a dialogue where the speech of each person is explicit in most texts. I have, nevertheless, included signed letters from collaborators where they explain their involvement in each piece (E47).

6. A literature review is included in my book (E32), but a range of relevant literature is alluded to in the body of this commentary.
7. In the commentary there is an argument for A) coherence; it is concerned with interventions into learning in the ETS. B) Originality; there are a series of creative ideas and arguments published in many different contexts, impacting on my own, others’ and institutional practice. C) The synthesis works through bringing together many perspectives on learning in a wide variety of contexts. D) Independent nature of this work. The work has been carried out with a minimum of supervision.

8. Dates and locations of specific pieces of research/publication are covered in the contents of the portfolio (pp. 4-9), but also in the Timeline (E51) and the bibliography at the end.

9. I have demonstrated the production of systematic research, research methods and independent critical powers, making a distinctive contribution to knowledge particularly through my book (E.32) and its focus on extreme negative behaviour in classrooms.

10. I have carried out original research and applied advanced scholarship which has been subject to the scrutiny of peer review (E17, E19-E24, E32, E34, E37).

11. I have made informed judgements on complex issues in the specialist field of teaching and learning and have consistently communicated my ideas to specialist (E19- E24) and non-specialist (E3-E13) audiences (University of Bolton, 2017, p.12).

12. My work has been at the forefront of academic knowledge (University of Bolton, ibid.), having been consistently published at national level from 1993-2019. (E3-E37), but also I have been viewed as a major voice in terms of my research and significantly adding to the debate on behaviour management in the ETS (Powell, 2019, see E49).
3. But what is learning?

The above and subsequent discussions assume that there is an agreed view of what ‘learning’ is, so we can easily determine the scope of this commentary. Learning, however, is a highly contended notion often ideologically constructed in terms of *inter alia* Behaviourist (Skinner, 1954), Cognitivist (Piaget, 1951; Bloom et al, 1956), Constructivist (Vygotsky, 1978), and Humanist (Rogers, 1961; Maslow, 1987), discovery, (Wells, 2001) deep, surface, rote or acculturated processes (Curzon, 2013). It is claimed that it can be determined by learning styles (Honey, Mumford, 2000) and VARK (Fleming, Baume, 2006) but these perceptions have been devastatingly undermined by Coffield et al (2004), but also by Nixon, Gregson and Spedding (2007). Teacher educators are charged with ensuring that trainees understand and apply learning theories, but this can be a complex process (Noel, 2011). Learning could also be understood as ‘change’ (Coffield, 2008).

For the purposes of this commentary, I use the OED definition of learning as ‘The acquisition of knowledge or skills through study, experience, or being taught.’ Nevertheless, I am aware that the term ‘learning’ is highly loaded in relation to its history, visibility (Hattie, 2012) interpretation and ideological weighting and discuss different definitions of learning and their implications based on Dewey (1938), Illeris (2007) and Coffield (2008, 2009) in my book (2017, pp. 4-6). I offer perspectives on issues of learning often by suggesting practice in different contexts, but in many instances I argue a case, sometimes based on qualitative research, observation or textual criticism, but
also sometimes try to solve problems of learning being observed in practice. If there is a central problem to be solved at the centre of this commentary, it is how best can learning be facilitated? My answers to this issue expand over many years in different contexts. Yet again the word ‘solution’ is ideologically situated, possibly now associated with one particular therapeutic method (Iveson et al., 2012).

4. Methodology

My methodological approach in this commentary tends to explore arguments and strategies over an extensive time period where I respond to a range of practice situations in education and differently evolving learning environments (Bransford, Brown, Cocking, 1999). This flexible, emotional and psychological responsiveness is an outlook I have encouraged in students and in this commentary use as a methodology for critiquing practice in terms of theory and theory in terms of practice. However, the ‘habitus’ of practice is always part of a complex relationship of my own privileged position as commentator, researcher and observer (Bourdieu, 1977) being part of and yet separate from the ‘field’ of study. The notion of practice, like learning, is contended and can imply the Aristotelian idea (384–322 BC) of praxis as opposed to theory and production. It is also the more radical notion promoted by Freire (1972) as part of a challenge or transformation of the status quo. It can be understood in the more neutral sense of what could be described as regular, repeated work (Carr, Kemmis 1986; Mezirow, 2000). As a doctorate by practice the implication is that I demonstrate my ability to affect other individuals, institutions and the sector at large. In this commentary I offer all these approaches at different points. Thus, for example, I influence individuals’
practice through dialogues, trainee work and explicit modelling in class (see Joe Wearing letter in E47). I impact on institutions, such as Dewsbury College, BSAD and Leeds City College through publishing substantial amounts with the TES, Guardian and later peer-reviewed articles at national level, thus substantially upgrading the status of the FE institution where I worked and unusually producing an extensive research environment for HE in FE where, at the time, none of my colleagues had published anything (Jones, 2006). The range of my impact on others becomes more explicit through subsequent pieces of evidence.

My perspectives over the years evolve and part of the method of this commentary is to self-critique both my current and earlier views. This commentary offers an evolving criticality, referring to a range of writers through which to subject my work to scrutiny (eds. Darder, Torres, Baltodano, 2017). Although the school of philosophy known as critical pedagogy refers to a range of subjects, perspectives or key concepts, such as the social construction of knowledge, class, equality, cultural reproduction and hegemony, amongst others (McLaren, 1989), I do not align myself with radical, political action as associated with some key figures of that movement (Darder et al., ibid.). I do, however, believe in the transformational power of education.

In my published research pieces I tend to use qualitative and occasionally action research as opposed generally to a quantitative methodology (Cohen, Manion, Morrison, 2011). My methods, as opposed to methodology, in peer-reviewed pieces typically involved interviews, surveys, focus groups and
observations (Denscombe, 2010) and continually intervene in public discourse on topics of where learning is taking place or not.

The question that arises with respect to my methodology is whether I am going to be so critical of myself that even the most basic assumptions about describing or analysing classroom events will not be accepted. Will there be a satisfactory way of scrutinising or offering discourse analysis of what happens in classrooms without a specific ideology or positionality implicit in each word or phrase utilised (Fairclough, 2003)? In my view, all one can do is be aware or be critically self-reflective of the weighting of words in commenting on teachers or students and their environments (Brookfield, 1995).

The next question is whether I should have used a more abstract, theoretical frame or possibly grand or meta-narrative (Lyotard, 1984) in order to explain the phenomenon of classroom activity, interactivity or events that take place in the ‘learning environment.’ Is there one accepted language that should be used to describe, explain or analyse classrooms? My methodology in this commentary does not attempt to posit one ideological position or style of language, but rather takes a critical view, usually pointing out the limitations or problematics of what I have said previously about practice. I generally critique my own work, explaining its context, inadequacies or subsequent developments where possible.

Although there is a fairly extensive bibliography at the end of this piece, there is a much longer bibliography at the end of my book, but also many references in the various peer-reviewed articles I have written. A literature review of writing on classroom behaviour theorists is in Chapter 2 of my book
(2017), some literature on learning is outlined above, whilst criticality is embedded into much of this text, it is not necessarily associated with critical pedagogy, aspects of which are utilised to debate statements made throughout this document. I am nevertheless, confident that my work has impacted on practice in the ETS in a number of ways.

My contribution to knowledge could be understood in terms of the criteria for impact as explained by Reed (2018) who has a range of categories of potential impacts in carrying out research, four of which are relevant to this commentary. Namely:

a. Changes in understanding, awareness and attitudes

b. Improvements in education

c. Capacity for preparedness.

d. Impact on behaviour beliefs and practices.

My contribution to knowledge could be summarised as follows:

1. I have published a large number of articles, changing and developing attitudes on issues of teaching and assessing language, literature and art. These articles were part of the process of changing exams, specifications and teaching concerns. All these pieces offer changes in understanding, improvements in education and impact on beliefs and practice of teachers within these areas as will be subsequently shown.

2. Every article for the TES and Guardian is arguing for change on a range of subjects. Each piece explores new ways of approaching elements particularly of the level 2 and 3 curriculum.

3. I have impacted on what has been published in the JFHE through regularly peer-reviewing articles. I have recommended many changes of understanding and attitudes over the last 4 years (See letter from Prof Rowley, E47).
4. My discourse on behaviour management has entered national discussions through exploring disputes and not assuming that one approach, strategy or view is correct. This is a normative academic approach, but behaviour management in the ETS has not been subject to this systematic perspective previously.

5. My book argues for preparing trainees for challenging classrooms (Reed’s ‘preparedness’), but argues this in terms of a range of academic research methods, wider discussion, but also putting stakeholders, other writers and theorists as a part of a national debate.

6. I have created a module to prepare trainees for facing challenging classes through case studies, which is normative in some other modules on this topic at other institutions (e.g. The University of Bolton). One of my innovations has been assessing trainees through them preparing digital presentations (E38) on issues of behaviour. In other words trainees are being prepared to be teachers as well as academics on this module.

7. It could be argued that my six peer-reviewed pieces and my book on behaviour management are now understood as a major contribution to the debates on this topic by Powell who shows that I am a major voice on behaviour management in the ETS (E49).

8. My book is the first full academic book on behaviour management in the ETS offering a substantial bibliography of over 300 texts, range of perspectives, research methods and methodologies and extended academic discourse.
5. More detail: The four parts

This document is divided into four parts. The first outlines a series of articles and pieces which I wrote mostly while working at what was then called Dewsbury College (now called Kirklees College), West Yorkshire (1986-2007). During this period I was a lecturer in English language and literature at GCSE, A level and degree level. I worked as an ESOL outreach teacher in the Muslim communities. I was a Public Relations officer, editor of a range of publications for the college, including Staff and Student News, co-ordinator of degree programmes, such as the BA Humanities validated by what was then called Leeds Metropolitan University (now Leeds Beckett) and Combined Studies degree with the University of Huddersfield. I was also a senior tutor at Batley School of Art and Design, which was then part of Dewsbury College (2002-2007). During this period my articles were public interventions into practice, rather than formally academic pieces. They were challenges to transform the way that practitioners worked. All these pieces involve critiquing issues of practice in teaching language, literature and art within a variety of ETS contexts and at different levels. This section is the context of experience of learning which later feeds into my practice in preparing and transforming teachers so as to be able to deal with students resisting or not resisting learning. These interventions could be understood as offering ways in many different contexts of overcoming barriers so that, from a Humanist perspective, learning could take place (Rogers, 1961; Maslow, 1987).

The second part outlines six peer-reviewed research articles which I undertook as a teachers' trainer. I was beginning to evolve into teacher as researcher (Stenhouse, 1975). At this point through speaking to many
teachers, reflecting back on my own experience at Dewsbury College and also through being an external examiner and quality reviewer with the Open College Network/CERTA (2007-2012), I began to believe that the issue of students not learning was more concerning than any of the public discussions in which I had previously been involved. This became the key focus of my practice. I was beginning to speak to teachers who said that their training had been irrelevant to their teaching job in terms of being able to control difficult or challenging classes and subsequently I began to offer responses or solutions (Lebor, 2017). I describe the conflicts between teachers and learners that seemed to be taking place in many contexts, discussing what was happening in classrooms rather than the theoretical version of what was supposed to happen. Five of these pieces were published in the *Journal for Lifelong Learning* with the University of Huddersfield and one with the *JFHE*. During this period, I became involved in several published dialogues about disruptive behaviour and wrote other brief collaborative articles, which are also placed within this period.

The central transformative document in this commentary, in my view, is my book which was published by Macmillan in 2017. It pulls together previous, peer-reviewed research, my notes on many incidents from earlier periods, arguments but also some research carried out in the context of the Consortium of The University of Huddersfield into attitudes of teacher educators and trainees in terms of their experiences and strategies for dealing with disruptive students. This book coupled with a chapter critiquing the language of ‘behaviour management’ in a book edited by Prof D. Robinson for Bloomsbury (2019) makes the case formally for introducing a mandatory
module on classroom behaviour for the ETS and thus impacting more on the whole sector.

The fourth part contains a series of documents outlining the specification of a module which I wrote devoted to classroom behaviour in the ETS, trainee case studies, assessment, feedback, trainee responses to this module and also documents concerning ethics, permissions and letters demonstrating that this work conforms to BERA requirements are included here (2018).

6. Proving impact

Proving impact is always problematic because it is difficult to prove that one phenomenon caused or had an effect on someone or something (Gregson, Nixon, 2009). However, if the characteristics of a doctorate involve publication, peer review and in the case of a doctorate by practice, wider impact, then it could be argued that the exhibits shown here fulfil these criteria (QAA, 2015). Proof of my impact on practice has been in the sheer number of words published, their national and international contexts, the amount of readership of these pieces and the very specific impact on trainees changing behaviour in classrooms due to the module ABMET and later PDBW which I invented and delivered.

**Part one** = Published interventions on teaching, learning and assessment 1993-2013: Over 10,000 words published in newspapers and journals mostly at national level.

**Part two** = Academic research, 2013-2016. 6 peer-reviewed articles = over 30,000 words published, plus dialogues, offering several perspectives on
learning, teaching and disruptive behaviour, a report, plus short articles on behaviour management.

**Part three** = 1 book = 77,000 words (the 6 peer reviewed articles above are modified into this context). The book was also peer-reviewed at Macmillan. 1 chapter = 5,500 words peer-reviewed and published with Bloomsbury (2019).

Impact = publication at national and international level.

**Part four** =

a) The book’s argument impacts on creating the module on behaviour management: five trainees are exemplified out of 50 trainees who took this module during its first years.

b) The module impacts on the students’ placement or work contexts, via their case studies, dealing with practical classroom problems and their solutions, but also subsequent impact on teaching at Leeds City College.

Further evidence of impact is as follows:

There have been thousands of downloads of these articles and chapters. I have received over £2300 in April 2018 from ALCS because of copies made of my publications (E54), which translates into 230,000 pages of my work photo-copied. A further statement from ALCS in 2019 of £350 meant that at least 35,000 pages of my articles were copied this year. Chapters from my book have been downloaded at least 4600 times. This success has meant that Macmillan have now agreed to bring out my book in paperback (See E47, letters). There are 8 citations of my work mentioned on Research Gate (see E47), 850 downloads of my article for JFHE, plus regular downloads of all my articles for The Huddersfield Journal for Lifelong Learning, whilst millions of
people read the TES and Guardian every month where my articles are still preserved on their websites.

