Welcome to the 4th Annual School of Education Symposium!

The School of Education is home to a vibrant PGR community. This one-day symposium will bring together the diverse array of SoE PGR students, and will afford the opportunity to share not only research, but also the experiences of the journey each is travelling.

The abstracts will follow below in the order of their presentations.

- **Helia Zohreh Rahbarikorroyeh / Education and changing self-image**

**Title:** “A report on a conference attendance”

In a very general language my topic is on Education and self-image: How education can transfer people’s self-image so they can see and evaluate themselves in a different and more empowering way.

People and knowledge: activism and education.

When I was choosing my research question I was asking myself about the role of education in people’s life. How education can change the game for people who are not the most privileged ones, how education can change the life for vulnerable people? Through some years of volunteering and working with people from less privileged parts of the society, I came to this point that it is not always about obtaining certain qualifications and skills to empower people, more important that education is about changing one’s world view and the view one has on herself. And this is where I think education and activism getting closer to each other, and it could lead to really good results.

I attended Frankfurt international book fair 19-23 October 2016. It is the world’s largest book event. Thousands of publisher, authors, scholars and many activists attended this event and it is good opportunity to meet people you have little chance to meet in other places. I visited the book fair to meet with some activities who were attending the book fair, some of them were holding talks, organizing workshops or other sorts of events. I had a chance to meet an activist who has been running an adult school for women. She was a dedicated feminist and socialist fighting for equality in the society regardless of race, gender or social class.

The meeting was a rewarding one. She was narrating stories, which were eye opening for me. Just being there in the book fair and attending different talks and workshops displayed a sharp contrast for me: Big publishers, Politian (ministers from European countries) and small groups of activist or publishers from third world countries. Listening to the head of some education institutions like DADA in Germany and later talking to a head of a small adult school in Germany painted a very interesting picture. How people in different power positions would address same issues. And how important it is to try see the story from different perspectives and once in a while be out of academia with.
Shahrzad Ardavani / MOOCs

Title: “Challenges and opportunities of MOOCs in Iran and other developing countries”

Massive Open Online Courses (MOOCs) provide educational and professional development opportunities for people whose access to traditional learning resources is limited or beyond their means. However, MOOCs may not be as beneficial to students in developing countries as to students in developed countries due to infrastructure and technological problems e.g. technical infrastructure (lack of a high speed internet, modern computer systems ...).

Other problems may be rooted in the cultural and political institutions (e.g. Educational policy makers concerned with the international influence of MOOCs on the national educational system) can pose inherent barriers to learning. Notwithstanding such problems, research may reveal opportunities for MOOCs to provide developing countries with a better learning platform; through access to western universities and their resources, and improving collaboration and interaction between nations.

My research is investigating how MOOCs can evolve education through exploring the potential for inter-cultural and professional learning within the context of a MOOC to improve learning experiences for professionals and students in higher education. It will work from the assumption that different learners bring different expectations and assumptions to on-line learning. Participant observation of professional groups (English teachers) in higher education and semi-structured interview methods will be used to deduce and develop new solutions (as applicable).

This paper is concerned with common pedagogical grounds that would accommodate both EU/UK and international students in the virtual environment of MOOCs. In this presentation, I will consider how the theoretical framework of ‘Cultural Historical Activity Theory’ (CHAT) and ‘Expansive Learning’ will be used in my research to better understand both the commonalities and the divergences that arise between pedagogies of MOOCs and learners from different cultural and institutional backgrounds.

