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Teachers as theorists (Volume 4, Number 3 International Journal of Learning and Change, 2010)

Abstract — This paper addresses the tensions that exist between policy-makers and practitioners about what learning and teaching should really be about. It adds to the collective reflection on what learning is about and how we should never stop engaging in reflection about it in an active, revolving and changing manner. Similarities between second language learning and generic learning intersperse the reflective account as the author looks through the lenses of her own disciplines of Linguistics, English Language and English as a Second Language. The reflection digs deep into the emotions of a critical pedagogue and is finally channelled into a ‘pedagogy of hope’ for a better future.

Keywords — Learning, Change, Transformatory learning, Critical pedagogy, Critical reflection, Post-16 or Lifelong Learning, TESOL (Teaching English for Speakers of Other Languages), HE (Higher Education)

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1 INTRODUCTION

Teachers these days have less and less time to be reflective and are forced to be more and more output-driven because of the agenda of compliance with top-down targets that permeates all phases of education in the UK. Teachers are audited, inspected, graded, told to improve their practice via action plans and to self-evaluate, in order to evidence impact on learners. In a way, teachers have become like automatons, and, instead of celebrating the ‘teacher as thinker’ end of the spectrum of pedagogical change, most HE institutions encourage their teachers to be ‘practitioners’ of new policies – almost denying them the right to effect changes at policy level on the very core of what they do everyday and which is teaching and learning. Within this wider context, I experienced a critical moment when I was asked to come up with my own learning theory, within the context of a teacher training course that I was taking as part of my new appointment in HE. Although I had been teaching since 1986 (including for four years in HE), in 2007, I was told to attend a teacher training course to gain a Post-Graduate Certificate for Teaching and Learning in HE (PGCert). However, I will show how this teacher training course made me realise that experienced teachers could greatly benefit from consciously going back to the basics of what constitutes learning in

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the first place. Indeed, in this paper, it is argued that Learning Theory is not static and that educators, teachers, teacher educators and students need to continuously reflect about their practice and adjust their thinking about what constitutes learning, in an ever changing cycle that leads to action. The paper is structured around a deep reflective cycle that I went through myself as a trainee on the PGCert. It presents my own reformulation of what constitutes learning by giving, first, some background to what fashioned my thinking, including the key theorists that I was inspired by. Second, I hope to take the reader through my practice and how it changed to accommodate new thinking about learning and teaching, specifically emphasising the core values of transformative and critical pedagogy. The paper is in the shape of a deep reflective commentary backed up by concrete examples of praxis and research in Teaching and Learning, and, very importantly for me as a critical pedagogue, written in the ‘reflective I’ – the ‘I’ that is self-evaluative, critical and bases its analysis upon reflection-in/on-action. There are diary entries to exemplify some of the key actions that I took at the time of studying for the PGCert. Each of the 4 sections of this paper explores my journey from experienced practitioner to thinker. The first section introduces the paper and poses some questions about the state of education in terms of Teaching and Learning. The second section explores the reading and the research that influenced the work and my own formulation of a theory of learning. The

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third section consists of a reflection on the actions that I took to effect changes in my practice. The final section concludes the paper and places it within the theory and practice of critical pedagogy, which is a school of thought that I began to actively research in 2006, and, that I have been passionate about ever since.

As I am a teacher educator myself, I believe that teachers like myself need to model best practice by carrying out their own reflections and producing diaries or journals in line with what we ask our trainee teachers to do, which is to write diaries or journals to make sense of what they are learning and how it is affecting, not only their present practice, but also, their future plans. This methodology leads me to conclude that each time anyone concerned with learning goes through this kind of reflective cycle, they are ‘playing a distinctively transformed tune’ as they put back Learning at the centre of everything they do. Also, this way, we are all learning together – the teacher and the taught.

There were also other critical moments that affected me and that made me explore my own feelings further about two key contexts in Higher Education – that of the teacher training context and that of the staff development context.