A powerful piece of evidence for the impact of my work is that my name is mentioned over 15 times in the chapter by Powell (2019) evidencing myself as a major voice or figure in the discourse on behaviour management in the ETS (see E49). Further impact is the letter written by my colleague, Joe Wearing about the influence of my practice on him in terms of teaching, publication and my internal moderation of his work (letter E47), but also the letter by Dr. Elizabeth Newton, my line manager who evidences my impact on trainees, the department and the wider college (E47).

The other major evidence of impact is that over 100 trainees on the Leeds City College PGCE course have researched their own environments (Stenhouse, ibid.) and used strategies through the ABMET module to change practice in their classrooms, whilst this in turn has had a major impact on teaching within Leeds City College (E39-E43).

If a doctorate is determined by breaking the boundaries of new knowledge, it could be said that many of the published articles included are pushing the current understanding of ideas, offering interventions that change perspectives on a variety of issues in the context of assessing, teaching and learning of literature (e.g. Shakespeare, Plath), language and art. I was very early and original in the way I critiqued ‘best practice’ (E11, E18) contributing to new understandings of this term at the time and ultimately was part of the process of changing practice in this respect. In a more formal sense, the originality or newness of what I am saying is in the sphere of looking at cases where learning does not take place and being concerned with the views of stakeholders, not normally approached for their views on class management,
such as managers and teacher educators. I see my work as an ongoing critique of practice which culminates in the design of a module on classroom behaviour in the ETS for researching and finding solutions to practice problems which in turn have changed practice within the institution where I work (see letter of Dr. Elizabeth Newton, E47). The fact of publishing so extensively whilst working as lecturer of HE in FE has meant that the institutions where I have been based have been transformed in terms of their standing as places where degree level work was delivered. I have thus impacted on the credibility for delivering degrees at Dewsbury College, BSAD and Leeds City College, University Centre.

7. Other definitions of doctoral work

If this was a doctorate based round different genres of maybe creative writing artefacts, then it could be said that there are many different genre forms present in this portfolio. There is a book review (E3), literary criticism (E5, E6, E9), art criticism (E10, E11), an editorial opinion piece (E8), satire (E13), dialogue/drama (E2, E15, E26, E27, E28) Feedback (E39-E43), a journalistic article (E12), academic book (E32), letter (E14), essays (E15, E17) and formal research (E19-E24), much of which was published at national level. However, the coherence or common theme of all these pieces is that they are a critique of current practice within the sphere of teaching and learning in the ETS.

It could be argued that I should delete Part four and submit this work as a retrospective doctorate of publications, but then I could not demonstrate directly how the ABMET/PDBW module had impacted on trainees and how they in turn were trying to resolve practice problems in their own contexts.
Alternatively, it could be argued that I should delete Part one and submit a doctorate as purely concerned with issues of training teachers to cope with behaviour management problems, but then this document would lack the nuance of a wider context of understanding my perspective on learning issues and debates within which problems of students resisting learning operates.

8. Criticality is central

My overall view is that this commentary is a dynamic piece of work that shifts in positioning arguments and understandings of learning and praxis (Freire, 1972; Darder ibid., p13) in a variety of contexts over three decades. Criticality is central. The process of this document will work as a commentary, explicitly using critical insights on earlier texts, their meaning or significance at the time in terms of learning. There will also be critical self-reflection throughout, exploring and analysing statements and texts, opening up previous assumptions to scrutiny (Brookfield, 1995; Boud, Walker, 1998; Moon, 1999). The commentary will number from E1 to E51 as a selection of mostly my published and other relevant documents, critically analysing what was said in terms of the overall argument for creating conditions so that learning could or did not take place.
9. Part one: Public interventions into practice

Although my earliest publication on the subject of disruptive student behaviour was in 2000, I was also writing on topics of teaching learning and assessment, such as a critique of exam overload (Lebor, 2001) and teaching literature around that date (Dewsbury College, 1987-2007). The point of including these articles is to set a context of arguing ways in which delivering and assessing English language, literature and art and design might be transformed. I have included a range of articles on these topics in this section to demonstrate my views and understanding of issues outside the main thrust of my later work which has mostly focussed on the issue of students resisting being educated and ways in which that might be countered. My previous concern as to when learning was taking place through teaching and assessment could now be understood in terms of when it was not taking place through classroom resistance (Darder et. al., pp12-13). This theme is present even in the earliest documents in the portfolio. My interventions in this first part are primarily focussed on the norms of learning within a Further and Higher Education context.
9.1. Part one

Public interventions into practice

Exhibits 1 to 18

Section 1 The context

Breaking through into print at national level in the 1990s was an exciting event (Exhibits 3-18), but really at the time I was passionate about the education of particularly ESOL students who came from deprived backgrounds and were struggling against racism, poverty and very low levels of education (Kirklees Gov. Accessed 2018). During this period I was working at Dewsbury College (1987-2002), editing Staff News and teaching ESOL, GCSE, A level English and art and design degrees (See E50). These pieces were comments on practice in a deeply challenging environment. I was often trying to critically scrutinise published literature and exam board documents in order to transform practice in terms of the problems faced by Further Education/second chance students.

I have begun, however, by including two pieces representing my eight years as the editor of Staff News. During this period, I wrote and edited nearly 200 editions of various papers for an audience sometimes of 500 members of staff, but occasionally 10,000+ local residents and/or students. The two pieces in the portfolio have their own historical significance and set a useful context for subsequent debates and issues. I ran a column jokingly called ‘No comment’ and asked different managers and politicians to write about their reactions to educational policy. This piece by ex-Prime Minister, Lord Callaghan is fascinating because:
1. He had initiated a national concern for the vocational sector in his famous Ruskin speech (1976).

2. It is significant that he is arguing in reaction to Thatcherism and the then new monetised version of incorporated colleges, about to be taken out of Local Education Authority control in 1992/93.

He still believed in the power of the unions to resist such changes. Although Callaghan produced this piece in response to a letter from the then principal of the college, Laurence Toye, the fact that the ex-prime minister felt Dewsbury College Staff News was a sufficiently significant vehicle to carry his views established this publication as having a national dimension. It could be argued that this piece summarises and sets the scene for a changing culture where money becomes the driving force in education within this sector.

Commodification of education becomes more explicitly embedded into society (Coffield, 2014). As editor of Staff News, I am opening national level discourses into the local institution where I work, impacting on tutors’ understanding of national educational issues at Dewsbury College.

The fascinating aspect of E2 is that I am able to question publicly the new principal of the college, Vince Hall who had written a key book on Further Education (1990) and had been on the national executive of the union NATFHE. He had been an avowed member of the Socialist Workers’ Party (SWP), but now in this interview was embracing the new capitalism of incorporation and commodification of learning (Aronowitz, 2004). It is the first step in my ongoing dialogue with power (Freire, ibid.), questioning how teaching and learning could successfully take place within the changing
contexts of incorporated colleges. My change in practice was my ability to question publicly the views of a college principal.

9.2. Intervening via The Times Educational Supplement

Part 1 Section 2

My first piece at national level ‘Family matters’ (E3) for the TES critiques the ‘Euro-Saxon’ and wealth assumptions of a text book for teaching English language. The reason I subject the ideology behind a supposedly simple English grammar text book to scrutiny was because on a daily basis I was teaching English to students (Dewsbury College, 1987-2007) from Black, Asian, and Minority Ethnic (BAME) backgrounds, steeped in poverty (Gregson, Nixon, Spedding, 2011; Richardson, 2009). My questions are really focussed on the authors’ lack of understanding of inclusivity (Lebor, 1993). I am critiquing embedded racism and transforming attitudes and practice in EFL teaching.

With ‘the Language of Confusion’ (E4) I critique the contradictions of how the current GCSE English Language syllabus demanded correct prose writing, yet ironically put forward as literature works on the syllabus that would not meet the written English GCSE exam criteria (Lebor, 1999). The argument I make shows the problematic conflicts between values enhancing inclusion through using patois, slang or colloquialisms of ‘multi-cultural poetry’ and the development of students’ correct grammar, spelling, syntax and the norms of English prose usage. I question the difficulties of practice for students who were supposed to be included by putting literary work that represented their dialect on the English syllabus. By arguing about the problematic nature of
including this poetry, I seem to be siding with a more traditionalist, non-inclusive ideology, yet I am doing so in the context of teaching BAME students who were trying to develop their English language skills in order to achieve employment and higher education in the UK. Practice was in conflict with my ideological position of trying to embed inclusive education (Bourdieu, Passeron, 1990). My perspective critiqued English Language exams, challenged current practice and was part of changes to GCSE syllabuses. It could be argued, nevertheless, that I was utilising Freire’s suggestion that the oppressed need to learn the language of oppressor in order to have a voice (1972).

Later in ‘Writers’ block’ (E7) I take the opposite perspective over issues of creative writing. Here I adjust arguments on ‘correct’ prose by questioning whether creative writing can be assessed as worse or better if elements of colloquial or non-standard English are part of the student’s creative production. I also question the balance of creative writing compared to critical writing in the current Language A level exam syllabus. The context of practice for this article was my role as an A level English language teacher, supporting students in producing creative pieces, whilst also developing critical/theoretical thinking. It was as if creativity or practice as a writer could not be sufficiently substantive without theoretical underpinning. My point here was that many creative works, such as Joyce’s *Ulysses* would fail the A level criteria by breaking normative language conventions of grammar and syntax, yet is acknowledged as a universal classic. Some students excelled at being creative, potential novelists, others at being critical. Few could combine both skills.
A further concern was the impact of teaching specific literary texts that seemed to refer directly to individuals who happened to be in the class (E5) and how different works could be understood and taught through A level criteria (E6, E9). The question was whether the A level criteria was a prism for affecting the interpretation and meaning of texts. Teaching Shakespeare to a wide spectrum of students from different ethnicities and cultures impacted on their understanding and engagement with plays (Lebor, 2000b). Classes were affected by my teaching Lear to a class where one student was blind and Othello to another group where one student was black. I self-reflected on a range of uncomfortable situations that arose whilst teaching particular Shakespeare plays and the effect of these texts’ impact and relationship on the class and teacher in these instances. Teaching was student-centred (Hamilton, Hillier, 2006). There was also a connection here with the alienation of students disenfranchised from the education system that is central to my practice and work. My view has not changed in that I still believe teachers need to be sensitive to the feelings, awkwardness and the problematic nature of texts and how these are read by students and replicated as complexity in their assessments. Relationships, empathy and compassion must be central to teaching (Bennett, 2012).

The question then became centred on how criteria can be applied to different literary texts. Does the interpretation of texts change because understood through specific exam criteria? In ‘Biographical floodgates’ I focussed on Plath (E6) whose work I had taught at degree and A level, but here questioned how exam criteria constructed readings of her poetry. Previously, biographical material had been considered irrelevant to readings of literary texts (Barthes,
1967). Were the students’ understandings disrupted through the criteria, text or teaching? The A level exam criteria here took on a specific ideological stance that assumed biographical material was crucial to understanding Plath’s work. However, the complexity of this issue becomes crucial in Plath’s mythical construction of herself as a Holocaust survivor. Plath was not Jewish nor in the Holocaust, yet imagined her German father as a camp commander when in fact he was a university lecturer in America. The literary processes of reading and criticism form a tension with the assessment criteria of exploring biography. Teaching A Level students to discuss the complex relationship between texts and authors was a key to practice in my sessions. Female students often felt validated by Plath’s anger. Male students felt excluded. The key to teaching groups with such diverse dispositions was to take on a highly critical view, thus encouraging extensive discussion that could be transformed into complex critical responses to texts in students’ exams. Exploring students’ reactions to difficult texts through the fulcrum of the assessment criteria forced even more mediocre students to achieve more complex understandings and thus higher grades. My concern was with improving the second-chance learning culture of Further Education students (Biesta, James, 2007).

My short piece ‘The Whigs are off’ explaining Augustan poetry to students who felt deeply alienated from 18th Century literature has many resonances for my career and work (E9). In fact this slight piece is a published reflection of an area where I had considerable knowledge, having written a 70,000 word Mphil dissertation on Swift’s political poetry in 1983. I am here trying to make Augustan complexities understandable, firstly to my own students at
Dewsbury College and then explain an approach that might cross the boundaries of culture and time to make this work relevant to contemporary A level students across the country via their teachers, suggesting ways of overcoming linguistic and cultural barriers to learning. Here I am trying to support students who have no connection with the elite, exclusive Augustan language of the 18th Century, by offering connections to modern approaches and perspectives on these supposedly outdated, arcane texts. The link to my later work is simplifying complexity and communicating what could draw in students who might feel alienated or disengaged from these texts. All these works critiquing exams were interventions within the sector, offering change and modifications to teacher practice in their class teaching of texts.

Pivotal in understanding the links and access from school/college to university is the assessment process of A levels. I made an intervention on this topic, ‘Overload of exams must go’ offering a critical stance on, in my view, the over-assessment of students via what was called Curriculum 2000 (E8). In critical pedagogy, there is a view that there is exam overload. This is perceived as one of the features of relentless capitalism (Anyon, 1980) differentiating through assessment in the schooling system managers and employers who control the means of production from workers who service that system, but here I am merely trying to modify the potentially inhumane exam system and its potentially alienating effect on many students and begin to offer alternatives (Swaffield, 2011). The suggestions I then offered could be critiqued in terms of a system which embeds a market led view of assessment (Anyon, ibid.). The AS level exam and coursework elements have both now virtually disappeared for university entrance. The end-exams of legacy A
levels from pre-2000 have been resurrected, but my suggestion of giving AS level the distinctive characteristic of being research/coursework-based in preparation for university-style assessment and vocational contexts was not embraced or understood. Again, my views were aimed at attempting to persuade educational authorities to modify systems in order to help learning and progress to take place, giving students training in research methods, more appropriate for assessment and work in HE and the adult world of work.

Between 2002 and 2007, I was senior tutor for HE at Batley School of Art and Design (BSAD). In that role one of my concerns was to support and upgrade HE staff’s scholarship profile. To this end, I started to model publishing on Art and Design subjects, initially in the Times Ed. where I had published previously and later in a series of other contexts. I interviewed many staff and students within the Art school and then wrote pieces challenging the notion of ‘best practice’ and ways of engaging Art students in achieving work that would launch their careers within the art world and achieve high standards on their courses (E10, E11, E17, E18). These pieces all reflect on student and teacher practice, challenge ideas of how to teach art, and work as a response to young people who resist education and the possible solutions available. In terms of professional practice of staff these articles were supposed to upgrade the scholarship profile of BSAD staff for QAA purposes and promote dialogue amongst staff and contribute to the intellectual quality of work being produced in that institution.

