# Uncertain Futures within a Risk Society – Expectations, Aspirations and Future Employment: Student Perceptions of Education Studies Degrees

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## ABSTRACT

With the decrease in PGCE Primary Education (QTS) places available in universities, this paper will explore data collected from 140 undergraduates undertaking a BA Primary Education Studies programme. Through the use of questionnaires, this research focuses on student expectations and aspirations and on whether they merely saw the course as a pre-entry programme for a PGCE in Primary Education or as a more diverse degree allowing access to a variety of employment opportunities. A range of viewpoint questions regarding course content and expected employment opportunities were included, as well as student suggestions for future course development. This research asks the question, 'For what are these students being educated?' Thus, it is set within a framework of diversity and risk, reflecting the increasingly global and disordered phase of contemporary life.

From the data collected, many students have chosen this programme to access PGCE Primary courses, although by the end of their degree some students had decided that alternative careers beyond being a qualified teacher might be more suitable. This initial research indicates an anomaly with students in their third year, wishing to see a multidisciplinary approach to their course, stating that psychology and sociology would enhance the programme and employability, whilst first year students were more likely to consider such a cross-disciplinary approach confusing and inappropriate to their studies. The data suggests that both the idea and experience of work is becoming increasingly insecure and disordered in

the contemporary world. In a globalised world students need to engage with both the changes in career opportunities and the associated uncertainty of becoming a teacher. The paper concludes that Education Studies and the desire to be a teacher, even with the lack of employment opportunities, is evidence of reflexive activity symptomatic of the Risk Society.

**Keywords:** Education Studies, aspirations, expectations, employability, risk society

### Introduction

> One of the most commonly offered recommendations to the young … is to be flexible and not particularly choosy, not to expect too much from jobs, to take the jobs as they come without asking too many questions, and to treat them as an opportunity to be enjoyed on the spot as long as it lasts rather than … a 'life project', a matter of self-esteem and self-definition, or a warrant of long-term security. (Bauman 2004, p.10)

In the twenty-first century, there are no longer any certainties regarding future career pathways; this paper explores the relationship between degree choice and future career identity. This study looks at the hopes and expectations of a cohort of students on an Education Studies degree, and their aspirations towards the teaching profession. Teacher training has been high on the political agenda in the UK: initially in recent times with the Furlong Report (2006), and subsequently 'The Importance of Teaching' White Paper in 2010 (DfE 2010). This paper was in response to the OCED PISA Survey of 2006, which 'has had an … influence of the formulation of the coalition government's educational policy' (Jerrim 2011, p. 7). 'The Importance of Teaching' White Paper focused on the government's concern regarding the quality and appropriateness of current teacher training provision in the UK. In support of their claim, it was suggested that the results from PISA 2006 indicated that out of 32 countries, UK pupils' performance fell 'from 4th in the world to 14th in science, 7th to 17th in literacy, and 8th to 24th in mathematics', suggesting that the UK was no longer economically and educationally competitive in a global market (DfE 2010, p. 3). By 2012, the figures for Wales were significantly lower than the OECD average, falling down the list of 65 countries to 43rd in mathematics, 41st in reading and 36th in science; below that of other UK countries (OECD 2013). Although the coalition has focused on the results

from OECD PISA survey, there has been some criticism of the way that the original survey was undertaken and the subsequent conclusions drawn. Some suggested that there were 'specific problems with missing data, survey procedures and the target population, which limit the inferences one can draw' (Jerrim 2011, p. 21).

Notwithstanding these criticisms, one of the areas that the government considered to be essential to improve student performance was the training of teachers. This resulted in a review of the way that teacher training is implemented, which included the cessation of funding for:

> those graduates who do not have at least a 2:2 degree; expanding Teach First; offering financial incentives to attract more of the very best graduates in shortage subjects into teaching; and enabling more talented career changers to become teachers. (DfE 2010, p. 9)

Although this focused on provision in England, currently the Welsh Government has the responsibility for 'the training, regulation and professional standards of teachers and the wider education workforce' in Wales. Welsh education policy has also responded to concerns for teacher education and the subsequent shift in government policy by decreasing the intake numbers of PGCE Primary Education (QTS) places in Welsh HEIs (Furlong 2006).