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At the start of the academic year, many Higher Education Institutions run staff development days for their academic staff. Such days tend to focus on how to develop excellence in teaching and learning and are somewhat akin to appraisals of how to teach, but not so much of what to think should be learning in the first place. Indeed, institutional staff development days are about teachers as practitioners rather than teachers as thinkers. In direct contrast to this staff development context, the teacher training context which I had the privilege to be part of, between 2007-2008, unleashed in me the desire to reach to the bottom of all of my thoughts and experience as a teacher and think very hard about learning and teaching. The most critical moment came when all the participants were very explicitly asked to come up with their own theory of learning on day two of the course. Where best to start with troublesome concepts, such as the state of education and the lack of focus on learning than in the teachers of teachers? Like myself – bottom-up – and turn those troublesome concepts into actions that could hopefully lead to equitable learning?

2. Formulating a theory of learning

Four main theories, different and similar at the same time, came ‘crashing in’ on me and helped me frame my own reflection – Freire (1996) and his emancipatory adult education approaches; Brookfield (2005) and his critical theory that recognises the dominance of certain ideologies; bell

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hooks (1994) and her theories for an anti-racist and anti-sexist education based on teachers' reflections on their own power, and, finally at this initial stage also, Coffield (2008) and his public plea for an explicit model of learning and change that will transform our institutions into true learning organisations. These four theorists were kind of asking me to re-assess the context that I was in and to dig deep into what I thought learning was all about, at a particular juncture of my life as a teacher educator, and, to be wary of formulaic approaches to Teaching and Learning.

Brookfield, for example, argues that we, all of us, are theorists, and, that it is by taking action and effecting change that we can reclaim learning and place it back into the centre of policy as teachers. He states that (2008: 3): 'The more deliberate and intentional an action is, the more it is likely to be theoretical'.

This, in effect, was what I was doing by self-consciously taking action to re-assess what learning was all about, as a result of being on a teacher training course.

On the one hand, I was assessing the situation I was in and critically noticing the two contexts above-mentioned (of the institutional staff development days and of the teacher training course), whilst also making most of my reading of key and critical theories about learning.

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The dichotomy between the two contexts of what might be expected of teachers (when they are participating in staff development activities as against teacher training ones) re-surfaced as a key theme in a lecture by Dr Jonathan Doherty (2008) from Leeds Metropolitan University (UK), entitled 'Children's Thinking in the Early Years'. Doherty bemoaned the absence of higher order thinking skills in the way teachers have been made to educate children in particular. 'Sustained shared thinking' (ibid.) is both a concept and a technique that the progressive teachers in his sample promoted in order to stimulate higher order skills in children when debating issues or topics. The teachers were in effect applying a coaching style to the teaching of 'thinking skills' to children as they would not interfere with the children's debates unless they felt that thinking skills had to be stimulated. He stressed the importance of D-mode thinking (deliberate thinking) where the teacher purposely says: "Let's do some creative thinking now", deliberately eliciting thinking skills. This also linked up very well with the ideas of Claxton (2008) and McGuinness (1998) who both espouse the importance of a more holistic curriculum that gauges and facilitates thinking skills and embeds them into the assessment of children.

It was evident to me that being expressly asked to come up with our own theory of learning on the course also sustained our shared thinking and I found myself reflecting afterwards in a way which seemed more profound

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to me. If I benefited so well from being made to think creatively and so deliberately about Learning, then it follows that that needs to be applied to students.

In HE, unlike it is in primary education, the emphasis is often explicitly on higher order skills but not many people seem to know for certain how to facilitate them, apart from encouraging self-directed learning, or, student-led research projects, among other enlightened ways of making students think for themselves. Is it perhaps because HE practitioners have themselves become victims of their own trappings and have accepted the status-quo – that of favouring strategic learning that yields better success rates than what I would call transformative learning?