In particular in ‘Model arrangements’ (E11) I argued against the case that there was only one way of teaching Art. I raised questions as to how to improve the quality of student work, exploring the complex issue of the
influences of bureaucratic exam systems, the conformity of studio practice contrasted with creative processes, student independence, engagement and development of the individual. In ‘Free of a kind’ E10, I argue for the subversive nature of Art and question how or whether that quality could be embedded into teaching art as an academic discipline (Lebor, 2004). Again this piece demonstrates aspects of improving practice, so that art students could be thoroughly engaged in different disciplines of art and design. A series of provocative arguments on art teaching practice are tightly outlined in the Times Ed, but explained through more considered expansion in ‘What is best practice in art and design?’ (E18). It is perhaps ironic that here in E18, I argue for disruption and subversion of the norms and conventions in an art context. If I was arguing this case now, I would make use of the extensive literature on creativity, such as that suggested by Cropley (2001) or the essays in Addison and Burgess (2003), and expand definitions of creative work to include collaborative enterprises and installations that act as interventions into the norms of student and teacher relationship and productions. More discourse on interventions in art and design practice and teaching are discussed in Part one section 4. In all these pieces for the TES, my impact is that 1) I am critiquing and being part of changes in practice in level 2 and 3 teaching, learning and assessment. 2) There is a vast readership of the TES (currently 1 million per month). 3) My influence continues as my articles are still available on the TES website.
9.3. Intervening via *The Guardian*

**Part 1 Section 3**

Part one section three consists of two articles published in the *Guardian* through which I move the discussion into one of the central strands of this doctorate; namely my commenting on classroom behaviour, but also the problematic nature of the Key Skills qualifications (Dewsbury College, 1987-2007). These qualifications were supposed to promote learning for vocational students who had not achieved academic qualifications between levels 1 and 2. Chronologically slightly earlier, written in 2000 and part of an intense period of my writing at national level for the educational press, this piece, ‘One strike and you’re out’ (E12) is placed here because of the convenience of identifying it in terms of where it was published (*The Guardian*) rather than its year of publication (See time line: E51).

The resistance to learning that I document later in this commentary are understood in the context of the debates with which I was previously engaged where I refine ideas on learning in different contexts. In E12 I began publicly to discuss the issue of violence in classrooms. The underlying focus of my emerging practice was beginning to be stated at a national level. Initially, I was interviewed on the phone by Guardian journalist John Crace who used some of my points in his article on the same page (2000), but I also wrote about how violent behaviour was becoming normalised in low-level, under-achieving classrooms. This article characterises my approach in embryo, outlining a range of classroom aggressions that I personally witnessed and then explored various approaches for dealing with this aggressive behaviour.

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The problem as I then expounded it was teachers interacting with whole classes of students in the ETS where they had little power to deal with difficult classes on a large scale and therefore had to rely on their personal relationships with students. I recounted how many teachers were reverting to more disciplinary stances (Crace, 2000). At the time the school leaving age was 16, by the time my book addresses these issues, the school leaving age had been raised to 18 (Gov. UK). In a short space, I describe a wide range of negative classroom activities in class where learning is resisted. I suggest counselling for students, extra support teachers, more resources, payment to teachers for stress, but in the end, I opt for possibly the most radical approach of all, which is listening to the embittered or resentful voices of students as a way of trying to break what I call the cyclic pattern of chronic underachievement. As a way of deeply challenging current practice, I pose listening to difficult students as an obvious, but radical activity for enhancing students’ lives in classroom cultures where no-one is listened to. This is the beginning of my interventions into national discourse on the issue of behaviour management in the ETS.

In 2001 I wrote a semi-humorous ironic attack on the new Key Skills qualification, ‘First there was liberal studies’ (E13), blending contentious arguments/images about Creationism vs Evolution with the development of different skills qualifications which I had taught over a number of years. I am ironically praising different qualifications and their evolution in terms of teaching students the skills of literacy, numeracy and ICT to make up for the gaps in students’ previous education in schools. The attack is really aimed at the constant changes of educational nomenclature, levels and qualifications
which undermine students’, teachers’, and employers’ understanding of the meaning, quality and purpose of teaching vocational students the skills required for employment. It could be argued that FE vocational education is supposed to function as a way of validating students who are operating at a lower level within the economy as well as educationally (Darder et al., ibid.). In fact the same piece could have been written about the introduction of Functional Skills in 2012. However, the serious points to emerge are:

1. There is still a vast gap in skills needed for preparing students from school into preparation for work (Gregson, Nixon, 2011).

2. In my view skills tests ought to be specifically geared towards the vocational context in which students are learning or are employed.

3. The relevance of skills qualification needs to be made a hundred per cent clear to students so that they feel thoroughly motivated to work on issues that will genuinely support their career aspirations and achievements (Hamilton, Hillier, 2006; Wallace, 2002, 2007)

My use of humorous irony was really a response of despair in the face of more upgrades of qualifications that seemed to bear little relation to the needs of students, employers or teachers. The proof is perhaps that Key Skills were so quickly superseded by Functional Skills. Too much reform was being offered too quickly (Stanton, 2008). The delivery of these qualifications seem to be particularly vulnerable to the disruptive behaviour endemic in so many classrooms witnessed or observed in my subsequent research into behaviour management issues (Coffield, Costa, Muller, Webber, 2014). I personally have now developed a more systematic response to the issue of ‘difficult’ students hence my embedding of practical solutions and a range of
subsequent writings on this topic. The changes in practice indicated by these particular articles were:

1) The disappearance of key skills.

2) The growing discussion and changes in approach to behaviour management problems.

3) I was challenging the assumption that older students would be compliant and better behaved in the ETS.

Furthermore, recently I wrote a letter in The Guardian (Lebor, 2018c), critiquing the new GCSE system in terms of its incoherence for employers. The significance of this letter (E14) is that I show much knowledge of the GCSE system in three UK countries; the implications of the changes for employers, the incoherence of the new system and in a few lines make a devastating case to a newspaper readership of 189,000 and a million on-line. In terms of impact there could be few ways of making a case to so many so concisely.

9.4. Valuing creativity

The context of ‘Can creativity be taught?(8)’ (E15) was that as a senior tutor for quality in HE at BSAD (BSAD, 2002-2007), I was attempting to model publication and dialogue with colleagues on issues that concerned practice in the art school. Ingram was a lecturer in the photography department who also taught a module on creativity to University of Huddersfield-based students at BSAD. I regularly spoke to him about his ideas and practice, but in this instance wanted to question some of his ideas in a more critical, public way. We had had these conversations informally, but here I start a dialogue via e
mail that quickly became a published piece. My methodology was applying the interview techniques previously associated with the editorship of Staff News to academic issues. This was also an example of dialogue and listening as recommended by Freire (1972). Central to my concern here is the tension between control and imagination, conformity and creativity, teaching and disruption. In this dialogue there is a certain vulnerability attached to both of us. Ingram feels I am probing his specialist area. Although I am the manager in this situation, I feel potentially out of my depth as, at the time, I had little knowledge of creativity theories. Nevertheless, I offer a critical perspective of his highly developed ideological approach which opposed authoritarianism, performativity, (Ball, 2003) his version of rationalism and managerialism (which he possibly felt I represented) through questioning the parameters of these concepts and attempting to show that they were all more complex issues than he would admit.

I have placed this dialogue into the commentary because it demonstrates my critical engagement with practitioners and practice. It also demonstrates:

1. I do not accept one overriding ideological position.

2. I am open to constant dialogues (Freire, ibid.) as a way of putting ideas under scrutiny with colleagues (2 more pieces were published on this theme not included here and subsequently I was engaged in more dialogues with other practitioners later exhibited in this portfolio).

3. My style of modelling constant critical questioning of staff and ultimately students in sessions is here shown in embryo.

4. I deeply believe in dialogic teaching (Alexander, 2008).
5. My use of dialogue had the impact of getting non-published staff published. Upgrading the institution’s status in terms of publication and giving voice to unhead teachers.

In ‘Why is creative writing so difficult to assess?’ (E16) I extend ideas from E7 and E14 and reflect in more expansive ways on the skills involved in producing creative writing, but more problematically how such writing can be assessed. The issue is that the criteria normally associated with academic and ultimately correct prose are flouted or often subverted when applied to creative writing. Part of the problem is that creative writers can break rules of syntax, ‘disrupt’ grammar, use colloquial language, break the boundaries of what is permissible to say in the norms of academic discourse. Personae in fiction can be vehicles for ironic or otherwise attacks on inclusive values or present attitudes that would normally not be acceptable within evidence-based arguments, associated with for example the social sciences.

I argue the case here for valuing the creativity of the individual. Although difficult to assess purely in terms of its aesthetic and unique qualities, I argue for valorising individuals’ creative achievements. I say that there are many aspects of creative writing that could be useful in supporting students’ future careers, but I could have added developing empathy and emotional intelligence (Goleman, 1999), understanding the minds and thought processes of others, thinking imaginatively to problem solve and extend students’ language abilities. Valuing more creative/imaginative activities in the curriculum might actually have a beneficial effect in countering the violent, disruptive behaviours which I outline in later elements of my writing and in the next parts of this commentary.
In these pieces I am really challenging the exam boards and educational thinking that in my view are undermining students’ personal, individual and creative development. This links to student behaviour and students’ involvement and intrinsic motivation for learning as an exciting activity (Kohn, 1983; Dweck, 2000). The weaknesses of my position are that I argue a case without evidence. I do not refer to theoretical literature on creativity or specific exam boards or criteria in this article. Nevertheless, the journal where this was published generally did not use extensive or even basic bibliographies. The audience were teachers who wanted to engage with arguments and ideas about current practice. The truths of empirical, social science academic writing should be based on science methodologies where propositions are tested against evidence, students and institutions are anonymous, the style of writing is more cautious and possibly more ‘objective’. Here I am arguing from personal experience and practice, reflecting critically on the problems I was encountering on a daily basis as a lecturer within Further Education contexts.

In my next published piece ‘Assessing art subjects’ (E17), I began to develop the qualities of a more academic stance when I explored in more detail the problematic aspects of applying academic and particularly commercial and personal development criteria associated with Foundation Degrees (FDs) to visual arts content, namely digital photography for which I was subject leader and had written the specification for validation at BSAD (Lebor, 2009). The key problem in assessing the FD that I explore is the issue of the validity of applying a plethora of criteria that are relevant to business and employment, but not to aesthetic issues, such as the content of digital images, form, lighting, originality, colour or context. The problem was that most of the criteria
for this degree were mandatorily pre-written as part of the FD Regional University Network (RUN) scheme that was supposed to apply to a wide range of different non-artistic disciplines across a large geographic area of the UK. The underlying point of FDs was that they were constructed in order to promote vocational education (McLaughlin, 2013; Bathmaker, 2013) and train students at degree level to focus on turning their artistic skills into employment and commercial success. Art was no longer supposed to be merely for art’s sake.

In this article I quote from the outcomes, criteria and the key documents written by Leeds Metropolitan University (now Leeds Beckett), Dewsbury College and the QAA. The question now centres on the relationship between individuals’ creative production and the constraints or judgements made on students’ work and whether in order to give the qualification academic credibility in terms of the QAA and FHEQ, commercial and personal development aspects of the generic FD qualifications are brought to bear on the creative impulses of art students. In fact this particular degree resolved many of these issues by locating creative activities within a highly commercial context so that students could develop their artistic abilities in situations where their work would be financially successful.

This particular article was peer-reviewed by Professor Sally Brown, to whom I refer because of her extensive work on assessment with Phil Race (e.g. Brown, Race, Rust, 2002). In this piece I am beginning to develop a more academic approach, using references to theories of art, qualification documents, analysis of student work, self-reflective practices, but also challenge the problematic nature of learning at HE level within the framework
of teaching visual arts and communication. I later developed a more academic approach to writing as a teachers’ trainer when I started putting classroom behaviour under scrutiny in a more formally academic and less journalistic way.

The reasons for including all these pieces are that:
1) I am impacting on staff at BSAD by getting them to reflect on their practice.
2) I am upgrading the academic level of this school of art. None of the 30 members of the staff in this institution had ever published anything before.
3) I am impacting on the promotion of BSAD as a credible place for delivering HE courses.
4) I am introducing creativity as part of my practice for later countering disruptive behaviours in classrooms.

9.5. Is ‘best practice' helpful for engaging either staff or students?

However, there is one article, E18 which I will cover briefly before moving into the central areas of concern in this commentary. This piece asks deeper questions about the nature of practice and particularly whether the term ‘best practice’ is at all viable when applied to art disciplines. This relates to the issues of student behaviour in that the practice described could be said to counter disengagement. Nevertheless, my enquiry into this topic stemmed from being given the task as senior tutor of producing a booklet of ‘best practice’ for level 3 teachers.

At that time the notion of best practice was normatively used to suggest an ideal form of teaching that should be followed potentially eliciting the ‘outstanding’ grade in Ofsted observations. My questions about the nature of
best practice were here applied to visual arts, but could be applied generally to other disciplines. The questions were:

1. Whether ‘best’ practice, using the superlative excluded all other classroom activities as being inferior.

2. One view or system’s best practice might be less than perfect from another perspective.

3. Creative processes can flourish under adverse circumstances, so teachers acting perfectly according to one particular Ofsted regime might be counterproductive according to another.

4. Did the formalising of one methodology in the classroom mean that approach would be set in stone and therefore become atrophied and not dynamically change with individual staff/student developments, different cohorts or evolving trends in art?

5. Was best practice the enshrined views of individual tutors who had been trained in one specific tradition which they then relayed intact to the next generation or were there contended notions of how to teach creative subjects in different environments?

6. Was art supposed to be subversive, changing traditions or the accumulation of skills that needed perfecting?

7. Did best practice imply criticism of those who did not conform to one preferred way of teaching?

The problem was whether the concept of a singular activity as understood by the term ‘best practice’ remained anomalous in the diverse creative activities of teaching the arts. Tutors argued that their ‘best practice’ was not easily captured by the bureaucratic process of producing their ‘best’ lesson plans or
schemes of work. This formal approach seemed to kill off creativity and was seen as counterproductive in terms of classroom behaviour and learning. In art classes the spontaneous rhythms and instinctive relationships that produced excellent work could not be understood in terms of students going through rituals and routines (Chaplain, 2003), form-filling, tick box version of education or a bureaucratic infrastructure that confined teachers and students who were at that time winning competitions at national level, whereas their tutors were refusing to write lesson plans. I outline these points because they are directly relevant to issues of creativity, disruption and the notion of learning being in tension with the control mechanisms and performativity of Ofsted (Ball, 2003; Wright, Loughlin, Hall, 2018).

