

**NARRATIVE STUDY:**

*An Immigrant Pupil's Experience of English and Multicultural Education*

**By**

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## **ABSTRACT**

A discourse on multicultural education evolved from the late 1950s in response to immigration from ‘the New Commonwealth’. By the 1980s that discourse had become dominated by multicultural and antiracist perspectives. Both can be seen to embody partial truths about Britain’s racial minorities, but neither are sufficiently adequate to the complex situation relating to belonging and cultural identity. An account of lived experience provides a unique dimension to such discourse.

This study uses narrative as a methodological approach to describe the effects English in multicultural education, has had on me as a child of immigrant parents and how it has shaped my identity and work as an English teacher involved with language and literature.

After validating the use of narrative in research, the study draws on my experience as a pupil and, subsequently, poet and teacher. I illustrate my history through a prose chronology as a way of illustrating the role of English in both colonial and multicultural education.

The dissertation also speculates on some pivotal points in the recent history of multicultural education and calls for the discourse on assimilation and integration to be re-negotiated. It acts as a revisionist argument about social mobility, ‘big society’ and cultural inclusiveness.

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## CHAPTER 1: INTRODUCTION

### A) Aims and Objectives

The current discourse relating to *Britishness* or British national identity, especially in the light of the immigration in the second half of the 20<sup>th</sup> century, is divisive and contentious (Doyle, 1989). Coupled with the implied distinction made of EU immigration with that from ‘the New Commonwealth’, the subject has become a political minefield. A number of publications/papers (Goodson, 1990; Hargreaves, 2006; Benton, 2000; Pring, 2013; *et al.*) and celebrity voices (Emma Thompson *cited* in Thomas, 2010; Richard Littlejohn, 2012; Trevor McDonald *cited* in Ager, 2003) have reflected aspects of this complex discourse in relation to identity, curriculum or what is loosely termed, Standard English (SE). In relation to the above, this dissertation identifies the English curriculum as a site in which conflicting definitions of multicultural education (and *Britishness*) have emerged and been contested. Although this is not entirely new ground, my account of my experience of English during 1960-1990s is relevant and politically pertinent in the current ‘post multicultural’ policy context.

The study may raise questions about my own reflexivity and the relevant paradigms. For instance, as an English lecturer and poet who has immigrant (Indian) parentage, I am both personally and professionally involved in this debate by the very nature of the work I do. My own cultural identity, and the *perceived* identity others might ascribe to me as an Anglo-Asian man living in Britain, clearly contributes to the way in which *I* see myself and the way in which I align myself with an idea of *Britishness*. This is derived primarily from my childhood and schooling in which I acquired English.

Firstly, this study uses the autobiography ('this incapacity, this handicapped memory', Derrida, 1998:54) as an exploratory vehicle. It gives narrative a centrality as a form of social science research because life stories in dissertations can help to reveal a different dimension to policy and practice (Bruner, 1997). However, this study is different from that described as *cultural research* or *political arithmetic*. This narrative is not designed specifically to fix or alleviate problems within our society (Powers, 2011). It deliberately strays away from the *functionality* aspect of research findings such as that championed by those involved in action, participatory or grounded research (Silverman, 2013). Instead this is a personal exploration of the issues and trends in government policy and the dominant ethic of English teaching. The dissertation is characterized by what in the 1970s was referred to as 'deep subjectivity', where the author is the subject. It is a study of multicultural education from the perspective of someone who experienced it as an immigrant and now as a teacher. Within this context there is also a focus on what we mean by multicultural education. The dissertation draws on the works of a range of social theorists and examines what multicultural education is.

Secondly, it argues how English in multicultural education has promoted integration and social mobility. But a certain facet of Britain's multicultural education has also incorporated reactionary ideas of power structures (Fairclough, 1989; Wodak, 1989) and national identity (Eagleton, 1983; Bourdieu, 1986; Mathieson, 1975). This is a view echoed by 1970's educational philosophers most notably Basil Bernstein:

How a society selects, classifies, distributes, transmits and evaluates the educational knowledge it considers to be public reflects both the distribution of power and the principles of social control (Bernstein *cited* in Althusser, 1971:47).

The dissertation puts English in the foreground because the current public discourse on

immigration is linked with language. I have, therefore, devoted a chapter on this topic to synthesise some of the issues that have emerged in the narrative. In relation to this there is a focus on the discourse relating to Standard English and Bernstein's 'code' theory presented through extrapolation of ideas from Halliday (1964).

## **B) Key Concepts**

Two important concepts are worth clarifying at the outset: *Standard English* and *multicultural education*.

I refer to the loaded term 'Standard English' to mean a certain kind of dialect and speech patterns characterized by professions populated by educated, middle class people. These include broadcasting, journalism, law, accountancy and medicine (Penketh, 2011, in Lavalette, 2011:50). In places, I refer to this as the SE or the 'non-descript accent' historically and culturally associated with the privileged, cultured class of the metropolis. It is an accent that displays confidence and self-assurance. It's not quite 'estuary' English nor BBC Received Pronunciation but it is distinct. Although I am not advocating a compulsory teaching of this dialect or accent, I do believe that school children should be encouraged to modify their speech patterns by improving their spoken language (dialect) and pronunciation, enunciation and intonation (accent). This is because we make impressions of ourselves by the way we articulate in public spaces, particularly relevant in professional settings.

The dissertation also recognises that the meaning and emphasis of the term *multiculturalism* have shifted since the 1950s. Harpercollins Dictionary of Sociology defines it as:

...the acknowledgement and promotion of cultural pluralism...multiculturalism celebrates and seeks to promote cultural variety...at the same time it focuses on the equal relationship of minority to mainstream culture (1991).

This definition has given rise to well-meaning albeit a contentious belief that all cultures are equal to one another (a pluralistic view). This is part of a liberal thinking about immigration and integration and, it could be argued, has fuelled resentment from the majority, indigenous culture that believes it is being sidelined of periphery and neglect due to government interventionism (state multiculturalism).

English in *multicultural education* is entwined intricately with the social and political climate. For that reason, I examine such contributory factors as the inner-city riots of the 1980s, 2001 and 2011 and censorship imposed by religious factions especially in relation to the Rushdie affair, Charlie Hebdo and the Trojan Horse scandal. Together they have had an impact; they have influenced the discourse on race, identity and integration of 'others'.

In the conclusion, the dissertation pulls together key ideas and strands in the narrative in order to define the role of English in multicultural education.

## CHAPTER 2: NARRATIVE AS RESEARCH METHODOLOGY

Narratives have a substantive role in that they contribute to our understanding of social and cultural life by constructing knowledge and meaning making. As a definition of narrative, Roland Barthes' statement is useful. He states that 'the history of narrative begins with the history of (hu)mankind; there does not exist, and has never existed, a people without narratives' (Barthes, 1966:14). Although he argued in his paper 'The Death of the Author' (1967) that a narrative is a datum that needs to be analysed and interpreted by using a range of semantic, knowledge and cultural tools other than those used in the study of 'the Author', he also felt that narrative has a unique role in a 'capitalist ideology which has accorded the greatest importance to the author's 'person''. The author is invariably concerned with humanity:

The author still rules in manuals of literary history, in biographies of writers, in magazine interviews, and even in the awareness of literary men, anxious to unite, by their private journals, their person and their work. The image of literature to be found in contemporary culture is tyrannically centred on the author, his person, his history, his tastes, his passions... (Barthes, 1966:2)

Of course Barthes elsewhere argued positively for the death of the author. But for some critics, 'narrative is the type of discourse that draws together diverse events, happenings and actions of human lives' (Polkinghorne, 1988:5-6). Narrative is becoming increasingly popular in educational research despite the fact that narrative belongs in the interpretivist field in its approach to the study of dogma and ideology. It can reveal the complexities involved in human emotions and experience. In doing so, and as critics argue, 'we try and make sense of the world through and *in* educational improvement' (Peim and Flint, 2012:202).

My own experience is important because it illustrates the ambivalence that people feel when reflecting on their schooling and settings. On the one hand, 1960s and 1970s education worked against immigrants like me for it excluded our cultural standing and racial identity (Gilroy, 1987; Warmington, 2014; *et al.*); on another, it was a positive influence in creating assimilation and social uniformity (Lowe, 1997; Gorski, 2006). My feelings are governed by these two polar ends. So I place myself as a datum because we are not packaged into a readily defined social theory. Instead we, like any documentary text, are ambiguous entities open to interpretations.

On another level, narrative is a way of making sense of a particular theory, in this case, the policy of multicultural education. It is also a way of looking at a policy from bottom up. Bruner (1986) calls this ‘narrative cognition’, where the particular and specific (my own experience of multicultural education) contribute to the whole (multicultural education policy). He contrasts this with ‘logico-scientific cognition’ which is concerned with universals, empiricist reasoning and proof (drawn through scientific tools). With some justification, he argues that neither is ‘better’ or more ‘truthful’; they are merely approaches to the use of narrative (Bruner, 1986:45).

I am using narrative not as a post-modern ‘turn’ to show a lack of faith in grand, master or meta narratives in research. To me the narrative is ‘a simple account of something’. In this case, it is my experience of policy and practice. Specifically it is a critical account (prose/autobiographical) of my educational experience. Although Barthes’s caveat needs to be considered, that fluency in prose can mask deficiencies in content and theorising (Barthes, 1966:16), there is no reason to suppose that this narrative study is any more likely to deceive than those that use traditional forms (Sikes, 2000).

In terms of originality of this study and its contribution to knowledge, I have been drawn to the idea of research as a form of story-telling, where my own experience and epistemological bias strengthens not contaminates the validity of the research findings. All social scientists are involved in determining a 'truth'. As Gudmundsdottir (1996) points out, the narrative research method is valid when data collection, interpretation and the recording are considered a 'meaning-making' process with similar features as those in stories/narratives (Gudmundsdottir, 1996:39). Silverman (1998) observes that all we have as social scientists are stories which need to be put into intelligent use in theorising about social life (Silverman, 1998:111) by reflection and introspection. Shakespeare's Hamlet talks about holding a mirror up to reality as a way of discovering himself and his place within an environment that holds him at bay. By using his own 'mirror', Foucault writes:

I discover myself absent at the place where I am, since I see myself over there. From that gaze which settles on me, as it were, I come back to myself and I begin once more to direct my eyes toward myself and to reconstitute myself there where I am (Foucault *cited* in Faubion, 1998:179).

We sense that for Foucault history is very much alive in the present. It is through history that he comes back to himself to 'divert my eyes' and to 'reconstitute'. His history is, therefore, an integral component of 'the self' and identity. As such he himself takes a centrality in research. Similarly, Derrida (1996) argues for the insertion of the self in research:

Where then *are we*? Where do we find ourselves? With whom can we still identify in order to affirm our own *identity* and to tell ourselves our own history? First of all to whom do we recount it? One would have to construct oneself, one would have to be able to *invent oneself* without a model and without an assured addressee (Derrida, 1996:55).

I, however, do not wish to ‘invent’ but to discover myself within a theory of multicultural education. The story-telling is a tool to display a truth normally associated in the production of factuality. Yet Foucault, a distinguished theoretician, defined his approach to post-modern research as ‘fictions’:

I am well aware that I have never written anything but fictions. I do not mean to say, however, that truth is therefore absent. It seems to me that the possibility exists for fiction to function in truth, for a fictional discourse to induce effects of truth, and for bringing it about that a true discourse fabricates or manufactures something that does not as yet exist, that is, ‘fictions’ it. One ‘fictions’ history on the basis of a political reality that makes it true, one ‘fictions’ politics not yet in existence on the basis of a historical truth (*cited* in Gordon, 1980).

In this sense Foucault is questioning the legitimacy and the objectivity implied in social research where the author has assumed the position of a dead author. The ‘am’ of the ‘I’ and its absence from the words spoken, texts written and thoughts constantly call for its de-objectification: ‘I’ is no-thing. After all, the ‘omniscient social scientific prose’ is built upon a ‘precarious fiction’, the ‘simultaneous absence and presence of the writer within the writing’ (Löwenheim, 2010:1024). This cannot but reveal that ‘the scientist only pretends to be absent’ (Inayatullah, 2011). Similarly, there is no definitive ‘truth’ only ‘truths’ assembled with a mass of contradiction borne out of liking and disliking of a certain stylised mode of language. The use of my own poetry is a way of illuminating myself and my identity. It helps to explore possible truths about race, language and cultural identity. As Derrida (1996) states:

Throughout the story I am relating, despite everything I sometimes appear to profess, I concede that I have contracted a shameful but intractable intolerance; at least in French, insofar as the language is concerned, I cannot bear or admire anything other than pure French (Derrida, 1996:46).

Similarly, Doty (2004) explains in the language of Barthes, the zero degree writing of science is nothing more than a 'style desirous of the absence of style' that inescapably exposes a 'desire to suppress desire', and in that, the life in the lifelessness produced by the 'disciplinary life' of science (Doty: 2004:5) governed by academic dictatorship as if 'objectivity' has divine right in scholastic writing. A prose narrative, as the one used in this dissertation, is more democratic for it lends itself to interpretation. In doing so, it defines and establishes a relationship between the writer and the subject; between the writing and the reader.

With such a theoretical and critical framework, I am placing myself in the centre of this research enquiry. I am both the subject and the researcher; the object and the study.

In his paper, *What is an Author?*, Foucault not only argues that the researcher is central in any form of narrative study (where his/her reflexivity or view point can be challenged and/or misappropriated) but that discourse *per se* is also a valid datum or object of appropriation (Foucault, 1969). He makes the point that discourse was not originally a product or an object. Instead it was an act placed in 'the bipolar field of the sacred and the profane, the licit and the illicit, the religious and the blasphemous' (Foucault, 1969:6). Historically it was a gesture fraught with risks before becoming goods caught up in a circuit of ownership. A text is validated, given the status of 'truth', only when it is given the legitimacy and reputation of authorship. It is this validation, the *name* of the author, which in turn gives the text its credentials and can even act as a form of healing (Rolfe, 2002). This is how I use my own narrative, a form of story-telling intercepted with relevant, speculation, theorization and notional 'truth(s)'. I am, however, aware that my subjectivity may be viewed with a discerning eye. But this is the original contribution to

knowledge. I am the subject viewing multicultural education and presenting the perspective in my own voice.

Peim (2010) also argues along these lines by questioning the form and register of a research enquiry. In his paper, *What is a Thesis?*, he explores shifts in the determination of truth in the works of Derrida and Foucault. He identifies a conservative trend to restore a ‘proper’ relation in the truth of educational research. The relation to truth is inevitably a matter of genre. It is the attempt to decree, explicitly or implicitly what is proper to the domain, to the discourse and its social relations. The omniscience of the authorial voice is an illusion or a scholarly falsity. A doctoral thesis is the actual *mode* that defines the integrity of properly validated knowledge. It is in such document that this relation to truth is put into play. Peim states:

The thesis has no determinate genre; even though it is always constrained by the ghostly genre (that ‘spectral’ condition) that decrees what is proper to it... (Peim, 2010:226).

Peim also suggests that empirical research is, to some extent, subjective and laden with politics where there is the interplay of the interest of the author, subject and the awarding/funding body. Power dynamics are always at play. The central issues require one to grapple with the internal politics involved in the creation of research:

Who determines, by what process and in relation to what systematic framework how things get included, excluded, designated or categorized? No species of text is without a context or without an institution. Both provide a stabilizing force and (together) act as an archive (Peim, 2010:232).

The archive is ‘what manages the habitation and movement of the zone of proximal development’ (Vygotsky, 1978:86). It is where ‘knowledge’ resides. But there are

different forms of knowledge. Said (1978), for instance, makes the distinction between pure and political knowledge:

It is very easy to argue that a writer cannot be detached from his social and political context and therefore all writing is political. We cannot argue that pure knowledge is non-political because the logic of that would be that political knowledge is not real, or lacking purity. In fact the adjective political is used to discredit a work (Said, 1978:9-10).

This is a valid point for it could be argued that this dissertation is also borne out of social and political context. As such 'pure' knowledge, neither can, nor should, take precedent. We have to consider politics. However, in the context of an enquiry into the nature of a particular form of education and schooling, we also have to delve into philosophy and ontology. We must question how knowledge is monitored and measured and against what threshold. And, politically, exactly *who* are the custodians of this knowledge (Goodson, 1994; Peim, 2010)?

This narrative study portrays my personal account to validate an approach to multicultural education by focusing on English (Brown and Duguid, 1991; Bruner, 2004). Bhattacharyya (1998) argues how tales like *The Arabian Nights* can tell us much more than any travel or history book ever could. Foucault also asks why such a collection of stories, which is one of the foundations of the West's fascination with the Orient, does not constitute scholarly work (Foucault *cited* in Rabinow, 1984:104). Hence, I use my own poetry. By adopting this particular narrative approach to this research, the dissertation will allow a voice to the author and his/her cultural group (1960s and 1970s black/Asian immigrant pupils from 'the New Commonwealth'). In this sense it can provide and develop a decidedly powerful, political edge (Gray, 1998:12).

This study describes *not* a *problem* as such but a *trend* in regard to a specific *kind* of thinking about multicultural education and English, particularly in their role in nation building and defining our cultural identity (Pring, 2001). It helps to construct our world through meaning (Hughes, 1990). This is very topical in the education field especially in regard to our government's current reforming of the National Curriculum. Some critics (Pring, 2001; Powers, 2011) see research as a way of 'pursuing and telling the truth' (Pring, 2001:414-415) where the production of knowledge results in the improvement of practice or development of policy.

As a lecturer and poet, my own work involves examining the nature and politics of literary criticism. The exploration of policy and practice and 'personal experience' is a process that defines my perspective on life. But I also acknowledge that in writing this dissertation I am already situated within a particular historical and cultural setting. As such, it raises the question and legitimacy of value-free research. Coupled with the view that 'the world we live in is constructed through meaning' (Hughes, 1990:138), I am comfortable in illustrating a journey that uses the narrative as a form of reflection.

The nouns 'journey' and 'narrative' are used deliberately because my role as an English lecturer, who has acquired English as a second language and who represents the effects of colonial imposition upon his heritage and culture, is central in this study. There is, therefore, a subjective, experiential aspect to this research. However, the social, political and cultural bias inherent in such a study is *not* something that should necessarily be erased or minimised. Instead, the study recognises the importance of my own positionality or professional reflexivity because my experience and perception of the external world are what are commonly termed knowledge. In re-constructing this knowledge for the purpose of this dissertation, I am validating it as data.

Inherently, interlocked in such a study are theoretical issues relating to the philosophy and language of research. But such an epistemological enquiry into education and language, may not sit comfortably with some critics, researchers, funding institutions and awarding bodies. Here the narrative is a theoretic device that acts as a model for understanding and evaluating. In this sense it is a component of ‘creative’ production:

Part of the point of the process is to recognise that forms of knowledge and ways of organising identities are subject to process of production, and that the ensuing productions will be done from particular points of view and with particular purposes in mind – whether these operate consciously or not (Peim, 1993:127).

My own narrative in this dissertation is part of that ‘creative production’. The narrative is used to extrapolate key ideas about multicultural education. These are then synthesized in the chapter on the identity of English and Standard English (SE) in the curriculum.

The study takes a phenomenological approach in which I interpret key aspects in my life to make sense of my personal experiences of education. This approach stems from my own philosophical concern with the nature of ‘Being-in-the-world’ (Heidegger, 1962) and the lived experience within the ‘life worlds’ (Husserl, 1970). It is about life transitions and identity changes or the awareness of what it means to be ‘different’ from others (Moustakas, 1992).

Amongst its findings the dissertation argues that not only should dialect be important in English (to widen pupils’ linguistic repertoire) but that teachers should also reconsider the politics of teaching English with a focus on ‘standard’ English pronunciation. This mode of pronunciation is defined as that which enables all pupils an access to a style of language and accent, where their speech reflects both educatedness and commonality, but not difference. This is a relatively contentious line of argument and one that no longer sits comfortably with

teachers committed to political correctness partly because such a focus is a remnant of the assimilationist approach to multicultural education. Correcting pupils' speech is seen as an intrusive violation of their identity. However, if we argue that we should provide pupils with a range of English styles and literature, then, it could be equally argued, that teaching various forms of vernacular is also part and parcel of that thinking. I am, therefore, aware that my thesis rejects the integrationist approach to multicultural education which argues that the English teacher should not focus on pupils' accents or dialects or, that features are unimportant. I believe that in today's education, the quality of a pupil's speech is important for why else would we assess pupils' Speaking and Listening skills at GCSE? It is even more important in multicultural education.

But what do we mean by the term multiculturalism?

Like Standard English this is another loaded term. Parekh (2006) makes a distinction between 'multicultural society' and 'multiculturalism'. He states that the former is about cultural diversity and the latter is 'a normative response to that fact' (Parekh, 200:64). The discourse is, therefore, located in the political sphere because it deals with equality, fairness and respect for the individual and minority communities in relation to the dominant culture. So, in one form, multiculturalism addresses questions of allegiance and national identity and legislation and strategies designed to strengthen pupils' awareness of these. In effect, multiculturalism examines the power dynamic embedded through the state apparatus, institutions, social structures and communities. As the Indian-born English writer Malik (2005) points out, multiculturalism is often used to describe a diverse multicultural society (usually as a result of immigration) but it also exists as a reference to the kind of state policies that are proffered as ways of dealing with a poly-cultural society. He argues that the concept of

multiculturalism embodies both a *description* of a society and a *prescription* for managing that society. However, according to Malik (2005), the multiculturalist description of society is a distorted one. Western societies, in particular, are not as diverse as multiculturalists often suggest and concepts such as ‘culture’ and ‘race’ are complex. Similarly, Parekh (2006) on cultural diversity, writes:

...common human identity but in a culturally mediated manner... They are different and similar, their similarities and differences do not passively coexist but interpenetrate, and neither is ontologically prior or morally more important. We cannot ground equality in human uniformity because the latter is inseparable from and ontologically no more important than human differences (Parekh, 2006:239).

Words such as ‘race’, ‘culture’ and ‘identity’ are, therefore, applied dubiously. Through a process of deconstruction of semantics, policy makers have come to realize not just that the notion of cultural diversity is not self-evidently good but that the concept of culture is not clearly defined:

....what exactly is a culture? What marks its boundaries? Is it possible to accord rights to cultures without treating such cultures as having fixed boundaries? Why should cultural differences be viewed as more salient than, say, class or age differences? In what way is a sixteen-year-old British-born boy of Pakistani origin living in Bradford of the same culture as a fifty-year-old man living in Lahore? Does a sixteen-year-old white boy from Bradford have more in common culturally with his fifty-year-old father than with that sixteen-year-old ‘Asian’? (Malik, 2005:362)

As a result, not only are words like ‘culture’ used without a clear definition but Malik (2005) argues that the very notion of cultural diversity is problematic. No one would argue that we

should treat minority cultures with respect and tolerance, and that people of these cultures should be permitted to pursue and practise whatever religion and lifestyle they choose. That is an important component of a multicultural society. However, there is another view of multiculturalism. It holds that all minority values must have equal status to those of the majority. Any attempt to uphold majority values over minorities is a form of prejudice. It is the tension between those two conflicting interpretations that give rise to conflict.

He further argues that multiculturalist prescription for society creates the very situation it is meant to solve. The notions of culture, identity and authenticity embodied in multicultural policies are derived from Romanticism:

between the Romantic idea of culture and an equally Romantic idea of identity. Romanticism is one of those concepts that cultural historians find invaluable but which is almost impossible to define. It took many political forms\*/it lies at the root both of modern conservatism and many strands of radicalism\*/and appeared in different national versions. Romanticism signifies not a specific political or cultural view but rather describes a cluster of attitudes and preferences: for the concrete over the abstract; the unique over the universal; nature over culture; the organic over the mechanical; emotion over reason; intuition over intellect; particular communities over abstract humanity (Malik, 2005:363).

In some ways, Romanticism resurrects ways of thinking about difference that are rooted in racial theory. Take, for instance, the notion of identity: According to Malik, 'Increasingly identity (is seen as something) the self creates and through which the self is created'. (Malik, 2005:364). Similarly, Hall (1992) states that identity is 'formed and transformed continuously in relation to the ways in which we are represented or addressed in the cultural systems which surround us' (Hall, 1992:277). He goes on to state:

The inner self, in other words, finds its home in the outer world by participating in a collective. But it is not just any collective. The world is comprised of countless groups: philosophers, truck drivers, football supporters, drinkers, train spotters, conservatives, communists and so on. But in contemporary debates about identity, each person's sense of who they truly are is seen as intimately linked to only a few special categories, collectives defined by people's gender, sexuality, religion, race and, in particular, culture. (Hall, 1992:277)

The emergence of multiculturalism as a favoured political strategy during the 1960s and the 1970s is the consequence of the narrowing of the political sphere. The dissertation will view assimilationism and integrationism during these decades in the light of this distinction. But there is little doubt that education/schooling is one of the sites in which the state has acted to prepare young people for living with cultural diversity. It has become the main battle ground for educationalists and policy makers (Warmington, 2014). Warmington also makes the distinction between multiculturalism dealing specifically with immigration from the New Commonwealth and multiculturalism in the broadest sense, characterized by the late 20<sup>th</sup> century. To critics like Warmington (2014) and Modood (2005), multiculturalism has come to include new forms of pluralist activism (feminism, gay rights, disability rights, indigenous people's movements and minority faith, ethnic and linguistic struggles):

These multicultural movements were politically diverse ...what they had in common was a belief that social justice entailed acknowledging difference as well as sameness: that there was more than one valid way to live and that a just society necessarily comprised negotiation between these ways (Warmington, 2014:73).

Moreover, it is not just a matter of tolerating difference but about allowing individual cultural identities access to shared public space and thereby fostering 'liberal citizenship' (Modood, 2005:65).

In summary, the dissertation is a personal autobiographical account of my understanding of cultural/national identity. It documents my experience of classroom pedagogy and how my own epistemological perspective has been shaped by social and political forces in recent British history. I place myself at the centre of the research to illustrate the effects English and multicultural education have had on me as an immigrant pupil.

## **CHAPTER 3: AUTOBIOGRAPHY – AN IMMIGRANT PUPIL’S EXPERIENCE OF ENGLISH AND MULTICULTURAL EDUCATION**

### **PART I**

#### **A) Background – Family History and the Politics of Race**

A key feature of my early childhood is the desire on my part to fit in with mainstream British culture, its language and its literature. It is a running theme that has often amplified itself at various intervals in my life. I wanted to belong to Englishness as if it might give me a sense of completeness. This overriding sense of wanting to be part of the whole can be explained in relation to my Hindu background.

Both my parents were born in what is now Pakistan during the British Raj. My father was born in the spring of 1930, and my mother, in the autumn of 1940. But these dates are estimates since there was no legal requirement to register births, and certificates were only issued if one was dealing with the authorities. At the time very few people dealt with civil law since administration was carried out tribally with village elders. My parents’ childhoods were spent in Lahore during the tail end of the British colonial rule. In terms of education, my paternal grandfather was a farmer who equipped my father with basic schooling in Urdu. This was, and remains to this day, the main language in that part of the region. My mother had no formal schooling but managed to learn Punjabi through a ‘home schooling project’ run by her immediate community. Both the Dougs and the Chandras are part of an ancient Hindu clan that predates Christianity.

Pre-1947 saw the run up to the partition of Pakistan from India that had been mobilised by the supporters of the home rule movement headed by such figures as Mohandas Karamchand Gandhi who Churchill described in derogatory terms as ‘a

seeditious fakir' (Tharoor, 2015). During this period, cultural suspicion and antagonism between Muslims and Hindus were rife and my parents saw the increasing resentment and division within their communities which, at one time, had been places of neighbourly cohesion and cooperation. In August 1947 The Radcliffe Line was published as a boundary demarcation line between India and Pakistan upon the partition of India. The Radcliffe Line was named after its architect, Sir Cyril Radcliffe, who as chairman of the Border Commissions was charged with equitably dividing 175,000 square miles (450,000 km<sup>2</sup>) of territory with 88 million people (Read and Fisher, 1998:482). Pakistan was intended as a Muslim homeland, while the new India was set to become a modern, secular democracy with a Hindu majority. Theoretically, geographically and, particularly from the point of view of the British, the line was convenient, equitable and well intentioned. Politically, from the point of view of the Muslims and Hindus, it was invidious, contentious and divisive with factions on both sides of the border feeling unjustly done by.

In reality, Punjab's population distribution was such that there was no line that could neatly divide Hindus, Muslims, and Sikhs. Similarly, no line could appease the Muslim League, headed by Muhammad Ali Jinnah, and the Indian National Congress led by Jawaharlal Nehru and Vallabhai Patel (all Western educated) and by the British. Moreover, any division based on religious communities was sure to involve 'cutting through road and rail communications, irrigation schemes, electric power systems and even individual landholdings' (Read and Fisher, 1998:483). A well-drawn line could have minimised the separation of farmers from their fields, and also minimised the numbers of people who were forced to relocate.

On 'the sub-continent as a whole, some 14 million people left their homes' including my

grandparents on both sides of my family. ‘People set out by every means possible – by air, train, and road, in cars and lorries, in buses and bullock carts, but most of all on foot – to seek refuge with their own kind’ (Read and Fisher, 1998:497). Many of them were slaughtered on an unprecedented scale. For my parents, the fact that people were able to turn on one another was disturbing. How could neighbours with a shared set of cultural values inflict violence on one another? My mother’s family witnessed looting, burning and beating of Hindus in Pakistan. Coupled with rape and abduction of girls and young women, it was the most startling reminder of how fragile our notions of home and security are. In a state of desperation, people left their land, their possessions and moved purely on the basis of sectarian/religious affiliation. Together it became the largest exodus of people in human history. Curfews were held whilst ‘camps’, set up at various points on the route, were guided by military personnel. Lines of people made their way from one region to another, passing a notional line drawn across the continent with, according to my father, little thought or care to the political and cultural ramifications this would have on subsequent generations of Pakistanis and Indians. Some people starved or died of exhaustion, while others were afflicted with ‘cholera, dysentery, and all those other diseases that afflict undernourished refugees everywhere’ (Read and Fisher, 1998:499). Estimates of the number of people who died range from 200,000 (official British estimate at the time) to two million, with the consensus being around one million.

With many other Hindus and Sikhs, my parents came 120 miles south of Lahore in the Indian state of Punjab where the same fate was witnessed by the Muslims forced to abandon their homes. It was during this time that my father, being only about 11 or 12, saw the horrific beheading of a Muslim man who refused to leave his home. My father was a part of the mob, cajoled into action by the Sikh/Hindu elders of the village intent on driving out Muslims. Some of them were fairly educated and had an elementary schooling

not unlike my father. However, being very young, my father took no direct part but just being there left him traumatised. The episode left an indelible mark on his conscience. He only referred to it in private with my mother and myself during the latter years of his life when he was fighting Leukemia of the blood. His perpetual guilt at the incident raises an important point about the spiritual value of education especially in the study of literature. If we take F.R. Leavis's view about literature as a civilising force and its potential to connect people (Leavis, 1943), then we also have to remind ourselves that the two World Wars also involved Christian nations who had a set of shared cultural traits, religion, music, arts, philosophy and even a royal family (Eagleton, 1983). Despite this, over five million soldiers died in four years of trench warfare; 72 million people died in World War II whilst a further six million Jews were killed in Nazi concentration camps.

Soon my father took abode in one of the villages in the district of Jalandhar to work in the fields as a farmer, whilst my mother's family, who were relatively well-to-do, settled in the actual city. Being a girl my maternal grandfather placed little priority in her education focusing instead on his four sons who subsequently entered the world of law, civil service and business. My father, on the other hand, had managed to acquire basic Urdu and Punjabi having attended a government 'free' school in the old village (which, nevertheless, still required a fee). But the atrocities he witnessed and was privy to should remind us about the importance we place on the politics of education. When the Allied troops moved in to arrest commandants after the Second World War, they realised that these people had spent their leisurely hours with a volume of Goethe, the Bible, read poetry and listened to Beethoven whilst on duty they lead the Jews into the gas chambers. Knowledge of culture, science and arts does not necessarily make you humane and 'civilised' irrespective of what romantic notions Newbolt and Leavis entertained about English, art and high culture. Morality and ethics are neither exclusive nor integral in

education. Neither knowledge nor an appreciation of literature necessarily enhances your sense and sensibilities. Like data, knowledge is all around you. Therefore, it is perhaps not a particular set of information and facts that we should obsess about (like our government does) but what we do with them that makes the difference.

With four years of elementary schooling in literacy and numeracy my father was able to read and write at a fairly proficient level. This allowed him access to newspapers and books. He even started teaching basic numeracy to the village elders who used to count by drawing marks in the sand. In this respect my father became a living embodiment of what Gandhi wanted to achieve in his education project. Gandhi not only rejected Western education but proposed a ‘new’ model of schooling and self-sufficiency and questioned the nature of education. It was akin to the English Utilitarian model advocated by Jeremy Bentham in *Principles Of Morals And Legislation* (1789) and developed by the English philosopher-economist John Stuart Mills in *Utilitarianism* (1863). However, whilst Bentham and Mills concerned themselves with the ethics of production and education for functional purposes, Gandhi, was lead by a desire to create political freedom for his nation. His education project encompassed a different society, reflecting the old values of pre-colonial days, and was based around the village:

Independence must begin at the bottom. Thus every village will be a republic...having full powers. It follows, therefore, that every village has to be self-sustained and capable of managing its affairs. Thus, ultimately, it is the individual who is the unit. This does not exclude dependence on and willing help from neighbours or from the world... In this structure composed of innumerable villages, there will be ever-widening never-ascending circles. Life will not be a pyramid with the apex sustained by the bottom (Burke, 2000:5).

