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Motivation

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Teachers' world: motivation and being in the induction of Scottish teachers

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Introduction

Teachers and their motivation to teach are usually studied in terms of personal motivational factors, whether extrinsic or intrinsic. In this paper we will attempt to show that motivation can be studied via the work of Heidegger (1962) and that empirical evidence supports this approach to the topic. Specifically we draw on an ongoing study into the Early Professional Learning of teachers in Scotland (the EPL project) to argue that a multi-dimensional model of early professional learning is essential if we are to understand the motivation and commitment of the [newly-qualified] teachers involved. The central idea of this argument is that teaching is only a meaningful activity within a world. We describe what this entails and why the concept is important. Worlds are multi-dimensional and resistant to representation, which in any case is only possible within a world.

The original purpose of the project was to compare the competence-based model of EPL as set out in the Standard for Full Registration (SFR) with a more holistic and intuitive notion based on ideas of relationality and becoming (McNally et al 2003). This comparison was to be made on the basis of interview and ethnographic data collected by teacher-researchers seconded to the project, followed by testing of the model using a number of instruments and indicators adapted or designed for the project. During the course of the project similarities began to emerge between the findings from new teachers and those from other work based settings studied in the course of the EVABCOM project. In particular, the work of motor-cycle technicians appeared to provide an example of an occupation which depended on a world of related activities and artefacts for its meaning (Gray 2004a). It also suggested that incentives other than money played a role in settings outside the usual areas of professional life where 'higher motives' or the notions of 'calling' or moral purpose were assumed to be central. The project team thus began to consider whether the concepts of 'world' and 'worlding' could make sense of the data from new teachers, since it became clear that a competence-based approach was entirely inadequate to the task of capturing the richness and complexity of the experiences of new teachers in their first weeks, months and years of teaching.

Section 1: what's in a world?

In this section we describe the background to our use of 'world' in the context of work and learning, which will involve an excursion into to world of Heideggerian philosophy. Heidegger (1962) is concerned with the question of being, which is essentially a question about sense-making. Only humans (as far as we know) are able to pose such questions, and we are therefore talking about human being(s) as questioners, but Heidegger is emphatically not talking about a socially-constructed (in its strongest sense) world, nor is he an idealist¹. Heidegger is concerned to study human existence in relation to Being as a whole. Although he does not use terms such as embodiment, it is clear that he refers to embodied human beings and that these beings exist in a material world. Indeed, the thrust of his argument is that to question the materiality of existence is non-sensical. The point here is that humans make sense of the materiality of existence in various ways and the result of this sense-making process is a world. Objects provide a way of getting at that world, as we will now discuss.

¹ Despite Blattner's (1999) discussion of Heidegger as a 'temporal idealist', it is clear from his writing subsequent to *Being & Time* that he is not.

Exegetes of Heidegger are fond of using his example of the hammer to examine his work on being-in-the-world (Dreyfus 1991). For Heidegger, there are two modes of being in which we encounter objects. In the main, objects are ready-to-hand when they express the meaningful co-involvement of self and object world through a network of practices. The alternative mode of being, presence-at-hand, is a mode in which objects merely show up as objects, without meaning. The obelisk in Kubrick's film *2001: A Space Odyssey* is present-at-hand to the proto-humans who encounter it, because it has no meaning to them in relation to their own world. Tarkovsky's film *Stalker* (1974) also provides powerful examples of how alien objects defy human understanding.

Hammering is an example of a practice which makes sense in a world in which there are also nails, pieces of wood, fences and, in order for these objects to keep making sense, joiners and carpenters, professional or otherwise. We can gain useful insights from the example, because hammering is a pervasive phenomenon which has been around for thousands of years and is thoroughly embedded in life and language, metaphorical or otherwise. Very few people, even the least practical, will pick up a hammer by the head and try to hit a nail with the handle². This assumes, of course, that the hammer is presented to them in the context of there being something to hammer, because if there is no hammering to be done, it doesn't matter how you hold it. As Heidegger suggests, it becomes something merely present-at-hand. Heidegger points to the breakdown situation as that which makes this transparent co-functioning of tools and other objects visible. The broken hammer, as it were, interjects itself between the joiner and the work, and becomes a critical incident in which the system opens up to reflective analysis.