Rafidah Hanum Nizar / Education

Title: “An exploration of students’ voice in understanding students’ difficulties in learning programming within Higher Education”

Learning how to program can be cognitively demanding because programming requires multiple processes from translating system requirements into an algorithmic form, solving problems and then learning to use the right programming syntax to run an executable program. This research study aims to explore the understanding and experiences of learning how to program in a Higher Educational (HE) context through student voice. Listening to the voice of students is important because each student learns differently; hence, each student will have a unique experience of learning how to program.
This study intends to complement existing research in the field, but does so qualitatively from a student’s perspective and through an educational lens. Most research in computing education has focused on teaching methods, educational technology and students’ misconceptions in learning programming. Despite the best efforts and support provided by the educators, students continue to struggle in learning and developing programming skills. Bronfenbrenner’s framework of human development will be used as a tool for understanding students’ development from all perspectives and different levels, from individual to society and organisational dimensions at large. All factors which may contribute to difficulties in learning how to program such as stereotype, male-dominated field, mathematical ability, computer efficacy, job prospect, parental career, ICT infrastructure in school and cultural values will be explored. A case study design is considered the most suitable strategy to investigate the contemporary phenomenon of students’ experiences in learning how to program through observation, interviews and students’ journals. Ultimately, the study aims to identify gaps in learning how to program from student perspectives.

Owen Okie/ Herbal Medicine

Herbal Medicine, MCPP.

Why is a new approach to health and medicine necessary? Healthcare professionals, scientists and patients are aware of the shortcomings of conventional medicine and frustrated with an increasingly fractured, impersonal, and expensive healthcare system -- resulting in greater usage of “alternative” and “complimentary” therapies (Lewith, 2012). Many practitioners (herbalists, naturopaths, functional doctors, etc.) are finding that integrative approaches usually work best. Herbs, nutrition and lifestyle modifications often prevent the need for pharmaceuticals (Murray and Pizzorno, 1997), whereas concurrent usage often results in synergistic effects; decreasing dosage, improving outcome and reducing side-effects (McKee, Stargrove and Treasure, 2008). Conventional medicine has enormously advanced the field of medicine. However, the rise of the diseases of western civilization are testimony to limitations that must be surmounted. While studying for my M.S. in Herbal Medicine, the lack of a coherent framework or meta-paradigm for the field of Western herbal medicine and conventional and alternative medicine struck me as increasingly problematic. I am convinced that in order to best support my clients, to evaluate and integrate the diverse approaches to health and healing in an effective and coherent fashion, and to facilitate open dialogue between different modalities of healing (such as between allopathic and herbal medicine) requires a cohesive meta-framework. My discovery of Integral Theory provided me with a powerful tool for developing this framework. As a health practitioner I’ve attained skills for turning theory into practice. Once the basic framework for Integral Healing has been developed it would be invaluable to be able to test it “in the field”. This could take the form of an integral approach to a complex health condition (such as cancer of Fibromyalgia/CFS) one that coherently integrates many fields of knowledge and modalities into a synergistic approach to healing.
Cathy Francis / Outdoor education

Title: “Touched By Nature”

My research explores children’s embodied experiential learning accumulated through journeying to and from and whilst at a beach within easy walking distance from their classroom. My research is inspired by my personal love of nature and through my experiences of working alongside children for almost thirty years as a primary school teacher in a variety of outdoor contexts. The climate change challenges we currently face have made me determined to do what I can to ameliorate the situation namely to; continue as a full time practitioner working outdoors with youngsters sharing my love of nature whilst pursuing academic research to bolster the evidence appealing for a paradigm change in pedagogy associated with Science and LfS.

I believe, for many, that nature has become absent from the human experience. We find ourselves living and learning distanced from ecosystems which for millennia have sustained us. I also believe, for a number of reasons, that three of the most efficacious facets of learning currently occupy a back seat in mainstream schools. They are; embodied learning, place connection and affective cognition. I argue that were they reawakened by skilled, well-informed mainstream classroom teachers then learning may become more purposeful, enjoyable and beneficial for all. I further suggest an ideal opportunity to rekindle these elements is to take teaching and learning outside. In this way it may also be just possible to elicit a population more capable of rediscovering nature thereby connecting to nature. I aspire for children to progressively; encounter, touch, affiliate and ultimately surrender to nature. I invoke the term surrender as a peaceable acquiescence of man with nature in stark contrast to man’s power driven manipulation and bombardment of nature which has rendered nature apparently subordinate to man’s demands; a situation precipitating the Anthropocene. Acting from within nature our human population may tread more lightly upon the Earth thus ensuring a sustainable future for us all.