But not unlike the Utilitarians Gandhi argued that ‘there would be no room for machines that would displace human labour that would concentrate power in a few hands’ (Burke,

2000:9). But in terms of the model of education, he spoke about ‘the rottenness’ of Western education. To him English education was flawed because of power structures incorporated in the way it was organised and the way the pupil in the system of schooling was managed. He saw an affinity with working class mill workers in Lancashire because in terms of class structures, they were just as enslaved to the empire as the Indians were in India. Hardly any of the wealth generated by the ruling classes filtered down to the mill workers. It was the intensity of exploitation and the heavy reliance on technology that was dehumanising large groups of people. He stated, ‘if the machinery craze grows in our country, it will become an unhappy land’ (*cited in* Burke, 2000:9).

For generations my father’s family had relied on subsistence farming for a living. But schooling and its functional aspect helped him to transfer himself from his immediate locality. Education for him became a tool to mobilise himself. It was not simply a form of aestheticism which occupied the minds of Ancient Greeks or what Said (1978) refers to as ‘pure’ knowledge. In this context, with perfunctory literacy skills, my father also attempted to enlist in the Indian army but failed his medical and fitness examination due to his under nourishment. From the late 1940s my father and his siblings began to venture out away from farming towards skilled labour. This can be seen as the result of Gandhi’s self-sufficiency project. Gandhi’s proposal was intended to stand the education system on its head. As Burke (2000) argues his social philosophy and the curriculum of what he called ‘basic education’, favoured the child belonging to disadvantaged families not unlike my father. Such thinking implied a programme of social transformation. It sought to alter the symbolic meaning of ‘education’ and to change the established structure of opportunities for education and skills. Gandhi was also of the opinion that manual labour should not be seen as something inferior to mental work that required a proficient command of literacy and numeracy. Rather idealistically, he felt that the work of the

craftsman or labourer should be the model for the 'good life'. Schools which were based around productive work for the benefit of all, were carrying out education of the whole person – mind, body and spirit – and the whole community with an emphasis on cooperation, communal cohesion and collectiveness.

A final point about Gandhi's 'new' model is the teacher's centrality in a pupil's learning. The teacher is given the autonomy, consistent with libertarian principles. Gandhi wanted to free the Indian teacher from state or bureaucratic interference. Under colonial rule, the teacher had a prescribed job to do that was based on what the authorities wanted the pupil to learn. Textbooks were mandatory that 'the living word of the teacher has very little value. A teacher who teaches from textbooks does not impart originality to his pupils' (Burke, 2000:12). Gandhi's plan, therefore, implied the end of the teacher's subservience to the prescribed textbooks and the curriculum. It presented a concept of learning that simply could not be fully implemented with the help of textbooks. Of equal, if not more, importance was the freedom it gave the teacher in matters of curriculum planning. It gave control to the teacher but it was, above all, a libertarian approach to schooling that attempted to transfer power from the state to the village.

It was in these social and political contexts that my father acquired his elementary education and got married when he was 18 or 19 years old.

In 1951 he had a child but his wife died of tuberculosis bronchitis leaving him with a daughter. For a few years she was looked after by my grandparents and my father's extended family. As poverty was rife and there being very little opportunity of moving out of economic hopelessness, my father set sights on places outside the Punjab and even started entertaining ideas of settling abroad. He read about politics, the economy and current affairs in newspapers but, more importantly, he read that there was work in

Kolkata. Education, in the form of literacy, proved an asset. It informed him, equipped him with knowledge of the bigger world outside his familiarity. After borrowing money from people in the village, his family secured funds for him to go and work in Kolkata. It was a popular destination at the time for many Punjabi migrant workers (today it is Dubai or other parts of United Emirates). There he worked in one of the ports as a docker on a shipping yard loading and unloading cargo. Later he invited his brothers to work in the same place. He did this for a few years sending money back to his extended family at regular intervals enabling his parents to marry off his four sisters with relatively handsome dowries. The migration also enabled him to buy properties and houses for himself and his parents.

By the mid-1950s he had lived in Kolkata for a few years followed by some sporadic bouts in Singapore and Marseilles in the south of France. The British government invited migrant workers from 'the New Commonwealth' and issued 'tokens' (invitations of work). He was given a British passport with full British nationality in 1957 to work in heavy industries due to the shortage of labour in this country (Bourne, 2007. This migration in turn, helped to transform Britain from a decades-old depressed, insular economy to an important leading European economic power. Britain had controlled 35% of world trade in 1900 but it could no longer be assumed that such dominance would continue as a feature of the national order (Doyle, 1983 *cited* in Colls and Dodd, 1986). In particular, it had suffered a great deal after the First World War:

The Victorian economy in Britain crashed in ruins between the two world wars. The sun, which as every school boy knew, never set on British territory and British trade, went down below the horizon (Hobsbawm, 1968:185).

On arrival in Britain, my father started working in one of the many foundaries in the West

Midlands making iron and metal sheets. Having set a base in north-west Birmingham, he went back to India in 1961/62 to find a suitable girl and remarry. He did this through the practice of an arranged marriage system in which his elevation and prospects in Britain made him an attractive suitor to wealthy families. He eventually chose a girl who became my mother, whose family were educated and economically self-sufficient. They got married and then immediately my father returned to Britain. I was born in 1963 and, a few months later, my mother, and I were invited over to Britain to join my father. My step sister remained with my grandparents with my father sending money to them almost on a monthly basis as penance for his guilt. A few years later she got married to an educated farmer's son who had studied engineering. They married in 1968 and then emigrated to Germany.

My brother was born in 1969 followed by my sister in 1972 when multicultural education was gaining shape and emerging as a progressive non-interventionist social strategy. It was a direct result of the increasing levels of immigration from 'the New Commonwealth'. This 'policy', according to some, was in itself a legacy of the British Empire (Modood, 2013:3) and had a colonial veneer because its primary purpose was to assimilate immigrants into the host culture. It was emerging amidst a culture of intolerance. One of the most vociferous political voices was Enoch Powell. In his famous 'rivers of blood' speech (Powell, 1968 cited in *The Daily Telegraph*, 2007) he articulates all the concerns audible in current discourse relating to immigration from Eastern Europe. Immediately he launches into incendiary semantics intermingled with allusions from classical Greek. He sees his job as a statesman to speak up against 'preventable evil', 'the current troubles' and 'unpopular topics', which, without people tackling them, will lead to 'graves'. He quotes a working class man employed in 'one of our nationalized industries' who is dispirited with the level of immigration 'in 15 or 20 years' time the black man will have

the whip hand over the white man'. Powell wanted an end to immigration and even called for the repatriation of those who were already settled here. '...at this moment 20 or 30 additional immigrant children are arriving from overseas in Wolverhampton alone every week - and that means 15 or 20 additional families a decade or two hence... (we are) permitting the annual inflow of some 50,000 dependants, who are for the most part the material of the future growth of the immigrant-descended population. It is like watching a nation busily engaged in heaping up its own funeral pyre'. He also opposed anti-discrimination policies and legislations, the very same legislations that were designed to create a multicultural society. In his speech he goes on to make a distinction between black people in America 'who were already there' and 'the New Commonwealth' people settling in Britain with full citizenship and rights to social benefits such as the NHS. Powell, an Oxford classicist himself, talks about the fear of sounding racist in this country and is impressed with 'the high proportion of ordinary, decent, sensible people, writing rational and often well-educated letter(s)'. These were anonymous because they felt it was 'dangerous' to express such views and might 'risk penalties or reprisals'. The white community was a 'persecuted minority'. He then went on to quote a Labour MP (John Stonehouse) who wrote in a local newspaper:

The Sikh communities' campaign to maintain customs inappropriate in Britain is much to be regretted. Working in Britain, particularly in the public services, they should be prepared to accept the terms and conditions of their employment. To claim special communal rights leads to a dangerous fragmentation within society. This communalism is a canker; whether practised by one colour or another it is to be strongly condemned (Powell, 1968, 'Rivers of Blood', cited in *The Daily Telegraph*, 2007).

The prevailing idea is that immigration from 'the New Commonwealth' is incompatible with British society. To some extent, Powell had a point. Immigration was changing the physical characteristics and cultural identity of British society. And negotiating a sensible

policy through a range of racial/communal identities was going to prove challenging. However, that is very different from what Powell implied that achieving communal cohesion was an impossibility. Moreover, there were flaws and snobbery in his argument. He was disingenuous to black history because black people were not ‘already there’ in America. They had been imported like goods whilst his reference to classical Greek and his use of ‘letters from educated people’ implied his recognition of hierarchy in culture and social standing.

My parents were working class Indians who spoke little to no English. With their distinct cultural features (my mother wearing a sari/Punjabi suits) they were the epitome of what Powell had caricatured in his speech: the racial/cultural difference.

My mother kept her Indian passport (stamped with ‘permanent stay’) on my father’s insistence. As he often confide in me ‘no one knows when one might have to pack up and leave for another place’. This opportunity came about on my father’s retirement when he and my mother decided to resettle in their ‘homeland’. By then, we, their children had grown and they had no responsibility for us. This freedom, absent of duty and obligation, however, only lasted a few months. They returned to Britain sensing how much India had changed. Many of their friends in India from childhood had, like them, emigrated, grown old or died. My father told me that ‘homeland’ is not the same place when people you knew are no longer there. Sometimes people *are* the place. Although India itself was going through a transitional state, the system, the rules and customs were at odds with my parents’ own (acquired) British sensibilities. So for the first time, in 1981 my father felt that Britain was, in actual fact, his home. A few months before his death in February 2004 he made it clear he wanted to be cremated in Britain. He wanted his ashes to be scattered in an English river (‘For the Severn and the Thames and the Ganges/run like a blank verse

cascading between us', Doug, 1999) because this was where his children were, his immediate family and his friends. By then he had already acquired large tracts of land (tens of acres) and a number of properties in India whilst in Britain he had paid off the mortgage for our house. By the time I was of school age he had become a landlord; his story is one of 'rags to riches'. But it is also indicative of social mobility.

I use this as back-grounding to put my own experience in a social/political context. My parents' history documents my nomadic upbringing in which my family navigated themselves into economic/cultural stability. It illustrates the spatiality involved and how my family's sense of who they are defies national borders and geographical boundaries. Partly because they have been uprooting themselves from an early age, a sense of not being part of the whole has always presided over them. For decades they had viewed Lahore as their 'home' although they were politically and geographically disengaged with that part of the world. They always felt that disconnectedness, that they were a minority. They had always been the settlers never having any lineage with the land, the place or the country, that determined their cultural and national identity.

This has also been a feature in my own sense of belonging and relationship with education and schooling. As this study highlights, the desire to fit in with the mainstream culture has been rather prominent in my life. Education in my life is a beacon which has often lead me to (re)evaluate my own sense of worth and accomplishment. This is exemplified in my poem *Those Yearning Years*:

Upon his face I saw for years as he printed Urdu  
Strokes about going back to India when the kids have grown

And then I'd scribble a foreign name and write  
A familiar phrase 'wife of' or 'son of' followed by an inky

Tribal surname, corrupted by the snow and the rain.  
At times I posted those letters light as the Indian  
  
Ocean to which I directed them. And my father  
Would explain the family tree, how we all fitted in,  
  
And tell me who was who and in which village he lived  
Pride and passion in his voice and a yearning to go back  
  
Home. And I'd imagine a far away world like Timbuktu  
Where a man's status was defined by the number of  
  
Buffaloes he had or acres under his name, not by  
A simple degree from an odd university, locked away  
  
In a drawer made of English Oak, an acknowledgement  
Rarely made, but an embarrassment all the same.

(Doug, 1999)

There were no books in our household during my early childhood. As such English education was a relatively alien feature of which neither my father nor mother had any real awareness. Both my parents told me family stories as part of an oral tradition through which basic Hindu mythology, culture and folklore were passed down to me as illustrated in this poem about my mother:

...I often addressed  
Light blue air mail letters to  
Village Post Office Rahimpur  
Where my unknown cousins all  
Lived. She would show me black  
And white photos of them tattered  
Over the years and I would study  
Their blackened faces staring  
At the lens with an uncomfortable  
Squint showing off their newly  
Made *shalwar* or *kameez*. They were  
Remote to me as the man on the

Moon and just as silent: a land of  
Ghosts, dreams and goblins, I  
Thought. My writing was small,  
Careful and exact as I wrote  
Pronouncing their Indian names in  
Anglicized tones which never looked  
The same on paper – just a corrupted  
Tongue and the bestest fonts colliding  
With the strangest vowels and  
Consonants...

(Doug, 1999)

The use of ‘corrupted tongue’ serves to highlight not only the janglement between the self and language but the psychological discordance one feels in a new setting. It is the oral tradition that defines my childhood learning at home through anecdotal, historical and biographical references. It was the means in which cultural traits, customs and practices were learned. Books did not appear until much later.

As such, I learnt Punjabi as my ‘mother tongue’ and English is something I acquired upon entering primary school; it was my second/public identity. Prior to that and throughout my formative years, the television was a window to a different cultural world that was overwhelming, strange, alienating and yet, simultaneously for a child, enticing and fascinating. Along with my later introduction to the library, it provided me with an opportunity to sense the workings of the English language and the array of English cultures it reflected and *continues* to reflect. The library in particular brought me close to another literary heritage, connecting me with a certain Englishness. It was an identity I was ‘inventing’ for myself (Derrida, 1996:55). In the novels I was reading the voices of fictitious characters appealed to me, to the point that I was creating imaginary people in my head right down to their voice, dialects and that defined, non-descript accent. These people were young children like myself but conveyed an element of kindness. They did

not have traces of regional accents but, what is now politically termed, SE accent. I was reading, imagining and, particularly, hearing this accent on television in the form of soaps, drama, serials and news broadcasts. The sound of a certain kind of English appealed to me, a recognition that a particular form of English had a value or some degree of cultural currency (Bourdieu, 1986). It was the middle class accent associated with education and culture.

### **B) Primary Schooling: Assimilationism and ‘Otherness’**

I attended Benson Primary School in Hockley in Birmingham, situated at the heart of a very multicultural/multiracial community from ‘the New Commonwealth’. It was not a large school with only two classes for each year comprising of roughly 25-30 pupils in class. Typically for the period, there was not a black/Asian member of staff, apart from Mr. Brown, a middle aged man who taught ‘the remedial pupils’. He was, in fact, part of the ESOL programme for the newly immigrant pupils who lacked linguistic skills and were being assimilated. From the 1950s to the beginning of the late 1960s it was a singular defining component of multicultural education.

A prominent feature of my education and my process of assimilation, was the cultural enrichment programme that the school curriculum embodied. At the time, assimilation was part of the government’s non-intervention policy. The education world assumed that immigrant pupils would ‘both absorb and be absorbed into the dominant culture’ (Selby, 1990; Warmington, 2014). Selby further argues:

The maxim ‘treat them all the same’ stemmed from the belief that by playing down cultural differences and skin colour, the teacher could help children live harmoniously together and appreciate their commonality rather than their differences (Selby, 1990:64).

The idea implied was that within schooling, irrespective of their cultural roots, pupils would remain the same, 'British, middle class, Christian' (Mullard, 1982 *cited* in Jones, 1998:2) and probably in that order, in which nationality preceded cultural status and religious affiliation. Some, however, thought it was a severely misguided 'policy' (Jones, 1998; Swann Report, 1985:198) because it brought a certain mistrust about the political intention whilst raising concerns about the delivery of the school curriculum. It also placed the onus on the immigrant child to fit in with the white, middle class, Christian culture. With very little government intervention, the assimilationist approach was used inconsistently for there were few tried and tested strategies to apply or rely on.

In examining multicultural education we need to identify some crude generalisations. There is a belief that to assimilate for immigrant black and Asian children in the 1960s was to discard (forcibly or voluntarily) all cultural traits and beliefs that define their identity as individuals. To assimilate for white children meant little more than staying the same (Mullard *cited* in Arnot 1985:44). Selby (1990) argues that by definition assimilation needed only to happen where there were children of ethnic minorities to assimilate: 'The so-called 'all-white' school and 'all-white' community were left untouched during this stage' (Selby, 1990:64).

Such simplified distinctions on racial/cultural grounds overlooks the fact that many working class white children also feel disenfranchised from the language and cultural traits of white educationalists and many other professionals. This is partly a by-product of the British class system. As Modood (2013) points out, the term multiculturalism carries associations of immigration and settlement. It is not a policy that 'arises out of a political movement but as a consequence of movement of people' (Modood, 2013:3). So multicultural societies were (and still are) countries which have a long, historical

experience of immigration, namely Canada, Germany, Sweden, Australia, United States and Britain (Parekh, 2006). Yet the trends in immigration to the above countries are evident prior to the 1950s in fact centuries before. However, these were mainly the migration from and within Europe and so concerned mainly with white migrants. Within that specific block of migration there were a set of shared racial and cultural characteristics. 1950s multiculturalism is entwined with power dynamics of racial/cultural equality and their relationship with difference (Said, 1978; Modood, 2013; Donald and Rattansi, 1992). Modood (2013) uses *The Future of Multi-Ethnic Britain* (2000) report produced by the commission for Multi-Ethnic Britain (known as ‘the Parekh Report’) as a benchmark to define a certain kind of multiculturalism for the 21<sup>st</sup> century Britain. To Modood it is something that ‘is rooted in recent and ongoing policies, politics and other real-world developments... it consists of ideas that influence policy-makers and public debates and are of great controversy’ (2013:17). Moreover, these subjects ‘have come to have the status that they have because of social and political struggles and negotiations surrounding racial, ethnic and religious difference largely led by immigrants and the second generation’ (Modood, 2013:17).

This dissertation also arises out of that struggle between conflicting forces of liberalism and what we understand by liberal education.

At primary school and subsequently secondary school, I enjoyed excursions to historical places which my parents were unable to provide. My parents’ lack of spoken English and formal education formed a barrier that excluded them from the indigenous community; it prevented their full participation. In addition, as a family, we were not familiar with the concept of holidays. My parents had neither the resources nor the foresight to see how enriching and culturally beneficial this would be for their children. So the schools’

recognition of this gap in immigrant and working class families is a credit to the foresight of those educationalists. It is something which I have personally valued. Whether the trip was geography or history related, I would always be one of the first few in class to bring back my 'signed' parental consent form. Soon I would go and look the place up on a map. On one occasion, when I was nine, I went on a day trip to France. On arrival in Calais, the teachers, thinking I was with adults, allowed me to drift off with a group which soon 'abandoned' me. Perhaps that is understandable for no one wants the responsibility of looking after someone else's child. However, not having any francs with me nor being able to speak more than a handful of words in French (like *bonjour, qui, bien, que* etc), I was in a predicament. All I heard was French coming out of every corner of that port, accentuating my unease and displacement. The idea of *bureau de change* had not yet entered my limited understanding of the monetary world. I was hungry and thirsty all day and looking rather pale and sick by the time we boarded the ferry late in the afternoon. After what seemed like a life time, I was so pleased to land in Folkstone where I could use my pound sterling to buy some food and drink. Despite this, however, the experience opened my imagination because for weeks after I would trace the route on an A to Z – recalling some of the place names on the journey.

Maps and historical archive were important to me because they provided something tangible from which I could view the world around me. If I could not be part of another world, I could imagine it by tracing the pictorial outline, the places, the names, the rivers, the routes and 'feel' the objects by looking at the pictures and reading their descriptions. It was a way of connecting with that which was not accessible to me. In a universe that excluded me culturally and linguistically, this introspection helped me to find my bearing and connected me with my other consciousness. This is illustrated in my poem, *Lingual Transition*:

It was in our form room (3C)  
hung above the blackboard  
*The Times* map of the world.  
And I'd stare and gaze at it,  
a dream-like consciousness  
that was neither here nor there  
like plump Mr James  
who taught us Geography  
and spoke in imitable Welsh  
vowels not robbed of foreign parts.  
'You've got a funny accent,' we said  
when he first read out our names  
in a lingual transition tucked away,  
here and there, near and far.  
And the voice.  
'You think so?' he replied,  
characteristically  
drawing on the last syllable,  
a stylized pronunciation  
deep but not English –  
whilst I dreamt of driving through  
America, going to Hollywood  
becoming a film star  
and forgetting my Indian-ness  
for a year or two. But still the voice  
spoke words to my spirit  
like an ally on the Frontline.  
And the map stared out  
all the shapes and colours,  
bigger and brighter than Britain  
or Europe put together.

(Doug, 1999)

This 'day dreaming' to counteract the classroom activities by using a map as a stimulus tool, is nothing new. The First World War poet, Ivor Gurney was using the same technique of escaping his immediacy by immersing himself in his imagination. He often used a map of Gloucester to recall the place names almost as a form of shutting out the horrors of

trench warfare. In addition, his square blocks of stanzas were a form of creating concrete. It solidified his mind as if clinging on to neatness and symmetrical shapes might counteract the disintegration of his mental stability (Doug, 2011a). Similarly, at school the map transported me to other worlds and enabled me to develop and broaden my creative skills. The need to rid myself of my immediacy, my locality and my Indianness is prevalent in my psyche. In another poem, *Playing With 007*, for instance, I recall how ‘talks of India, its shades and colours still embarrassed me - like the enunciated breasts of Miss Iliffe’ (Doug, 1999).

Critics like Said (1978) might articulate the importance of one’s own cultural identity but to a child who feels uncomfortable about his own sense of difference, the relationship between his own cultural identity and the dominant culture has other dimensions.

Such episodes, as the excursion to France, accelerated my immersing into retrospection and imagination. It was at this stage I began to inspect myself in the wider world and my relationship with it. In particular, I was fascinated with language, dialects and people’s use of English. I registered the different speech patterns and accents that defined people’s sense of differing British identities. I might even say it ignited my interest in words, for language and for poetry as my poem for the Queen, *The Notes of the Rani* indicates:

I was seven when I saw you on a black and white screen  
A time when the world was a mysterious commodity

Unique and obscure like *The Rain-Charms for Duchy*.  
Your doleful dignity stood defiantly like John the Baptist,

Gracefully like perfect stillness, perfectly.  
That language echoed clarity and antiquity

Like the clear sharp outline of a midnight moon,  
Smiling upon the Crown like pomp and majesty.

Oceans can rise in leaps and bounds, they say,  
Like a lyrical sonnet piercing the heart.

Perhaps they can. Back then that voice was a youthful  
Harp or a sitar faintly playing, falling like the stars.

But it wasn't your English consonants clashing  
With my foreign vowels that touched me then,

Or the structured restraints of dangling chords  
That appealed to my senses. Instead,

It was that deep resonance, that rare presence  
Of a different world hanging like a poem in my class.

There was that voice out of touch, in another league  
Like the man on the moon, magnetic as the *Rosette Stone*

Or *Kaaba* in the East, filtering through time  
Like ambiguity invading my culture and youth.

And I remember Armstrong's animated prose  
*One small step...* washing over the unease of Annenberg's

*Fumbling refurbishment, rehabilitation.* So tonight,  
I see age as a linguistic thought, the grouping

Of words and intonation that touches the state  
Of *nirvana* where your eyes still dance like a haunting,

The omniscient guide, in a turbulent universe.  
And amidst a Plantagenet sky, softly speaking still,  
I think of Annenberg and Armstrong and Hughes,  
And the flights and flutterings of your words

Descending like Christmas rain, like *holi* confetti,  
Deep in motion. As if you're probing the past

Patiently, like an advocate of the English law.  
For this is what you are and all that we stand for.

(Doug, 2002)

Although this poem appears to be a series of reflections on the Queen, on a closer reading one discovers it is actually not about her but the narrative voice and *its* perceptions of the Queen. It centralises her accent and her language. It depicts the mingling of other tones and familiarity that sat incongruously with my wider world of large significant figures like Motion, ‘Annenberg, Armstrong and Hughes’. The poem also makes a link with possibility, connecting it with social mobility and aspirations. There is a sense that as a narrator I can aspire to be like Western figures of politics, arts and science. My Indian identity was not my only defining quality. I could acquire the tools for entry into that world of English language, literature and culture (Warmington, 2012; 2014; Gorski, 2006). Through the acquisition of those tools, I could be anything I wanted. I could be anyone. In my delusions and self-deception (or what some researchers today might refer to as self-actualization), I transported myself into other worlds in which I would mingle with imaginary characters.

On another occasion I remember visiting London and standing outside 10 Downing Street and wondering why everyone was so excited and taking pictures. After all it was just a house with a policeman. Then I remember visiting the Tower of London and being excited at seeing the crown jewels and hearing our teachers recount the stories of the princess in the tower, Henry VIII and the numerous executions that took place in the garden. My imagination would be alighted by those school excursions and the gaps in my knowledge would be filled by research in the school library – who is the Prime Minister?

What did Richard III look like? Did he really have a hunch? What currency do they use in France? How do you say 'I am hungry' in French?

I recall these examples from my primary schooling to make a point about my sense of being. They highlight my desire, at the time, to learn about a world outside the confines of my daily existence. The examples illustrate my displacement. The 'new world' of 1960s, in which my primary schooling took place, was enticing; it drew me in. My learning resonated with me. I did not see it in terms of knowledge (aesthetic, pure or political) or question its quality or relevance. From the point of view of an immigrant child, it was cultural training. To me everything was lively and interesting because it was new from the grounding given by my parents. This inherent need to connect with the host culture was not exclusive to me because it was also reflected in many of my friends who shared my background. In fact, it was a common feature in the first/second generation of Asians in Britain as a number of celebrity voices have echoed in their accounts of their childhood (Syal, 1996; Sanghera, 2008; Khan, 2006; *et al.*). They all write about their past as a living entity in which they felt a sense of cultural isolation and embarrassment at their difference. I, too, am interested in my own history because it takes me not only to other worlds but other times. In looking back I can reevaluate my present and shape my future. I am certain this is the result of my own filial history, of our moving around from one place to another, from one country to another. My family's cultural displacement echoes in everything I do and determines, unsettlingly, my place in the world I live in today.

These anecdotal incidents from primary schooling also highlight an important idea about the role of education and its function in our multicultural society. Education is a living organism that incorporates and navigates various communal strands and interests. My experience raises questions about what we mean by multicultural education, how it should

be applied and for what purpose. To me multicultural education is to broaden pupils' awareness of otherness. I enjoyed everything about the experience of seeing a different environment and venturing out of my familiarity. I wanted to be part of that wider world stretching out from my home and locality. School excursions took me to another England. I was encapsulated by English history. I loved the splendor and the magnificence embodied in castles and cathedrals, the art galleries and museums. My young mind sensed that that was high culture; that was art; that was history. But it wasn't my world. There was a sense of otherness. Years later when I would be teaching *Our Day Out* by Willy Russell, I will recall that simple innocence of that period in my youth. I will recall my registering that sense of awe at the diversity of my universe. I will sense the clash between class and culture; class and language. It was a universe that was mine and, though alienating, I was somehow part of it. I was connected with that different England (Doug, 2004b). But in the light of the history of my parents and their linguistic detachment from English, I noted (even then) my own reluctance to claim that England for myself. It was mine and yet simultaneously it was not mine (Derrida, 1998).

Clearly there is some contradiction here. Firstly, there is no doubt that without the schools' ethos, my limited cultural awareness would have remained intact. 1960s schooling assisted my learning which was good and beneficial to my cultural assimilation process. Although I understand that pupils' cultural identities are important, as a child I did not want to be different. Did that education necessarily distance me from my own ethnic heritage? This point about alienation and distancing is made by many black critics including Viswanathan, 1989; Gilroy, 1987 and Spivak, 1990.

My ethnicity was reinforced at nearly every opportunity and instead of helping me to feel connected with the bigger cultural group of pupils, I felt very marginalized by the constant

reference to my Indian roots. Subconsciously, given that my parents were outsiders, it reinforced the importance of my needing to fit in with mainstream British community.

Being bilingual and having a bicultural identity should make one feel more rounded in terms of experience and perspectives. Yet it alienated me; it shamed me. I recall on one occasion my mother coming to collect me. She was standing in a sari and *bindi* and so looking decidedly different amongst white mothers wearing Western clothing. Apart from her appearance, her lack of English also embarrassed me. Together, such incidents made me feel ashamed because it accentuated how different I was in an English environment. It is the same idea that Parekh (2006) illustrates by recounting a story about witnessing an Asian girl on the train with her parents who started talking in Urdu. She got angry, leaned over to them and told them to shut up. When her mother, in a state of confusion, asked why, the girl replied, 'Just as you do not expose your private parts in public, you do not speak in *that language* in public' (Parekh, 2006:204). One wonders whether she would have felt the same if her parents had spoken in French or German.

Was this my own personal misgivings about belonging or was it the effect (or failing) of the assimilationist approach in multicultural education?

This is the dichotomy in which we need to explore multiculturalism and liberal model of education. How do we marry the need to integrate and even assimilate pupils of immigrant families who have little or no knowledge of English or British culture, with our need to uphold their cultural identities? (Gorski, 2006). Or is it, as Ray Honeyford along with critics like Trevor Phillips, Hugo Young and Kenan Malik have argued that multiculturalism is dead? (Mullard in Arnot, 1985; Modood, 2005). This question is very pertinent in my case because even government officials when talking about schooling are intimating that multicultural education is no longer a valid policy. Even the prime minister

has attacked 'state multiculturalism' which allows communities to live in isolation to one another (Taylor, 2011:1).

I am, however, a little more ambivalent. For instance, I attended a Sunday school run by our neighbour at a local church because my parents felt that it would be culturally and educationally beneficial for me to acquire the philosophy of our host culture. But Sunday schooling for them meant weekend 'school' tuition. They ignored the fact that the core text of that schooling would be The Bible (the hymns and biblical theology) with its focus on Christian principles and morals (Eagleton, 1983). These were the instruments of instruction. As Mathieson (1975) points out, R.E. is an antiquated feature of schooling that has survived from the late 19<sup>th</sup> century. Originally English as a school subject existed as a simple instruction for basic skills for reading and writing. The central text for this subject was the Bible and so education was intrinsically linked with religion and Utilitarian ideas about hard work and self-sufficiency. And although it subsequently developed into a liberal project, its initial function was to instil core Christian values, to safeguard the interest of the 19<sup>th</sup> century middle classes and to suppress any possibility of a revolt and the growing agitation that had been building up in the form of the Chartist movement (Eagleton, 1983). Religious instructions remained at the heart of good education and Britain's public schools remained euro-centric in regards to aesthetics, politics, philosophy and classical studies. They looked to Greece and Italy for heritage and antiquity and models of culture. As evidenced in Powell's speech (1968) educationalists and politicians were concerned it was these subjects and Western European civilisation that held 'the monopoly of the road to true liberal goals' (Mathieson, 1975:45). Even when English came into the curriculum it was relegated to the lower rank, offered mainly to the less able pupils. So critics (Mathieson, 1975; Eagleton, 1983) argue education was a form of

appeasement of the working classes. It was a training ground to build character and souls of uncultured, economically disenfranchised children. Even as late as the mid-20<sup>th</sup> century, politicians like Churchill in the context of English teaching were suggesting that Latin or Greek should be left for the intelligent boys as a treat (Quirk and Smith, 1959:14).

Matthew Arnold, however, wanted education as a whole to form the soul and character of school pupils. But he felt the means for this should not be left exclusively to R.E. or poetry. He believed in a liberal model of education (to create enquiring minds) but his view as to how this could be attained was linked to the centrality of religious instructions in which the Bible remained the core text. That is convenient when much of a country's populace shares a religion or a denomination. It unifies the country under a set of ideals which the nation is supposed to uphold. These include tolerance, respect for the rule of law, appreciation of equality and diversity and showing understanding of difference. It is what Nicky Morgan, the present Secretary of State for Education wants when she calls for schools to promote British values. It is easier for the state to legislate defined morals and values under a broad umbrella of fairness and democracy. Parekh refers to this as 'civic assimilationism' (2006:224) in that it assists nation building, to mobilise the populace under one definitive set of values and principles. But the danger is that such an approach can strengthen a monoculture perspective that prevents pupils from looking outward:

Monocultural education also stunts the growth of the critical faculty. Students taught to look at the world from the narrow perspectives of their own cultures are bound to reject all that cannot be accommodated within its categories. They are likely to judge other cultures and societies by the norms and standards of their own, and find them odd and even worthless. And in judging their own society in terms of its own norms, they are not likely to take a genuinely critical attitude to it... Monoculture blunts the imagination and makes you vulnerable to the deadly voice of narcissism... Monocultural education is then simply not good education (Parekh, 2006: 226-227).

The relevance and validity of R.E. in its existing form especially in multicultural Britain in the 21<sup>st</sup> century, is open to debate and refutation. How does it compare to the rising number of free schools and faith schools which segregate and isolate pupils on the basis of their communal ties? Is there a correlation between religious instructions in these schools run along the principles of cultural practices and the values and ethos of a multicultural society? Or are these two entities in direct contrast to one another and, therefore, incompatible?

Parekh (2006) makes the argument that good education is when children are exposed to otherness and difference, when their ideas of the norm are challenged through discourse, argument and refutation. Giving them what they are familiar with does not challenge them intellectually nor does it prepare them to face the diversity in our society. It does not give them the skills to forge links with people from other faiths and other cultures. What it does is to create cultural bigotry. It encourages cultural narcissism about one's own belief system and narrow mindedness regarding ideas and knowledge.