I argued the case against best practice in E11 (BSAD, 2002-2007), but it has now been established that there is no such thing as best practice (Coffield et al. 2014: Gregson, Hillier, 2015). My earlier arguments proved to be correct. Examples of so called ‘good practice’ outlined by teaching staff in that particular environment of BSAD included presentations and public feedback to students by graphics teachers who replicated professional studios to enhance connections with industry. Photography tutors argued for the independence of students working on creative journeys of discovery outside the geography of the academic institution. Fine artists wanted close observation in studios coupled with exposure to the influence of galleries, artists, outside settings, but ultimately in all cases there had to be a balance between imagination, technical training and the realities which artists could and might encounter. In the end both articles question the notion of best practice in art (E11, E18). I posit the relationship between students producing work and it being exhibited
at the end of the year show where art can be viewed, understood and assessed as an example of what all could be agreed upon as the ultimate aim of art teaching, namely for art produced to be exhibited and viewed.

The reasons for exploring these issues in this part of the commentary are that these articles highlight constant shifts in understanding the tensions between learning and a range of contexts within arts subjects. Learning can be interpreted in many different ways, challenging theories of learning propounded in later sections where the main focus is on examining circumstances where the norms of teaching have broken down. These pieces act as a context to the next sections where the focus becomes the points at which learning is resisted, thus by way of contrast these earlier pieces are more concerned with instances of when learning did take place in many different circumstances, offering some nuance as to what learning might mean in different creative contexts. They offer changes to practice in a range of different contexts and circumstances.

10. Part two

Critical commentary on classroom practice

10.1. Section 1, Peer-reviewed

In the first section of this part of the commentary, my focus is going to be on six peer-reviewed articles where I began to scrutinise disruptive behaviour in classrooms from a range of methodical perspectives (Leeds City College, Education Dept. 2008-2019). Although not my intention when starting out, the result was to begin to triangulate research into this issue by examining the
attitudes of a range of different stakeholders. In this commentary I want to subject my own strategies to critical surveillance, highlighting weaknesses and strengths of what I have said, whilst spending space on these peer-reviewed articles because they became crucial as upgraded versions embedded into my book (E32).

In order to reduce the large bulk of reading material in the portfolio, I have only included the opening page of these articles. Each whole article can be easily accessed on-line or through the bibliographical references at the end of this commentary. A more extended version of each article is also embedded in my book, a complete version of which is present in the portfolio (E32).

The first issue I will explore is that of my articles’ titles. In E19, E20 and E21, I provocatively used language of violence. There were several unexplained reasons for doing this. Firstly, I wanted to reflect on the violent events I was describing in classrooms. Secondly, I felt this aspect of teachers’ lives was being ignored by teachers’ training departments; the titles were purposefully supposed to be provocative in order to get teacher educators’, teachers’ and managers’ attention. Thirdly, each title offered some cultural/educational reference. Thus ‘Class Wars’ (E19) evoked the Marxist implications of middle class/bourgeois expectations being foisted unfairly on working class students (Anyon, ibid.). War and Peace (E20) was an ironic reference to Tolstoy’s novel and the development of individuals who went through difficult experiences, whilst ‘War Stories’ (E21) referenced long-term military experience, constructing classrooms as locations for conflict or war zones (Macmillan, 2018). This is a conventional, humorous construction of
classroom behaviour which could be and has been deeply challenged (Rennie, 2015).

Although I originally intended to continue with these metaphors for E22, E23 and E24, I eventually decided to characterise these articles more through their methodology or participants, rather than constructing difficult classroom situations as deeply conflicted. The problem of using war metaphors was that it disparages the relationship between teacher and students, understanding student activities and intentions as characteristically negative. Violent metaphors set up an expectation that many classrooms would or could involve either physical or psychological conflict, when in fact most classrooms in the post school sector might be compliant or buzzing with learning and creative energies. Was I gratuitously characterising parts of the sector in a negative way to prove an overall point about the need to introduce a module on behaviour management? Was I seeing disruptive behaviour in every interview or discussion with every teacher because this was the topic I was researching (Cohen et al ibid.)?

The problem is that it is extremely difficult for many reasons to access statistics or quantify how much disruption is happening in ETS classrooms. There is so much bias in-built into any research into this issue. Unions will have their reasons for encouraging members to divulge challenging or threatening events that have happened in classrooms because this heightens the value of protecting members against management (UCU, 2013). Management tend to downplay negative events because this suggests there is something wrong with the institution where they work which in turn can have negative implications for enrolment, safeguarding of students and funding.
Ofsted can only comment on a brief window of time where often students will actually behave for self- or status quo preservation purposes or be forced into absence so that the college or training institution can retain its reputation (Bennet, 2017; Grierson, 2017).

The second major issue with respect to methodology in these six pieces is that of validity. Is there sufficient evidence to suggest that generalisations can be drawn from any of the evidence presented in these pieces? The point is that each of these relatively short pieces operates more like a small scale piece of research valid in its own context, examining one aspect of the problem from the perspective of a different group whether that be experienced teachers (E21), managers (E24) or disruptive students (E22). An overriding argument as to the significance of the findings from this research, at this stage, is not being made. Each piece has its own context of a different institution, participants, research methods and perspectives. Although these articles suggest ways of improving practice, technically they may not be characterised as action research (Pring, 2000; Cohen ibid.). Only at a later stage within my book (2017) do I use this information in combination with many other experiences, research and arguments in order to justify devoting a whole mandatory module to the topic of behaviour management in teachers’ training courses in the ETS.

Finally, it should be said that these articles have a consistent readership of roughly 10 downloads per month. The article ‘War stories’ is used on the University of Bolton module, Positive classroom behaviour (E49), whilst ‘War and Peace’ is used for teachers qualifying for QTLS as evidenced by a letter from Dr. Patricia Odell, the head of QTLS in this country (E47).
10.2. Entering the classroom

‘Class Wars’ (E19), my first peer-reviewed article on behaviour management, focussed on preparing trainee teachers for dealing with the opening moments of a session and how that impacted on the rest of the lesson. In these case studies I explore what happened in two different classroom situations where the trainee was immediately rejected (Lebor, 2017, pp. 51-60). At the time it seemed important to start discussing situations where teacher/student relationships broke down almost before they had a chance of being established. I was interested in those moments of entering classrooms when all the feelings of trepidation and anxiety that might be generated for a new teacher could become particularly challenging when the trainee is faced with very aggressive students who reject any notion of conformity, compliance or the norms of the learning environment. Although when writing this article, I already worked formally as a teacher educator, the incidents outlined were based on field notes and observation reports, garnered from previous roles as senior tutor and mentor at a college.

In this article the data about these experiences are based on my account of a mentoring relationship between myself and two different trainees. The weaknesses of this qualitative research are that the reader is reliant on my construction of narratives and that there is little triangulation in giving corroboration to what happened. Observations involve complex relationships between observer and observee (Wright, 2016). However, I establish myself as a reliable narrator through outlining a range of credentials for myself as the data collector of the research, namely that I had been an external
moderator/quality reviewer for over a hundred educational and vocational
institutions with OCN and CERTA, though in fact these organisations are not
mentioned by name in this context. I underpin points with academic
references and say that I had been a lecturer since 1976, working at every
level from entry up to third year degree and masters level and was a senior
tutor for quality at an Art College. However, as a reflexive practitioner
(Cunliffe, 2004) all this could mean that the data collector could construct,
interpret or even distort events in order to fashion incidents to fit with a
particular argument. In fact, I used observation notes on many of these
incidents narrated within my research, modified in order to protect the identity
of individuals and institutions (BERA, 2018).

More important perhaps from the perspective of preparing trainees for
becoming teachers was the construction of difficult case studies and the
debate as to which tactics or strategies could or should be best used by
teachers when faced with such unpleasant situations. My feeling was that
these sorts of situations were almost completely ignored by trainers with some
notable exceptions (Vizard, 2009; Wallace, 2002, 2007) both in terms of the
literature written and in training sessions. If one examines the teachers’
training PGCE/Cert Ed. specifications at a range of courses in the ETS during
that period with exceptions, the idea of devoting time to this issue in a formal
way is mostly ignored. Significantly, there was nothing in the documentation
for PGCE trainees at the University of Huddersfield where this piece was
published or the other 22 colleges of the Consortium education training
departments for the ETS (University of Huddersfield, 2018). As a result of my
writing the University of Huddersfield has now included one outcome relating
to behaviour management in their above scheme. In my view this is woefully inadequate.

The strengths and weakness of this article are that it attempts to recreate the social interactions of trainee teacher, observer and students through description, direct language, use of documents, theory and analysis. Observation is a legitimate form of gathering social science data (Cohen et al, ibid). The piece has an ethnographic element because the observer is part of the situation being described; making judgements and as in all teacher observation becomes part of the experiment in teaching that is taking place (Coffield, 2012; O’Leary, 2011). However, if teacher education was merely a set of instructions as to how teaching should take place and the rules were mechanically followed, without the problematic presence of human interaction of students, this sort of qualitative research would be entirely redundant. The key strength of ethnographic style immersion in the culture of education, with which trainees will have to cope, is that these descriptions help construct the realities of some classrooms for which trainees are being prepared (Cohen et al, ibid., pp219-247). However, the weaknesses of ethnographic research are that it is reliant on the constructions, understanding and interpretations of the researcher; validity and reliability could be problematic. The findings cannot be challenged for their objectivity by other researchers and it is difficult to replicate the exact circumstances that gave rise to evidence or recommendations (Cohen et al., ibid. pp183-186).

I did not offer a particularly complex theoretical infrastructure through which these events could be understood or interpreted. I refer to Willis (1977) in order to frame the discussion of teacher/student relationships within the
problematic nature of social class structures, but these have changed since his writing (Binner, 2011). I also refer to Petty (2014), Vizard (2009) and Kounin (1997), for example, who are more practically based educationalists, in order to demonstrate that advice from the experts does not always work in all circumstances, but also to make the more general point that runs throughout my published writing that it is difficult to legislate for different classes because there are so many variables. However, one key reason I avoid complex discussions of theory in my work is that I am purposefully trying to write in a way that is understandable and will be read by trainee teachers from a range of different academic backgrounds and levels. The more complex and abstract the theoretical frame of reference, the less likely teachers or trainees are going to read extensively and benefit from this work, yet trainees need evidence-based research (Heilbronn, 2011) in order to know how to behave in classrooms. However, if my work was written as lists of tips (Dix, 2010) or in a populist style, merely based on the writer’s own experience in classrooms without references, index or bibliography (Cowley, 2015), then it would lack credibility or sufficiently address the emotional, psychological and strategic discussion which in my view needs to take place. My style of writing in itself is attempting to model ways of speaking about difficult classroom events without making them sound so removed from the violent reality where these events are located and therefore occasionally embed the demotic language of staff and students. I try to avoid framing the discussion via abstract theoretical language (Darder et al., 2017, p15) or to be understood as merely the personal narratives of individual teachers, yet I try to use extensive bibliographies as a way of filtering and analysing classroom experiences through the literature lens (Brookfield, 1995) of what has been said previously.
For the purpose of this commentary, the focus of this discussion should be on practice. The reasons for analysing structural issues of research, presentation and language is to probe the validity of what is being said, analyse the parameters of practice that are being described and demonstrate the complexity of constructing and analysing classroom events. In terms of practice, however, I am examining almost the opposite themes and phenomena of what were described as learning in the previous section. Whereas earlier I was trying to refine systems, situations and examining processes of learning, occasionally looking at different versions of practice, here I am exploring situations where learning goes wrong. Practice is, in this instance, being analysed at different levels; myself working as an observer, mentor and adviser, removed and yet part of the process (Bourdieu, 1977), but also offering descriptions of trainees and students’ behaviours. Practice involves mentoring initiates into very demanding situations. Despite having taught a mentoring module (See CV) for the BA in Education and Professional Development with the University of Huddersfield, having formally been on mentoring training courses (level 3) and being aware of mentoring theorists and practice models, in this article about observing and mentoring trainee teachers, I do not reference the vast array of mentoring literature with which I was familiar, e.g. Clutterbuck, Megginson (2004), Colley (2003) Pask and Joy (2007). The practice element in this article involves analysis of difficult situations and some advice that emerges, based on qualitative almost subjective arguments as to why one trainee passes, whilst the other is referred.
It could be plausibly argued that the decision as to which trainee passed, should have been reversed. Aiden in the ‘Class Wars’ text faced a far more dramatic rejection of his practice with desks being kicked over, whilst Baiden faced the more normative reception of students being merely indifferent to his presence in the room. If witnessed by Ofsted, both classes might have failed; the department or even the institution would have been put under special measures if this sort of student behaviour was evidenced as being more widespread. The point is that these sorts of incidents are not normally reported in official documents, text books or in academic accounts of classroom behaviours. There is possibly too much at stake. I discuss this in my book (2017), but also in my piece on constructing the language of behaviour management, using different metaphors for understanding the relationship between teachers and students (2019). These open discussions of disruptive behaviour challenge the current practice of many teachers’ trainers.

10.3. How to support trainees with difficult classes

In E20 I discuss a strategy for modelling support for trainees and teachers, who face particularly challenging behaviours in their classrooms. Again there is a violent metaphor, a literary allusion or joke in the title ‘War and Peace’, but here I am contrasting the violence experienced by trainee teachers in their placement classroom (Duckworth, 2013) with the civilised, supportive environment of discussion, analysis and recommendations offered by what took place within a training session (Lebor, 2017, pp. 137-148). The piece’s title could be criticised in that it constructs classroom events as violent, thus potentially belittles students’ lives by using mock-heroic humour about their
interactions in the classroom. In defence of these titles it should be said that these articles are describing violent incidents and I am trying to draw attention to these classroom events, attract readers, teachers, trainees and teacher educators. The intention is to challenge teacher education departments to focus on classroom events where trainees and qualified teachers face deeply threatening situations where the idea of learning and civilised values are under attack. I view this as particularly problematic emotionally and psychologically for teachers who, by the very nature of their vocational calling, believe in education.