Within one of my disciplines at the time – that of TESOL - I was in the process of publishing a paper entitled ‘The creative knowledge of ESOL teachers’, as ESOL teachers in the UK tend to be recruited from various disciplines, professional backgrounds or contexts that bear little direct relation to this highly specialised area of adult learning. This in itself proves that such teachers (most of them very successfully) have the ability to transfer their already existing skills and (professional) experiences from one discipline (with its own set of skills and work experience) to their chosen discipline of TESOL with its own set of skills and work experience.

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The question is also what makes someone want to become an ESOL practitioner in the Lifelong Learning Sector, even though the whole sector is under-funded, complex and has cumbersome processes which make unreasonable demands on its workforce? The picture is not as positive as the sector skills' council wants us to believe (cf. LLUK). However, it is in that very sector that I had seen some of the best teachers of adults. Indeed, in 2007-2008, I was engaged in co-training with a colleague of mine 20 teachers of Skills for Life (Adult ESOL and Literacy in this case) and observed many of them in their practice regularly, and, came to the conclusion that the hypothesis of the paper that I wanted to publish must have some founding; in that ESOL/Literacy teachers in the Lifelong Learning Sector must value the focus there is on their creative knowledge within that discipline, and, in some way, like their students themselves, they are transferring knowledge creatively from one system to another. In the case of ESOL learners, the transfer is from one culture to another and from one language system to another where the only true universal, according to Chomsky (1965), between all the languages of the world is G for a Grammar of some sort – so one can imagine the amplitude and complexity of the schematic transfer from language 1 to language 2 (and sometimes from many languages to an additional language).

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All of this critical reflection that I was going through – originating from key readings, professional events, making links between different sectors of education, assessing my own current discipline and researching learning through the lenses of both discipline and work experience - converged towards a formulation of my own theory of learning, based on my own critical awareness and experience to date of both the HE and Lifelong Learning sectors. This theory of learning could therefore be expressed as follows:

To experience new knowledge/concepts/skills and then critically take action to change something/someone/a system in and outside of yourself using your already existing thinking skills so that you can make the necessary adjustments to the new experience and make it make sense to yourself and to the world around you

This is assuming, of course, that the conditions are all ideal and that the learner has not been presented with barriers (institutional or otherwise) to prevent such transformation from happening. In order to facilitate such transformatory learning, it follows that teaching has to enable these processes to happen, or at least create the conditions for them to start happening.

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Brookfield (2005: 353) argues that ‘teaching critically has a transformative impetus’ because without combining theory and practice, such practice would be merely striving to develop cognitive processes in adult learners without necessarily striving to create a better world, more equal and anti-racist/sexist. In a way, one could argue that the transformatory impetus can be for micro or macro purposes, similar to what is stated in the definition above of ‘change something in’ (micro & more likely to be a cognitive change) ‘and outside of yourself’ (macro & more likely to be more socio-political). The transformatory element of critical pedagogy can be obtained via different methods. Indeed, Brookfield (2005) stresses the eclectic nature of the methodologies of critical pedagogy where some theorists have argued for self-directed learning (such as critical reflection) and others for collaborative, collective learning (such as popular education methods) as ways by which learners would develop critical thinking skills (Kadi-Hanifi, 2009). However, the argument beautifully advanced by Brookfield (ibid.) is that such eclecticism is necessary in a world where diversity reigns, especially in Adult Education contexts.

In his inaugural lecture which is also a damning report on the state of the Lifelong Learning Sector, Prof Frank Coffield quotes from the QIA’s definition of excellence the following words (2008: 23):

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‘We believe that excellence means developing, maintaining and delivering to the highest standards of responsiveness, effectiveness and efficiency’

Coffield argues that there are two problems with this definition – *what* should be developed? And why is *equity* not included in the criteria for judging standards?

Like Fielding (2007), Coffield then argues that (2008: 24):

‘Written policies on teaching and learning need to go way beyond administrative details and offer an explicit model of learning and of change; and be able to show how both are used to make students, tutors, the senior management team and the institution itself better at learning in a person-centred learning community.’