In Wales, as early as 2006, there had been concerns regarding the low employment levels of those undertaking PGCE Primary programmes in Wales. In primary, at no time during four years leading up to the Furlong Report has the 'employment rate in Wales exceeded 41%; in 2003/4 it was 28%' (Welsh Government 2006, p. 2; Furlong 2006). To respond to the under-employment of newly qualified teachers, the Welsh Government reduced the number of new entrants to ITT courses to better meet the needs of maintained schools in Wales (Welsh Government National Statistics 2012). In turn, this will impact upon the aims and design of BA Education Studies programmes, which often focus on preparing students for PGCE Primary programmes with (QTS) and thus on students taking an Education Studies Degree on the expectation of entering the teaching profession.

When designing feeder programmes for PGCE programmes it is useful to consider the changing landscape of what constitutes knowledge within a global context. Historically, teachers engaged with grand narratives and the 'fixed-certainties' of the requirements of student learning, whereby it was considered that 'each society has its regime of truth' which was then

represented in the curriculum (Sim 2011, p. 8; Edwards, Gilroy and Lartley 2002, p. 7; Foucault 1980 p. 131; Giddens 2008). This fixed-certainty of the formal curriculum has been challenged in recent years through the 'paradox of globalisation' and the need to respond to 'flexible economies', with a need for knowledge to be legitimised 'locally rather than universally' through 'little narratives' and multiple futures (Lyotard 1984, p. 60). This is particularly germane to the changing employment landscape in the UK today (Hargreaves 2000 p. 47; HMSO 2006). It could be said that modernity focused on the need for classroom professionalism, whereas today's risk society acknowledges the need for a variety of knowledges, which give a

> sound academic foundation, namely a Bachelor's degree – in sum, a liberal educa-
> tion which preceded professional education. (Edwards, Gilroy and Lartley 2002,
> p. 61)

This need for a sound academic foundation underpins the development of a range of Education Studies degrees in the UK. The relationship between Education Studies and teacher training has not always been explicit. The Benchmark for Education Studies (QAA 2001) avoids direct reference to teaching within its documents. Rather, the QAA takes a cross disciplinary approach to Education Studies with a variety of 'perspectives', which aims to understand the 'nature of knowledge' and 'ways of knowing and under-standing' that simultaneously acknowledges that society and academia do not have all the answers (QAA, 2001). In this way, some programmes have moved away from a primary focus on QTS courses to individually tailored 'little narratives', which allow for multiple alternatives and future career choices. The recommendations of the Leitch Review (Treasury 2006, p. 8) aim to develop a flexible workforce equal to responding to the uncertainty within a globalised society. For some, this was seen as a resistance to gov-ernment control and authority over the teaching workforce. With the focus on variety and cross–disciplinary learning seen as the strength of such degrees, the range of subject areas which have traditionally underpinned student learning includes sociology, social policy, psychology and social sciences (Palaiologou 2010, p. 269). Alternately, such degrees could be considered as separate and discrete programmes which are taught 'along-side' Initial Teacher Training degrees with a focus on the requirements of the current curriculum within the classroom (Ward 2008, p. 20).

Through analysis of the responses from 140 undergraduates undertaking a BA Primary Education Studies programme in a Welsh HEI, this paper

will consider students' expectations of programme content and their understanding of future employment opportunities. It will also explore the appeal of a teaching career in light of the processes of globalisation and the onset of a world beset with risk and uncertainty (Beck 1997; 2000; 2009; Bauman 1992; 1998; 2004; 2009).

## *The Risk Society, Globalisation and Identity*

Globalisation, despite being a term now used in everyday discourse, remains a contested concept (Axford 2013; Booth 2001). For some academics, it is an 'act of faith' with little evidence; for others, it is an act of war against local traditions; whilst for other theorists, it does not exist at all (Hirst and Thompson 1997; Pellicani 1991; Krasner 1994). However, these authors are persuaded that there is significant evidence to talk about the onset of a 'global era', an era also labelled 'high modernity' (Giddens 1990; Bauman 2009). This has profound implications for our national, local and personal identities. Instantaneous images of famine in sub-Saharan Africa, for example, or a Japanese tsunami, and the devastation caused by global terrorist networks, combine to produce a 'collage effect' in which 'events are more important than location' (Lash and Urry 1994, p. 244). Thus Held (1991, p. 1) argues that globalisation:

> reflects a widespread perception that the world is rapidly being moulded into a shared space by economic and technological forces and that developments in one region of the world can have profound consequences for the life chances of individuals in communities on the other side of the globe. (Held 1991, p. 1)