In this article I outline some of the many stressful challenges that teachers have to face in their daily lives (Lebor, 2013b, p.21). A key aspect of this piece is that it describes these classes, but also the training classroom which is here understood as a location for joint reflective practice, where strategies can be formulated; a place made safe through some key features for building a non-competitive atmosphere and model this as an approach for trainees in later years to deploy in staff-rooms, department meetings or in teams. I outline the training strategy by combining a range of reflective models (Boud, Walker, 1998; Brookfield, ibid.) into a more co-operative agenda of joint practitioner research as explained by Wenger (1998). The training sessions operated as supervisory and reflective discussions on what trainees had faced in placements during the previous week. The research methods of this piece were based on my self-reflexive account (Cunliffe, ibid.) of training sessions where trainees outlined the problematic nature of classes they faced. I tentatively put forward certain suggestions at some points in the discussion, but continually questioned my own motives for each comment I made. The
piece operates as an example of self-reflective and reflexive practice (Moon, 1999).

The aspects of this piece that prevent it from being merely narrative or even anecdotal of classroom happenings are: it places the training session in several contexts, documenting the attitudes of Ofsted, locating the problem through literature, opening discussions of techniques and strategies available in the literature, but also referencing a range of self-reflexive/reflective theorists and using their methods to apply to my own and trainees’ behaviours. One key aspect of this account is my criticism of myself, my attitudes, the assumptions of my background and scrutiny of my own motives in how I act and what I say. This self-analysis might have been taken further, through applying specific ideological or therapeutic frameworks to argue more strongly against myself, criticise the process I adopted, the underlying socio-economic or even personal deconstruction of my ego, instincts, beliefs and gendered role of my interactions with the trainees present in my class. I could have critiqued myself in a more relentless and systematic way, however, if the purpose of the article was to model ways of dealing with challenging classes, then the relentless focus on my own role as a teacher educator in this instance might have seemed self-indulgent, narcissistic and ultimately irrelevant or possibly counter-productive to the overall discussion of dealing with difficult people and potentially developing resilience in trainees. This article was supposed to be challenging to teacher educators and helpful to trainees trying to put discussions of when classes go wrong as explicitly part of teachers’ training courses. In fact this article has been used as a model of
research, using joint practitioner and communities of practice as methods to be modelled by QTLS trainees. (See Odell letter, E47)

10.4. Experienced teachers speak

With ‘War Stories’ (E21) I retained the violent metaphor, possibly cliché of speaking about classrooms as war zones (Macmillan, 2018). It could be argued that this sort of humour deflects the negative experiences of teachers, jokingly belittles the behaviour of aggressive students and therefore maintains the distance and possible control over classes. However, the counter-argument could be made that objectifying and distancing students means that the cycle of violence and disruptive behaviour is consolidated and continues.

In this particular context I began to use more traditional social science methods of collecting qualitative data namely interviews, questioning teachers who had worked for over 10 years on firstly their experiences of disruptive student behaviour during their careers and secondly the advice they might proffer to trainees coming into the profession (Lebor, 2017, pp. 77-87). The significance of taking the views of experienced teachers seriously had many implications. Instead of basing advice on tips of writers (e.g. Cowley, ibid.) based on one person’s singular vision or view, this method allowed for discussion of a range of different experiences, contexts, strategies and multiple perspectives on extreme situations faced by teachers over a lengthy time-scale.

One aspect of the research that was particularly important was that teachers questioned felt that at least someone was taking an interest in their difficult/challenging experiences of being teachers, wanted to write about what
had happened to them, the challenging problems they had faced where they had very little acknowledgement or support from colleagues or management. The research methods had operated as a kind of therapy for staff, off-loading their feelings of frustration and impotence, but also gave them an opportunity to express pride in their own professionalism and ability to cope. The other key features of this piece were that even though the sample was relatively small, the methods, consisting of questionnaires, interviews and a focus group, the number of years covered in terms of careers amounted to 30 teachers x 10 years = 300 years of teaching. Most teachers questioned had 20 years experience of teaching in Further Education, thus expanding the span of years covered by the research. This posed an interesting quandary as to whether the fact that a teacher had worked for more years in a college meant that it was more likely that all these teachers would at some point have witnessed some ‘bad behaviour.’ The question underlying much of my research during this period was whether disruptive behaviour was a significant feature in many teachers’ lives and ultimately whether more training needed to be in place to prepare, train and support teachers in dealing with this or whether I was always predetermining the results of my research because I was always questioning teachers or trainees who had some involvement with disruptive students. They naturally wanted to speak to me.

Some limitations of this research were that this was in a sense a convenience sample in that I knew these teachers either through being with them at conferences, courses or staff rooms. However, the fact that the interview was the prime method of data collection meant that there had to be an element of rapport, personal engagement and social intercourse between interviewer and
interviewee. This was the only way perhaps to access the data. In order to win the trust of the interviewed, there had to be relationship (Cohen et al. ibid.).

The aim was to establish qualitative understanding of experience as opposed to merely offering sets of pieces of advice, and thereby probe in an open way what was happening in classrooms. In order to establish this kind of information, building trust and knowledge of the other person was essential. In the end it turned out that these experienced teachers had all faced difficult classes during their careers. In some cases these problems had carried on for extensive periods. All tutors interviewed argued that ‘prevention was better than cure’ and recommended the norms of good teaching; namely preparation, establishing ground rules, maintaining rules throughout the session, whilst supporting individuals through one-to-one relationships, connecting and communicating with individual students.

However, one significant aspect of this article is the discussion of validity where I show how the same questions about facing disruptive students would have different meanings and consequences if posed at a job interview or at a management appraisal meeting. The fact that I was known to the participants as a teacher educator and researcher into issues of disruptive behaviour meant that the anonymous interviewees had a less guarded, more open attitude towards the questions posed in this context. A more random sample might have produced either less truthful responses or raised questions as to how the information was going to be used in the future. The answers were in fact more deeply rooted in the experiences of the teachers and ultimately seemed, in my view, to validate and even valorise their role.
10.5. Which therapy model, if any?

In ‘The fear of being assessed’ (E23) I looked at my own interaction when involved in a case study with a ‘disruptive individual’ who was from an affluent background, yet seemed to reject the academic system and become violent towards property and act threateningly towards teachers and his parents. I examine my own self-reflexive reactions to mentoring and tutoring this difficult/challenging student through an Access assessment process (Lebor, 2017, pp. 89-106). At one level this analysis works as advice on how to tutor students for academic assessment which might be relevant for home as well as college-based tutors, but there is also a covert argument countering what I see as the pernicious or counter-productive effects of perfectionism and implying that reasons for disruptive or negative behaviour might not be connected with issues of social class or wealth as has often been argued (Anyon, ibid.).

This research works as a case study, offering a window on experience, narrating my own attitudes, explaining the content of the student’s assessment and how I approached teaching specific elements of an arts-based curriculum. I wanted to discuss some of the generic skills or approaches to teaching texts to young people. There is little written on this in an academic context. Advice tends to work as cribs on specific texts (e.g. Spark, 2018), in other words, what to say in an exam or generalised points on study skills. Some books on pedagogy discuss one-to-one learning (Curzon, Tummons ibid.), but do not discuss this when it goes wrong or becomes a highly problematic relationship as in this case. In my article I do not discuss the safeguarding/well-being dimensions of this situation, but focus on issues
of confidentiality and touch on the complex issues of different models of counselling that can construct the potentially therapeutic relationship between teacher and student (Hyland, 2006). I am here concerned with practice.

Again the literature on this topic tends to assume the righteousness and efficacy of one counselling system, such as Restorative Practice (Sanghani, 2012). However, the problem with Restorative Practice is that it is generally a post-facto system dealing with events that have passed. My approach here tends to be eclectic, making use of various counselling models, such as Cognitive Behaviour Therapy (CBT) (Greenberger and Padesky, 1995) and Solution Focus (Iveson, ibid.). However, this eclectic approach could be viewed as structurally contradictory, leading to self-defeating strategies or a mish-mash of different ideologies and therapeutic philosophies that in practical terms work against each other. Benign listening to students is again reiterated as a powerful tool. I am here refining the earlier advice I proposed in E12 of listening to students.

A key element of this paper is self-analysis, looking at my background and experience. The point here is that I am viewing my own positionality, prejudices, class-positioning and academic assumptions as vital elements that impinge on judgements and strategy, explaining the level of identification, threat, engagement and relationship with the individual student, how this evolved and was ultimately resolved in this particular context.
10.6. Disruptive students

In ‘What did disruptive students say?’ (E24) I again moved away from violent metaphors in the title and focussed on the stakeholders or group who were being researched, in this case ‘disruptive students’ themselves (Lebor, 2017, pp123-135). Again there are still problems here of language and discourse. I assume that the words ‘disruptive students’ can be used, but this raises a number of issues. Firstly, as discussed in the article, there is a question of how we designate students as ‘disruptive’ (Binner, ibid.). Is it a badge of shame or honour? Are the students characterised as disruptive by their teachers or is it self-defining? The word ‘disruptive’ implies that there is a flow that has been in some way blocked or stopped. But as I argue in 2019, disruption might be a useful learning direction or change in the pace of the session. The language we use about sessions constructs the reality of classroom relationships. Secondly, is the term ‘disruptive’ pejorative? Does it stigmatisate students, dehumanise or even make them sound ‘other’ to ourselves as teachers? Are the students disrupting more than classrooms, but also sabotaging their own social mobility or social capital? Is there also an assumption that the ‘we’ of teachers excludes students or reduces them to powerless subjects without agency (Bourdieu, 1977; Field, 2005).

There is another level of self-criticism operative in this article that begins to listen to the voices of students and shows the arbitrariness of researchers writing about students rather than students speaking for themselves. The words of the students are mediated through the format of a questionnaire administered by their teachers. I do not speak to or interview these students directly, but rather approach them via their teachers. There are many
advantages and disadvantages to this strategy. Advantages are that the students do not become personally involved with me and therefore there is no aspect of winning approval, taking time from their studies or objectifying students as 'specimens' of an experiment. Disadvantages are that I cannot comment directly on their appearance, behaviour during interview and possibly ask follow-up questions or probe more deeply into their views or perspectives (Cohen et al. ibid.).

Thus it is the teachers who define their students as disruptive and teachers administer the method of data collection (Binner, ibid.). The focus of my small-scale research project (Hillier, Jameson, 2003) was to hear from students who had carried out some very negative activities in class, listen initially to the reasons these students said they had carried out destructive activities and check what these students said they wanted from learning sessions. In this piece, we hear a variety of student voices, explaining their reasons for subverting classes, but also significantly we hear how this sample of students critique their teachers’ lessons. It turned out that these students said that they wanted well-planned, stimulating, creative sessions with teachers who were good at communicating, treated them as adults and were helpful and supportive. In other words they said they wanted the norms of good practice in college sessions as outlined in many text books on teaching and learning (Armitage et al., 2007; Petty, 2014; Avis et al., 2015; Curzon ibid., 2013). The question is whether they would react differently and engage thoroughly in sessions if they got what they said they wanted.

The problem then becomes how could this good practice be embedded into all college sessions as normative, so that these sorts of students did not disrupt
sessions in the first place? Could educating all PGCE/Cert Ed. trainees through a programme or module be a way of embedding good practice so as to ensure that students did not disrupt sessions? The issues underpinning this point are numerous. My articles on this topic were beginning to formulate a series of questions about class management asking different stakeholders about the process of training and educating young people. Perhaps the most rigorous piece of research I carried out at this stage was my investigation into what a range of ‘managers’ in positions of authority in various departments said about class management.

10.7. A management issue

This research was initially supervised and funded by the Education and Training Foundation (ETF) and located at The University of Sunderland Centre of Excellence in Teachers’ Training (SUNCETT). This framework allowed me to take this research further than earlier projects. I had advice, support and criticism from SUNCETT staff, presenting my research at the University of Sunderland in front of amongst others, Prof Frank Coffield and later producing a research poster and lecture at the ETF research conference in front of, amongst others, Prof. Anne-Marie Bathmaker. I produced an early version for this research scheme, but then in order to publish this work, it had to be peer-reviewed, thoroughly upgraded and was then published in the *JFHE*. Peer reviewers wanted more tests carried out, particularly putting the recommendations offered by managers under teacher scrutiny as to whether they were useful or not in their own teaching contexts.
This was original research in that previous writers had not shown an interest in managers as having a distinct view on the issue of classroom management. They either went through the available strategies (Vizard, 2012) or if interested in interviewing specific groups, focused on what students, trainees or teachers said (Wallace, 2007). My interest has been in what people say in their institutional context. I believe this is a key approach because there is an assumption that strategies for behaviour management are always the same in all contexts. A key aspect of my overall research into behaviour management is a constantly evolving and dynamic process, because each class, institution and relationship between individual teachers and their classes are always different. This is confirmed in the final part of this commentary, where each account of trainee practice is completely different due to all these factors (E39-E43).

The research itself (E24) initially used a survey to collect data from 17 teachers and then 25 managers from different colleges. I ran two focus groups of managers debating strategies, then interviewed an experienced manager in more depth in order to triangulate the above researched views. I finally subjected the recommendations of managers to a rank ordering process administered in order to offer some power to tutors so they might comment on the relevance and usefulness of management suggestions (Lebor, 2017, pp. 107-122).

There are many criticisms that could be levelled against my methods in this context. Firstly, one might ask which managers were chosen. Were they senior managers and how senior was their standing within the institution
where they were located? Did they have power over sections of colleges? In fact most managers involved in this research were in charge of whole departments, but in some case they had authority over ‘schools’ within colleges. However, I did not specify a criteria for establishing the characteristics of a manager, merely defining a manager as someone “with responsibility for organising teaching, training or controlling the activities of other teachers” (OED). Managers involved in this research were in fact in charge of departments of maybe 10 to 15 teachers. However, this was not specified within the research paper. The other aspect not specified was the vocational area from which these managers drew their experience or the context in which they made their recommendations. Engineering might have a very different ambience to hair and beauty. It was also difficult to ascertain whether problems were characteristic of specific colleges, departments, academic levels, geographic areas, class or gender as managers may have presented a positive spin on their own management skills and the purported success of their personal management style in their answers.

However, none of these points was the purpose or result of this research. Managers had approached me with their staff’s class management problems. The discussions on questionnaires, focus groups and interviews, as in previous research, tended to work as a forum of expression, offering an opportunity for managers to discuss the problems they faced in their departments, either possibly in the hope that emerging strategies would evolve that could support them in their work or that it might have been an opportunity to share the difficult challenges that their job entailed. Once
discussions began, the motives for managers’ agreement to be involved was never explored or even mentioned.