In my present HE role of post-16 teacher trainer, I stress the importance of learning and change to my trainees but am aware at the same time that this may not be happening in the contexts (some of them very dire) of where most of these trainees work. Just like Coffield suggests above, the administrative side of learning (or rather ‘delivering learning’) takes precedence over the more essential and equitable ‘change management’ side of learning. In terms of learning theory and its implication for

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curriculum design, this is very similar to what Meyer and Land (2006) suggest happens when ‘a threshold concept’ may remain simply an issue of cognitive organisation and perspective rather than a ‘troublesome’ concept for learners. If teachers in Higher Education do not give due credit to troublesome knowledge and its potential for transformative learning (or at least for a re-positioning of subjectivity) and have themselves become converted to forms of what Meyer and Land (2006) call ‘ritual knowledge’, then it follows that they may all be perpetuating the (potentially disastrous) status-quo that Coffield warns us against.

This in effect is what can also be experienced on staff development days in HE, as mentioned in the introduction to this paper. What has therefore framed this reflective commentary is the tension that the author felt existed between the good practice in the teacher training context and the not so good practice that has to be abided by by employees of large organisations that have not yet learned how to learn better. Sometimes the teacher trainer might feel like saying very bluntly to his/her trainees: ‘Don’t kid yourself. All this is rubbish. You’ll soon find out that you cannot apply any of your gorgeous creative knowledge to your workplace etc..’ but, if, on the other hand, the teacher trainer believes in a pedagogy of hope as pioneered by Freire (1996) then they should always strive to never become cynical. At times of personal anxiety, there is an urgent

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need to remind oneself why one is here as a teacher educator in the first place. As Parker and Lynn warn, although in their case they are arguing for an anti-racist pedagogy, teachers must always look at the power they have from all kind of angles. In a paper on the usefulness of Critical Race Theory, they argue that (2002: 15):

‘White teacher educatorsengage in reflexive thinking about what it means to be White in a field such as education and its impact on practice’

It is precisely this awareness of the power a teacher or teacher educator has, whether in terms of their ethnicity, gender, politics, ideology and so on that should prevent teachers from imparting a sense of despair and loss to the students that they teach. It is conceded though that in the messy sector where my students teach it is a very hard stance to take as I, myself, left the sector for exactly those reasons that Coffield enumerates. The hope is that, together with like-minded people, critical pedagogues, like myself, will be able to identify what Meyer and Land (2006: 377) call ‘stuck places’ - or those places that ‘may occasion ‘epistemological obstacles’ that block any transformed perspective’ - in order to counteract the change in culture that is happening in HE or, at least, in what are called post-1992 universities which have not yet acquired the status of the

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old ones, and, therefore, have to impose strict controls on their outputs, including teaching and learning.

‘Should we rock the boat and steer it away from its fast ride towards the iceberg’ or ‘should we conspire’ (like we all did, and, with devastating consequences, with the war, for example) ‘with a system that values efficient evaluations without sparing much thought to what it is we are all thinking we are doing in the first place?’ I wrote in one of my diary entries, quoting Coffield’s words and linking them to the wider context of the Iraq war that was troubling me greatly at the time.

Whilst reflecting on my own learning, I realised that I was not only putting myself in the shoes of my own students, but that I was also experiencing very basic renewed emotions about teaching and learning that I had assumed I would never experience again, given that I had been teaching for over 20 years.