The impact of globalisation is not only detectable in media and 'facts', such as Facebook and global warming, but also in the way that global relations are discussed and perceived. The result is an 'emptying out' of time and space which personalises the experience of globalisation and global risk. Individuals find themselves facing an increasingly contingent environment, with an ever-growing set of possible knowledges, products and images to be encountered. As Kundera writes, 'there is nowhere one can escape to' (cited in Bauman 2009, p. 6). What is more, the dominant political discourse within UK is one of 'no alternative', with governments perceiving the existence of a new political economy dominated by global markets that render them impotent, with 'no choice' but to pursue policies that enhance national competitiveness (Hay and Watson 1999). This can be

seen in a raft of current UK legislation and policies from health, crime, welfare and especially within the field of education.

The emergence of the 'risk society' is the consequence of a combination of the intensification of risk in the globalised world – and this heightened perception of risk at the global, national and local levels (Giddens 1990, p. 124–5). In addition, the risk society embodies a changing relationship with scientific knowledge. Firstly, in this new era, science no longer offers the certainty and the progress of modernity, characterised by feelings of being 'out of control' in a 'runaway world' (Giddens 1990; 1999). Threats such as antibiotic resistant strains of bacteria, AIDS and the threat of global warming push the boundaries of risk beyond time and space, challenging state borders. Secondly, in light of the accessibility of knowledge through the emerging information society, individuals no longer have to rely on 'expert systems' for knowledge. 'Knowledge-based technologies make scientific knowledge, previously confined within institutions, increasingly available for personal consumption' and, in turn, this can 'de-professionalise' previous high status careers (Booth 2001, p. 83). Thus, Beck (2009) argues:

> the category of risk reflects the response to uncertainty, which nowadays often cannot be overcome by more knowledge but is instead a result of more knowledge'. (p. 5)

An example of this is the ageing population; increased life expectancy, to Beck (2009, p. 216), is a 'triumph of modernity'. In the Western world, people are living longer due to better nutrition and medicine. However, the costs are high with increasing retirement, health and social care benefits. This has become a matter of deep anxiety for Western governments and especially in the UK. Thus, for Beck (ibid.), 'the greater the success of modernisation, the more threatening looms the "catastrophe" of greying societies'. Seen in this light, the global era, rather than being simply a consequence of capitalism driven by market activity, can be considered a human activity 'made through the choices of actors engaged in a reflexive monitoring of all areas of life' (Axford 1995, p. 12) and indicative of a complex interdependence between local and global; personal and political (see, for instance, Appadurai 2001; Axford 2013). Consequently, we are all globalising agents.

Central to Beck's account of the onset of the global era is the idea of the 'risk society'. Individuals, in a world of uncertainty and risk, are forced to become more reflexive' (Beck 2009, p. 120). Reflexive modernity has implications for our 'selves'; for our identity formation and the experience

of self has a potentially high impact upon career choice and access to employment. The potency of expert-systems and nation-states has become challenged nowhere more so than within education:

> the loss of conceptual, as opposed to operational, responsibilities; loss of time for reflection and for recovery from stress; the weakening of control and autonomy; and in general, a move from professional to technician status (Woods, 1996, p. 328; cited in Scanlon 2011, p. 7)

The global era is therefore characterised by the search for certainty in a 'global supermarket of identities' through careers that give status and professional fulfilment, which may be counteracted through attitudes from the 'general public, the government, or organisational employers' (Bauman 2013; Ritzer 2001, cited in Ritzer 2011, p. 275). What is more, the breakdown of the idea of modern society as progressive, objective and rational is questioned. Beck (2011, p. 5) argues that 'the single, undivided truth has fractured into hundreds of relative truths resulting from the proximity to and dismay over risk'. In other words, the grand narrative of modernity has given way to multiple or mini-narratives, which further destabilise identity. In this sense, late modernity is a period of social change prompted by the need to cope with the risks generated by modernity itself.[1] Postmodernists such as Bauman[2] and Lyotard suggest that the modernist period in human history was passed when citizens became consumers rather than producers, when norms of behaviour were challenged and deconstructed making it possible to liberate individuals to different behaviours. While there has been a rupture in human experience, both in terms of living and theorising about living, the authors support Beck, Bonss and Lau (2003), who state:

> modernity has not vanished, we are not post it. Radical social change has always been part of modernity. What is new is that modernity has begun to modernize its own foundations. This is what it means to say modernity has become reflexive (p. 1)

This reflexivity is seen at the level of the state and education. Despite, or maybe because of, the challenges to the potency of the nation-state, politicians in particular have 'played a large part in contributing to [the] view of government helpless in the face of global trends' (Weiss 1997, p. 126). Therefore, policymakers are reacting to, and also enacting, the processes of

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[1]  See generally, Beck, Giddens and Lash, *Reflexive modernity*, Polity, 1994.
[2]  E.g. Bauman, *Liquid modernity*, Polity, 2000.

globalisation. When we consider the situation within universities and degree programmes which prepare future teachers and learning professionals, it is evident that these multiple or mini-narratives are changing the landscape of both employment and education. To misappropriate the manifesto pledge of the Labour party in 1997 – 'Education! Education! Education!' (Blair, cited in Hills and Stewart 2005, p. 46) – education is a policy area which UK and Welsh governments feel should be particularly responsive to the perceptions and processes of globalisation. In an advisory paper the Information Society Forum states:

> The pace of change is becoming so fast that people can only adapt if the information Society becomes the 'lifelong learning Society'. In order to build and maintain competitive economic advantages, skills and talents must be constantly reshaped to meet the changing needs of the work place, wherever that is. (1996, p. 2)

This resonates with the Welsh Government (cited in HEA, 2012) view that

> our policies aim to raise the levels of achievement in Wales and achieve a social wellbeing that is vital to developing a prosperous economy. We promote a culture of lifelong learning to help improve opportunities for people at all stages of their life.

In this more 'reflexive' stage of modernity, we witness the intensification of risk, through processes of globalisation, as well as an enhanced perception of risk at the personal level (Jones 2010, p. 44). As risk and uncertainty intensifies, people are forced to become more reflexive; forced to engage with a global market of information and competing 'expert systems'. As a consequence, local traditions and knowledges are lost, leading to de-traditionalisation; an 'emptying out' of meaning, and the destruction of local communities (Giddens 1994, p. 100). However, while Giddens (1994) sees increased access to expert systems as the key to finding ontological security, Lash (1993) highlights the unequal access to knowledge. For Lash, the risk society is underpinned by 'new forms of social inequality' in the 'knowledge-dependent, scientifically mediated global reconstruction … of social structures and institutions' (Beck 1999, p. 110). This world is characterised by conflict between expert systems, and the 'unawareness' of more disadvantaged sections of society (Beck 2009). Nonetheless, both Lash (1993) and Giddens (1994) link the onset of a more disordered world with enhanced reflexivity in the search for identity.

In other words, when responding to risk we need to keep up with global technologies, markets and migration, and learn to keep learning; education is the key to our prosperity and security. The search for secure anchors of identity, through the consumption of knowledges, is a central feature of reflexive modernisation and the 'risk society' (Giddens 2008; Lash 1993; Beck 1992; 2011). The expectation of employment in the twenty-first century is no longer embedded in certainty; rather, individuals have to navigate their identity within a world of multiple meanings and heightened risk. Such risk impacts upon an individual's experience of their working identity as fluid and uncertain; thus the individual further retreats into 'old professionalisms' as an anchor in an uncertain world. It is the authors' belief that career choices, such as becoming a teacher, may be a part of this search for ontological security, particularly in a society obsessed with education.

> Wales must avoid the trap of a 'low skill equilibrium' and dependence on low skilled, low paid jobs, which are vulnerable to relocation worldwide. In order to do this, the UK and Welsh Assembly Governments must work with the higher education sector to raise the skills base, stimulating the local economy and enabling Wales to compete in a world where high volume, low value production increasingly takes place overseas. (Welsh Affairs Committee 2009, p. 107, para. 73)

In this globalising and fragmenting world, traditional occupations may offer security and an anchor for identity. Ironically the grand narrative of the structural education progression to a secure life-long career is less evident. Not only are careers more fluid, but in the face of anxious governments and the subsequent centralised control of education, there are accompanying reductions in autonomy, agency and choice; this is particularly evident in the teaching profession. Alongside this focus on controlling compulsory education, there has also been a rise in the number of career opportunities in alternative and lifelong learning educational settings. Education is now seen as a marketable product and there has been an accompanying growth in 'consumers and new products', with education 'being amongst the most significant' (Jarvis 2009, p. 59).