Initially, some managers had written asking me to work out strategies to help their department. Other managers wanted to be present in the focus groups and discussions. The usual sensitivities of researching disruptive behaviour accrued. The problems of exposing the negative sides of an institution or creating bad publicity for a particular course loomed large in this investigation. There are major differences between writing as a journalist to reveal the problems of an institution for the public interest and the motives of a researcher, exploring the complexity of educational problems, in this case trying to improve a situation through experimenting with certain recommendations and then checking to see whether, for example, behaviour improved. Unfortunately, as mentioned in E24, I was/am not in charge of a whole institution or department and therefore could not carry out a longitudinal study into improvements in classroom practice. If I had been, I may have been constrained by ‘the usual sensitivities’ of not exposing problems or have had the freedom to explore the issue of behaviour management problems in so many contexts. Action research into developing strategies in a specific context later became the task of my trainees, which we will see emerge in Part Four.

In the end, the research debated different perspectives on class management, listening to the voices of a group, not normally researched, namely managers, to hear their perspective on this issue. The research was not trying to prove a particular case or even to show that one strategy worked, whilst others did not. It was rather qualitative research into the views of stakeholders exploring their perspectives on learning, but also reflecting on what was happening in
their different environments. This was an original contribution to knowledge in that it opened academic debate into perspectives on this issue rather than offering either tips associated with Vizard or limited academic discussion or references as associated with Wallace (2002). In fact all six of these pieces, plus my book are considered as key documents in researching the issues of behaviour management. In Powell’s account of the extant research into behaviour management, the above articles are all understood as a central contribution to the academic discourse on this topic (Powell, 2019).

Part two

10.8. Section 2, Collaboration, dialogue and announcements

In this section I am going to speak briefly about a series of pieces where, in various public arenas, I began exploring the issues of disruptive students. Technically, I initiated all these articles and were, with the exception of E29, written in conjunction with other teachers. I have included them to give examples of how I have worked collaboratively in joint practitioner research (Coffield et al., 2014; Wenger 1998) with other writers and encouraged dialogue. These pieces announced research; three were dialogues and the final piece was an unpublished report (E31) that formed the research into the views of trainee teachers and teacher educators later represented more extensively in my book (2017, pp. 169-202). All these publications increased the impact on practice of my book and previous work.
10.9. Dialogue with colleagues

My younger colleague, Brockway had never been published previously and as a way of mentoring his academic writing career, I involved him in writing a brief article for *Intuition* (E25) outlining some agreed points about behaviour management discussions we had conducted in the Teacher Education staff room at Leeds City College, offering some practical advice to teachers and trainees. In this article I reference previous longer pieces of research I had produced, discussed in Part two of this commentary. E25 concludes with the idea of initiating more dialogues (Lebor, Brockway, 2014b).

We then developed a more complex example of a dialogue where we discussed some issues and parameters of what could be done as a teacher to counteract disruptive behaviour. In this discussion (E26) I probe Brockway to explore the changes in culture between teachers’ violence towards students and the possibilities for creative learning in contemporary classrooms. There is a point of tension when notions of punishments are discussed, not rewarding students through attention when they ‘misbehave.’ There are, however, many assumptions in this discussion; traditional ideas about ‘behaviour management’ ‘reward’ and ‘punishment’ are reiterated, nevertheless in terms of practice, central to the role of the teachers’ trainer is the ability to set up placements and teacher shadowing where required so that trainees learn through modelling from more experienced teachers (Powell, 2012). My main point is that the open dialogue we are having could be an example of how teachers and trainees might discuss these issues in training sessions or in staff rooms. Brockway rightly uses Rogerian notions of ‘unconditional positive regard’ and Berne’s adult-to-adult transactional
analysis, but also puts issues of inclusion, equality and diversity as central to our current understanding and constructions of classrooms.

There are certain weaknesses in this piece. The dialogue now seems quite stilted, such as when I ask “But you are not suggesting we return to corporal punishment...” I make comments to provoke a response or keep the discussion moving, but mostly we align ourselves with the value of having public dialogues as a model for listening to one another and having discussions that can take place, rather than proffering a new or radical view.

10.10. Continents apart

More unusual is the dialogue in E27 with Dr Paula Green where we are comparing the practice of being teacher educators in Leeds, West Yorks and South Africa/Malawi (Lebor, Green, 2014c). In this dialogue, which I initiated, I am trying to draw out the contrasts between at least these two cultures. Differences emerge of technologies, wealth and poverty and different systems of education. However, in terms of practice the most salient point to emerge is the contrast between Malawian students, observed by Green to be enthusiastic, compliant and thoroughly engaged in their sessions and my own experiences of student truculence and resistance in the Education and Training sector in the North of England. This is, of course, a vast simplification and there are many complexities within each context, however, the significant aspect of this dialogue is its location, comparing and contrasting classrooms in different cultural and geographic settings. Culturally responsive pedagogy needs to become, in my view, much more central to the teachers’ training curriculum. The reason for this is because teachers are facing students from a
wide range of neuro-diversity and different cultural and ethnic backgrounds (Wolf, 2011). Teachers need to be fully prepared for this reality. The change in practice could be summarised as:

1. Involving Dr. Green in published dialogue which she had never encountered previously.
2. Modelling cross-cultural discussions on differences in education in different countries.
3. Introducing public dialogue about different methods of training teachers in different countries.

10.11. Disruptive dialogue on disruption

The dialogue with Rennie is more confrontational and possibly in parts abrasive. She does not accept the language I use to introduce the discussion and deliberately subverts the technological vehicle we are using in order to illustrate points about the nature of disruption. In my view this is a very successful encounter because difficult issues of constructing disruptive behaviour are debated in an open and analytic way. Rennie redefines disruptive behaviour as a learning experience in itself, does not accept violent, negative behaviour by students as particularly problematic and is deeply suspicious of what she considers the norms of managerial advice, namely using contracts, ground rules, small group work etc. as mechanical and limited approaches that do not lead to reflective learning or helping students to develop relationships as individuals. Both of us recount particularly challenging and difficult confrontations with emotionally wrought students and
both refer to classes ‘rioting’ and discuss publicly how these situations might be understood (Lebor, Rennie, 2015b).

Rennie used the Cynefin framework to define simple and complex situations (Snowden, 2015). I admit, in the dialogue that my questions are simple, but in terms of this definition argue that classroom situations described here are highly complex. I again outline my research on speaking to managers (E24), but also make very clear statements about my practice as a teacher and teacher educator, using a dialogic process, continually questioning students and trainees, but also being open to being questioned and challenged in classrooms as happens in this dialogue. My final statement in this piece goes to the centre of my attitudes to being a teacher and the human complexity of the teacher/student relationship. It could be said that this final paragraph encapsulates my perspective and embodies my purpose and reason for being a teacher educator, underpinning many of the points and arguments outlined in my previous and subsequent writing. To quote in full:

“I have no problem with being questioned and probed. It is actually the dialogic approach I continually use myself in all my teaching from Entry level classes all the way through to level seven Masters teaching. I see questioning and probing as essentially part of the dialogic process at the centre of the two-way relationship between all teachers and learners. The basic concern and interest into the life, aspirations, motivations and experiences of students is the way of validating learners, their reality, views and what has happened to them in the past, particularly in previous educational settings, but also concerns why they think what they think and whether there is an alternative discourse. I do find this topic endlessly fascinating because of its continual
variation depending on circumstances, so, as you say, reductionist advice on
ground rules, boundaries and lesson plans might offer many teachers a
limited set of tools and resources for dealing with different sets of complexity
in each situation where ‘learning’ is being resisted. However, sometimes the
energies of learners in a class can be unleashed at such a high level of
intensity that deploying rules and threats are rendered meaningless. The
important aspect for me in this dialogue is that you have engaged in
discussing these issues beyond the normative frameworks of many
educational gurus who offer a series of behaviours that they say work in their
lectures, theory books and video sessions away from actual classrooms. You
have widened the conversation to explore a level of complexity to suggest that
a rioting class is a human situation that cannot easily be characterised or dealt
with in a generalised or formulaic way. The question is really how can
individual teachers find it in themselves to teach where learners are not co-
operating and then the question becomes what support can managers, other
tutors and trainers put in place to ensure that these tutors feel they can
survive, thrive and offer imaginative strategies when they are faced with
challenging situations” (Lebor, Rennie, 2015, p.19).

‘How managers can support teachers dealing with behaviour issues’ (E29) is
a summary of my research from E24, putting the suggestions gleaned from
managers out into the public arena, reporting research and summarising
much debate (Lebor, 2015a). The importance of these articles operates as a
dialectic moving the discussion from personal research, exploring the
complexities of language and human situations, critiquing aspects of the
managerial approach as explored in E28 to this more pragmatic, possibly
journalistic, listing of advice to practitioners as suggested by managers. The problem was that many managers interviewed offered tactics that merely reiterated what they personally would have done if they were teaching the class, rather than offering overall strategic advice that could be applied on an institutional basis. I revisit the advice that staff meetings should be used as a forum for supporting staff facing challenging classes; buddying experienced and inexperienced teachers, but also offering whole organisation policies. The “dialectic” is supposed to operate in a transformational way, moving dialogue into practice (McLaren, 1989, p57). The process of this commentary is constant reflection in the light of new experiences, discussion, and publication and of rethinking what has been previously said.

10.12. The teenage brain

During this period I particularly wanted to write a series of public dialogues, modelled on what I had done in my conversations about creativity (e.g. E15), but in this case devoted to the topic of behaviour management. My idea was to produce dozens of discussions with different teacher educators on their perspectives on how they taught or what they advised on behaviour management. In this regard E30 could be described as a failure. I opened the discussion with Collins by asking my usual questions about behaviour management, but she responded with a 3000 word argument about the special requirements of teenage males. My involvement with this piece was to challenge many of the assumptions, edit the language so that it was understandable for a wide audience and reduce its polemic qualities so that it was acceptable for publication. This piece is highly reliant on the earlier views of Blakemore (2018). I do not consider it an original contribution to my
perspectives on behaviour management issues, but I have included it because it shows me collaborating with other teacher educators in order to improve practice and adds another dimension to the debate (Lebor, Collins, 2016a). This was the first piece that Collins had ever published. Shortly after this she became a lecturer in education at the University of Leeds. This also impacted on the publication toll of the education department at Leeds City College.

10.13. Joint, collaborative research

In E31 I was part of a joint project with Rennie, funded by the University of Huddersfield Consortium to investigate how behaviour management issues were addressed in the sector and Consortium (Lebor, Rennie, 2016c). We were supposed to research trainee needs and offer recommendations for the university’s teacher educators. We were supervised by Prof Roy Fisher and Dr David Powell. This was joint-practitioner research (Wenger, 1998; Coffield et al 2014; Gregson, Nixon, Spedding, 2015). My role in the project was to carry out qualitative research into the perspectives and experiences of trainees and teacher educators (Lebor, Rennie, ibid., pp.12-40). Rennie’s self-selected role was to construct and carry out a supported experiment, deliver a three month CPD training programme for any trainee in the Consortium who said they required this and gather teaching resources that could be used by trainees and trainers (See letter in E47). We presented our findings in a report and via presentations at a Consortium event and at a national conference at the University of Huddersfield during which we gave individual lectures and
answered questions from trainees on a panel with Prof Susan Wallace, Paul Dix and Dan Taubman (E48).

From my point of view this research was central to progress the numbers of stakeholders whom I could research for their attitudes and experiences, questioning different groups on the issue of when learning was resisted. The strengths of this research were that it was a supervised, joint-project exploring trainees’ and trainers’ views over 23 different colleges. The weaknesses were that only 103 trainees responded to a very detailed questionnaire out of initially a possible 1,191 trainees in the system during those three months. In order to carry out this research I had to construct and use a series of research tools, questionnaires, questions for focus groups and ultimately interviews with teacher educators. In fact I had previously constructed a brief questionnaire on this topic (Lebor, Rennie, 2016) which I had used with many dozens of trainees when I lectured at the University of Huddersfield Pre-service conferences in 2015, but also later in 2016 and interviews with newly-qualified tutors associated with previous years hence the expanded numbers of this research when I write about this in my chapter 10 (2017) on trainee views. However, most extended comments in E32 come from the detailed questionnaires produced under supervision during this 3 month project.

This research uncovered learning requirements amongst trainee teachers regarding classroom behaviour. It questioned trainee and newly-qualified teachers who were facing serious behaviour management issues in their classrooms. The research was heavily monitored within the university, institutional setting. The findings were quite critical of the status quo. This might have been significant in the fact that this report was never published.
Versions of what I wrote based on more surveys were eventually published in my book; versions of what Rennie wrote were later published as chapters in the Bloomsbury book (2019) to which I also contributed.

In this portfolio I have only included a summary of the research. It was joint practitioner research that impacted on discussions about behaviour management at the University of Huddersfield, but as mentioned this research had the limited impact on the University of Huddersfield and only modified their PGCE offer by including one outcome on behaviour in their PGCE course specification (ibid.).

**Part three**

**11. A matrix of perspectives on classroom behaviours**

**11.1. Critiquing my book**

The main focus of this section is a critical account exploring the strengths and weaknesses of my book and a single chapter. I have included two positive reviews of the book (E33) but also three articles (2018) publicising the arguments (E35, E36, E37) thus increasing its national impact. I will not comment further on these pieces other than to say that all this writing is attempting to influence practice in national contexts. My main task in this section is to subject the book (E32) to scrutiny using critical perspectives to focus on its problematic or arguable aspects and introduce levels of theoretical understanding that have not been previously included in the published book (2017). The first element to be explored is its title. The
'classroom management' part of the title was strongly advised by the publishers, Macmillan who suggested that my preferred title of 'The battle against being educated' by itself might be seen as pithy and dramatic, but would not attract readers either commercially for the book or in terms of algorithms for chapter downloads. They insisted that the words 'behaviour management' were included in order to attract readers. Their commercial knowledge was vindicated. However, the words 'classroom behaviour management' are problematic and possibly do not receive sufficient analysis within the book itself. Thus although I argue for the primacy of equality and support for a humanist understanding of the relationship between teachers and students, there is an underlying assumption of the authority of the teacher and the managed role of the students. The words 'classroom management' assume that students lack agency (Bourdieu, 1977) or cannot be androgogy-based (Knowles, 1975), self-determining learners, but have to be controlled by teachers. Students are being schooled to replicate and accept the hegemony of the current power base in society (Darder et al., ibid.).