I decided to look for a metaphor – musical in my case – to tap into these deep emotions, as is recommended by Freire, in a pedagogy of hope. I imagined an ‘accordion’ of learning, where key teaching and learning values are matched with examples from my own practice in black and white boxes, almost suggesting, as one unwinds the metaphorical

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keyboard, that the would-be accomplished teacher has the perfect set up now to run their fingers along the keys, producing a harmonious tune that begins with *designing teaching programmes* through to *methodologies of teaching, resources and materials*, not withstanding, *developing effective learning environments, assessing effectively*, and, finally, *monitoring and evaluating teaching and learning practices*. The above-italicised phrases were what the SEDA-accredited PGCert¹ course learning outcomes wanted us to address in any way that we saw fit, as long as we could evidence, from our own practice, the positive impact they had on our practice in HE. The metaphorical ‘accordion’ image seemed to work, as I then imagined that in my reflective commentary, I would press some of the ‘black keys’ when I wanted to give precise examples of how I was addressing the SEDA learning outcomes. I also imagined that I would have a go at practising the ‘fan’ part of the ‘accordion’ where I could expand or constrict the air that is produced by the life force of my own concerns about learning and teaching – i.e., practice my own reflective skills.

¹ SEDA stands for Staff Educational Development Agency – A very well respected organisation that endorses HE teacher training courses, like the PGCert in Teaching and Learning in HE, and, allows successful completers to become fellows of the Higher Education Academy (HEA) – a prestigious title that I have now acquired.

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In effect, teacher training programmes are about all of the teaching and learning values that are held dear by many teachers, but, at the same time, and after critical dialogues with my tutor and with my co-trainer, I became aware that it was absolutely critical for me to concentrate on one or two examples from my own practice, at a time, to 'refine the tune' and make it more relevant to my own reflections so that my 'accordion' would play the music that makes sense to me, and, hopefully, to the world of the students around me; in effect supporting my own above-mentioned theory of learning whereby I believe that after the initial change, then, transformation within and without, teachers have ultimately to make sense of it all to themselves and to the world that they operate in. Brookfield urges an appraisal of learning and teaching in terms of how it should challenge ideology and unmask power, whereas Meyer and Land suggest that it is about helping to solve troublesome knowledge that threshold concepts provoke in learners. The effect remains transformatory in both the teacher and the learner and may or may not lead to socio-political action such as that suggested by Marxist pedagogues of the Freirean tradition.

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3 EXAMPLES FROM PRACTICE

The most salient transformation that I experienced, as I was reflecting on the reflections that I had regularly recorded in my professional diary, was the realisation that there was a very strong similarity between generic learning theory and that of second language learning. Indeed, links started forming between concepts from learning theory, such as those of transferable skills, creative knowledge, stuck places, liminality and transformation and seemed to map quite well with those of second language acquisition theory. A second language learner creatively transfers their existing linguistic skills to language 2, may, in so doing, fossilise some errors of interference between the two languages, passes through the essential stage of interlanguage, where neither L1 nor L2 is entirely spoken, but a new creative mix of the 2, in order to, with good teaching and learning, reach the final stage of acquisition which is quite transformatory.

Having passed through these stages myself via deep reflection, that is, transferable skills or experiences, learning from reading and theories, as suggested on my teacher training course, via perhaps a few stuck places and liminality, before a transformation of some sort, I felt more able, not only to see those links, but also to find ways of supporting my trainee

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teachers better by playing a characteristic tune that makes sense to myself and to the students that I was teaching.

So I began to see how crucial it was for a teacher to listen to the warnings that were out there telling us that we, maybe, are not altogether making ourselves consciously think about learning.

Frank Coffield was warning us about how fast we were riding towards the iceberg. Fromm (in Brookfield, 2005), before him, in the 1970s, had talked about educators having become 'pseudo-thinkers'. Freire also warned against the banking system of education where the teacher makes deposits and the student stores these without questioning the teacher.

Meyer and Land, very recently, argued that it is the role of the teacher to help solve troublesome knowledge for themselves and for their students, otherwise teachers run the risk of converting to forms of what they call 'ritual learning'.

Therefore, it is essential that we strive to change and evolve beyond what we have been accustomed to accept as the norm – i.e., that we keep on ever evolving and changing beyond our own thresholds.

In a way, the teacher becomes a kind of 'grass-roots' thinker, and, the effect is transformatory in both teacher and student.