Nevertheless, my parents' feelings about Christianity and Christian tuition are rather telling. The need to 'fit in' with whatever we imagined Britishness to be was central to our sense of being, leaving me at least, feeling disenfranchised from my ethnicity and roots (Khan, 2006). But this is something I have only identified subsequently. At the time and even into my adulthood I have felt that such a grounding in Christian philosophy has been an asset. It has been the foundation of my understanding of Christian theology, thoughts and values. I had not located this during my school days. Without articulating it, I even blamed my sense of cultural alienation on myself and my parents. Self-incriminations were evident for parents had little awareness of British cultural tastes and nuances. That is the effect that cultural/ethnic/racial alienation can have in school on a pupil. Even to this

day, whenever I discuss white nations, I (almost instinctively) use the pronoun ‘we’. And rather worryingly, when I refer to the Indians I have uttered the differentiating pronouns ‘they’ and ‘them’ – establishing rather strangely that sense of otherness despite my Indian parentage. This is also evident in my parents’ ‘world view’ in which Englishness or Britishness is equated with quality/high standards in terms of craftsmanship and moral values. Clearly (whether explicitly or implicitly) there is some kind of psychological manipulation in our use of English language in the way we include or exclude people (Gilroy, 1987; Spivak, 1990). This is also illustrated by Cox (1970) who reiterates Newbolt’s 1921 vision to make some schools’ programme of learning central in the creation of pupils’ identity. Cox stated ‘a national curriculum in England is intentionally involved with the question about our national identity, indeed, with the whole future ethos of British society. The teaching of English ... affects the individual and social identity of us all’ (Cox, 1990 *cited* in Protherough and King, 1995:4). In schooling, especially in the subject of English, the pupil is pulled away, from his/her original social/cultural identity and replaced by another, alien identity. This is particularly true of working class pupils, left feeling somewhat uneasy, awkward and, from a neo Marxist standpoint, disenfranchised. As Peim and Flint (2012) point out:

That class culture is a major factor in determining educational success and failure in contemporary Western contexts has been argued consistently since the 1970s. The Marxist-influenced concept of ‘cultural capacity’ has been deployed to explain how the cultural dice is loaded in favour of the dominant culture and culturally dominant (Peim and Flint, 2012:153).

I would argue that this systematic disassociation is particularly acute in working class *immigrant* pupils of black/Asian descent. It is a feeling that instantiates that sense of otherness and alienation. Ultimately it becomes a barrier. Despite having all the necessary academic prerequisites, certain socio-cultural-racial groups (like my parents) are going to

remain impervious to social mobility (Gilroy, 1987). They do not possess what Bourdieu, (1986) terms ‘cultural capital’. This might come in a variety of forms: they did not go to the right school; they do not have the powerful connections; they do not have a concrete heritage or lineage and, their cultural set of traits, norms and values remain alien and keep them at the peripheries of the white middle class world. To understand this feeling one has to consider Said’s *Orientalism* (1978) and the effect English had, and continues to have, on people throughout the world. The term ‘Orientalism’ is rendered into a pejorative word:

I doubt if it is controversial, for example, to say that an Englishman in India, or Egypt, in the later 19<sup>th</sup> century, took an interest in those countries, which was never far from their status, in his mind, as British colonies. To say this may seem quite different from saying that all academic knowledge about India and Egypt is somehow tinged and impressed with, violated by, the gross political fact—and yet *that is what I am saying* in this study of ‘Orientalism’ (Said, 1978/2003:11).

Said (1978) argues that the West had dominated the East for more than 2,000 years. Europe in particular had dominated Asia politically for so long that even the most outwardly objective Western texts on the East were permeated with a bias that even most Western scholars could not recognize. His contention was not only that the West has conquered the East politically, but also that Western scholars have appropriated the exploration and interpretation of the Orient’s languages, history and culture for themselves. They have written Asia’s past and constructed its modern identities from a perspective that positions Europe as the norm, from which the ‘exotic’, ‘inscrutable’ Orient deviates. This has been done through the appropriation of language and a set of values and perspectives.

There are, however, flaws in Said’s account of the Orient. In focusing on the West’s violation of the Islamic/Arab world(s), he leaves out the cultural/linguistic violation and

misappropriation carried out by the Muslim scholars/invaders against eastern religions and dharmic cultures that predate all the monotheist, Abrahamic religions and Western philosophy.

Nevertheless, the British Empire and its violent sowing of colonial seeds in foreign lands as a way of civilizing foreigners, clashes with the history and heritage of those people. So on being asked what he thought of Western civilization, Gandhi's quip is apt: 'I think it would be a good idea'.

The English language (as both Newbolt and Leavis advocated) has gained world recognition as a kite mark of excellence and quality. Today it is linked intrinsically with a Western, European cultural identity. In using English we are not merely passing on messages and information; we are in fact transmitting a certain cultural brand of values and moral code. These are a shared set of principles which are, at times, put to the test and our government tries to gain ownership of some of these such as freedom, decency, fair play, justice, compassion as if these pillars are alien to the rest of the world. Amongst these 'education for all' is a key feature in which the purity of the English language must be preserved and protected from those who are foreigners and/or culturally inferior (Newbolt, 1921; Leavis, 1943).

The unease I feel about my own education continues. To me, English is not simply the language through which I express myself. As an Anglo-Asian it has long been a subject that defines me, includes me and many times, excludes me. It puts me at an arm's length in the periphery of a respectable culture that is decidedly British. It shapes my thoughts, my morals and cultural values which are, I have noticed in recent years, very different from those of my parents. I sensed the correlation between language and cultural identity

at university when a tutor asked in a deconstructive way what language I thought in. Up until then I had never pondered on what language I *thought* in. It never occurred to me that my thought patterns *had* a language. But I know what that tutor was hinting at. He was suggesting something about my cultural identity and my own alignment and affiliation with a familiar set of values and moral code (Bourdieu, 1986; Bernstein, 1971). It is an idea that Macaulay in the 19<sup>th</sup> century had articulated in his argument for a particular use of English in education in India, to instil and share a set of English cultural traits and sensibilities with the new educated class of natives. English as a subject had to prescribe a key selection of cultural values. This could be used to mobilize the indigenous race but also to strengthen a certain cultural commonality in England amongst the English classes, or what might be broadly termed as 'nation building'. It is an idea that the Newbolt Report, 1921, along with F.R. Leavis championed putting the importance of English as a form of cultural studies to enhance cultural singularity and communal cohesiveness (Mathieson, 1975; Eagleton, 1983).

### **C) Racism and Assimilationism**

At primary school, I also noticed how Asian pupils were working harder than their white and black counterparts partly because they were dealing with bilingualism and biculturalism, but mainly because they were trying to assimilate into an environment that excluded them both racially and culturally. Their desire to please was very noticeable and racial distinctions in terms of behaviour and attitude were highlighted. This is borne by Townsend and Brittan's survey (1972) which indicated that a majority of the secondary heads in a study commented favourably on the manners, courtesy, keenness to learn and industrious application of the Indian and Pakistani pupils as opposed to the black pupils; Brittan's study (1976) showed more than two-thirds of the teachers in the sample

indicating unfavourable opinions of West Indians whilst Stewart's study (1978) revealed a positive stereotype of the Asian pupil as industrious, responsible, keen to learn and having none of the behaviour problems associated with West Indian pupils (Fazakarley, 2009).

Yet racism affected all immigrants not just the black Caribbean pupils. Prominent incidents are cemented from my primary school days when I was seven years of age. One Monday morning the teacher removed me from class assembly on the grounds that I could not sing to music. She took the hymn book away and gave it to another pupil. On another occasion, the teacher singled me out as that 'foreign boy', accentuating my difference, by asking me what my family called a table. She was rather surprised when I said 'table'. Such episodes, littered with a teacher's insensitivity and casual indifference to cultural identity, were not uncommon with pupils from my background but they also hint at what Gillborn (2005) calls the whiteness theory:

Whiteness draws much of its power from 'othering' the very idea of ethnicity. A central characteristic of whiteness is a process of 'naturalisation' such that white becomes the norm from which other 'races' stand apart and in relation to which they are defined (Gillborn, 2005: 488-489).

It became clear that teachers in both state and independent schools had no clear conception of the importance of their role in a multi-ethnic society (Sivanandan, 1982 *cited in* Tomlinson, 2008). Creating a homogenous cultural identity might fall into the whiteness theory. It amplifies apathy, disregard and indifference. For instance, it was argued by groups such as the North London West Indian Parents' Association that teachers lacked knowledge of minority children and their backgrounds, and their attitudes to and expectations of their pupils were influenced by racial beliefs of low expectations (Tomlinson, 2008). Coard, 1971 *cited in* Tomlinson, 2008) suggested that teachers during

this period seriously underestimated the abilities of all black children. The pupils responded by building up resentment and emotional blocks to learning. Hence curriculum change in the 1960s was being described as multiracial, multicultural and multiethnic though in reality its impact was described as being minimal (Tomlinson, 2008). The existing curriculum continued to encourage beliefs in the economic, political and racial superiority of white Europeans, and goes some way towards explaining the racial tension that accompanied it.

I do not blame the teachers for they were not trained to cope with such diversity of pupils (Gallavan, 1998). On reflection what concerns me is that this problem was tacitly institutionalised and handled only half-heartedly without much reference to resources, training or pedagogical strategies. I remember how a studious young Asian girl was 'assigned' to assimilate newly arrived Asian pupils in my school by taking them under her wings, interpreting to them and even helping them with their reading and writing. She was, effectively, an assistant teacher doing, what would be considered today, a very crucial job in helping immigrant pupils to settle in a foreign environment. She was assuming the duties and responsibilities one would today only confer on a qualified member of the teaching profession. This was evidenced because at the time, Britain had a distinct absence of a robust, well-coordinated multicultural policy in education (Gallavan, 1998).

Multicultural education was left unsatisfactorily with individual schools as to how they managed difference, racism, assimilation, integration and 'otherness'. In particular, English was tainted with cultural ambivalence for very few teachers and educationalists knew how to assimilate immigrant pupils whilst respecting their identities. This was certainly the case with pupils like me:

How does one represent other cultures? What is another culture? Is the notion of a distinct culture (or race, or religion, or civilization) a useful one, or does it always get involved either in self-congratulation (when one discusses one's own) or hostility and aggression (when one discusses the 'other')? (Said, 1978:325).

This period was also assessing the impact of 'race riots' at the end of 1950s which became the catalyst for subsequent legislation that brought race issues into government agenda. For instance, the First Commonwealth Act, 1962, identified education as a solution to the 'problem' of cultural difference. There was also an emergence of a change in tone and nuances concerning the subject of immigrants and immigration. The government wanted to work towards the creation of a national policy for race relations (Lowe, 1997). The semantics shifted from aggressively overt cultural superiority of assimilationism towards a liberal suggestion of 'equal opportunity accompanied by cultural diversity, in an atmosphere of mutual tolerance' (*cited* in Troyna, 1993:24). This provided the emergence of integrationism.

It was also in this context that the Local Government Act (1966) made funds available '*to help meet the special needs of a significant number of people of commonwealth origin with language or customs which differ from the rest of the community*'. This included funding to support the education of pupils of ethnic minority groups and bilingual learners. In general, support for early stage bilingual learners took place in specialist and separate Language Centres and/or through withdrawal from mainstream classes in schools. I was one of the pupils who were identified by my primary school as requiring this provision. I remember being taken out of mainstream English, where pupils were doing RSA writing, literacy and assessments, and into English as a Second Language tuition which took place upstairs in a relatively casual and informal surrounding. Our teachers like Mr. Brown were specialists, they were brought in especially to provide this provision and we rarely ever

saw them out of this context. In terms of classroom activities, we were encouraged to speak and read through a variety of stimulus material including game playing, solving jigsaw puzzles and reading. The books generally contained Anglo-centric settings with narratives involving characters like Brenda, caravans and cats and dogs. But there were also one or two thin books equivalent to pamphlets with drawings depicting black/Asian people. This, however, always embarrassed me as if was not part of the mainstream reading list that my white friends were reading downstairs in the RSA class. However, generally these sessions were enjoyable and I noticed the particular attention the teachers paid to our vocal skills including intonation and pronunciation. I remember that as Indian pupils we had difficulty with our Ws that sounded like Vs, a point some indigenous white pupils would remind us with derision and mockery. So although a little embarrassing for Asian pupils like myself, Mr Brown's instructions on speaking properly with clear enunciation and intonation were assisting our integration and preparation into big society, the world outside school. It was a point in favour of assimilationism because the training certainly helped me to navigate my way in British society.

In the late 1960's despite Powell's warning (1968) and our government's concerns about the mass of 'undesirables' (like my family) entering Britain or what Lowe quotes as 'the three Ss – saris, samosas and steel bands' (Lowe, 1997:122), politicians still permitted schools to adopt an *ad hoc* policy to the English curriculum. This lack of a clearly defined strategy may have lead to a certain inertia and indifference on the part of teachers. As such, it was purely through chance that you might have encountered a passionate teacher brimming with excitement at the challenge imposed by pupils of my background (Mr. Bispham was one such individual whose infectious excitement, originality and spontaneity were a welcome relief for pupils like myself). But on the whole educationalists merely paid lip-service to immigrant communities. Despite one or two European directives that

pupils should be taught in their mother tongue (applied inconsistently), schools had no real strategy and lacked direction from both local and central governments. This state of affairs continued throughout the 1970s decade.

My primary school teachers did not consider my sitting the 11+ examinations despite my having learnt English within three years to a level as advanced as any other pupil in that school. There was an element of arbitrariness about the actual selection for testing. Despite my ability, it left me feeling academically inadequate. It is perhaps this feeling of not being part of the 'real' culture or not being able to speak like my white friends that propelled me into pursuing English as a degree and then as a career. Perhaps my pursuing a doctoral degree is also a by-product of that feeling of cultural and lingual inadequacy. Indeed today even my academic papers and poetry are littered with images relating to spoken language and cultural identity. These themes leave me with an overriding sense of inferiority. They are embedded in my poetry and papers sometimes consciously but, more often than not, unconsciously. It is a recognition that someone is making a value-judgment not only on my work but on me as a subject. So even at primary school the ability to speak English properly and clearly was important to me. It would, I imagined, prevent lingual differentiation that somehow embarrassed and labeled me as that 'foreign boy'. Not unreasonably, therefore, I thought that upon acquiring a good quality of spoken English, it would enable me to take a participatory role in the playground, where I would not be prejudiced or discriminated against. However, conversational skills, tone and nuances were not taught as part of the English programme unless the pupil happened to be completely new to English (as I was), in which case he would be taught ESOL in isolation to the rest of the class. This oddity did not make much sense especially as pupils (and people) we spend far more time engaged in Speaking and Listening activities than Reading and Writing. So I have often wondered why during the 1960s and 1970s educationalists

did not sense the importance of teaching Oracy in primary schools especially if they were committed to a liberal model of multicultural education.

There have been clashes between *policy* and *practice*; the gulf between what the government wants and the actual, purveying reality. Today some educationalists (Blackledge, 1994; Fuller, 2010) are still concerned about the influence of various national literacy strategies/programmes designed to instil the centrality of phonetics, grammar and other reading targets designed to measure explicit outcomes and assessment objectives set by external assessors such as examining boards. Thinking on these subjects is influenced partly by the introduction of the integrationist approach which started to appear in the early 1970s to mark a shift in the ‘policy’ of multicultural education but partly by the government’s need to create a skilled workforce.

## **PART II**

### **A) Comprehensive Schooling and Inner-city Riots**

During the early 1970s a broadly integrationist approach to multicultural education was being applied partly as a result of left-wing wakening but partly because of the rise in black and Asian critics (Warmington, 2014). Unemployment was soaring and the British economy was facing competition from continental Europe. Britain’s entry into ‘the Common Market’, lead the county into further uncharted territory. For the government, education needed redefining and it required a link with the demands imposed by modernity and modern economies. English became the core subject for nation building. Affirming British culture was implicitly brought to the foreground of pedagogical concerns and strategies. During this time the Bullock Report, *A Language for Life*, 1975, was also published. Its aim was to redefine the role of the schools’ curriculum and raise

academic standards and heighten pupils' sense of British cultural identity. Inadvertently, it posed questions about the purpose of modern education, exactly what tools and what skills does schooling need to impart to pupils? Moreover, how useful will these skills be in the wider world of commerce, employment and industry? Callaghan's 1976 Ruskin College speech is the cornerstone of this train of thoughts which, according to Barber (1996), put education in a totally different field. Callaghan made a connection between education standards and the world of industry when he talked about the need to establish a 'core-curriculum' with 'basic skills', 'national standards' and 'the need to improve relations between industry and education':

I do not join those who paint a lurid picture of educational decline because I do not believe it is generally true ... I am raising a further question. It is this. In today's world higher standards are demanded than were required yesterday and there are simply fewer jobs for those without skill (Callaghan, speech at Ruskin College 1976, *cited* by Barber, 1996:34).

The speech cemented a relationship between education and work-related skills, between qualifications and tangible skills for production and employment, between schooling and industry. It is what some critics have used to accentuate their argument about a 'hidden curriculum', that the primary purpose of schooling is to transform children into fully functioning social agents who will eventually become well-adjusted tools for the economy. In Callaghan's speech, the nature of education became intrinsically linked with developing the economy. With this as the backdrop and alongside the CSEs, 'O' Levels and 'A' Levels, schools introduced a host of courses and qualifications whose primary aim was to instil relevant, practical skills in the pupils. These new skills such as NVQ and BTEC qualifications would have to be useful in modern economy. This idea that our culture with the foundations of Englishness would weaken unless we do something drastic through education, persists even today with politicians and celebrities voicing their

concerns (Cameron *cited in* Taylor, 2011; Thomas, 2010; McDonald *cited in* Ager, 2003; Littlejohn, 2012; *et al.*). Coupled with captains of industry bemoaning young people for their poor literacy skills, today's education trajectory is moving towards functionality, away from aestheticism and away from Said's (1978) 'pure' knowledge.

This shift has led many (Goodson, 1990; Ball, 1983; *et al.*) to reconsider the nature and politics of education. They ask, what is the purpose of a government funded education system? As Hammersley and Hargreaves (1983) point out: 'Until the last decade or so, problems of distribution and availability, of who gets an education and in what kind of institution, were the ones that dominated educational debate and research, with questions about the *content* of education receiving very little attention' (Hammersley and Hargreaves, 1983:1). Is the primary purpose of education to instil knowledge and develop pupils' critical thinking skills and creativity or 'pure' knowledge? Or does schooling exist to create an effective workforce for the benefit of the economy and the material interests of the individual (Newbolt, 1921)? This is particularly relevant to the subject of English. As Goodson (1981) states, 'The *subject* is viewed not as an abstract intellectual conception but as a changing body of knowledge produced by a social collectivity' (Goodson, 1981 *cited in* Ball, 1983). There, interlocked are the two opposing forces which also impacted multicultural education.

It was in this climate of political conflict, I entered secondary education in 1975. I went to a comprehensive in which many of the teachers were the old grammarians from the 'posh school' only down the road.

However, my secondary schooling had its own pitfalls. The school I attended was relatively large. It had roughly 1100 pupils from 11 years of age to 16. A majority of those

pupils were of black or Asian descent with only one Asian staff who taught Physics. It was situated in the heart of a culturally and economically challenging inner-city community in the north west of Birmingham: Handsworth. The area was and is a nodal point of immigration from Ireland, Jamaica, South Asia and the Far East. Today it is populated with immigrants from Eastern Europe and the Middle East. In the late 1970s, however, it was also an area that contained rising unemployment and social deprivation. Coupled with reports of racism, police harassment and bad housing, Handsworth was brewing silently for civil disruption that was to occur in the early 1980s in the form of inner-city riots. They would compel the country and the Conservative government into urgent action (Fazakarley, 2009-10; Bourne, 2007).

The riots occurred during the period 10-13<sup>th</sup> July 1981, when I had just finished my first year of 'A' Level studies. Some believe they were aggravated by police harassment and the fact that only 5% of black pupils who had left school in May had found jobs or apprenticeships. It soon became a discourse about community relations. Most notably, the interplay between specific presentations of Asian and Black communities is of great significance. Fazakarley (2009-10) describes the dissonance in detail with its stress upon difference and the under-current relating to class being noted in particular. It is argued that Barker's paradigm is useful in understanding media's presentation of events. However, a particular form of racism that makes distinction between racial groups is not wholly new. Fazakarley (2009-10) further describes the divisive and derisory way in which the media portrayed the Asian and black communities. 'Rarely did elite actors regard the community as indivisible whole. The most salient and unbridgeable division was that separating the Black and Asian communities' (Fazakarley, 2009-10). Little commonality existed in the way these groups were represented: indeed, popular theories of causation frequently

stressed the role of inter-community *difference* and hostility. As in education Asians were depicted as industrious, hardworking, self-sufficient, family people with strong communal ties whilst the black youths were undisciplined, lacking respect for law and order and so prone to criminality and criminal behaviour (Fazakarley, 2009-10). Schooling was seen as a programme to curtail any form of social rebellion or political dissension. Such thinking was also applied to the riots in 1985 and the surreptitious purpose of education to control the masses (Eagleton, 1983). Critics have defined a relationship between poor education, lack of work/training opportunities and employment. This is something Pilger and Robinson (*cited* in Davison and Moss, 2004) highlights by quoting a government official reflecting on the then-high unemployment levels and implications for schooling:

We are in a period of considerable social change... there may be social unrest, but we can cope with the Toxteths... but if we have a highly educated and idle population we may possibly anticipate more serious conflict. People must be educated once more to know their place. (Pilger, 1992:29 *cited* in Robinson, 2006, in Davison and Moss, 2004).

This association is particularly prominent in areas of high density of ethnic communities where poverty and race culminate in issues regarding wealth, power and justice.

Prior to this my school was oblivious to the undercurrent of unrest that was taking shape in the community at large. One of the characteristics of the school, and the establishment, was the overriding ignorance of race and culture and the failure of teachers to understand why it was that Indian and Pakistani pupils were doing better than black Caribbean pupils. Already there had been signs that the government was attempting to address this startling failure of our education system.

The *The West Indian Community Report published in 1977* by the Commons Select

Committee on Race Relations and Immigration had already highlighted widespread concerns about the poor performance of West Indian children in schools and had recommended ‘*as a matter of urgency*’ that the government should institute a high level and independent inquiry into the causes of this underachievement.

In 1979 the Labour government established the Committee of Inquiry into the Education of Children from Ethnic Minority Groups. The report set out to:

review in relation to schools the educational needs and attainments of children from ethnic minority groups taking account, as necessary, of factors outside the formal education system relevant to school performance, including influences in early childhood and prospects for school leavers;

consider the potential value of instituting arrangements for keeping under review the educational performance of different ethnic minority groups, and what those arrangements might be;

consider the most effective use of resources for these purposes; and to make recommendations

Under the chairmanship of Anthony Rampton, the Committee compiled an interim report *West Indian Children in our Schools* in 1981. It was submitted to DES on 27<sup>th</sup> February 1981 but not published until 17<sup>th</sup> June in the midst of the inner-city riots. It concluded that the main problems were teachers’ low expectations; lack of black and Asian teachers in schools to act as role models for immigrant pupils and racial prejudice among white teachers and society as a whole. The conclusion did not sit comfortably with the Conservative government and the social unrest in which it found itself. Rampton was sacked and replaced by Michael Swann who then produced his own findings in a comprehensive report focusing on behaviour and attitudes. It was published in 1985 as *Education for All*. It concluded:

the fundamental change that is necessary is the recognition that the problem facing the education system is not how to educate children of ethnic minorities, but how to educate *all* children;

Britain is a multiracial and multicultural society and all pupils must be enabled to understand what this means;

education has to be something more than the reinforcement of the beliefs, values and identity which each child brings to school - it must combat racism and attack inherited myths and stereotypes;

multicultural understanding must permeate all aspects of a school's work - it is not a separate topic that can be welded on to existing practices;

Swann in quoting the interim of 1981 watered down the prominence of racism in schools as a contributory factor in the underachievement of black pupils. Instead he states:

... no single cause ... but rather a network of widely differing attitudes and expectations on the part of teachers and the education system as a whole, and on the part of West Indian parents, which lead the West Indian child to have particular difficulties and face particular hurdles in achieving his or her full potential.

The report states that it is only the 'white' majority which has the power to give expression to its prejudices by using its inherent dominance of all walks of life to deny opportunity and access to other minority communities. Yet it rejected positive discrimination (Modood and May, 2001) and also stated that 'white racism' is not the only area to be tackled:

We firmly believe however that *all* forms of prejudice against groups of people on racial grounds are wrong - as Lord Scarman put it in his report:

*'Pride in being Black is one thing, but black racialism is no more acceptable than white. A vigorous rejection of discriminatory and racialist views is as important among black people as among white if social harmony is to be ensured.'* (Modood and May, 2001:307).

Clearly the perimeters of the original Rampton Report were renegotiated and multicultural education was something that affected us all. However, it did recognise the under-achievement stating that in CSE English and GCE 'O' Level English Language only 9 per cent of West Indians obtained higher grades compared with 21 per cent of Asians and 29 per cent of all other leavers in the LEAs of the report's studies. This is also in line with my school results. Only 10 school leavers from my year (consisting of roughly 180 pupils) went to do 'A' Levels. Out of these only 4 went to university. None of them were of African-Caribbean descent.

There was an urgency about the tone. The main aim of the report was to change the existing behaviour and attitudes towards those of an ethnic minority background. Taylor (1986) writes:

It confirmed the underachievement of pupils of West Indian origin in relation to their peers and pointed to a range of contributory factors especially... a network of widely differing attitudes and expectations on the part of the teachers and the education system as a whole, and on the part of the parents (Taylor, 1986:69).

The report added:

A well intentioned and apparently sympathetic person may, as a result of his education, experiences or environment, have negative, patronising or stereotyped views about ethnic minority groups which may subconsciously affect his attitude and behaviour towards members of those groups... we see such attitudes and behaviour as a form of 'unintentional' racism (*cited in Taylor, 1986:69-70*).

The report went on to illustrate the importance of belonging as a factor in the well-being of immigrant pupils and their ability to perform well in school and in the wider society. Whereas the black immigrants thought there would be a commonality between them and the white British community due to language, music, lifestyle, religion and other shared cultural

factors and practices and that Britain would be their ‘home’, the Indians and Pakistanis had no such illusions. They expected a degree of separateness and antagonism from the white community and so created a network of support systems to enable them to function with some degree of self-sufficiency. The black pupils’ disengagement with British society in the report is also reinforced as a quote from a West Indian mother:

Many of us came here with a myth in our minds, the myth of belonging. We have also raised our children to believe that they belong in these societies and cultures (simply because they were born here) only to find that as they grew older, they were seen in the eyes of the host community as a new nation of intruders. Our children are then faced with great traumatic and psychological problems, since they are made to feel that they do not belong here, also they feel that because they were not born in the West Indies they do not belong there either... (The Swann Report, 1985:21).

Even today despite the numerous initiatives to readdress the under achievement of black pupils, it could be argued that very little impact has been evidenced. Mirza (in Richardson, 2005) states that the only thing that has changed is the semantics. Resistance to diversity is merely tolerated. Today we might not talk about the infamous ‘Sin Bins’ but we do talk about ‘Pupil Referral Units’:

...20 years on there is still no integral anti-racist training for teachers. Seventy percent of Newly Qualified Teachers say they do not feel equipped to teach pupils from different ethnicities. They may get one hour’s class on diversity in their whole training (Mirza in Richardson, 2005).

## **B) English and Diversity in the Curriculum**

Apart from the disparity that existed between the black and Asian immigrant pupils another feature of my schooling was to do with the curriculum contents of English. The

old GCE English syllabus, incorporating language competences (evidenced through comprehension, composition and précis), was at odds with the prevailing enthusiasm for literature not language. Even today fewer school pupils opt for 'A' Level English Language than they do for 'A' Level English Literature. It is a trend also discernible at university level where, as a result, there are only a handful of courses in English Language (Robinson, 2006, *cited* in Davison and Moss, 2004). In terms of composition the exclusively white, English focus was clearly evident. Very little time or focus was given to an integrationist approach to multicultural education. I understand this to be teaching in and with diversity. No teacher introduced a text from non-white authors. No attempt was made to include even a snippet from Hanif Kureishi, V.S. Naipaul, Michael Ondaatje, Wole Soyinka, Derek Walcott, Salman Rushdie, Toni Morrison, Farrukh Dhondy or Alice Walker despite the fact that an overwhelming number of pupils in that school were from black/Asian immigrant parents. There are two ways of looking at this.

We could argue that multicultural education should try and promote assimilation so that ethnic minority groups can participate in the mainstream society whilst maintaining their racial and cultural identities at home. Education should equip them with necessary tools to provide them with a shared national identity and to take part in 'big society'. On the other hand, critics especially from the 1970s have argued for multicultural education to mean developing pupils' individual identities and thereby celebrating 'difference' (Pike, 2015) in school and the wider community. The curriculum should enable the pupils to see themselves and hear their voices. The appointment of black/Asian staff partly as role models would fill a hole in the education system. Theoretically, this is good and one might be very sympathetic to such a perspective. However, this view of multicultural education is also questionable because the logical conclusion of its application (schools catering for

different cultures) may leave the curriculum unworkable. Its presiding egalitarianism may segregate schools and dilute learning to the point that in doing so, we encourage the hidden curriculum and a multi-tiered education system.

It is, however, partly through annoyance and exasperation that some political figures argue that multiculturalism has no place in our society. They argue that it is a naïve form of thinking about modern Britain (Cameron, *cited* in Taylor, 2011). The difficulties implied in creating a well-balanced rounded experience of education for black and Asian pupils/students has lead critics to come to a fatal viewpoint about multicultural education. The Rushdie affair, the political ramifications of 7/7 and scandals like the ‘Trojan Horse’ further create a sense of exasperation from policy makers. It leads critics like Trevor Phillips, William Pfaff, Martin Wolf and Gilles Kepel to conclude that multiculturalism is dead (*cited* in Modood, 2013:11; Modood, 2005).

However, linked to our approach to multicultural education is the issue of human resources. The lack of black/Asian authors and staff as role models is something that a number of reports have highlighted including the most recent one published by the NUS entitled *The Race for Equality: A report on the experiences of Black students in further and higher education* (2012). In order to create a cultural shift, it recommends raising awareness of educational attainment and satisfaction gaps between black/Asian and white students. It also recommends staff training to tackle racial stereotyping by promoting inclusive and non-discriminatory attitudes and behaviour. But recommendation 10 (1) takes the discourse further by suggesting that:

...ethnic diversity among staff is important for both black and white students, as it provides role models, as well as a range of perspectives that enrich learning and demonstrates an institution’s commitment to diversity. Educational institutions need to

improve diversity of their staff to better reflect the diversity of their student body (Race for Equality Report, 2012:61).

The report also states that a minority of respondents felt that equalities policies had virtually no impact upon their educational experience as they were not publicized well, were rarely upheld or existed only to pay lip service to the equalities agenda (2012:35). There may be some truth in this viewpoint. There is a need for equality and diversity to go beyond a theoretical construct. Used effectively they can form relevant and practical interventionist strategies to tackle the continuous underachievement of black/Asian pupils. Today it is also an integral component of multicultural, state education in which exposition to difference and otherness is encouraged and promoted.

However, we should not homogenise equality and diversity as these are two different themes. They are not, as depicted by practitioners, synonymous. Equality is different from diversity: the former deals with fairness, justice and with creating an environment that enables all pupils/students to do well in the education system. Diversity, on the other hand, addresses issues of difference amongst social groups and how the teaching resources reflect pupils' different identities (Warmington, 2014). In saying that multicultural education is dead we might be in danger of turning our back to these important, mandatory themes that had previously been embedded in the curriculum. For instance, the government's outdated 'equal opportunities' has been replaced by 'diversity' and Newbolt's desire to use the curriculum to build a 'national identity' has been replaced by 'citizenship'. But these politically charged lexicons are not one and the same thing.

My comprehensive schooling had all the hallmarks of an assimilationist approach to multicultural education, to develop pupils' awareness of white British society. Its purpose was to help pupils to access, and take part in, mainstream culture. Today some critics

think that we should allow some parents to cocoon their children inside their own communities. But there is a danger that in doing so, we might limit the opportunities offered to the children in those communities. We disempower them.

A multicultural education is a means to develop a shared set of cultural values and thereby encouraging learning that promotes access to jobs and training, and social mobility, irrespective of a pupil's culture or religion. It is about imposing effective interventionist strategies when there is a danger that a community wants to shield its own children from the realities of multicultural and diverse Britain.

### **C) Clarke's 'Trojan Horse' Report, 2014, and Discourse on Race**

Birmingham's 'Trojan Horse' scandal of 2014 is significant in discussing diversity in education. It has been argued that some governing bodies in some 14 state schools coordinated to bring about an Islamic agenda in the curriculum contents and the day-to-day running of their schools. A further 11 both faith and state schools, are still under investigation. It is alleged that they did this by systematically undermining the management and non-Muslim staff through intimidation and bullying. According to Peter Clarke, some politically charged Muslim members in governing bodies conspired against school leaders. They usurped the authority of headteachers by being deliberately obstructive and confrontational. Clarke states there is evidence that they promoted segregation, including the subordination of girls, and allowed the potentiality for radicalisation and extremism. The conclusion is that:

There has been co-ordinated, deliberate and sustained action, carried out by a number of associated individuals, to introduce an intolerant and aggressive Islamic ethos into a few schools in Birmingham. This has been achieved in a number of schools through gaining influence on the governing bodies, installing sympathetic headteachers or senior members of staff, appointing like-minded people to key positions, and seeking to remove

headteachers who they do not feel to be sufficiently complaint with their agenda. Their motivation may well be linked to a deeply held religious conviction, but the effect has been to limit the life chances of the young people in their care and to render them more vulnerable to pernicious influence in the future (Clarke, 2014:96).