However, many of the strategies suggested in the book are purposefully to create adult environments where learning activities stimulate students into research, discovery learning or self-directed explorations. Teachers' motives could be to create autonomous, independent learners or fit in with a managerial version of society where education is a form of Panoptican (Foucault, 1991) control, surveillance where students do not know if they are being watched. It could be argued that students are being replicated into their roles either as controllers of the means of production or lower level producers depending on their marks in assessment (Anyon, ibid., p151).
The term ‘battle against being educated’ is problematic from several perspectives in that it constructs the relationship between teachers and students as conflicted (Lebor, 2019). However, the reasons for using this particular formula were that it is referring to a) actual violence in the classroom b) it is a formulation that describes education as a gift that is being resisted. This formulation might be conferring privilege on teachers as the instigators of conformity in society and constructing disruptive students as those who are reacting against societal norms by resisting the controlling structures of contemporary capitalism or other versions of state “hegemony” (McLaren, ibid., p62).

It should be said that this book was not written as a doctorate, but rather with the express purpose of helping to support and change trainee practice. Yet it continually questions and sometimes subverts the norms of behaviour management discourse, implicitly using the tools of critical pedagogy, questioning theory and practice in a range of contexts. As author, I have been imbued with a critical pedagogy approach through coming from an educational and cultural background of constant questioning, but also more formally teaching all modules on the BA in Professional Development with the University of Huddersfield (see E50) where being a self-reflexive practitioner and using critical pedagogies to explore intellectual, textual and human behavioural issues were normative approaches. It could be argued that my book only minimally references a systematic, transcendent, grand narrative as previously mentioned. I do not put forward a whole-world view or a consistent ideological, sociological, theoretical approach to practice problems, but then I
don’t believe in one explanation of everything (Lyotard, 1984). There are references to class, gender, ethnicity, disability and other issues of inclusion, yet I only reference some of the major and possibly less abstract thinkers on these issues. Nevertheless, I have referred to Marx, Willis, Foucault, hooks and Illych, amongst many others, but not directly to works by the Frankfurt School and its legacy, but implicitly embed the sort of pedagogical criticality associated with these perspectives. I have not proffered a theoretical framework for understanding how society works as a whole or where schooling fits within a particular ideological understanding of cultural capital (Field, ibid.) or the processes of education in potentially differentiating students in terms of their level of financial or managerial power to which students will aspire or not, depending on class, background and economic/cultural context (McLaren, ibid., pp75-76). On the basis of Chapter 8 and in Lebor 2019, I give some indication of possibly ‘spoilt’ students from affluent backgrounds, disrupting classrooms as counter evidence to the argument that disruption is purely the province of the under-privileged and academically limited. However, I have not really had the opportunity to substantiate this view through researching, for example, private education or even begin to marshal evidence that might be available for this argument.

Teachers/readers will be approaching the issue of how they teach; the political meaning behind their role and the power or authority of their position from diverse ideological perspectives. Privileging one ideological stance or explanation might undermine or critique the self-determining confidence of individual tutors who might have diverse ideological positions on these issues. My approach is overall dedicated to practice, in other words what will
fundamentally support the individual journey of teachers being effective in classrooms.

Opening the discussion about negative events that are happening in classes is radical in itself. Admitting to vulnerability, allowing teachers and managers to collaborate in supporting one another has deep implications for humanising relationships. If teachers identify with many varied points on the political spectrum, then it can be quite counter-productive to their sense of self, if teacher educators identify with one specific ideological stance and criticise those trainees who do not conform with this view. When advice or recommendations are given to teachers, there is an assumption of power from the adviser to the trainee-teacher who in turn is seeking to develop their consciousness and being into many potential roles as later discussed (Lebor, 2019). Nevertheless, there could or should be a theoretical position within the book for describing the constructions of groups and how these work. If the book had been formally underpinned by the work of Bourdieu (ibid.) or Giddens (1984), then as Binner says in her unpublished phd, the behaviour management of the two classes she explored, could be understood in terms of theories of power and control. By contrast I have explored a wide range of classes, stakeholders, contexts and theorists who specifically focus on behaviour management issues (e.g. Kounin, 1997; Wallace, 2007; Cowley, 2015; Bennet, 2017). Nevertheless, is interest in the theory of pedagogy particularly un-English (Simon, 1981)? Throughout the book there is an issue as to which theorists should be selected for each examination of social phenomena. Are theorists chosen because they offer useful explanations of reality or perhaps cover the human conditions discussed in the most plausible
way ideologically, phenomenologically or philosophically for one particular person’s point of view? Will the selected theorist most clearly align with the ideological position of the researcher?

Most of the theorists I discuss do not have an overarching explanation of human nature, but rather focus on practice in the classroom. However, a specific ideological underpinning for my work could be identified in a writer, such as Kohn (1983/1996, 2006) who expresses an anti-capitalist, egalitarian, pro-democratic stance which is generally associated with critical pedagogy (Lebor, 2017, pp.36-37: Darder, ibid.), but most classroom behaviour management theorists give advice on how to control classrooms without identifying with a specific ideological position. The perspective of teachers and managers, questioned throughout the book could replicate the managerialism, authority and power structures of the institution where they work. Nevertheless, in order to achieve some sense of internal balance, confidence and expressions of engagement with others, teachers need to develop classroom relationships. Viewing relationships as central could be seen as offering a Humanist philosophy where overcoming barriers is key to the enterprise of teachers interacting with students (Rogers, ibid.; Maslow, ibid.). The question then becomes, if viewed from a libertarian perspective, does Humanism merely allow the power structures of class and marginalisation of women, ethnic minorities, those with different sexuality or abilities to be put in place more effectively? Or does that focus on human relations necessitate an understanding of a spectrum of different psychologies, potentially viewing human relations as dependent on versions of Freudianism for understanding students’ childhood past (Giroux, 1983,
pp45-46) restorative practice to fathom recent events (Hopkins, 2004), CBT to analyse repeating patterns (Greenberger and Padesky, ibid.), solution focus to ask questions about students’ perfect futures (Iveson, ibid.) and a welter of other theories and frameworks for making sense of the perplexity of the human condition. Can one theory of being human genuinely be posited to explain all the learning events that take place in a classroom? Although the publishers and peer reviewer wanted me to produce a book that was going to be academic, yet ‘opinionated’, the main thrust was that I was asked to write a text that was going to be practical and useful rather than abstractly theoretical.

11.2. The narrative element

The next criticism that could be levelled against this book is that it contains a strong narrative element (Cohen et al., pp. 584-586). There are several reasons for this. The events in classrooms are narratives. I have had to use storied accounts of what happened (Shacklock, Thorp, 2005). History and biography are normative in social science (Mills, 1959). The texture of information concerns a series of happenings between people; these sequences could be reduced to formulae; A hit B. C said “Don’t!” But by emphasising theory, discourse analysis or abstracting events to formulae and ignoring the economic, cultural and gender dimensions of these events, for example, they become:
1) Quite alien.

2) Unreadable as a source of information for other teachers.

3) Do not help with the social/cultural understanding of events.

4) They become not part of the normative discourse of what happens in classrooms.

However, it could be argued that this narrative approach borders on being anecdotal. How can the events recorded be substantiated, validated or triangulated? Narrative sections of the book are based on notes on lesson observations or write-ups from reports or events that were later published in peer-reviewed journals. Sometimes there is a relentless series of negative events that are being recalled. The Macmillan peer reviewer at the end asked me to modify my approach by cutting down on the sheer number of negative events as the effect on the reader was s/he claimed deeply depressing. I countered this problem by introducing more irony, jokes and humour into the style of the book. This was an attempt to make the book more readable, but did these changes undermine or trivialise the overall argument? I would argue that these events were not being systematically confronted by teacher educators in the ETS literature, other than by Vizard and Wallace and that in my view a module needed to be constructed whereby trainees could research their own environment (Stenhouse, ibid.) and be credited for working out strategies and solutions for dealing with classroom behaviour issues (E39-E43).
11.3. The political dimension

Another issue that does not surface explicitly in my book which subsequent editions and articles could change is the idea that a major reason for classroom disruption is many students’ dislike or refusal to co-operate with the prevailing Government/authority/establishment culture as represented by teachers and classrooms (Giroux, 1988). This could be understood as political and maybe shows a rational reaction to what is seen as an imbalance of power (Darder, ibid.). I do speak about the idea of students being compliant, counselled or becoming acculturated into the educational system (Hyland, 2006) and the levels of inequality within the system (Green, Janmatt, 2011). The problem is that, although I mention the idea of middle-class/bourgeois values being foisted on working class young people (Lebor, 2017; 2019), I do not explicitly investigate this perspective as the major cause or context of students’ cultural experience. The schooling of society (Illych, 1971), arguably ‘brainwashing’ young people into conforming to the expected norms of what is required currently in a capitalist economy, needs much further research (Hyland, 1998). The link between constructions of ‘class’ and behaviour management issues needs to be investigated more thoroughly. Maybe the question about FE colleges should be asked as to whether they have been the Cinderella Service because they school those who will carry out less financially-rewarding jobs within the economy (Avis, Bathmaker, 2007).

As suggested in my latest chapter ‘Reflections on the language of disruption, learning and conflict’ (E34) I have moved away from the notion of ‘behaviour management’ and begin to move towards Personal Development, Behaviour
and Welfare (PDBW) (School leaders, 2017), the current title of my ABMET module. However, the problem remains of how individual teachers can relate to difficult or resistant classes and whether constructing this problem as student welfare emolliates or hides the difficulty that individual teachers face.

There is a difference between difficult and violent behaviour as explained in this chapter (E34). At its most extreme, disruption can involve violence against teachers. This is a relatively rare phenomenon, particularly in the post-school sector; however, it can present difficulties within Pupil Referral Units (PRUs) or special facilities for supporting potentially ‘aggressive’ learners who cannot cope with the conventional norms of classroom interactions. However, learning can be disrupted in many other ways. After attacks on teachers the next level of intensity is violence between students, screaming, refusal to carry out tasks, talking in class, using mobile phones, putting on make-up, coming late or the ultimate vote of no confidence in the teaching, not turning up for lessons (Parry, 2013). Context is everything. Each of the above scenarios could be considered as ‘difficult’ behaviours involving passive/aggressive resistance to learning, but also perfectly legitimate learning experiences. The violence between students could be martial arts. The screaming might be on the football field. Refusal to carry out tasks could be assertiveness training. Using a mobile might be research. Talking in class could be paired work, discussion or a team project. Lateness might represent genuine problems; the student could be the caring lynch-pin in the survival of his/her family. Putting on make-up could be on a beauty course. Not attending could be due to disability, distance learning or even students completing course work. Some students work better in an independent digital
environment and achieve higher marks when working from home. Deciding whether these classroom events are examples of difficult behaviour or merely part of the normative cultures of teaching and learning are always a question of interpretation and context.

More research by individual teachers on the causes of classroom problems and strategies that work in their own localised contexts might be a way forward. It could be said that the negative events described in my book might be disconcerting for trainees coming into the profession, but that one could argue that not confronting these issues in teachers’ training means that teachers are unprepared for the difficulties they might face, have unrealistic expectations and hence leave the profession within the first five years after qualifying (Tickle, 2018).

11.4. Discrepancies

There is a discrepancy already mentioned between the number of students questioned and interviewed in previous versions of this research and the increased numbers discussed within the context of this book. The reason for this is quite simple. In earlier peer-reviewed documents, there was often a time-scale to the research. Once embarked on the book, I was asked to expand the research in several contexts, asking managers, teachers and trainees more questions. This was a method of expanding the samples, triangulating information to check whether individuals outside my original samples still held the same views. Occasionally the numbers mentioned in the text refer to overall numbers approached and/or numbers who actually
responded to research questions at different points. The publishers wanted to see new information and a more developed position than the work previously published. My concern was whether I was always meeting teachers/trainees who were struggling with difficult classes. Did the fact that I was researching the topic of disruptive behaviour mean that I was always being drawn to meet teachers who talked about negative behaviours they had experienced? Was it a self-fulfilling prophecy? Unfortunately, the question posed to different groups of trainees “is anybody experiencing challenging or difficult classes?” usually met with a 30 to 40% affirmative answer (2017, p. 210).

11.5. What are the strengths?

Having honestly tried to confront my book’s weaknesses, I would argue that it does raise many questions about the nature of learning. It sets the scene of colleges and institutional frameworks in the ETS where resistance to learning has been shown to happen, making a case for demonstrating the differences between schools and colleges and the implications of behaviour management problems in these two different contexts. The key point is that in most books on behaviour management, it is assumed that the same rules apply (Rogers, 2015). My book tries to unravel the differences. It describes a wide range of negative events that do not normally appear in books on teachers’ training. It is as if these negative events are edited out as too difficult to discuss possibly because they show a lack of containment or this is not the way the profession wishes to define itself, but also teacher educators cannot easily legislate on what should be done as the contexts and dynamics of classes and the
individual teachers leading them are so specific that generalised advice cannot be given. Hence, I show that the same advice can be counter-productive in different circumstances. Classroom management is very difficult to teach, but this is the point of my book.

11.6. Quantitative research

I could have carried out quantitative research into the numbers of incidents of bad behaviour across the country, but this information is extremely difficult to access. I would also have replicated the work of Parry and Taubman (2013) who had far more access via the national union, but their work is problematic because there is an in-built bias towards teachers and a critique of management for not protecting members. Furthermore, I show that the categories of disruption mentioned in this report could all be seen as potential learning experiences, depending on their interpretation (2019). Wallace’s qualitative research is based on interviews with teachers and students (2007). I have expanded on her viewpoint by looking at this problem from many perspectives or lenses (Brookfield, ibid.) including experienced teachers, students, managers, ICT specialists, trainees and teacher educators.

If my book was purely dispassionate or unengaged research into classroom events, I might have produced a more consistent series of research outcomes, or even one overriding method or methodology, but this book is deeply concerned with the human challenges of practice teachers face in their relationships with students. Each chapter engages with practice in different
ways. If it had been action research, as shown in subsequent trainee work, then it would have been a much more limited experiment within a specific context. The publishers and peer reviewer wanted it to have a practical application with recommendations at the end of each chapter, which, of course, reflects the priorities of this commentary which is based on changing the practice of others. In this book I do outline and examine a range of theorists relevant to behaviour management. Although I keep repeating the mantra that the generalisations of theory are critiqued via the specificities of practice and vice versa, I focus on theories that are appropriate for classroom practice rather than abstractions that cannot always be applied.