Aristea Kyriakou / Critical outdoor education and the use of the school grounds

Title: “Another brick in the wall”

My research interests are focused on outdoor education and the use of the school grounds. Outdoor education, briefly, is an alternative approach in education that aims to provide learning in interplay between experience and reflection based on concrete experience in authentic situations. Adapting a critical stance however in this theory, I would rather call it “outdoor e-ducation”, based on Masschelein’s argument that “e-ducere” stands for leading out, liberating and displacing our view, in comparison to “educare”, which stands for teaching. The challenge is to see outdoor education through critical pedagogy lenses. For this I will introduce this concept through the popular song by Pink Floyd “Another brick in the wall” and share/show the several levels of these walls as I see them: a wall of the relation between educational systems and students, students and teachers, buildings and school grounds, a wall of one’s self as an isolating barrier through one’s life, a wall in various research
methodological implementations, etc. Presumably there is a lot more interpretations of the walls and all cannot be mentioned here. The important thing is, however, that the investigation of some of them in this presentation serves the needs of communicating a message, here and now: that we are becoming attentive. Outdoor education and critical pedagogy are more related than they seem to be. In this sense, this presentation will be an invitation for further questions to be explored collectively.

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**Clare Taylor-Brown/ Digital Learning**

**Title:** “One step beyond: A Digital Blended Community Learning Project in the North of Scotland”

Community Learning & Development (CLD) is a way of working with and supporting individuals and communities to increase the skills, confidence, networks and resources they need to tackle problems and grasp opportunities. CLD has a role to support and empower adults, particularly those who are marginalised or require additional support, to develop their digital literacy skills. One Step Beyond: A Digital Blended Learning Research Project in the North of Scotland aims to support CLD practitioners to use Small Private Online Course (SPOC), a version of the MOOC (Massive Open Online Course) phenomenon, in promoting lifelong, lifewide, learner-centered learning with individuals and groups in rural and remote communities. Nurturing the development and confidence of a community of CLD practitioners to use emerging learning technologies and select or design a SPOC or COOC for their participants’ learning needs, the research aims to: ● Examine the methods and practices which enable non-traditional/informal learners to best engage with Open Educational Resources (OER) ● Research the experiences and outcomes for both CLD practitioners and their learners Using Participatory Action Research, CLD practitioners and their participants will participate as co-researchers and co-learners. The collection of data will include observations, interviews, focus groups and case studies. The intention is to promote innovative pedagogical models for community learning, which respect and empower learners as co-producers on their lifelong learning journey. The main objective is to explore and critique the role of an open pedagogy in the field of Community Learning and Development.

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**Alastair Clarkson/ Scottish autism**

**Title:** “How do views of disability and difference influence the implementation of organisational ethical expectations within autism support services?”

Autism is a developmental condition, which affects an individual's capacity for communication and social interaction and may profoundly impact on quality of life. Diagnosis currently relies on the interpretation of a socially constructed schedule of behavioural difference. Despite an increasing volume of autism research, significant uncertainty continues to surround many aspects of this condition. Whilst autism originates within the medical domain, there remains a lack of substantive evidence for a definitive program of medical or pharmaceutical treatment, which may be universally applied to the support of autistic individuals.
As the behavioural differences that define autism can be seen to emanate from differences in cognition, autism support can viewed as the mediation of cognitive and communicative differences to allow individual needs to be identified and enable development of well – being. The provision of this support however, rests pivotally on a derived understanding of what autism 'is' and how this condition impacts within each individual. Significant cognitive differences within autism appear frequently complicated by challenges of learning difficulty and co-occurring conditions. These differences require staff to focus on an interpretation of service user behaviour to understand communicative intent and facilitate the meeting of needs across varieties of cognitive style and capacity. Key skills such as empathy, self-reflection, observation and perspective taking allow staff to more successfully interpret and translate these differences and support individuals more effectively.