An example from my own practice is an activity that I have tried out in two different contexts – a staff development one and a teacher training one. It consists of adapting a method from a popular education model of

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feminist critical pedagogy, as used with very deprived communities in Latin America (Nadeau, 1996).

What is interesting is that in both the contexts in which I used this method, the effect has been transformatory and the participants have commented about how they felt both empowered to effect a change to their professional practice, as well as better tuned in to their emotions to a degree when one of them exclaimed ‘oh I get it now, learning is basically a very emotional state of being’.

The aim of the activity was to get teachers to embed differentiation effectively, when teaching diverse, mixed-ability classes in the Lifelong Learning sector. I decided to throw them into the deep end, by teaching them a bit of a vocational lesson in French, to make them experience how second language learners, with varying levels of English, would feel when they sit in vocational classes taught in English. After the short lesson in French, they had to say what they could do to help their trainees (in the staff development context) or their learners (in the teacher training context) and come up with strategies for differentiation in the classroom. They also had to critique the way I facilitated learning and what improvements I could have made to the way I presented the material in French. The session ended with the participants being presented with a cuddly bear (symbolising their trainee or their learner, depending on the context), and, as they came up with strategies for differentiation, they had

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to dress the teddy-bear each time each one of them came up with a strategy and formulated their own ideas for improved practice. They were in effect looking after their own trainees or learners and making them feel secure and loved. Some of the participants hugged the bear and some other stroked it. They were reconciling the emotions created by troublesome concepts (such as differentiation in the classroom) with the feelings they had for their own practice, and, concretely contributing all together to the metamorphosis of the symbolic learner. I deliberately called the activity ‘the dressing up of the undressed teddy-bear and then cuddling it together’ activity, to impart a sense of action, group praxis and transformation to any learning that was taking place. Although popular educators use emancipatory methods such as this one, they are very clearly structured and deliberately target learning that leads to concrete action. At the same time, popular educators such as Denise Nadeau, strongly believe power must not be centralised into the hands of the trainer (or facilitator), and, it is when power is shared, that true learning takes place. In terms of learning theory, I cannot see any contradiction between popular education and mainstream theory, such as the one Meyer and Land describe. The participants in the workshops described above were reconciling themselves to the affective parts of their transformation and in so doing, I believe that the despair that may spring up when being challenged by new learning was not counter-productive.

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However, I also believe that, because learning is forever evolving and changing, I need to dig deeper in new areas of learning for myself. Hence, the following extract from my diary soon after I ran the above-mentioned workshops. Even though I have evolved since I wrote the following extract, it, nevertheless, shows the pedagogical concerns that stem from praxis and change, and, the desire to learn and change in the future.

Diary entries and actions for 08-10: I am not yet there in terms of my deeper understanding of some aspects of Critical Pedagogy. For instance, I want to learn more about the differences that exist between the key methodologies of 'pedagogy of hope', 'pedagogy of desire', 'pedagogy of love' etc.. and their implications for teaching and learning, and, in particular teacher education. I attended a very theoretical presentation last year (at the Critical Pedagogy week-end of the HEA's C-SAP) by a critical pedagogue called Sarah Amsler (2007) who has also recently won a 'teacher of the year award'. I came out with a long list of references to research the different aspects of pedagogy that she talked about. I need to attend, in general, a few more sociology seminars, and, in particular, devote more time to research on Critical Pedagogy. A book by S. Brookfield, entitled 'The power of critical theory for adult learning and teaching' (2005), as suggested by my SEDA tutor, is now on my list of books to read from cover to cover, rather than the focused reading of one chapter that I have done so far for the course. The advantages of reading

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such a book are such that I will be able to delve into the key theories behind Critical Pedagogy and research the area further.'

What Popular Education methods (underpinned by my strong beliefs in Critical Pedagogy and 'transformatory' learning) also allow me to do is resist the tendency there is in constructivism - such as in Light and Cox (2001) to believe that 'All knowledge is idiosyncratic and personal', thus denying the possibility of sharing and communicating knowledge between people – such as in Fox (2001). I have, therefore, come to the conclusion that I need to look at such theories in more detail and come up with one that satisfies the eclectic nature of teaching and learning, but one that maximises learning though etc...'