Within the world of hammering, nailing is not the only way of fastening two pieces of wood together. It is not always the best possible way, but in Western joinery it is traditional. In the Japanese tradition, conversely, nails were regarded as crude and expensive, and a hugely sophisticated system of wood joints evolved to avoid nailing where possible. This should alert us to the danger of studying hammering, as a competence, without seeing it in a cultural or systemic context. In order to be an authentic joiner in the 21st century, the use of nail guns, cordless screwdrivers and instant adhesives, whilst being an adaptation of the tradition, is entirely in line with the purposeful nature of joinery as a trade or profession. The cordless screwdriver or the nail gun are simply more sophisticated versions of the hammer. In other words, it still makes sense to be a joiner in a world which requires houses built partly of wood, with windows, doors etc. Conversations with professional joiners³ indicate that one of the causes of dissatisfaction with current apprentice training schemes is that decontextualised exercises in the college workshop do not prepare apprentices for real-world situations, where walls may not be square, customers are impatient and tools often in the wrong place. This is not just a matter of altering training practices to make the workshop resemble part of a real world. It is precisely the existence of impatient, worldly customers, and the ability to deal with them, which helps to create a core professional identity for joiners.

This is not unique to joinery, of course, and a nursing student in an earlier study (Gray 2004b) put it this way:

² I'm happy to put this to the test, if challenged by RR!

³ I would particularly like to thank Billy Shepherd for his insights into the vocational learning of joiners

...the common foundation course, it was appalling, just ridiculous, I spent six weeks on a health promotion placement... As far as I'm concerned, it had nothing to do with nursing... ... it would be good if there were beds because that would mean there might be a chance of a patient being there.

In this case, health promotion was seen as being outside the traditional activities of nursing, and therefore lacking in meaning for one who espoused the core professional identity of being a nurse. As Chiarella (2002) describes, nursing as a core activity is being displaced by the introduction of care assistants and other forms of support staff at one end of the scale and by an increasingly medicalised model of professionalism at the other. The world of nursing as traditionally understood is changing, and patient care is not necessarily the primary focus of this world.

Similar considerations applied when we attempted to discuss future business scenarios with the motorcycle technicians during the EVABCOM research. The idea that hydrogen powered scooters would become the core business of motorcycling professionals was seen as unthinkable. Motorbikes were defined by being fast, noisy and exciting, not by having two wheels and getting from A to B quietly and economically. Here, however, we have to be cautious, because professional identities can and do change over time. Nurses are taking on health promotion, prescribing and other non-traditional activities. Even within motorcycling, the business in question had itself redefined the traditional idea of the greasy back-street workshop, in line with changes in the nature of motorcycling itself. It had developed a retail environment which appealed to a changing customer base, and in doing so had captured a massive share of the market. Such a transformation of the traditional low-key attitudes prevalent in the motorcycle business exemplifies the changing nature of work generally. We will now explore a further philosophical issue which lies at the heart of these changes.

Authenticity, tradition and heritage

Despite Heidegger's allegedly conservative agenda (Fritsche 1999), or even because of it, his writing on temporality in *Being and Time* is highly relevant to the changing nature of professional identity, because he makes a distinction between 'tradition' and 'heritage', in which 'tradition' is, in terms of practices, conservative and hostile to initiative and innovation (Gray 1996). 'Heritage' on the other hand, is the result of transforming the past in such a way that it enhances the present and informs the future. Part of the process of becoming authentic is thus to inherit and to take over and transform practices which others have developed but which can be harnessed to a 'for-the-sake-of-which', an informing principle which transcends the everyday chatter and conformity of 'the one' (*das Man*) as in 'this is what one does'. Modern business history is littered with examples of businesses which continued to 'do what one does' until their demise. The British motorcycle manufacturing industry provides a relevant example, with the recent revival of Triumph as a credible player being a result of the sort of transformation in practices which we have in mind. Similarly, the world of teaching in the UK has gone through a series of changes in response to its reflection on external circumstances, and the EPL research indicates that there are sometimes conflicts between the transformational aspirations of new teachers and the capacity of the education system to react to them. As with nursing, there is a tension between the need for a world to

have a core activity or theme which persists through time, and the evolving nature of practice as feedback loops disturb the linearity of the system.