Clarke implies that their prejudice against ‘otherness’ and other viewpoints is what multicultural education (with an integrationist strategy) should challenge. Yet Clarke states that neither the government nor the local authority intervened which left a space for an aggressive form of Islam to take seed. If this is possible in state schools, it is equally possible that a faith school unregulated may give further credence to cultural bigotry in its promotion of monocultural, religious ideology and doctrine.

How does this incident sit in the context of today’s discourse on race, identity and multicultural education? How do we theorize this and put it into a critical dimension?

Today’s multicultural education needs to be cohesive and mainstream and not sit as a component of a secondary curriculum; it needs to encompass not segregate pupils. Critics warn about the dangers of ‘self-segregation’ where people lead ‘parallel lives’ (Warmington, 2014:135). These too can lead to a cultural paralysis and disenfranchisement. I would agree with Modood (2005) that black and Asian communities embrace British identity albeit recorded as a hyphenated word such as Black-British, British-Indian, British-Pakistani etc. He argues that more indigenous white British people, who have a national-territorial base in the British Isles but who have a grievance against the state, are openly reluctant to call themselves British such as the Welsh, Scots and the Irish (Modood, 2005:71). However, Modood is skewered when he dismisses the validity of any form of criticism directed at Muslim communities as ‘a political con’ (Modood, 2005:66) because such a resistance to debate, discourse and dialogue perpetrates

antagonism, resentment and cultural suspicion. It fuels fervour in the far-right political parties.

One of the areas I would like to extrapolate from the narrative is my own sense of cultural alienation. During the 1960s and 70s the educational environment excluded me and my identity. There was a tacit surreptitious approval on the part of teachers to maintain that situation. Their reluctance to interfere was noted. Coupled with racist insults in the streets (experienced by nearly every black and Asian person I know) and the playground, it gave me a sense of ‘otherness’. It is a feeling that although I live here, the system in which I operate is designed and often engineered unfavourably without my interest.

Multicultural education emerges from postwar extra European/non-white immigration and settlement and their struggles and the policy responses around them to achieve some form of acceptance and equal membership. Such migrants have not been simply perceived as new neighbours, fellow workers or citizens. They have been seen as different (Modood, 2013:37).

Immigrants have also been marginalized and culturally alienated by such documents as the Swann Report (1985) which Modood and May (2001) argue ‘rejected the notion of separate *ethnic minority* schools, particularly *Islamic* schools... It viewed the prospect of Muslim schools as socially divisive... It firmly distanced itself from religious instructions in schools, arguing *the role of education cannot be, and cannot be expected to be, to reinforce the values, beliefs, and cultural identity which each child brings to school*’ (Modood and May, 2001:307).

In Britain multicultural education has been mingled with anti-racist education, equal opportunities and the need to develop mutual tolerance (Warmington, 2014). I am going to examine my cultural alienation with reference to the current discourse on race.

Modood (2013) points out that 'race' is loaded with differing political connotations and meaning depending on the context (time and place) of its use. Sometimes it is about colour but for many Europeans anti-Semitism has been Europe's primary racism. According to this definition, it does not denote colour difference. Within the Equality Act (2010) race has been identified as one of the protected characteristics, referring to a pupil's identity which is explicitly protected from discrimination. The concept of race continues to be a controversial area of debate as the term is often seen as being socially constructed, 'a group behaviour that previously used to be characterised as innate is now seen as socio-cultural' (Modood, 2013:35) arising out of the 'pseudo-scientific'. It arises out of various doctrines of the second half of the 19<sup>th</sup> century, which were chiefly concerned with 'white supremacy'. Race is often viewed as an invalid biological concept and that it lacks scientific underpinning as a means of categorising people (Chitty, 2004). This view is supported by the suggestion that 'race is a social construct and not a scientific valid reality' (Penketh, 2000:89). Garner, 2010 (*cited* in Lander, 2011:52) also supports this view by saying it is designed by humans. Hence, 'race' is not just limited to physical differences but to characteristics, qualities and attributes ascribed to people as a way of differentiating them for the political convenience. However, the Equality Act (2010) categorises race on the grounds of nationality, ethnic background, origin and/or heritage. Therefore, when exploring the effectiveness of policies designed to enhance multicultural education, we need to recognise that institutions consciously and unconsciously discriminate against people (Penketh, 2000).

Racism distorts human beings and social relations. It brutalises them and dehumanises those who perpetrate or articulate it (Miles and Brown, 2003). It is a denial of humanity and a means of legitimising inequality, particularly inequality explicit in class structures (Gillborn, 2005; 2010). According to many black and Asian critics like Alibhai-Brown

(2000b), it is prevalent in school/educational environments (Swann Report, 1985; Rampton Report, 1981). Historically, racism objectified human beings and translated them into goods and capital which is evident in the colonial slave trade and in today's human trafficking (Gilroy, 1987). The key ingredient was exploitation for maximum profit and so today's racism is 'hard-wired into (black) consciousness' (Ryde, 2009:35 *cited in* Lander, 2011:52). Penketh (2000) makes a link with the development and expansion of 'industrial capitalism' which was emerging in the 18th century. Fryer (1984 *cited in* Lavalette and Pratt, 2009), states that racism developed in three distinct phases: the racism of slavery, the racism of empire and the racism of post-war migration to Britain. Penketh (2000) makes a link between the history of racism and British colonial past with migrants of the 1950s such as my father who, like myself, faced unprecedented levels of abuse. The term 'institutionalised racism' was used in the McPherson Inquiry on the death of Stephen Lawrence and the subsequent obstruction that weaved its way into the police investigation. It was a new paradigm in the discourse about race, identity and institutions.

It could be argued that some of today's anti-racist policies are an extension of the inadequacies of integrationists' strategies that purport to give Black Minority Ethnic groups a voice but in practice marginalise their participation and engagement:

The cloak of multiculturalism has been worn by those with no interest in integration. Treating black people differently has enabled white institutions to carry on as if nothing substantive has changed since the arrival of the Windrush from the West Indies. As long as "ethnic minorities" were given some money and space to play marbles in the ghetto, nothing else needed to happen. Whether you look at the BBC or the top FTSE companies, the multicultural answer has failed to transform anything very much. Talking to the teenagers who have grown up with multiculturalism, I found that many young people - black, Asian, white and mixed race - are impatient with the whole ideology. They reject the traditional categories which multiculturalism tries to shoehorn them into (Alibhai-Brown, 2000b:1).

The reclaiming and redefining of derogatory language such as the n-word and p-word is (for many third and fourth generation descendants from ‘the New Commonwealth’) a way of asserting a 21<sup>st</sup> century identity. Its use is a form of reownership, a reclaiming of the word by the new black generation. Clothing is also another indicator of confidence with more and more Muslim men and women wearing attire that is in tune with their religious and cultural affiliation. Together this is a bold, confident assertion of language, identity and belonging (Modood, 2013:39). Coming to the defence of one’s culture, whenever there is a public statement of criticism, is therefore, natural because culture is part of your make up.

This was exemplified in the ‘Trojan Horse’ scandal. Critics like Rizvi (2014) have counter argued the perspective of Clarke. They accuse his report for lacking ‘some basic understanding of Islam’. She states that she observed a balanced curriculum in the schools she visited for her research. However, she does not take into account the nature and perimeters of the Clarke report. It is not a critique akin to OFSTED inspection of teaching and learning. It is certainly not a critique of *all* Islamic schools. Instead it is an investigation into schools where some of the staff have failed to provide that balance or have acted injudiciously in correspondence, language, interaction and behaviour. In some of the schools, politically motivated individuals have tried to impose an Islamic agenda or have curtailed the full implementation of the schools’ curriculum. It is also evidenced that in all the 14 schools identified only 3 schools have more than 10% of their pupils speaking English as their first language and half less than 10% who are eligible for free school meals. Such statistical datum may heighten a correlation with language, poverty and socio-economic mobility. The area is one of the most economically and culturally deprived parts of the Midlands where Muslim sets of Pakistanis and Somalians have created their

enclaves. Although such isolation empowers them culturally, it also disempowers them politically. It is what Derrida might term ‘a disintegrated community’. It is ‘cut up and cut off. One can imagine the desire to efface such an event or, at the very least, to attenuate it, to make up for it, and also to disclaim it’ (Derrida, 1996:55).

The core criticism of the report concerned communal and religious politics. The interplay of community activists and the schools’ management created a friction between the two parties perhaps even hindered pupils’ progress. In some of these ‘Trojan Horse’ state schools pupils’ attainment, progress and improvement have been slow despite all the support and intervention that has been in place. There is also evidence that subjects that did not lend themselves to the schools’ cultural/religious identities such as arts, music, drama, sex education were ignored. There is also evidence that imams and senior Muslim staff/headteachers were espousing anti-American/anti-Semitic rhetoric and conducting hardline religious assemblies with sexist overtones (Clarke, 2014).

Any form of schooling has an obligation to oppose such practices. In an increasingly cultural diverse society we need to consider the question of the ownership of education. Whose education is it – parents’ or children’s? Who is in charge of our state schools and, how do these considerations fit in with multicultural education? Is it about cultural ideology or political dogma? The incident is an example of the dangers of allowing a monocultural approach to permeate across the education sector. It goes against the very notion of equality and diversity (Alibhai-Brown, 2000a; 2000b). It neither treats pupils fairly nor does such an approach promote difference. But the incident also raises questions about power dynamics and the relationship between the different government agencies. What is the role of central government and how does it differ from the role of the LEA? To whom, or to which body, are academies and secondary schools accountable?

There are also Muslim individuals in Birmingham communities who are asserting their wish to limit their children's education by limiting the curriculum. They want their own cultural and religious values to take prominence in the actual education of their children and the day to day running of the schools. The effect of this could be segregation, intolerance, homophobia, and a lack of sex and relationships education. Their marginalisation of other viewpoints is what multicultural education should challenge and address. Yet, despite reports that such practices were in existence, neither the ministry of education, the LEA nor Birmingham City Council took sufficient steps to tackle those concerns:

Birmingham city council was aware of the practices and behaviours that were subsequently outlined in the 'Trojan Horse' letter long before the letter surfaced. Officers have conceded that it did not consider carefully enough nor soon enough the question of whether there was a pattern in what was happening across a number of schools. Instead, the Council persisted in approaching incidents on a case-by-case basis. Further, the officers looking at the issue from a community cohesion and education management perspective respectively did not appear to be sufficiently joined up (Clarke, 2014:96).

For instance, one of the missions of Michael Gove, the former education secretary, was to empower governing bodies in the running of schools. He wanted to decentralise education and give more control to the parents. This is also an extension of a particular thinking on multicultural education and about democratisation of education. It is an approach designed to empower the communities in which schools exist. However, as a former chair of a governing body in one of the primary schools in Birmingham's inner-city, I can state that my experience of the quality of the membership's knowledge of educational issues, understanding of finance, awareness of curriculum strategies and other considerations that determine the effective running of a school were disappointing.

In my experience, parents were interested mostly in their own children's class and concerned mainly with day to day activities. They did not have an overview. They had little understanding of policy issues, national guidelines, and next to no knowledge of the politics of education in a multicultural setting. It is easy to see how governors with only rudimentary knowledge of the subject could be mobilised or manipulated by the chair to oppose or obstruct school leaders. One of Clarke's conclusions concerns the quality of governors:

If one sets aside the allegations of extremist behaviour, there is still an issue of competence: can governors support their schools to become outstanding institutions. And can they do it acting as 'critical friends' rather than critics? This is an issue for those who train governors in Birmingham because it appears from the evidence that some governors are not clear about their roles, or they exceed their responsibilities... they focus on rights not responsibilities... a mind-set that can lead to problems (Clarke, 2014:90).

Multicultural education should not be confused with political correctness nor should it succumb to the control of any political lobby. Neither the central nor local government should remain detached lest their intervention might disturb community relations. Clarke reports that Birmingham City Council was reluctant to take up issues with governing bodies even when headteachers were complaining that they were being undermined and prevented from doing their job:

The Council has not supported headteachers faced with aggressive and inappropriate governor behaviour. This has led to the perception that the council has relied too readily on the solution of a compromise agreement and that it has failed in its duty of care towards their employees. The Council not being proactive enough in confronting the type of governor practice described... (this) has led to a perception that it has appeased governor' (Clarke, 2014:97).

Instead of supporting senior management to devise strategies to promote integration, influential voices opposed them in favour of their own Islamic traditions, customs and

practices.

Some proponents of a new form of multiculturalism take the view that real multicultural education should expose pupils to other worlds unfamiliar to them; it should make them question who and where they are. As such we should be teaching social ethics but not solely through religion. We should also use literature and philosophy to develop discourse and dissonance. We should encourage pupils to challenge and defend each other's perspectives and beliefs through argument and refutation. Multicultural education extends beyond religious and communal considerations but, more importantly, it extends beyond cultural sensitivities (Doug, 2004). In teaching pupils what they will inevitably learn from their communities is almost redundant. It acts as an educational faux pas. New forms of multicultural education should do more than that. As Parekh (2006) states:

A good education should expose pupils to different conceptions of the good life, systems of belief and modes of conceptualising familiar experiences, and get them to enter into the spirit of other cultures, see the world the way they do and appreciate their strengths and limitations. While rightly developing the powers of independent thought, analysis, criticism and so on, it should also cultivate 'softer' and less aggressive capacities such as sympathetic imagination, the ability to get under the skin of others and feel with and for them, the willingness to look at oneself from the standpoint of others, and the capacity to listen to them with sensitivity and sympathy'. (Parekh, 2006:227)

In 1984 Ray Honeyford, the headmaster at a Bradford School, raised the importance of assimilationism. He accused left-wing liberals for promoting a jaundiced idea of multiculturalism at the expense of a broader programme of learning. He believed that his pupils from mainly poor Pakistani communities were being badly served by left wing policy makers and parent groups. He ran into trouble because of the way he expressed his views. But the essence of what he said was credible. Two decades ago Phillips said that Britain was 'sleep walking into segregation' (*cited* in Casciani, 2005). Even today we are

still widening the gap in this way, because armed with a particular view of multicultural education we are compromising the contents of the National Curriculum in favour of cultural sensibilities. In promoting faith schools or schools with a religious character, we may be in danger of segregating BME children and their communities. This is mainly because, in doing so, we are effectively creating further divisions within the framework of the National Curriculum.

There is little doubt that pupils' religion and cultural values of their families are important. We do need to involve parents in their children's education, for the good of all communities. But multicultural education also has a duty to help pupils to learn about a world outside their communities and culture (Doug, 2004). All forms of education and schooling should free young people from reactionary thinking and cultural parochialism. By applying an unsatisfactory, out-dated definition of multicultural education that prescribes a laissez-faire to cultural sensitivities, we impoverish our pupils' education. We also fail our pupils from those communities.

However, this comes with a caveat. In the 1970s we were given literature that was culturally *exclusive*. Its racial and cultural singularity was a dominant feature. We read Kenneth Grahame's *Wind in the Willows*, *Lucy Poems* of Wordsworth, Shelagh Delaney's *A Taste of Honey*, Mark Twain's *Tom Sawyer*, Enid Blyton's *The Famous Five*, *The Railway Children* by Edith Nesbit, *The Charge of the Light Brigade* by Tennyson and one or two of Shakespeare's sonnets. To people from my social/cultural background education existed in the peripheries of our identities with very little connection to our home lives in the inner-cities. Multicultural education, therefore, raises questions of curriculum appropriateness and whether the offering of tokenistic black and Asian writers is patronising and doing ethnic minority pupils a disservice. Today I question this myself. If

I had been given the choice of reading black/Asian writers or the canonical white writers I was familiar with, whether I would have really opted for the former. I suspect not purely on the basis that for me, at the time, reading, literature and education in general were modes through which I re-evaluated myself and my surroundings. But, unconsciously, I sense when I reflect on that education, that I was also the product of a system that implicitly undermined my ethnic cultural identity – a point Bourne (2007) in distinguishing assimilationism from integrationism. That cannot be fair or judicious. In retrospect the recommendations of the Rampton (interim) *Western Indian Children in Our Schools Report* (1981) were apt and relevant in this context of the debate particularly in identifying the need to recruit more black and Asian teachers. We should try and engineer a cohesive programme by working closely with different elements in our society.

Clearly there has to be some common ground and we have to explore and navigate ourselves in this territory. It is probably true that the old undefined syllabus with a heavy white, middle class focus was alienating for pupils from ethnic communities as well as those from the white working classes. For instance a time when I truly identified with a text was in my fourth year when our English teacher introduced *A Kestrel For a Knave* by Barry Hines. The text spoke to me because it had a working class perspective on a subject of comprehensive schooling and its failings. This was something we were aware of and could relate to. The novel's depiction of the injustice and inequities in the education system, was moving. The P.E. teacher's and the Headmaster's treatment of Billy aroused a lot of empathy in me. It proved that if literature could be selected according to the makeup of the class, then there could be a stronger engagement with the text. It is a view F.R. Leavis amplifies that literature should develop pupils' engagement with the text and heighten their sensibilities.

Some critics would argue that a thick diet of white, middle class literature sits incongruous in an inner-city comprehensive. Monocultural education does a disservice to all white pupils as well as the pupils of BME communities. This thinking can also be applied to English language. My experience of the purveying ethos in the classroom was defined by middle class traits and eccentricities. There was a heavy focus on relatively advanced grammar, syntax, reading comprehensions, diagnostic exercises, vocabulary building, essay writing, rhetoric and précis work. Some of these were dull and we often wondered about their educational merit and social relevance. There were, for instance, free writing exercises in which we would have to debate topical issues such as, in relation to South Africa's apartheid, whether politics should be kept out of sports. Importance was given to research skills and structuring of an argument. Subsequently, I discovered that some of the skills I picked up during these classes have stuck with me in adulthood. They have been useful in FE, HE and even when I entered teaching as a profession. Over the years I have noticed that the teaching of grammar and syntax, which went out of fashion in the 1980s and 90s, appear to have come back in terms of key skills in the school curriculum. Their importance is highlighted in today's coursework assessment and examinations. So I question just how 'inappropriate' they were since I have benefited from those very same skills. Technical knowledge is not redundant but teaching it out of context is. It needs to be embedded into the syllabus so that pupils learn *within* context without the singularity of focus on one aspect of grammar.

However, grammar aside, tests, assessments and standardisation are other aspects I am uncertain about. In regard to this, it is not assessments *per se* that I object to, or the subtle embedded testing, but the *over* assessment of pupils to the point that OFSTED is recommending a regulated form of education to begin when a child is barely 2 years of age (Adams, 2013). Today's British school pupils are the most tested generation in

Europe; the most tested generation ever produced (Pring, 2013). Yet governments and industry are, and have been, criticising their standard of literacy and numeracy irrespective of the perennial reports of high grades at GCSE level.

Spoken English in GCSE assessment is different. I would argue that the framework of descriptors and suggested activities for assessment can be applied reasonably well. By interrogating some works on language and social theory, I would suggest that the assessed component of Speaking and Listening in English is neither injudicious nor socially divisive but that holding such a perspective actually is. Education philosophers like Peim (2009; 2012) question whether British pupils' use of English should be assessed/graded. To me, however, this line of questioning goes against a liberal model of multicultural education. The assessment of Speaking/Listening skills on the GCSE English course in the last twenty years has enabled pupils from marginalized communities, who have been historically excluded from certain professions, to gain appropriate linguistic skills and thereby taking an active role in social mobility. Why should it be that we can assess pupils' speaking skills in other languages but not in English? Mercer (2014) argues that if something is not assessed it is devalued. So, in order to maintain its centrality and currency, we should assess Speaking and Listening skills. Honey (1989) makes the case for the teaching of SE pronunciation in order to help pupils to gain social mobility. He argues that by saying accents do not matter, we are giving credence to a lie. Accents do matter in the world of work because we make assumptions about people by the way they speak and their use of language. Accents, dialects and speech patterns, and the way other people react to these, are integral to our sense of character and identity. Sometimes they hinder social mobility, prevent us from gaining entry into certain professions because we just do not fit into a group's shared set of lingual tones. Of course we should challenge

prejudice and stereotyping, and discrimination of any kind is unjust. But simultaneously it is possible to deduce that there is some merit in teaching skills that might fall in the assimilationist approach to multicultural education as demonstrated by my ESOL teacher, Mr Brown. To say that accents do not matter, that we should not interfere with the way pupils speak and refrain from ‘correcting’ them, we are fueling a fallacious, elitist view of language. It could be argued that this is not just integrationism, but a view governed largely by political correctness. It is molded partly by the educated class of academics who, by and large, have rid themselves of regional dialects and accents. They do this in favour of a non-descript educated accent and style of language. Yet they somehow believe today’s school children should not be encouraged to adopt a similar approach. This objection to teaching a non-descript style of speech is disingenuous to white working class pupils just as it is to BME pupils.

Bearing in mind that so many pupils were from Chinese, Punjabi and Urdu backgrounds, during my schooling there was hardly any focus on Modern Languages apart from French which was only compulsory in the first three years. Yet a colleague of mine, who attended a grammar school, was given a diet of Modern Languages that included French, German and Latin. So how does this discrepancy sit with a liberal model in the curriculum? This deficiency in language skills was also noticeable at university where many of my friends had acquired one or two modern languages and there were others who also had basic understanding of Latin. So it is possible to view the absence of foreign languages in the curriculum as a critical omission insofar as multicultural education is concerned.

My recollection of my English classes during the run up to my examinations in the 5th Year (Year 11) are also a little ambivalent in that we were taught by two teachers with opposing perspectives on pedagogical strategies. Each of them (both white) had different

styles and approaches. One of them was the head of English, middle-aged, strict, traditional grammarian and the other was in his thirties and fairly new to teaching. The former was dry, disciplinarian and concerned with the teaching of grammar in isolation, *out* of context. It was clearly an anti-Leavis approach. But I learnt about subjunctive clauses and prepositions ('never end a sentence with a preposition'). He was wrong in that he was applying the rules of Latin to English, maintaining the widely held notion, coated with snobbery, that Latin is superior to the English vernacular. As a teacher myself, one of his activities still concerns me in that he would give us pages and pages of a text book or chunks off the black board to copy out into our exercise books. I remember vividly that one of the books for this purpose was *Our Language* by R.A. Coombes. This was a dry, insipid text that, for me at least, lacked both appeal and contextual relevance. On reflection I might argue that his inclusion of this text hindered our connection with the subject; it distanced us from English and its centrality in our studies. The other teacher, however, was a little casual, relaxed in terms of discipline but keen to connect us with literature. It seemed he took care to select what would interest us without patronising us with his choice of texts. He introduced us to *Billy Liar* by Keith Waterhouse, a play that still resonates with me in terms of comedic sadness. I am sure that popular comedy today borrows aspects of Waterhouse's comedy to depict the tragedy of what Joyce calls 'the paralysis' inflicted by the tragedy of environment and circumstance.

#### **D) GCSE Poetry Anthology**

Only one of my English teachers, therefore, considered us in his choice of 'O' Level texts and selected his material in accordance with what might be seen as an integrationist approach to multicultural education. Such an act places the child at the centre of learning because it respects him and his identity. This could be contrasted with the unsatisfactory

state of affairs regarding the compulsory range of poems Key Stage 4 pupils have to study today. The anthology is an example of a debateable approach to multicultural education both in terms of its contents and structure. The anthology was stipulated in the Education Reform Act, 1988 (Elliot, 1994). Some would argue that it has also shaped the way teachers and pupils think about poetry in the classroom (Cooper and Davies, 1993; Kress *et al.*, 2005). Any discourse regarding the nature of AQA's Poetry Anthology, specifically (up until 2010) its section entitled 'different cultures and traditions', requires an assessment of the intention of such a publication in relation to multicultural education.

Currently the largest of the four English examination boards is the Assessment and Qualifications Alliance (AQA) (Dymoke, 2002). Today AQA awards 66% of the total GCSEs and 42% of the AS/A Levels nationally (AQA, 2010). Understandably it is influential in terms of the way it navigates the English curriculum contents, coursework, assessment and grading with various government agencies including the Qualifications and Curriculum Development Authority (QCDA), the successor of QCA (Pike, 2000). In recent years, it has played a significant role in co-drafting, devising and applying the framework for the Poetry Anthology's section entitled 'different cultures and traditions' (Benton, 2000; Dawson, 2009). With regard to this, the Board has championed not only the cause for 'diverse' selection of modern poets but has defined the assessment objectives, precisely and succinctly putting them into a workable framework. Although all examining boards include a selection of non-British poets, it is worth our while to focus our discussion primarily on AQA's poems compiled for the anthology in 2004 (AQA, Anthology, 2010) to reflect a multicultural Britain.

According to the AQA there are primarily three key papers that have formed the foundation for its schools' Poetry Anthology (Ashworth, 2010). These are the

government's White Paper in 1982 led by the then (Conservative) Education Minister, Kenneth Baker, the legislative stipulation in the 1988 schools' National Curriculum and New Labour's reforming of that educational programme in 1998. Although all three educational landmarks are significant in their own right, it would be unfair to examine them in isolation to the social change that precipitated their conception. For instance apart from government reports, one rather important forum that influenced Baker's thinking is the Poetry Research Project and its findings and recommendations in 1982 (Benton, 1999). The Project analysed responses from 170 English teachers in a single LEA. These came in the form of lengthy questionnaires and face-to-face interviews about their practice of teaching poetry and their attitudes towards it. This survey was, incidentally, repeated by the Project with roughly 100 teachers from the same LEA some 16 years later in 1998 during New Labour's administration. What is particularly significant about that survey is that in 1982 English teachers, although generally confident about teaching poetry, were less confident about the selection mechanism used to measure the quality of poetry that would be appropriate to study in class. What appeared to trouble them in 1998 were the effects of the National Curriculum and SATS on their teaching and, of the way poetry was examined (Cooper and Davies, 1993). According to Benton (2000), teachers were concerned about the kind of poetry that would be suitable and the prescribed objectives especially in a culturally diverse country as Britain. How would poetry reflect a multicultural Britain? They were uncertain about the question of negotiating pupils' cultural identities. But they also felt confused about the skills they were supposed to be instilling or developing, let alone dealing with the pupils' general resistance to poetry:

It has to be acknowledged that poetry starts at a disadvantage. In the public view it is something rather odd, certainly outside the current of normal life; it is either numinous, and therefore rarely to be invoked, or an object of comic derision. (Benton 1999:522).

What the Anthology did was to accentuate English teachers' concern not only about the nature of pedagogy in the classroom but the politics of teaching poetry (Barber, 1996). It also brought into question pupils' differing perceptions of the subject/themes especially those that had clear cultural variants. Some critics, therefore, established that English is more than just reading, writing, speaking and listening:

The meaning of English may now reside as much in the teacher's 'bearing' how he or she dresses, how the furniture is arranged in the room, what the displays on the wall are, what gestures are used at particular moments in the teacher's practise . . . (Kress *et al.*, 2005:4).

In regard to the component 'different cultures and traditions', what might concern many critics is the precise nature of the semantics and the process of selection, because something political is implied. What mechanism does the AQA apply to determine a range of poems/poets which/who reflect cultures and traditions and what exactly is this section designed for? (Blackledge, 1994).

What model of multicultural education does it sit with? Clearly the curriculum relating to Key Stage 4 poetry is led by our government's slogan incorporating 'inclusiveness' and 'diversity'. It might be seen as an attempt to create social cohesion and cultural harmony (Harber, 2010) but it is inconsistent with the advice from the government.

For instance, according to the AQA the poems should help pupils to 'learn about the literature of another culture, as well as reflect on their own experiences' (AQA, 2010:4). The texts are defined by examination boards in line with the National Curriculum requirements where appropriate. There is, however, some flexibility for teachers to select from a range, there are set National Curriculum requirements for Key Stage 3 and 4. An overtly canonical perspective on the value of the classics states that 'pupils should be introduced to major works of literature from the English literary heritage in previous

centuries' (DfE, 1995:19). The government directives cite Austen, George Eliot, the Brontë's, Hardy, Swift and Defoe among others as examples of major writers who have written fiction of 'high quality' (Baxter, 1998:23 *cited in* Davison and Moss, 2004). Such guidelines sit on par with F.R. Leavis's and Newbolt's vision that literature should strengthen monocultural British identity.

This directive aside, there is also a clash of interests because the actual design of qualifications (such as GCSE English) is governed by the economic principle of monetary value. What will these qualifications buy in the world of work? What exactly will it equip pupils to be able to do? Some might call such an economically tailored approach a form of social engineering (Pring, 2005). There is nothing inherently wrong with that. However, there is a problem if the very nature of education including literature and 'ethnic' poetry can be changed at the whim of our politicians who want to use English as a way of building nationhood or, at the very least, developing a sense of national identity. This might not be devoid of fear of immigration or global market forces and competition. So how examining boards like the AQA position themselves and do a balancing act will determine their choice of poems/poets in the section 'different cultures and traditions'.

Evidently there are a number of problems relating to the rationale underpinning the process of selection. As Dawson (2009) asks, what exactly has the AQA meant by 'different'? For instance, Key Stage 3 teachers are permitted to use Tennessee Williams, John Steinbeck or Mark Twain – white Americans – as writers from a different historical time. Such an implicit clause allows teachers to opt for culturally familiar writers rather than Black, Asian or Middle Eastern writers such as Maya Angelou or Nadine Gordimer (Dawson, 2009) whose cultures may, on the face of it, seem unfamiliar. This is partly, as stated, due to their unease with different cultures. As the works of Scafe, Yandel and

Dymoke have indicated, coupled with teachers' lack of confidence in poetry in general, it is hardly going to encourage them to present poetry from 'different cultures and traditions' in an effective, engaging way. These teachers' reluctance to tackle poetry that may be culturally inspiring for pupils goes against the spirit of the National Curriculum, something which the guidelines set by the examining boards are supposed to uphold and nurture.

In addition when we talk about 'different' we also have to ask ourselves different from what or whom? Why are Black and Asian poets living in the UK like Grace Nichols, Benjamin Zephaniah, Daljit Nagra and John Agard viewed as poets from 'different' cultures? Different from whom? White British, white Europeans? White working class? What about poets of mixed race; should the AQA continue classifying them as 'different'? If so, does not 'different' in this context imply one's race and convey rather racial connotations/assumptions? Does it just extend to colour of skin? In this context, it does. However, what about gay poets; does their gender or sexual orientation make them 'different'? They are not categorized and nor should they be. In the spirit of fostering cultural inclusiveness, it could be argued that black and Asian poets living in the UK should be seen as English, especially in the context of today's multi-cultural Britain in which cultural 'familiarity' should be an over-riding feature and not cultural 'difference'. Nowhere should this be emphasized more so than in the sphere of education for our pupils.

Just as in the 'core' cluster of poets as diverse as Simon Armitage, Carol Ann Duffy and Seamus Heaney, it is paramount that the section 'different cultures and traditions' reflects new emerging voices that express the concerns of a new generation and their relationship with the world today. As we documented, evidently since 1995 teachers welcomed poets from the 20<sup>th</sup> century which were introduced in subsequent editions. Similarly, the

‘different culture and traditions’ section should not exist as a patronising, tokenistic gesture on the part of the education establishment - to appease the left wing critics. The danger lies in complacency, in believing that the poets one encountered in the 1960s (Imtiaz Dharker, John Agard, Grace Nichols, *et al.*) will ‘speak’ for/to a generation growing up in the second decade of the 21st century. If multicultural education is an evolving, ephemeral process, then the selection of authors in the anthology should reflect that.

The AQA needs to be continuously looking out for new voices of a new generation. If one of the functions of the poetry on the National Curriculum is to enhance pupils’ sense of themselves as individuals who have a shared commonality explored by ‘the ways in which language reflects identity ... through accent, dialect, idiolect, varieties of SE according to age and gender’ (AQA 2010:15), then we have to present our pupils with poetry which has the workings of a living language that will help them to explore issues of the past, belonging and cultural identity. The only way to do that effectively is to abandon the existing format so that ‘ethnic’ voices and perspectives are part and parcel of the mainstream poetry, like local accents and regional identity.

In terms of attitudes there is no doubt that some English teachers convey a resistance to teaching pre-20<sup>th</sup> century poetry (Pike, 2000; 2003) because they argue that pupils find it irrelevant, remote and hard to engage with (Benton, 2000). This problem is exacerbated in relation to ‘different cultures and traditions’, as some teachers not only have a strong resistance to poetry because they lack confidence, but they also fail to disguise a certain unease with ‘otherness’, especially when it comes with a prescribed accent (Goody and Thomas, 2000, *cited* by Dawson, 2009; Gallavan, 1998). Some argue that it culturally alienates pupils whether they are from a white working class or from an ethnic minority

group (Wade and Sidaway, 1990). However, Dawson (2009), quite rightly, points out that some critics unnecessarily over-complicate the matter by stating that to teach poetry effectively from different cultures one must be culturally qualified (TuSmith, 1990, *cited* by Dawson, 2009; Gallavan, 1998). The crux of the problem lies in the segregation of poets in the Poetry Anthology whose very format (departmentalizing black and Asian poets) acts as a tokenistic gesture of political correctness, a form of political appeasement.