Another example from my own evolving practice is about an inclusive assessment strategy that we trialled on the course. My co-trainer and I introduced an element of peer assessment which seemed to stimulate reflection, collaborative learning and the sharing of good practice among our trainees further, as they had been reading Curzon (1990), among other key writers about the practice of teaching and learning in the Lifelong Learning sector, and, had asked whether we could model these concepts for them. In addition, in the students' feedback the year before, the oral presentations that the student made to the whole group were rated very high by the students for best learning experience on the course.

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We must therefore strive as much as we can to preserve the learning element that exists within assessment as well. It is when concepts (such as peer-assessment) or standards are interpreted as absolute ‘targets’ that one must reach, via summative exam-type assessment or Ofsted-type scrutiny, that they lose the appeal they could have of contributing to the ongoing cycle of learning.

To exemplify the kind of actions that this particular concern with assessment was leading me to, I have selected the following diary entry from my professional journal at the time:

Diary entries/actions for 08-10: I need to get more involved with diversifying the assessment process at the university, by, perhaps maximising my impact on the new work-based learning modules that are being developed at the moment, and, by, adding to the list of assessment methods that is also being discussed by course leaders in my institute. The list will then need to be translated into feasible ways of assessing that we could write into our modules in 2010.

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4. Conclusion

Jacques Derrida is important to me at this point and is a useful way of ending this reflective paper. He also made the links between language and learning, and, in some fascinating way to me at the moment, sits up there looking down on us (wearing a slight ironical smile maybe) and reminding us that just like language, human learning needs to go through a cycle of (19:428) : ‘...*la conception, la formation, la gestation et le travail*’, and that we perhaps dwell too much on ‘travail’ and forget the ability we have to go right back to the stage of ‘conception’, or worse even, we leave all of those stages to policy-makers and only do the ‘travail’ bit!

If we have forgotten that we have this kind of ability, and, here, I mean those of us who are experienced teachers, then we will not be able to imagine a different future, where a better world is possible.

Experienced teachers (and teacher trainers) need to go back to basics, they need to ‘mess about’ in the ‘sand pit’ experientially, so to speak. It is not easy to do that. They would, like a second language learner inevitably experiences at some point of their learning of a new language system, feel stuck in that ‘messy’ bilingual phase of ‘interlanguage’, where language 1 and language 2 do not reconcile and can lead one to produce personally stressful forms of a language that does not make sense to anybody (or worse, forever remain silent in language 2). Every new rule of grammar

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noticed has not been schematically stored, as the already existing language system/s may sometimes refuse the re-positioning that is necessary in order to let 'divergent' thoughts and processes settle alongside them. The teacher (like his or her student) is thus in that constant state of 'liminality' (that I mentioned in section 2) and will need to reach levels of transformation, each maturing him or her further - although this does not necessarily imply 'convergent' closure, but rather the beginning of re-invention and re-interpretation. Anxiety and despair may reign, and, like in the case of the trainee teachers that I teach, there must be a reconciliation between what is known already and what is needed to be known to change and improve.

This is, therefore, why this paper asks all educators to keep on changing and moving on, as well as moving away from thinking that we have reached the best that we could do in our own learning.

At the same time, a return to what constitutes learning in the first place is essential so that I can play a distinctively transformed tune each time the theory that I have attempted to formulate in the first place, for myself and for those around me, is re-visited.

My accordion plays a different tune to the one I played before, each time I try and deconstruct the reality of the moment that I am in.

The emerging pedagogy of hope that this paper has brought out of me so far is one that has managed to find meaningful links between Freire and

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Derrida. It stresses the importance of imagination without which we would think that tomorrow is 'just a future of this present' and the past is just 'a past of the present'.

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