Scottish Autism promote the value of diversity via the belief that autistic individuals are best served by the embrace and celebration of difference. Within services, this recognition that every service user should hold an equal stake and value in the world can equate to a view of staff support as 'cognitive partnership’. As staff are faced with the reality of working with complex differences in cognition which may lead to forms of communication and behaviours that challenge, it follows that the beliefs and values held internally by staff which relate to these differences (such as their view of disability or difference) may influence their capacity to understand the nature of an individual's support needs and influence their response.

Although public policy directives consistently call for improvements in autism support settings, the experience of those receiving support often highlights a 'gap' between prescribed autism policy and autism support. Scottish Autism understand how interpersonal and ethical values link closely to practice quality and have devised training to focus on ethical intentions, reflective practice and processes of continuous improvement with the aim of developing services further. In light of the ethical aims of the organisation, the nature of autism support, and the gaps identified between policy and practice, it is hypothesised that the internal ethical profile of staff may mediate their experience of training and influence the practice of organisational ethical expectations.

This study will employ semi structured interviews of staff and psychometric tools to examine this hypothesis and gauge the impact of training over time on staff perception of disability and difference, service user behaviour and empathic capacity. In summary, the study will seek to identify the presence of barriers and facilitators which may impact on the implementation of autism specific training within direct autism services within a third sector organisation.

Daniel Wodah/ Indigenous people, PRA

Title: “Reconsidering approaches to climate change science education in rural Ghana”

Scientific findings indicate that virtually every part of the globe, is being affected by climate change. The concept of climate change as a process is mostly an urban perception, the view of people who are far removed from the environment they depend on for raw resources. On the contrary, indigenous people who are at proximity with the natural environment, which
they rely on for their survival have different view of climate change, and they base their traditional practices on these alternative vision. In light of the above difference, a number of authors have argued for the recognition of the limitations of conventional ways of teaching climate change science in schools and for the inclusion of a multiplicity of other perspectives, such as indigenous knowledge. However, identifying relevant approaches for this inclusion is problematic as there is no clear guidance on how this can be achieved. Participatory Rural Appraisal (PRA) recommended as a possible integrative participatory theoretical methodology facilitates learning with indigenous communities. Even though PRA in recent times has been proposed, its use as part of community learning in Ghana is left unexplored. Therefore, this project intends to explore this using PRA which is rooted in post – normal science theory. With this in mind the following questions will be posed: How do indigenous people construct knowledge together about climate change?; How do different members of the community share their experiences about climate change?

Jessica Singer/ Being and Becoming

Title: “The identity of the artist teacher and its implications for learning throughout the life course”

The artist teacher negotiates between the realm of art and education. This research explores the challenge of change inherent in transitions the artist teacher negotiates whilst working within formal and informal educational settings. This work explores how individuals learn in and through their experiences from the standpoint of sociocultural theory and relational ontology. The source of this discussion is capturing the complexity of life choices in becoming an artist teacher and the implications for learning across the life course. Learning throughout the life course embraces, in principle, a wide range of social spheres and policy areas.

This study focuses on a group of artist teachers who teach within schools and in the community. The artist teacher ages range from 40-60+ years. The research is exploring how each artist teacher’s personal autonomy shifted between change of work practices and the environment they were engaged in. This journey opens discussions on the blurring of identities between personal and professional practice.

The research methods involved semi-structured interview questions and visual methodologies. Semi-structured interviews were open-ended to encourage participants to share their personal life stories on being an artist teacher. An interview schedule was created to cover the following categories: their career decisions, learning within the workplace and out with the workplace, and involvement in lifelong learning programs. Participants also created artworks as a form of exploration into the research study.