It is reassuring to learn that these criticisms of the Poetry Anthology were addressed by the AQA (2010) when the board finally abandoned ‘different cultures and tradition’ in favour of a new format for their 2010 edition. The current Poetry Anthology presents the poets/poetry in a far more inclusive way by grouping poems in terms of themes and not in terms of cultures defined on rather questionable racial grounds (AQA, 2010, Digital Poetry Anthology). The poems are presented in four broad themes: Character and Place, Voice, Conflict and Relationship. Such vamping of the format means pupils will see poets set alongside one another, irrespective of their race, culture or ethnicity, allowing pupils the opportunity to synthesize by comparing and contrasting poetic perspectives.

Although this is a welcome change, the range of poets is still predominantly narrow, even more so than in the previous edition. It seems there is a tacit reluctance to teach new voices of the younger generation. In fact it is rather noticeable that there has been a pairing down of the selection of poets from ‘different cultures and traditions’. Apart from including Daljit Nagra there is little ‘new’ in the new edition. The few older voices of the 1950s and 1960s generation continue to resonate such as Imtiaz Dharker, John Agard, Grace Nicholls and Mimi Khalvati. This is regrettable because there is a range of poets including Richard Grant ‘Dreadlock Alien’, Kumar Singh Khan, Sudeep Sen and Pam Kaur whose poetry, if we apply Leavis’s measurement of quality in literary works, has not

only stood the test of time and gained critical praise, but whose perspectives explore issues relevant and pertinent to young people today. Moreover, their style of delivery, their adventurous way of connecting with the English language, whether through the written word or through performance, is engaging and accessible. If modern poets are selected purely on the basis of recommendations from schools and educationalists involved in the teaching and assessment of English (AQA, 2010), then it is worth investigating whether more reliable forms of selection can be put into practise. We need to establish an egalitarian form of methodology. Why would examining boards or teachers, for instance, want to leave out Handsworth's Benjamin Zephaniah, one of the most accomplished living poets writing in Britain and very popular with pupils from all backgrounds?

How does this omission reflect English in multicultural education?

There is evidence that the choice and selection of schools' poetry is governed by the values and principles that gave shape to the National Curriculum. The spirit of its conception in the 1980s has, in theory, been at the forefront of examining boards' choice of poets/poetry. However, this selection must be comprehensive and rigorous and not merely based on some vague ideas of quality and worthiness such as those championed by Matthew Arnold or F.R. Leavis – that only the intellectual elite can define and judge what is 'good' poetry (Leavis, 1948, *cited* in Pike, 2003). Moreover, it should not function as a perfunctory superfluous gesture on the part of examining boards. It is also clear that British examining boards cannot keep using black and Asian poets whose voices educationalists feel comfortable about using in class. It is also far too convenient for examining boards of any country to use poetry as a way of reinforcing a set of cultural values and heritage. Such an approach produces neither effective teaching nor effective learning. It merely begets regurgitation of teachers' ideas (Holmes, 1928, *cited* by

Goodson, 1990; Gallavan, 1998). Instead pupils' exploring of language by making a personal, emotional link with a poem is just as important (Rosenblatt, 1978, *cited* by Pike, 2000). Although there have been subsequent changes to examining boards' selection since 1995, the loss of dubious semantics has given way to the narrowing of the list of black and Asian poets currently on offer. It would be wise for the AQA and other bodies/agencies involved in curriculum and assessment to critically evaluate the range of poets on offer. An investment in research for the next edition due in 4 years' time is vital if the quality and diversity of poetry – and its ability to engage with pupils and their cultural identity – are going to be strengthened. Perhaps just as importantly, we should be cautious that poetry teaching does not become a purely mechanistic exercise designed primarily to create nationhood or a national identity. Recent government agenda has influenced the assessment objectives that emphasize the importance of identifying technical aspects of a poem. This approach may lead us to re-consider the nature of poetry teaching. Are we merely trying to teach pupils to identify different components of a poem or are we, through the appreciation of aestheticism and the workings of our living language, genuinely interested in developing pupils' understanding of humanity? Either way, how does this thinking sit with a new model of multicultural education?

In this context, it is noteworthy that Pike (2015) critiqued a paper of mine based on an early draft of one of the chapters in this dissertation. In the section “‘Other’, ‘Different’ or ‘Contemporary’ cultures and traditions?” although Pike acknowledges the importance of raising questions about what we mean by difference (and difference from whom?), he is less convinced about my conclusion that much of AQA discussion has focused on race and colour of skin as opposed to difference in social and background. He states:

It is a mark of difference to the majority that Imtiaz Dharker was born in Lahore to Pakistani parents, was brought up in Glasgow and lives in London, Wales and Mumbai.

Most people belonging to the ethnically white majority in the United Kingdom do not divide their time between Mumbai and London and it is important that they learn from British citizens such as those of Pakistani origin who do live in two cultures. That Dharker describes herself as a 'Scottish, Muslim, Calvinist' immediately distinguishes her from the secular majority in England. That Choman Hardi was born in Kurdistan and raised in Iraq and Iran distinguishes her from the majority in the United Kingdom. (Pike, 2015:157)

Although I would agree that these poets do provide something the majority of the people in the United Kingdom are not exposed to, differentiating them on purely this ground misses the point about race. Poets from 'other cultures and traditions' were (and are) surreptitiously dismissed as minor in comparison to Heaney, Armitage, Duffy, Clark etc. Moreover the title of this section seemed almost as a dismissive, throw away after thought something which a number of poets and teachers acknowledged. But Pike's comment also overlooks issues of identity and belonging. It by-passes the inherent desire on the part of the immigrant voices to be connected with the mainstream culture, not as foreigners but as people who have the validity, the right to be here. It ignores the idea that not all immigrant pupils want to be isolated, demarcated as other units belonging to other lands, with other histories. This ties in with the 'Trojan Horse' scandal and the government's drive to set up more faith schools and free schools and thereby dividing communities on religious, sectarian and cultural lines. This is not inclusivity, assimilation or integration of any great merit but social segregation for political convenience. How could any form of distinction of British writers/poets on the basis of their race, colour or cultural identity be justified? Pike (2015) interprets my conclusion that it is better that AQA does not distinguish poets on the basis of their race/culture but rather sees poets as voices of and about place and themes as reactionary, regressive in line with the governmental view of inclusiveness (Doug, 2011). This point is also misunderstood. In welcoming AQA's decision to group poets on the basis of subject matter and themes and not on race, land, culture, traditions, or

‘otherness’, Pike suggests is a sign of political correctness that denies pupils the opportunity to celebrate difference:

To see only racial grounds for black and Asian poets being ‘segregated’ appears decidedly secular and does not sufficiently attend to cultural and religious difference. Such an approach, despite good intentions, may exacerbate the marginalisation of minority perspectives as attention is now focused on the difference between ‘contemporary’ and ‘heritage’ literature rather than between different groups in contemporary society (Pike, 2015:158).

He goes on to state:

Ceasing to appreciate such difference may be precisely what is advocated by the current political emphasis on shared ‘Britishness’ and ‘British values’. Rather than talking about differences, English is being encouraged to focus on common values and what binds us together (Pike, 2015:159).

I am not convinced of this rhetoric. I believe AQA’s departure is a form of acceptance that in a multicultural country as Britain writers from other parts of the world are and should be celebrated as writers who live on these shores. It was the segregation of poets on the basis of their cultural difference that was a form of political appeasement, a gesture of political correctness. It was, as Naidoo (1994:42) suggests, a form of marginalisation of black and Asian voices/texts which poets have legitimately questioned. However, I do agree with Pike on his final statement on this matter:

Arguably what is needed is... a more nuanced and discriminating appreciation of contemporary difference and diversity (Pike, 2015:159).

As for my own ‘O’ Level reading diet, there is a certain irony that despite its absence of a left wing multi-cultural consideration, I did very well within that system in terms of attainment and social/cultural enrichment. I passed my ten ‘O’ Levels and went on to

pursue 'A' Level studies at Matthew Boulton FE College, Birmingham. However, it is difficult to rule out one perspective over the other because inherent in both dimensions is the importance of appropriateness, relevance and quality of the knowledge and texts.

So the issues regarding *what* is taught, on what basis the texts are selected and *how* they are taught under the broad umbrella of multicultural education, are key concerns that need to be defined and through which we need to navigate ourselves.

### **PART III**

#### **A) FE College, Pedagogy and 'A' Level English**

I studied English Language and Literature (AEB) for one of my 4 'A' Levels not because I was particularly fond of language but purely because that was the only combination that was offered. I was apprehensive about this choice. The head of English at my comprehensive had put me off linguistics but at college I witnessed a different approach to this subject. The language component, like its direct counterpart, literature, was taught in context to social and cultural forces. So it had an immediacy and relevance and, for me there was a certain appeal. I could relate to language as a living organism and the pedagogical approach the teachers took. Their approach enabled them to make associations with social and political factors that had contributed in the shaping of English language. In looking at idioms, we would examine linguistic traits and patterns of groups and sub groups and how they acquired these features. We would identify the underlying assumptions these groups embodied and transmitted to themselves, their peers and the wider communities. In particular, the origins and development of the language appealed to me because it incorporated historical trends that influenced the use of words and syntactical patterns. We learned that everything in our society is a human construct and,

therefore, prone to change and alteration. This also includes our identity, the persona we present to different people and in different contexts. Language is merely a vehicle for this projection. We learned that nothing is permanent. Everything is transitional and ephemeral. Perhaps that resonated with me and my perpetual quest to find a fixture, something my 'O' Level English teacher through his use of R.A. Coombes failed to instil in me. As an immigrant, I had always felt there was something lacking in my sense of not being part of a whole, not belonging. So perhaps it was then that I began to learn that there is no such thing as cultural solidification or permanence. And this also applied to identity.

During my secondary schooling, learning was a living embodiment and had a practical value. It taught me, a student with a limited understanding of Britishness, the world of work. The learning process was interactive and engaging. We carried out research amongst our peer groups and questioned our use of language. We were the object of study not just onlookers but the very vehicles that utilised language and moulded it into a shape to use in our own world. Even then, at that early stage, I knew that this subject had been taught badly at school. Contextualization of themes, concepts and issues and making associations with pupils and their backgrounds are important if learning and education are to have any significance in our society. That reinforces a certain thinking on multicultural education. It is a particular thinking about education, its relevance in a wider context and its relationship with those for whom it is intended.

In terms of literature, the texts I covered for this course were primarily canonical bearing F.R. Leavis's kite mark of quality and excellence and the subsequent DfE (1995) recommendations for texts of 'high quality'. These included: *The Return of the Native*, Hardy; *First World War Poetry*, ed. Black; *King Lear*, Shakespeare; *Volpone*, Johnson; *Dubliners*, Joyce and *Short Stories* by H.G. Wells. Clearly there is not a single

black/Asian author on that list. Some critics see this as a failing. However, at the time it did not occur to me that there was an under-representation of ‘other’ groups in our society. What concerned me were the pedagogical features of the lesson in which these texts were taught. I would argue that the style of delivery and the teacher’s passion for the subject are two essential ingredients to a successful lesson. I got along with both of my English teachers. Their enthusiasm was infectious for they seemed to embody a spirit of excitement at the reality of teaching these texts to a group of teenagers from a diverse multicultural background (Gallavan, 1998). But it might also have something to do with my own attitude to learning. It was clear I was eager to learn about ‘otherness’. I was genuinely interested to connect (Newbolt, 1921; Leavis, 1948). However, their selection of texts must have also created a challenge for them: how do you teach texts that are at least 70 years old and produced in a culturally and politically different society than that of Britain of early 1980s? The text and the context of its conception, production and distribution are pivotal in our appreciation of the artistic value and the quality of thought. It is an idea I explore in my poetry. Years down the line, for instance, a colleague of mine’s wife (also a teacher) located a copy of one of the texts I had used at this time. My name was still discernible and printed in my own handwriting. It led me to write the following poem, *Rediscovering ‘King Lear’* (Doug, 2002):

*Claire found it in her school cupboard, Colin says leaning forward,  
Passing it to me like an old piece of education.  
It’s the New Clarendon Shakespeare’s edition of King Lear*

edited by Ralph E.C. Houghton M.A.  
Formerly Fellow and Tutor of St. Peter’s College, Oxford.  
Published by Oxford University Press, 1957,

it’s been reprinted several times over concluding in 1978  
for my untraceable universe, my comprehensive school  
and me. *Strange how it got there, he ponders vaguely*

*crossing into another metropolitan borough – Stoke of all places!*

There's a pause as he fumbles back into his chair.

Your name's on the inside cover, he states pleased with himself

as if clenching a deal, a sale he's made. In my hands, I sense

an old familiarity that passes through me like *déjà vu*.

It's royal blue, antiquated a little, on the trailing end of an empire,

smudged through the parchment on the left hand corner

and, yes, my name's there, printed clearly in blue. The R's looped

rather uncertainly, a remnant of a grammarian influence,

not the *R* I use today – a Zorro slash intercepted urgently

with a lower case L conveying the re-enforcement of a dual identity.

Back then dual and identity weren't cajoled into a compound word.

Back then they stood apart, distinctly, separated like Toby

who was always picked last on the sports field at Metcheley Lane.

And it's odd how after twenty one years not a trace of me remains.

All my notes have been rubbed away, replaced with a new language,

a new identity. My book, my name, is merely a commodity

to use over and over again for the sound editorial wisdom

of Ralph E.C. Houghton M.A. that emblem of an age

shrivelled like me at the finishing line of History, captured

like a philosophical idea, call it literature or settlement.

And I think of Roman roads and Egyptian tombs

Neither here nor there – not dead nor dying, just being,

Breathing time and space as if they're one and the same thing.

(Doug, 2002)

I refer to this because it brings together some of the themes and ideas about settlement, belonging and language and their transitional quality. But there is also a certain desire on the part of the narrator to be an establishment figure, of a certain class of academics personified by Oxford University. Even today, after having obtained a Master of Arts

degree in English I still feel that I have not earned it, that, somehow, I am not good enough; that I am a fraudster. It is a strange sensation, and perhaps all immigrant pupils of my generation feel it. I still do not sense I fit in with Englishness. It continues to evade me and keeps me at bay.

The context and contents of my 'A' Level studies were a form of multicultural education because it connected us to 'otherness'. That impulse to do well and succeed would not have existed had I not been exposed to possibilities. That type of multicultural education helped us to reach another stratosphere of social mobility, areas that had traditionally excluded us. Moreover, it brought us together in a broad cultural umbrella by extrapolating shared values that united us as students in a multicultural community. Today we can absorb those ideas through our understanding of 'big society' and 'social mobility'. Multicultural education is a belief that English language and literature belong to us all. We are all their owners and consumers. This thinking holds well in theory but in actual practice it does not fair well with all immigrant pupils especially not the 3<sup>rd</sup> and 4<sup>th</sup> generation of BME for they want to see English reflect their perspective and concerns. Education should reflect the composition and the make-up of our society.

Subsequently, in my pursuing teaching/education as a career, I am a successful 'product' of that old, undefined syllabus in spite of its drawbacks. And despite my possessing English as a second language, I have accrued enough nounce and lingual skills to take advantage of social capital. I was aware of my own cultural deficiency at school even before I went to university. This idea about the centrality of language in determining one's sense of his own identity is in line with Bourdieu (1977). Like Marx, Bourdieu saw language as a market of symbolic capitals and power, with people juggling for profit and with some people structurally having less capital than others (Bourdieu, 1977).

Bourdieu's Marxist thinking is particularly acute in his theory of cultural capital and his concept of habitus that the more wealth one has, the more powerful, influential a position one occupies in social life.

Bourdieu (1986) extended Marx's idea of capital beyond the economic and into the more symbolic realm of culture. Cultural capital comes in three forms: embodied (accent, dialect, tastes, mannerism, posture, clothing etc.), objectified (material possessions, valuables, cars, houses, jewellery etc.) and institutionalised (education, qualifications, school, university, course, titles, position in society etc.). In *La Distinction* (1979) Bourdieu links French citizens' tastes in art to their social class positions, arguing that aesthetic sensibilities are shaped by the culturally ingrained habitus. This according to Bourdieu is so ingrained that we accept it as a form of permanence instead of looking at it as something that evolves and is culturally developed. This leads to our justifying social inequality, because it is believed that some people are naturally disposed to the finer things in life while others are not.

Bourdieu (1979; 1986) also saw the social world as being divided up into a variety of distinct arenas of fields of practice like art, education, religion, law etc., each with their own unique set of rules, knowledge and forms of capital and although there may be some overlap generally these fields are autonomous from one another. Each field has its own set of positions and practices, as well as its struggles for position as people mobilise their capital to stake claims within a particular social domain. The prevalence of such implicit thought in our capitalist society does lead to social and cultural injustice. For instance, Hymes (1980; 1996) argues:

The world of language is not just one of difference but one of inequality... some of that inequality is temporal and contingent on situations while another part of it is structural and enduring; and that such patterns of inequality affect, and articulate around, actual, concrete,

language forms such as accents, dialects, registers and particular stylistic skills (Hymes, 1980; 1996:32).

Similarly, Peim and Flint (2012) state:

The failure of working class children in education relates to the systematic bias of the system, rooted in culture. In schools, working class culture is either not recognized or is denigrated as an inferior form of culture, a kind of anti-knowledge. Success in schooling is a matter of adopting a certain 'style' of being. The school reward system recognizes certain styles positively and others negatively. Cultural capital is visible in social habits, styles of speech and modes of conduct and being that belong to the general way of existence known as *habitus*... the durable dispositions engendered by the class/cultural environment of your upbringing. Through the various gradations of the education system cultural capital translates into wealth and power. Academic success can be exchanged for economic success (Bourdieu and Passeron, 1977 *cited in* Peim and Flint, 2012).

In being a success in that particular multicultural education system, I too have lost an element of my cultural identity and heritage. My knowledge of Biblical stories, English history and English literature, for instance, far exceed my understanding or awareness of Hinduism or Indian art or Indian literature. I have become, in Gandhi's phrase, 'the English-knowing men', the educated elite packed with English manners, sensibilities and taste. It seems success in that old curriculum came at a price. But we could ask, is it the job of schools to cater for different communities, their traditions, cultures, literature and religions? In parts of Birmingham there are schools with pupils speaking fifty different languages at home. We might express a certain scepticism for the National Curriculum but how does a school function if the curriculum is not standardised; if there is no commonality in the syllabus or if we do not extrapolate core values from different communities under the broad umbrella of a national programme of learning? In this way, education, as a whole, has its seeds in a certain liberal thinking about the relationship of government, state and nationhood.

At the same time, being a child of immigrant parents whose first language was not English and who had very little in the way of ‘cultural capital’ (Bourdieu, 1986), I was also at a disadvantage, socially/economically at the periphery of the dominant culture whose members not only exercised but wielded power and influence.

There are at least two perspectives on a liberal model of multicultural education. One school of thought argues that the role of education is to make pupils aware of the world around them (Eagleton, 1983; Pike, 2015; Colarusso, 2010). It argues that the purpose of education, especially the subject of English in the curriculum, is to develop pupils’ humanitarian sensibilities (Mathieson, 1975; Clark, 2001). Education is there to help pupils connect with mankind and spiritual and ethical values (Pike, 2015). This perspective suggests that although education has a numbers of functions, serving society and making the world a better place to live in, must take priority. This is certainly the view F.R. Leavis championed in the 1940s and 50s.

The other school of thought is more functional. As we discussed in relation to Gandhi’s Utilitarian model of education for the Indians after 1947, it argues that schooling as a project had 19<sup>th</sup> century utilitarian roots. In Britain, these provided the context for the first Education Act. At the heart of this national programme for children in the second half of the 19<sup>th</sup> century, was the desire to equip society with practical skills so that pupils will be able to find employment and provide for their families. To argue, as classicists might, that a liberal education should instil contentment, knowledge and understanding of the world by accentuating pupils’ sensibilities through the appreciation of aesthetics, art and literature, might be a little disingenuous to the working classes and immigrant communities. It marginalizes their concerns by relegating skills as secondary after thoughts. One can only argue that money and materialism are unimportant when one has

already acquired or inherited these. But for the masses who have to do without, who have to survive on the breadline or have only known a benefit dependency culture for a generation or more, practical skills for employment are essential. For them, schooling and a liberal education are a way out of poverty, towards economic independence and self-sufficiency. Therefore, functional skills for industry are not only important but central to improving their lives. I believe that dimension and thinking regarding the value of practical education also needs to be applied to multicultural education.

## **B) Undergraduate Studies and English Literature**

I enjoyed my 'A' Level studies and was successful in the examinations in all four subjects. There was never any doubt that I was going to go to university. In my mind's eye it was almost a celestial place as exemplified by Hardy's Jude Fawley who dreams of those spires of learning and high culture. Alternatively it could be seen as 'the institution which to everyone is one instrument of good... a form of asylum' (Williams, 1965:29). I took the former view. I was going to study English whether that consisted of a combination or a single honours degree. I chose Lancaster University because I was rejected unceremoniously by York University. It was not their fault. I had been late for the interview, was unprepared and referred to Toni Morrison as a he. But I had also applied to Lancaster on the flimsy, haphazard understanding of the Wars of the Roses. So after my rejection by York University, I instantly developed an allegiance with the Lancastrian, the Plantagenets.

What the 'A' Level success did was to provide me with a passport to university education and opened my eyes to that other world in which people demonstrated hierarchy and privilege (Bourdieu, 1979). Even the UCAS application process was telling. The statement

required that applicants write about their middle class hobbies/pursuits and effectively show their cultural capital. So students like myself have always felt a hint of embarrassment about our background because we were not exposed to horse riding, mountaineering, travel, rugby, scuba diving or hiking in the Far East with our parents. University would be a world in which having a socially acceptable accent would matter. In particular, the non-descript accent was a stamp of validity to membership to an elite class of people (Syal, 1996; Sanghera, 2008; Khan, 2006; *et al.*). But for me, it was also coupled with race and other people's perception of me. I was by the colour of my skin an outsider who somehow got into university circles through egalitarian channels governed by political correctness and cultural sensibilities. The feeling that I did not belong there, that somehow I had fudged my way through, has always been in the background of my mind.

My interview was an intensive, 45 minute session during which I was asked about my favourite authors, their style of writing and the social/political perspective they presented. Having stated that I was reading *Mrs Dalloway*, I was asked to extrapolate and explain the function of some of the key narrative devices of Virginia Woolf. It was very distinct, a contrast from my experience of interviewing prospective undergraduates today where no such questions are asked because universities are no longer supposed to act as academic elites. However, at my own interview I must have spoken with some coherence because they offered me a place and I accepted without having done much research into the contents of the B.A. English course.

When I told a couple of my Asian friends at college that I had been offered a place they sneered at the idea. 'So you're going to do a degree in book reading? What use will that be then?' one asked. But their reaction is telling and compels us to consider the purpose of

education. Why would anyone want to do a degree that is not going to equip you for a specific career? What is the point of such (expensive) studies? Should not university education train you for a profession? To my friends, and increasingly many people today, it is a matter of functionality ('political') above aesthetics, ('pure' knowledge, Said, 1978). Education has to be linked to social mobility. It is a vehicle through which one navigates his/her route to economic security.

I appreciate this perspective and line of enquiry for it encompasses the functional aspect of education. Education must serve a tangible purpose. This view is particularly prevalent with critics who argue that education and particularly higher education (which comes at a cost to the individual), must equip students with practical skills/tools they can redeploy in future employment. But for me, at the tail end of the flower power generation of the late 60s and early 70s, gaining knowledge and enrichment were foremost considerations not employment prospects. I was interested in learning for the sake of learning. This included reading books that I would not otherwise have had the compulsion, guidance or the confidence to plough through by myself. University life would, I thought, provide me with the context to read literature culturally unfamiliar to me. At the time, my attitude to multicultural education, and reading in general, was influenced by my experience of assimilationism.

My first year of undergraduate studies was uninspiring in terms of the depth and breadth of literature we studied. It consisted mainly of English literary texts from the middle ages through to the 18th century of the enlightenment, the age of empiricism. We studied everything from Chaucer's vernacular exposition of (im)morality of his age to Thomas Grey's pondering on whether ignorance was truly a bliss; from the early recording of written English in the form of verse, to the standardization of English language in the form

of Johnson's dictionary. In retrospect, many of the lectures were dull, antiquated in terms of presentation but at the time no one questioned the quality of these lectures. The cold, archaic way of scholarly presentation reinforced that the delivery and style of language at higher education is meant to be out of touch with mainstream society. It was complexity personified. A part of our job as students was to decode the language in which knowledge was re-packaged, redefined and disseminated. Very little of what was said appealed to my world of cultural displacement and social awkwardness. For instance, I was the only Asian student surrounded by middle class students from the shires whose university educated parents were from established professions such as law, the stock market and medicine. Again they had 'cultural capital' (Bourdieu, 1977).

The deficiency was also noted in the absence of my knowledge of foreign languages especially French. Most of my peers from independent or grammar schools could speak one or more of the European languages ranging from elementary to advanced levels. One or two even had some basic understanding of Latin. Such knowledge of other languages might not have given them an advantage on a literature course but it did propel their ability to demonstrate technical accuracy whereas I would have to wait until I graduated to learn about conjugated verbs, third person predictive, dative and accusative verbs etc. At university such technical language was unfamiliar to me and so any discussion pertaining to this subject often left me with a feeling of inadequacy. It gave me a sense that my school education was inferior.

However, there was a certain pride attached to being at university. Somehow my entry into academia suggested a form of acceptance and initiation into British middle class. It was my initial step into the circle of social and cultural respectability, where language was

an indicative marker of quality and status and this also included the spoken language and accents with which I maneuvered myself.

Being the first member in my family to go to university provided me with a sense of accomplishment. But it also accentuated the gap between my parents and myself. Tacitly, they were becoming aware of my increasingly Anglicised outlook on life and philosophy. My language and accent was changing. These differences were also a cause of conflict. I sometimes wonder whether this was the result of the literature, lectures and tutorials I was exposed to or the influence of my rich, white middle class peers. In hindsight, I suspect it was the latter. According to my Asian friends, I was ‘gorafied’ (a derogatory modern coinage to mean Asian in exterior but white from the inside). There was a certain truth in this. The change of personality was also evident in my clothing, taste and manners and, very significantly, speech. This is also something Pip discovers in Dickens’ *Great Expectations*. But this chasm between an undergraduate and his parents is nothing new. I remember from the early episodes that fictitious Ken Barlow from ITV’s *Coronation Street* was also accused of similar traits of snobbery by his father when he went to university and moved into academia. Such a departure is seen as a betrayal of your roots (Parekh, 2006).

In my own case I was (and am) the very caricature that Gandhi had defined, the very people who had replaced their native Indian clothing and outlook for British identity. I could see how my outlook on life, started to clash with my parents’ relatively conservative set of values. Is this the effect of multicultural education of the 1960s and 1970s or is inevitable that your surroundings are going to affect your outlook and identity?

I was now immersing myself not only in a language that was distinct from my parents' but I was also moving in a universe that was culturally, socially and ethically different from what I had been used to. Even my accent was going through a process of elevation. It was being modulated according to the speech patterns of my very esteemed lecturers and my white middle class friends. A couple of months into my first term, I consciously, started losing my working class/Asian/Birmingham speech patterns, replacing them for the refined dolce tones of RP that I heard in lecture halls and staff corridors. My voice was being replaced by the sound of middle class English. I began the process of reshaping my identity.

It is an idea that Parekh (2006) highlights by quoting Edward Said on the Rushdie affair concerning the publication of *The Satanic Verses*. Said criticised Rushdie 'for using his intimate knowledge of his community to feed the anti-Muslim prejudices of the West and showing a 'lack of loyalty' to it (Parekh, 2006:159). Others accused Rushdie of 'cultural treason' (Ali Mazruri *cited* in Parekh, 2006:159). This is because allegiance to one's own culture is prevalent in many people who have emigrated and taken residence in other countries. The alienation or the strangeness of the new environment compels them to create a unity. Culture defines them and so any criticism of one is a criticism of the other. In taking on another identity or challenging your culture, many black African Americans are described by their own community as having 'betrayed' them, showing 'disloyalty' or being 'cultural scabs'. Duty to culture, to maintain its importance and centrality in our lives is something that Parekh (2006) articulates. He states that we have to defend and cherish our culture and pass it on to our children in order that it may survive. But he presents this view with a condition:

Loyalty to a culture also involves a duty to explore, deepen and enrich its resources and remove its defects. No culture is perfect, and it is bound to include beliefs and practices

that are perverse and sit ill at ease with values and ideals. To love one's culture is to wish it well, and that involves criticising and removing its blemishes. ... loyalty to a culture is loyalty to the ideal and values of the community men and women who built their lives around these (Parekh, 2006:160).

Despite this, my English studies at Lancaster gave me a range of perspectives and experiences relating to my culture and the wider community. The literature on the course helped me to gain confidence in myself. But the studies also gave me inspiration in the form of teachers and their enthusiastic engagement with the texts. So some of my favourite teachers were/are those who have helped me to find my own 'voice' and encouraged me to think outside the proverbial box (Doward, 2013; Gallavan, 1998). A few of our tutorials would be conducted in a haze of cigarette smoke. One lecturer in particular, would be smoking and drinking whilst pontificating on themes and perspectives in a text. Another lecturer, of whom I have very fond memories, was paralysed from the waist down but who was an exceptional teacher. He had an enormous magnifying glass for he was half blind. He was Dr. Derek Elders.

Elders always started with his class by gauging our knowledge base, our interest. Such was his infectious passion for literature that he could, in the course of an hour and a half lecture, discuss in detail semiotics in the literature from the middle ages whilst sporadically making reference to popular culture of soaps, cartoons and *The Magic Roundabout*. He was an eccentric Englishman; one who would spend his tutorials intelligently discussing anything and everything – from the poetry of Pam Ayres to Thatcher's education policy; from the perils of socialism to the *nirvana*; the mantra in the Hindu Sanskrit and Vedic texts to the Bible; from Homer's *Iliad* to postcolonial literature. Most of all, he did not believe in grades. Instead, he would inspire us, encourage us to write, to think. I remember how my friends and I would carry on discussing the finer

points he had made long after the tutorials. He would talk to us and introduced keen students to the head of English. On one occasion, whilst teaching us Milton's *Paradise Lost* and the religious poetry of the metaphysicals like Herbert and Donne, he introduced me to the university chaplain to discuss the 17<sup>th</sup> century's understanding of holy trinity. When I told the chaplain I did not quite understand the theological paradox, he replied, 'I'm pleased to hear it. I'd be worried if you *did!*' As for Elders, I think he is a mark of a good teacher and every teacher today should aspire to be like that; comprehensive, free, diverse and open minded. He/she should not be restricted or limited to a scheme of work/lesson plans. This thinking is also in line with what Gandhi proposed should be the role of the teacher in a village cooperative managed and run by its own members (Burke, 2000). In Punjabi a teacher is a guru, a sage, a spiritual guide, who develops his/her pupil on a journey of self-discovery through mutual respect. He/she is like a parent who helps the child to navigate himself/herself through the various moral and ethical conundrums. He/she teaches his/her pupil of the importance of character building and its importance in life to sustain oneself in the face of adversary:

A teacher who establishes rapport with the taught, becomes one with them, learns more from them than he teaches them. He who learns nothing from his disciples is, in my opinion, worthless. Whenever I talk with someone I learn from him. I take from him more than I give him. In this way, a true teacher regards himself as a student of his students. If you will teach your pupils with this attitude, you will benefit much from them (Gandhi, 1942, *cited* in Burke, 2000:12).

Pike (2015) also makes an argument for the need of the English teacher to instil or incorporate a set of spiritual/ethical values because English has a 'pseudo-religious status' (Pike, 2015:137). David Holbrook espoused about the nature of English studies and the role of the English teacher. He stated although English is not a religion 'it is a discipline in which we use language, to grope beyond language, at the possible meaning that life may

have' (*cited* in Pike, 2015:137). In taking on the role of 'preachers of culture' English teachers assumed a centrality in the curriculum for both themselves and the subject of English. But when English was emerging as a distinct subject in the curriculum, the English teachers had autonomy; they had control of the management and delivery of their subject. They were not confined to an external prescribed syllabus broken down into objectives, skills, descriptors and mark schemes (Peim, 2009).

Teachers like Mr. Elders are now far and few because a new mode of teaching and a new school of education has emerged in the last thirty years. My concern is that teaching is regulated and monitored to such an extent that there is limited room to be maverick or to practise autonomy in regard to style of teaching and pedagogy. If we take the view that teaching should be a creative, organic process that sees pupils as individuals, then this approach of over regulating classroom practice and disempowering the teacher through the restriction imposed by a centrally controlled curriculum, is counterproductive. However, I understand that there is some validity in the argument of the importance of standardizing assessment, defining pedagogical strategies, shaping curriculum contents and prescribing learning outcomes. A focused approach to teaching and learning can be effective for both the teachers and pupils because it ensures the coverage and assessment of selected knowledge. This is particularly helpful for new teachers who may want a detailed, descriptive lesson plans. The approach also ensures that there is an adherence to a set of standards and classroom practice, culminating to provide a unified experience of learning, whilst the enforcement of a nationally recognised 'good practice' adds to social equality.

Perhaps there is a need to renegotiate the boundaries between these two prevailing thoughts about the role of the teacher in the management of English in a multicultural setting.

My second year was relatively uneventful. We covered the literature from the 18<sup>th</sup> and 19<sup>th</sup> centuries. I enjoyed the Romantics and Cowper, Clare and Goldsmith were a novelty and an interesting addition to my understanding of this movement that also brought in an anarchic, de-establishment ethos by refocusing on the form, purpose and nature of poetry. It brought in a liberal dimension to something that had been exclusive to the middle and ruling classes. It was all about the spontaneous overflow of emotion written in an ordinary form, in ordinary language for ordinary people. The novel's emergence in the form of Defoe's *Robinson Crusoe* was also breaking and redefining literature and the politics of reading/writing. Perhaps this also propelled my moving into poetry, although I did not start writing until a few years later. It was all about appropriateness and the role of language as a vehicle for political movements and social change. It was asking questions about the nature of literature and English and their use in our society. What are the functions of these comparable entities? What roles do they serve? These are very similar questions we are asking in this dissertation. What is the role of multicultural education? What good does it serve?