The use of the term 'authentic' to describe emergent professional identity thus describes the sense of purpose within a historical and cultural context which gives meaning to discrete task performance. In principle, a group of academics could learn, as an intellectual and practical exercise, how to set valve timing, change tyres and replace brake pads, but this would not, in itself, turn them into authentic professional motorcycle mechanics, no matter how good they became at these individual tasks. These tasks are traditions inherited from others in the world of motorcycling, but their mere restaging in an artificial situation is insufficient for the creation of an authentic professional identity. The theme that runs through all our current research is that to be professional requires a value system based on responsibility, which implies a future-oriented temporality, and recognition by others. Professional identity is a self-interpretation of ability, which, as Blattner (1999:81) points out, depends on the exercise of that ability. He uses the example of bicycle riding as an ability. One can learn to ride a bike, and retain the ability for a lifetime, but only the continuing exercise of that ability over time leads to self-interpretation as a 'cyclist'.

One of our participants summed this up neatly:

There are no two [motorcycles] the same...you can't just have a totally non-motorcycle related life and come to work, do your bike stuff and then go away again, nobody does that...with us it's 24hours a day, seven days a week, you make a rubbish mechanic if you're not into it, you recognise a pattern after a while, what kind of people have got what kind of bikes...

As with the contents of a deceased person's house, merely placing items in a new location cannot recreate the home of the person from whom they were inherited, and their presence might even be stifling of innovation. It is only when they are rearranged as part of one's heritage that they can contribute to an authentic identity. Fritsche (1999:206) argues that Heidegger's ideas about tradition and heritage are open to an American mis-interpretation which places too much stress on individuality as opposed to the *Volkish* communitarianism intended by Heidegger himself. This is not just an arcane point of philosophical debate, however, since the nature of work itself is determined not by individuals, nor by communities of practice within organisations but by wider socio-cultural forces. In the case of motorcycling, the technician has to some extent been deskilled by changes in manufacturing: greater precision and reliability of major components; the use of sealed units rather than assemblies of smaller parts; replacement of mechanical linkages by electronic or 'mechatronic' systems, and upskilled by socio-cultural changes such as the increased disposable income of customers and the fragmentation of the market.

For teachers, a similarly-diverse set of changes have resulted in both upskilling and deskilling: curricular frameworks rather than individual courses; introduction of ICT and sophisticated visual aids; inter-agency working; the removal of sanctions such as corporal punishment. In both cases, however, the core professional identity is based around the world in which it is embedded. For teachers, this world is constituted by components such as compulsory schooling, schools as material spaces and even the idea of childhood as a period of formal learning. These are, of course, socially and culturally determined, and are mutually interconnected.

Similarly, the world of motorcycling, as it existed for the technicians in the study, includes components such as roads (and off-roads), riders (i.e. individuals with a tolerant attitude to the elements and a certain physical relationship with the machine) and manufacturers interested in catering to them. The horizon of the world of motorcycling was, however, clearly delineated, and did not include colleges or large corporations:

Interviewer: What's the relationship of what you did in college to what you do now?

Technician: Totally irrelevant... Honda's a bit "here's a brand new engine on a brand new stand with a brand new set of tools in a brand new workshop, we'll take our time⁴ from that, not taking into account the bike might have 25,000 dispatch miles on it, you've got two jobs going at the same time, [the proprietor] is on your back because you haven't kept to the allocated factory time, you're not standing there in a lab coat in ideal conditions, you've lost half your tools, still hung over from yesterday, you're only human!

In neither case is the world timeless and independent of culture. In theory, teaching as a profession could be done away with by legislating for compulsory home education by parents, whilst the world of motorcycling could be legislated out of business for reasons of health and safety. The abolition of the world of the samurai in 19th century Japan provides an example of a profession whose existence depended on a particular social system for its survival.

Judgements-in-the-world

So far we have suggested that worlds are interconnected amalgams of objects, activities and understandings which reflect cultural and historical realities. As a relevant aside, the Government's own Research Assessment Exercise for 2008, despite being highly structured and bureaucratised in its implementation, cannot by its own admission function properly other than by exercising holistic, expert judgements as to the quality of submitted research (Brown 2005). The deliberations of subject panel members are facilitated by their own embedding in the appropriate world of research work, whether that be in mathematics or education. It is not seen as desirable or possible to train panel members from outside the subject fields in question, and although there are users of research on the panels, these are drawn from interested and informed professional bodies or institutions, which are themselves involved in the world of research in some way.