*Methodology*

The research focus of this study is to gain student perspectives on a BA Primary Education Studies degree through asking them about their

expectations, experiences and aspirations. To explore these issues, a broadly qualitative questionnaire was designed, which employed 'open questions … which do not close down the debate by limiting respondents to predetermined sets of responses' or those that elicit 'numerical information'. Both closed and open-ended questions were used to collect data (O'Hara et al. 2011; Keeney 1999). The design of the questionnaire comprised an initial limited set of closed questions to explore the profile of the student cohort, followed by a number of open-ended questions to elicit experiences, perceptions and expectations. The closed questions allowed students to identify their year of study and educational histories, and included a range of demographic questions, for example age and gender; an additional question focused on whether any family member was or had been a teacher. These questions allowed for some comparisons to be made between groups (Johnson and Christensen 2012, p. 170). Open-ended questions were employed to collect data which would reveal the students' expectations, aspirations and the perceptions of potential future employment opportunities (Foddy 1993). These were designed to allow respondents to express their opinions spontaneously, to avoid bias in addition to having the 'opportunity to … describe and explain in detail' their personal stories rather than only answering a set of 'predetermined response categories' (Schuh and Associates 2011, p. 304, Appendix 1). Qualitative questionnaires allow respondents to explore their opinions in an anonymous written response to a range of open-ended questions, in this context without the anxiety of being identified by their lecturers (O'Hara et al. 2011). These also allowed students to explain their initial understanding of what the degree would deliver as well as perceived future benefits. The research instrument, with its focus on the individual 'stories' as a form of multi-voiced narrative, is well suited to exploring the perceived uncertainties and risks inherent in a post-modern world (Boje 2002, p. 9.). Thematic and frequency analysis of the qualitative section of the questionnaire were also applied (Morgan et al. 2003). The discussion of the data will initially outline the frequency and profile of some of the reasons for students choosing the BA Primary Education Studies degree. One additional question focused on whether any family member was or had been a teacher. Again, this allows for between-group comparisons (Johnson and Christensen 2012, p. 170). Subsequently, the data was coded, which then allowed for the development of themes from the personal narratives; from the 'raw data based on the … literature review', the 'grouping of these themes' and finally interpretation (Rovai, Baker and Ponton 2014, p. 24;

Sparkes and Smith 2014, pp. 124–5). Some limited frequency of responses will also be included to allow for the 'range and scope of the themes identified in the data' (VanderStoep and Johnson 2009).

Prior to the questionnaire being completed during lectures, the researchers ensured that issues of anonymity and confidentiality were explained to students; they were assured that no name would be recorded on individual questionnaires. Finally each student was then asked to complete a voluntary informed consent form (BERA 2011, p. 5). The questionnaires were handed out at the beginning of a compulsory lecture for each year group. It was explained that the data would be reviewed by the teaching team and would feed into future programme developments. The modules in which the questionnaires were completed were not taught by the researchers; in this way students were free to express their opinions or withdraw from the research without the fear of impacting upon their assignment marks and to ensure anonymity (Oliver 2003, p. 81; cited in Cohen et al. 2013).

*Research Profile*

Of the original 141 qualitative questionnaires handed out, 102 were completed. This resulted in 60% of first year students, 71% of second year students and 96% of final year students responding: a total return rate of 72%. Of the respondents, 72 (70.5%) students were female and 30 (29.5%) were male. The age range was predominantly under the age of 22 (70 students, or 68%). Interestingly, 17 students had children (16.5%). Out of the complete cohort, 70.5% had family members who were teachers.

Students explained a variety of reasons for undertaking a BA Primary Education Studies degree without QTS; the most frequent answers clustered into the following categories:

- Did not gain a place on a BA (QTS) degree      37%
- Want to be a teacher      66%
- Want to undertake a PGCE (QTS)      65%

It appears from the initial data above that student expectations and aspirations were focused on using the degree as a pre-entry programme for a PGCE in Primary Education. This was particularly evident in first year students, although by their final year they began to see career options as

being more diverse allowing them access to a variety of employment opportunities.

Beyond these career aspiration questions, student viewpoint questions regarding course content and expected employment opportunities were also included, giving students space to suggest future course developments. This will be considered in the next section.