My third year was startling because we were covering the novels of the 19<sup>th</sup> century and modernism through which I saw the dismantling of form, structure and the questioning of art and its value in an ever increasingly complex universe and our place within it. I was spell bound by the poetry of the First World War, Ezra Pound, W.B. Yeats, T.S. Eliot and Larkin. I was taken in by novelists such as Orwell, D.H. Lawrence, Kingsley Amis, Margaret Atwood *et al.* and, by dramatists like Beckett, Pinter, Brecht, Ibsen, Strindberg, Trevor Griffiths, David Storey, David Hare and David Edgar. The core feature running through all of these writers was their concern about society in a flux, about conflict, about art, about globalization, about the nature of political transition and, most importantly, their questioning about the kind of world we want(ed) and how that was/is going to be

achieved. Here was an example of political knowledge (Said, 1978) designed to assess social imbalance and the equilibrium that favours one class of people over others. They critiqued the very system that gave rise to social/sexual/cultural imbalances and prodded the political canvas to explore the means to change the husk of our capitalist enterprise into a meaningful socialist reality. Even today critics acknowledge that inequality in education affects students' future career opportunities. Despite only 7% of children being privately educated they still make up 75% of judges, 70% of finance directors, 45% of top civil servants and 32% of MPs (Penketh, 2011, in Lavalette, 2011:50).

So modernism appealed to me because it addressed the very fabrics of my environment. But I had to wait until the third (and final) year to get to this period of literature. I was awoken by James Joyce, Dickens and Hardy. I could relate to the paralysis that entraps individuals like Gabriel, Tess of the D'Urbervilles, Clym Yeobright, Jude Fawley, David Copperfield, Nicholas Nickleby and Philip Pirrip (Pip). The tragedy that befalls well-meaning characters resonated with me for these narrative figures cannot feel connected with one place, a benign space that suffocates them and refuses to let go. Not unlike me in today's British society in which I deal with the growing polarization of communities and cultural perspectives.

By the time I graduated my dialect and speech patterns had lost all hints of Asian-ness and even my regional British accent had been erased. I had created another identity. I remoulded my accent in line with my middle class friends. I started talking about literature and arts with confidence and conviction and began to make distinctions between various forms of English leaning always towards high Leavis's culture as opposed to popular culture. My identity was changing. Like Pip, in becoming educated and a gentleman, I was

also becoming very class conscious of who I am and my place in the middle class world I was entering.

### **C) EFL and Postgraduate Studies**

Upon graduating and gaining an RSA Certificate in Teaching English as a Foreign Language I took up a British Council post for a two year stint at the University of Athens and one or two private language schools in Piraeus. I was to teach English as a Foreign Language for the Cambridge Proficiency qualification. The post came with a decent salary (local currency) and accommodation (a flat with a balcony overlooking the harbour/bay).

My contract required my teaching 15 hours Cambridge Proficiency to undergraduates in Medicine and Law. But the post also enabled my taking private work with English language schools in and around the area including the harbour city of Piraeus. In these schools I taught Cambridge Ordinary Certificate to high school pupils which involved teaching a class for two hours each day except Saturday and Sunday. The class sizes were 12-15 students and sometimes less than 10. To some extent I do believe classroom practice is important.

My choosing education as a career is also in line with what Mathieson (1975) points out as traditionally a common feature amongst working class graduates. Many have seen the education profession, particularly teaching, as a stepping stone from manual labour and cultural impoverishment towards skills, cultural capital and social mobility. Jane Eyre, Sissy Jupe in *Hard Times* and Biddy in *Great Expectations* are just a handful of examples from literature. Other fictitious characters including Ken Barlow from the soap,

*Coronation Street*, and not unlike me, entered teaching and journalism, are further examples of this trait.

I learned my English grammar and developed this knowledge whilst teaching it to the students for no one at college nor university had given us lectures on linguistics. Both my 'A' Level English and my degree were in English Literature which meant I had very little relationship with the workings of the English language. It was during the actual teaching in a real environment that I gained the skills and experience that have stayed with me since then. The actual theory I learned was almost in isolation to the classroom practice because very little of what I acquired in lecture halls/seminar rooms filtered into my day to day teaching or my concerns as a teacher. I might argue that the most valuable part of my training was dealing with the students directly and adjusting my tone/tempo/style according to their expectations and needs as Newbolt (1921) and Leavis (1948) had proposed. English teaching was not just about language or texts. English encompassed a whole range of other disciplines which lent themselves to the English classroom. I incorporated drama, art, philosophy, cultural studies, film, theatre, poetry and music. This was not something I had been taught nor something that was highlighted during the theory stage of my teacher training. All that came through my direct involvement with students and the process of teaching/learning.

It was during these two and half years (1985-1988) that I developed strategies for teaching and engaging students, by contextualizing and referencing a wide range of subject areas. In one private school I started teaching a beginners class whose only knowledge of English was 'hello' and 'goodbye'. There were, however, no issues relating to classroom management. In my experience, their respect for learning and education is something that has not been equalled in any British school/college. Whilst I was teaching, I would

imagine the job was easier than working in a comprehensive school in Britain where class sizes were/are over 30 and where discipline is a perpetual problem for teachers. But discipline, truancy and classroom management are still important areas that are insufficiently covered on teacher training courses in which focus is, more often than not, on defining clear aims and objectives, target setting, facilitating the experience of learning and measuring outcomes.

During this time whilst teaching Oracy where accent, pronunciation and intonation were key components, I began, fairly unconsciously, to moderate my own speech patterns. This was also to do with mixing with other middle class EFL teachers some of whom were from Cambridge and Oxford and for whom the middle class accent was inherited. It was a natural component of their identity. Some of the girls spoke with a cut glass Queen's accent as if it was their birth right. Even though I never had a broad regional accent of any kind, my tones and patterns of speech had been shifting towards something resembling an SE (non-descript) accent. No one told me to accentuate an SE accent. It was something that I felt was necessary given the nature of the profession I was entering. Although liberal critics might argue we need more EFL teachers teaching with broad regional accents, EFL schools abroad might have other opinions on this (Honey, 1989).

Coming from a working class, Asian/immigrant background the need to camouflage my ethnic/social/cultural identity seemed imperative to me as if was the basis upon which I was to progress as an English teacher. It was a part of a recurring theme in my development: a desire to fit in; a feeling that I did not quite belong. So my accent, that still had a hint of West Midlands and Asian, was being replaced fairly rapidly with a non-descript accent. This was also in line with what EFL schools in Greece wanted especially those working with the Foreign Office and British Council whose personnel spoke in

Standard English, non-descript accent. I began to accentuate my British accent rather unconsciously because I also took on the idea that as an English teacher I had a duty to set an example to my students. I was, after all, their mentor. Perhaps it was at this time I also started listening to BBC Radio 4 as part of that desire to accelerate my lingual transition that would eventually pave way for my social mobility in Britain.

My teaching post in Athens was interesting in other ways: firstly it gave me a good grounding in grammar, something which neither my comprehensive schooling nor my university course had equipped me with. Up until then, my awareness and understanding of the working of the English language was gained through, and by, practise alone. There was neither any grounding in technicality nor theory. I had been given very little exposition of syntactical patterns, pronunciation rules, etymology or advanced grammar. Elucidation and elocution were kept in the periphery of our studies. Even rules relating to spelling and punctuation were taught implicitly and haphazardly within context and so I found myself at a disadvantage. Perhaps a defined syllabus would have filled that gap. This was noted a few months after my graduation at an EFL job interview where I had been advised to brush up on my grammar. And that is what I did in the weeks leading up to my taking up the post in September 1985. As preparation, I purchased Oxford University Advanced Grammar, a text book that set out the main points/rules and their exceptions. It was a resource material, a form of an investment that would prove to be invaluable during my initiating years into English teaching.

Teaching English in a Greek setting, with my deficiency in technical skills, meant being on my toes because at times I was simply a few pages ahead of the students. I was fascinated by the grammar rules I was teaching and learning. The Director of Studies interpreted my enthusiasm as a sign of my love for teaching. By espousing the intricate details of the

workings of the English language, I gained a confidence and, began to see myself as a professional in an EFL world. Pronunciation and intonation are the key areas of Oracy in which I immersed myself. I discovered how much I enjoyed teaching the technical aspects of the qualification such as grammar in use, reading comprehension and composition writing skills. This enjoyment was partly to do with my deviating from the prescribed syllabus and, over the two years, gaining confidence to use other reading/teaching material to make the classroom experience interesting and enjoyable. Despite the relatively dry contexts of the whole course, namely the subject matter of the reading material and the Euro-centric focus on monolithic middle class culture, the accents on the listening tapes provided by the Cambridge board were SE, focusing on the middle class tones and patterns of speech.

I returned to Britain set on making English as a career. And purely because I have felt that English was not my language, that somehow I do not possess nor share its geographical and political heritage (Derrida, 1996), I decided to pursue an MA in Modern English Literature at Nottingham University. It was a full-time, one year course and would cover poetry, prose and drama. There I was awarded a residential tutorship which meant the University would offer me board and accommodation in return for my looking after the welfare of 15 undergraduates. It was during this time I met the poet and critic Tom Paulin who gave me the encouragement to pursue writing as a form of self-analysis. It was a means through which I could dissect my background and experience and my ambivalence regarding my cultural identity. It would also provide my relationship with country, place, history and family. The MA course contained a module on Irish poetry namely Seamus Heaney, Paul Muldoon, Michael Longley and Derek Mahon. I connected with these voices because they were writing about culture and education and how these two aspects defined their sense of 'self' and who they are. To them the preoccupation of writing was in itself a

political act of dissension. Like Heaney's *Digging*, the pen, for me, became a metaphorical tool on par with a spade, a sword or a gun. It became a means of self-expression through which I became curious and self-analytical (Heaney, 1966; 1980).

This thinking developed not purely from my reading of the various different texts on the course. It did not appear in isolation to social factors but in conjunction with them. The thinking about the politics of writing coincided with the emergence of one of the most contentious issues to face politicians and the artist, the clash between community cohesion and freedom of expression/speech.

It was during this postgraduate year that international controversy ensued regarding the publication of Salman Rushdie's *The Satanic Verses*. As I understood at the time, there were a range of political issues that were part and parcel of a broader discourse about freedom of speech, democracy, British values and the role/existence of religion in a multicultural society. Within the subsidiaries of these subjects, there were also questions about the role of the artist. Did he have the right to offend, to satirise, to push back the boundaries of orthodox thinking? Did he occupy this exclusive domain in the name of art or was his infusing his role as a writer with politics? Is there a way to isolate these two separate entities, writing and politics, or are they synonymous with one another? Is all writing political? To what extent is the artist the very product of his culture? In standing against the inequities of powerful forces such as religion in his own (minority) culture, is he giving credence or a critical voice to the dominant culture? Does the artist (especially an artist from BME) have a duty to safeguard the interest of the minority groups in a prevailing, predominant culture within which they are located and exist?

These questions were important during the last decade or so of the 20<sup>th</sup> century but they

gained even more prominence and a centrality after 9/11 and the terrorist attacks on the east coast of USA. To me multiculturalism was/is not just a matter of assimilation or integration. Upon the allied forces, lead by the USA, taking military action in the Middle East, at first against Afghanistan and then Iraq, the complexity of the geo-political situation escalated to affect Muslims all over the world. They saw the continued attacks against Islamist terrorist groups like Al-Qaida as a prolonged offensive against Islam and Muslims (Modood, 2013; Parekh, 2006; Bourne, 2007). This thinking persisted throughout the first decade of the 21<sup>st</sup> century propelled by incidents that were to have a global impact.

When in November 2004 the documentary film maker Theo van Gogh in the Netherlands was murdered by Muslims who objected to his criticism of Islamic traditions, we knew we were witnessing an invidious clash between religious orthodoxy and cultural traditionalism on the one hand and the values of a liberal, plural society on the other. It reminded us that art, writing, film making were intrinsically linked and the resulting dynamics of the incident were going to have an affect on the political landscape of countries in Western Europe.

However, freedom of speech and the sanctity of religious dogma did not just affect Muslims in plural, multicultural societies. In December 2004 Sikhs objected to the depiction of a rape scene in a temple (gurdwara). They took offence that lead them to threaten the staff/cast at The Rep, Birmingham where the play *Behzi* by Gurpreet Kaur Bhatti was being staged. It contained a reference to an offending (offstage) rape scene in a Sikh temple. A number of relatively moderate voices (Freedland, 2005) condemned the violence and the sabotaging of art with political protest. However, at the same time, they could not reconcile the dichotomy that multicultural society had to face: artistic

freedom/freedom of speech against the need to show respect and tolerance for different tones, diversity of voices and other cultural perspectives.

Although many critics provided responses that conveyed neutral compromise (Singh, 2004) one or two voices (Freedland, 2005; Rai, 2005) linked the reaction of the liberal lobby as contradictory and suggested something about the need to preserve multiculturalism in some form or another:

Fifty years after the end of colonialism, most British people are comfortable living with people of different colours. But many are still uncomfortable with different cultures. The legacy of colonialism lingers, now disguised as a defence of "free speech". Ironically, it finds its most xenophobic expression among liberals. Forty years ago, it was the British way to condemn racism but to defend remarks like Atkinson's in the name of free speech. No longer. Asian communities look forward to a day when cultural pluralism is likewise claimed as the British way of life (Rai, 2005).

Subsequently, other voices have been a little more reactionary. For instance, Godiwala (2006) rose to the defence of the Sikh protestors albeit by deliberately misrepresenting and simplifying the playwright's artist/political stance. Her main objection was the sanctity of the religious building which is set alongside of the brutality of the 'offstage' rape scene. She argues a compromise could have been reached by relocating the rape scene in a community centre and thereby avoiding the gratuitous offence to the Sikh community. Bhatti's juxtapositioning of the fictitious sexual crime with the Sikh holy book (Guru Granth Sahib) or her merely locating them in close proximity, is the main source of the offence. Godiwala then criticises people like myself, the liberal voices championing the arts. In particular, she singles me out by reinterpreting my perspective in an article I wrote for a national newspaper (Doug, 2004). In this piece I argued for the freedom of art/artist to say the unsayable and to push back the boundaries of conventionality and traditional

values. To Godiwala (2006) this smacks of cultural betrayal and political hypocrisy, something that is expected from critics like myself whose works contain an overriding endorsement of plural principles against cultural values. In this critical vein she goes on to question just how versed in Sikh culture and Punjabi language Bhatti actually is if she failed to judge the mood of the community.

There is nothing inherently wrong or politically incorrect in Godiwala's stand point. Today minority groups like Sikhs and Muslims are clearly victimized in a conflict of values and, particularly in the case of the latter, in the ever-increasing geo-political situation. This is evidenced further in the case concerning the satirical magazine *Charlie Hebdo*, in which Muslim gunmen murdered the staff of the publication in their editorial office in Paris. Their offence is similar to the *Behtzi* affair – artists offending the sanctity of religious figures/symbols and the contentious context in which they are depicted. Should we uphold the right of Muslims who believe that the depiction of Allah should warrant a death threat? Does the writer/artist have the right to cause offence? And just how important is the exercising of this right which causes offence to minority groups living in a multicultural setting?

Media's coverage of their plight is quite telling with so much depiction of hostility, cultural suspicion and political antagonism by columnists and pundits. So multiculturalism as a concept and multicultural education in schooling have to take on those different interests and the various ways in which groups interpret the world they live in. How do we teach critical thinking and creativity in schools without pupils resorting invariably to a holy book for reference/guide? Does R.E. allow for a conducive atmosphere for an open class debate, or does it merely pay lip service to religious groups/lobbies pushing their own religious agendas? How can we have a critical

discussion of belief if we feel that we might say something that may cause offence to some pupils?

On this subject, Pike (2015) attempts to define core values that unite people from all cultural backgrounds. He argues that English has important functions in a liberal multicultural education that attempts to unite and empower pupils not purely as vessels fit for the economy but as individuals who have a shared set of values (respect, beneficence, duty, justice, mercy, magnanimity, tolerance, understanding, compassion etc.) for themselves and the bigger world in which they live. He discusses the universality of virtues or what he quotes as ‘the Tao’ (Chinese for ‘the way’ or ‘the road’). Crudely, these are a set of values that all human beings, irrespective of their cultural backgrounds, possess and demonstrate in different forms and surroundings. Pike (2015) argues that ‘the Tao’ extends beyond the Western empiricism, the Enlightenment, the metaphysics and the 19<sup>th</sup> century age of reason:

Arguably, the Tao offers a more universally ethical basis for English teaching than either the rationality of Enlightenment or the emotion of romanticism, however critically enlightened. The Tao transcends democratic values and appears altogether more foundational for human ethical life being drawn as it is from the *literature and religions of different cultures and traditions*. Central to the Tao is the understanding that certain actions ‘merit, our approval or disapproval’ (Lewis, 1978 cited in Pike, 2015:89).

Pike (2015) then puts ‘the Tao’ alongside Lickona’s 10 Essential Virtues which include such features as good judgment, fortitude, temperance, a positive attitude, hard work, integrity, gratitude and humility (Pike, 2015:91) and goes on to suggest that morality or making moral judgment is something teachers should not shy away from. He quotes Bohlin, 2005:

Our temptation as educators of adolescents in an increasingly pluralistic society is to remain hands-off and assume a non-interference policy when it comes to the topic of moral

choices and commitments. We are sometimes inclined to leave older students free to discover for themselves what is best and right and to avoid 'indoctrinating' young people with certain moral values. Indoctrination is precisely what many educators fear falling into (Bohlin, 2005 *cited in* Pike, 2015:93).

There is an implied assertion here of the inadequacy of R.E. to fulfil the moral base for character building. So if R.E. is inadequate in dealing with cultural descent or allowing pupils to say what they think of religious ideologies without the fear of causing offence to their peers, is it the role of English to provide the relevant perimeters and framework for critical thinking by engaging the pupils with a range of texts and perspectives to view moral conundrums?

Even back in 1989 my experience and perception of the world suggested there was a hole in multicultural education. The tools through which we saw cultural difference and integration were inadequate and perhaps needed to be revised and re-evaluated.

#### **D) Teaching Profession**

I was trained in the mid-1980s by left-wing leaning educationalists. They were the proponents of a certain liberal education that trusted the English teacher to provide a rounded experience of English language and literature for his/her pupils. For instance, one of my trainers was a bearded long haired hippy from the tail end of the flower power generation of the sixties. He dressed in multi-coloured clothes and sandals and spoke in an animated, affected style of a thespian. Such trainers had very little regard for uniformity, regularisation or discipline. Instead they believed in unlocking pupils' creative potentials and imagination (Robinson, 2015). They believed in individuality and egalitarianism. Most of all, they acted as if their pedagogical practices could chip away at elitism, tradition and conservatism. Their ethos was set out to undermine the establishment and

the powers of educational and government institutions. Yet they themselves enjoyed the benefits through their education. They did not believe in rigorous, detailed lesson plans or comprehensive schemes of work because such a descriptive/prescriptive approach to teaching undermined the pupil as an individual. Peim and Flint (2012) illustrate this rather disparagingly:

In line with the shift in emphasis in teacher education, special attention has been given to planning schemes of work for the delivery of the national curriculum. These schemes of work are conceived of a series of lesson plans. Lesson planning, therefore, came to be central to the business of learning to teach and be a teacher in a contemporary school. The teacher in training now must produce lesson plans, which form an important element of professional proficiency. Innumerable guides exist that provide templates for an effective approach to lesson planning. Government agencies provide exemplar lessons. At the heart of a 'good' lesson plan according to the accepted specifications, is the determination of learning outcomes for the class in question. It is essential, according to this now powerfully ensconced rhetoric, that learning be specified in advance. Time has to be – just as Foucault indicated in his account of 'discipline' – utilised to the maximum. The lesson has to be carefully staged according to the logic of learning, and the plenary session (every lesson must have one) must reinforce consciousness of precisely what has been covered and learnt. Thus the curriculum can be delivered according to a carefully staged, step-by-step, stage-managed, developmental procedure (Peim and Flint, 2012:157-158).

Having prior knowledge of each pupil's ability, potential, conduct and learning and behaviour issues, the teacher is able to ascribe certain identities and expectations to and from each pupil in his/her class. It views the pupil as a commodity not as an individual with an array of complexities that govern his/her behaviour in class and his/her attitude to learning.

Inadvertently, educationalists also did us a disservice through veiled hypocrisy. They emphasized the importance of our own working class voices. Yet they themselves accentuated their own educated English accents, conveying a kind of superiority over our regional dialects and accents. In our dialogue there was a clash between privilege elitism

and the powerless underclass that we represented as already illustrated in my poem, *Imperial Seminar* (1999).

Teaching assessment was also conducted in a haphazard and problematic way. My first teaching observation was carried out by an elderly Welshman without a pen or paper who sat at the back of my class for ten minutes without making a single note. When I addressed the subject of feedback a few days later, he said, ‘You were fine. You talked, they listened. There were engaged, they were learning’. Such a curt summing up by the use of a simplified turn of phrase is inadequate and leaves a lot to be desired. It could be argued that any form of observation feedback needs to have some uniformity; it needs to be standardized to reduce randomness and arbitrary subjectivity.

This is about moderation and proportionality. What is not required is the replacement of one inadequate style with another inadequate style. Today those educationalists are now long gone. They are all retired or have left the profession. In their place new teachers from new training colleges have been recruited who now deliver and manage the subject of English in our schools. These new teachers are connected with the new school of thought regarding teaching and learning. They excel with descriptive schemes of work, detailed lesson plans and all the government tools that OFSTED and other agencies introduce or replace. But in doing so, we are creating the climate for weakening teachers’ autonomy, diminishing pupils’ creativity (Robinson, 2015) and giving a generic gloss to classroom experience of teaching and learning.

In 1988, having modulated my accent and gained experience of EFL teaching, I returned to Britain. I worked in a number of language schools in London and Oxford as initially a teacher but soon as a Director of Studies responsible for a team of teachers. This lasted a

few years before I took up a full time position in an FE college in the Midlands when I was 27. My initial contract as an ESOL teacher was for a year but this was extended to three years after which the College made me a permanent member of staff in the department of Humanities. Here I taught on a range of courses in English including EFL, GCSE, 'A' Level, City and Guilds 7307/4 teacher training course and foundation degree course in English literature in conjunction with a local university.

During this time, very few teachers of my background were teaching English and so it was, to some extent, quite progressive of the College to employ me as an English lecturer. In doing so, it was going against the grain of stereotyping. But the position proved to be mutually beneficial. I gained experience of English teaching at various levels including HE and teacher training whilst the College principal was able to capitalise on my enthusiasm for arts, poetry and for being a maverick, tad anarchic and subversive. I got on well with many of the 'A' Level students on the English courses. I was able to command just the right balance of respect and friendliness with a sense of professionalism. Most importantly, my line manager trusted me and gave me enough leeway in the classroom to do whatever I felt was warranted. But in terms of administration, I never got used to senior management meetings and in fact got called in to see the Personnel Manager on a couple of occasions to explain my series of absences. I was frank and reasoned that the meetings had very little productive value as far as teaching and learning were concerned. They gave me little to nothing I could use to strengthen my classroom pedagogy. The manager sympathized and said, 'Yes, but can't you just go along like the rest of us and sit there and nod?' Her comment summed up what I have often thought was wrong with the modern teaching profession. It pays too much lip service to management speak; to corporate fascination for boardrooms and strategic plans. It maintains that business corporate culture is relevant to pupils'/students' education whereas, in fact, it has very little in common with

schooling and the experience of teaching and learning. This also applies to the changing semantics in education.

For instance, today the word *pupil* or *student* is being phased out it seems from government-produced documents and replaced instead by words like *learner* and even corporate-related nouns such as *customer* or *client*. Such language for one researcher might be demystifying a specific area of education as a way of viewing children as adults. But it is also hinting at the way in which power structures in education and learning are changing, leaning towards a consumer orientated economy. The composition and working of education are now defined by the language of market-forces where semantics such as *value-added* are part and parcel of education speak. Pring (2013) also observes this phenomenon. Following on his discussion of Michael Barber, who came up with an Orwellian coinage, Pring states:

(Barber's) 'Deliverology' is the systematic process for 'driving progress' and 'delivering results' in education. It has the 'tools' with which teachers might *deliver* more effectively at the student level what is intended at the system level. These 'tools' enable the school reformers to set precise and measurable targets, plan strategies for attaining those targets, gather the data on learner-by-learner performance, monitor that data and then, in the light of the monitoring, solve any problems which are related to the implementation of the reforms as these are reflected in the targets.... The 'newspeak' of education, a new 'deliverology language' has developed in Britain and the USA, borrowed from the business world where *outputs* are related to *inputs* and where *effectiveness* in meeting the *performance indicators* is the key criterion of success. Schools are now subject to *audits* of their performance in relation to the *targets*, set 'at the system level'. Teachers are seen as the *deliverers* of what, at a system level, has been prescribed. And they have to comply because, otherwise, the *customers* might take their custom elsewhere (Pring, 2013:30-31).

This is also evident in the thinking of many education policy makers. David Collins who in 2009 was appointed Chief Executive of the Learning and Skills Improvement Services produced a publication entitled *A Survival Guide for College Managers and Leaders* (Collins,

2006). A guide it might be but not one of the ten chapters is devoted to teaching or learning. Instead Collins makes much of efficiency gains, value for money, marketing products, income targets for each subject, quality control and measuring and examining performance. Most notably, all his references are from the world of business and management not from education and certainly not those discernibly from the frontline teaching.

This has lead critics like Cuban (2005) to conclude that this is a serious flaw in our government's thinking on education. In his book *The Blackboard and the Bottom Line: Why Schools Can't Be Business* (2005), Cuban argues that the increasing cross fertilisation of the world of commerce and the world of education will be disastrous in the long run because these are at polar ends of the spectrum. These worlds are governed and managed by a differing ethos and philosophical perspectives. He shows this with reference to many documents in which the world of business has shaped the aims and values, the governance and, above all, the language of education. As Harber (2010) states, the reaction to the perceived failure of schools has been to run them more like businesses, and in doing so, shift the moral language of education to that of the management theory which itself is central in the business world.

Our government's idea to make captains of industry and senior military personnel school Heads, and expect them to produce the work of trained educationalists, might be misguided in this context.

In the context of this study, 'mission' means one thing as a singular noun but as 'mission statement' (compound noun) it has certain connotations. It gains an entirely different meaning, a different political veneer. The same applies to other compound words such as in the compound phrase '*pupil-centred* learning'. This has a very different meaning to learning where the pupil is at the centre. 'Pupil-centred learning' is a lexical pattern that conveys a

statement, a certain kind of ideology regarding modern pedagogy. OFSTED inspectors, for instance, usually express a dislike of too many ‘teacher-led’ lessons, where (they might argue) pupils are merely given information and expected to regurgitate it in assessments. But at one time, in a different social and political context, a lesson led by the teacher was considered an effective component, a pedagogical asset.

I might argue that there is a dichotomy between what OFSTED *purport* to want and what *actually* happens as a result of their intervention in schools. Instead of having ‘pupil-centred learning’ teachers are constrained by the limited time they have to cover the syllabus and the all too great importance given to pupils’ exam performances. Coupled with the schools over-emphasis on grades and their implications on their position in the schools’ league table, certain practices ensue placing quality and pupils’ learning as merely secondary considerations.

Setting ‘targets’ and ‘goals’ for pupils might be seen as empowering the individual by clarifying their own pace and style of learning, and using such terms as ‘managers’ might seem more appropriate than heads of department. But such deployment of language might also be seen as evidence of American corporate culture sweeping through our schools and education. From a Marxist perspective (Eagleton, 1983), such language also reinforces the capitalistic purpose of education, to engineer a workforce that will be used by industrialists and employers who contribute to the health of our economy. So very little of the governance of schools is in the individual interest of our pupils. Corporate language does not fit in education let alone multicultural education.

In regard to the texts I taught, there was hardly anything that reflected a multicultural Britain. The authors were relatively canonical and books that could have been taught in any school/college in this country. Nothing of my multicultural class from the Black

Country was reflected in the poetry, novels or the plays that students had to study for their modularised examinations. Perhaps, one might think, this is a failure on the part of the English team to diverge from the literary comforts of familiarity. Not quite so. The examining board had specified that schools/colleges could only choose from their list of authors/books. I remember looking at the list and thinking that there is nothing culturally enticing that I am compelled to opt for. Nothing was aimed at a multicultural education. But I also remember that I did not argue for black/Asian authors. In fact, when it came to expressing my views on the limited choice offered to black and Asian students, I was rarely voluble in my criticism of the over-riding white authors on offer. This was partly because I enjoyed the authors I was teaching and partly because I had not read many authors from my background and therefore I could not argue with a conviction as to why we should offer so and so or why so and so was culturally more appropriate to my multicultural classes. But the third reason is perhaps just as pertinent. There was still a part of me that felt authors from my background (anyone who was non-white) was somehow culturally and intellectually inferior; that no one from my background was going to match the dizzy heights of Orwell, Dickens, Shakespeare, Blake, Hardy *et al.* So my silence and reticence on such matters as multicultural education and curriculum was instantiated because I did not have the confidence to rise to the defence of non-white authors. I did not believe in my own argument because I had been conditioned to think in a certain way about 'difference', ethnicity and cultural homogeneity.

Nevertheless, a majority of my professional life has been in pursuit of arts and aesthetics and developing a shared sense of humanity, understanding and compassion through the teaching of literature. It is a pursuit I have enjoyed but it has also dulled me and my passion. This has partly to do with the standard texts on the courses especially in the AQA GCSE anthology in where a handful of set poets are selected and which teachers have to

cover in detail as preparation for the written examination in Year 11. Such a prescribed, prescriptive course in terms of reading, where the texts remains constant for 4-5 years, might not be to the advantage of the teachers or the pupils.

Recently at my FE college, I have taken responsibility for the management and delivery of the Functional Skills course in English, a programme that has gained prominence and priority in the curriculum due to various government directives designed to tackle what they see as an increasing problem relating to school leavers' literacy and numeracy skills. Prior to my taking up of this course leader role, I believed that the business of failing literacy was an imaginary *faux pas* or, at the very least, an exaggeration. Since 2011, I have sensed the problem is real. By viewing the ever rising demand for literacy in the college's vocational programmes such as IT, Retail and Business, Public Services, Sports, Child Care, Hair and Beauty amongst others, I have noted there is a significant number of students who can barely read and write. The only reading many of them do is text reading on their social networking sites. Very little of their reading encompasses a text longer than a paragraph. It is clear that although schools celebrate their GCSE results every summer, highlighting their percentage improvement, for an alarming number of pupils the National Curriculum has failed them. Coupled with the rising truancy as a problem for all institutions, it should make us question the purpose, relevance and quality of any education not just multicultural education. Functional Skills, for instance, is heavily prescriptive (focusing primarily on writing formal and informal letters, emails, blogs etc.) and has an intrinsically practical value (provide students with skills and tools to present themselves appropriately in the world of work and commerce). Managing the programme requires the team to adhere closely to the set aims/objectives of the course and its unique ethos. Edexcel is proud to declare that there is no compulsion on the part of the teachers to teach literary texts such as poetry, plays and prose. Instead the examining board defines

English and its relevance in everyday situations. They stress the 'functional', practical element of the English qualification.

Although there is validity in such an approach, we have to be careful. I am not convinced that this sole objective, focusing on the vocational aspect of English, is as beneficial to the students as examining boards might imagine. A diet of English studies removed from the literary component, where instead the focus is mainly on the conventions, style and register of formal and informal letters/emails, can be robbed of aestheticism. Such a narrow detailed set of aims (based primarily on functionality) questions the students' connection with language and their enjoyment of the course contents. Moreover, such an approach is also disingenuous to the students. It implies that we as educationalists in FE have given up on those very students and that somehow they have been relegated to the side lines of academia where the only form of textual study they will undergo is one focused on vocational skills. I am compelled to cohere from the exam board's guidelines in order to inject music, art and literary texts into the syllabus. I ensure that at least one of the three lessons is an interactive lesson where students explore their connection with a literary text such as a poem. I will also deliberately introduce magazines, newspaper articles, games and discussion about football and celebrity. I lead a team of staff, some of whom are relatively new to teaching. Like all education institutions, my employer places much emphasis on data collection, upon following a defined set of routes on how to teach and how to manage a class (Peim, 2009). The new teachers have little objections/concerns about this shift in power dynamics. I have the skills descriptors and suggested reading and assessment material but I also see the drawbacks of such a course because it is robbed of literary value. There is nothing on the course that requires the students to use their imagination and visualise fictitious characters and places. So I dispense with the components of course as and when necessary because although the students have failed

their GCSE English for whatever reason, they are still young and forming impressions of the world. Many of them want to engage with middle class pursuits and high culture in which ‘posh people’ discuss literature, theatre, opera, music, arts and poetry. One student, for instance, recently asked if we could look at *Beowulf*. Another asked about Sophocles’ *Oedipus Rex*. Such literature is hardly the first thing that comes to teachers’ minds when they enter a Functional Skills class.