We are thus suggesting that understandings within worlds are more important in terms of early professional development than the performance of discrete tasks, and that expert status is gained not through task performance but by task performance in work situations in which an authentic work identity can be acquired.

Participation in a world thus provides a basis for answering the question "What am I going to do now?" As with similar questions in any professional field, there is no one correct answer. Take the following story, as told by one of our project partners (Stronach 2004):

A pupil approaches a teacher and asks to go to the toilet.
Should the teacher say "yes" or "no"?

⁴ manufacturers' recommended time for doing the job in the workshop, as a basis for costing.

At first sight this seems to have little to do with specific, definable competence. However, the EVABCOM manual provides a similar story as an example of the dilemma faced by nursery nurses – a child is observed “piddling in a sandpit” (EVABCOM 2005).

Hypothetically, a ‘competent teacher’ should be able to make a correct decision; either to say ‘yes’ or ‘no’ to the pupil, or to remove the child from the sandpit. This appears to be at a lower skill level than the classic EVABCOM example of designing die tooling, since it requires a simple decision rather than an elaborated design exercise (Bremer 2005). This is, however, a more contextually-bound situation than the die problem, and could not be posed as an evaluation task without providing concrete examples of pupil, classroom, school and neighbourhood. The available information is incomplete even for a teacher located in the physical reality of the classroom. Does the pupil really need to go to the toilet, or is s/he merely seeking an excuse to leave or disrupt the class? Will he or she come back? Will parents retaliate if permission is refused? What is school policy on the issue?

The ability to make judgements based on incomplete information is not merely of academic interest. Flexible working, autonomy, self- or team-management and the possession of ‘work process knowledge’ (Huys & van Hootegem 2005; Boreham & Samurçay 2004) are increasingly becoming characteristic of industrial employees. The multi-skilled technicians interviewed for the EVABCOM project, as we describe below, had a clear concept of their role within the company and were able to make meaningful connections between their work and the larger field in which internal and external customers and suppliers operated. In our terms here, we see them as being participants in a world whose central theme was ‘maintaining production’.

What’s in a world: Part II

Teachers are in a world inasmuch as they are dis-distanced from the entities which constitute it. By dis-distanced, Heidegger means that they are involved with, and yet distinct from, those entities. This can mean physical proximity or knowledge in the sense of awareness of an entity which is not physically present. Thus, my involvement with the world of my department within the University continues whilst I am away doing research somewhere else. On the other hand, I have no involvement with the US State department, and it does not form part of the departmental world, although I am aware of its existence. It might, however, become part of my world if I decided to emigrate. There is a certain amount of discussion about the difference between ‘worlds’ and ‘regions’ in Heidegger (Arisaka 1996; Young 2000), and what this might mean for concepts of proximity. The idea of a world does not imply that those within it are unaware of, or disengaged from, other worlds or regions of activity. Teachers can also be motorcyclists, without necessarily being professionals within that world. It is sufficient to have an understanding of self-as-motorcyclist which applies under one set of circumstances, and another self-understanding as a teacher, which applies at school.

This is not dissimilar to the concept of public and private spheres as developed by Habermas (1968). His concern is to develop the idea of the public sphere as a forum for rational-critical debate, in other words, as a world of shared meanings and mutual recognition. The fragmentation of the public sphere by neo-liberalism, the rhetoric of choice and the rise of ‘issue politics’ suggests that the concept of worlds as overlapping, porous but ultimately bounded can be used to replace the idea of a unitary public sphere or civil society. Choice is

often an unsatisfactory concept when applied to public services such as schools or hospitals, or those privately-supplied services which operate on the macro-scale, such as banking. In such cases, the individual cannot 'dis-stance' her or himself from the world of the provider in a sufficiently proximate way to enter that world. As with the new teachers in our study, and their placement destinations, choice is meaningless without full knowledge of the 'worlds' on offer. Whereas I can choose between two pairs of trousers on the basis of my experience of them in a shop, the experience of choosing on-line is more fraught, since I cannot experience the embodied sensations of fit and fabric directly. The same applies to schools, which cannot provide more than a bare outline of their world in any representative medium.