### *Main Themes and Discussion*

From this data, 3 main themes emerged. These were:

- Aspiration: Becoming a teacher
- Content: Evidence of reflexivity, realisation of uncertainty and the value of transferable skills for employment
- Future Employment: Acknowledgement of the fractured nature of education in the face of globalisation and reflexive modernity

### *Aspirations: Becoming a Teacher*

The data revealed that many students' expectations of undertaking this programme was to access PGCE (QTS) and eventually to become a teacher. This is in contrast to the reality that there no longer is the 'fixed certainty' of being a teacher in the light of the 'paradox of globalisation' and the needs of 'flexible economies' (Sim 2011, p. 8; Lyotard 1984, p. 60). The comments made by students indicate an inflexible attitude that may hinder future employment opportunities. For example:

> Not only do I want to be a teacher, I enjoy other aspects of the course
>
> To learn more about education
>
> Would like to have the opportunity to be a teacher
>
> I will be able to go on to a PGCE

Looking at the data from levels 4 and 5, which gave suggestions for modifications to the course, there was a resounding call was for more experience and knowledge to enhance their future ability to become a teacher. For 36 out of 74 students who expressed an opinion, many made direct statements that they wanted more teaching practice and placements within the course. This focus on the practical at the expense of the theoretical and political

landscape will potentially limit their ability to go beyond the perceived certainties supported by the grand narrative of welfarism of modernity. These comments, which focus on the desire for a less theoretical and reflexive degree, mirrors the government's de-professionalisation of teachers. For instance, comments such as:

More lectures and teaching practice

More teaching, less on inclusion

More experience in schools and working with children

More about teaching

More work assignments about becoming a good teacher. Focus more on this.

More modules about teaching instead of ones about politics and research methods etc.

This may also be seen as a reflection of the students' own recent educational experience in compulsory schooling. This now creates a cycle of compliance and acceptance of knowledge, which has been delivered through state institutions and high status curriculums; this is in stark contrast to the decentralisation of knowledge in the 'knowledge society'. As Jarvis (2007) states, 'This is a cyclical position, ultimately, where the cultural knowledge legitimates the social structures that, in turn, legitimate!' (p. 37).

*Course Content: Evidence of Reflexivity, Realisation of the Value of Transferable Skills for Employment*

A small minority of students engaged with the programme in a more reflective way about the value of the course and future employability. These students were able to challenge the assumptions made by the previous students regarding what constitutes knowledge and considered that compulsory education does not exist in a vacuum. In this way, they began to voice their understanding of multiple alternatives in light of a changing landscape of education. This includes reflection on the benefits of a more flexible way of working, which may enhance employability (Beck 1997; 2000; 2011).

There also seems to be too much on teachers, not all students want to be teachers

More placement opportunities in other places as well as schools e.g. nurseries, in colleges and hospitals

> Maybe more 'practical' sessions on learning key skills + valuable for employment – other than teaching

> More in-depth knowledge of educators outside the classroom e.g. museum workers

Within the BA Primary Education Studies degree, half of the modules are linked directly to classroom practice and the others are linked to issues of theories of equality and social inclusion. In terms of the content of the course, this initial research indicates an anomaly. Students in their first and second years reported an antipathy to modules which explored issues of equality, theory, social and political debates surrounding education: 'Some of the social inclusion modules don't seem to be as relevant for a life in education.' Answering the question, 'what have you enjoyed least, so far, about undertaking this course?' students answered:

> Social Inclusion assignments

> I didn't really like the social inclusion modules

> The Social Inclusion Lectures in Semester 1

> Social exclusion boring

> Some modules which I feel aren't related to teaching

> 'Politics lectures' and 'Politics'

> I believe that it relies too much on theory and more emphasis should be placed on more practical learning experiences

> I feel that some subjects do not relate to me and are unnecessary to primary education i.e … sustainable development and social inclusion modules

They seem to consider that the cross–disciplinary learning, which under-pins this degree, has little or no relevance to primary education within the classroom. This could reflect student misconceptions regarding the nature of the degree, as the title refers to a specific stage of compulsory education; 'Primary' (Ward 2008, p. 20). Although, as already considered, the subject benchmarking documents outline that such a diverse underpinning is an essential part of a modern degree in Education Studies (QAA 2001, para. 6.1). It could also reflect the need for students to find a secure foundation for their identity-formation in a fractured world through pursuing careers that their parents and communities view as 'high status', e.g. teaching (Beck 2011, p. 5).