Together such incidents serve as an example. We need to rethink of what we are doing in an English class. What is our relationship with the students and the subject? What is our relationship with the politics of education? How do we connect them with reading, writing and using the spoken English language for business and social interaction? Should we persist in perpetuating the notion that modern or canonical literature is not for the Functional Skills students because they failed their GCSE English and that the only form of English they need to use and be exposed to is the vocational English? Such a value-judgement seems a little self-defeating.

My by-passing the prescribed Functional Skills programme does not arise from some conviction in a libertarian perception of education or in any particular political ideology about multicultural education. It arises because I believe that the system which is designed by policy documents and which operates for the greater good of society, cannot always accommodate everyone. I am not convinced that my Functional Skills students (from a range of cultural backgrounds) are failures just as I am not convinced that our current policy on education, and implicitly multicultural education, is a complete success. Instead I believe that the system has let down many of my students. Just as they might have failed in the system, the system has failed them (Gallavan, 1998).

I am aware that the Functional Skills programme for English is not strictly related to multicultural education. But it serves a point. Education cannot afford to generalise about the students' ability and potential. By articulating arguments about the practical value of schooling, education and policy makers are marginalising pupils by making judgements about what they need for the future. They select their able and less-able pupils and channel them to a set of skills 'relevant' to them. These are the very skills which will help them gain employment and thereby sustaining themselves in life. Some might question this objective (Pike, 2015). In relation to this, I have two concerns. Firstly, making a judgment on a pupil's potential at such an early age is unfair for it fails to take into account value added. Pupils come to school with a social, cultural and economic baggage. They might have an array of problems and circumstances that may hinder their learning. So Eagleton (1983), Mathieson (1975) and Clark (2001) are right. To make correlative connections regarding performance, attainment and examination results of one pupil against another is not only divisive but it is actually unhealthy, unfair and politically injudicious. As Peim and Flint (2012) state, schooling is an extended selection programme to demarcate pupils for a particular function in society.

In addition to coordinating the Functional Skills programme in the college, I teach two modules on the Diploma in Education and Training which are intended to impart practical knowledge about the nature of assessments and teaching strategies. But I have redefined these to include inclusiveness and the role of education to provide economically and culturally deprived students with opportunities to mobility, difference and 'otherness'. I am not convinced that educational institutions such as schools, colleges and universities exist for the sole benefit of the individual. Some might argue that their function is dictated by the laws of supply and demand which themselves are governed by political forces (Goodson, 1990, 1994; Pring, 2013). It is important to put that in perspective because not

all we do in education in the form of data collection serves tangible benefits for our pupils. To assess whether what we do in education is worthwhile and good a simple test can be applied. Everyone should ask how does what I am doing benefit the pupils/students? If the answer is 'it doesn't', then we are failing as educators who have a duty to the students/pupils. We are failing as 'preachers of culture' (to borrow Mathieson's coinage) because traditionally schools have always 'stood playing their role as the guardians of English cultural life' (Dodds, 1986, *cited* in Colls and Dodd (ed.), 1986:5). Modernity and the changing face of British culture require that we reconsider our relationship with schooling and education but more equally with language.

## CHAPTER 4: STANDARD ENGLISH IN A NEW MODEL OF MULTICULTURAL EDUCATION

### A) English as a Political Tool

An underlying core in the debate about Standard English (SE) in a multicultural context is the idea of decadence; that sloppy language somehow reflects the declining moral and spiritual health of our nation. Some argue we need to use ‘proper’ English because the social fabrics on which society operates, depend on it (Honey, 1989). Critics like Thompson and McDonald might borrow political lexis – *reinvestment, freedom* and *power* – but their overall concerns might not be for the individual or for character building (Seldon, 2013) but society at large.

To some, the importance of applying correct language is implicitly linked with stability and an ordered society and an individual mind. In this assumption a correlation is made linking physical structure, expression and sanity. For instance, in Act II, Polonius objects to Hamlet’s letter to Ophelia on the count of his misuse of language:

To the celestial and my soul's idol, the most beautified Ophelia,'--  
That's an ill phrase, a vile phrase; 'beautified' is a vile phrase ... (*Hamlet* II.2 pp. 110-111)

It is such evidence that leads him to the fallacious conclusion that Hamlet is mad. This association with language and mental stability is significant because Shakespeare reminds us about the importance of speaking plainly. In *King Lear*, for instance, children use elaborate language full of superlatives to win their father’s favour. Goneril and Regan’s use of hyperbolic language as flattery for material gain. This is contrasted with the good characters who, not dissimilar to Joyce’s paralysis, can barely utter a word. *What can you say to draw a third more opulent than your sisters?* demands Lear in the opening scene, *Speak* (*King Lear*, I.1 pp.85). When Cordelia says and repeats ‘nothing’, we know we are

at an important juncture. This insufficient language is going to be the springboard for the tragedy. In the end, it is appropriate that Edgar should conclude, 'Speak what we feel not what we ought to say' (*King Lear*, V.3:324).

In relation to the narrative, our concerns about standards in English might also be linked not only with sincerity but cultural insecurity. They suggest that the language is under threat by foreign cultures/people diluting the purity of English by their use of ungrammatical forms and 'alien' vocabulary. However, this is not a new idea. Successive governments since the beginning of the 20<sup>th</sup> century have attempted to guard standards in English language from the Newbolt Report, 1921 to Gove's Education Act, 2011. Each policy document concluded, quite decisively, that standards were better thirty-forty years previously.

This is particularly the case with Baker's White Paper (1982) which became the catalyst for the reforms that followed in the 1980s culminating in the introduction of the National Curriculum. As stated, with the rise of immigration in the 1970s and 1980s, urban social unrest and the unemployment of this period and the growing competition from Europe and the wider markets, it became paramount for the government that pupils learnt about their own cultural heritage and focused on speaking correctly. So examining boards introduced speaking/listening components in English coursework and made the study of Shakespeare and the canon (Newbolt, 1921; Leavis, 1948; Education Reform Act, 1988) obligatory requirements. It could be argued that such emphasis was largely a reactionary measure to address the infiltration of 'otherness' as a way of counteracting modernity, agitation and change (Doyle, 1989). It was a way of heightening a sense of Englishness. To some, the debate about SE continues to embody this historical legacy in a multicultural setting.

This thinking might grab newspaper headlines for a government promoting and restoring the beauty of the language and English culture amongst our young people. However, is it a little more than marketing gloss in a multicultural setting? Does it ignore the fact that language is fluid, at a constant flux and that to attempt to curtail this is bordering on futility? Is it similar with culture perpetually evolving?

The discourse on teaching or correcting pupils' spoken English is influenced heavily by the integrationist approach to multiculturalism and political correctness which has almost come to be mean 'leave well alone'.

Some critics insist that instead of insisting on SE, denigrating the speech of young people and depersonalising their language, we should be encouraging them to use a variety of English forms (Crystal, 1965; 1997). We should be celebrating the richness of the English language, the diversity it encompasses. To state the contrary is linguistically contentious; it is a restrictive way of thinking about the politics of language. I would accept that,

However, in order to democratise the language for the good of all our pupils we need to provide a mechanism for those pupils to change and develop their speech patterns and in doing so we can also give them access to other accents and other modes of speech. Our approach to teaching language, like multicultural education, needs reflect the changing world. It has to reflect the altering tastes in fashion and values. Pupils need ownership of, and affiliation with, language through their use of lexical structures, syntax and grammar (Woolard, 1998 and Silverstein, 1985 *cited* in Wortham, 2001). But, at the same time, they also need suitable dialect for formal situations/contexts.

Wyld (1921) is quoted by the Newbolt Report, disapproving of prescriptive grammar teaching 'a grammar book does not attempt to teach people how they ought to speak, but,

on the contrary, unless it is a very bad or very old work, it merely states how, as a matter of fact, certain people do speak at the time when it is written' (Newbolt Report, 1921:281 *cited* in Mathieson, 1975). Halliday *et al.* (1964) state 'a speaker who is made ashamed of his own language habits suffers a basic injury as a human being: to make anyone, especially an immigrant child, feel so ashamed is as indefensible as to make him feel ashamed of the colour of his skin' (*cited* in Mathieson, 1975:105). They point out, there is actually no such thing as a slovenly dialect or an accent that is 'wrong'. These observers have conceded that it is difficult to define what 'correct' English is (Crystal, 1965; 1997). It is a point Quirk and Smith (1959) also address:

Usually it is regarded as the application of the rules of Latin grammar and syntax to the language, a notion which is, of course, fundamentally unsound ... Sometimes it refers to RP, sometimes to the cultivation of a literary style – though the latter is always inappropriate in speech... the circumstances of utterance are extremely diverse, and one of the more realistic criteria of 'correctness' is that the linguistic forms selected should communicate the intended 'content' without unintentional obstruction of 'expression' (Quirk and Smith, 1959:9).

With a similar line of thinking the Warwick English Project defined 'SE' by differentiate spoken and written forms:

Spoken Standard English is a dialect with particular grammatical forms. It is socially prestigious and is expected and appropriate in formal public contexts (e.g. presentation, formal job interview). Spoken Standard English excludes by definition certain non-standard grammatical forms (such as 'I'll wait here while ten o'clock') and vocabulary items (such as 'geezer'). Although the dialect is usually associated with formal contexts, it can also be used informally ... Written Standard English is that form of English which is used in most written or scripted contexts (e.g. newspapers and news broadcasts). Spoken Standard English incorporates this but also includes features that are inherent in unscripted spoken language (*cited* in Clark, 2001:99).

Any definition of SE is going to be based on the specific use of English in

different contexts. Yet written English still takes precedence. Carter (1995)

defines it without differentiating the written and the spoken forms:

SE may be defined as that variety of English which is usually in print and which is normally taught in schools and to non-native speakers using the language. It is also the variety which is normally spoken by the educated people and used in news broadcasts and other similar situations (Carter, 1995:145).

I believe there is an argument about the teaching of SE dialect in class and training pupils to gain a non-descript accent. In the context of social mobility, teaching SE empowers pupils. Honey (1989) argues that as critics from an educated class, telling pupils that their regional accents do not matter gives truth to a lie. It disempowers them; it restricts their entry into other classes and professions. It prevents them acquiring the lingual patterns familiar in formal settings where people exercise power and influence. English teachers already teach pupils to differentiate formal from informal English. Moreover, if we argue that language is not unlike clothing then we must advocate a particular model of English that will empower working class/immigrant pupils culturally and economically. This does not mean we eradicate all non-Standard forms of English. It simply means we help pupils to acquire the means to use a non-descript accent so that they can apply it in an appropriate context. We do not consider it ‘wrong’ to tell pupils to dispense with wearing inappropriate attire. So is there anything inherently ‘wrong’ or politically injudicious about directing pupils on their choice of vernacular, style and dialect and saying those ‘might not sit comfortably in that setting’? A value judgment is clearly evidenced by some educationalist like Woodhead (1998).

Arguing that we should not correct pupils’ pronunciation is part of an integrationist approach to multicultural education, an approach that has, subsequently, given risen to concerns about lack of uniformity and standards in spoken English amongst our pupils.

The approach has also been glossed with political correctness that states we should allow pupils to express themselves as they wish. In this thinking we put SE and discourse on accents and dialects into the background by suggesting that accents do not matter in the world of education, employment, training and entry into establishments such as law, church and politics (Penketh, 2011, in Lavalette, 2011:50).

In the light of a range of different cultures and races that occupy Britain of the 21<sup>st</sup> century, perhaps we ought to be thinking of a neo-multicultural education perspective which would include rethinking about class, social mobility, language and economic empowerment. This thinking leans towards the assimilationist approach.

**B) Standard English in Multicultural Education: *Speak the speech, I pray you, as I pronounced it...***

My perception of multicultural education also encompasses the debate about how we speak and the differing mechanics we employ. It is relatively ancient (Newbolt Report, 1921; Bullock Report, 1975; Swann Report, 1985). One could argue that this particular discourse is steeped in politics and British colonial power. However, even during Shakespeare's time people were complaining about the sloppy use of English language (Crystal, 1997). Letters in *The Times* during the 19th century were voicing readers' concerns about the state of English and its anarchic element (*cited* in Phillipson, 1992). Similarly, the Newbolt Report, 1921, stated that it is emphatically the business of the elementary school to teach all its pupils who either speak a definite dialect or whose speech is disfigured by vulgarism, to speak SE with clarity and expression to strengthen cultural identity (Newbolt Report, 1921:65). Such was the antipathy towards 'bad' English. Our current government's focusing on grammar and British values is part and parcel of that original concern. It makes a strong correlation 'between standards of the

‘proper’ in language and general behavioural standards of modern youth’ (Peim and Flint, 2012:143).

This discourse about the quality of our spoken English could be seen as being divisive because it separates those acting as the custodians of the language (educated, professional class) from the common users (the uneducated class of labourers). So it could be inferred that by its very nature, it is elitist (Crowley, 2003). But the debate emerged long before Prince Charles (1991; Honey, 1989) bemoaned the corrupting influence of American English:

... people tend to invent all sorts of nouns and verbs and make words that shouldn't be... We must act now to insure that English – and that, to my way of thinking, means English English – maintains its position as the world language well into the next century (Prince Charles, *cited* in Evans and Booth, 2012).

Apart from the nationalistic overtones about control and administration of the English, Prince Charles’s perspective shows a genuine concern for standards:

Our language has become so impoverished, so sloppy and so limited ... we have arrived at a wasteland of banality, cliché and casual obscenity (Prince Charles, *cited* in Evans and Booth, 2012).

In the public arena the subject gained prominence when celebrities made disparaging comments about young people’s use of English:

Don't use slang words such as "likes" and "innit". Just don't do it because it makes you sound stupid and you're not stupid ... We have to reinvest, I think, in the idea of articulacy as a form of personal human freedom and power (Emma Thompson *cited* in Thomas, 2010).

The compulsion to define a standard model for a language is evident. All early critics including the Roman grammarian Quintilian, felt the need to prescribe and define the standard for their language. For English, only one or two voices like Priestley (1762) saw

singling out one dialect of English language over any other as a futile imposition and argued instead that we should not formulate invariable and inflexible rules of speech and writing to English. He argued to the contrary that rules should be based on prevailing custom or whatever happened to be the standard of the time, dictated by common usage. But that is not reflected in the elite, middle class professions which still, by and large, employ people with a non-descript accent.

In the context of multicultural education, and in relation to my own experience of schooling and growing up as an immigrant in Britain, there might be a valid reason for the teaching of SE.

In the 1970s the focus shifted from language as a determinate point of monoculture to a complex point that existed between language and multicultural cultural setting (section entitled 'Comprehensive Schooling and Inner-city Riots'). Through language and its application we could decode a culture and explain the variants and the relationship between the different users. Bernstein's (1973) work on language codes and how they determined educational achievement is significant. He outlined the relationship between the restricted code ('context bound') and the elaborate code ('context free') and put the case that 'code switching' is a naturally acquired skill. Similarly, Labov 1972 (*cited in Tomlinson, 2008*) defended the use of black English as being different but not deficient. The Bullock Report (1975) also supported this view, stating that linguists studying Jamaican and Creole described them as 'languages with their own grammar and vocabulary' (*cited in Davison and Moss, 2004:106*). The report also attempted to shift away from 'correct' English with too much reliance on a prescriptive syllabus and spoke instead of appropriateness, context and a restriction-free pedagogical. As Davies (2004) notes, it has, unfairly, been a focus of criticism and mild ridicule. He quotes an example:

Noting the close links between the acquisition of language and any sort of learning, the report rejects any notion of English as a distinctive subject, with a body of knowledge and a set of techniques that its teachers should transmit. The teacher's function is, rather, to help children in their 'process of discovery'. The report rejects 'correctness' as a concept to be used in judging speech, preferring 'appropriateness' as the criterion (Lawlor, 1988:12 cited by Davies (2004) in Davison and Moss, 2004:107).

However, the discourse on SE was being abandoned in the 1960s and 1970s rather due to the unease felt by many teachers. But from the point of multicultural education, SE is important. Firstly, it is egalitarian because it is concerned with the *written language* more than with the *actual sound*. Unlike BBC or the outdated Received Pronunciation, SE is mainly about grammar, syntax, spelling, vocabulary and expression. However, Derrida states (1996) pronunciation, intonation, dialect and accent, are 'a hand-to-hand combat with language in general; it says more than accentuation. Its symptomatology invades writing. That is unjust, but it is so' (Derrida, 1996:46). Dialects and accents portray images and characteristics about ourselves and our character.

Critics point out that dialects have their own grammatical forms which may challenge conventional laws (Crystal, 1997). For instance, a few regional dialects have double negatives, sentences ending in prepositions and even irregular subject/verb agreement such as *we was* as opposed to *we were*, *you was* instead of *you were* and *me mam* and not *my mother*. Within some groups even the apostrophe is considered almost redundant. Instead, for English teachers it causes a rift and linguistic inconvenience, identifying those who use SE or abuse it (Honey, 1989).

The use and the implementation of SE in multicultural education also have political connotations (Honey, 1989). To some it implies that there is a hierarchy of English, a divisive field of excellence that segregates speakers and places them in defined 'restrictive' social stratification. Implicitly the use of any notional measurement of pupils'

quality of English coupled with ‘streaming’ and the setting of different aspirations and possibilities, re-enacts the very inequalities that education is supposed to remove (Bernstein, 1971). It accentuates difference and segregation. It entraps the pupils in class-codified language by limiting their opportunities. In other words it plays into stereotype and prejudice. As Peim and Flint (2012) state: ‘the classic sociology of education (has) long shown that schools do not innocently offer equality to all social groups’ (2012:149). It could be argued that discussing and addressing equality within Language becomes the core model of classification on the grounds of ability, acceptable normality, intelligence and social and cultural stratification.

Today critics argue that SE relegates other forms of dialect onto the side lines and gives the impression that one form of English is ‘better’ than another (Algeo, 1999; Crystal, 1965; Crowley, 2003; Woodhead, 1998). Coupled with the fact that some custodians of English have promoted their own form of spoken language as being superior to all other dialects, this has resulted in the marginalising of other users (Crowley, 2003). It may not be intentional but that is the effect. My misgivings about my original accent is an example. I noted at university that there is ‘good’ English – the English of the privileged classes with cultural capital – which can be juxtaposed with what we might loosely refer to as *bad* English, the grammatical/syntactical patterns of the working classes especially young people who punctuate their utterances with rhetorical gap-fillers with ‘you know what I mean’, ‘like’ and ‘innit’ (Thomas, 2010).

As a teacher I have learnt that dialects and speech patterns must not be considered in over-simplified terms. Linguistics has analysed the cognitive components; but many elements in language are also imbued with non-cognitive values. Their use is not just about expression. Standard and social dialects are not different ways of saying the same thing, in other words, they are not a set of equivalent ‘codes’ (Bernstein, 1971). Instead, they

operate for different functions depending on the space and context. Dialects serve as tools for integrationism:

... the social structure generates distinct linguistic forms or codes and these codes essentially transmit the culture and so constrain behaviour ... there will arise distinct linguistic forms, fashions of speaking, which induce in their speakers different ways of relating to objects and persons (Bernstein, 1971:106).

Each style of life implies a kind of relationship between people and a set of prescribed attitudes to experience. This results in the habit of selecting in certain ways from the cognitive and non-cognitive possibilities of a language. Bernstein (1971) in pedagogic discourse has focused on the speech amongst working class boys in south London. He remarks how predictable their utterances are, how much they rely on implicit meaning and extra verbal signals. As an example and like my own use of pronouns to align myself with a particular racial/cultural group, he illustrates the boys' use of 'them' and 'us'; 'they' and 'we'. He argues that their application of such pronouns is punctuated with vagueness and cultural and linguistic ambiguity which excludes those who do not share cultural commonalities with the boys. It is a political determinate. The lack of an antecedent implies that 'we' all know what is referred to, so it would be redundant to elaborate. So 'they' is being used to reinforce the community of interest generated by 'we'. It is, at once, a building of cultural identity amongst the boys and defining their relationship with their locality. Simultaneously, it denies access to 'intruders', it guards their enclosure. It is this that Bernstein refers to as the 'restricted code', a specific language that includes/excludes accordingly.

What about the belief that our language is being based and contaminated by foreign influences (Honey, 1989), especially in the context of a multicultural setting?

This marginalisation of working class English speakers has been instantiated by

Conservative critics unjustly likening American English to ‘barbarism’. However, Crowley (2003) and Algeo (1999) have observed, during its roughly thirteen centuries of recorded history, English has diversified in many ways. Any two varieties of a language become increasingly different from each other when their speakers do not communicate with one another for whatever geo-social/political reason(s).

English in America started to disintegrate into other forms when English speakers first set foot on American soil because the colonists found new things to talk about. They also ceased to talk regularly with the people back home. The colonists changed English in their own unique way. However, at the same time, speakers in England were changing the language, only in a different way from that of the colonists. A 17<sup>th</sup> century British traveller in America, Francis Moore (Algeo, 1999) observed this too. He was rather horrified to see the seepage of new, unfamiliar coinage such as ‘bluff’ (the lower bank of a river, in the estuary). He likened this to barbarism and a savage misuse of English, indicative of the falling standards. Yet as Algeo (1999) observes such coinage was necessitated by the geo-physical landscape of the new world as well as the people’s need to create a cultural identity. Over time the two varieties became increasingly different, not so radically different that they amounted to different languages, as Italian and French had become a millennium earlier, but different enough to notice.

The differences between American and British are not due to Americans changing from a British standard. American-English is not a corrupt form of British-English sprinkled with barbarisms. Rather, both American and British English(es) evolved in different ways from a common 16<sup>th</sup> century ancestral standard. Present-day British is no closer to that earlier form than present-day American is. Critics would argue that in some ways present-day American is more conservative, that is, closer to the common original standard than is present-day British (Algeo, 1999). Critics like Prince Charles, therefore, might be misled

in associating American English with vulgarity, sloppiness and impoverishment. American English today is on par with British English with over a billion people in the world speaking one of the two varieties.

Honey (1989), however, puts the case that teaching foreign students varieties of regional English is pandering to political correctness. People are more susceptible to an accent that conveys educatedness not overt privilege but some form of learning. What most foreign students in other countries want is EFL taught in non-descript or educated accent. There is, he argues, more of an imperative to standardise English if we bear in mind the centrality of English in a global context:

Cultural prestige of British English as a model for foreign learners is offset by the economic and political power and influence of American English, and the two models now seem to be in fairly equal competition in educational systems around the world...(this) world-wide tendency, then must be towards greater standardisation and uniformity of English (Honey, 1989:167-178).

Dr Johnson compiled the 'first' dictionary (1755) without making crude distinctions between one form of English and another. His dictionary was foremost a comprehensive collection of words/language spoken by 'the English people of this land'. Subsequently dictionary editors (the educated class) started categorising English into different compartments. They began referring to *quality* and *standards* whilst making a distinction between educated, cultured speakers and those who lacked education and culture. Within this definition, class was an important feature. By the early 20<sup>th</sup> century, for instance, SE was being defined with words like 'best', 'currency' and 'cultural status' of the person using the language. It denoted 'superior', 'well-bred' and 'informed' (Woodhead, 1998). In this context, it is worth noting that *culture* meant high culture of Leavis's. It was the stuff of opera, theatre and arts and not necessarily the stuff of popular culture of

working men's clubs, soaps, pubs and football. In this definition and usage, therefore, SE is political as it denotes cultural superiority.

This political debate has implications on teaching and learning in a multicultural setting. It has, for instance, been noted that pupils from middle and privileged classes do well in exams. They do so partly because the very means by which knowledge is transmitted in the classroom is familiar to them (Bernstein, 1990). This, however, is not the case for pupils from working class backgrounds especially those like myself of the BME category. Our use of language (with regional and foreign accents) has been relegated to an inferior rank and status. The system that defines quality and designs mechanisms to assess learning and the acquisition of knowledge is biased in favour of SE (Pring, 2013). They argue that during the assimilationist approach to multicultural education (1950s-1960s), consciously or unconsciously teachers attempted to rid their pupils' voice. They interfered with their language by intercepting their non-SE. In doing so they imposed a 'better', corrected form. In this process, some pupils were (implicitly) made to feel inadequate. The Bullock Report, 1975, was right, therefore, to shift the emphasis to appropriateness. Throughout schooling pupils are taught and tested in a medium whose very laws have to be learnt, adopted and applied. It seems that only then can facts and knowledge be measured and assessed with any degree of accuracy. Only then can we apply Michael Barber's (2011) 'deliverology'. Perhaps, as some have argued, a fallacy is manufactured linking intelligence with affectation of non-descript accent, class and snobbery (Honey, 1989).

I am not totally convinced. There is an argument that teaching non-descript English dialect and accent is different (Honey, 1989; Crystal, 1997). My own experience would suggest that immigrant pupils of my background were keen to fit in with the host cultural group. They wanted aspiration and access to social mobility, training and employment opportunities. They wanted to be accepted as people who were part and parcel of British

life and society. The inner-city riots of the 1980s might be construed as evidence of that notion of belonging. It is evidence of our need to provide all pupils with language skills that might benefit them in the long run. Pupils of immigrant communities wanted recognition, a form of cultural validation in which the quality of their use of English was indicative of some social standing. As language is an essential life-tool, we have to give serious consideration to how we teach and not by-pass this because of political correctness or cultural sensitivities. We need to place 'appropriateness' and 'context' in language teaching and not shy away from correcting pupils' use of English.

I would argue that there is a need for teachers to promote educated styles of English whether that is in the form of literacy, writing or speech. In teaching grammar and standard vocabulary, pupils/students are brought together in a shared language. Similarly in encouraging a non-descript accent pupils are given a tool for assimilationism and social mobility. So the 1950-60s assimilationist thinking behind the strategy of providing all pupils with a non-descript dialect and accent was not necessarily flawed. The Bullock Report's 'appropriateness' should stretch to include training pupils to use the intonation/patterns of English in a professional setting. In Functional Skills we are already teaching pupils to shift from one style of written English to another (Formal/Informal). Why could we not extend the same thinking to spoken English in a multicultural setting? Bernstein's work on 'code-switching' (1971/1973) could be adopted for this line of thought.

Teachers in multicultural education shy away from such linguistic interference because teaching SE suggests a betrayal of people, class and heritage. Teaching accents is political but not teaching SE is a form of injustice and a denial of opportunities and social mobility.

This is a recurring idea in literature. Countless works have illustrated this division including Shaw's *Pygmalion* and Dickens' *Hard Times* where Gradgrind forces Sissy Jupe to use SE which, as the reader knows, may be socially respectable but is in fact cold and clinical, robbed of fancy, warmth and love. In the latter case, language becomes a tool for control and conformity, reinforcing the view that power resides in embedded institutions, aligned practices, habits and attitudes. This is the case when Gradgrind addresses Jupe about her name:

'Girl number twenty,' said Mr. Gradgrind, squarely pointing with his square forefinger, 'I don't know that girl. Who is that girl?'

'Sissy Jupe, sir,' explained number twenty, blushing, standing up, and curtseying.

'Sissy is not a name,' said Mr. Gradgrind. 'Don't call yourself Sissy. Call yourself Cecilia.'

'It's father as calls me Sissy, sir,' returned the young girl in a trembling voice, and with another curtsey.

'Then he has no business to do it,' said Mr. Gradgrind. 'Tell him he mustn't. Cecilia Jupe ...'

(Dickens, 1969, *Hard Times*, p.49)

The infliction of SE here robs Sissy Jupe of her identity as indeed it robs Eliza Doolittle. The thinking, as Clark (2001) points out drawing on the works of John Locke, is that the child's mind is a *tabula rasa* whose personality develops as a result of his/her experience with the environment which could be 'regulated to iron out defects and deficiencies' (2001:42).

Pupils' voices are violated for political convenience, to amplify the power of one class dialect over another. This is also a theme apparent in some of my own poetry as illustrated in this poem, *Imperial Seminar* that depicts the lingual-political dynamics in a university class. Here, the teacher flaunts language as a weapon:

‘And that’s it’, he concludes striding empathically into mid-air defining the absence of philosophy in the poetry of Elizabeth Bishop.

The class sits, staring into silence, amplifying a pause, eliciting illegibility of an aesthetic thought.

No one speaks. And then.

‘There’s a kind of strangeness, isn’t there,’ he begins again rewording the conclusion, ‘this process of writing where the individual is subtly, obliquely linked to the oppressed.’

‘subtly, obliquely’ echoes in my head like a distant poem.

He waits, prompting a remark about Zibigniew Herbert’s unpunctuated speech or Miroslav Hobub’s pro-scientific clinical social commentary.

But no one speaks. For a moment.

Then Santosh, not quite on cue, formulates restrained foreign intonation, constraining to keep a strand of his syntax, his Indian antiquity, far too weak and falls almost into disarray. The voice classes with the teacher’s Irish protestation and perfection of academic expertise whose independent word-patterns bombard like punctuation – indicative of his superior knowledge, or lack of it. And slowly Santosh retreats, colonized, while the teacher smiles

(Doug, 1999:75).

The overall effect is that it leaves such individuals like Santosh (an Indian national) feeling a degree of lingual (or is it cultural?) inferiority. It gives them a sense that somehow they have not measured up to the expectations of the educated class. Naturally that sense of difference leaves them alienated. It is a feeling that although they write, read and speak English, it is not *their* English. Their tongue is a foreign one (Derrida, 1996).

But Santosh's very presence in an English class at a British university where he is gaining a Master's qualification in English, suggests he is opting very consciously to acquire a better status than that which would be afforded at an Indian university. Is this the lingering effects of colonialism or is it a conscious, individual movement on the part of Santosh to exercise control of English language despite his own accent?

Clark (2001) makes the point by citing both Crowley (1996) and Leith (1983) that SE was developed at the expense of other regional dialects/accents. The debate, particularly in the 19<sup>th</sup> century, was led by the assertion that pronunciation is closely allied with power, learning and authority. Amongst them was ownership. As RP became more closely associated with SE, other accents, together with dialects, were pushed into the sidelines and somehow classed 'ignorant', 'wrong' and downright 'vulgar'. It was as if the speakers of these dialects were alien to, or untrained speakers of, English and that, despite their usage, it was not their language (Clark, 2001; Honey, 1989).

The multilingual Derrida illustrates this lingual, ontological and psychological dichotomy. In *Monolingualism of the other or the Prosthesis of Origin* (1996) he writes his famous maxim through what he calls 'performative contradiction'. He states 'I only have one language; it is not mine.' He continues:

It (French language) will never be mine, this language, the only one I am thus destined to speak, as long as speech is possible for me in life and in death; you see, never will this language be mine. And, truth to tell, it never was.... The moment you say in French that the French language – the one you are speaking in this manner, here at this very moment, the one which renders our words intelligible, more or less (to whom are we speaking, moreover, and for whom? and shall we ever be translated?) – well that is not your language, even though you have no other, not only will you find yourself caught up in the 'performative contradiction' of enunciation, but you will also worsen the logical absurdity, the lie, in fact, or even the perjury within the statement. How could one have only one language without having any, without any which is theirs? Their very own?

This failure of ownership of the language, using it but not possessing it, was evident even at the turn of the 20<sup>th</sup> century. Daniel Jones' *The Pronunciation of English* (1909) was written specifically for teachers with the aim of correcting 'cockneyisms or other undesirable pronunciations in their scholars' (*cited* in Clark, 2001:51). In another publication Jones states:

If in our schools we regard it as desirable to deal with the pupils' speech at all, we must have some idea of the kind of speech we wish them to acquire ... my own feeling is that our aim should be to secure a form of speech that shall not merely be intelligible but pleasing to the greatest number of educated speakers of English; and that implies not only unobjectionable pronunciation but good voice production (Jones, 1917:5-6 *cited* in Clark, 2001).

The idea that some people do not feel they own the language is nothing new. But it is, in my own experience, an important feature. The lack of currency/purity in lingual tones suggest an inferiority associated with 'undesirable' speech. This was also prevalent amongst some educated elite at university. Joyce's *Dedalus* reflects on this very notion in *A Portrait of the Artist*:

The language in which we are speaking is his before it is mine. How different are the words *home, Christ, ale, master*, on his lips and on mine! I cannot speak or write these words without unrest of spirit. His language, so familiar and so foreign, will always be for me an acquired speech. I have not made or accepted its words. My voice holds them at bay. My soul frets in the shadow of his language.

In teaching SE we equip pupils with confidence, opportunity and choice; we empower pupils, helping them to gain access to employment, education and training.

### **C) English Language and Colonialism**

Intrinsically, within this debate about pronunciation and SE there are ideas about identity,

culture, class, power, authority and ownership. These ideas are, in turn, linked to the way we see multicultural education in the 21<sup>st</sup> century.

By re-contextualising the author, like Antonio Gramsci in his *Prison Notebooks*, Viswanathan (1989) argues that a class of people can exercise its power not merely by the use of military force but by an institutionalised system of manufactured moral leadership. This then propagates certain ideas and beliefs about the oppressed and the oppressors. For Gramsci, for instance, ‘cultural hegemony’ (*cited* in Viswanathan, 1989) is maintained through the consent of the dominated class which assures the intellectual and material supremacy of the ruling class. She uses this Gramscian model of hegemony to analyse the relationship between British political and commercial interests and the establishment of English literature as a discipline in India.

Viswanathan states that the literary curriculum (with the passing of the Charter Act, 1813) was introduced in India not to demonstrate the superiority of English culture but to ‘mask’ the economic exploitation of the colonised. There were two, almost paradoxical, forces at work: one to make the East India Company accountable and two to ‘civilise the natives’.