Other innovative aspects are that it is a book which listens to the voices of others rather trying to impose a view that privileges my experience. It models strategies and methods of practice for trainees to support one another initially within training classes and then in future professional settings. It includes the ICT dimension of ghost-writing, cyber bullying and plagiarism, interviewing experts and students to begin opening up the problematic nature of this topic in terms of class management contexts. It questions teacher educators and managers on their experiences and views of class management issues. This is an approach which contributes to new knowledge, the most significant element of which is the final chapter where I put forward a potential module for using at national level, implemented within my own institutional context, validated originally by Teesside and then by the Open University, successfully piloted and taught since 2014, contributing to trainees’ practice, knowledge and ability to resolve problems. This module has now been upgraded to be called PDBW and has been compulsorily taken by all 50 PGCE trainees this
year which in turn has had a significant impact on 1) these trainees’ approach to behaviour management problems in their classes. 2) The teacher education department in enhancing its standing and approach to teacher education. 3) The college of 26,000 students as a whole in that methods used in training sessions are now percolating into practice throughout the college. (See letter from Dr. Elizabeth Newton, E47).

In the chapter for Bloomsbury (2019), I begin to look critically at some of my own previous writing, analysing the use of language employed to describe ‘classroom management’ as a phrase that implies a loss of agency or self-directed learning; ‘disruption’ as implying a flow that is stopped, but learning might just be redirected, whilst metaphors of violence construct the classroom as an arena of conflict, students resisting learning. I justify the use of violent imagery in the titles of my publications by arguing that in each case there is some act of physical violence being described and that by not referring to this dimension of some teaching situations, the literature is giving a false impression of what trainees can occasionally expect in classrooms. In this chapter I reiterate the differences between schools and colleges, analyse two public lectures on classroom management and explain the inadequacy of such lectures, when compared to a whole module devoted to supporting trainees with their issues in dealing with challenging classes. I offer a range of strategies and techniques for addressing difficult classroom situations; characterise different versions of being a teacher, explore their social/political implications and finally suggest a range of difficult conversations that could take place in classrooms. This chapter is one of ten in a book offering a progressive, academic exploration of this topic.
12. Part four

12.1. The application of practice

In this last section (E38-E51) I present how my module (ABMET) worked in practice, contributed to trainee knowledge and include the handbook, specification, tasks, marking criteria, student work and some feedback documents as evidence for the practice impact of my arguments. I produced this module as a response to the research which I had carried out over many years. Other elements I have included are a sample of ethical statements and permission documents from various sources so as to establish that all this work took place within the framework of BERA requirements (ibid.).

I would, however, argue that the most important element in this section is the work of the trainees who came from different vocational and academic backgrounds and had to research their own environment where they were located for their placement, identify problems that they were facing in terms of classroom management issues and then work out strategies for addressing these problems with respective individuals or groups. These were trainees becoming researchers (Stenhouse, ibid.) carrying out small-scale, action research and reflective practice (Hillier, Jameson, 2003; Sahlberg, Furlong, Munn, 2012). There were many aspects of this approach that were innovative, radical and highly practical. The key was constructing trainee teachers as researchers investigating their own context and applying strategies in order to
resolve practice problems. This is an innovative approach associated particularly with the PGCE at Leeds City College, but in this module is significantly relevant because trainees are dealing with problems in their environments that need changing. This module is intentionally preparing trainees for future problems that they might meet as practitioners. All trainees used in this research filled a consent form an example of which is included in document E45. In this document I only include the first page of the trainee work to show evidence of their engagement with challenging issues and my influence in changing local practice through this module without becoming too involved in the norms of practical teaching and marking.

Thus, Trainee A offers a fascinating study of teaching law at Access and degree level to students at least one of whom entered the classroom and used vulgar, aggressive language to attack another student in the class. As part of her assignment, trainee A was able to reflect on the problematic nature of this class and suggest a range of solutions to practice problems. She explored causal and contextual factors, but critically used relevant literature in order to analyse what had occurred and then implement a series of restorative practice interventions to reverse the negative dynamics of the situation and embed improved relationships into this classroom. The key factor here is the usefulness of applying discussions from the teachers’ training module ABMET into the practical situation faced by this trainee in her localised context.

Again, Trainee B gives a very good account of defining the parameters, causes and contexts of disruptive behaviour, but his case study is centred within a very challenging environment of low level achievement and difficult, un-co-operative behaviours where students are ‘disengaged’ and ‘disaffected’.
His case study focuses on one learner who came constantly late, disrupted other students, shouted and used illegal substances. The second learner in his case study challenges tutors, threatens and acts in an aggressive manner towards other students, but also has issues with being “academically inadequate.” Through the ABMET process, Trainee B was able to analyse the classroom situations, reflect on the context, causes and relevant literature, but also work out a series of useful recommendations that could be applied in future circumstances. The academic process of writing his assignment meant that this trainee could articulate these situations and get the support of colleagues in the trainee class discussions, feel comfortable about focussing on issues where learning was being resisted, and implement solutions.

Trainee C’s work was interesting and was possibly under-marked at the time. Its use of secondary qualitative research and national information on disruption sets a context of a study of developments within an anonymised, business degree-level course, disrupted through students’ use of mobiles, chatting, shouting and swinging on chairs. She identifies potential causes and behaviours based on Wallace (2007), Vizard (2012) and Cowley (2014). She eventually lists strategies for dealing with this particularly difficult class by linking employment opportunities to classroom content. Again, the ABMET course allowed the opportunity for this trainee to reflect on what was problematic in her class and work out solutions through discussion in class and writing up her case study. She productively used an academic assignment for solving practice problems she was experiencing.

Trainee D located the problems she was facing in the wider context of quite extensive knowledge of literature associated with Bennett (2012), Sellgren
(2013) and Wilson (2014) amongst others. She gave a very detailed account of the social interactions of health students, using phones, not complying with teachers’ requests and being hostile and challenging or resisting the teachers’ presence in the class. The assignment allowed Trainee D to reflect on her own emotions, work out a series of strategies, such as welcoming in students at the classroom door and saying ‘thank you’ when there was compliance. All these techniques had been discussed in class. The assignment allowed Trainee D to notice and comment on student behaviour in detail, applying a range of theories formally and work out how she would interact with students in the future.

Trainee E interpreted the assignment as centrally pertaining to mental health issues. He outlined definitions and activities that constituted disruptive behaviour, referring to a range of sources. He then based his research on auto-ethnographic processes, analysing his own personal feelings and stresses and how this related to the sports classes he was teaching. He moved the discussion onto a deeply personal and harrowing experience, demonstrating how the inner lives of trainees/teachers can affect how they understand and react to the emotional lives of students in their classes. In this case, the assignment gave this trainee the opportunity to work through his own attitudes and feelings, so that he could become a more effective, reflective practitioner in the future.

There are at least 50 case studies that could have been put into this commentary in order to demonstrate how the ABMET module assignments helped support trainees with difficult situations in practice. The module offered them the opportunity to discuss in the safety of the training class any
difficulties or problems that were happening in their placements or classroom work-place. The module acted as a kind of therapy for trainees to offload their feelings about the problems they were facing on issues of practice, particularly where learning was being resisted. Whilst other modules focussed on the norms of teaching, learning or what should be done in order to produce creative, and engaging sessions, this module focussed on areas where students did not co-operate with the learning process. Trainees were able to research the literature, discuss the issues in class, receive support from colleagues, work out solutions for their current context of work, but ultimately gain skills and knowledge of methodologies for solving problems in their future careers.

It could be said that some of the documentation needed revision and that the module needed upgrading. With the introduction of the same module as PDBW, these developments were subsequently addressed. The module then became more directly concerned with trainees meeting the Ofsted criteria of PDBW in the college.

I have also attached a range of responses from different cohorts of trainees demonstrated the value attached to this module by future teachers (E44). I have also included a sample range of ethical permission forms, trainee permission letters and flyers from conferences or training events where I spoke on behaviour management (E48), plus tools from my research, questionnaire forms (E45, 46), thus demonstrating the ethical considerations and examples of the methodological tools substantiating research carried out in line with BERA requirements.
Finally, I have included a range of relevant letters, E47a –E47q

.E47a Sample consent letter: Bill Jones, deputy CEO Leeds City College

E47b Letter of reference of support for my doctoral level work: Prof Roy Fisher, University of Huddersfield.

E47c Letter of reference of support for my doctoral level work: Head of Consortium, Dr. David Powell, University of Huddersfield.

E47d Letter on collaborative research: Sandra Rennie SEQALS

E47e Letter on collaborative research: Ian Ingram, photographer, ex BSAD

E47f Letter on collaborative research: Dominic Brockway ex-Leeds City College.

E47g Letter on collaborative research Anita Collins: University of Leeds.

E47h Letter on collaboration Dr. Paula Green: Johannesburg

E47i Letter of support for practice Dr. Denise Robinson: Professor and ex-Director of The Consortium, University of Huddersfield: editor.

E47j Letter of support for peer reviewing for JFHE Prof. Jennifer Rowley: Metropolitan University of Manchester.

E47k Letter re: lectures on behaviour management at University of Bolton Associate Prof. Dr. Sarah Telfer.

E47l Letter re: ABMET/PDBW modules at Leeds City College: Dr. Nena Skrbic., programme manager, teacher education
E47m. Letter from Dr. Patricia Odell, use of ‘War and Peace’ for QTLS

E47n Letter from Dr Elizabeth Newton Re: my impact on trainees, course, department, college.

E47o Letter from Joe Wearing re: influence on his practice as teacher, writer and assessor.

E47p Letter from UCU re: adverts sent out to course members about my book.

E47q Letter from Macmillan re: publication of book as paperback

12.2. Conclusion

There are many pieces of evidence within this commentary and portfolio that demonstrate ways in which I have developed, challenged and/or significantly revised practice and influenced others in the ETS. I have focussed on a range of interventions into learning situations devoted to teaching language, literature and art and design, examining how teaching learning and assessment could be improved or calibrated in the context of particular classes or exam systems in order to support learners achieve meaningful outcomes in their practice.
I have impacted on practice in terms of being part of the process of making racism unacceptable in language texts (E3), modified attitudes towards GCSE and A level exam texts, attacked Key Skills (which subsequently disappeared) and curriculum 2000 (which was deeply modified). I introduced many ideas for assessing and promoting creativity which later became key to my practice in countering disruptive behaviour in classrooms. I attacked the notion of ‘best practice’ in 2006 which was subsequently in 2014 deemed to be an indefensible concept.

All these interventions into current practice (E3-E18) were part of a process of entering and changing national discourse on these key areas of teaching, learning and assessment. Practice changed in all the areas mentioned at national level, but there were also other major changes and impacts on myself and the institutions where I worked to which I will refer below.

As formally employed as a teacher educator, I developed my focus from changing practice in terms of how or whether different content could be taught or assessed in different ways to a concern about learning being resisted and how this phenomenon could be countered via teachers’ training. Whist the earlier parts of my published work could be characterised as individual interventions and a discourse commenting on texts and how practice might be changed in terms of how they might be taught and assessed, my work moved towards more collaborative dialogues and then into formal methodologies for collecting data and mounting an overall argument for putting the case to train teachers in the ETS on how to deal with challenging behaviour. The impacts in this sphere have been more visible.
1. Over a quarter of a million pages of my work have been photocopied.

2. I have had over 4600 downloads of chapters from my book.

3. My book has been published at an international level, selling sufficient numbers to warrant bringing it out in paperback.

4. My work has been cited and referenced as a major researcher into the area of behaviour management in the ETS.

5. I have invented a module on behaviour management that has been studied by over 100 trainees and their practice has been changed through being on this course and they, in turn, have changed the practice of a very large college (26,000 students).

6. I have changed the practice of a number of teaching staff directly through modelling sessions, researching, writing or being involved in dialogues with them.

7. I have modelled research, publication and dialogues in the various departments and colleges where I have worked which has in turn impacted on several individuals and the current education department where I work.

8. I have put the subject of behaviour management in ETS as a central concern amongst teacher educators, trainees and teachers through speaking at conferences and lectures at different universities, but also publishing in many contexts on this issue.
9. I am approaching the discourse on behaviour management more as an academic dispute than previous publications of reports, brief articles or ultimately 'how-to' books (Powell, ibid.).

10. I have written the first full academic book on the subject of behaviour management in the ETS.

11. I have significantly revised practice in that as someone writing from a position of teaching HE in FE, I have transformed the status of this area to one where colleges can compete with universities in also becoming research-informed centres.

Thus the impact of my practice as a writer and researcher has influenced many individuals, institutions, students and teachers. It has been a transformational process, with me operating as a self-reflective practitioner, commenting on experience within classrooms and texts, but writing about all this at national level.

Publishing at national level had a transformational impact on the institutions where I worked teaching HE in FE, raising the credibility of delivering degree level programmes at Dewsbury College, BSAD and Leeds City College. The fact that I was the only person in various HE teams who had published extensively in these environments meant that the stereotype of FE lecturers as only being 'good vocational teachers' but not writers or researchers significantly challenged current practice and this in turn had a major impact on the level of HE student work in this context, the credibility of teams in terms of QAA inspections, validation, but also increased the esteem with which I, my colleagues and the institutions where I worked was held.
Nevertheless, throughout this work, there is a deep concern with learning and different classroom contexts offering perspectives on where learning takes place with various levels of success. With some variations, my work achieves a high level of rigour by being scrutinised and published by a plethora of highly critical editors at the Times Educational Supplement, Guardian, Routledge, Macmillan, The University of Huddersfield, BERA, Intuition and Bloomsbury. I have had to develop a rigorous, concise style in my published work. In classroom practice, as teacher and educator I have had to engage with many hundreds, if not thousands of students from many diverse backgrounds and levels, supporting their learning in a variety of contexts and very often transforming their lives. As a researcher I have tried to be constantly self-critical of my methods, methodology and practice. In the end I hope this body of work stands as a series of innovative ideas and reflective strategies to support learning and changes of practice in the ETS.

**Recommendations**

These recommendations are based on the experience and writing that I have produced as evidenced in the portfolio rather than specifically emanating from the critical commentary itself.

1. In the context of much violence in our society between young people, I would highly recommend that teachers in the post school sector compulsorily receive a module of training in dealing with violent behaviour.
2. All violent incidents to be logged by each institution and national statistics to be available for scrutiny.

3. Strategies for reducing violence in informal and formal teaching spaces to be discussed at national level.

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