New teachers in Scotland are enrolled in an official induction scheme which guarantees them a place within a school for their first year, at a reduced (0.7) timetable. In order to sort the applicants across LEA areas, they fill in a form with five ranked choices of LEA area, with the option of ticking an 'anywhere' box which may entitle them to a bonus payment. It is virtually impossible for applicants to know the details of every school to which they might be posted, but highly likely that they will know at least one or two schools from their teaching practice during ITE. At the application stage they are thus dis-distanced from a small number of possible destinations and (in effect) unaware of others. As the process continues they may become aware of some of these possibilities and in the end will be allocated a school which may or may not be a desirable choice from their perspective. The process of entering this school, as part of a world, usually begins at that point, but in some cases there may be prior experience of it, either from teaching practice or from (e.g.) being a parent of a pupil. It might be argued that this is entry into a community of practice (Lave & Wenger 1991), and it is not problematic to explore it on that basis. The concept of world, however, is both more complex and more useful in terms of its explanatory power, as we will seek to show.

Heidegger is keen to show that understandings of 'world' are cultural rather than personal, and the political implications of this have been widely discussed (see Wolin 1998 for a collection of essays on this topic). The significance of world as a cultural understanding is the element of continuity across time sustained by social consensus. Whereas the community of practice can be created and recreated in different settings and with different members, a world has elements which transcend the 'stretch' of an individual lifespan. This does not necessarily imply a particularly long timespan, but it does entail that elements of a world can survive changes in the makeup of its population, or the demise of communities of practice within it. Thus, 'motorcycling' as a world-forming activity is not dependent on the survival of either Honda, the dealer down the road or (fortunately) any individual biker. Conversely, it does depend, as we argued above, on the existence of roads, oil, speed limits and a social consensus which sees it as a permissible, if sometimes transgressive, activity. What could change, in a way which threatened its existence, is the social consensus, with or without technological or economic changes.

Schools have existed in more-or-less their present form for hundreds of years. Whilst radical alternatives are sometimes presented (e.g. Illich 1971), there is currently a strong social consensus that schools are necessary and that their scale is satisfactory. Whilst schools can have small numbers of pupils in rural areas, it is not seen as desirable that schools should be larger than a few thousand pupils at most. Furthermore, it is also seen as desirable that they should not be split across sites and that there should be one person (the Head) in overall charge. None of these is necessary to the worlding of the school, but nevertheless most schools conform to this pattern. At the same time the existence of schools, as currently

understood, requires that a certain meaning be given to parenting, that teachers be paid professionals and so on.

There are of course aspects of education policy which affect the ways in which schools do things (e.g. comprehensivisation, free school meals, streaming), but the world of school transcends these, just as the world of motorcycling transcends the output of Honda or Triumph. I nearly used the expression 'essential idea' instead of 'world' in the previous sentence, but this would suggest that there is a Platonic ideal of the school which transcends its material realisation. This is not the case, and Heidegger puts the activity first – the idea is the label on meaningful activity within a cultural paradigm.

A further point to make here is that new teachers are as essential to the world of school as the school is to their own concept of world. They are not external to it, and their 'entry' into the world is a metaphorical schema rather than an action in the world. They are in fact always already part of the world of the school, into which they are, in a Heideggerian sense, 'thrown'. Heidegger uses the term 'thrown' not as an alternative metaphor for 'entry' but as a way of capturing our emergence into being, from being, rather as the thrown pot emerges from the clay.

Motivation – the opposite of worldly?

Using the expression 'worldly' about a person is generally an indication of concern for the material over the spiritual. What we wish to argue here is that a concern for worldly materiality is actually the opposite of a concern for (amongst other things) financial rewards. Teachers perform demanding work because, in the first instance, they have a concern for the future of their world which is informed by an interpretation of the past. This is a projection of their own embodied existence on to the temporality of the world as it stretches out before them. At the same time it is not an unshakeable faith but a realistic projection which has to be based on dis-stancing from elements of the world into which they are thrown. It is not necessarily a lifetime commitment, but even in cases where an individual makes a decision to teach for a limited period, the ability to conceive of a temporal horizon is revealed. It should also be recognised that teachers who choose not to get deeply involved in the world of the school in the sense of avoiding social contacts or extra-curricular activities, are not necessarily disengaged from the overall world of schooling, since their own authenticity (e.g. George/Logan) depends on their being allowed to make such a choice.