She argues that:

...the introduction of English represented an embattled response to historical and political pressures: to tensions between the East India Company and the English parliament, between parliament and missionaries, between the East India company and the Indian elite classes. The vulnerability of the British, the sense of beleaguerment and paranoid dread, is reflected in defensive mechanisms of control that were devised in anticipation of what British administrators considered almost certain rebellion by natives against actions and decisions taken by the British themselves ... (Viswanathan, 1989:11).

To Viswanathan, the enforcement of a particular kind of literature could be viewed as a decoy to the mass rape and violation of a nation that began with the East India Company as early as the century. In the next few centuries the propagation of English literature

among the 'natives' was carried out to ensure the authority of the British government. Its aim was to create a stable state in which British mercantile and military interests could flourish. This ranged from the vigorous attempts made by the government schools to the more uncomfortable attempts made by the missionary schools to Christianize the Indians by instilling a set of Western cultural values that would sit inconspicuously in relation to colonial capitalism.

Viswanathan points out the inherent contradictions in the colonial project of creating an educated elite class of natives. Apart from developing a dissatisfied knowledgeable group of people that was denied any suitable employment opportunities, the literary curriculum highlighted the problems of a system which advocated both social control and social advancement. It was inevitable that such a dichotomy would create a conflict of ideology. Moreover educating the masses would eventually lead to political agitation, social unrest and a demand for better conditions (Eagleton, 1983).

Viswanathan is careful not to oversimplify the British educational objectives in India. Using a variety of resources, she demonstrates the continual modification of the British educational goals which together created the discipline of English studies. Her attention to archival material and historical details often leads to interesting excerpts, such as an examination paper by a Nobinchunder Dass of Hooghly College, Calcutta, who enthusiastically praises the colonisers' culture. Such an effect is not incidental but intended. As stated it is also evident in my own parents' perception of Britishness. It is what colonial scholars like Max Muller, who subsequently became philologist and a scholar of Sanskrit and vedic culture, had orchestrated and encouraged. In 1868 Muller had written to George Campbell, the newly appointed Secretary of State for India:

India has been conquered once, but India must be conquered again, and that second conquest should be a conquest by education. Much has been done for education of late, but

if the funds were tripled and quadrupled, that would hardly be enough ... By encouraging a study of their own ancient literature, as part of their education, a national feeling of pride and self-respect will be reawakened among those who influence the large masses of the people. A new national literature may spring up, impregnated with Western ideas, yet retaining its native spirit and character (Muller, 1902: 357-358).

Similarly, Macaulay advocated that:

We must at present do our best to form a class who may be interpreters between us and the millions whom we govern; a class of people, Indian in blood and colour, but English in taste, in opinions, in morals, and in intellect (*cited in Doug, 1999:3*).

Gandhi, however, saw the injustice of Macaulay's imposition of English on the Indian nation. Although in Africa he had been a beneficiary of Western education, in his thirties he came to the view about 'the rottenness of this education' (Burke, 2000:12). He made a key correlation between the English curriculum and slavery:

To give millions knowledge of English is to enslave them. The foundations that Macaulay laid of education has enslaved us. I do not suggest that he had any such intentions, but that has been the result ... is it not a painful thing that, if I want to go to a court of justice, I must employ the English language as a medium; that, when I became a barrister, I may not speak my mother-tongue, and that someone else should have to translate it to me from my own language? Is not this absolutely absurd? Is it not a sign of slavery? Am I to blame the English for it or myself? It is we, the English-knowing men, that have enslaved India. The curse of the nation will rest not upon the English nation but upon us (*cited in Prabhu, 1958 cited in Doug, 1999:64*).

Gandhi was in antipathy with his requiring to speak and defend the notion of Home Rule and Independence in a foreign tongue. It was the very tongue from which he was trying to free his people and his country. He disliked the way his native language was barred in officialdom whilst education was being carried out in English for the chosen few who were being trained to think like their masters. Yet he did not blame the colonial powers for this prescribed training. It was natural that they would want a class of elite Indians to act as the rulers on their behalf. Instead he was critical of the Indians for allowing themselves

to be cajoled into accepting this bargain. Later in his life he was to write that ‘real freedom will come only when we free ourselves of the domination of Western education, Western culture and Western way of living which have been ingrained in us... Emancipation from this culture would mean real freedom for us’ (Burke, 2000).

It would, however, be scholarly disingenuous to imply that Macaulay only put British interest at the heart of his education project in India. For instance in a speech he made in the House of Commons in February 1835 there is a strong suggestion of British responsibility on humanitarian grounds:

What is power if it is founded on vice, on ignorance, and on misery; if we can hold it only by violating the most sacred duties which as governors we owe to the governed and which, as a people blessed with far more than ordinary measure of political liberty and of intellectual light, we owe to a race debased by three thousand years of despotism and priest craft. We are free, we are civilised to little purpose, if we grudge to any portion of the human race an equal measure of freedom and civilisation (*cited* in Viswanathan, 1989:16).

Although Viswanathan concentrates on bringing together various pamphlets, tracts, periodicals, and government sources, she is inclined to be overly absorbed by her material. This is evident in Chapter II entitled, ‘Preparatio Evangelica’, where she devotes considerable space to a biographical sketch of Alexander Duff. Duff, not unlike Macaulay, argued it is the moral duty for the colonisers to replace that which they destroy:

The ample teaching of our improved European literature, philosophy and science, we knew, would shelter the huge fabric of popular Hindooism, and crumble it into fragments. But as it is certainly not good simply to destroy and then leave men idly to gaze over the ruins, nor wise to continue building on the walls of a tottering edifice, it has ever formed the grand and distinguishing glory of our institution, through the introduction and zealous pursuit of Christian evidence and doctrine, to strive to supple the noblest substitute in place of that which has been demolished, in the form of sound general knowledge and pure evangelical truth (Macaulay *cited* in Viswanathan, 1989:45).

If Western education is going to replace superstition and tribal customs of foreign lands, then it also needs to provide a tangible substitute to entice the people. Materialism, competition, profits, and the exploitation of labour might be substituted for traditional Indian values and practises.

Viswanathan professes a greater interest in imperial representatives than in the material conditions that produced their work and fails to contextualise the material she presents. Her brief conclusion points out the dangers of reading 19th century educational practice as continuous with contemporary English studies in India. And there are difficult ironies. For instance in warning us about the ‘illusion of historical continuity’, she does not necessarily demystify the contradictions of a postcolonial educational system in which an ostensibly leftist government in Bengal rigidly enforces the study of canonical English texts. Perhaps this is an example of the power, the influence, such lingual-colonial imposition can have. It leaves a legacy that goes beyond the immediate and local into the sphere of long term psychological spatiality. This is also, as discussed, evident in the thinking of my own parents who, during my formative years at least, viewed Britishness as a kitemark of standard and quality.

Viswanathan (1989) reminds us that educational systems and curriculum developments must be judged in historical perspective not unlike this dissertation that uses the narrative in which multicultural education is examined. Viswanathan's intellectual history of British educational practice in India is both an account of the relationship between power and culture and an indictment of the exploitative tendencies of any ruling class interests. So what we consider to be Standard English is a value judgment, political and mingled with what Viswanathan concludes is cultural intrusiveness hinting at power dynamics in the relationship between the oppressed and the oppressor (Viswanathan, 1989).

It is understandable that colonial writers have felt that unease of writing in the language which is theirs and yet not quite theirs (Derrida, 1998; Said, 1978). On the one hand, English is universal and liberating but it is also a reminder of subjugation and cultural rape of foreign lands. The disconnectedness, or cultural displacement, which non-British and members of the BME category in Britain feel, has been heavily documented by writers like Naipaul *et al.*

## CONCLUSION

In this chapter I would like to synthesise some of the key ideas in this dissertation and to bring together the different strands of the narrative. In particular this section will address such subsidiary questions: should we still be thinking of multicultural education in relation to assimilationist and integrationist approaches (Cameron in Taylor, 2011; Mullard in Jones, 1998) or has the present geopolitical situation, especially regarding Britain's relationship with the Middle East, exacerbated further complexities that give rise to terrorism, cultural suspicion/antagonism and social segregation? If so, then should not multicultural education address issues of commonality, features that unite all pupils of this country under a broad umbrella of nationhood and national identity (Newbolt, 1921; Leavis, 1943)? This is something policy documents have recognised and although we need to recontextualise the social climate and the impetus that may have given rise for critics to address nationhood, nation state and cultural identity, discourses relating to language teaching and English studies have political relevance and importance in today's social policy (Mercer, 2014). Immigration, foreign competition and colonisation aside (Viswanathan, 1989), the nuances and the assumptions government reports and directives make about 'otherness', suggest an urgent compulsion to safeguard social structures, British values and national identity by involving pupils of all backgrounds (Cameron in Taylor, 2011). There is nothing intrinsically wrong with this idea if we bear in mind that schooling has always been a state-funded project. As such the government(s) have the right to provide a legitimate framework through policy documents that determine education's directions, contents and delivery.

As the narrative has illustrated, the development of education (and the role of English within it) has been intricately linked with the social and political forces that have been at play in one form or another. Since the 1870s schooling and, in particular, the teaching of English as a national project has been changing (Mathieson, 1975; Eagleton, 1983). Whether it acted as a tool for colonisation (Macaulay) or as a means to accentuate British cultural identity (Newbolt, F.R. Leavis, *et al.*), English has reflected the changing concerns of our governments and society at large. Today's politicians are skewed in their view that politics should be kept out of the curriculum and its delivery. Apart from the fact that this in itself is a political statement, it could be argued that any national schooling project that ignores the spiritual, moral and educational needs of the children is going to suffice. As such it will inevitably tangle itself in a political quagmire about the nature of education and all that is taught and managed in schools (Pring, 2005; 2013).

So what is left of multicultural education specifically in regard to English? Can we still talk of its relevance in schooling specifically in promoting issues of diversity, tolerance, respect for 'otherness' and cultural cohesion? Or has this thinking on education merely been assumed in everyday practice to the extent that it is almost impossible to talk of any form of schooling and education strategies without delving into the rhetoric of antiracism, equality and diversity (Bourne, 2007; Warmington, 2012; 2014)? Should (and can) the discourse on multicultural education be removed from the political arena or is politics part and parcel of the biosphere in which the discourse is located? I think it is difficult if not impossible to detach education from politics. However, whereas in the 1970s multicultural education was governed by left-wing leanings that focused on anti-racism, anti-sexism and equal opportunities, today such subjects have been absorbed in mainstream politics and society at large. They are no longer the exclusive concern of 'the Left'. So to assess the

effectiveness of any government interventionist approach, we can evaluate it personally, retrospectively and in relation to the changing political climate of Britain.

As the narrative highlights, during my childhood in the 1960s an assimilationist approach to multicultural education was not necessarily detrimental because pupils like myself wanted to fit in with the dominant cultural identity. Perhaps this is a feature of all children whether they are immigrants or not. The desire to fit in is natural. But in the long run the multicultural approach of the period excluded me and my background from the mainstream education/curriculum. Moreover, my own sense of wanting to fit in with Britishness was perhaps aligned with other mitigating factors relating to my family background. For example, my role within the family as the eldest child, whose parents spoke only rudimentary English and who saw Britishness as a symbol of excellence, gave me a sense of responsibility and this, inadvertently, propelled me to forge an alliance with British national identity. I realised even when I was in my primary school that my parents were at a disadvantage economically, culturally and politically. But this was nothing unique. Many other Asian families, such as my friends', were also like mine, disempowered due to lingual deficiencies and who viewed Britishness with a certain awe. But their mind-set was also one that thought the best way to get along in this country was through docility, cooperation, hard work, and acceptance of the status quo and the imbalance of power dynamics that operated in our society particularly in education.

As black critics have pointed out, the 1950s and 1960s assimilationism was little more than a strategy to help immigrant pupils to become like white middle class children (Warmington, 2012; 2014; Bourne, 2007). Governments advised that no school should compromise more than 30% immigrant children (Tomlinson, 2008, *cited* in Warmington, 2014:72). Apart from the fear of foreigners and foreign cultures, there was little emphasis on the pupil as an individual and his/her cultural identity. As many critics have pointed

out, this dimension was rather fraught with controversy because, according to them, the immigrant child was denied a voice in the whole schooling process and, in particular, the curriculum. His/her presence was only recognised in relation to whiteness and white British history (Gillborn, 2005). I think these in turn were mingled with racism and colonial mentality leaving the pupil feeling like an outsider.

During the 1960s I felt marginalised, never quite belonging in the mainstream of British society. My Indian background was always at the forefront of my sense of being at school. How I navigated myself amongst the various components of the curriculum meant, I had to acquire the relevant skills/tools to succeed both culturally and academically. I was propelled by my desire to be British, to be part of the whole. The school's attention on my racial and cultural difference actually embarrassed me because I did not feel it was a celebration but askance coupled with an awry curiosity. This partly conflicts to what current discourse on race alludes, that the absence of non-white voices and representation in schooling disconnected the immigrant child. My sense of being an Indian pupil acted as an uncomfortable barrier that led to disengagement with my own history and cultural identity. I wanted access to all that was essentially British in terms of cultural enrichment programmes of the schools and reading resources in English, R.E. and History. Segregating writers and pupils of my background as 'others' for the convenience of poetry anthologies (Pike, 2015) introduced in the National Curriculum in 1988, did not sit comfortably in my perspective of multicultural education. To me it acted as a piece of contrivance for the purpose of political correctness in which diversity is promoted through left-wing rhetoric.

Yet critics like Pike (2015) suggest there is a need to celebrate difference, that there is space in the GCSE syllabus to incorporate black and Asian voices. He argues that such

writers like Imtiaz Dharker, Choman Hardi and Daljit Nagra have their own histories and cultural/religious identities and that to exclude or to put them under a broad umbrella of Britishness is doing them a disservice. There is clearly good intentions in this view because it suggests we must teach pupils to understand and welcome difference. Pike argues:

Rather than talking about differences, English is being encouraged to focus on common values and what binds us together. This is important but the result of such assimilation or 'inclusion' may not encourage an appreciation of difference (Pike, 2015:159).

Pike is clearly going against the view held by political leaders and policy makers like Michael Gove and Nancy Morgan. In this sense it is possible to view Pike's approach as segregating writers unnecessarily. In advocating the over-promotion of difference, we may also be in danger of alienating non-white communities, putting them on the sideline away from the power base. Inadvertently, we marginalise voices of BME/immigrant communities by keeping them at the periphery of British cultural values and, thereby, accentuating their separateness. The view amplifies a thought that they are voices of 'otherness' falling outside of the norm. In turn, it reinforces white British communities' antagonism for and criticism about multiculturalism and multicultural education. These have been echoed by John Major who stated:

I want a reform of teacher training. Let us return to the basic subject teaching, not course in the theory of education. Primary school teachers should teach children to read, not waste their time on the politics of gender, race and class (Jones: 1998:5).

Similarly, Gordon Brown and David Cameron have referred to 'muscular liberalism' (*cited* in Pike, 2015:154) through which, they feel, there is a need to assert British values and British cultural identity. All these political leaders have expressed concerns that multicultural education over-emphasizes separateness at the cost of national unity; that it

advocates a laissez-faire attitude to cultural practices through passive tolerance. It encourages self-segregation (Warmington, 2014; Clarke, 2014). In this view, any government and their ‘capillaries of power’ (Foucault, 1980) in a free, plural society must continue to challenge social and cultural inequities, subjugation of girls, the practice of forced marriages, homophobia etc. Multicultural education programmes must be inclusive not exclusive and divisive. This is a *functional* perspective on education and schooling. Social, cultural and attitudinal changes in the last 20 years suggest there may be good reason to be optimistic about British society’s ability to adapt, reform and modernise. Multicultural education should reflect this adaptability and not merely reinforce an overtly assimilationist or integrationist approach to our pupils’ education.

Is it not possible to reach a compromise between these polar ends of the discourse? Of course diversity is an important element in a plural society and we should teach pupils about ‘otherness’ and different viewpoints and cultural and religious practices. Equally importantly, we should help pupils to make a critical evaluation and formulate value judgements about moral/ethical standpoints held by different factions and communities in our society (Pike, 2015). Just as one might argue that there are right and wrong answers even in the study of English literature, so could we argue that not all cultural practices/values and moral frameworks are akin to a liberal understanding of free, plural society.

Moreover, if people have expressed a genuine concern about the social/racial segregation and the disparity that exists between one community and another, then could it not be argued that schooling should unite these same groups and enclaves that have partially given rise to ghettoization in our cities (Ouseley Report, 2001; Mullard in Jones, 1998): Bloch and Solomos, 2010 *cited* in Warmington, 2014)? If we are critical of the growing

cultural 'enclavisation' and 'self-segregation' in our society, then in our allowing this to fester in the school system are we not spearheading the very trend we are trying to tackle?

Multicultural education is borne out of social and political climate and necessity produced by economic deprivation in the form of ghettos (Bourne, 2007). Handsworth and the inner-city riots of the 1980s, disturbances in Oldham, Burnley and Bradford in 2001 and the Birmingham in 2011 have been indicative of the social unrest that lies beneath a deceptive calm (Fazakarley, 2009-10). They are partly the reason why central government have led the community cohesion initiatives which has, in turn, moved the debate about race and racism into the arena of cultural plurality and has shifted the blame for racial inequality (both in school and society at large) onto the minority groups (Bourne, 2007):

In many areas of Britain, Pakistani and Bangladeshi communities and newly arrived refugees who happen to be Muslim, are amongst the poorest in the country. In such areas educational provision from pre-school to further studies is lacking and employment opportunities for the young are absent...Instead of recognising the economic decline in such areas, coupled with a long and unbridled racial discrimination over things like housing allocation, has led to exclusion from mainstream society, the excluded communities themselves are being blamed for their isolation. Instead of examining the impact of white flight out of mixed schools and neighbourhoods, Muslims are blamed for self-segregation (Bourne, 2007:6).

People need jobs; they need a decent standard of living (Fazakarley, 2009-10). And so education needs an element of functionality; it needs to empower pupils with skills to sustain a livelihood. In this way, it has to have a strong practical aspect because in giving pupils merely an appreciation of aesthetics or pure knowledge (Said, 1978) is to rob them of practical skills that might enable them to gain social mobility. Middle class proponents

of a libertarian view of education argue for the teaching of aestheticism or knowledge for the sake of knowledge but fail to understand the privilege standpoint they occupy. This view was also held by the now defunct English Association who argued ‘that English be the constant, the unresting ally and companion of whatever other studies the call of national enlightenment and national efficiency may prescribe... to counter linguistic perversion and the present condition of rapid degeneration’ (Doyle *cited* in Colls and Dodd, 1986:107). People can only appreciate ‘enlightenment’ and ‘national efficiency’ when they are economically secure. It is only then that they will have time and resources to immerse themselves in the appreciation of humanity, poetry, music and beauty but that privilege will extend to working class people *only* when they have attained economic stability and self-sufficiency. What good is the appreciation of art if one does not have a job to sustain himself/herself and his/her family? This is one of the deductions that can be made of the inner-city riots. For the liberal-left to argue that aesthetic appreciation of the world such as a pupil’s understanding of humanity, poetry, music and art (‘pure knowledge’) takes precedence over functional knowledge and skills (‘political knowledge’) could be seen as elitist (Said, 1978). The view is a product of a privileged position.

This brings us to consider what kind of multicultural education we should be advocating and what are the potential drawbacks? How effective were the assimilationism and integrationsim as approaches in education?

I think there were problems with both of these directives regarding multicultural education. Assimilationism contained within it traces of colonial thinking about immigration and ‘otherness’ (Said, 1978; Viswanathan, 1989; Gillborn, 2005). It was borne partly out of a certain mode of thinking that assumes white, British culture and its

language supersede all else in the world (Macaulay) and that ‘the New Commonwealth’ people arriving in this country to settle here, had an overriding obligation and duty to adopt and embrace British values (Lowe, 1997). This process was particularly prominent in education where the pupil’s initiation was conducted in the delivery of the school curriculum. In this respect, English remained the linchpin subject in the school curriculum (Newbolt, 1921). English and R.E. teachers, in particular, reinforced themselves as ‘the preachers of culture’ (Mathieson, 1975).

The approach is also worth contextualizing by looking at the racist rhetoric that was espoused by people like Enoch Powell in the 1960s. There is a view that this anti-immigration campaign was accompanied by fear of ‘otherness’ and the threat it imposed on British national and cultural identity. With the increasing unemployment and lack of job opportunities and training for both black and white people, there was a growing agitation. Coupled with the relatively recent decline of the empire (Hobsbawm, 1968), there was an overriding sense of loss and insecurity in the country. Britain’s entry into the Common Market in 1972 further accelerated a feeling of powerlessness, that the future of the country lay not in the hands of the British government but foreign forces beyond our shores that were able to manipulate the great and the good of this country.

Similarly, integrationism contained within it flaws from the point of view of cultural homogeneity and cohesiveness. It rendered multicultural education unsatisfactory. One of the key features of integrationism was to allow pupils the right to maintain their individual languages, cultures and identities. The approach also included an over-emphasis on ‘celebration’ of difference. This was expressed in a variety of ways such as schools inviting community activists (politically motivated) as members of the governing bodies. However, as pointed out in earlier chapters, the effectiveness of this was dependent on the leadership and drive of individual schools, some were more successful than others in

navigating themselves within a set of cultural challenges. What made it complex was that the thinking got wrapped up in the politics of anti-racism and fascism, mingled with political correctness to the point that people have become exasperated with the whole idea of a multicultural society. In the consciousness of the British people, immigration is a problem not an asset (Bourne, 2007; Mirza in Richardson, 2005).

Despite integrationism there were clearly other problems for schools. There was the lack of engagement and achievement of immigrants particularly black pupils from Jamaica and other parts of the Caribbean. This was highlighted by the Swann Report that went closely to identifying the problem as institutionalised racism. It stated that proportionally an alarmingly higher number of black pupils (especially boys) were underachieving and that this was the direct result of the low expectations teachers had of them and of the system in which they were assessed.

Lack of role models in British culture, in education, media and politics along with the absence of father figures in families did little to help black pupils develop an engagement with education or authority. Coupled with the distinct lack of black teachers in the teaching profession with whom pupils may have developed some degree of affinity and understanding, black pupils were left largely ignored or neglected. Moreover, underachievement was not regarded as a school problem and so it was not important for headteachers to address this by implementing relevant strategies. As critics noted:

...black students are systematically disadvantaged but blamed for their own failure by assessments that lend racist stereotypes a spurious air of scientific respectability (Gillborn, 2010:231).

From the late 1960s there also emerged questions about the administration and management of multicultural education. An integrationist approach with a differing

emphasis would have been reasonably satisfactory had it been coordinated effectively, resourced properly in the form of staff development and training and been applied with conviction. As it were, many of the government non-interventional directives allowed schools and educationalists to apply the basic principle of multicultural education (to assume the immigrant pupil into the mainstream curriculum). These directives were not guided by regulation or scrutiny. As such, multicultural education, in my experience, was dubiously affiliated with political correctness and, at the time, left-wing politics. It included the teaching of anti-racism, anti-fascism and anti-sexism. But the underlining issues (such as why black pupils were underachieving or why black and Asian concerns were not being addressed by schools) were left relatively untouched. Even when committees were assigned to investigate such pertinent inequities, the issues and problems were covered only half-heartedly. There was limited emphasis, compulsion or obligatory recommendations to educationalists and policy makers. As this dissertation has pointed out, the Swann Report is an example of such tacit intervention which made little.

The English syllabus and course contents are other areas that have been tackled but with minimal effect on the delivery and management of the subject. In devising modern curriculum strategies and selecting English texts we should be careful not to think of the integrationist approach as that which merely celebrates 'difference' and 'otherness' (Pike, 2015; Said, 1978). Such an approach might be perceived as patronising. As Said (1978) illustrates, such an approach is flawed because historically the depiction of black and Asians in Western culture, more often than not, appears imperialistic and or racist. This is also what the history of English teaching in the colonies like India has shown (Viswanathan, 1989). Such a focus has not been popular in India. Gandhi's resistance to Western imperial education is an example of this antagonism.

Multicultural education also raises the question of the importance of managing English language in schooling. Language is continually in a state of flux; it is ephemeral because society is forever changing. So I am not arguing that we need to restore the beauty of English to an idealised, fictitious age by promoting SE and criticising young people for their unorthodox usage. This would ignore the fact that language is part and parcel of young people's identity made up of 'codes' (Silverstein, 1985 and Woolard, 1998 *cited in* Wortham, 2001; Bernstein, 1971; 1973). Chiding them for this is a personal attack on their cultural identity and propels inequities. However, in the world of work, communication is about using an appropriate mode of language in a given context. By teaching pupils SE or a non-descript dialect and accent, we are making them aware of different forms of English so that they can take advantage of choice and opportunities that are on offer. If SE can be taught in reading/writing it could also be applied to speaking. Moreover, equal opportunities require we offer all pupils the chance to gain the relevant skills which will assist and maintain them in their chosen field of work. Such a discourse would fall under employability skills, an element highlighted in all subjects' schemes of work.

During my school days, I felt there was a need to provide pupils with opportunities to acquire a non-descript accent in order for them to develop tools for certain middle class professions or enroute to certain careers which have traditionally (through social prejudice) restricted entry for immigrant and working class white pupils due to their lingual variants (Penketh, 2011, in Lavalette, 2011:50). However, educationalists have been alarmed when such an idea is proposed. They misinterpret this as giving credence to the idea that one form of English is culturally superior to another. So they object to the teaching of pronunciation, intonation and accent (components of elocution). This is an influence of political correctness for these are the very people who themselves have acquired entry into elite professions by refining and re-tuning their lingual skills. In turn,

these have enabled them to fit in. If we argue that creating social mobility means shifting from one mode of speech to another (Bernstein, 1971; 1973) then we could argue that there is a place for the teaching of spoken English. Not teaching such a key component, might be seen as a dereliction of professional duty because it gives a certain lie to a truth that pupils' broad regional tones and dialects do not matter (Honey, 1989). In this respect, I, along with many working class/BME figures, have lost my local accent. I was aware that in order to fit in with the world of English teaching, I needed to acquire a non-descript accent. I did not want to accentuate my difference because the reality about accents is stark and injudicious. Stereotyping is rife (Bennett, 2015). Perhaps it is partly this realisation that has enabled me not only to do public speaking but to become a commentator/critic for the BBC. I doubt if such opportunities would have been afforded me had I not lost my Indian and/or regional accent.

However, teaching English Oracy skills (Mercer, 2014), does not mean we deny pupils the right to speak their dialect and vernacular with their own accents but we encourage them to look at language and lingual tools as means for employment and social mobility. In this way, we help them to acquire some degree of Bourdieu's symbolic and cultural capital (1986). I do not think this necessarily disadvantages immigrant and white working class pupils, it merely empowers them. In this way, therefore, a new model of multicultural education should not treat pupils differently (or accentuating their sense of difference) but help and support them to gain social mobility (Mercer, 2014) and identification with the wider community.

So where does that leave immigrant/BME pupils?

I believe we need to reconsider what we mean by multicultural education and how this can benefit pupils of *all* backgrounds, whites as well as Asians and blacks. Jones (1998) states

that in the 1960s and 1970s non-immigrant/BME people did not feel multicultural education had anything to do with them. But why should the concept of multiculturalism be relevant to non-white pupils only? How we all deal with otherness, diversity and difference is important to society as a whole not just to communities that belong to ‘other’ cultures? How we help pupils to define their relationship between their cultural identity and their national allegiance (British values) is something that we need to reconsider. I put the case that in the current climate we need to think of multicultural education not in terms of a static political position but something that has to develop with the changing composition of immigration and the challenges it poses in a geopolitical arena. We have to consider a range of areas including social mobility, employability, functionality and economic needs. Multicultural education should bring people and communities together and not, as has been argued by our recent governments, to give legitimacy for segregation and isolation in the form of faith schools. Such thinking that espouses the democratisation of education, giving parents and communities the right to limit their children’s understanding of the modern world, merely cocoons pupils and restricts their awareness of themselves and the society in which they live (Doug, 2015). Encouraging diversity by allowing communities to design their own schools is counter-productive. Faith schools, free schools and academies under a religious doctrine merely perpetuate cultural exclusivity and ‘self-segregation’ (Warmington, 2014). I believe this goes against the grain of what modern multicultural education is or can be. So a framework for the holistic approach to the teaching of morality and ethics has to be considered (Pike, 2015). But most of all, educationalists have a duty to safeguard the interest of the pupils, to break them away from the limitations imposed on them by reactionary cultural conservatism (Clarke, 2014). What they are taught in and out of schools and how we manage that is important to our society as a whole particularly communal cohesion. Pupils should have

an understanding of their individual identities but those identities are also attached to national allegiance or a set of British values to which we adhere. Some of these, such as freedom of speech, freedom of expression, inclusiveness and empowerment of girls, have been highlighted in the Rushdie affair, the Hebdo incident and the Trojan Horse scandal. I believe we need to address the growing political disaffection amongst some immigrant/BME pupils who see their cultural identity in conflict with their national allegiance. Multicultural education has to confront the disengagement and radicalisation of some vulnerable pupils who apply a fundamentalist interpretation of a religious ideology to justify terrorism/acts of violence against British citizens. By coordinating an effective multicultural education approach we can build a sense of national unity and belonging.

I would argue, therefore, that multicultural education has not necessarily come to an end nor is it irrelevant (Jones, 1998) but that it has acquired a new identity. There are forces and public opinions that require educationalists and policy makers to consider a neo-integrationist approach in education to reinforce a shared commonality and national identity. Unlike the 1950s and 1960s, today more and more countries are witnessing freedom of movement and are embracing the challenges this poses on their populace and their national identity.

How do I now see myself as one who is the very product of multicultural education of the 1960s and 1970s? Am I fully integrated (do I fit in) with British culture and society? How does this link with symbolic and cultural capital (Bourdieu, 1986)? Do I possess this? Do I have access to all that was denied to educated black and Asian immigrants in the 1950s/60s? These questions are difficult to answer because they are intermingled with the politics of race, colonisation and economics. To some extent, I am an experienced member of the teaching profession. I have taught English at all levels (from Beginners to Masters)

and in a wide range of public and private settings. Today I am a course leader in Functional Skills English and I teach on the Cert. Ed. and DET courses run at my college. I am also often asked to talk at various conferences and to illustrate my thoughts and concerns about the current state of education. As a published poet I have had high profile commissions and have held the honorary title of poet in residence at the Birmingham Rep. and UCE whilst also being Birmingham Poet Laureate (the first Asian to have had such civic title). So on that basis, as a professional, I am relatively successful and I do possess an element of symbolic capital.

But how I view myself in British society is different from the way others view me. There is clearly a difference in the way some in the white British community see me and the way other Asians perceive me. Today, for instance, I am asked to comment on topical issues for the media. But these have almost exclusively been social-problem issues such as terrorism, multiculturalism, multicultural education, cultural identity, religion, immigration, festivals, gender politics, racism etc. In regard to these I may be invited to give my views on Rushdie or other black or Asian writers. However, very rarely has an editor/producer phoned me to ask my views about other fields of my research and interest. I have yet, for instance, to be asked about writers like Seamus Heaney, Ted Hughes or other white poets/writers living or dead. No one has ever asked me to comment on the plays/sonnets of Shakespeare. It is as if I am only equipped to have views and perspectives on problem-issues related to my race/cultural background. The same applies to academic journals. I can write a piece about Webster's 'The Duchess of Malfi' *providing* I recontextualise it for non-white pupils. The editor only showed an interest in my article when I offered to personalise it in terms of my teaching perspective and focusing on the engagement of Asian students in my college. Other colleagues have commented how it is that many other non-black people teaching in universities do not possess a doctorate and

yet each time I have applied (and attended an interview) I am told I have not been successful because I do not hold a doctoral qualification. Is this racism? Is it discrimination? Am I a victim of racial prejudices still prevalent in our society or have I a chip on my shoulder?

Some black critics will argue that I will never be a member of the British middle class because that in itself embodies a set of values and traits that are exclusive to white communities. I lack cultural capital (Bourdieu, 1986). For instance, I do not share the heritage or the lineage of these Isles which suggest something about ownership. Similarly, I do not share the contentious history and relationship Britain has had with my country of birth, a history that has been bloody and violent. So my sense of belonging is different from my cultural identity (Viswanathan, 1989). I am British in terms of my full participation in the affairs of the state and society. However, my background is Punjabi and Hindu. I am fully immersed in the religious/cultural that define me and my sense of who I am. Although my arts and literary taste is very Western, my ethical values are defined broadly by Christian instructions. I love football but hate cricket. So when people talk about my allegiance and use the Tebbit's cricket test to ascertain the degree of my loyalty to Britain (also the concern of Powell), my answer is usually too complex for a simple evaluation. Perhaps this is not exclusive to people of BME category. The burgeoning international economies and the growing movement of people for migration purposes, suggest that we are all going to have multiple identities defined not only by culture, race and nationality but by economic standing, quality of education, our use of language and their association with class. Identity is already an ambiguous concept. But with multiple layers that accompany modernity and one's belonging, identity has become more elusive than ever before.

I believe a truly liberal model of multicultural education should address issues of national allegiance and national identity. Our responsibility is not just to our own culture and religion but to our nationality and our shared set of national values. It should accentuate and clarify communal and national issues for pupils. Although multicultural education must maintain the interest of the pupil, it has to be weighted equally with the interest of the state, the machinery that funds schooling and education.

As for me I might say I am British; I can only have a British nationality. But it is not my nationality. Like Derrida said 'we only ever speak one language. But we never speak only one language' (Derrida, 1996:10). A liberal multicultural education provides pupils the opportunities to explore the dichotomy that is implied in such a paradoxical statement.

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