*Future Employment: Changed Expectations and Acknowledgement of the Fractured Nature of Education in the Face of Globalisation and Reflexive Modernity*

Students in their third year were more likely to express a wish to see an enhanced multidisciplinary approach to their course, stating that psychology and sociology would enhance the programme and employability. This suggests that they are beginning to engage reflexively with the social and political landscape and understand the importance of this knowledge within a 'risk society'. As Axford (1995, p. 12) articulates it, human agency is enhanced when individuals 'engage … in a reflexive monitoring of all areas of life'. These students appear to have embraced the breadth and depth of their current degree and are better informed to teach in a flexible way that responds to the needs of a changing world.

> learning a mixed style … focusing many areas around working with children

> More Social Justice modules

> Maybe a more in-depth understanding of child psychology

*Preliminary Conclusions*

The data suggests that both the perception and certainty of work is becoming increasingly insecure and disordered in the contemporary world. The certainty of gainful employment was at the centre of the modern world and of our modern identities, particularly within careers such as education (Beck 2009, p. 216). The Risk Society denotes both the 'intensification of risk' in the globalised world and the 'perception of risk'. The result of this is the onset of reflexivity, with implications for identity formation and the experience of self, reflected in career choices. For these students, the research revealed their attraction to 'traditional' narratives within 'traditional' professional careers – in this case, teaching: 'We want to know how to teach'.

The data also demonstrates that students show a rejection of 'uncertainties', such as engaging with political debate, and a need for the security of 'knowing how to teach' is indicative of students looking towards expert systems for security. Becoming a teacher, therefore, is identified as becoming a professional who achieves 'expert' knowledge. What is more, students wish this view to be reinforced by the university in terms of the content of their lectures; looking for certainty is then offered

in the 'practice of … professionals and other experts … [with] a strong institutional aspect' as a response to the risk society (Lash 1994, p. 118). What does this all mean for students studying Primary Education Studies? These students are looking for the 'security' of unquestioned knowledge about 'how to teach', in a 'traditional' profession, even in a course that does not guarantee progression to the teaching profession. What is more, this search for security is evident in their initial resistance to anything that challenges that 'expert system', such as competing ideologies about education and political debates about equality and exclusion. In other words, in this more disordered world, the appeal of 'traditional' narratives, particularly through 'steady' careers options such as teaching, are enhanced.

Within the data, it is apparent that there is an adherence to the perception of certainty that the teaching profession brings. Despite the increasing evidence that teachers are under stress and that there are anxieties about the outcomes of education, easier exams, unhappy children etc., 'being a teacher' appears to remain an attraction. However, the focus on greater orientation towards teaching was most true of those at first and second year level. By the end of their degree course, some students had decided that alternative careers beyond being a qualified teacher might be more suitable, sustainable and realistic. One respondent encapsulated this with the answer to the question, 'Why did you choose this course?':

> I will be able to go on to do a PGCE in Education with Qualified Teacher Status is NOT the case! Unless you get a place on the PGCE – the degree isn't great!

On the other hand first year students were more likely to consider such a cross–discipline approach confusing and inappropriate to their studies, rather than as a foundation to being more responsive to the uncertainties of future career choices. In a globalised environment, students need to engage with changes in employability and future identities as potential teachers and into the wider context of lifelong learning; this also applies to those who design and deliver Education Studies degrees.

This paper concludes that Education Studies, and the desire to be a teacher, even with the lack of employment opportunities, is evidence of reflexive activity symptomatic of the Risk Society. What this research reveals is the wish for individuals to be 'told' how to do something, while paradoxically, reflecting and challenging that expertise at the same time. As theorists of reflexive modernity suggest, engagement with competing 'expert-systems' is part of the search for secure bases of identity in the global era. The security of teaching – to be given the knowledge to teach

without having to worry about any political discourse or competing theoretical perspectives on education – was a major preoccupation of students, especially in their first and second years of study. What they looked for was the certainty of being a teacher rather than the uncertainty of theoretical debate, as encapsulated by one respondent: 'Although certain theories about teaching are covered, I believe there could be a module focusing on classroom based practicalities and teaching.' This clearly reflects that students, on this programme, consider that the teaching profession is a high status 'safe' career for the twenty-first century which, to some degree, ignores the reality of the risk society.

> The poignant and incurable experience of insecurity is a side effect of the conviction that, given the right skills and proper effort, full security can be achieved. (Bauman 2011, p. 57)

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